

The View from the U.S.

By Mike M. Mochizuki



America's basic military strategy in East Asia is to deter attacks against its allies and vital interests in the region through the forward deployment of air, naval and ground forces and ultimately the threat of nuclear retaliation. If deterrence should fail, the United States will reinforce its forces in the theater to meet its alliance obligations. For the entire postwar period, the military balance in the Pacific theater has been favorable to the United States and its allies. Although the recent Soviet military buildup in the region has altered the situation somewhat, the parallel strengthening of U.S. and Japanese military capabilities has helped to maintain the favorable balance.

Japan is critical to the United States not only because the bilateral security treaty permits American forces to have key bases in Japan, but also because Japan by doing its own share to protect its homeland contributes greatly to regional deterrence and mutual security.

There are at least two ways in which the strategic situations of Central Europe and Northeast Asia differ. In contrast to Central Europe, where the primary threat is a possible ground attack by Warsaw Pact forces, there are two distinct, albeit related, threats in Northeast Asia: an air and naval threat against Japan and a ground threat against the Republic of Korea.

Global balance

Secondly, whereas many experts see the conventional military balance in Europe as being unfavorable to NATO, most agree that the combined conventional forces of the United States and its allies in Northeast Asia are still superior to those of their potential adversaries. Consequently, unlike in Europe, there is less need to rely on nuclear weapons to deter conventional threats in the Far East.

In recent years, Northeast Asia has become increasingly important for the Soviet Union's submarine-launched stra-

tegic nuclear forces. Because the region is now a vital factor in the global nuclear balance, American military analysts recognize that U.S. and Japanese forces in the Pacific are valuable for deterrence not only at the regional, but also at the global level. Moreover, given the technological superiority of the West, the United States is seeking Japanese assistance to develop conventional systems that would destroy enemy tactical nuclear weapons.

With regard to the INF treaty signed in December between the United States and the Soviet Union, NATO should now vigorously pursue negotiations with the Soviets in order to correct the existing unfavorable military balance in terms of conventional forces. This raises the question of whether or not Gorbachev will seek to link the conventional arms control process in Europe with similar discussions in East Asia. Whatever the case, a demonstration of Japan's determination to increase its conventional defense capabilities would strengthen its leverage *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union. Both Japan and the United States should also begin to think through the kind of East Asian military balance that would best serve their interests and promote regional stability.

While I believe that Japan has made significant strides in improving its defense capabilities, there is much more that can be done in support of the common security interests of Japan and the United States. This includes making Japan's air and sea defenses more effective, upgrading its warning and surveillance capabilities, enhancing coordination among the three armed services, improving their readiness and cooperating with the United States in order to advance defense technologies.

There are a number of factors that contributed to the decline of American hegemony in addition to the large burden the U.S. has had to bear in the defense area. Just to mention a few: the neo-mercantilist trade policies pursued by Japan

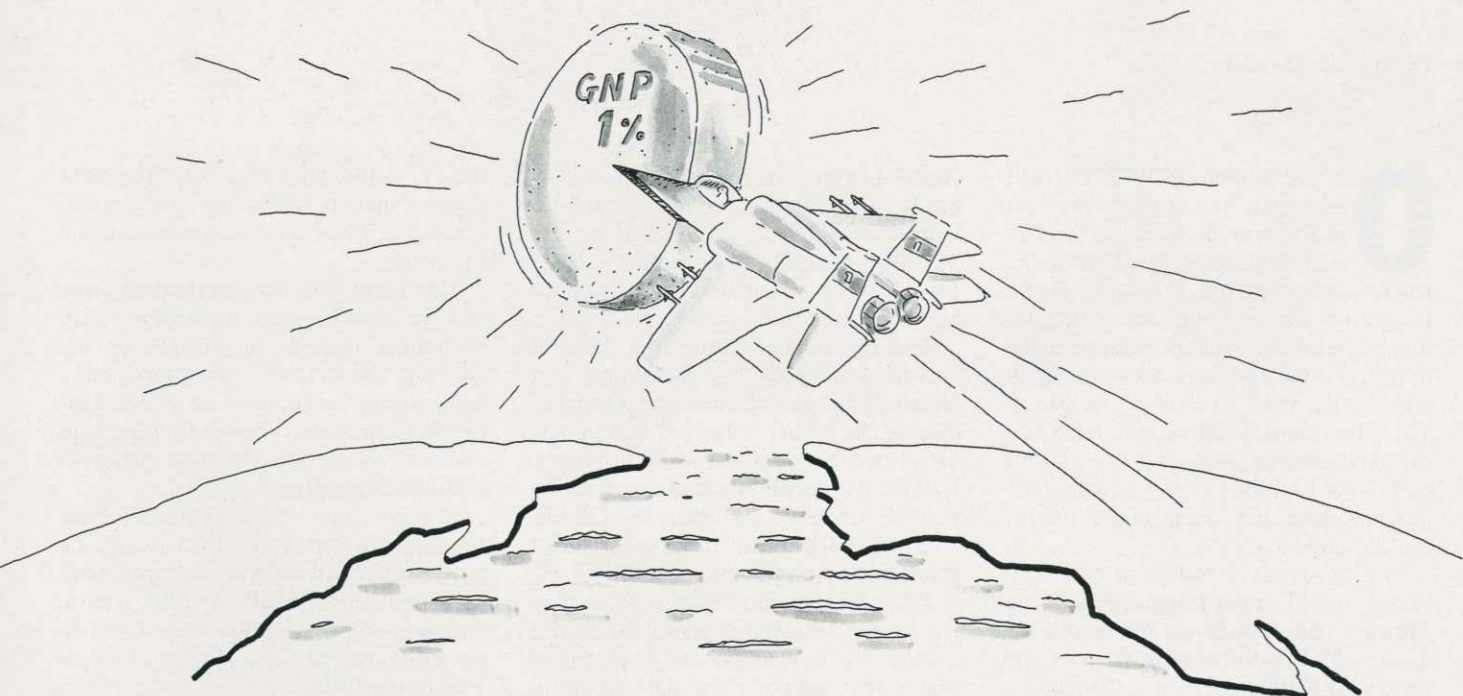
throughout the postwar period, the U.S. government's misguided macroeconomic policies, the insufficient effort of American businesses to improve their international competitiveness, and the American people's tendency to live beyond their means and their neglect of education. But we should also remember that U.S. hegemony was a product of the unique situation after World War II.

