

# IIPS International Symposium

## Japan's Role in the Forthcoming World Order

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Symposium Report

### Session One

After opening remarks by IIPS President Yoshio Okawara, four guest panelists from Japan and abroad discussed the reconfiguration of the global power structure, and Japan's role in it. Here is a summary of their remarks.

#### **Hanns W. Maull, Professor, University of Trier, Germany**

The world faces an increasingly unstable future in the aftermath of 9/11, and global relationships are changing, often in ways that are difficult to predict. Two significant factors are behind these changes: the growing role of globalization and the disintegration of old Cold-War era power structures. During the Cold War it was clear who stood where in the global political arena, whereas the post-Cold-War era is notable for the freedom of choice that it has afforded the governments of the world. Further, the events of 9/11 have had a huge effect on US policies, as has the rise of China as a world power. The one thing, then, that is certain about the global balance of power going forward, is that it is filled with uncertainty. It is, however, possible to look at this situation as an opportunity—the advent of an era in which many countries exert influence on one another, pushing and pulling their way to a new global order.

So what is Japan's role in all of this, and how should the country's position in this new era be viewed? The answer really depends on how one looks at the changing world. For the realist, Japan faces a future of declining power. After all, the realist's view is a nationalist one—nations are the center of power, their sovereignty is paramount, and military strength becomes the ultimate measure of national strength. Similarly, economic strength is based on domination of trade. In this sense, Japan's gradual decline is to be expected. The country faces a shrinking population, and it is difficult to

imagine that it could match China or India in terms of future economic growth. A realist might say that the only way for Japan to resist these forces and stem its decline is to pursue a stronger, more symmetrical alliance with the USA. However, this also carries with it risks. First, circumstances could lead the US to abandon the alliance at some point, and second, such an alliance may force Japan to get involved in situations that have little to do with its own interests. Looked at this way, the US-Japan alliance is perhaps not as stable as it appears, and the realist would likely say that Japan might need to re-evaluate the relationship.

What options for hedging its risks does Japan have? One, accept the use of nuclear weapons, or two, start working to build even closer relationships with, and develop a regional cooperative structure among, its neighbors in East Asia. Maintaining a balanced relationship with China is a critical factor in this second option. Further, it is not clear whether such a constructive, tight-knit regional partnership is even possible, politically, socially, or culturally.

In the end, it really comes down to whether or not this realist view of the world actually comes to pass; at this point, at least, it seems to have not. The continued growth of global economic interdependence certainly seems to call the realist picture of the future into question. Again, the global order could change in many ways, and the advent of a new order—one in which Japan is not necessarily a declining power—is always a possibility.

**Richard J. Samuels, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA**

Let us talk about the Japan-US alliance. It has been said that Japan has chosen the path of trying to “co-manage” the US’s hegemony in the region—in other words, that it is trying to become a more equal partner in the relationship. While Japan has long been considered the subservient partner in its alliance with the US, this may now be a thing of the past.

The question really centers on how Japan can position itself as a more pivotal player, not just regionally, but on a global scale, and this relies on three key points. First, how does Japan view itself? As a major power or just a middling power? Second, what role does Japan hope to play regionally and globally? And third, how does the Japanese government expect to balance the need for risk-hedging while still profiting from the opportunities it encounters? The two may not be consistent with one another, yet Japan is attempting to pursue both.

Four assumptions are commonly raised when talking about Japan’s security policy. One is that a new security policy came into being only after 1945; this is incorrect.

Second is that Japan's pacifist stance has been merely an ideological touchstone, a view that has been pushed increasingly to one side of late. Third is that the mutual security interests of Japan and the US overlap, and that what they have in common outweighs how they diverge. And fourth is that Japan's leaders have simply been following the lead of the US, and have not really been able to apply any strategic thinking to their policy choices.

Regarding the first point, Japan's security policies and the arguments surrounding them were never a single concerted effort, and in fact can be seen as a broad continuum of debate and thinking that spans both the pre-war and post-war periods. Even today, discussion continues around a re-evaluation of the original Yoshida Doctrine.

On the second point, with its dispatch of Self-Defense Force troops to the Indian Ocean, as well as troops to Iraq, Japan is facing significant changes. Each of these moves, taken alone, may not amount to much, but taken as a whole they represent a major policy change. What is important is not whether these steps are being motivated by a resurgence of Japan's militaristic past, but that they represent realist efforts at risk-hedging by the political leadership.

