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## AMENDING JAPAN'S CONSTITUTION AND THE RE-ARMING OF JAPAN

By

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Let me begin with the observation that Japan is already armed. Article 9 in the US-designed constitution prohibits Japan from establishing its own armed forces. However, the eruption of the Korean War in August 1950 led General Douglas MacArthur, then the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (SCAP), to order Japan to form the National Police Reserve, a constabulary force composed of 75,000 personnel to take over the public security functions vacated by the US troops that were transferred to Korea.

Today, Japan's armed forces is more modern and more sophisticated than any of the armed forces of the ASEAN member states. In 1994 Japan's Self-Defense Force (SDF) had a total of 237,700 active members and 47,900 reserves,<sup>1</sup> putting it next to Russia, China and India in strength. Its Air Force possesses and manufactures war planes as sophisticated as those from the United States. Its Navy has the most advanced anti-submarine technology in the world; in fact, it has cruise missiles that fire warheads with a high degree of accuracy from a 300 to 400 mile distance. Japan also manufactures Charge Device Couples or CCDs for imaging and targeting. These devices were used by the American warplanes that hit Iraqi troops with a high degree of accuracy from the air. The only thing the Japanese do not have for now are long-range missiles, long-range bombers and nuclear weapons. But according to an Associated Press report, Japan holds about 4,684 kilograms of plutonium in its domestic facilities. An additional 6,197 kilograms of plutonium are stored in Britain and France, ready for shipment whenever Japan needs it. Experts say it takes only 20 kilograms of plutonium to produce an atom bomb but with Japan's advanced technology, it needs only 5 to 10 kilograms to do the same. Hence, one can readily appreciate Japan's nuclear capability considering the amount of plutonium it now possesses. According to Japan's Science and Technology

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Agency, the country plans to produce enough plutonium to use through the year 2010.

If Japan is already a military power, why do many Japanese still want to change their constitution? And why is Japan's participation in the United Nations Peacekeeping Force now deemed important for the country's national interest? Why does Japan consider the establishment of an independent armed force which is not controlled by the Americans, the first step in becoming a "normal nation" again? And what does a "normal nation" mean to the Japanese leaders?

In order to understand why Japan is instituting these drastic changes in its constitution and to evaluate them meaningfully, we need to take into account five fundamental points. First, most Japanese today believe that since the end of the Cold War, Japan has been undergoing a historical transition and internal reappraisal which, according to the famous Japanese political analyst, Yoshihide Soeya, is "similar in scale to the Meiji Restoration and the reforms after World War II."<sup>2</sup> Of course this process of self-appraisal and self-examination is taking place everywhere in the world. In Asia alone, China has decided that its paramount interest is the development and expansion of its economy, Malaysia is advocating for an Asian trading bloc similar to the European Community, while some ASEAN members are seeking to build a multilateral structure vis-a-vis emerging powers like Japan, China and India, to handle security issues.

Second, we need to comprehend the role of the Japanese political system and the technocratic bureaucracy in Japan. Many of the changes taking place in Japan today are the outcome of policies instituted by these agencies, and of problems spawned by the rivalry between the political parties and the bureaucracy.

Third, a clear understanding of the possibilities and limitations of Japan's Self-Defense Force will give us a better lead on why Tokyo wants to increase its strength to project Japanese military power beyond its territory.

Fourth, we need to examine Tokyo's justification for wanting a permanent seat and the veto vote in the UN Security Council. Some critics argue that Japan's desire to become a permanent member of the Council reflects nothing more than the use of economic power to forge foreign policy. But Japan's reasons are very different. Likewise, we need to examine Japan's unstated motives for wanting to change its constitution and transform its Self-Defense Force into a normal armed force, that is, one capable

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of both defense and offense. Only by reading between the lines can we uncover the real reasons why Japan wants to institute radical changes as it prepares to move into the 21st century.

Equally important, we need to look at America's position vis-a-vis Japan's desire to re-arm and play a more active role in international affairs. After all, America has provided Japan, since the post-World War II period, a security umbrella so essential to Japan's industrial growth and expansion.

Finally, we need to examine what are the implications to the Philippines, to the Asian region and to the world, as Japan moves to become a "normal nation" again.

