

Vacillating between the US-centered and UN-centered Security Postures: Japan's Reconstruction of Post-Cold War Strategic Identity in the 1990s*

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Abstract

Recent developments in Japan's right of collective self-defense and 'comfort women' issues have often been attributed to PM Abe's political agenda, historical revisionism, and Japan's overall 'rightward tilt' in the 2010s. By resuming to Japan's parliamentary debates (domestic elites) in the 1990s on these two issues, however, this article argues that such perspective is prone to overlook how these issues have been intricately connected to Japan's 'reconstruction' of its national strategic identity in

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the post-Cold War era. Excavating the link between Japan's historical revisionism and its efforts to newly consolidate its security posture in the post-Cold War setting, this article finds that the seemingly 'revisionist' and 'self-contradictory' changes in Japan's approach to the right of collective self-defense and 'comfort women' issues are better understood from the point of Japan's strategic quest towards security. The central arguments of this paper are: 1) Japan's domestic debates on the right of collective self-defense and apology diplomacy in the 1990s symbolize Japan's quest for new strategic identity in the post-Cold War setting; 2) specifically, the 'idea' of transition from US-USSR bipolarity to the 'UN-centered' world order played a critical role in bringing about Japan's efforts to renew its postwar pacifist identity and apology diplomacy in the early 1990s; 3) yet, such backbone of the post-Cold War identity was watered down as US-centered security order regained prominence in the late 1990s, attenuating the rationale behind Japan's pacifism and apology diplomacy on the issues of the right of collective self-defense and 'comfort women'; 4) overall, Japan's vacillation between the UN-centered security posture and the reliance on the US-Japan alliance determined the changes in Japan's approach to the two contentious issues.

Keywords: Japan, national identity, collective self-defense, comfort women, post-Cold War era

I . Introduction

After three years of summit disengagement, Korea and Japan came

to a sudden agreement on the issue of ‘comfort women’ on December 28, 2015. This ‘final and irreversible’ agreement, as it was so stated, was met by both acclaim and criticism, and the future ramifications of this diplomatic action are yet to be determined. Despite lack of domestic consensus on the issue, however, the bilateral agreement unclogged the Korea-Japan relations, which, under Park Geun-hye and Abe administrations, had seen little interaction since the inaugurations of the two governments. What was significant was that the agreement on ‘comfort women’ issue became a timely lubricant for the two countries’ security cooperation against nuclear threats from North Korea, illuminating the complexity of Korea-Japan relations that are tangled in between the ‘virtual alliance’(Cha 1999) and historical animosities.

Prime Minister Abe’s decision to ‘settle’ the issue of ‘comfort women’ came as a surprise not only because it came about in an abrupt manner but also because of the context of the agreement. Acknowledging the “involvement of the Japanese military” and “responsibility” of the Japanese government at the time, PM Abe essentially reversed the statements he had made in the past (Harding 2015). Nonetheless, not only did PM Abe quickly return home to make statements at the Diet that the agreement does not constitute Japan’s acknowledgement of its involvement in sex slavery and war crimes, the agreement in fact did little to assuage Japan’s domestic tension concerning the Abe administration’s ambitious defense agenda, whose fundamental aim lies in remaking of Japan into a proactive “first-tier” power in the international affairs (Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of Japan 2013). Since its inauguration in December 2012, the Abe Cabinet has introduced a variety of new defense initiatives, including the establishing of the National Security Council (NSC), releasing of the very first National Security Strategy, and replacing of the 1967 Three Principles of Arms Exports (TPAE) which essentially lifted the decades-long blanket ban on Japan's arms exports. Amongst these changes, the Abe Cabinet's resolution on the 'reinterpretation' of the Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution to allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defense (CSD) on July 1, 2014, along with the controversial passing of a set of security bills in September, has brought many critics at home and abroad to question the nature of recent developments that are taking place in Japan under his leadership.

The purpose of this paper is not to evaluate PM Abe's personal intentions that lay behind these developments. Rather, it attempts to trace back the emergences of the right of collective self-defense and comfort women issues in the 1990s, in order to elucidate how these two issues must be contextualized as part of Japan's efforts to rebuild its national strategic identity in the post-Cold War era. Specifically, it pays attention to the development of parliamentary debates (domestic elites) throughout the 1990s in unraveling the nascent phase of the 'reconstruction' process of Japan's national strategic identity in the face of looming post-Cold War structure. This article seeks to excavate how the two issues were intricately connected under the post-Cold War landscape, and by doing so it provides a better understanding toward what is seemingly a rather perplex posture of

Japan. The central arguments of this paper are: 1) Japan's domestic debates on the right of collective self-defense and apology diplomacy in the 1990s symbolize Japan's quest for new strategic identity in the post-Cold War setting; 2) specifically, the 'idea' of transition from US-USSR bipolarity to the 'UN-centered' world order played a critical role in bringing about Japan's efforts to renew its postwar pacifist identity and apology diplomacy in the early 1990s; 3) yet, such backbone of the post-Cold War identity was watered down as US-centered security order regained prominence in the late 1990s, attenuating the rationale behind Japan's pacifism and apology diplomacy on the issues of the right of collective self-defense and 'comfort women'; 4) overall, Japan's vacillation between the UN-centered security posture and the reliance on the US-Japan alliance determined the changes in Japan's approach to the two contentious issues.