On the third point, the extent to which the two countries' interests overlap was recently outlined in a report from the US/Japan 2+2 talks. To the extent that there are overlapping interests, however, Japanese and US policies also diverge, with the US being excluded from participation in the East Asia Summit, as well as differences in opinion about the direction of reform at the United Nations. The two countries also have different approaches to dealing with China. Japan is always looking to minimize risk, while some say the US is offering Japan insurance against those risks. At the same time, the driving forces behind the alliance are undergoing significant change at the hands of Japan's renewed political resolve and capabilities. Does Japan really have what it takes to become a sovereign partner, and will the US be able to accept a partner who insists on its sovereign rights? Will the alliance be able to survive a situation in which the two partners achieve parity in their relationship? It may come down to whether or not Japan itself can accept the doctrine of the right to collective self-defense.

Given the effects of the Yoshida Doctrine, and Japan's experiences during World War Two, it may be a mistake to expect the country to become a central player on the global stage. Still, neither should it be relegated to a marginal role. Japan can and should play a pivotal role in the world under the aegis of the US. For that to happen, it must first address its historical issues with its immediate neighbors. Japan has become a more active alliance partner, and the scope of the alliance itself has gone from being purely local, to regional, to one of increasingly global reach today. Finally, the Japanese

government is now more competent on the world stage than it has been in the past. It is increasingly able to assert its own interests and to guarantee those interests on its own terms. This certainly bears watching going forward.

**Alam Bachtiar, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Indonesia**

There are three points in the relationship between Japan and Indonesia to which the term “after the deluge” applies perfectly. First, after the literal flood, the period following the great tsunami in the Indian Ocean seems to have brought about a new age of support, cooperation, and NGO activity both at home and abroad. Second, while at one time Indonesia was the biggest recipient of a “flood” of Japanese overseas development assistance (ODA), and Japan had significant other investment in the country, the crash of Japan’s bubble economy, and subsequent administrative and structural reforms there have brought about a continued reduction in that aid. Finally, the past five years have seen a “flood” of moves toward greater democratization in Indonesia. Still, problems of poverty, corruption, and fundamentalist terrorism persist, and while systematic reforms toward democracy have moved ahead, the solutions to these issues remain elusive.

My research focuses on the social order, specifically on the need to strengthen civil society in our country. A civil society in this case can be characterized as being an active force against authoritarian regimes in developing countries. It is not simply society as a whole, neither is it just the sum total of NGO activity. A truly dynamic civil society is one in which the culture and values embrace diversity and pluralism, and in which divergent interests are tolerated. There are two major non-ideological arguments for a value system that welcomes diversity—one being Habermas’s “Theory of Civil Society and the Public Sphere,” which argues that a truly vigorous civil society must of necessity carry with it an element of diversity, and the other being Amartya Sen’s “Development of Freedom,” which posits that development cannot proceed effectively without freedom.

Looking at Japan’s relationship with Indonesia to date, most of the original ODA went to infrastructure projects—projects that were naturally very welcome—but since the 1990s, most NGO support has shifted to so-called “soft” support. One of the most well received recent examples was Japan’s assistance in helping to establish a fair and reliable system for conducting public opinion polls prior to the 2004 presidential election. What is important are not so much the systems themselves, but the values that bring them to life—acceptance of diversity and a culture based on civil society—and the need to continue strengthening these values. This is one area in which Japan can play a critically important role in the new world order.

**Makoto Iokibe, Kobe University, Japan**

When Perry's ships first arrived in Japan, the country faced the momentous challenge head-on, despite its fears of being subsumed by this "imperialist" power; fifty years later, it pulled off one of history's biggest upsets with its victory in the Russo-Japanese war, going on to become one of the first non-Western nations to successfully acquire and adapt Western learning for its own purposes. In just 50 years, it also managed to surpass the military superpowers of Europe in the extent of its modernization, and its ability to do so well before any other non-Western nation is one of the country's great achievements. Finally, it became Asia's only true empire, and the only country with a military modern enough to assure it of victory. Unfortunately, this strength also created scope for mistakes, and throughout the 1930s Japan pursued a regrettable policy of military engagement and aggression against its neighbors. Determined to establish its independence from the West, Japan entered World War One burning with a new nationalism, one that roused a similar sentiment in neighboring Asian countries. Japan's decision to regard such sentiments as a threat to its vested interests in the region, rather than give its neighbors the same respect and sympathy Japan felt it deserved itself, eventually led to its domination of the region by force, and eventually, to its own destruction. Thus, while pre-war Japan was presented with several valuable opportunities to contribute to the world order in a positive way, it failed to do so.

On the other hand, since the end of the war, Japan has shouldered much of the blame for the war itself, and the slightest success or smallest event is apt to set off another round of clamoring that "they're going back to their old militaristic ways again!" This is simply untrue. After the war, as the country regained its independence following the Korean War, Prime Minister Yoshida was in fact under a great deal of pressure from the US to re-establish full military capability. Yoshida resisted this pressure, and instead of choosing a militaristic government, set the country on the path to becoming a major economic power.

