

Security after the Cold War

By Toshiyuki Shikata

After nearly half a century of fierce rivalry between two bitter ideological enemies, the unprecedented arms race between East and West is finally over and the world is looking for ways to ensure international security in the post-Cold War era.

The United States and the former Soviet Union have embarked on a gradual reduction of their nuclear and conventional arsenals, but this is being concentrated for now on phasing out obsolete or soon-to-be-obsolete weaponry, on scaling back their bloated military structures, and on reducing the number of people under arms. Neither side has yet indicated any clear outline of what force levels it would feel comfortable with, and the process is more likely to be one of efficiency enhancement than one of substantial disarmament.

Given this situation in the United States and the former Soviet Union, their allies are naturally also hard at work reviewing their force levels and rethinking their defense strategies.

Japan's security needs

During the Cold War, Japan was a loyal retainer in the U.S.-led camp, contributing to Western economic development and stability and helping to deter the threat of aggression. Japan's basic security strategy at the time was one of comprehensive security based on the balanced deployment of economic influence, diplomatic maneuvering and defense capability. This approach was codified in the Basic Policy for National Defense adopted by the National Defense Council in 1957, the main tenets being:

- (1) working for world peace through the United Nations;
- (2) consolidating the foundations for national security with comprehensive policies;
- (3) gradually acquiring the moderate but effective defense capability needed to defend Japan; and

(4) grounding Japan's security in the Japan-U.S. security arrangements.

The government has taken every opportunity since then to reaffirm and elaborate on Japan's basic thinking on security. Among the declared policies are:

- (1) Japan will not again become a military power such as might threaten any other country.
- (2) It will firmly adhere to the three non-nuclear principles (of non-possession, non-manufacture, and non-introduction).
- (3) It will steadfastly refuse to export arms.
- (4) It will maintain an exclusively defense-oriented posture.
- (5) Every effort will be made to ensure strict civilian control.

Together, these policies constitute the core of Japan's security policy.

Given this context, what has been done to ensure that the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have the necessary defense capability? Much of the answer is to be found in the National Defense Program Outline adopted by the government in October 1976. As might be expected, the Outline begins with a look at the prevailing international situation. At the time, the government saw three factors as characterizing the international climate:

- (1) Major military clashes between East and West can be deterred by the balance of power, including the balance of nuclear power.
- (2) It is conceivable that there could be a limited armed conflict in the vicinity of Japan.
- (3) It is unlikely that there will be any major military attack on Japan so long as the Japan-U.S. security arrangements remain functional.

Japan's defense was conceptualized in line with this basic understanding of the international situation.

First, this embodied a reliance on the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

Second, it called for creating and maintaining the necessary conventional force.

This reference to "the necessary conventional force," of course, implied a need to set qualitative and quantitative parameters. Qualitatively, it was imperative, among other things, that the force not have any major functional shortcomings, that it achieve a balance between front-line and logistics capabilities, that it be fully vigilant in times of peace, that it be effective against limited, small-scale aggression, and that it be expandable should the aggression escalate.

And third, it called for maintaining and enhancing the credibility of the security arrangements with the U.S. Wide-ranging and uninterrupted dialogue with the U.S. was seen as part of this credibility enhancement, as were joint studies and joint exercises on both front-line and logistics operations in line with the guidelines for Japan-U.S. defense cooperation, technical and equipment cooperation, and efforts to facilitate the stationing of U.S. forces in Japan.

After the Cold War

There are two views of the Cold War and its end. One sees the end of the Cold War as vindication of its contention that the vast arsenals held by both East and West are white elephants serving no useful purpose but likely to trample everybody to death, and many people in this camp now argue for full and complete disarmament. On the other side are those who see the Cold War's end as vindication of their contention that the peace could only be won by resisting Soviet military expansionism and who call for continued Western unity in maintaining a conventional force balance and nuclear parity attuned to the stark international realities.

It is thus instructive to ask ourselves what has changed, what has not changed, what should change, and what should not change in the post-Cold War world.

There are six areas where the strategic climate has changed radically with the collapse of Cold War structures:

(1) Cracks have developed in the political and military unity of the old Eastern bloc countries.

(2) Military technology has started to flow from the old Eastern bloc countries to the Third World.

(3) Countries in both blocs have started to put increasing emphasis on the pursuit of economic interests.

(4) The refugee problem is increasingly severe and increasingly important.

(5) The United Nations is gradually starting to play a greater role in security issues.

