JAPAN’S CHANGING SECURITY POLICY: AN OVERALL VIEW

Sharif Shuja

School of Law
University of Maryland
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* Sharif Shuja is a member of the International Studies Program at Melbourne's Victoria University, and has contributed chapters to Unmasking Terror: A Global Review of Terrorist Activities (The Jamestown Foundation, 2005), Encyclopaedia of International Terrorism, I, Terrorism: History and Development (Deep & Deep Publications, 2002), Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Contemporary Issues in World History, Vol. II (McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 2002), and has also published over 40 articles in journals such as Harvard Asia Pacific Review, The American Asian Review, East Asia: An International Quarterly, Australia and World Affairs, Issues and Studies, Taiwan Defense Affairs and Journal of International and Area Studies. The author wishes to acknowledge useful comments and suggestions of the Review Board on an earlier draft of this paper.
I. INTRODUCTION

The doctrinal tradition of Realism has dominated the discipline of International Relations and is becoming enormously influential in Japan’s foreign policy. Realism offers four major propositions about global reality: (1) independent sovereign states are the most important actors in global politics and must be the basic unit of “realistic” analysis; (2) the relationship between these states is best understood as ungoverned anarchy; (3) the behavior of states engaged in anarchical conflict can nevertheless be understood in rational terms – as the utilitarian pursuit of self (state) interest; and (4) even when state actors appear to engage in cooperative activity and/or when actors other than states engage in integrative behavior that appears to undermine the power politics premise, this is a transient and ephemeral phenomenon and the structural determinants of (anarchical) global existence still apply.

While there are many variations on this theme, there is general agreement that these propositions are central to Realism. It is the state, rather than culture or civilization, which continues to be the primary locus of power and identification. It is the state that is the primary source of political power. Despite the influence of transnational corporations and international capital flows, it is the state that remains the primary economic unit. Japan’s Prime Minister Junichiro KOIZUMI has endorsed Realism as the theoretical framework in and through which Japan approaches its strategic thinking, and is now adopting its new security and foreign policy.

This study, applying the state-centric approach and Realism, represents a modest attempt to examine Japan’s foreign policy adjustment in recent years, and predicts its future directions. It argues that under Koizumi’s leadership, Japan is making a pragmatic, practical, hard-headed assessment of its security needs and its real long-term interests.

Today Japan has the third largest defense budget after the United States (US) and China and a quarter of a million men and women under arms. Its Self Defense Forces (SDF) are deployed on peacekeeping operations overseas and in support of US-led coalitions of the willing in Afghanistan and Iraq. The legislation permits troops to take part in limited overseas operations but not to engage in combat. However, more and more politicians argue that Japan must be more resolute and assertive in defending its vital interests, including taking pre-emptive military action, when necessary. The quiet revolution in Japanese foreign policy, which allowed it to take on responsibilities in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq, is a wel-
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come sign of a more confident Japan assuming its rightful place in the world. Prime Minister Junichiro KOIZUMI has declared his desire to see Japan become a "normal" state.¹

Japan's foreign policy and defense elites envisage playing a more constructive role in regional and global affairs, free of constitutional shackles, by building and shaping institutions and norms according to Japanese values and interests. This is what Koizumi means when he talks about Japan becoming a "normal" state. He also implies a greater willingness to use force and dispatch the SDF on operations beyond Japan's borders in coalitions of the willing, as well as United Nations (UN) sanctioned peacekeeping operations.

Will Japan become a leading military power? In the short to medium term it is unlikely that Japan will seek to become a major military power. The primary reason for Japan's reluctance to do so is not to be found in any structural factor, such as a high degree of dependence on trade or the absence of any potential security threats, but rather is attributable to Japan's postwar culture of antimilitarism. This anti-militarism is one of the most striking features of contemporary Japanese politics and has its roots in collective Japanese memories of the militarist takeover in the 1930s and the subsequent disastrous decision to go to war with America.

The chief lesson Japan has drawn from these experiences is that the military is a dangerous institution that must be constantly restrained and monitored lest it threaten Japan's postwar democratic order and undermine the peace and prosperity that the nation has enjoyed since 1945. This particular view of the military has become institutionalized in the Japanese political system and not only is supported by Japanese public opinion, but to a surprising degree is shared by large segments of Japan's political and economic elites as well.²

This study sheds analytical light on Japan's changing security policy and seeks answers to several important questions that have major consequences for Northeast Asia. It examines issues such as: Japan-US alliance; China threat perception; North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, and Japan's own nuclear and missile programs.

¹. To understand how, even sixty years after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the promulgation of an anti-militaristic constitution a few years later, the Japanese people are still heavily influenced in their response to defense and security policies by these twin experiences, see Glenn D. Hook, Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan, London: Routledge, 1996.

². Interview with Toshiya NAKAMURA, Professor of International Journalism at the Siebold University in Melbourne, January 2005.
What are Japan’s strategic aspirations? Will Japan move closer to the US or seek greater autonomy within the framework of the US alliance? Why is Japan signing on missile defense, and under what circumstances might Japan acquire nuclear weapons?

Under Koizumi’s leadership Japan is moving away from its pacifist past towards an outward-looking security posture characterized by a greater willingness to use the SDF in support of its foreign policy and defense interests. Tokyo’s desire to pursue a more proactive security policy is not an unreasonable response to the more threatening and volatile security environment it faces in the post-9/11 security environment. This shift represents a defining watershed in Japan’s post-war security policy. It is time for Japan to move beyond the ideals of the post-World War II peace constitution and to participate more fully in building and sustaining regional order and combating the emerging threats to security.

It is important that Japan clearly articulate the strategic rationale for its defense modernization program and changing security policy to avoid any misperceptions about its intent and purpose. It is necessary for the Japanese to understand that they still carry a great deal of historical baggage in Asia where memories of past Japanese militarism have not completely faded, as continuing Chinese and Korean resentment over Koizumi’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine³ attest. Koizumi’s visits provoked furious reactions from the Chinese and South Korean governments, who saw it as a sign of reviving militarism.

II. JAPAN-US ALLIANCE

On September 8, 1951, Prime Minister Shigeru YOSHIDA signed a security treaty with America which has provided the essential foundation for defense against external threats.⁴ The treaty allowed the Japanese government, for the next four decades, to adhere to the so-called “Yoshida Doctrine,” consisting of the following principles: maintenance of strong ties with the United States

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⁴ This was the US-Japan Security Treaty signed in San Francisco and often referred to as the San Francisco Treaty.
as the central axis for Japanese foreign policy; reliance on the United States for defense against armed invasion and attack; limited rearmament, designed solely for defensive purposes, with increases in defense spending capped at around one percent of Gross National Product (GNP) per year; and a concentration of resources on economic recovery and growth as Japan's highest priority goals.

During the Cold War, siding with the American camp and through the alliance, Japan concentrated its entire energy on development of industrial might without paying much attention to national security. Taking advantage of the pacifist constitution imposed by America during the occupation era, Japan has tended not to get involved in regional conflicts and to evade international obligations of sending armed forces overseas. This minimalist security policy served Japan's strategic interests well.

