

Rethinking Japan as an Ordinary Power

Takashi Inoguchi (Professor, University of Tokyo)

(Prepared for presentation at the conference: The United States and East Asia: Old Issues and New Thinking, Yonsei University, May 30-31, 2003)

1. Introduction

It is not an exaggeration to say that Japan in the early years of the 21st century faces a major transition which it has not experienced since 1945. In popular parlance, it is a transition from a subnormal state to a normal state, from an extraordinary power to an ordinary power. The primary purpose of this essay is to clarify the nature of a transition and to suggest the way in which such a transition might be carried out.

I define an ordinary power as a major power which concerns itself with order and justice in its conducts of global politics (Foot et al, 2003). By order I mean the stability and predictability of global society and its components. By justice I mean that a set of values like freedom, equality and non-violence are to be achieved for humankind. Therefore by an ordinary power I mean a major power which is concerned about both order and justice and is seriously interested in bringing about order and justice to the extent to which it can. During the Cold War period, order was a primordial concern to many powers while justice tended to be set aside. But after the Cold War, global justice has been brought back to a primordial concern for many powers. Hence not only *medicins sans frontiers* but also justice without borders, duties beyond borders have been abundantly put forward in the 1990s and beyond. Two major problems in bringing about order and justice are: (1) it is not easy to define which is just, which is unjust, especially when the use and threat of force is necessary to bring about justice, however it is defined. The world does not consist of ideologically uniform members. If the world consists of ideologically uniform members, whether they are Kantian, or Grotian, or Hobbesian members, global governance would be much easier. (2) it is not easy to use force effectively to bring about justice, however it is defined. The world is not governed by a world government equipped with the authority and capacity to tax people and conscript soldiers.

In order to be clear about where Japan is located in the direction of an ordinary power right now in 2003, it is best to let Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi speak his mind. In the extraordinary committee on emergencies legislation in the Upper House on May 20, 2003 (Asahi shimbun, May 22, 2003):

I believe that a Constitutional revision is desirable in the future so that the Self Defense Forces can call themselves armed forces with a sense of pride. But time is not ripe for that. I am convinced that time is bound to come when the Self Defense Forces will be constitutionally legitimated as armed forces and will be accorded their appropriate honor and position as a war fighting organization to defend the Japanese state and to defend Japan's independence without continuing futile debates on unconstitutionality or constitutionality.

Before I move on to the present and future of Japan's prospect as an ordinary power, let me briefly summarize the path Japan has trod so far, focusing on the Self Defense Forces' origin and development.

In 1945 Japan was thoroughly defeated by the Allied Powers of the Second World War. Japan accepted an unconditional surrender. Japan was occupied by the Allied Powers headed by the United States from 1945 to 1952. Japan was totally disarmed. Japan went through regime change. A new Constitution was drafted largely by Americans. It was largely done in 1946. Two factors were important in defining the characteristics of the new Constitution. First, the Japan policy of the United States government was to transform Japan from an aggressive, war-prone, military government to an inward-looking, peace-loving, democratic government. Its war aim was being executed quite faithfully during very early years of the Occupation. Second, the American team of constitutional drafters included a bulk of New Dealers in the 1930s. They exercised an enormous influence on the primary nature of the new Constitution. The new Constitution is very progressive in social policy, gender policy, human rights, taxation, education, local government. They were implanting onto Japan the similar kind of reform experiment that the United States conducted during the former half of the 20th century (Zunz, 199X). When the first and second factors were combined,

what resulted from the occupation was an extraordinary Japan, deprived of armed forces and devoid of the right to use force in the settlement of international disputes.

Meanwhile, the Cold War progressed in Asia as well, with China taken over by the Communists in 1949 and the Korean War waged in 1950-1953. In light of the intensification of the Cold War and the concomitant need for the United States to transform Japan into an unsinkable aircraft carrier of a sort in rolling back and containing the Communist threat, the United States concluded a treaty whereby Japan be given security umbrella while the United States enjoy the almost free use of military bases and air space, the smooth and ample supply of energy, water and food, swift repair facilities, and good sleep, comfort and relaxation. This is the Security Treaty between Japan and the United States, drafted largely on the eve of the Allied Powers granting independence back to Japan amidst the Korean War. The contradiction between the new Constitution and the Security Treaty was left largely to the good judgment and deft handling by the Japanese government. The Japanese government handled this innate contradiction, helping the United States conducting wars in Korea and in Vietnam as well as containing China.

