

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
CENTER FOR NORTHEAST ASIAN POLICY STUDIES

WHITHER JAPAN?
NEW CONSTITUTION AND DEFENSE BUILDUP

Mr. Tomohiko Taniguchi
CNAPS Japan Fellow, 2004-2005
May 2005

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
1775 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036-2188
Tel: 202-797-6000 Fax: 202-797-6004
www.brookings.edu

Contents

Introduction

Constitution

Timeline

Power dynamic in the Diet

Article 9

Collective self-defense

Areas of contention

Defense Buildup

Operation Enduring Freedom

Operation Iraqi Freedom

Missile Defense

One could wonder why

New Defense Thinking

Security environment

Multi-Functional Flexible Defense Force

Tanks and fighter aircraft are passé

An Asian equivalent of the United Kingdom?

The China Factor

U.S. emphasis on Asia

Taiwan: a worst case scenario

Scenario 1: Japan losing America

Scenario 2: Japan losing China

Whither Japan: Policy proposals

In the short term

Mid to long term: avoid becoming an enfant terrible

Introduction

This paper explores the changes to the Constitution and defense strategy currently underway in Japan and considers where the nation is headed. To address these questions, it will focus on those changes that could seriously affect or alter Japan's relations with the United States and neighboring countries. The revisions to the Constitution and the ongoing defense buildup certainly meet this criterion, and are therefore drawing attention from the rest of East Asia, as well as from the United States.

This paper attempts to make the case that Japan is proceeding rapidly on both of the aforementioned fronts, as if to confirm the wisdom that when things eventually start moving in Japan, they tend to do so rather rapidly.¹

For instance, within a relatively short period of two to three years, Japan has: (1) sent Self Defense Force (SDF) troops to Iraq; (2) begun maintaining a quasi-permanent maritime presence in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea; (3) decided to implement sea-based missile defense, the first country among the U.S. allies to do so; (4) started to reorient its defense posture toward China; and (5) decided to revise its Constitution, in order to enable the nation to engage in collective self-defense with its ally, the United States. A decade ago, such changes would have been beyond anyone's wildest imagination. Changes are no less rampant in other areas. The current debate even includes whether the nation should introduce an empress for the first time in more than 230 years; polls show that a large majority favor this change.² The 1990s, which many dubbed a "lost" decade for Japan's economy, now seems to have been a fertile period of preparation for the many changes now taking place not just in that sector but across the board.

The rapidity of the development combined with the resultant emergence of a Japan which is not merely an economic giant but also a military power might well have created a widening gap in perception between Japan and its immediate neighbors, most notably China. As a consequence, both Japan and China consider themselves reactive, responding only when the envelope is pushed by the other party.

From the Japanese perspective, China is a revisionist power with renewed territorial ambitions. Yet it may well be that China perceives Japan as no longer a status quo power but one that is involved in U.S. efforts to encircle China. One need not cite works by Robert Jervis³ or John G. Stoessinger⁴ to know that misperceptions of the motives of one's perceived adversary have long been a cause of overreaction and military escalation,

¹ The reason for this peculiarity, while itself an intriguing question, is beyond the scope of this paper and would be better addressed by specialists of other academic disciplines.

² Though constitutional in nature, the issue (of whether it is appropriate for Japan to have empresses) requires no amendment of the existing Constitution, for it contains no reference to whether the head of the Royal Household should be male or female. The Imperial Household Law (*Koh-shitsu Tenpan*) would introduce a change if indeed necessary.

³ See Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.)

⁴ See John G. Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go to War*. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2000.)

thereby leading nations to “security dilemmas,” and eventually to war. Hence, the unfolding rivalries between Beijing and Tokyo are a source of grave concern.

“Whither Japan?” is a question this paper as a whole must address. Japan is highly *unlikely* to move to become a freelance power by distancing itself from its traditional ally, the United States. In fact, the opposite is the case: Japan has chosen to *strengthen* its political and military ties with America. Hence, a more immediate question is, “Why has it done so?”

The following sections will examine what the new Constitution will look like and include observations on the transformations taking place within Japan’s military. Discussions will follow as to what the drivers are for these changes. The paper will then explore a number of scenarios involving the Taiwan Strait, to shed light on what a new Japan, alongside the U.S., could do in the case of regional contingencies. It will conclude by returning to the basic question: Where Japan is headed?

Constitution

Yasuhiro Nakasone, Prime Minister and President of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the mid-1980s, gave a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan in Tokyo on February 23, 2005, in which he assured the audience that in three years “the Diet [parliament] will be discussing how they should change the Constitution.”⁵

Yukio Hatoyama, one of the founding politicians of the largest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), made a similar statement: “The DPJ will have a draft for the revised Constitution earlier than the LDP. We will be fighting against the LDP with the draft in hand in the upcoming general elections that are probably due within the next two years.”⁶

Okiharu Yasuoka, a lower house member who headed the LDP’s working group for the Constitutional revisions, stresses that the question is no longer “whether or not” but “when” the nation is going to have a new Constitution. Within the year 2005, the Diet will create a body to propose the amendment of the Constitution. Mr. Yasuoka believes that the Diet will then pass the National Referendum Legislation, a prerequisite that specifies the procedure for the national referendum required for introducing any changes to the Constitution.⁷ Mr. Yasuoka also pointed out that the party will have finished a draft for a new Constitution by the time the LDP celebrates the 50th anniversary of its establishment on November 15, 2005.⁸

⁵ The conference in its entirety can be viewed, in Japanese, http://www.videonews.com/asx/fccj/022305_nakasone_300.asx.

⁶ Yukio Hatoyama, interview by Tomohiko Taniguchi, Tokyo, Japan, February 24, 2005.

⁷ Okiharu Yasuoka, interview by Tomohiko Taniguchi, Tokyo, Japan, February 25, 2005. The words that are in use to describe what will happen to the Constitution range from “to change,” “to amend,” “to revise,” to “to rewrite.” Though it is still too early to tell what the final outcome will look like, it will be more like writing anew than adding a few clauses or revising some articles.

⁸ The LDP was established on November 15, 1955.

Timeline

An emerging timeline indicates that a critical first string will be pulled this year by creating a parliamentary body for proposing the amendment. The enactment of the referendum law is projected to occur as early as the end of 2005. It appears that Japan will have a new Constitution by the end of the decade at the earliest, or at least within the next ten years. Some say this pace is appropriate while others disagree. There are concerns within Japan's defense community, for example, that it is too slow. Should Japan be unable to implement collective self-defense, some argue, the nation will remain ill-prepared to utilize the missile defense system that will be put into use circa 2007. That, combined with the possibility of hostilities between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, could present a danger in the next three to four years. These points will be discussed in more detail later.

Despite questions about the pace of reforms, it is safe to argue that Japan has come a long way in a relatively short period of time. Since the current Constitution was enacted in 1947, it has been a national taboo even to *consider* changing it. Now, almost all polls show that a majority of Japanese, without regard to political orientation, are in favor of revising the Constitution. According to the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, a slightly right-of-center newspaper, 65 percent of those polled preferred constitutional revision. Whereas its political opposite *Asahi*, a left-of-center newspaper, found for the first time in the newspaper's history that a majority, 53 percent of those polled, supported revision.⁹

One might ask how it is that Japan, a country known for its pacifist and anti-military sentiment since the end of World War II, is now swinging in a different direction. Indeed, anti-militarism has long seemed almost part of the Japanese DNA. In March 1969, when the Cabinet Office asked more than 16,000 Japanese men and women whether Japan, with its economy already second in the free world only to the U.S., should do more to enhance its defense capabilities, only 28.1 percent responded positively while 41.3 percent said either it need not or should not.¹⁰ Pacifism was particularly strong among women. Two years later, in February 1971, when a similar poll was taken among 2,496 housewives, one in three (33.4%) expressed outright rejection to Japan's possessing armed forces of any kind.¹¹

Even as late as January 1989, when the Cabinet Office asked whether Japan should send troops abroad to participate in UN-led peace keeping operations, only 22.4 percent responded positively whereas 46.5 percent responded negatively.¹²

Changes, however gradual, to these strong isolationist/anti-militarist sentiments started to occur after the first Gulf War, during which Japan's so-called checkbook diplomacy

⁹ See *Yomiuri* articles dated April 2, 2004. See *Asahi* article dated May 1, 2004.

¹⁰ *Shakai Ishiki ni Kan-suru Yoron Chosa* (Poll on Social Consciousness), taken among adults between 16 and 70 years of age in March 1969, <http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/s43/S44-03-43-22.html>.

¹¹ *Kenpo ni Kan-suru Yoron Chosa* (Poll on the Constitution), <http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/s45/S46-02-45-18.html>.

¹² *Waga Kuni no Heiwa to Anzen ni Kan-suru Yoron Chosa* (Poll on Japan's Peace and Security), <http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/s63/H01-01-63-24.html>.

brought humiliation rather than appreciation. Even still, in January 1994, when asked whether defense capabilities should be further enhanced, 66.2 percent of those polled answered that the level as it then stood was more than appropriate, and only 6.3 percent answered positively in favor of enhancement.¹³

To be sure, pacifism is not entirely dead. The Japan Teacher's Union (JTU), the slogan of which is "Never send our pupils to the battlefield," has long advocated anti-militarism, opposition to the U.S.-Japan alliance, and absolute pacifism, and continues to do so. The JTU now counts 30 percent of the nation's teachers as members down from 50 percent in the mid-1980s.¹⁴ The Japan Socialist Party—a longstanding major opposition party in Japan—has also promoted its ideology of 'unarmed neutrality' in every national election. Nevertheless, majority opinion has swung solidly behind revision. This newly emerging consensus represents a substantial leap from the past.