Japanese leaders were content to rely on the US for extended deterrence through the US nuclear umbrella. They believed that if push ever came to shove, the US would in fact be willing to sacrifice New York to save Tokyo. Still, Japan kept its options open, as it had to because bedrock issues of security were involved. There is nothing in Japan's peace constitution that would prevent Japan from acquiring either nuclear weapons or missiles.

An alliance presupposes an enemy. If the enemy disappears, there is going to be a question as to whether the alliance will continue to exist. As a result of the Soviet Union's collapse, the rationale for the US-Japanese alliance has lost much of its validity and can no longer serve as the sole basis for the security relationship. However, I argue that the conclusion of the Cold War struggle has not made Japan more secure at all; rather, the new world has negatively impacted Japan's security environment. Now the Cold War is long over, and strategic circumstances are very different, not least because China is a rising power that keeps provoking Japan.

In the meantime, military threats have increased visibly in areas around Japan. These threats include the test firing of Taepodong ballistic missiles by North Korea, that country's suspected nuclear weapons program, the intrusion of its spy ships into Japanese waters, China's military buildup, the violation of Japan's territorial waters by a Chinese nuclear-powered submarine and China's anti-secession law, which authorized the use of military force against Taiwan. These incidents are of great concern to Japanese security planners.

Many Japanese conservatives (both in the re-elected ruling party and in the main opposition party), analysts and media com-
mentators do not believe that the US would now be willing to sacrifice New York to save Tokyo. However, Japan is now thinking only to acquire a sophisticated missile defense system. This capacity goes some way to meeting Japan's needs, because it is non-nuclear, defensive and will protect her against incoming missiles.

But Japan's leaders know that missile defenses, confined to defending against ballistic missiles only, will not work against the strategic cruise missiles that China is developing with help from Russia. It is then possible that Japan will acquire offensive capabilities against both China and North Korea, and if North Korea acquires nuclear weapons, Japan may also want nuclear weapons. Then the big question might be whether Japan could acquire nuclear weapons and remain a US ally, as Britain did.

The continuing Japan-US alliance is argued for in three ways. First, Japanese policy makers believe that America's involvement in Northeast Asia is a more effective way of reducing the possibility of armed conflicts in the region than a barely attempted, and as yet untested, regional security framework. This should continue as long as currently negative factors in terms of Japan's security, i.e., China's military expansion, North Korea's domestic problems, Chinese-Taiwanese trouble, and Japan's territorial disputes with Russia, South Korea and China, do not dissipate.

Second, Japanese leaders recognize that the United States still has a great deal of leverage over Japan. Without US support and involvement, neither the regional strategy of constructing a more hospitable Asia-Pacific community, nor the global strategy of becoming a cosmopolitan power, is viable. For example, if the United States does not actively press for Japan's effort to acquire a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, no other major power will. Furthermore, access to the US market is essential to the success of Japan's export-led growth policy. In short, as long as the US does not end its alliance with Japan, the Japanese are aware that they cannot do so unilaterally. As a result, guaranteeing friendship and cooperation between the two countries is increasingly being viewed as quite important.

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5. This is the view of Toshiya NAKAMURA, a Japanese academic and media commentator, Interview, January 20, 2005.

6. A Taiwanese declaration of independence is likely to result in a naval blockade, if not in an attack by China. The United States might respond militarily, putting Japan in a position where it must take sides which, depending on the outcome, could have a major impact on the regional security environment.
Third, the US-Japan Security Treaty was the cornerstone for stability and development in the Asia-Pacific region because it gave international credibility to Japan’s fundamental stance that it would not become a major military power, "thus facilitating the acceptance of a larger political and economic role for Japan by its neighbours." Japan therefore has long centered its foreign policy on its bilateral relationship with the United States, a stance supported by the majority of the Japanese.

Two schools of thought on America have existed in Japan’s decision-making circles. These are (1) Realist school of thought; and (2) Liberalist school of thought.

Those belonging to the realist school of thought view America as being guarantor of Japan’s security, and adopt a pro-American stance. These people lack the vision that would allow them to respond effectively to the changes taking place on a global scale. Their position tends to focus primarily on specific circumstances in East Asia and pays little heed to America’s global strategic thinking; the realist view also puts insufficient weight on recent trends toward alliances based on shared values, particularly human rights and humanitarianism, which are increasingly underpinning responses to regional conflicts. The realist school does not fully comprehend that alliances in the post-Cold War era are increasingly based on the presumption that they are justified by certain ideals.

Liberalist thinkers in Japan seek to establish that the end of the Cold War should mean the end of the use of military force. They tend to criticize American involvement in any conflict as a bid for military supremacy, thus feeding the persistent undercurrent of sentiment against the United States among the Japanese people. This sentiment could be described as a sort of antipathy toward absolute power rather than simple anti-Americanism – a sentiment seen not just in Japan but also in France and other European countries. It is a feeling that has grown in reaction to the increasingly interventionist approach the United States has taken in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Japanese strategic thinking, like that of many European countries, generally sees threats in traditional terms, based upon perceived intentions of other actors, mainly states, with containment and deterrence as the main instruments to ensure national security.

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7. For this point in particular, see Takakazu KURIYAMA, New Directions for Japanese Foreign Policy in the Changing World of the 1990s, Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1990, pp. 24-26.
American neo-conservatives, or "neocons," on the other hand, see security in terms of the possible capabilities of others, requiring pre-emption and regime change to prevent future threats emerging. The foreign policy agenda of neoconservative intellectuals is to enhance greatly the US military, and to use this military power to reshape the world in the image of a capitalist democracy.

The Bush Administration's recently released *Global Postures Review* involves re-deploying US military forces currently stationed around the world. It doesn't just adjust overall force levels; it also aims to pull 70,000 to 100,000 troops out of Europe and Asia. Currently, more than 100,000 US troops are based in Europe – about 70 percent of them in Germany, and 100,000 in the Asia-Pacific. Most of the troops are to be moved from Europe and Asia will return to America. This is not to say that America plans to reduce its ability to intervene militarily around the world; it is about global realignment of US forces and capabilities. In August 2004, President Bush announced plans to cut back the US troop presence in Korea. The US will not only diminish its military presence there, but will also relocate its remaining troops away from the demilitarized zone (DMZ), but within South Korea. It is significant that the move coincides with a US plan to patrol the Straits of Malacca in the same region.

President Bush said that, in Northeast Asia, "we are working with our strongest allies to restructure our military presence and command structures, while simultaneously improving capabilities in the region." The joint US-Japan research project on developing missile-defense technology is an example of the strategy. Meanwhile, the US has shifted nearly 4,000 of its troops from South Korea to Iraq.

Many do not think that the US move will in any way lessen the effectiveness of the US military to operate in this part of the world. South Korean President ROH Moo-hyun thinks there will be no change in the strategic balance in East Asia. South Korean Foreign Minister BAN Ki-Moon has expressed a similar view that the new US deployment will not create a "security vacuum."

