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WORKING PAPER

The Ripple Effect: *Japan's Responses to the Iraq War*

By Kurt M. Campbell, Nirav Patel, Richard Weitz



**Center for a
New American
Security**

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Japan's Responses to the Iraq War



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

America's military intervention in Iraq has catalyzed major changes in the Middle East, but the ramifications of its military campaigns around the world, particularly in Asia, remain understudied. Throughout major capitals in Asia discussions relating to America's staying power and influence are becoming more pronounced.

Many of these debates are playing out openly in Japan where strategists and policymakers grapple with similar security challenges emanating from North Korea and growing uncertainty regarding China, a resurgent Russia in the greater Asia-Pacific theater, and questions about America's staying power and commitment to the bilateral alliance. Japan, unlike India and China, has been analyzed through the prism of the Iraq war; however, a majority of these analytic undertakings fail to decipher long-term structural changes that are taking place in Tokyo's policymaking apparatus.

For almost two decades, the end of the Cold War, the relative decline in Japan's economic influence, and increasing regional security threats from Japan's East Asian neighbors have compelled Japanese leaders to revise their country's national security policies. The Iraq war accelerated but did not start this trend or change its trajectory. Similarly, the end of the war will unlikely reverse recent changes in Japanese foreign and defense policies.

Despite Article 9 of the Occupation-era Japanese Constitution in which Japan "forever renounces war as a sovereign right," Japan became intimately involved in the U.S.-led Iraq war, providing logistical support for American and coalition troops, pledging \$5 billion in aid for Iraq's economic rehabilitation, and even sending hundreds of members of its military, the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), to engage in noncombatant humanitarian and reconstruction operations in southern Iraq. The latter decision represented the first deployment of Japanese soldiers to a combat zone since World War II. These decisions required Tokyo to take risky actions that could have generated tremendous domestic political upheaval, as well as making Japan a more likely target of Islamist terrorists and inducing anxiety in East Asia of potential a Japanese military revival. Moreover, Japan's pronouncements came against a background in which many other great powers either opposed the

war or adopted a low profile, a situation in which a more isolationist Japan would have found plenty of company.

Japan's commitment to U.S.-led military operations has been extremely contentious. Three prime ministers have served since the Iraq war started and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party faced a major political defeat at the hands of the Democratic Party of Japan — partly because of its strong commitment to U.S.-led military operations. Even though Japan's commitment to American military operations initially helped strengthen alliance-based cooperation, it has over the years become politically caustic and eroded Japanese domestic support for military assistance to U.S. operations.

Despite tremendous political dislocation in Tokyo, the government has taken a proactive role to increase its international presence. Moreover, Japan's recent leaders have accelerated the “normalization” of the Japanese military. This has been spurred by regional threats, the changing nature of its alliance with the United States, and domestic pressures for constitutional reform. The American preoccupation with Iraq likely accelerated these changes. Yet, though a more ambitious course has been plotted since Japan's first constitutional modification in 1992 authorizing the use of SDF forces abroad for peacekeeping operations, the country has not yet completely abandoned the Yoshida Doctrine to become a fully autonomous international actor and military power.

There is broad recognition in Tokyo that Japanese security still depends on decisions made in Washington. Japan's process of security normalization, begun in the wake of the Cold War, will remain slow-moving in a country with a decades-long post-World War II legacy of military abstention. Like the Persian Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq will likely come to represent a significant step along the path in Japan's foreign policy transformation. In the aggregate, Japan's involvement

in the global fight against terrorism and the war in Iraq represent a stark departure from the Yoshida Doctrine—and a potential phase change in the Japanese-American alliance and its global posture. The following lessons learned are likely to animate Japan's foreign policy in the coming years:

Normalization: Japan's active military's non-combat support for OEF and OIF operations has stimulated further efforts to restructure both the legal and organizational dimensions of Japan's national security policies to enhance the country's ability to respond to internal and external security threats.

Continued Questions about America's

Commitment: America's relative inattention to Asia and focus on Iraq contributed to significant Japanese anxieties that will not quickly disappear. Conservative voices in Tokyo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs are likely to gain more influence in shaping Japanese policy toward North Korea. However, Tokyo's China policy is likely to remain driven by economics and pragmatism.

Emerging Strategic Relationship with India:

India represents a potential counter-balance against China. This view is shaped by some Japanese foreign policymakers who fear a decline in American power and influence in the Asia-Pacific.

Resurgent Russia: Japan feels that America's inability to politically challenge Russia's revisionist agenda – as witnessed in Georgia – holds implications for America's ability to ward off Russian territorial claims in Japan's northern territories.

INTRODUCTION

The United States' decision to invade Iraq in March 2003 set in motion changes in the geostrategic tectonic plates that few, if any, could foresee at the time. The deployment of hundreds of thousands of American troops to liberate Iraq and topple Saddam Hussein's despotic regime has turned into a costly military operation with over 4,128 service men and women killed in action,¹ and approximately 30,000 wounded,² and the number of soldiers and families affected by psychological illnesses soaring over 300,000.³ The war effort has cost over a trillion dollars and unraveled the delicate geopolitical balance both in the Middle East and around the world. The reverberations of the Iraq war are likely to permeate foreign policy decisions for the foreseeable future.

Thus, the Iraq War remains a centerpiece for foreign policy discussions in both Washington and around the world. A majority of the work about the geopolitical repercussions of the Iraq war effort focuses on America's decreasing global popularity and the correlating strain on its traditional allies, particularly in Europe. However, much of this large body of scholarship has overlooked – perhaps as a result of the strategic community's growing “Middle East” myopia – how Japan views the conflict. In particular, what remains to be determined is whether Tokyo has learned from the military campaigns and whether or not the Iraq war will induce a strategic shift in Japan's foreign policies.

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Japanese leaders had become dissatisfied with the prewar Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. They viewed it as an aggressive authoritarian government hostile to Japan and its allies. Yet, the main concern that drove American policy makers to invade Iraq—concern about a future attack by a nuclear-armed and hostile Iraqi government or Islamist terrorists collaborating with it—had less influence on Japanese decision making. Instead,

three specific Japanese security concerns made it seem both necessary and opportune to provide extensive support for Washington's war in Iraq. First, Japanese officials desired to sustain good diplomatic and security ties with the United States in the face of growing regional security threats from China and North Korea. Second, they saw the conflict as an opportunity to affirm Japan's expanding

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role in international security affairs without arousing undue alarm among anxious neighbors fearful that Japan's military “normalization” could relax barriers to Japanese militarism that have existed since World War II. Third, Japanese saw many similarities between North Korea and Iraq. If Iraq was successfully executed it could serve to further enhance a deterrent against North Korean aggression or America could seek to apply military pressure to overthrow Kim Jong Il's regime.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States

provided the Japanese government with an opportunity to reaffirm its fidelity to the Japanese-American alliance and Japan's emerging role as an important international security actor. Immediately following the attacks, the administration of then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi initiated steps that led to the unprecedented deployment of Japanese troops in Afghanistan to provide noncombatant support for U.S.-led military operations against the Taliban. Less than three years later, in January 2004, Japan deployed a detachment consisting of 600 military personnel, again in noncombatant roles, to conduct humanitarian and reconstruction activities in Iraq.

Although the Iraq War has served more as a catalyst than cause of the changes in Japan's foreign and defense policies in recent years, Tokyo's deployment of thousands of troops into an active foreign combat zone represented a significant strategic departure. For over five decades, since its World War II-era military aggression led to its adoption of its antiwar constitution, Japan has eschewed direct participation in foreign wars. Japan's involvement in the Iraq conflict, along with its engagement in Afghanistan, has accelerated the Japanese government's decision to discard some key elements of the longstanding Yoshida Doctrine, which emphasizes economic development over military power.⁴ While a principal feature of the doctrine—ultimate reliance upon the United States for military security—remains intact, many of its other tenets have been stretched and often broken in recent years, partly under the weight of the Iraq war.

This paper will explore the impact of American military operations in Iraq on Japan. Part one reviews Japan's changing domestic situation and regional security environment. Part two will then assess Japan's participation in the conflict and chart a detailed course of how the Iraq war has catalyzed defense policy shifts in Tokyo.

PART I: JAPAN'S TRAJECTORY

In an effort to provide a context for Japan's involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, this section will assess Japan's current trajectory, evaluating the present economic and political landscape and outlining Japan's major foreign policy concerns. Articulating the country's prevailing political-strategic stance, the section will conclude with an evaluation of the challenges to Japan's current foreign policy course.

Japan's Economy

Emerging from the devastation of World War II, Japan enjoyed unprecedented economic development for most of the second half of the twentieth century, due in large part to its minimal expenditures on Japan's national defense, which primarily became an American responsibility.

Guided by the "Yoshida Doctrine," a post-World War II political strategy named after Japan's first post-war prime minister, Japan generally avoided costly foreign military activities in favor of economic advancement and strategic cooperation with the United States. The Japanese government renounced nuclear armament, fixed military spending at no more than one percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), and enacted a series of broad economic reforms encouraging technological investments, international trade, and the rapid expansion of industry. These reforms, coupled with minimal defense expenditures, spurred astonishing growth—more than 10 percent annually from 1955 to 1970—and helped Japan become the world's second-largest economy by 1972.⁵ By the time the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, Japan had established itself as a dominant technological power and world's largest creditor nation.⁶ One observer remarked at the time: "The Cold War is over and Japan has won."⁷ The Yoshida Doctrine provided a strategic blueprint for how Tokyo would exercise power around the world.

Japan's economy boomed until the early 1990s, when scandals involving government officials,

bankers, and leaders of industry—compounded by the Asian Economic Crisis of 1998—placed Japan in an economic depression that it continues to struggle with to this day.⁸ Overinvestment, including the purchase by Japanese companies of such American institutions as Rockefeller Center and Pebble Beach Golf Course, coupled with the asset price bubble of the late 1980s prompted the government to lower interest rates and encourage banks to lend, resulting in massive asset price inflation and the tripling of stock and urban real-estate prices. Once the bubble burst in the early 1990s, asset prices and banks collapsed and unemployment reached postwar highs. Unable to adapt its highly-bureaucratized, producer-oriented economy to the liberalized and increasingly competitive post-Cold War marketplace, Japan entered a "lost decade" of economic and political stagnation worsened by higher oil prices, weaker investor confidence, and lower equity prices.⁹ Economic growth—a robust 4 percent throughout the 1980s—has slowed to a mere 1.7 percent per year since 1990.¹⁰ Efforts to revive the economy have largely proven unsuccessful, due in part to the government's inability to secure major structural economic reforms and the economic slowdowns that have also affected important trading partners such as the United States and the European Union.

