

Can the Japanese Turn Their Pacifism from Passive to Proactive?

By **KAMIYA Mataka**

The Interim Report on the Revision of the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation (hereinafter the "Guidelines"), which the Japanese and the U.S. governments published on 9 October 2014, declared that the Guidelines revision corresponds to Japan's policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" based on the principle of international cooperation adopted by the government headed by Prime Minister ABE Shinzo and that the revision reflects the substance of the cabinet decision on 1 July 2014 that includes changes in constitutional interpretations aimed at enabling the limited exercise of the right of collective defense. The author heartily agrees with this declaration as one of those who have called for switching Japan's post-World War II pacifism from a passive one to a proactive one for a long time.

There have been two types of passiveness inherent in Japan's post-World War II pacifism. They were the absence of the "intention to take action for peace," and the absence of the "intention to use military power for peace." Japanese people have gradually regained their awareness for the need for their country to contribute personnel to, and play a part in, activities for world peace since they were shocked by the international criticism of Japan's responses to the Gulf Crisis and the Gulf War (1990-91) as "checkbook diplomacy" by a nation that only donates money for the sake of peace. However, the tendency to understand peace and military power as completely opposite and incompatible concepts and to reject the dual nature of military power as a tool that can destroy peace and has a capacity indispensable to defending peace has remained deeply rooted in Japanese society. The Japanese government's policy against the exercise of the right to collective defense has been the symbol of such a tendency. This policy has been "an impediment" to the Japan-U.S. alliance (The 3rd Armitage-Nye report: "The US-Japan Alliance: Anchoring Stability in Asia"). It would be highly desirable if such passiveness could be overcome. However, I cannot be too optimistic about the current situation. The author would like to ask readers to read the following extract. When do you think this essay was written?

Then, how will Japan's post-World War II pacifism be evaluated...? Phrases like 'not taking up arms,' 'anything but war,' 'not possessing nuclear weapons,' and 'not deploying troops overseas' characterize Japan's postwar pacifism. As these words demonstrate, Japan's postwar

pacifism was a principle that denies something, To borrow an expression from Professor KOSAKA Masataka, it was negative pacifism. However, to what extent will such negative and passive pacifism adapt itself to a greater international role in a time... when Japan is about to play such a role?

Japan must continue its restraint in taking action of some kind. However, the theme for the country... is to do something..., instead of just retiring into its shell. If that is the case, there is a need to convert our pacifism from a negative and passive one to a more proactive and positive one. I believe Japan must think of something independently and develop original schemes for approaching it in order to bear its international responsibilities more proactively while continuing to exclude military-centricism.

Was this essay written around the time of the Gulf War? The answer is no. It is not that new. KAMIYA Fuji, my late father, who was a well-known Japanese representative in the field of international politics, wrote this essay forty-five years ago in 1969.

I was astonished when I found these paragraphs recently and knew that my own father had pointed out a quarter century earlier what I have been thinking and arguing for the last twenty odd years. I was even more shocked by the fact that Japan has not yet sufficiently overcome the passiveness of its pacifism after nearly half a century since such arguments were first made by leading intellectuals of the time, and now those of us in Japan who specialize in diplomatic relations and security are still discussing the same issue, using words that are almost identical to those used forty-five years ago.

Without sufficient public support, Prime Minister ABE's proactive pacifism cannot be adequately implemented, and might end up being a pie in the sky. The same is true for his policy of limited exercise of the right of collective self-defense. To what extent will the Japanese people allow their pacifism to become proactive? Various public opinion polls conducted after the cabinet decision on July 1, 2014, have consistently demonstrated persistent reluctance of the Japanese public to accept the limited exercise of the right of collective self-defense by their country. As has been often argued, insufficient explanation about the policy by the Abe administration could be one of the reasons of that. There is, however, another more fundamental reason: One aspect of passiveness in Japan's post-war pacifism, the reluctance to acknowledge the role of military power for peace, still remain quite strong in the Japanese society.

Can the Japanese people overcome the passiveness they have not been able to get over for the last forty-five years? Will Japan be able to implement the policy of positive pacifism? We should not be too optimistic and complacent about the current situation. More explanations by the

government would be necessary. And so would be the role of opinion leaders like ourselves. Japan's foreign and security policies will remain at a crucial stage from this point on.

Note: The sections of the above quotations denoted with "..." contained the following phrases, respectively - "in relation to problems in the 1970s," "in the 1970s," "in the 1970s" and "for Asia."

(This is the English version of an article written by KAMIYA Mataka, Professor of National Defense Academy of Japan / Superior Research Fellow of JFIR, which originally appeared on the e-forum “Hyakka-Seiho” of JFIR on November 9, 2014. The views expressed here are the author’s own and do not represent those of the National Defense Academy of Japan or of Japan’s Ministry of Defense.)