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From Sword to Chrysanthemum

Thomas U. Berger

Japan's Culture of Anti-militarism

The end of the Cold War and the phenomenal increase in Japan's economic and technological power put Japan today in the position to become, if it chooses, a military as well as economic superpower. The diminution of the Soviet threat and the increasing U.S. preoccupation with domestic problems give Japan a latitude for independent action it has not had since the end of World War II. At the same time the U.S.-Japanese security alliance, which has enabled Japan to adopt a minimalist approach to defense and national security, is being weakened by ideologically charged trade and other economic frictions and a growing American perception of Japan as a threat to its interests.¹ Moreover, in the long run Japan faces the prospect of having to deal with other rising regional powers, most notably the People's Republic of China. This changing international security environment thus raises question whether Japan, having become an economic rival of the United States, may not in the future become a military competitor as well; whether, after having adopted a pacifist stance for half a century, Japan may choose to unsheathe its sword once again.²

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1. Among those who see Japan as a threat is the so-called revisionist school of Japan experts, including Chalmers Johnson, "Their Behavior, Our Policy," *The National Interest*, No. 17 (Fall 1989); Clyde Prestowitz, *Trading Places* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); James Fallows, "Containing Japan," *Atlantic*, Vol. 263, No. 5 (May 1989); Karel Van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power: People and Politics in a Stateless Nation* (New York: Knopf, 1990); and Pat Choate, *Agents of Influence* (New York: Knopf, 1990). American public opinion is also moving towards a more negative view of Japan; according to a February 1992 *Times/Mirror* poll, 31 percent of those surveyed now view Japan as the country that presents the greatest danger to the United States. See William Watts, "Japan Focus of America's Worst Fears," *The Japan Times*, July 15, 1992, p. 21, for a review of recent surveys.

2. See George Friedman and Meredith Lebard, *The Coming War with Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991). See also Simon Winchester, *Pacific Nightmare: A Third World War in the Far East* (London: Sidgwick and Harrison, 1992). Such concerns can be seen in the recently leaked Pentagon report which emphasized that the United States must remain actively engaged in

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In this article I argue that such fears are largely misplaced and that 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 anti-militarism. 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.

Japan's culture of anti-militarism originally developed under the aegis of a benevolent U.S. hegemon during the 1950s and 1960s. Since then it has taken root and is no longer a hothouse plant that would wither and die the moment American commitment to East Asia security affairs weakens. Nonetheless, Japan's anti-militarism in its present form could not survive both a weakening of its alliance with the United States and the emergence of a new regional security threat. In such a scenario Japan's political system would undergo a profound crisis and a new coalition of political actors might come to power, possibly with a far more aggressive approach to national security. Indeed, rather than a resurgence of militarism, I will argue that the main danger Japan faces today is precisely the opposite; because of its unwillingness to make a greater military contribution to regional and international security, Japan threatens to damage its alliance with the United States, the key element that enables Japan to maintain a relatively low posture on defense. Thus, paradoxically, Japan's extreme anti-militarism increases the likelihood of a shift in the opposite direction.

After first briefly examining and evaluating both the arguments that predict that Japan will adopt a more activist military posture and those that do not,

maintaining regional security in order to prevent Japan and Germany from feeling compelled to build up their military forces. See Patrick Tyler, "U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop," *New York Times*, March 8, 1992, p. 1 and 14.

I trace the evolution of Japan's postwar culture of antimilitarism and examine its impact on defense policy formation. I conclude that it is in the interest of the United States to help Japan manage a slow and orderly evolution of this peculiar culture toward a more realistic stance with regard to security affairs, one that is prepared to meet potential military threats actively and could survive a reduction in America's regional military presence. In particular, I argue that Japan should be encouraged to play a larger role in the post-Cold War security order, especially in the area of regional security. With the assistance of the United States, Japan should seek to create a diverse network of institutional security ties centering on, but not relying exclusively on, the present Mutual Security Treaty with the United States.³ Such a development would not only help lighten the U.S. military burden and contribute to peace and stability in the Far East, but would also help the Japanese preserve the most admirable features of their new political-military culture, namely their determination not to pursue a destructive course of military expansionism and nationalist self-assertion.

Arguments Predicting an Increased Japanese Military Role

Two sets of very different though potentially complementary arguments predict that Japan will begin to develop military capabilities commensurate with its enormous economic and technological ones in the not too distant future. The first set of arguments is based on purely international systemic factors, focusing on regional instability in East Asia and on the changing distribution of power between Japan and the United States. The second set of arguments stresses domestic political variables, pointing to rising Japanese nationalism and growing irritation with the United States over trade and other issues.

PRESSURES FROM THE STRUCTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Many realist theorists have argued that there is a historical tendency for powerful nations to try to establish themselves as hegemonic powers who

3. The Mutual Security Treaty is the cornerstone of the U.S.- Japanese security relationship and commits the United States to help defend Japan militarily in return for Japanese cooperation on security issues. For an overview of the origins of the Mutual Security Treaty system, see Martin E. Weinstein, *Japan's Postwar Defense Policy, 1947-1968* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

define the rules of interstate relations.⁴ In the modern age the two leading international hegemonies have been Britain in the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries and the United States in the post-World War II era. Because of disparate rates of economic growth, concentrations of power in the international system are fluid and inevitably discrepancies develop between the international hegemonic structure and the distribution of real power. With time hegemonies tend to become increasingly weak relative to other, non-hegemonic states who enjoy a higher rate of economic growth. When such disequilibria occur the old dominant power is displaced by a more vital rising nation. The new power then takes on the hegemonic role, or else the international system lapses into a state of anarchy. Historically such periods of transition have been marked by military conflict as rival states have sought to assume the mantle of international leadership.⁵

From this perspective it seems inevitable that Japan, with its combination of demographic weight and economic and technological prowess, will seek to play a greater military role than it has in the past. Some have voiced the hope that Japan will expand its partnership with the United States and help promote not only its own but regional security as well.⁶ Other analysts, most prominently George Friedman and Meredith Lebard, have predicted that Japan will begin to behave like other historical rising powers, converting some of its enormous economic strength into commensurate military capabilities and eventually seeking to replace the United States as the new hegemonic power.⁷

A second strain of realism, sometimes called defensive realism, does not share the classical realist assumption that nations always seek to maximize their power. Instead, defensive realists subscribe to the rather more modest proposition that most nations are inclined to expand their military capabilities only insofar as needed to achieve security from perceived external threats.⁸

4. Classical statements of this point of view include Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Free Press, 1954); and Martin Wight, *The System of States* (Atlantic Heights, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1977).

