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Japan as a Regional Actor

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Many external observers have seen Japan's growing eagerness to play an active world role in the post–cold war era as a reflection of its ambition to become a "normal" great power, including in the military domain. Along this line of argument, the nature of Japan's changes has been characterized as a move to the right, intensifying the Sino-Japanese rivalry, both economically and geopolitically, in the East Asian order in the coming decades. There is, however, a huge disconnect between these perceptions, on the one hand, and the actual change Japan has been undergoing since the end of the cold war, on the other.

A major characteristic of Japan's post–cold war diplomacy has been its lack of intention and preparedness to play the part of a political player as a great power ordinarily would. Japan's fundamental reference point in security policy has been its alliance with the United States, and this basic premise did not change, or strengthen, in the 1990s.

True, the end of the cold war and the rise of China have prompted Japanese policy makers to consider new security environments more squarely and more realistically. The solution, however, has not been to develop a strategy of self-reliance. On the contrary, Japan has reaffirmed the importance of its alliance with the United States, and has simultaneously launched initiatives that will allow it to participate in efforts at multilateral security cooperation.

The nature of Japan's response has not been greeted by observers, including many in Japan, as it is viewed as a turnaround from some long-standing postwar taboos; the attempt to revise Article 9 of the Constitution, which stipulates Japan's renunciation of war, symbolizes this turnaround.

In the interim, nationalist and rightist voices, which have been on the defensive against the dominant pacifism of society, have grown loud.

The net effect of this phenomenon has been mixed at best. For one thing, with the change in political discourse on security and external affairs, the debate on the need for national defense has intensified. There has not been credible indication, however, that nationalists have taken control of the policy making as regards security, although they have clearly become important factors to be taken into account.

A more certain change in Japan's security policy has been its steady progress toward greater participation in the arena of international security. International security is defined broadly here as multinational efforts toward maintaining and building international peace and stability. Domestic changes in Japan's foreign-policy parameters, some of which may indeed be associated with the surge of nationalism, have in effect accelerated Japan's participation in international security, including United Nations peacekeeping operations (PKO).

These changes in security policy of Japan have proceeded parallel to a deepening of regional economic integration and the development of civil society networks that have united a like-minded middle class across Asia. Although Japan's image in these domains is not entirely positive, Japan's economic and civil roles have in fact not only been significant but also relevant to Japan's larger political and security role. Japan's engagement in international security could develop into an integral part of its grand strategy of community building if it is sustained by its economic and soft power—as opposed to military might—as an engine to unite the countries in the region through a market economy and common values.

In sum, Japan's new regional role ought not to be seen as reverting to traditional power politics, but as working toward the building of an East Asian Community: through its participation in international security and through its efforts toward creating an equal partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

From National to International Security

The Trauma of the 1991 Gulf War

As the international security environment has become fluid and uncertain with the end of the cold war, the United Nations has received renewed

attention, particularly involving its peacekeeping operations. In addition, when and where the use of force is critically involved, the balance between the United Nations and the United States has become a new defining factor in international security.

For Japan, as well as for many other countries, the 1991 Gulf War was a turning point, awaking the government to new dimensions of international security. Japan's international humiliation, which resulted from its incapacity, except through checkbook diplomacy, to contribute to multinational efforts against Iraq, the aggressor against Kuwait, was the driving force behind passage of the International Peace Cooperation Law in June 1992. Enactment of the law enabled the Japanese government subsequently to dispatch its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to peacekeeping operations under the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), as well as to a number of other UN peacekeeping operations, including operations in Zaire and the Golan Heights (Heinrich, Shibata, and Soeya 1999).

The initial phase of these adjustments was not smooth. Resistance from domestic political forces and public opinion was strong, as evidenced by the failure of the government's minimal effort to dispatch SDF medical units for the Gulf War. At the time of the Cambodian development, a television program went so far as to use film footage of the Japanese invasion in Manchuria to convey its opposition to the government's plan to send SDF troops to UNTAC. The government had, in addition, to deal with the suspicion of some Asian countries.

