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REVIEW ARTICLE : PERSPECTIVES ON JAPAN'S SECURITY

'Power' and 'security' are two terms that go hand in hand in strategic vocabulary, though notionally both keep changing in the context of changing dynamics of international relations. With an enhanced power status, there is always a change in security aspirations or a craving for greater security. Japan, the world's second largest industrial economy, often labeled as 'economic superpower' finds such a fulsome category that is different from the traditional nomenclature of a superpower. In terms of scientific attainments and technological innovation it always causes envy, even jealousy of most other nations and cultures. Even with its current economic stagnation, Japan features very importantly in the global strategic scene.

Naturally, Japan has its own security aspirations in the Asia-Pacific region as a systemic actor. As Asia's leading economic-technological giant, there is sense of a shared pride, often featuring as a developmental model, though there are also areas of concerns and insecurities. Japan has also been increasing its military expenditures over the last couple of decades, somewhat in reluctance, emerging in terms of defense budget as the third largest military power of the world, though still remains obligingly committed to a 'peace constitution' framed by the Americans experts

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in the late 1940s. Hence in an age of multilevel concern for security in the new millennium it is natural that Japanese security policy would draw academic attention and provoke thought. The paper reappraises the academic perspectives on Japanese security focusing on a recently published book on the subject by an eminent political scientist of Bangladesh.

Dr. Talukder Maniruzzaman, who authored the book *Japan's Security Policy for the Twenty-first Century* (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2000, pp. 78), is a professor of political science at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. He has established reputation as a profound security analyst in the region and in the scholarly world. He spent over a year (October 1995-November 1996) as a visiting Japan Foundation fellow at the Institute of International Relations, Sophia University, Tokyo, for his research on the work and had intellectual exchange with a number of leading Japanese specialists in the field. Therefore, his analytical perspectives and erudite reflections deserve serious attention. Dedicated to Robert O' Neill, the distinguished strategic analyst who once headed the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, the work does reflect the committed research knack, scholarly care and learning attention that is expected of a devoted social scientist.

With a single chapter of 45 pages, divided in eight small sections, and with half a dozen in the lists of Appendix and Table and quadruple of Figure, the book is unique in the class of scholarly works. In addressing the one single question, "Will Japan Repeat the History of 1940s?" Professor Maniruzzaman has attempted to position himself as a dispassionate analyst, distancing from both the 'American bashers' and the 'Japan bashers'. His analytical journey seems largely oriented towards inquiring whether Japan is set to become a responsible power, with "some separate and some shared burdens" of international security

together with the U.S.? (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 2), To this end he appraises Japan's status as a military power, its nuclear aspirations, the 'Peace Article' of the Japanese constitution and the growth of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), Tokyo's notion of 'comprehensive security', Japanese foreign aid, Japan's international trade as an element of its security policy, the status of Okinawa, and finally, takes into account some of the more recent debates on Japanese security policy.

The analysis in the study begins with an indexing of Japan's fairly well-known economic superiority in areas such as gross domestic product (GDP), its higher rate of GNP, its record aid disbursement and its increasing foreign direct investment (FDI), the growing figures of its defense budget in relation to other East Asian countries and Australia, its state-of-the-art weapons as well as forces. He also argues that Japan "has already become a major political power" and is poised to become a major military power (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 3-5).

In highlighting Japan's nuclear aspirations, Professor Maniruzzaman brings to focus Japan's acquisition of large quantity of plutonium and its nuclear reactor-based energy policy. Arguing that Japan has "largest stock of weapons-usable plutonium outside the nuclear weapons states" it is already a *de facto* nuclear power that can produce a nuclear bomb "within 20 days to two months" (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 6-7), despite its adherence to the non-proliferation regimes such as the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) and the comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT) as well as the admitted commitment not to become "a military superpower" (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 7).

While addressing the pacifist nature of the Japanese constitution and Japan's postwar economic-oriented security strategy, Professor

Maniruzzaman believes that pacifism has been thrust upon Japan due to the “traumatic experience of being the first victim of the nuclear “holocaust”, but there is a general consensus emerging among the Japanese political elites about a self-reliant Japanese armed force so as to serve what he epitomizes as “*Grand Strategy of Japanese Defense*” (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 10).

Addressing the context and content of the Japanese notion of comprehensive security, often associated with the “pragmatist pacifist” Ohira Masayoshi, the study seeks to de-link it from the prodding of “Mr. Pressure”, viz. the U.S., and projects it as Tokyo’s design “to cast a conceptual cloak over already existing elements in Japan’s foreign politics” (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 10-11). Thus, the Japanese foreign aid program is seen as a critical element “to bolster up its own security interest”, or more specifically, to prop up markets for Japanese products. In similar fashion, touching on Japan’s capitalist practices and trade regime Maniruzzaman upholds the stricture of the Japanese “developmental capitalism” as the “*Keiretsu* system of cross-share-holding” that is aided by “administrative guidance” and ordered in such social and corporate structures so as to keep foreign products out of Japanese market (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 22).

