

SOUTH ASIAN POLICY OF JAPAN

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Abstract : South Asia has become a significant region to Japan for its geo-strategic location. The relation between Japan and South Asia is very old. Japan has some political, strategic and economic interests in South Asia. Post Cold War South Asia has become a more important region of Japan foreign policy. This paper is to explore South Asian Policy of Japan which is very important for economic, social, political and security development.

Introduction

Though Japan is one of the richest countries in the world, South Asia has become an important region to Japan for its geo-strategic location. About the geo-strategic importance of South Asia the Japanese Ambassador in India Hiroshi Hirabayashi opined, "A large part of Asia spreads out as an arch of the Indian Ocean, making the South Asian landmass the center. South Asia links the Eastern and Western flanks of the Asian continent. Hence, from the Portuguese to the British "greater India" (i.e., South Asia) occupied the key position in their broader Asian politico-strategic designs. The trade across the Indian Ocean is vitally important to Japan. All these that South Asia is a gate way to central Asia, which has been recognized as another area for the natural resources."¹

Japan's Diplomatic, Security and Strategic Policy in South Asia

The main frame work of Japan's security policy is largely determined by the constitution of 1947 and the security treaty with the United States concluded in 1952 and extensively revised in 1960.² The constitution of 1947 was written under the strong influence of the U.S. occupation forces. The article 9 stipulates,

"Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

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 belligerence of the state will not be recognized."³

Under 1947 constitution, Japan did not possess military forces during most of the occupation period. But with the beginning of the Cold War, the U.S. posture toward Japan's armaments changed, and under Washington's strong pressure, Japan began to equip itself with armed forces under various names: the Police Reserve Forces were created in August 1950 under direction of General Headquarters (GHQ); the Maritime Security Forces were established in April 1952; the Police Reserve Forces and the Maritime Security Forces were reorganized under the heading of the Hoancho (Security Agency) in August 1952; and in 1954, these forces were further reorganized as the Self-Defense Forces.⁴

During the Cold War period, South Asia continuously remained a less priority area in the foreign policy approach of Japan.⁵ The Cold War period's diplomatic and strategic ties between Japan and South Asian countries remained largely undeveloped.⁶ The reasons were: firstly, most of the regional countries had a pro-Soviet foreign policy. Secondly, their economic policies being rigid that did not attract the Japanese businessman.⁷ After many years of Japan's diplomatic silence about South Asia this situation began to change in the early 1970s and 80s. Two important events helped to start Japan's foreign policies changes in South Asia. One, the 1973 oil embargo by the Arab oil producers, Japan changed her policy not only in the Middle East region but also in South Asia.

South Asia is a gate way of Japanese oil supply. South Asia's strategic importance of the sea lanes, gave South Asia a high priority of Japan's foreign policy. It was commented, "during the 1973 oil embargo by the Arab oil producers brought about a significant change not only to Japan's policy in the Middle East region but South Asia as well. For an unfettered energy supply from the Middle East, the South Asian location has an important bearing on Japan. South Asia being placed in the centre of Middle East and Japan and closer to Central Asia and the strategic significance of the sea lanes passing along the South Asian coasts have been rated highly among the foreign policy establishment."⁸

After the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet Union, Japanese involvement increased in South Asian regional politics. It was highlighted, "Only in the last couple of decades of Cold War there

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have been some movements towards resuming political dialogue and forging closer links in the South Asian countries. The region featured especially important since the Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan. As a Western ally and Moscow's immediate neighbor Japan naturally shared the perception of Soviet threat and hence worked to intensify the political dialogue with the countries of the region.⁹ Two Japanese Foreign Ministers visited India and Pakistan in 1980 and 1982. Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Nakasone visited Pakistan and India in April –May 1984 and re-established high level political contacts between Japan and South Asia after many years. Foreign Minister Mr. Kuranari Tadashi visited the India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh from August 10 to 15, 1987. It was a positive step in Japan's relations to the South Asia, because this was the first high level visit after establishment of SAARC as a regional forum in South Asia.

The establishment of SAARC in 1985 became an important frame for Japanese approach towards South Asia. It was stated, "The birth of SAARC gave Japan the impetus for a collective approach to the region."¹⁰ During his visit in Bangladesh Mr. Kuranari pointed out three principles which formed the basis of future co-operation between Japan and South Asia. These are: (1) promotion of political dialogue to seek peace for South Asia; (2) promotion of mutual understanding between peoples; (3) strengthening mutually beneficial co-operative relations.¹¹

Since the World War II, the process and stage of involvement of Japan in South Asia with the evolution of foreign policy, three phases (1952-1960), (1960-1990) and (1990 to present)¹² can be identified.

