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The new East-West conflict? Japan and the Bush administration's 'New World Order'

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Summary Given the end of the Cold War, the future of the geopolitical relationship between the United States and Japan has been the subject of considerable speculation. This paper argues against theories which grandly proclaim a new east-west conflict in the form of either a future US-Japan alliance against Eurasia or a coming war between Japan and the US. Rather, the post-Cold War US-Japan relationship has seen the persistence of Cold War institutions, discourse and patterns of interaction. Since 1990 the relationship has been characterised by a tension between the Bush administration's aspiration to lead a 'New World Order', on the one hand, and, the US's need for Japanese financial involvement to do this, on the other.

Since 1989 the global political map has undergone a profound transformation. The collapse of the Cold War as a system of meaning in global politics has prompted intense speculation on possible future fault lines in world politics. One gathering point of this speculation has been the US-Japan relationship. Both states together account for almost 40 per cent of the world's GNP. The United States is the largest military power in the world while Japan, by some measures, is the third largest military power. US trade with the Asia-Pacific region now exceeds US \$300 billion annually which is more than one third larger than US trans-Atlantic trade (Solomon 1991a). The 1960 Mutual Security Treaty between the US and Japan is the geopolitical anchor of the whole Asia-Pacific region.

From a world-systems perspective, Wallerstein (1991) interprets the future of the US-Japan relationship in terms of an emergent Kondratieff A-phase long wave (between 1990-2000), the post-US hegemonic cycle and rising structural crisis in the modern world-system. He argues that Japan is steadily inching ahead of its rivals in the race for control of key technologies and that Japan's real competitor in the long run is less the United States than a revitalised Western Europe. He anticipates 'a US-Japan economic-political alliance, with the United States first as the senior partner, then as the junior partner' (Wallerstein 1991, 44). The cultural differences between the US and Japan are not, he suggests, a fundamental obstacle to a US-Japan alliance. His future east-west conflict pits a North American-Japan-China economic zone against a Western-Eurasian economic zone.

Precisely the opposite conclusions are drawn by Friedman and Lebard (1991) whose book title *The coming war with Japan* secured it best seller status in Japan. They argue that both the economies and strategic priorities of the US and Japan are in fundamental conflict. With the end of the Cold War, the United States, they assert, will turn its attention to economics and trade. The result will be a series of trade wars (with the US excluding Japan from the US market) which will eventually lead to a political rupture between both states. Japan will attempt to build up its own Pacific bloc and actively use its already powerful military to protect Japan's interests in this region. This will bring it

into direct military conflict with the United States and the result will be an east-west war between both states.

Though they reach different conclusions, the geopolitical speculations of Wallerstein (1991) and Friedman and Lebard (1991), are marked by a similar penchant for grand historical theorisation. Both perspectives maintain a detached aloofness from the empirical details of foreign policy practice, a methodological style that can also be found within political geography (Cohen 1991). Rarely are the particulars of a foreign policy relationship or foreign policy documents subjected to detailed empirical analysis. (In Cohen's case explanation is grounded not in actors and institutions but in metaphysical 'organismic developmental principles' which are supposedly innate to the nature of systems). A clear alternative to this form of sweeping geopolitical commentary is *critical geopolitics* that seeks to unravel the messy complexities of open-ended and historically dynamic geopolitical relationships (Dalby 1991). A critical geopolitics does not ignore the terms by which foreign policy relationships are understood but engages with the institutional and discursive forms of such relationships (Ó Tuathail 1992). In the case of the US-Japan relationship, this involves tracing how the implosion of Cold War discourse since 1989 has changed (if at all) the institutional structures and discursive expression of the relationship. Unravelling and deconstructing the textuality of foreign policy practice is not to refuse narrative or the possibility of explanation. Rather, there is a refusal of the possibility of detached, objective explanation, the type of aloof geopolitical commentary which assumes the separation of signification from 'the world' and ignores how power is produced in the representational practices that are foreign policy (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989).

This paper offers a brief, empirically based reading of the changing shape of the pivotal US-Japan geopolitical relationship. It seeks to document the current discursive terms by which the relationship is understood and explore the tensions within these terms which will be crucial in determining its future direction. The paper is divided into three sections which address, first, the Bush administration's 'New World Order', secondly, the situation of the Japanese state after the Cold War and thirdly, some disruptive forces which are likely to influence the future direction of the relationship.