On the question of Okinawa that has strategic proximity to China and Korea and hosts over 50 per cent of U.S. military personnel in Japan, the study places it as ‘a victim of strategic location’ or that of the “tyranny of geography”, though many Okinawans are presumed to see themselves “as victims of double occupation, historically by Japan and since World War II by the U.S.A.” (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 24-25).

Before offering his concluding thought, the author makes a comparative appraisal of the debate on Japan's security policy in the leading English dailies and periodicals of Japan and in international journals initiated by American security specialists, including those in the political establishment as well as the "revisionist" scholars. He also makes an analysis of the debate from Japanese point of view and led himself to the argument that "the Japan-U.S. military treaty will continue to be the most important treaty in the world "bar none" in the 21st century" (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 41-42).

In the backdrop of the foregoing reasoning, Professor Maniruzzaman moves his readership to what appears as a remarkable conclusion, though the concluding remarks hardly represent a summing-up of the array of arguments that he marshals in the preceded sections. Conceding that the Japanese people are still pacifists, as was expected of them by the framers of the 1947 peace constitution—being "allergic" to both words "war" and "nuclear"—and given their pragmatism and traumatic experiences, they have "now become a responsible nation" (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 44).

Even there playing with some jugglery of phraseology he seeks to unfold what he calls the Japanese "myth that they were 'chosen people' and there would always be "Kami Kaji" (divine wind) to save them from foreign aggression", though the real "Kami Kaji", as he suggests, is technological advancement (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 44). It is both technology and trade that had led the Japanese to the pinnacle of capitalist revolution, as the study offers its end-view, and to remain "Strong and Responsible" Japan requires a security policy that would promote her trade for raw materials from other countries (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 45). Hence Japan has presumably its economic compulsion not to launch an aggressive war that could

mean the destruction of the very international order on whose stability Japan can survive and prosper.

The exploratory-speculative reasoning used in the study, coupled with elements of academic eccentricity and the art of dramatic, somewhat patterned on Chalmers Johnson's "revisionist" thinking, makes it an interesting reading piece, but the demerit is also inherent in that it lacks consistency. In an age of economic globalization how a nation could be placed as "Strong and Responsible" that is already projected as a major political/military power and a *de facto* nuclear power ordained with a 'Grand Strategy of Defense' that is backed by a huge stockpile of fissionable means of warfare, remains committed to a *Keiretsu* system of cross-share-holding—determined to keep foreign products out of Japanese market? Here the study has, to paraphrase the learned author, more 'ambiguity' and lack of 'sophistry' in its analytical thrust than what is attributed to the Japanese ruling elite.

Moreover, the study does not touch on any of the issues that may provide input for a revival of Japanese irredentist behavior regionally or internationally, nor does it even mention the unresolved disputes that Japan has with a nuclear giant such as Russia over the 'Northern Territories', with nuclear armed China over the Senkaku islands or with the politically volatile two Koreas over very many issues that may cloud their mutual relations. There may be a propensity to play up nationalist feelings *vis-à-vis* the neighboring power contestants should there be major unresolved issues destabilizing relations. While suggesting Japan as a "Strong and Responsible" actor the study has failed to place these Japanese security concerns in their proper perspective.

The views on strategically located Okinawa are also misplaced. It is true that historically its position southwest of Japan and in the center of East Asia's sea routes distinguishes Okinawa, linking Japan's island of Honshu to the northeast, a maritime superhighway drawing the islanders into the cauldron of power politics (Tomoya, 2000: 50-54). None of this, however, is to imply that the Okinawans—while remaining strongly resentful of the U.S. bases, the consequent environmental hazards and occasional behavior of the American marines—see Japan as an occupying power or resent at all being a part of one of the most homogenous nations of the world.

Japan's storing of plutonium ordered to fulfill the requirements of 'recessive deterrence' (Kalam, 96: 62-63) as well as of the overall nature of its energy policy has not also been placed in the right perspective. It is true that there are contradictory elements in Japan's nuclear policy, but having been the first and the only victim of the nuclear holocaust, the responses of the Japanese nation as a whole to any kind of escalation of nuclear arms draws almost instantaneous opposition and in a democratic setting the Japanese government can hardly afford to ignore it (Hussain, 2000: 31-35; Kristensen, 99).

It is fair to suggest that the greatest deterrent to Japan's major rearmament of its own choosing, *sans* U.S. pressure, so as to fit any 'grand strategy' is the moral and psychological one largely shared by the watchful Japanese media and the Japanese nation. In an age of security shift and technological innovation any country is entitled to keep the capability to switch rapidly from civilian to military production, should international security situation warrant it. There has never been any devilish motivation in Japan's postwar defense procurement, as most of them reflected the desire of the senior security partner of the bilateral alliance. The argument may perhaps be placed the other way around: Had there been any opposition to

Japan's defense procurement at any stage from its leading security partner or did not have Washington's total approval Tokyo would never have contemplated initiating any defense procurement policy, given the entire context and history of Japan's postwar security thinking.

