

## JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER DJP

## Asian neighbours to be given priority

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THE historic elections in Japan that ended the LDP's 55 years long hold on power is set to bring about major changes in its foreign policy directions and objectives. During the elections domestic issues and the call for change captivated the attention of the voters. Foreign affairs did not figure prominently in luring voters to the DJP. However, things are changing in Tokyo. Although the DJP must satisfy the voters on a range of economic issues, foreign affairs is currently causing more attention both in Japan and outside. It seems significant changes are in the offing there in the way the DJP conducts its foreign relations, particularly with the United States. The new Foreign Minister of Japan Katsuya Okada is bringing all the attention both by his personality and the issues he is prioritizing for the new DJP Government in foreign affairs.

Okada will be more than a Foreign Minister. As a former DJP President, he could have very well been the present Prime Minister. He led the DJP brilliantly in the 2004 general elections but resigned when the party suffered a humiliating defeat in snap elections that Koizumi called the year after. Before assuming the post of Foreign Minister, he was the party's General Secretary. All these are well acknowledged within the party. Thus he will be a powerful Foreign Minister who will be likely to stamp his authority upon Gaimashu (Foreign Ministry in Japanese) unlike many of his predecessors. The Social Democratic Party, with whom it entered into alliance for leverage in the Upper House where its numbers are weak, wants a dramatic shift in Japan's polity towards the US. In focus are four secret deals that give the US unilateral rights on crucial military and nuclear issues. Okada is also aware that there is a significant section of Japanese, particularly the young generation, who would like Japan to come out of the US umbrella. However, Okada is also aware that he must steer the country in a position where the Japan-US ties are not weakened for a host of reasons. Given his stature and his close ties with US leadership, Okada is likely to achieve this crucial objective in relations with the US.

He has already focused on the sensitive issue of Japan-US relations to satisfy public curiosity. He has instructed Mitoji

Yabunaka, a career diplomat and Vice-Foreign Minister who is also the bureaucratic head of Gaimashu, to inform him with facts about four secret pacts that Japan is publicly known to have signed with the United States. There has always been suspicion that Japan had at various times signed with USA four secret pacts that the government has always denied, even under oath in Parliament. The denials notwithstanding, many Japanese believe in their existence and want these to be scrapped.

One of these four secret agreements was introduced in 1960 at the time of revision to US-Japan Act in 1960 that allowed US to bring nuclear weapons to Japan unilaterally. A second secret deal was reached in 1972 when Okinawa was returned to Japan that allowed the US to bring nuclear weapons in Japanese territory at times of emergency, again unilaterally. A third secret pact allows USA to use its military bases in Japan for contingencies in the Korean peninsula without consultation with Japan. The fourth secret pact imposes upon Japan to bear the costs of returning former US military bases to their original sites. The new Foreign Ministry has demanded that Gaimashu set up committees with experts drawn from Japan and abroad to examine and scrutinize documents and papers and interview relevant officials. The process of investigation would take the whole of next year to complete, which may bring many officials to face serious consequences.

Okada's instruction to Yabunaka on the secret pacts could suggest that he holds strong anti-US views. That would create a paradox if the new Foreign Minister is serious about pursuing a path of confrontation with the USA. Maintaining Japan's alliance with USA, its only military ally where Japan is bound by its constitution not to empower itself militarily for offensive purposes, is crucial to its existence because it is under threat of nuclear attack by North Korea. Japan's historical relation with China has, within it, seeds of future conflict that makes a strong Japan-US relation vital for Japan. Fortunately, despite his instructions on the secret deals, Okada holds quite a different view personally on the US whose politics has influenced his thinking to a great extent. He studied in Harvard University for a year at the Weatherhead Centre for International Affairs where his



Okada is set to give Japan's foreign relations a new direction.

teachers were Economist Geoffrey Sachs and former Labour Secretary Robert Reich. He visits USA once a year and has close friends in US politics and administration. All these are expected to come into bearing in the way the new Foreign Minister conducts Japan's relations with its key ally the United States to tone down the anti-US views of the Social

Democratic Party and sections of the public. In fact, experts believe that with Okada, the DJP will handle Japan-US relations more realistically and differently from the way they spoke on these relations leading to the general elections.

The new Foreign Minister is also expected to set new directions in Japan's relations with its neighbours, particularly

China. As a parliamentarian and DJP President, he made known his dislike for many of Koizumi's actions that he thought had adverse consequences regarding foreign relation for Japan. In his book *Seiken Koutai* (Change of Regime in English) written in 2008, Okada said that during the Koizumi era, Japan allowed US unilateralism the upper hand while pay-

ing little attention to its Asian neighbours that narrowed its diplomatic choices. Okada was severely critical over Koizumi's yearly visits to the controversial Yasukuni shrine that honours 14 Class One war criminals much to the disgust of China and South Korea. During a debate in Parliament in June 2005, Okada sternly told Koizumi that his visits to the Yasukuni shrine will destroy Japan's relations with China and in turn affect its relations with the rest of Asia. In that speech, he went on to suggest that the yearly visits to Yasukuni damaged Japan's chances for a permanent seat in the expanded UN Security Council and sabotaged the chances of China's assistance in resolving the North Korean standoff on the nuclear issue.

