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The Japanese State of Mind: Deliberations on the Gulf Crisis

Japanese reactions to the Persian Gulf crisis that broke out on August 2, 1990 have effectively exposed the idiosyncratic nature of the Japanese in their attitudes toward the rest of the world and their own security. Compared with earlier cabinets’ handling of similar situations, the positiveness and speed with which the government took the initiative on August 5, only three days after the crisis arose, both to formulate and announce its policy of economic sanctions against Iraq—prohibiting oil imports, exports, loans, and investments, and freezing economic cooperation—was an epoch-making event. This, however, was both the beginning and the end of swift, decisive action on the part of the Japanese government.

Immediately afterward, one more opportunity for Japan to make a diplomatic contribution to a resolution of the Gulf crisis was approaching. This was Prime Minister Kaifu’s visit to five Middle East countries, scheduled before the crisis for an August 15 departure. Instead of seizing the opportunity, however, Kaifu hemmed and hawed over whether or not he ought to go until, two days before his planned departure, he “postponed”—which is to say, canceled—the trip. Sankei shimbun carried an editorial the next day, August 13, lamenting that “this postponement on the eve of his departure reveals to the world with shameful clarity that Kaifu Toshiki, as Japan’s prime minister, has no clear vision of the ‘post-Cold War’ world.” It could not have been put any better.

From that point on the responses of the Japanese government became increasingly and obviously passive. Neither the billion dollar contribution announced on August 29 nor the three billion dollar contribution announced on September 14 had been arrived at as an independent move based on the ideals and philosophy of the Japanese government. They were offered grudgingly and obsequiously, as an appeasement to the Americans, in response to American demands and pressure.

What also must be noted along with the confusion of the government’s response is the fact that the special session of the Diet called to deliberate Japan’s response to the Gulf crisis was not convened until October 12. And if the total inaction of the government and the ruling party was a problem—which is to say, if it was a problem that they failed even to attempt to call a special session of the Diet for over two months following the outbreak of the crisis while they faced the appearance of a new situation that obviously could not be handled with the old laws, system, and methods—then the political sense of the opposition parties, which looked on with arms folded and offered no alternative plan, can only be described as incomprehensible.

And so it was that a government under the leadership of a prime minister like Kaifu came to present what it called its “United Nations Peace Cooperation Bill” (UNPCB) to a Diet comprised of political

parties that had no idea how to react to it. The bill was proposed on October 16, and during the 22 days until it was abandoned on November 8, the whole of Japan became a hornets' nest of round-the-clock theological disputes, not on the question of "what can we do" in response to the Gulf crisis but "what can we not do?" Then, when the bill was abandoned and the Diet adjourned on November 9, the Japanese shifted their attention to the problem of freeing the Japanese hostages in Iraq. On December 6, Iraq's President Hussein announced the release of all hostages, and no sooner had the hostages come home than the Japanese essentially lost all interest in the Gulf crisis, joining instead the crowd of gawkers watching the fire on the other side of the river.

What was the significance of the Gulf crisis to the Japanese? What did the U.N. Peace Cooperation Bill mean to them? And what did world peace, justice, national security, and national honor mean to them? More than anything else, it was that remarkable 22-day period that suddenly brought these questions from beneath the surface of public awareness and debate and exposed them to the light of day.

The UNPCB submitted to the Diet by the government on October 16 consisted of 6 chapters, 32 articles, and additional clauses. Article 1 stated that its purpose is to provide a mechanism to effect the overseas dispatch of a United Nations Peace Cooperation Corps by establishing a United Nations Peace Cooperation Council, United Nations Peace Cooperation Corps, etc., in order to give apt and speedy cooperation to the peace maintenance and other United Nations activities carried out in accordance with United Nations resolutions for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Article 3, paragraph 1 of the bill asserted that Japan could cooperate not only with activities based directly on the U.N. resolution but with actions taken by U.N. member states and other states "in order to assure the effectiveness of the U.N. resolution," by which it assumed that it could cooperate with the U.S.-centered multinational force dispatched to the Persian Gulf.

Article 3, paragraph 2 defined the duties of the U.N. Peace Cooperation Corps (UNPCC) as: 1) policing of cease-fires, 2) supervising administrative affairs, 3) policing elections, 4) installation of transport and communications facilities, 5) medical activities, 6) civilian relief activities, and 7) damage rehabilitation activities. These made it possible for Japan to participate in all U.N. "peace-keeping operations" other than force disengagement and assumed that it could participate or cooperate with certain rear-guard support activities of the multinational force. In other words, from the very outset, the possibility of participation in front-line battle activities of the U.N. "peace-making operations" or the multinational force was excluded.

