

# Japan's Foreign Policy under US Unipolarity: Coping with Uncertainty and Swallowing Some Bitterness

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Takashi Inoguchi\*

## Introduction

Interviews with members of the Japanese governing élite highlighted two caveats, which derive from convictions Japanese tend to hold regarding the world order: (1) that the world outside Japan is full of uncertainty and, therefore, that one cannot predict even an inch into the future (*issun saki wa yami*); and (2) that international relations consist of interactions between the wishes of one side and the wishes of its adversaries, and their outcomes (*aite ga aru koto desu kara*), and, hence, no vision of the coming world order can be unilaterally or directly translated into reality. The interviewed members of the governing élite invariably qualified their statements with these two caveats, which may essentially be their way of avoiding the often traumatic fate of predicting the future, as can be illustrated by two examples from the past.

In 1939, Prime Minister Kiichiro Hiranuma was completely taken by surprise when he was informed that the Soviet Union and Germany had concluded a non-aggression pact, betraying Japanese wishful thinking that Germany would be "sincere" in its commitment to the Tripartite Pact against the United States, Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union. In 1971, Prime Minister Eisaku Sato was disgusted to find that the United States had established normal diplomatic relations with China, only shortly after the United States had asked Japan to join it in undertaking the unenviable task of supporting Taiwan in the United Nations.

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\* Takashi Inoguchi, Ph.D., is Professor of Political Science, Institute of Oriental Culture, the University of Tokyo, Japan. He wishes to thank the members of the governing élite who kindly answered his questions. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference on "Conflict or Convergence: Global Perspectives on War, Peace and International Order", sponsored by the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, Cambridge, Mass., 13-15 November 1997. He gratefully acknowledges the comments made on it by Takashi Hosomi, Samuel Huntington, Lucian W. Pye, Theo Sommer, and participants at the conference. He also wishes to express his appreciation for the very useful comments made by the anonymous referee.

Lucian W. Pye says that trying to predict what China will do is "voluntary folly". The assignment here should be slightly more positive. I introduce one anecdote. Madame Anson Chan, the second most powerful person before and after 1 July 1997, made a remark that few might have ventured under similar circumstances. In a press interview, she was asked: "In Deng Xiaoping's view and in the Chinese-British Agreement, the one country/two systems arrangement should prevail in Hong Kong between 1997 and 2046. How would you describe the situation after 2047?" Her answer was: "One country, one system, preferably Hong Kong style." What she meant by this was not clear. She could have meant that China would be governed by the rule of law, a capitalist economy, and a fledgling democracy by 2047 as Hong Kong was in 1996. At any rate her exercise in prediction did not turn out to be folly. Politically she survived the 1 July 1997 transfer of sovereignty. In terms of empirical testing, her target date is far enough away from today that she may be more or less exempt.

Before turning to the views of Japan's elite of their country's foreign policy, it is necessary to briefly discuss the nature of the data. My interviews focused on members of the bureaucratic elite, as is often the case in analyses of Japan's foreign policy. The sample includes bureaucrats in some of the highest-ranking positions in Japan relating to foreign policy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and the Defence Agency. It also includes some members of the bureaucracy working on issues directly relevant to the questions posed. Those interviewed were sent a set of questions well in advance of the interviews.

Members of the political and business elite were interviewed with less intensity and without a systematic set of questions sent in advance. The analysis of their views was based with more reliance on their published views, whether available as commentary in newspapers or magazines, or as broadcast on television in the form of policy debates.

The set of questions focused on the structure and distribution of power, the stability of the world order and the use of force. The interviews were conducted mostly in the autumn of 1997, with some follow-ups for updating in the spring and summer of 1998. Although the data collected cannot be claimed to be thoroughly representative of the views of all members of the foreign policy elite, I argue that it provides a very revealing and useful basis for analysing Japan's foreign policy.

In what follows, I shall portray and analyse perceptions of the global structure of power, sources of threat to stability, the role of intervention and use of force, and the nature or vision of the world power structure in the next century among the members of the Japanese governing elite. On this basis, I shall argue that Japan's foreign policy is best characterized as that of "muddling through" amid the dual uncertainty originating from US unipolarity and economic globalization and that, while riding somewhat uneasily along the path of US unipolarity, Japan has had to swallow some bitter pills more often than during the Cold War period.

## Structure of Power

The modal view of the world order held by the governing elite in Japan is that of Pax Americana. Power distribution is manifestly unipolar, or perhaps latently multipolar,

with the United States, especially in international security. When their own country's national security is assured by US sailors and soldiers stationed on their own territory, it is not surprising that the Japanese élite unequivocally acknowledges this as a fact of life. Especially under the new Japan-US security arrangement guidelines, the pre-eminence of the United States is felt even more strongly than in the past.

The new defence guidelines are in a sense the operational expression of the new defence outline as determined by the Japanese government under Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama in November 1995. The distinctive feature of the new defence outline is its stipulation regarding handling of aggression. The old defence outline stated that Japan should repulse limited and small-scale aggression in principle alone. The new defence outline says that in case of an emergency caused by direct aggression, Japan should repulse it in appropriate co-operation with the United States. The new defence guidelines have a correspondingly distinctive feature. The old guidelines stated that Japan's provision of services to US armed forces for emergencies outside Japan and within the Far East was determined by the Japan-US security treaty and associated arrangements. The new guidelines do not contain this sentence. The new guidelines came into existence in order to move beyond the framework set by the Japan-US security treaty, particularly Articles 5 and 6, which deal with emergencies involving Japan and the Far East, respectively. The security dominance of the United States is the point of departure on their cognitive map.<sup>1</sup>