Exposed to enormous uncertainty about how Japan could guarantee its national security, Japan in the early 1990s tried to renew its postwar pacifist identity, seek its place and influence in the international community. The reevaluations on the right of collective self-defense along with the 'comfort women' issue by the political elites were parallel strategic efforts to consolidate Japan's place at the UN as well as in the region, which were intricately tied to Japan's strategic redesigning of its security posture. Overall, looking closely at the incipient phase of the domestic construction of national strategic identity provides insight to the questions of why Japan's security resurgence and historical revisionism accompany Japan's

quest to become a ‘normal country,’ and how continuity, rather than discontinuity, characterizes the strategic agenda-settings of the second Abe cabinet.

II. The Debate on Japan’s Postwar National Strategic Identities

To contextualize the controversy surrounding Japan’s right of collective self-defense and comfort women issues as the two pillars of Japan’s search for post-Cold War national strategic identity, this article shall begin by reviewing the literatures on Japan’s postwar national identity. At the foremost, there has been a series of controversies over the question of whether Japan can be characterized as a pacifist state. The current reforms under the Abe Cabinet for instance are most severely criticized by the pacifist school of Japan’s identity discourse. Highlighting Japan’s post-war construction of antimilitarist norms, touted by Japan’s Peace Constitution (Article 9), self-imposed 1% GNP ceiling on defense expenditure, the 1967 TPAE, and limited Self-Defense Forces (SDF) (Berger 1983; 1998), many contend that the series of security and institutional reforms executed by the Abe Cabinet aim directly to alter or abolish these norms, signifying the ‘gutting’ of Japan’s post-war pacifist identity. Recent studies on Japanese foreign policy and defense reforms point especially to the Abe administration’s concept of “proactive defense” and its efforts to allow the exercise of the right of collective

self-defense as the signs of deviation from Japan's previous "norms" in its external policy – characterized by reactive nature vis-à-vis "gaiatsu (foreign pressure)" – in the post-war era (Calder 1988).

Yet, has Japan ever been a pacifist state? Contrary to Thomas U. Berger (1998)'s renowned culturalist interpretation of Japan (that post-war Japanese society as well as the state's external policies are founded upon antimilitarist culture), scholars like Kent Calder (1988) elucidated Japan's pacifism as state strategy, which was adopted in order to shun international commitments or proactive international role, while reserving most of national resources to economic growth and maintaining its alliance with the US. A few others have even termed Japan in the late 20th century and onwards as a 'mercantilist state' that may have been reactive in its post-war security policies, yet has displayed significantly aggressive posture in economy-related spheres (Hirata 2001).

The empirical data also suggest Japan's gradual expansion in their security roles, discrediting the pacifist interpretation of Japan's post-war identity. In the late 1970s, the US began putting pressures on Japan to upgrade its role in regional security, as it was faced with the escalating military buildup of the Soviet Union as well as with the undermining of the US's military capability in Asia after the Vietnam War. In 1979, the Carter administration advocated that Japan should raise the self-imposed 1% GNP ceiling on defense budget. The Reagan Administration put forth the concept of "burden sharing," requesting its allies, including Japan, to take up larger accountabilities in security realms that are befitting to the economic capabilities. In

the early 1990s, Japan was pressured to agree on the cost-sharing for the maintaining of the US bases in Japan (Otake 1983; Muroyama 1992). Japan's defense capability, namely the operations of the SDFs, became gradually susceptible to these pressures; Japan decided to raise the 1% GNP ceiling in defense expenditure in 1986; the US-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines in 1978 was designed to foster military cooperation between the SDF and US forces in Japan. The 1978 Guidelines were revised again in 1997, expanding the scope of US-Japan military cooperation (Asagumo Shimbunsha 2001, 346-53). Although some saw that the 1978 Guidelines were "no more than guidelines at this stage"(Nishihara 1983-84, 203-204), others argued that the Guidelines became the turning point from which the SDF became an integral part of US forces in the Asia-Pacific region (Yoshioka 1981, 47), essentially overriding the Constitution and warranting Japan's right to exercise the collective self-defense.

In this sense, while it is true that Japan has largely been "reactive" in its external policy until the late 20th century, it also undertook gradual expansion of its security roles since the 1990s, which poses a question on Japan's pacifist or antimilitarist nature. In this context, Gerald Curtis (1993)' conceptualized notion of "coping strategy" and Richard Samuels (2007)' "Goldilocks strategy" would seem to be more fitting in describing the foreign policies of postwar Japan, which successfully capture a rather complex and hybrid nature of the development of Japan's external policy. In short, they perceived that the "reactive" nature is only a partial description as Japan's foreign policy has been always an outcome of Japan's strategic "coping" with

the given environment, carefully pursuing its “balanced goldilocks strategy” to achieve its goals in economic prosperity and security under the US-Japan alliance system. Additionally, the reactive nature of Japan is overstated if we take into account of the public statements given by Yasuhiro Nakasone in 1982, when he became Prime Minister. In it, he made public statements, insisting Japan was to become an active member of the West and share the “common fate” with the US. He also stated that Japan should become an “unsinkable aircraft carrier” to defend the West (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 1983, 374; Japan Times 1983/01/20).