Article 22 further stipulated that Japan Self-Defense Force "units or individual soldiers" would be dispatched to the UNPCC along with personnel from the Maritime Safety Agency and other related administrative agencies, and that in such instances members of the Self-Defense Force would "hold joint status as members of both the UNPCC and the Self-Defense Force." The related Article 27 authorized the carrying of small arms by members of the Peace Cooperation Corps, but with the

added condition that such arms be used “only in situations in which there exists sufficient reason to believe that there exists an unavoidable necessity for the protection of the life or safety of oneself or another and only within limits judged to be reasonably necessary.” The Article further limited their use with the stipulation that “even in situations in which small arms can be used, harm must not be inflicted on others except in conformance with the provisions of Articles 36 (legitimate self-defense) or 37 (temporary asylum) of the Criminal Law.”

The special session of the Diet called on October 16 opened with questions posed by representatives of each party in a plenary session of the Lower House, but there was absolutely no debate made from political, strategic, and legislative points of view. In other words, no such questions were posed as what the significance of the Gulf crisis was for the world and Japan, what kind of response Japan should make to the crisis, whether Japan could respond sufficiently to these demands by means of the existing legal system and the human and material resources in hand, or what we should do if we could not respond sufficiently.

Instead, the debate concentrated on one single administrative, technical, and legalistic question: was this UNPCB unconstitutional? This is why, for 22 days, the Diet carried on, ad nauseam, a theological dispute not on the question of “what can we do” but “what can we not do?” In the Diet’s eyes there existed neither the world nor the Persian Gulf but only the sacred and inviolable Article 9 of the constitution, the protection of which was set before each member as a test of theological purity, paralyzing each one in its magic spell.

The Socialist Party, among others, took the position that the bill was unconstitutional and demanded to know if “the government is planning to change the customary interpretation of the constitution.” Fearing a constitutional debate, Prime Minister Kaifu replied that the government “has no intention of changing the customary interpretation of the constitution,” from which moment the fate of the UNPCB was sealed. Apparently Kaifu had no clear conception of the enormity of the problem contained in the proposal that Self-Defense Forces be dispatched to a strife-torn foreign region for the first time since the enactment of the postwar constitution and against a background of worldwide change—namely, the end of the Cold War. The Diet had resolved in 1954 that “the Self-Defense Force will not be mobilized abroad,” and successive cabinets had formally interpreted the constitution to mean that “the exercise of the collective right of self-defense is not permitted.” Considering all this, the choice that Prime Minister Kaifu should have made was to have explained to the nation “why it is necessary to enact this bill.” He should have openly expressed his political convictions concerning the Gulf crisis and Japan’s role, asserted that “we have no choice but to change the customary interpretation of the constitution,” and then initiated a debate of the administrative, legal-technical, and interpretive questions at that level.

Had he done so, even if the bill in the end had been rejected, that process would have been a far-from-meaningless exercise, for it would have aroused the Japanese to a sense of their international mission and an awareness of national security. And if, in the course of this debate, it had become

clear that a change in the interpretation of the constitution was an impossibility, this would have opened the way to the next logical question: “Should the constitution be revised?” Instead, what we have is a dead end. Shriveling in the face of cries for “one-country pacifism,” Kaifu lacked the courage to propose a reinterpretation of the constitution, and he presented to the Diet a bill that had no hope of passage without precisely such a reinterpretation. Instead of substantive questions, he was showered with the emotional demagoguery of Socialist Party Chairwoman Doi Takako and others demanding “Will it be war or peace?” and “Do not send our boys to the battlefield,” in response to which he merely waffled. As a result, there was virtually no constructive debate prompting a reassessment of Japan’s role in a dramatically changing world. Nevertheless, it is only through an analysis of this sterile debate that we can attain an understanding of the world view and the awareness of national security of the Japanese today.

