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Diplomacy as Defense Strategy

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1. The gamble of the Japan-China treaty

Ernest R. May, a well-known American historian of foreign affairs, argues incisively how dangerous it is for policy makers, when confronted with an irreversible and crucial policy decision, to misapply the lessons of contemporary history. Exaggerating a bit, one can say that modern history is little more than a tragedy brought about by just such costly misapplications.

Not long ago Japan made an important historical choice. I am of course speaking of the conclusion of the Japan-China peace and friendship treaty. No sooner had this new age of Japan-China friendship dawned, however, than circumstances arose compelling us to fear for the future of the international environment surrounding Japan.

China's shifting domestic politics

What amplifies our concern, needless to say, is the fluidity in the Chinese political scene that suddenly became obvious after the middle of November 1978 when Deputy Premier Teng Hsiao-p'ing had finished his visit to Japan, made a whirlwind tour of three countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and returned to Peking. This fluidity in contemporary China, consisting of unrelenting criticism of Mao Tse-tung's patriarchal power structure and unambiguous de-Maoification of Chinese society, is a manifestation of the deep cleavages and internal contradictions immanent in the power structure under Hua Kuo-feng as well as the inevitable bankruptcy of the lie that all the political and

social malaise of China today is to be ascribed to the crimes of the "Gang of Four." As such, the major outlines of the change had naturally been anticipated.

Thus China is now about to "take off" from the society that was sealed behind the Maoist myths. But this does not mean that de-Maoification is in for smooth sailing henceforth. This is because there still remain elements at the center of power standing in the direct line of inheritance from Mao, and because the Maoist system survives in social institutions. Now that the process of power transfer upon Mao's death has become clear, Chairman Hua himself has to fear the "shadow of Mao," the political source that enabled him to rise to power. This much cannot be denied.

When the situation unfolds to the point where the so-called pragmatist faction wins total power, we must be prepared to see the evolution in China of a new diplomatic phase: the sprouting of a more rational view of the Soviets, grounded in a strategic calculus, in place of the Maoist view based on emotionalism and hatred. This likelihood becomes all the more evident when the imminent rehabilitation of "China's Khrushchev," P'eng Te-huai, the leader of the pro-Soviet faction, is taken into consideration. The rest of the world seems hardly aware of this prospect. But regardless of the policies of the outside world toward China, history has witnessed the functioning of certain restorative powers in Sino-Soviet relations within the continuum defined by alliance and hostility. It is precisely because this is beyond our control that great concern and anxiety have arisen among us.

The asymmetry of the treaty

In regard to the Japan-China treaty, what was decisively lacking on the Japanese side was the viewpoint that Japan-China relations are no longer a bilateral issue but part and parcel of highly active and shifting international relations. What obscured this viewpoint were the traditional and unique sentiments that the Japanese hold toward China and a certain inertia on our part. It is not necessary to discuss this anew here. What must be pointed out, however, is that once signed the treaty has begun to move of its own accord, with wide international repercussions, completely independent of the Japanese sentiments that brought it into being.

A second point is also self-evident even though hardly acknowledged heretofore: the extreme asymmetry between Japan and China in policy decision making. Two crucial factors made a treaty with an "antihegemony" clause a necessity for China, specifically, China's world strategy (the formation of antihegemony, or anti-Soviet, alliances) and its national goal of modernization in four fields. One has heard so much of "neighbors across the water" and "same Chinese characters, same race" that one almost forgets that Japan, in contrast with China, has no comparable world strategy or national goal. More fundamentally, Japan is the world's only superpower lacking a world strategy and national goals. One can say that our policy decision on this occasion was arrived at in strict accordance with a run-of-the-mill decision-making model reflecting international and domestic pressures, especially various internal political considerations of the Fukuda Cabinet and eco-

nomic considerations of the business community, which was undergoing a prolonged recession.

To repeat, the decision-making processes in the two countries leading to the signing of the treaty were asymmetrical in the extreme. For China the treaty was a matter of high strategy; for Japan it was a matter of low policy. The Japanese side passively concentrated its attention on the wording of the antihegemony clause and on the immediate Soviet reaction, without a broad strategic outlook on posttreaty developments. The immediate consequence was that the world paid little attention to Japan's enunciation of an "omnidirectional diplomacy" no matter how much fanfare it was given, instead accepting China's strategic definition of the treaty.