Power dynamic in the Diet

This phenomenon is partially a result of the changed power configuration in the Diet. At the time of this writing, the LDP-led coalition¹⁵ plus the DPJ, both of which seek the re-writing of the Constitution, make up 96 percent of the membership in the House of Representatives, and 92 percent in the House of Councilors.¹⁶ The Socialist Party, now called the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which was at one time the largest opposition party, has lost many seats and now holds only 6 seats out of 480 in the House of Representatives and only 6 out of 242 in the House of Councilors. 1995 was the watershed year in which the Socialists began to lose substantial support, due to the socialist Prime Minister's mishandling of the massive earthquake that devastated central Japan and the Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway. Also, the SDP's constituents in the unions, who have traditionally been a source of hard-core opposition to any revision of the Constitution, are steadily losing power.¹⁷ The SDP's losses in the Diet and the DPJ's gains have made it possible, for the first time in living memory, for both houses to have more than the necessary two thirds of votes needed to change the Constitution.

¹³ *Jieitai Bouei Mondai ni Kan-suru Yoron Chosa* (Poll on the Japan's SDFs and Defense Issues), <http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h05/H06-01-05-14.html>.

¹⁴ *Kyoshokuin no Soshiki suru Syokuin Dantai no Jittai Chosa* (Survey on the Organizations Teachers and School Employees belong to) taken by the Ministry of Education and Science, http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/15/12/03122201.htm.

¹⁵ This comprises the LDP and Komeito, a semi-Buddhist party.

¹⁶ As of March 10, 2005, in the House of Representatives with a total of 480 seats, the seat-allocation is as follows: LDP 248; DPJ 177; Komeito 34; Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 9; SDP 6; Independent 4. As of March 14, 2005, in the House of Councilors with a total of 242 seats, the seat-allocation is as follows: LDP 114; DPJ 84; Komeito 24; JCP 9; SDP 6; Independent 5.

¹⁷ According to statistics compiled by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, union membership has declined from 35.4% recorded in 1970 to 19.2% as of 2004. In the U.S., 14.3% of waged and salaried workers belonged to unions in 2003.

Box 1: Procedure for rewriting / amending the Constitution

Article 96 of the current Constitution:

Amendments to this Constitution shall be initiated by the Diet, through a concurring vote of two-thirds or more of all the members of each House and shall thereupon be submitted to the people for ratification, which shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of all votes cast thereon, at a special referendum or at such election as the Diet shall specify.

Amendments when so ratified shall immediately be promulgated by the Emperor in the name of the people, as an integral part of this Constitution.

Author's note:

There must be more comprehensive legislative arrangements in order to implement the amendment process which is only vaguely sketched above. Firstly, it is unclear who in the Diet can propose amendments. Whether the Cabinet, as is the case with proposing ordinary legislation, can propose revisions also remains debatable. An amendment must be made in the Diet Law to clarify these points. Secondly, a new law must be legislated concerning how and on what occasion the national referendum should be conducted. There is a bipartisan consensus on the need for such legislative arrangements sooner rather than later.

As noted above, the LDP and DPJ appear united in their belief that the Constitution should be revised. "I have been greatly encouraged by former Prime Minister Nakasone," reveals Yukio Hatoyama, a leader in the DPJ.¹⁸ That Yasuhiro Nakasone mentors not only his LDP colleagues but also such influential members of the DPJ as Hatoyama is telling in that more consensus are being forged than first meets the eye, overriding party boundaries. There is even agreement in two controversial areas: (1) the stipulation in Article 9 of the Constitution that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes," and (2) the idea sustained by successive administrations that collective self-defense is part of any independent nation's natural right *in theory* yet, *in practice*, is not possible for Japan.

Currently, there exist more similarities than differences between the two parties' proposed drafts. For the sake of this discussion, Nakasone's proposal and Hatoyama's can be viewed as representing the views of the LDP and the DPJ respectively.¹⁹

¹⁸ Yukio Hatoyama, interview by Tomohiko Taniguchi, Tokyo, Japan, February 24, 2005.

¹⁹ Neither of these in any way represents either party's official views that are still being formed as mentioned previously. For Nakasone's proposed draft, see the Institute for International Policy Studies (IIPS), *Kenpo Kaisei Shian* [A Draft for Revising the Constitution] (Tokyo, Japan: IIPS, 2005,) partly downloadable in Japanese from the Yasuhiro Nakasone website <http://www.iips.org/j-index.html>. For Hatoyama's, see Yukio Hatoyama, *Shin Kenpo Shian: Songen aru Nihon wo tsukuru* [A personal proposal for a new Constitution: to create a Japan that is of dignity] (Tokyo, Japan: PHP Kenkyujo, 2005.)

Article 9

Article 9 is the heart of what has been called post-war Japan's "Peace Constitution." It comprises two sections; the first renounces war and the second prohibits Japan from possessing any "war potential," in the form of a military. Nakasone's draft keeps the renunciation of war as a means to settle international disputes largely intact, although it proposes to change the wording from "[the Japanese people] renounce war" to "[the Japanese people] recognize no war." Hatoyama's proposes to retain the original wording as is.

Regarding the second part, Japan obviously currently maintains armed forces, called the Self Defense Forces, and both Nakasone and Hatoyama agree to change the SDF's name. In both proposals, the SDF are no longer to be called mere "forces," but "militaries." The suffix "*tai* [隊]," normally used for police or fire fighters, is currently used for the SDF (*Jieitai*). Both Nakasone and Hatoyama propose instead to use "*gun* [軍,]" a noun meaning military. On this and other relevant points, Box 2 further illustrates the proposals in the Nakasone and Hatoyama drafts, as well as the current text.

Hatoyama's proposal also puts significant emphasis on the United Nations. As shown in Box 2, he asserts that the "State of Japan by law can transfer part of its sovereign right to international organizations. When participating in actions of collective security in order to contribute to peace and stability in international society, the State of Japan by law can restrict its sovereign right."

This obviously presupposes that the UN would be the main force for international security, which it has never been, and that "collective security," defined as the use of force by the UN against an internationally recognized enemy, is a workable concept. It is one thing to aspire to high ideals in a statesman-like fashion, yet quite another to decide whether these ideas can bear any practical relevance. However, on collective self-defense, the gap between Nakasone and Hatoyama is indeed negligible.

Regardless of specific differences and similarities, both proposals reflect a shift in the collective mindset of the Japanese from the old one that favored euphemism to the new one that appreciates realism.

Box 2: Constitutional drafts*

Current Constitution:

Article 9

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Nakasone draft:

Article 11

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever recognize no war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

The State of Japan, in order to secure its peace and independence as well as to maintain security for the nation and the people, possesses the Military for Defense.

The State of Japan, in order to sustain international peace and security and to provide humanitarian support, can let the Military for Defense participate in such activities as conducted either by international organizations or under the framework of international cooperation.

The power of command and control of the Military of Defense belongs to the Prime Minister. When ordering the Military of Defense to conduct such activities as would involve use of force, Prime Minister must obtain confirmation of the Diet in advance, or in such cases as deemed necessary, afterwards.

Hatoyama draft:

Article 46

Honoring justice and order in international society and aspiring to establishment of a permanent international peace, the Japanese people negate any acts of aggression and peace destroying.

Based on the spirit expressed in the preceding paragraph, the State of Japan forever renounces war and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

Article 47

The State of Japan actively cooperates with the United Nations and other established international organizations in their activities for the sustenance and creation of peace.

Article 48

The State of Japan can by law transfer part of its sovereign right to international organizations unless doing so will not violate the basic order of governance this Constitution stipulates.

When participating in actions of collective security in order to contribute to peace and stability in international society, the State of Japan can by law restrict its sovereign right.

Article 50

The State of Japan, in order to secure its independence and security, possesses the Military of Self-Defense.

The organization and conduct of Military of Self-Defense shall be determined by law.

Article 51

The supreme power of command and control of the Military of Self-Defense belongs to the Prime Minister.

Article 52

Confirmation of the Diet is required when the Prime Minister mobilizes the Military of Self-Defense.

Article 53

Development, production, and possession of weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons are prohibited.

Article 54

The Japanese people are not obliged to join the Military of Self-Defense.

**Apart from the current Constitution, the above are translations by the author of this paper, and are in no way official.*

Collective self-defense

In May 1981, Japan's Cabinet Legislation Bureau issued an interpretation of Japan's constitutional right to engage in collective self-defense. According to Richard Samuels,

It is recognized under international law that a state has the right of collective self-defense, which is the right to use actual force to stop an armed attack on a foreign country with which it has close relations, even when the state itself is not under direct attack. It is therefore self-evident that since it is a sovereign state, Japan has the right of collective self-defense under international law. The Japanese government nevertheless takes the view that the exercise of the right of self-defense as authorized under Article Nine of the Constitution is confined to the minimum necessary level for the defense of the country. The government believes that the exercise of the right of collective self-defense exceeds that limit and is not, therefore, permissible under the Constitution.²⁰

Successive Japanese administrations have adhered to this strict interpretation, despite the fact that “the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense” is enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This policy has in large part been a product of political *quid pro quo* between the ruling and opposition parties on a variety of occasions over many years. As such, it has never been made statutory, yet not a single administration, including the current one of Junichiro Koizumi, has dared announce otherwise.