In her questioning of the government at the very outset of the Diet session, Chairwoman Doi declared, “Now, at a time when the U.S.-Soviet Cold War structure has ended and likewise in Asia the normalization of both Japanese-North Korean and South Korean-Soviet relations has given rise to something we might call a ‘no-war structure,’ what moves us and fills us with pride is our own ‘no-war constitution.’” In the linguistic universe represented by such pronouncements, there is something extraordinarily interesting, something that contains a certain mentality and logical structure by Doi Takako and a significant portion of the Japanese people. In a sense Doi’s declaration might be seen as the polar opposite of what Margaret Thatcher is reported to have said to George Bush immediately after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait to the effect that “We must not ignore Iraq’s destruction of the legal order. If we do not stand together to oppose this, the new world order that we trying to build will disintegrate.”

There is probably not a great deal of difference between Thatcher’s “new world order” and Doi’s “no-war structure” so far as their ultimate aims are concerned, but while Thatcher believes her “new world order” will never come into being without a positive effort, Doi thinks that her “no-war structure” is going to fall off the shelf ready-made, that all we have to do is stand by and watch it happen. This “no-war constitution” of which Doi speaks is based on a logic that says that Japan, under its postwar “closed-country (sakoku) pacifism,” will not participate in world events, and it has functioned all these years to perpetuate the logic of keeping ourselves alone safe amid the Cold War structure. Now, however, when the positive participation of all countries, including Japan, is needed to determine whether or not the “end of the Cold War” will lead to the birth of a “no-war structure,” Doi trots out the “no-war constitution” with its logic that rejects precisely such a positive response and makes noises as if to say that this very “no-war constitution” has given rise to the emerging “no-war structure.” It is simply shocking that neither Doi herself nor the substantial number of Japanese she represents are even vaguely aware of the self-deception of this logic.

The same can be said concerning the full-page political advertisements with Doi’s photograph and the headline “NO DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS OVERSEAS—THE SOCIALIST PARTY” which the Party ran in all the major national newspapers on October 26 just as the Diet deliberations on the

UNPCB were at their height and on the eve of a by-election held in Aichi Prefecture on November 4 to fill a vacancy in the Upper House. The ad was obviously meant to promote the fortunes of the Socialist Party by pandering to and inflaming what we might call the “one-country pacifism” or “closed-country pacifism” mentality deeply engrained in the postwar Japanese.

According to a national telephone poll conducted by the Kyodo News Agency at the end of October 1990, 500 of the 1,000 people who were asked “What do you think of the UNPCB?” answered that they were opposed to it, while those respondents in favor of it numbered a mere 133. When asked, “What do you think of dispatching the Self-Defense Forces abroad?” 668 were opposed and only 129 in favor. Proclaiming one’s opposition to the dispatching of Self-Defense Forces abroad at a time like this is easy. But politics conducted according to public opinion polls cannot be good politics, especially when the epoch has reached a major turning point and it becomes necessary to change the customary ideas and approaches. Unless someone explains to the people why change is necessary, they can never recognize it for themselves. Herein lies a source of a tense relationship between public opinion and politics, and public opinion and journalism. Politicians and journalists can never carry out their responsibilities when they run away from these tense relationships.

Now let’s take another look at this advertisement, “NO DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS—THE SOCIALIST PARTY.” Never mind that the government distinguishes between “deploying troops” (hahei) and “dispatching the Self-Defense Force” (haken). (As Prime Minister Kaifu explained in his response to Chairwoman Doi in the Diet session of October 16, “deploying troops” means “deploying armed forces for the purposes of military engagement,” and therefore the term does not apply to the present UNPCC.) Declaring “NO DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS—THE SOCIALIST PARTY” without further explanation is an attempt to give the Japanese people the mistaken impression that the Socialist Party is opposed to a plan of the government to “deploy armed forces for the purpose of military engagement.” The text of the ad begins with the words, “The constitution that vowed to reject war is now facing its greatest crisis since the end of the war. Under the lovely-sounding banner of ‘UNPCB,’ the way is being opened to send our Self-Defense Forces to fight abroad.” And it concludes, “Now that the world has finally begun to move in the direction of dialogue and demilitarization, we assert that the greatest ‘contribution’ Japan can make is to adhere to our Peace Constitution: to make it live. Raise your voices with us. Help us put a stop to those who would trample on our no-war constitution by deploying the Self-Defense Forces overseas”.

