

Japan

Since the end of the Pacific War, Japan has relied exclusively on the United States for its security. The Japanese economic miracle was a direct result of enlightened Occupation policies and the economic benefits of supplying material and entrepot facilities to UN forces in Korea. Japan, not Korea or the Philippines (certainly not Thailand or Vietnam), was the essential component of United States security policy in Asia Pacific.

Every aspect of Japanese Asia Pacific foreign policy is related to maintaining harmonious relations with the United States. Although there are serious economic and trade difficulties between the two countries, both Tokyo and Washington have striven to keep the security relationship beyond reproach. (The Toshiba-COCOM scandal and the FSX imbroglio of the late Eighties did much to damage this aspect of bilateral relations. It is uncertain if the recent visit to Japan by President Bush was successful in focussing public attention on Japan's generous host nation support for U.S. forces stationed in Japan.)

Japanese views of the various regional security proposals were almost uniform in their disapproval. Suggestions from Mongolia and Korea were commented on favourably but not pursued. Tokyo dismissed the Soviet proposals as self-serving and hollow, and criticised Australia and Canada for their naïveté in appearing to follow the Soviet's regional agenda (views which were echoed in a gentler way by Washington) or to impose European models on Asia. The revolutionary approach taken by ASEAN in the leadup to the 1991 PMC obliged Japan to reconsider its attitude towards discussion of regional security arrangements.

Virtually all Asia Pacific governments have vivid memories of Japanese militarism, and many regional actors' determination to retain a stabilizing American military presence was designed as much to keep a lid on Tokyo's suspected military aspirations as to guard against Soviet encroachment. These suspicions had made much more difficult Japan's attempts to satisfy American requests for greater burden-sharing and those international critics who demanded that Japan assume a greater and more activist political role in world affairs. Increases in the Japanese defence budget (necessary to provide increased host nation support to American forces in Japan) were criticized by China, Korea and others. Debates in Tokyo over Japanese participation in United Nations sanctioned peacekeeping operations were viewed suspiciously and commented on disparagingly by many in Asia Pacific.

By the time news of ASEAN's intentions had reached Tokyo, much rethinking had already been done,¹⁹ and a decision was taken to support calls for a multilateral forum to discuss security. To ensure that the Soviet Union would continue to be isolated from the region, it was decided to support ASEAN's proposals but with the proviso that the existing PMC be the preferred forum. This would allow discussions on "regional reassurance" to take place among like-minded countries while deferring participation by the Soviet Union.