However, for the bilateral U.S.-Japan military alliance to function effectively, the lifting of the self-imposed ban on collective self-defense is long overdue. Nakasone and Hatoyama are in complete agreement on this. Both advocate that the second part of Article 9 stating “...land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized...” should be abrogated, leading Japan to become as normal a nation as any UN member country that has the aforementioned inherent right of collective self-defense.²¹

In a speech given at the Brookings Institution in May 2005, Prime Ministerial hopeful Shinzo Abe of the LDP joined them by saying, “[The] narrow interpretation that Japan is not able to exercise the right of collective self-defense is not applicable in today's international world. It need hardly be pointed out again... that the interpretations offered by the Japanese government hitherto have reached their limits in a number of respects. One of the duties of our generation is to change this government's interpretation so as to enable Japan to exercise that right.”²² Mr. Abe followed up saying that a change in the interpretation “will result in an increase in Japan's deterrent capability and a reduction in the likelihood of exercising military force.”²³ What implications this may have in the case of regional armed conflicts will be discussed later in this paper.

²⁰ Richard J. Samuels, “Constitutional Revision in Japan: The Future of Article 9.” (The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, December 15, 2004.) This transcript also provides a useful guide as to why this narrowly defined interpretation has persisted for so long.

²¹ IIPS, *Kenpo Kaisei Shian*, p. 56. Hatoyama, *Shin Kenpo Shian*, p. 79.

²² <http://www.brook.edu/fp/cnaps/events/abe20050502.pdf>.

²³ <http://www.brook.edu/fp/cnaps/events/abe20050502.pdf>.

A glance at Hatoyama's draft proposal might lead one to assume that he is not specific on *collective self-defense* while advocating strongly the need for *collective security* supposedly formed under the banner of the United Nations. This does not mean that he is opposed to Japan giving itself the right to collective self-defense. In fact, the opposite is true. In his book *Shin Kenpo Shian*, he argues that it is almost self-evident that an independent nation preserves its natural right to collective self-defense.²⁴ "By specifying that Japan possesses [what he calls] a Military of Self-Defense," he continues, "there should be no further room for debating if Japan, as a nation, has a natural right of defense, individually or collectively."²⁵ Hatoyama goes on to be yet more specific that with his new Constitution "it would be all the more natural for Japanese forces to take retaliatory actions against a third party harming U.S. naval ships that have come to defend Japan and the surrounding region."²⁶

Areas of contention

Of course, there are differences on collective self-defense: Hatoyama's draft includes a clause that ensures that Japan has no weapons of mass destruction, while Nakasone's does not. Yet the similarities between the two outweigh the differences. Both agree, for instance, on the need to further institutionalize and enhance the mechanisms of civilian control over the military.

Points of contention will likely appear much more in domestic issues rather than in areas such as defense. The question of whether Japan should continue to have a bicameral legislature or whether the upper House of Councilors should be abolished will certainly evoke opposition, especially from the members of the upper house. Hatoyama finds himself caught in the crossfire as he maintains there should only be one house.

A larger potential road block in the way of an agreement is that so many proposals will emerge that lawmakers will be unable to narrow their focus and will spend too much time forging consensus, hence losing momentum and eventually public support. As noted above, the two major parties are working hard to publish their proposals in the autumn of 2005. Three of the largest business interest groups have pronounced their support for constitutional revision, and even have their own draft outlines ready.²⁷ As Akihiko Tanaka, a political scientist at the University of Tokyo, suggests, "it might not be a bad idea for lawmakers to try to be less statesman-like and more like practitioners to focus narrowly on changing only a couple of articles to start with, to be followed by incremental changes to eventually complete a new Constitution over the years."²⁸ As a first step, he suggests that only two articles be revised, Article 9 and the aforementioned Article 96, which stipulates amendment procedures (see Box 1, above).

²⁴ Hatoyama, *Shin Kenpo Shian*, p. 70, translation by Taniguchi (tbT)

²⁵ Hatoyama, *Shin Kenpo Shian*, p. 79, (tbT)

²⁶ Hatoyama, *Shin Kenpo Shian*, p. 80, (tbT)

²⁷ They are Japan Business Federation (Nippon Keidanren); Japan Association of Corporate Executives (Keizai Doyukai), and The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Nihon Shoko Kaigisho).

²⁸ Akihiko Tanaka, interview by Tomohiko Taniguchi, Tokyo, Japan, February 21, 2005.

Revision of the Constitution, which has remained unchanged since its implementation nearly 60 years ago, will inevitably involve much debate, as it should, given the enormity of the task. Recent polls indicate that when faced with the increasing possibility that a new Constitution will in fact be introduced, the public has started to show more reluctance to proceed than previously.²⁹ Still, one can confidently predict that Japan will emerge within the next decade as a nation empowered by a revised Constitution to exercise collective self-defense, if not offense.

Defense Buildup

It is indisputable that Japan's partner in any collective self-defense activities would be the United States, its sole military ally. In fact, it can be argued that Japan has already undertaken some acts of collective self-defense with the U.S. Some examples include:

Operation Enduring Freedom

A squadron of Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) ships in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea areas provides U.S. naval ships, among others,³⁰ with water, fuel for ships, and fuel for helicopters taking part in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. Since the inception of OEF on December 2, 2001 until March 21, 2005 as much as 92,500 gallons of water, 104.4 million gallons of fuel for ships, and 60,800 gallons of fuel for helicopters have been provided by the JMSDF—all at the expense of Japanese taxpayers. More than half of the amounts in each category have gone to U.S. forces.

The proposal to deploy an Aegis destroyer on a near-permanent basis garnered stiff opposition from both within and outside the ruling LDP. Hiromu Nonaka, then a heavyweight in the ruling party, voiced strong concern that it would unnecessarily provoke the Chinese. The Koizumi administration nonetheless prevailed, reportedly reasoning that Japan should “show the flag” to the Americans.

The significance of the OEF undertaking is that the JMSDF is demonstrating daily that (1) it is among the best-trained blue water navies in the world, as it requires considerable expertise to conduct “parallel-refueling” in mid-ocean³¹; (2) it has “enabled otherwise unlikely coalition partners that lack financial resources, such as the Pakistani navy, to join forces with the U.S.”³² thus playing the role of coalition-multiplier; and (3) Japan now has the political will to put some of its most powerful weapons systems such as

²⁹ A poll taken mid-April 2005 by Jiji Press resulted in less than 30% of those polled being in favor of Japan having *gun*, i.e. three military services.

³⁰ The countries whose ships have been refueled by the Japanese are, in order of frequency, the U.S. (277 times), France (51), Canada (37), Pakistan (32), Italy (24), the United Kingdom (23), New Zealand (15), Germany (10), Greece (10), Spain (10) and the Netherlands (7). Source: JMSDF website, <http://www.jda.go.jp/JMSDF/>.

³¹ Two ships, one of which is to refuel and the other to be refueled, must proceed in absolute parallel for hours in the middle of the ocean at the lowest possible speed, making them extremely vulnerable to possible attack.

³² Anonymous JMSDF officer interview by Tomohiko Taniguchi, Tokyo, Japan, March 2005.

Aegis destroyers into use, not only to defend the homeland but also to enhance its alliance with the U.S.

Of note also is that there is now an extended communication link between JMSDF Aegis destroyers and U.S. Navy ships that would have been unachievable were it not for a continued dispatch of this nature. Uniform-to-uniform exchanges of views and communication between the U.S. and Japan have never been more intense and frequent than they are now. This is in part because Japan has become a member of the “Coalition Village” that the U.S. Central Command established in Tampa, Florida by pulling together liaison officers from the nations participating in the operation. Reflecting this sense of accomplishment, a JMSDF liaison officer wrote an essay in the Japanese press entitled “Japan’s SDFs are now a Major League player, following ‘Godzilla’ Matsui [a player on the New York Yankees baseball team].”³³

Operation Iraqi Freedom

Under the framework of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Japan has been sending SDF troops to Iraq since December 2003 to engage in a host of activities. Though termed “Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq,” it was nonetheless the first deployment of troops by Japan to a near-combat zone since the end of World War II and, as such, was extremely controversial. Special legislation³⁴ was enacted which stipulates that the JSDF troops 1) engage only in such activities as “medical services, water supply, rehabilitation and maintenance of schools and other public facilities, and transportation of materials such as those for humanitarian and reconstruction use”³⁵; and 2) are allowed to use “pistols, rifles, machine guns, recoilless rifles and light anti-tank munitions”³⁶ strictly for self-defense in accordance with Japan’s ordinary criminal law.³⁷

Richard Armitage, then U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, argued that “it’s not necessary to be the pitcher or the catcher and be involved in every single play of the game. But you cannot play at all unless you are on the baseball diamond. I’m hoping that the nation [Japan] will decide to get out of the stands and onto the playing field,”³⁸ the Koizumi cabinet responded to his call although the nation was evenly divided on this matter.³⁹ So far, Koizumi’s political investment has paid off handsomely. Despite a recent poll indicating that a majority of Japanese still oppose the deployment of the JSDF in Iraq,⁴⁰

³³ OHTSUKA, Umio, “Tampa de Jieitai mo mejaa ni naru: Gojira Matsui ni tsuzuke,” *Shokun* (a monthly magazine), April, 2004.

³⁴ If translated into English, it is called the “Law Concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq.”

³⁵ “The Outline of the Basic Plan regarding Response Measures based on the Law concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq,” issued by the Office of the Prime Minister, December 9, 2003.

³⁶ Op. cit.

³⁷ Op. cit. Note that neither martial law nor court-martial systems exist in Japan.

³⁸ “Armitage hails decision to dispatch SDF to Iraq,” *Japan Policy & Politics*, June 16, 2003.

³⁹ An Asahi Shimbun poll conducted on March 16, 2004, resulted in 42% in favor and 41% against Japan sending SDF troops to Iraq.