5. See Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

6. See, for example, James E. Auer, "May the U.S.-Japan Defense Alliance Continue Going from Strength to Strength," *The Japan Times*, February 26, 1989; and Jimmy Carter and Yasuhiro Nakasone, "Ensuring Alliance in an Uncertain World: The Strengthening of U.S.-Japan Partnership in the 1990s," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter 1992), pp. 43-56.

7. Friedman and Lebard, *The Coming War with Japan*.

8. This is one of the key distinctions between classical realist theorists such as Morgenthau, Wight, and Gilpin, and the so-called structural-realist or defensive realist school represented by

Yet from this perspective as well, there is reason to expect that Japan will want to rearm. The end of the Cold War has witnessed the emergence of a host of regional disputes which had been suppressed by the U.S.-Soviet rivalry since World War II. Though so far such conflicts have been confined to Eastern Europe and the territory of the former Soviet Union, Asia too has many potential conflicts. The situation on the Korean peninsula remains tense, and though dialogue between the sides continues, the North may still acquire nuclear weapons.⁹ In Southeast Asia, regional powers are rapidly acquiring new and more advanced weapons systems. One potential hot spot is the territorial dispute by China, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei over the Spratley Islands, which are thought to have valuable oil resources and are located on the strategic sea lanes running through the South China Sea.¹⁰ The Russian military presence in Northeast Asia remains considerable. Finally, there looms the long-term problem of a rapidly industrializing but politically repressive People's Republic of China.¹¹

All of these risks may prove acceptable to Japan, as long as it enjoys the firm support of the United States. The United States, however, appears exhausted by its long struggle with the Soviet Union and is plagued by serious domestic economic and social problems.¹² With the external Soviet threat gone, these internal problems seem likely to command increasing attention from American leaders and lead to a reduction in U.S. commitments abroad. The U.S. withdrawal from the Philippines and planned troop reductions in Korea can be interpreted as the first steps in this direction.¹³ Some Japanese even worry that the United States will come to see Japan rather than the Soviet Union as its chief international adversary.¹⁴

Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer 1984), pp. 58-108; Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984); and Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

9. On Japanese fears concerning a potential North Korean nuclear threat, see *The Japan Economic Journal*, May 18, 1991.

10. See Mark Mihovjec, "The Spratley and Paracel Islands Conflict," *Survival*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January/February 1989), pp. 70-78.

11. The author is grateful to comments made on this point by Professor Masashi Nishihara.

12. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).

13. On Asian fears that the U.S. military commitment to East Asia is weakening, see *The International Herald Tribune*, January 31, 1991.

14. See for example Hisahiko Okazaki, *Hanei to Sutai to Orandashi ni Nihon ga Mieru* (Tokyo: Bungeishunju, 1991). Okazaki, a career diplomat who has served as ambassador to Saudi Arabia

Given the potentially volatile security situation in East Asia and Japanese doubts concerning the U.S. commitment to Asian security, Japan may come to feel compelled to provide for its own defense. Japan would then be forced to confront the potential for conflict in its own backyard and would need to ensure that nearby crises would not threaten vital Japanese interests. In such a scenario Japan would find itself trying to fill the East Asian and Southeast Asian power vacuum with some version of *Pax Nipponica*. Whether other nations would accept Japan in such a role, however, is an open question.¹⁵

DOMESTIC PROPENSITIES TOWARD REMILITARIZATION

Parallel to arguments that predict Japanese rearmament on the basis of international systemic factors are those that concentrate on domestic, primarily political-cultural, factors. Three aspects of Japanese society could contribute to a remilitarization of its defense policies: its strong sense of ethnocentric nationalism, its peculiar combination of strong group loyalty with a lack of centralized decision making, and the relative absence of a sense of war guilt.

Many analysts have argued that Japan's national identity is based on a widespread belief in its uniqueness. This belief takes many different forms and shapes, all of which share the premise that the Japanese are so fundamentally different from other peoples that there is an almost impenetrable barrier to mutual understanding and interaction.¹⁶ These beliefs are linked to a widely shared conviction that Japan possesses a unique cultural advantage in its ability to produce quality goods and maintain an orderly society, and is reinforced by the popular view that ethnic homogeneity is central feature of its culture. Conversely, many Japanese feel that ethnic diversity is at the root of the relative decline of Western society in general, and American society in particular.¹⁷ In recent years a number of far right-wing figures,

and Thailand, compares Japan with sixteenth-century Holland, which he describes as a trading nation that fell victim to the envy of France and Britain once the unifying threat of the Spanish Empire had receded. See also Yukio Matsuyama, "Kokusai Rashimban," *Asahi*, November 8, 1991, p. 1. For an overview of Japanese reactions to the end of the Cold War, see *International Herald Tribune*, June 21, 1990.

15. See John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5-56, for a similar argument about Germany and Europe.

16. For a good overview, see Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); and Kosaku Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

17. See, for example, Bill Powell and Bradley Martin, "What Japan Thinks of America," *Newsweek*, April 2, 1990, pp. 16-22, which notes public opinion data showing that 57 percent of all Japanese believe that ethnic diversity is a factor in America's decline.

such as Shintaro Ishihara and Jun Eto, have tried to use trade and economic disputes with the United States to rouse nationalist sentiments¹⁸; at the same time the Japanese government, especially under Prime Minister Nakasone, has been more active in trying to promote a sense of national pride.¹⁹ It is not difficult to imagine that such sentiments could be provoked to rally popular support for a massive military buildup of society.

A second reputed feature of Japanese society that makes it susceptible to remilitarization is its combination of extraordinary group loyalty and lack of central control.²⁰ From kindergarten to the corporate boardroom, the Japanese have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to create highly efficient organizations to which individuals develop a degree of loyalty and of attachment that, in other societies, is usually reserved for the family or religion. At the same time, there is no tradition of strong central decision making in Japan as there is in the West, and policy is made on the basis of mutual accommodations between the leading institutions that command individual loyalties. Once a consensus has formed, such as one in favor of remilitarization, it becomes very hard for the national leadership to steer the decision-making process rationally because of the number of different and competing groups involved.²¹ This combination of ethnocentric nationalism and a political culture prone to inertia might provide fertile grounds for an ultranationalist explosion, possibly triggered by rising resentment over a Japanese perception of unfair U.S. demands on trade and other foreign policy issues.

