

Japanese Nationalism: Response to Changing Regional and International Environment*

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'Growing Japanese Nationalism' has become a subject of intense debate during the last one decade, in particular after revision of the history textbooks, formal recognition of the 'Kimigayo' anthem which reminds one of Japanese militaristic past, and initiatives taken by the Japanese Government to amend the pacifist Constitution. An attempt is made in this study to compare Japanese nationalism prevalent in the pre-World War II period and the type of nationalism emerging in Japan in recent years. Both the nationalisms are qualitatively different. 'Aggressive and militant' nationalism of the pre-World War II period was a response to the environment existing during that period when a large part of the world was colonised by the advanced western countries including China, where each power had its interests and own spheres of influence. Meiji leaders were determined that their country should not suffer the same fate as their neighbour. It was with this objective that the Japanese leadership sought to instil nationalism in the minds of the common people so as to extract maximum devotion and support from them for their expansionist foreign policy. On the other hand today nationalism in Japan is basically geared towards seeing that it occupies an important position in world affairs which are commensurate with its being the second largest economy and a major contributor to multilateral organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and a major provider of developmental aid and foreign direct investments (FDI). In simple words it wants to be a 'normal' country and not just a follower of the US. It is unlikely that Japanese nationalism will tread the militaristic path as in the pre-War period. This is mainly because the international and the regional environment which exists today is drastically different from the pre-War period. China is no more a weak power and other developing countries which were colonised are emerging powers. Moreover, a peaceful environment is necessary for its economy to prosper. Besides democracy has come to stay in Japan and there are equally assertive groups which strongly oppose any stand taken by the government which may lead to the revival of militarism in Japan.

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Since the early 1980s, the revival of Japanese nationalism has been a subject of considerable debate. Japan's close neighbours China and South Korea in particular have been more concerned and vocal about the rise of nationalism in Japan. This concern and fear was ignited by the revision of history textbooks in the early 1980s in which sections on Japan's aggression in China during the pre-World War II period were considerably toned down. After 1978, when China adopted its market reforms, several agreements were concluded to strengthen relations and enhance economic cooperation between the two countries. Japan offered aid for several large-scale projects and development of infrastructure. Volume of trade between the two countries also increased rapidly. However, deepening economic relations did not translate into warm political relations. In the 1980s there were a number of anti Japanese demonstrations in China. Japan's growing economic presence was viewed as an attempt to dominate China once again, only this time it was through economic means. There was a general feeling that Japan was using its economic resources to regain a dominant position in the region and at the same time making efforts to downplay its wartime atrocities in China, the Korean peninsula and some of the Southeast Asian countries.

Consequently apprehensions about 'growing Japanese nationalism' are basically limited to the East Asian countries. However, discussion on this issue is more widespread due to several controversial actions taken and statements made by Japanese leaders and a number of initiatives taken by Japan's ruling party. These include the amendment of the Constitution so as to enable it to have its own military which has been interpreted by several countries as part of Japanese aspirations to dominate the region as in the pre-War period. Japan, on the other hand, having been totally defeated in the War and having experienced the horrors of the atom bomb according to some analyses is not inclined towards military power. Even today, in spite of Japan's efforts to introduce major changes in its domestic and foreign policy which clearly point towards its intention of playing an assertive role in international affairs and promoting a feeling of nationalism among the Japanese people, the possibility of its becoming a militarily aggressive power seems to be quite remote. If this is so then why is there so much fear of 'growing nationalism' in Japan. Is Japanese nationalism a threat to peace and security of the region and the world? To address these queries for the purpose of this article, it is important to define nationalism. Nationalism in simple terms can be defined as shared experience of culture, traditions and values by a people living in a particular geographic region. It does not necessarily imply that it considers other cultures as inferior. It also does not connote the aspiration to dominate other countries militarily or culturally. Though patriotism is often used interchangeably with nationalism its meaning is a little different from that of nationalism. Patriotism implies that one's own country is superior to other countries. There is a feeling of superiority over others both militarily and culturally. The definition of nationalism for the Japanese today has undergone a drastic change from what it was in the pre-War period.

