

Security for the 21st Century: Lessons from the 20th Century

By Shikata Toshiyuki



With the end of the Cold War, the importance of Japan-U.S. security arrangements is increasingly being questioned. The photo shows a joint exercise between Self-Defense and U.S. forces in Japan.

Photo: Kyodo News Service

included the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal and its conventional forces in the Far East; North Korea's conventional forces, supported by the Soviets and Chinese, developing north of the 38th parallel; and the constant power struggle in China combined with its ever-growing nuclear program and conventional forces which had previously overflowed onto the Korean Peninsula.

The threat to SLOC entailed regional instability along the route through the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the Indian Ocean, Strait of Malacca, the South China Sea, and the East China Sea. Problems included instability among Middle East producing nations; the numerous countries in Southeast Asia where domestic battles raged between governments and com-

munist guerrillas; instability in the Taiwan Strait, etc.

Japan's defense strategy during this period centered on two fundamental principles. The first was based on the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty which placed reliance on the strength of the United States to deter nuclear aggression and thus preserve Japan's three non-nuclear principles.

The second principle was to deter conventional attacks on Japan through a cooperative relationship with the U.S. and to prepare its own defense. If an attack did occur, the U.S. and Japan would join forces to defend Japan. Under these circumstances, Japan's forces would assume defensive measures while the U.S. military would implement any offensive action.

The Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) would take the lead in any limited aggression (a small-scale operation in which there is little preparation time) against its territory. However, Japan was incapable of responding to an all-out

The 20th century has been one of wars and revolutions. We have witnessed two world wars and social revolutions in both Russia and China. Heated confrontations on the Korean Peninsula, in Indonesia and the Middle East took place during the lengthy Cold War period. More recently, with the approach of the end of the century, we experienced a completely new type of hostility during the Gulf War.

The human race also learned many important lessons during this period. We were taught that totalitarianism and imperialism should be eliminated. Although we opened the Pandora's box of nuclear arms, efforts are being made—including attempts at arms control—to reclose that box. Finally, the United Nations was born, a global organization patiently pursuing essential programs including developmental aid, economic cooperation, protection of human rights, and peacekeeping, to name a few.

This type of determined effort has

greatly decreased the possibility that two developed, democratic nations would settle disputes through armed conflict. Also, the possibility of a large-scale nuclear war between powers with such capability has diminished.

As the 21st century creeps over the horizon, mankind asks itself: Will this be a century of instability and confusion, or, applying the lessons learned from the 20th century, will peace and stability reign?

Japan's self defense during the Cold War

Two major concerns dictated Japanese military strategy and defense power planning during the Cold War period. First was the existence of military power posing a territorial threat; the second was Japan's globe-circling sea lines of communication (SLOC), particularly in unstable areas along the oil route to the Middle East.

The threat to territorial self defense

invasion (a large-scale operation allowing some preparatory time by the aggressor). Thus, in such a situation, a combined force of Japanese and Japan-based U.S. forces/U.S. forces transferred to the area would take necessary action.

The Japanese SDF monitors the SLOC in surrounding waters while the U.S. Navy serves to protect SLOC in outside oceans and straits. In addition, to facilitate implementation of the cooperative strategy supported by the U.S., Japan provides U.S. forces with bases and necessary support in both territorial defense and SLOC defense of surrounding waters.

Based on the perceived threat and defensive strategy stated above, defense strategy during the Cold War era was as follows. To facilitate defense capability to counter a sudden ground attack in northern Japan, more than one-third of the ground force's fighting power, including 180,000 troops, 13 divisions, and 3 independent brigades with 1200 tanks, artillery brigades equipped with surface-to-ship cruise missiles, etc. were stationed in Hokkaido.

To defend SLOC in territorial waters, the Maritime Self-Defense Force patrolled a fan-shaped sector stretching 1,000 nautical miles southeast with 60 surface ships, 16 submarines, and 220 planes including 100 anti-submarine patrol aircraft and mine-sweeping units.

The Air Self-Defense Force implements territorial defense with a total of 430 tactical aircraft, including 10 interceptor units, 3 support fighter units, 3 air transport units, 1 early-warning unit, and others. Along with 6 high altitude air defense missile units, the entire force was distributed evenly across the country.