During the Occupation period and thereafter roughly until the income-doubling plan was announced by the Japanese government in 1960, the political forces that shaped public opinion on issues of war and peace were socialists and communists. To deter them from resorting to strong collective action, the predecessor of the Self Defense Forces was created in 1950. Its primary aim was for internal security when a large bulk of the United States armed forces were combating in Korea. The Self Defense Forces were not accorded the right to use force in the settlement of international disputes. The Self Defense Forces has been confined to the use of force only when its use is for strictly defensive defense (*senshu boei*) or only when you are hit on the face, you can hit back and hit back minimally. The problem is of course that once you are hit, you might not be able to hit back, especially when weapons have state-of-the-art advanced lethal ones. Along with the doctrine of strictly defensive defense, a number of restrictions have been imposed. The one that has been removed in relation to the participation in peace keeping and other kinds of operations is to bar the Self Defense Forces from being sent abroad. Even when the Self Defense Forces are sent for peace

keeping operations, troops should not be sent to places where fighting has not ceased. Even on peace keeping operations mission, troops are not permitted to shoot first. Only when you are hit, you can hit back. To make the matter worse from the Self Defense Forces' point of view, weapons they use are largely either purchased from the United States or from domestic manufacturers. The problem is that American weapons are very expensive if only because of their most advanced nature and that domestically manufactured weapons are not permitted to export to foreign countries. The immediate consequence of the latter is to keep domestically manufactured weapons exceedingly expensive. The combination of expensive weapons, American or Japanese, and relatively high salaries of troops means that budget-wise the Self Defense Forces is already the second largest armed forces next to that of the United States. Despite incremental changes made to adjust the Self Defense Forces to the rapidly changing international environment over the last decade, the basic feature of the Japanese state, i.e., being deprived of armed forces that can fight and being devoid of the right to use force in the settlement of international disputes, have been kept essentially intact. In this sense Hans-Peter Schwartz's characterization (1985) of Germany before and after 1945, *Machtbesessenheit* (aggressively clinging to power aggrandizement) and *Machtvergessenheit* (Obliviousness of power) broadly applies to Japan before and after 1945 (Katzenstein, 199X; Berger, 1999). Since 2001, however, the speed with which Japan has been prodded to move forward in the direction of an ordinary power is going fast from "the show of the flag" in the Afghan War to "the boots on the ground" after the Iraq War (Nihon keizai shimbun, May 24, 2003). These features would make Japan's transition most interesting to examine.

In what follows, I will first examine both actor-level and systemic-level characterizations of Japan that have been presented for the last two decades. Second, more specifically I will look into Japan's policy toward Pyongyang, Baghdad, and Tehran. Lastly, I will draw some conclusions on policy and theory.

2. Four Characterizations of Japan at Actor's and Systemic Level

I examine four faces of Japan, each more or less presuming the leading position and role of the United States.

Figure: KEY CONCEPTS DEFINING JAPAN'S POSITION and ROLE in the WORLD

SUPPORTER David Lake, Takashi Inoguchi

Primary actor's level characterization in the 1980s; but its position and role are embedded in and derived from the international economic system; disorderly behavior is discouraged.

GLOBAL CIVILIAN POWER Hanns Maull, Yoichi Funabashi

Primary actor's level characterization in the 1990s; but its position and role are defined by the legacy of the past, *Machtvergessenheit*, alliance duties, and ambivalence between limits of nonmilitary power and pride in global civilian power;

WILLING PARTNER Francis Fukuyama, Takashi Inoguchi

Primarily actor's level characterization in the 2000's; but its position and role are defined by the post-Cold War gross convergence of values and institutions in which nurturing trust at times of risks is of primordial importance in building partnership; the issue of justice has become salient.

SYSTEMIC CROSS-CURRENTS Robert Cooper, Robert Kagan, Takashi Inoguchi

Primarily systemic level characterization in the 2000's; but how cross-currents determine actor's level orientation and policy needs more actor specific parameters to be well-identified; the justice issue is inexorably intertwined with the other issue.

