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Source: *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Summer, 1991, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Summer, 1991), pp. 257-273

Published by: The Society for Japanese Studies

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/132742>

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## Japan's Response to the Gulf Crisis: An Analytic Overview

*Like a Bolt from out of the Blue*

The Middle East has long been considered a remote region by most Japanese. No doubt, one can recount in considerable detail the Persian and, to a lesser extent, Turkic and Arabic influence on Japanese history and culture through China, most notably during the T'ang dynasty.<sup>1</sup> Yet, there were no direct encounters between the Middle East and Japan until the late twentieth century. Japan's first major encounters with the Middle East were occasioned by the oil crisis of 1973, triggered by the fourth Arab-Israeli war and the OPEC oil embargo, and by the second oil crisis of 1980, triggered by the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. These two crises, however, did not involve Japan in any substantial way other than their negative impact on the Japanese economy. The Gulf crisis is different. Since August 2, 1990, it has forced Japan to be an indispensable part of the war efforts led by the United States. Thus, of the three recent crises emanating from the Middle East, the Gulf crisis has presented a novel challenge to Japan. This article will describe and analyze how Japan's historically molded psyche and institutional structures influenced its response to this crisis and how its response was forged as part and parcel of political competition over systemic restructuring at home.

August 2 came literally like a bolt from out of the blue to the Japanese government, which was surprised by Iraq's bold move into Kuwait. This

Editors' Note: A third essay on Japan and the Gulf Crisis is planned for publication in the next issue.

I gratefully acknowledge Courtney Purrington's comments on an earlier draft of this article.

1. Yamada Nobuo, *Persia to To* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1971), and the five other volumes in the series *Tozai bunmei no kōryū*, 6 vols. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1970–71).

was in part because it lacks a sufficiently competent political and military intelligence apparatus in the region. It was also a surprise because the U.S. government had not given a consistent, unambiguous signal to Iraq and the rest of the world.<sup>2</sup> But Japan was unusually quick in responding to the Iraqi invasion by issuing its own economic embargo even prior to its participation in the United Nations-sponsored economic embargo. Japan's rapid response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was natural, given the strong position it has taken against military aggression such as Vietnam vis-a-vis Cambodia since 1979, and given the relatively strong position it had developed since 1973 through its program of diversifying its oil supply rather than relying on any one oil supplier. Japan's quick implementation of an economic embargo stands in sharp contrast to its slow and spasmodic response to contributing to the military operations of the anti-Iraqi multinational forces.<sup>3</sup>

After the U.N. resolution calling for Iraq to pull out of Kuwait was approved by an overwhelming majority of nations including Japan, Japan moved surprisingly slowly. Before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait took place, Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki planned to visit the Middle East, but his trip was cancelled immediately upon news of the invasion. After the U.S. government called on its allies to demonstrate solidarity and contribute to the multinational effort in any possible form, the Japanese government was to stumble almost continuously. Within a few days after pledging \$100 million as a contribution to the multinational forces and those allied countries suffering from the crisis in the Middle East, the government increased its pledge to \$4 billion. A natural reaction of many was why not \$4 billion from the beginning? A United Nations Peace Cooperation bill was first drafted largely by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August and September. Its thrust was to make non-military contributions to the multilateral forces and not to send Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to the Middle East. This period coincided with the intense lobbying by U.S. Ambassador Michael Armacost of LDP leaders, including Secretary General Ozawa Ichiro, and also with the previously postponed visit to the Middle East by Prime Minister Kaifu. A first draft of the bill was forced to undergo drastic revision in order to incorporate the "forward-looking" policy orientation (meaning pro-deployment of SDF in response to the U.S. government's call) of party leaders such as Ozawa Ichiro and Nishioka Takeo, chairman of the LDP's Party General Council. Once the special National Diet session

2. See for example Ted Gup, "A Man You Could Do Business with," *Time*, Feb. 27, 1991, pp. 50–54.

3. For descriptive details, see for instance Asahi Shimbun, *Wangan sensō to Nihon* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun, 1991); Courtney Purrington and Akira Kato, "Japanese Crisis Management During the Iraqi Crisis," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (April 1991).

started, the government exhibited an unusual degree of incompetence in its handling of criticism and questions raised against the bill. The debate on the bill aroused the entire nation to an unprecedented degree. Public opinion was polarized with those opposing the bill constituting more than two-thirds of the nation. The government backed down from passing the bill at the end of the autumn 1990 Diet session. The new emperor's enthronement ritual took place as planned immediately thereafter. Then the heat of public opinion apparently subsided with the busy weeks toward and after the end of the year, which was filled by budget-making and cabinet reshuffling.