What most struck me when I first read this advertisement was the absence of any mention whatever of Iraq or Saddam Hussein. At a time like this, when world peace is confronting a major test, the Socialist Party pretends that such crises and problems do not exist. They tell us, “Now that the world has finally begun to move in the direction of dialogue and demilitarization, we assert that the greatest ‘contribution’ Japan can make is to adhere to our Peace Constitution: to make it live.” Is Saddam Hussein moving in the direction of dialogue and demilitarization? Is that what he’s doing? Or is he trying to move the clock backward in the direction of confrontation and military expansion? What we see in the Socialists’ pleas on behalf of “our Peace Constitution” is sheer demagoguery, a

logical shell game, pandering to the emotions of “one-country pacifism” in which the Japanese want to be the only ones who avoid all the risks and keep a distance between themselves and danger.

The tragedy of Japan that became clear in the course of the Diet deliberations on the UNPCB was that such pandering to the emotions of “one-country pacifism” was characteristic not only of Chairwoman Doi but of Prime Minister Kaifu as well. His remarks in the Diet, “Even if we dispatch the Self-Defense Force to the Gulf, our boys will be stationed away from dangerous places,” symbolically exposed his vacillatory position. Kaifu was heavily censured by both those opposed to the UNPCB and those in favor of it. While concentrating on those critiques of his lack of leadership, I would here like to examine the editorial positions adopted by Japan’s major newspapers during the period of the Diet deliberations on the UNPCB.

One point worth special notice in the Kyodo News Agency telephone poll cited earlier is that, of the 1,000 respondents who were asked “In what form do you think Japan should contribute in the future to world peace and the resolution of conflicts?” a surprising 553 answered that they thought Japan ought to send not only material and monetary aid but “personnel aid, too.” True, 454 of those 553 wanted to limit the contribution of such personnel aid to “those in non-military aspects,” but since neither the government nor the LDP was advocating the dispatch of personnel for purposes that included the military aspect, a straightforward reading of the poll results can be taken to mean that 553 out of 1,000 respondents believe that it is necessary for us to “send personnel, too.” (I am using the phrase “military aspects” in the sense of “battle service” or “frontline service.”) The fact that a full 500 of the 1,000 were, nevertheless, opposed to the UNPCB indicates that the fundamental problem was the different manner in which Prime Minister Kaifu presented the question.

If a national leader were going to appeal to his people on the need for such a historic change of policy as this, he himself should have done so as a matter of philosophy and conviction. No wonder the Sankei shimbun editors argued on November 2:

How can Japan respond effectively to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait? This is the question that has to be answered first, but Prime Minister Kaifu and the other LDP leaders have never even asked it. The total lack of all such high-level political judgments is the bill’s greatest flaw. The very first thing the prime minister should have worked out when writing the bill was a new government interpretation of the collective right of self defense in Article 9 of the constitution and an accompanying revision of the Self-Defense Force Law. This was a matter of his “political” responsibility. Mere lack of preparation was not the cause of the revelation of the bill’s vagueness of terminology and the government’s almost comical ineptness in the replies it offered throughout the debate. The cause lay all too obviously in the absence of political decisiveness on the part of Prime Minister Kaifu as the country’s leader.

This recalls a Yomiuri shimbun editorial that appeared as early as September 14:

Any attempt to deal with the newly emerging situation within the bounds of the past constitutional debate is destined to head for a dead end. New situations call for new models of action. If we skirt constitutional debate, it will be impossible for us to make an appropriate response to the question of our international contribution...If there has been established an interpretation of the constitution that prevents our cooperation with the U.N., including the multinational force, then that interpretation ought to be changed.

A few days later, on the 22nd, the Yomiuri's editorial, "Questioning the Wisdom and Leadership of Prime Minister Kaifu," asserted that "This is not a problem that can be considered only on the level of intra-Diet party politics...It is the responsibility of the highest leader to appeal directly to the people, to persuade them, and to seek their understanding." Then, on the 28th: "The one thing we need now is constitutional debate...It is the mission of the government to demonstrate throughout this debate a solid interpretation of the constitution and to assert its leadership ability in order to form a consensus...The last thing we need now is a supreme leader who waffles."

The Yomiuri called its editorial of October 13 "Let the Prime Minister Boldly Challenge His Opponents in Constitutional Debate":

In order to meet this challenge we face, it is urgent that we re-evaluate the constitutional interpretations that have been accumulated throughout the Cold War era and establish a new route to peace based on a new perspective in the days of the "post-Cold War." For example, there is the interpretation that the exercise of the collective right of self-defense is unconstitutional, but there is no express stipulation to that effect in the constitution. It is merely the interpretation of successive cabinets, formulated within the framework of the Cold War.