The Bush administration's 'New World Order' and Japan

One can find no better illustration of the intertextuality of global politics (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989) than the phrase 'New World Order'. A phrase of long historical antecedents, it had been revitalised in recent times by Mikhail Gorbachev as part of his self-interested attempt to create favourable international conditions for his restructuring of the Soviet Union. However, the Bush administration hijacked the term and worked it into a comprehensive post-Cold War articulation of US foreign policy aspirations for world order in September 1991. While the implosion of the Cold War prodded the Bush administration towards a re-definition of global politics, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was the immediate stimulus for the grandiose re-write of meaning in global politics. Speaking to Congress while the US led coalition bombed targets in Iraq and Kuwait, President Bush argued that 'what is at stake is more than one small country. It is a big idea: a new world order where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind (*sic*)—peace and security, freedom, and the rule of law' (Bush 1991). The concept and the context of its articulation revealed two important aspects of the Bush presidency. First, the 'New World Order' was defined in terms of states and the discourse of sovereignty (and not the common humanitarian values appealed to by Gorbachev). As an exercise in the

writing of international political space (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992), the 'new world order' was a perpetuation of the traditional statist ways of inscribing the world. The only borders that mattered were state borders. Secondly, the concept was a reactive vision brought on by the sudden collapse of the Cold War as a meaningful discourse in global politics, and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The reactive pragmatic nature of US foreign policy formulation was a hallmark of the Bush presidency (Deibel 1991). The 'new world order' became the analytic by which the Bush administration could assimilate the collapse of the Cold War yet retain its deeply embedded faith in Cold War forms of reasoning and its representation of the 'United States' as an exceptional power within the international system. The 'new world order', therefore, was closer to a tactical modification of Cold War discourse than a new foreign policy vision which transcended Cold War practices.

The vision of a 'new world order' projected by the Bush administration had three organisational principles. The first was American ideological leadership which was justified by the 'unique responsibility' the US state had to bring freedom to the world. 'Americans', Bush noted in his State of the Union address of 1991, 'have a unique responsibility to do the hard work of freedom. As Americans, we know there are times when we must step forward and accept our responsibility to lead the world away from the dark chaos of dictators, towards a brighter promise of a better day' (Bush 1991).

The second organisational principle was co-operation with the Soviet Union in a revitalised UN Security Council. Bush's first significant articulation of the notion of the 'new world order' came after his visit to Helsinki where he and Soviet President Gorbachev issued a joint statement against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (Bush 1990). As became clear from the rhetoric used by the Bush administration to script its intervention in the Gulf the Bush administration's interpretative horizon was World War II (Luke 1991; Ó Tuathail 1993a). The post-Cold War era offered the possibility of securing the 'new world order' Franklin D Roosevelt envisaged with the permanent members of the UN as the world's 'policemen'.

The third organisational principle of the 'new world order' was the 'full participation' of the US' European and Asian allies in the creation of the American defined 'new world order'. In practical terms, this meant the re-casting and modernisation (not abolition) of the US' Cold War strategic alliances with Europe (NATO) and Japan (Mutual Security Treaty) to take account of a changed geopolitical environment. All of these alliances subordinated the military power of these allies to that of the United States. The flexible containment of Third World dictators and out-of-area power projection capabilities were to be the new strategic principles around which these alliances were to be organised (Luke 1991). Significant economic powers, like Japan and Germany, were expected to contribute economically to the maintenance of a military system which locked them into accepting American control over their own security.