It is not necessary to discuss China's world strategy in dealing with the Soviets here. But what of the gamble of our political and business circles on China's urgent national goal of modernization in four fields? From Teng Hsiao-p'ing's viewpoint, modernization with an acute sense of mission is requisite to strengthen his own political power base. As Japan-China economic relations stand at present, however, the more they expand the further astray China will be led from its principle of self-reliance. The debt burden on China will become a serious problem in the future, making the present course a risky one for China as well. It is for these reasons that I find much merit in Raymond Aron's recent warning: "To me nothing seems more foolish than the idea of a 'limitless Chinese market.' ... It may be all right for bankers and businessmen to rush to Peking or Shanghai, but I hope they entertain no illusions" (*L'Express*, October 28–November 4, 1978; translated from the Japanese).

The price of the treaty

Two recent events have swiftly driven home to the Japanese how high a price they have paid in their China gamble. One is the conclusion of the Soviet-Vietnamese friendship and cooperation treaty on November 3; the other is Japan's diplomatic setback as a candidate for a nonpermanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

That the Soviet-Vietnamese treaty was signed at this point clearly indicates that it was a direct repercussion of the Japan-China treaty. The former treaty includes, moreover, a "consultation" clause (whereby the two countries have pledged to consult each other on military and political matters in the event of an emergency) inserted at Moscow's behest, the first step in setting up the so-called Asian collective security system, giving the treaty enormous significance for Asia's future. In the midst of Sino-Vietnamese military clashes, Japan-China cooperation must have posed a great threat to Hanoi, which no doubt felt the need to enlist Soviet cooperation. Such a noticeable increase in Soviet presence on the Indochinese Peninsula may even invite the return of the United States so soon after its withdrawal. This would be bound to increase tensions in Asia.

Japan's defeat at the United Nations, meanwhile, demonstrated the weakness of Japan's foreign policy, oriented as it is toward the big powers. We should face up to the cold fact that China did not vote for us in spite of our commitment to the China connection. That some

ASEAN countries failed to vote for us in spite of our solicitude may indicate the wariness of countries on China's rim of a "union of Asian giants."

One can conclude that far from calming and stabilizing the international environment of Japan, as some optimists had forecast, the Japan-China treaty is in fact doing the opposite. In any event, if the conclusion of the Japan-China treaty was simply the latest in a series of errors in analysis, as it would appear to be, then we cannot help being seriously concerned over the future of our diplomacy and even our national security.

2. Cool war: A new cold war

The scale of the Japan-China treaty's repercussions is determined fundamentally by the direction and development of the international situation. And today's international situation can be defined precisely as a "cool war": the United States and the Soviet Union seem to regard the SALT negotiations as a license for competition in further military expansion. What with the buildup of cruise missiles, neutron bombs, tactical nuclear weapons, and conventional arms, events are moving in a most deplorable direction. When the United States government acknowledged the presence of MiG 23s in Cuba in mid-November, the Carter administration took a low posture in reacting to the incident so as not to turn it into a second Cuban crisis. This suffices to show the continuation of the cool war.

The characteristics of today's international relations, as shown by the above incident, are distinct from those of the postwar cold war between East and West in that two modal behavior patterns are mixed and in constant flux. On the one hand the United States and the Soviet Union are agreed on mutual deterrence and possess functioning channels of communication; on the other hand they are prepared more than ever to engage in strategic intervention in internally caused local conflicts, thus running the risk of limited war. Furthermore, on this backdrop is superimposed the Sino-Soviet cold war—global dispersal of Sino-Soviet confrontation—which exacerbates and amplifies U.S.-Soviet strategic competition.

Here at last détente and the attendant multipolarization of international politics have exposed themselves as illusions. As catchy as détente was as a concept of international politics, it merely signified the institutionalization of cold war. Détente was suited to Europe, where by tradition a system of international relations has existed—the European state system featuring maintenance of the status quo, peaceful coexistence, and social stability. Where these conditions are absent, as in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and other non-European regions, no foundation for détente exists.

The Sino-American rapprochement across Asia was regarded by the public at large as a typical instance of détente, and it was widely alleged that the cold war structure had disintegrated. However, Sino-American rapprochement was nothing but the evolution of a cold war subsystem. It resulted from the Sino-Soviet confrontation that started in the 1960s and the simultaneous decline of American power vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Far from being the dis-

integration of the cold war structure, in fact it was the dawning of cool war conditions encompassing Europe, Asia, the Middle East, the African continent, and the Pacific region.

American strategy

Under these circumstances, American world strategy shifted to a two-dimensional one set forth clearly in the so-called new Pacific doctrine of December 1975: carrying forward the Soviet-American détente in the Europe-Atlantic region and, in order to accomplish this, consolidating a trans-Pacific coalition of the United States, Japan, and China in the Asia-Pacific region. With China's willing participation, an indubitable framework of antihegemony alliances has emerged.

