

CHAPTER 2
THE DEBATE ON JAPAN'S MOVE TOWARDS BECOMING
A 'NORMAL STATE'

Japan is the only country in the world that experienced nuclear bombs and suffered major devastation during World War II. Today Japan's economy has recovered and surpassed most countries in the world. It is considered as a global economic power and the only country in Asia that can compete with western countries. However, in the global security sphere, Japan falls further behind other countries. A constitutional restraint is a main difficulty which Japan struggles to remove.

Japan is said to be an 'abnormal state'¹ as it is constitutionally prohibited from possessing military force. Since the end of the Cold War, this attribute of Japan began to evolve in response to numerous factors which will be discussed in chapter 3. To validate my hypothesis, this chapter focuses mainly on the significance of a 'normal state'. In addition, to understand the abnormality of Japan, its pacifist philosophy which was a major contributor to Japan's post war status quo, will be examined. For a clearer understanding of the concept of a 'normal state', diverse opinions from politicians and scholars who are involved with Japan's security are studied in this chapter.

1. Pacifist concept and the abnormality of Japan

Pacifism illustrated Japan's nature in the post war period. In the late 1940s, the Peace Issues Discussion Group and the socialist party brought about the idea of unarmed neutrality which additionally contributed to an identity for Japan as a 'peace

¹ Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Harsh reality check for Japan at UN," *The Nation*, July 19, 2005, p. 10A.

state'.² To explain this, Japan could not deploy any violent resource, in other words military force, to accomplish its intent. As a result, Japan became a peace loving country³ as stated in the Preamble of the constitution.

“We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world.... We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want.”

According to this pacifist concept, Japan was turned into a country without national army since the end of World War II. Article 9 of the present constitution gave rise to the legal constraint that the exercise of military power was not permitted. In this regard, Japan could not possess any kind of military force as stated in Clause 2 of Article 9.

“In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

As a result, Japan could not participate in acts of aggression and could not use military force to settle international dispute.⁴ Following the legal constraint from Article 9, Japanese policy makers focused on economic development which

² Glenn D. Hook, *Japan's Contested Constitution* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 21.

³ Ministry of Defense, Japan, “The Basics of Japan’s Defense Policy,” 2007.

⁴ See Article 9 of the constitution in Appendix 1.

eventually pushed Japan to become the world's second largest economy.⁵ Pacifism could be perceived as a major factor that contributed to Japan's economic success since Japan was not concerned about military build up. In this regard, economic issues were a higher priority than security issues.⁶ Japan's national security would not change despite a successful economy and less likely to be attacked by other states since those states depend economically on Japan. As a result of its pacifist concept which was embedded in post war Japan, Japan had kept low profile on international security affairs and appeared to be an abnormal state.

However, in the 1990s, the 'abnormality' of Japan in the post Cold War era further involved the responsibility of state. To explain the responsibility of Japan, there are two assumptions to be considered. First, Japan, as a member of international society, can not actively make international security contribution since it does not have military power. In reference to the significance of national security, most states are likely to be friendly but a few states may be hostile and aggressive. Although there are a few, those hostile states can cause problem to other states. In order to deal with this problem most states possess armed forces. Therefore, military power is considered as a fundamental requirement for states.⁷

To explain the above assumption, the military power is not only a necessity for Japan's self-defense but is a necessity for the nation's participation on the global security stage. In other words, military power was an important factor for Japan to conduct itself on the international stage as a responsible international member who actively dealt with security issues.

The second reason that supports the assumption which differentiates Japan from other states is its inability to uphold the basic value of state system. According to Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen,⁸ security is one of the five basic values which a state should maintain. Protection from the internal and external threats is what citizens expect from the states. Christopher Hughes also defined security as protection of

⁵ Marie Soderberg, "The role of ODA in the relationship," in *Chinese-Japanese Relations in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 114.

⁶ Reinhard Drifte, *Japan's Foreign Policy for the 21st Century: From Economic Superpower to What Power?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 26.

⁷ Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 4.

⁸ Ibid.

welfare from all forms of potential or actualized threats.⁹ Japan could not guarantee the security of its own people. Therefore, it needed to maintain the tie with the US. In the post Cold War era, Japan encountered a wide range of external threats but it was not able to exert the military power to protect its citizens. The Chinese and North Korean missile tests are good examples demonstrating Japan's vulnerability to regional threats.