NATIONALISM IN JAPAN IN THE PRE-WAR PERIOD

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan set out on the path of overall modernisation. It was keen to catch up fast with the advanced western world. During the closing years of the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), the Japanese feudal system, which was insulated from the outside world for almost 250 years, was not strong enough to resist the advanced western countries and had to conclude unequal treaties with several of them. Renowned Japanese scholars of that era like Yoshida Shoin, Fukuzawa Yukichi and others were well versed in world affairs and in particular about the conditions in their neighbouring country China. They realised that since China was a weak country it was easily exploited by various western countries with each of them having its own spheres of influence there. Japan's ruling elite, acutely aware of this fact, were determined that their country should not suffer the same fate as their neighbour. It was clear to them that to attain a position in the world, equal if not superior to the western countries, and to avoid subjugation by the western countries, Japan would have to strengthen its economy and army at a rapid pace. Japan had to utilise all the resources it had at its disposal to achieve its goal. Almost totally devoid of natural resources, it was important for Japan to exploit the other advantages which it possessed. An obedient, devoted and hard working labour class was perceived as an intangible asset which could make an invaluable contribution to the modernisation process. The task of instilling these values in the heart of the common man was somewhat easy considering that during the 250 years of Tokugawa rule some of these values were well-inculcated into the character of the Japanese people.

Tokugawa rulers patronised neo-Confucianism (as interpreted, elaborated and synthesised by Chinese scholar Chu Hsi [1130–1200]) which emphasised a well-organised hierarchal society. Each individual's place in society was determined and accordingly he was expected to fulfil his obligation with diligence, humility and obedience. Respect for superiors, obedience and filial piety were central to the teaching of Confucianism. Promoting Confucianism, the Tokugawa house realised, was an effective way to ensure the continuance of its own rule. Consequently, teaching Confucian ethics became the primary purpose of education that was imparted to the samurai class which assisted the Tokugawa rulers in administering the country. The common man directly or indirectly was either influenced or compelled by the rulers and superiors to observe the same values and etiquette followed by them. Besides education, several other methods were evolved by Tokugawa rulers to extract obedience and subservience from their subjects. Under the *Sankin Kotai* system (alternative attendance), *daimyos* (feudal lords) had to spend six months in Yedo and in their absence their families were required to stay in Yedo. Also known as the hostage system, this was fundamental to the entire mechanism of control. *Daimyos* were obliged to take permission before constructing bridges and building roads etc. This was intended to

tighten the ruler's control over the *daimyos* and to prevent them from forming a united front against the ruling house. Christianity which talked about equality among human beings was considered as subversive and banned. Implementing such policies enabled the Tokugawa rulers to rule over the country for two and half centuries. Nevertheless it was impossible with the passage of time to contain the social, political and economic changes taking place internally which demanded a change in the political and social structure existing in the country. Intellectually the Tokugawa period was very vibrant. Gradually several schools of thought such as the Kokugaku, Mitogaku, Yogaku and Kangaku emerged which posed a challenge to the rule of the Tokugawa house. The Shogun was considered as one who had usurped the Emperor. The business community, placed the lowest in the social hierarchy, increasingly became disgruntled. Even though they were rich and the elite were increasingly becoming indebted to them, their status in society did not improve. The samurai class, dependant on the Tokugawa house for their stipend, though placed highest in the social order were gradually becoming impoverished, as the financial situation of the Tokugawa rulers worsened due to lavish living, natural disasters etc. The stipend of the lower samurai in particular, was further reduced or was even discontinued, making them *ronins* (wayward). The peasant class inspite of being positioned well in the social hierarchy, was the most exploited with a large percentage of them living in absolute penury. Even the *Kuge*, a section of the aristocracy of the Imperial House distinct from the feudal aristocracy *daimyos*, were especially unhappy with the treatment given to them by the Shogun. Their economic condition deteriorated along with the privileged position they enjoyed in the earlier period. With almost all the sections of society nurturing a grievance against the *shogunate*, the demand for opening Japan to western trade and learning gained momentum by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Change was inevitable—it only needed a push, which was provided by Commodore M.C. Perry. After repeated failed efforts made by western countries to persuade Japan to open its doors and allow them to have access to their ports, finally in 1853 the US dispatched a quarter of its navy under the command of Commodore Perry who was successful in signing a treaty in 1854 which granted US ships access to Japanese ports. Japan had no alternative but to submit to Perry's ships which were equipped with advanced artillery and cannons. In 1858, Townsend Harris who according to the agreement was permitted to stay in Japan as the American Consul, managed to conclude a full-fledged trade treaty. Soon other western countries entered into similar treaties which though unequal, could not be resisted by Japan considering its weak economy and lack of military preparedness.