Immediately before the United States opened fire against Iraq on January 17, 1991, the mood in Japan was one of eagerly awaiting and optimistically expecting peace to prevail. Once the war began, the Japanese government exhibited a kind of reactivity similar to that of August and September 1990. This time its response was much quicker, in part because this response came not from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but from the Ministry of Finance for financial contributions and from the Defense Agency for SDF operations. Once prodded by the U.S. government, the Japanese government pledged \$9 billion to the United States. It also announced that SDF aircraft would be used to help refugees return to their home countries in Asia. Debate on what Japan's response to the crisis should be was resumed inside and outside the Diet by those critical of the government's position on revenue sources for the \$9 billion and on the use of SDF aircraft for overseas operations. The Japanese government had to obtain the approval of both houses of the National Diet for new taxation and bond issuing. It bypassed the National Diet, however, on SDF operations by resorting to an "administrative directive." In order to secure the approval of the two smaller opposition parties, especially the Clean Government Party whose support was necessary in the opposition-controlled Upper House, for the \$9 billion contribution to the multinational forces, the government incorporated some of the policy preferences of the Clean Government Party. It agreed not to increase taxes on tobacco and somewhat reduced the defense budget. In turn, the Clean Government Party pledged to accept the government's policy on SDF operations despite the resistance of rank-and-file members of the party. The LDP also agreed to endorse a new candidate in the spring 1991 election for the Metropolitan Tokyo governor, a candidate acceptable to the Clean Government Party instead of the current governor backed by Tokyo-based Dietmen and Metropolitan Assembly members from the LDP. The supplemental budget bill enabling the \$9 billion contribution was passed in the National Diet on March 6, 1991. The problem of whether the government may have gone beyond the constitution and the SDF law remains disputed and will not be resolved for some time. Japan's response to the Gulf crisis may be characterized as follows.

At the government level, support was extended to the U.S.-led multinational forces' war efforts. Yet its decision and implementation tended to be on the whole slow and spasmodic. At the popular level, more than two thirds of the Japanese were basically unhappy about the government's support for the U.S.-led war efforts. They were somewhat skeptical of whether use of military power could help achieve war aims and mildly suspicious of the U.S. government's war aims and the Japanese government's motivation in using foreign pressure for its own political purposes. Looking at the interactions between the government and the masses, namely, the final decision on financial contributions and SDF operations, it seems safe to say that the democratic mechanism of feedback has worked to bring the government to take a centrist position.<sup>4</sup>

### *Factors Shaping Japan's Response to the Gulf Crisis*

Three major factors depict Japan's response to the crisis: They are 1) uncertainty and anxiety; 2) historical learning; and 3) self-confidence. They point to the primary importance of historically molded psyche and institutional structures of Japanese society.

*Uncertainty and Anxiety.* First, the Japanese government has been cautious in adapting to the post-Cold War order because it has not found the post-Cold War reality so comfortable: removal of the East-West schism from the configuration of world politics means that the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, the key device for Japan's foreign policy line, has a lessened significance.<sup>5</sup> The Japanese government thus kept refusing to acknowledge the advent of detente until as late as spring 1990 by saying that there is no such word as detente in its dictionary. It has two strong reasons for not quickly adapting to post-Cold War conditions. One is the unresolved territorial issue with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the refusal of the U.S. Navy to enter a full arms control agreement with the Soviet Union with respect to nuclear submarines and vessels, especially in the Northwest Pacific region, also provides a good excuse for the Japanese government not to change its direction in any way. Yet the unexpectedly fast unfolding of global detente and dismantling of the Cold War institutions throughout 1989 and 1990 made the Japanese government apprehensive about new realities. Able neither to chart its own independent and autonomous line nor to embed itself

4. Bruce Russett, *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), especially pp. 146–69.

5. Takashi Inoguchi, "Change and Response in Japan: Japan's Politics and Strategy," in Stuart Harris, ed., *Change in Northeast Asia* (London: Longman Cheshire, 1991); Takashi Inoguchi, "Pacific Asia in a Post-Cold War Era," paper presented at the Yomiuri Symposium, Tokyo, October 11–12, 1990.

within some new international institutional framework except the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, Japan is in many ways apprehensive about the evolution of the post-Cold War international system.<sup>6</sup>

A second reason for adapting only slowly to post-Cold War conditions is that the Japanese government has been somewhat apprehensive about the course the United States may take, especially in light of the overwhelming rigidities of its fiscal and energy policies and the increasing signs of losing its manufacturing competitiveness vis-a-vis the Japanese and other difficulties in its manufacturing and financial sectors. It is concerned about the United States declining too early and too fast as no other candidate seems ready to take up the kind of major international leadership role the United States has so far played. It is clearly not in the interest of Japan to see the United States prematurely decline.<sup>7</sup> Yet, what the Japanese government has seen in the United States for the last decade or two is not very reassuring. First, U.S. fiscal policy has been so rigid in the face of its twin major deficits in government spending and trade that no bright prospect is yet to be seen. Japan's concern has been repeatedly expressed in joint declarations of the Western economic summits since the mid-1980s, which called on the United States to reduce its deficits, along with the call for Japan to expand its domestic demand and for Germany to enhance its supply capacity. The Japanese government's concern is sometimes transformed into indignation vis-a-vis the United States as Japan doubled its domestic demand dutifully between 1985 and 1989 while the United States did not "do its homework" at all and continued to press Japan for further concessions.