Even so, it is important not to exaggerate the extent of Japan's economic problems. Although far from the double-digit expansion of the 1960s and early 1970s, economic growth continues at a steady 1.5 to 2 percent per year, driven by business investment and strong export growth, fueled in particular by growing demand from Asia for the country's manufactured products. This diversification of Japan's trade portfolio has insulated Japan from the weaknesses of the American and European economies, but it has not helped Japan's large service sectors enjoy renewed prosperity because they depend primarily on domestic customers. Thus, over 2007, wages have decreased

slightly and deflation persists in the Japanese economy. On the other hand, Japan still remains the second most technologically powerful economy in the world and the third-largest national economy based on purchasing power parity (PPP), behind only the United States and China.¹¹

Japan depends on the Middle East for almost 90 percent of its oil supplies, which itself are essentially entirely imported. Oil still accounts for 46 percent of Japan's energy needs.¹² Such dependence has encouraged Japanese policy makers to seek to retain good relations with the Middle East oil suppliers, especially since the shock of the 1973-74 OPEC oil embargo made evident the dangers of alienating these countries through an overtly pro-Israel policy. Even so, by the time of the 2003 Iraq War, Japanese policy makers had long lost faith in Iraq as a reliable energy partner. Tokyo viewed Hussein's hostile rhetoric regarding Japan and its allies, his threatening policies towards neighboring oil producers (which conveniently allowed Tokyo to maintain good relations with these countries even while breaking with Baghdad), and its efforts to promote higher world oil prices as a threat to Japan's energy and national security.¹³ Japanese policymakers found it much more difficult to break off energy and commercial ties with Iran. The Japanese government generally favored the European constructive engagement approach toward Tehran over the more confrontational policies favored by successive American governments during the 1990s.¹⁴

Japan has been less affected than other countries by the post-Iraq War rise in world oil prices, which partly result from the decrease in Iraqi oil production following the American-led invasion. Due to its scarce resources, Japan has long been a leading innovator in reusable energy sources and alternative forms of energy such as natural gas, coal, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and nuclear energy in addition to promoting conservation. Japan is the largest LNG importer in the world and

represents 40 percent of world imports.¹⁵ Japan's 55 nuclear reactors currently meet a third of the world's energy needs. The government plans to construct many new plants to raise this total to at least 40 percent by 2017.¹⁶ Energy-saving tactics are pursued vigorously in private industry as well. For example, Japan is the world's leader in hybrid car developments. Thanks to these and other measures, Japan has actually reduced its oil imports to 4.12 million barrels a day in 2007 from five million in 1973; oil consumption per unit GDP has fallen dramatically since that time.¹⁷

Nevertheless, rising world energy prices have had an indirectly negative effect on Japan by disrupting the economies of other countries that traditionally import large quantities of Japanese goods. Not only has the cost of transporting these products risen, but the worldwide economic slowdown has decreased demand for Japanese imports. They also have sharpened competition – despite recent agreements on cooperative exploration – between Japan and China for access to energy resources, most prominently under the East China Sea but also in third-country markets.

Experts differ in their economic outlook for Japan. According to an April 2008 report by the OECD, the Japanese economy should continue to experience growth of 1.5 to 2 percent through 2010, owing to increasing export totals to other Asian countries—particularly China, which replaced the United States as Japan's largest trading partner in 2007.¹⁸ Others predict that Japan is recession-bound, pointing to an overall drop in exports and a declining trade surplus.¹⁹ Japan's Minister of Economic and Fiscal Policy Hiroko Ota proclaimed in January 2008 that Japan was no longer “a first-class economy.” Citing an ageing population, the rise of its Asian rivals, and the recent inability of the Diet (the Japanese legislature) to pass economic reforms, Ota emphasized that Japan must continue to push technological innovation to adapt to globalization and to spur greater

economic growth.²⁰ Over the past six months, and particularly since June 2008, the Japanese economy (impelled by American financial woes) has slowly declined.

Japan's economic problems provide insight into why Japan may have taken a more proactive role during the Iraq war. If Japan continues to lose – or is perceived to be losing – its footing as a global economic powerhouse, it may slowly begin to rebalance its position in the international arena by becoming more proactive and engaged in resolving conflict and crises overseas. As Japan attempts to search for a new grand strategy, it will be forced to reconcile a post-Yoshida doctrine world with its involvement in the Iraq war.

Domestic Politics

OVERVIEW

Since the Diet's inception in 1955, Japan's legislative assembly has been ruled almost continuously by one political party: the center-right Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Focusing primarily on national economic prosperity, with ties both to big business and rural agriculture, the pragmatic LDP shaped Japan's post-war domestic and foreign policy with little resistance from opposition parties within the Diet. The LDP has governed alone or in coalition with another party throughout Japan's postwar history. The quartet of leaders that have led Japan in the 21st century—Junichiro Koizumi (April 2001 to September 2006), Shinzo Abe (September 2006 to September 2007), Yasuo Fukuda (September 2007 to September 2008), and Taro Aso (September 2008 to present)—have been long-serving members of the LDP. Nevertheless, the ability of LDP-led governments to implement radical policy initiatives was hampered by the party's rampant clan-based factionalism, which provided many opportunities for intra-party stalemates and vetoes. In contrast to his two dynamic predecessors, Prime Minister Fukuda was considered an uncharismatic but also uncontroversial

transitional figure. His surprise resignation in early September of 2008 not only fanned the flames of political turmoil in Japan, but also heightened prospects for a potential DPJ premiership that could emerge in November 2008. Regardless of who wins the election, Japan's foreign policy commitments are likely to be non-controversial, particularly, regarding military deployments toward Afghanistan.

In recent years, the centrist Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has emerged as the leading opposition party. Its members, who are ideologically diverse, strongly back the U.S.-Japan security alliance but are generally less supportive than their LDP colleagues of proposals to amend Article 9 of the constitution in order to permit Japan to support a wider range of overseas military operations. The New Komeito Party, which is backed by the Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai, is currently a junior partner of the LDP in the ruling coalition. It describes itself as a party of peace and has opposed deploying Japanese troops to Afghanistan. On the left, the Japanese Socialist Party and the Japanese Communist Party have strenuously opposed Japan's military activities and, at least in rhetoric, characterize the current SDF as unconstitutional. Both parties have lost considerable popularity since the end of the Cold War, though they have experienced a subtle renaissance as of late.

CURRENT PLAY

Plagued by money scandals and the mismanagement of the public pension system, the LDP-led coalition (with the New Komeito) lost its majority in the Upper House of the bicameral Diet to the DPJ in the July 2007 elections, resulting in a divided Diet for the first time since before World War II. The LDP, which won a landslide victory in the 2005 legislative elections, retains an overwhelming majority in the Lower House. The DPJ, while more supportive of expanding Japan's security role than other opposition parties, has called for reducing Japan's support for

the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Unaccustomed to bipartisan politics, Japanese politicians have found it difficult to adopt even basic legislation since the DPJ assumed control of the Upper House.²¹

After its electoral victory, the DPJ blocked extension of Japan's maritime support (refueling operation) mission on behalf of the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) campaign in Afghanistan. The DPJ argued that the deployment was unconstitutional and that unlike the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation, the OEF campaign lacked an explicit UN Security Council mandate. In addition, DPJ leader Ichiro Ozawa, who was formerly the LDP's Secretary General, challenged the wisdom of the entire mission, complaining: "In seeking to fight terrorists, Japan's overseas military activities are instead creating conditions that invite their attack."²² On November 1, the MSDF had to end their support mission in the Indian Ocean when efforts to negotiate a compromise between the LDP and the DPJ on the issue proved unsuccessful.²³ Unfortunately, this tension continues to shade debates about Japan's commitment to the U.S. and has further impelled gridlock in Japan's parliamentary system. The MSDF resumed its support operations in January 2008 when the Diet's Lower House passed new authorizing legislation with a two-thirds majority, which meant the law could take effect without the approval of the Upper House—the first time in Japanese parliamentary history that legislation had been passed in this controversial manner.²⁴

JAPANESE PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT THE WAR

Whatever the actual considerations that led Japanese policy makers to support U.S. military intervention in Iraq, opinion surveys showed mixed support for the war among the Japanese people. Polling in March 2003 showed that, while only 12 percent believed that "the government had every reason to back the U.S. military action"

(emphasis added), 64 percent believed that it "had no choice but to do so."²⁵ Revealingly, 92 percent said they were "anxious about North Korea."²⁶ In this case, popular calculations mirrored those of many Japanese policy makers, who saw supporting the United States in Iraq as important for ensuring American support for Japan against Pyongyang. A poll conducted a few months later, at the time the Diet authorized the deployment of Japanese ground forces to Iraq, found that 55 percent of the respondents opposed the measure, compared to 33 percent who supported it.²⁷ But a subsequent survey found that support for the deployment increased to 65 percent in April 2004, 11 points higher than the polling results of a year earlier.²⁸ The results of a survey conducted between September 21, 2006 and October 1, 2006, moreover, found that more than 70 percent of Japanese polled were "highly" or "somewhat" appreciative of the SDF's reconstruction activities in Iraq.²⁹

There were other signs of support, or at least lukewarm acceptance, of the deployment decision. The death of two Japanese diplomats near Tikrit met with little criticism among the Japanese. When Iraqi insurgents temporarily seized a large number of young Japanese peace activists as hostages in April 2004, the public tended to blame the captors rather than their abductors for unnecessarily placing themselves in danger.³⁰ Japan experienced much smaller antiwar demonstrations than occurred in other countries that had sent troops to Iraq. The explicit endorsement of the SDF mission by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan probably helped sustain domestic support for the operation.³¹ The subsequent expression of gratitude by his successor, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, for the ASDF's activities in Iraq also quieted some opposition.³²

An opinion survey published in February 2007 found that less than one-fifth of Japanese polled thought that participating in the Iraq war had been a good choice.³³ Yet, the Japanese continue to

view Americans—though not George W. Bush—favorably.³⁴ A recent analysis has concluded, on the basis of a pair of polls taken before and after the start of the war, that the Iraq war has had little impact on popular attitudes towards the United States.³⁵

