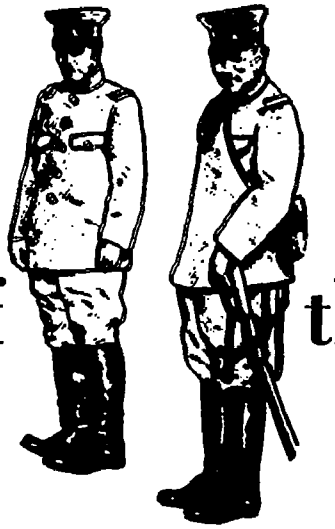
In the long run, an independent Japan will rearm

The Course of the Rising Sun



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It is generally accepted today that Japan —simultaneously the most economically powerful and militarily weak nation in Asia—is looking for a role in the world community that is independent rather than subservient, cooperative rather than disruptive, influential and contributive rather than domineering and exploitative. Thus Japan is an anomaly in a system of world politics where the prime determinant of role and influence throughout the modern age has been military power and the will to use it. However, having once demonstrated its ability and will to challenge the United States and Great Britain in East Asia, Japan could again become a major military power if that seemed necessary to achieve and maintain the influence it seeks in the international community.

The military option would, of course, become more attractive if Japan's economic power were seriously threatened. The Japanese possess both the financial and technical ability to develop a conventional force equal to any currently in existence, as well as a nuclear capability that could rank Japan with the Soviet Union and the United States. What has been lacking is the impetus to decide to alter present policies of maintaining only a modest self-defense force in favor of a vastly expanded military establishment. Given the unfolding transitions in the international political and economic environment, we may be approaching the time when the climate is right for a resurgence of Japanese militarism.

Japan's decision to expand into Asia was neither hasty nor irrational. Undertaken largely to find productive outlets for her ever increasing population and to obtain raw materials and energy for her factories, it had been obvious to her military strategists from the outset that the establishment of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" would inevitably result in conflict with the Western powers. The crisis came with the stringent economic restrictions put into effect by the United States in the summer of 1941. Japan could no longer import essential raw materials for war production. Complete abandonment of her nationalistic ambitions was unthinkable. The only alternative was to seize the rich southern resources area—Malaya and the Dutch East Indies.

Japan's success during World War II was attributable to her large, well-trained military forces, a substantial and expanding industrial complex, economic strength, a stable political and social environment, and a government and people with strong nationalistic feelings who were capable of making the ultimate sacrifice in defense of what they believed to be their national interests. Japan's defeat came when, and only when, she was denied access to the raw materials and petroleum required to support her factories and war machine.

At the end of World War II the Allies disarmed and sought to neutralize Japan. General MacArthur even visualized Japan as the Switzerland of the Far East and set about creating a political structure conducive to that end. The Japanese, still in a state of shock from the dreadful experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were happy to oblige. Their antiwar philosophy is reflected in Article 9, commonly referred to as the "no war" provision, of the Japanese Constitution:

> Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the State will not be recognized.

Unfortunately, MacArthur's goal had to be abandoned when conditions began to change in the Far East and American interests were threatened. China fell to communism in 1949; the newly created People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union concluded a thirty-year alliance; and war broke out in Korea, with Chinese "volunteer" participation. These

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events served to upset the military equilibrium in the Pacific. Placed at a disadvantage in relation to the Soviet Union, the U.S. sought to restore the balance and contain communism by rearming Japan and concluding a series of mutual security arrangements with other nations in the region.

The first step toward rearmament involved creating in August, 1950, the 75,000-man National Police Reserve, intended to maintain law and order in Japan following the deployment of American forces to Korea. Constitutional difficulties and public opinion delayed the establishment of the Self-Defense Forces, visualized as an army without war-making potential. It was not until October, 1953, that Japan entered into a firm commitment to rearm, thereby paving the way for the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement which was concluded between the United States and Japan in March, 1954. The principal purpose of the pact was to relieve the United States of its burden of defending Japan by encouraging Japan to increase its capabilities along sound lines.