His views on Koizumi's Yasukuni shrine visits that many in the LDP think will no doubt endear him to the Chinese and the South Koreans, two countries that are crucial to Japan's foreign policy needs and objectives in the Korean peninsula. A more balanced relationship with the US that Okada is likely to bring about in Japan-US relations by smoothing US unilateralism will also help bring Japan closer to the Asian countries from whom it had gradually drifted away under the LDP. Japan under Okada's stewardship is expected to re-discover its Asian roots.

For Bangladesh, both Okada and DJP are unknown quantities. There are both opportunities and problems in the change of government in Tokyo. The LDP leadership that was in power when Bangladesh was fighting its war of liberation was strongly motivated to support Bangladesh's economic development when the country became independent. That motivation continued over many decades both in the economic and political context of Bangladesh-Japan relations. The political ties have weakened in recent times but Japan still remains strongly committed to being Bangladesh's most important development partner. Bangladesh's diplomacy must now make renewed efforts to reach the new leaders in Japan. Okada's focus on Asia could create scope for Bangladesh to re-kindle the once strong political ties while seeking greater economic relations where Japanese investment should be the key focus.

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## Obama scraps the centrepiece of Bush security agenda in Eastern Europe

BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

ON 17th September, President Barack Obama took a bold decision in scrapping the Bush-era plan for a missile shield to defend Eastern Europe. Obama promised a redesigned defensive system, saying it would be cheaper, quicker and more effective against the threat from Iranian missiles. The Bush-era plan had complicated ties with Russia, which objected to where the shield installations would be built. Anticipating criticism from the right that Obama was weakening America's security, he said repeatedly that this decision would provide more - not less - protection.

In its place, Obama is proceeding

with the US Defence Secretary Robert Gates (he held the same position under former President Bush) reportedly said that two important developments had prompted a reassessment. First, there had been a change in the 2006 view of the Iranian threat. The intelligence community now assesses that the threat from Iran's short (Fateh-range 169km) and medium range ballistic missiles (Zelzal: 402 km), not from long-range missiles (the Shahab-3: 1995km), is developing more rapidly than previously projected. The second development was technological. A distributed and mobile network was preferable to a single fixed site for sensors as proposed in the Czech Republic.

lite countries.

The controversial US security policy in Europe in installing an anti-missile radar in the Czech Republic and missile interceptors in Poland to ward off threat from Iran's long-range missiles was not acceptable to Russia because Russia angrily criticised that the US missile defence plan was not against Iran's missile threat but posed security threat to Russia. This plan spawned misunderstanding between the two countries and stood as a stumbling block in cooperative relations with Russia.

Furthermore, Russia took certain counter-measures in response to the US missile shield. One of them was to install missiles in the Russian

and brave".

The hallmark of US foreign policy under President Obama rests on three Ds: diplomacy, development and defence. He is an idealist and a pragmatic person and that is why he can sell his ideas. Political vision without ideas is simply routine administration.

President Obama has realised that Russia's cooperation is necessary because currently the Security Council has become ineffective because of Moscow's threat to veto on many issues raised by the US. The UN stalemate is a reminder that his agenda, outlined in Prague in April, was doomed without a more cooperative Russia.

There are other reasons as well and some of them deserve mentioning. First, Obama was scheduled to chair on September 24th the extraordinary summit at the UN for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the US-drafted resolution on it met Russia's objections. The US found that the resolution would not be adopted and it was considered as embarrassing for the President. Second, if the momentum could be maintained Obama has a chance of support of the Senate to ratify the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty). China would follow suit and the Treaty would enter into force prohibiting nuclear tests and providing a powerful legal barrier to proliferation. Third, on 5th December, the 18-year old Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) is due to expire and the US and Russia are striking an arms control deal cutting deployed strategic warheads on each side to 1500. Fourth, tough sanctions could not be imposed on Iran because of Moscow and its acquiescence would also bring on board China for sanctions against Iran, if necessary.

It seems President Obama removed a big thorn in bilateral relations with Russia. In the wake of this, the NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen (former Danish Prime Minister) renewed NATO's efforts to bind Russia into a system to guard against missile attacks from Iran. We should explore the potential for linking the US, NATO and Russia into a missile-defence systems at an appropriate time.

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## Russia seeks a role in 'Af-Pak' issues

JYOTSNA BAKSHI

ON assuming office, President Barack Obama spoke of 'resetting buttons' of America's relations with Russia. Henry Kissinger's article which appeared on 26 February 2009 in the Washington Post reaffirmed a shift in thinking on Russia in the context of the Afghan war. Kissinger argues that the US cannot withdraw from Afghanistan as the jihadist victory there will have ominous consequences for the stability of the entire region. Nor can it win the war by the methods employed so far. He suggests that the Afghan issue be tackled through international effort, involving all of Afghanistan's neighbours, India and permanent members of the UNSC and not by unilateral US effort. Owing to geographical reasons, he termed cooperation with Russia and Pakistan as crucial and added that Washington had to choose between a partnership or adversarial relations with Russia.