And again on the 17th:

With regard to our response to the multinational force, it is necessary to re-evaluate the longstanding wall of the collective right of self-defense. Either we recognize an exercise of the collective right of self-defense limited strictly to support of such multinational forces, or we work out a new judgment that these are actions that occur in a different dimension than the collective right of self-defense.

The Sankei shimbun was, in a sense, even more penetrating in its editorial, "Change in Constitutional Interpretation Comes First," of September 27.

If the paramount principles of the nation's actions are to center upon Japan's relationships with the United Nations and the United States, then the conclusion is already obvious...[The government] tries its best to dilute any image that appears the least bit "military," emphasizing instead the "unarmed" "civilian" side, but however restricted our aid may be to support in the medical, communications, and transport areas, the fact is that Japanese personnel will be headed for a battle zone, and it is this recognition that is lacking...The time has come to change the interpretation of the constitution by

which successive cabinets have refused to countenance the exercise of the collective right of self-defense and to grapple seriously with the revision of the Self-Defense Force Law so as to make the foreign dispatch of Self-Defense Forces possible...We should not seek shelter in a policy such as the U.N. Peace Cooperation Law that we know to be a less than wholly desirable policy...Japan cannot possibly “contribute” to and “support” this effort with a thrown-together UNPCC of the sort the government envisions that is unarmed, inadequately trained, and lacking an adequate chain of command.

Thus the Sankei made no bones about supporting the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces abroad and rejecting the concept of the UNPCC. On October 17 its editorial was called “Constitutional Interpretation: Jump, Mr. Prime Minister!”

Now is the time to change the interpretation of the constitution that “the collective right of self-defense could not be exercised” which is the main stumbling block to dispatching the Self-Defense Forces...It is said that constitutionally “there can be no foreign dispatch of Self-Defense Forces that presumes the use of military force,” but this is true only in the context of “a means of settling international disputes,” and not in the context of the use of force in general. The constitution does not negate the use of force as an exercise of the right of self-defense...We don’t have to produce any new concepts to justify participation of the Self-Defense Forces in a U.N. force or a multinational force: we should deal with it as an exercise of the collective right of self-defense.

The Sankei thus left no doubt where it stood.

In stark contrast to the Yomiuri and the Sankei, with their forthright advocacy of constitutional reinterpretation and dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces, and their criticism of the waffling Prime Minister Kaifu’s lack of leadership, the Asahi and Mainichi both advocated a strict interpretation of the constitution and opposed the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces, in the course of which they criticized the government and stood in clear opposition to its proposed UNPCB. But when it came to the question of how Japan should carry out its international responsibilities as a major power, the rhetoric of both papers suddenly clouded over to the point of incomprehensibility. They even outdid Prime Minister Kaifu in fabricating empty structures out of non sequiturs piled beautifully one on another.

“It might be called dreaming to attempt to solve the present Gulf crisis without firing a shot or shedding a drop of blood. Indeed, there are those who say that such attempts are lost on an outlaw like Saddam Hussein,” said the Asahi shimbun of September 13, but even as it clearly defined the problem, it went on without venturing to argue that such an attempt was not dreaming, concluding first that “it will be difficult to meet American demands with non-military contributions, but all wisdom must be exhausted on obtaining understanding for Japan’s special status,” and dodging the issue: “There are those in Congress who criticize Japan for not making military contributions, but if Japan compiles a record of solid results through its own unique contributions, this will almost

certainly appreciated.”

The Asahi did not define exactly what it meant by “military contributions,” but the term would seem to be somewhat broader than my own “battle service” or “frontline service,” taking in all “armed cooperation” and “participation of Self-Defense Forces,” which is why it seemed to me that the Asahi’s conclusion simply glossed over too much. The September 9 Asahi took note of the fact that “surely other dictators will appear in the future who seek violently to destroy the order,” but while supposedly discussing the role that Japan was to play, it made do with the feeble conclusion that “the responsibility that has been placed on the shoulders of the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union is truly great,” and “we expect much from both leaders.” Thus we saw not only Chairwoman Doi and Prime Minister Kaifu but also the Asahi shimbun pandering to those emotions of “one-country pacifism” in which the Japanese want to be the only ones who avoid all the risks and keep a distance between themselves and danger.

