

**Reconciliation:  
A Challenge for Japan's  
Foreign Policy**

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# **RECONCILIATION:** **A CHALLENGE FOR JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY**

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## I

For Japan, reconciliation with its Asian neighbors (i.e. China and South Korea, and eventually North Korea in the future) is a major foreign policy challenge. This is because reconciliation is a critical factor affecting peace and stability in East Asia, which, in geopolitical terms, is the most vital region for Japan's security. More importantly, this is an issue for which the outcome will shape Japan's character as a nation in the twenty-first century. Yet the violent anti-Japanese demonstrations which erupted in China and South Korea in April 2005 revealed in a rather shocking way that the issue remains far from being resolved even sixty years after the end of World War II.

Most analysts view the demonstrations as outbursts of nationalism that has been fostered by history education in both China and South Korea. They also point out that such history education, often anti-Japanese, is being carried out with the purpose of indoctrinating the students with the legitimacy of the governing authority. Such observations are basically correct.

In this connection, whether Prime Minister Koizumi should desist from visiting the Yasukuni shrine<sup>1</sup>, as demanded by the Chinese and Korean governments, has become a

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1 The Yasukuni shrine is a shinto shrine where over two million war dead are enshrined. China and South Korea both protest the Japanese prime minister's visit to the shrine on the ground that class-A war criminals are also enshrined.

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contentious issue in Japan. Those who defend the visit argue that foreign governments have no right to interfere in such matters, i.e., how Japan's political leaders pay tribute to their war dead. They also maintain that even if the Prime Minister refrained from visiting the shrine, there would be no guarantee that Japan's relations with the two countries would improve. The first line of argument is valid as a matter of general principle. But the same cannot be said about the prime minister's visit to the particular institution called the Yasukuni shrine. I will explain my reasoning later. The second argument seems persuasive. Since the Yasukuni shrine is only one of the many targets of anti-Japanese nationalism that persists in South Korea and China, it is not conceivable that the two countries would cease to raise the history issue with Japan even if the prime minister refrained from making the visit to the shrine. Nor is it realistic to expect, for example, that the Japanese concession on the Yasukuni issue would change their opposition to Japan becoming a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations.

It is necessary to know the background of anti-Japanese demonstrations in order to understand the state of Japan's relations with its neighbors. But this knowledge does not suffice to pave the way for achieving mutual reconciliation. What the Japanese must recognize first is that reconciliation between the ruler and the ruled or the aggressor and its victims is a difficult and time-consuming process in which both sides must engage.

A peace treaty is a legal document that terminates the state of war and settles various issues (e.g., reparations) arising from its consequences. In the case of Japan, the San Francisco peace treaty is such a document. Japan also concluded separate peace treaties with some Asian countries that had fallen victim to the Japanese aggression. The joint communique issued on the occasion of Sino-Japanese normalization in 1972 is not a peace treaty, but has similar characteristics. The legal settlement of Japan's colonial rule over the Korean peninsula was concluded by the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea and its related agreements (1965). Since the agreements relate only to South Korea, however, it is necessary to conclude a similar agreement with North Korea in the future in the event of normalization of relations.

Although such treaties and documents are indispensable steps to put an end to the colonial rule or the state of war and establish normal state-to-state relations, these legal documents alone do not achieve reconciliation. Reconciliation is a process that requires the courage and efforts of both the wrongdoer and the victim sustained over generations. For the wrongdoer, it means the courage to face squarely with the past and the efforts to remember the remorse for the past. For the victim, it must have the courage to distinguish the present from the past and make efforts to forgive and accept

the wrongdoer.

It is human nature to want to forget the dark memories of the past. One needs courage to overcome such an attitude of denial and to recognize the negative legacies of the past history of one's own country. In parallel fashion, if a nation is to learn lessons from history to avoid making similar mistakes, it must have the courage to come to terms with the dark pages of its history. Furthermore, it must make efforts to maintain such foreign policy as is consistent with its remorse. There are some who criticize such view as masochistic; but I do not agree with them. Every nation has some dark pages in its history. This is not something to be particularly ashamed of since a nation is a product of humankind, which is prone to commit mistakes. On the contrary, to recognize its past misdeeds as such will allow the nation to stand morally on firm ground. Moreover, it is a process that the wrongdoer must go through in order to achieve reconciliation with the victim.