Yet US dominance is significantly qualified in three respects: first, it is seen as a temporary phenomenon in the economic arena when viewed in a 25–50-year time span. US dominance in the economy cannot last for ever. When Robert Reich's *Work of Nations* was published in the early 1990s, the Japanese governing élite welcomed the positive tone of the book but did not seem to be convinced by the message that the march of globalization would continue indefinitely and irreversibly, and that globalization would impart positive benefits to all people around the globe.<sup>2</sup> Rather, they welcomed it because it gave them a good picture of things to come in the near future. The boom, now being enjoyed by Americans, cannot be endlessly sustained. It is driven by technological innovations in the electronics, telecommunications and financial service sectors and will subside somewhat when these innovations diffuse into the manufacturing sector. Japan excels in the manufacturing sector. The diffusion of technological innovations in these three sectors will work to the long-lasting benefit of Japan because it is bound to combine information technologies and manufacturing technologies most skilfully. Two recent examples will suffice.<sup>3</sup> First, it was Clarion, a Japanese manufacturer of car audio instruments, that Microsoft chose for its lead partner in manufacturing computer software for automobiles. Virtually no other names among car audio instrument manufacturers were on Microsoft's list for its partner. A few leading Japanese manufacturers of car audio instruments and car navigation equipment, such as Pioneer, Sony and Matsushita Telecommunications Engineering, have progressed beyond Microsoft's computer software standards and thus have no strong incentive to work with Microsoft in this area. Second, the unified European standards for next-generation mobile telephones were determined by the European Telecommunications Standards Institution in favour of the Swedish-Finnish scheme as opposed to the German-French scheme. Technological development for the former was

done by Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation, while the latter's was done by Motorola along with its German and French counterparts. The Japanese mobile telephone is much smaller and cheaper in the first place. Some Europeans seem to welcome the healthy influence of non-Americans in counterbalancing American dominance in many areas.

The New Economy thesis, as presented by Steve Weber and other economists in the United States, must be taken largely as a sign of American hubris at the peaking of the economic boom, much in the same way that Japanese boasted, in the very recent past, that the Japanese economy would virtually take over the world.<sup>4</sup>

Second, in the security area as well, some perceptive observers have noted that the United States has become a "balancer" rather than remaining a hegemon.<sup>5</sup> Its overwhelming dominance cannot unilaterally deter aggressive actors from acting. Compare the US actions in 1991 and 1998 *vis-à-vis* Iraq. In 1991 it was successful in part because it held the legitimization of multilateral backing. In 1998 it was not, in part because of its proclivity for using unilateral force without bothering with international legitimacy. The US position was not supported by three permanent members of the UN Security Council. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan was able to conclude an agreement with Iraq to secure its compliance with the United Nations Special Commission. The United Kingdom and Japan, further, drafted a UN resolution on the issue, which was subsequently supported unanimously in the UN Security Council. Iraq was at first negative regarding the resolution but subsequently came to "welcome" it after the phrase "the severest consequence" contained therein was explained as not necessarily meaning the use of force. Japan's position was that it was always concerned with achieving the peaceful resolution of conflict whenever feasible and possible. Such action was therefore a matter of course. In addition to the non-use of force, it was intended to point out to Iraq the need for it to make possible the lifting of economic sanctions, which would thereby allow restoration of normal relations with the rest of the world and the establishment of conditions for embarking on economic development, an endeavour in which some friendly nations might be able to extend a helping hand. The point here is that the US show of force in the Gulf *vis-à-vis* Iraq did not bring about what it wanted; on the contrary, it alienated many Gulf and other countries in the vicinity.

In Pacific Asia, too, the United States acts like a balancer *vis-à-vis* China, such as by consolidating arrangements with Japan. The new defence guidelines are meant to facilitate US actions in meeting crises in Pacific Asia and beyond, with Japan giving the United States much more freedom in the use of facilities critical for emergency operations in meeting possible challenges on the Korean Peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait.

Underlying the trend of the United States becoming a balancer seems to be its inability to establish clear priorities on a number of issues. In the post-Cold War world, security considerations may be overridden by, for example, commercial and ideological considerations. Hence the confusion in the United States over human rights versus business priorities relating to China in the 1992-94 era and over security versus business considerations in the 1994-96 era. In the Middle East, although security considerations loom large, achieving peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority

has been given lower priority than the vigorous assertion of US dominance in the Gulf region by shows of force. Both the China and Middle East priorities have apparently undermined regional support for the US position there and beyond. In other words, by acting like a hegemon in the region, the United States has given the impression of being a balancer while inviting more room for manoeuvring and intervention from outside. Its assertion of dominance in the Gulf War of 1991 and in the Taiwan Strait, intervention by aircraft carriers in 1996 demonstrated the hegemonic will of the United States as well as its never-long-lasting stamina for military engagement. The trend towards the United States becoming a balancer is presumably not only related to its incapacity to set clear priorities, but also to changes taking place in the structure of the balance of power. This pretext of the US as balancer might be rebutted with the assertion that what seems to be balancing is in fact an act of binding, a vigorous engagement undertaken in each major region, largely on a bilateral basis. Members of the Japanese governing élite seem to agree on both views.

Third, in the cultural and ideological realm, as well, the United States seems to be less aggressive than in the past in pushing its values and norms, notwithstanding often-heard views to the contrary. To be sure, the United States promotes democracy and preaches about the protection of human rights abroad.<sup>6</sup> But it focuses more on Africa and the former Communist countries than on the more resilient countries of Pacific Asia and Latin America. Samuel Huntington's thesis of a "clash of civilizations" seems to resonate largely with one of the currents of public opinion that declares the United States should not overextend itself. Henry Nau's thesis that US foreign policy should give primary consideration to security and identity seems also to be harmonious with the large segment of public opinion which holds that the United States cannot concern itself with every part of the world. Only countries that are similarly structured should be the priority of the United States. Bruce Russett's theory of democratic peace argues that democracies rarely fight each other and that the United States attempts to facilitate democratization abroad in order to reduce involvement in war and/or that the United States seeks to surround itself with the familiar terrain of democratic countries with similar values and norms.<sup>7</sup>

Their views refer, to oversimplify, to the strategies of confining intimate interactions with familiar worlds. In the case of Samuel Huntington, it is North America and Western Europe. In the case of Henry Nau, it is the Group of Seven world, significantly including Japan. In the case of Bruce Russett, all the democracies unite. The counter-argument to this is that the United States is aggressive in its rhetoric, exporting to and imposing on their targeted countries a self-righteous missionary zeal. It asserts that what might be called American fundamentalism must be restrained. By American fundamentalism they seem to mean the more-than-adequate dose of market liberalization and security co-operation. The counter-argument seems to be shared fairly widely at the popular level, even among the governing élite, although it is normally not often expressed in public. Such slogans as "do not meekly and blindly swallow the medicine of Anglo-Saxon-style financial market liberalization" and "do not throw out the Japanese economic development model wherein manufacturing matters most and human-resource development is stressed" are examples of such counter-arguments.

