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NIPPONESE NUKES NEXT ?

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NIPPONESE NUKES NEXT?

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*III*

**ABSTRACT**

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This paper examines the extent of the resurgence of nationalism and militarism in modern day Japan; the realities of the Showa Constitution restrictions as an inhibitor of rearmament with nuclear weapons; and the economic and technological capabilities of Japan to acquire a respectable nuclear deterrent. The risks of nuclear dependence on the US nuclear umbrella are discussed along with the obstacles to rearmament and the pros and cons of rearmament. An analysis of these factors, in conjunction with the changing aspects of Japan's internal and external environment reveal that there is a mentality, a capacity and a trend in Japan toward nuclear self-sufficiency and that Japan will become a nuclear power by 1980.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, Japan is a dynamic island nation whose strategic geographical location and great economic status give her considerable influence in the Far East and the position of a potential balancing force in world power. Her people's native resourcefulness and advanced technical skills have propelled her from the total defeat of World War II to the world's third greatest industrial, economic and trading power, in a time span of just twenty-five years.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years the United States has been concerned with powerful national pressures to satisfy her overwhelming domestic needs and has become disillusioned with her world policeman role of stabilization and peacekeeping. These pressures combined with awareness of Japan's new status of power and wealth have evolved into US desires, as expressed in the Nixon Doctrine, for greater Japanese participation in the political stability and economic development of the Far East. The Japanese are aware of their enhanced world position and their nationalistic pride creates desires for a more influential role in world affairs.<sup>2</sup>

Japan is currently in a state of flux due to the re-

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<sup>1</sup> Hanson Baldwin, Strategy for Tomorrow, pp. 233-237.

<sup>2</sup> Herman Kahn, The Emerging Japanese Superstate, p. 171.

definition of US security interests which have aroused Japanese feelings of insecurity in regards to the credibility of American security guarantees and in regards to Russian and Chinese intentions. This insecurity combined with nationalistic fervor for world status and concerted economic interests in regional development are causing the Japanese to reevaluate their strategic thinking as to the world role they desire to play.<sup>3</sup> This rethinking prompted Japanese leaders to probe Defense Security Laird during his 1971 Tokyo visit as to US attitudes toward possible Japanese nuclear armament.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, there is much speculation and a great Japanese dilemma as to whether Japan could or should emerge as a world superpower with nuclear capabilities. In order to determine the probability of whether Japan will acquire nuclear weapons within the next decade, it is necessary to examine the major forces and trends that will influence her.

#### RESURGENCE OF MILITARISM

Revival of traditional Japanese nationalism has been spurred on by pride of Japan's successful economic progress. This resurgence of nationalism is supported by a 1968 poll

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<sup>3</sup> Maharaj K. Chopra, Wing Commander, "Aspects of Asian Security," Military Review, November 1972, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> T.C. Rhee, "Japan: Security and Militarism." The World Today, Vol. 27, No. 9, September 1971, pp. 393-394.

which indicated that 47 percent of Japanese felt superior to Westerners, whereas only 20 percent had superiority feelings in 1953, and this trend is probably growing.<sup>5</sup>

"Sekai-ichi (best in the world) is a phrase that stirs the deepest emotions in Japan."<sup>6</sup>

Today's Japanese business ethics and habits are inherited traits based on centuries of tradition and are derived from the Tokugawa merchants and the Samurai.

The merchants contributed their economic acumen, their pragmatic outlook devoid of ideology, their experiences in making decisions by experience. The Samurai brought with them their autocratic traits, their belief in privileges and status for those with power, their fierce loyalties and willingness to compromise with friends, their aggressiveness with its touch of ruthlessness toward rivals.<sup>7</sup>

These traits have withstood concerted efforts of the allies after World War II to "Westernize" the Japanese by substituting political and personal gratification for national gratification. Kahn believes that the Showa generation, representing two-thirds of the population, will carry forward these economic policies that elevated Japan to a great power status but there is also a poten-

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<sup>5</sup> "Japan: A Time of Decision," Newsweek, 4 October 1971, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Halloran, Japan Images and Realities, p. 153.

tial for them to revert to nationalism and cultural identity rather than imitate the foreign models of the past<sup>8</sup> twenty-five years. Such a reversion would stir national support for revival of military power to gain national objectives.