Such apprehensions are further heightened by Japan's apparent unwillingness to confront the grim historical legacy of atrocities committed by its forces

18. See Shintaro Ishihara and Akio Morita, *No to ieru Nihon e* (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 1989), translated into English, minus Morita's contributions, as *The Japan That Can Say "No": The New U.S.-Japan Relations Card* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991); and Jun Eto, *Nichibeï Senso wa owatte inai* ("The Japanese-American war is not over") (Tokyo: Nesco, 1987).

19. Among other measures taken to raise Japanese national consciousness during the Nakasone period, there was the reintroduction into school textbooks of military figures as role models for Japanese children; *Japan Times*, February 11, 1989; the creation of a national center for the study of Japanese culture; *Asahi*, February 29, 1988; and making compulsory the singing of the national anthem and flying of the national flag at school events; *Asahi*, March 28, 1989, p. 1.

20. This view of Japanese society has been much popularized in recent years by Van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*.

21. See Karel Van Wolferen, "No Brakes, No Compass," *The National Interest*, No. 25 (Fall 1991). This point of view is shared by many Japanese concerned with the danger of Japanese rearmament. One of the earliest formulations of this point of view can be found in Masao Maruyama's discussion of the social basis of pre-war Japanese militarism, "The Ideology and Dynamics of Japanese Fascism," in Masao Maruyama, *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), edited by Ivan Morris.

during World War II. Many outside observers contrast Japan with West Germany, where after an initial period of hesitation, the Germans have been remarkably forthright in trying to come to grips with the Holocaust and other dark corners of their history.²² It is argued that Japan's failure to do the same indicates that the Japanese, unlike the Germans, have failed to draw any lessons from the war and thus are more inclined to revert to their pre-war patterns of behavior.²³

WEAKNESSES IN ARGUMENTS PREDICTING JAPANESE MILITARY EXPANSION

The chief problem with arguments predicting a more militarily assertive Japan is that little evidence suggests that Japan is preparing to embark on a major armaments program. Three recent developments are typically identified as signs of movement towards a more expansive defense policy: increased Japanese defense expenditures, the growth of the Japanese defense industry, and the rise of Japanese nationalism. Upon closer examination, however, all three reveal themselves to be considerably less significant than they might first appear.

Japanese defense expenditures have risen at the rate of 6.5 percent a year since 1978, and in dollar terms Japan now has the world's third largest defense budget after the United States and Russia (over 30 billion dollars).²⁴ Nonetheless, there is considerable debate over the cost-effectiveness of Jap-

22. See Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust and German National Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988). While the Japanese did not carry out a program of systematic mass murder on the same scale or in the same cold-blooded fashion as did the Nazis, it is important not to overlook the extent of Japanese atrocities in East Asia, of which the Nanjing massacre is only the most infamous example. For more on Japanese war crimes, see Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War 1931-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Ienaga, *Senso Sekinin* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1985); Meirion and Susie Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army* (New York: Random House, 1991). Since the death of Emperor Hirohito in 1989 there has been slow but considerable progress towards open recognition by the government of Japanese wartime atrocities, in part motivated by a desire to improve relations with Japan's Asian neighbors. For example, the Japanese government has decided to officially investigate the cases of an estimated 200,000 women, mostly Korean, who were forced to serve as prostitutes for the Japanese Imperial Army. *Asahi*, July 7, 1992. Japanese textbooks have also been revised recently to include more explicit recognition of the aggressive nature of the Japanese drive for conquest in East and South-East Asia; *Asahi*, July 1, 1992, p. 1.

23. See, for example, Steven R. Weisman, "Pearl Harbor in the Mind of Japan," *New York Times Magazine*, November 3, 1991, p. 32.

24. Currently Japanese defense expenditures stand at over 30 billion dollars, or approximately 1 percent of its Gross National Product (GNP). The actual figure is even higher, since Japanese figures do not include military pensions and benefits. If the Japanese defense budget were calculated using the common method employed by NATO countries, the actual level of defense spending is closer to 1.7 percent of GNP.

anese defense spending. The cost of both military manpower and equipment is, like virtually everything else in Japan, extraordinarily high.²⁵ Moreover, the increase in defense expenditures came as part of a deliberate strategy adopted in the early 1970s to strengthen the military relationship with the United States rather than to try to pursue an even more expensive (and dangerous) program of developing more autonomous Japanese military capabilities.²⁶ Japan's military buildup during the late 1970s and 1980s took place in close consultation with the United States. Consequently the Japanese force structure is designed to complement that of U.S. forces in the region, with a heavy emphasis on defensive weaponry, and little independent capacity for power projection.

In addition, in good measure the increase in defense spending during the 1980s was presented to the Japanese public as a means of appeasing U.S. demands to do more; without external pressure from the United States, it is doubtful that the Japanese would have supported an extension of their military establishment to the extent they have. With the end of the Cold War the rate of increase has begun to decline, despite the fact that many East Asian countries are continuing to invest heavily in their armed forces,²⁷ and for 1993 the growth in Japan's defense expenditures is expected to be around 3 percent.²⁸

Some argue that because of Japan's tremendous economic and technological strength, it will inevitably seek to develop an independent military-industrial base.²⁹ To date, however, Japanese industry has continued to be reluctant to commit itself to arms manufacturing. No major Japanese weapons manufacturer is dependent on arms contracts for more than 10 percent of its sales. Though the traditional Japanese arms lobby has been campaigning for decades for looser restrictions on the export of weapons, the govern-

25. See, for example, Ikuhiko Hata, "Jietai wa Tatakaeru no Ka," *Gendai*, February 1987, pp. 212-236.

26. The best available sources on this subject are Hideo Ohtake, *Nihon no Boei to Kokunai Seiji* (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobo, 1983); and Katsuya Hirose, *Kanryo to Gunjin: Bunmin Tosei no Genkai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989).

27. For example Chinese defense expenditures, the third largest in the region after the Soviet Union's and Japan's, have increased 12.5 percent in 1990, 15.3 percent in 1991, and an estimated 13.9 percent in 1992. See David Shambaugh, "China's Security in the Post-Cold War Era," *Survival*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Summer 1991), p. 103.

28. See *Nikkei*, June 5, 1992, concerning the current negotiations over the defense budget; and *Nikkei*, June 22, 1992, on the rapid increase in defense expenditures in South East Asia.