Still, neither the Asahi nor the Socialist Party seemed to take exception to the position that Japan must contribute not only “things” and “money” but also “people.” Thus, the one remaining point of contention was whether or not this contribution of “people” could be in the form of armed cooperation, i.e., the Self-Defense Forces. An October 7 Asahi editorial pointed out that “the question has been narrowed down to that of the use of the Self-Defense Forces.” Assuming this is the case, I would like to emphasize the importance of the “recognition” mentioned by the Sankei shimbun on September 27 that “however restricted our aid may be to support in the medical, communications, and transport areas, the fact is that Japanese personnel will be headed for a battle zone.” I was absolutely opposed to sending Japanese boys into that battle zone unarmed, whether they were members of the Self-Defense Forces or not. This would have been tantamount to ordering them to leap into a raging sea without life jackets for themselves in order to save the lives of others.

With regard to the case of an unarmed “UNPCC” advocated by the Socialist Party participating in cease-fire supervision and other such activities, which could not have been entirely free of danger, General Secretary Yamaguchi of the Socialist Party said, “Article 9 of Japan’s constitution has been acknowledged by the U.N. I believe that neither the Secretary-General of the U.N. nor the commander of the peace-keeping operation will dare to send members of the Japanese UNPCC into dangerous areas.” These were the words of a man who had no concept of reality. Imagine a commanding officer with troops under his supervision who tell him, “No, I can’t do that,” “I can’t go there.” Nor would that be his only handicap. He would have to assign part of his armed forces to the protection of the Japanese UNCPP who lack even the ability to protect themselves. This degree of international common sense was far from being common sense among the Japanese. And once we did recognize their need for arms, these troops would necessarily be a “Second Self-Defense Force.” Once we went that far, the problem of what to call this Japanese unit dispatched overseas to preserve international peace—whether “Self-Defense Force” or “UNCPP”—would no longer, it seemed to me, make any substantial difference, either in terms of constitutional interpretation or international law.

Meanwhile, in an editorial of October 17 called “Are Self-Defense Forces Needed in Cooperative Operations?” the Asahi said, “We believe that the way to respond to the expectations of international society is to train a professional organization devoted solely to Peace Cooperation duties and separate from the Self-Defense Force.” Probably the same concept of a non-Self-Defense Force Peace Cooperation Corps lay behind its October 7 editorial, which said, “We must make it clear exactly how far Japan is able to cooperate with the U.S.-centered multinational force now forming in Saudi Arabia. The government seems to be of the opinion that we are limited to rear-guard support without the use of military force, but does this make any sense? Having been perceived as ‘soldiers,’ can members of the Self-Defense Force suddenly slip away from the battle line when hostilities begin without inviting the derision and distrust of other nations?” What, then, of the Asahi’s “professional organization devoted solely to Peace Cooperation duties?” Could it “suddenly slip away from the battle line when hostilities begin without inviting the derision and distrust of other nations?” Here again the Asahi exposed its views as empty rhetoric, gloss without substance.

Editorials appearing in the Mainichi shimbun were virtual photocopies of the Asahi’s, lacking in freshness or individuality. This could not be said of the Nihon keizai shimbun’s views, but they simply dodged the real questions by limiting themselves to comments on how and when the debate should be conducted, as in “Avoid Haste in Enacting a U.N. Peace Cooperation Law” (October 11), “Consult the Popular Will in Changing the Interpretation of the Constitution on Self-Defense Forces” (October 17), and “Throw Out UNPCB and Start Again” (November 1).

Such, then, was the situation surrounding the deliberations on the UNPCB, a situation that was caught in the spell of the Japanese people’s emotions of “one-country pacifism” in which the Japanese want to be the only ones who avoid all the risks and keep a distance between themselves and danger. And we have seen that such potentially disparate voices as the chairwoman of the Socialist Party, the prime minister, and the Asahi shimbun were all equally caught in the spell. Those hoping to resist the flow by taking up their pens in hopes of opening the minds of the people would seem to have been facing a Sisyphean task. The only newspapers that tried it were the Yomiuri and the Sankei, and aside from me the number of individual commentators was hardly imposing: Sato Seizaburo, Kitaoka Shin’ichi, Takubo Tadae, and Yayama Taro. But this did not signify that there were only a few commentators who truly understood the need for the UNPCB. What it signified, rather, was the weakness of Japanese individualism in critical situations. As a general tendency of Japanese society, the spell of communalism emerges, and in the face of it the individual simply withers.

