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EMERGING DEBATE OVER JAPAN'S DEFENSE UNDER NAKASONE

INTRODUCTION

Japan came out of the World War II defeated and shattered with a Peace-Constitution drafted for her under the influence of mainly the US. The Constitution renounced "war as a sovereign right of the nation and threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes". In this sense Japan is a unique sovereign nation-state in the present-day world.

Since then almost four decades have passed with many changes both in and outside Japan. Naturally these changes brought along some changed perception among the leadership and the general public about Japan's security needs as an independent and sovereign state. During the initial period, after regaining political independence through a Peace Treaty with the Allied Forces in 1951, Japan embarked on the nation-building process, relying solely for defense on the US under a Security Treaty signed with her at the same time. Within a very short time Japan regained her economic muscle and in the subsequent period she turned herself into an economic Superpower, second only to the US in the industrialised world.

On the other hand, due to the lack of a clearly-defined constitutional framework for her security needs, Japan kept on relying on the US for her military protection. Of course, during this period, the Constitution was interpreted as allowing Japan to have the 'minimum' forces necessary exclusively for defensive purposes. Upto the mid-60s, even any public discussion over security needs was regarded as taboos, though some measures were taken to increase the Self-Defense Forces.

Meanwhile, since 1969 under the Guam Doctrine enunciated by President Nixon, the US took a policy of disengagement from the Asian mainland. Even the US forces stationed in Japan and South Korea were greatly reduced. On the other side, during the 70s the Soviet military capability was largely increased in Asia and the Pacific, posing a growing threat to US allies in the region. And because of well-known reasons, the US had to concentrate her forces in the Gulf and Europe. Under these circumstances, the US government started putting pressure on Japan to bolster her defence, so that Japan can take over the protection of 1,000 miles of sea-lanes around her. The American public and the Congress kept on bluntly urging Japan to end her 'free ride' on defense at the cost of American tax-payers and increase her defense budget, which is much lower as a proportion of GNP than all the NATO allies.¹

In the domestic front, growing self-confidence, derived from miraculous economic success, and an increased awareness of the responsibilities which she ought to bear internationally prompted Japan to address herself to security questions more positively than before. Besides, continued improvement of living standards took the edge off the ideological contentions between political parties, thereby broadening the base for policy debates over issues pertaining to national security. This marked a shift of preference for a realistic rather than an ideological approach to security needs.²

In such a situation, obtaining in the domestic as well as in the international arena, Yasuhiro Nakasone, the architect of the Defense Agency Establishment Law and the Self-Defense Forces Law (which allow for limited Japanese armed forces) became the 14th Prime Minister of post-war Japan. He had a solid background

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1. USA, Britain and west Germany spend 6%, 5.1% and 3.2% respectively of their GNP for defence. Soviet Union's defence budget amounts to 14% of her GNP, where Japan's 1982-83 defence appropriations accounted for 0.971% only, *Asiaweek*, 21 January 1983, p.23.
 2. Yukio Satoh' "The Evolution of Japanese Security Policy", *Adelphi papers* No. 178 (London: IISS, Autumn 1982), p. 5.

of being an ardent advocate of increasing Japan's defense forces. Immediately after assuming power, Nakasone indicated the priority of defense on his political agenda and unlike his predecessors, the new Premier was very much blunt in citing Soviet Union as the threat to world order. In like manner, he was very explicit and unequivocal in stating the policy-objectives of his government over defense while giving an interview to the *Washington Post* during the visit to the US in January 1983.

While the bold pronouncements by the Japanese Premier over the most sensitive area of Japan polity were welcomed as "a reasonably significant effort" in America, they strongly aroused the still ingrained pacifism at home and sent some shock-waves to many leaders in the region. Despite a change in perceptions especially after the 1970s onward both by the successive leaderships and the general public over Japan's security needs, some observers at home and abroad expressed uncertainty over the extent to which Nakasone with his stated views over defense can go along, taking into consideration the contextual environment of Japan under which its defense policy formulation and implementation take place.