The accumulation of concrete achievements has gradually eased, and even dispelled, these concerns both within and without Japan.

A New Look at the U.S.-Japan Alliance

The end of the cold war was also cause for the Japanese government to reconsider the terms of the U.S.-Japan alliance, as well as the role of the SDF, under changing security environments. During the cold war, the U.S.-Japan alliance served two major purposes: the defense of Japan and the U.S. forward deployment strategy in Asia Pacific, which often extended to the Middle East. Article 5 of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty has served the former function; Article 6, the so-called Far East clause, the latter.

With the end of the cold war, the horizon of international security opened up for Japan, requiring participation, in some form, in multilateral

efforts to maintain international peace and stability. Unlike European countries, however, Japan does not have effective footing in multilateral diplomacy in the United Nations; nor does Japan have it with its neighbors in Asia. Somewhat naturally, therefore, the Japanese government sought to emphasize a new dimension in the U.S.-Japan alliance from the standpoint of Japan's contribution to international security.

For instance, the revised Defense Program Outline (the new Taiko), adopted by the cabinet in November 1995, stressed both a new role for the SDF in international peacekeeping efforts and an important role of the U.S.-Japan alliance in these endeavors; it stated that "this close cooperative bilateral relationship based on the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements facilitates Japanese efforts for peace and stability of the international community, including promotion of regional multilateral security dialogues and cooperation, as well as support for various United Nations activities" (Japan Defense Agency 1995).

Along this line of logic, the U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration on Security, signed by Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro and President Bill Clinton in April 1996, declared that "the Japan-U.S. security relationship . . . remains the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives, and for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region as we enter the twenty-first century" (Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1996).

The unspoken assumption here is that the United States' global strategy would not contradict these basic goals of international security. The two leaders "reaffirmed their commitment to the profound common values that guide our national policies: the maintenance of freedom, the pursuit of democracy, and respect for human rights," and declared that "Prosperity is more widespread than at any other time in history, and we are witnessing the emergence of an Asia-Pacific community."

Implications of Domestic Changes

While Japan was moving into the arena of international security, critical changes in domestic politics were also in progress. Most notably, the monopoly of power by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was broken in August 1993 with the installation of the Hosokawa Morihiro government as an anti-LDP coalition. When the desperate LDP returned to power in a coalition government under Socialist Party leader Murayama Tomiichi as

prime minister in June 1994, Murayama was prevailed upon to recognize the constitutionality of the SDF and the legitimacy of the U.S.-Japan alliance, thus destroying the long-standing raison d'être of his own Socialist Party. This led to the catastrophic demise of the Socialist Party and the collapse of the so-called 1955 Regime under which a progressive pacifism had been particularly strong.

This demise of leftist-pacifist forces in domestic politics has fundamentally altered the context of political discourse on security matters. Most prominent has been the rise of conservative nationalism, even as this development was not unexpected, encouraged by the changing security environment upon the end of the cold war. As a result, the Japanese have begun to debate security matters more forthrightly than before. From a larger perspective, this has marked the lifting of historical taboos on security policy, including the dispatch of the SDF beyond the Japanese national border and reconsideration of Article 9 of the Constitution.

This phenomenon, however, is not necessarily an indication of Japan's rightist leanings, as many in Asia worry. Japanese opinion polls in the 1990s, for instance, suggest that while Japanese have come to support the revision of Article 9, it is because it prohibits Japan from "international contribution" in such efforts as UN peacekeeping operations (Soeya 1998).

The Impact of 9-11 and Its Aftermath

9-11 and International Security

The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, (9-11) have opened up a new chapter for international security. Immediately after 9-11, the support of the international community for the United States was overwhelming. Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that he would stand by U.S. President George W. Bush, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) invoked for the first time its Article 5, declaring 9-11 as an attack against NATO. China also agreed to the UN Security Council resolution allowing the U.S.-led multinational forces to engage in a war in Afghanistan; it was the first instance where China voted for the use of force by UN members against a sovereign state (Shambaugh 2002, 243–244).

Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro also announced his unequivocal support for the United States. This was a natural response from

the standpoint of Japanese engagement in international security, the momentum of which had been steadily rising in the 1990s. In fact, the antiterrorism measures law, enacted speedily to dispatch the SDF to the Indian Ocean for logistical support, was legitimized in the name of the United Nations Charter and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, not the U.S.-Japan alliance ("Special Measures Law" 2001). Invoking the U.S.-Japan security treaty was impossible because the Japanese government has not recognized the right of collective defense as constitutional.

Here, lessons learned from the 1991 Gulf War experiences were clearly at work. The nightmare for Japan would have a repeat of checkbook diplomacy, which would be a blow to Japan's standing in international security. Politically, for central decision makers, particularly Koizumi, the U.S. encouragement that Japan play a larger international security role was not insignificant, but interest in such a role for Japan had already taken root; the government was not acting for the sake of the bilateral alliance.

It was fortunate as well for the Japanese government that the support for the United States did not contradict Japan's contribution to international security. With the United States as the 9-11 victim, the international community was willing to accept its leadership in the fight against terrorism at the time in Afghanistan.

Iraq and the Case for a Community

The aftermath of the war in Afghanistan, however, was much more complicated. The labeling of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as the "axis of evil" by Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address was troublesome for Japan as well as for many other countries. The actual application of preemptive strikes against Iraq made the situation even worse. First, the strategy of the preemptive strike has not received support by the international community as a legitimate means to international security. Second, the unilateral application of this questionable strategy has made it difficult for many in the international community to support the United States in the name of international security.

Thus, the opposition voiced by France and Germany against the Bush policy to attack Iraq was less an act of sabotage of the U.S. leadership role in international security than encouragement for the United States to act prudently according to the norms of international cooperation. The U.S.

attack on Iraq was not the exercise of prudent leadership. France and Germany could engage in such diplomacy because they have their own forums of multilateral diplomacy based in Europe, as well as at the United Nations.

In contrast, Japan does not have effective alternative means with which to deal with the United States. The Japanese government, too, was deeply distressed by the unilateralism of the Bush administration. It, therefore, hoped that a U.N. resolution would be passed justifying the U.S. action. When time ran out, however, the Japanese government had no other choice but to go along with the United States.

Beneath the surface, therefore, the implications of the Japanese support for the war in Afghanistan and the support for the U.S. war against Iraq are significantly different. The former was a clear case of international security recognized as such by the majority of the international community; the latter was not. But the case of the Iraq war has revealed that where there is a gap between the role of the United States and the cause of international security, Japan would in the end have to follow the lead of the United States.

The aftermath of the war against Iraq has thus exposed a basic dilemma for Japan's participation in international security. This dilemma, in turn, informs a strong motivation shared among Japanese policy makers toward community-building efforts in East Asia. The ultimate logic is that an East Asian Community could function as a multilateral group that could stand up to the United States; in a case like the war against Iraq, it could pressure the United States to act prudently according to the principles of international cooperation. The purpose would be not to counterbalance the power of the United States, but to confront it in a constructive manner and to accommodate it when it leads with prudence.

This, of course, is a long-term goal. Before that can happen, the countries of East Asia must make efforts toward regional integration; it is a process that must be started immediately. For Japan's strategic efforts in this direction, a Japan-ASEAN equal partnership is an important asset as well as a critical engine.

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East Asian Community and a Japan-ASEAN Partnership

Japan's Initial Efforts in Multilateral Security

The predominance of the U.S.-Japan alliance in Japan's post–cold war engagement in international security is related to the lack of effective multilateral forums for Japanese security policy. That Japan should look toward multilateral security cooperation in the region would seem natural, therefore, not necessarily as an alternative to the U.S.-Japan alliance but as a new tool to cope with new security challenges.