29. See Jeffrey T. Bergner, *The New Superpowers: Germany, Japan, the U.S. and the New World Order* (New York: St. Martin's, 1991), pp. 175-181.

ment and mainstream business leadership has refused to comply for fear of triggering a popular and diplomatic backlash, and in order to avoid creating an overly powerful arms lobby.³⁰ With the exception of the aircraft industry, most leading Japanese high technology companies, especially those specializing in electronics and new materials, are reluctant to expand their weapons production, and even the aeronautics industry is primarily interested in using military contracts as a means of promoting the civil aeronautics industry.³¹ Japanese business leaders are aware of the danger of creating a "military-industrial complex," and they view the distorting impact of arms research and production on America's economic and technological competitiveness as an instructive negative example. They feel that Japan's industry has been successful precisely because it has concentrated on producing quality goods for the demanding civilian market, and they believe that increased defense production would more likely weaken rather than strengthen the nation's technological base.³²

Perhaps the most convincing evidence for the view that Japan may soon adopt a more aggressive military posture is the widely publicized upsurge in Japanese nationalism, accompanied by an increasingly negative, even hostile, view of the United States. Yet, while this upsurge in nationalism bodes ill for relations between the two countries, especially in the areas of trade and economics, there is little indication that it is translating into support for a stronger Japanese military or a more assertive Japanese stance on international security issues. Rather, efforts since 1945 to revive the old pre-war nexus between the state, the nation, and the armed forces have been consistently rejected by Japanese public opinion and the majority of the

30. See Richard J. Samuels, "'Rich Nation, Strong Army' and Japanese Technology," in Ethan Kapstein and Raymond Vernon, eds., *National Security and the Global Economy* (forthcoming). On the debate around 1980, see Shoichi Oikawa, *Jietai no Himitsu: Tozai Gunji Baransu no Henka no Naka de* (Tokyo: Ushiohunsha, 1981), pp. 171–176. See also the comments of Japanese business leaders in *Nikkei*, April 9, 1980. This reluctance to export weapons, however, does not extend to so-called "dual-use" technology having both civil and military applications. See Marie Söderberg, *Japan's Military Export Policy* (Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 1987).

31. See Richard J. Samuels and Benjamin C. Whipple, "Defense Production and Industrial Development: The Case of Japanese Aircraft," in Chalmers Johnson, Laura Tyson, and John Zysman, eds., *Politics and Productivity: How Governments Create Advantage in World Markets* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Books, 1988).

32. Interviews in spring 1988 with Ken Moroi, President of Chichibu Cement, and Genya Chiba, Director of the Research Development Corporation of Japan. For more on the historical development of these views in the 1950s, see Hideo Ohtake, "Nihon ni Okeru 'Gunsankanfukugotai' no Keisei no Zassetsu," in Ohtake, ed., *Nihonseiji ni Okeru no Sooten* (Tokyo: Sanichishobo, 1984).

Japanese political elite.³³ While Japanese leaders often make use of nationalist rhetoric, the use of nationalist symbols in connection with military issues remain highly controversial and the target of fierce criticism in the national media.³⁴

Indeed, not only is it difficult to find any evidence that Japan is preparing to expand its military role in response to the changed international environment, but precisely the opposite seems to be true. Japan's reluctance to contemplate any expansion of its military role in the world, despite external pressures to do so, was illustrated by its recent behavior in the Gulf Crisis. Just when the world was expecting Japan, together with the newly united Germany, to begin to take over from the United States the mantle of leadership in their respective regions, both countries were plunged into virtual policy paralysis by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.³⁵ Instead of revealing a new assertiveness, Japan had great difficulty responding to the crisis, dispatching a token mine-sweeping flotilla only after hostilities had ceased, and only grudgingly offering financial support after much internal bickering.

The Japanese public appeared totally unimpressed with arguments stressing the importance of meeting aggression or defending the principle of national sovereignty. There seemed relatively little appreciation of the need to prevent the Gulf's vital oil resources from falling under the control of a leader like Saddam Hussein. Instead of raising international ethical or political issues, the domestic debate focused almost entirely on the need to appease the Americans versus adherence to Japan's position as a peace nation, as embodied in Article 9 of the constitution, and guarding against a rekindling of militarism. Although most Japanese condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, many Japanese preferred to see the United States as a bully, overeager to resort to armed force in the Gulf in order to reaffirm its global hegemonic role.³⁶

33. See Thomas U. Berger, *America's Reluctant Allies: The Genesis of the Political Military Cultures of Japan and West Germany* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991).

34. A good example was provided by the negative domestic response to Prime Minister Nakasone's 1988 visit to the Yasukuni Shrine dedicated to the spirit's of Japan's war dead. See *The Japan Times*, August 16, 1988, p. 2; and *Asahi*, August 16, 1988, p. 1.

35. See Courtney Purrington and A.K., "Tokyo's Policy Responses During the Gulf Crisis," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (April 1991), pp. 307-323.

36. The most comprehensive summary to date of Japan's reaction to the Gulf war is *Asahi Shimbun Wanganiki Shuzaihan, Wangan Senso to Nihon* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1991). See also Courtney Purrington, "Tokyo's Responses during the Gulf War and the Impact of the 'Iraq

Japan is now capable of developing a formidable military-industrial base independent of the United States, and as a result of its economic and other achievements, there has also emerged an increased sense of patriotic pride in Japan. Yet, to an extent that is baffling from a traditional realist point of view, the Japanese apparently remain content to rely on the United States for their military security, and there is little indication that contemporary Japanese nationalism is translating into greater support for the armed forces. What is the source of this reluctance on the part of Japan to increase its military capabilities? Is it likely to change in the near future?

Arguments that Japan will not Increase its Armed Forces

Three arguments have been offered by various analysts of international relations to explain the absence of conflict among the advanced industrial nations of the West: the peaceful nature of liberal democracies³⁷, the moderating influence of international institutions such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)³⁸, and the growing importance of economic relative to military sources of power in a world marked by increased and complex economic interdependence.³⁹ All three of these arguments, however, appear to have only limited applicability to East Asia. While democracies have historically proven reluctant to wage wars on one another, they suffer from no such inhibitions *vis-à-vis* non-democratic regimes, and aside from Japan and South Korea, there are no democratic regimes in East Asia. Likewise there are no international institutions in the region that could defuse potential crises and reassure member states about their neighbors' intentions. Finally, while undoubtedly the most vibrant economies in the region depend largely on foreign trade, the trade they conduct with one another (i.e., with their most likely adversaries) is still small compared to their trade with the United States and Europe. Moreover, the largest

Shock' on Japan," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Summer 1992), pp. 161-181; and Purrington and A.K., "Tokyo's Policy Responses during the Gulf Crisis."