The present paper is an attempt at studying the growing debate over Nakasone defense posture, its prospects and implications. The first part presents, as a backgrounder, the legal and constitutional framework under which Japan's defense policy operates. The second part deals with the Nakasone defense posture and the factors precipitating such an increased role of Japan in defense. Finally, the third part makes an attempt at analysing the prospects and attendant ramifications of the new defense posture—both in the domestic as well as regional contexts.

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF JAPAN'S DEFENSE POLICY FORMULATION

Over the years since World War II, in pursuit of having a minimum force for self-defense, Japan gradually developed some legal and constitutional framework for formulation of her defense

policy. This framework is composed of certain broad policy-elements. Despite a new perception by the present leadership of Japan regarding her vital security interests, Japan's defense policy is likely to be confined within this broad framework, presumably with changed nuances and added interpretations.

Basic Policy for National Defense

Japan's defense policy is founded on the Basic Policy for National Defense adopted by the Cabinet of Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi in May 1957.

This Basic Policy calls for, first of all, the promotion of international cooperation and efforts for peace and the establishment of the foundation of security through stabilisation of domestic affairs, and then, the gradual buildup of an effective defense capability and the Japan-US Security arrangements as the basis of national security³. In order to achieve this objective, the Basic Policy laid down four principles (Annexure-1).

Peace Constitution

The most notable among the major features of post-war Japan's security policy was the adoption of the Constitution of 1946 which set out the fundamental framework for her security needs. Paragraph 1 of Article 9 stipulates:

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

Paragraph 2 of the same Article states:

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognised.⁴

3. *Defense of Japan*, (Tokyo : Japan Defense Agency, 1981), p.1.

4. Kishimoto Koichi, *Politics in Modern Japan* (Tokyo: Japan Echo Inc., 1982), pp. 36-37.

Since the adoption of this Constitution which was drafted under the influence of General Douglas MacArthur, there has been much controversy over Article 9. At the outbreak of the Korean war in 1950 when American forces stationed in Japan were mobilised to fight the communist forces, Japan established the Police Reserve Force under the direction of General MacArthur which in 1954 became the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF). Although the SDF was officially justified on the ground that Article 9 did not preclude the maintenance of a minimum military strength necessary for an 'exclusively defensive' defense the constitutionality of the SDF became a subject of fierce political and academic contention throughout this period. Moreover, the lack of a clear constitutional definition of what is meant by "self-defense" made the subsequent buildup of the SDF very susceptible to changes in public opinion,⁵ as reflected from time to time in the Diet debates and Public Opinion Polls. So far, the successive Japanese governments refrained from defining fully the constitutionally permissible scope of 'self-defence', perhaps fearing that such an attempt may foreclose the future options for the SDF.

Three Non-Nuclear Principles

These "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" of not possessing, not manufacturing and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan were first announced by Prime Minister Sato in 1967 and since, they have been repeatedly reaffirmed by the successive governments. These principles were the expression of the Japanese public's natural abhorrence of nuclear weapons. However, there raised a public controversy in Japan when in 1981 there were reports that the US Air-craft carrier *Midway* with nuclear weapons on board was permitted to call its home port at Yokosuka near Tokyo.

Principle of Civilian Control

This principle is the result of reflection over the way Japan was pushed into the last World War by the militarists. The present

5. Yukio Satoh, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

system provides the Diet and the government with the power to maintain political control over the Self-Defense Forces⁶. Japanese politicians of every stripe, including those usually labelled right-wingers seem to be committed to the military being subordinate to a cabinet of civilians appointed by the Prime Minister from elected members of the Diet.