Similarly, it seems unreasonable to single out the Japanese arms producing companies for marketing their products when it is known that the Korean and Indochina battlefields, viewed by Shigeru Yoshida as "a gift from the gods" (Kalam, 96: 48), have drawn them up into the arms business. It is indeed known that Japan's whole rearmament process and the building of the SDF was a response to meet U.S. and western strategic needs of the Cold War period, or more specifically, came under 'Mr. Pressure' so as to cope with Washington's desire since the 1950s. Looking at the context and functioning of the Japanese arms producing companies it seems fair to say that they have not so far behaved as a persuasive or aggressive military-industrial complex, unlike those in arms business in most other developed countries, so as to have a serious ramifications for the Japanese military-security policy (Endicott, 78: 226-229).

On the issue of Tokyo's power potentials the fashioning of analysis in the book in reference to the political-military linkages based on the Japanese defense budget seems misplaced, as military power never translates itself automatically into political power unless there is a corresponding political will to translate that power for military purposes or a driving motivation to run for military ends. Neither the Japanese ruling elites nor the current generation of the Japanese nation as a whole have either of the political-psychological orientation to transform them or behave as a hegemonic power. Indeed, as the study acknowledges, Japan remains fully committed not to become a military superpower (Maniruzzaman, 2000: 7).

Rather, as the author himself recognizes, the Japanese economy in the last few years has been suffering from stagnation and the Japanese as a nation are going through a process of agonizing appraisal and reappraisal *not* to move towards militarism of any sort but is set to learn about the context and consequences of the “system fatigue” that causes concern and perhaps seek the right remedy so as to overcome the curse of system inertia troubling Japan.

On the subject of foreign aid as an instrument of Japanese security policy, it is appropriate that Japan should do more to help the poorer nations of the world in their search for the right kind of development destiny. However, the diagnosis offered in the study of the deep malaise of aid-development dichotomy appears more cosmetic than real policy prescriptions. Internationally, Japan itself had been a major aid recipient until the 1960s. Its emergence as a donor nation was not only guided by the considerations of “geoeconomics” or to bolster up its own security interest but was also as part of the doctrine of comprehensive security or as Ohira called it—*sogoanzen hoshō*—that itself was framed in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the backdrop of an alliance policy ordered to offer ‘strategic aid’ to countries important to the western alliance (Kalam, 96: 54-55). Hence, it was natural that the Japanese official development assistance (ODA) would not be untied; rather it was ordered to replicate the prevailing system of aid regime developed by the Development Assistance Countries (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

However, Japanese ODA policy has been evolving since then and, as the world’s largest donor power for the last decade, Japan has been constantly reappraising its overall aid policy in the light of shifting emphasis of post-Cold War security considerations. The expectations are of course there that Japan would not only implement

the ODA Charter to which it committed itself since 1992 and would use its influence with OECD to offer better aid bargains for the developing world but would also extend its own expertise and requirements so as to balance the needs of the world's have-nots.

It seems inconceivable that in an age of multilevel concerns for security, the study did not get any attention to issue areas such as democracy, gender, human rights or environment that have fashioned much of the security debate in the post-Cold war era. The Japanese print media, including the English dailies and weeklies, have proved to be thorough in their vigilance and diagnosis of the situations of human security (i.e. violations of human rights) and environmental hazards confronting the Japanese nation as well as the Asian neighborhood. Similarly, the nuclear reactor-based energy policy has also drawn sharp criticisms from the media. Equally alert are the environmental groups from Honshu to Hokkaido in their efforts to conserve Japan's nature and ecology as well as to prevent an escalation of environmental degradation.

There is another noticeable lapse in terms of objective of the study: It has not identified the specific areas of security that are separate or exclusive to Japan's own and what are the "shared burdens" of international security it has with the U.S. Nor does the study offer any thought on the 'system disequilibrium' (i.e. lack of a recognized status in the international system commensurate with its economic-technological ranking and the support it renders to the very sustenance of the system) affecting national psychology in Japan that contributes about 20 per cent of the UN budget and is abused as the paymaster for many of the international situations requiring huge forces and funding, though Tokyo itself is not yet accommodated in the international

decision making structure, or more specifically as a permanent member of UN Security Council?

Perhaps, a more careful inventory by the author of the Japanese official and non-official thinking in security matters and the entire range of debates surrounding Japanese security in the postwar era—including Japan's own endogenous process of self-criticism, appraisal and reappraisal before eventually committing itself to a security strategy in right perspective—would have made the study still more richer and thoughtful as a piece of scholarly research.

However, the lists of Appendix, Figure and Document added towards the end of the book may prove extremely useful to young researchers for a comparative perspective of the status of Japan's security relations with the U.S., the quality of its Japanese aid disbursement, the amount of its defense expenditures etc. The author has also demonstrated his immense analytical interest to go beyond the conflict-ridden strategic environment of the South Asian neighborhood so as to inculcate new security thinking among the readership in the region. Therefore, even in its current form, Professor Maniruzzaman's book will prove immensely useful and thought provoking to analysts and researchers on international security agenda in general and those paying attention to Japanese security issues in particular.

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