In 1858 the feudal system came to an end and power was restored to Emperor Meiji. Meiji leaders initiated a range of social, political and economic reforms with the objective of modernising Japan. The feudal class structure was dismantled, as a result of which many of the old values and behaviour patterns also underwent a change which was inevitable due to the abolition of the class structure and new

found freedom of expression by the lower strata of the society. If Japan was to expedite its modernisation programme and catch up with the western countries, then it would have to mobilise and regiment the working class. Education was utilised as an effective medium to achieve this purpose. A statement made by the then Education Minister Takayoshi Kido clearly states the relationship between nationalism and education. He stated: 'It is upon the people that the state stands, while it is for the people's happiness that the state exists. It follows from this that everything that is done by the Government should be for the eventual benefit of the people. Only when the people grow rich through the exercise of their wisdom and become strong by increasing their power under the protection of the government can the state expect to have its rights established' (Aso Makoto and Amano Ikuo 1972: 9). Fukuzawa Yukichi, a noted and influential thinker of the Meiji period, was of the opinion that a certain specific situation makes man pursue a certain specific objective and value judgment should be made in relation to this objective. According to Fukuzawa this specific situation at that point of time was that Japan was a poor and small country which had been 'dragged out' into this western type international community. It was an era when western powers were expanding their power all over the world. It was an era when the 'stronger preyed over the weaker' (ibid. p. 15). This view was shared by a large section of the influential leaders. Japanese ruling class consciously linked education of the people to Japan becoming an economically and militarily strong country, to occupy an important position in the international community which during that period implied mainly the 'western world'. Mori Arinori, (Education Minister 1882–89) an educationist whose ideas had a profound influence on the education system was clear that the main objective of education was to make Japan a rich and strong country and to maintain its national polity. 'Moral education' was given priority in the school curriculum.

During the 1930s and early 1940s especially, as Japan aggressively pursued its expansionist policy in the neighbouring Asian countries, the 'moral' content in the school curriculum increased enormously. Anti-establishment opinions and movements were contained by strictly implementing several legislations such as the peace preservation laws. Pride in Confucian ethics, the view that Japan was entrusted the task of liberating the Asian countries from western powers only to be ruled by Japan, were ideas which were deeply instilled into the minds of the common Japanese. The 1930s till the end of the war is referred to as a period of the rise of 'ultra nationalism' in Japan. Japanese nationalism is linked with the aggressive and harsh rule over Korea which it had annexed in 1910, regions in China, and some of the countries of Southeast Asia. However, Japan's extreme nationalism during the pre-War period was to a large extent a response to the strong western countries who had colonised a large part of the world. There were only two alternatives for the ruling elite to choose from—to either accept the superiority of the western countries or else to compete with them by making their country strong. Japan chose the latter. Thus Japan's nationalism in the pre-War period has to be perceived from this point of view.

POST-WORLD WAR II

After being totally defeated in the war and the experience of being occupied by Allied powers, a demoralised Japan after regaining its sovereignty in 1952, focused primarily on rebuilding its war-torn economy. For its security it depended on the United States with whom it signed the Mutual Security Treaty in 1952. Surrender, defeat and the experience of acute suffering, hunger, disaster and shock from the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had taught the Japanese a lesson which a large section of the society has still not forgotten. It was clear to the Japanese that adopting an aggressive and militaristic path was not the proper one to achieve its foreign policy and economic objectives. A majority of the Japanese supported the pacifist Constitution which included Article 9, preventing Japan from resorting to war to solve international problems. Though the 'ultranationalist' leaders who were purged during the occupation period or had gone underground, surfaced after 1952 and made an attempt to revert to the 'education system' prevalent in the pre-War period, the democratic forces had taken root and there was no going back.

Japan's economy grew at a rapid pace during the 1950s and 1960s. It had emerged as a major economic power. The first major incident which somewhat aroused Japanese nationalism was the Nixon shock of 1972. The Japanese felt betrayed by the US, their close ally. Japan, however, did not opt for a belligerent foreign policy; instead it made more efforts to strengthen ties with Southeast Asian countries. In 1978 Japan and China signed a peace treaty and agreements were concluded which aimed at enhanced economic ties. The Official Development Assistance (ODA) which so far was used mainly to serve Japan's economic requirement, was now also used as an important tool to achieve various other foreign policy objectives such as cementing ties with neighbouring countries. In fact during the 1980s the environment was one of promotion of 'internalisation' of Japan.