Japan-US Security Arrangements

The Japan-US Security Treaty, signed in San Francisco in 1951, was later replaced by the Japan-US Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security of 1960, which remains in force today. This security arrangement was imperative for Japan to make up for the weakness of her 'exclusively defensive' defense. As a result of this security system, an armed aggression against Japan will possibly lead to a direct confrontation with vast military might of the US, both conventional and nuclear. This option of the Japanese to rely extensively on American military protection was reflected in one principle of the Basic Policy for National Defense (Annexure-I). A 1981 Public Opinion Survey revealed that 66% of the respondents thought the Japan-US Security Treaty is helpful for the peace and security of Japan, while only 4% responded negatively.⁷

National Defense Program Outline

Unlike the previous defense buildup plans envisioning attainment of specific targets within fixed periods of time, the National Defense Program Outline adopted in October 1976 after the completion of the Fourth Defense Buildup Plan, sets forth the fundamental guidelines for defense preparedness, including the maintenance and operation of defense capability. Japan's defense

6. Keichi Ito, "Japan's Defense Concept and Its 1981 Defense white paper" *Asia Pacific Community*, No. 14, Fall 1981, p.106.

7. *Defense Bulletin: A Public Opinion Survey on the self-Defense Forces and Defense Issues* (Tokyo : Japan Defense Agency Public Information Division, June 1982), p. 21.

buildup from fiscal 1977 on has been based on this Outline.⁸ The Outline which relates to defense concept and defense posture has been presented in Annexure-II.

NAKASONE DEFENSE POSTURE

During the visit to the US in late January 1983 in an interview with *The Washington Post*, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone laid down his three defence policy-goals:⁹

My own view of defence is that the whole Japanese archipelago.....should be like an unsinkable aircraft carrier putting up a tremendous bulwork of defence against infiltration of the (Soviet) Backfire bomber. To prevent Backfire from penetrating through this wall should be our first goal.

The second target objective should be to have complete and full control of four straits that go through the Japanese islands so that there should be no passage of Soviet submarines and other naval activities.

The third objective is to secure and maintain the ocean lines of communication. For the ocean our defence should extend several hundred miles, and if we are to establish sea lanes then our desire would be to defend the sea lanes between Guam and Tokyo and between the Strait of Taiwan and Osaka.

In order to materialise these policy objectives, Nakasone already took some steps. After assuming the country's leadership in December 1982, he announced plans to establish a *Council on National Security* composed of Japanese from all walks of life. This was intended to bring the defence debate more open to the public which would help find a consensus among the Japanese people. In his address to the Diet, Nakasone stressed that Japan's capacity to defend itself would not expand outside the limits set by the country's war-renouncing Constitution. But hinting

8. *Defense of Japan, op. cit.*, p. 2.

9. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 February 1983, p. 46.

at his personal campaign to amend the no-war clause, Nakasone declared, "In responding to this time of turmoil, however, we should review our basic institutions and arrangements anew with a fresh mind holding nothing taboo."¹⁰

Regarding Japan-US mutual cooperation over defence in accordance with the Security Treaty, Nakasone agreed that "Japan had not put in sufficient effort" in taking its share of the defence burden, and that "our mutual trust with the United States" called for Japan to honour its "promise to augment that trust." Accordingly, in an austere new budget, the defence expenditure for 1982-83 was increased by 6.5%, where the overall rise in total budget was only 1.5% over last year. Further, he expressed his firmness to increase the defence budget to 1% of GNP by 1984 and a three-fold increase after the 1990s.

During the US visit the Premier took a move to permit sales of high-powered computers, fibre optics communications gears and radar-absorbing ferrite paint. It may be mentioned that the Japanese Constitution, as such, does not forbid the sale of arms abroad. Nevertheless, Japan has always pursued a restrictive policy on arms exports. This was heightened to a total ban, including a flat prohibition on exchanges of military technology by Mr. Takeo Miki's government in 1976.

In the same address to the Diet, Nakasone emphasised that Japan was offering its technology to the US military only within the framework of the mutual security pact and that Tokyo would not sell any weapons abroad. It so happens that *Article 3* of the Japanese-American Security Treaty binds the two countries to develop each other's defence capability through mutual cooperation¹¹.

Looking at the firm commitment and the steps taken so far in boosting Japan's defense in only a few months under Nakasone's leadership, it seems worthwhile to delve into the motivating forces precipitating the adoption of such moves. Although such factors

10. *Asiaweek*, 4 February 1983, p. 14.