⁴⁰ A Nikkei newspaper poll conducted in late December 2004, showed that 54% were opposed to the Japanese government’s decision extending the staying period for the SDF troops in Iraq.

the JSDF's involvement has not led to any war casualties, either Japanese or Iraqi; therefore domestic opposition has been kept at bay.

In an address at the White House on March 19, 2004 commemorating the first anniversary of the start of OIF, President George W. Bush praised Japan's participation by referring to its "historic commitments of troops to help bring peace to Iraq" and ended his speech by quoting the diary of Katsuhiko Oku, a Japanese diplomat who had lost his life in an ambush in Iraq. "The free people of Iraq," President Bush quoted, "are now making steady progress in reconstructing their country -- while also fighting against the threat of terrorism. We must join hands with the Iraqi people in their effort to prevent Iraq from falling into the hands of terrorists.... This is also our fight to defend freedom."⁴¹ If Japan's decision to participate in OIF had been a means of "paying a fee" to maintain membership in the "American Club," then it has never been a more fully-fledged member than now.

The Iraq experience made it possible for the JSDF to re-brand its image from that of an imperialistic aggressor to something more humane in the eyes of those Southeast Asian people whose nations were hit by the devastating tsunami in late December 2004. Within two weeks of receiving a request from the Indonesian government, Japan had already begun to provide support. As of the end of March 2005, the JGSDF team had treated 6,000 patients, vaccinated more than 2,000 people, and disinfected 34 acres of land. In addition, a total of more than 400 tons of goods were shipped to the needy by the three branches of the JSDF, involving more than 2,000 troops.⁴² Many of the same areas that benefited from these swift rescue operations had been invaded by Japanese forces during World War II. Had the JSDF not already "flexed its muscles" in Iraq, it is doubtful whether Japan could have accomplished this mission and gained so much appreciation as a result.

Missile Defense

Japan's 2004 defense white paper states the following: "With BMD quite suited to Japan's exclusively defensive national defense policy, the Security Council [of the Prime Minister] and the Cabinet on December 19, 2003, approved the proposal 'On the Introduction of a Ballistic Missile Defense System and Other Measures' and decided to pursue such systems."⁴³ If participation in OIF cemented Japan's membership in the American Club, its decision to adopt ballistic missile defense (BMD) gave it "platinum" member status, or to use newly-coined jargon, the status of a "mega ally."

It has gone largely unnoticed that Japan's action is hardly a unilateral policy choice. Saying that BMD development goes hand-in-hand with the U.S. does not suffice; it is an integral part of the overall BMD that the U.S. started in the year 2004.⁴⁴ In order to

⁴¹ "President Bush Reaffirms Resolve to War on Terror, Iraq and Afghanistan: Remarks by the President on Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom," March 19, 2004.

⁴² Information posted on JSDF web site by the JDA on March 22, 2005.

⁴³ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2004*. (Tokyo, Japan: Inter Group Corporation, 2004.) p. 422.,.

⁴⁴ When the Budget Committee of the House of Representatives met on April 15, 2004, Vice Admiral (ret.) Hideaki Kaneda suggested that Japan's MD program was part of U.S. Block 04.

implement “sea-based, mid-course anti ballistic missile defense,” it takes a defense platform of Aegis destroyers; Japan currently has four, more than any other nation except for the U.S.⁴⁵

On the U.S. side, a program called Block 04 is being implemented. Designed as the first increment, or “block,” of layered missile defenses, the program calls on the U.S. to build up the following in the years 2004 and 2005 (hence the name “Block 04”): (1) Ground-based, mid-course defense; (2) Sea-based, mid-course defense (SMD); and (3) Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) batteries. Already, the U.S. Seventh Fleet has put one SMD-capable Aegis destroyer on patrol in the Sea of Japan, with the obvious purpose of deterring North Korea.

Indeed, Japan is getting ready to launch sea-based and Patriot batteries, and it is procuring from Raytheon and other providers key weapons systems that are exactly the same as those the U.S. will adopt. In short, Japan is co-building Block 04 with America.⁴⁶

The 2004 white paper notes also the following: “A total of about 106.8 billion yen...has been earmarked in the FY 2004 budget for BMD-related costs, which will cover (1) the refitting of Aegis vessels and acquisition of SM-3 missiles, (2) the upgrading of surface-to-air Patriot guided missile systems and acquisition of PAC-3 missiles, and (3) the design of a system to add BMD-compatible functions to the automatic warning and control system (the BADGE system).”⁴⁷ The lion’s share of the contracts for these systems goes to U.S. contractors such as Lockheed Martin and Raytheon.

According to the Japan Defense Agency’s (JDA) blueprint,⁴⁸ by the year 2010 the SDF will be able to field be four refitted Aegis destroyers and 16 Patriot missile batteries. A total of four advanced radar systems (FPS-XX) and seven refitted radar systems (FPS-3) will be made available by the year 2011. The enhancement of the BADGE and other communication systems will be completed over the next three to seven years. In sum, Japan’s BMD capability will be functional in its earliest stage from the year 2007 onward and complete by the year 2012.

One could justifiably question whether the missile defense system is indeed technically capable of tracing enemy missiles and destroying them mid-course. The system is a unique weapon that can work insofar as the perceived adversary believes that it will work. The Chinese, if not the North Koreans, know how to render it ineffective, for instance by deploying Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicles (MIRV). However, as was the case with the Strategic Defense Initiative in the Reagan era, missile defense, in a

⁴⁵ Spain is building four “F-100” class frigates based on U.S.-supplied Aegis systems. Taiwan has requested the sale of four U.S.-built Aegis destroyers so far to no avail. South Korea is also building Aegis ships. See Jeremy Stocker and Robin Ranger, “Re-thinking ballistic missile defence.” (Global Defence Review Ltd., London, UK: 2000.)

⁴⁶ Tomohiko Taniguchi, “Why Japan went ballistic,” *Asia Times Online*, April 24, 2004.

⁴⁷ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2004*, p. 424

⁴⁸ Japan Defense Agency, *Tohmen no BMD Shisutemu Seibi Koso An* (A tentative blue print for constructing BMD systems), unpublished.

literal sense, is not so much a weapon system as it is a political weapon. Its primary function is to deter missile-holding nations; but equally important is to display the strength of an allied relationship—in this case, the one between the U.S. and Japan. Japan’s BMD program is another means for the nation to pay an extra “insurance premium” in a region that is increasingly uncertain and risky.

As shown in Table 1, Japan’s defense budget is not necessarily on the rise. Yet qualitatively, the nation’s defense capabilities are advancing, most notably in the aforementioned area of missile defense.

Table 1: Defense-Related Expenditures

FY	Billions of yen	As a Percentage of Japan’s GDP	Billions of U.S. dollars	U.S. Defense Budget (\$ billions)
1995	4,724	0.959	----	----
1996	4,846	0.977	----	----
1997	4,941	0.958	----	----
1998	4,929	0.948	----	----
1999	4,920	0.991	----	----
2000	4,922	0.987	48.12	281.16
2001	4,939	0.952	39.12	290.96
2002	4,940	0.995	37.23	331.95
2003	4,927	0.988	41.77	387.32
2004	4,877	0.974	46.73	434.78

(Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2004*, p. 487-490)

Plans were made in the FY2004 defense budget to begin building the 13,500-ton helicopter destroyer (DDH), code-named 16DDH (as in the sixteenth year of the reign of the *Heisei* emperor in the Japanese calendar), in the year 2004 with another planned for the following year, representing another step forward in capability.

Its modern Aegis capacity with phased array radars, paired with its advanced information link which connects to both the Cabinet situation room and other weapons systems, give 16DDH what the JMSDF believes will be the crucial node for the information network. This could be the flagship for the entire JMSDF fleet.

The JMSDF maintains that it can carry only four helicopters, but in practice, it can carry as many as ten. In addition, experts say that it is not entirely impossible for it to be refurbished to carry Vertical, Short Take-off and Landing (V/STOL) aircraft such as the United Kingdom's Harrier class jet fighter.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ *Sekai no Kan’sen* (Ships of the World). January, 2004, pp. 136-141.

16DDH will be the largest ship in the JMSDF, and the largest Japan has had in the post-imperial era. It is almost as large as the Japanese Imperial Navy's *Toné* class heavy cruiser. In JMSDF classification, it is by no means an aircraft carrier, although its characteristic shape imparts exactly that impression. In size, it compares to some currently active aircraft carriers such as Italy's MM *Giuseppe Garibaldi* (10,100 tons) and Spain's *Principe de Asturia* (17,188 tons).

Furthermore, the FY2004 defense budget “shall include the costs to introduce a precision missile guidance system (attached to missiles currently used) that can receive signals from GPS satellites and precisely guide the missile to the present targets.”⁵⁰

Despite these enhancements, the JSDF cannot be compared to its peers in developed nations. It lacks nuclear weaponry, and no naval vessels are nuclear powered. Moreover, there exists no amphibious force such as the U.S. Marine Corps. There are neither long-haul force projection capacities nor special operations forces to operate behind enemy lines. All this is a direct consequence of the nation's time-honored “exclusively defense-oriented policy,” which is in turn a product of the post-war Constitution. These self-imposed handicaps on offensive capabilities will most likely remain intact, as even a revised Constitution will renounce threat or the use of force as a means of settling international disputes. Japan's defense buildup should be considered in this broader framework.

One could wonder why

Still, why is Japan *at this point* revising its Constitution, building up its defense capabilities and attempting to marry these two developments by legalizing the right to collective self-defense? To answer this question, one should take a small detour and look into new defense thinking currently under discussion in the policy circles of Tokyo.