### *Japan Without America*

Most Japanese believe that for much of the Cold War period, Japan's foreign policy consisted of "nothing but *ad hoc* responses to situations... bereft of ideals and principles."<sup>3</sup> Its foreign policy often followed the American political line while at the same time allowing Japan to pursue its mercantilist interests. But this stance did not extend to international politics and security. As one Japanese analyst said:

During the Cold War era, it did not really matter whether we did nothing or whether the UN did not function; the world danced to the tune of the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Japan and the UN had no meaningful role in world history. Our UN-centered diplomacy at that time was empty rhetoric, meaning in practice, Japan would do nothing in the international scene, just as it followed the pacifist doctrine of protecting the constitution... We must realize, however, that times have changed. This is the essential starting point. Put simply, the post-Cold War era is one of collective responsibility, no country seeks to take sole responsibility of running the world.<sup>4</sup>

This pronouncement demonstrates Japan's dissatisfaction with the old security arrangements where the US made almost all decisions affecting not only military but economic affairs. Japan's dissatisfaction further intensified when Washington not only insisted that Tokyo accept American trade terms, but even threatened to wage a trade war. Certainly Tokyo believes it is about time Japan takes on the requirements of leadership - which means facing up to the US and assuming the responsibility of

defending its own interests. To do this, Japan has to cut the defense umbilical cord which ties the country to America.

The question to be asked is, to what extent will Tokyo expand its defense capabilities and what kind of security realignments will Japan forge in the coming century? Recently, the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, the most influential and most widely read paper in Japan (circulation of 10 million), called for a public discussion on this issue, particularly on the formation of an independent armed force by Japan.

### *Japanese Political System<sup>5</sup>*

Let me now turn to the roles of Japanese political parties and technocracy. For simplicity I shall not dwell on the history of Japanese political parties but proceed to discuss the role of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which governed Japan from 1954 to 1993.

What needs to be emphasized here is that current Japanese political and economic policies were conceived by Yoshida Shigeru, the Prime Minister of Japan from 1946 to 1954. After years of dealing with MacArthur, Yoshida tried to make the most of the US-designed constitution and came up with a plan whereby Washington would take care of Japanese security, the technocrats in government would formulate the policies for administering Japan, while the elected politicians would govern the country. The primary government policy was the industrial modernization of Japan. This plan became known alternately as the System of '55, the 1955 System or the Yoshida System for the LDP.

The Yoshida plan, which was implemented vigorously from the mid-1950s onwards, led to the phenomenal growth and industrial expansion of Japan and the spectacular increase in the wages and income of the Japanese. As a result, the LDP became the only political party most trusted by the Japanese people, while the opposition parties were reduced to taking radical positions which majority of the Japanese rejected. In the meantime, LDP politicians became the instruments of big business and industry. Moreover, the government agencies and technocrats who formulated and carried out the details of the economic plan became increasingly powerful. The power of the technocrats reached a point where they took part in parliamentary debates and were the ones who answered most of the questions of the opposition for the LDP politicians. From 1955 to 1992, opposition parties found it impossible to dislodge the LDP. The largest opposition party,

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former Prime Minister Murayama's Japan Democratic Socialist Party (JDSP) pushed itself to the extreme left. Lacking any meaningful role in the political scheme, they were reduced to taking extreme foreign policy positions. They supported Pyongyang against Seoul, Beijing against Taipei, and served as mouthpiece of radical labor unions and anti-US military bases groups in Japan.

According to one of the most powerful finance ministers of Japan, Ichiro Ozawa, in his book *Blueprint for a New Japan*, the LDP was so securely entrenched that the debate in the Diet during this period was more for appearance to show Japanese democracy at work, rather than for fleshing out alternative programs to achieve Japanese national goals and interests. After staging what appears to be "a righteous debate," technocrats would sit down with LDP and opposition politicians to work out a deal to divide and schedule the distribution of spoils. In exchange for favors, the opposition constituencies and politicians would agree to stop opposing. However, to keep a semblance of political opposition in the country, the technocrats would prepare questions and answers for the opposition politicians to act out in subsequent parliamentary sessions. On occasions when fistfights occurred in parliament, these were for the most part triggered mainly by personal grudges and political infighting. Given the fierce anti-communist ideology and US domination of Japan and the rest of the so-called "free world," Japanese opposition parties could not play a political role of any consequence.

From 1955 to 1992 the real struggles for power were between or among the rival factions within the LDP. And over time, a *modus vivendi* of consensual haggling and trading was reached. The leaders of the dominant LDP faction took turns in assuming national leadership while those members who were not in the political limelight engaged in political maneuvers and fund-raising activities that were often illegal. Such indiscretions were often condoned when they were considered useful for LDP leaders in power; however, these actions also led to their downfall when their power as high public officials began to wane.

Former Finance Minister Ozawa claims that all these political maneuverings have been going on because Japan has no meaningful international role under the protective umbrella of America. While the Yoshida system transformed Japan into a top industrial power, it also changed Japan's parliamentary democracy into an LDP fiefdom ruled by an LDP technocratic mandarin. Precisely because corruption and smugness was the order of the day, many Japanese leaders became concerned that LDP could no longer protect Japanese economic gains and lead the country into a more

meaningful international role after the Cold War. Hence, they sought to introduce reforms in Japanese politics by instituting a genuine two-party system. The reformers are convinced that the current system only fosters money politics because candidates from the same party offer deals instead of meaningful alternative policies. They believe that politicians will have more authority if voters make their choices on account of distinct party differences and policies. This in turn can take place only if the dominance of LDP is destroyed. At the same time this will reduce the role of the technocrats to mere advisers.