A second signal Japan has received from the United States is that while many competitive U.S. firms have been doing well at home and abroad, the increasing call for protectionist measures in less competitive sectors at home has encouraged Japanese firms to seek other outlets. There have been three stages in this process: U.S. criticism against Japanese export-oriented growth in the decade after the first oil crisis encouraged Japanese firms to seek direct investment in the United States. The steady expansion of their presence in the United States through setting up new manufacturing facilities and purchasing U.S. companies and properties has aroused a fear that the United States is gradually being bought up by Japan. Second, these purchases have been prompted not only by the consideration of averting trade friction but also by the simple fact that many Japanese firms have had huge financial surpluses, largely from their inflated assets in the form of

6. See for instance Sakaiya Taichi, "Sekaishi no naka no Wangan sensō," *Chūō kōron*, April 1991, pp. 48–87. See also Takashi Inoguchi, "Four Japanese Scenarios for the Future," *International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Winter 1988–89), pp. 15–28.

7. Inoguchi Takashi, "Zen chikyū ampo kyōryoku kaigi no teishō," *Chūō kōron*, March 1991, pp. 124–37.

land holdings in Tokyo and its vicinity. At the third stage, Japanese investment has been steadily turning away from the United States. This is not only due to lower U.S. interest rates as the U.S. economy entered a recession, which discourages Japanese companies from retaining their U.S. investment portfolio, but also because of growing uncertainty in the international business environment, which has led them to diversify their assets in other regions, namely, Western Europe and Pacific Asia. This phenomenon took place much more steadily than many thought in the late 1980s.<sup>8</sup>

Most important of all is the vague angst about Japan's position and role in the world. Long accustomed to the virtual absence of a major global security role in its foreign policy agenda, Japan is apprehensive about what it sees as the imposition on it of unwanted roles by the United States. Whether or not Japan should take on more global responsibilities is not subject to much dispute, as many opinion polls have indicated. More than two thirds of those surveyed in Japan are of the view that Japan should enhance its contributions to the global community, but that such contributions should be restricted to a non-military role in conformity with its pacifist constitution.<sup>9</sup> The most popular notions of what Japan's role should be in the world are predictably a "trading state" and a "global social welfare state."<sup>10</sup> In other words, it is advocated that Japan should continue to prosper by focusing on commercial activities and endeavor to make financial, technological, and scientific contributions to keep the world safe from hunger and war.

The very position and power Japan has acquired through economic means for the last two decades, however, has also been forcing Japan to take on new global political responsibilities. By falling short of these responsibilities, or at least doing "too little, too late" in many cases, Japan has been intermittently exposed to barrages of criticism from abroad. The very fact that Japan is exposed to such criticism has led many Japanese to react in an increasingly negative manner to calls for it to play a more global political role. They are being attracted to pacifism, rejectionism, and isola-

8. See for example Kenneth B. Pyle, ed., *The Trade Crisis: How Will Japan Respond?* (Seattle: Society for Japanese Studies, 1987); Kozo Yamamura, ed., *Japanese Investment in the United States: Should We Be Concerned?* (Seattle: Society for Japanese Studies, 1989); and Kozo Yamamura, ed., *Japan's Economic Structure: Should It Change?* (Seattle: Society for Japanese Studies, 1990).

9. See for instance the following polls: *Tokyo shimbun*, Sept. 4, 1990; *Yomiuri shimbun*, Sept. 30, 1990; *Asahi shimbun*, Oct. 1, 1990; *Mainichi shimbun*, Oct. 15, Oct. 23, and Oct. 29, 1990; *Asahi shimbun*, Nov. 1 and Nov. 6, 1990; *Nihon keizai shimbun*, Nov. 21, 1990; *Yomiuri shimbun*, Dec. 26, 1990; *Asahi shimbun*, Jan. 1, 1991; *Tokyo shimbun*, Jan. 30, 1991.

10. Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Sasa Atsuyuki, "Posuto Maruta ni okeru Nihon no chii," *Chūō kōron*, March 1991, pp. 48–59.

tionism. Pacifism wants to see the spirit of Japan's pacifist constitution spread to the rest of the world in terms of peaceful conflict resolution. Rejectionism arises from anti-American nationalistic feelings and calls for refusing to act in concert with U.S.-led military actions. Isolationism preaches the virtue of distance from politico-military involvement in the Gulf war. These three threads of response come not only from the left but also from the right and the center.<sup>11</sup> Aside from these refusals, economic signs have started to point to a decline in Japan's surplus that could be used for global contributions. The Japanese current account surplus in relation to its GNP has been steadily shrinking from 4.5 per cent in 1986 at its peak through 1.9 per cent in 1989 to a predicted 0.8 per cent in 1992.<sup>12</sup> In tandem with the steady increase in the non-productive population, tax revenue has started to stagnate and social welfare expenditures have begun to increase steadily. The Ministry of Finance's attempts at increasing taxes have met staunch resistance, as did the introduction of the consumption tax in 1989, and it has become much more cautious to introduce new taxes. This revenue-collecting difficulty seems to enhance uncertainty about the new role expected of Japan.