The international coalition organised against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was paradigmatic of how the Bush administration saw the 'new world order' operating. The United States would take the lead in defining the ideological terms of the crisis, provide the core of the military force for intervention, and monopolise the key military decision-making positions in any international coalition. The Soviet Union and the other permanent members of the UN Security Council would co-operate in legitimating the intervention of the US led international coalition. Finally, the financial costs for the intervention would be paid by economically prosperous states like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Germany and others.

defense relationships which give it structure' (Solomon 1991b, 623). In keeping with the basic conservative inclinations of the Bush administration, he further stated that 'tomorrow's sources of aggression may be different from those of the Cold War era. But they will be no less threatening to our security. Tomorrow's nuclear threats will be from the Iraqs and North Korea of the world.' Third World pariah states were the new enemy. In a statement before the Senate on 30 October 1991 Solomon described what the end of the Cold War meant in Asia for US foreign policy:

As the overlay of US-Soviet competition has been removed from Asia, the region's diverse interests and concerns stand out in sharp relief. What had been a secondary aspect of our Cold War security presence is now evolving into the primary rationale for our defense engagement in the region: to provide geo-political balance, to be an honest broker, and to reassure against uncertainty (Solomon 1991c, 819).

The new rationale for the substantial US military presence in Japan, therefore, is to provide 'geopolitical balance', a euphemistic code word for maintaining its own dominance. Implicitly, at least, the US military now recognises that its 60,000 troop presence in Japan is, in part, to keep a check on Japanese power in the region. This position has received tacit support from members of ASEAN (Khamchoo 1991, 18-9). Mahubani (1992, 136) notes that the main purpose of the Mutual Security Treaty now is to 'restrain the nuclearization and militarization of Japan, consequently reassuring Japan's neighbors that it will remain peaceful.' This interpretation, however, is disingenuous since the US has historically encouraged the re-militarisation of Japan.

The Japanese state after the Cold War

Japan, as has been well documented, has been a major beneficiary of the Cold War and has become the leading geo-economic power in the modern world system (Johnson 1982). Geopolitically, however, the state has taken a very minimalist role in world affairs until recently. The Japanese Foreign Ministry is still tiny compared to the foreign policy institutions of other comparable states. Three factors account for this. First, Japan's security relationship with the United States has subordinated it to the geopolitical imperatives of the US state. Secondly, the Japanese state does not have a strong central executive and coordinating the development of a strong independent foreign policy has been seriously hampered by this fact (Van Wolferen 1989). Thirdly, the Japanese public is very ambivalent about a global geopolitical role for the Japanese state and has consistently opposed any measures to revise its 'peace constitution' which circumscribes the use of Japanese forces overseas (Khamchoo 1991; Yamaguchi 1992).

The reactive minimalism of the Japanese state in world affairs, however, has slowly been changing. In the 1980s Japan excluded the US from its ban on the export of military technology and since then both states have co-operated somewhat in developing new military technology. The extensive Japanese innards of many of the so-called 'American' weapons systems used in the Gulf war has been a source of some pride to certain Japanese nationalists (Isihara 1991). In the 1980s the Japanese state also began a concerted effort to increase its foreign aid and in June 1990 its absolute aid disbursements surpassed that of the United States (Orr 1991). The broader-based elements of this aid are the result of direct pressure brought to bear upon Japan by the United States to complement its own foreign aid program. Finally the LDP leadership

The course of the Gulf crisis and subsequent war, however, revealed certain tensions and contradictions between Bush administration's 'new world order' and the 'interests' of its ostensible allies like Japan. In effect, the Bush administration asked Japan for active financial support without granting the state any significant influence over the direction of the conflict. US-Japan relations suffered a series of setbacks during the Gulf crisis. From the Bush administration's perspective, the Japanese government of Toshiki Kaifu was unable to deliver on a promise to send Japanese non-combatant personnel to the Gulf beyond a few token mine-sweepers. The Japanese government was also perceived as slow to provide aid for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The result was a considerable rise in anti-Japanese sentiment within the US which remained even after the Japanese government pushed through measures providing US\$11 billion in financial support (plus US\$2 billion in aid for front-line states) when the war was over. From the Japanese government's perspective, its more moderate preference for economic sanctions and its geo-economic arguments on oil were ignored. The US appeared to act unilaterally and hastily. In order to raise the US\$13 billion Japan eventually contributed, the Japanese government had to raise domestic taxes. Yet despite the size of its contribution, the largest of any state (besides those directly affected like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait), the Japanese government was left outside the consultation loop on the strategy and timing of the war. Japanese officials complained of 'taxation without representation.'