## II

The view that Japan has yet to come to terms with the past, or World War II, is not only common in China and Korea, but is widely shared among the intellectuals in Southeast Asia, America, and Europe. The international media were by no means sympathetic to Japan when they reported the anti-Japanese demonstrations. Their common observation was that both sides were equally guilty of viewing history through the skewed lenses of nationalism.

In my view, this is not an altogether mistaken observation. Most Japanese relate Japan's postwar pacifism to its own wartime sufferings (symbolized by the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). In their minds, Japan was a victim of the war. The recognition that Japan was the wrongdoer is almost nil. This is because the political leaders in postwar Japan have failed to give a fair and comprehensive account of its past history in the first half of the twentieth century. As a result, postwar Japan's history education was largely neglected due to sterile ideological debates between pro- and anti-Marxism. This is evidenced by the fact that most Japanese who grew up in postwar years have few memories of learning the history of modern Japan in school.

Prime Minister Murayama's official statement, issued on August 15, 1995 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, is of great significance since it is the first comprehensive account by the Japanese government of the past

history. Its most important passage runs as follows:

"During a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensure the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. In the hope that no such mistake be made in the future, I regard, in a spirit of humility, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology. Allow me also to express my feelings of profound mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, at that history.

"Building from our deep remorse on this occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, Japan must eliminate self-righteous nationalism, promote international coordination as a responsible member of the international community and, thereby, advance the principles of peace and democracy."<sup>2</sup>

The key words here are: "a mistaken national policy," "colonial rule," and "aggression." Together they deny in unambiguous terms the legitimacy of Japan's expansionist policy that caused enormous sufferings to other peoples over half a century and finally led Japan to a catastrophic defeat. Thus the prime minister's statement accepts, as a historical fact, that Japan was the wrongdoer. Based on such remorse for the past, the statement declares postwar Japan's rejection of xenophobic nationalism and affirms its firm commitment to international cooperation, peace and democracy.

I was serving in Washington as ambassador when this statement was issued. I immediately sent its English translation to the White House requesting President Clinton's personal attention. The White House soon informed me that the president considered the statement very courageous. This convinced me that the statement would also be positively received internationally.

I believe that the Murayama statement is a persuasive rebuttal against the criticism that Japan is not facing the past, because it is not a politician's personal opinion but has the political weight of the official view of the government approved by the cabinet. Regrettably, however, it is little known in Asia and elsewhere. Three years ago, for example, when I gave a speech in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Japan's relations with ASEAN, a question was raised during the Q and A session if Japan had ever made an apology regarding World War II. As nobody in the audience had ever heard of the Murayama statement of 1995, I appealed to them to read it. I again had a similar

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2 Translation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

experience in April 2005 (just before the anti-Japanese demonstrations in Korea and China) at Stanford University in America when I discussed Japan-Korea and Japan-China relations with a group of Korean-American and Korean graduate students. In spite of their interest in the history issue, none of them had read the Murayama statement.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II (August 15, 2005), Prime Minister Koizumi issued another statement. Not only did it basically follow the Murayama statement, but it also referred to postwar Japan's contributions to world peace and prosperity such as its development assistance and participation in U.N. peacekeeping operations and stated that "Japan's postwar history has indeed been six decades of manifesting its remorse on the war through actions."<sup>3</sup>The Koizumi statement, with its emphasis on Japan's postwar policies and actual actions, is perhaps more persuasive than the one ten years before as a proof that Japan's remorse and apology are not mere words.

The Koizumi statement came out at the time when Sino-Japanese and Japan-Korea relations as well as the East Asian situation in general attracted international attention. As a result, it was more widely reported by the foreign media and probably contributed to improving Japan's image. The Japanese government (the foreign ministry in particular) should make additional efforts, as part of its public diplomacy, to make these two statements better known.

What is more important for Japan in the coming years is that the Japanese, the younger generation in particular, understand the two statements including their historical background. What does "a mistaken national policy" actually mean? Why should Japan's colonial rule be denied legitimacy? Why is the war Japan waged for fifteen years since the so-called Manchurian incident in 1931 considered aggression? History education in school must be able to answer clearly such questions. This is the way to renounce forever "self-righteous nationalism" which the Murayama statement rejects. It is also part of the continuous efforts to remember the past, which should be made by the present as well as the future generations in order to achieve reconciliation with Japan's neighbors.