New Defense Thinking

On October 4, 2004, Hiroshi Araki, head of the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities [known in the United States as the Araki Council, hereafter called the Council], handed Prime Minister Koizumi a report [hereafter called the Council report] entitled “Japan's Visions for Future Security and Defense Capabilities.” This report would form the basis for Japan's defense planning in the ensuing period.

The Council comprised ten individuals: Mr. Araki, a retired executive of the nation's largest electric utility company, who held the role of chairperson; the President of Toyota Motor Corporation; three academics (two men and one woman) specializing in international relations; a retired civilian head of the Japan Defense Agency; a retired Chairman of the JSDF's Joint Chiefs of Staff; a former Minister of Foreign Affairs; a former Deputy Cabinet Secretary; and a literary critic. The Council members are not all well-versed in the technicalities of defense-related issues, which is often true of such “councils.”

⁵⁰ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2004*, p. 124.

The Council's papers and summaries of its discussions are accessible via the Internet. Close examination of these materials and the aforementioned Council report reveals the baseline of Japan's new defense thinking. Based on instructions advocated by the Council report, the *National Defense Program Guideline for FY 2005 and After* was written and approved by the Security Council and the Cabinet on December 10, 2004. This program determines how Japan should strengthen its defense capacities in the mid- to long- term. Therefore, it is of vital importance to examine the Council report to see what aspects of Japan's defense policy are changing.

The following section describes: (1) How the report has defined Japan's security environment; (2) What the new concept "Multi-Functional Flexible Defense Force" (MFFDF) means; and (3) How Japan's alliance relationship with the U.S. is viewed.

Security Environment

As is now customary for reports of this nature, the Council report begins illustrating Japan's security environment by listing extraordinary new threats for which no nation, be it Japan or the U.S., could be fully prepared. Those threats include terrorism bred by failed states, pirates "wreaking havoc in the sea lines of communication," internet "trouble-makers" teaming up with terrorists, and WMD proliferation. The report notes that "religious fundamentalism, chauvinism, and extreme nationalism, the psychosocial forces that breed and intensify these types of threats, exist throughout the world. The accelerating pace of globalization driven by technological advances carries with it the risk that threats of all kinds can move and spread rapidly around the world."⁵¹

Yet even if these are threats that recognize no borders and also face other nations, the report asserts, "Japan faces security problems unique to its location in East Asia." It goes without saying that as a report addressing *Japan's* security environment, it is those issues that it regards as *unique* that are of greatest importance. Hence the report states:

The end of the Cold War has certainly reduced substantially the risk of a full-scale invasion. However, there continue to exist two nuclear powers (Russia and China) in this region, and one country that has not abandoned its ambition of developing nuclear weapons (North Korea). The problem of WMD development, including North Korean nuclear weapons, and the development and deployment of ballistic missiles could represent a direct threat to Japan, and instability on the Korean Peninsula may yet become a major destabilizing factor affecting international relations in East Asia. Furthermore, the possibility of armed clashes across the Strait of Taiwan could not be ruled out. If a large-scale military conflict were to break out in East Asia, not only would it threaten regional and global security, it could even affect the stability of the world economy. Failure to achieve a peaceful resolution of conflicts over resource development and other problems in Japan's vicinity could have serious consequences for Japan's

⁵¹ The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities Report, "Japan's Visions for Future Security and Defense Capabilities." (Tokyo, Japan: The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities, October 2004.) English text available on the GlobalSecurity.org website, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/japan/2004/041000-csdc-report.pdf>.

security.⁵²

Considering this definition of Japan's security environment, the report calls for substantial shifts in Japan's defense posture and doctrine from those established in the Cold War era during which Soviet Russia was the primary source of military threat to Japan and the U.S. For example, to deter possible Soviet amphibious attack, the JGSDF stationed large tank battalions and armored forces in the northernmost island of Hokkaido. To contain the Vladivostok-based U.S.S.R. naval presence largely in the Sea of Japan and in the Sea of Okhotsk, a great deal of effort was put into enabling JMSDF and JASDF to seal, if necessary, the channels that surround Japan. However, the recognition of a changed environment led Council members to conceptualize what they now call a "Multi-Functional Flexible Defense Force" (MFFDF), as will be discussed later in this paper.

Furthermore, for the first time in the post-war era, Japanese defense policy planners have started to look at areas of instability as sources of threat to Japan's national security *no matter how geographically distant they may be* from the Japanese archipelago. Accordingly, the report states:

In the past, there has not been sufficient awareness of the vital link between Japan's international cooperation and its security. Japan's current international peace-building efforts and initiatives aimed at achieving "human security"⁵³ in various parts of the world should be viewed as having a direct bearing on Japan's security. Preventing some fragile countries from becoming sanctuaries for international terrorists is critical to the stability of the world and Japan's national interests.⁵⁴

"In other words," it goes on to say, "the SDF has been defined as an entity whose primary role is to protect Japan from threats by other states without going overseas... In fact, it would be fair to say that the SDF has fulfilled its objectives by its existence alone."⁵⁵

The old notion that the SDF should merely exist on Japan's soil is quickly being replaced by a new view that it must be a working functional force, deployable anywhere, to achieve Japan's national interest. This rather dramatic change of view was made in part to confirm the accumulation of experiences the SDF has undergone in a host of peace-keeping operations, and missions such as OEF and OIF. This new philosophy was first put into an official document on December 19, 2003, when the Security Council and the Cabinet adopted a resolution with regard to missile defense policies "in a pretty much low-key fashion," according to Nobushige Takamizawa, a Councilor at the Office of the Minister of State for Defense.⁵⁶

⁵² The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities., pp. 3-4.

⁵³ "'Human security' embodies the idea of strengthening efforts, in the face of globalization, to protect each individual from threats to survival, life, and dignity, such as conflicts, refugee problems, infectious diseases, and sudden economic crises." The Council report, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Op. cit.

⁵⁵ The Council report, p. 12.

⁵⁶ Nobushige Takamizawa, *Study Meeting Report* No. 4. (Asia Friendship Association, October 6, 2004) p.

The resolution, entitled “Development of the Ballistic Missile Defense System,” mandates that to pursue peace and stability in Japan and beyond “the Government is required to ensure measures...mainly to promote diplomatic efforts, and *the effective implementation of defense capabilities* while sticking to Japan-U.S. security arrangements.”⁵⁷

According to Takamizawa, this represents a new and unprecedented mindset that regards the nation’s “effective implementation of defense capabilities” as equally important as diplomatic efforts in enhancing peace and stability.⁵⁸ The new mindset typifies a substantive departure from the old wisdom that the JSDF could work only in a reactive fashion within Japan’s territorial boundaries.

Multi-Functional Flexible Defense Force

The JSDF is now faced with a much wider range of tasks both geographically and in terms of requisite capabilities, ranging from the traditional nuclear threat to armed state-to-state conflict to anti-terrorist activities. In order to face these new challenges, the idea of a Multi-Functional Flexible Defense Force (MFFDF) was introduced in the Council report. While it stresses that “Japan should not possess nuclear weapons,”⁵⁹ the report urges that JSDF modernize itself in order to “be ready and able to swiftly execute the following missions: (1) Defend offshore islands and counter armed incursions into Japanese territories; (2) Defend important installations from attacks by guerrillas and special operations forces, as well as contain those attacks and damage from them; (3) Monitor and respond to armed special-operations vessels in surrounding areas; (4) Monitor and respond to the violation of surrounding airspace; (5) Implement an effective defense against ballistic missiles; (6) Collect and analyze strategic intelligence pertaining to the military posture of neighboring countries.”⁶⁰

If this is a concrete mission description of the new MFFDF, it is safe to say that Japan is not far off from undergoing a military transformation with implications for both force posture and military doctrine.

Tanks and fighter aircraft are passé

Indeed, within the JGSDF a massive downsizing is already imminent. According to a white paper issued in early 2005 by the JGSDF Staff Office, changes are underway to: (1) reduce tanks and main artillery guns by 40% (from 900 units to 600 in both cases), reduce anti-tank missiles by 90%, and reduce the personnel operating this weaponry by 30%; (2) increase the number of light-armored vehicles by 40% and convoy helicopters by 10%; (3) shift heavily guarded fronts from Hokkaido to Kyushu and further south, and from the Eastern shore to Western shore; (4) create what can be called a Central

10; report not publicly available.

⁵⁷ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2004*, p. 550.

⁵⁸ Asia Friendship Association, *Study Meeting Report*, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁹ The Council report, p. 6.

⁶⁰ The Council report, pp. 24-25.

Response Command as an umbrella unit to combine special forces such as paratroopers; and (5) enhance interoperability between the U.S. forces and the JGSDF.⁶¹

If tanks have become an endangered species, so have combat aircraft in general and fighters in particular. According to *National Defense Program Guideline for FY 2005 and After*, the number of aircraft will be reduced from 400 to 350, and within that the number of fighters will be reduced from 300 to 260.⁶²

Least affected among the three branches of service is the JMSDF, where the number of destroyers will only be reduced from 50 to 47, combat aircraft from 170 to 150, and the number of submarines will remain at 16.⁶³

Doctrinally, with the Cold War long over, emphasis is rapidly being put on the western and southern fronts directly facing North Korea and China. The Council report also states that the inability to deal with illicit entry into territorial waters of armed special-operations vessels, even if such an event does not produce casualties, poses a serious threat to security.⁶⁴ Furthermore, among the potential missions for the MFFDF, “defending offshore islands, and countering armed incursions into Japanese territories” was specified as the first priority—doctrinal implications bear no need of further explanation. For the first time in Japan’s post-war history, threats to the nation’s security are perceived as coming not from the north, but from the west.