NATIONALISM IN JAPAN GAINS MOMENTUM

It is only after Junichiro Koizumi became Prime Minister in 2001 that the discussion on 'Rising Nationalism' in Japan has become a subject of heated debate. Koizumi brought with him a new style of political leadership and the political discourse which accompanied it had not been heard in Japan earlier. He provided a leadership which at least overtly appeared to be strong and assertive. Koizumi presented himself as a Prime Minister who was determined to implement his policies and decisions even in the face of severe criticism both from within the country and without. During his tenure, of all his actions and policies, one of the most controversial was his regular visits to the Yasukuni shrine where the Class A war convicted leaders are enshrined along with others. His visits to the shrine evoked strong reaction from China and South Korea. However, he did not heed the protests and continued with his visits

annually. His visits raised numerous questions about Japan's changing perception of its pre-War actions in the region. He strongly reacted to the objections to his visits. He declared his visits were a 'matter of the heart' and that he did not need anyone's permission to visit the shrine. Opponents at home criticised his visits to the shrine that led to a steep deterioration in relations with China which had emerged as Japan's major economic partner. Koizumi, however, was relentless. If there was external criticism, there was also tremendous domestic admiration for their leader who was not cowed down by opposition. In April 2005 widespread violent anti-Japanese demonstrations were held in China to denounce Japan's wartime atrocities and to oppose its bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. An internet petition against Japan's aspiration for a permanent Security Council seat attracted 22 millions signatures from the region. A similar demonstration of China's hatred for Japan was displayed in 2004 when the Chinese soccer team lost to the Japanese team (Varma 2006). On these issues, similar kind of opposition was seen in South Korea too. These violent anti-Japanese feelings contributed to whipping up nationalistic feelings among the Japanese. The general feeling was that even though these countries have been important beneficiaries of Japan's ODA and Japan had made efforts to establish cordial relations with them, still there was no appreciation forthcoming from them. China for long was the topmost recipient of Japanese ODA. Japan made several efforts to assure China that it was a reliable friend. Most visible were efforts made by Japan in the post Tiananmen square incident of 1989 where student protest was ruthlessly crushed by the Chinese authorities. Most western powers condemned China for this and economic sanctions were levied against it. Though Japan was party to these decisions it was also the first to discontinue the sanctions and also made efforts to persuade the western powers to do the same and not 'isolate' China. Top Japanese leaders were among the first to visit China. The most significant step was the visit of the Japanese Emperor to China in October 1992, the first ever visit by a Japanese Emperor to China (Varma 1993). So such a reaction came as a shock and somewhat angered the common Japanese. From public opinion polls held in recent times it is clear that the warm feelings of the Japanese towards South Korea and China have declined drastically after the anti-Japanese demonstrations in April 2005. This is in spite of the fact that cultural and economic ties are deepening between Japan and South Korea and China. China is Japan's largest trading partner replacing the US. Annually more than four million people travel between Japan and China. Chinese, after English, is the most popular language studied in Japan. In China as well, study of Japanese language is very popular. Koizumi's landslide victory in the snap polls of 2005 is a testimony of his domestic popularity and the support for his policies though his style of politics undoubtedly contributed to arousing Japanese nationalist sentiments.

The political agenda of Koizumi's successor, Shinzo Abe who became Prime Minister in September 2006 seems to be similar to that of Koizumi. His attitude and observations about the pre-War history is also indicative of his belief in not being too

repentant about Japan's pre-War aggressive expansionist policies in neighbouring countries. In his policy speech in the Diet he has pledged to take a more assertive diplomatic posture. Japan also aims to strongly pursue a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. The first step towards energising foreign policy is that instead of relying on the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs entirely for foreign policy-making, for the first time the Prime Minister has appointed advisors for national and foreign affairs. Abe's victory and the support he has received at home has aroused fear about rising Japanese nationalist sentiments not only in China and South Korea but also in western countries.

However, it is also obvious that the intention of the new Japanese leadership including Abe, is probably not to revert to the pre-War type of militarist nationalism but that Japan should play a prominent role in international affairs. The aim is to present Japan as a nation which is 'independent' and determined to take its own decisions and which is not dictated or cowed down by any other outside power. In striving for this objective, Abe does not wish to spoil relations with any other country including China and South Korea. Japanese leaders' intent was evidenced by the fact that within two weeks after becoming Prime Minister Abe paid an official visit to China and South Korea with whom relations had been severely damaged. In their meeting on 8 October 2006, leaders of the two countries agreed to cooperate on a variety of issues ranging from economic, energy, environment and security to culture. At the same time, though he did not categorically state whether he will refrain from visiting the Yasukuni shrine in future, he explained to the Chinese leaders that the issue will be dealt 'appropriately'. Most important is that the two leaders agreed to start a joint study on history before the end of the year (*Japan Times* 9 October 2006). The seriousness which he attached to his visits to these countries is clear from the fact that he made an attempt to prepare favourable ground before his visit by accepting the historic 1995 statement made by the then Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi, apologising for the suffering caused in Asia during the war.

