

DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY OF A DEFEATED NATION: YOSHIDA SHIGERU AND HIS SUCCESSORS

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Yoshida Shigeru was the most prominent of the early post-World War II Japanese Prime Ministers. Yoshida's deft use of diplomacy along with his rebuilding doctrine which stressed economic growth while at the same time de-emphasized the military paved the way for the return of Japan as one of the most powerful nations of the modern world. After the war, Japan was left with only three-quarters of its national wealth intact, had lost all of its overseas colonies and was forced, through the Potsdam Declaration, to fully disarm. Yoshida's strategy was fully in line with the realities his country faced. He promptly accepted Japan's defeat and was willing to work with occupation authorities. Yoshida's strategy was to ensure that the world economic system was open up to Japan as quickly as possible. At the same time, Yoshida embarked on a policy that would ensure Japan's security by linking Japan's security to that of the USA through a bilateral security agreement. In return for US protection Yoshida promised to use Japan's economic capacity to support western military objectives. Yoshida's policies were not accepted universally and received much criticism from both the left and the right in Japan. Most of the criticism centers around dependence on the occupation, loss of independence, cost of the alliance with the US and the financial burden Japan accepted for US forces in Japan.

The prime goals of Yoshida for a post war Japan were as follows: 1) combine the traditional and conservative elements within the government with the reformist and the progressive parts in an attempt reorganize the prewar political system; 2) bring Japan back into the international community; 3) become a member of the Bretton Woods system which would hasten Japan's economic recovery; 4) eschew the rearmament of Japan; 5) restrict the communist threat. Yoshida's primary goals was to shed Japan of its defeated status and bring Japan back into the international community. Bringing Japan closer to the USA militarily with its alliance with the USA would assure Japanese security while, at the same time, Yoshida

could harness the incredible human as well as industrial capacity of Japan to propel the country back to prominence in the world community. Yoshida also sought reconciliation with China for both economic as well as a counter influence measure in the communist realm. The US, however, feared that any move toward China by Yoshida would have negative consequences in that Japan may be the one influenced by China.

The San Francisco Peace treaty signed in September 1951 was the height of Yoshida's diplomatic career. The treaty saw Japan paying relatively little in reparations and also allowed Japan to keep sovereignty over Okinawa and the neighboring islands. The treaty was also the beginning of the end for Yoshida. Politicians from both the left and the right felt that the U.S. Japanese alliance and the presence of US bases on Japanese soil made Japan weak and subservient to the US. It did not help that Yoshida rebuffed the American request for him to increase rapidly Japan's rearmament so that US forces could leave Japan in a timely manner. Yoshida choose a more gradual increase in Japan's forces citing constitutional restraints and economic burden as limits to a quickening of Japanese rearmament.

By 1955, Yoshida was out of office. The framework of his diplomatic strategy, however, was to be used by his successors to bring Japan back into the international arena. Diplomatic strategy would now be in the hands of both pro-Yoshida as well as anti-Yoshida politicians with the formation of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Members of the new party included Hatoyama Ichiro (52nd, 53rd and 54th Prime Minister of Japan), Tanzan Ishibashi (55th Prime Minister of Japan), Kishi Nobusuki (56th and 57th Prime Minister of Japan), Ikeda Hayato (60th Prime Minister of Japan), Sato Eisaku (61st, 62nd and 63rd Prime Minister of Japan), and Shigemitsu Mamoru (served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister after the end of WWII). Through their leadership Japan was able to enter GATT now known as the WTO and a renewed focus in engagement with Southeast Asia was sought with Kishi being the first post-war Prime Minister to make trips to Taiwan as well as South east- Asia. Although these new post-war leaders were positioning Japan to fully re-enter the international community their relationship with the US was being tested. Shigemitsu's goal was to wean Japan from its military dependence on the US

and sought a faster buildup of Japan's military forces along with a more equal bilateral treaty. These requests were, however, rejected by then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Japan would remain in a type of protectorate status, at least militarily with the US, while its Self Defense Forces would only see gradual increases in their size.

The biggest issue facing Japan's leadership in the post-war era was ensuring domestic stability which both Kishi and Hatoyama both addressed rather unsuccessfully. Kishi did not fare well mostly due to his uncompromising temperament and Hatoyama's call for a new constitution did not go over well with the public. Hayato and Ishibashi, on the other hand, made their focus the economy as well as better relations with both China and the United States. Ishibashi is best remembered as introducing budgetary policies that would fuel Japan's unprecedented growth. Ikeda's contribution can be seen in his strategies which had the effect of propelling economic policy over security policy. Japan was finally able to accept the validity of the post-war political structure. Under Ikeda's leadership, Japan was able to enter the international world order as a full member.

Sato was Japan's longest serving Prime Minister. His fortunes were mainly due to Japan's high economic growth rate during his reign. Although his main focus was the economy he also wanted renewed attention towards patriotism with his government's main goal to be Japan's recovery of administration rights over Okinawa. This would mark the end of defeated nation status for Japan. In Sato's quest for the return of Okinawa, he embarked on a strategy that would see Japan declare itself a nonnuclear power while, at the same time, a pledge he would use Japan's economic capacity to enhance the West's position in the Asia-Pacific region. Sato's acceptance of the alliance burden went a long way to the successful conclusion to an agreement that would see Japan take back administrative rights over Okinawa by 1972.

Although Yoshida was the architect of a diplomatic strategy that would see Japan's eventual return as a full member to the international community it would be up to his successors to implement his

objectives. The post-war leaders be it pro-Yoshida or anti-Yoshida knew that Yoshida understood the need for Japan to be stable as a first priority in order to begin Japan on its long road to recovery. Domestic stability was necessary for economic recovery which, in turn, paved the way for reintroduction in a world whereby Japan had to find its place. Japan has become one of the world's most prosperous countries but the challenges it faces today seem to be as serious as any it has ever faced. Japan seems to be pinned between the West and the East. How to deal with an increasingly belligerent China while, at the same time, maintain its interests with the USA. How long is Japan willing to accept the alliance burden? Will Japan increasingly turn eastward? These are all questions that need to be dealt with now rather than later by politicians in Japan that have the courage to buck the trend and come up with ideas that will lay down the diplomatic framework, as Yoshida did post WWII, to allow Japan to prosper in the 21st century.