In this connection, I would like to touch upon the issue of the Yasukuni shrine. I already said earlier that how Japan's political leaders pay tribute to the war dead is a

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3 ibid.

matter in which no foreign government should interfere; however, this general principle does not apply in the case of the Yasukuni shrine. Prime Minister Koizumi maintains that the purpose of his visit to the shrine is to mourn the war dead who dedicated their lives to the country and also to pledge that Japan must always defend peace and never again start another war. I do not question the sincerity of the prime minister's sentiment, which most Japanese probably share. Yet, I am unable to support his visit to the shrine for the simple reason that the shrine's view of history is not in accord with the position of the government as expressed in both of the prime minister's statements. This is something that any visitor to the museum attached to the shrine ("Yushukan") will notice by reading some of the captions accompanying the exhibits and also its publications. The shrine, for example, consistently calls the war in the Pacific "Daitowa Senso (the Great East Asian War)". This is of course how the wartime Japanese government called the war. And it is a well-known historical fact that the naming is inseparably connected with the concept of "the Great East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere," which the government tried to advance in order to justify the war. The prime minister and other political leaders in responsible positions of the government should refrain from making visits to the shrine, which may be construed as sharing the shrine's view that sees Japan's wartime history in a positive light. In my view, this is not because China and Korea are opposed to the visits but because such visits will call into question the consistency of the Japanese government.

### III

As I said earlier, the process of reconciliation must begin with Japan coming to terms with the recent past and must move forward with its continuing efforts by which the country's policies and actions reflect its acceptance of the past. Viewed in this context, Prime Minister Koizumi's statement may be considered a further step forward from Mr. Murayama's statement of ten years ago since it rightly stresses that the road Japan has trodden for half a century demonstrates such efforts. Yet, as memories of past history are not easily forgotten in actual international relations, the efforts do not readily bring about reconciliation.

Then, how has Germany, which, like Japan, is a vanquished party of World War II, dealt with the issue of reconciliation?

That postwar Germany (West Germany before unification) has undertaken full and

extensive accounting of its wartime responsibility is widely known. In Japan, however, many have failed to understand correctly Germany's painful exercise. The misunderstanding has led to the argument that the responsibilities Japan and Germany must respectively share differ in substance and magnitude. That is to say, the responsibility for which Germany is asked to be accountable for is that of the Holocaust, but the responsibility for this crime must be borne by Hitler and other Nazi leaders, exonerating the German people. No one can deny that the Holocaust has left an indelible stain on German history as a crime committed by the state. Germany, however, must also be held responsible for its expansionist policy, driven by nationalism and military power, which caused havoc in Europe. This is the position postwar Germany has consistently maintained. It has been recognized further that the responsibility for the past should be borne not solely by the Nazi leaders but by all Germans. This was eloquently expressed by President Richard von Weizsacker of West Germany in his speech in the Bundestag in 1985, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe. He said: "All of us, whether guilty or not, whether old or young, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and liable for it."<sup>4</sup>

Incidentally, the Chinese government takes the position that the responsibility for the aggression committed by Japan must be borne by the leaders of Japanese militarism (China, therefore, opposes the Japanese prime minister's visit to the Yasukuni shrine where the class-A war criminals are enshrined.), but not by the Japanese people (China, therefore, did not ask for reparations). This may sound fine on the surface. And yet, the Japanese should not accept this at face value and think that we are exonerated. The question as to whom should be accountable for a mistaken policy - the question of specific accountability - and the legacies of history that the people must shoulder over generations as a consequence of certain acts of the state in the past are two separate issues. This is exactly the point mentioned in President Weizsacker's speech quoted above. If they were not separate, the remorse and acceptance of the past would be meaningless.