37. Michael N. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80 No. 4 (December 1986); and Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 49-52.

38. See, for example, Jeffery Anderson and John Goodman, *Mars or Minerva? A United Germany in a Post-Cold War Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Center for International Affairs [CFIA] Working Paper No. 91-8, 1991), pp. 1-3.

39. The now classic formulation of this thesis is Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), especially pp. 27-29. See also Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

military powers in the region—Russia, the PRC, and India—have far less external commerce than do Japan and the other East Asian trading states. Consequently, the economic costs of military conflict between East Asian countries may count far less than they might in Western Europe, and the political and social ties that commercial relations bring are also correspondingly weaker.

The one external factor that seems to provide an adequate explanation for Japan's anti-militarism is its extreme dependence on the United States to provide for its external security. Yet, even from this point of view, the depth of Japan's aversion to using military instruments is difficult to explain. Indeed, Japan's lack of willingness to share in the risk of military actions in the Gulf threatened to damage its relations with the United States. If Japan were determined to preserve its free ride on the security order created by the United States, it should have sent at least some forces to support the international effort against Iraq, if not on the same scale as the efforts of Britain and France, then at least on a scale comparable to those of Italy and Belgium.⁴⁰ To explain the phenomenon of Japanese anti-militarism, it is therefore useful to look beyond structural factors and to take Japanese domestic politics, and in particular its new anti-military culture, into consideration.

Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism

The experience of defeat, and how that experience came to be interpreted and institutionalized in the Japanese political system and in Japanese defense policy, continue to shape Japan's willingness to make use of the military today. In this context it may be useful to compare Japan with West Germany, for while both nations' experiences were similar in many respects⁴¹, the differences between them led them to draw very different lessons from their experiences of the war and to develop correspondingly very different forms of pacifism.

Japan's defeat in World War II was devastating. Over two and a half million Japanese had lost their lives in the course of the struggle; its cities were

40. Conversations with Motoo Shiina, Spring 1991, and Professor Seizaburo Sato, Summer 1992.

41. Both Japan and Germany were late-industrializing, rising non-status quo powers with illiberal, even anti-democratic traditions. After brief experiences with more democratic forms of government in the 1920s, in both Japan and Germany there emerged authoritarian states bent on territorial expansion. Both were then defeated by the United States and its allies, were occupied, and in both new liberal democratic institutions were introduced.

ruined; it was the target of atomic bombing; and for the first time in its recorded history it was conquered by a foreign power. As in Germany, the defeat had delegitimated Japan's prewar regime and its expansionist ideology. By the end of 1945 the dream of building a Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere under Japanese control had turned to ashes, and the average Japanese citizen was completely absorbed in the task of merely staying alive.

Three important differences between Japan and Germany at the end of the war were to lead to different interpretations of these broadly similar experiences. First, the nature of Japanese militarism differed from that of German Nazism. The Nazis were a mass-based movement centered on a political party. Although the Nazis were aided and abetted by segments of the traditional German political and economic elites, the Nazi leadership was separate from these groups, drew much of its support from the lower middle class, and ultimately proved inimical to many of the same elites who had originally tried to use Nazism as a weapon against the Communists.

The Japanese militarists, on the other hand, were far more organic to the old elite. Though they were heavily concentrated in the military, they were also represented in the media, segments of the business world, the bureaucracy, and the political parties.⁴² And whereas the Nazis were voted into power, and thus could claim broader political legitimacy, the Japanese militarists took over through a far more insidious and protracted process of political assassinations, attempted *coups d'état*, and engineered military emergencies abroad.⁴³ The independent position of the army under the Meiji constitution allowed it to evade civilian control and stage military incidents abroad to expand Japanese control over North China. This isolated Japan internationally and weakened more moderate Japanese political forces. At the same time radical young officers and fanatical members of various ultranationalist organizations killed or intimidated whoever opposed the precipitous expansion of the empire.⁴⁴ While the military as an institution enjoyed

42. This point is made by Masao Maruyama in "Patterns of Politics in Present-day Japan," in Maruyama, *Thought and Behaviour*, pp. 456–461.

43. It might be pointed out that the Nazis were originally elected by only a plurality in 1933. Subsequently, however, Hitler was able to augment his popular support greatly. See Karl Dieter Bracher, *The German Dictatorship* (New York: Praeger, 1970).

44. For more on how the militarists took control of Japan in the 1930s, see James B. Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy: National Security and Foreign Policy, 1930–1938* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Richard Storey, *The Double Patriots* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957); Dorothy Borg and Shumpei Okamoto, eds., *Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese-American Relations*,

broad popular support, especially in rural areas, no one ever freely voted for a militarist government or for a single charismatic leader like Hitler or Mussolini. Instead, policy emerged out of struggles among elite groups. It was therefore far easier for individual Japanese than for most Germans to feel, in the war's devastating aftermath, that they had been the victims of political forces beyond their control.

A second crucial difference between Japan and Germany was that far more of the old Japanese elite were able to survive the war, and in many cases to hold or return to their old positions of power. In part this was because the Allied Occupation in Japan ruled indirectly, relying on the existing Japanese bureaucracy to administer American policies. And in part this was because it was even more difficult in Japan to identify who had been an active supporter of the regime. Unlike Germany, there had been no real, effective opposition to the war-time government, and aside from the relatively few Japanese communists and union leaders who had been jailed by the secret police, and who were to become increasingly suspect as the Cold War progressed, there were no leaders with clean records on whom the Allies could count to take over in the new Japan.

One reflection of this was that as early as 1958 Kishi Nobusuke, who had been arrested for war crimes and was a signatory of the declaration of war on the United States, became prime minister of Japan. Even though many old Nazis not only survived but even prospered in postwar West Germany, none could have hoped to achieve this kind of rehabilitation.

Third and finally, the conditions under which the war broke out in Asia were qualitatively different from those in Europe. Although Hitler claimed he was standing up to foreign powers determined to cripple Germany through the Treaty of Versailles, the initial victims of German aggression, Czechoslovakia and Poland, were innocent bystanders. The Japanese, on the other hand, found themselves in a world made up of western empires, led by nations which exhibited a racist ideology.⁴⁵ The ideal of self-determination of peoples was ignored outside of Europe by the same European powers—France, Britain and Holland—that condemned Japanese aggression in Asia. When the Japanese expanded into Korea and China, Asia was already being

1931–1941 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973); and Masaki Miyake, ed., *Gumbushihai no kaimaku* (Tokyo: Daiichi Hoki Shuppangaisha, 1983).