Indeed, Washington is willing to enhance the quality of its military cooperation with Seoul by deploying more precision-guided weapons systems, including advanced missiles. Moreover, the Pentagon has promised a US$11 billion modernization plan to upgrade

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South Korean facilities as part of efforts to increase its capability, even though it is reducing troop levels. Korea remains a major politico-strategic issue in Washington's East Asia policy. But Japan under the current Bush Administration is getting more attention.

President Bush's view is that Japan should be the focus of American security politics in the Asia-Pacific and that Japan was all too often ignored during the Clinton years. The Bush Administration sees Japan as an increasingly important global partner in peacekeeping, in promoting democracy, and in addressing major challenges in Northeast Asia. Japan, on the other hand, is reluctant to lead, and its neighbors reluctant, for historical reasons, to accept its leadership.

III. CHINA THREAT PERCEPTIONS

According to one Japanese analyst, the last thing President Bush would want to see is “Japan making friends with China.” Mr. Koizumi seems happy to oblige on this count, maintaining a cool distance between Japan and its Asian neighbor. However, in an interview in 2002, Koizumi stated flatly that he does not “subscribe to the view that China is a threat” and insisted that the main challenge now facing his country was “how Japan will be able to cooperate in terms of regional stability, with the premise that Japan will not use force.”

China (including Hong Kong) is now Japan’s largest trading partner. China has also served as a preferred production base for Japanese firms. Most Japanese business leaders and economic bureaucrats continue to view China’s economy as complementary to their own. As Japan’s economic interests in China have evolved, its political dialogue with Beijing has also deepened. In 1998, for example, Japan and China agreed to annual meetings between their heads of state and an expansion of their dialogue to include security issues. In 2001 Japan, China, and South Korea agreed on an additional annual summit meeting between their economic ministers.

These episodes indicate that Japan has actually moved closer to Beijing, despite more than a century of enmity between the two

countries, despite their competition to establish regional leadership, and despite an active lobby of “China hawks” in Tokyo.

It should be noted that Japan has undertaken a number of international actions in recent months which have aroused Beijing’s hostility. Among these are: (1) Japan’s warning to China after it enacted its “anti-secession” law which legalized war with Taiwan; (2) Japan’s attempt to secure a permanent position on the UN Security Council; (3) Tokyo’s exploration permits for oil and gas in disputed waters of the East China Sea; and (4) China’s concern at the development of closer relations between Japan, the United States and Taiwan.

The controversial history textbook issue is yet another source of hostility. In April 2005, a new history textbook, which both China and South Korea said had twisted historical facts and whitewashed Japan’s war crimes, triggered anti-Japanese demonstrations in both countries. There was also criticism of Chinese textbooks in Japan’s media, suggesting that China should halt its nationalistic and anti-Japanese education. In any case, China’s own sordid history of repression against its own people (including the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989), genocide in Tibet and fomenting of insurgencies in Asia from the 1940s to the 1970s hardly qualifies it to criticize Japan.

There are various contrary perceptions of Chinese policies in Japan. Some people speak volumes about Japan’s concern both about rising Chinese military power and over how events could unfold, and thus view China as a threat. The view that China is a “threat” to regional order has resonated strongly throughout Western academia and policy making since the mid-1990s. Some leading realist advocates who have advanced the “China threat theory” are Richard Berstein, Ross Munro, Bill Gertz, John Donelly and John Mearsheimer. Berstein and Munro suggest that the view of China aiming for economic growth and regional stability is obsolete, and Gertz argues, “the great threat of the twenty-first century . . . is the nuclear armed communist dictatorship.”


Realist Donnelly argues that as a state increases its power, it will invariably seek greater influence and change the power structure in the region. This poses a threat to regional order as established powers will react to maintain their position in the system, and the rising power will wage war to revise the status quo.\footnote{J. Donnelly, \textit{Realism and International Relations}, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 26.} Like Donnelly, Mearsheimer asserts that states seek to maximize relative power to increase their security \textit{vis-à-vis} other states,\footnote{J. Mearsheimer, \textit{The Tragedy of Great Power Politics}, New York: Norton, 2001, p. 396.} and agrees that a rising China will seek to increase its power capability and displace the US as regional hegemon.

The realist view is based on the notion that China's rapid economic growth and increased military power will invariably translate into an ambitious and expansionist foreign policy. However, the notion that Chinese national power has increased to such an extent as to be considered a threat to the region is questionable. It is clear that Chinese military power has increased concurrently with its growing economic prosperity. China has increased its military budget by one-third over the last two years, replaced its current arsenal of liquid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missiles, and increased its build up of short-range ballistic missiles.\footnote{S. Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and Pragmatic Foreign Policy Behavior," in S. Zhao, ed., \textit{Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior}, New York: East Gate Books, 2004, p. 65.} However, contending that a growing military strength is evidence of a more ambitious and expansionist foreign policy needs to be qualified by two important points.

First, China is still a second-rate military power and there is an immense and growing technological gap between China, on the one hand, and the US and Japan on the other.\footnote{L. Xiang, "Washington's Misguided China Policy," \textit{Survival}, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn 2001), p. 21.} Second, its military response is no more than a rational response to US missile defense plans. National Missile Defense (NMD) threatens to render the current Chinese nuclear deterrent redundant, and if Taiwan were to participate in Theater Missile Defense (TMD), then it would possess a credible defense against the use of force by China.\footnote{Y. Xuetong, "Theater Missile Defense and North-East Asian Security," \textit{The Nonproliferation Review} (Spring-Summer 1999), p. 65. For a useful analysis of the current Chinese thinking by Chinese strategic experts, see, for example, CHENG Yawen, "China Adjusts Strategic Thinking," \textit{Beijing Review}, August 26, 2004, pp. 26-27.}
not perceive China as posing a direct security threat but, at the same time, a few scholars still suggest that the Chinese security policies contain underlying threatening factors. They point out that the lack of transparency in Chinese military expenditure is the source of suspicion and worry for the concerned countries. For example, most military experts in the world believe China's military investment is two or three times what the Chinese say it is. It's the absence of transparency that raises the questions.

Others explain the rising perception of the China threat in Japan in terms of China's expanding military expenditure and equipment, Chinese policy in the South China Sea, its nuclear tests, and the increasing influence of the military in Chinese politics. Even though these scholars do not accept an immediate China threat thesis, they agree with the long-term potential threat from China. The public, scholars and some politicians in Japan assume that, since China is a revisionist state, it has an intention of filling up the power vacuum in the region left behind by the end of the Cold War. Other scholars who take the opposite position emphasize the fact that China, in respect to military capability and economic resources, does not have the power to pose a threat to Japan.

It is true that China has a belligerent image, due to its efforts to modernize the military and its high growth-rate of military expenditure and numerous missile tests, but in reality, Chinese military expenditure is only 10-20 percent of Japanese defense spending. These scholars claim that the phrase “China as a threat” is an exaggeration and insist that the Japanese Government should induce China to participate in a multilateral security order and help them to improve transparency.

The Chinese military rise has been occurring for over 10 to 15 years, and it is only recently that Japan's security establishment has started to focus on it. Why have there been changes in Japan's threat perception about China in the last four to seven years? What are the events that have triggered the perception change? The important issues are Chinese policy in the South China Sea, its nuclear tests, continuing modernization of the military and the increasing influence of the military in Chinese politics. These events and factors have increased a China threat perception in Japan's security planners.