During 1952-1960 Japan played no significant role in South Asia.¹³ Because, after the defeat in the second World War, Japan was tied politically, economically and strategically to the Western bloc, regaining national independence as a close ally of the U.S.¹⁴ Japan became independent after signing San Francisco Treaty on September 8, 1951 and received complete guarantee of its internal and external security from US by signing Japan-US security treaty the same day.¹⁵ Hirose Takako stated, "After the second World War, the situation changed both in terms of global politics and Japan's position in Asia. Japan started making its own foreign policy as a member of the Western camp in the Cold-War context, which imposed a certain framework within which its foreign policy was to be made."¹⁶

During the period 1960-1990 Japan developed economic relation with South Asia. Japanese economy gained most during 1950-53 Korean war and was quick to declare in its 1956 economic white paper that post-war difficult years for Japan had been over.¹⁷ In the 1960s, the competitive strength of Japanese industry increased rapidly and "by the mid-1960s, both in terms of GNP and foreign trade Japan had come to occupy an important position in the world pecking order."¹⁸ By the early seventies, Japan's post war diplomacy towards Southeast Asia had been labeled a "traders diplomacy."¹⁹ Japanese scholar Yonosuke Nagai called it "a diplomacy of the economy, by the economy and for the economy."²⁰ For the Japan's rapid economic growth in 1960s, Japan came forward to make its economic diplomacy with South Asia. The 1975 Diplomatic Blue book of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs summed up Japan's South Asia policy as follows: "Good relations have been maintained between Japan and the countries of Southwest Asia on the basis of economic exchange, economic and technical co-operation and various kinds of interchange in person-to-person contacts. Japan's basic diplomatic policy towards its area is to maintain and promote friendly relations with all the countries concerned and to co-operate to the greatest extent possible for the stability and development of the area."²¹

In 1988 Japan's total trade volume with the SAARC region was \$6,414 million. Among this Japan export was \$3,856 million and import was \$2,558 million leaving balance of \$1,298 million which was in Japan's favour. Japan has continued trade surplus with all the countries of South Asia.²² Japan became the largest bi-lateral donor to countries in South Asia and it was one fourth of total Japanese ODA, by the end of the Cold War. Until the 1990s, economic diplomacy was the key character of Japan's policy towards South Asia.²³

In the phase from 1990 about the post Cold War Japanese diplomatic aims, the then Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Aso stated, "Diplomacy aims to promote the interests and welfare of people, while envisioning the distant future. Diplomacy is synonymous with tireless efforts to create a suitable global environment to achieve these objectives."²⁴ Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso mentioned at Diet, Japan would like to achieve her diplomatic goals, "strengthening the Japan-US alliance, this should always come first. With the following areas, meanwhile, it is difficult

to set an order of priority. That said, second comes the goal of building regional stability and prosperity by working together with our neighbours China, the Republic of Korea and Russia, as well as other countries of the Asia-Pacific region and thus growing together. Third is to tackle the global issues facing human kind, such as terrorism, global warming, poverty and water issues.”²⁵

In order to understand new developments in Japan's policy in South Asia, it is necessary to discuss new dimensions of Japan's foreign and security policy of post Cold War. After the end of the world war second, Japan could not develop regional strategy as it maintained a distant relations with Asia. But in the Post-Cold War days domestic forces in Japan mounted pressure and aspired for Japan's 're-Asianization.' The Plaza Accord of 1985, East European recovery in 1989, US-Japan trade frictions and the proximity of Asian booming markets added potentials for Japan's neo-Asian policy.²⁶ Besides, global political changes in the 1990s gave Japan an opportunity to transform its old fashioned diplomatic style, Japan took an independent and progressive foreign policy.²⁷ Edward J.Lincoln mentioned, “The end of the Cold War opened the way for Japan to pursue an independent foreign policy.”²⁸ In 1991, the vice-minister of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr.Takakazu Kuriyama told, “Japan must take an active role in the reconstruction of the world order.”²⁹

The main event that led to a shift in Japanese security policy was Tokyo's worst experience during the war of 1991. Japan had had huge financial contribution of the Persian Gulf War but faced criticism from both the Western and Arab states for not sending combat personnel to the Gulf War.³⁰ It helped Japan to think beyond the defense of its territory and participate in defining new rules to govern the international security environment in the post-Cold War period.³¹ More over the Persian Gulf war demonstrated to Japan that military power shapes international relations to a significant degree in the post Cold War era and that Japan was not well equipped to deal with military crisis.³² After the Gulf war, the security dimension in Japanese foreign policy gained prominence. Japan adjusted its security policy to allow for greater participation in the international security environment in the particular ways:

First, Tokyo enacted the international peace co-operation law in 1992, which allowed Japan to play a more active security role through greater participation in United Nations peace-keeping operations (UNPKO).³³

Second, Tokyo reformulated the National Defence Programme Outline(NDPO) in 1995. It helped to emphasize Japan taking a greater role in UNPKOs, and the Self Defence Force(SDF) addressing low intensity threats like terrorism.³⁴