11. *The Economist*, 14 November 1982, p. 37.

must have existed at least from 1970s, at the onset of 1980s they added new dimensions, because of a marked change in the geo-political environment in which Japan exists today. Of course, this changed scenario was added to the personal preference of Premier Nakasone for a greater role of Japan in defense.

Perception of a Soviet Threat :

According to an Opinion Poll conducted in August 1981 by the Yomiuri Shimbun, a leading national daily, among the respondents who saw a possibility that Japan might be invaded by a foreign country in the near future, 69% pointed to the Soviet Union as the possible source of a threat¹². Among the conceivable causes of this strong perception of a Soviet threat may be listed the Soviet military buildup in the Far East, particularly the construction of military facilities on the Northern Territories (the group of Japanese islands lying off Hokkaido that remain under Soviet occupation since World War II), an increasingly growing Soviet Pacific Fleet, the use of base facilities of Vietnam by the Soviet Navy and her armed intervention in Afghanistan. Since taking over leadership, Nakasone himself very bluntly pointed to Soviet Union's growing forces in the region as the direct threat to Japan's security. This is evident from his stated policy-goals. It may be mentioned that Soviet Union is the only major country with which Japan does not have a peace treaty.

During the last 15 years Soviet Union had an increase of 45% of her Pacific Fleet. Besides having huge combat forces in the Far East, reports suggest that she stationed there several long-range Back-fire Bombers and SS-20 IRBMs. All these are mostly based near Vladivostok, Japan's door-step. Recently Japan has formally protested to Moscow about Soviet proposals to transfer some of its European-based SS-20 missiles to Siberia if an agreement is reached on limiting the number of missiles in Europe.

12. *Information Bulletin 1981*, (Tokyo Public Information and Cultural Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) p. 304.

The Question of Reliability of the US Security Guarantee :

The perceived decline of American interests in the security of Asia following President Nixon's disengagement policy from the Asian mainland was not taken well by her allies in the region. The fall of Vietnam, the conspicuous reduction of American military presence in the territories of all her security partners in the region, including Japan and then the Carter Administration's announcement—subsequently shelved—of the withdrawal of US ground combat forces from South Korea—all these aroused misgivings about the reliability of the American commitment to the security of Japan. This feeling was compounded by what was perceived as the relative waning of the military superiority of the US over the USSR on a global scale. Later, the deployment of naval vessels of the US Seventh Fleet to the Indian Ocean and the Gulf brought home to the Japanese the reality that the American military capability around Japan could be 'stretched thinner' in the event of a crisis elsewhere.¹³ Moreover, there is some sense of uncertainty among the Japanese as to the extent to which the Japanese and US forces would coordinate their activities in the event of a military emergency.

Dependence on Free Sea-Lanes for Survival :

Japan's life-lines, such as the routes for oil supply extend world wide, so that any increase in Soviet influence in other areas—Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Gulf—would have serious implications for Japanese security, because a steady supply of energy forms an integral part of her security concept.¹⁴ Japan imports over 99% of her oil to produce three quarters of the energy required to sustain her economy. The fact that over 70% of her oil imports comes from the Gulf states makes peace and stability in the Gulf region, and the security of the sea-lanes connecting the Gulf and Japan, a matter of vital importance to her security.¹⁵

13. Yukio Satoh, *op.cit.*, p.5.

14. Keichi Ito, "Japan's Defense Policy", *Asia Pacific Community*. No. 10, Fall 1980, p. 2.

15. Yukio Satoh, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

The Need to Promote Stability in Third World Countries :

Japan with her vast economic power is getting more and more involved in offering financial and technical assistance to developing countries. For example, Japan offered much amounts of help to strategically important but vulnerable countries, such as Thailand, Pakistan and Turkey. Japan is deeply involved economically and politically with the countries of ASEAN. Presently, Japanese trade with ASEAN countries, which includes the import of oil from Indonesia, amounts to about \$40bn a year. With Latin American and African continents, presently Japan has got important stakes in the field of economic cooperation, which can be maintained only in an atmosphere of political stability. During 1980-85 Japan has a foreign aid budget of \$21.5 bn, which is more than double of the preceding years.