In summary, the pacifism is a major factor that explains Japan's abnormality in the post war era. A passive security role was not compatible with the environment in the world after the Cold War when new threats emerged, such as ballistic missiles and international terrorism. Abnormality does not only refer to low profile on the international stage but also the ability of Japan to guarantee the security of its citizens. The change in Japan's security was marked by the Gulf War which occurred two years after the Cold War ended. As a result, a concept of 'normal state' arose.

2. The concept of a 'normal state'

The Japanese-coined term, 'normal state' was primarily introduced to Japan in the first part of 1990s. It derived from an observation on Japan's inability to make a contribution to the Gulf War.¹⁰ Military affairs appeared to be a minor issue in Japan after the inception of the constitution and the Japan-US Security Treaty which turned the US into a security protector for Japan. During the Gulf War, the US requested assistance from Japan but the Japanese constitution was a major factor that prohibited Japan from granting the request. This raised the importance of the military issue in Japan. Therefore, 'normal state', which emerged as a result of Japanese response to the war, signified a country that¹¹

⁹ Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Economic Power and Security: Japan and North Korea* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 32.

¹⁰ See speech by Mr. Owada Hisashi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, "Japan's Post Gulf International Initiatives Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan," August 1991.

¹¹ See Richard B. Finn, "Japan's Search for a Global Role: Politics and Security," and Okubo Shiro, "Japan's Constitutional Pacifism and United Nations Peacekeeping," in *Japan's Quest: The Search for International Role, Recognition, and Respect*, ed. Warren S. Hunsberger (N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), p. 123-129.

- (a) was equipped with military force which could be used to counteract threat and security problems
- (b) was able to freely and actively play a security role on the international stage to make international contribution

Henceforth, 'normal state' elevated the importance of Japan's security role. Post Cold War international security situations, threats from missiles, nuclear weapons, and terrorism encouraged Japan to be on the track to become a 'normal state'. The major issue is whether Japan is moving towards a 'normal state' equipped with military power or a 'normal state' is the only option for Japan to choose in order to live in the changing world.

2.1 Normal state: proponents of the concept

There is no agreement on the definition of a 'normal state'. A number of academics and politicians studied the change of Japan and suggested the concept of a 'normal state' and the criteria that Japan needs to meet. Political aspects appear to be far more significant than economic aspects.

2.1.1 Normal state: military aspects

To support the political aspects of a 'normal state', the concept of normal state was first proposed after the strong criticism of Japan's passive role during the Gulf War in 1991.¹² Following the war, the idea of 'normal state' was formulated by Owada Hisashi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs from his speech given at the meeting hosted by the World Economy Research Association in Tokyo.¹³ The most important attribute of 'normal state' was the military power. From the mistake from the Gulf War, the question of what kind of nation that Japan would become after the Gulf War was raised. In addition, to guide Japan with regard to a 'normal state', three options were proposed at that meeting. First, Japan could be a 'normal power' like most countries. Secondly, Japan could become a small country which had no

¹² Shiro, p. 107.

¹³ Owada Hisashi, "Japan's Post Gulf International Initiatives" (Speech, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 1991).

influence on other countries. Third, Japan might choose to follow the path that the country was very strong economically but militarily weak.¹⁴

According to Owada's concept of 'normal state', pacifism was first challenged after the end of the Cold War since he suggested the country should have military power. A year after the concept of normal state was proposed, the Self-Defense Forces was dispatched overseas for the first time. This is not to suggest that Owada brought about the breakthrough of Japan's Self-Defense Forces but it is to emphasize that the concept of 'normal state' had a military dimension.

In 1994, the term 'normal state' was popularized when it was mentioned in '*Nihon Kaiso Keikaku*' or "*Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation*" written by Ichiro Ozawa, leader of Democratic Party of Japan, in 1994.¹⁵ Two requirements for Japan to be a 'normal state' were pointed out. First, a normal state is the state that willingly supports those responsibilities regarded as natural in the international community which is especially relevant to national security. Secondly, a normal state is a state that cooperates fully with other states in their efforts to build prosperous and stable lives for their people.