45. Even the United States, it should be recalled, had closed its doors to Asian immigrants for explicitly racist reasons.

carved up by the Western powers. Japan's professed mission was to liberate and unite all of Asia in order to protect Japan and the rest of Asia from outside aggression. This message ultimately was not accepted by most other Asian peoples, for in fact it turned out the Japanese were merely replacing the yoke of the white Westerners with an even more brutal and equally racist yoke of their own.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, at least within Japan this bestowed on Japanese expansionism a degree of legitimacy even among many on the left who were opposed to the militarists for other reasons.⁴⁷

These differing conditions in Japan and Germany led their citizens to interpret their experiences in very different ways, and to draw very different, almost inverse, lessons from them. In the German case, the unbridled passions of pre-war German nationalism were identified as the primary cause of the *deutsche Katastrophe* (as Friedrich Meinecke called it). Nationalism was associated with virulent racism and blind national ambition, which were blamed for all the dark episodes of modern German history, from the expansionism of Kaiser Wilhelm II to Hitler and the Holocaust. The military establishment, while hardly viewed in a favorable light in postwar West Germany, was seen as a secondary evil which had served as a tool of nationalism, but not the primary cause of the rise of nationalism and the *Katastrophe*.

In Japan, on the other hand, it was the military institution itself which became the primary target of criticism after the war. Nationalism, while viewed as a destructive force, especially by the political left, was seen more as an instrument of militarist control than as the root cause of the demise of Japan's brief pre-war democracy and its catastrophic entry into World War II. This point of view was greatly encouraged by the non-military elites, who were all too happy to make the military into a scapegoat in order to direct blame away from their own shoulders.⁴⁸

46. Mark Peattie's biography of Kanji Ishiwara, *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975) provides a fascinating and insightful look at one of the chief ideologists of Japan's military expansion in the 1930s.

47. For more on the role of racist thinking in the Pacific war, see John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986). For one Japanese intellectual's effort to detail the crimes committed by Japanese forces, see Ienaga, *Pacific War*. See also Harries, *Sheathing the Sword*, especially pp. 97–183, for a good summary of the Japanese view of responsibility for the war. The author is also grateful for the insights offered by Professors Masamichi Inoki and Seizaburo Sato on Japanese views of the war.

48. See Hans Baerwald, *The Purge of Japanese Leaders under the Occupation* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977). It should be noted that even before the end of the war many Japanese leaders were convinced that the military was a hotbed of (ironically, potentially communist) subversion and therefore had to be restrained. See John Dower, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida*

The popular perception that the war in Asia was a response to Western imperialism, the lack of popular involvement in the militarist takeover of the government, and efforts by the ruling elites to pin the blame of the war exclusively on the Imperial Army, all worked together to make most Japanese citizens feel less recrimination over Japan's role in starting World War II, and over the atrocities that Japanese forces had committed throughout Asia, than Germans did over their country's misdeeds in Europe. Instead of feeling remorse over Pearl Harbor, most Japanese felt victimized, a sentiment strongly reinforced by the atomic bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.⁴⁹

This again may be taken as a reflection of the continued influence of the old party, economic, and political elites who had led the country into the war in the first place and who still believed in the justice of their cause. While the Occupation purges had been intended to remove these people from power, in practice these purges were very difficult to implement because guilt was often difficult to determine, and because the skills and knowledge of the old elite were desperately needed to rebuild the country, a goal which received growing priority with the start of Cold War. In addition, since the militarists had far more successfully coopted the old political elite, there were far fewer domestic victims of the wartime regime who could bear witness against their oppressors than was the case in Germany. There never has been a Japanese head of state ready to publicly atone for the war crimes of his nation, as German Chancellor Willy Brandt did in 1970 by publicly falling to his knees before the memorial for the victims of the Warsaw Uprising.

This general lack of self-recrimination does not mean that the Japanese did not draw any lessons from the war, but the lessons that they drew were different from those the Allies had hoped they would draw.⁵⁰ The Japanese felt doubly victimized. First they felt victimized by the West, which they felt had cynically refused to respect Japan's right to defend its legitimate interests in Manchuria, and had threatened it with a crippling oil embargo.⁵¹ At the

Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878–1954 (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1979), chapter 7.

49. See, for example, the relative lack of attention to the Pearl Harbor issue in Ienaga, *The Pacific War*. The author is grateful for points made in this regard in conversations with Professors Mark Peattie, Carol Gluck, Masamichi Inoki, and Seizaburo Sato.

50. For more on the Western failure to get the Japanese to recognize their guilt, see Harries, *Sheathing the Sword*, part 3.

51. Beginning in 1937 the United States had imposed progressively sharper economic sanctions on Japan to protest its policies in North China and to create incentives for a more moderate Japanese foreign policy. These sanctions culminated in a complete oil embargo in 1941. The Japanese military planners perceived the embargo as an effort to cripple their economy and

same time, the majority of Japanese also felt victimized by their own military for having dragged them into a war that rationally could only end in tragedy, and for conducting that war without regard for the suffering that was inflicted on the Japanese people. Consequently the military was seen as innately inclined to take matters into its own hands, and hostile towards human rights and democracy. The profound Japanese distrust of its own military has consistently been reflected in the Japanese debate over defense and national security throughout the postwar era. For example, the Japanese have been extraordinarily reluctant to allow their armed forces to engage in military planning for fear that, as in the 1930s, the military might try to engineer an international incident that could drag Japan into a war in Asia.⁵²

After World War II, West German conservatives and centrists both sought to contain the forces of nationalism through integration with the West. But in Japan there was no such drive to integrate the nation in transnational structures (other than the United Nations), both because the extreme economic and political disparities between Japan and its neighbors did not favor any but the most superficial form of integration, and because Japanese people on both the left and the right were more ambivalent than were the Germans about their relationship with the United States. Domestically, many of the conservatives who were strong defenders of the security relationship with the United States were also critical of many of the American reforms of the Occupation period.⁵³ And in terms of foreign policy, Japanese leaders beginning in the 1950s were highly averse to becoming involved in U.S. strategy in the Far East.⁵⁴

reacted by speeding up their plans for war with the United States. See Michael Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919–1941* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), especially pp. 120–135 and 215–241.