A sequence of actions taken of late by JSDF suggesting that the historic shift is already taking shape includes the following: (1) In FY 2004 the number of “scrambles” (immediate takeoffs of fighter aircraft as a result of territorial airspace violations) increased only against Chinese aircraft, from two to thirteen times;⁶⁵ (2) In April 2005, four F-15 fighter aircraft belonging to the Second Air Wing of the Northern Air Defense Force based in Chitose, Hokkaido (the northernmost main island of the archipelago), flew all the way to Kyushu (the southernmost main island) to conduct the third U.S.-Japan combined exercise of in-flight refueling, a skill the JASDF aims to master by FY 2006;⁶⁶ (3) The Japan Forum for Strategic Studies, a JDA-associated think tank, proposed to the Minister of State for Defense on January 14, 2005 that the Agency stop using the word “exclusively defense-oriented policy” as a backbone of the nation’s defense policies;⁶⁷ and (4) By the end of FY 2004, intelligence gathering capacity was greatly enhanced for the Kyushu-based Western Army of the JGSDF.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Ground Staff Office, *Rikujo Jieitai Kaikaku no Hoko: Arata na Rikujo Jieitai no Sozo* (Way to go for the JGSDF: Toward a New JGSDF). Downloadable at present only in Japanese from the JGSDF website, <http://www.jda.go.jp/jgsdf/>.

⁶² *National Defense Program Guideline for FY 2005 and After*. Downloadable at present only in Japanese from the JGSDF website.

⁶³ Op. cit.

⁶⁴ The Council report, p. 4.

⁶⁵ *Asagumo Shimbun* (Web News, <http://www.asagumo-news.com/news.html>), April 28, 2005.

⁶⁶ *Asagumo Shimbun* (Web News), April 21, 2005.

⁶⁷ The exclusively defense-oriented policy means that defensive force may not be employed unless and until an armed attack is mounted on Japan by another country. See *Asagumo Shimbun* (Web News), April 14, 2005.

⁶⁸ *Asagumo Shimbun* (Web News), April 7, 2005.

An Asian equivalent of the United Kingdom?

All of these developments are occurring within the context of tightened security ties with the United States. Put differently, Japan's qualitative defense buildup is not a consequence of the nation's becoming a more right-wing or freelance power. This point can be made evident by counting the number of times – 53 in a 53-page report – that the Council used the term “Japan-U.S.” in connection with words like alliance, cooperation, defense cooperation, security arrangement, security relationship, and security treaty. For example:

- Responding to situations in areas surrounding Japan that have an important influence on Japan's peace and security will inevitably require Japan-U.S. cooperation in order to prevent the threat from affecting Japan. We must continually upgrade arrangements for cooperation to deal with such situations, and strive to enhance the reliability of Japan-U.S. cooperation in actual operations (p. 7).
- In the military sense, too, the Japan-U.S. alliance is increasingly assuming the role of preventing the emergence of threats in the international community (p. 9).
- It would be fair to say that the Japan-U.S. alliance has become “public goods” for the countries in the region (p. 9).
- The realization of better intelligence-related collaboration with the United States would help make bilateral talks more fruitful and thereby create a more effective alliance. Japan should further enhance its capabilities in gathering and analyzing information in order to be able to offer balanced, objective analytical products from Japan's own perspective. In addition, the government should also take the initiative in pursuing strategic discussion with the United States concerning role sharing, taking into account Japan's own imperatives. Also, a new “Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security” and new “Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation” that are in touch with the current strategic environment should be formulated upon the output of these talks (p. 19).

It should also be noted that the concept of interoperability between the U.S. and Japan is being pursued by the JGSDF,⁶⁹ which previously had been reluctant. Advocated here, albeit vaguely, is a new Japan that does not say “no” but commits to bringing itself ever closer to the U.S. and projecting the image that only an enhanced U.S.-Japan security relationship can provide the region with “public goods.” Moreover, it is suggested, along with the overall emphasis by the Council on the need to upgrade the nation's intelligence gathering capabilities, that the two countries be knitted more firmly together by sharing crucial intelligence. On the whole, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the emerging trends will make Japan the Asian equivalent of the United Kingdom in its relationship with the U.S.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ground Staff Office, *Rikujo Jieitai Kaikaku no Hoko: Arata na Rikujo Jieitai no Sozo*, p. 4, p. 13.

⁷⁰ This is largely in line with what Richard Armitage and others advocated before President Bush took office. See *The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership*. (INSS Special Report, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, October 11, 2000).

The China Factor

Thus far, this paper has noted that: (1) it is a matter of time before Japan has a new Constitution that will enable it to conduct collective self-defense with the U.S.; (2) in practice, Japan has already undertaken numerous activities, such as combined U.S.-Japan missile defense arrangements, which almost constitute conduct of collective self-defense; and (3) a new defense concept has emerged in that threats to Japan are newly defined, strengthened security ties with the U.S. are advocated, and a claim is made that Japan, together with the U.S., provides regional security as public goods.

Why are all of the above activities proceeding at an unusually rapid pace? Among multiple reasons, the “China Factor” stands out as deserving special attention. To defend “offshore islands, and countering armed incursions into Japanese territories” has become a top priority for the future of the JSDF, and to “shift heavily guarded fronts from the Hokkaido areas to Kyushu and further south, and from the Eastern shore to the Western shore” have developed into some of the more urgent tasks that the JGSDF must pursue. These two undertakings suggest that Japan’s policy-makers are eyeing North Korea and China with a great deal of suspicion.

Much of Japan’s recent defense buildup has been justified on the grounds that it protects Japan from the threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear and missile ambitions. When the Budget Committee of Japan’s House of Representatives met in February and April 2004 to discuss the defense budget, including funds for missile defense, VADM (ret.) Hideaki Kaneda told the Committee that what Japan was about to equip itself with would already be “capable of defending Japan from North Korean ballistic missiles such as *Nodong*. Yet there may be room for a degree of doubt as to whether it is capable also against some of the advanced missiles such as those China may possess.”⁷¹

While Japan has been preoccupied with the often-discussed threat from North Korea, the administrators of the missile defense program and other defense initiatives have obtained latitude to secure funding. However, in the run-up to finalizing the report, it is obvious that the Council, in fact, gave more attention to China than to North Korea. As a matter of fact, North Korea provided a convenient façade behind which Japan was able to slowly but steadily sharpen its focus vis-à-vis China.

On June 29, 2004, in its fifth meeting, the Council discussed the potential military threat both from North Korea and from China. Although a large part of the presentation that the JDA gave to the Council was devoted to describing North Korea’s military capabilities, even more time was spent on the Chinese section, emphasizing that: (1) in China, military modernization is accelerating, with the number of Russian-made “fourth generation” fighter aircraft increasing.⁷² The fourth generation Sukhoi Su-27 and a

⁷¹ Minutes of the Budget Committee, April 15, 2004, House of Representatives, translation by the author.

⁷² The fourth generation fighters include the F-15, whose variant F-15J constitutes the core of JASDF air power. While the Su-27 is normally classified as a fourth generation fighter, the Su-30 is more advanced, and often dubbed the 4.5 generation.

“4.5th” generation Su-30 have sufficient range to reach Kyushu and Shikoku; (2) the military balance between China and Taiwan will likely turn in China’s favor; and (3) China has intensified its naval and maritime research activities not only near Japan’s waters, but also inside its exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

In response to this presentation, members of the Council voiced a variety of concerns regarding the Chinese military situation. According to the summarized minutes, their concerns were as follows:

There is no transparency either about the Chinese defense budget or about defense policies. For instance, whether one can believe what they say about how many troops were discharged is questionable, for sometimes those discharged have been found to be continuing work as members of the armed police; Nationalism is on the rise in China and the nation is pushing its defense frontline steadily forward. We should not overlook each and every action they take; China is committed to advancing its military technologies, especially C4ISR [Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance] capabilities. C4ISR is also important for Japan, especially to enhance interoperability with the U.S.; China may aspire to compete with the U.S. by strengthening its army and economy, yet will be faced with many obstacles down the road, which makes the U.S.-Japan alliance even more important. If the alliance is rock solid, the Chinese will unlikely set themselves on a collision course with us.⁷³

However, these concerns toward China’s military buildup are nothing new. First, they are an extension of what Japan’s defense white papers have continued to highlight over the last couple of years. And second, they are in tune largely with a renewed U.S. defense strategy that puts far more emphasis upon East Asia, especially on its littoral waters, than it did during the Cold War.

In both the 2003 and 2004 defense white papers, analyses of China’s defense capacity have taken up more pages (approximately 10 pages in the original Japanese versions) than any other nation including North Korea. The 2004 paper depicts the developments with regard to Japan’s interest in island territories close to China:

In recent years, China has been expanding the scope of its maritime operations, as demonstrated by the reinforcement of its active bases on the Spratly and Paracel Islands, whose sovereignty is disputed by some ASEAN member countries... China enforced its Territorial Waters Law in 1992 which stipulates that the Senkaku Islands, which are an integral part of Japan, ... are Chinese territories. And China’s National Defense Law, enacted in 1997, mandates protection of maritime interests along with the defense of territorial land, sea, and airspace.

Chinese vessels have carried out activities that seem to be oceanographic research, mainly in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Japan. Japan and China, to settle the issue, formulated a framework for mutual prior notification on scientific oceanographic research activities in areas close to each country in the East China Sea... However,

⁷³ *Anzen Hoshō to Boeir-ryōku ni kannsuru Kondankai Dai 5-kai Giji Yoshi* (Summarized minutes of the fifth meeting of the Council), June 29, 2004, downloadable at the Prime Minister’s Official Residence. Translation by Tomohiko Taniguchi.