One observer has identified four broad contemporary schools of thought regarding how Japan should orient its international security policy. The “normal nationalists,” which include Koizumi and Abe, seek very close relations with the United States and want Japan to be more active militarily, primarily through participation in multinational military operations that include U.S. forces. Adherents to this approach tend to be hawkish towards North Korea and skeptical about how China will use its growing power. The “middle power internationalists,” who are said to include Prime Minister Fukuda, tend to emphasize integration with Asia, while relying on the United States less and resisting major changes in Japan’s defense policy. The “neo autonomists,” who can be found largely on the far right of the Japanese political spectrum, advocate a much more assertive foreign and defense policy. They even favor abrogating the U.S.-Japan alliance because it constrains Japan’s sovereignty. Finally, the “pacifists” would like to see a *de facto* – if not formal – termination of Japan’s alliance with the U.S. because they fear it might entrap Tokyo in America’s conflicts with other states. Instead, they want Japan to rely more on multinational security institutions such as the ASEAN Regional Forum. Although the adherents of these schools are not strictly distributed by political party or other institutions, and many individuals embrace tenets that overlap with several schools, the first two seem most influential at present within the LDP and DJP.³⁶

Security Reform

ARTICLE 9

The Japanese military’s noncombat support for

Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom has stimulated further efforts to restructure both the legal and organizational dimensions of Japan’s national security policies to enhance the country’s ability to respond to internal and external security threats. For example, Prime Minister Koizumi’s response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States included instituting long-sought emergency powers for the executive branch if faced with similar emergencies in the future.³⁷

In April 2007, the Lower House created a panel to study ways to allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defense without altering the constitution.³⁸ An actual formal amendment to the constitution would have been a very challenging process. It would require a two-thirds majority in both the Upper and Lower Houses of the Diet and majority support in a nationwide referendum. The progress the LDP has made in expanding Japan’s defense activities without formally changing the constitution has decreased some of the impetus behind a constitutional revision. Even so, in May 2007, the Diet adopted legislation specifying the procedures for holding a referendum on changing Article 9 if the Diet were to ever approve an amendment by the required two-thirds majority.³⁹ Since the LDP and the DPJ currently hold well over two-thirds of the seats in both houses, they theoretically would be able to secure parliamentary approval of any amendment whose wording their representatives, who generally support some kind of revision, though differing on its acceptable language and extent, could agree on.⁴⁰

The Japanese government is currently seeking enactment of legislation that would allow it to permit future SDF deployments in multinational “cooperation” operations without requiring separate authorization legislation for each mission.⁴¹ The SDF missions for Afghanistan and Iraq have all been authorized by the passage of specific legislation by the Diet. A new law is required each

time the Japanese government wants to dispatch the SDF. This legislation must establish the operating parameters for each mission, define the conditions under which the SDF may use force, and specify a time limit for the deployment. New legislation is also required to extend the time limits of such laws before they expire. Opponents of the proposal, while acknowledging it could accelerate future SDF interventions, worry that it will provide future Japanese governments with a blank check to engage in a variety of operations that could meet the proposed definition of support for an “international cooperation activity.”⁴² Continued political instability in Japan has delayed further progress on this issue and it is unlikely to be given consideration until a post-Fukuda administration.

DEFENSE OF JAPAN 2007

On June 13, 2007, the Japanese government approved the latest edition of its annual defense white paper, *Defense of Japan 2007*.⁴³ The report identifies North Korea and China as Tokyo's primary strategic concerns while reaffirming Japan's alliance with the United States, commitment to international peacekeeping, and intent to keep defense spending at slightly below 1 percent of the country's gross domestic product (some \$39 billion). However, Japan's defense expenditures since the first Gulf War have been relatively flat (see table 1).⁴⁴ Even though the Iraq war catalyzed political decisions for JMOD to take a more proactive role in military-support missions, its budget is constitutionally burdened and unlikely to account for more than 1 percent of its GDP for the foreseeable future.

This version of the white paper was the first published by Japan's new ministry of defense, which before January 2007 only had status as an “agency.” Compared with the previous Defense Agency, whose main function was to manage the Japanese Defense Forces, the Defense Ministry has assumed a much greater role in national security planning and policymaking. *Defense of Japan 2007* justifies the new defense structure as needed to help

Japanese policymakers better manage crises and support international peace activities rather than to conduct more effective combat operations.

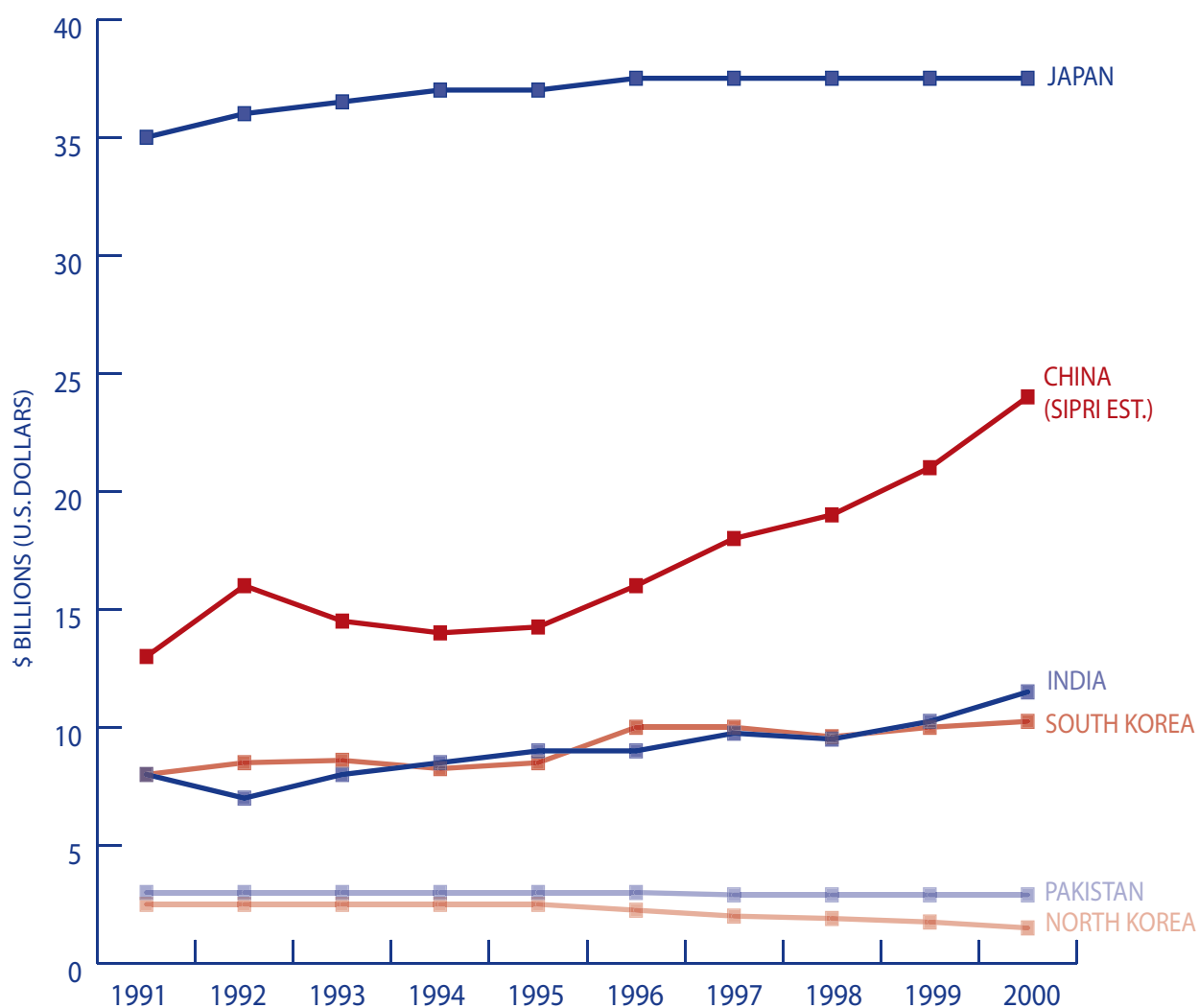
The Japanese white paper characterizes North Korea's improving missile arsenal as a major threat. The report assesses the Democratic Republic of North Korea (DPRK) as having extended the range of its missiles, as well as operational improvements

“Even though the Iraq war catalyzed political decisions for JMOD to take a more proactive role in military-support missions, its budget is constitutionally burdened and unlikely to account for more than 1 percent of its GDP for the foreseeable future.”

in accuracy and targeting. In addition, *Defense of Japan 2007* underscores Japanese officials' profound concern about China's military intentions and capabilities. The report warns that Beijing's military modernization, especially its acquisition of warships and warplanes suitable for projecting power at great distances from the Chinese mainland, is shifting the balance of power against Taiwan and could threaten Japan and other countries. The document also reiterates longstanding Japanese complaints—intensified by China's

Figure 1

DEFENSE EXPENDITURES IN NORTHEAST AND SOUTH ASIA



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Military Expenditure Database.⁴⁵

January 2007 test of an anti-satellite weapon—about Beijing's lack of transparency regarding its military programs. Japanese perceptions of security threats from North Korea and Japan are discussed in more detail below.

The white paper indicates that international peacekeeping has become a primary mission for Japan's military, which will pursue such operations in a "proactive manner." In recent years, Japan has made substantial contributions to foreign peacekeeping missions. In addition, the Japanese government sent several hundred troops to southern Iraq to promote civil reconstruction, water purification, and other humanitarian activities. Japanese navy ships have also provided logistical support for coalition forces engaged in Afghanistan, and played a critical role in 2004 during tsunami relief operations in Southeast Asia. These activities are also discussed below.

Defense of Japan 2007 also underscores the general humanitarian and security benefits of Japan's contribution to peace operations. Nevertheless, participating in peace and post-conflict reconstruction operations also helps promote U.S.-Japanese security relations. With U.S. troops heavily engaged in Afghanistan and Iraq, Washington continues to look to Tokyo to assume a major role in managing international security threats, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. The evolution of Japanese-American security relations since the Iraq War is discussed below. Japan's initial involvement in the Iraq and Afghanistan military campaigns has undoubtedly influenced the type of commitment Tokyo is willing to extend. A greater focus on humanitarian and non-traditional security relief operations – or "softer" missions – is likely to dominate Japan's engagement both under the alliance framework as well as multilateral operations.

Japan's Changing Threat Environment

One of the Iraq War's most significant lessons for Japan is that America's attention to Asia is likely to

be less than optimal in the coming years. America's strategic preoccupation in Iraq and Afghanistan has diverted hundreds of billions of dollars of resources, hundreds of thousands of people, diplomatic focus, and most importantly the precious lives of its men and women in uniform. Even though many in Japan have a strong desire to help the United States, it is not necessarily in their strategic interest to do so. Japan has not been a target of violent Islamist terrorists and its commitments to U.S.-led operations have generated tremendous political blowback in Tokyo.

Japan's main strategic challenges lay in its own backyard. From the rise of China to a resurgent Russia to a nuclear North Korea, Japan will be forced to rebalance its geostrategic perspective to ensure its national security and interests. The following sub-section details Japanese relations with leading Asian powers and North Korea in the aftermath of the Iraq war – while providing historical context to illuminate more nuanced lessons learned.