Most Japanese political analysts claim that under the Yoshida system, the technocrats did well in setting up an industrial Japan. The country was under technocratic management, while foreign policy was dictated by aligning with America and business considerations. This "business first" policy led Japan to deal with any government, even dictatorial or repressive ones, or with countries considered by the West as "ideologically offensive." Japan tried to appease the leaders of these countries to obtain the resources needed by its industries and have access to their markets. And as long as the Cold War lasted, Washington abetted Japanese mercantilism. But Washington did not foresee that Japan under this policy would become the rival industrial giant that it is at present.

Today, with the Cold War over, Washington has become less accommodating of Japanese mercantilism. Indeed only a few years after the Cold War, Washington confronted Japan and demanded that the Japanese buy a specific amount of American goods and services or that trade between the two countries be based on numerical ratio.

This confrontational stance has triggered a debate within Japan on the issue of removing Article 9 and rewriting the country's constitution so as to restore Japanese sovereign right to maintain its own armed forces. Article 9 as will be discussed later, tied Japan militarily to America's defense force. Most Japanese believe that a new constitution will give Japanese politicians more authority over foreign policy and allow the government to take a more flexible stance in international affairs.

A few years back, most Japanese would have attacked Ozawa's argument that Japan should become a "normal nation," in the sense that Japan's armed forces should be independent of American control, as "dangerous thinking." The end of the Cold War makes both bilateralism and unilateralism irrelevant for regional security. Today, most Japanese believe that the Ozawa

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argument is not only correct, but represents the only route for Japan as it moves into the next century.

### *Japan's Self-Defense Force<sup>6</sup>*

The reformation of Japan by MacArthur began with the 1946 Constitution which contains a peculiar provision (Article 9) stating that the "Japanese people renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes." The article further stipulates that Japan should never maintain "land, sea, or air forces as well as other war potential." The same constitution makes the Japanese parliament the highest organ of the state; only civilians can serve as ministers or premier, and the Cabinet is collectively responsible to the Diet, which controls the budget.

Through the constitution, MacArthur banned Japan from establishing its own armed forces and Japan accepted the ban by ratifying the constitution. MacArthur's goal was to prevent a return of "militarism" and to deny the remaining Japanese militarists any influence over Japanese life.

In 1954 when the Japanese passed the Self-Defense Force Law, command and control of the military was vested on the Prime Minister. The 1954 law assigned the SDF the mission to "preserve the peace and independence of Japan," that is, to defend Japan against external attack and to assist in the preservation of public security. The SDF public security mission differs from normal public peace preservation which is the responsibility of the police.

According to the SDF law, only the Prime Minister is empowered to mobilize the SDF but only after he has consulted with the National Defense Council and has secured the approval of the Diet. But most military officials believe that, given these lengthy procedures, SDF commanders would be severely restricted when the country is under external attack. Of course, the SDF is authorized to return fire if SDF troops are killed by enemy fire. But they are enjoined to refrain, if possible, from "hurting human beings."

Before the end of the Cold War, Japan's LDP held that the Soviet Union was the main threat to Japan. Hence, despite institutional restraints, Japan was able to build its armed force with American acquiescence since America's view then was that "no nation can do any wrong if it took steps to defend itself against possible Soviet aggression." Japan's expenditure for the SDF

increased steadily since its creation in 1954. In a period of 10 years, Japan's Ground SDF increased from a total of 75,000 troops in 1954 to 180,000; for Maritime SDF, over 40,000; and 50,000 for Air SDF. Over a period of 27 years, the defense expenditure went up from \$800 million in 1957 to \$12 billion in 1984. In 1985 when Japan decided to modernize the SDF, the Mid-Term Defense Estimate of Nakasone Yasuhiro, then Director General of the Japan Defense Agency who later became the Prime Minister, recommended that 1.004 percent of the GNP be appropriated for the SDF from 1987-1990.

To most Japanese legal minds, the constitutional status of the SDF is ambiguous. Article 9 prohibits the possession of war potential and yet Japan maintains its own armed forces. The Japanese government contends that Article 9 does not deny the inherent right of a sovereign nation to defend itself, and that it does not bar Japan from maintaining minimum military strength to exercise this right. It claims that any military strength exceeding the required minimum constitutes war potential. For example, weapons of purely strategic character such as ICBMs and long-range bombers are constitutionally prohibited. Similarly, the dispatch of armed SDF troops to a foreign country is not allowed.

