

# Adopt a New Pacifism as Japan's National Policy

By YUSHITA Hiroyuki

May 3 is the Constitution Memorial Day in Japan, commemorating the day on which the present Constitution of Japan came into effect. Results of public opinion polls published on that day and other related media coverage provoked many thoughts in me. Constitution per se must be so interpreted as to be in line with the times and in the light of the changing circumstances that have evolved since its enforcement. Indeed, changes in public opinion on the Constitution are truly reflected in the poll results. It is important to defend what is to be defended and to change what is to be changed according to the contemporary view on the constitution. What is to be changed is not necessarily the actual letter of the constitution but the interpretation of it. A typical example is Japan's view on "pacifism."

It has long been held that the "pacifism" of Japan's Constitution forbids possession of military forces but only allows possession of self-defense capability which is to be deployed for no other purposes than defensive ones in case Japan is under armed attack. In other words, to most Japanese, "pacifism" means no more than refraining from making unprompted use of arms. However, this kind of view has fallen out of step with the times. Reality of the international society today demands more positive actions and operations to achieve peace in the world. During the Cold War era, Japan was allowed to be committed solely to economic activities, while having heavy reliance on the US for security. But the situation has completely changed since the end of the Cold War, and eventual shift of international order from uni-polar system to multi-polar system.

The international society differs from a domestic society in that the former lacks the government, parliament or police. In the international society, countries have no options but to negotiate, to make agreements, and to cooperate, mainly among major powers, in order to settle various issues, including building and maintaining peace. Major powers including Japan are expected to fulfill the duties of being engaged actively in multilateral talks and of making a fair contribution to international affairs. Those countries which neglect such duties must be considered uncooperative and would eventually lose confidence of other countries. If China complies with such duties and Japan does not, China will have a voice in the international society but Japan will not. Needless to say, this is an unacceptable situation. A fair contribution would include not only political and economic cooperation but also military cooperation. For Japan, international cooperation in military affairs would include overseas deployment of the Self-Defense Forces and, when needed, entail the exercise of armed force.

It is unreasonable to think that Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan forbids such actions. For, what Article 9 renounces are war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. The use of force as means of being engaged, as a member of the international society, in collective endeavor to pursue peace and stability of the international society is quite another thing. From the viewpoint of the Japanese "desire to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth," as reads the Preamble of the Constitution of Japan, it is necessary to be involved in collective actions of the international society including the exercise of armed force when needed, as in the cases of the Gulf War and counter-piracy operations off Somalia.

"Pacifist" Japan should first of all make strife in the field of diplomacy and also aim to disseminate to the world such Japanese traditional values as spirits of harmony and co-existence. What is required of Japan today is a new "pacifism" as a national policy to achieve world peace, not a pacifism of refraining from military affairs.

**(This is the English translation of an article written by Mr. YUSHITA Hiroyuki, Visiting Professor, Kyorin University, which originally appeared on the BBS "Giron-Hyakushutsu" of GFJ on June 26, 2009.)**