Let me recount a personal anecdote here. Last October I was invited to participate in a debate on the pros and cons of the UNPCB that was televised nationally by NHK. When I arrived at the studio and met the others, I got the impression that NHK had constituted the panel to include three opposed to the measure and two in favor. The other participants included a scholar of constitutional law, a scholar of international law, and two scholars of international politics. At least one of the latter was widely recognized in Japan as a realist. Some three days earlier, I had read these remarks by him:

The negation of the collective right of self-defense tramples on the most fundamental concept of constitution. I am sure that we will have to change the way we think about the collective right of self-defense. Once a U.N. force is formally constituted, Japan will be in no position to hesitate. It's not a question of whether or not we can participate in collective security; it is our duty as a member nation. We don't want it to look as though Japan is using its constitution as an excuse to do nothing. Now is the time to stop this wishy-washy interpretation of Article 9 of the constitution.

When the camera and mike were turned on the man who had written these words, however, I was flabbergasted to hear him voicing opposition to the UNPCB on the grounds that "we should wait until the maturation of a popular consensus and of consensus among the government and opposition parties." This left me all alone, one against four, as the only voice on this national broadcast in favor of the bill.

The most deeply rooted element upon which was based the assertions of domestic Japanese commentators opposed to the overseas dispatching of the Self-Defense Forces was that emotion of "one-country pacifism" in which the Japanese want to be the only ones who avoid all the risks and keep a distance between themselves and danger. Thus it shared the same root as the desire for "one-country prosperity-ism" that dates from the period when we were being called "economic animals." These commentators might have pretended to be conscientious objectors, but that is all they were doing: pretending, for they lacked both the positive will to pay and the very concept of paying the price that must be paid for the privilege of conscientiously objecting to military service. Take, for example, the writer Tsutsui Yasutaka, to whom the Asahi gave the spotlight on New Year's Day in its "Rondan" column. Here is what he said in this piece, called "The Country Doesn't Need to Be Cool":

In the postwar world, Japan was the country that had the best thing going. We didn't have to give a damn what anybody thought about us. The one hitch was that we made lots of money, so now all of a sudden we're a "major power" with "dignity" and "pride" that we have to live up to. Now we've got guys telling us that we have to worry about our "self-awareness as a member of international society" and that we "cannot be permitted to go on forever with the same attitude we have always maintained." Yeah. Right. Sounds cool. But it doesn't mean a thing. Where we really went wrong, I think, was giving financial support in conformity to the economic blockade. I'm not saying we have to act cool by saying "NO" to America. The best way for us to maintain the kind of pride best suited to us as Japan, the mercantile nation, would have been for us to whimper and stammer, "Gosh, fellas, they've still got our hostages." It may not be cool, but that kind of country can be permitted to exist. It's a hell of a lot better than sending soldiers overseas.

This rare frankness, plus the fact that the Asahi gave Tsutsui the opportunity to speak his mind, may well have been an example of victors' pride, for by then they had succeeded in sending the UNPCB down to defeat. On the other hand, that very fact makes this a valuable document in our study of "Japanese-style pacifism."

The postwar pacifism of the Japanese is rooted in our experience of the utter horror of World War II, including the atomic bomb. Its starting point is the thought, “We never want to experience such horror again,” and, therefore, it expands to include only concomitantly thoughts of others: “We want to banish such horror from every corner of the world.” This altruistic side, however, is divorced from any concept of willingly sacrificing oneself for others.” As long as the question has remained one of “never again visiting harm upon others,” Japan’s postwar pacifism has been successful at glossing over its self-deception, but now that the situation is one of “having to do something for the sake of others,” Japan’s postwar pacifism must confront its own logical bankruptcy and is losing its moral foundation.

Meanwhile, throughout this debate on the UNPCB, there seems to have been a misunderstanding in other countries with regard to those domestic Japanese—myself included—who advocated sending the Self-Defense Forces overseas. This misunderstanding was the suspicion that at the heart of their assertions lay a secret ambition for the transformation of Japan into a major military power: the suspicions that the ones advocating the overseas dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces were the militarist, colonialist, ultranationalist sector of the Japanese populace. Of course, I cannot guarantee that there were no such people among those who advocated sending the Self-Defense Forces abroad: I do not know them all, nor can I claim to represent them here.