A government paper also claims that Japan is constitutionally banned from exercising the right to collective defense on the ground that the "constitution allows an act of self-defense as far as it is intended to defend Japan's own land and people." In other words, the constitution, according to this paper, bars Japan from aiding any foreign nation, with which it has close relations, against aggression.

It is precisely this position that leads many people to interpret the US-Japan Mutual Cooperation and Security Treaty (MST), as *not* a mutual defense treaty.<sup>7</sup> It recognizes that an attack against one party is not automatically an attack on the other. An attack against US forces outside Japan does not require Japan to do anything, although an attack against either party on Japanese territory requires both to act to meet the common danger "in accordance with its constitutional provision and processes." This non-symmetrical relationship was meaningful in 1952 when Japan was essentially defenseless and the US was militarily committed to the containment of China and the Korean War. This also means that America is responsible for Japan's security. Today most Japanese are not sure that America will readily come to their defense, considering that the US Congress has been engaged in Japan bashing for the last 10 to 12 years. Thus, the value of the Treaty is, at most, to serve as a deterrent, in that an armed

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aggression by another nation against Japan “would lead to the thought that they are in direct confrontation with the US.”

In 1981 a special Committee on Security was formed in the Diet. The Committee was tasked to study “problems relevant to the Japan US Security Treaty and to work out the necessary measures.” In March 1982, the Committee held its inaugural meeting. Among its 181 members, 58 called for the revision of the MST. Their reasons were: (1) the US alone cannot maintain peace and security; (2) the MST should reflect Japan’s economic and industrial growth; (3) the MST keeps Japan in a protectorate status and is therefore injurious to Japanese national pride; (4) increased Soviet power compels Japan to strengthen its capacity for collective defense (collective defense means Japan must be able to project its military power beyond its territorial boundaries); and (5) Japan should shoulder the burden of defending, jointly with the US, its own sea lanes to the Middle East. Those who sought the revision of the MST included Diet members, former diplomats, university professors and ranking members of the Japanese industrial complex.

If during the Cold War, Japan’s thinking about defense was generally guided by the principle of defending the country from conventional attack and leaving the nuclear warfare to America, today most Japanese leaders believe that Japan must not only beef up its armed forces; it must also revise its constitution in order to become a “normal nation”.<sup>8</sup> In plain language, build an armed force at par in strength and sophistication with those of the other major powers of the world.

How will Japan proceed to do this?

### *Japan’s Rationale*

Japan’s partnership with America has allowed it to save on its defense spending and at the same to build one of the most advanced, if not the most modern industry in the world. During the Cold War, when American senators, defense analysts, academics and intellectuals would ask Japan to contribute money and personnel to fight the communists, Japan would always cite its constitutional restrictions: war was not supposed to be the instrument of its foreign policy.<sup>9</sup>

After the Cold War, specially after a series of Japan bashing incidents in the US Congress, Japan has begun using such criticism to justify its desire to change its constitution, to build an

independent armed force and above all, to become a "normal nation" again. Thus in 1992, when the Diet passed the UN Peace Cooperation Bill which, for the first time, allowed Japanese troops to serve overseas since the end of World War II, part of the justification given was "to allow Japan to make a more visible contribution to international efforts to resolve conflicts threatening international peace and security." In fact, Japanese Foreign Ministry officials claim that with the passage of the Bill, Japan now assumes a more meaningful and significant role in world affairs, especially within the framework of UN peacekeeping operations. For this reason Japan wants permanent membership in the UN Security Council including the right of veto.<sup>10</sup>

Japanese intellectuals support their government's position and argue that after the Cold War, the UN sprang into prominence as the major forum for resolving regional conflicts. Indeed the UN had found its prestige resting on its hitherto ancillary Peacekeeping Operations. The Council could quickly agree on most of the issues that came before the body; for instance, it readily agreed to condemn Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and take drastic action. Unfortunately these activities have had a mixed record. The United Nations' successes in Cambodia and the Gulf War were like brilliant beams in the dark, but its debacles in Somalia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Angola and Rwanda have dimmed UN's prestige as an effective peacekeeping organization. According to one article, "it became clear that the Security Council was often unable to make its decisions effective. Worse, it proved very difficult for the UN to send peacekeeping forces to intervene in civil wars in which no government has invited them, when the fighting factions are unwilling to cooperate with the UN forces, and there is little possibility of bringing political or other pressure to bear on those factions."<sup>11</sup>

The UN was founded principally to deal with threats to peace, acts of aggression, and disputes and conflicts between states. But the post-Cold War period shows that it has to deal with civil wars. It is now perceived to have the potential of being the world's police force and of providing humanitarian rescue service. But for the UN to undertake these tasks, it must have adequate money, resources and personnel. Put simply, not many of the major powers are willing or ready to support this new peacekeeping role of the UN. Thus the UN cannot realistically meet its present and future peacekeeping challenges without some built-in military capacity.<sup>12</sup>

Many Japanese scholars say that the inability of the UN to meet its current obligations stems from the UN Security Council itself. "Without reforming the Security Council, all other reforms

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will be Band-aid measures.” The first step is to “bring powerful nations like Japan and Germany into the Council and participate in its reform.” Japan and Germany possess not only the financial resources but also a good understanding of post-Cold War problems. But they cannot be expected to help the UN from the outside.