As stated in his policy speech to the Diet, Abe's vision is to make Japan 'a beautiful country'. 'A beautiful country' according to him implies restoring Japanese pride in their own culture, values, tradition, history and nature which has weakened during the last sixty years. This does not mean that the Japanese have become arrogant and are hostile to other cultures and consider other cultures as inferior to that of the Japanese. This is demonstrated by the fact that South Korean television serials and Korean actors are very popular in Japan. In 2002 both Japan and South Korea co-hosted the Soccer World Cup. In fact in this age of globalisation it is not possible to shut the doors to the outside world as was possible during the Tokugawa period. More and more Japanese are travelling abroad and interacting with people belonging to different cultures, having different values and traditions. In fact, most Japanese believe and do not support war as a solution to any issue. Many argue that Japan's defence budget is limited to only one per cent of the GDP whereas in the pre-War period while planning the national budget priority was given to strengthening the

army and the navy. The army and naval officials enjoyed veto power in Cabinet which enabled them to control the political forces in the country. However, at present there is no full-fledged Defence Ministry and if one is created in the future, it may not be able to influence and control the government in the manner it was possible for the military to do so during the pre-War period.

A possible reason as to why talk about Japanese nationalism is more widespread now than it was earlier is that while in the decades immediately after the war nationalistic sentiments were suppressed or restrained due to the recognition by Japan of its harsh expansionist policy especially in East Asia, in the first half of the twentieth century, the new generation of Japanese leaders and public who have been born in post-War Japan including the present Prime Minister Shinzo Abe are not burdened with the pre-War guilt. The present generation of Japanese feel that instead of continuing as they have done for the last sixty years—that is, be apologetic about the war and be concerned about the sensibilities of the neighbouring countries—it is time to think about Japanese sensibilities as well. There is an urge to see Japan play an independent and assertive role in the region and the world.

The 'neo conservatives' argue that with increasing globalisation, Japan's business culture and work ethics is undergoing a change which greatly contributed to Japan becoming an economic power. Instilling nationalism in the Japanese people is not necessarily to acquire a belligerent posture in foreign affairs but is directed towards regaining its economic strength and instilling confidence in the Japanese people. With China rising, Japan visualises that the power balance in East Asia is undergoing a change. It has to change its strategy so that it is not overshadowed by China or any other country in the region. Japan aspires to negotiate with China and the other countries in the region with certain amount of assertiveness and confidence. If there are areas of conflict between Japan and China there are also a number of areas—trade, investments and exploration of oil—in which they both need to cooperate and compromise.

Japan's apprehension is that while it continues to pursue a pacifist foreign policy, China's military might is growing and so is the nuclear threat from North Korea. Japan increasingly believes that it can no longer afford to be pacifist. Though the US is and will continue to be the main factor in Japan's foreign policy it is also clear to the leaders that Japan cannot totally depend on the US for its security or follow US guidelines in foreign policy decision-making. Often Japan is not taken seriously in international negotiations as it is considered to be a mere 'satellite' of the US. A recent comment made by North Korea, though very harsh, is representative of a view which is held about Japan. On 4 November 2006 the North Korean Foreign Ministry stated that since Japan had refused to recognise North Korea as a nuclear weapons state it need not attend the six party nuclear talks. The statement further said: 'There is no need for Japan to participate in [the talks] as a local delegate because it is no more than a state of the United States and it is enough for Tokyo just to be informed of the results of the talks by Washington,' (*The Times of India* 2006).

Since the end of the Cold War in particular, Japan has often felt apprehensive about being 'abandoned' by the US. Japan was very disappointed at not having received much appreciation for its contribution of \$15 billion towards the Gulf War (1991–92). More recently considering the major problems confronting the US in Iraq, Japan's concern about its overdependence on the US for its protection in case of attack from another country, has increased. As an economically developed country, Japan looks upon with envy and concern that even developing countries like India, Pakistan and North Korea enjoy a certain amount of recognition in international affairs since they possess nuclear capabilities. China is regarded as a major power not just for its growing economy but also because it is a nuclear power and has a huge army. It is important, hence, to amend the pacifist Constitution which will enable Japan to be responsible for protecting itself from external threats. A bill has been introduced in the Diet to have a full-fledged Defence Ministry instead of just a Self Defence Agency.