First to appear was the characterization of Japan as a supporter of the United States in the international political economy in shaping and sustaining the norms and rules of trade, money, finance, development, and sometimes security(Lake, 1988; Inoguchi, 1986, 1988). Its background is the fast rise of Japan's economic competitiveness, sometimes giving a menace to American stronghold in the 1980s and into the mid-1990s. There was apprehension about whether Japan acts as a supporter or a spoiler or a challenger of the whole American-shaped world political economic order (Inoguchi, 1989a). That was also the time when the developmental state (Johnson, 1982) was fashionable in defining the nature of late-comer state-led developmental drive in many of the Asia-

Pacific states, most notably Japan, Korea and Taiwan (Amsden, 2001; Haggard/Moon, 1989; Woo-Cumings, 1997). The developmental state was conceptualized as inherently representing unfair competition, non-transparent government-business relations and proneness to regulation and cartelization. This characterization faded as the United States economy resumed its long business peak for much of the 1990s and beyond.

Second, reflecting the global *raison d'être* of economic powers without teeth, Germany and Japan, came up with the concept, a global civilian power (Mauk, 199X; Funabashi, 199X). While the supporter notion often tended to be confined to the international political economy, the global civilian power notion has encompassed more explicitly international security as well. There are two major roles for armed forces: war fighting and peace keeping. The global civilian power notion does not take care of the former, but does of the latter. Although they were the vanquished in the Second World War and have been most dependent on the United States militarily, accommodating the largest American troops on their soils in Europe and Asia respectively, their pride in their achievement of peace and prosperity led them to put forward this concept. Although both powers are unable and do not dare to build armed forces which could act on their own will, they are increasingly confident that they can act as peace keepers who help stabilize and re-build war-prone countries. The concept was triggered as their reaction to the end of the Cold War. Once the East-West confrontation is gone, the role of military power would be reduced. Therefore the role of such economic superpowers who can lend helping hands to those impoverished would be most worthwhile mission for Germany and Japan. Especially for Germany the concept served its ideas and interests perfectly. The deepening and widening of the European Union went on after the Cold War. For Japan as well, the post-Cold War euphoria about the hyper-active role of the United Nations under Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali encouraged Japan to participate in UN peace keeping and other operations in near and faraway places from Japan (Inoguchi, 1995; Dobson, 2003). Germany has gone ahead than Japan in transforming its armed forces from solely defense to mainly outside of the area (NATO) operations (Yomiuri, May 23, 2003).

Third, since the September 11 events of 2001, what Francis Fukuyama (1995) said of the post-Cold

War global politics has started to ring much truer than in the 1990s. In his view, alliance has ceased to exist; instead partnership has begot its extraordinary importance; partnership can be constructed on the basis of trust, which grows out of commitment-cum-compassion despite high risks. President George W. Bush's coalition of the willing since the September 11 events is partnership of the type Francis Fukuyama meant. Hence the extraordinary list of those willing to fight against terrorism: those countries which are confronted by dissidents and rebels at home or rogue states nearby like Russia (Chechens), Spain (Basques), China (Uighurs and other dissidents), Cambodia (dissidents) rushed in to the coalition of the willing. Like *le Monde*, nous somme tous americain. However, since alliance has been substantially watered down by the partnership concept and its underlying unilateralism concept of the United States, traditional allies have started to develop their diverging style and substance with respect to the alliance with the United States. The divergence has been most glaringly laid bare in the process of negotiating on the terms of resolution on Iraq at the United Nations. France underlined autonomy; the United Kingdom reaffirmed special relationship; Germany placed its fortune on regional embeddedness. Despite all the Ishihara-Gaullist temptation in Japan, despite all the seductive call to return to Asia, Japan crossed the Rubicon in the Iraq War in the British direction (Inoguchi, forthcoming in 2003).

Fourth, more broadly, Inoguchi (1999, 2000, 2002) has identified three major ideological currents of global politics, Westphalian, Philadelphian and Anti-Utopian. By Westphalian I mean the state-sovereignty focused conceptualization of global politics. By Philadelphian I mean the popular-sovereignty focused conceptualization of global politics. By anti-utopian I mean the loss of sovereignty focused conceptualization of global politics. This framework allows one to place Japan's position in a global context where three totally different currents influencing actors with a mix peculiar to each, at a given time point.

