

## THE END OF THE POST-WAR PERIOD IN UNITED STATES-JAPANESE RELATIONS

EDWARD A. OLSEN

The antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union, compounded by the Sino-Soviet split, has produced a nuclear-based power relationship, commonly represented as a triangle, both in the world as a whole and in East Asia as a sub-region. If one has to select *the* factor in the contemporary configuration of the world's powers, this nuclear trifurcation would probably be one's choice. However, given the wide range of factors confronting mankind as we approach the last quarter of the Twentieth Century, restricting an assessment to a narrowly-nuclear base may well prove imprudent. The stalemate which is the effective result of nations holding each other in an abeyance of terror seems to be allowing a greater degree of latitude in the political maneuverings of powers which are not part of this dominant triangular relationship. Overall, such maneuvers remain peripheral to the core triangle. Yet, as the extra-triangular nations gain power in certain non-military sectors of the strategic balance they begin to impinge upon the sanctity of the principal relationship and must be taken into account.

Japan is in the forefront of these impinging powers. In the last several years it has been readily apparent that Japan has begun to "feel its oats" in international politics due to its manifest postwar successes. Concomitant with its reemergence on the world scene, anxiety has arisen over the effect Japan's new stature will have upon the relationships which have prevailed between the United States and Japan over the years since 1945 — relationships which have been "special" in the sense that the relationship between the United States and Great Britain was "special". This anxiety reached a high point during the months following the so-called Nixon Shocks of 1971, which are still reverberating across the Pacific, like reciprocally perpetual "tsunami" battering the interface of U.S.-Japanese contacts. The effect has been to bring the postwar period to U.S.-Japanese relations to a close. This

leads to questions of how this development occurred and what import this will have for the United States, Japan, and the world at large.

When and how do "postwar periods" end? Such periods may abruptly end with renewed hostilities. On the other hand they may and often do end with the gradual dissolution of previously existing relationships. Neither of these historical models, however, can be applied to the postwar era in the U.S.-Japanese relations.

One should not use the term "unique" too lightly in describing anything dealing with Japan, for it is a term often abused by Japanophiles who are continually awe-struck by Japanese phenomena. Nevertheless, there are occasions when it is appropriate. The end of the U.S.-Japanese postwar period may be appropriately placed in this category. It is manifestly evident that the postwar period is ending, but not by a process even remotely resembling either of the cited historical models. New hostilities have not brought about its demise and it certainly has not been forgotten. Rather, there is a developing consensus that the postwar period has about run its course and needs to be replaced by something else. It is this emerging consensus, a tacit agreement upon the need for delineating a contemporary yet historical benchmark, which is unique.

#### *From Cooperation to Competition*

To place this end of an era in perspective one must view the totality of the post-1945 period. Confusing the termination of the American occupation of Japan with the end of the postwar period is a popular misconception. Even the most cursory analysis of the post-independence period will demonstrate that there was an unbroken continuum underlying both of these periods. In its essence this continuum may be characterized by cooperation. This "cooperation" differed over time in both context and content. During the occupation it was initially cooperation designed to effect limited Japanese recovery. The context of the developing cold war brought about changes in the content of U.S.-Japanese cooperation. Americans, in consideration of both the United States' national interests and of the geo-strategic interests of the Japanese which victory had bequeathed to the United States, encouraged Japan's economic and military redevelopment. This encouragement did not appreciably change when the Japanese regained their sovereignty in 1952. Rather, enforced cooperation assumed the form of a balanced partnership, in the sense of both partners benefitting mutually.

Had this mutually beneficial stage in the development of U.S.-Japanese relations continued indefinitely, the postwar period would probably have faded out and been ignored until some future historian arbitrarily plucked out a terminal date. However, relations between the two states have not remained on that level. The context of the relationship changed, but the content — particularly its form— changed very little during the 1960's. A sign of the troubles ahead may be seen, with the advantages of hindsight, in the Security Treaty dispute of 1960. Many people, both in the United States and in Japan, blythly made the assumption that the United States achieved some sort of victory for its interests by securing a treaty renewal. To a degree this assumption is correct, but it passes over American desires of the time for a greater Japanese role under the provisions of the pact. The Americans did not get what they truly wanted. As a former Foreign Minister, the late Aichi, Kiichi, stated in retrospect:

As for the contents of the amended pact, Japan's views were incorporated to such an extent that I even wondered whether the United States would accept the amendments without complaint.<sup>1</sup>

The year 1960 may be viewed as the watershed from a decade of balanced partnership to a decade of imbalance. The outwardly smooth tenure of Ambassador Edwin O. Reischauer served as a baffle deflecting the voices of criticism, but increasingly, during the later 1960s, the mutuality of the *status quo* became a matter for debate. The crux of this issue was that more and more Americans believed they were being “had” by the Japanese — that the Japanese now held the longer end of the stick.