NORTH KOREA

Despite Japanese threats and pleas, North Korea resumed test launching ballistic missiles over the Pacific Ocean in July 2006, ending the moratorium the DPRK had maintained on such tests since September 1999. North Korea's test of a nuclear explosive in October 2006 constituted the first technological step toward developing a nuclear warhead sufficiently small for delivery aboard a ballistic missile.⁴⁶ In April 2007, Yuriko Koike, the first person appointed to the new post of national security adviser, called North Korea an "enormous" threat to Japan. Koike explained that Tokyo would insist that the DPRK take concrete action to end its nuclear program because its "missiles, with a nuclear warhead maybe, may reach the territory of Japan in about seven or eight minutes."⁴⁷

The 2006 detonation prompted the Japanese government to reassess, for the first time publicly,

the country's long-standing decision to refrain from developing an independent nuclear deterrent. Embodied in the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles," successive Japanese governments have committed not to possess, produce, or permit the entry into Japan of nuclear weapons. Although Japanese policymakers reaffirmed their commitment to maintain Japan's non-nuclear status, the Japanese government expanded its range of sanctions on North Korea.⁴⁸ The Japanese Foreign Ministry characterizes Japan's present approach toward the DPRK as "dialogue and pressure."⁴⁹

In addition, Japanese policy makers have made clear that they continue to view the DPRK as a rogue regime for its past kidnapping of Japanese citizens. In September 2002, Prime Minister Koizumi made an unprecedented visit to North Korea in an attempt to achieve a breakthrough in bilateral relations. This summit produced the Pyongyang Declaration in which Japan apologized for its past behavior toward North Korea and the DPRK agreed to comply with international law to meet its nuclear nonproliferation commitments. Kim Jong Il's efforts to obtain peaceful relations through frankness backfired, however, when he announced that Pyongyang had kidnapped over a dozen Japanese citizens between 1977 and 1983 to serve as language instructors for DPRK intelligence agents. Kim claimed that eight of the acknowledged abductees had died, but the still secretive North Korean government proved unable to provide an outraged Japanese government and public sufficient information to support this claim. After DPRK authorities handed over the ashes of one of the dead abductees, DNA tests showed that they belonged to someone else, raising suspicions that the abductees were still alive.⁵⁰

Many Japanese remain unconvinced that most of the abductees died in North Korea and suspect that the number seized was actually higher. Family members of the abductees as well as Japanese human rights groups have collaborated

with sympathetic government officials to keep the issue prominently in the Japanese media. When the DPRK permitted the five children born to former abductees to visit Japan in October 2002, the Koizumi government refused to compel their return. DPRK representatives subsequently refused to reopen the issue and called on Tokyo to pay reparations to North Korea for Japan's colonial occupation, restore full diplomatic relations with Pyongyang, and remove its sanctions on DPRK commercial activities.⁵¹ The abduction issue has since impeded substantial progress in the bilateral negotiations aimed at establishing diplomatic relations and resolving mutual disagreements between Japan and North Korea.⁵² In the Six Party Talks seeking to secure the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, for instance, the Japanese government has adopted a much firmer stance than that the United States, South Korea, China, or Russia.

Despite mutual Japanese-American antipathy toward the Kim regime, recent months have seen a modest divergence in the positions of the United States and Japan toward North Korea. The Bush administration now seems more willing to yield on other issues, including that of the abductees, in order to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons development program. In contrast, despite criticism at home and abroad, the Japanese government adamantly refuses to normalize relations with the DPRK or provide substantial financial assistance in support of the February 2007 denuclearization accord without meaningful progress in resolving the abduction question as well as the nuclear weapons issue.⁵³ Japanese officials, citing the unresolved abduction issue, have lobbied Washington not to remove the DPRK from its list of state sponsors of terrorism until the DPRK clarifies the status of the abducted Japanese. U.S. authorities added Pyongyang to the list after government investigators concluded that North Korean agents were responsible for the 1987 bombing of a South

Korean civilian airliner, which killed all 115 people on board. DPRK negotiators have long demanded the removal because the designation requires the United States to veto proposed International Monetary Fund and World Bank assistance to the DPRK. It also excludes U.S. arms sales to North Korea and restrains economic assistance.⁵⁴

At the June 2008 session of the talks in Beijing, the

“The Iraq War has had the most demonstrable impact on America’s ability to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis.”

DPRK delegation finally said they would reinvestigate the abduction issue—as well as the 1970 hijacking of a Japanese plane that was diverted to North Korea—without further preconditions. In return, the Japanese government lifted some minor sanctions imposed on North Korea since 2006, including a ban on chartered flights between the two countries. More serious sanctions, however, remain in place, including a Japanese ban on North Korean imports. In addition, Japanese leaders stressed that they were prepared to impose even more stringent sanctions if the North Korean government did not fulfill its commitments regarding the abductee and nuclear issues.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Tokyo has yet to commit to provide energy and other economic assistance to the DPRK as part of its contribution to implementing the denuclearization deal. Although Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura welcomed the DPRK’s June 2008 nuclear declaration, he stressed that it needed to be verified and “would have been better if the declaration had included nuclear weapons.”⁵⁶ The

other parties appeared prepared to make up any short falls that could result should Japan continue to decline to provide the fuel.⁵⁷

The North Korean issue has created the most immediate source of tension in U.S.-Japan relations since many Japanese observers have concluded that, no matter what the president says in public, the Bush administration is prepared to deemphasize its support for Japan’s position on the abductees/terrorism issue in return for securing a denuclearization deal. Some Japanese defense experts attribute the Bush Administration’s shift on North Korea—in favor of a negotiated settlement even on the basis of an imperfect agreement—as an attempt to secure some positive accomplishment for Bush’s legacy to compensate for the Iraq failure.⁵⁸ An alternative interpretation held by some Japanese is that the Iraq fiasco convinced Washington that regime change was not a credible objective in the case of North Korea.⁵⁹ If the DPRK fulfills its part of the February 2007 Six-Party agreement and dismantles its nuclear weapons potential, it will remove a major threat to Japanese security. For this reason, Fukuda said at the G8 summit, which Japan hosted this July, that progress on denuclearization need not await a resolution of the abductee issue. At a news conference at which Bush stated, “The United States will not abandon you on this issue,” Fukuda observed: “It should not be the case that there is no progress on the nuclear front just because there is not progress on the abduction issue.”⁶⁰

But Japan’s leaders have expressed widespread skepticism that the DPRK will relinquish its nuclear weapons program even if all the parties remove the abductees issue from the negotiating table. Even if North Korea were to eliminate its nuclear arsenal to satisfy the United States, the DPRK would still possess hundreds of shorter-range Nodong-1 missiles that could attack Japan’s main cities with conventional warheads. Japanese intelligence concluded from the July 2006 Nodong

launches that the DPRK had developed the capacity to employ these mobile missiles with high accuracy against potential targets in Japan.⁶¹

The Iraq War has had the most demonstrable impact on America's ability to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis — a view shared by former Bush administration Senior Director for Asia Michael Green.⁶² American military commitments to Iraq have not only stretched our ground forces and military assets to a breaking point but have also undermined the Bush administration's ability to shore up political support for new military endeavors. The recent about-face in America's negotiating posture vis a vis North Korea from hard-line to more pragmatic has not been well received in Tokyo. Removal of North Korea from the state sponsor's of terror list induced a feeling of abandonment in Japan and a worry that Washington is willing to abandon Japanese interests for its own needs. Officials in Tokyo regularly articulate how the Iraq war has challenged America's ability to compel North Korea to denuclearize.

CHINA

In addition to the threat from North Korea, the Japanese have become increasingly concerned about military intentions and capabilities of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Japan's relationship with China, burdened by history and intermittent geopolitical disputes, is complex, made ever more so by China's meteoric rise in recent years. Coinciding with Japan's "lost decade," China enjoyed rapid industrial growth during the 1990s and is becoming the world's second-largest economy according to many measurements.⁶³

For the past decade, Japan's leaders and public alike have expressed alarm at recent Chinese foreign policy actions. During the March 1996 crisis over Taiwan, China launched missiles in the island's vicinity, threatening regional maritime commerce. Some of the missiles landed less than

100 kilometers from Okinawa.⁶⁴

Since the late 1990s, Chinese ships have conducted unauthorized exploratory research within waters claimed by Japan, exacerbating their bilateral dispute over exploratory drilling rights in undersea natural gas fields in the East China Sea near the Senkaku-Diaoyutai Islands. Japan adheres to the UN Law of the Sea when defining its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as extending 200 miles from its shore. China asserts that its EEZ begins not at its coast but from the edge of its submerged continental shelf. Recent Chinese drilling at the Chunxiao/Shirakaba gas fields and Japan's response have highlighted the dangers of these conflicting claims. Although the fields lie just inside China's side of the meridian line separating the two countries' claims, Japanese experts believe that exploiting the fields would siphon gas from deposits that extend under waters claimed by Japan—a situation disturbingly similar to that which Saddam Hussein cited to justify his invasion of Kuwait in 1990. In May 2004, Beijing authorized Chinese firms to commence exploratory drilling. In November 2004, the Japanese detected a Chinese Han-class nuclear submarine in its territorial waters near Taiwan.⁶⁵ Following a year of futile protests, Tokyo decided to permit Japanese firms to conduct their own explorations in the disputed region. After Chinese warships provocatively patrolled the area, the Japanese Coast Guard boldly assumed formal control over the contested Senkaku Islands south of Japan.⁶⁶ In November 2006 and January 2007, the Japanese government formally asked China to cease production at disputed gas fields in the East China Sea.⁶⁷

Japanese policymakers have also expressed concern about the China's surging military spending, which has increased by double digits for many years, a level exceeding the country's average annual economic growth rate.⁶⁸ Since the late 1990s, the Chinese government has accelerated efforts to modernize and upgrade the PLA. The latest

Chinese defense white paper outlines plans for an ambitious, multi-decade effort to modernize all the branches of the PLA, from the army, navy, and air force to the Second Artillery Forces, which manage the country's strategic missile forces.⁶⁹ On March 4, 2007, the Chinese government announced one of its largest military spending increases in years, a 17.8 percent increase in its declared defense budget.⁷⁰ China's lack of transparency regarding defense expenditures obscures matters, but most foreign analysts estimate that, since the official Chinese budget figure excludes spending on military research and development, nuclear weapons, and major foreign weapons imports, the PRC could spend as much as \$100 billion annually on defense.⁷¹

China's military buildup has raised some alarm in Tokyo about Japan's security situation. The Japan Defense Agency's *Defense of Japan 2005* identified, for the first time, China's military modernization as potentially threatening and called on Beijing to make its defense programs more transparent.⁷² On September 27, 2006, the new Director General of the Japanese Defense Agency, Kyuma Fumio, told the media that Chinese military power had become so great that it would be "impossible for Japan to deal with it single-handedly, no matter how much money we spent for our defense buildup."⁷³ In Fumio's assessment, only the U.S.-Japan mutual defense treaty could counter this imbalance.⁷⁴

Chinese-Japanese relations improved after Abe became Japan's prime minister on September 26, 2006. His October 9, 2006 visit to Beijing ended an 18-month freeze on bilateral summits between the heads of the two governments. Before then, the Chinese government had suspended high-level summits with Japanese leaders outside the context of multilateral gatherings in order to protest Koizumi's annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. The Chinese and many Asian nations perceive Yasukuni, which honors Japan's 2.5 million war dead, as an abdication of responsibility for Japan's

imperial military rule. Popular relations between Chinese and Japanese people reached a low point under his tenure when, in August 2004, Chinese fans booed Japan's national soccer team when it played at the Asia Cup tournament in Chongqing.