To focus more on the vicinity of Japan, it seems that the Japanese governing élite holds the same picture of Pacific Asia as it does of the world. The prevalence of US dominance is most obvious in Pacific Asia. Here the United States reigns supreme with its overwhelming military power and its readiness to intervene. The Pacific Ocean is indeed an American lake. Complex power configurations, however, seem to work as constraints against US use of force and further reinforce the trend in which it acts more as a balancer than as a hegemonic scriptwriter.

Russia has been moving further from the United States and closer to China and Japan both because of affinities and differences. In the view of the Japanese governing élite, Russia was disgruntled that its own pro-Western, pro-American policies on market liberalization and security redirection under Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev did not bring as much gain as it initially expected, so it has started to manoeuvre in search of more opportunity to enhance its gains under Foreign Minister Evgeny Primakov. Russia has thus become the intermittent spoiler and supporter of Pax Americana, in a way reminiscent of French diplomacy under President Charles de Gaulle. Russia's vigorous intervention in the UN inspection issue in Iraq in 1997-98 can be taken as one example.

While Russia is interested in China in terms of selling weapons and natural resources, especially natural gas and petroleum, it retains its deep-rooted apprehension about China. Russia is a country which had emerged from under the yoke of khanate power. In whichever direction China might go, whether with military aggression or through some sort of bankruptcy, it spreads both destabilization and people outside Chinese boundaries, posing a long-term nightmare to Russia, not necessarily confined to such people as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Vladimir Zhilinovsky. Russia's thirst for immediate gain and need for engagement with China in order to keep its borders safe and stable seem to have led to overtures to China for friendship and partnership. Foreign Minister Primakov seems perfectly cognizant of all these things in his calculation and implementation of foreign policy. Russia has every reason to seek friendship with Japan following the enlargement of NATO. It needs more room for interaction with non-American actors and thus to expand its freedom to act. The defrosting of the Sea of Okhotsk in terms of American security posture towards Russia is further enhanced by the defrosting of the Kurile islands dispute with Japan.

Furthermore, Russia wants capital and technology from Japan on a large scale. One way to obtain it is to lure Japan to its natural gas and petroleum resources in eastern Siberia and Central Asia. As a matter of fact, the plans and preparations for linking Siberia and Japan-Korea-China with pipelines have been under way for some time, and—if things evolve smoothly—in 25 years' time, Northeast Asia will be covered by a network of pipelines from Russia as densely as in Western Europe. Now—25 years from the Helsinki Accords of the early 1970s—security *détente* and economic interdependence are firmly entrenched in Europe. In return, Russia expects a massive dose of official and non-official developmental assistance from Japan. While Japan expects the four Kurile islands to be given back to it somehow in the process of fostering friendship and enhancing economic interdependence, Russia appears to be consciously or unconsciously playing down the possibility of returning the islands. President Boris Yeltsin's major speech outlining the policy package of 1998, delivered at the Russian

Duma on 17 February 1998, does not contain reference, within the main text, to the accord on these islands and a treaty of peace reached in November 1997 at Krasnoyarsk between Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and himself. It goes: "Large-scale trade and economic relations must be the basis of a solid foundation of our relationship with Japan. The 'Yeltsin-Hashimoto Plan' aims at this."<sup>8</sup>

China acknowledges the United States' dominance in Pacific Asia. China's preference for the Japan-US security treaty reveals parts of China's calculation. When Japan's new defence guidelines were announced, China expressed concern about them. It is worried not so much about the United States becoming mightier with enhanced co-operation by Japan in US actions as it is about the United States giving a much larger security role to Japan. The apprehension that the United States has sided with Japan through the new defence guidelines seems to have prompted Chinese leaders to go ahead and "normalize" its relations with the United States by releasing Wei Jingsheng and by finding ways to entice US business to China's shores. Realists since the time of Sun-tzu, the ancient Chinese strategist, Chinese leaders are busily finessing their balance-of-power politics in repositioning of the US-Japan-China triangle. While keeping close to Japan in terms of business and official development assistance, China plays its balance-of-power politics by moving closer to the United States and enhancing its position *vis-à-vis* Japan.<sup>9</sup> Following three phases of vigilance (1989–91), frustration (1991–95) and repositioning (1995 to the present)—all in the shadow of the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 and the sabre-rattling in the Taiwan Strait of 1995—China officially "normalized" its relations with the United States through President Jiang Zemin's visit to the United States in the fall of 1997 and through President Bill Clinton's visit to China in July 1998.

In President Clinton's "three no's" speech regarding Taiwan during his visit to China, he apparently accommodated the Chinese request to help remove the threat of Taiwan while pressing the Chinese government to accelerate the "liberalization and democratization of China" (to oversimplify, more business and less human-rights violation), to which the Chinese government apparently expressed accord, in principle, at least. The Japanese government was apparently initially disquieted by the "three no's" speech, especially its implication that the new defence guidelines would not be applied to the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

Yet the Japanese government apparently concluded that if the Chinese were happy with the assurance from the United States that no threat would originate from Taiwan and could concentrate its efforts on enhancing peaceful interaction and economic interdependence with the rest of the world, the "three no's" speech might not be so bad. It would mean that if the new defence guidelines were partially instrumental in leading the Chinese government to seek the removal of "the threat" from Taiwan, then the new defence guidelines would prove to have performed their job very well and would continue to be effective, as they are phrased for general and non-geographical emergency guidelines; hence, Japan's one-sentence response when Clinton did not visit Japan *en route* to China or on his way back to the United States: "Good US-China relations are good for US-Japan relations as well." However, it may be no less accurate to say that the Japanese governing élite may have felt that the Americans were too pushy about the new defence guidelines and that they were partially used to induce

China in a new direction. In other words, they may have felt the “bitter pills” of the new defence guidelines and the “three no’s” speech, reflecting on the price of US unipolarity, which they must in any case go along with.