Prospects of Closer Relations with China :

Since the start of the 1970s the preoccupation in China's foreign policy was to curb Soviet expansionism, perceived to be furthered in the Asia-Pacific region through Brezhnev's Asian Collective Security Plan. Opening of China to America and the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Japan in 1972 were first steps by China towards cultivating a mutually beneficial political and economic relationship with the West. After some years, in the context of a changed geopolitical situation in Southeast Asia, the signing of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978 and the inclusion of the *anti-hegemony* clause in it gave indication of a shared view by two former adversaries regarding Soviet designs in the region. Although the Treaty stipulated that it would not be directed against any third country and would not involve joint action or specific arrangement of any kind, that shared view proceeded one step further after Soviet Union's managing an institutionalised foothold in Indo-China, the subsequent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the rapid buildup of the Soviet Pacific Fleet. Therefore, China welcomes, together with Western capital and sophisticated

technology, an active defense posture by Japan and the US to counter the common threat in the region. Similarly China's modernisation program has opened up the prospect of an enormous market with huge potential for Japanese capital and advanced technology.

The Situation in Korean Peninsula

This is likely to have an important effect on Japan's security perceptions, because of her geographical proximity to and important economic stakes in South Korea. Any large scale military conflict in the Peninsula must involve Japan, at least indirectly. During the recent visit of Yasuhiro Nakasone to Seoul, the first ever visit by a Japanese Prime Minister since normalisation of relations between the two countries, Japan offered a \$4 bn aid and loan package to South Korea. Besides this greater economic interaction, an increased defense role by Japan in the Far East is likely to make up, to some extent, the imbalance in war potential between North and South Korea. The Republic of Korea welcomes a greater defense effort by Japan in the Region.¹⁶

Finally, Japan's Perceived Role in Global Perspective :

The perception of an increasingly global role to be played by Japan in future world economic relations made its leadership conscious of the need to actively participate in a global strategy aiming at maintaining peace and stability worldwide. This is accompanied by the mounting expectation in the west and the Third World that Japan should begin to share international responsibilities, both politically and economically, to an extent commensurate with her present economic status. All these prompted Japan to take steps in the direction, including increasing interests towards defense.

PROSPECTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF NAKASONE DEFENSE POSTURE

In order to analyse the prospects of Nakasone defence policy execution, one has to invoke, first of all, the much-controversial con-

16. The Author's personal discussion over security issues in the region with the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, 7 April 1983.

stitutional provisions. Since the mid-1950s the interpretations of the successive Japanese governments over Article 9 as allowing Japan to have the 'minimum' force necessary for self-defence seem to be vague and abstract enough, in the sense that it can be given some twists catering to the needs and perceptions of a given leadership. As mentioned earlier, the governments of Japan so far didn't define this 'minimum' defense capability, perhaps to maintain flexibility in future defense postures. When the F-4 Phantom was introduced in ASDF of Japan in 1968, its bombsight and flight-refuelling couplings were removed because they were "inconsistent" with self-defense. But from late 1982 the Japan ASDF began deploying the advanced F-15s in order to defend her air space from enemy infiltration. Nakasone's stated goal of defending the sea-lanes extending over several hundred miles — between Guam and Tokyo and between the Strait of Taiwan and Osaka also seems to fit the bill, as the Premier himself expressed intention of not going beyond the limits set by the war-renouncing Constitution !

In fact, Nakasone policy statements reaffirmed his long-standing personal creed as an out-spoken member of a late 1950s Committee that examined Japan's post-World War II Constitution, when he wished to scrap its Article 9. Besides being the architect of Defense Agency Establishment Law and the Self-Defense Forces Law, as Director-General of the Defense Agency in 1970-71, he first introduced the system of issuing *White Papers* over defence in order to inform and accordingly, mould the general public over defense issues. Recently the Prime Minister expressed his willingness even to review the basic institutions and arrangements anew, if necessity arises. The Premier's move to permit sales of Japanese military technology to America is a case in point where he bypassed the previous ban on defence exports, both weapons and technology. Therefore, it may be said that Nakasone's personal commitments accompanied by his holding of power are likely to positively contribute, at least to some extent, towards implementation of his defence policy-goals.

