

CONCLUSIONS

Japan failed to fully take advantage of the opportunities it had after World War II. Due to constitutional limitations it is a country pacifistic in nature, and although exactly this should have given it an option for an active presence in the region, Japan has always considered this aspect to be a political handicap. Therefore, Japan has had no significant political successes on the international arena. The period of its relative greatness ended with the defeat in 1945, and the lost war and subsequent occupation stripped it of all energy and will to act. For decades, Japan has exclusively practiced the so-called economic diplomacy, and even in this field under strict supervision on the United States. Its political actions remained solely in the field of intentions or supporting unrealistic options. An example of this could be unsettled relations and border disputes with neighbours: **Russia, Korea, China, Vietnam and even Taiwan¹**.

China's economic successes and its formation of favourable international surroundings results in its increase in significance in the region and within the global economy. It also influences the fact that USA and ASEAN countries are more often considering China to be a significant partner. Japanese politicians are aware of this trend and envision the improvement of their country's position on the international arena in the necessity to become independent. However, the chances to fulfil this goal are limited. Experts have no doubts that the reasons for this lie in the fact that the United States is not interested in the transformation of an ally into a fully independent competitor.

At present, many forces in the Pentagon have a negative approach towards increasingly visible tendencies for Japan to have a more independent role. The background for these reservations are fears that if Japan start to conduct an independent foreign policy, the East Asia system, essential to America's security and in which this country plays a significant role, could be seriously threatened.

One should realise that China, as well as other Asian countries, both Koreas prefer to deal with a still weak American presence in the region, rather than with strong Japan. They understand that the aim of American military presence in Japan is to "watch" the country

¹ Jan Rowiński, "Spory graniczne i konflikty terytorialne w Azji Wschodniej o progu XXI wieku", in: ed. K. Gawlikowski, "Azja Wschodnia na przełomie XX i XXI wieku. Stosunki międzynarodowe i gospodarcze", Warsaw 2004.

which in the past attacked United States territory and conducted criminal military operations in Asia.

At present, not many experts have doubts that the 21st century belongs to China, believing that such a situation results from the natural development of global economy. The dynamic growth of Chinese economy, which results from Deng's reforms, has shown that the only country which continues to have an advantage over the Middle Kingdom is the United States and only this country can compete with China today. Japan had its "golden age" already in 1950-80. Then, China entered the international arena, and it intends to play a major role there, and perhaps in time, the main one. From the psychological point of view, it seems that due to this country's size, its history, culture and economic successes of the last decades, the world has in reality accepted this. The best proof for this is President Barack Obama's statement, who said that the United States accept the necessity to "strengthen alliances" but also to "create new partnership bonds". Analysts believe this to be a clear symbol that Japan is not necessarily longer the only and main American ally in Asia.