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The United States and Post-War Japan, toward Greater Japanese Autonomy

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Abstract: The essay devoted to analysis of the evolution of the relations between Japan and the USA in the period after the end of the Second World War and up to the present day. Under evaluation there is an American occupation policy influence on formation of the strategic course of the Japanese foreign and domestic policy over the post-war period. The choice was in favour of the military alliance with the USA in the interest of concentration of the country's own efforts not on formation of defense potential but on economic revival, modernization and social development. This choice put limits on possibilities for independent actions in the spheres of international relations and defence policy.

In the process of obtaining solid economic potential aspirations for greater independence in the framework of the alliance with the USA have started to develop. There are descriptions of the examples of such attempts. Japanese-American relations in the period during the prime-minister Abe and President Trump administrations are also under analysis.

Keywords: Japanese-American relations, doctrine of Japanese foreign policy, military-political alliance between the USA and Japan, autonomy

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Соединённые Штаты и послевоенная Япония; к большей японской автономии

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Резюме: Эссе посвящено анализу эволюции отношений между Японией и США в период после окончания Второй мировой войны и по настоящее время. Оценивается влияние американской оккупационной политики на формирование стратегического курса японской внешней и внутренней политики на весь послевоенный период. Состоялся долгосрочный выбор в пользу военного союза США в интересах концентрации собственных усилий не на создание оборонного потенциала, а на экономическое возрождение, модернизацию и социальное развитие. Данный выбор ограничил возможности самостоятельных действий страны в сфере международных отношений и оборонной политики.

По мере обретения Японией солидного экономического потенциала начало проявляться ее стремление к большей самостоятельности в рамках союза с США, к большей

автономности. Приводятся примеры таких попыток. Охарактеризованы японо-американские отношения при премьер-министре Абэ и президенте Трампе.

Ключевые слова: японо-американские отношения, внешнеполитическая доктрина Японии, военно-политический союз США и Японии, автономность.

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JAPAN'S DEFEAT AT WWII AND CONDITIONS OF CAPITULATION

This essay tries to describe the United States seen from the perspective of a former Japanese diplomat who has experienced it through his family narrative¹, his own experience and all that he came to learn in living within the Japanese society.

The starting point is 1945, when the author was born, Japan was defeated and capitulated to the United States and its allies after prolonged war that lasted since 1941. Since I was born a grandson of Togo Shigenori, who was the foreign minister of the Cabinet of Tojo Hideki, which started the Pacific War against the United States in 1941 and then the Cabinet of Suzuki Kantaro, which ended that war in 1945, my basic knowledge and recollection of the capitulation originates from the family narrative from my mother, who was the only daughter to Shigenori, and lived very close to her father in these war years.

Fundamentally the position of the surrendering cabinet headed by Prime Minister Suzuki Kantaro to which Togo Shigenori joined in April 1945 was to accept terms of surrender with one condition, preservation of "national polity", meaning "Imperial Household" through mediation by the Soviet Union, which was the sole global power which Japan was not at war with. The Suzuki Cabinet transmitted a decisive message of capitulation in its instruction to Ambassador Sato Naotake in Moscow on July 12 reaching punctually to Stalin before his departure to Potsdam. American position, having taken into account the July 12 message for surrender, was issued in the form of Potsdam Declaration dated July 26. There was sufficient knowledge in one part of the US administration, with enough expertise about Japan, that the only condition which the Japanese government would insist upon was the preservation of the Imperial Household, meaning the preservation of Japan's identity.