By the 1970s, Japan had already established cooperative relationships with many of its Asian neighbors. However, in 1974, during Prime Minister Tanaka's historic trip to Southeast Asia, his visit was interrupted by violent anti-Japanese protests. Alarmed by this reaction to what they had seen as peaceful development efforts, Japan's public and private sectors undertook a re-evaluation of their relationships in the region, a process that three years later took the form of the Fukuda Doctrine, presented by then-Prime Minister Fukuda at an APEC gathering in Manila. The Doctrine first pledged that Japan would never again become a military power, that Japan was determined to build friendly, heart-to-heart relationships with its Asian neighbors, and finally that it would do all it

could to cooperate in the stability and development of the entire Southeast Asian region, including ASEAN and Indochina (Vietnam). This was Japan's first attempt at offering a regional policy of this nature, and it was presented not with the wind-wracked saber-rattling of the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, but with Japan as the sun that would shine benevolently on the rest of Asia. This new approach was welcomed by the countries of ASEAN, and was followed up not just with more words, but with a large increase in development support that contributed significantly to the industrialization of the region. Japan continued with this policy from 1977 until the Asian Crisis of 1997, a stretch of twenty years marked by real accomplishments, in which Japan was able to build good will by doing good. While Southeast Asia had also suffered from the effects of the war, Japan was able to gradually gain recognition in the region, not through repeated apologies for the past, but by focusing on how it could help in the present and into the future. This is how, slowly and quietly, a peaceful reconciliation with the countries of Southeast Asia was finally achieved. It may not be so easy in the case of China, where the war dragged on for much longer, or Korea, which Japan kept under colonial occupation for so many years. Still, as these East Asian countries move from developing-nation to industrial-exporter status, a combination of trade, direct investment, and ODA has proven helpful. Further, by not taking a bullying, superior, and condescending stance in its relationships in East Asia, Japan has been able to contribute to the regional order by continuing to quietly support its neighbors.

Today, there are two dangers that could lead to the fall of this regional order. One is North Korea, which is feeling left out of the economic development enjoyed by the rest of East Asia, and is taking out its frustrations in the form of missiles and nuclear threats. How this threat is to be dealt with is a major issue. A second danger is in Japan's relationship with China, which has enjoyed dramatic economic success. Since the delivery of the first ODA to China in the 1980s, Japan has pursued both trade and direct investment, and has contributed significantly to China's industrialization. While this success is of course due to China's own efforts, Japan has supported those efforts for over twenty years, and has continued to support China as it takes its place as a trusted, responsible member of the international community. Just as this support has begun to bear fruit, issues such as the Yasukuni problem have arisen to muddy the waters again. Unless the two countries have the wisdom to establish a set of common interests that go beyond these issues that are rooted in the past, many of these problems will remain insurmountable.

From a broad perspective, Japan's original alliance with Great Britain lasted a mere twenty years, while its relationship with the US has been unusually successful, lasting

for nearly fifty years and showing no signs of decline. While the alliance is firmly rooted in both countries' desire for a world order that is tolerant of freedom, it too is facing an ordeal in the controversy over the relocation of the US military base at Futenma in Okinawa. The critical question is whether Okinawa can be persuaded to accept this plan and allow it to move forward. As the US continues its transformation, Japan is also under pressure to quickly decide just how, and to what extent, it should continue to cooperate with its alliance partner. Even if the US were to wish it, it would be out of the question for Japan to cooperate in every armed conflict around the world, and even the US makes mistakes. Japan needs to stand on its own two feet in deciding how to move forward. While it is important that Japan make full use of the legitimate functions of the United Nations, it should not put its own decision-making in U.N. hands. For Japan to successfully maintain its alliance with the US, it must show that it can address its own security issues with its own regional experts, and, by building consensus from within the region, make it clear that it intends to avoid making mistakes, while also preventing the US from making mistakes of its own.

## **Part Two**

In addition to the panelists, other scholars contributed to the discussion.

### **Xu Zhixian, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, China**

Sino-Japanese relations are facing their most difficult period since the normalization of ties. At this point, there are too many problems to hope for any short-term improvements. Still, the relationship between Japan and China is a critical one, and both countries have a great deal to gain in the creation of a new world order.

China today is in a period of transition. While Chinese policy towards Japan continues to be based on friendly cooperation, as a scholar representing China, this participant would like to contribute to further efforts to improve the mutual relationship.

### **Brij Tankha, University of Delhi, India**

For India, the concern is really in taking a broader view of Asia when establishing relationships. While reference is sometimes made to the "arc of instability," the Indian prime minister prefers to refer to an "arc of prosperity." While India has warred with China in the past, today it is working to strengthen cultural as well as economic ties with the country. Our relationship with Korea also continues to develop, with Korea now a major investor in our country.