The Japan-China peace and friendship treaty, acclaimed with loud cheers by Washington, cannot escape the objective fact that it was realized in this international political context; Japan's loud protestations of omnidirectional diplomacy affect that fact very little. To describe this state of affairs from the viewpoint of America's Asian policy, Stanley Karnow, well known for his sharp analyses of China and Asian affairs, has noted that for the first time in half a century the United States is not forced to choose between China and Japan but can encourage a cooperative relationship between them (*Baltimore Sun*, November 6, 1978). Viewed from the Soviet side, compelled as it is to make a fundamental change in its Asian stance, the emergence of an antihegemony coalition gives the Russians free license to engage in a strategic counteroffensive of their own choosing.

Accordingly, Japan, unable to come up with a world strategy of its own, is having international citizenship thrust upon it, entailing Japan's involvement not only in the Sino-Soviet conflict but also in the global cool war. We cannot brush off as mere coincidence the outbreak of debate in Japan on legislation to facilitate responses to national emergencies at about the time of the signing of the Japan-China treaty.

A recent series of statements by National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and Energy Secretary James Schlesinger indicate that America's China policy has overcome the intractable problem of finding the proper formula for normalizing Sino-American relations—purely domestic problem though it was—and is turning unswervingly to the task of fostering China's anti-Soviet stance. This basic American policy is about to be implemented by the officials at the nerve center of the Carter administration.

Chinese strategy

We cannot help having a deep sense of unease when we hear Carter's staff members articulate such a strategy as if it were a matter of course. At the same time, the Chinese side has not only come out in favor of the Japan-U.S. security treaty but has also reevaluated the treaty as constituting a link in anti-Soviet defense cooperation. This can be seen in the well-publicized remarks of Teng Hsiao-p'ing on his visit to Japan as well as in a comment made by Liao Ch'eng-chi: "Under the existing world situation the Japan-U.S. security treaty is still worthwhile. Inasmuch as the Soviet Union is the biggest power interested in starting a world war, we com-

pletely appreciate the need for the treaty" (quoted by Yūji Soga, Japan Socialist Party member, in the *Asahi Shimbun*, November 22, 1978). The Japan-China treaty with its anti-hegemony clause enables China to take just such a stance.

In this way China's world strategy to construct an eastern NATO by linking the Japan-China treaty and the Japan-U.S. security treaty is being delineated ever more boldly. China is nearing the decision not to renew the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance, whose full term runs to 1980. Knowing that abrogation of the treaty will remove a restraint against a Soviet attack upon itself, thus increasing the Soviet threat, China is expecting Japan to step up its defense buildup as a part of an anti-Soviet defense. At the same time China is using de-Maoification as an incentive to induce all strata of society to take part in production and construction for the country's modernization, aiming at the goal of a "rich country with a strong military," much as Japan did in the past.

The four fields singled out for modernization are generally listed as agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology, in that order. Taking the paradoxical nature of Chinese logic into account, however, priority should rather be understood as being on the modernization of science and technology, including business management, and the target of the moment as being enhanced military capability. Accordingly, progress in Japan-China economic relations in response to the call for modernization in four fields will obviously help increase China's military capability. This will not only invite a corresponding Soviet arms buildup and still more active Asian strategy but also stimulate a military buildup in Vietnam and other countries on China's periphery, leading inevitably to the militarization of Asia as a whole.

In spite of its avowed aim of peace and friendship, the Japan-China treaty has the potential to develop in this risky direction. Seen in the light of this potential, will not Japan's well-meaning omnidirectional diplomacy become an empty phrase and, worse yet, jeopardize the security of Japan? We have yet to hear any argument that can flatly deny such misgivings.

3. Deficiencies in the defense controversy

The recent debate over emergency legislation coincided, oddly enough, with such international developments. Seen in this light, the joint action plan unveiled last November for cooperation between the U.S. armed forces and our Self-Defense Forces in the event of an armed attack on Japan includes a great many touchy problems. A detailed examination of these problems must be left to the experts on military matters. However, a more serious point, whether with respect to emergency legislation or to joint Japan-U.S. military action, is that our policy makers and defense authorities seem to regard defense problems arising from the Japan-U.S. security setup as only a bilateral question having to do with Japan's strengthened defense capability. This parallels the government's view that Japan-China relations are only a bilateral question. Unlike some of the critics in the opposition camp that we can expect to hear from

on defense matters, our policy makers and defense authorities seem unaware that the international currents enveloping Japan are flowing in a dangerous direction.