The first step in this direction was taken by Sato Yukio, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Sato played a critical role in the early 1990s, acting as a bridge between Japan and ASEAN in the initial exchange of ideas at the track two level. This contact led to the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 (which many of the contributors to this volume were eyewitnesses to).

At about the time when ARF was created, the Japanese defense establishment was groping for a path to multilateral security cooperation. In February 1994, Hosokawa, who was prime minister, created an advisory panel on post–cold war security and defense policy. In April, Hosokawa resigned, to be succeeded by Hata Tsutomu. By August, the Hata administration was gone, replaced by the LDP-coalition Murayama government, to whom the report of the advisory panel was presented.

The report characterized the post–cold war security environment as opaque and uncertain, placing the promotion of multilateral security cooperation on top of the priority list, followed by the effective management of the U.S.-Japan security relationship and defense capability. It specifically argued that the critical issue was whether the United States would be able play a leadership role in multilateral security cooperation, and that Japan and the United States should promote broad and close cooperation, based on the institutional settings of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, toward effective multilateral security cooperation (Prime Minister's Advisory Group on Defense Issues 1994).

The process invited intervention by the United States, which feared that the emphasis on multilateral security cooperation would weaken the foundation of the U.S.-Japan alliance. In fact, exactly at the time when the Japanese advisory panel called for greater participation in multilateral security, the crisis between North Korea and the United States was on the

verge of military conflict. The situation was saved by the last-minute visit of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, which led to the Geneva agreement establishing the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) in exchange for the North Korean commitment to freeze its nuclear programs (Oberdorfer 1997). The crisis was impetus for the revision, in 1997, of the 1978 Guidelines for Defense Cooperation between the United States and Japan.

Japan's primary concern in this period had been with the fluidity and uncertainty of its security environment. It coincided with the call from maverick politician Ozawa Ichiro that Japan become a "normal country," which came to be associated more with Japan's participation in international peacekeeping efforts than with anything else.

From the Fukuda Doctrine to ASEAN-10

Since 1977, Japan's long-standing policy toward Southeast Asia has been represented by the so-called Fukuda Doctrine. In a visit to Manila in August of that year, Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo announced a three-point policy. First, Japan was committed to peace and was determined not to become a military power. Second, Japan would establish a heart-to-heart relationship of mutual trust with Southeast Asia that went beyond economics and politics. Third, Japan would cooperate with ASEAN's efforts to strengthen solidarity and resilience, nurture relations of mutual understanding with the Indochinese states, and thus would contribute to the peace and prosperity of the entire Southeast Asian region.

The political essence of the Fukuda Doctrine was the third point: that Japan would serve as a bridge between ASEAN and Indochina for the peace and prosperity of the entire Southeast Asia as an equal partner. This principle remained as the core of Japan's subsequent Southeast Asia policy, which was revitalized at the time of the Cambodian peace process in the early 1990s when Japan actively sought to play a political role (Soeya 1997).

With the realization of the ten-country membership of ASEAN (ASEAN-10) in 1999, the expressed political goal of the Fukuda Doctrine was about to be achieved on ASEAN's own initiative, with economic backing by Japanese official development assistance (ODA) and private trade and foreign direct investment. In early 1997, anticipating this development, Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro proposed a Japan-ASEAN summit.

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From ASEAN + 3 to the Koizumi Proposal

The realization of the ten-country membership of ASEAN coincided, however, with the Asian financial crisis, forcing ASEAN countries to go through a series of restructuring efforts domestically as well as regionally. Also, at about the same time, China shifted its main strategic focus from high politics to low politics. ASEAN, following its usual instinct to balance relations with external powers carefully, turned the Hashimoto proposal into its own initiative, leading to the establishment of ASEAN + 3—that is, the nine countries of ASEAN (Cambodia would officially join in 1999) plus China, Japan, and South Korea—at the end of 1997.

These developments have ushered in new momentum toward deepening regional integration. Singapore took an important step in officially proposing a free trade agreement (FTA) with Japan in December 1999 when Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong visited Japan. Japan, which had begun to study similar arrangements with several countries, including South Korea, responded positively, and negotiations proceeded.