In response to “China as a potential threat” and the intensified threats by North Korea, Japan has transformed its security policy in terms of strengthening Japan-US security cooperation in regional security, and smoothing operations of the SDF.
Under Prime Minister Junichiro KOIZUMI, Japan has been an enthusiastic supporter of the US-led war on terrorism, with Japanese combat personnel being dispatched overseas for the first time without UN authorization. Tokyo is already trying to play a larger role on the international stage by crafting a multipolar resolution of the Iraq crisis.\textsuperscript{20} This decision reflects the Japanese penchant for pragmatism. Moreover, after years of prevaricating, Japan has also signed up to the United States global system of missile defense. Certainly, US pressure had a great deal to do with both decisions, but perhaps more importantly, the rhetoric of the Bush doctrine offered Prime Minister Koizumi a chance to further his national agenda.

Koizumi is seeking to revive nationalism and strengthen the SDF. The SDF budget is now at an all-time high of US$1.2 billion,\textsuperscript{21} and with a new constitutional provision allowing weapons trade, Japan can now develop a missile defense system with the help of the United States to fend off potential short-term threats from North Korea and long-term threats from China. While expanding military powers may be an effective short-term distraction from Japan’s economic woes, remilitarization will create fervent domestic opposition.

In April 2004, three Japanese hostages\textsuperscript{22} were held captive in Iraq. Koizumi refused to give in to their demands for Japan to withdraw its 550-member SDF contingent serving on humanitarian relief work in the southern Iraqi city of Basra. Pressure in Japan for their withdrawal continued, especially after the beheading in October of Japanese tourist Shosei KODA. Rather than continuing to portray Iraq as a country thankful for Japanese aid, the media began to question Iraqi security and the safety of peacekeepers in Iraq.\textsuperscript{23}

In a January 2005 poll conducted by Kyodo News, over 55 percent of Japanese people believed that Japan should withdraw from Iraq as soon as the Dutch security forces protecting Japanese troops leave.\textsuperscript{24} The Japanese Defense Agency will have to balance its

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} "India and Japan Eye New Axis," \textit{Asia Tomorrow}, October 2004, p. 29.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Cited in "Foreign Affairs," \textit{News Weekly}, December 3, 2005, p. 17.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Three Japanese nationals were held hostage for a week by the militant Mujaheedin Brigade, and were released on April 15, 2004.
\end{itemize}
peacekeeping operations with opposition from a majority of Japanese citizens once the Dutch forces withdraw. Japanese media have recently reported that the troops who are helping to rebuild infrastructure in southern Iraq could return in May.

In addition to domestic opposition, the remilitarization of Japan would likely bring about international disapproval and regional instability. China, North Korea, and South Korea still remember being victimized by the Japanese military during World War II. Japan’s nuclear ambitions would add a new dimension to East Asia’s present fears. A belligerent North Korea and a threatened China would acquire more weapons and resources – leading to a potential Asian arms race that could destabilize the region.

The main issue for Japan’s foreign policy now is how to make international contributions that respond to the needs of global society while maintaining the alliance, with the United States as the centerpiece. These contributions include military efforts, such as Japan’s participation in international peacekeeping operations, their increasing involvement in regional initiatives against weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation, international terrorism, and non-military assistance in economic and technical fields.

On June 6, 2003, Japan’s Parliament passed three war contingency bills. These were the Law regarding Response to Armed Attacks, the Law on the Establishment of the Security Council of Japan, and the Law to amend the SDF. These bills increased the government’s powers in military emergencies. Under the contingency laws, the government will draft a plan of action when there is an attack against Japan or when the government determines that the danger of an attack is imminent. The plan, following Cabinet approval, must be endorsed by the Diet.

In situations deemed particularly urgent, the government is empowered to mobilize the SDF before drawing up a plan, but has to halt the deployment of forces if the eventual plan is rejected by the Diet. The law also allows the government to put the SDF on standby when it determines that a military attack is “anticipated.” The amendment to the SDF law enables military personnel to seize land and other property for operations, and exempts the SDF from a range of peacetime legal procedures, such as those concerning road traffic, medical activities and constructing facilities for their use.

The war contingency bills have bipartisan support. Earlier, the public opinion poll of April 2, 2003, conducted by Japan's biggest newspaper Yomiuri Shimbun, suggested the majority of the public (54 percent) were for the amendment to the Constitution. Prime Minister Koizumi has also indicated that his country would be prepared to launch a pre-emptive strike against a foreign threat, adopting the most strident position by a Japanese leader since World War II.

His comments reflect the change occurring in Japan's defense policy from pacifism to a more robust, deterrent-oriented posture. The shift has been prompted by threats from terrorism and a hostile North Korea, which is locked in a confrontation with the US over its nuclear weapons program.

IV. NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR AND MISSILE THREATS

Almost everyone agrees that the secretive one-party state should not be allowed to continue with its nuclear weapons program. The cause of the huge explosion at Ryongchon in North Korea remains a mystery, but has focused attention on the secretive totalitarian regime of KIM Jong-il, which has been involved in nuclear weapons testing, offensive missile production and drug-running.

The six-party talks and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) are cases in point. Washington leads this PSI to intervene in the global arms trade. A mixture of conventional law-enforcement, intelligence and naval firepower, the PSI has tightened international cooperation in blocking weapons exports, especially missile sales. It began with 13 nations, including Australia, and has expanded to almost 80.

North Korea first revealed its possession of nuclear weapons on April 24, 2003 in bilateral talks with the US and China in Beijing. In the talks, North Korean negotiators threatened Assistant Secretary of State, James A. Kelly, and his delegation that they would export nuclear weapons or conduct a "physical demonstra-

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26. This is a new multilateral forum in Northeast Asia, in which all the region's major powers (China, Japan, Russia, USA, South Korea and North Korea) sit down to persuade Pyongyang of the need to abandon its nuclear program. North Korea announced on 10th February that it has nuclear weapons and is withdrawing from six-nation talks. President Bush has said the United States wants those talks to continue.

tion,” indicating that they may conduct a test of a nuclear weapon. Pyongyang later announced that it has nuclear weapons.

Many analysts wondered if the Communist state would push ahead with a nuclear test. Others wondered if the United States would refer the nuclear issue to the UN Security Council or conduct a pre-emptive strike on the North. North Korea and the United States have exchanged verbal attacks. US President George W. Bush has fired a barrage of negative comments regarding North Korean leader KIM Jong-il, branding him as a “dangerous person” and a “tyrant.” North Korea has labeled Bush a “hooligan.”

Pyongyang also declared that it had completed the extraction of 8,000 spent fuel rods from its nuclear reactor in Yongbyon. This announcement stunned the international community, stoking concerns about a future nuclear test. It also indicates that the North is seeking to increase its nuclear arsenal, rather than pushing to conduct a nuclear weapons test. This signals that the North is aware of the dangerous repercussions of conducting a nuclear test. The North also understands that an increased arsenal presses the Bush Administration.