In addition to Ozawa's proposal, 'normal' activity which was natural was considered as a kind of environmental preservation.¹⁶ In other words, Japan should include a national security role in its international contributions as a basic premise that a normal state should follow. To become a normal country, Japan had to participate more in international affairs for the purpose of bringing peace and security to people and the world. The Gulf War (1990-1) was perceived as an opportunity for Japan to play a role in cooperation with other countries and bring peace and security to the world. In fact, assistance from Japan was required during the Gulf War but the Japanese government could not effectively respond. The constitutional restraints were always a major problem for Japan. In this regard, freedom to manage national security role was suggested as a way to lead to normality of the country.

¹⁴ Hisashi.

¹⁵ Ozawa Ichiro, *Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1994), p. 94. and Shiro, p. 123.

¹⁶ Shiro, p. 124.

According to Ozawa, Japan's security role on the international stage was a major factor that was driving Japan to become a 'normal state'. As this goal could not be achieved by a single kind of domestic reform, political, legal and military reform were suggested as a motivational force to move Japan forwards becoming a 'normal state'.

Of these three reforms, legal reform would be the most important one since the constitution was a major legal obstacle for Japan to possess military force. Legal reforms could open the door for the expanded role of SDF which could then allow reform of the military.

Military aspects appeared to be a main focus of a 'normal state'. To explain this, Japan's difficulty in dealing with international security issues in the post Cold War era challenged pacifism. For example, ineffective measures to the Gulf War led to the enactment of the International Peace Cooperation Law which legitimated the first overseas dispatch of Japan's Self-Defense Forces to Cambodia.¹⁷ Prior to the enactment of this law, the debate about the erosion of pacifism was raised among the Japanese policy makers.¹⁸

Military aspects and security aspects are major factors allowing Japan to follow the path to a 'normal state'. As proposed by Watanabe Akio, president of the Research Institute for Peace and Security, a 'normal country' is a country that has to meet two international norms. First, the country should recognize the use of force as the last resort in self-defense, and the use of force needs to meet four criteria which are immediacy, proportionality, necessity and illegality. Secondly, when the international community imposes collective sanctions on a state, each country must contribute to these sanctions. The method that each country uses, may not concern the use of military force; however, the use of force cannot be dismissed in principle.¹⁹

Additionally, a more proactive approach was recommended to replace the restrictive constitutional interpretation. The 1947 constitution was consistent with the

¹⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, 'Diplomatic Bluebook 1992,' [www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1992/1992-3-1\(1\).htm#4](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1992/1992-3-1(1).htm#4). Southeast.

¹⁸ For more information see Okubo Shiro. "Japan's Constitutional Pacifism and United Nations Peacekeeping," in *Japan's Quest: The Search for International Role, Recognition, and Respect*, 1997.

¹⁹ "The Domestic Debate," *Japan Echo*, special issue (2005): 20.

1945 UN Charter but the government interpreted the ban on the maintenance of ‘war potential’ that Japan could not participate in international peacekeeping activities.

Military aspects were included in the concept of ‘normal state’ of Christopher Hughes in his book *“Japan’s Re-emergence as ‘Normal’ Military Power”* as it was used as a means to exercise the right of ‘collective security’. Sheila A. Smith²⁰ pointed out in *‘Japan’s Future Strategic Options and the U.S.-Japan Alliance’*²¹ that ‘normal state’ was prone to the emergence of a more active military. In other words, to become a ‘normal state’, Japan had to be more capable of ensuring its own national security. However, the relationship with the US was perceived as an obstacle to Japan’s moving forwards becoming a ‘normal state’. Japan had to become less dependent on the US.

2.1.2 Normal state: the relationship with the US

Japan’s relationship with the US was one of major factors that supported Japan’s move towards becoming a ‘normal state’. The role of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces which were an important component for this move was expanded under the bilateral security relations between these two countries. In addition, the support from the US for the permanent membership on the UNSC was important of clearing the way for Japan to become a ‘normal state’ as the inclusion in the UNSC would allow Japan to exercise the military power.

Apart from the aforementioned bilateral relations, the importance of these relations was raised and included in the concept of a ‘normal state’ proposed by some scholars. Tomohide Murai, a professor of international relations at the National Defense Academy²² was one of those who mentioned the relationship between Japan and the US in his concept of a ‘normal state’. Tomohide suggested that Japan should maintain strong defense ties with the US despite seeking more independence from the US.