*Historical Learning.* The most salient aspect of Japanese learning from history is deep skepticism about the utility of military power, especially as projected onto foreign terrain for a prolonged period of time. A century of striving as an ambitious newcomer for a "venerable place in the world" ended in complete failure in 1945. In contrast to this failure, concentration on economic activities for nearly half a century since then has brought about both peace and prosperity.<sup>13</sup> Some recent major events in the world have simply reinforced this belief. The most cogent examples include the American war in Vietnam and the Soviet war in Afghanistan, in both of which the interventionist powers were not able to impose their will for a period considerably longer than military presence. The guess of many Japanese is that even if the United States has won militarily in the Gulf war, more enduring regional factors will diminish the long-term impact of the outcome of the war to a marginal extent. For Japanese, lessons of history inform them that military supremacy in foreign terrain will be short-lived and that military action begets counter-actions, which tends to nullify whatever thrust interventionist powers' military action may be intended to

11. On these three strands of response, see for instance Komiya Ryutarō, "Nihon higurijiteki kōken o," *Nihon keizai shimbun*, Oct. 8, 1990; Koyama Shigeki, "Nihon, dokuji no gaikō o," *Nihon keizai shimbun*, Sept. 24, 1990; Ishikawa Yoshimi, "Wangan kiki, nanimo shinai, to iu daisan no sentaku," *Asahi shimbun*, Sept. 13, 1990, respectively.

12. Economic Planning Agency, *Keizai hakusho* (Tokyo: Okurasho Insatsukyoku, 1990).

13. Akira Iriye, *Shin Nihon no gaikō* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1991).



have. With this lesson of history, it is very natural that the Japanese are basically skeptical of the effectiveness of military action to attain political goals in the longer term. Further reinforcing this skepticism is what they see as the growing importance of economic interdependence in the world economy. Although somewhat shaken by the Gulf war, the basic tenet of this dogma has been retained so that Japan can envisage a kind of world where international finance—not military power—will be the key to influence.<sup>14</sup>

Another thread of Japanese learning is the debt of history. By debt of history, I mean the legacy of Japanese misconduct in the prewar and wartime years as constraints on Japanese diplomacy. It became evident that, once the Gulf crisis led the Japanese government in autumn 1990 to move toward using the Self-Defense Forces for the purpose of creating the appearance of solidarity with other nations, Pacific Asians, especially the Chinese, manifested their concern about the direction of Japan's drive.<sup>15</sup> Is Japan really grudgingly following the U.S. call for military participation in the Gulf war? Or is it adroitly using this opportunity to send the SDF abroad in wartime for the first time since its inception in 1954 in order to pave the path for future SDF activities outside Japan? The instinct of those nations who suffered from Japanese aggression has been to revive the memory of the past. As a result, they criticize Japan's attempt to dispatch the SDF abroad in a preventive fashion and call for a U.S. military presence in order to mitigate the already fairly predominant Japanese economic influence in the region.

From a different angle, the debt of history can be seen as an excuse for reluctant Japanese not to shoulder such security-related burdens. When the Japanese government cited the debt of history as a reason for its hesitancy to dispatch the SDF to the Gulf, some saw this as an attempt at self-contrived sabotage. At any rate, the debt of history has operated as a constraint on Japanese diplomacy. Whether Japan is constrained happily or unhappily is somewhat difficult to tell.<sup>16</sup>

14. See for instance the discussion on the Gulf war by Kato Koichi and Yamazaki Taisaku, both members of the Lower House and former Director Generals of the Defense Agency, and Koyama Shigeki, member of the Middle East Economic Research Institute, a think tank under the umbrella of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, in "Imakoso Pax Japonica no kakuritsu o," *Ekonomisuto*, Feb. 19, 1991, pp. 44–50.

15. See *Ajia no shimbun ga hōjita Jieitai no "kaigai hahei"* (Tokyo: Nashinokisha, 1991). On the mildly affirmative responses from many Asian leaders to the idea of SDF participation in U.N. Peace Keeping Operations, as occasioned by the tour of an LDP politician, Watanabe Michio, in East and Southeast Asia, see *Mainichi shimbun*, March 10, 1991.

16. On the debt of history, see Takashi Inoguchi, "Four Japanese Scenarios for the Future," *International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (Winter 1988–89); Takashi Inoguchi, *Japan's*

The third strand of Japanese learning from history is anti-colonialism. It may sound somewhat strange to mention Japanese anti-colonialism as Japan itself was a colonial power until 1945 and might be categorized as a neocolonialist in the world today by commentators of radical leftist persuasion. But deep in the Japanese mind, Japanese colonialism was portrayed largely as the result of Japanese counter-action vis-a-vis Western colonialism. It was meant as anti-colonialism, however awkward its justification may sound to many. Since relinquishing its militarist past in 1945, Japan has been more anti-colonialist and may be called anti-expansionist. Postwar Japanese anti-colonialism or anti-expansionism overlaps with its having a very close relationship with the United States. Anti-colonialism was revived by the U.S. occupation of Japan and has been retained as the U.S. armed forces have kept their bases and other kinds of presence in Japan and its vicinity. Thus, whenever the United States uses high-handed pressure during negotiations on issues of trade, the economy, market liberalization, and burden sharing, this sentiment is awakened among many Japanese. They have no difficulty, for instance, in finding quasi-evidence in Ambassador Armacost's energetic pressure for Japan to liberalize its market or contribute more to the maintenance of international order in recent years.