The US, in response to North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, seems to have adopted a three-goal strategy to: (a) contain nuclear weapons, (b) establish a missile defense, and (c) begin work on toppling KIM Jong-il. The US’s strategy has created discord with Seoul; President Bush confronted former South Korean President KIM Dae-jung and urged him to cease “appeasing” North Korea. He similarly urged Kim’s successor ROH Moo-hyun to stop “pandering” to North Korea. To defuse the nuclear stand-off peacefully, however, the US needs to pursue a diplomatic approach, one in which Pyongyang has the freedom to transform itself into a “normal state.”

The North Korean leadership also needs to understand that fostering nuclear intentions will only lead to further isolation and economic hardships as the possession of nuclear weapons will not be an asset to its security and economy but will only end up being a burden. It must make the fundamental strategic decision to give up its nuclear ambitions once and for all.

Why are the North Koreans so determined to build their own nuclear arsenal? There are four possible uses for nuclear weapons: for deterrence, for attacking another country, as an export earner, and as a bargaining chip in negotiations. Nuclear weaponry would certainly deter a US attack, but a North Korean use of that tiny deterrent force, whether in defense or attack, would be suicidal. Af-
ter the revelations in February 2004 about Pakistan’s nuclear black-market operations, any Korean export of nuclear technology would be virtually impossible. Moreover, Korea has no exports other than narcotics, missiles and forced labor. That means its real purpose with nuclear weaponry is to use it as a bargaining chip in exchange for economic benefits and security guarantees.

This poses a problem for Japan. North Korea analyst Gary Samore estimated that over the next few years North Korea could complete facilities capable of producing sufficient plutonium and highly enriched uranium for up to a dozen nuclear weapons annually, in addition to its suspected current stockpile of one or two nuclear weapons.28 The potential for North Korea to sell such weapons on the black market to rogue states or terrorists, in order to raise much needed funds, is alarming. Furthermore, its ballistic missile program has the capacity to strike Japan, which is only 8.5 minutes flying time from North Korea. If North Korea were to develop this capacity, Japan would become completely dependent on America’s nuclear umbrella. This would weaken Japan’s commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its own declared non-nuclear principles.

The principles were first announced by then Prime Minister Eisaku SATO in December 1967, and successive governments have adhered to this policy. However, the principles have been challenged in a new circumstance of the post-Cold War era, especially by nuclear threats from North Korea or by the rising power of nuclear China. In fact, Mr. Yasuo FUKUDA, the chief Cabinet Secretary of the Koizumi Government, told reporters on May 31, 2002, “The [non-nuclear] principles are just like the Constitution. But in the face of calls to amend the Constitution, amendment of the principles is also likely.”29

Furthermore, an influential opposition leader of the Liberal Party, Ichiro OZAWA, criticized China’s rapid military build-up in his speech on April 6, 2002, and referred to the potentiality of Japan’s becoming a nuclear power. He said, “If China gets too inflated, the Japanese people will become hysterical in response. We have plenty of plutonium in our nuclear power plants, so it is possi-


ble for us to produce 3,000 to 4,000 nuclear warheads.\textsuperscript{30} The remarks were apparently provoked by the rising power of China and Pyongyang's unpredictable nuclear threats and anxiety about the effectiveness of security guarantees from the US.

For some time the US has been considering imposing sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea), but the matter has been met with opposition from China which, as a permanent member of the Security Council, is in a position to veto such sanctions. Without China's participation there cannot be any sanctions. China currently favors a negotiated settlement rather than the imposition of sanctions.

China wishes for peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and opposes the application of international pressure on Pyongyang. On the one hand, Beijing feels that if sanctions were applied and China were to participate, this could undermine the domestic stability of North Korea and would harm the KIM Jong-il regime. On the other hand, without the participation of China, sanctions cannot be applied as a UN measure, and the result would strengthen the Pyongyang regime by fanning nationalism in the North, which regards such action as a declaration of war against it. In either scenario, Beijing fears the consequences would be the destabilization of the Peninsula.

Beijing is also concerned that it will lose leverage over North Korea at a time when the international community needs such leverage to resolve the crisis successfully. As a result of such complex calculations, China has reiterated the need for a solution through dialogue and negotiation. It seems that China has begun to persuade North Korea to resolve nuclear issues through peaceful negotiations. China's bottom line seems to be the maintenance of its strategic relationships with the DPRK. Despite urging for a negotiated solution, China places emphasis on its friendship with North Korea.

Besides China, the other two members of the six-party team which have been traditionally highly involved in the affairs of the Peninsula, Japan and Russia, have both opposed the development of nuclear weapons by North Korea.

Of the two, Japan is more concerned, because if North Korea possesses nuclear weapons and a delivery system, the security of Japan would be directly affected. Under such a scenario, it would be unacceptable for Japan to be placed within the nuclear strike

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
capability of another unfriendly power. Korea is to Japan what Belgium has been to England. England would not tolerate control of Belgium by a hostile power as Belgium has constituted a base for the invasion of England.

Japanese apologists like to describe Korea as "a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan." This geopolitical imperative of Korea to the security of Japan should be appreciated as a permanent and unchanging strategic configuration. It is for this reason, when, in 1992, Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa was asked whether Japan would accept North Korea's nuclear capability, he answered by the single word, "no," though he did not see that US nuclear weapons in Japan were aimed at North Korea.

There is another dimension in the development of a nuclear capability in Pyongyang, i.e., Japan might use the DPRK's nuclear capability as a pretext for going nuclear itself. Japan, already an economic superpower, could come to seek a nuclear capability commensurate with its economic status. Were this to happen it would have a massive adverse impact on US security, with America losing her hegemony in the Asia-Pacific. But this seems unlikely.

It is possible that if the DPRK is allowed to develop nuclear weapons, Japan might feel increasingly subject to nuclear intimidation from Russia, China and North Korea. Although Japan is now under the protection of the American nuclear umbrella, there is no guarantee that Japan can expect US protection forever or that the US-Japan military alliance will continue indefinitely without frictions or a divergence of interests between the two countries. Current trade frictions and a divergence of political interests may alienate Japan from the US. If this alienation were to occur and North Korea possessed nuclear weapons, then Japan would be exposed to threats from three nuclear powers.

Russian interests and policy towards the DPRK changed dramatically during 1990. Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Moscow and Seoul in 1990, Russia has steadily reduced its ties with the DPRK, placing the relationship on a purely inter-state basis, without recognizing the "special relationship of the fraternal socialist states." On the new basis: (1) Russia has now demanded hard currency for North Korea's debt payments, instead of a fraternal socialist price; (2) Russia has officially withdrawn its nuclear experts from the DPRK while urging Pyongyang to adhere to the NPT regime; (3) Russia has informed the DPRK that it would not honor its obligation to come automatically to the assistance of North Korea in case of military conflict; and (4) Russia is not giving
the DPRK any military assistance, perhaps because it is now able to manufacture most of its needed conventional weaponry, including the fighter aircraft MIG-29. Because the above policy changes favor the ROK vis-à-vis the DPRK, Russia lost much of the effective leverage that she had exercised over the DPRK.