The causes of this development grew out of the nature of the relationship between the United States and Japan. On most issues the Japanese have either been seated in the same boat as the Americans or their “autonomous” boat has been firmly secured to the stern of the United States' boat, riding gently in its wake. In either event the Japanese have had virtually no desire to “make waves” and gone out of their way to prevent any wave action from developing lest they themselves be swamped in the process. As an ally and partner there certainly is not anything wrong with such guidelines as long as they prove successful. There is one small danger in this process, however, one to which the Japanese have fallen victim. It

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<sup>1</sup> Aichi Kiichi. *The Search for National Security*. Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969; p. 8.

is quite easy, over time, to get one's roles confused and to become deluded into thinking that the tail actually does wag the dog.

On the assumption that the United States would continue to play its role even if Japan occasionally tweaked its nose, the Japanese have often taken liberties with its favors. The result of these "liberties" is that, while the United States has steadfastly provided the security and stability which enabled Japan to prosper, some Japanese have turned around and audaciously told the United States that American motives and goals are evil and immoral—all the while, of course, benefitting from the byproducts of those "evil" and "immoral" ends. The United States, often in a stance of self-abnegation, has frequently worked for Japan's interests. Not only has the United States been receiving less and less benefit from such efforts, it has been increasingly criticized by the principal beneficiary. This was the *status quo* of which Japan's leaders were so enamoured and which the United States' leaders have begun to challenge.

The phase of unbalanced partnership, although initiated by security concerns, rapidly spread to economic affairs as America's economic animal instincts were aroused by both Japanese competition and restrictive trade practices. Economic differences have indeed come to the foreground, at least temporarily eclipsing security affairs. The factors bringing this series of problems to the forefront have been multi-faceted. The world-wide economic slowdown at the turn of the decade — subsequently aggravated by various resource shortages, aggressive and successful Japanese economic growth programs, and last, but far from least, a combination of an American economic recession coupled with a noticeable turning inward by Americans across the political spectrum reflecting upon their goals — an inward-looking posture increasingly reminiscent of the United States' isolationist heritage — have all served to focus attention on economic issues. While it would be ludicrous to suggest that the United States is concerned about the prospect of Japanese military competition (although closer Japanese ties with another power such as the Soviet Union or China would cease to make it unthinkable), "competition" is precisely the fear-producing word increasingly bound to the overall U.S.-Japanese relationship.

It has, of course, been the United States' goal in Asia to make Japan its capitalist bastion against Communism. Obviously this goal has been achieved. Problems arose as Japan surpassed the goals es-

established for it by its American mentors. From the United States' position there has been too much of a good thing. What makes matters particularly galling to the United States is that American security policy — which, as was noted above, has received vigorous abuse from many Japanese — has underwritten much of the economic growth and prosperity which is now being seen as a threat to American interests. A seemingly quick and simple solution would be the cessation of American financing of Japan's security needs. The problem with this frequently very appealing solution is that it might well create far more serious problems that it would solve. The solution therefore must be primarily economic and diplomatic. Unfortunately, requisite solutions have not yet been found and as a consequence relations between the United States and Japan have been at a low ebb.

As the context of U.S.-Japanese relations was markedly altered by Japanese prosperity juxtaposed with American unrest the content and form of the relationship remained statically hidebound by sentimental legacies rooted in the immediate postwar period. The irrationality of this state of affairs has become increasingly apparent. The need for a change — a readjustment — was clear. The Japanese acceded to the pressures placed upon them by agreeing in a limited way at the 1969 Nixon-Sato talks to play a larger regional role in East Asia. While the Japanese viewed their promises of 1969 as a major step, to many Americans they had only made a hesitant and reluctant first step. In order to redress the unbalance, much more would be required of the Japanese. Japan's leaders were aware of American discontent and often talked of the possible new roles Japan might play which would be more commensurate with their growing power. There is not any doubt that Japan's leaders were serious in their intentions. In fact, it was the seriousness of the new vistas which were being unveiled before them which led them to ponder the issues in depth. Issues of such potential import for Japan's future required careful attention. Unfortunately, lengthy consideration of alternatives on the part of Japan's leaders appeared to be undue procrastination from the vantage point of Americans familiar and impatient with Japan's past stalling tactics.