²⁰ Sheila A. Smith was an Assistant Professor at Boston University and a research fellow in Politics and Security at the East-West Center in Hawaii.

²¹ Sheila A. Smith, “Japan’s Future Strategic Options and the US-Japan Alliance,” in *Japan’s Nuclear Option: Security, politics, and policy in the 21st century*, eds. Benjamin L. Self and Jeffery W. Thompson (Washington DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003).

²² Chester Dawson, “Flying the Flag,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (August 1999): 19.

In the study of Takashi Inoguchi, “*Japan’s Ambition for Normal Statehood*”,²³ the relation with the US was one of three activities that was regarded as an activity of a ‘normal state’. The dispatch of warships to the Indian Ocean when Japan decided to join the U.S. war on terrorism; Japan’s free trade agreement initiative; and Japan’s engagement with North Korea are three activities that were considered as a sign of a ‘normal state’. Contrary to other scholars, Inoguchi included economic aspect to explain the attribute of a ‘normal state’.

In relation to ‘normal state’ and Japan’s relation with the US, former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi could guide Japan to a path of a ‘normal state’ under his security policy. Koizumi favored a strong security role and wanted Japan to have a stronger military tie with the US.²⁴ A good example was his support for the US military attack on Iraq in 2003 when most Japanese citizens opposed his decision.²⁵ Japan’s normalization derived from cooperation with the US through the dispatch of the SDF to Afghanistan and Iraq.²⁶ The security policy under Koizumi’s administration had changed Japan’s security stance to actively participate in the international security affairs. The determination to stipulate the possession of a military force for self-defense was an example.²⁷ Koizumi was the prime minister in the post Cold War era following the Nakasone Doctrine.²⁸ His ambition was to turn Japan into a ‘normal state’.²⁹

Although the opinions on normalization are varied among Japanese politicians, the mainstream is represented by those who want to see a strengthened

²³ Takashi Inoguchi, “Japan’s Ambition of Normal Statehood,” paper presented at the International Conference on East Asia, Latin America and the “New” Pax Americana, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University and East Asia Institute, Korea, February 14-15, 2003.

²⁴ Reiji Yoshida, “Koizumi’s foreign policy: US always comes first,” *Japan Times*, June 25, 2006, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/mail/nn20060625a4.html>.

²⁵ Natsuyo Ishibashi, “The Dispatch of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces to Iraq,” *Asian Survey* XLVII (September/October 2007): 766.

²⁶ Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan’s Re-emergence as a Normal Military Power* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 51.

²⁷ “Koizumi wants legal basis for military,” *Japan Times*, October 31, 2005. <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/getarticle.pl5?nn20051031a1.htm>.

²⁸ Shigenori Okazaki, “Behind Japan’s Foreign Policy,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (June 2005).

²⁹ Glenn D. Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 62.

security role of Japan. As seen in the recent years, unprecedented bills concerning security affairs were pushed pending approval by the Diet. The change in attitude of Japan's legal bodies supported the security role of Japan. The change in Japan's security policy under the constitutional constraints will be further examined in chapter 3.

2.2 Normal state: the opponents of the concept

As discussed earlier that Ozawa's concept of 'normal state' called for the participation in collective security, his concept of 'normal state' was strongly opposed by Takemura Masayoshi, a member of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Left wing of the party. He wrote a book '*Japan: a Small but Shining Country*' in 1994 the same year that Ozawa wrote his famous book *Blueprint for a New Japan*. Takemura stated that Japan should enjoy the economic advantage and the end of the Cold War.³⁰ In addition, he did not support Japan to participate in collective security or pursue the permanent membership on the UN Security Council which were two important factors that helped move Japan to become a 'normal state'.

There are diverse opinions regarding a 'normal state'. The study of public opinion towards the 'normal state' is based on the reaction to the defensive strength such as the overseas dispatch of SDF.

Conclusion

A number of scholars and politicians suggested the concept of a 'normal state' which political aspect appears to be more significant than economic aspects. The major attribute of 'normal state' was the possession of military power since this term emerged after the Gulf War when Japan was internationally criticized for not contributing combatant personnel to fight in the war. However, to understand how

³⁰ Michael Jonathan Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), p. 19

Japan will become a 'normal state', factors that resulted in changes of Japan's security policy need to be considered.