Russia, though a member of the current six-party team, has taken rather a low posture towards the North Korean nuclear issue. It is probable that two considerations have influenced Moscow to take a low profile on the nuclear issue. First has been Russia's internal instability, both politically and economically. Russia simply cannot afford to put foreign policy first. Second, Russia, with its much-reduced economic well-being and considerable need for Western help, has little capacity to involve itself in Korea.

Since the onset of the nuclear crisis, North Korea and the United States have engaged in a game of “chicken”. The North has resorted to using the brinkmanship tactic, exaggerating its nuclear capability. On the other hand, the United States has often amplified the North's nuclear threats. Washington has demanded that the North dismantle its nuclear program, using Libya as a model case.³¹

The US, after having toppled dictatorships in Afghanistan and Iraq following the 9/11 terror attacks in 2001, might have contemplated getting rid of KIM Jong-il by military means; but this would be a very dangerous venture.

It could provoke a war with China, or at least risk stirring up extreme Chinese hostility. But such US action is hard to envisage, as opposition at home would be too fierce. Lacking other options, America has now decided to engage with the DPRK.

South Korea's Unification Minister CHUN Dong-young visited the DPRK and had talks with KIM Jong-il in Pyongyang on June 17, 2005. The talks produced extraordinary results. Kim's indication of North Korea's return to the stalled multilateral talks in Beijing in July was a significant departure from Pyongyang's past insistence that it would discuss the nuclear issue only with the US. Kim's comments about North Korea's possible return to the six-party talks, re-entry into the NPT, acceptance of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections, and abandonment of its missile development program must have attracted Washington's attention.

The leaders of South Korea and the US held summit talks in Washington in June and reaffirmed their position of pursuing a

³¹ For details, see Michael O'Hanlon and Mike Mochizuki, Crisis on the Korean Peninsula: How to Deal with a Nuclear North Korea, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.
peaceful and diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue. In fact, Roh’s reliance on engagement has restrained Bush’s ability to unilaterally pursue his “neo-containment” of North Korea, both in terms of economic sanctions and possible military action, and has profoundly affected both Washington’s and North Korea’s approach to resolving the nuclear issue. The reaffirmation means that Presidents Roh and Bush have agreed to give North Korea one more chance. The two leaders promised that the US would give multilateral security guarantees and economic aid to North Korea, and eventually promote “more normal relations” with the North, if Pyongyang gave up its nuclear program.

President Bush and KIM Jong-il have both felt compelled to adjust their respective strategies regarding the six-party talks. The talks began on September 13, with North Korea finally signing a pact on nuclear arms on September 19. The agreement offers new hope for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Under the deal, North Korea has agreed to abandon “all nuclear weapons” and “existing nuclear programs” and return at an early date to the NPT, from which it withdrew in January 2003. It has also agreed to allow inspections by the IAEA. In return, the other parties will provide Pyongyang with energy, investment, aid and security guarantees that ensure the peninsula is non-nuclear.

This agreement is a highly welcome development. It appears that Pyongyang understood that fostering nuclear intentions would only lead to further isolation and economic hardship as the possession of nuclear weapons would not be an asset to its security and economy but would only end up being a burden.

The US affirmed that it had no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula and no intention to attack North Korea. Japan and the US pledged to work towards normal diplomatic relations with Pyongyang. China, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the US also said they were willing to provide energy assistance to North Korea. The agreement concedes North Korea’s right to a light-water nuclear reactor, a concession Bush didn’t want to make at this stage. The agreement is fragile, but if it holds together, it will defuse one of the world’s most dangerous flashpoints and remove one of the deepest concerns for regional defense planners.

Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka MACHIMURA said: “The fact that North Korea has promised for the first time to aban-

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don its nuclear weapons in a verifiable way will serve as an important basis for realizing denuclearization.”³³ The proof of North Korea’s intentions will be whether it will submit to, and cooperate with, a tight and intrusive international verification regime. That remains to be seen.

There are other threats to Japan’s security that also require mention. The question of eventual Korean unification must inevitably concern Japan as a neighbor, as does the more immediate possibility of conflict on the peninsula, stemming from North Korea’s missile threats.

North Korea has developed a significant missile capability. It has hundreds of Scud missiles and similar weapons which could be used against targets in Japan and South Korea. Japan’s greatest concern is the North’s No-dong missiles, which can carry chemical and biological weapons. The No-dong 1 has a range of 1,000 km (sufficient to reach Osaka), while the No-dong 2 can put Tokyo, as well as Japan’s other major cities, within range. It is estimated North Korea has about 100 of these, mostly on mobile missile launchers located throughout the country.³⁴

Given the presence of US military bases in Japan, it is likely that a number of these are targeted at Japan. Just how vulnerable Japan is to a North Korean missile strike was highlighted when Pyongyang fired a Taepo-dong missile directly over Northern Honshu in August 1998. The failure of Japanese early warning systems to detect the missile before it splashed down in the northern Pacific compounded the gravity of the situation for the Japanese. Japan condemned North Korea for a dangerous military provocation, and announced that it would launch its own spy satellites to keep track of developments in North Korea. More importantly, the missile launch resulted in a change in Japanese thinking regarding TMD. The Japanese had previously not been overly enthusiastic about participating in TMD development, but announced the decision to join the research program in September 1998.

The Japanese Defense Agency head, Shigeru ISHIBA, informed the Japanese Diet on March 27, 2003 that Japan should itself acquire longer-range missiles, and that Japan was thinking of buying Tomahawk cruise missiles that would be capable of hitting North Korean missile sites. Japanese apprehension about North Korea has already been influenced by the North’s rogue behavior. The

North has harbored Japanese Red Army terrorists, kidnapped Japanese nationals, smuggled narcotics into Japan and directed a stream of hostile propaganda against Japan.\textsuperscript{35}

The North's behavior has stimulated Japan to adopt a more robust attitude to its own security. This is illustrated by the change in dealing with clandestine North Korean ships that have operated against Japan for many years. In December 2001, the Japanese coastguard pursued a North Korean intruder into China's exclusive economic zone and sank the vessel in an exchange of fire. The missile threat has also influenced Japan's greater interest in the US NMD system. Japan is already discussing NMD with the US, and Shigeru ISHIBA has spoken in support of Japan's participation in the system or development of its own system. It is inevitable that "Japan will acquire offensive capabilities against both China and North Korea. If present trends continue, Japan may also want nuclear weapons."\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{V. JAPAN'S NUCLEAR MISSILE PROGRAMS}

The Koizumi government, more than any previous Japanese administration, has been receptive to the idea of Japan reacquiring the use of force as an instrument of state policy – though it is not clear how much of this is driven by a perception of Chinese threat, and how much by the wish to maintain security relations with the US, which is underlined by a marked Japanese fear of abandonment. This fear and North Korea's nuclear threat may drive Japan to go nuclear.\textsuperscript{37}

The proposition that Japan should possess its own nuclear weapons has been rejected in major polls. In a 1999 poll by the National Institute for Research Advancement, only 7 percent were in favor of Japan possessing its own nuclear weapons, even if the US-Japan Security Treaty were to be abrogated.\textsuperscript{38} Earlier in a survey in 1998, only 17 of 431 Diet members were 'in favor', or 'some-


\textsuperscript{36} This is the view of Robyn Lim, Professor of International Relations at Nanzan University, Nagoya. For details, see Robyn Lim, "Upping the Ante on N-Weapons," \textit{The Australian Financial Review}, September 21, 2005, p. 63 [opinion].


what in favor’ of nuclear armament. However, many Diet members and bureaucrats argued that Japan should be armed with nuclear weapons.