But the Potsdam Declaration was intentionally left vague on this point, and while the Suzuki Cabinet spent several days of precious decision making still waiting the final message to come from Stalin, on August 6 an atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima and on August, 9, the second bomb fell on Nagasaki and the Soviet Union entered the war against Japan and attacked Manchuria. Predictably, the Government of Japan, under

¹ The author was born in a family of diplomats. His grandfather Togo Shigenori was twice Japan's foreign Minister, first at the Cabinet of Tojo Hideki, which started the Pacific War, and the Cabinet of Suzuki Kantaro, which ended that war. His father, Togo Fumihiko, married Togo Shigenori's daughter Ise and adopted the name of Togo, assumed important posts in relation to post-war Japan's policy toward the United States, and became vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to the United States.

the first Imperial decision, issued on August 10 accepted Potsdam Declaration with one condition: "its understanding that the power of ruling of the Emperor would be maintained". On August 13 the American leadership responded that "the future of Japanese polity will be decided by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people." The second Imperial decision was made on August 14 to accept this term.

AMERICAN OCCUPATION POLICY

On September 2, the formal surrender document was signed by the representatives of Japan, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru and General Umezu Yoshijiro, Chief of Staff of the Army, and General Douglas MacArthur and other allies' representatives. The occupation began. The occupation policy was directed largely by the United States. It consisted of so called three "D's" during the first two years: Demilitarization, Democratization and Decentralization.

The most important objective was understandably Demilitarization, because the United States was determined to deprive Imperial Japan of military power, both physically and mentally, never to let it become a threat to the existence of the United States. The dissolvment of the military went on without major obstacles. How to write in the constitution a pacifist article not to allow Japan to become a military power was a more difficult matter of negotiations between the Genral Headquarters (GHQ) of the occupation forces and the Japanese government led by Shidehara Kijuro, but by March 1946, a strongly pacifist Article 9 was formulated and gained consensus. From the Japanese side another matter of utmost concern was the position which the Imperial Household would gain in the Constitution. Shidehara and MacArthur agreed in the March draft, to define in article 1 Emperor's position as "the symbol of the state"

Another critical issue related to Demilitarization was the war criminals' tribunal. The so-called Tokyo Trial was held from May 1946 till November 1948. For the accused in the Tokyo trial and for the Japanese government remaining in power the most critical issue was to keep the Emperor out of the Tokyo Trial. Emperor was successfully removed from the list of the accused, and nothing really substantial happened during the procedure of the trial touching upon the war responsibility of the Emperor. It is often attributed to MacArthur's occupation policy of "expedience" that Emperor's position was protected. He thought that occupation policy will be carried out more effectively if the Emperor would support it. But whatever MacArthur's intention, the sole condition attached to surrender by the falling government of the Empire of Japan was thus kept. One needs rightly to attribute this factor as a starting point of trust-building between Japan and the United States in post-war years.

But after this initial two years of three D's policy enrolled reasonably well, there occurs an important shift in the American occupation policy to transform Japan into a vanguard of democracy against communist countries. Instead of becoming just a peaceful and democratic state Japan was expected to develop into a country which not only shares common democratic values but also holds strong economic and military

power to fight alongside America against rising communist threats. In other words, the Cold War logic began to prevail. A new occupation policy was announced in December 1948 to introduce a new economic strategy to transform Japan into a rich industrial state. And as early as August 1950 National Police Reserve Corps was established, opening the way for creation of the Japanese military forces, so called Self-Defense Forces.

Post-war Japan's fundamental was a greater autonomy vis-a-vis the United States. Yoshida doctrine: successfully prioritizing policy of economic construction against American pressure of militarization

It was Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru who led Japan under this changing and contradictory American occupation policy. From May 1946 till December 1954, with the exception of one year period from May 1947 till October 1948, Yoshida continued to stay in power. Yoshida pushed strongly the policy of prioritizing economic buildup. It was in line with the two years of initial occupation policy and not contradictory to the remaining five years of occupation policy after the Cold War bent was introduced. Yoshida was restrictive to increase substantially Japan's military power, but since his policy of pacifism was entirely in line with American policy of the first two years, the Americans were not in a position to enforce the policy of militarization. All the more so because Yoshida agreed to let the US troops fill in the power vacuum caused by the minimalist Self Defense Forces.