Chinese oceanographic research activities without notification or inconsistent with notification under the framework have been observed. Furthermore, Chinese... activities have been conducted... even in Japan's territorial waters, without Japan's consent that is required based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Chinese warships have often navigated in waters near Japan. Chinese naval vessels that seemed to conduct some exercises or be engaged in intelligence or maritime research have been observed. In June 2003, a Chinese Navy icebreaking and survey and research ship "*Haibing 723*" was observed stopping dead in the ocean south off Iriomote Island... In November 2003, a Ming-class submarine was seen surfacing on the Osumi Strait of Kyushu Island and sailing to west.⁷⁴

Although the idea is not stated explicitly in the white paper, experts concur that some of these activities have been conducted in order for the Chinese navy to better map the ocean floor and gather information regarding sea currents, water temperature, and sound conductivity—specific data needed for their submarines to exit into the Pacific without being detected by U.S.-Japan reconnaissance capabilities.

If these constitute Japan's long-term concerns, it should have come as no surprise that the Council had to state that defending "offshore islands, and countering armed incursions into Japanese territories" has become top of priority for the future JSDF. The Security Council and Cabinet, when approving the *National Defense Program Guideline for FY 2005 and After*, noted:

China, which has a major impact on regional security, continues to modernize its nuclear forces and missile capabilities as well as its naval and air forces. China is also expanding its area of operation at sea. We will have to remain attentive to its future actions.⁷⁵

U.S. emphasis on Asia

Japan's concerns and its new set of policies over China's defense capacity were hardly unrelated to the posture that the U.S. has been attempting to implement for a prolonged period. As early as the mid-1990s, Andrew W. Marshall and his Office of Net Assessment within the Office of the Secretary of Defense had started to focus attention on the possibility that a potential regional opponent would use "anti-access and area-denial" strategies to prevent U.S. maritime forces from entering its littoral waters.⁷⁶

The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR) postulated that "[t]he East Asian littoral—from the Bay of Bengal to the Sea of Japan—represents a particularly challenging area."⁷⁷ Subsequently, in an announcement made on August 16, 2004, President Bush stressed that in Asia, unlike on other fronts such as Europe, the U.S. "will improve its ability to deter, dissuade, and defeat challenges... through strengthened

⁷⁴ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2004*, pp. 62-63.

⁷⁵ "Security Environment Surrounding Japan" in the *National Defense Program Guideline for FY 2005 and After*.

⁷⁶ Michèle A. Flournoy, ed., *QDR 2001: Strategy-Driven Choices for America's Security* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2001), p. 38.

⁷⁷ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, September 30, 2001, p. 4

long-range strike capabilities... and a network of access arrangements.”⁷⁸ He also made it clear that additional expeditionary maritime capabilities will be stationed forward in the Pacific and that advanced strike assets will be deployed in the Western Pacific.⁷⁹

Japan’s doctrinal change, defense transformation and missile defense together represent an indispensable link in a chain that the U.S. is attempting to extend over the shores of East Asia.

Taiwan: a worst case scenario

This paper noted above that there are concerns within Japan’s defense community that the speed with which lawmakers are proceeding in re-writing the Constitution is inappropriate. Under the current Constitution, which does not allow Japan to conduct collective self-defense, its missile defense capabilities would remain inactive against enemy missiles so long as they are headed for the U.S. but not toward Japan.

Upon detecting a missile launch, from North Korea for example, the JSDF would compute the missile’s trajectory and speed to determine its likely target. If it was on course to hit Japan, both sea-based and ground-based missiles would be fired against it. If, however, the missile turned out to be headed not for Japan but for Hawaii or Guam, Japan could do nothing but watch. Given the absurdity of such a situation, there is growing hope among JDA officials that the government will abandon its self-imposed ban on collective self-defense over the next few years, during which time the first increment of missile defense capabilities will be made functional.

The next two to three years could be even more trying for the management of the U.S.-Japan alliance if the Taiwan question is taken into consideration. With or without a formally acknowledged collective self-defense arrangement, Japan might well “lose” either America or China or, even worse, both. The following imagined but plausible scenarios illustrate how Japan’s present Constitution and policies could foreordain one of these undesirable outcomes.

Scenario 1: Japan losing America

With the Chinese government placing enormous importance on the success of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the resultant international acclaim, Taiwan sees a window of opportunity and aims to achieve *de facto* independence by that year. Beijing decides to “teach Taipei a lesson” by hitting the island with a dozen or more missiles. In this and the following scenarios, it is assumed that as a consequence, hostilities commence between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and the U.S. President decides, albeit very reluctantly, to put the Yokosuka-based aircraft carrier battle group into action to defend Taiwan. However, Chinese aircraft far outnumber the U.S. fleet air force and the damage

⁷⁸ “Fact Sheet: Making America More Secure by Transforming Our Military,” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/08/20040816-5.html>.

⁷⁹ Respectively, President Bush speaks of an aircraft carrier battle group that is to be deployed in Pearl Harbor and a squadron of attack submarines stationed in Guam.

and casualties on the U.S. side accumulate as time goes by. Eventually, the Chinese are able to do enough damage to the American aircraft carrier to sink it.

Earlier, according to an annual report to the U.S. Congress on the military power of China, the Chinese military publication *Junshi Wenzhai* claimed that “China already has an ‘Assassin’s Mace’ or ‘Trump Card’ doctrine to counter U.S. air superiority in the Western Pacific.”⁸⁰ The report states that “one article specifically identifies five major ‘assassin’s maces,’ including fighter bombers, submarines, anti-ship missiles, torpedoes, and mines to destroy aircraft carriers. China is either acquiring these weapons from Russia or developing them itself. The last paragraph of the article claims that China can coordinate all these five weapons to attack an aircraft carrier simultaneously from several directions and leave it ‘in flames.’”⁸¹ The very doctrine is now being put into practice—mines and even cruise missiles are causing enormous damage to the U.S. aircraft carrier.

Meanwhile, the government of Japan, having failed to legalize the right to collective self-defense, is unable to assist the American ship. Tokyo is bound by the time-honored “Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation,” signed by both the U.S. and Japanese governments in September 1997, and the law on “Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan.” Both clearly stipulate that Japanese forces, in providing “rear area support” to U.S. forces under enemy fire, should stick within Japanese territory, or at the farthest, “on the high seas and international airspace around Japan which are distinguished from areas where combat operations are being conducted.”

The Chinese, knowing that a single bullet could activate Japan’s *own individual* right of self-defense, are determined not to harm the Japanese forces that maintain a safe distance from the foundering aircraft carrier. Inside Japan’s Prime Ministerial Residence, a heated debate has been going on day and night as to which side Japan should choose: China or America. The Prime Minister finally chooses the former, arguing that China has been Japan’s neighbor for the last two thousand years, and obviously will remain so in the millennia to come. The continental giant is too close and important for Japan to lose. Japan proves that civilian control over its military is effective as the massive JSDF remains at a standstill.

In Washington, DC television screens broadcast the U.S. aircraft carrier gradually listing to one side and Japan’s distant Aegis destroyers remaining quiet. The White House repeatedly attempts to call Japan’s Prime Minister to no avail, for Tokyo never answers the phone. The President calls an emergency meeting with his top aides and declares that the U.S.-Japan alliance has now been terminated. At about the same time, Beijing calls Tokyo and tells the Japanese Prime Minister that Japan does not have to worry about the loss of its relationship with the U.S. The Chinese are happy to protect Japan’s SLOC, which will remain peaceful under the watch of the PLA Navy.

⁸⁰ “*Shashou jian*” in Chinese; *Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act Annual Report on the Military Power of the People’s Republic of China*, July 28, 2003, p. 21.

⁸¹ *Op. cit.*

Scenario 2: Japan losing China

In order for Japan to end the self-imposed ban of collective self-defense, a Prime Ministerial announcement would suffice, as the ban has never been made legally binding, but has remained only as a non-statutory interpretation of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau. Under Scenario 2, Japan has obtained the right to collective self-defense either through a parliamentary decision, a cabinet announcement, or through a hasty last-minute announcement by the Prime Minister.

By the time the Sino-Taiwan war erupts, the transformation of Japan's force is almost complete. In Kyushu and Okinawa, the JSDF has greatly strengthened its capabilities and is ready to head south at a moment's notice.

Upon hearing that the President of the United States has decided to intervene in the war, the Japanese Prime Minister, in an almost automatic decision that nonetheless follows close consultations with the U.S., orders that the JSDF to mobilize to the maximum degree. For the first time in the more than 60 years since the end of World War II, Japan goes to war against an enemy—China. Shaken by this development, a number of DPJ politicians institute a hunger strike and Tokyo sees its largest anti-war protest rally since the late 1960s, but all to no avail, for the war ends much sooner than many thought. The joint U.S.-Japan strike capacity, especially with the added capability of 200 F-15 fighter aircraft sent by the JASDF, simply overwhelm the enemy power in only two days. With China badly defeated, Taiwan declares independence, and the U.S. and Japan have both lost all connections, business and political, with China.

However, in the worst-case scenario, Japan might lose *both* the U.S. and China if Tokyo fails to act decisively, and remains halfhearted. This scenario could materialize if Japan fails to respond promptly to calls for support from the U.S. but eventually lends its forces to the action against China. Politicians in Washington will be furious at Japan's lack of support, and China will naturally see the other side of the equation. Thus, Japan ends up isolated in a very volatile security environment.