The National Defense Council, established in July, 1956, to advise the Prime Minister, issued the Basic Principles of National Defense in May, 1957, which underlined the policy of joint defense as well as self-defense through progressive rearmament. Today, Japan has an armed force totaling 266,000, equipped with new and improved weaponry. Notwithstanding a recognized need for a self-defense force, the majority of the Japanese public is adamantly opposed to the development of nuclear weapons, though it appears to be only mildly opposed to further expansion along conventional lines.

Japan's phenomenal economic recovery and subsequent expansion has created a completely new role for the Japanese in world affairs, a role so influential as to bring with it unavoidable political and diplomatic consequences. As a result, its once comfortable relationship with the United States has entered a period of transition, principally because Japan has become an active competitor in the economic sphere that was once the exclusive reserve of the Americans.

Japan's postwar industrial growth has led to a heavy dependence on imported raw materials, especially petroleum products. The Japanese presently import some 200 million tons of crude oil from the Middle East, which is carried by a fleet of 220 tankers averaging 90,000 tons each and making an average of ten trips a year. Although advanced technology and synthetics may progressively reduce Japan's dependence on imports of raw materials, it is significant that about 85 per cent of Japan's crude oil comes from the Persian Gulf and has to pass through the Malacca or Lombok Straits. She is thus dependent for oil on a number of politically volatile countries.

The Japanese Government has so far reacted to all this in two ways. First, it has encouraged Japanese oil companies to increase their involvement in oil extraction, refining and distribution, with the objective of having 30 per cent of Japan's oil requirements controlled by Japanese firms by 1985. In this regard, the Japanese have been promoting the idea of constructing a major oil pipeline across the Isthmus of Kra in Thailand to take advantage of the economies involved and to provide a valuable safeguard against interrupting the flow of their vital oil supplies. Conceptually, supertankers would transport crude oil from the Persian Gulf to the Isthmus. The oil would be discharged and pumped across the Isthmus to smaller tankers in the Gulf of Thailand.

Second, the Japanese Government has tried to diversify its sources of supply—a move that involves relations with China, Russia and the United States. Both China and Russia want to establish commercial relations with Japan, partly for commercial and partly for political reasons: neither wants Japan tied too closely to the other. Japan, in turn, sees both countries as a potential export market, and Russia in particular as a way of diversifying its source of energy and other raw materials through the development of Siberia. Access to Soviet raw materials, particularly crude oil and natural gas, is of paramount importance to the Japanese Government. The signing of a Soviet-American Trade Agreement, which envisages a major U.S.-USSR partnership for the exploitation of Siberian petroleum and natural gas resources, has caused the Japanese considerable concern. They fear the United States might displace them in their attempts to develop and exploit these critical resources in partnership with the USSR.

The very nature of the proposed Soviet-American and Soviet-Japanese projects highlights the prospects of intensified competition between the United States and Japan as consuming nations. The Soviet Union is fully aware of the volatile nature of the situation and can be expected to exploit its economic and political advantages. The energy crisis in the United States will assuredly lead to increased American consumption of foreign oil and to intensified Japanese efforts to assure that future Soviet supplies will not be preempted by American firms. Should this materialize, Japanese-American relations are bound to be severely strained, even if the expected development of Siberia involves Japan and the United States as joint partners with the Soviet Union.

Japan's involvement in the prospective development of a Siberian petrochemical industry has not gone unnoticed in China. China fears any development of Siberia that would enhance Russia's ability to wage war against the Chinese. Japan, in turn, is mindful that China's ties in Singapore, Malayasia and Indonesia constitute a potential threat to Japan's use of the Malacca Straits.

The international concern manifested in recent months over the control of the

Malacca Straits has highlighted dramatically Japan's vital interest in insuring the security of its most important maritime lines of communication through the Indian Ocean. At present over 90 per cent of Japan's petroleum and a significant quantity of its mineral imports have to be shipped across the Indian Ocean and through the Straits of Malacca.The volume of Japan's exports via this route has been increasing and through the Straits of Malacca. The volume of (seeking to offset anticipated reductions in its ratio of exports to the United States, which had been approximately 30 per cent of its total) attempts to cultivate markets in Western Europe and elsewhere.