This article verges on the incrementalist arguments in interpreting the changes in Japan. David Arase overviewed the evolution of Japan’s defense policy and stated that Japan began to deviate from post-war “passivity” to become “a strong” and “active state” in a period between 2001 and 2006 (Arase 2007). Yoshihide Soeya also noted that there are “concurrent indications of greater activism and even hints of leadership, especially since the last half of the 1980s”(Yasutomo 1986). Shintaro Ishiara’s book, *The Japan That Can Say No* (1989), suggests that the normal country agenda emerged in the early 1990s, signaling Japan’s employment of proactive foreign policy. Others have also traced the evolution in Japan’s antimilitarist norms since the 1950s (Y. Park 2014) and concluded that the changes in Japan are not necessarily the abrupt decisions by the Abe Cabinet, but an incremental transition from its post-war reluctance in the extra-territorial activities to expand its regional security role and counter the growing influence of China in the region (C. Park 2014).

All in all, it is against this backdrop that this article finds the most merit of proposed analysis on Japan's 1990s parliamentary debates – the consensus-building process among domestic elites: 1) adjustments in Japan's national identity can be interpreted as an outcome of long-term, complex domestic consensus-building process rather than a rationalist design of a single individual; 2) by focusing on the parliamentary debates that took place throughout the 1990s, an incremental perspective on Japan's current reforms can be explored. The following sections will delve into Japan's parliamentary debates on the collective self-defense and comfort women issues in the 1990s in order to elucidate the contending rationales and process in conceptualizing Japan's national strategic identities in the post-Cold War era.

Ⅲ. From International Contribution to Collective Security: Development of the Parliamentary Debates on the Right of Collective Self-Defense

While the controversy surrounding Japan's right of collective self-defense seems to be at its height in recent years, the process-tracing of the issue into the past reveals that the issue was widely discussed among the political elites in the 1950s as well as in the 1990s. After evaluating the rationale based on which Japan's postwar pacifism was consolidated in the 1950s, this section turns to

the parliamentary debates on the issue of the right of collective self-defense in the 1990s. Specifically, it pays attention to how the logics behind the expansion of Japan's role in regional as well as global security vacillated between the UN-centered security posture and the reliance on US-Japan alliance. While in the early 1990s UN-centered approach provided larger incentive to increase its defense capabilities within the context of international norms and reconciliation with the neighboring countries, the series of external security threats caused Japan to gradually place heavier reliance on the US-centered security vision, instigating contentious debates on Japan's collective self-defense in the neighboring countries.

1. Emergence of the Collective Self-Defense Issue

The debate on the right of collective self-defense first appeared in the Japanese Diet as early as in 1950, as the daunting Cold War structure brought about the question of Japan's national security. In the early 1950s, the Japanese leaders were concerned with three major aspects of the right of collective self-defense. First, they discussed whether the right of collective self-defense could be exercised should the allied occupation come to an end with the signing of San Francisco Peace Treaty. Despite the US assertion that Japan's "peace constitution" is not to deprive Japan's "inherent right" of collective self-defense as an independent state, by the early 1950s the Japanese government had established that, even though Japan recognizes the sovereign right of individual and collective self-defense,

“Japan would not possess any military power based on the Article 9 of Japanese Constitution.”¹⁾ Second, the inauguration of the Self Defense Force in 1954 was met by serious opposition by those who argued that the possession of military force is against the principle of the peace constitution. The Japanese government reasoned that the constitution does not deprive Japan of possessing the "least necessary power organization" for protecting Japan, arguing for the constitutionality of the SDF. Third issue, which was discussed in relevance to the right of collective self-defense in the 1950, was the problem of the US bases in Japan. Progressives argued that the existence of the US bases itself is the violation against the principle of non-exercise of collective self-defense, because, with the deployment of American forces to Korean peninsula from the Japanese territory — which was a reality at the time —, Japan was jointly exercising the US’s right of collective self-defense. On a fundamental level, these voices reflected Japan’s fear of entrapment which was to resonate throughout the Cold War period. The conservatives often rationalized the use of Japanese land by the American forces as well as the constitutionality of SDF by emphasizing the importance of the US-Japan alliance which would bring “peace and stability in the Far East, upon which Japan’s security itself can be guaranteed, based on the spirit of UN Charter.”²⁾ These three aspects — non-exercise of the right of collective

1) Aiyu Okamoto, Special Committee of Peace Treaty and US-Japan Security Treaty, 1951/11/7.

2) Special Committee of Peace Treaty and US-Japan Security Treaty, 1951/11/15.

self-defense, constitutionality of the Self-Defense Force, and to provide the US forces with bases in the Japanese territory — became the basic foundation upon which Japan’s postwar “pacifism” was maintained throughout the Cold War period.