From the perspective of the United States the Japanese needed more encouragement. This encouragement took the form of the so-called Nixon Shocks of 1971 focusing on the surprise announcement of President Nixon's trip to Peking and the series of economic shake-

ups which shortly followed that announcement. The "nikuson shokku" shook Japan to its roots. The immediate gut-reaction of numerous American Japanologists was that a horrendous mistake had been made which would, in all likelihood do grievous damage to the special relationship which has bound the United States and Japan together throughout the postwar period. More importantly, this was seen as a serious error of miscalculation on the part of the Nixon administration. This assessment is accurate with one very important exception. The relationship was shaken severely, but neither out of ignorance nor by accident. Portions of President Nixon's 1972 Foreign Policy Statement indicate that the shocks were administered to Japan in full cognizance of their probable consequences. The President stated, in part:

The shocks of 1971 . . . only accelerated an evolution in U.S.-Japanese relations that was in any event, overdue, unavoidable, and in the long run, desirable.

Our relationship now requires greater reciprocity.

The unjustified complacency of the recent past has been replaced with a greater awareness of the tasks which we both face.<sup>2</sup>

President Nixon turned the screws a bit tighter in his 1973 Foreign Policy Statement when he complained that Japan had, in effect, been getting a free ride for too long. It seems evident that the United States' efforts were directed at shaking the Japanese out of their complacency. Considering the reaction the "shokku" and the subsequent hardening of American positions evoked in Japan, we may assume that the administration succeeded.

#### *A New Era: A new Relationship*

The gap which has developed between the United States and Japan has rather obviously changed the character of the relationship which prevailed over the years since 1945. Recognition of this gap by the parties on both sides of the still deepening chasm has led to an emerging consensus calling for a new era to supersede the postwar period. For lack of a better term the new era has generally been called the post-postwar period. Unfortunately, many people on both sides of the gap still cling to the images of the past, but such images are little more than the ghost images of a dead period. The sooner they are disposed of, the sooner the new relationship can be provided a firmer foundation.

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<sup>2</sup> *U.S. Foreign Policy For The 1970's*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972; pp. 52-59.

A solid foundation may be found once the relationship between the United States and Japan completely sheds the unwanted legacies of mentor-student dependence bequeathed by the occupation. A huge step toward that goal was taken with the reversion of the Ryukyu Islands to Japan in May of 1972. Prior to that event former Japanese Prime Minister Sato Eisaku had noted:

Some years ago I stated that without a settlement of the Okinawa problem, Japan's postwar period could not be considered closed. However, I consider the return of Okinawa not merely the end of an era known as the 'postwar', but a turning point that will enable the Japanese people to reaffirm their identity and to seek a proper place for Japan in the world.<sup>3</sup>

It can be more justifiably argued that the postwar period actually ended during the mid-1960s at some ill-defined point when the United States' flexible attitude toward Japan's intransigence began to harden, but for the sake of greater bi-national consensus we may utilize Prime Minister Sato's point of departure. If such feigned definitude will enable both peoples to recognize the nature of the Real-politik which prevails between them, the acceptance of a clear and commonly accepted symbolic benchmark date is entirely justified.

The new era has started, but without the advantages enjoyed by the "postwar". The U.S. and Japan obviously do not possess today a central authority capable of issuing SCAP-like directives which would have the effect of synthesizing both nations' energies and directions. Instead their assets are residual good-will and, more importantly, a wide range of common interests. These assets ought to outweigh the liabilities of more recent vintage which have been allowed to disrupt the common interests.

The two themes which have been dominant in U.S.-Japanese relations are economic and security affairs. Economic competition is often portrayed as a causal factor leading to the recent ill-will between the United States and Japan. Competition biased by hostility has caused ill-will, but it does not necessarily have to continue to cause ill-will in the future. Economic competition, if reasonably equitable, ought to be a healthy aspect of cooperation between states. One can only trust that competition between the United States and Japan will assume this form given continued joint efforts to relieve imbalances and to reduce misperceptions of each other's economic role and interests. This is the form which competition must take

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<sup>3</sup> Sato Eisaku. *New Tasks for Japan*. Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969; p. 13.

in the future — friendly economic competition. There are not any viable alternatives. We cannot return to a pseudo-occupation cooperative relationship in economic affairs which the Japanese might prefer and there are not any incentives to destroy the relationships which amicable competition based on equality holds for the future.

