Japan has been debating to amend its Constitution - the document that has guided its security, diplomacy, politics, Society and traditional Culture. The effort has been expedited by the Japanese establishment following the end of Cold war. The impelling factor behind the move has been to establish itself as a powerful nation commensurate with its economic strength. With the criticism of its Checkbook diplomacy during the 1990 gulf war it has realized that the “soft power” alone can not help it gain an influential position in the comity of nations and a combination of soft and “hard power” is necessary. The talk of expansion of United Nations Security Council and its aspiration to get a permanent seat has also triggered the debate. The Japanese administration is aware of the fact that because of War renouncing Article 9 of its Constitution, it lacks a legal framework to respond militarily to a conflict which is a primary mandate of the UNSC’s peace enforcing missions. And whenever it has presented the demand to gain a permanent berth in the powerful international body, its ally the US has always reminded it that it lacks the ability to assume the kind of responsibility the UNSC plays. The then US secretary of State Collin Powell had gone on record saying that to get the US support it has to amend Article 9. Thus the pressure comes both from its ally and within the LDP hawks to amend the Constitution.

In the post Cold war period successive Japanese government has taken many steps to revise its pacifist Constitution which includes setting up Constitutional Research Commission in both the Diet (which concluded its finding in 2005) and enacting a bill (in 2007) to decide ways how to put the Constitution on referendum by 2010.

As the establishment debated the Constitution, media, pressure groups and political parties unveiled their complete proposal suggesting how the US imposed 1947 constitution should be revised, which gave another vigour and twist to the debate. Pacifist groups however, have been strengthening their rank and file to oppose tooth and nail any amendment. Thus real show down between the revisionist and pacifist would be seen if Constitution is put on referendum.
Another factor which has checked Japan to go slow on the move is the strong reaction from its neighbour and erstwhile colonies who view Constitutional amendment as lifting the checks on its greater remilitarization. Whether Japan achieves a Constitutional revision goal or not flexible reinterpretation (which has been done many times) has made the Constitutional “spirit” redundant. The only thing Japanese establishment wants to do now is change the “letter” so no body questions the Constitutional spirit.

The period of this research is from 1991-2006; however, since the research concludes in mid 2009, the researcher thought it appropriate to look the issues up till mid 2009 so that the debate do not loses relevance.

The researcher owes thanks to many institutions and individuals in helping this research. I would like to thank Radio Japan NHK for offering me a part time work of Content Analysis of their program broadcasted for the Indian subcontinent. During my association with NHK from February 1998 to March 2007, I heard Radio Japan’s program almost daily and learnt a lot about Japan’s politics, society and Foreign policy. The honorarium I received partly helped me carry forward my higher studies. I also express my gratitude to government of Japan for awarding me its prestigious Mombukagakusho fellowship which paved way for my studies at Waseda University’s department of Political Science and Economics. When I remember help at Waseda University, I never forget support from Professor Umemori Naoyuki my guide at political Science department who had been very kind and even after my return had been sending me academic advice. I would wish to offer my sincere gratitude to Professor Takahiko Tanaka, who made me discussant in his small class of four where he delivered lecture on international relations in English. I also owe thanks to Bukh Alexander, Retto, Nagata, Satako and all the students of Umemori sensei’s Friday seminar, in which I presented my draft chapters and received comments and suggestions to strengthen my thesis. I would be ungrateful if I do not thank library staffs of Waseda’s central and CIE libraries, National Institute of Defense Studies library, National Diet Library, Institute of International Policy Studies library, for allowing me to access primary and secondary resources.
I am particularly thankful to many Japanologists like Glenn. D. Hook, Mac Comark, Malcolm MacIntosh, Osamu Nishi, Hugo Dobson, John F. Howes, Koseiki Shoichi, Nobuya Bamba, Reinhard Drifte, Douglas H. Mendel, John E Endicott and Ronald Dore as their in-depth research have helped me a lot in developing an understanding on various issues related to national and international affairs of Japan. I am also thankful to various columnists like K. Nabeshima, Eric Johnston T. Kajimoto who had been regularly writing in Japan Times and other international dailies on Constitutional amendment in Japan and their writings certainly helped me keep abreast about the issue.

Among my friends, I am thankful to Nimesh, Mahesh and Himanshu da for their help during my PhD synopsis. I must thank to Mahendra Prakash, Shahshi Kant and B. Vinoth Raj for technical support during final stage of this thesis. Thanks to Arif, Meraj, Abhay and Jalees for getting the books issued on their library cards. Abhay needs special thanks also for being my host as after returning from Japan I had to wait for a long queue to get accommodation. Thanks to Hiroko Arakawa, my senior and researcher at Japanese Embassy, who drove down to my hostel to lend me the latest edition of Japan’s Defence Whitepaper. I also owe gratitude to my wife Nilofer who understood my problems and single handedly reared my daughter Hiba, though they missed me a lot and found difficulties in handling family life.

I am indebted to many kind-hearted teachers who helped and offered encouragement for this research work. I must sincerely thank my supervisor Dr. H. S. Prabhakar for his continuous support from writing synopsis to completing thesis. Without his support the completion of this research was unimaginable. I am grateful to Professor Lalaima Varma, Professor Shrikanth Kondapalli, Dr. Sharbni Roychaudhari, Dr. Vara Prasad for intriguing interest in Japan’s Studies and Tachibana sensei for teaching me Japanese language. I am also grateful to IDSA for providing me a job at its East Asia Cluster and thank to N.S Sisodia, Thomas Mathew, P Satobdan, Dr. Raja Ram Panda of IDSA for encouraging completing PhD thesis faster.

Date: July 21, 2009
Place: JNU, New Delhi

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