2. The Debate on Japan’s Post-Cold War Strategic Identity in the 1990s

In the post-Cold War period, however, the right of collective self-defense was discussed not in the context of “Japan’s security” per se, but the issue was integrated in the context of “international contribution”(国際貢献) (Mochizuki 2007, 5). With Iraq’s invasion to Kuwait on August 2, 1990 and the growing international pressure for the UN interventions, Japan’s political leaders also began discussing the possibility of Japanese involvement in the UN’s peacekeeping operations. By the end of the month, the Kaifu cabinet began putting together “UN Peace Cooperation Law”(国連平和協力法) in order to “provide appropriate and swift cooperation to the peace-keeping and other operations under the UN resolution.”³⁾ The advocates of Peace Cooperation Law often referred to two constitutional documents in defending their case: the UN Charter and the Japanese Constitution. They argued that the “spirit of the United Nations”— while specifically pointing to UN Charter Chapter 7 Article 41, 42, and 43 — oblige the member states to provide “armed forces, assistance, and facilities… for the purpose of maintaining

3) Upper House Plenary Session, 1990/10/18.

international peace and security”(United Nations). In addition, looking to the preamble of the Japanese Constitution, Tadashi Nishihara, then a professor at National Defense Academy, argued that it was a matter of “national honor” to join the international society for the preservation of peace.⁴⁾

The main purpose of the law, the cabinet explained, was to send “support unit” to provide necessary supplies to the UN Peace Keeping Force (PKF) and enable transport cooperation of non-military supplies of food, water, medical goods, etc. using both SDF’s and private aircrafts and ships. The advocates of the Law emphasized that, with the end of the Cold War, Japan faced the necessity of dealing with the international security challenges outside the framework of the US-Japan alliance, and contributing to the UN-approved missions would enhance Japan’s national prestige. Kenichi Ito, former bureaucrat and one of the leading international relations scholars at the time, argued that the only reason why Japan was able to discard the right of collective self-defense in the postwar period was because the US was there to provide protection. He argued that, with the possibility that the US might leave the region, it was necessary for Japan to establish a legal framework in order to uphold the UN Charter in a full scale, including sending out of the military personnel abroad.⁵⁾ Others argue that the reluctant attitude towards peacekeeping measures would never be accepted by the international community,⁶⁾ and an LDP member Mitsuru Sasaki

4) Tadashi Nishihara, Lower House Special Committee on Security, 1990/10/4.

5) Kenichi Ito, Lower House Special Committee on Security, 1990/10/4.

claimed that Japan must break away from the “checkbook” diplomacy and send in personnel, which was an essential part of international contribution that would lead to the upgrade of Japan’s international status.⁷⁾

This controversial proposition was met by severe oppositions from the progressive camp as well as some of the LDP members. One of the focal points in the parliamentary debates surrounding the passing of the law was whether such activities in support of UNPKF were indeed categorized as the exercise of the right of collective self-defense. One socialist member asked the government’s prioritization between the UN Charter and the Japanese constitution — whether the UN Charter has higher authority than the Japanese constitution⁸⁾; others questioned the government’s intention as to how far the “UN-centered” policy would go, and whether the government was considering the possibility of further participation in Peace Keeping Operations in the future.⁹⁾ Also, in the parliamentary debates, some politicians expressed concerns over the growing apprehensions from the East Asian states toward Japan’s attempt to attain larger international role, which included the possibility of overseas deployment of the SDF. While acknowledging the necessity of wider international contribution, Mitsuru Sasaki, an LDP representative, claimed that the government has the responsibility to convince China and Southeast Asian states that Japan’s intentions are entirely peaceful.¹⁰⁾ A socialist Yasuko

6) Tadashi Nishihara, Lower House Special Committee on Security, 1990/10/4.

7) Mitsuru Sasaki, Upper House Plenary Session, 1990.10.17.

8) Upper House Foreign Affairs Commission, 1990/09/19.

9) Upper House Financial Committee, 1990/10/3.

Takemura castigated the government's ambivalent use of term "international cooperation," saying that even the Pacific War was fought in the name of "contribution to Asia."¹¹⁾

To these queries, the Kaifu cabinet and the following cabinets repeatedly appealed that the cabinet would always abide by the basic interpretation of the constitution, namely that the constitution does not allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defense, and Japan's international contribution would always be contained within this framework.¹²⁾ In their logic, the transportations and supplying of necessary goods such as food and water in the name of "peace cooperation"(平和協力) were not to be considered the exercise of the right of collective self-defense, because these activities were not intended to exercise the use of force.¹³⁾ In a similar vein, they argued that the dispatch of the SDF would only be approved when it had no intention to use force. In addition, Prime Minister Kaifu continued to emphasize that the cabinet was neither attempting to overturn the basic principle of non-exercise of the right of collective self-defense nor intending to revise the constitution.¹⁴⁾ On the matter of assuaging protests by the East Asian states, he expressed his determination to "abide by the exclusive defense (專守防衛) based on the principle of the peace constitution, and, standing upon the repentance from the past, Japan shall never become a military superpower again."¹⁵⁾ It

10) Mitsuru Sasaki, Upper House Plenary Session, 1990/10/17.

11) Yasuko Takemura, Committee on International Cooperation, 1992/05/07.

12) Toshiki Kaifu, Lower House Plenary Session, 1990/10/18.

13) Lower House Plenary Session, 1990/10/16.

14) Lower House Plenary Session, 1990/10/16.; Upper House Plenary Session, 1990/10/17.

turned out that the Kaifu cabinet was not convincing enough to pass the UN Peace Cooperation Law. At the end, the law was rejected due to large domestic oppositions, while the Kaifu cabinet donated a total of 13 billion US dollars to the US and the coalition forces.