Author, Willard Price refers to Japan's recurring ambition to expand at the expense of her neighbors, a trait and philosophy ground in the Japanese mind for twenty-five centuries. He cites with concern a return toward militarism with citizenship rights restored to some 70 thousand purged militarists and nationalists, who have infiltrated the educational, news and other media; revising books, denying Japan's war guilt and promoting national fanaticism.<sup>9</sup>

When making observations about the Japanese people it is difficult to separate the businessmen from the politicians, militarists and the nationalists due to the uniqueness of their traditional ethics which stresses duty and loyalty to the group and the Japanese society regardless of the actions required. Many Westerners view this Japanese approach as opportunistic, expedient and

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<sup>8</sup> Kahn, p. 182-183.

<sup>9</sup> Willard Price, The Japanese Miracle and Peril, pp. 321-334.

pure utility when compared to the Western concepts of  
duty, loyalty, truth, conscience, etc.<sup>10</sup>

There are some influential political, business and military leaders advocating higher defense expenditures on the premise that military power must accompany economic power. One gifted playwright nationalist politician, Shintaro Ishihara, openly campaigned for a nuclear deterrent. The nuclear weapons deficiency is naturally a touchy subject with the military establishment which leans toward nationalism.<sup>11</sup>

The most powerful Japanese business association is the Keidanren, which is composed of Japan's most prominent bankers and industrialists. This association has a special committee concerned with armaments production and has frequently spoken out for rearmament and expansion of the defense industry.<sup>12</sup> Its minister in charge of science and technology, Wataru Hiraizumi, believes that Japan should become a major power in all respects.<sup>13</sup> Apparently most Japanese feel that their country will acquire nuclear

<sup>10</sup>

Charles A. Moore, The Japanese Mind, pp. 297-298.

<sup>11</sup>

Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Fragile Blossom, Crisis and Change in Japan, p. 100.

<sup>12</sup>

Rand Corp. Report No. R-1030 - ISA, Japanese National Security Policy - Domestic Determinants, June 1972, p. 72.

<sup>13</sup>

Brzezinski, p. 99.

weapons since polls show, that regardless of their personal feelings, most Japanese believe that their country will acquire nuclear weapons over the next decade.<sup>14</sup>

Research does reveal Japan's tremendous nationalistic spirit and a trend toward revival of traditional militarism, with national expectations of a world power role and with resignation to nuclear weapons acquisition in order to play the scenario.

#### REALITIES OF CONSTITUTIONAL RESTRICTIONS

One of the major obstacles to full Japanese rearmament with nuclear capabilities is Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which denounced war as an instrument of policy and forswore the maintenance of land, sea, and air forces and other war making potentials. This provision was accepted by the Japanese for ten years until the legal position of defensive nuclear armaments was voiced by Prime Minister, Nobusuke Kishi. His position caused great national concern and furor and resulted in a later decision by a Cabinet Constitution Research Committee that the constitution prohibited Japanese possession of nuclear weapons of any kind.<sup>15</sup> Changes in Japanese

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<sup>14</sup> "The Missing Super-Power," The Economist, London, Vol. 240, July 31, 1971, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Kei Wakaizumi, "The Problem for Japan," A World of Nuclear Powers, ed. Alastair Buchan, pp. 78-79.

attitudes on total prohibition of military forces in perpetuity were also encouraged by US interest and support<sup>16</sup> for the creation of Japan's Self-Defense Forces.