Postwar Germany (the Federal Republic) has made enormous efforts to achieve reconciliation with its European neighbors and to regain the trust of the international community. The basics of such efforts are: Germany will never again act unilaterally

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4 Translation by the German foreign ministry.



in Europe but will always act together with Europe; and Germany will pursue such policies as are consistent with this basic posture. The paths Germany chose to prove its posture were: first, to take part in the process of European integration; and second, to join the Atlantic alliance (NATO). By committing itself to these two regional arrangements, West Germany assured its neighbors and the international community that it would indeed not act alone and would always act together with Europe. Moreover, domestically, Germany's Basic Law places severe constraints on its use of force abroad. The 1994 opinion of the constitutional court of the Federal Republic was that the Basic Law permits the use of force outside the NATO area only when authorized either by NATO or by the United Nations. The more restricted interpretation of the German government prior to the opinion of the court was that no use of force was permitted for purposes other than the defense of the NATO area.

What have brought about the peace and prosperity of postwar Europe sharing the basic values of freedom and democracy are, without a doubt, first, the political and economic integration that started from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and has led to today's European Union; and second, NATO, which has maintained the security of such Europe. Every student of postwar European history knows that the basic objective of the ECSC, which was founded in 1952 by the French initiative with the German acceptance, was primarily a political one - to put the Franco-German rivalry, the source of two world wars, forever in history by placing the two key industries under the authority of a supra-national body. As to NATO, it used to be said that its purpose was to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down. Throughout the postwar years Germany has done its best to remove the deep mistrust of its neighbors by undertaking a large share of the political and economic costs of the two regional institutions as their faithful member. Nevertheless, during the process that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and led to German unification in the following year, Germany had to face a serious concern shared by its neighbors regarding a giant nation about to rise in the middle of Europe. But for the then Chancellor Kohl's tenacity and the strong support of the United States, German unification would not have been achieved. Even the ceaseless efforts of West Germany for over four decades did not suffice to remove completely the European mistrust of German nationalism.

How does Japan's postwar path compare with that of Germany? In 1952, Japan returned to the international community under the terms of the San Francisco peace treaty and, by concluding the Japan-U.S. security treaty, entrusted its own security in the hands of the United States amidst the Cold War. This is what has come to be called the San Francisco system, which in effect had a twofold objective: to bring Japan into the Western camp in the world of East-West bipolar confrontation; and, at the same

time, to serve as a regional framework which would prevent Japan from again becoming a military threat in Asia and the Pacific. For those countries which had fought the war against Japan and for Korea, which had just been liberated from Japan's colonial rule, the Japanese threat seemed much more real than the Soviet threat. The Japan-U.S. security treaty was perceived by such countries as an arrangement for their own security against a possible reemergence of the Japanese threat rather than for the security of Japan. Under such circumstances, building a multilateral regional security system with the shared objective of responding to the Soviet threat, or a system similar to NATO in Europe, could not be a realistic option for the United States.

Japan, which accepted the San Francisco system, has steadfastly maintained, as its basic foreign policy, the political commitment to identify itself with the West and the alliance with the United States based on the security treaty. It goes without saying that the security treaty has been indispensable for Japan's security. At the same time, it must also be remembered that the treaty has served as an international guarantee against Japan acting unilaterally in the Asia-Pacific. Mr. Henry Kissinger, who engineered the strategic shift of the U.S. China policy of the Nixon administration, recalls in his memoirs that on several occasions, he stressed to the then Chinese leaders (Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Premier Chou En-lai) the U.S.-Japan alliance was "a rein on Japanese unilateralism."<sup>5</sup>

Article 9 of the Japanese constitution corresponds to Germany's Basic Law as the domestic constraint on unilateralism. As the supreme law of the newborn nation, Japan's postwar constitution embodies its renunciation of prewar militarism, statism, and self-righteous nationalism and its commitment to democracy, pacifism, and internationalism. True, the actual meaning of its Article 9 as a norm for Japan's pacifism has often been a controversial subject. Yet, a broadly shared domestic consensus and support seem to exist concerning two basic prescriptions: first, the maintenance of the exclusively defense-oriented military posture whose missions and capabilities are strictly limited to the defense of the Japanese territory; and second, no overseas dispatch of troops for the use of force in another country. This is what is understood as the meaning of the so-called no-war provisions of Article 9, which domestically purports to make sure that Japan will not act unilaterally in Asia and the Pacific.