The domestic opposition against the dispatch of the SDF abroad was assuaged after Japan went through severe international criticism for its “checkbook diplomacy” and “one-country pacifism” in the “contribution” of the Gulf War, which made the Japanese people as well as the reluctant political leaders acknowledge the inadequacy of the traditional “pacifism” for the newly emerging security challenges. Once withdrawn from the parliament, another law was introduced under the Miyazawa cabinet in order to establish a legal framework for Japan’s “international cooperation.” The 1992 Diet, a.k.a. “PKO Diet,” was deeply divided between those who supported the PKO Law and those who remained prudent in expanding Japan’s international role by participating in the UN peacekeeping operations. The supporters of the PKO Law often emphasized that Japan must actively participate in the UN-centered operations, in order to abide by the spirit of the Japanese constitution that promoted efforts in achieving “an international peace based on justice and order”(Article 9) and pledged to “accomplish these high ideals and purposes with all our resources”(Preamble).¹⁶⁾ Keigo Ouchi, a member of the center-left Democratic Socialist Party, argued that Japan, as a resource-poor

15) ToshikiKaifu, Upper House Plenary Session, 1990/10/17.

16) Kazuhiko Kimiya, Upper House, Committee on International Peace Cooperation, 1992/05/22.

country, must aspire for world peace and free trade, and can no longer continue to be content with the idea of “one-country pacifism.” He goes on to propose that the exercise of the right of collective self-defense is a matter of policy, not constitution, and the government must initiate discussions among the people concerning the “revision” of the constitution.¹⁷⁾

The cabinet, however, remained reluctant when it came to the “revision” of the constitution. Then Minister of Foreign Affairs Kabun Muto acknowledges the difficulty in launching discussions in such sensitive issues as “revision of constitution,” pointing to the vulnerability of the ruling LDP which was then under severe criticism for successive political scandals.¹⁸⁾ When asked whether Japan would be able to become a “true” contributor to international peace under the limited interpretation of the constitution and non-exercise of the right of collective self-defense, he answers that the government would do its best to find a larger middle ground between the PKO Law and the current interpretation of the constitution.¹⁹⁾ By persuading two opposition parties, namely Komeito and Democratic Socialist Party, the cabinet passed the PKO Law on June 19, 1992, under the restrictions of five principles for the SDF to be sent overseas: 1) the parties of armed conflicts must reach an agreement of cease-fire; 2) the host countries as well as the parties to armed conflicts must issue consent for the UN PKO and Japan’s participation; 3) maintain strict

17) Keigo Ouchi, Lower House Plenary Session, 1993/01/26.

18) Kabun Muto, Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee, 1993/05/19.

19) Kabun Muto, Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee, 1993/05/19.

impartiality; 4) if and when these conditions are unmet, the Japanese government withdraw SDF units; 5) limitation on the use of weapons to “minimum necessity”(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2014). In principle, the central premise of the law was to allow dispatch of the SDF outside the Japanese territory, yet the missions were restricted to non-combat areas and transportations of necessary supplies.

3. Changes in Rhetoric: Emphasis on the UN-Centered "Collective Security"

The question arises, then, why it was possible for the Miyazawa cabinet to pass the PKO Law despite the fact the context of the law was largely drawn from UN Peace Cooperation Law which had been withdrawn during the previous cabinet. The intensification of international criticism against Japan's ‘checkbook diplomacy’ and Japanese people's growing awareness towards changing external environment alone cannot explain how the cabinet tried to set apart the issue of overseas deployment of SDF from its first attempt in 1990 in their incorporation of support from other political parties.

Looking closely at the parliamentary debates surrounding the PKO Law, it becomes clear that an important discourse was born during the PKO Diet, which was to become a turning point in Japan's domestic debates on the “international contribution” and, by extension, the right of collective self-defense. On February 21, 1992, the LDP's Special Investigation Committee on Japan's Role in International

Society (国際社会における日本の役割に関する特別調査会), so-called Ozawa Investigation Committee, announced a report concerning Japan's proper role in the changing security environment in the post-Cold War period. This report introduced a concept which would later be labeled as "universal theory of security"(普遍的安全保障論), which argued that the UN-led peacekeeping operations must be separated from the exercise of "the right of collective self-defense." Arguing that Japan must break away from postwar "passive pacifism" and engage in "assertive and active" pacifist stance, the committee concludes that the government must consolidate a legal framework within which the SDF can be dispatched overseas. Their argument was based on the logic that, traditionally, the postwar cabinets have renounced the exercise of "the right of collective self-defense" in the fear of intervening inter-state conflicts, yet such interpretation did not include the participation in the UN-centered "collective security" agenda (集団安全保障) (Nippon Foundation Library 2002). They argued that, under the US-Soviet Union bipolarity of the Cold War structure, the UN-centered operations were in practice invalid, yet as the world order is moving towards UN-centered security order, it is undesirable for Japan not to be a part of it. In 1994, Prime Minister Hata, a leader of non-LDP coalition cabinet after Hosokawa, first acknowledges that, *with* the UN commitment, in some cases it can be rendered constitutional for Japan to join "collective security"—not collective self-defense — mechanism.²⁰⁾ Towards the late 1990s, as

20) Lower House Budgetary Committee, 1994/05/26.