Yoshida and Washington agreed that when the Cold War tension rose particularly high by North Korean attack on South Korea in June 1950 Japan would conclude the San Francisco Peace Treaty in September 1951, together with the Japan-US security Treaty. They successfully excluded China, which was divided into the People's Republic of China (Communist China) and the Republic of China (Taiwan) as well as North Korea and South Korea who were at war then. The Soviet Union attended the San Francisco conference and made several interventions criticizing the partiality of this peace treaty but did not sign it. Hatoyama Ichiro, who followed Yoshida from December 1954 till December 1956 concluded the Joint Declaration, normalizing relations with the Soviet Union in October 1956.

PRIME MINISTERS KISHI AND SATO: CONSOLIDATING THE ALLIANCE WHILE ENHANCING JAPAN'S GREATER AUTONOMY

Kishi Nobusuke is known to be one of the most powerful post-war Japanese prime ministers. He was the first general secretary of the Liberal Democratic Party, formed after the merging of the Democratic Party and Liberal Party in November 1955. He then assumed the post of prime minister in February 1957. His major accomplishment turned out to be the conclusion of the Security Treaty with the United States, signed on January 19, 1960 as a revised version of the Security Treaty of 1951, signed immediately after the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The essence of the new document was to level up Japan's role to a more autonomous position vis-à-vis the United States. The gist of the new treaty was Article V, whereby the United States was obligated to defend Japan in case of an attack. But Japan was not obliged to participate in American military actions if they were not connected with the defense of Japan. The Japan-US Exchange Notes attached to Article VI

prescribed three issues obligating the US to entering preliminary consultations with Japan, one of which being the introduction of nuclear weapons to the American bases in Japan, and another about the location of large-scale military base on the Japanese territory.

Nevertheless, the opposition led by the Japan Socialist Party propagated that the new treaty made Japan "entangled by wars waged by the United States" and was symbolizing "subordination to America". Media echoed that criticism and pacifist public opinion blindly followed. As the result when the Treaty was signed in January 1960 and presented to the Diet for ratification, huge public demonstration took place to prevent the ratification, the single biggest ever taken place after WWII. Prime Minister Kishi stayed firm to have ratified it but had to resign.

The Soviet Union, watching this domestic chaos in Japan, sent a verbal note as early as January 27, 1960 stating that "given the nature of the new military treaty, which de facto loses Japan's independent status, Habomai and Shikotan, as being promised by the Soviet Government to transfer to Japan (by the 1956 Joint Declaration), shall only be transferred after the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Japan." Whatever Soviet intention of issuing this verbal note, it seems that the Soviet Union completely missed out the opportunity to grasp Kishi's genuine intention to bring Japan to a more equal and autonomous position vis-à-vis the US. One may conclude that security treaty of greater equality and greater autonomy on the Japanese side itself was a strengthening of the alliance, therefore the Soviet Union could not tolerate it. But if that were the case, the Soviet Union, just by following ideological Cold War rebukes, missed out important decades which it could have cultivated to let Japan become a more friendly country to serve Soviet's national interests.

Kishi was first followed by Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato, who occupied the post of prime minister from July 1960 till November 1964, concentrating more on Japan's economic development. He inaugurated his 'Program of Doubling the Income' immediately after assuming the position of prime minister, and in fact from 1955 till 1973, Japan experienced 18 years of "high economic growth" - 10% per year.

Then Ikeda was followed by Prime Minister Sato Eisaku. His most important agenda was the reversion of Okinawa Islands, which were under full control of the United States. Next to the conclusion of the Security Treaty, it was very clear that the second most important event in the foreign policy arena was greater autonomy vis-à-vis the United States. Under Article III of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, Okinawa was theoretically placed under the "trusteeship system of the United Nations" but until that happened, "the United States remained as the sole administrative authority." The initiative came from Sato, it was Japan which took the leadership to change the status quo. The most difficult issue was the presence of the nuclear weapons in Okinawa. This problem was resolved by the Sato-Nixon Joint Communiqué of November 1969, namely that in case the US considered to return the nuclear weapons to Okinawa it would have followed the procedure established under the consultation system of 1960: a fair and mutually acceptable solution. Having resolved all other issues, the reversion treaty was signed in June 1971 and went into force in May 1972.