In November 2006, China and Japan resumed their working-level defense dialogue, which had been in abeyance since March 2005. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's April 2007 visit to Japan further advanced the modest *détente* that has marked Sino-Japanese relations. Despite the high-profile cultural and business exchanges that characterized the visit, Wen's warning underscored the underlying tensions that still trouble the relationship between the two governments. For example, Wen and Abe failed to achieve discernible progress on the Sino-Japanese dispute over the energy resources under the East China Sea dispute. Even as Wen visited Tokyo, Japanese officials expressed concern about a report that China's state-controlled CNOOC Ltd. had begun processing oil and natural gas from the Chunxiao/Shirakaba gas fields that are currently disputed by the two countries. At the summit, the two governments agreed only to continue bilateral discussions and to review a report on how their countries could jointly develop the undersea natural resources. Their present energy cooperation focuses mostly on bilateral conservation and environmental measures.

Furthermore, when Abe visited Europe in January 2007, he urged the EU governments not to lift their embargo of arms exports to China, arguing such a move would adversely affect the security situation in East Asia.⁷⁵ Like other governments, the Japanese criticized China for its failure to notify other countries in advance about its anti-satellite (ASAT) test and then for delaying its subsequent confirmation about the incident. Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso complained that China should have given Japan advanced notice.⁷⁶ Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki warned that Beijing's lack of openness about the incident could

reinforce doubts about China's peaceful motives.⁷⁷ Abe told the Japanese Diet that China's test might have violated international law since the 1967 UN Outer Space Treaty, which bans weapons of mass destruction in space, requires all countries to avoid contaminating space with debris.⁷⁸

At the April 2007 summit, Chinese and Japanese leaders agreed to create a "hot line" between their defense establishments. They also advanced plans to expand military exchanges, including reciprocal naval ship visits.⁷⁹ In June 2008, a Japanese destroyer docked at a Chinese naval port for the first time since World War II. Another first had occurred the previous month, when the Japanese SDF delivered relief aid to China after the earthquake in China's Sichuan Province on May 12, 2008.⁸⁰ The planned defense communications link might help prevent the inadvertent escalation of future military incidents, such as when the Japanese detect yet another Chinese submarine in their territorial waters. Neither the hotline nor the exchanges, however, will directly address the more general apprehension in Japan regarding China's long-term military plans.⁸¹

In May 2008, Hu Jintao concluded the first state visit by a Chinese president to Japan in almost a decade. President Jiang Zemin traveled to Japan in 1998, but the subsequent deterioration in relations between Beijing and Tokyo severely curtailed high-level meetings. The 2008 meeting helped gloss over months of tensions over the safety of exports from China to Japan — particularly, the infamous poison dumplings. The meeting created an open and productive diplomatic space to further enhance bilateral relations between Beijing and Tokyo. Both sides even concluded joint-development agreement for natural gas deposits in the East China Sea.

Despite generally stable bilateral relations between China and Japan, anxiety runs deep in both nations. Uncertainty continues to shade strategic perspectives in Tokyo and Beijing.

For their part, Chinese leaders view warily Japan's growing military capabilities, expanding security role in East Asia, and efforts to revise the pacifist clauses in the Japanese constitution. In particular, Beijing fears that Tokyo's expanding military cooperation with the United States could lead to the provision of de facto Japanese assistance to Taiwan in a future cross-Straits confrontation. Chinese strategists especially worry that Tokyo and Washington could share missile defense technologies with Taiwan, negating Beijing's deterrent strategy of threatening missile strikes in response to Taiwan's assertions of greater autonomy. Over the long term, Chinese security experts fear that Japan could exploit its technological and industrial potential, including the country's latent nuclear weapons capacity, to become a major military power. The recent decision of a Japanese parliamentary committee to authorize the government to use Japan's robust space capabilities for "non-aggressive" military purposes could exacerbate such concerns.⁸²

In the near term, moreover, Chinese authorities appear reluctant to embrace Fukuda given his weak domestic position. Recent polls place his approval rating at below 21 percent.⁸³ This situation impels Fukuda's drive to improve Sino-Japanese relations since a diplomatic success might boost his popularity. Yet, Fukuda's political weakness makes it difficult for him to realize such improvements since Chinese policy makers doubt that Fukuda has sufficient domestic support to fulfill any commitment his unpopular government might make to Beijing.

The Iraq wars has impressed upon Tokyo that America will not always be able to give Asia the attention it needs. America's strategic preoccupation in Iraq and Afghanistan has given China space to enhance its regional influence and power. For Tokyo, this is not only worrisome but a trend against which they are likely to have to hedge. Many in Japan perceive that America's extended

deterrent in Asia has eroded as a result of its commitments abroad and seek to take the necessary steps to ensure their security.

SOUTH KOREA

Japan's relations with South Korea, while better than Tokyo's ties with the DPRK, also remain troubled. From 1994 to 2002, Japan and South Korea expanded their defense cooperation in response to mutual concerns about North Korea and American pressure. In October 1998, Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo provided a written apology to South Korea for the suffering Japan had caused it in the past, and South Korea lifted its ban on cultural imports from Japan. Both nations have also started to participate in joint security exercises and continue to engage in an ongoing trilateral security dialogue with American participation.⁸⁴

Yet, many in Japan have become concerned that South Korean leaders have adopted a position of nearly unconditional engagement with North Korea and China, while simultaneously relaxing security ties linking South Korea to Japan and the United States.⁸⁵ A visible example of their diverging perspectives occurred in their differing responses to the DPRK's July 2006 ballistic missile tests. Whereas Japan adopted comprehensive sanctions in retaliation for what it perceived as a significant deterioration in its regional security environment, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun downplayed the threat by arguing that the range of the missiles was too great to threaten South Korea but too short to reach the United States, conveniently ignoring their potential use against Japanese targets.⁸⁶ South Korean officials—who estimate that DPRK agents have kidnapped thousands of ROK citizens since the 1953 Armistice, and still hold hundreds of them (primarily fishermen)—express little support for the Japanese decision to freeze negotiations with North Korea over a far smaller number of abductees.⁸⁷ Until last year's change of government in South Korea, Japanese policymakers worried about

the perceived weakening of the U.S.-ROK defense alliance that Tokyo has long seen as a core buttress of its regional security.

For their part, ROK leaders have made clear their unease at Japan's expanding capacity to project military power onto the Korean peninsula. Many South Koreans still denounce the brutal Japanese occupation of Korea that occurred before and during World War II. The issue of compensating South Korean "comfort women" and forced laborers remains under discussion between the two governments. South Koreans worry that the new generation of Japanese leaders will show less repentance about past Japanese policies than the cohort that governed Japan during the Cold War. In March 2007, South Koreans protested vehemently when Prime Minister Abe made remarks that appeared to cast doubt about previous Japanese admissions that the Japanese military had used coercion to force the comfort women into serving as sex slaves.⁸⁸ The comments aroused concerns even in Washington and became a major issue at the April 2007 Abe-Bush summit.⁸⁹ Like the Chinese, South Koreans criticize Japanese history textbooks for trying to whitewash Japan's past behavior.

In December 2005, President Roh cancelled a planned ROK-Japan bilateral summit with Koizumi in retaliation for his visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine.⁹⁰ Prime Minister Koizumi's regular visits to the Yasukuni Shrine in Japan from 2001-2006 alienated many in South Korea. The leaders of both countries have also expressed unease at Japan's expanding international security role and attempts to modify the Japanese constitution.

A more contemporary concern among South Koreans is that Japan's expanding military capacities might lead North Korea and China to accelerate their own military buildups, to the potential detriment of ROK security. For example,

South Korean defense analysts have warned that any U.S. decision to reverse its current policy and sell Japan the F-22A Raptor, the most powerful warplane in the world, could destabilize the military balance in northeast Asia and generate a regional arms race.⁹¹

Japan and South Korea also contest the sovereignty of the Takeshima/Dokdo Islands, which lie between the two countries. The ROK keeps a police force on the islands, whose surrounding waters contain rich fishing grounds and, potentially, billions of dollars worth of natural gas hydrates. The dispute unexpectedly escalated in the spring of 2006, when South Korean Coast Guard ships intercepted Japanese research vessels attempting to conduct a survey of the surrounding area.⁹² Discussions in 2006 and 2007 on demarcating the two countries' overlapping maritime claims failed to produce an agreement.⁹³ In July 2008, South Korea recalled its ambassador to Tokyo to protest the decision of the Japanese government to describe the islands as Japanese territory in its middle school textbooks.⁹⁴ South Korean Prime Minister Han Seung-soo visited the islands at the end of the month and called Dokdo "the son of our country."⁹⁵

Japan has strenuously made efforts to improve ties with South Korea. On October 20, 2007, shortly after the DPRK nuclear test, the Japanese, ROK, and U.S. foreign ministers held their first formal trilateral meeting since October 2000. Although Abe has left office, the change in government in South Korea in February 2008 has brought to power a conservative government under Lee Myung-bak whose regional security outlook is more in line with that of Tokyo than his two immediate leftist predecessors, Kim Dae-jun and Roh Moo-hyun. Lee declared improving relations with Japan a foreign policy priority, but their fundamental differences over how to manage North Korea, the Takeshima/Dokdo Islands, and their diverging views of history continue to burden

Tokyo-Seoul relations, which appear to have been unaffected by the parallel decisions of both countries to provide ground troops and other support for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Historical disputes color the subtext of bilateral relations between Seoul and Tokyo. Even though both nations are allies of the United States tension continues to play a spoiler role for greater regional cooperation. The Iraq War did not directly exacerbate tensions between the two nations, but America's diplomatic focus away from the region didn't help in mediating bilateral flare-ups between Seoul and Tokyo.