Another aspect positively contributing towards assuming a greater defense role by Japan in the coming years is her *industries'*

potential in production of weapons and military hardwares. Already Japan possesses the full technological know-how for producing atomic weapons. She has experience, though limited, in developing her own advanced weapons systems, such as Mitsubishi's air-to-surface missile ASM-1 or its T-2 supersonic trainer. Some reports suggest that the missile systems produced by Japan already erode the self-defense limit for, given their capability of reaching Sakhalin, Vladivostok and the Soviet-held islands of Kunashiri and Shikotan, the missile's development further erodes the already vague line between the offensive and defensive capability.¹⁷ Some observers believe that if the Japanese would begin to spend much more on defence, the money would be spent in Japan, not on licensed production of military hardware from the US. There is little now to stop the Japanese from fielding home-made weapons which would be technologically equal to their American counterparts. As Kazuo Shibato, general manager of Nissan Motar Co's Aeronautical and Space Division observes, "In national defense Japan is rather enthusiastic about domestic development and less positive about licensed production. We expect Japanese defense work to increase gradually."¹⁸

Still another factor helping the acceptance of Nakasone defense policy by the Japanese public, specially by the business community is their sentiment to avoid a trade war with the US, their main defence and trade partner. Presently, America has got a trade deficit with Japan of over \$ 20 bn, amounting to about 90% of her total trade imbalance. American business leaders strongly censure Japan for her protectionist policies, pursued through tariff and non-tariff barriers. These sentiments are fuelled by the perceived "free ride" of Japan in defense at the cost of American tax-payers. So in all possibility, a greater burden-sharing in defense by Japan may reduce, to some extent, the trade irritants.

Despite the above aspects' working in favour of Nakasone policy implementation, if we carefully try to look into the problem, we

17. *The Bangladesh Times*, 10 November, 1982.

18. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 February, 1983, p. 47.

are likely to find some inhibiting factors standing in the way both in the domestic as well as in the regional arena.

Domestic Factors

1) War-hating psyche of the Japanese Public: The memories of nuclear holocaust in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are still very much vivid in the mind of the Japanese people. For this they held responsible, to a greater extent, the militarism of the then government. Even today some people think of a strong military establishment as anathema to democracy. An Opinion Poll conducted in 1981 reveals that a majority (57%) favored maintaining the present size of the SDF in future, only 17% favored a buildup, while those advocating a reduction in the SDF accounted for 13%. The same Poll shows that 68% of the respondents thought the Article 9 of the Constitution helpful in enhancing Japan's security.¹⁹

So the Prime Minister's bold pronouncements over defense did not go down so well at home. The opposition parties, together with the general mass, raised an uproar over Nakasone defense buildup plan. The Premier himself had to go on Japanese Television to deny the more hawkish aspects of his statements. Even *Sankei Shimbun*, regarded as the most hawkish of Japan's major daily newspapers, questioned in an Editorial whether Nakasone had gone too far.²⁰ The recent defeat of the Japan's ruling LDP candidates to the socialist and communist counterparts in two crucial local elections in the Northern and Southern prefectures where the LDP reigned for 24 and 16 years respectively, may be a green signal of not allowing the Prime Minister to go far, as is preferred by him.

2) Problems in manpower recruitment for defense : Due to bitter experiences derived from World War II, the Japanese public still view soldiering in very low esteem. Furthermore, considering the speed and extent of aging of the population structure, Japan is likely to face constraints in recruitment of necessary young and able-bodied people for the purpose.

19. *Information Bulletin 1981, op. cit.*, pp. 304-5.

20. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 February 1983, p. 46.