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5 Henry Kissinger, The White House Years, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1979, p.1089

## IV

For any nation, it needs courage to face the dark pages of its own history. This is even more so when those pages relate to the recent past. Moreover, a great deal of determination and perseverance are required when what is asked is not a single action of making an apology or paying reparations but long-term efforts over generations that reflect the acceptance of the past. With the passage of time, the public will increasingly feel onerous the maintenance of heavy self-imposed constraints on the country's foreign and security policies to regain the trust of the international community, and will ask for their removal in order to become a "normal country." Yet, if reconciliation is to be achieved, the political leaders must resist such public pressure of nationalism.

As reconciliation is a mutual process, the wrongdoer's unilateral efforts alone will not suffice. Only when the victim accepts the wrongdoer's remorse, recognizes the difference between the past and the present, and agrees to share the future together, does reconciliation become true and final. When the postwar paths of Japan and Germany are compared from such a viewpoint, the latter seems to have been more successful. And the most important reason for the difference may be found in the international environment in which they find themselves.

Western Europe, with which Germany pledged to act together, is not merely a group of countries tied together by economic interests and security needs, but a community based on such basic values as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law that govern its political and social systems. To "act together" meant for Germany to choose a path that would make Germany a member of the community of nations bound together by such values. In response, the Western European countries appreciated Germany's move and agreed to share the common future with Germany. As the European Union expands, the community is now growing to embrace all of Europe.

On the other hand, no similar community-like regional framework based on pluralistic values ever existed in post-World War II Asia. Nor has there been any Asian initiative of regional integration in a similar direction. Postwar Japan identified three principles of its foreign policy as U.N.-centered multilateralism, cooperation with countries of the free world, and acting as a member of Asia. The characteristics of Asia in the Cold War years were division rather than integration and conflict rather than reconciliation. Consequently, "acting as a member of Asia" could not serve as a foreign policy principle but became a mere empty slogan, devoid of any substance to form a realistic policy option. Although it has recently become fashionable in Japan and other Asian countries to talk about an "East Asian Community," there is no sharing of basic values in East Asia to bring about a regional coherence requisite for forming a

community. This means that there is no Asia with which Japan can act together. The greatest threat to peace in prewar Europe was the French-German rivalry. Likewise, the Sino-Japanese conflict was the major threat to peace in Asia in the first half of the twentieth century. The key word in the success story of postwar Europe, which overcame the rivalry and achieved mutual reconciliation, is democracy. That democracy took root in postwar Germany made it possible for other democracies in Western Europe to forgive Germany's past and accept it as "one of us." In Asia, on the other hand, Sino-Japanese reconciliation still remains a distant goal even more than thirty years since normalization. Here again, the key word is democracy. While postwar Japan has steadily grown as a democracy, China maintains a one-party totalitarian dictatorship. This difference is a major obstacle to mutual reconciliation.

## V

When President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea and President Jiang Ze-min of China made state visits to Japan in succession in the fall of 1998, the public reaction in Japan to the two visits was sharply divided.

The Japan-Korea joint declaration, co-signed by Prime Minister Obuchi and President Kim, included the following noteworthy passage:

"President Kim Dae-jung highly appreciated the role Japan has played for peace and prosperity of the international community by, inter alia, its security policy, which includes the exclusively defense-oriented posture and the three non-nuclear principles under the Postwar peace constitution, and economic contributions to the world economy and developing countries. The two leaders expressed their determination that Japan and the Republic of Korea further develop their cooperative relations, based on the universal ideals of freedom, democracy, and market economy, through extensive exchanges between the two peoples and mutual understanding."<sup>6</sup>

Most Japanese are willing to repent the past and offer a sincere apology. At the same time, they would like to see the international community, including Japan's neighbors, appreciate postwar Japan's renunciation of the past and its unwavering steps

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6 Translated by the author from the official Japanese text, published in Gaiko Seisho

(Diplomatic Bluebook) 1999, Part I, p.312, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000.

for the sake of peace and international cooperation. This is not only a natural sentiment but even a legitimate expectation if reconciliation is to be a mutual process. President Kim's appreciation of today's Japan and the two leaders' shared resolve to promote the bilateral relationship based on common universal ideals were received by the Japanese public as responding to such expectations and thereby opening the prospect for future-oriented Japan-Korea relations, free from the constraints of their past.