AUSTRALIA

Relations between Japan and Australia have also evolved in the context of their joint engagement in the Iraq War. Australian troops in Iraq sometimes protected Japan's noncombat SDF contingent. In March 2007, the Abe government signed a Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation. It provided for bilateral collaboration on counterterrorism, maritime security, disaster relief, and peace operation, with provisions for joint training and intelligence-sharing. This accord represented the first formal security agreement that Japan has signed outside of its agreements with the United States. Although the joint obligation does not oblige either nation to come to the other's aid, it is a significant step toward stronger relations between the two countries.⁹⁶ Japan, Australia, and the United States have subsequently conducted several combined exercises, some of which have also involved the Indian armed forces.⁹⁷ In October 2007, for instance, navies from the three countries conducted a drill near Japan's southern Kyushu Island that involved two destroyers and two P-3C anti-submarine patrol planes from the Japanese MSDF and one P-3C patrol plane each from the U.S. Navy and the Australian air force. They practiced search and rescue activities as well as a simulated attack on a Japanese escort ship.⁹⁸

The defeat of the Howard government in the recent elections has produced a new government whose Mandarin-speaking prime minister, Kevin Rudd, is eager to improve relations with China and has proposed multilateral solutions that include, not exclude, non-democracies to address problems in the Pacific region.⁹⁹ Political tensions between Japan and Australia became more pronounced

“For Japan, India represents a potential counter-balance against an aggressive Chinese ascent.”

when Kevin Rudd – during his first global tour as prime minister – bypassed Japan. For Tokyo, this not only furthered underscored Australia’s China-tilt, but also highlighted a Canberra foreign policy that was less in-line with the Bush team’s Asia policy. Nevertheless, Japanese and Australian diplomats are currently drafting a joint resolution in the United Nations that would seek to encourage China to join other nuclear powers in reducing the size of its arsenal of nuclear weapons.¹⁰⁰

INDIA

India has been the largest recipient of Japanese foreign assistance for the past four years, displacing China. Japanese foreign investment in India is soaring due to the fact that many Japanese companies are now looking to hedge their risks after heavily investing in China. The governments of both India and Japan have sought to increase economic and strategic ties with the other, especially in light of China’s growing economic and military threat. Unlike many of Japan’s potential

security partners in Asia, the Indians harbor few animosities toward Japan over its aggressive behavior before and during World War II. Abe’s diplomatic formula of creating an “arch of freedom and prosperity” in Asia nicely encompassed the democracies of India and Australia while excluding China and North Korea, Japan’s main security threats.

Since Koizumi’s leadership role, India and Japan have been strengthening bilateral ties. Japan has provided India billions of dollars in foreign assistance and continues to be a major financier of the New Delhi-Mumbai corridor that is meant to link the capital and the financial center of India. Japanese car companies, such as Suzuki, are also establishing large factories in India and Japan’s leading tech companies are drilling into India’s vast reserves of human capital for software and IT assistance. This cooperation has also expanded into the strategic sphere.

In April 2007, the U.S., Indian, and Japanese navies held joint exercises in the Pacific Ocean off of Japan’s east coast, where they rehearsed a joint response to a major natural disaster.¹⁰¹ In August 2008, Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura announced that the Japanese government would back the controversial U.S.-Indian civil nuclear energy cooperation agreement despite the opposition of the country’s anti-nuclear activists, who argue the agreement would weaken the nuclear nonproliferation regime by effectively legitimizing India’s refusal to join the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and develop its own nuclear weapons arsenal in violation of NPT principles.¹⁰² These trends indicate a concerted effort by Tokyo to establish stronger bilateral ties with India to counter potentially aggressive Chinese moves.

For Japan, India represents a potential counter-balance against an aggressive Chinese ascent. Japan and India both share tremendous anxiety

regarding China's rise (as detailed in the China section above). India and Japan are both democracies and share similar values. Even though India is attempting to eschew being categorized as a counter-balance to China, its being courted as one by the region's major powers. Moreover, Japan's current trajectory seems to indicate tremendous uncertainty over America's staying power in Asia. Some leading Japanese strategists are charting a more forward-engaged Japanese foreign policy in order to hedge against a likely (perceived not necessarily actual) decline in American power and influence in the Asia-Pacific.

RUSSIA

Despite the end of the Cold War, Japan and Russia have been unable to resolve their territorial dispute over what the Russians call the Southern Kurils and the Japanese label their Northern Territories. These four islands—Kunashir (known in Japanese as Kunashiri), Iturup (Etorofu), Shikotan and Habomai—have remained under Moscow's control since the Soviet military occupied them at the end of World War II. The Soviet authorities expelled the original inhabitants and established military bases and other settlements in their place. Japanese government representatives have claimed that, while Tokyo did cede control of the Sakhalin and Kuril islands to the USSR under the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty,¹⁰³ which Moscow never signed, the treaty's provisions did not apply to the four islands of the Northern Territories, which Tokyo has never recognized as part of the Kuril chain.¹⁰⁴ A 1956 Joint Declaration restored diplomatic and commercial relations between Russia and Japan, but the lingering sovereignty dispute has prevented their signing a formal peace treaty. Moreover, Russia's recent display of revisionist power in Georgia has further demonstrated to the Japanese that Moscow's intentions are rapidly becoming revisionist and a threat to Japan's security.

Various proposals to divide control of the islands

or establish a creative shared sovereignty arrangement have never gained decisive support in both governments simultaneously.¹⁰⁵ Whenever one side seemed prepared to make a deal, the other party declined in the end to endorse it. Since any compromise settlement would experience extensive criticism from nationalist politicians, Russian and Japanese leaders typically have found it easier to stand firm on principle regardless of the high opportunity costs—notably, the lack of a formal peace treaty and the discouraging of potential investors and other business deals due to increased uncertainty—they incurred.

While reaffirming both countries' interest in a settlement, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted in 2007, "It is important that the eventual solution be something acceptable for the public and parliament of both the countries."¹⁰⁶ Former Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Georgy Kunadze, less diplomatically explained, "I cannot think of any Japanese government that is strong enough to drop these demands all together, and I cannot think of any Russian government which is crazy enough just to give away the islands."¹⁰⁷ This sentiment is gaining more traction in Japan as senior officials worry about the level of American commitment to Japanese security — particularly, because of America's strategic preoccupation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

At their April 2008 summit in Moscow, Fukuda urged, "The negotiations must be further developed to raise the relationship between the two countries to a higher dimension."¹⁰⁸ Putin simply expressed hope that "we'll further our negotiations and improve our relationship in all areas, based on achievements from previous talks," implying a lack of interest in departing from Moscow's current stance.¹⁰⁹ Kremlin spokesman Alexei Gromov subsequently stated that territorial questions were not discussed in detail and that neither side's position had changed on the sovereignty issue.¹¹⁰ With polls showing a precipitous decline in Fukuda's domestic

popularity,¹¹¹ the Japanese Prime Minister had little leverage to offer major concessions, which presumably also diminished Russian interest in pursuing a deal.

The sovereignty dispute has also engendered recurring mutual recriminations about alleged territorial violations. Russian ships regularly detain Japanese sailors who attempt to fish in the waters

“Japan feels that America’s inability to politically challenge Russia’s revisionist agenda – as witnessed in Georgia – holds tremendous implications for America’s ability to maintain stability in Asia against China and Russia.”

surrounding the disputed islands, charging them with violating Russia’s maritime boundaries. In August 2007, a Russian coast guard ship killed a crew member of a Japanese fishing boat with a warning shot aimed at the vessel.¹¹² In turn, the Japanese government has alleged that Russian military aircraft have periodically violated Japan’s air space. The most recent incident occurred in early February, when a Russian Tupolev Tu-95 bomber, ignoring the warnings of the Japanese fighter aircraft sent to intercept it, overflew the uninhabited island of Sofugan in the Izu island chain south of Tokyo during a February 2008

Pacific Ocean exercise.¹¹³ Japanese authorities have also recently accused Russian diplomats of spying on the Japanese cabinet.¹¹⁴ Although Russian representatives denied both accusations, Japanese nationalists used the espionage incident to resume denouncing Moscow for allegedly pursuing hostile policies toward Japan.¹¹⁵ For Japan, these actions highlight Moscow’s internalization of President Bush’s doctrine of preemption, which eschews sovereign non-interference principals.

The Russian military occupation of Georgia has underscored the reluctance on the part of the present Russian national security establishment to offer territorial compromises, especially to American military allies. Japan will continue to feel pressure from Russia over its Northern Territories, but will not take any action to counter Russian aggression. Japan feels that America’s inability to politically challenge Russia’s revisionist agenda – as witnessed in Georgia – holds tremendous implications for America’s ability to maintain stability in Asia against China and Russia.

PART II: LESSONS LEARNED

The most significant lesson that American policy-makers should absorb from Japan's reactions – and involvement in the Iraq war – is a maturation of their defense posture and policies. Unlike China's lessons-learned paper, Japan is far less likely to apply American force projection and principals to international conflicts. In its search for a new grand strategy Tokyo is likely to place more emphasis on building its conventional capabilities while enhancing its alliance with the United States. For the foreseeable future Japan will likely continue on a difficult transition toward becoming a normal power. This section will sketch out the complex progress Japan has made while illustrating particular policies that indicate progress toward normalization.