Countermeasures for the 21st century

The strategic environment experienced great change with the end of the Cold War. We are now in what is called the post-Cold War period, a time of transition. How will Cold War defense strategy be reshaped to conform with new challenges to security posed in the 21st century?

Generally, a military threat is comprised of three basic factors: capability, intention, and an environment which justifies the use of force. During the Cold War era, stark differences in ideology kept intention the status quo, and force could have been justified by certain environments on several occasions. Thus, the military threat during this era was capability.

However, these three ingredients changed with the collapse of the Cold War system. The most outstanding was diminished intent through the near disappearance of ideological conflicts, and a newfound difficulty in creating environments justifying force due to the international community's development of strict standards for armed conflict.

However, there was not necessarily any decrease in capability. Although Russia is reducing its nuclear arsenals, there remain, even now, more than enough missiles to annihilate Japan within seconds. In addition, China continues nuclear testing and is working to improve nuclear capability.

Therefore, although intent and environment have diminished with the end of the Cold War, the mere existence of nuclear weapons poses the greatest military threat to non-nuclear Japan. Thus, it is of dire necessity that Japan remain under the nuclear umbrella of the United States.

Russia's conventional forces in the Far East are being scaled down. However, combining forces from both the North and South, approximately 1 million conventional troops remain poised along the 38th parallel, stretching for 250 kilometers. This area is the world's most densely fortified military spot.

With economic growth as the central goal of China's state-run government, the number of soldiers in the Chinese army has decreased. However, there is a determined effort to modernize the air and maritime forces and the percentage increase in military spending exceeds that of the GNP. Similarly, Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries are modernizing their military forces, particularly maritime and air forces.

The modernization of conventional forces increases capability, however,

since intention and environment are not evident, mere modernization does not create an immediate threat. In other words, in both the short- and mid-term, the direct threat to Japan's territory, or SLOC, by conventional forces is small.

Newly discovered elements of instability

Although the chance of military threat is exceedingly low, new elements of instability surround Japan. History might evolve in such a way that unstable elements become danger, danger evolves into threat, which then escalates into crisis.

To maintain defense preparedness, the lifecycle of tanks, ships and aircrafts in particular necessitates a clear hypothesis about how the strategic environment will develop over 15 to 25 years.

However, it is difficult to predict the future, even how circumstances will develop one-quarter of a century from now in the year 2020. Thus, all possible scenarios must be taken under consideration including favorable, positive developments; current circumstances remaining largely the same; and unfavorable, worst-case scenarios.

For any security program, it is imperative to consider worst-case scenarios; this is the essence of security. Following are the unstable elements which closely affect Japan.

The Korean Peninsula

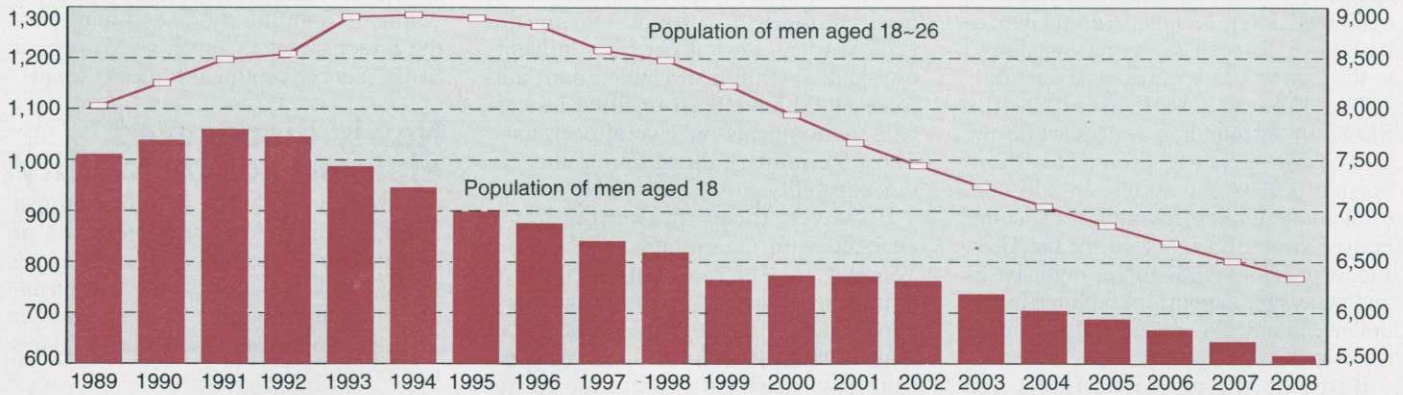
Geographically closest to Japan is a divided Korea. The worst-case scenario assumes North Korea's failure to relieve international suspicion concerning its nuclear weapons development, failure to deepen ties with the interdependent international community, and an unmoving stance towards a more democratic government.