52. See Ohtake, *Nihon no Boei*; and Georg Mammitzch, *Die Entwicklung der Selbstverteidigungs-Streitkräfte* (Ph.D. dissertation, Friedrichs-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, 1985). Japanese suspicions regarding the military also reemerge whenever there is an incident involving the armed forces. For example, after a 1988 collision between a Maritime Self Defense Forces' submarine and a private yacht, the press and media were filled with accusations that the Self Defense Forces had the same lack of regard for human life and the rights of civilians that the old Imperial Army had. See public opinion data in *Asahi*, November 6, 1988, p. 11; and media reaction in *Shukan Bunshun*, August 4, 1988, pp. 30–36; *Shukan Yomiuri*, August 14, 1988, pp. 20–27; and *Sandei Jai Maimichi*, August 14, 1988, pp. 20–24.

53. For example, they were critical of U.S. efforts to strengthen the unions, reform school curriculum, and decentralize the police. See Dower, *Empire and Aftermath*; and Ohtake, *Boei to Kokunai Seiji*.

54. The United States wanted Japan to play a more active role in regional security, entering into an alliance structure similar to that of NATO in West Europe and becoming an arms supplier to U.S. regional allies. See John Welfield, *An Empire in Eclipse: Japan in the Post-War Alliance*

This negative view of the military is shared all along the political spectrum in postwar Japan, and was held not only by the far left, but by many conservatives and even far right-wing figures as well.⁵⁵ Where these groups differ, however, is in how they propose to prevent the military from becoming a danger again.

JAPAN'S POLITICAL-MILITARY CULTURE

In postwar Japan there emerged an ideological constellation of contending political groups, each with very different interpretations of Japan's past and each holding very different visions for Japan's future. It is possible to identify three main groups: the left idealists, the centrists, and the right idealists. The left idealists were associated largely with the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP), the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), and the Buddhist Clean Government Party (CGP). The centrists were to be found in the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and in parts of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The right idealists were for the most part found in the LDP.⁵⁶

For each of these groups, but especially for the idealists of the right and left, the military issue was not merely a technical problem of how to secure the nation from the threat of external attack, but a reflection of a much deeper debate about the shape of the Japanese domestic order and Japan's proper place in international society. This inward-looking tendency of the Japanese defense debate was strengthened by the fact that, except for the period immediately following the outbreak of the Korean War, the threat of attack from abroad did not seem very credible to either the Japanese public or much of the political elite.

The right idealists held the most favorable view of Japan's past, and were determined to preserve as much of its cultural core as possible.⁵⁷ The right

System (London: Athlone Press, 1988); Dower, *Empire and Aftermath*; Thomas R. Havens, *The Fire across the Sea: Japan and the Vietnam War 1965–1975* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977); and Frank Kowalski, *Nihon no Saigumbi* (Tokyo: Simul Press, 1969), pp. 72–73.

55. See Dower, *Empire and Aftermath*; Ikuhiko Hata, *Shiroku Nihon no Saigumbi* (Tokyo: Bungei-shunju, 1976); and Hideo Ohtake, *Nationarizumu to Saigumbi* (Tokyo: Chukoshinsho, 1988).

56. This section draws heavily on Mike Mochizuki, "Japan's Search for Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Winter 1983/1984), pp. 152–189; Tetsuya Umemoto, *Arms and Alliance in Japanese Public Opinion* (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1985); and Kiyofuku Chuma, *Saigumbi no Seijigaku* (Tokyo: Chishikisha, 1985), pp. 177–180.

57. The exact content of this core is difficult to define even for the conservatives themselves, but generally speaking it includes respect for the Emperor, a spirit of self-sacrifice for the common weal, and pride in Japan's past and its traditional values and customs. See Umemoto, *Arms and Alliance*.

idealists were highly critical of many of the Occupation's reforms, such as the decentralization of the police forces and the strict separation of church and state, which they saw as debilitating to the Japanese nation. Chief among the reforms they objected to was the constitution, which had been written and imposed upon the Japanese by General Douglas MacArthur and the Occupation authorities. In particular they objected to Article 9, renouncing Japan's right as a sovereign nation to use force for the settlement of international disputes. The right idealists wished to revise Article 9 in part because they believed that a strong and independent military is an essential component of any sovereign nation, but also because they wished to use the military issue to spark a broader debate about the postwar reforms, from the use of patriotic symbols in the schools to the legal status of the emperor. They hoped to rekindle a sense of national pride, which they believed must include pride in the nation's armed forces.

For the most part, the right idealists were critical of the pre-war militarists, who they felt had foolishly led the country into an unwinnable war, and they certainly did not wish a return to the 1930s. They were also not overtly anti-American, believing that alliance with the United States was necessary to counter the far more dangerous threat of communism. Rather they wanted to move back closer to the type of social and political system that had existed toward the end of the Meiji period (before World War I), with greater centralization of authority and a stronger sense of national pride and purpose than existed in postwar Japan, but backed by a modern economy.⁵⁸

The left idealists, on the other hand, were the most critical of Japan's past and its traditions, which they saw as feudalistic and exploitative.⁵⁹ Part and parcel of this past were Japan's martial traditions, and in particular the Imperial Japanese army. Like the right idealists, however, the left idealists were interested in defense issues not only within the context of national security, but also because they too hoped to use the military issue as a means of sparking a larger debate on contemporary Japanese society. They argued that many of the same groups in the conservative parties and business world

58. See Umemoto, *Arms and Alliance*.

59. The mainstream in the left-idealist camp centered on the Japanese Socialist Party and included the majority of Japanese intellectuals. The Japanese Communist Party represented a sizable minority in the left-idealist camp and advocated the creation of a large, independent people's militia. Since 1958 the communists and the socialists have between them received approximately 26–35 percent of the vote and enjoy considerable support from the Japanese intelligentsia, media, and trade labor movement.

who were responsible for the rise of militarism were still in control of Japanese politics. The only way, from their standpoint, to attack the root causes of militarism was to reform the Japanese social, economic, and political systems along more socialist lines. For this reason they opposed the alliance with the capitalist West, which they feared solidified the control of reactionary forces. In place of the Mutual Security Treaty relationship with the United States, the mainstream within the left favored the adoption of a stance of strict unarmed neutrality.