the heated parliamentary debates discussed the passing of the Law on a Situation in Areas Surrounding Japan (周辺事態法), which legalized the dispatch of the SDF to combat areas (though only for the purpose of logistic supports), the term “collective security” was increasingly replacing the concept of “collective self-defense.”²¹⁾

The irony is that such attempt for rationalizing the overseas deployment of SDF based on the idea of ‘UN-centered collective security’ turned out to be a mere dilatory devise that was soon to be replaced by security policies centered around US-Japan Alliance by the end of the decade. With the passing of Law on the Situation in Areas Surrounding Japan (1999), the condition for the overseas deployment of SDF was soon applied to the context of US-Japan alliance and its activities in the Asia-Pacific region. Reflecting the US’s growing concerns toward newly-arising security challenges in the region, epitomized by North Korean missile activities “Nodon” on May 29, 1993 as well as the Taiwan Strait crisis in 1996, the Nye report (1995) redefined the security of Japan as the “linchpin” of the US policy in the region. In other words, before the debate of ‘collective security’ centered around UNPKO could fully be explored, only the practical component was cut out and employed to the US-Japan security alliance which again became the central reference point of Japan's strategic identity.

21) Tadayuki Naojima, Upper House Investigation Committee on International Affairs, 1996/02/28.; Masahiko Takamura, Upper House Foreign and Security Committee, 1999/03/12.

IV. Lubricating Japan's Shift to New Strategic Identity: Parliamentary Debates on the "Comfort Women" Issue

Faltering between the US-Japan alliance and UN-centered security posture to redefine Japan's national strategic identity in the post-Cold War era, the emergence of debate on the comfort women issue in the 1990s occupied another aspect of Japan's quest for its place in the post-Cold War world. The observation of the issue reveals that Japan's strategic purpose of "apology diplomacy," which soon invited highly contentious domestic backlash, lay in smoothing the way for establishing a new place in the international community. The political decision on the launching of 'apology diplomacy' was neither molded as the product of harmonious domestic public opinion, nor as the direct response to the international criticism on the issue. The apologies were devised to lubricate Japan's enhancement of its regional role in light of new post-Cold War world order, tied intricately to Japan's strategic redesigning of its security posture.

1. The Emergence of Japan's Apology Diplomacy and the 'Comfort Women' Issue

On December 6th, 1991, three former 'comfort women' including Kim Hak Soon (who was the only plaintiff that revealed her real name) along with forty-one former soldiers filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government at the Tokyo District Court for reparation payments.²²⁾ A month later, on January 11, 1992, *Asahi Shinbum*

reported the discovery of the documents that proved the involvement of the Japanese military on the operations of wartime ‘comfort stations’ by Chuo University professor Yoshiaki Yoshimi, only five days before PM Kiichi Miyazawa’s visit to ROK. Reflecting these developments, Miyazawa gave a speech at National Assembly of Korea on January 17, 1992, entitled “Japan-ROK Relations in the Asian and the Global Context,” in which he delivered his “sincere apology” to the wartime ‘comfort women.’ Miyazawa went on further to say that passing down of the “correct understanding” of history is “responsibility” of his generation, and promised with his “determination” to “nurture” the younger generation with “understanding for the feelings of the victims and a sense of admonition that these misdeeds should never be repeated.”²³⁾

What is significant is that in the same speech, Miyazawa placed emphasis on the importance of Korea-Japan relations, which he perceived as the key axis for “Asian and global dynamism.” Miyazawa stressed the value of consultation and collaboration between Korea and Japan “at the United Nations.” He also mentioned the significance of US-Korea-Japan relations in the process of “transforming [the] region from that of tension to that of cooperation and create a prosperous and open Northeast Asia” in the post-Cold War era. Miyazawa also stated that Japan is “preparing the domestic arrangements... to provide further personnel cooperation... in U.N. Peace-keeping Forces in order to live up to the expectations of the

22) 『日韓の相互理解と戦後補償』 p. 148.

23) <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1992/1992-appendix-2.htm>.

world community.” In other words, the speech contained Japan’s determination to renew its international profile, including the area of UN PKO. Japan’s attempts for apology on the comfort women issue, and by extension, historical reconciliation, were founded upon Japan’s larger objective, to attain permanent seat on the UN Security Council — a part of which to pursue Japan’s rebuilding of its new credibility within the international society.

2. Apology Diplomacy and its Contested Path towards the International Community

The inauguration of the ‘apology diplomacy’ was stimulated from the Japanese ruling body’s agreement that, after it failed to play a corresponding role during the Gulf War as the second largest economy in the world, Japan needed to secure a more pivotal role within the UN. However, there were at least two external impediments Japan needed to overcome in order to achieve this goal. First is to de-escalate the tensions among the neighboring countries on the issues of Japan’s increase in self-defense capability, which could easily cause “Japan’s remilitarization-phobia” in China and Korea. Another impediment that stood in the way of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council was UN human rights treaties. The releases of two Official Inquiries on July 6, 1992 and August 4, 1993, which provided the official document regarding the wartime ‘comfort stations’, were the results of such dynamism that involved all surrounding factors, including Korea’s democratization, the end of

the Cold War, the rise of liberals within the LDP, and international Japan-bashing. Japan's 'official line' regarding the 'comfort women' issue, epitomized by Kono Statement, was squeezed out of such changing external dimensions.