President Jiang Ze-min's visit, taking place only a month and a half later, was a sharp contrast to the Korean president's. Throughout his stay in Japan, the Chinese visitor seized every opportunity to raise the history issue and repeatedly argued that Japan's correct recognition of the past was the precondition for the development of Sino-Japanese relations. On the other hand, the Japanese did not hear a word from President Jiang that China was prepared for reconciliation in response to Japanese repentance. Also in the joint statement, reviewing the bilateral summit, the Chinese side, in response to the Japanese expression of deep remorse, merely stated that it hoped "the Japanese side draw the correct lesson from history and maintain firmly the path toward peaceful development." Unlike in the case of the Japan-Korea joint declaration, the two leaders did not sign the Sino-Japanese statement. It was reported to have been Prime Minister Obuchi's decision. And the Japanese public supported him.

President Jiang's visit, which ended in such a way, was seen in a negative light in Japan, despite the release of a joint press statement that contained a broad cooperative program covering thirty-three items. The American and European media also reported that the visit was a failure of Chinese diplomacy. It was a forerunner of the current state of Sino-Japanese relations, which is described as "cold politics, hot economics." The Chinese leadership may have failed to recognize that the one-sided emphasis on the history issue could be counterproductive by causing an adverse reaction of Japanese nationalism. If that was the case, the reason for the failure lay in the very nature of China's political system itself.

There was a decisive factor that produced a difference between Korea and China in dealing with Japan's history issue, which surfaced in a stark way at the time of their leaders' visits: today's Korea is no longer an authoritarian military regime as it used to be and, like Japan, is a democracy, while China is not. A totalitarian/authoritarian political system is inherently an intolerant regime as it attempts to impose particular values on its people by the power of the state. It inevitably tends to rely on an exclusive ideology or a xenophobic nationalism to suppress what it sees as inimical values in order to defend its legitimacy. By contrast, democracy, which is a pluralistic political system that allows the people to hold freely diverse values, is by nature tolerant and inclusive, capable of restraining forces of exclusive character.

Between a totalitarian/authoritarian state that does not recognize the people holding diverse values and a democracy that tolerates pluralistic values, there is a decisive

difference in the political flexibility that is essential for reconciliation to share a common future with the former adversary by overcoming their past conflicts. Against the hypothesis in international relations that democracies do not fight with each other, a serious objection exists on the ground that it lacks historical evidence. Nevertheless, it can be said that mature democracies do not resort to force with each other in pursuit of national interest since they mutually abide by the established rule to resolve any conflict or dispute by such peaceful means as consultations and negotiations. This is recognized today by anybody who observes intra-EU relations, trans-Atlantic relations as well as Japan-U.S. relations. Mature democracies, unlike others, possess a high degree of tolerance, which enables them to contain unguided forces of ideology and nationalism.

The Federal Republic of Germany was accepted as a member of Western Europe early in the postwar period; the bloody history of World War II did not become a serious obstacle to the development of postwar Japan-U.S. relations; and Korea has recently come to appreciate today's Japan in a positive light. These developments were possible because they were all relations between democracies. On the other hand, its political system makes it difficult for China to welcome a democratic Japan. It is also clear that anti-Japanese nationalism, fostered by the Chinese communist party's strong emphasis on patriotism in its history education, prevents the Chinese from recognizing the difference between prewar and postwar Japan.

What can be seen from the foregoing is: to achieve Sino-Japanese reconciliation, Japan's efforts must proceed, but they are not enough to remove the obstacle; and as long as the difference in the basic values which govern the respective political system remain, a community in which Japan and China can share the future together will not emerge in Asia. This does not imply that Sino-Japanese rivalries are inevitable. It means, however, that Japan and China, two major powers on which the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific largely depend, need certain wisdom and effort, not required in relations between democracies, to manage conflicting interests and promote mutual benefits.

## VI

In connection with Japan's basic position that "Japan will not act unilaterally in the Asia Pacific," the author would like to discuss three issues: Japan-U.S. relations, regional cooperation, and the revision of Japan's constitution.

