Chapter Six

Conclusion

The study advanced the following research questions: (a) to what extent Japan’s security policy has changed in the post-11 September global order (b) what are the factors that have influenced the shaping of Japan’s security policy in the contemporary global order (c) what explains Japan’s behaviour in the post-11 September 2001 global order?

The attempt to answer these questions began with a historicisation of Japan’s behaviour towards other states as an island nation. Historicisation in this context implies an appreciation of the manner in which Japan has interacted with the regional hegemon in the Chinese world order and Japan’s attempt to challenge the hegemon, once it had acquired the requisite capability. Japan’s alliance with various great powers such as Great Britain, Russia, Nazi Germany was also traced to explain its tendency to align with the dominant power of the day to enhance its status in the international system in the course of fulfilling its great power ambitions. Japan’s attempts to reconcile with its militarist past and its ambiguities about possession of nuclear weapons and the security alliance with the US is elaborated to explain Japan’s dexterous handling of such conflicting issues to find its place in the international system. When an opportunity arises, be it pre-War alliances with other great powers or changes in the global order following World War II and 11 September 2001, Japan has had always been prompt in appropriating such situations to attain its great power objectives.

An appreciation of American grand strategy is done beginning with its hegemonic ambitions in the Western hemisphere and in the Pacific. The calculated isolationism of the US was also discussed. Besides the selective engagement of the US with European great power wars only when a great power threatens to dominate it was taken into account. The US involvement in the World War II and the strategies of containment and Marshall Plan to contain Soviet expansion in Europe and the extension of containment to other parts of the world so as to maintain its dominance during the Cold War era has been discussed. The post-Cold War strategies of maintaining its unipolarity in the international system and the way the US had appropriated the 11
September 2001 terrorist attack on its soil to perpetuate its global dominance through wars, counter-proliferation, missile defense and restructuring and forging of new alliances is elaborated here.

Besides this historicisation of Japan's security policy and appreciation of American grand strategy, variables were also drawn from different theoretical perspectives to explain the changes in Japan's security policy. The variable of vulnerability was drawn from structural realism. The logic of structural realism was explained through systemic anarchy, the question of capabilities, security predicaments, vulnerability, balance of power and nuclear power parity. Japan's increasing vulnerability to North Korea and China was analysed. Japan's economic and technological capabilities and how they could facilitate Japan to attain great power status was also investigated. Japan's response to the changing global order and how it facilitated Japan to address its questions of vulnerability and nuclear weapons were also addressed.

Another variable that was drawn from liberal international relations theory to explain the changes in Japan's security policy was preferences. The liberal theoretical logic is explained through three core assumptions: (a) the primacy of societal actors (b) representation and state preferences (c) interdependence and international system. The role dominant domestic actors play in determining the state preference that reflect their interests and the influence of various institutions in transmitting those interests as preferences and the interaction between states and their attempts to realise their preferences were elaborated. The inadequacies of structural logic were also explained. States such as Taiwan, South Korea and Egypt have renounced their nuclear programmes either when they were vulnerable to massive conventional attack or when a regional acquires nuclear weapon. The dominant players in Japan's domestic politics are the political class, bureaucracy, big business and public opinion. The economic recovery as the preference in the post-Occupation Japan, and the confusion that prevailed in the 1990s about its preferences following the economic crisis were analysed. Finally, the changed dynamics of preference formation and its impact on Japan's security policy in the post-11 September 2001 period was also examined.

The following hypotheses were advanced at the beginning of this study: (a) Japan's security policy has undergone an incremental change, which is evident in the
sending of Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to war zones and augmentation of its power projection capabilities (b) the increasing vulnerability of Japan in the post-11 September 2001 global order has lead to a shift in Japan’s security policy (c) Although Japan moved in the direction of becoming a great power through rearming its military, it has not crossed the nuclear threshold despite increased vulnerabilities.

The study proves the first hypothesis that Japan’s security policy has undergone an incremental change, which reflects in the sending of Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to war zones and augmentation of its power projection capabilities. Japan had sent its troops to war zones in Afghanistan and Iraq for the first time since 1945 despite constitutional constraints on it. It had also increased the capabilities of its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) through acquisitions of offensive and defensive weapons and diluting the laws that bind them. The second hypothesis, which is that the increasing vulnerability of Japan in the post-11 September 2001 global order has lead to a shift in Japan’s security policy, is slightly modified. Although North Korean threat and China’s emergence as an economic and military power in the region has increased Japan’s vulnerability, whenever there is an opportunity arises for Japan arises due to changes in the international system, Japan has always appropriated to advance its great power ambitions. The final hypothesis, viz. or i.e. although Japan moved in the direction of becoming a great power through rearming its military, it has not crossed the nuclear threshold despite increased vulnerabilities, is also slightly modified. It is not just structural factor such as US nuclear deterrence alone that has restrained Japan from becoming nuclear weapon state; there are other factors such as domestic preferences that have influenced Japan’s nuclear behaviour.

Although mono-causal explanations such as vulnerability or preferences are advanced to explain state behaviour for the sake of parsimony, they are over-simplified. A state’s behaviour is too complex to be explained through a single variable. Multi-causal variables are more robust and have better explanatory capability. Therefore, Japan not becoming a nuclear state despite increasing vulnerabilities in the changing post-11 September global order is not just a function of structural constraints but also the function of its preferences as well. The behaviour of a state is not determined by realist
calculations alone. The realist logic of rationality is bounded and has limited application in the non-Western contexts, such as the case of Japan.