

## **Paul Kevenhörster: Japan's Role in Asia's New Power Constellation**

With the end of the Cold War, Japan is facing the problem of redefining its position in foreign policy. And it seems that in the country's debate about this redefinition, it is not the 'Asianists' who will prevail but the 'globalists' who, on the one hand, press for strengthening Japan's role within Asia, and on the other, demand that the US presence in the region should continue. Apologists of this line follow the tradition of a doctrine developed by prime minister Shigeru Yoshida half a century ago, which was originally meant to be effective only during the time of the country's reconstruction after the Second World War and called for Japan's eventual emancipation from the USA. The Yoshida doctrine emphasised not only the need for Japan's economy to recover after the war and to maintain contacts with the USA for that purpose but also the light quality of Japan's future armament and the cession of military bases to the US armed forces to ensure the country's long-term security.

Until today, Japan's foreign policy is rooted in the thinking of the Yoshida doctrine. When the Fukuda doctrine arrived in 1977, however, a new orientation gained weight in the country, according to which Japan would renounce any military role in Southeast Asia, collaborate with the ASEAN states and, in parallel to this, cooperate with Indochina to secure freedom in the region. The Hashimoto initiative of January 1997, which promotes consultations between Japan and the ASEAN states on a regular basis, similarly has its roots in the Fukuda doctrine.

Japan's relations with its most important neighbours – China and Korea – are more strained now than they have been for a long time. These two countries are the reason why calls for Japan's rearmament are growing louder and louder. This new way of thinking in Japan's defence establishment led to the authorisation of 'self-defence forces' and the purchase of Tomahawk missiles from the US to launch a pre-emptive attack against North Korea. Reality, however, is characterised by the 'sword and shield structure' within the American-Japanese alliance, which in case of a conflict assigns military missions to the US and the role of logistical supporter to Japan.

While there are no changes in Japan's defence policy, and Tokyo will probably remain Washington's junior partner in security policy in the future, some movement can be observed in the country's development policy. In the spring of 2006, Japan's government initiated a fundamental reorganisation of the country's organisations that implement development policy, strengthening and expanding the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), among others.

All in all, the image projected by East Asia's security constellation remains contradictory. Asian networks still confine themselves to the field of economic cooperation, and realities will cause any vision of expanding cooperation in the region to fail in the foreseeable future. This is precisely the reason why the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) plays a major role in forming security-policy identities.

In Japan's foreign policy, a comprehensive security strategy is more important than the classical form of defence. Thus, development policy serves as tool of foreign trade policy as well as to secure the supply of raw materials, food, and energy. Yet Tokyo also has an eye on the development of its partner countries and uses its development policy as bargaining chip to strengthen its own negotiating position.

At the start of 2005, Tokyo presented the framework of its Medium-term Policy on Official Development Assistance. On the one hand, for example, this policy feels obliged to support the millennium goals in its fight against poverty, and on the other, it seeks to expand efficient institutions to stabilise the macro-economy, to encourage foreign trade and investments, and to

implement a sustainable development strategy. For this purpose, development cooperation itself is to draw on the ODA Task Force which, among others, includes diplomats as well as JICE and/or JBIC employees, in order to improve not only the realisation of political consultations but also the selection of projects and cooperation with local partner organisations.

In the past, Japan's foreign policy was often accused of pragmatism, a lack of principles, and the exploitation of international relations in support of its own maxims of action. Meanwhile, however, Japan's international weight has grown and Tokyo's foreign policy has become more active, giving the country the status of a non-military economic global power that will certainly be able to cope with future challenges. Japan could become the prototype of a new nation state which pursues its own interests by making use of its economic resources, not its weapons. Although Tokyo is now better adapted to growing international interconnections than other countries, it will be necessary for it to redefine its line in foreign policy. Such a redefinition might conceivably include coordinating political issues in international organisations and strengthening the international regime. This would offer the country, which is situated in the middle of a constantly changing international force field, a fundamentally solid outlook on the future.