However, Japan's "apology diplomacy" was by no means uncontested. Beginning in the mid-1990s, wartime 'comfort women' issues were discussed widely in the Japanese Diet in the context of history textbook, and how and whether the issue should be included in the education of middle-school history curriculum. In 1982, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Miyazawa made a statement that, receiving criticism by Korea and China concerning the descriptions of past events in Japanese textbooks, "Japan will pay due attention to these criticisms and make corrections at the Government's responsibility," from the perspective of "building friendship and goodwill with neighboring countries." He also adds, "Regarding textbooks that have already been authorized, Government will take steps quickly to the same effect."²⁴) But it was only after a decade had passed when the Japanese government decided to carry out concrete measures in dealing with the issue. In 1993, the Japanese government compiled the research findings concerning the wartime "comfort women" issue, according to which all seven middle-school history textbooks that were applied for government approval in 1995 included the term "military comfort women" (*jūgunianfu*), some with the description of

24) Statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Kiichi Miyazawa on History Textbooks, 1982/08/26. Refer to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/state8208.html>.

“forced mobilization to the war front.”

These changes in the middle-school history textbook triggered a heated debate concerning the issues of “comfort women” and the matter of its historical accuracy. Some Diet members argued that it was premature to teach such issue as “comfort women” to school children,²⁵⁾ and demanded that the issue to be removed from the textbooks which would be read by the children who might not be able to fully understand such sensitive matter.²⁶⁾ Further, some denied the “forced mobilization” of the “comfort women,” and firmly denied the existence of any historical records that prove the “coercion in a narrow sense” by the Imperial army. At an Upper House budgetary committee on January 30, 1997, Toranosuke Katayama points to the term “*jugun*,” or “in military service,” and claims that it gives false impression that the military was directly involved in mobilizing wartime “comfort women.”²⁷⁾ To this remark, government official admits that “there was no evidence found among the records studies by the government on ‘forced mobilization’ by the Japanese authorities.” In May 1997, Shinzo Abe argued that whether the mobilization had been “forceful” only had grounds in the words of the victims. Nevertheless, the only reason why the Japanese government admitted the coercive recruitment of the ‘comfort women’ in the Kono statement was because of “obvious diplomatic consideration” which reluctantly responded to outside pressures, and

25) Shingo Nishimura, Lower House Legal Affairs Committee, 1996/12/05.

26) Tadashi Itagaki, Upper House Budgetary Committee, 1996/12/11.

27) Upper House Budgetary Committee, 1997/01/30.

it is problematic to include such historically-unproven context into history textbooks.²⁸⁾

The heated domestic debates on the issue of wartime “comfort women” triggered by the review of history textbook in 1995 should not be simply understood as a mere trend of Japan’s historical revisionism. For the advocates of the above assertions, it was a matter of Japan’s national identity which was projected internally as much as it did to the outside world. Throughout the second half of the 1990s, the advocacy against the approved history textbooks dealt with three major issues. First, the reason why the advocates argued against including the “comfort women” issue in the middle-school history textbook was because they were concerned that such textbooks could spread the self-denigrating views towards Japan’s own history among younger generations. They argued that the history textbooks were increasingly emphasizing Japan’s “dark past” as Asia’s aggressor and overlooking the sufferings the Japanese people endured during the wartime as well as Japan’s postwar achievements. Second, they were adamant about the wording of “*jugun*” or “in military service” as well as “coercion” to characterize the mobilization of women, to be separated from the term “so-called comfort women.” They argued that these terms are historically inaccurate since the government only relied on the testimonies of the victims when admitting the direct involvement of the military in mobilizing these women.²⁹⁾ Facing these criticisms, three major publishers, Tokyo Shoseki, Kyoiku

28) Shinzo Abe, Lower House Finance Committee 2nd division, 1997/05/27.

29) Tadashi Itagaki, Upper House Budgetary Committee, 1997/03/18.

Shuppan, and Teikoku Shoin, applied for the revisions of their textbooks in 1999 to change the term from “military comfort women” to “comfort women”, and Tokyo Shoseki additionally changed the wording from “forced” to “against one’s will”.³⁰⁾

Third, those who criticized these revisionist trends among the conservative Diet members often showed great concerns for Japan’s international credibility. Haruko Yoshikawa, an Upper House member from the Japan Communist Party, raised caution against 2001 history textbook review, which, among four out of seven textbooks that were then under review, did not include the issues of “comfort women,” and she claimed that this was against the promise “Japan made to the international community.”³¹⁾ An LDP member Hakubun Shimomura also claimed that Japan should carefully consider the criticisms by China and Korea, which could hinder Japan’s efforts “to strengthen the prosperity and peace of East Asia as well as to develop its own friendly relations with China on the basis of US-Japan cooperation.”³²⁾ Hideo Den, a leftist Upper House representative, expressed concerns that, North and South Korea’s bashing of Japan’s historical revisionism at UN Human Rights Commissions would only make it more difficult for Japan to build regional trust with surrounding states, let alone attain permanent seat in the UN Security Council.³³⁾

Throughout the period of “apology diplomacy” in the 1990s, the

30) Upper House General Affairs Committee, 2008/08/09.

31) Upper House General Affairs Committee, 2008/08/09.