In 1964, China's detonation of her first nuclear device caused an apprehensive Japan to reevaluate her security position, and shortly thereafter, a committee of the Upper House supported the legality of defensive nuclear weapons.<sup>17</sup>

This position was substantiated in October 1970 by a Japanese Defense Agency "White Paper" which supported the position of a sovereign nation's inherent natural right of self-defense and the maintenance of defensive power by Japan to a scale necessary for self-defense.<sup>18</sup> Japan also announced that its possession of small yield, tactical, defensive nuclear weapons would not be prohibited<sup>19</sup> by the Japanese National Peace Constitution.

Price states that the Japanese cannot respect its constitution because of its foreign origin and alien phraseologies which are repugnant to the Japanese.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup>

Baldwin, p. 242.

<sup>17</sup>

Wakaizumi, pp. 78-79.

<sup>18</sup>

Japanese Defense Agency, The Defense of Japan, (English Translation), October, 1970, pp. 27-28.

<sup>19</sup>

The Washington Post, 21 October 1970, p. 22.

<sup>20</sup>

Price, p. 225.

Today there is a movement for constitutional revision of Article 9, with nationalistic aims to rebuild military power. One advocate for change in the "no-war" article is Mr. Osamu Inaba, Chairman of the revision drafting committee, who believes that most Japanese support a policy of self-defense sufficiency.<sup>21</sup> Opponents of revision cite the restraining effect of the constitution on Japanese rearmament with its favorable benefits of tranquility from international power struggles.<sup>22</sup>

Conservative leaders privately support a revised constitution which would be truly Japanese and portray her history and culture and feel it should reflect the realities of Japanese politics and better serve this unique nation, erasing all the marks of World War II defeat and occupation.<sup>23</sup>

A constitutional revision would enable the Japanese to fill the military vacuum in Asia created by US troop reductions and allow greater Japanese regional economic, political and military involvement in accordance with the Nixon Doctrine. It would also greatly

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<sup>21</sup> Richard Halloran, "Japanese Weigh Charter Revision," The New York Times, 31 October 71, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Peter J. Hino, LTC, And in this Nuclear Corner... Japan? p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Halloran, p. 110.

enhance Japanese prestige and strategic perspective. If Japan cannot or does not overtly revise the constitution, she will conveniently reinterpret it so as to achieve her security interests. As can be seen, Japanese government attitudes have evolved from absolute rejection to convenient acceptance of the legality of defensive nuclear weapons. In the future, her own strategic interests will guide her security policies.

#### ECONOMIC MIGHT AND TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES

Japan's GNP now exceeds \$200 billion and her GNP should approach nearly \$400 billion in 1975 barring any permanent undermining effects of the current world energy crisis. Future budget allocations of the small percentage now appropriated to defense will represent a sizeable amount and would be sufficient for the development and maintenance of a significant nuclear program.

The necessity for the development of nuclear energy has long been recognized by Japan's business leaders, and there is reason to assume that the current energy crisis will force the Japanese toward a crash program of energy development, so as to offset their future vulnerability to the whims of the Middle East Nations or other world power confrontations. It seems logical due to the constraining factors of limited native raw materials and because of technological know-how that Japan will steer a course

toward primary dependence on nuclear energy to meet her current and anticipated future energy needs.

Utilization of American fueled generating plants has greatly assisted the Japanese in assimilating nuclear technology. They are expected to have 38 nuclear fueled plants by 1977<sup>24</sup> and by 1985 will have the capacity to produce 30<sup>25</sup> to 40 million kilowatts of atomic power.