POST-SATO PERIOD: UNFORTUNATELY, JAPAN FAILED TO OBTAIN MORE AUTONOMY

However, clear-cut direction of Japan after the reversion of Okinawa for greater autonomy has been obscured by several factors. First, criticism remained in Japan that American bases in Okinawa would continue to oppress the Okinawa people even after the reversion. In fact, the impact of American bases was felt somewhat more keenly because American bases from the four main Japanese islands came to be reduced.

Second, reversion of Okinawa signaled the beginning of a trade war between Japan and the US. Starting from textiles; moving to steel, color TVs and automobiles to be governed by Japan's voluntary export restraints; greater US access to Japanese markets such as semi-conductor, construction, beef and citrus; going to macro-economic policy adjustment and so on. Evidently, there emerged an impression of America pressuring Japan and Japan making concessions. Few national leaders or diplomats of Japan maintained that understanding of political difficulties of an allied country and took necessary measures to ease them. But this logic was not easy to be absorbed by Japanese media and public opinion. There unfortunately emerged little impression of greater autonomy in these 25 years of economic friction, which basically ended when Japan's economic might ceased after the explosion of the economic bubble in the early 1990's, coinciding with the end of the Cold War in 1989-91.

Third, initial events after the end of the Cold War did not help either. During the first Gulf War of 1990-91, because of its deeply engrained pacifism, Japan restrained to take any military contribution and its financial contribution to America-lead war gave an impression that it was performing unwillingly under American pressure. That somewhat disastrous situation substantially improved when security concern replaced sharply economic friction in 1995 and genuine efforts followed by both sides to strengthen security cooperation in many areas. In particular Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro succeeded in 2001 and facing the 9/11 terrorist attack of the US, encouraged his counter-part President G.W. Bush for taking more active policy initiatives to fight against terrorist activities. Those were clearly more autonomous foreign policy initiatives. But then, the six revolving door prime ministers in Japan from 2006 till 2012 did not leave a room for leadership, taking some significant measures not to mention any autonomy policy initiatives vis-à-vis the United States.

The legacy of autonomy had to wait until the return of Abe Shinzo in December 2012². But before discussing this period, I need to touch upon the arrival of President Trump as a result of the 2016 presidential elections.

² Abe became prime minister first from September 26 2006 until September 26 2007. Then he was reelected as prime minister on December 26 2012.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND HIM?

Enormous amount of discussion is going on concerning President Trump. This essay does not intend to make a new discovery but tries to keep a minimal shared understanding. His policy, right from the beginning of his campaign, was “America First”. But in concrete terms, what does “America First” mean? This paper offers the following five points as a basic understanding.

First, in the area of economic policy, the emphasis of “America First” was **on bilateralism**, where American benefits and disadvantages could be more visible than in multilateral arrangements. Hence Trump withdrew from the TPP and the Paris Accord on global warming. The WTO is under severe scrutiny that it does not give fair judgement on American national interests.

Second, in the area of security, defense and foreign policy, contrary to prior fear, that the U.S. will return to a new Monroe doctrine, dissociate from global governance and pay attention on narrowly oriented American national interest, it seems that Trump is willing to actively intervene in areas where he finds that American interests are at stake, even with more active use of military force.

Third, unlike economic areas, where strong inclination to bilateralism is supported by Trump’s own thinking, in the area of security, defense and foreign policy, traditional US institutions, in particular the military, the Department of State and others such as CIA and FBI have their own interests and preferences. So, American policy toward China, Russia, North Korea and Iran can be singled out as a unique mixture of institutional preferences and presidential views. In comparison to institutional views, Trump’s view may be qualified as **pragmatic to China, more friendly to Putin, unconventional to North Korea, and more hostile to Iran**.