Second, the Council at present relies for its increasingly complex operations almost on *ad hoc* logistical support from member countries and similarly *ad hoc* contingents. This means that its initial reaction will be hesitant, indecisive, and therefore slow. Above all, the measure of force that it will use remains uncertain. For instance, in the Rwanda civil war, the UN could not act because no member state volunteered to commit peacekeeping forces in that country.

The Japanese also believe that the current UN leadership has “shown a tendency toward emotionalism in the area of peacekeeping operations, as was in the case of Somalia.” This, of course, is an indirect criticism of US troops sent to that country over a year ago. Another weakness of current UN peacekeeping operations is that the major participants cannot agree on a common strategy. For instance, NATO and the UN cannot agree on who should decide what areas to target in Bosnia, thus leaving the peacekeeping forces on the ground easy prey as hostages.

Unless these issues are resolved and a new and more meaningful program for peacekeeping, anchored on a much more effective means of exercising command is formulated, the UN may end up as an organization without a mission.

The Japanese argue that the current leadership in the UN Security Council is suffering from “Cold War fatigue” as well as a misplaced concern for national interests, that make them unable to come up with new approaches and solutions to the new challenges to world peace and security.<sup>13</sup>

The Japanese also object to the vague terms of engagement and disengagement of the peacekeeping forces. They ask: “In the event of long-term engagement, who is supposed to underwrite the expenses?” Kuwait, for instance, bore two-thirds of the cost of the UN Iraq-Kuwait peacekeeping efforts while the Japanese contributed another huge sum.

One Japanese scholar observes that “in view of the limits to the UN’s human and economic resources and political power, and the limits to the cooperation of member states underwriting these

resources, the organization's ability to make peace is limited." Therefore, a new paradigm on peacekeeping operations is needed; and the Japanese believe that once Japan becomes a permanent member of the UN, it will not hesitate to introduce these reforms.

We can readily see that Japan is justifying its "normal country" thesis in the name of helping the peacekeeping efforts of the UN. Japan wants permanent membership in the UN Security Council in order to provide the leadership, financial resources and personnel to ensure the efficacy of the UN. But to be able to carry this out, Japan must first revise its constitution in order to build an armed forces with sufficient power to station troops beyond Japan's territorial boundaries. It is clear therefore from the writings and statements of Japanese scholars and government officials, that Japan is re-arming not to replace American military power in Asia, nor to undermine the security of the region but to rescue a failing UN that might lose its reason for being.

However, some Japanese scholars also argue that while Japan is restructuring its defense system, it should continue to remain under the American protective umbrella for 10 to 15 more years. This means that as Japan modernizes and upgrades its defense forces to be at par with those of the major powers, America should continue to protect Japan.

### *The Proposed New Constitution<sup>14</sup>*

The *Yomiuri Shinbum* published on November 3, 1994 a revised draft of Japan's 1946 constitution. For most Japanese, the timing of the *Yomiuri* draft's release was very significant as November 3 coincided with several historic occasions. It marked the day the postwar constitution was promulgated as well as the birthday of Emperor Meiji, in whose name the prewar constitution was enacted in 1889.

Although unprecedented in the history of Japanese media, most Japanese had long anticipated the publication of such a draft. The *Yomiuri* draft revises a third of all the constitution's articles.<sup>15</sup> It specifically calls for nine fundamental changes: (1) a declaration that sovereignty resides in the people and in a government by elected representatives; (2) a reaffirmation of the role of the emperor as "symbol" of the state and its people; (3) explicit provisions for the existence of the Self-Defense Force (SDF), but forbidding conscription and weapons of mass destruction (nuclear and biological weapons); (4) constitutionality of deploying the SDF for international peacekeeping missions; (5) a respect for

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personal and environmental rights; (6) clarification of the role and functions of the Upper and Lower Houses in the Diet; (7) increased power for the Prime Minister; (8) creation of a constitutional court of justice; and (9) facilitation of the procedure to amend the constitution.

The *Yomiuri* editors claimed that aside from wanting to correct many deficiencies in the current constitution, ranging from inadequate translations of the English original, to flaws due to haste and lack of thorough discussion by the Japanese people, they genuinely hoped to encourage open debate and criticisms of the proposed draft.