Clear progress is also being made in India's relationship with Japan. However, for most Indians the possibilities are still more latent than realistic. Still, there is a strong

desire in the country for closer ties with Japan, and India believes that this could be significant for Japan. Because it has so much to contribute to any region, Japan needs to be able to think beyond East Asia, and to understand that relationships with India and all of South Asia can be important, not only economically, but politically and culturally as well.



### **Part Three**

The panelists also came up with some other points, as noted below.

#### **Richard J. Samuels, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA**

Earlier, when this participant mentioned “guns,” Dr. Iokibe spoke of “butter” in terms of the economy. However, what is really more important is the need to develop soft power, power that rests on moral authority and that attracts people for its moral righteousness. For example, Japan and China are wrestling with some historical issues, and Prime Minister Koizumi probably missed a critical opportunity with his visit to Yasukuni Shrine last month. If he had shown even a shred of the strategist stance he takes in his approach to domestic politics, things could have worked out very differently. He might have sent a clear message, in advance, that his government’s efforts to rebuild its relationships with its neighbors are far more important than any pledge to pray at Yasukuni. Then, if China had failed to respond to this message, he could have gone ahead with the visit as planned. By doing so, he could have demonstrated Japan’s clear moral advantage in the region and possibly achieved a resolution. Any protests on China’s part would have come across as disingenuous at best, and likely fallen on deaf ears.

#### **Hanns W. Maull, Professor, University of Trier, Germany**

While Japan needs to define for itself what role it will take in the future, I think it is important for Japan to also consider how it might act as a global civilian power. In order for Japan to determine this role for itself, it needs to adopt a global view, while also deciding what approach it will take to the various issues that it faces in its own region. In that process, it is also important that Japan take into positive consideration the concept of joint regional sovereignty and power-sharing. This sharing of sovereign power would seem to represent the future of regional relationships.

In terms of the US-Japan alliance, if Japan can set out a more constructive, balanced vision for the relationship, it can begin to exert influence over US policy. A relationship based on that kind of constructive cooperation would ultimately result in a Japan that can truly say “No” to the US.

Japan can also play a much more active leadership role in its regional relationships. What is critical is that, by setting a good example for the region as a whole, it can demonstrate to its neighbors how important it is to follow the rules and to observe accepted practices.

It is also important that Japan step up its international investment role, both politically and economically. In that respect it is unfortunate that it seems to have been dropped from the running for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

If Japan is to act as a global civilian power, what will be crucial is its ability to form partnerships and coalitions. The partnership between government, NGOs, and the private sector, for one, is an important factor in the development of soft power.

Finally, Japan needs a comprehensive vision, not only of the new global order, but also of what its role in that order should be. The creation of more open, civilized international relationships will help show the way, and Japan can certainly be a part of that process.

**Makoto Iokibe, Kobe University, Japan**

Since the end of the Cold War, Japan has greatly expanded its role in global security. Not only did it participate in UN peacekeeping in the aftermath of the Gulf War, but it has also worked to redefine its security agreement with the US to include provisions for greater security throughout the Asia-Pacific region. It has also bolstered its own efforts, dealing directly with suspicious vessels in its waters and with the abduction issue with North Korea. An expansion of Japan's security role seems unavoidable. While much of Asia is concerned about the perceived dangers behind discussions aimed at a revision of Japan's Constitution, as long as the Japanese people act morally, it should not be a problem. As long as Section 9.1 of the Constitution, which calls for the rejection of wars of aggression, is kept in place, Japan, like any country, certainly has the right to self-defense, and as long as it also agrees to participate in assuring global security, there is no reason why these three should be an issue. With the provision that it continues to reject aggressive action, Japan should continue with both its self-defense efforts and its contribution to global security, which together help to support the world order.

Japan's strengths are as an economic power, and it continues to be the only country that uses ODA as a comprehensive tool across many levels to support developing nations. Moving forward, how Japan uses this tool to support newly bankrupt nations will be critical. The 1980s and 1990s ushered in an era of greater global freedom and many countries unable to stand on their own economically faced financial ruin; the frustration this created was the breeding ground for much of the terrorism seen today. After the events of 9/11, the West has also come to understand the importance of extending a hand to these countries. Thus, Japan's economic support policies of the past have once again been validated. Japan, which has cared for broken and faltering countries so often in the past, is at its best in such a role. Only the US can offer a

military response, but Japan can play the healer, and together the two should take responsibility for supporting the global order going forward.

As to whether or not Japan can say “No” to the US, this participant actually believes that they have done so many times in the past. However, the USA under the Bush administration has been brasher in its policies, particularly since 9/11, and this has led to its mistaken war in Iraq. Still, America, with all its freedom and diversity, is capable of learning from its mistakes, and the next presidential election will probably see new trends appearing. Japan needs to wait patiently, considering carefully how it can best cooperate with a changed US when the time comes.