In this scenario, North Korea, facing destruction, may become desperate and direct military force past its borders. Even if North Korea's nuclear capability proved nonexistent, and even if their theater missiles only contained TNT, this still remains a serious threat to Japan.

Also, a confrontation between North and South Korea would create a situa-

Graph 1: Changes in Male Population at the Ages Eligible for Recruitment of Privates (GSDF), Seamen Apprentices (MSDF) and Airmen 3rd Class (ASDF)

(1,000 persons)



Sources: Before 1993: National census, "Population Estimate" (as of Oct. 1 each year) by the Statistics Bureau of the Management and Coordination Agency. After 1994: "Future Estimate of Japan's Population" by the Institute of Population Problems, Ministry of Health and Welfare (based on average of estimate as of Sept. 1992).

tion in which a flood of refugees traveled to Japan. Again, Japan would come under fire within the international community if the U.N. decided to send peacekeeping forces to the Korean Peninsula and the SDF was unable to participate directly.

If, at this time, Japan was a member of the U.N. Security Council, isolation from the international community would be unavoidable—a situation far worse than any military threat. Thus, Japan must actively participate in non-military U.N. programs, including PKO activities, responding to refugee problems and large-scale natural disasters, and environmental preservation on a large scale.

Every scenario envisions a reunification of Korea. However, the economic depression following such a move will be unavoidable. A power struggle could commence between China, Japan, Russia and the U.S. over which country should take the initiative to support the new Korea. History itself illustrates the difficulty a reunited Korea would have in keeping an equidistant relationship with its neighbors.

Within China

Within economically flourishing China is a multitude of unstable elements. The favorable scenario paints a China able to control its yearly popula-

Graph 2: Changes in Defense Expenditures (Original Budget)

(Unit: ¥100 m, %)

FY	Item	Defense Budget (Original)	Growth from Previous Year	Ratio of Defense Budget to GNP	Ratio of Defense Budget to General Account
1955		1,349	-3.3	1.78	13.61
1965		3,014	9.6	1.07	8.24
1975		13,273	21.4	0.84	6.23
1976		15,124	13.9	0.90	6.22
1977		16,906	11.8	0.88	5.93
1978		19,010	12.4	0.90	5.54
1979		20,945	10.2	0.90	5.43
1980		22,302	6.5	0.90	5.24
1981		24,000	7.6	0.91	5.13
1982		25,861	7.8	0.93	5.21
1983		27,542	6.5	0.98	5.47
1984		29,346	6.55	0.99	5.80
1985		31,371	6.9	0.997	5.98
1986		33,435	6.58	0.993	6.18
1987		35,174	5.2	1.004	6.50
1988		37,003	5.2	1.013	6.53
1989		39,198	5.9	1.006	6.49
1990		41,593	8.1	0.997	6.28
1991		43,860	5.45	0.954	6.23
1992		45,518	3.8	0.941	6.30
1993		46,406	1.95	0.937	6.41
1994		46,835	0.9	0.948	6.41

tion increase of 13 million, control its 20% inflation rate, met all oil energy demands which will increase by approximately 10%, control crime and corruption, create a democratic government which respects human rights, tone down its military appetite, respect the rules of economic interdependency within the international community, and overcome its domestic power struggle.