Basically, the Japanese authorities are so delighted to have Chinese support for the Japan-U.S. security treaty and stronger Self-Defense Forces that they take this to be a sign that the so-called unarmed neutrality concept is now bankrupt. They are oblivious of the total structure of the cool war, however, and they also fail to add to their calculations the price they will soon have to pay for their mistaken policy choices. To be sure, some anti-Soviet, pro-China advocates are all for the formation of a U.S.-Japan-China antihegemony coalition. But Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda and most other government officials including Masayoshi Ōhira do not go that far, hence their platform proclaiming omnidirectional diplomacy. I have already touched on the coincidence of debate on emergency legislation flaring up at the same time a virtual U.S.-Japan-China coalition was formed. History shows that it is such coincidences that often conceal pitfalls for nations.

The danger of the military approach

It follows from the discussion in the preceding section that in the international environment surrounding Japan today all diplomatic problems can be reduced to the problem of security; put differently, Japan's security depends decisively on diplomatic strategy. This point cannot be denied in view of Japan's virtually total dependence on other countries for its survival. The fact of the matter is, however, the highly strategic opportunity presented to Japan by the Japan-China treaty was wasted, with no substantive high policy debate on this aspect of the question being undertaken.

In the meantime, controversies revolving around defense technologies and tactics, as in the emergency legislation debate, or focusing on the uniquely Japanese question of whether defense forces are condoned by the so-called peace Constitution have raged in the past and continue to rage today. This military debate was stimulated by China's affirmative evaluation of the Japan-U.S. security treaty and its suggestions for further military buildups; new highs in the debate can be anticipated as old allegations of the Soviet menace resurface and interact with the newly active Asian strategy of the Soviet Union.

Current indications are that the defense debate will tilt ever more to the purely military side, but this could undermine understanding of the fact that Japan's security in today's international community cannot be guaranteed solely by military preparedness. The military dimension is after all a subsidiary element of the much broader category of diplomatic strategy, and defense debates devoid of diplomatic strategy tend to be unproductive and liable to turn on value judgments. Naturally we ought to be prepared for emergency situations, but it is still more important to recognize that our country's security cannot be maintained unless national emergencies are avoided in the first place. The pitfall in Japanese thinking on the defense issue is thus the lack of understanding that an active diplomatic program is the best strategy for Japan's survival, that such a diplomacy is in fact

the very stuff of which a defense strategy should be made.

4. Diplomacy as strategy for survival

The late Alastair Buchan, professor of international relations at Oxford University, whose untimely death the year before last was much regretted, once said of East Asian international relations that there is no sharper contrast than that between China and the Soviet Union in armed confrontation with each other and unarmed Japan standing like a glass skyscraper beside them (lecture carried on the BBC, December 7, 1974).

If I may revise the metaphor somewhat, Asia today lies in a triangle bounded by three massive buildings: the already completed Soviet building of steel, the Chinese building of iron, trying to stand up to the Soviet building, and the Japanese building of glass. As the glass building will not support steel elements, its structure can be preserved only by consistently sticking to a flexible structure using the medium of glass. Should a half-baked attempt be made to put a steel frame into it, the structure might be damaged and the whole building come tumbling down. This, be it noted, is a mere metaphor. All the same, it is suggestive of the correct security posture for Japan.

What I have called a flexible structure means, in terms of diplomatic security strategy, a multidimensional approach to diplomacy; what I have termed the need to consistently stick to this structure means eradicating the protectionist tendencies that remain strong even among the advanced capitalist countries now that they face wide fluctuations in international exchange rates, standing behind the free trade system, internationalizing Japan, and establishing an open domestic system. Understood as a strategy of survival, our country's security policy will not be viable until we proceed in this direction.

The proper balance in diplomatic relations

The first thing to be avoided is the dangerous view that Japan and China are somehow destined to share a common fate. Ever since the signing of the Japan-China treaty, the Chinese have been peddling the slogan "Friendship and unity of 1 billion Chinese and Japanese." Since 900 million of the 1 billion are Chinese, the slogan may have a sweet ring to the Chinese. For our part, the historical precedent of Japan's pro-Chinese psychology makes it all the easier for us to fall victim to the slogan. But stressing unity with China to excess may invite fears of a "new yellow peril" among the Asian countries on China's rim and countries in the West, thus restricting Japan's ability to evolve a pluralist diplomatic strategy. This point must be evident to anyone who observed the reactions of Singapore and other ASEAN nations on the occasion of Teng Hsiao-p'ing's recent visit to Southeast Asia.

The more our contact with China expands, the more we should restrain the pan-Asianist tendency in our diplomacy. Unless we are properly ascetic, there is even a danger that our bureaucrats may lose sight of their own nationality in the course of visits to the Middle Kingdom; this has already happened to some of them, incumbent as well as retired, in certain

ministries as well as the Defense Agency.