The US-Japan difficulties during the Gulf crisis illustrate the consequences of the contradiction within post-Cold War US foreign policy between the need to achieve greater burden-sharing and the desire to maintain the US' superior position of power over its allies. The course of US-Japan relations beyond the Gulf war reflect this contradiction. In January 1991, James Baker signed a new five year agreement on the expenses of maintaining US forces in Japan which would bring the Japanese contribution to about 50 per cent of the total cost of stationing US forces in Japan (Baker 1991). The US, however, refused to let the Japanese pay all non-salary costs because, as Richard Solomon (Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs) explained, this 'could limit our operational flexibility.' If the government of Japan is to pay for US operations, he argued, it 'would naturally want some say in what those operations should be. I doubt that our commanders in the field desire this kind of arrangement' (Solomon 1991a, 385). The ability of US commanders to unilaterally exercise power as they saw fit had to be maintained.

In January 1992, President Bush visited Tokyo and together with Prime Minister Miyazawa proclaimed the 'Tokyo Declaration' which acknowledged the growing global influence of Japan and set out ways in which it can work with the United States in addressing both world problems and regional crises. Bush administration officials re-articulated the US policy position (used since Nixon) that the US 'in principle' supports the right of Japan to a permanent seat on the UN (Japan is currently a temporary member and thus does not have a veto). However, the Bush administration did not back such a change in the immediate term. Bush termed permanent Japanese membership 'extraordinary difficult' while US officials were reported as telling Tokyo it should look on the issue as a '5 or 10 year' project (Friedman 1992a).

As in Europe the Bush administration sought to justify the perpetuation of its Cold War alliances in the Pacific in new terms (the US currently has about 130,000 military personnel deployed in Asia, mostly in Japan, South Korea and the Philippines) (Bosworth 1992, 116). Solomon noted in a speech on 6 August 1991 in Auckland, New Zealand, that 'while the form of our security engagement will adjust to new realities, I can say unequivocally that we intend to retain the substance of this role and the bilateral

of the Japanese state have committed themselves to facilitating Japanese participation in UN peacekeeping activities. The domestic legislation needed to secure this, however, ran into concerted domestic opposition. The effort by the Miyazawa administration in late 1991 failed because of an internal power struggle within the LDP party. However, legislation was eventually passed in June 1992 allowing Japanese soldiers to join United Nations troops in peacekeeping operations abroad. A Japanese diplomat now heads the UN peacekeeping mission in Cambodia and, in September 1992, Japanese soldiers began arriving in Cambodia to serve as part of the UN mission.

Despite a traditionally subservient role, the Japanese state, with US encouragement, now appears to be willing to take on greater degrees of international responsibility. While certain elements within Japan argue for a more nationalist and self-assertive foreign policy for Japan, the dominant foreign policy orientation is for a more involved, but still subordinate, geo-economically oriented Japan. Khamchoo (1991, 21) argues that Japan's leaders have steadily resisted any policies that might have negative repercussions on national economic pursuits. Eiichi Nakao, the Japanese Minister of International Trade and Industry, expressed what is still the official Japanese view when he stated that the 'standard bearer of world peace and the free-trade system can be none other than the United States' (Nakao 1991).

The future of the US-Japan geopolitical relationship

At the present conjuncture the likely future of the geopolitical relationship between the US and Japan is a continuation of the current division of labour between both states. The United States would remain the world's pre-eminent geopolitical and military power with Japan complementing its leadership through its international aid programme and its involvement in international organisations like the United Nations and Group of Seven. In order for this division of labour to succeed, however, a number of disruptive forces need to be held in check, particularly in the United States.

The first of these is the growing economic nationalism in both states. Geo-economic discourses on the US-Japan relationship are particularly resurgent in the US as it labours through its domestic recession (Morley and Robins 1992; O Tuathail 1993b). 'America first' sentiments made their mark on the US presidential election campaign of 1992 even though neither Clinton nor Bush are sympathetic to 'revisionist' views of Japan. Vice-presidential candidate Al Gore charged that the Bush administration is 'soft on Japan' and has senior advisors who are on the pay-roll of Japanese auto companies (Jenkins 1992). Ross Perot's unusual campaign did give voice to 'revisionist' views of Japan (and those 'agents of influence' who worked for it in the US) as a threat. He also declared that he wanted to change security arrangements in the Pacific (Perot 1992, 102-3). The persistence of the US trade deficit with Japan, which increased to US \$43.4 billion with Japan in 1991 while dropping with the rest of the world, has politicised the US economic relationship with Japan in ways which undermine the mutual cooperation necessary to sustain the geopolitical division of labour (*Economist* 1992).