Fourth, these aspects highlight important features of President Trump’s political thinking. Trump seems to be less attached to the so-called Euro-American liberalism, or in other words, ideological attachment to fundamentals of human rights and democracy. In the traditional differentiation of International Relations theory, he may be closer to realism and less inclined to liberal thinking. Some supporters of liberal order criticize him as one of the three major **authoritarian rulers** together with Xi Jinping and Putin.

Fifth, it seems to be clear now that Trump, who is already through two and a half years of his presidency, is mobilizing his political capital to win the presidential election campaign in the year 2020. What we do not see in Trump’s thinking is long-term strategy for the United States and the world. This shortage is all the more evident in the election year when all policy decisions could be made based on the **expediency** of “which policy helps more to win the election?”

PRIME MINISTER ABE’S APPROACH TO PRESIDENT TRUMP

President Trump’s basic message toward Japan in line with his basic positions described above was fairly simple: in economic area, “buy more American products”. In

order to pressure Japan to buy more American products, Trump typically mobilized the logic of trade-off between economy and security: "because Japan is typically profiting from the United States on security, it should buy more American products."

Well, here Abe has a lot to say. He could say for instance, the following:

"Mr. President. You are right, or rather you were right until 2016. Before that, as the result of concluding a new security treaty with the United States in 1960, the United States came to bear under Article V, legal responsibility to fight against any country which might attack Japan.

But because of the interpretation of the strongly pacifist nature of Article IX of the Constitution, Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDF) were not allowed to fight against a country which might have attacked the US. In other words, the SDF were forbidden to implement the right of collective self-defense, which under the UN Charter all countries were possessing, because of the interpretation of the Constitution.

I have long thought that this asymmetry has to be corrected. Going through the procedure of revising the constitution is one approach, but this entails a lot of time and complex procedure. So I decided to go for the revision of the interpretation of the Article IX. We first announced that direction by a Cabinet decision in 2014, enacted a new law in 2015, and that law entered into force in 2016, as if to have anticipated President Trump's justifiable accusation of Japan, had we have not enacted the new law.

Legal measures adopted in 2015 are called 'Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security'. In case an attack against a country such as the United States which has close relationship with Japan occurs, the new law allowed to mobilize SDF only 'when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.'

In simple terms, 'if the US is attacked, Japan may join and fight against that attackers, provided that that attack would create the same level of danger as if Japan itself is attacked.' It is a unique legal situation never existing before, but most certainly structural asymmetry is substantially if not holistically removed. Japan is in a more autonomous position vis-à-vis the United States."

I feel certain that my able former colleagues at MOFA should have told President Trump and his entourage the emerging new legal and political situation, so that unnecessary fire which may work unproductively may not be ignited. So that Trump's initial statements asking for 'quid-for-pro' of finance and security soon disappeared from public debate. Admittedly just prior to the G20 in Osaka, on June 26 2019, Trump's statements came back that "If Japan is attacked the US will defend it at all costs. But if the US is attacked Japan just watches this attack through Sony-made TV screen." It could have been his sense of frustration on some aspect of Abe's policy, for

instance on Iran. Abe Government was trying in some way to let the US and Iran have better communication, including on Iranian nuclear program. But even so, this does not let the validity of Abe's new interpretation of the Security Treaty and the enhanced autonomous position vis-à-vis the United States lose its values.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude briefly by reinterring to Trump's Russian policy and how this is affecting Japan-Russia relationship. As said in comparison to America's institutional policy lines, which see President Putin representing real threat against the US, President Trump behaves more friendly toward him. But nevertheless, given the overall policy lines by the US leadership in Washington DC, Abe's unwavering insistence on concluding the peace treaty with Russia, based on substantial concession of traditional claim over the islands, is no better proof of autonomy, or genuine efforts toward greater autonomy from the United States. Abe, as the prime minister, certainly is not in a position to say this, because it entails useless political reaction from Washington. A humble academic analysis has, fortunately in a democratic society like Japan, the right to express freely any of author's views.

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