Japan's long-term strategic concern is quite understandably aroused by Indonesian and Malayasian moves to extend their sovereignty over the Malacca and Singapore Straits. They are striving to extend their control over shipping through what has long since been recognized, at least by usage, as an international waterway. Control of this vital gateway to the Indian Ocean has assumed regional as well as global strategic significance. This is manifest in the interest that the United States, the Soviet Union and, more recently, China have displayed in the Straits and in the question of who will fill the vacuum created in the Indian Ocean by withdrawal of British military power from the region in November, 1971.

The postwar Southeast Asia policy of Japan has focused on the development of the region as a Japanese marketplace in exchange for the abundance of raw materials available there. The policy has been tempered by two significant factors. First, the lingering enmity of the Southeast Asians toward Japan; and, second, the geographical relationship of the archipelago to the Straits of Malacca.

Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida established the pattern of Japan's postwar Southeast Asia policy. He recognized that Southeast Asian sentiments toward Japan were unfavorable, resembling in many ways the feelings of the Europeans toward Germany after the First World War. He frankly acknowledged that "apprehensions that Japan might again become a menace to world peace seem to linger among the peoples who have suffered disastrously from Japanese aggression and who have a vivid memory of the resurgence of Germany as a satanic power under Hitler" (*Foreign Affairs*, January, 1951).

Though these apprehensions may have lessened somewhat with the passage of time, they persist to this day. This is especially true of China, whose leadership has repeatedly warned against the resurgence of militarism in Japan. The Chinese have steadfastly maintained that although Japan has become an economic power, "the contradiction between the malignant swelling of Japan's economy and her shortage of natural resources was ever sharper than before World War II." China has also maintained that Japan was seeking to resolve the problem of shortages through expansion abroad, and that "an economic power is bound to become a military power as economic expansion leads to military expansion" (Rathy Brig Sawhny, *The Institute of Defense Studies and Analyses Journal*, April, 1972).

Turning to the second factor, Japanese foreign policy reflects the fact that the archipelago of Southeast Asia straddles the sea routes over which oil must be transported from the Middle East. Japanese industry is extremely vulnerable to any interruption in the supply of petroleum, and, with the continuing growth of the Japanese economy, this dependence is likely to increase for some years. Although the security of supplies in the Middle East itself would appear to be a greater potential problem than the sea routes through the islands of Southeast Asia, it is extremely difficult to visualize positive steps that Japan could take with respect to either without the cooperation of other major powers or an extensive rearmament program.

Thus it is not inconceivable that Japan may be unable to safeguard what it considers to be its legitimate and vital interest in the continuity of maritime and, indeed, naval traffic through the Straits of Malacca because of power rivalries in the region. If that happens, Japan would be forced to choose between accepting a curtailment of these interests or finding other means to safeguard them. Japanese leaders have been reluctant to indicate what steps they would take if Japan's efforts to increase its influence in the international community through its economic power failed; nor do we know what steps Japan would take if its economic power itself were threatened by the denial or restriction of passage through the Malacca Straits.

Moreover, developments in Tokyo-Washington relationships have a crucial impact on Japanese policy in Southeast Asia. The Nixon "shocks," the reversion of Okinawa with its concomitant requirement for increased self-defense forces, and the growing economic and commercial rivalries between Japan and the United States have all aroused deep anxieties in the minds of the Japanese about their role in Southeast Asia and the world.

The advent of the Nixon Doctrine has given forward-thinking Japanese leaders cause for alarm, principally because of the contradiction the doctrine presents between the desire for continued American security arrangements and the desire for Japanese autonomy. The problem is compounded by the return of Okinawa to Japanese control and the potential withdrawal of U.S. forces.

The price the Sato government had to pay for the reversion of Okinawa was its commitment to assume a greater responsibility for maintaining the peace in the Far East. By formally recognizing the vital importance of the security of Korea and Taiwan, and by expressing its willingness to cooperate with the United States in the event of emergencies in

these areas, Japan went a long way toward commiting itself to regional cooperation in security matters.