A nuclear-armed Japan could become a reality if North Korea were to become a nuclear state. At present Tokyo is constrained by its NPT status, and the US nuclear umbrella, as well as by public attitudes. If Japan were to participate in the US NMD system, it could help sustain Japan’s commitment to the US-Japanese security alliance, obviating Japan’s need to consider development of its own nuclear weapons. But if strategic circumstances were to change, and the US security guarantee were no longer available, then the prospect of a nuclear Japan would become a real issue – despite its current nuclear allergy.

Over the years, several Japanese Prime Ministers have canvassed the possibility of obtaining nuclear weapons for defensive purposes and staying within the constraints imposed by Japan’s post-war constitution. Prime Minister Nobosuke KISHI did so in the late 1950s and so did his brother, Prime Minister Eisaku SATO, in the mid-1960s. One of Japan’s most persistent nuclear advocates was another Prime Minister, Yasuhiro NAKASONE. In 1969, there was even an official report recommending that Japan embark on a weapons program. In 1993, the then Foreign Minister, Kabun MUTO, argued that a nuclear weapons capability would be important if Japan faced a severe threat. He said: “If North Korea develops nuclear weapons and that becomes a threat to Japan, first there is the nuclear umbrella of the US on which we can rely. But if it comes to the crunch, possessing the will that we can do it is important.” But many Japanese remain opposed to going nuclear. So far as is known, no weapons program has been undertaken. Unless there is a radical change in the US non-proliferation policy, Japan would also face intense opposition from Washington if it claimed it could no longer rely on sheltering under America’s nuclear umbrella.

Japan could succeed in building such weapons quickly. Japan’s nuclear power program has generated huge stockpiles of plutonium, which it has been allowed to separate in reprocessing facilities. Compared with North Korea’s ability to generate enough plutonium to make one weapon a year, Japan already has enough to

make more than 1,000 warheads.\textsuperscript{41} Nor does anyone doubt that it has the technical skill to incorporate its plutonium into an effective fission weapon deliverable by plane or long-range missile.

One area that is receiving high priority in Japan's defense establishment is defense against ballistic missiles. Currently, Japan is not able to detect and intercept incoming ballistic missiles without US assistance. In the absence of a countervailing missile capability, which is forbidden under the current interpretation of the constitution, Tokyo has opted to participate in the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) program. The central aim is to construct a 'missile shield' able to protect Japan against a limited strike from North Korea,\textsuperscript{42} although it is unlikely to be an effective shield against China's or Russia's more numerous and capable missile forces.

Japan’s work on missile defense, spurred by North Korea’s test of a long-range missile in 1998, has been limited to research and development. Under the plan, Tokyo will contribute ¥100 billion to acquire key US-made technologies, with a further ¥600 billion contribution expected over the next five years. Washington will provide substantive technological support for Tokyo's BMD project.\textsuperscript{43}

Japan has now started operating the common sea-based BMD platform as well as Aegis combat system-equipped air warfare destroyers, and is working with the Americans on development of interceptor missiles.\textsuperscript{44} Under the Washington agreement, Americans "will deploy their x-band anti-missile radar system in Japan, share information and co-ordinate responses with the Japanese. The Japanese and US Pacific BMD systems, though yet unproved, will be closely meshed."\textsuperscript{45}

US-Japan cooperation on missile defense has major implications for Japan's approach to collective self defense since the technology being developed to protect Japan against North Korean missiles will also constitute an integral part of the US national missile defense system. Many Japanese politicians have been reluctant


\textsuperscript{44} Peter Alford, "US Keen on Japanese Ties with Australia," \textit{The Weekend Australian}, December 10-11, 2005, p. 3 [Defence].

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.}
to support BMD because they fear enmeshment in US conflicts and war planning should Japan become part of an extended missile defense system.

China is concerned that the expertise acquired in sensitive areas of missile technology would be readily transferable to a ballistic missile program should Japan decide to develop its own missiles and arm them with nuclear warheads. China is also worried that Japan might export missile technology to Taiwan. Extending the shield to cover the approaches to the island could negate China's current missile advantage over Taiwan.

Beijing is of the view that this missile program would have "negative effects on regional stability and security." However, Japanese Defense Minister Shigeru ISHIBA rejected complaints that the move would threaten regional stability. "We don't need to shoot interceptor missiles if they don't launch their missiles, so I think the nature of the system is entirely defensive, thus constitutionally possible, and it matches with Japan's exclusively defensive posture," he said. Mr. Ishiba also acknowledged that Washington regarded Tokyo's participation in the missile defense project as a litmus test of its commitment to the US-Japan alliance.

The Japanese Foreign Ministry said that "Japan has been conducting technological research of BMD with the United States and has now come to the conclusion that it is desirable to introduce the system for the purpose of enhancing peace and security of the nation and for strengthening the Japan-US Security Alliance." The multi-layer defense system will consist of Aegis BMD know-how and Patriot PAC-3 equipment, both of US origin.

Cognizant of the shockwaves that the move could send across the Asia-Pacific region, the Koizumi administration took care to emphasize that the move was entirely "defensive" and that it would have "no threatening implication for the neighboring countries and areas and no ill-effect on the stability in the region . . . As and when necessary, Japan would explain its position so as to gain international understanding," it added.

One aspect is that the new BMD system could either be a forerunner of, or indeed become an integral part of, the TMD system proposed by the US in the Asia-Pacific region. According to

48. Ibid.
Masaru TAMAMOTO, senior fellow at the Japan Institute of International Affairs, the US “has been pushing Japan toward assuming a greater security role, including the development of a TMD system and expanding collective security arrangements, in an effort to enhance deterrence against any Chinese military ambition.”49 Japan has been undertaking joint technological research just on TMD, covering US military forces in Japan. TMD, which had focused on short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, is now likely to merge with a program targeting intercontinental missiles. The Japan-US research being conducted on sea-based systems will become part of the missile defense program as a whole.

Japan’s decision to develop this ballistic missile defense system could pressure Australia to join this system. One of the results of the September 11 attacks could well be the beginning of Japan’s remilitarization and Japan’s closer military cooperation with its allies. Mr. Koizumi, on an official visit to Australia on May 1, 2002, declared that “joint security talks between top-level officials from the US, Japan and Australia are to become a permanent feature of the strategic dialogue in East Asia.”50

While Canberra welcomes this development, Beijing, of course, will be wary. Beijing fears that any interlocking of the web of US alliances in the region could in future constitute a strategy of containment aimed at China. Its concerns are akin to those of Russia, which confronts North Atlantic Treaty Organization enlargement into Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. Neither wants to find itself isolated. China is already worried about the US-Japan missile defense deal.