Even after economic sanctions imposed on China after the Tiananmen massacre were more or less lifted, China continued to feel strongly that the United States still attempted to meddle self-righteously in its internal affairs. Human rights and Taiwan are the two most disquieting issues, but China focuses more on business and, hence, on more peaceful borders and oceans. Its aspirations require sustained internal reform (both economic and political) and adroit adaptation to the economic environment within and without. Chinese leaders acknowledge the United States as the economic leader in the region. At the World Business Forum at Davos, Switzerland, in January 1998, China’s Deputy Prime Minister Li Langqing made a well-calculated speech, appealing to the United States and all the rest, saying that China would defend the Hong Kong dollar and Chinese yuan exchange rates *vis-à-vis* the US dollar for the sake of the stability of the Asian and global economy. Chinese leaders were eager to impress upon the participants that China was the good boy amid widespread confusion and ineptitude in the Asian financial crisis. While “normalizing” its relations with the United States, China is aggressive in its drive to increase the number of countries that do not recognize Taiwan but do recognize China, now including the Republic of South Africa and Panama. Beijing is also concerned about the Korean Peninsula, since any possibility of North Korean “peaceful evolution”, that is, capitalistic democratization, must be averted. Such a scenario would open the way to South Korean and, thus, Japanese and American capitalism, and therefore the possibility of “peaceful evolution” spreading from Korean borders into China, especially with 2 million minority Koreans living right next door to North Korea inside China. It is no less strongly supportive of the North Korean regime than the United States or Japan, all of which dread the possibility of instability there.

In the economic realm, the United States prospers as never before in the recent past and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) reigns supreme amid the financial crisis in Asia. However, the time is not far off when Pacific Asia will start to rebound from its current nadir with its strength in the manufacturing sector combined with US-led innovations in information technology and anticipated reform of the financial service sector in Pacific Asia. Some members of the Japanese governing élite have been critical of IMF-formulated prescriptions, declaring that IMF cures may leave Pacific Asia open to an all-out influx of Anglo-Saxon-style capitalism, resulting only in a less competitive Pacific Asia. They advise the IMF to recommend less stringent policy packages and schedules to Pacific Asian countries. The message they are trying to get across is that “I’m fine, and too great a dose of IMF medicine will weaken, rather than cure, the Pacific Asian economies where Japan has immense vested interests”.

Also, regarding the US dollar dominance in Pacific Asian economies, voices are increasingly heard that the Japanese yen should be made the regional currency since, as far as the real economy is concerned, manufactured products originating in Japan and transactions in such products are dominant in the region.<sup>10</sup> That would reduce room for the assaults of speculators, enhance the stability of the currency market and improve efficiency in all transactions. As a number of regional currencies cease to be pegged to



the US dollar, it is argued, the scheme of making the Japanese yen the regional currency should be pushed hard. Thus, in the economic area as well, among the Japanese governing élite, US dominance is acknowledged, while at the same time some departure from it is also considered. Yet despite all this ambivalence, the Japanese governing élite holds steadfastly to those policy options that presume US hegemony. Hence, the Japanese governing élite's posture is generally one of being forced to ride uneasily on US unipolarity, swallowing whatever bitter pills that come along from time to time.

In the cultural and ideological area, the Asian financial crisis has suppressed *ex post facto* the once-boastful talk of a Japanese economic-development model and of the superiority of "Asian values". In other words, the spread of the "American way" seems to be extending even further even if it is resisted internally, since, after all, the practice of the IMF Way implies that all is not "fine". Pacific Asian countries like Indonesia, Korea and Japan are muddling through, coping with the crisis through market liberalization, tax reduction and the stimuli of fiscal spending. Meanwhile, China has acceded to the United Nations' Convention on Human Rights, not only in the social and economic and cultural realms but in the civil and political realms. This is a victory for the United States. Although it is the Chinese leaders who will determine whether it is going to be a hollow victory, at least from the US viewpoint, Chinese compliance with the United Nations human-rights regime is a major coup, reversing the trend since the Tiananmen massacre and placing China in the context of larger trends leading towards the next millennium. After all, it is the Helsinki Accords of the early 1970s that paved the way for the "peaceful evolution" of Communist Europe with its human-rights articles.

## Threats to Stability

When discussing stability in global politics, the greater difficulty of identifying potential sources of threat than in the past is attributed to the passing of the Cold War. The degree of uncertainty is so immense that discussion of questions of security tends to focus on potential threats to stability in the immediate vicinity of Japan rather than on threats to global stability as a whole. Yet Japan's governing élite is not oblivious to the structural threats to global stability.

Non-traditional threats to stability, such as terrorism, weapons proliferation, and the drug trade are recognized. Policy measures are taken to cope with them. Furthermore, the Japanese government mobilized support at home quite successfully for the treaty of 1998 banning land-mines, and the joint Japanese-British resolution on UN inspection on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was passed unanimously in the United Nations Security Council. But in terms of actual discussion, however, these non-traditional threats do not seem to be given first priority.

Rather, discussion of longer-term threats to stability tends to focus the attention of government leaders on structural causes. In other words, a certain degree of dissatisfaction with the ways in which the global order is maintained tends to be manifested especially in the areas of international trade and finance, evoking such phrases as "American fundamentalism" and "non-separation of powers".

By "American fundamentalism", such observers seem to refer to the tendency of the United States to run its global economic affairs with such a self-righteous attitude that resistance and reaction is bound to occur.<sup>11</sup> In the Japanese view, rather than making the organizing principles of the Anglo-Saxon-style market economy sacrosanct and imposing them on other economies as such, globalization should be able to accommodate a diverse set of organizing principles for the market economy. By the "Anglo-Saxon-style market economy" they seem to mean the market based on more thorough liberalization than most other economies. They argue that the operation of the global economy is bound to face difficulties if the United States argues self-righteously that only the market principles it advocates are acceptable and attempts to force other countries to adopt them. They further argue that American fundamentalism itself could further undermine the hegemonic position and power of the United States. They suggest that what is necessary at this phase of global development is what may be called "strategic pragmatism". By "strategic pragmatism" they seem to mean the conception of global, market-based enlightened interests combined with a relatively non-ideological monitoring of market forces and relatively non-ideological drawing up of market rules.