Given such coercion already experienced by the Japanese themselves, or at least seen as such by them, it is not difficult to understand why many Japanese have felt that the Iraqis were punished by the Americans somewhat out of proportion to their misconduct in Kuwait, which most Japanese strongly condemn. Although the Middle East is not an area with which most Japanese are familiar, a sizable proportion of them do have a modicum of historical knowledge about the region, especially since the first oil crisis of 1973. Conflicts of interest among OPEC members like Iraq versus states in the Gulf Cooperation Council, rivalries between Iran and Iraq and between Palestinians (Arabs) and Israelis, and their historical origins constitute such knowledge. In U.S. diplomacy toward both Japan and the Middle East, many educated Japanese see traces of colonialism in a modern form. However unjustifiable and brutal Iraqi conduct may be, this

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*International Relations* (London: Pinter Publishers, forthcoming), especially Chapter Seven, "Sino-Japanese Relations: Problems and Prospects"; Takashi Inoguchi, "Asia and the Pacific since 1945: A Japanese Perspective," in Robert H. Taylor, ed., *Handbooks to the Modern World: Asia and the Pacific*, Vol. 2 (New York: Facts on File, 1991), pp. 903–20. With regard to Sino-Japanese relations, see also Laura Newby, *Sino-Japanese Relations: China's Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1988); Nakajima Mineo, *Chūgoku ni jubakusareta Nihon* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju-sha, 1987); Tanaka Akihiko, *NitChū kankei* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1991).

aspect of the Gulf war is not missed by many Japanese, or for that matter by many Asians.<sup>17</sup>

*Self-Confidence.* It may be paradoxical to juxtapose anxiety and self-confidence as two factors shaping Japan's response to the Gulf war. But it would miss a great deal if one dropped self-confidence as a factor shaping Japan's response. Japanese are confident in their ability to make structural adjustments as they did successfully in the two previous oil crises.<sup>18</sup> When Americans were citing the Japanese oil dependence on the Gulf oil-producing states as a reason for Japan to become more involved in the Gulf crisis, Japanese felt that they could secure petroleum through markets. This was confirmed by seeing neither drastic oil-related price hikes nor a deterioration in the Japanese yen's exchange rate vis-a-vis the dollar at least in the short term. The first oil crisis forced Japan to minimize energy consumption fairly drastically while the second oil crisis forced Japan to substantially reduce the relative weight of labor costs in manufacturing. The present oil crisis seems to have accelerated the diversification of Japanese money away from the United States to other areas, most notably to Japan, Pacific Asia, and Western Europe. With land prices in Tokyo stabilizing, Japanese spending has become less flamboyant. Yet the large-scale recycling of surplus capital by the Saudis, Japanese, and others to the United States in the form of international contributions to the multinational forces' war expenses is expected to activate the U.S. and world economies.<sup>19</sup>

Japanese self-confidence is also very clear with respect to economic competitiveness. Although Japanese competitiveness is not overwhelming in many respects, the fact that Japan along with some Pacific Asian countries has been further enhancing its competitiveness in many areas underlies its self-confidence. Irrespective of whether such self-confidence is well founded or not, it very much shapes their attitude. Even though some short-term and intermediate-term disturbances from the Gulf war may turn out to be far more serious than they want to see, Japanese self-confidence when combined with a large degree of uncertainty about the evolution of the international system seems to encourage them to "watch and wait"

17. "Asia Asks: War for What?" *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Jan. 24, 1991, pp. 10–14; "Impact on Asia: Once This Lousy War Is Over," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 7, 1991, pp. 8–12.

18. See Kozo Yamamura and Yasukichi Yasuba, eds., *The Political Economy of Japan, Vol. 1: The Domestic Transformation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Edward Lincoln, *Japan: Facing Economic Maturity* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1987); Yasuba Yasukichi and Inoki Takenori, eds., *Kōdo seichō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989); Takashi Inoguchi, "Japan's Politics of Interdependence," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Autumn 1990), pp. 419–37.

19. Kikuchi Tetsuro, "Nihon mane futatabi kaigai e," *Mainichi shimbun*, March 5, 1991.

rather than “go and get it.” Needless to say, self-confidence encourages cost-sharing and sacrifice. That would be an absolute necessity for those who want to minimize the negative consequences of the Gulf war. Thus from this angle also, it is fairly clear why the Japanese government has opted for the policy of non-military contributions instead of the two extremes of “watch and wait” and “go and get it.”