Japanese Involvement in the Iraq War

Before the 1973-74 Arab-Israeli War the Japanese governments had deferred to Washington's lead when conducting policy toward Iraq and the rest of the Middle East. The shock of the OPEC oil embargo, however, resulted in Tokyo distancing itself from Washington and adopting a more pro-Arab policy, while simultaneously taking measures to reduce Japan's dependence on Middle East oil. The policy shift helped improve relations with the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein. From 1977-81 and again in 1985-86, Japan was the largest exporter of manufactured goods to the Middle Eastern country, which became an important buyer of Japanese goods as well as an oil supplier. During this period, it is estimated that one-quarter of all Japanese overseas development projects were concentrated there, including projects led by major Japanese companies like Mitsubishi.¹¹⁶

Tokyo's decision to side with the U.S.-led Desert Storm in the first Gulf War, as well as support the imposition of economic sanctions on Iraq by the United Nations in 1998, caught the Baghdad government off-guard since their economic ties with Japan had misled Iraqis into thinking that they would have Tokyo's neutrality if not outright

support. The Iraqi government responded to what they saw as a betrayal by denouncing Japan as Washington's lackey and detaining Japanese citizens as part of their Desert Shield hostage collection. Japanese policy makers, however, wanted to emphasize their support for the United Nations and opposition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). In 1998, Japan co-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution No. 1154 with Britain and the United States. It warned that Iraq would face the "severest consequences" if it failed to allow UN inspectors free access to all suspected WMD sites.¹¹⁷ The Japanese government backed Britain and the United States when they launched air strikes against Iraq in December 1998 to coerce its government into allowing unrestricted UN inspections of its suspected WMD facilities.¹¹⁸

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Prime Minister Koizumi was among the first world leaders to reaffirm his country's support for the United States. A staunch proponent of the normalization of the Japanese military, Koizumi in early October 2001 helped to pass the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law. The legislation, which pledges Japanese support for the U.S.-led campaign in and around Afghanistan, was the first of several explicit steps taken by Japan to aid the United States in its fight against terrorism. Renewed yearly since its passage in 2001, the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law allows for the dispatch of the Marine Self-Defense Forces (MSDF) to the Indian Ocean to provide refueling services and other logistical support for U.S. forces in Afghanistan. In addition to maritime interdiction of suspected terrorist or WMD shipments, MSDF support has included "transportation, repair and maintenance, medical services, communications, airport and seaport services, and base support" for American troops.¹¹⁹ The law also permitted the SDF to conduct surveillance and intelligence operations far away from Japan, as long as the SDF did not become part of the military force of any country. It was also unprecedented

in that it authorized Japan's soldiers to use weapons to defend people under their protection, and not merely in self-defense.¹²⁰ The new legislation also revised the Coast Guard Law to permit firing warning shots at boats followed by shots to disable intruding boats.¹²¹ The law was last renewed in June 2008, though Japanese support is declining, especially within the DPJ and the junior coalition partner, the New Komeito.

Koizumi justified support for Operation Enduring Freedom by citing the 24 Japanese nationals killed in the attacks as well as the general need to counter international terrorism.¹²² Although Japan has largely escaped the Islamist-inspired terrorism seen in some other Asian countries as well as in Western Europe and the Middle East, the terrorist threat resonated with many Japanese given their country's long experience with this problem. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Japanese Red Army became one of the best-known extremist groups. Although its declared objectives were to overthrow the Japanese government and monarchy and to start a world revolution, the group's most prominent attacks occurred in Tel Aviv, Singapore, and elsewhere. While the Aum Shinrikyo also conducted overseas operations, it became best known in 1995 for killing twelve people and affecting thousands more by releasing Sarin gas in the Tokyo subway system. The cult had also conducted other biological and chemical attacks, which came to light after the subway incident.

Japan's involvement in the war in Iraq has proven much more controversial. Although Japanese policymakers ruled out providing direct military support for the American-led invasion of Iraq that began on March 20, 2003, Prime Minister Koizumi immediately expressed his "understanding" of the reasons for the military intervention, despite its absence of a supporting UN Security Council resolution. More concretely, he arranged for an extension of the MSDF deployments in the Indian Ocean to free up U.S. forces for operations in Iraq.

Koizumi then secured Japanese involvement in the coalition's postwar stabilization efforts in Iraq.

Nonetheless, Japanese officials remained reluctant to provide additional support until the United States had secured United Nations endorsement of its Iraq campaign. For a country that had long prided itself on supporting the United Nations financially and with peacekeeping troops, and that aspired to become a permanent member of its Security Council, the lack of alignment between American actions and the formal UN position presented paralyzing tensions.

It was only after the adoption of United Nations Resolution 1483, which called on member states to assist in Iraq's reconstruction, that the Koizumi government submitted to the Japanese Diet, on June 13, a Law Concerning Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq. This legislation, enacted on July 26, 2003, authorized the SDF to provide noncombatant support for American and other coalition forces in Iraq and the surrounding Persian Gulf. In January 2004, 600 GSDF personnel began to assist with post-conflict reconstruction activities (repairing schools, providing health care, distributing food and water, and assisting with the provision of other public services) in Samawah, southwest of Basra. The forces remained dependent on Dutch and Australian forces for their defense. In addition, for much of their two and a half years in Samawa, the GSDF detachment, whose composition continuously changed as new members rotated in-and-out of the battlefield, were "unable to perform their stated duty of aid work" because of local violence.¹²³ Although the Japanese soldiers suffered no casualties, in July 2006, amidst the deteriorating security situation in Iraq, Koizumi announced that the force's mission had been "fulfilled" and ordered their withdrawal.¹²⁴ Even when they were deployed, Japan's troop contribution was significantly less than that of the main U.S. coalition partner, the United Kingdom, or Japanese

neighbor South Korea, which sent 3,600 soldiers. Nevertheless, the GSDF deployment in Iraq represented the largest and most dangerous overseas operation conducted by the Japanese military since World War II.¹²⁵ By the time it had ended, over 5,000 GSDF personnel had gained first-hand experience in a potential combat zone.¹²⁶

Although Japan has not had troops in Iraq since the July 2006 decision to withdraw troops, the ASDF continues to provide logistical support for coalition forces. From Kuwait and Qatar, roughly 200 Japanese airmen have, since the beginning of the GSDF mission in Iraq, helped to transport supplies and troops—officially no weapons—to Baghdad and northern Iraq aboard three C-130 transport planes. In August 2006, Japan and the United Nations signed an agreement formalizing this arrangement.¹²⁷ In April 2007, the Japanese Nagoya High Court ruled that the ASDF mission violated Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution because it involved the airlifting of multinational troops to a war zone. Government officials dismissed the ruling and reaffirmed their determination to end the missions as scheduled in 2009.¹²⁸

In explaining his government's December 2003 decision, Koizumi cited the need for Japan to support its bilateral military alliance with the United States.¹²⁹ At the beginning of the year, during the run-up to war, he had emphasized the importance of this alliance for sustaining Japan's security: "Japan has enjoyed peace for more than 50 years since the war thanks to the Japan-U.S. alliance. It is not in our national interests to hurt the credibility of the alliance...The United States says that they consider any attack on Japan as an attack on America. That is working as a major deterrent against any country that may try to attack Japan."¹³⁰ Koizumi considered the deployment of ground troops to the Iraqi theater as especially important in demonstrating Japan's reliability to Washington as an important security partner that was no longer hobbled by pacifist or constitutional

inhibitions.¹³¹ Prime Minister Abe, Koizumi's successor, also emphasized the need for Japan to support U.S. security initiatives—including by relaxing constitutional limitations on bilateral military cooperation—in order to influence American foreign and defense policies of concern to Japan.¹³²

Koizumi also saw the Iraq War as an opportunity to realize his ambition to modify the Japanese constitution, or at least its practical application, in order to make Japan more of a "normal" great power.¹³³ Although he declined to justify the deployment on the basis of collective defense, the prime minister characterized the mission as a noncombat humanitarian effort. Koizumi also differentiated between a "combat zone," which remained off-limits for the SDF, and a peace support mission in "an area where security was poor," finding a formula that could theoretically allow SDF activities in many other regions of conflict.¹³⁴ Operationalizing SDF personnel in military operations helped Japan take a critical step toward contributing to international security. It also gave the Japanese Ministry of Defense real experience and necessary psychological confidence to engage in similar overseas contingency operations in the future.

One reason the Japanese decided to deploy ground and air force personnel to an active war zone was to avoid the embarrassment that had befallen Japan a decade before. During Operations Desert Shield and Storm, Japan was criticized for not contributing non-monetary support for the effort to repel Iraq's attack into Kuwait. While the Japanese government provided logistical support in noncombat zones and contributed \$13 billion to that effort, it did not contribute troops directly to Desert Shield or Desert Storm. A more active role in the 2003 campaign would send a signal that Japan was capable of more than writing checks.

Nevertheless, the Japanese government has continued to exploit the country's financial resources

to provide significant reconstruction aid to Afghanistan and Iraq. In this regard, Japan has far outstripped any of the coalition forces except the United States. Tokyo has pledged \$2 billion to help rebuild Afghanistan after the overthrow of the Taliban regime. In addition, Japanese representatives committed \$5 billion to promote Iraq's post-Saddam recovery at the October 2003 Madrid conference. The latter sum ranked Japan as the second-highest contributor after the United States, which committed \$20 billion to Iraq's reconstruction at the conference.¹³⁵ When the Japanese government announced the withdrawal of its ground force contingent, it took care to reaffirm its commitment to provide billions of dollars to assist in Iraq's economic reconstruction.¹³⁶ Even though Japanese lawmakers are struggling to keep their commitment to refueling operations in the Indian Ocean they remain committed to monetary assistance. This is a likely indication that America's demands on Tokyo for greater participation in international anti-terror operations and the Iraq war have created greater roadblocks to Japan's exercise of military power – even if used for humanitarian purposes.

In March 2007, moreover, Abe and Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi agreed to establish a “long-term strategic partnership” between their countries to enhance the countries' economic and political relationship. Analysts interpret the odd formation of a “strategic partnership” between two mid-sized countries operating in entirely different spheres of the world as an attempt by Japanese policymakers to please their American colleagues, who might have welcomed the declaration as a sign that Tokyo was continuing to support the Bush administration's policy in Iraq even after withdrawing its ground forces.¹³⁷ The agreement also provided another framework through which Japan could continue to develop its energy relationship with the new Iraqi government. Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi praised the GSDF and

the ASDF for the “significant role” they have played in helping promote security after the Iraq War. After signing the strategic partnership, Al-Hashimi requested that Japanese companies invest in the development of oil and gas in Iraq as soon as possible.¹³⁸

The fact that the majority of the Iraqi aid package has been allocated to the restoration of Iraq's oil and natural gas infrastructure—including a refinery in Basra¹³⁹ — underscores the Japanese objective of enhancing their access to Iraq oil supplies. In public, Koizumi made the indirect argument that an SDF presence would help keep the region stable, which in turn would keep oil prices steady.¹⁴⁰ Less openly, he and other Japanese officials may have seen the deployment as essential for securing direct access to Iraq's oil supplies. After the governments of France and Germany opposed the American invasion of Iraq, U.S. policymakers moved to exclude French and German firms from obtaining contracts in postwar Iraq. Conversely, Japanese officials, like those of other allies, may have hoped that their unprecedented level of support would be rewarded by Washington with Iraqi oil contracts.¹⁴¹ An official of Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry later acknowledged that Japan's aid policies in Iraq had the additional purpose of assisting private Japanese companies to receive future oil development contracts in Iraq.¹⁴² After the occupation, Japanese government and energy company representatives assumed a prominent role helping restore Iraq's oil and gas industries.¹⁴³

In early 2007, Japan's first defense minister, Fumio Kyuma, engendered a minor contretemps (and probably revealed the private opinion of many Japanese) when he publicly termed the war a mistake, a comment that led Vice President Cheney to shun him during his February 2007 trip to Tokyo.¹⁴⁴ More generally, many in Japan believe that the administration has been overly preoccupied with the Iraq question at the expense of other

issues, particularly diplomatic focus in Asia.