By "non-separation of powers", Japanese observers refer to observation that in the handling of trade disputes, judges, prosecutors and lawyers seem to act in unison for the advancement of US interests. Even if the United States as hegemon can take advantage of the hegemon's prerogatives and privileges in imposing such rules, they argue that such rules cannot be effectively sustained for a longer term. Their non-sustainability is bound, moreover, to generate further sources of instability in the global order. More pragmatic attention to and monitoring of technological progress, energy resources and demographic development, as well as closer co-operation and co-ordination in tackling these issues would contribute more constructively to global stability, it is argued. The attempt to govern global economic affairs only by rules that are effective for well-developed markets would create sources of dissatisfaction and distortion which would undermine global economic stability and, as a consequence, global political stability as well.

Japanese observers thus argue that what they call "anticipatory pragmatism" is required. By this they mean assiduous monitoring of developments in technology, energy resources and demography, as well as preparation of effective global policy measures, including effective market rules.

Criticisms of American fundamentalism and non-separation of powers are ordinarily levelled against areas other than security and are thus narrowly defined. But it is important to note that members of the governing élite in non-security areas are somewhat suspicious of the much-vaunted security alliance and alignment with the United States, although this alliance is presented by members of the security-related governing élite to be the very cornerstone of Japanese diplomacy.<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact, opinion polls periodically conducted by the Prime Minister's Office indicate clearly that the United States is considered a threat to Japan second only to North Korea.<sup>13</sup> There seem to be contrasting views about the sources of threat to stability, but views are more unified about the dominance of the United States economically.

Now, what is the view of members of the security-involved governing élite of the sources of threat to stability? As mentioned above, they focus only on the vicinity of

Japan. There are two schools of thought. One stresses the medium-term uncertainty and unpredictability of power alignments and power balances in the future, while the other focuses on the short-term strength of the United States. According to the latter, the immediate and direct threat originates from North Korea. China is considered a vaguer, indirect threat.

The medium-term uncertainty school avoids discussion of specific threats. Given the overall rapidly changing and fluid situation in the vicinity of Japan in terms of development of economic and technological power on the one hand, and in terms of alignment patterns on the other, it is considered advisable not to make any specific mention of threats regarding either capability or intention of aggressive action. The US as short-term protector school is more oriented to political and diplomatic matters, while the uncertainty school is more oriented to technocratic-military concerns. The former is more widely reported in the mass media than the latter.

For both schools of thought, the United States is Japan's principal friend. It is Japan's only effective ally. Observers of both persuasions argue that the United States plays an important role in maintaining the stability of the region of Northeast Asia and of Pacific Asia as a whole. The two differ on whether the US stabilizing role is based on the principle of operating as a balancer or on the role of binding as an engaged hegemon. Needless to say, the majority see the United States, with its active, largely bilateral diplomacy in the region, as a hybrid of balancer and hegemon. The apparent inconsistencies between the perception of the United States as a balancer and hegemon are resolved because its balancing role is understood as a reflection of the United States' lower priorities and reduced power, especially in light of its never-repeat-the-Asian-quagmire phobia.

Trust in neighbouring states is not particularly high. Mistrust of China increased steadily between 1992, the twentieth anniversary of normalization of Japan-China diplomatic relations (1972), and 1998. China's nuclear testing of 1995 and generally hard-handed approach to human rights and suppression of democratic movements, as well as certain anti-Japanese remarks made in relation to recent history, have not helped to ameliorate the situation. China's attitude towards Taiwan and the new Japan-US security alliance guidelines seems to have contributed to that mistrust as well.

On a deeper level, mistrust of China originates from two extreme scenarios. One is the emergence of an aggressive, mighty economic growth and expansionism; the other is of an outbreak of chaos and disaster that spills beyond its borders. Although China's annual growth rate has begun to decline, moving into single-digit figures, it is widely acknowledged that its developmental momentum is still vigorous and that its defence spending is accordingly quite high. What is particularly worrisome to members of the Japanese governing élite is the propensity of the Chinese governing élite to resort to force, especially soon after coming to power: Mao Zedong in Korea (1950), Mao Zedong in Quemoy and Matzu (1958, after his temporary comeback to promote the Great Leap Forward), Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai in India (1962), Lin Piao *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union (1969), Deng Xiaoping in Vietnam (1979), and Jiang Zemin in the Taiwan Strait (1995). Although these shows of power might have been intended to demonstrate to the people that everything was under control, the widespread suspicion is that much, if not everything, is under the control of the military.

The second scenario is the opposite of the first. It is widely recognized that Chinese society would be close to anarchy without the Chinese Communist Party and that, at least in the short term, Communist-led reform is the best that can be hoped for. At the same time, doubts remain that the Chinese Communist Party can stem the tide of liberalization and democratization, and that once developmental momentum is lost and the Communists lose power, an anti-Communist transition might well create pervasive internal unrest and massive emigration, at least in the short term. The Japanese governing élite seems to be watching China to see whether either of these extreme scenarios will be borne out, while continuing their policy of helping China modernize and choose a path that falls in broad harmony with Japan's interests.

Trust in North Korea and in Russia had been at its nadir up till the very recent past. But Russia's striking metamorphosis into a self-claimed friend of Japan, supporting the Japan-US security treaty and its new guidelines, seems to be encouraging a gradual thaw of the long-standing, traditional mutual mistrust between the two countries. Recognition that the collapse of the North Korean regime would entail too much trouble to Japan as well as to other neighbours, including South Korea, seems to be prompting Japan to move to a softer position on North Korea in 1997, with particular regard to food aid and the possibility of diplomatic normalization. However, the North Korean missile/satellite launching shot over the Japanese islands in September 1998 aroused intense hostility among the public. The Japanese government took measures to freeze Japanese-North Korean diplomatic normalization talks, cancelling a new charter flight arrangement, banning remittance of funds to North Korea, postponing the signing of an agreement on financial payment to the Korean Energy Development Organization, and some emergency assistance to North Korea, along with closer consultation with the United States and South Korea on issues pertaining to North Korea, such as the theatre missile defence system, the Korean Energy Development Organization, and the US-North Korean, South Korean-North Korean, and Japanese-North Korean talks.