The shift for an essentially actor's level characterization of Japan's position to a basically systemic level characterization of Japan's position needs to be underlined. It is a post-9/11 phenomenon which has accentuated the unipolarity and unilateralism of the United States. Japan used to stick to the quintessentially Westphalian framework with state sovereignty always given the highest priority in

its international relations. However, the tide of globalization especially since the time of the Plaza agreement (1985), one year after which the volume of currency trade surpassed the volume of trade of goods and services for the first time in human history. Not only financial integration and the global synchronization of fashions but also the permeation of humanitarian norms and democratic values have been advancing very steadily. In the 1990s Japan opened the way to participate in United Nations peace keeping operations as a global civilian power. Germany has gone ahead of Japan in this regard by enhancing peace keeping operations components (more Philadelphian) rather than the national defense components (more Westphalian) of its armed forces. In the 2000s Japan joined the coalition of the willing, waving the flag of anti-terrorism by sending the warships equipped with state-of-the-art Aegis system to the Indian Ocean. It is an indication of Japan's keen awareness of the Philadelphian currents and anti-utopian currents of global politics that could wreck havoc to Japan. This characterization allows one to detect the shifting mix of the three currents in a country's international relations, whether it is Japan (Inoguchi, 2002), the United States (Inoguchi, 1999) or whatever. In other words, Japan has made a strident step in facing the Philadelphian and anti-utopian directions in addition to the still dominant Westphalian framework in Japan's international relations.

Naturally, the question arises: Is Japan becoming an ordinary power? The following four answers are given.

(1) It has been a solid supporter of the American-led international economic system although at times Japan was suspected as a spoiler or even a challenger in the 1980s. Assuming the dominance of the United States, Japan wanted to highlight its positive, constructive role and position, especially in non-security areas.

(2) It has been a global civilian power with high priority always given to human and economic development and peace keeping and other operations. The advent of the post-Cold War era meant that the world would be more peaceful and that the use of force would be restrained to lower levels.

(3) It has been a willing joiner of anti-terrorism. As of May 2003, President George Bush has been quite selective in allowing foreign heads to stay at Crawford, Texas, the list of which is Aznar,

Howard, Koizumi and Putin (Nihon keizai shimbun, 24 May 2003). In terms of the amount of time for both heads to talk *tête-à-tête*, for instance, Koizumi's 10 hours, Rho's 38 minutes stand out.

(4) It has shifted from the rigid Westphalian mind-set to the mix in which the Philadelphian and anti-utopian mindsets have been injected. Systemic changes are visible and tangible since the 9/11 events. Not only joint war-fighting in the front but logistical actions in the rear but also those governance tasks that need to be shared such as intelligence sharing, policing, financing the government, legislation and economic reconstruction and development are now slowly in sight. Not only for the United States, but also for its partners, sharing vision and intelligence and sustaining global governance have been features of the Philadelphian and anti-utopian mind-sets and their implementation.

Is the above description of the four-stage historical evolution of Japan for the last two decades in harmony with the proposition that Japan is steadily becoming an ordinary power? My argument is that it is. To further clarify the matter, I must bring in the debate between Robert Kagan (2003) and Robert Cooper (2000).

Robert Kagan has most famously published his essays on the Weekly Standard (later to be published as a book in 2003) in which he contrasts America and Europe very unfavorably to Europe. His argument is that Europeans, so long accustomed to their cozy and comfortable corner of the world called the European Union in which contracts among free and democratic citizens reign supreme, have forgotten about violent power and cruel injustice in the rest of the world. Even if Europeans give the high priority to order and justice within Europe, they do not like to get heavily involved in bringing order and justice in the rest of the world.

Instead of so doing, Robert Cooper (so argues Robert Kagan) argues that there are three distinctive zones in the world, each of which represents the post-modern values and institutions, the modern values and institutions, and the pre-modern values and institutions. Robert Cooper's policy recommendation is *chacun a son gout*. In other words, like Kipling, he seems to preach that East is East, West is West and that happiness is not having too dense interactions among the three zones

from the vantage point of the post-modern Europe.

In a sharp contrast, the United States, so argues Robert Kagan, faces the one and globalized world where order and justice are not necessarily abundantly supplied! The United States, the only superpower and hyperpower, goes out to deal with chaos and injustice on the entire globe whenever deemed necessary and feasible, at least the United States so justifies its action.