Third, the US-Japan security alliance is the most important pillar of Japan's security strategy ever since the end of the Cold War. In 1996, Japanese government started to talk with the United States to revitalize the US-Japan alliance to make it more relevant to the Post Cold War environment. In early 1999, the revisions of the US-Japan Defence Guidelines, signaled three important changes to Japan's role in the post-Cold War security environment.³⁵ These are:“(a)Japan's military was authorized to take various measures in the event of “emergencies near Japan,” allowing the SDF to provide rear-area logistical support to US forces during crises near Japan and to conduct near- area search and rescue operations for military power,(b)The Japan-US Acquisition and Cross- Servicing Agreement(ACSA) was revised.

The revision allows for expanded bilateral co-operation to include the supply of fuel and necessary goods during emergencies near Japan instead of during peace time only,(c)The SDF law was amended to allow for the evacuation of Japanese citizens from overseas. More over, SDF personnel could use weapons for self-defence in providing rear-area support and engaging in search- and-rescue operations for US military personnel.”³⁶ Another land mark initiative was the meeting of the US-Japan security consultative committee (SSC) in Washington on February19, 2005 and the consequently released joint statement. The “common strategic objectives’ earmarked in the statement were the following:

- (1) Identification of international terrorism and proliferation of WMDs as common challenges.
- (2) Modernization of military capabilities in the region, to be paid attention to (an obvious reference to China).
- (3) Ensuring the security of Japan and regional peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region.
- (4) Support the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula, as well as resolution of issues with regard to North Korean development such as its nuclear programme, missile activities and abduction issues.
- (5) Stress on cooperative relationship with China and encourage it to improve transparency in military affairs.

- (6) Resolution of the Northern Territories dispute between Japan and Russia.
- (7) Security of maritime traffic as well as ensuring of stability of global energy supply.³⁷

Important turning point of Japan's foreign and security policy came with the 9/11 terrorist attack and subsequent war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq.³⁸ Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi introduced three bills in the Diet including the anti-terrorism special measures law, which was enacted in October 2001.³⁹ This law helped Koizumi to send ships and troops to the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan. For the demand of the Japanese people and US request Japan reinterpreted the Japanese constitution article 9. Japanese Prime Minister Shonze Abe in his September 2006 inaugural speech at the Diet, "called for a new interpretation of collective defence, revision of the constitution, a larger military role for Japan and a more assertive diplomacy."⁴⁰ Besides, the February 2005 meeting of the Japan-US security consultative committee also redefined the bilateral partnership as a "global" alliance with a number of common strategic objectives. At the broadest level, these include the promotion of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law; non-proliferation and counter terrorism, support for Japan's permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council; and the security of global energy supply.⁴¹ It provided a frame work for possible multilateral cooperation between the Japan-US alliance and other partners. Australia has shown a interest in joining the fold and Prime Minister John Howard and Japanese Prime Minister Abe signed, 'a joint security declaration. That agreement focused on bilateral cooperation in range of security fields, including counter terrorism, maritime security and intelligence.'⁴²

The latest Japan- US security consultative committee meeting on May 2007 high lighted the importance of security cooperation with two other major global players ;India and NATO.⁴³ Hiroyasu Akutsu stated,"it is becoming clear that the bilateral bonds between Washington and Tokyo are becoming the basis for multilateral strategic dialogue among the liberal democracies of Asia."⁴⁴ Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso and Indian Prime Minister Monmohon Singh signed the "Joint declaration on security cooperation between Japan and India" on October 22,2008 in Tokyo.⁴⁵ Indian leading strategic analysts and political commentators

over this joint security declaration 'significant development,' which would change the security architecture of Asia'.⁴⁶

In the 1990s, Japan gradually came forward to play a significant role in South Asian regional politics. Both sides have taken some initiatives to promote their relation. Ambassador Hiroshi Hirabayashi pointed out, "entering the 1990s, we have witnessed some very important changes in the parameters in this region.

First , the end of the Cold War allowed both Japan and South Asia to accommodate more flexible political maneuverability in their international relations. The redundant yoke of Cold War was removed.

Second, the economic liberalization taking place since early 1990's in India as well as in its neighbouring countries has started to offer the international community possibilities of economic interactions.