Though the Japanese leadership is keen to amend the Constitution, it can also be argued that Japan will not acquire the same ambition of expanding its territory and dominating the region. Lessons of pursuing an expansionist policy abroad and subsequent defeat and destruction in World War II have been learnt well. Japan, in the post-War period has focused on building its economy which can be strengthened and sustained not by an aggressive policy but by contributing to the peace and stability of the region and the world and by maintaining and strengthening its ties with the various countries of the world. In Japan the 'new thinking' is that though Japan for the last sixty years has followed a pacifist foreign policy and made significant contributions to the UN and other multilateral agencies which play an important role in resolving problems confronting the world, it has not been sufficiently recognised for its contribution. One of the factors posing an obstacle to Japan being seriously considered for the permanent seat in the UN, is its close security ties with the US.

CONCLUSION

Just as power has been described as 'hard' and 'soft' power, similarly nationalism can be described as 'hard' and 'soft'. Countries like the US are considered 'hard' powers since they possess both economic and military might whereas Japan has been referred to as a 'soft' power since it is only an economic might and is a major source of ODA and FDI to developing countries, but has no military prowess. Providing economic and technical assistance is not sufficient to acquire a prominent role in international affairs. It is also not always an effective tool to mend or strengthen ties with countries as is evident in the case of Japan's relations with China. Japanese nationalism which prevailed during the pre-War period can be referred to as 'hard' since it was aggressive, militaristic, and the Japanese people were not only proud of

their traditions, culture and the purity of their race but also believed that they were superior and destined to rule over the Asians. However, the kind of nationalism that is emerging in Japan since the last one decade in particular is 'soft' because it does not seem to nurture the ambition of unilaterally attacking any country or imposing its culture on other countries. The Nationalism emerging in Japan is basically geared towards seeing that Japan occupies an important place in the world community which is commensurate with the status of the world's second largest economy and a major contributor to international organisations such as the UN, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Restoring pride in Japanese traditions and virtue is the main goal, which to a great extent was responsible for Japan's economic success story.

Another important factor which needs to be taken into consideration while discussing 'rising nationalism' in Japan is that 'democracy' which has gained a certain amount of maturity over the decades and freedom of press and expression are here to stay. Unlike in the pre-War period when many legislations were adopted by the government to suppress criticism, today in Japan there are several diverse opinions on various issues which are expressed fearlessly. If there is a section which favours the rise of nationalism there is an equally strong section which will oppose the rise of a 'militarist' or 'aggressive' type of nationalism. An example of the divided opinion in Japan is the formal recognition in 1999 of the Rising Sun emblem and the 'Kimigayo' anthem (which calls for the reign of the Emperor to continue for a thousand years, which is often regarded as the symbol of Emperor worship and Japanese militarism of the 1930s and 1940s). Passing of this bill produced a strong reaction from the East Asian countries and within Japan also there was opposition to the passage of this bill. There were demonstrations in front of the Diet by students, teachers and the opposition parties. On 21 September 2006 the Tokyo District court ordered the Metropolitan Government to pay 12.03 million Yen or 30,000 Yen each to 401 teachers who objected to the city directive making it obligatory for them to sing the national anthem at school ceremonies (*Japan Times* 22 September 2006). Teachers have 'no obligation' to sing "Kimigayo" while facing the national flag. Another example of Japanese citizens themselves being opposed to the pre-War type of nationalism was exemplified by the uproar created when former Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro in his address to a gathering of lawmakers belonging to the Shinto Seiji Renmei, a political group of the association of Shinto shrines made a statement to the effect that Japan is a 'divine nation centering on the Emperor'. He had to face strong criticism not only from some citizens groups and from the opposition but also from some members of his own cabinet. Finally the Prime Minister had to apologise before the Diet's Upper House plenary session even though the censure motion introduced against him in the Upper House was defeated (*Japan Times* 18 May 2000).

A member of the Japanese Diet, Koichi Kato, has put Japan's ambitions probably in the right perspective when he says, 'The endeavor today is to find the genuine identity of this country. For decades we thought this lay in economic achievement—in catching up to America. But we've done that now. We're affluent. So for the past twenty years

we've been soul searching—looking for something which we should aspire next' (Patrick L. Smith 2006). In simpler words, Japan is trying to only become a 'normal' country with a proactive foreign policy.

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