Trust in South Korea is not noticeably high, although both Tokyo and Seoul are allies of the United States. On both sides, however, efforts at enhancing ties have become quite lively since President Kim Dae Jung came to power in early 1998. With his ascension to power, South Korea has moved steadily towards more cordial relationships with both the United States and Japan, especially with regard to North Korea. The United States, South Korea and Japan are all interested in peaceful resolution of conflict. Despite tough talk heard especially from among some members of opposition parties, the Japanese government seems to be pursuing the course of engaging North Korea so that it would not become a nuclear weapons-possessing state, basically relying on the United States.

The conventional arms trade and arms race kept at a low-level equilibrium may be the ideal. But the general non-transparency of friend-foe relations in the post-Cold War world makes it more difficult to envisage what kind of regime can be aimed at controlling levels of force, with whom and under what rules. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them do constitute a threat to stability. But as long as they are cost-effective, and as long as weapons-possessing states are the key initiators of a control regime for such weapons, non-possessors would stand in the way of the formation of such a control regime.

The Indian and Pakistani nuclear bomb testings of the summer of 1998 aroused strong protests in Japan. The Japanese government took measures to halt new official development assistance to both countries and started to gather support for a long-term goal for the abolition of nuclear weapons, hosting antinuclear weapons conferences in Japan. The apparent connection of the Pakistani missiles to North Korea aroused vigilance in Japan, which became apparent reality in September 1998 with the shooting over the Japanese islands of the missile/satellite rocket.

The apparent convergence of technology and finance by both Confucian states (North Korea and China) and Islamic states (Iran and Saudi Arabia) has also brought home the Huntingtonian nightmare. The Indian nuclear bomb testings were motivated, in the Japanese view, both by defence concerns against possible nuclear attack by Pakistan and by resolve to elevate its international status and prestige as a nuclear weapons–possessing state as long as all the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are nuclear weapons–possessing states. What might be called the conventionalization of nuclear weapons appears to be the cause of grave concern among the Japanese governing élite, as Japan is determined not to be such a state. Here again, they are inclined to rely on the United States to discourage and deter potential nuclear weapons–possessing states from manufacturing them. Yet the United States itself seems to be more interested in incorporating those newly emerged nuclear states into a global nuclear regime whereby monitoring can be effectively conducted against further nuclear proliferation. This has been one of the bitter pills that Japan must swallow in going along with US unipolarity.

The Japanese government is determined to gather support for the effective control of small guns and other weapons, as they constitute the direct cause of the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people every year in strife-ridden areas. Just as with the campaign to ban land-mines, which culminated in an international agreement in 1997, the Japanese government has been vigorously advancing its cause and “international legislation” to back it up.

## Intervention and the Use of Force

In international society as it exists today, some states find it necessary to resort to the use of force. The United States itself is a frequent user of force in small-scale peace-keeping operations in the broad sense and it is the great peacekeeper of today. Its military presence awes some states and peoples and serves as a pacifying force. However, the question should be asked: How accepted is the US use of force for this purpose in international society? On this question, the majority view of the Japanese governing élite seems to be that it depends on the nature of US-promoted assertions and the process the US employs to obtain a consensus for them in international society. As long as actions based on the above-mentioned American fundamentalism and non-separation of powers predominate, the effectiveness of US use of force is bound to diminish.

It seems, therefore, that the views of members of the governing élite on the use of force avoid any kind of general statement. It is, first, recognized that the use of force is necessary given the nature of international society. Yet, second, under the Japanese

Constitution as it is interpreted in Japan, the use of force for the resolution of international disputes cannot be justified. Nevertheless, third, it is recognized that the United States is virtually the only frequent user of force for securing order and stability in the world. However, fourth, there is apprehension that the United States may lose touch with reality if it leans too much towards the relatively more comfortable interactions with familiar actors primarily in the West, whether based on theories of a "clash of civilizations", a "richmen's club" or "*pax democratica*".

In other words, the members of the governing élite seem to accept the US use of force in the broad sense, yet they desire broader acceptance of that use by international society. This is because, while they perceive of the world as being in a great transition from Pax Americana to a world that is as yet undefined, they desire that there be continuity of peace and prosperity under whatever new international regime might emerge. Their view of the use of force is more pragmatically conceived than philosophically oriented and they are less interested in discussing the principles justifying or legitimizing it than in ensuring the peace and stability of the world. Ironically, however, their interest in a soft-landing in the transition leads them to concern themselves with the evolving nature of power in international society and its constituent elements. They have a strong preference in this regard for Joseph Nye's notion of "soft power".<sup>14</sup>

When it comes to more specific questions on the use of force such as what constitutes justifiable circumstances and justifiable forms of weaponry, they are more inclined to hedge on their answers. This may be because they consider it improper to articulate arguments that seek to legitimize specific circumstances and weapons when the Japanese Constitution rejects the use of force for the resolution of international disputes. It may also be because the only members of the governing élite interested in such topics are those few who are directly involved in preventing such circumstances and curtailing such weapons.

At the same time, it is very important to note that what the governing élite tends to regard as desirable is an international order in which the non-use of force for the resolution of transnational disputes is universally practised. This may simply be a reflection of the prevailing predilection of the Japanese governing élite to depend on Japan-US security arrangements in a too facile fashion. It explains also the relative popularity of books like Ronald Dore's *Japan, Internationalism and the UN*,<sup>15</sup> in which the author envisages such a world with reference to the UN Charter and the Japanese Constitution.

## Power and Structure

The Japanese governing élite is above all pragmatic. Its members try to look ahead; they try to anticipate. That is why strategic pragmatism is a popular notion in Japan in both the bureaucracy and in the business sector.<sup>16</sup>

Then what is the desirable pattern of power distribution for the early decades of the twenty-first century? Again the governing élite would twist the question first by asking what is the most likely distribution of power and then attempt to envisage what would be potentially effective ways for curtailing undesirable developments given the

most likely distribution of power. In other words, they tend to be order-takers rather than order-makers in the context of discussions on security. Thus, as far as Japan's security goes, one may argue that the members of Japan's governing élite are decision-takers rather than decision-makers themselves. As long as they presume US hegemony so centrally in their cognitive security map, they are bound to remain decision-takers.