Most Japanese political analysts who have read the draft said that except for Chapters III on national security, Chapter IV on overseas military operations, and Chapter VII granting the Prime Minister far reaching authority, which are “the heart of Japanese debate,” all other provisions are “great improvements” on the current constitution.

Under the *Yomiuri* proposal, the provisions on national security attempt to dispel suspicions that the draft is an excuse to remilitarize Japan. Thus, Article 10 begins with the following:

- (1) *Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese shall never recognize war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.*
- (2) *Seeking to eliminate from the world inhuman and indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction, Japan shall not manufacture, possess or use such weapons.*

But the language of Article 10, in particular, the phrase “inhuman and indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction,” is vague. Although this actually restates Japan’s three non-nuclear principles i.e. not manufacturing, possessing, or allowing the introduction of nuclear weapons, the dropping of the word “nuclear” could allow Japan to manufacture, possess or use nuclear weapons provided they are not “inhuman or indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction.” Indeed, this statement becomes acceptable, if one recognizes that with today’s technology, it is possible to produce nuclear weapons that are not instruments of mass destruction. Henry Kissinger has even pointed out that one can now wage limited nuclear wars.

Some Japanese critics are perfectly happy with the double meaning, but others would rather have the constitution state in very clear terms “the abolition of nuclear weapons and maintenance of a nuclear free-policy.”

Article 11, which confers constitutional status on the SDF, stipulates the following as its role:

- (1) Japan shall form an organization for self-defense to secure its peace and independence and to maintain its safety.
- (2) The Prime Minister shall exercise supreme command authority over the organization of self-defense.
- (3) The people shall be forced to participate in the organization of self-defense.

Chapter IV of the *Yomiuri* draft cleverly handles the controversial issue of sending SDFs overseas by rewriting the UN justification for peacekeeping forces. Again it begins with the ideal in Article 12:

Japan shall aspire to the elimination from earth of human calamities caused by military conflicts, natural disasters, environmental destruction, economic deprivation in particular areas and regional disorder.

Then in Article 13, it declares:

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding article, Japan shall lend active cooperation to the activities of the relevant well-established and internationally recognized organizations. In case of need, it may dispatch public officials and provide a part of its self-defense organization for the maintenance and promotion of peace for humanitarian activities.

Again “well-established and internationally recognized organizations” need not be the UN. It can mean the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or any other security organization which Japan may ally itself with in the near future.

The editors of the *Yomiuri* and their study group have given the assurance that the revision is intended to stop a “resurgence of reactionism and militarism aimed at a return to the prewar Meiji

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constitution.” Still, no matter how one looks at it, the ambiguity of language in Chapters III and IV of the revised draft will nonetheless provide opportunities for Japan to pursue its military ambitions. The good thing is that the proposal is still subject to debate and can be amended according to the genuine wishes of the Japanese people.

### *Washington's View*

At this point one may ask what Americans think of Japan's “normal nation” thesis. After all, Washington, being the largest unelected political party in Japan, still exercises strong influence on the political fortunes of Japanese political and economic leaders.

A report published by the Aspen Institute's Aspen Strategy Group in January 1993, and written by people who are now active in the Clinton government, considers Japan's rise as a world power as inevitable. It predicts four ways in which this might take place:

- (1) by re-arming and by building up its military to complement its economic strength;
- (2) by pursuing an economic strategy anchored on an Asian trade bloc that will compete against the trade bloc of the West;
- (3) by maintaining the status quo with the US while continuing to expand its global economic interest; and,
- (4) by becoming a global civilian power that pursues its global interests through international agencies such as the United Nations.

The authors believe that the fourth route is most likely to happen in view of Japan's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. They also recommend that the US actively support this route and help Japan secure a permanent seat in the Council.

Since President Clinton does not want Japan to develop into a military superpower, he has decided to support Japan's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, despite the US Senate's unanimous resolution stating “that neither Japan nor Germany should be admitted as a permanent member until each is capable of discharging the full range of responsibilities accepted

by all current permanent members of the Security Council.” President Clinton attached no such condition when he announced his support for Japan’s bid. This means that the Americans are not united on the issue of Japanese membership in the UN Security Council.

### *Japan’s Unstated Agenda*

The US Senate’s objection is not only confined to the propriety of Japanese and German involvement in decisions concerning UN peacekeeping operations that may endanger the lives of American soldiers and those of other countries. It is also directed at the less than candid stance of Japan in explaining why it wants to become a military superpower.

Of course, Japan’s lack of candor may be attributed to its unwillingness to stir the political and security waters in the Asia-Pacific area. Obviously the Japanese government is aware that some countries have great difficulty forgetting past cruelties and humiliations, as seen in the case of the comfort women. But there is also no doubt that many Americans are worried about Japan’s militarization specially because most of its industries are more advanced than those of the US. Americans will not forget that Japan’s fledgling post-war industries overtook their own in every aspect and scale. In fact, unless there are drastic improvements in the US, Japan will soon replace it as the leading industrial power in the world. All these changes are taking place under America’s own protective security umbrella. It takes little imagination to see that given sufficient time, Japan can surpass America’s military might.