Japanese self-confidence is also based more generally on nationalistic sentiments originating from the combination of enlarged self-esteem and growing criticism from abroad.<sup>20</sup> As a result of their economic achievements, Japanese self-esteem has already become high. In general, the Japanese are secretly or openly proud of themselves and want to see their achievements appreciated and acknowledged, if not necessarily applauded. But what they often see abroad is that their achievements are criticized for being callous to others. No doubt, jealousy and enmity do play an important part in such criticism. As Carlo Cipolla has written of first- and second-generation empire builders, many Japanese tend to take such criticism as personally directed at themselves.<sup>21</sup> According to Cipolla, first-generation achievers, so preoccupied with their task, cannot enjoy life with others. They do not know how to relax. Second-generation achievers tend to look down on others, not necessarily aware that their achievements were a result of the first generation’s exertions. Third-generation achievers relax and associate with others and know how to laugh at themselves. Many Japanese resemble Cipolla’s first- and second-generation achievers. This being the case, there is no wonder that nationalistic sentiments tend to grow in tandem with Japanese economic success and foreign criticism typified by Japan-bashing. With nationalistic sentiments ever-growing underneath the surface of Japan’s politeness, it is no wonder that public opinion has reacted very negatively to the U.S. call for greater Japanese contributions to the Gulf war.<sup>22</sup>

### *Larger Political Competition over Systemic Restructuring*

Looking at the Japanese response to the Gulf crisis, it is immediately clear that how to frame the response is part and parcel of a larger political competition over how to restructure the Japanese political system. It has been called the “overall settlement of the postwar era” (*sengo so kessan*) by former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro. The competition has become intense because a number of forces have been leading Japan to tackle

20. One of the best-known examples is Morita Akio and Ishihara Shintaro, “*No*” to *ieru Nihon* (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 1989).

21. Carlo Cipolla, ed., *The Economic Decline of Empires* (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 12.

22. See the opinion polls referred to in note 9.

the issue head on. This competition is best understood when seen from three main angles: the traditional ideological cleavage between the right and the left, Japan's changing position in the international system, and private-sector strength.

*Traditional Ideological Cleavage.* The intense right-left cleavage in Japanese politics has led many observers to call it "divided politics" or "cultural politics."<sup>23</sup> The cleavage was strong from the immediate postwar years to the early 1970s. The right-wing policy platform tended to stress the following four lines of policy positions: 1) alliance with the United States, greater expenditures and role for Self-Defense Forces, and anti-communism; 2) national identity, traditional morality, and the emperor; 3) production, efficiency, and innovation; and 4) protection of and subsidies to socially weak sectors. The left-wing policy platform emphasized four different lines of policy positions: 1) neutrality or non-alignment, light defense posture, and anti-hegemony nationalism; 2) civil freedom, egalitarian norms, and democracy; 3) a better working and living environment and protection of consumers; and 4) social welfare, education, and public expenditure. These are more or less similar to right-left cleavages in many other countries.<sup>24</sup>

The cleavage seemed to be mitigated somewhat during the post-oil crisis period when distributive issues in an era of lower economic growth placed both the left and the right on more or less pragmatic grounds concerning social and economic policy issues. Most symbolically, wage increases were somewhat restrained more or less cooperatively by labor during the post-oil crisis recessionary periods. Even those two core areas where the right-left cleavage used to be most intensely observed, that is, defense and diplomacy and the emperor and national identity, seemed to be watered down substantially in the 1970s and 1980s. On defense and diplomacy, the positions of the non-Communist opposition parties have moved to, or at least toward, de facto approval of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and the Self-Defense Forces as the Cold War has waned. On national identity and the emperor also, their positions have seemingly moderated, perhaps helped by the increasingly nationalistic stances taken by many Japa-

23. J. A. A. Stockwin, *Japan: Divided Politics in a Growth Economy* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975); Joji Watanuki, "Pattern of Politics in Present-Day Japan," in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (New York: Free Press, 1967).

24. Takashi Inoguchi, "Japan 1960–1980: Party Election Pledges," in Ian Budge et al., eds., *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Postwar Election Programmes in 19 Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 369–87; Takashi Inoguchi, *Public Policies and Elections: An Empirical Analysis of Voters-Parties Relationship under One Party Dominance*, Papers in Japanese Studies, No. 2, Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore, February 1989.

nese on what they see as Japan-bashing. Yet, it has turned out that the pacifist position on the constitution has been no less divisive now than before as demonstrated by the division in public opinion over the SDF's military participation and financial contributions to the multinational forces including for the supply of weapons. Moreover, pacifism has permeated large portions of the right wing as well on these issues. It is not exactly the expression of traditional ideological cleavage but does revive and amplify it.