Japan is almost devoid of uranium bearing ore and is engaging firms world-wide to prospect and mine for uranium; but she is concentrating her efforts toward nuclear breeder reactors, a process which converts uranium into plutonium and over a period of time makes more plutonium than it consumes. Japan has also succeeded in the centrifugal separation of uranium 235 which facilitates economical small plant utilization.<sup>26</sup> Kahn estimates a Japanese plutonium capacity in 1975 to produce several thousand small nuclear weapons with little restrictive effect on production and the ensuing cost of kilowatt hours.<sup>27</sup>

Japan was the fifth nation to orbit a satellite and rapid advances in space research and missile technology propelled her into third place in this science. Japanese

<sup>24</sup> Oral J. Bilderback, Capt. USN, Resurgent Japanese Sea Power, Inevitable Result of Nixon Doctrine, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Brzezinski, p. 108.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Kahn, p. 165.

emphasis is being placed on highly precisioned larger satellites developed and launched in a short time span. In 1971, she launched both liquid and solid fueled rockets.<sup>28</sup> She has successfully launched a nine and one-half ton rocket to a range of 1300 miles and her MU 4 Missile has the thrust, pay load and range equivalent to the early US Minuteman Missile.<sup>29</sup> Kahn predicts that Japan will have the space technology to produce equivalents to the early Minuteman and Polaris by 1975 and will likely acquire nuclear weapons within the next five or ten years.<sup>30</sup> Other Japanese experts feel that Japan could quickly produce nuclear weapons, but barring active US support or obstruction, it would take her a considerable time to develop a respectable nuclear deterrent.<sup>31</sup>

#### RISKS OF NUCLEAR DEPENDENCE ON THE US

Japan's economic success and survival as a leading commercial nation is dependent upon the continuous supply of raw materials and her access to her natural marketing areas. These facts were so dramatically emphasized recently

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<sup>28</sup> Mainichi, 25 October 1970, 11 September, 1971, 15 September, 1971.

<sup>29</sup> Arleigh Burke, United States - Japanese Relations, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969, p. 75.

<sup>30</sup> Kahn, op. 165-166.

<sup>31</sup> Brzezinski, p. 100.

by the rationing of Middle East oil to her "well oiled" economy. Her resources vulnerability can be accentuated by noting that 99.5 percent of her oil is imported and her estimated needs are expected to increase 250 percent by 1985.<sup>32</sup>

Japan's geographic proximity to the PRC and the USSR make her sensitive to any potential aggressive offensive actions by these communist nations and intensifies Japanese concern in protecting her regional interests and investments and in securing vital sea lanes, notably the Malacca Straits. Japan is extremely conscious of growing Russian naval power in the surrounding oceans and the increased Soviet air surveillance of Japan. She is also very conscious of Red China's national ambitions, her regional nuclear capabilities and her penchant for fomenting revolutionary wars in the area.

Since World War II, the Japanese have been dependent on the US nuclear umbrella to protect her vital security interests; but recently US-Japanese relations have faced increased uncertainties in regards to American base rights in Japan, local defense requirements and responsibilities, and recent US emergency economic measures. Japan has also taken notice of the divisive effect of the Vietnam War on

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<sup>32</sup> "Japan in the International Economic War," The Oriental Economist, Vol 39, No 731, September 1971, pp.17-18.

US public support for involvement in foreign wars and are found to be concerned about the aftermath of Watergate and its erosive effect on the independence of the executive branch and its ability to commit the United States in foreign affairs.

Japanese leaders recognize that international power relations are changing in the Far East and the more nationalistic leaders fear a weakening of US resolve in the area. They are promoting a more independent, strong self-reliant Japanese program for reasons of security and prestige. Japanese doubts about US defense commitments are supported by a recent Japanese newspaper poll which revealed that 38 percent of those polled felt as if the US would not defend Japan in an emergency.<sup>33</sup>

Dependence on the reliability of the US nuclear umbrella is humiliating to the prestige of the status conscious Japanese. It is also dangerous in the event that US and Japanese national interests do not coincide in a given situation or if relations between the two nations become strained. Japan's leaders and its people are becoming convinced that the free world's second greatest industrial power must have a self-sufficient defense force to project her national aims, to protect her fantastic

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John Toland, The Rising Sun, pp. 451-452.

economic gains, to gain self-confidence, prestige and influence, as well as to deter potential aggressors. A defense mantle with nuclear armaments fits the Japanese desire to become independent of the United States.