The majority of the Japanese governing élite seem to be of the view that a somewhat reconfigured Pax Americana will continue in the first decades of the twenty-first century. It is useful to note that even at the height of the period of the late 1980s through the early 1990s when Japan-as-Number One was much vaunted in economic areas, a Pax Americana Phase II scenario was regarded as the most likely.<sup>17</sup> Yet the reconfigured Pax Americana may not continue as robustly into the first decades of the twenty-first century as some people now think. According to their view, the American manner of global governance actually undermines Pax Americana by seriously distorting more "natural" and "market-adapting" approaches. What irks them most is what seems to be the high-handed imposition of highly articulated sets of norms, rules and frameworks that are purported to be "universal practice". They call this "American fundamentalism" sometimes and at other times, "non-separation of powers".

Because these undermining forces are at work, the dilution of American power and the devolution of American supremacy are likely to ensue. The forms of such power dilution and devolution envisaged differ from one segment of the élite to another. Before I discuss these forms, it may be useful to mention the four scenarios envisioned as of 1989. They are: (1) Pax Americana Phase II, (2) Japan-US bi-gemony, (3) Pax Nipponica and (4) Pax Consortis. The first needs no further explanation. The second is the scenario envisaged in which the United States and Japan form a well-connected and concerted duo. The third envisages a world dominated by a hypothetical Japan. The fourth is a scenario of multipolarity and coalition formed in a world of relatively less frequent use of force. In terms of desirability, the fourth is the most popular; the first next popular. In terms of feasibility, the first ranks highest and the fourth, second highest.

The basic picture does not seem to change fundamentally as far as the view of the governing élite is concerned. The first few decades of the twenty-first century are the period of transition from Pax Americana Phase II or the reconfigured Pax Americana to Pax Consortis. Why should the transition take place in the first few decades of the twenty-first century? Because the forecasters and other visionaries tend to argue using a time span of 20–25 years, as do the World Bank and the OECD. Important here, globally and especially regionally, from the Japanese point of view is the prospect for China.<sup>18</sup> Also, what exactly will Pax Consortis be? It could be argued that Pax Consortis is merely another name for US-dominated global governance of international discussions, norms and rules. It could also be argued that Pax Consortis is another name for multipolarity, with the United States reigning as *primus inter pares* rather than in pre-eminence. What is the key differentiating variable within the Pax Consortis equation?

That variable is what happens in Europe and the European Union (EU). If the EU becomes a bloc comparable in power to North America, with the Eurocurrency

establishing a position on a par with the US dollar, then the latter sub-scenario is more likely. If a Maastricht-Amsterdam-driven (and -constrained) Europe were to flounder, the former sub-scenario would be more likely. When Zbigniew Brzezinski argues that Japan's regionalism is suicidal and that Japanese globalism should be the wave of the future, he seems to be encouraging either the bi-gemony scenario mentioned above or more broadly, the Asia-Pacific scenario, which closely approximates the scenario in which the United States remains the primary force in the region and globally.<sup>19</sup>

The views of the Japanese governing élite on the prospects for the EU are ambivalent. First of all, they are no less sceptical of international institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union than their European or American counterparts. Furthermore, the kind of difficulties the EU member states have encountered in forging the Euromoney system seem evident to them of the infeasibility of the envisaged monetary union in a self-sustainable form.<sup>20</sup> In the realm of security as well, they are quite conscious of the fact that the EU has not done anything particularly impressive or effective in Bosnia-Herzegovina or in the eastward expansion of NATO.

The Japanese governing élite views the effectiveness of the United Nations and other international institutions in the short run with scepticism, although in the longer view it tends to be no less hopeful than Ronald Dore for a UN-led global governance under a Pax Consortis-like scenario. For the first decades of the twenty-first century, the sceptical view will prevail. It may be that once Japan obtains permanent membership on the UN Security Council, its views of the United Nations may become less sceptical. The majority of Japanese lawmakers believe firmly that without Japan's closer involvement in running the United Nations and global affairs, global governance by the United Nations, which will have no conscription or taxation system of its own, will be totally ineffective. After all, today Japan's financial contribution to the United Nations is roughly equivalent to that of four other non-US permanent members of the Security Council, that is, Russia, China, France and the UK combined.

Regional co-operation in the realm of security is generally underdeveloped and largely bilateral in Pacific Asia.<sup>21</sup> Yet, members of the Japanese governing élite apparently expect such co-operation to develop steadily in the first decades of the twenty-first century, triggered in part by the new Japan-US security guidelines. The new guidelines are, in the words of Kurt Campbell, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence, comparable to those for NATO in Europe. Russia strongly supports the new guidelines and its relations with Japan are growing warmer. Both Japan and the United States have been making assiduous efforts to induce China to adopt more open and constructive directions both politically and economically. South Korea and Japan are groping for ways to adjust their respective alliances with the United States to new developments in the international environment.

According to members of the Japanese governing élite, the United States seems to be invigorating its diplomacy both in terms of balancing and binding in order to sustain its overall supremacy in global governance in the longer term. The two policy arms of Japan's expanding role are official development assistance (ODA) and peacekeeping operations (PKO).<sup>22</sup> The world's largest ODA donor, Japan seeks friends far and near. For the last few years, priority has tended to go to friends afar such as in



Africa, the greater Middle East (including Central Asia) and South Asia. Yet the belief that the heavens would fall, as Deng Xiaoping used to say, if Japan and China resorted to war for resolution of conflicts between them, has kept Japan donating substantial amounts of ODA to China. As the old Confucian adage goes, happiness is seeing a friend from afar, indeed. Yet unhappiness is having a foe across the street.

The ODA Charter announced in 1992 enunciates a set of criteria and norms that should be used in extending assistance, which closely resemble the political conditionality of Japan's ODA. Such assistance includes high military expenditures, extensive weapons purchase, suppression of human rights, suppression of pro-democracy activists, and pollution of the environment. Japan claims that tenacious engagement and persuasion on these issues, but not to the point of causing loss of face in public, has more merit than demerit in getting results.

