

Introduction

The strategic situation in Asia Pacific has undergone change as momentous and far reaching as that in Europe. The disappearance of the Soviet threat and the related redeployment of American forces, the political resurrection of China, the settlement of the Cambodian conflict and indications of progress in inter-Korean relations have led policy makers in many Asia Pacific states to reconsider their political and strategic interests and to formulate appropriate policy responses.

While no other country in Asia Pacific has the capability to play a stabilizing role as well as Japan, a regional Pax Nipponica could well include components not in Western interests. Racially homogeneous and often wary of outsiders, bound by its own codes and united by its own myths, Japan has no tradition of cultural linkages and intercourse with its neighbours.¹

A half century later, the Japanese continue to view the events leading to the Pacific War as a conspiracy by the great powers to deny them freedom of economic manoeuvre necessary for sustained development. There is no popular sentiment in Japan that admits the brutal behaviour of the military throughout Asia Pacific during the war, and official expressions of regret by Tokyo have provided no comfort to those whose countries were invaded, conquered, or annexed by Japanese Imperial forces. Japan's economic prowess has now captured the markets of Asia Pacific. "Predatory capitalism" has triumphed where bayonets failed, and the result is a Japan that is envied, respected, feared, and at times loathed throughout the region.

The Reestablishment of the Japanese Military

Following its surrender in 1945, Japan was totally demilitarized by the United States which assumed responsibility for national defence. In 1950 most American garrison forces in Japan were deployed to Korea, and the Occupation authorities in Tokyo established a 75,000 man National Police Reserve to assist in maintaining civil order. The following year, Japan and the United States signed a bilateral security treaty which provided for American forces to cooperate with Japan in repelling any major foreign attack. In 1952, the paramilitary National Safety Force (land) and Coastal Safety Force were formed. These were under-staffed and under-equipped, and it was soon realized both in Washington and Tokyo that Japan could not defend itself from any serious form of external aggression.

In 1954 the Japan Defence Agency (JDA) was established. To ensure civilian command of the military, the Director General of the JDA (the de facto defence minister) was given a Cabinet position reporting to the Prime Minister.² In conjunction with this, the Ground (GSDF), Air (ASDF), and Maritime (MSDF) Self Defence Forces were established.