Frustration with US leadership is growing within policy circles in Japan. Mahbubani (1992, 127) notes that Japanese security planners did not even consider the possibility of a rupture in the US-Japanese security relationship during the Cold War but now they do. Bosworth (1992, 127) suggests that America's moral authority is under threat in Asia 'not so much for anything it is doing in Asia but for what Asians perceive America is doing to itself.' These sentiments could become more significant given the continued failure of the US state to address its budget deficit and arrest domestic decline.

In order for the current US-Japan division of labour to remain as it is, the militaristic ambitions of certain groups in both states will also need to be checked. Yamaguchi (1992, 168) argues that the Japanese Self Defense Forces are the only armed forces among those of the developed nations that remain uninfluenced by the end of the Cold War: 'They went on expanding all through the 1980s in the shadow of the Soviet threat, and they continue to strengthen their armaments even now, after the Soviet threat has evaporated.' In the United States, Cold War institutions, dispositions and proclivities persist. The US military has long been used to relative unilateralism in its affairs and the March 1992 leak of a secret Pentagon briefing paper on US military planning in the coming decade suggests that influential forces within this institution, at least, wishes to preserve that unilateralism. The leaked Defense Planning Guidance draft argues for a strategy to protect the US's position as the 'sole superpower' by containing the emergence of 'regional competitors' like Russia, Germany, and Japan. This would necessitate the maintenance of a large military establishment by the United States and the active subordination of the US's erstwhile allies. The draft notes that the US must 'remain sensitive to the potentially destabilizing effects' in East Asia if American allies there, 'particularly Japan but also possibly Korea' take on enhanced roles as regional powers (Tyler 1992a). 'We must maintain our status as a military power of the first magnitude in the area. This will enable the US to continue to contribute to regional security and stability by acting as a balancing force and prevent emergence of a vacuum or a regional hegemon' (excerpts reprinted in *New York Times*, 8 March 1992). The draft re-iterates the Cold War view that it is 'in everybody's interest' to have the nuclear protection of Japan come from the United States, not Japan (Tyler 1992b).

The discourse of the leaked Defense Planning Guidance draft reveals the persistence of Cold War geopolitical reasoning in certain circles within the US national security state (Dalby 1992). As significant, however, was the fact that the leaked draft was largely repudiated once it became public (Tyler 1992b). The discourse of Cold War geopolitics, a discourse that (among other things) writes international political space in terms of physics (balance, equilibrium, unipolar, multipolar, vacuum, stability, etc.), no longer commands the consensus it once did in US political life. Emergent geo-economic representations of security have the potential to transform the institutions of the Cold War state in the US. President Clinton, for example, has promised to create an Economic Security Council (modelled after the National Security Council) dedicated to improving the competitiveness of the US state (a problematic entity given the globalisation of the 1980s). He has also called for the establishment of a civilian version of the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) which currently funds high technology research with military applications.

US relations with Japan are currently in a period of transition and drift (Friedman 1992b; Hinata 1992; Mahbubani 1992). Emergent geo-economic discourses of security battle residual Cold War geopolitical discourses of security within the institutions of the US state. The Japanese state too is often divided between geo-economic and geo-political institutions (MITI versus the Foreign Ministry; O Tuathail 1992). In certain cases, geopolitical arguments surprisingly dominate geo-economic interests. Relations with Russia, for example, are still hindered by the issue of the Kurile islands. The future direction of the US-Japan relationship will be determined by the outcome of these domestic battles over the writing of security, national interest and national identity in a post-Cold War world in both states. For the moment, this pivotal geopolitical relationship continues to be shaped by institutional and discursive residuals of the Cold War. It is the open future of these domestic discursive struggles and not the abstract working

out of 'organismic developmental principles' (Cohen 1991), Kondratieff waves and hegemonic cycles (Wallerstein 1991), or inevitable logics of conflict (Friedman and Lebard 1991) that will determine the future of US-Japan relations.

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