First, on Japan-U.S. relations. The importance of the bilateral alliance to defend the peace and security of Japan and, at the same time, to serve as an international

guarantee that Japan does not act unilaterally, will not diminish in the foreseeable future. Some Japanese critics mistakenly argue that Japan should shift its U.S.-tilted foreign policy stance toward Asia. Such argument overlooks the views discussed seriously in the U.S., China, and elsewhere that a nuclear North Korea will lead Japan to go nuclear also. From the Japanese perspective, a nuclear Japan never seems a realistic option. Internationally, however, it is regarded as a common sense that the solid Japan-U.S. alliance is the precondition for Japan remaining non-nuclear. That Japan distancing itself from America is a major destabilizing factor in the Asia-Pacific is a commonly shared perception in the region even in the post-Cold War era. And China is no exception in this regard.

The biggest problem for Japan in its relations with the U.S. is that the latter's influence is dominant in every aspect: military, political, economic, and cultural. Between two individuals, if one finds the other superior in every aspect, physically, intellectually, etc., the former tries to keep a certain distance from the latter in order to avoid the loss of his or her own identity. A similar tendency is observed in international relations. Every country, in its relations with the U.S., is often seized, to some degree at least, with a nationalistic mentality of asserting its own uniqueness. The best way to offset such a frame of mind and to maintain cooperative relations with the U.S. is to form a coalition of like-minded countries, which will ease the perceived American pressure and will also help strengthen its own influence vis-à-vis the U.S.

In the case of Germany, the European Union and NATO, two regional frameworks, serve not only to secure Germany's commitment to Europe, but also enable it to maintain a balanced relationship with the U.S. In the absence of a similar regional framework, Japan is directly exposed to the prevailing American influence. As a result, it cannot escape the public image of subservience - the image of "a Japan that cannot say no to America" - even when its cooperation with the U.S. is in its own national interest. During the Cold War, when the Soviet threat was too obvious to ignore, such an image may very well have been accepted by the Japanese public as worth paying the price for Japan's security. Today, however, as threats have become more diverse and diffused, the perception of exclusive reliance on the U.S. is no longer bearable in the long run. Careful management of the alliance thus becomes necessary lest Japan's basic foreign policy stance yield to domestic public pressure of skewed nationalism that calls for "an autonomous foreign policy, less dependence on the U.S., and more weight on Asia." Under the unstable and uncertain post-Cold War environment, the Japan-U.S. alliance must adjust itself to meet a number of new challenges: North Korea, Iraq, Iran, China, terrorism, non-proliferation, and the realignment of U.S. bases in Japan.

Even though the importance of the alliance with its twofold role - Japan's security and restraint on Japan's possible unilateralism - remains unchanged, it seems neither appropriate nor sustainable over the longer-term to rely solely on the bilateral

relationship with the U.S. There are two reasons for this: first, in today's increasingly multi-polar world, the bilateral alliance alone cannot meet all of the diverse security needs, no matter how powerful the U.S. is; and second, under such circumstances, it will not be possible to develop a balanced and stable overall relationship with the U.S. unless the alliance is reinforced by some appropriate regional structures. Thus, for example, it may be worth considering the idea to develop the current six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear issue, if and when they produce the intended outcome, into a new regional security structure that will guarantee the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and replace the existing armistice agreement with a permanent North-South peace treaty.

In building cooperative regional structures in the Asia-Pacific, it is not necessary to be particular about their geographical scopes and functions as long as well-defined objectives and a clear sense of direction exist. In this regard, the advancement of peace and democracy, stated in Prime Minister Murayama's statement of 1995 as the goals Japan must pursue, should serve as the basic policy guidelines. More specifically, the first policy objective is to establish in the region the rule that any conflict or dispute must be resolved by peaceful means without resort to force and a mechanism to ensure its effective application. The second objective is expanding and sharing democratic values among the countries of the region. Needless to say, the advancement of democracy cannot be achieved by a coercive policy. Nor should it try to promote a particular model disregarding the different conditions of the individual countries. It should be based, however, on the recognition that the more the countries in the region share such universal values as individual freedom, respect for human rights, and the rule of law, the greater the long-term prospect for the development of regional solidarity that will give birth to a peaceful and prosperous Asia-Pacific community. Such a community differs from the European Union, a supra-national institution. The Asia-Pacific is too diverse a region to pursue such a goal. Yet, the task should be to build step-by-step a network of cooperation that promotes common interests on the basis of agreed rules while respecting the uniqueness of the individual countries.