#### OBSTACLES TO REARMAMENT

The major obstacles to large scale rearmament including nuclear arms are; domestic-political opposition economic considerations, regional interpretations and possible American negative reactions. An important element of the Japanese electorate allied with the mass media is against large scale rearmament. Japanese government moves toward even non-nuclear military power provokes considerable resistance. Although some armaments interests promote rearmament to hedge against recessional tendencies, a recessionary trend could influence public opinions against rearmament. The Japanese are aware of their Asian neighbors traditional fear of their military prowess, and realize that a massively armed Japan would revive old anxieties and hostilities, offsetting security gains and thereby damage the positive image gained by their economic successes. The Japanese are unsure as to the American reaction to remilitarization and are concerned about American sensitivities affiliated with the tragic experiences of World War II.

## PROS AND CONS OF NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS

Many arguments can be made for and against Japanese acquisition of nuclear weapons. Some principle incentives to go nuclear are; budget capacity, military utility, industrial advancement benefits, fear of permanent dependence and control and international prestige.

With its expected continued high rate of growth, not withstanding the short term effects of the current energy crisis, Japan's prolific economy can afford a substantial nuclear effort. A nuclear arsenal could provide sufficient military strengths without large conventional forces. A military nuclear program would provide technological spin-off benefits for industry and would soothe Japanese fears of permanent superpower dominance of all phases of nuclear technology, and an important world nuclear ranking would provide increased national status and prestige for government engineers, scientists, and armed forces.

Principle arguments against nuclear weapons are economic, nuclear vulnerability, nuclear allergy, moral concern, fears of revived militarism, and political implications.

Economic arguments counter the tremendous expense of a nuclear venture when Japan already has the protection of the US nuclear umbrella. Also, nuclear weapons have military significance only when a second strike is capable

and the Japanese population and homeland concentration would be very vulnerable, although this limitation could be minimized with an armed ballistic missile fleet in ocean waters. Because of their own nuclear victim experiences in World War II, many Japanese abhor nuclear thoughts. There is also moral concern that a nuclear Japan would enkindle enormous fear and animosity of other nations and there would be the political embarrassment to a nation that has for many years denounced the evils of nuclear weapons. Many Japanese also fear the revival of militarism with its internal repression of rights that such a program may bring. Taking all of these facts under consideration, an overt nuclear acquisition policy without the necessary psychological acceptance buildup of the Japanese people could greatly divide the nation.

#### CONCLUSION

It is inconceivable to this student of history that Japan with its past aggressive military and economic record and with its current status as the world's third greatest economic power, gained by the inherent nature, traits and traditions of the Japanese people, would or could refrain from becoming a major region or world political power and thereby lose all that she has gained. The stark nakedness of Japan's industrial power physique, revealed to the entire world by the current Middle-East oil crisis, will surely

ignite Japan on an emergency nuclear power seeking mission paralleled only by the 1958 US satellite craze reaction to the Soviet Sputnik. Such a program is bound to reap the collateral benefits of an assimilation of a superior nuclear knowledge and the capabilities necessary for nuclear weaponry.

Japan has the economic capacity, technological know-how and will-power for such an accelerated program and will produce nuclear weapons by 1980. Her nuclear acquisition program will be a continuation of her deliberate and covert build-up which will give her the necessary springboard for a quick but massive rearmament program. Initially, Japan will probably have a nuclear program which imitates that of France and Britain, with limited retaliatory capacity. Ultimately she will strive for a technological breakthrough and this event coupled with a gradual world acceptance of a "nuclear Japan," would elevate her to the position of a dominant military power in Asia.

Nipponese Nukes Next?      Inevitable!

Ka.....Boom!

*Norbert M. Reinert*  
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