What Japanese scholars and political leaders fail to state are their fear of the following developments:

(1) that Japan cannot maintain the Yoshida plan (American security umbrella hand in hand with unhampered Japanese industrial development) without paying a high price. Certainly the Japanese got the message when President Clinton asked that they buy a fixed percentage of American goods and services or otherwise face trade sanctions.

(2) China’s growing economy and the possibility that it may become one of the largest, if not the world’s largest economy in the next two to three decades. There is no doubt that China will soon be moving into some Japanese markets. In addition, China is the fifth largest arms producer and the third largest nuclear

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power in the world. Japan can no longer push China around the way it did during the early 1920s and 30s when Japanese military troops ruled Asia.

(3) the likelihood of a united Korea. With an industrialized South and a nuclearized North, Korea, because of past anomalies, can become a large Japanese headache. Indeed many Korean watchers in Japan have written that if Pyongyang becomes a nuclear power, it can pose a real threat to Japan. They believe that Pyongyang cannot be trusted and that it will not honor any kind of agreement on nuclear inspections. In an article entitled "The Danger of Appeasing Pyongyang," Sato Katsumi, Director of Modern Korea Institute, claims, along with several other Japanese analysts, that North Korea already possesses a nuclear bomb. He cites a secret document compiled by Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev which shows that North Korea, with the help of top Russian nuclear scientists, has reached the final stage of work on a nuclear missile. He suggests that the only way to deter North Korea from using the weapon is for Japan to build a similarly equipped arsenal.

There is no doubt that Japanese fear of North Korea is very real, and such fear can only push the Japanese to press their re-arming sooner than scheduled.

(4) the emergence of Russia as a superpower. The Japanese are aware that Russia is currently in dire economic difficulties. But its nuclear arms and missiles are still intact. While Russia may have decommissioned some of them, it still has enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world 50 times over. Russia's economic recovery is a matter of time - and the potential remilitarization of Russia can become once more Japan's biggest worry.

For the Japanese people, the era of economic power without the corresponding military power is clearly waning. The Yoshida plan, the shimmering symbol of Japanese postwar success story, is coming to a close.

Indeed Japanese leaders have only limited options open to them, specially with an electorate demanding that the country become a "normal nation" before the end of the century. Clearly these domestic pressures have had their effects on Japanese leaders. Even the Japan Democratic Socialist Party (JDSP), the country's main opposition party and a traditional supporter of Pyongyang, has changed its position vis-a-vis the latter's nuclear ambitions as well as the issue of re-arming Japan. Former Prime Minister

Murayama who belongs to the JDSP, also supported America's hard-line stance against North Korea and voted to abide by any UN decision should North Korea fail to agree to a nuclear inspection.

Few Japanese were surprised when Murayama supported the plan of sending Japanese troops abroad. In his address to the 131st session of the Diet, the former Prime Minister announced: "Japan will keep its efforts to have the necessary minimum defense capability consistent with Japan's hope of global rearmament." Murayama nonetheless affirmed former Prime Minister Hosakawa's commitment "to dispatch members of the Self-Defense Force 'overseas' on a humanitarian international relief operation."

Indeed, for the first time in Japanese politics, foreign policy and military concerns are shaping the ongoing process of political realignment. There is a strong likelihood that views on how Japan should revise its constitution and re-arm, as well as what its role in UN peacekeeping efforts should be, will affect the shifting alliances among various political forces.

Two major camps are emerging. One group wants Japan to play a more active role in the international scene, including active involvement in the military aspects of UN peacekeeping operations. This group is made up of the Japan Renewal Party, Komeito (Clean Government Party), and the Socialist Democratic Party along with majority members of the Liberal Democratic Party.

At the other camp are those who are leery of a "normal" role for Japan. A "normal country" is one that bears the same kinds of responsibilities, both military and nonmilitary, as its peers in the international community. The members of this camp are the New Party Sakigake (Harbinger), the Social Democratic Party of Japan and some Liberal Democrats. They believe that Japan should maintain the status quo.

For now, it appears that the advocates of Japan as a "normal nation" are winning and are getting support from majority of the Japanese people. It seems only a matter of time before the first camp achieves a domestic consensus. But how quickly can the Japanese translate their desire to become a normal nation?

While Japan may be preparing to project its military power beyond its territorial limits, there is doubt that the Japanese, for the moment, will go nuclear. Japan's assumption of a security role larger than joining the UN peacekeeping force will likely send

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quivers throughout the region. Hence, it will probably wait for a decent interval of time and a credible excuse to do so.