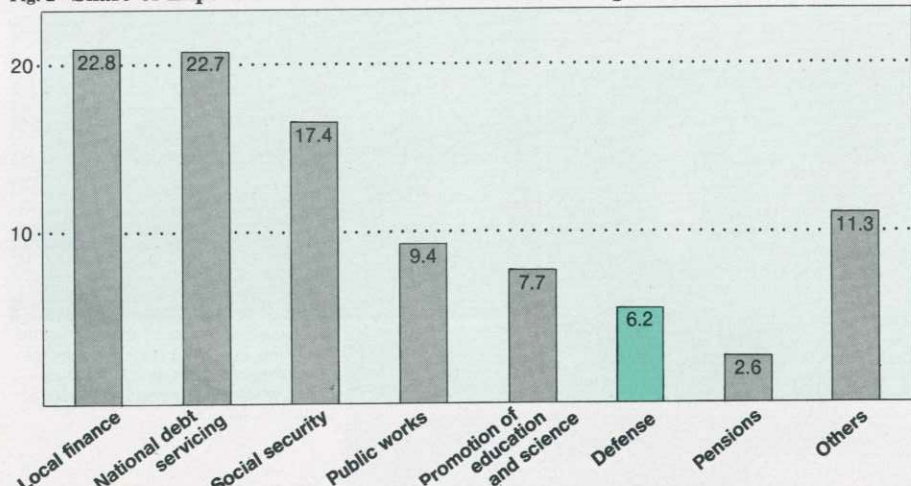
(6) The international community is very alert to how different countries respond to the different issues.

With these changes and the collapse of the Cold War structures, there are those who say we are entering an era of regional suzerainty. And because the changes over the past two years are fully equivalent to those changes that took place at the end of the First and Second World Wars, some people have said that this Cold War could better have been characterized as the Third World War.

It is significant that the world fell to war less than 30 years after World War I and that it was only a few short years after World War II that the Korean War erupted, followed by the Vietnam War and wars in the Middle East.

There are also a number of factors that

Fig. 2 Share of Expenses in FY 1991 General Account Budget (%)



Source: Defense of Japan 1991, Defense Agency

have remained unchanged despite the collapse of the Cold War structure, and it is clearly imperative that we make no mistake in responding to this new situation.

First is that Russia remains a great military power. Although the United States has recently declared that Russia no longer constitutes a threat to the U.S., and although that may be true, this does not mean that Russia is not a force to be reckoned with in the Northwest Pacific and is no longer a potential threat to Japan.

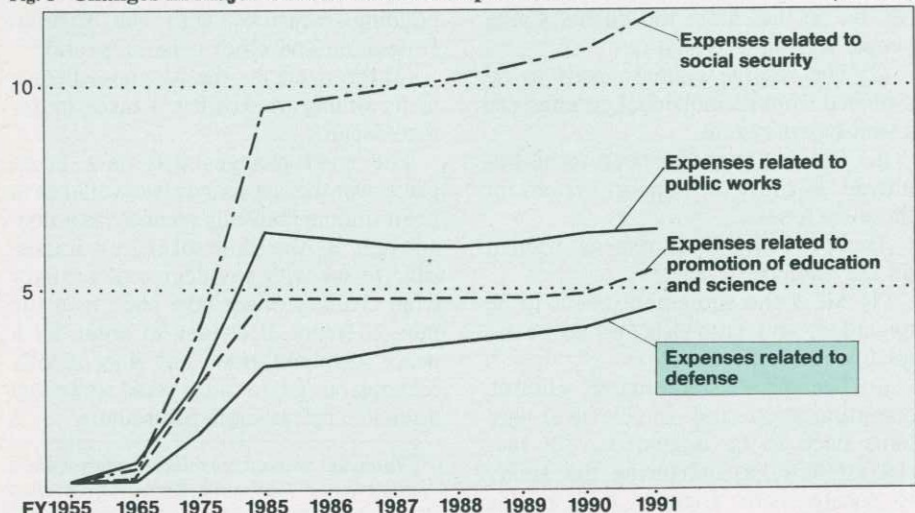
Even as the Russian people are having to scrounge for food and as Japan is gear-

ing up to extend humanitarian assistance to the Russian Federation, the CIS and Russian Far Eastern commands continue to fire an admittedly smaller but nonetheless continuing stream of missiles in practice launches, their tank corps are not suffering from any shortage of parts or personnel, and they engage in large-scale exercises, practice with advanced simulators, and make other efforts to maintain a state of preparedness. The people are hurting, but the military machine is still going strong. The Soviet Union has disintegrated, but the Russian Federation has taken its place as a military power.