*Japan's Changing Position in the International System.* In tandem with the growth of Japan's profile in the international system, the voice for a more proactive rather than reactive diplomacy has become increasingly strong. Reactive diplomacy has been noted as the hallmark of Japan's diplomacy during the postwar era, especially for the last two decades.<sup>25</sup> It has a number of origins. Consensual decision making is often depicted as a factor slowing down Japan's diplomatic responses. Another reason is that Japan's prime ministers during the last 18 years have come from smaller factions of the governing party and offered weak political leadership; two exceptions are Nakasone Yasuhiro, who overcame this weakness by other means, and Takeshita Noboru, who was a member of the largest faction. Weak leadership has tended to stifle any bold initiatives coming from the bureaucracy or the party as the cabinets have become an arena for competing interests to meet without being resolved rather than being a strong actor to aggregate various voices into one national policy action. Third, Japanese diplomacy has been largely preoccupied with what has been traditionally called low politics, i.e., politics of commerce, where coordination and consultation with the private sector is essential and where market forces are the key variable often overriding the policy preference of the government, hence all the reactivity. Fourth, and most relevant to the Gulf crisis, the security shyness of Japan has to be stressed. Given the legacy of its failed militarist past, institutionalized constraints within the constitution against using force for resolving international disputes, and constraints arising from the Japan-U.S. security treaty on adopting any autonomous defense policy, Japan's reactivity is natural in most foreign policy crisis situations where war and peace are at stake.

Yet for those reasons summarized earlier, the voice calling for a proactive rather than reactive diplomacy has become stronger. This voice takes two forms. One calls for a greater political role in the world more or less in tandem with the United States. The second seeks an autonomous route,

25. Kent Calder, "Japanese Foreign Economic Policy Formation: Explaining the Reactive State," *World Politics*, Vol. XL, No. 4 (July 1987), pp. 517–41; Takashi Inoguchi, "The Nature and Functioning of Japanese Politics," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1991), pp. 185–98; Inoguchi, "Japan's Politics of Interdependence."

perhaps in loose concert with Pacific Asia and with the United Nations.<sup>26</sup> It is not necessary to emphasize that mainstream thinking has been of the passive type. But these two forms of proactive diplomacy are increasing in strength and have been further emboldened by the Gulf crisis.

The line of thought for a greater political role is roughly as follows: Given the institutionalized and psychological impediments against Japan assuming global security responsibilities and given the alleged political sterility of debate within the Diet and bureaucratic impasse, advocates of this approach try to make the best use of the demand for Japan's greater security roles in order to make a breakthrough in resolving the dilemma of Japan's security shyness. To accomplish this, they rely on a flexible interpretation of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and Japanese law, which is less directly vulnerable to parliamentary scrutiny. Both the decision on Japan's financial contributions to the multinational forces and the use of SDF aircraft in rescuing refugees might be considered as small yet important steps in that direction. This diplomatic position is basically preoccupied with avoiding further deterioration in the Japan-U.S. relationship before Japan can relinquish its semi-sovereign status. Needless to say, this voice for proactive diplomacy does not seem intent on turning Japan into a state with heavy armaments like the United States or the Soviet Union. Rather, along with those who advocate greater autonomy, it stresses the paramount importance of international finance over that of military and nuclear weapons.

The thinking of those who favor an autonomous route for Japan is roughly as follows: Given Japan's prominent stature, it ought to be able to act more independently of the U.S. government and more in harmony with "domestic demands." This position reflects some negative sentiments toward the United States, not necessarily psychological but, more importantly, based on their forecast of the increasing economic vigor and weight of Japan (and no less importantly that of Pacific Asia) vis-a-vis that of the United States at the dawn of the next century.<sup>27</sup> Given the predominantly pacifist orientation of domestic opinion, this "autonomous route" thinking advocates more use of what has been called "soft power"<sup>28</sup> in the sense of forging, consolidating, and making the best use of the network of interdependence shaped largely through market forces and augmented by some

26. Takashi Inoguchi, "Shaping and Sharing Pacific Dynamism," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 505 (September 1989), pp. 46–55; Inoguchi, "Zen chikyū ampo kyōryoku kaigi no teishō."

27. Iwata Kazumasa, for example, has sketched three scenarios of the world and regional economies in the 1990s, namely, Pacific optimism, Pacific pessimism, and Euro-optimism, as expounded at the conference on the political economy of international cooperation, Hakone, Japan, Jan. 12–13, 1991.

28. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

loose and flexible institutional arrangements. An example would be the slowly emerging role of the Bank of Japan as a coordinating actor for monetary policy in Pacific Asia.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, in this scheme of things, the international security apparatus will become much less salient than in the view of those pushing for a greater political role, and arms control will be an important agenda not only to make the world safe from war but also to make Japan's predominantly economics-oriented diplomacy more effective in an environment where weapons are not of overwhelming importance and are simply another form of power. An example would be Japan's initiative to participate in an international nuclear power generation/reprocessing scheme.

There is no clear-cut division between these two proactivist positions and one might see both positions as largely complementary. A greater political role is loosely represented by the views of politicians such as Secretary General Ozawa Ichiro and the members of the defense *zoku* (Diet defense specialists who are advocates of strong and often autonomous defense<sup>30</sup>), as well as the Defense Agency and defense contractors. Those supporting the autonomous role are loosely represented by big business, especially the finance sectors, as well as the economic ministries, most importantly the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs seems to be inhabited by both reactive and proactive schools fairly equally but dominated in practice by the reactive school with its domestic power base remaining feeble and shallow.<sup>31</sup> At any rate, the proactive schools are in ascendance in correlation with the slowly intensifying political competition over domestic systemic restructuring. What form their ascendance will take politically in terms of party reconfiguration remains to be seen as public opinion has not yet indicated a preferred direction in a convincingly clear-cut fashion.