Inability to achieve these goals creates the following two worst-case scenarios. First is the road to domestic collapse. Although the huge flow of refugees resulting from this breakdown would pose a non-military threat to Japan, it still is a serious threat to security. Second is the road towards becoming a military superpower. By the year 2020, the oil consumption of 1.4 billion Chinese will be enormous. Even if domestic production increases, there is no doubt China's dependence on oil supplies from the Middle East and East Asia will skyrocket. To protect its SLOC between the Middle East and China, an expansive navy will become necessary as it is inconceivable China would, as Japan has, have their SLOC route overlap with America's Seventh Fleet.

In Southeast Asia

As a huge nuclear power, China will impact greatly on East Asian nations. With its various territorial disputes, including the Senkaku Islands, the increase in China's military power may trigger a similar military build-up in this region.

Southeast Asian countries, sensing a military threat from China, may use the Strait of Malacca as a strategic choke point. China may then choose Myanmar as its land passage into the Indian Ocean. With Chinese forces overflowing into the Indian Ocean, India may respond by strengthening its maritime and air forces.

Although China claims its nuclear weapon development is to force the U.S. and Russia to decrease and ultimately destroy their nuclear stockpiles, the arsenal may in effect trigger a nuclear build-up in India and Pakistan.

Any instability in the Indian Ocean, Strait of Malacca, or South and East

China seas poses a serious threat to Japan's SLOC. This, combined with Japan's territorial dispute with China—the Senkaku Islands—may push Japanese public opinion towards supporting modernization and expansion of the Maritime SDF in order to protect its SLOC.

SDF restructuring for the 21st century

Based on the perception of events stated above, we can clearly state the following. First is the need to strengthen the Japan-U.S. security system as it will become more important in the future than it was in the Cold War era. As long as nuclear weapons exist, Japan will continue to expect much from nuclear deterrence. Also, although during the previous historical period efforts focused on territorial defense through cooperation with the U.S., it will be of the utmost importance in the coming century to continue supporting U.S. forces in order to maintain security for East Asia, particularly the Far East region.

Additionally, since Japan has decided not to become a military superpower, our dependence on the U.S. military to protect the far-reaching SLOC will only grow with time.

In order to facilitate U.S. military effectiveness in the region, Japan must realize that it is the Asian country best equipped to provide personnel, supplies, funds, technical support, and bases to U.S. armed forces.

Secondly, in order to create a framework of collective security in Asia, it is necessary that Japan actively contribute personnel, supplies, aid and ideas to the effort. For the first time, a forum for discussion on collective security in Asia was created in the form of ASEAN. It is necessary to begin with the task of confidence building among member nations.

Thirdly, the Japanese Constitution limits the extent to which the SDF can directly participate in U.N. multinational peacekeeping forces. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we actively participate in emergency response

teams, PKO activities, and assist in providing aid when natural disasters strike.

The Japanese government is currently reviewing the 1976 "National Defense Program Outline." The current Mid-Term Defense Program covers from 1991 to 1995, thus in order to formulate the next (1996 to 2000), the review must be completed by the year's end. This review will also take into account population transition of eligible applicants and continued SDF budget limitations (Graphs 1 and 2).

The previously discussed self-defense strategy requires a decrease in the current number of Ground Self-Defense Forces (180,000), with its existing unfilled vacancies, to about 150,000 or 160,000, and stepped up mobility and fire power by reorganizing into 9 smaller divisions and several brigades. Improved response to emergency situations should be made possible by establishing reserve forces. Also, communications and field medical battalions with bilingual capabilities must be prepared for PKO activities.

As with the GSDF, the Maritime forces require an approximate 20% cut in the number of anti-submarine patrol aircraft units, ships and submarines. These funds could then go towards strengthening capability in sea-based air defense, theater missile defense, and ocean transport.

Similarly, Air SDF fighter plane units should be scaled down by about 20% thereby funding modernization and increasing the functions of long-range airlift, early warning systems, theater missile defense system, etc.

Reshaping is fundamental to the changes in force structure required to meet the challenges of the 21st century. These changes include streamlining through a "slimming down" of the force, increased sophistication and capability, facing new responsibilities by developing theater missile defense, and maintaining transport planes and air tankers for long distance transport of peacekeeping units and for territorial air defense, respectively.

Shikata Toshiyuki, a retired lieutenant general, is professor at Teikyo University.