The reason a measure of coolness is required in dealing with China is that the future of Sino-Soviet relations is still indeterminate—one can project both extremes of Sino-Soviet war and reconciliation, either of which would be threatening to us. Japan's diplomatic strategy must be independent of such uncertain factors. This is all the more true in that the threat to the Korean Peninsula, which is vital to Japan's security, still persists.

In conclusion, we must avoid the risk of turning the Japan-U.S. security system into an eastern NATO as desired by Washington and Peking. While taking the trilateral relations between Japan, the U.S., and Europe as the cornerstone of our diplomacy, we must place Japan-China relations in a subsystem subordinate to the former. To curb the congenital big-power orientation of Japan's diplomacy means precisely to multiply such subsystems. This is why our relations with not only China and the Soviet Union but, equally important, the ASEAN nations, Indochina, and the Pacific region must be taken seriously. Moreover, we must go on to make diplomatic initiatives into such blind spots as Mongolia and New Zealand.

The second major problem area is that of dissolving the credibility gap between ourselves and the United States and Western Europe that arose in the course of the revaluation of the yen.

How the outside world should deal with China, a nation still undergoing massive changes, is a problem on which no common agreement exists among the nations of the West; only competition prevails among them. Nor is there any consensus on another important international task—that of resolving disputes between the North and the South.

Whether the summit meeting of industrialized nations, to be held for the first time in Japan in June 1979, can outgrow the old "world economy conference" framework and go on to deal with such problems will become a touchstone of the diplomacy of Japan as the host country.

The pluralist approach

Third is the need for a roundabout approach in thinking of diplomatic strategy. Here it is necessary for us to turn away from the item-by-item routine of moving from Japanese-Chinese to Japanese-Soviet relations. Because Japanese-Soviet relations are so critical at the moment, no progress can be expected under the existing conditions if we persist in dealing with Japanese-Soviet relations in terms of the Japan-China-USSR triangle.

In this regard, the Japan-Australia relationship is extremely important. This is not simply because the economic needs of Japan and Australia are complementary. More than that, the relationship is one of the most important ones today because it can augment our bargaining power in our dealings with the Chinese and the Soviets. This is because Australia already ranks third among our trading partners in terms of trading volume, because it is of critical importance as a source of resources and food, and because it is indispensable for multiplying our diplomatic dimensions in view of our excessive dependence on northern sea fisheries and our

consequent vulnerability to Soviet pressure. Indeed, Australia can be a vital link in our survival strategy.

In terms of real trading volume, Japan-Australia relations are much more valuable than Japan-China relations. But this fact is inadequately appreciated. Moreover, the altercations over sugar and beef imports from Australia have demonstrated the presence of domestic Japanese factors, such as the distribution system, speculation, and protectionist tendencies, that could undermine our important relationship with Australia. Japan stands to lose much if the Australians become intractable in the future because of their very mixed feelings toward Japan and because we have done nothing to ameliorate them. As noted already, there is no guarantee that China will step in to compensate for any losses we may suffer. The example of Japan-Australia relations alone, thus considered, clearly exposes the lack of recognition that diplomacy can contribute to Japan's security.

Cultural diplomacy

Last but not least, the poverty of using diplomacy as a strategy first and foremost in the traditional arenas of politics and economics needs to be pointed out. In the context of today's tense international situation, diplomacy is a game of images. It is also a means of communication (human, cultural, and informational) between alien civilizations. Again, it is an art of averting friction between cultures in contact with one another.

Such cultural diplomacy can make important contributions to our security. In an age when the U.S., Chinese, and Soviet world strategies are clashing with one another, Japan stands at a threshold where it can augment its cultural diplomacy by drawing on the unique traits of Japan's multiple modern cultures. In this regard, the first stage of internationalization, when exporting Japanese culture, arts, and letters sufficed, has come to an end. Today's cultural diplomacy must seek instead to circulate a wider variety of modern cultural and scientific achievements and a broader spectrum of human talent.

The work of the Japan Foundation and the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers in this respect has already produced noteworthy results. Still, the importance of enlisting such cultural exchange as an arm of diplomatic strategy is as yet only inadequately understood, as the subject has fallen between the two stools of concern over the charge of "cultural imperialism" and disdain for cultural affairs. Nevertheless, one cannot help feeling that Japan, devoid of world strategy or national goals, is in urgent need of putting its cultural diplomacy on a sound footing as a strategy of survival and defense. In this sense one can say that today Japan's diplomacy stands at the crossroads. (Courtesy of Chūō Kōron Sha)