As far as I know, however, those who voiced approval for the UNPCB have absolutely no connection with militarists, colonialists, or ultranationalists. So, then, who are they? In my opinion, they—or should I say we—are essentially enlightened internationalists. To take myself as an example, I have consistently advocated the maintenance and strengthening of the Japan-U.S. alliance, believed in the necessity of an accurate recognition of the history of Japan’s actions vis-à-vis its Asian neighbors, called for the complete liberalization of all Japan’s markets including that of rice, and supported the course of keeping Japan a minor military power whose forces are devoted exclusively to self-defense.

Coming from a background like this, what were the reasons that I came to believe in the necessity for dispatching the Self-Defense Forces abroad? These had to do with a change in the relative power of Japan and the world – in particular, the United States. Japan is now a major economic power, while America’s relative power has declined in the meantime, and this raises several questions in my mind: Is it all right for Japan to go on pursuing its “one-country pacifism” and “one-country prosperity-ism” as it has in the past? With these as its only goals, will Japan not lose its ability to keep a grasp on its own peace and prosperity? Are not Japan’s peace and prosperity possible only within a context of world peace and world prosperity?

Conversely, will the world not lose its ability to maintain its peace and prosperity without the contributions and participation of Japan? Thus, when I and others advocated the dispatching of the Self-Defense Forces abroad, we were in no way saying that Japan had to play the role of the world’s policeman in place of – or together with – the United States, or that Japan’s contribution to the world

should be primarily military. As I wrote in the November 1, 1990 issue of *Shukan bunshun*:

Naturally, the core of Japan's contributions ought to be made in fields in which Japan excels. Since Japan is a major economic power, it would be both natural and appropriate for the core of our contributions to be economic. There is margin, too, for political and diplomatic contributions, and though there haven't been too many of these heretofore, we should make them. Why, then, is it also necessary for us to send people? It is necessary in a symbolic sense. It is necessary for us to appeal to the rest of the world by showing that "We aren't just sending money and things, but people, too!" And unless we do this, we risk giving the impression to the other countries of the world that Japan foists all the dirty work off on them and cleverly manages to keep its own hands clean. Once that happens, no economic contributions, however large, are going to be appreciated.

Those opposing our view argued that sending the Self-Defense Forces was not necessary even for symbolic reasons – but on what moral basis? Certainly they had no intention of arguing seriously that while American mothers ought to endure the pain of sending their children to the battlefield, Japanese mothers need not do so. The only thing that Japanese could do, then, finally, was to act like conscientious objectors, but I believe that Japan has become too important a nation to be the world's conscientious objector. The international system itself can no longer function with Japan in that role.

It is a question, too, of how we are to take the words that Congressman Riegle is reported to have said during the debate in the U.S. Congress on the authorization of the use of military force against Iraq: that what Americans want to see is Japanese and German boys fighting in the trenches on the front line right alongside American boys. It seems to me that he was saying that while America both needs and welcomes our financial support, it is not just a question of money. He wanted us to know that America was looking for a heart in the allied nations, a heart that understood that grave significance of the shedding of the blood of American boys for the sake of world peace. And unless it found that heart, America's own heart was going to give out. He was asking us if we were prepared to let this happen. He wanted us to see that even though it may not come down to Japanese actually "fighting in the trenches on the front line," the very least a great nation like Japan could do was to make some symbolic gesture indicating the heart to provide rear-guard support. The question of whether or not we sent the Self-Defense Forces abroad signified nothing more nor less than this.

Then, too, we saw some of our Asian neighbors raising doubts. They wondered if, in preparing to send its Self-Defense Forces abroad, Japan was secretly hoping to re-establish its military hegemony in Asia. It was really a pity for such suspicions were, of course, unfounded. Probably all we could do was sincerely explain our true intentions and hope for understanding, but the fact is that the friendship of the Asian countries is almost as important to us as that of America. Perhaps all Japan can do in this case is wait until the day arrives when they come to understand our true intentions.

Still, this is a question that had to be balanced against the one of just how fervently America and the countries preparing to stand on the front lines with America to maintain world peace were hoping for

Japan to send its Self-Defense Forces overseas. Inasmuch as Japan has not the slightest ambition to re-establish its military hegemony in Asia, Japan has no other reason to send the Self-Defense Forces abroad than the request and expectation of other countries for Japan to do so. This is what I want to stress above all in closing.