*Private Sector Strength.* Corporate strength has become an undeniable key factor in Japanese politics. Growth in the strength of the private sector and decline in the strength of the public sector may capture a key aspect of Japanese politics in the 1980s.<sup>32</sup> The driving force is market liberalization.

29. See Ashley Rowley, "Shy Bloc Leader," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Feb. 14, 1991, p. 42.

30. Inoguchi Takashi and Iwai Tomoaki, *Zoku giin no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1987).

31. See for instance Daniel Okimoto, "Political Inclusivity," in Takashi Inoguchi and Daniel Okimoto, eds., *The Political Economy of Japan, Vol. 2: The Changing International Context* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 305–44. See also a gossipy yet very informative series of articles on ministries and agencies of the Japanese government, "Shirizushi shin kanryō shinka ron," *Zaikai tembō*, Jan. 1990–March 1991.

32. Kent Calder, "Japan's Public and Private Sector: Beyond the Revisionism Debate," *The JAMA Forum*, Vol. 9, no. 1 (Sept. 1990), pp. 3–7. On the increased influence of pressure



With the partial dismantling of bureaucratic regulations and restrictions so tenaciously guarded for so long, private sector strength has come to the fore in the 1980s. An important force sustaining market liberalization is the maturity of the Japanese economic society, which demanded freer economic activities and consolidated interdependence with the world economy, most notably with the U.S. economy. Politically, the Japanese government wanted to act with the United States in giving support to the tide of market liberalization most vigorously initiated by the United States in the early 1980s. The Japanese government also wanted to see Japan's private sector become more competitive in a less protected market. When the economic society was loosened in many ways in the form of market liberalization, the bureaucratic instinct of the Japanese government led it to "discipline" the society in another form.<sup>33</sup> This took the form of a renewed emphasis on national defense and identity. National defense received most privileged treatment in the budget along with foreign aid throughout the 1980s in terms of the continuously high expansion rate of budget. Since 1985, national identity has been officially stressed in public schools at primary and secondary levels in the form of raising the national flag and singing the national anthem.<sup>34</sup> These two policy areas are so closely enmeshed with the traditional political cleavage of Japanese politics that they are bound to arouse the somewhat semi-dormant opposition. They are also deemed necessary by the Japanese government precisely because Japan has to "internationalize" itself much more vigorously and steadily and is bound to be exposed to the vagaries of international influences, be they security threats, migrants, or foreign ideas and religions.

Thus, these three forces—traditional ideological cleavage, Japan's changing international position, and private sector strength—have been further intertwined in shaping the Japanese response to the Gulf crisis, preparing the stage for intense political competition over the framework for systemic restructuring.

### *Prospects*

Half a century after 1945, when Japan was heavily bombed by the Americans without mercy, the Japanese now watch the Gulf war with analogies drawn to the Japanese war in the 1940s.<sup>35</sup> Superimposed on the multi-

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groups and politicians, see Muramatsu Michio et al., *Sengo Nihon no atsuruyoku dantai* (Tokyo: Tōyō Keizai Shimposha, 1986); Inoguchi and Iwai, *Zoku giin*.

33. Inoguchi Takashi, *Kokka to shakai* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1988), pp. 150–67; and Inoguchi, *Public Policies and Elections*.

34. *Yomiuri shimbun*, March 9, 1991.

35. See for instance "Tensei jingo," *Asahi shimbun*, March 8, 1991.

national forces' air attacks on Iraq seen on TV news programs are memories of U.S. air raids on Japan. Suddenly Iraq becomes analogous historically to Japan: Wasn't Japan somewhat like Iraq when Japan conquered Manchuria? Didn't Japan recklessly plunge into confrontation with the United States at Pearl Harbor? Constrained significantly by their understanding of historical lessons about the utility of military power, the debt of history, and anti-colonialism, what makes distinctive the Japanese response to the Gulf crisis, including the public support for the multinational forces' military action in the Gulf, is the somewhat awkward mix of apprehension and self-confidence. With GATT and the Gulf suddenly clouding the blue sky of the first phase of the post-Cold War era and the second phase looking gloomy in many ways, Japan nonetheless will move on, based somewhat feebly at first but later more confidently on its own vision and dynamism. The Gulf war will be remembered by many Japanese in a somewhat strange way as a vindication of the Japanese wisdom based on the negation of the Pearl Harbor complex since 1945. That would significantly affect the tone of the Japanese historical reflection on the fiftieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor in late 1991 and the course Japan will take into the next century. With its somewhat amorphous vision of how the world should be shaped and with its not necessarily overwhelming economic strength in the longer term, whether Japan can steer its course safely and live happily with the rest of the world remains to be seen.

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