Despite these differences, the Japanese government has declined to confront the Bush administration directly on its Iraq policies. In announcing a subsequent extension of the Iraq mission, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki explained, “As the United States and the multinational troops continue their aid to Iraq, it is necessary for Japan to carry out responsibilities that are appropriate to our status.”¹⁴⁵ A Japanese official accompanying Abe during his April 2007 visit to the United States more forthrightly acknowledged another motive—maintaining Washington’s support regarding North Korea: “The United States won’t give consideration to Japan over the North Korean issues unless Japan maintains its Iraq policy.”¹⁴⁶ Members of the Diet also acknowledged the logic of supporting the United States in Iraq to maintain American backing for Japan’s hard-line position in the Six-Party Talks.¹⁴⁷

Perhaps for this reason, the Japanese government discouraged media coverage of the GSDF deployment to Iraq.¹⁴⁸ In January 2004, the Japanese Defense Agency asked that all Japanese media leave Iraq. The Defense Agency went as far as to threaten a total blackout if any problems were to arise. In 2003 the Koizumi government was forced by pressure from local media organizations to amend a series of bills concerning personal information that could have infringed press freedoms.¹⁴⁹ A scandal erupted when it emerged that the GSDF’s intelligence security unit had gathered information on the activities of organizations and individuals that opposed the deployment of SDF troops in Iraq.¹⁵⁰ The Japanese Defense Agency acknowledged the operation after the Communist Party in Japan found incriminating documents of such activities.¹⁵¹

As in the United States, the Japanese government and public have incurred the intangible costs of dealing with returning military personnel from

Iraq whose physical or mental health has been adversely affected by the war. One government study found that the suicide rate among returning SDF troops is three times the national average. Because the Iraq War represents the first time Japanese troops have been involved in an ongoing combat situation since World War II, Japanese soldiers, civilians, and government officials alike must address the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder

“The true lessons of the Iraq War are likely to take years to manifest in Japan, but the certainty that Japanese involvement catalyzed transition to normalcy is evident to date.”

(PTSD) for the first time in many decades, regardless of the noncombatant status of the SDF troops who were in Iraq.¹⁵²

Japan’s gradual transition to normal power status has had its fair share of ups and downs during the Iraq war. Tokyo’s commitment to the U.S. has been instrumental in helping Washington achieve many strategic objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan, but has also created tremendous strain in the political system, reaching almost paralytic levels. The true lessons of the Iraq War are likely to take years to manifest in Japan, but the certainty that Japanese involvement catalyzed transition to normalcy is evident to date.

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CONCLUSION

Although the violence in Iraq shows signs of abating, instability will likely continue for many years as the Iraqi central government remains rather weak and unable to effectively exercise political control. Japanese policymakers have pledged to continue to provide air support for U.S. forces in Iraq as well as logistical support from the Indian Ocean for troops in Afghanistan. Given domestic political paralysis it is unlikely that Japan will again provide an on-the-ground presence in Iraq. Nor is it probable that Japan will commit GSDF troops to Afghanistan in a manner similar to the Iraq mission. The New Komeito Party, the LDJ's partner in the current government coalition, has objected to the mission as too dangerous given the rising violence in Afghanistan.¹⁵³ Although Japan figures to remain peripherally involved from a military standpoint, Tokyo should continue to enjoy a considerable presence in Iraq due to its billion-dollar economic reconstruction aid package.

Iraq has been a brief episode in Japan's arc, and more of a catalyst than cause of its changing global security role. Thus far, Tokyo's involvement in the Iraq project has not fundamentally changed the prism through which the government of Japan views the American alliance: Japanese policymakers remain interested in seeing the United States maintain a strong presence in East Asia and support Tokyo in Japan's relationship with China. The fate of the current North Korean denuclearization deal, China's ongoing regional resurgence, the troubles that plague the Japanese economy, and the success of the LDP's reform projects will all have a greater effect on Japan's security trajectory in the foreseeable future than the Iraq war.

The United States and Japan have managed their different perspectives on the Iraq War and their changing security relationship well. According to Asian security expert Michael Green, their bilateral security alliance is in considerably stronger shape today than it was before the Iraq War.¹⁵⁴ U.S. officials enthusiastically urge the Japanese government

to continue to assume a larger role in supporting the war and help manage other international security challenges. "Japan has an opportunity and an obligation to take on a role that reflects its political, economic, and military capacity," Defense Secretary Robert Gates observed while on a November 2007 tour of East Asia.¹⁵⁵ The United States, he added, "hopes and expects Japan will choose to accept more global security responsibilities in the years ahead."¹⁵⁶ The fact that Japan's unprecedented engagement in Iraq occurred without casualties, but still allowed Japan to avoid the humiliation that ensued from its military abstention policy during the Gulf War, presumably will make it easier for Japanese governments to undertake similar missions in the future if deemed equally necessary to promote Japan's security—including indirectly by bolstering Tokyo's security credentials in Washington.

For almost two decades, the end of the Cold War, the relative decline in Japan's economic influence, and increasing regional security threats from Japan's East Asian neighbors have induced Japanese leaders to revise their country's national security policies. The Iraq War accelerated but did not start this trend or change its trajectory. Similarly, the end of the war will unlikely reverse recent changes in Japanese foreign and defense policies. The following are summary findings of lessons that Japan has learnt or observed in the wake of the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Article 9

Japan's active military's noncombat support for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom has stimulated further efforts to restructure both the legal and organizational dimensions of Japan's national security policies to enhance the country's ability to respond to internal and external security threats. For example, Prime Minister Koizumi's response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States included instituting long-sought emergency powers for the

executive branch if faced with similar emergencies in the future.¹⁵⁷

The Japanese government is currently seeking enactment of legislation that would allow it to permit future SDF deployments in multinational “cooperation” operations without requiring separate authorization legislation for each mission.¹⁵⁸ The SDF missions for Afghanistan and Iraq have all been authorized by the passage of specific legislation by the Diet. A new law is required each time the Japanese government wants to dispatch the SDF.

Japan's gradual transition to normal power status has had its fair share of ups and downs during the Iraq war. Tokyo's commitment to the U.S. has been instrumental in helping Washington achieve many strategic objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan, but has also created tremendous strain in the political system, reaching almost paralytic levels. The true lessons of the Iraq War are likely to take years to manifest in Japan, but the certainty that Japanese involvement catalyzed transition toward normalcy is evident to date.

Growing Questions about America's Commitment

One of the Iraq War's most significant lessons for Japan is that America's attention to Asia is likely to be less than optimal in the coming years. America's strategic preoccupation in Iraq and Afghanistan has diverted hundreds of billions of dollars of resources, diplomatic focus, and most importantly the precious lives of its men and women in uniform. The following regional challenges are exacerbating feelings of anxiety in Japan about America's commitment to the alliance and strategic engagement in the region.

NORTH KOREA

The Iraq War has had the most demonstrable impact on America's ability to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis — a view shared by former

Bush Administration Senior Director for Asia Michael Green.¹⁵⁹ American military commitments to Iraq have not only stretched our ground forces and military assets to a breaking point but have also undermined the Bush administration's ability to shore up political support for new military endeavors. The North Korean issue has created the most immediate source of tension in U.S.-Japan relations since many Japanese observers have concluded that, no matter what the president says in public, the Bush administration is prepared to deemphasize its support for Japan's position on the abductees/terrorism issue in return for securing a denuclearization deal. Some Japanese defense experts attribute the Bush Administration's shift on North Korea—in favor of a negotiated settlement even on the basis of an imperfect agreement—as an attempt to secure some positive accomplishment for Bush's legacy to compensate for the Iraq failure.¹⁶⁰ An alternative interpretation held by some Japanese is that the Iraq fiasco convinced Washington that regime change was not a credible objective in the case of North Korea.¹⁶¹

HEDGING AGAINST CHINA

The Iraq War has impressed upon Tokyo that America will not always be able to give Asia the attention it needs. America's strategic preoccupation in Iraq and Afghanistan has given China space to enhance its regional influence and power. For Tokyo, this is not only worrisome but a trend that against which they are likely to have to hedge. Many in Japan perceive that America's extended deterrent in Asia has eroded as a result of its commitments abroad and seek to take the necessary steps to ensure their security, however, this has not translated into greater momentum for Tokyo to reconsider its nuclear status.

EMERGING STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA

For Japan, India represents a potential counterbalance against an aggressive Chinese ascent. Japan and India both share tremendous anxiety regarding China's rise (as detailed in the China

section above). India and Japan are both democracies and share similar values. Even though India is attempting to eschew being categorized as a counter-balance to China, its being courted as one by the region's major powers. Moreover, Japan's current trajectory seems to indicate tremendous uncertainty over America's staying power in Asia. Some leading Japanese strategists are charting a more forward-engaged Japanese foreign policy in order to hedge against a likely (perceived, not necessarily actual) decline in American power and influence in the Asia-Pacific.

RESURGENT RUSSIA

The Russian military occupation of Georgia has underscored the reluctance on the part of the present Russian national security establishment to offer territorial compromises, especially to American military allies. Japan will continue to feel pressure from Russia over its Northern Territories, but will not take any action to counter Russian aggression. Japan feels that America's inability to politically challenge Russia's revisionist agenda – as witnessed in Georgia – holds tremendous implications for America's ability to maintain stability in Asia against China and Russia.

Bottom-line

Spurred by novel regional threats, the changing nature of its alliance with the United States, and domestic pressures for constitutional reform, Japan's recent leaders have continued to increase the country's involvement in international affairs and have accelerated the "normalization" of the Japanese military. Yet, though a more ambitious course has been plotted since Japan's first constitutional modification in 1992 authorizing the use of SDF forces abroad for peacekeeping operations, the country has not yet completely abandoned the Yoshida Doctrine and become a fully autonomous international actor and military power. Tokyo still depends for its security on decisions made in Washington—and its leaders know it. Japan's process of security normalization, begun in the

wake of the Cold War and Tokyo's embarrassment over the first Persian Gulf War, will remain slow-moving in a country with a decades-long post-World War II legacy of military abstention. Like the Persian Gulf War, however, Afghanistan and Iraq will likely come to represent a significant step along the path in Japan's foreign policy transformation. In the aggregate, Japan's involvement in the global fight against terrorism and the war in Iraq represent a stark departure from the Yoshida Doctrine—and a potential phase change in the Japanese-American alliance and its global posture.

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