Whither Japan: Policy Proposals

In the short term: increase insurance coverage

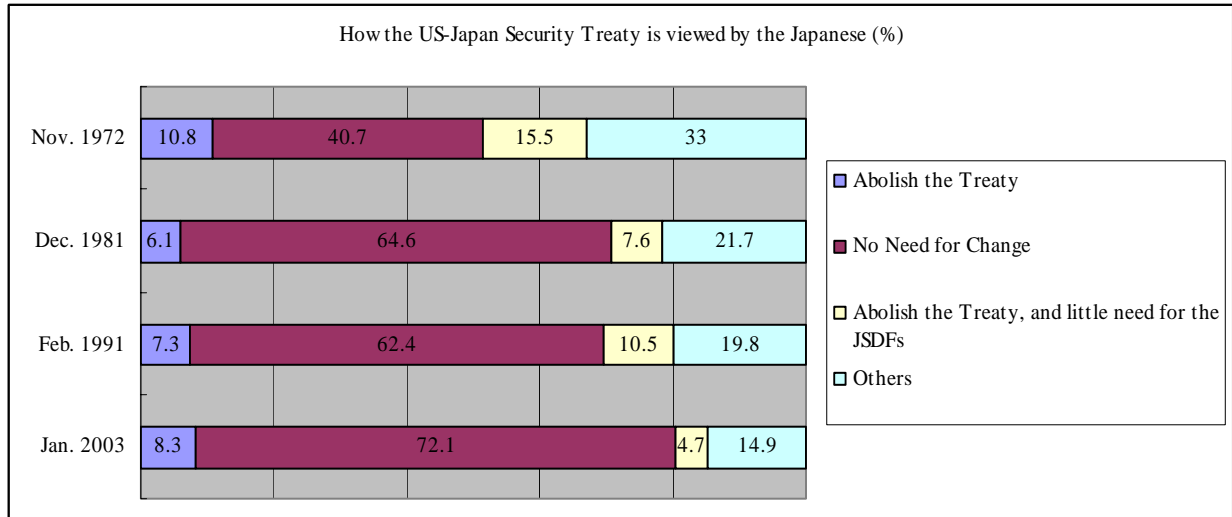
Whether or not conflict erupts across the Taiwan Strait, China is a great source of uncertainty, and will remain so for a considerable length of time. China could develop into a country that is democratized or industrialized - or both, or neither. Prolonged growth of the Chinese economy, though its sustainability remains questionable, will itself pose a danger to the rest of the world by disrupting both the supply and demand of marketable goods. Although it is in everyone's interest to have a stable, peace-loving China that is content to maintain the status quo in the surrounding region, little assurance exists as to whether this will eventually materialize.

When faced with uncertainty of this nature and magnitude - in other words, heightened risk - it is rational for China's immediate neighbors to upgrade their "insurance policies"

by paying higher premiums.

This is what Japan is doing now. After all, the U.S. has continued to provide Japan with peaceful SLOC over the last sixty years even at the cost of American soldiers' lives: 33,629 in Korea and 56,201 in Vietnam.⁸² The Japanese public has responded positively to this commitment by becoming ever more supportive of the U.S.-Japan bilateral alliance. According to a poll taken regularly by Japan's Cabinet Office over the last three decades, the ratio of those who support the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is now at an all-time high (see Graph 1).

Graph 1



(Source: Cabinet Office)

Japan has chosen to tie itself tighter to its time-honored insurance-policy provider. Its force transformation, defense buildup, and participation in the U.S.-led war against terrorism can be viewed as costs of Japan's insurance policy upgrade. This tilt may turn out to be unnecessary in the long run if the risks are lowered once China's course settles on a more predictable direction. In the interim, the U.S. and Japan have found it sensible to strengthen their bilateral links.

This was made most evident when the American secretaries of state and defense met with their Japanese counterparts in Washington, DC on February 19, 2005 in a meeting of the Security Consultative Committee (SCC, or "two plus two"). Referring to challenges of a conventional sort, this meeting emphasized that "persistent challenges continue to create unpredictability and uncertainty [in the region]". More importantly, after noting in an obvious allusion to China that "modernization of military capabilities in the region also requires attention," they went on to specify peace in the Taiwan Strait as a "common strategic objective," and stated that the U.S. and Japan should "encourage the peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait through dialogue."⁸³

⁸² Asagumo Shimbun Sha, *Bouei Handobooku* (Hand Book for Defense 2004). (Tokyo, Japan: Asagumo Shimbun Sha, 2004), p. 828.

⁸³ Joint Statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee, Washington, DC, February 19,

In order for both the U.S. and Japan to send an unambiguous message to Beijing that they will deter any military assault by the Chinese against Taiwan, this joint stance should remain unaltered over the coming years. Given the importance of maintaining peace and stability in Asia in general, and along the SLOC in particular, the U.S. has few options other than to maintain an unflagging alliance with Japan. For its part, Japan should grant itself the right to collective self-defense exactly for the purpose of enhanced deterrence. If an increasingly cohesive front comprising the U.S., Japan, and possibly Australia emerges, there should be hardly any incentive or opportunity for either North Korea or China to try to disrupt the peaceful order in Asian waters.

Mid to long term: avoid becoming an enfant terrible

The fundamental shift in Japan's military doctrine and the resultant changes taking place in the nation's defense posture that have been discussed are, astonishingly, known to few Japanese. The Japanese media is to be blamed first and foremost. As this paper has attempted to demonstrate, a great degree of information is readily available to the careful observer of government publications, including the websites of the JDA, JSDF, and other agencies.

Despite the great significance of an addition to Japan's defense doctrine, the populace is scarcely aware that Japan is now willing to pursue peace and stability not only through ordinary diplomatic means, but also through *the effective implementation of defense capabilities*. Since the missile defense program was pronounced by the Cabinet and the Security Council on December 19, 2003, according to the nation's largest media database,⁸⁴ a total of 23 articles in large and small Japanese newspapers include the words "missile defense," "Cabinet decision," and "Security Council." Among the 23 articles, not one has discussed the strategic shift noted above while almost all articles express concern about the maintenance of close civilian control over the military. While that is a concern worth noting, the articles are astonishingly off the mark.

One consequence of the lack of debate is that few lawmakers have ever considered "out-of-the box" scenarios, such as those this paper has addressed regarding Taiwan. Neither Yukio Hatoyama (DPJ) nor Okiharu Yasuoka (LDP) would admit in interviews⁸⁵ that should a war erupt between Beijing and Taipei, there is an increasing possibility that Japan would go to war *against* China. Both maintained: "It cannot happen," for the Olympic Games are far too important for Beijing to lose. A nation with politicians utterly unprepared to think the unthinkable, and with a growing military, could itself become a source of threat to its neighbors. To Beijing, Japan must appear increasingly as a military power willing to fight against it, side-by-side with the U.S., in case of contingencies over Taiwan. However, the nation's political leaders are yet to come to grips with what appears in the mirror.

2005.

⁸⁴ Nikkei Telecom 21.

⁸⁵ Yukio Hatoyama, interview by Tomohiko Taniguchi, Tokyo, Japan, February 24, 2005. Okiharu Yasuoka, interview by Tomohiko Taniguchi, Tokyo, Japan, February 25, 2005.

This unclear vision is a prime source of widening misperceptions between China and Japan. Therefore, Japan should have two mid- to long-term objectives.

A metaphor borrowed from the financial community explains the situation best for Japan: “Sunshine is always the best disinfectant.” In other words, the more information the nation discloses, the less room will there be for its neighbors to misunderstand its intentions. Herein lies the heart of the debate: the Japanese should have among themselves a discussion regarding their own military doctrine, including the right to collective self-defense, and ultimately decide what role they want to play in maintaining peace and order in the region.

Both lawmakers and bureaucrats must articulate the nation’s security policies. The media should penetrate further into the policy-making process. A country is always better off when equipped with a press that bites. Right-wing pressure groups, though small in number, that intimidate the people they deem “liberal” must be checked by the authorities much more rigorously.

A security dilemma serves no one’s interests. The Japanese government must invite Chinese defense planners to Tokyo regularly so they can scrutinize Japan’s defense buildup and developments. This attempt at transparency should be unwavering and unilateral, with or without reciprocal action from the Chinese side, in order for Japan to achieve the moral high ground. As this paper has shown, Japan is literally undertaking a defense buildup; it is building up *defense* and not *offense* capabilities. This point should be brought home repeatedly to the planners in Beijing.

Second, Japan should increase the width and depth of its track two contacts and other non-governmental contacts with China. Japan is now far behind the United States in this regard. Before dismissing some of the eccentricities of Chinese nationalism against Japan, the Japanese must put much more effort into disseminating knowledge about Japan to a wider Chinese audience. At present, there is no Chinese “portal” website accessible to the increasingly internet-literate Chinese audience to provide information about Japan’s news, politics and culture. Even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is yet to make its website fully available in Chinese.

Japan badly lacks both the inclination and the resources to help shape the thinking of younger Chinese generations into more pro-Japan attitudes. For instance, it is beyond anyone’s imagination that Japan, although it is a neighbor of China, could have an equivalent of the Hopkins-Nanjing Center, where students from both China and the United States learn together and form personal relationships.

If the development of a cohesive U.S.-Japan deterrent against Chinese adventurism can be described as a form of Western-style short-term preventive medicine, there must also be a form of Chinese medicine that can nurture friendship among the three powers for generations to come.

* * *

China is rising and Japan is changing. Unfolding events suggest that Japan will soon become the “normal” country that it has long aspired to be. With incremental changes introduced into the nation’s military conduct, even before it has a renewed Constitution, Japan appears increasingly powerful, even as its intentions may remain unclear to its neighbors. Whither Japan is a question that the Japanese must answer for the benefit of itself and its neighbors.