This process of regional cooperation should take into full consideration the following needs:

First, no regional order should exclude the United States. This does not mean that U.S. participation is required in every single scheme of cooperation. But the American presence in the overall order of the Asia-Pacific is essential. This is obvious since the purpose of the whole exercise is to reinforce the Japan-U.S. alliance. It should also be kept in mind that neither peace nor prosperity in the region is possible without America's active engagement.

Second, any regional order should keep its door open to China. It is not in Japan's interest to let China, a non-democratic country, assume the leading role in building a regional order. On the other hand, any attempt to contain the rising



influence of China is liable to increase the tension in the region and detrimental to building a peaceful order in the Asia-Pacific, which Japan wants to pursue. Japan should encourage China's participation in the process while strengthening the cooperative ties with the U.S. and other democracies in the region. This is undoubtedly a long-term process; but such efforts to engage China are probably the only realistic policy to allow China to restrain its assertive nationalism and encourage it to move towards a more pluralistic political system.

If such multi-tiered and multi-faceted cooperative structures based on peace and democracy are built, a community of nations will emerge with which Japan can act together, rather than a supra-national organization like the EU,. This process will create an environment which will allow Japan to achieve reconciliation not only with its neighbors, but with the entire region.

Finally, on the issue of constitutional revision. As discussed in Chapter III, Article 9 of Japan's postwar constitution, like Germany's Basic Law, has served as the domestic constraint on unilateralism. Political momentum towards rewriting the constitution seems to have been created since the general elections of last September, which the pro-revision Liberal Democratic Party won by a handsome majority. Nevertheless, as regards Article 9, the focal point of the issue, a consensus seems to exist neither in the Diet, which has the power to propose constitutional amendments, nor among the voters on a specific language. What is most worrisome in the domestic debate is the complete absence of attention to the possible impact of rewriting Article 9 on Japan's relations with the rest of the world.

The 1994 reinterpretation of the Basic Law, which allowed Germany to send its troops outside the NATO area for combat purposes under certain conditions, was based on the opinion of the constitutional court. Yet, one should not minimize the importance of the international background that made the reinterpretation politically possible: the acceptance of such German action by its European neighbors. Does a similar environment surround Japan? The answer of its neighbors would be an emphatic "no."

A certain level of domestic consensus in favor of an amendment that will explicitly recognize the right of self-defense and the right to maintain armed forces for self-defense purposes, which are often considered ambiguous under the existing Article 9, may be achievable. This, however, is not necessarily the case with the outside world. If Article 9 is rewritten in the way mentioned above, what will be the international reaction? Most foreign observers regard Japan's self defense forces as first-class armed forces by any standard. Thus it may be natural for other countries to assume that the rewriting of Article 9 is not simply for removing its ambiguity but for a hidden policy intention. The same can be said about the right of self-defense, which of course is a universally recognized right whether or not the constitution says so. What then is the real purpose of the amendment? What about the right of collective self-defense, which the Japanese government has always maintained cannot be

exercised under the constitution? Is such interpretation going to change? If so, how is it going to change? One argument says that revising the constitution is necessary for Japan to become a "normal country." But does this mean that Japan now wants to remove the self-imposed postwar constraint on unilateralism?

Japan will be asked to answer such questions in a convincing language if and when it decides to rewrite (or reinterpret) Article 9. Outside observers tend to see, with some apprehension, the recent political trend towards revising the constitution as reflecting the rise of Japanese nationalism. If Japan's answers fail to reassure these critics, there is a real danger that the trust Japan has worked so hard to earn throughout the postwar years might crumble, not only with its neighbors but with the entire international community. Japan's political leadership bears a heavy responsibility to avoid such an outcome at all costs.

The quick visits to Beijing and Seoul in October last year by Mr. Abe, Japan's new prime minister, are considered a diplomatic success as they put Japan's derailed relations with China and Korea back on track. These visits certainly showed that none of the three parties found a state of broken dialogue to be in their best interest. The basic problems of reconciliation, however, remain unsolved.