The TMD is a project for “defense” of the United States and its allies, such as Japan and Australia, against rogue countries like North Korea. The risk is that it will antagonize China, whose relatively few nuclear missiles would be rendered impotent were an anti-missile shield ever to work. The mere threat of deployment would therefore encourage China to build more missiles, setting off an arms race in Asia, and this would play into the hands of those within Beijing’s leadership that are looking for “an American enemy” to solidify their own domestic political positions on the basis of uncompromising nationalism. All of these factors have to be balanced in any consideration of a TMD system.

VI. JAPAN’S QUEST FOR A UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT

Japan’s changing security and defense policy should be viewed within the framework of its broader foreign policy framework of striving to be a global player, a shift from its past foreign policy based on the principle of passive pacifism. In the current era, Japan seeks to play a greater leadership role in the region of East Asia as well as in other parts of the world, and its pursuit of obtaining a permanent seat at the expanded United Nations Security Council is part of this broad foreign policy objective.

If Japan actively seeks to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it certainly needs to build up its international prestige. The country must show the world what sort of role it intends to play in an increasingly integrated global security system. At issue here are the ultimate objectives and the quality of Japan’s foreign policy. In this context, Japan needs to identify more strongly with what one might call the “international security community,” which involves shared values and standards for action.

Most Japanese view their country as having been a model global citizen since the end of World War II, and they have a point. Not a single Japanese soldier has fired a shot in anger in 60 years. Japan participates in international peacekeeping operations and is increasingly involved in regional initiatives against nuclear proliferation, international terrorism and piracy. Tokyo made a significant commitment to the Australian-led UN mission to secure East Timor in 1999. Japan is also a core participant in the Proliferation Security Initiative.

Japan is the world’s second largest economy after the USA, and is also the second largest contributor to the UN.\(^{51}\) Its aid to developing nations – China included – has been massive. As for Afghanistan, Japan hosted an International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance on January 21-22, 2002, where Tokyo pledged up to $500 million in aid over the next 25 years. Furthermore, after the inauguration of the Afghanistan Transitional Administration headed by President Hamid Karzai, the Japanese government decided to extend an Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) package of about $42 million to support the Administration. In addition, Japan has contributed a total of approximately $144 million to assist

the activities of UN agencies and other international organizations for Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons.

Another of Japan’s notable contributions is its financial assistance of approximately $300 million to the Pakistani Government as well as technical assistance to Southeast Asian countries. The purpose is to suppress existing and newly forming terrorist organizations and to enhance airport and seaport security. It is no wonder that UN Secretary General Kofi Annan thinks highly of Japan.

Wanting to position itself on an equal status with the other great powers in the Security Council, Japan has been launching pro-active diplomacy in the UN to convince other nations of the need for Japan to gain a permanent seat in the Security Council. Japan and India have recently established several high-level contacts. Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko KAWAGUCHI visited New Delhi recently and informed Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that the two sides had agreed they would extend mutual support for permanent membership of the Security Council.

New Delhi has no problem accepting Tokyo’s desire for a more visible international role, so long as Japan acknowledges India’s own interests in this regard. The declaration by both countries, at the end of Kawaguchi’s India visit, that they will support each other’s candidature for the UN Security Council “to enhance the effectiveness and credibility” of the UN is being seen in this context.52

The United States said that it would back Japan and one other as yet unnamed power. Australia backs Japan. Although Japan’s bid received an endorsement from Kofi Annan, South Korea’s ambassador to the UN told reporters that Japan was not entitled to a permanent seat because it “lacks the confidence of neighboring countries.”53 In China, opposition to Japan’s UN bid started out as an internet petition that gathered 25 million signatures and culminated in mobs vandalizing Japanese department stores in Chengdu and Shenzhen. “Japan’s final aim is to dominate Asia by military force. China has an obligation to stop Japan from doing so,”54 said Tong ZENG, one of the organizers of the petition.

Will China block Japan’s bid? It is not clear that would win China many friends. If China blocks the UN bid, Japan is guaran-

54. Ibid.
ted to retaliate in some ways, most likely in the economic realm. A trade war would be irrational; it would, of course, hurt Japan. China is now Japan’s largest trading partner, but it would hurt China too.

VII. CONCLUSION

The US will shape Japanese security policy to a large extent. Despite irritations over the presence of American troops, especially for those in Okinawa, Japan is expected to continue to depend on the US-Japanese military alliance for its security. In the absence of a domestic political consensus for a new assertive foreign policy, and in the face of the reluctance of Japan’s neighbors to accept a major military power as well as a more active independent Japanese security role, the alliance with the United States will very likely remain the best security strategy for Japan, provided that the US continues its engagement in Asia.

An attempt by Japan, perhaps through renewed nationalism, to seek its autonomy from American security and foreign policies cannot be ruled out. One wonders how the US will interpret its security treaty with Japan if Tokyo decides to confront China, perhaps even militarily, in the dispute over the Senkaku Islands, a part of Okinawa with potentially valuable seabed resources. Nor is China the only concern. There are many other uncertainties. North Korea, which has abducted more than 100 Japanese citizens, is developing a nuclear capability and brandishing it as a bargaining chip. It has warned that it would hit Japan with missiles if Tokyo decided to impose economic sanctions, Japan’s sole form of leverage. Leaving aside uncertainty about the accuracy of North Korean missiles, the question of how Japan and the US would respond remains critical. These regional tensions and uncertainties may finally stimulate Japan to emerge from its futile passivity and become a strong nation willing to accept sacrifices.

In response to North Korea’s missile threat, many members of Japan’s government and the media have argued that their country should prepare to defend itself – including, possibly, by developing nuclear weapons. Not long ago such comments would have been unthinkable outside the extreme right wing of Japan’s political discourse. Today, however, this kind of language is becoming more and more common, indicating that a rising nationalism has taken hold in Japan. This development could have an alarming consequence: namely, the rise of a militarized, assertive and nuclear-armed Japan, which would be a nightmare for the country’s neighbors.
Japan at the moment is moving away from its pacifist past towards a more outward-looking security posture characterized by a greater willingness to use the SDF in support of its foreign policy and defense interests. This shift is gaining momentum. We can expect to see a more self-confident Japan in the international arena in the future, a Japan that is not afraid to assert itself in controversial issues. Signs of this have already emerged.

Japan’s recent effort to gain a permanent seat in the UN Security Council is a clear example of Japan’s new role conception. Wanting to position itself on an equal footing with the other great powers in the Security Council, Japan has been launching aggressive diplomacy in the UN to convince other nations of the need for Japan to gain a permanent seat in the Security Council. The controversial history textbook issue and Koizumi’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine are yet other signs of the new Japanese foreign policy orientation asserting its own voice in a forceful manner. One thing is sure: the more assertive Japanese foreign policy will significantly affect US-China relations and Japan-China relations in the future.
## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS USED

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<tr>
<td>BMD</td>
<td>Ballistic Missile Defense</td>
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<td>DMZ</td>
<td>demilitarized zone</td>
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<td>DPRK</td>
<td>Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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