32) Lower House Foreign Affairs Commission, 2001/04/04.

33) Upper House Investigation Committee on International Affairs, 2001/04/18.

historical reconciliation, including the issue of wartime ‘comfort women,’ was often discussed concurrently in the context of international contribution (*kokusaikoken*). However, just as the rhetoric of ‘UN-centered collective security’ became a mere stepping stone in order to pass the controversial security legislations, which, before long, only led to the strengthening of US-Japan security alliance, neither did the ‘apology diplomacy’ function to embody Japan’s vision of UN-centered international community. As the prospect of UN-centered regional order became quickly replaced by bipolar rivalry against rising China, the “comfort women” issue was reduced from international human rights issue to bilateral, historical controversies.

V. Conclusion

The early development of post-Cold War debates on Japan’s strategic identity allows us to understand how the issue of collective self-defense and apology diplomacy surrounding the comfort women issue in the 1990s formed the two sides of the same coin in Japan’s quest for its new role and place in the international community. The drastic changes in environmental structure brought by the end of the Cold War exposed Japan to enormous uncertainty as to how Japan could guarantee its national security. The issues of collective self-defense and apology diplomacy in the early 1990s are, as this article tried to illuminate, best understood in the context of these

structural changes in the regional environment, which essentially rewrote Japan's strategic interests to renew its external strategy.

One of the main implications of this article is that recent emphasis on PM Abe's "aberration" or "nationalist" turn in understanding the reignited controversy surrounding Japan's collective self-defense and 'comfort women' issues must be reevaluated. This article tries to illuminate Japan's vacillation between its UN-centered security posture and reliance on US-Japan alliance throughout the 1990s, and how its attempts to redefine national strategic identity within the international community were at the heart of these two issues that have come to symbolize Japan's struggles in the new regional order. While in the early 1990s UN-centered approach provided larger incentive to Japan to reconcile with the neighboring countries, the gradual move toward heavier reliance on the US-centered security vision lessened Japan's commitment to its earlier statements.

Put in another perspective, it is necessary to point out that the rationales that legitimized the internal changes concerning the two issues — the right of collective self-defense and 'comfort women' — rested upon the idea of UN-centered international system, not the US unipolarity which became the reality of the post-Cold War world. In a similar vein, Japan's 'normal country' debate was also molded out of such earlier expectation that the US-Japan alliance might no longer be enough to guarantee Japan's national security. To this day, Japan seems to be continuously pervaded by two conflicting rationales on how Japan should redefine itself in the aftermath of the Cold War. One stream believed that Japan faced the necessity of detaching itself

from the logic of the Cold War security arrangement under the US-Japan alliance and must search for a new framework in dealing with Asia as well as the UN-centered international structure. Recoiling from this idea was another stream of rationale, which focused on strengthening Japan's influence in Asia by upgrading Japan's status to an "equal" partner of the US within the framework of renewed bilateral security alliance.

In September 2015, the second Abe cabinet finally set forth the legal framework for the exercise of the right of collective self-defense for the first time since the 1950s. In the same year, the Abe cabinet also reached an agreement with Korea on how to 'finally and irreversibly' settle the issue of 'comfort women,' although the growing discontent in both countries and Abe's continuous revisionist agendas seem to be inviting more questions than answers. In a sense, the current situation resembles what happened in 1992: molding of political discourse without social construction. A close look at the parliamentary debates concerning the right of collective self-defense and comfort women issues in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War suggests that the 1990s was a 'missed opportunity' — and perhaps the same can be said for today.

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요약

일본의 미일동맹-유엔중심의 안보전략의 변용: 1990년대 일본의 탈냉전기 국가정체성 재건과정을 중심으로

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본 논문은 현재 일본의 집단적 자위권과 위안부합의를 중심으로 전개되고 있는 일본의 보통국가노선-역사적수정주의-우경화에 대한 논쟁을 과거 1990년대 일본의 탈냉전기 국가정체성 재건과정을 통해 재조명하고자 한다. 1990년대 일본 의회에서 논의된 정치엘리트간의 논쟁과정을 심층분석하여 1990년대 초기에 등장한 일본의 사죄외교(apology diplomacy)가 당시 탈냉전기란 새로운 외부환경에 대응하기 위한 일본의 전략적 국가정체성 및 국제사회에서의 지위를 확립하기 위한 과정이었음을 밝히고자 한다. 구체적으로, 일본은 1990년대 초기에 국제사회와 유엔을 매개로 한 일본의 새로운 위상과 국가정체성을 확립하고자 하였다. 따라서 집단적 자위권 및 위안부합의 문제에 대하여 평화주의적 노선을 택하였다. 하지만 1990년대 후반에는 일본이 점차 미국중심의 안보전략으로 회귀하면서 탈냉전기 초반의 국가정체성과 상충하게 되었다. 이렇게 미국중심과 유엔중심이란 두 축에서 변용된 일본의 안보전략은 1990년대 일본의 집단적 자위권 및 위안부 문제를 둘러싼 논쟁을 해석하는 주요한 틀이자, 일본의 탈냉전기 새로운 국가정체성 확립과정의 연장선상으로 이해할 수 있다.

주제어: 일본, 국가정체성, 집단적 자위권, 위안부, 탈냉전기