Just as we, as nations, have no need for extreme competition in economic affairs, we have even less need for hostility in our security affairs. The security issue has been a true stumbling block in U.S.-Japanese relations. This is the area of greatest imbalance. The Japanese have made numerous pronouncements regarding their intentions to take up the slack in this area of their relations with the United States. However, they have been equivocal and niggardly in their performance. Japan's Self-Defense Forces remain relatively insignificant.<sup>4</sup> A statement of Nitobe Tinazo written early in this century needs to be revived and presented to the contemporary Japanese:

We must not forget that a phoenix rises only from its own ashes, and that it is not a bird of passage, neither does it fly on pinions borrowed from other birds.<sup>5</sup>

Japan, as the phoenix bird exemplar of the postwar period, literally rose from its own ashes and does not appear to be a "bird of passage". However, Japan falls far short of being a complete phoenix since, although her economic wing seems firmly fixed, her military wing is very definitely a "borrowed pinion" — borrowed from the United States. This is precisely what Nitobe had warned of. A bird with such a healthy economic wing cannot reasonably expect to have another bird — one which finds the sky increasingly congested — continue to support its lame wing. Flying high on one wing is impossible, even for a lustrous phoenix, and more Japanese ought to realize it. Few observers of the Japanese scene anticipate or wish this particular phoenix to develop a muscular right wing and excessively sharpen its talons. If it were to do so, it would rapidly become an apparition of its hawk forefathers. However, even a dove must have two wings capable of supporting its own weight.

Rather than a full fledged revival of military power, the Japanese seem likely to stop short of such a goal. Their national

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Martin Weinstein's book (*Japan's Postwar Defense Policy*; Columbia University Press, 1971) for policy considerations. See also the writer's unpublished M.A. thesis (*The Role of the Self Defense Forces in Postwar Japan*; U. C. Berkeley, 1970) for an examination of the forces themselves and the factors contributing to their weakness.

<sup>5</sup> Nitobe Inazo. *Bushido, The Soul of Japan*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1969 (reprint of 1905 Putnam edition); p. 189.

goals are ill-defined in most, if not all, areas of international concern. One must trust that recent shifts in world politics will cause the Japanese to structure their goals more rigorously. In the security sector Japan's conservative elite seems unlikely to stray very far from proven methods. Perhaps the statement of former Japanese Defense Agency Director-General Arita Kiichi, comparing Japan's future role to the roles of the No drama, will prove prescient:

Until now, American strength has played the role of the 'shite' (leading role in the No) and the strength of the Self-Defense Forces has played the role of the 'waki' (supporting role in the No), but in the future conversely the Self-Defense Forces will perform the role of the 'shite' in which it will defend Japan by itself.<sup>6</sup>

Given the nature of American desires within the framework of the Nixon Doctrine<sup>7</sup> and Japanese interests, this type relationship seems quite likely.

In both sectors, economic and security, the United States and Japan are being compelled to transform their relationship. They are being compelled by changes in their comparative stature and by a changed international political milieu. Conditions have changed dramatically in East Asia during the past decade; witness the Sino-Soviet split, the Vietnam War followed by the United States' military retrenchment, the Sino-American and Sino-Japanese rapprochements, the emerging detente between the two Koreas, and — in the very long run, perhaps the most significant of all — the emergent reality of a Japan standing nakedly vulnerable in a world grown increasingly conscious of resource scarcities. All of these developments have compounded the necessity for recognizing the reality of a post-postwar stage in U.S.-Japanese relations. The necessity is confronting peoples, but neither are adequately meeting the challenges of the 1970s and beyond.

Japan does possess power. Despite its recently exposed "feet of clay", the power Japan possesses — both economic and military — has removed it from the confines of a postwar context. The post-postwar period in U.S.-Japanese relations is upon us today. The consequences of this development require that the United States and

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<sup>6</sup> Doba Hajime. "Jishu Boei ni tsuite" (Concerning Autonomous Defense) in *Kokubo* (National Defense), Vol. XVIII, No. 11, Oct. 1969; pp. 64-65.

<sup>7</sup> The writer has addressed these desires in an earlier article, see: "The Nixon Doctrine in East Asian Perspective" in *Asian Forum*, Jan.-Mar. 1973; pp. 17-28.

other major states grant the Japanese their proper place on the power continuum. It is also mandatory that the Japanese recognize and accept that place. The importance of facilitating Japan's transition into its post-postwar relationships with the United States and all other countries cannot be underestimated. This transition can and must be accomplished without unduly disrupting other extant relationships. This will not be a simple task, but it is a necessary task requiring prompt attention and concerted efforts by all concerned.