Whatever the reasons for the passing of this hegemony, it is clear that the American people now want a lower-cost and lower-risk foreign policy. This does not mean that the United States will return to some form of isolationism. But it does mean that America's allies will find it more and more in their own interests to contribute to the maintenance of global security. In other words, being a "free-rider" or even a "cheap-rider" will become a less rational policy.

Spending limit

Although in all democracies budgetary constraints do shape the substance of defense policy, I believe that an artificial spending limit like the 1%-of-GNP rule is not the proper way to monitor the military. The best way to maintain civilian control over the military is to have informed and open discussions of the nation's security needs and the most appropriate security strategy.

Former Prime Minister Nakasone's decision to rescind the 1%-of-GNP limit on defense expenditures was essentially a sound policy. But Japan should also re-examine the military doctrine contained in the 1976 National Defense Program Outline (NDPO) in light of the changing international environment. Although Japanese officials would like to avoid a public debate about strategic matters by revising only the NDPO appendix which outlines the numerical strength of the Self-Defense Forces, I firmly believe this would not be a wise course in the long



run. A democratic nation must have a strategy that is understood and supported by its people.

In light of the tragic wars that engulfed East Asia during the first half of this century, it is entirely understandable that neighboring countries are still wary of a resurgence of Japanese military power. But generally, I feel that these suspicions are slowly beginning to subside. Nevertheless, Japan must continually stress that its military forces are strictly defensive in nature and refrain from using xenophobic appeals to justify a military buildup. More generous economic relations with its Asian neighbors should also allay fears of Japanese militarism.

On the whole, I believe that economic and security issues have heretofore been linked in a positive way. Because the security relationship has been so important to both nations, Japan and the United States have had the political will to manage the economic conflicts without jeopardizing the alliance. Only a few irresponsible U.S. leaders have openly proposed that America should do less for Japan's defense in retaliation for the latter's unfair trade practices.

The recent rise of American "techno-nationalism" in response to many years of Japanese "techno-nationalism," however, threatens to link economics and security in a negative way. Moreover, the conflict last summer over Toshiba's violation of the COCOM regulations has had a sobering effect on American views of Japanese business practices.

Basic trust

In the coming years, both nations must work hard to manage the technological competition and coordinate technology policies so as not to undermine the basic trust essential to the alliance. It goes without saying that greater bilateral technological cooperation would contribute a great deal to enhancing Western security interests.

Although some American opinion leaders will argue that Japan's current defense efforts are adequate, I think that the majority will insist on a moderate increase in Japanese military capabilities and responsibilities. For example, most Americans are indeed puzzled at why Ja-

pan cannot even deploy minesweepers to the Persian Gulf to protect the free passage of oil on which the Japanese economy depends so heavily. Many would be outraged if American lives were lost in defense of Middle East oil supplies while Japan provided only money and technical assistance.

Japan can do much more in economic terms such as through financial assistance, liberalization of its trade and investment practices, and technological cooperation to help the developing countries in East Asia and elsewhere. For example, Japan could play a key role in helping the Philippines overcome its economic difficulties. It can also become more active in various international organizations for the purpose of managing the world economy and of resolving the numerous conflicts around the globe. ■

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