Peacekeeping operations (PKO) are the other major arm of Japan's expanding role. Since the Gulf War of 1991, Japan has opened the way for involvement in peacekeeping operations and disaster relief operations. The frequency of its participation in the former area is now quite substantial, as in the case of Cambodia, the Persian Gulf, Rwanda, the Golan Heights and Namibia, to name a few examples. Participation in disaster relief is not as frequent as far as government teams are concerned. Yet non-governmental organizations have steadily been invigorating their participation in both areas. One of the best known is AMDA (Asian Medical Doctors' Alliance), with 1,500 medical doctors in Japan and the rest of Asia registered for disaster relief operations globally. The AMDA has sent more than 100 missions abroad over the past 15 years.

In deciding on peacekeeping operations, no "abstention rule" or refraining from dispatch of PKO forces to destinations outside the region or cultural sphere is followed. Japan has been more hesitant, rather, in interpreting its Constitution, domestic laws, and administrative rules in its own region with regard to military or auxiliary logistic action. Indeed, except for its participation in the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, Japan's PKO forces have been sent out more often beyond Pacific Asia than within it. The new Japan-US security treaty guidelines seem to broaden and deepen the room for action by Japan's Self-Defence Forces, if in small steps, mainly in terms of auxiliary logistic manoeuvres within its own region.

In terms of US application of the abstention rule, members of Japan's governing élite are moderately apprehensive about the Huntingtonian criterion because Japanese civilization is outside Atlantic civilization. In other words, the United States might not come to defend Japan. On the other hand, Japan must take care of itself since there are no other states to come to its aid, even if the Huntingtonian abstention rule is not applied. They are slightly more at ease with the Nauesque criterion of the OECD club. They are vaguely apprehensive about the Russett criterion of democratic peace since it might mean that Taiwan would have to be militarily defended through Japan's own involvement along with that of the United States. Some members of the Japanese governing élite are somewhat suspicious of the Clinton visit to China and his "three no's" speech regarding Taiwan in that, instead of the Nauesque or Russett criterion, the Huntingtonian criterion may have prevailed in downplaying Japan, the self-perceived complaint and currently economically feeble ally, in relation to China, the potential

source of the "clash of civilizations", and in suppressing the democratic reality of Taiwan in relation to the democratic potential of China in the nebulous future.

## Conclusion

The view of Japan's governing élite of the evolving world order is a mixture of very short-term and very long-term thinking, without very tightly connected logic articulating between them. Some call it strategic pragmatism. By "strategic" is meant long-term goals-cum-hopeful thinking. By "pragmatism" is meant "muddling through". At any rate, it is firmly anchored in US-centred international security and free trade.

Two major dilemmas of this broadly accepted position are posed to the Japanese governing élite. One is Taiwan and the other is economic regionalism. These two dilemmas are not easy for Japan to handle because, should they not be handled well, the very foundations of Japan's foreign policy might be jeopardized. After China's sabre-rattling in the Taiwan Strait in 1995, the United States has been groping for a possible way out of the Taiwan conundrum while preparing a strategy to defend Taiwan. The new Japan-US security guidelines are in part the two nations' response to the issue of a possible forcible take-over of Taiwan by China. While the United States has been trying to enhance its capacity to deter and defend Taiwan since it is a vigorous democracy and since the Taiwan Relations Act obliges the US government to defend Taiwan, the United States is also trying to cope with the possibility of emerging regional bipolarity with the United States, Japan, South Korea, Australia and, possibly, Indonesia sitting on one side, and China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, North Korea and some of the ASEAN countries sitting on the other.

Why might Indonesia "possibly" sit with countries such as the United States, Japan, South Korea and Australia, while other ASEAN members sit on the other side? First, Indonesia is a military ally of Australia. Second, Indonesia is known for its distinctive memories of China (in 1965-66) and ethnic Chinese Indonesians (in 1965-66 and 1997-98). Third, Indonesia has a special relationship with the United States and Japan because of the US stake in the energy sector and the Japanese stake in the manufacturing and energy sectors. Fourth, Indonesia sits geographically farthest away from China among all the members of ASEAN.

The strategy of the United States appeasing China by not permitting Taiwan to declare independence while not allowing China to forcibly integrate Taiwan into itself and preparing Taiwan to accommodate a "one country/three systems" arrangement might be worked out in the long term, but the Japanese governing élite seems to think that to mention such a scenario in public would only embolden China and then become a self-fulfilling prophecy. While the Japanese governing élite seems to be thinking that the new Japan-US defence guidelines do not oblige Japan to wage war with China shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States over Taiwan, they do not seem to be entirely content with the portrayal of regional bipolarity under a global unipolarity, especially with Taiwan placed on the other side, since bipolarity suggests that Japan will be forced to take sides.

Economic regionalism poses another difficulty. The Japanese governing élite seems to think that, with more room for the use of the Japanese yen, Pacific Asian

countries with heavy borrowing from Japan, on which interest must be paid in Japanese yen, would have a much easier time in terms of the financial crisis. They also believe that a Japanese yen area might well be set up so that the regional picture of yen-dominant manufacturing would be matched with that of the US dollar-dominant international currency. This brand of economic regionalism, aimed at forming an Asian Monetary Fund, as advocated by Vice-Minister for International Finance Eisuke Sakakibara, was immediately rebuffed by the US government late in 1997 when Japan was criticized for not doing anything to alleviate the Asian financial crisis. The gap between manufacturing funds and international money in Pacific Asia is caused, in the view of a few members of the governing élite, by the advanced stage of capitalism, that is, an imperialism in which economics (manufacturing, in which Japan excels) is subordinated by politics (finance capital, in which the United States overwhelms all others with massive capital brought to the United States from Japan). Yet it is the predominant view of the governing élite that as long as international security and free trade are assured by the United States, and as long as the United States shares with Japan and many others the basic norms and rules of international society, the assertion of such a doctrine may not serve Japan's interests.<sup>23</sup>

To conclude, the Japanese governing élite views the evolving world order with an approving nod and supportive actions as well as with some basic, long-term apprehensions and many short-term worries, large and small. Essentially, it attempts to cope with uncertainty by riding high on the wave of US unipolarity, which from time to time seems to be quite a bitter pill to have to swallow. Although its policy actions are less-than-impressive in any sense of the word, it entertains a quite wide-ranging vision of the possibilities for the evolving world order.

## Notes

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