Despite intense competition between Moscow and Washington for influence over the Eurasian space, the two share common concerns regarding religious extremism and militancy. These forces threaten peace and stability in Russia's soft underbelly. If these forces succeed in establishing a foothold in Central Asia's populous Fergana Valley - as they aspire to - there will be no stopping them from advancing further north. Russia seeks to counter this threat through a pro-active policy in the southern direction.

There are also economic reasons propelling Moscow's southward move. Russian expert Yuri Krupnov opines that while Russia exports mainly hydrocarbons and raw materials to Europe and China, it can export industrial products to the countries towards its south and thus, revive its dilapidated industrial base.

In a landmark agreement on 6 July, during President Obama's recent Moscow visit, Russia allowed 4,500 overflights about 12 per day carrying military cargo for US/NATO troops deployed in Afghanistan. Earlier, Moscow only permitted the transit of non-military cargo. More than two-thirds of all supplies for US and NATO troops in Afghanistan have been traditionally sent by the much shorter and cheaper land route across Pakistan. However, due to repeated militant attacks, this route has become unsafe. With the projected increase in the US/allied troops in Afghanistan, the search for a reliable alternative supply route had become critical. Through this move, Russia has assured for itself a role in the Afghanistan conflict, which it was denied ever since the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989. As a quid pro quo, Russia is now likely to be involved in training the Afghan forces.

Earlier, Washington had regarded the

reassertion of Russia's influence as the biggest threat to its Eurasian strategy. This author was told by visitors to Afghanistan that the US officials there denied the Russians any role in reconstruction projects. The Chinese were regarded as less of an immediate rival by the West and were allowed to bag a hefty US\$3 billion project to exploit Afghanistan's Aynak copper deposits along with the railway infrastructure development project.

Moscow is also directly cultivating Afghan and Pak regimes. On 30 July 2009, the first four-nation summit of the Presidents of Russia, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan took place in the Tajik capital, Dushanbe. All sides discussed cooperation in infrastructure projects, energy, transport, and security and ways to curb the drug menace. They agreed to meet regularly to push forward multifarious cooperation. The possibility of the export of hydroelectricity from Tajikistan to power-deficient Afghanistan and Pakistan, including from the Russian-built Sangtuda-1 project on Vakhsh River was also discussed, with the participation of Russia for the first time.

Following recent intensification of military operations against Islamic militants in Pakistan and Afghanistan, many Central Asian fighters living in the Pak-Afghan border areas have reportedly returned to their homelands. This has aggravated the threat of Islamic militancy to secular Central Asian states. Tajikistan, which shares more than a 1000 km border with Afghanistan, is particularly vulnerable. While Moscow wishes to remain the main guarantor of security to Central Asian states, it must contend with tough competition from the West, led by the US and the growing economic and military muscle of China.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reportedly strove hard at the Yekaterinburg SCO summit held on 15 June 2009, to bridge the gap between Russia and the US. India is interested in peace, stability and development in its immediate and strategic neighbourhood. It has made a sizeable US\$1.2 billion investment in development projects in Afghanistan. The opening of transport routes and energy corridors, possibly through combined international effort, can greatly boost South Asia's (including India's) trade with Central Asia and direct the flow of energy resources southwards. India should welcome the reduction in trade and travel barriers while protecting its territorial integrity and sovereignty. However, the formation of closed groupings to the exclusion of or at the expense of India, need to be countered at the very outset.

India needs to pursue a carefully calibrated, pro-active policy to promote its interests. History shows that the developments in the region have always affected India's security and political and economic interests.

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Obama makes the road to bilateral relations a little more smoother.

with sea-based system protecting southern Europe and the Middle East. The revamped sea-based system, according to the President, would be a far more effective means of protecting US interests at home and abroad from the possible threat posed by Iran.

Initial stage of Obama's alternative plan would deploy Aegis ships armed with interceptors and there would be a second phase on land in 2015, probably in Turkey.

Aegis ships also carry Tomahawk cruise missiles and submarine torpedoes and rapid response gun systems. It can blow up ballistic missiles above the atmosphere. The cost of the revised programme reportedly would be \$42.7 billion.

The leaders of Eastern Europe, though uncomfortable with the decision, have realised that they could do nothing and accepted the change. Polish leaders hoped that the US would deploy Patriot missiles in Poland, while Czech leaders believed their security was entrenched in NATO. Strong criticism came from Republican lawmakers in the US. Putting facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic was symbolically very important for the US and NATO, according to some lawmakers. Senator McCain called the decision "seriously misguided" and said it had the potential to undermine the US's standing in Eastern Europe, former Soviet satel-

enclave Kaliningrad (next to Poland and Lithuania), to place there nuclear-capable T-22 strategic bomber and to equip Russia's ballistic missile arsenal with technical features allowing them to evade US missile defences. To Russia, the missile defence shield was a symbol of US' failure to take their concerns into account. Moscow saw it as an attempt to sap their deterrent against a US first strike.

In response to Obama's decision, Russia shelved its plan in Kaliningrad the next day. Russia's President said that the move was "positive." Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin praised the decision to scrap the missile shield plan as "correct