3) Restrictions on acquirement of facilities for defense expansion: Keichi Ito cited the defense planners as saying that "the SDF require vast land for exercise grounds as well as bases. But land prices have been soaring while local residents' demands to preserve the living environment are mounting too. In such a situation it is nearly impossible to acquire new land for the SDF in our narrow country."²¹

4) GNP ratio and budgetary constraints: The general public in Japan developed some form of nostalgia over the maximum limit of 1% of GNP for defense appropriations. But this limit came about by a happenstance of earlier budgets quite unrelated to security requirements as such. The first year for which the SDF budget went below 1% of the GNP was 1959 when Japan had just launched a massive economic growth program. From then on, the largely pacifist Japanese public argued that 1% of the GNP is the maximum what they would tolerate for defense expenditure. In fact, in 1976 the Cabinet officially accepted this argument, on the proposition that the annual rate of real growth in the GNP would average 6% into the mid-1980s.²² The 1982-83 defense budget of Japan amounts to 0.97% of the GNP, still marginally below the psychological barrier, but this year's budget marked a 6.5% rise in the face of rising colossal government borrowing. So, despite the government's desire to beef up defense, it cannot go beyond a certain limit because of rising opposition towards a sharp tax increase by the government for reducing the budget deficit. A survey conducted by the Information Office of the Prime Minister's Cabinet Secretariat reveals that 47% of the respondents thought the present level of defense spending as best, while only 20% felt the need to increase the budget and 15% responded in favour of reducing the budget.²³

Regional Implications

A strong defense posture by Japan brought mixed reactions to the countries of the region.²⁴ Much of the concern about the prospect of

21. Keichi Ito, *op. cit.* (fn. 14), p.7.

22. S. Chawla and D.R. Sardesai (eds.), *Changing Patterns of Security and Stability in Asia*, (New York : Praeger, 1980), p.111.

23. *Defense Bulletin*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

24. *Asiaweek*, 21 January 1983, p. 24.

a re-armed Japan goes back to Japan's imperial past when the militarist leaders in the name of "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere" annexed some lands and then invaded some others during World War II. Memories of the harsh occupation period are still strong, as shown most clearly by the region-wide protests during the Japanese textbook affair last year.

Indonesia and Philippines are among the ASEAN countries who are most scared at the prospect of a militarily stronger Japan. In the latter part of 1982 while visiting the US, President Suharto made his concern clear to President Reagan over the issue. Indonesia is dissatisfied over Washington's alleged approach of evaluating the situation in Southeast Asia as a function of her strategic equation with Tokyo and Peking. Vice-President Adam Malik warned that Japan must not be allowed to re-arm. That is something all Asians fear.

President Marcos of Philippines expressed his worries to Washington during his visit there in 1982. Foreign Minister Romulo, General MacArthur's aide-de-camp during World War II, asked to avoid strengthening Japan so much that with the economic power they have now, coupled with military power, it becomes very dangerous to the world. But both Indonesia and Philippines feel the necessity of self-defence of Japanese home islands, but that effort should not go beyond that limit.

Soviet Union warned that such moves to bolster defence would make Japan a likely target for a retaliatory strike, and this could lead to a national disaster more serious than the one that befell it 37 years ago, when US planes dropped atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. So she cautioned Japan not to give up its hitherto "reasonable policies."

On the otherhand, the governments of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea, with varying degrees, welcome a stronger Japan. The Thai officials indicated that the Japanese defense increase would help to lessen Washington's security burden and strengthen security in the Asia-Pacific region.

During the visit to Japan in January 1983, the Malaysian Premier Mahathir endorsed the idea of Japan building up its military capacity to defend its own archipelago, after the Japanese Prime Minister convinced him that Japan's defence would not involve Southeast Asian waters. The Malaya Premier indicated to Nakasone that the right to defend the Malacca Strait belonged to Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. In recent months Malaysia took a *Look East* policy to develop still closer relations with Japan.

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, concerned about Soviet expansion in the region and eager to develop economic links with Japan, has indicated his support for Tokyo's modest military buildup.