Third, it would not be just if I did not mention the importance of democratization process going on this region as well."⁴⁷ Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiku's visit to Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka from April 28 to May 6 1990 was the important point in Japan -South Asia relations. During his India visit, Prime Minister Kaifu announced at the Indian parliament, "to visit South Asian countries this time in order to develop further friendly and cooperative ties between Japan and this region, which has potentials for development against the background of its great civilization and its billion people."⁴⁸ The Japanese ambassador to Dhaka, on the eve of Kaifu's visit narrated Tokyo's "South Asia policy" and maintained that Japan attached great importance to the economic and political stability in South Asia as instability in the region would jeopardize the whole of Asia. Japan wanted to ensure economic development and political stability in South Asia.⁴⁹ In 1991, Japanese government established the South Asian Forum, to promote dialogue and encourage consultations on a regular basis.⁵⁰ Japan positively engaged in efforts to achieve peace and stability in South Asia. Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi mentioned, "Japan will be positively engaged in efforts to achieve stability and prosperity in South Asia through the enhancement of its ties with the countries in the region."⁵¹

One of the four pillars of Japan's diplomatic agenda is disarmament and non-proliferation.⁵² Japan is working strongly against the nuclearization in South Asia, because Japan is the only country in

the world to have experienced the immense problems with the nuclear war. About the nuclearization in South Asia, Japan's first policy was to force two big countries of the region to abandon their nuclear programmes and sign the NPT treaty. Second, after the nuclear tests and formal declaration of their (India and Pakistan) nuclear weapons capability, to avoid any nuclear confrontation between two hostile regional powers.⁵³

Japan is the world's second largest energy consumer and the largest importer of crude oil as well as liquefied natural gas (LNG). Most of the Japanese energy are imported from the Gulf countries. The security of sea lanes of the Indian Ocean, connecting Japan with the Middle East is a vital element of Japan's national security. Two major powers of South Asia India and Pakistan in the region, plays a key role in the security of the Indian Ocean. Japan's policies to maintain, security in the Indian Ocean are bilateral security dialogues with Pakistan and signed security treaty with India. Three bilateral security dialogues were held between Pakistan and Japan, and Japan signed a security treaty with India on October 22, 2008.

China is the important factor of Japan's strategic policy in South Asia. China's economic growth and defense modernization are the security threats of Japan and India, because China through the use of 'rogue nations' like Pakistan and North Korea would attempt to checkmate an upward ascent of the strategic profile of India and Japan.⁵⁴ Besides, China wants to prevent India from dominating South Asia and the Indian Ocean. China's naval strategy policy seeks to secure her oil supply and trade routes through the Indian Ocean to the straits of Malacca and the South China sea.⁵⁵ China's naval strategy policy is the threat of Japanese energy security. Japanese Ambassador in India Mr. Hiroshi Hirabayashi stated, "Our country (Japan) largely depends on the import of oil from the Gulf region and the South Asia is located in the mid-way between that region and Japan. The so-called "sea-lanes" run through the Indian Ocean and it is the vital interests of Japan that the South Asian region remains stable and friendly. It is also to be noted that South Asia is a gateway to Central Asia, which has been recognized as another big potential area for the natural resources."⁵⁶ In this context, Japan's strategic policy in South Asia, is to checkmate China having security cooperation treaty with India.

South Asia is called a harbour of terrorism. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Japan became very active against the war on terrorism and

took some measures against terrorism. The basic policy of Japan's International counter-terrorism measures are:

(b) Multilateral cooperation

1. Conforming and strengthening political will, regarding importance of the fight against terrorism: In September 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UN global counter-terrorism strategy. The Group of Eight (G-8) nations meanwhile, have confirmed in sharing political will to prevent and eradicate terrorisms. Japan is playing a vigorous role at the UN, the G-8 and other forums.
2. Improvements in international law and creation of global benchmarks.
- (c) Fulfillment of United Nations Security Council resolutions against actual threats.
- (d) Counter-terrorism capacity building assistance.
- (e) Legal provisions support: Japan is assisting by seminars regarding accession to international counter-terrorism conventions and implementing domestic laws.
- (f) Law enforcement personnel capacity building assistance.
- (g) Provision and improvement of equipments.⁵⁷

About the war on terrorism, Japan's strategic policies in South Asia are: First to reinforce the international coalition against terrorism. Second to provide capacity-building assistance to the South Asian countries in order to enhance their counter-terrorism capabilities. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi opined, "Japan will continue to work on the diplomatic and other fronts to reinforce the international coalition against terrorism, to bring peace and reconstruct Afghanistan, and to strengthen international legal frameworks against terrorism."⁵⁸

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that as a major power in the world, Japan has some political, economic, diplomatic, strategic and security interests in South Asia. Post Cold War Japan's strategic and diplomatic policy in South Asia is to checkmate China and establish terrorism and piracy free Indian Ocean.

Moreover, for removing human security threat in South Asia, Japan has been giving huge financial aids to South Asian countries, send special envoy to Sri Lanka to mediate both parties, urged India-Pakistan to solve the Kashmir problem by bilateral dialogue and according to UN resolution. So, it is clear that though during the Cold

War period, Japan-South Asian relation was very low; in the post Cold War period, South Asia's strategic and diplomatic relation increased significantly. Now Japan is not only economic development partner of South Asia, but also, it is a strategic and security partner.

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