With regard to Robert Cooper's three-fold zoning approach to characterize world order, I am of the view that the three currents are concurrents ubiquitous to each and every part of the globe. True, as Robert Cooper argues, the post-modern world is the Atlantic + G8 world. the modern world is the group of 77 world, and the pre-modern world are the group of failing/failed world + the rogue states. But the key point is that the three-fold geographical zoning in an era of globalization is inherently and increasingly unnatural (cf. Tanaka, 2000; Sorensen, 2002). In the beginnings of the 21st century, one cannot publicly dismiss the grave importance of massacres going on in Rwanda or anywhere whereas in the beginnings of the 20th century, arguing the wisdom of nonintervention, one diplomat in the Foreign Office in Britain was able to register the sentence when there arose a severe civil strife in Persia:

Let them fight among themselves and cook stew of themselves (approximate sentence, cited in Axelrod, 1972).

3. Japan's Policy toward Pyongyang, Baghdad, and Tehran (to be written)

4. Conclusion (to be written)

Reference

Amsden, Alice (2001) *The Rise of "the Rest": Challenges to the West from Late Industrializing Economies*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Amsden, Alice and Wan-wen Chu (2003) *Beyond Late Development: Taiwan's Upgrading Policies*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Asahi shimbun (2003)

Axelrod, Robert (1976) *Structure of Decision: The Cognitive Map of Political Elites*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Berger, Thomas U. (1998) *Cultures of Anti-Militarism: National Security in Germany and in Japan*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Cooper, Robert (2000) *The Postmodern State and the World Order*, London: Demos.

Dobson, Hugo (2003) *Japan and United Nations Peacekeeping: New Pressures, New Responses*, London: RoutledgeCurzon.

Foot, Rosemary, et al, eds. (2003) *Order and Justice in International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fukuyama, Francis (1995) *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, New York: Basic Books.

Funabashi, Yoichi, (1991) *Nihon Senryaku Sengen* (Japanese Strategic Manifesto), Tokyo: Kodansha.

Hagaard, Stephan and Chung-in Moon (1989) *Pacific Dynamics: The International Politics of*

Industrial Change, Boulder: Westview Press.

Inoguchi, Takashi (1986) "Japan's Images and Options: Not a Challenger, but a Supporter," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol.12, No.1, pp. 95-119/

...(1989) "Four Japanese Scenarios for the Future," *International Affairs*, Vol. 65:1 (Winter1988), pp.2-14.

...(1995) "Japan's United Nations Peacekeeping and Other Operations," *International Journal*, Vol.50. No. 2, pp.325-342.

...(1999) "Peering into the Future by Looking Back: the Westphalian, Philadelphian and Anti-Utopian Paradigms," *International Studies Review*, Vol.1, No.2, pp. 173-191.0

...(2000) "Three Frameworks in Search of a Policy: US Democracy Promotion in Asia-Pacific," in Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi, eds., *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies and Impacts*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 267-286.

...(2002) "Three Japanese Scenarios for the Third Millennium," in Immanuel Wallerstein and Armand Clesse, eds., *The World We Are Entering, 2000-2050*, Amsterdam: Dutch University Press, pp. 189-210.

...(2003) "Japan's Ambition for Normal Statehood," in Jorge Dominguez and Byung-Kook Kim, eds., *East Asia, Latin America and the New Pax Americana*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Inoguchi, Takashi and Daniel Okimoto, eds.(1989) *The Political Economy of Japan Vol. 2: The Changing International Context*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Johnson, Chalmers(1982) *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-*

1975, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kagan, Robert (2003) *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Katzenstein, Peter (1996) *Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Lake, David (1988) *Power, Protection and Free Trade: International Sources of U.S. Commercial Strategy, 1887-1939*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Mauil, Hanns (1990-91) "Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter.

Nihon keizai shimbun (2003) "Shitei de kantai Bush ryu (Welcoming at Home, Bush Style)," May 24, p.2.

Schwartz, Hans-Peter (1985) *Die Gezaehmten Deutschen: Von der Machtbesessenheit zur Machtvergessenheit*, Stuttgart: DVA.

Sorensen, Georg (2001) *Changes in Statehood: The Transformation of International Relations*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tanaka, Akihiko (2002) *The New Middle Ages*, Tokyo: LTCB International Library Foundation.

Woo-Cumings, Meredith, ed. (1997) *The Developmental State*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Yomiuri shimbun (2003a) "Dokugun kokusai funso taisho chushin ni (The Geran Armed Forces Transformed into Dealing with International Strifes), May 23, p. 9.

...(2003b) "Hata no tsugi wa Boots o (From Flag to Boots)" May 24, p. 1.

Zunz, Olivier (2002) *Why the American Century?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.