To allay such misgivings among some of the regional countries, Japanese officials assured that it would never become a military power, because its people are absolutely opposed to the revival of militarism. Washington, too, seems to share Japanese views that Southeast Asian anxieties are unfounded. As Defense Secretary Weinberger said recently, "I don't think there is any indication whatsoever, that the Japanese have any militaristic or offensive desires."

CONCLUSION

It is evident that Nakasone defense posture indicates certain shift from his predecessors' policies in the field. What is distinguishing in the present leadership is its openness and explicitness in publicly expressing Japan's security needs and perceptions. Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone came to power as a self-assertive leader, putting defence as his top policy-priority. Through the abstractness of constitutional provisions, as allowing to maintain a "self-defence" capability, he naturally will try to convince the Japanese public of the need of having a stronger defense posture. The economic muscle of Japan and the potential of its industries in producing arms and weapons are likely to further the defense buildup plan. Besides, Moscow's active desire to see suspicions

about Japan's growing defense role fester among the countries of the region may itself, to some extent, ward off their fears and worries.

Although the Japanese are gradually coming to perceive the rightful place they should have as [an economic Super-power among the world community, they seem to be still unwilling to achieve that through force postures. A greater consciousness among the general public over security issues is still far from its taking a concrete shape. Therefore, the leader of Japan is likely to face strong opposition at home in implementation of his government's policy, especially if it involves a tax-increase and it's being spent on defense. So it remains to be seen exactly to what extent the Prime Minister of Japan can transform his personal preferences for Japan's security needs into part of his government policy, and thereby steer its implementation.

ANNEXURE-I

Basic Policy for National Defense

1. To support the activities of the United Nations, and promote international cooperation, thereby contributing to the realization of world peace.
2. To stabilize the public welfare and enhance the people's love for the country, thereby establishing the sound basis essential to Japan's security.
3. To develop progressively the effective defense capabilities necessary for self-defense, with due regard to the nation's resources and the prevailing domestic situation.
4. To deal with external aggression on the basis of the Japan-US security arrangements, pending more effective functioning of the United Nations in future in deterring and repelling such aggression.

ANNEXURE-II

National Defense Program Outline**A. Defense Concept****(a) Deterring Aggression**

As for national defense, Japan makes its fundamental policy not only to possess defense capability of appropriate scale on its own and set up a system for the most efficient operation of such defense capability, but also to maintain the credibility of the security arrangements with the U. S. and establish a system for their smooth implementation with a view to building a defense system capable of coping with any type of aggression and thereby deterring aggression.

As for nuclear threat, Japan relies upon the nuclear deterrence of the U. S.

(b) Coping with Aggression

In the event of indirect aggression or an unlawful act with such military strength as could lead to aggression, Japan will respond immediately to bring the situation under control as soon as possible.

In case of direct aggression, Japan will respond promptly to eliminate such aggression within the shortest possible time through the comprehensive and organic operation of defense capability. If the direct aggression is a limited and small-scale aggression, Japan will in principle eliminate such aggression independently. Even in case the scale and type of aggression are such that it is difficult to repel such aggression independently, Japan will continue firm resistance by employing every means at its disposal and eliminate the aggression by obtaining the cooperation of the U. S.

B. Defense Posture

In line with the above-mentioned defense concept, Japan will maintain defense capability based on the

following six elements of defense posture. Moreover, the defense capability represents a fundamental system capable of shifting to a new posture of defense smoothly in the event the situation undergoes an important change requiring such a new posture.

Posture for vigilance

Posture against indirect aggression and unlawful act with military force

Posture against direct aggression

Posture for command, communications and logistics support

Posture for education and training

Posture for disaster relief

C. Set-ups of GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF

As a basis for possessing the aforementioned defense posture, the GSDF, MSDF and ASDF will respectively maintain necessary set-ups, and pay particular heed to the promotion of organic cooperation among the three services and the enhancement of effectiveness through integrated tri-service operation.

Source. *Ibid.*, p. 2.