Since President Nixon's move toward détente with China, Japan's leaders have undoubtedly come to realize that Japan can no longer serve as a "bastion" of United States policy toward China. Indeed, China may become a major bastion of an emerging United States policy to contain the growth of Japanese power in both its economic and possible military manifestations. It is only in this context that China appears to be favorably disposed to the continuation of the Japanese-American alliance. During the 1950's China dubbed the alliance as a design to clear the path for Japanese militarism to overrun Southeast Asia. But today the situation has changed, and China views the alliance both as a restraint upon Japan and as protection against Japan's developing close ties with the Soviet Union.

What China has failed to recognize, however, is that the burgeoning of Japan's will to enlarge its role in response to the Nixon Doctrine is linked to a simple nationalistic urge toward self-assertion. Japan wants emancipation from its subservient relationship with the United States, and is well aware of the prestige and potential influence inherent in economic and military leadership. The particular sociopsychological background of the Japanese is conducive to looking at international society as a system of hierarchical relationships, and such thinking has encouraged the notion that Japan should become a great power, perhaps even a "superpower." This underlies the view that sooner or later, though probably not before the 1980's, Japan could develop nuclear weapons. Although public attitudes will be a problem, 45 per cent of Japan's population now believes that their country will one day possess nuclear weapons. It is nevertheless the consensus of serious observers that only a massive and direct external threat to Japanese security can overcome the pressures of partisan politics and public opinion against nuclear weapons in the near future.

Meanwhile, the Japanese Government is implementing its Fourth Defense Build-up Plan, which was developed in 1970 in the midst of the kind of controversy that has surrounded every step in the military sphere since 1950. Providing for an expenditure of 5.8 billion yen over a five-year period to modernize Japanese capability in the air and at sea, as well as to strengthen the defense production base, this plan is double that of prior plans. Though military expenditures will be kept under 1 per cent of the Gross National Product, the growth of the latter will mean a constant expansion of the defense budget. It is therefore estimated that by 1976 Japan's armed forces will rank seventh in the world; a moderately high rating but still considerably below the military giants of the world and far short of what made Japan's army a fearsome machine a third of a century ago.

In light of the rapidly changing political, economic and military environment in the far Pacific, and of Japan's growing concern with its maritime lines of communication through the Straits of Malacca, alternatives open to Japan appear to be one or some combination of the following:

1. *Attempt to restore and maintain its erstwhile close relationship with the United States.* This would inevitably require that Japan continue to accept a subordinate role—politically, economically and militarily. This could be complicated by current ambiguity regarding Japan's ultimate role as distinct from the intermediate position it presently occupies.

2. *Seek closer relations with China.* Though there is much to recommend this economically, the Chinese fear resurgent militarism in Japan to the extent that China is not prepared to grant Japan equal, let alone dominant, status. Moreover, such a relationship could only serve to exacerbate Sino-Soviet relations in the long run.

3. *Seek closer relations with the Soviet Union.* Again, there are economic advantages to such a union. However, it would place Japan at the ultimate mercy of the Soviet Union, and would therefore be unacceptable to the Japanese.

4. *Seek to enter into a quadrangular nonaggression pact with the United States, China and the Sovie Union.* Though this may be preferable, and the course most likely to achieve stability in the Pacific region, it is impractical because of contemporary political divisions separating the major powers with an interest in the Pacific.

5. *Move progressively toward an independent, self-reliant posture.* This involves an acceleration of conventional rearmament, and probably the development of a nuclear capability in the long run. It would permit Japan to become its own master and to achieve the influence it seeks internationally through exploitation of its growing economic strength. Moreover, it fulfills the Japanese quest for greatness, notwithstanding that it requires that the Japanese put aside their idealistic renunciation of military power as a means of influence in the international community.

The ever expanding economic strength of the Japanese nation has created a new role for Japan in world affairs, which, together with its increasingly heavy dependence on imports through the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean, dictates either that it continue to be wholly subservient to the United States or that it develop the means through which to assert its independence and protect its interests abroad. To accomplish its goals it is probable that Japan will seek to balance its relationships with the United States, China and the Soviet Union in the short range as it moves progressively toward an independent, self-reliant military, political and economic posture in the long range.