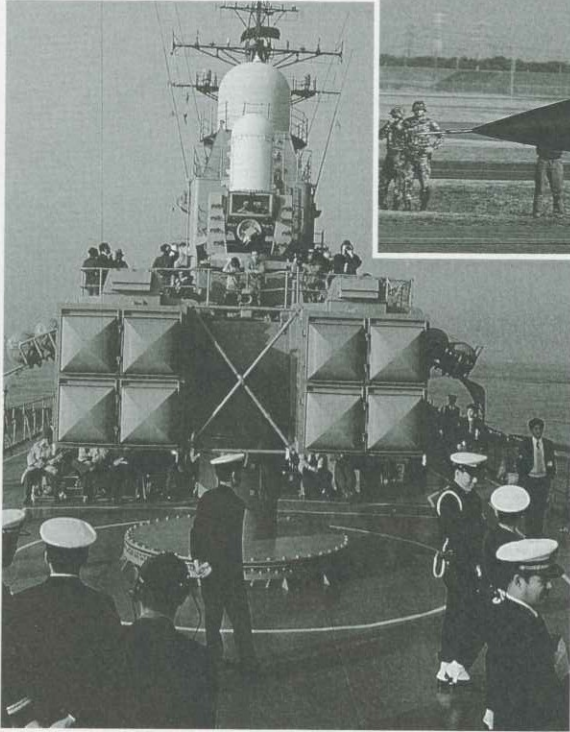
Second is that there has been no change in the Russian Federation's geopolitical position. Just as Japan has had to rely on imports for its main resources throughout the ages, so has Russia always been in the position of possessing a great land mass and seeking to gain outlets to the sea by expanding to the West, to the East, and to the South.

Third is the unchanging importance of the Japan-U.S. security arrangements. Yet at the same time, the end of the Cold War means that Japan can no longer just take grateful shelter under the umbrella provided by the U.S. and the other democracies. The United States will continue to be the only superpower and will continue to exercise global leadership in all fields. For Japan, situated as it is within the Pacific community, the United States

Fig. 1 Changes in Major General Account Expenditure



Source: Defense of Japan 1991, Defense Agency



Japanese Self-Defense Forces personnel in training. Post-Cold War developments have brought about a shift in Japanese policy, which seeks a more streamlined, better-trained SDF.

is its most important and most dependable friend, and it is the weakening of the cooperative military arrangements with the U.S. that would pose the real threat to Japan. In this sense, the bilateral security arrangements may well be said to be the ultimate tie that binds the two countries together.

Post-Cold War responses

Given all of this, what changes should or should not be made in Japan's defense posture? Actually, none of the basic policies or other principles enumerated above need to be changed as a result of the Cold War's end. There is no need for Japan to radically overhaul its security policies, its military buildup or its defense posture.

What needs to be changed, however, is the way the policy goals are pursued and the way the forces are constituted. First, it is essential that Japan shift to a policy of seeking to meet its security

needs with a compact, better-trained force. The essentials here are personnel, equipment and systems.

On the personnel side, three reforms are needed:

(1) The SDF have to be made more attractive so that more top-quality young people will want to sign up.

(2) The reserve system needs to be switched from its individual emphasis to a unit-based system.

(3) Training exercises need to be improved, as must the support system for these exercises.

There are also three reforms needed on the equipment side:

(1) All of the equipment needs to be upgraded, and emphasis has to be on quality and not quantity.

(2) The C³+I (command, control, communication and intelligence) systems need to be upgraded, with special attention to enhancing the ability to locate both friendly and hostile forces and with equal attention to mod-

ernizing the technology for camouflage.

(3) Research and development needs to be promoted to reconcile the dual imperatives of operational needs and technological capabilities.

And in terms of systems, there are two reforms that need to be made:

(1) Looking at the Ground SDF, for example, it is necessary to move away from even deployment of forces nationwide toward strategic deployment of specific forces to specific regions to perform specific duties. At the same time, the Ground SDF needs to develop an operational doctrine that will enable small forces to engage large forces successfully.

(2) Second is the need to modernize the SDF mandate to enable them to contribute to international peacekeeping missions through the United Nations. This means that in addition to civilian volunteers, the SDF should be able to provide disaster rescue and relief operations overseas, and should be able to take part in United Nations peacekeeping operations. It goes without saying, however, that there should be no overseas role for the SDF in the absence of a popular consensus and a political determination by the government.

Finally, it should be noted that there are a number of aspects that should definitely not be changed:

(1) the need to enhance the credibility of the Japan-U.S. security arrangements;

(2) the need for effective confidence-building measures with the Russian Federation and other neighbors; and

(3) the need for the Japanese people to be willing to do what it takes to defend Japan.

The rapid changes that have taken place over the last year or two would have been unimaginable as recently as a decade ago. By the same token, it is impossible to say with any degree of accuracy what changes might take place over the next 10 years. It is easy to argue for a peace dividend now, but imprudently relaxing our guard today could well exact a terrible toll at some future date.

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