### *Implications of a Normal Nation*

Neither the United States nor the rest of Asia can afford to ignore the implications of Japan's desire to re-arm and play a larger role in international affairs. Pressed by their own people to prepare Japan for the next century, Japanese leaders can be expected to revise Article 9 of their constitution and upgrade their armed forces to the status of a great military power in the near future. This means that Asia may soon play host to several major military powers aside from the US - a development which could lead to another arms race, which was already halted by the end of the Cold War. With Japan armed to the teeth, Russia, China, India and Korea will not stand idly by and watch Japan celebrate its arrival as a normal nation; and if Russia and China beef up their firepower, there is no doubt that America and Europe will follow suit. Hence, an increase in Japanese military power is certain to destabilize not only the Asia-Pacific region but the current balance of power in the world. It might even bring about a temporary disarray in security arrangements and goals.

Some ASEAN members will probably initiate talks with the United States to ask the latter to maintain its presence in the region. But should America continue to lessen its role in Asia-Pacific as the Clinton administration is doing, we are bound to see furious conferences on new regional security systems, and perhaps even discussions on security in Asia without America.

Precisely what the Philippines will do when such events occur is a more difficult issue to discuss. We can envision a "wait and see" attitude, letting the events work themselves out before we take sides. That is, assuming that the luxury of neutrality and the events will not engulf and destroy us. Perhaps this early we can press that the big powers in Asia scale down their military build-up in the next ten years.

Ideally, worldwide disarmament would be the answer. Collective understanding and agreements on territorial boundaries, free access to sea lanes of communications, and reduction in military arms would greatly ease tensions and differences among nations. But since the nuclear powers believe that they are exempt from further testing and producing nuclear devices, and that most nations still view one another with great mistrust, disarmament and collective agreements to reduce tension appear a distant ideal.

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History has shown that mistrust, ethnic hatreds, religious differences and economic rivalry are the substance of conflict, while economic power is the handmaiden of military might. Let us hope that Japan remembers the lessons of the last war and not repeat the adventure which its military leaders set sail some 50 years ago.

## NOTES

1. *1995 Asia Yearbook*. See also *Military Balance*, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.
2. *Look Japan*, July 1994.
3. Shinyo Takihiro, "The Conditions of Permanent Membership in the U.N. Security Council," *Japan Echo*, Summer 1994.
4. Ibid.
5. For a more extensive discussion on the subject, see Ushio Jiro and Noguchi Yukio, "Reforming Japan's 'War Footing' Economic System," *Japan Echo*, Summer 1994 and Yamazaki Masakazu and Kasuya Kazuki, "Taking Stock of the Postwar Era," *Japan Echo*, Winter 1994.
6. See Ikle and Nakanishi, "Japan's Grand Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1990.
7. The 1951 US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty was recently renewed. It was the result of the "Joint Japan-US Declaration on Security Alliance for the 21st century," signed between President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto on April 17, 1996.
8. According to *Yomiuri's* polls, the percentage of Japanese favoring revision of the constitution has risen from 23 percent in 1986 to 33 percent in 1991 and 50 percent in 1993. See Kitaoka Shin'ichi, "The Constitution: Ready for Revision?" *Japan Echo*, Summer 1993.
9. See "Yoshida Shigeru and the Rearmament Issue," *Japan Echo*, Winter 1994.
10. See Okazahi Hisahiko, "Clearing the Way for Global Security Role," *Japan Echo*, Summer 1993.
11. Brian Uruquart, "Who Can Police the World."
12. For most Japanese, the Dayton Agreement among the contending forces in the Balkans is yet another example of the UN's inability to keep and maintain peace without American leadership.

13. Takihiro, "The Conditions of Permanent Membership in the UN Security Council," *Japan Echo*, Summer 1994.
14. For a very thorough discussion on the constitution of Japan, see "The Constitution: Ready for Revision?" *Japan Echo*, Summer 1993; Kamiya Fuji; Moroi Ken; Nishi Osamu; and Momochi Akira, "How to Improve the Constitution: Four Views," *Japan Echo*, Summer 1993; Seki Yoshihiko, "Concluding the Debate on War-Renouncing Article 9," *Japan Echo*, Summer 1993; Yomiuri Constitution Study Council, "An Initial Proposal on Japan's Constitution," *Japan Echo*, Summer 1993.
15. See Yomiuri Constitutional Study Group, "A Proposal for a Sweeping Revision of the Constitution," *Japan Echo*, Spring 1955; "Excerpts from the Constitution and Proposed Changes," *Japan Echo*, Spring 1955; Kitaoka Shin'ichi, "A Critique of Yomiuri Amendments," *Japan Echo*, Spring 1955; "The Constitution: Four Newspapers Speak Out," *Japan Echo*, Spring 1955.