China, having achieved its goal of joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) and observing in the meanwhile the initiatives of a series of bilateral FTAs in the region, came up with its own FTA initiative: a proposal for a free trade agreement with ASEAN on the occasion of the ASEAN + 3 summit meeting in November 2000. In the following year, Chinese and ASEAN leaders reached the basic agreement to establish a free trade area within the next ten years. This was quickly followed by, in November 2002, the signing of a comprehensive framework agreement to carry out the plan.

These China-ASEAN initiatives prompted the Koizumi government to develop its own regional strategy built upon the ongoing process of FTA negotiations. In a policy speech delivered in Singapore in January 2002, Koizumi proposed the "Initiative for a Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Partnership," built upon the "Japan-Singapore economic agreement for a new age partnership," the so-called Japan-Singapore FTA, which Koizumi had signed prior to the speech (Koizumi 2002).

More importantly, Koizumi's speech included the ambitious statement that "our goal should be the creation of a community that acts together and advances together." Koizumi expressed his expectation that, starting from Japan-ASEAN cooperation, "the countries of ASEAN, Japan, China, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand will be core members of such a community."

To substantiate such partnership with ASEAN, Koizumi advanced a new approach to Japanese diplomacy with ASEAN. While stating his basic stance to promote the policies of the Fukuda Doctrine, Koizumi noted that "in the quarter-century since the 'Fukuda Speech,' the global situation has undergone tremendous change." He then continued:

> In Southeast Asia, peace has progressed with the resolution of conflicts in Indochina, resulting in the expansion of ASEAN to ten countries. Democratization and a market economy are also progressing in Asia. The People's Republic of China and Taiwan have joined the WTO. Furthermore, as a result of the terrorist attacks on the United States, we've seen a paradigm shift in security concepts, making patently clear the importance of working together for the sake of peace and stability.

Koizumi in effect called for a global partnership with ASEAN. While repeating the importance of tackling "a variety of transnational issues such as terrorism, piracy, energy security, infectious diseases, the environment, narcotics and trafficking of people," Koizumi stated:

> Japan-ASEAN cooperation must extend its reach globally. I believe we should increase our cooperation on such issues as peace and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan, measures for disarmament and nonproliferation and reform of the United Nations.

In a nutshell, although Koizumi's speech took the form of addressing Southeast Asian nations, it made clear the comprehensive design of Japan's regional engagement: a strategy of economic engagement with the "Initiative for a Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Partnership" as the central component, and a commitment to international security by extending Japan-ASEAN cooperation globally.

What is quietly implied in this presentation of policy approach is the weight of ASEAN as an equal partner for Japan's regional, and global, role.

Conclusion

It has long been said in the Japanese policy community that Japanese policy makers feel most at ease in Asia with their ASEAN counterparts. ASEAN countries now say that the feeling is mutual. This is clearly the result of extensive and rich contacts during the last decades.

The grounds for such optimism, however, cannot be turned into assets unless approached strategically. Both Japan and ASEAN countries have

tended to take each other for granted, although there is enormous potential for both to tap in their regional strategies. Important domestic changes have occurred in recent years for Japan's regional and global policies, which have accelerated the momentum of Japanese engagement in international security and regional economic integration. After all, it is too early to conclude that the 1990s was a lost decade for Japan.

It is time that Japan and ASEAN move forward strategically by raising the creation of a stable and prosperous regional community as a long-term goal. Such a community could, and indeed should, have elements of a security community, where the use of force as a means of settling international disputes is illegitimate and like-minded peoples are connected by these shared values.

It would not be entirely self-serving for a member of the Japanese policy community to say that the distance between Japan and ASEAN countries—strategically, politically, economically, culturally, and in terms of civil society—is far less than the gap between ASEAN countries and other major external powers, including the United States, Russia, and China. Regionally and globally, the interests of Japan and ASEAN converge. Ultimately, this is the structural basis for an equal partnership between Japan and ASEAN.

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