The popular image that the left idealists promoted was of Japan as a "peace nation." As the only country to have suffered atomic bombings, they argued, Japan alone among the world's nations fully appreciated the horrors of modern warfare. Through its idealistic renunciation of force, embodied in Article 9 of the constitution, Japan should serve as an example to the rest of the world of the futility and immorality of war. In this way the left idealists took the war guilt issue and stood it on its head by allowing the Japanese to seize the moral high ground from the Americans who had defeated them.⁶⁰

The centrists were the most pragmatic of the three groups. While they were more favorably disposed towards Japan's traditional culture and values than the left idealists were, they saw far greater need for fundamental reform than did the right idealists. At the same time, they took their models for reform not from the socialist East, as did the left, but from the capitalist West. The centrists were eager to adopt as much as possible of the American way of doing things in order to create a more prosperous and modern Japan. They were relatively uninterested in defense matters, except insofar as the United States forced them to be. Their primary policy objective was economic reconstruction and expansion, while keeping as low a profile on defense and foreign policy issues as possible.

This ideological cleavage between right idealists, centrists, and left idealists continues to run through Japanese politics today. The stances that the different groups take on issues have shifted somewhat, and on balance their positions have become less polarized. Few right idealists would still look to Meiji Japan for their ideals, and most left idealists now look to the social democratic and green parties of Europe for inspiration, rather than to Marxism-Leninism. Nonetheless, to a surprising extent the basic preferences of

60. This idea was first advanced by Japanese intellectuals soon after the war ended. See Tatsuo Morito, "Heiwakokka no Kensetsu," *Kaiso*, January 1946.

these three groups on defense and related domestic political issues remain unchanged.

THE EVOLUTION OF JAPAN'S ANTI-MILITARISM

Over the course of the 1950s the centrist position basically won out in the Japanese policymaking process. The urgent task of rebuilding the economy, the need to end the U.S. occupation as soon as possible, and the necessity of U.S. cooperation to achieve these goals allowed no other course of action but alignment with the West in the intensifying atmosphere of the Cold War. At the same time, widespread fears of a militarist revival, anxiety that over-involvement in the U.S. alliance might drag Japan into a land war in Asia, and unwillingness to divert resources from economic reconstruction compelled the Japanese political leadership to keep its military commitments to a minimum.

The centrist position was associated with the Yoshida doctrine, named after centrist Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida who had led the country in the early 1950s. While the Yoshida Doctrine was never clearly defined, its main elements included close alignment with the United States (even at the cost of Japan's traditional ties to mainland Asia), a focusing of national energies on economic pursuits, and the maintenance of a minimal military establishment for the purposes of maintaining domestic security and satisfying U.S. demands for burden sharing.⁶¹ This doctrine, in somewhat more clearly articulated and developed form, continues as the basis for Japan's defense policies today.

Despite the evident rationality of the Yoshida doctrine in light of the international environment, in the beginning its basis of domestic support was narrow. The centrists were seriously challenged by both the left idealists, who dominated the opposition parties and had strong mass appeal, and by the right idealists, who were particularly strong within the conservative parties. After the creation of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in 1955, the centrists temporarily lost control of government. Under Prime Ministers Hatoyama and Kishi, the right idealists tried to lay the groundwork for a major expansion of the armed forces, a reversal of some of the more

61. For more on the intense pressure that the United States, and especially John Foster Dulles, placed on Japan to do more militarily, see Dower, *Empire and Aftermath*, chapter 10; Hata, *Shiroku Nihon no Saigumbi*, pp. 131–135, 179–190; and Michael Schaller, *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

liberal reforms of the American Occupation (beginning with the anti-war clause in the constitution), and a fostering of national pride.

In 1960, however, the Kishi government's efforts to revise the Mutual Security Treaty triggered popular opposition that began on the left but ultimately came to be supported by the political center as well. For weeks the Diet Building was besieged by protestors, and as the demonstrations became increasingly violent, public opinion, the media, and even Japanese business leaders became increasingly critical of the Kishi government's handling of the situation. Many of Kishi's fellow conservatives within the LDP, out of both ideological conviction and political opportunism, deserted him and in effect joined the left-wing opposition. While ultimately the Treaty was reformed, the Kishi government fell and further efforts to change Japan's domestic system through a transformation of its international role were, at least for the time being, abandoned.⁶²

The pattern established in 1960 has repeated itself several times over the course of the postwar era. The ruling LDP is essentially an alliance of centrists and right idealists, united by a common interest in the survival of the present economic system and the alliance with the United States. Whenever it has appeared, however, that a radical departure from the centrist Yoshida line was imminent, or that right idealists might succeed in linking nationalism with military issues, the political center has defected and supported opposition forces in blocking the new defense initiative.

One of the best recent examples of this pattern was Prime Minister Nakasone's effort in 1986 to exceed the limit on defense spending of 1 percent of GNP, which he linked to what he called the final resolution of postwar Japanese politics and, through his official visit to the Yasukuni shrine, to a revival of pride in Japan's armed forces. Although in principle there was broad consensus that the 1 percent limit would have to be abolished at some point, there was near-universal opposition to Nakasone's tactics and to his right-idealist political agenda. In the end, Nakasone was forced to abandon the project, which was then realized in a low-key fashion less than a year later.⁶³

62. The definitive English-language study of the Mutual Security Treaty riots is George Packard, *Protest in Tokyo: The Security Treaty Crisis of 1960* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1966). Perhaps the best scholarly Japanese work on the subject, outstanding for its coverage of the debate within the LDP and the Foreign Ministry, is Yoshihisa Hara, *Sengonihon to Kokusaiseiji: Ampokaitei no Seijirikigaku* (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1988).

63. See Akio Kamanishi, *GNP 1% Waku: Boeiseisaku no Kensho* (Tokyo: Kakugawa, 1986); and Taro Akasaka, "1% Waku de tsumazuita Nakasone Shuho," *Bungeishunju*, November 1985.

Because of the inhibitions imposed by the ideological divisions among Japan's political elites, defense policy has been forced to develop almost surreptitiously, through a process of what is called *kiseijijitsu no tsumiage*, or the accumulation of *faits-accomplis*. Whenever there is a consensus between the right idealists and the centrists that something must be done to improve national security, changes in policy are made quietly and with a minimum of public debate. Simultaneously, with every new defense initiative, new safeguards have been placed upon the armed forces (commonly referred to as *hadome*, or breaks). The Japanese defense system does change in response to international pressures, but it changes incrementally, at a deliberate pace subject to the constraints of the domestic political situation. As the recent Gulf crisis shows, an urgent need which was nonetheless short of a direct invasion can throw the system into crisis and lead to policy paralysis.

A good example of the way in which Japanese defense policy evolves when there is an internal consensus is offered by the 1978 Guidelines for U.S.-Japanese Defense Cooperation, a set of administrative regulations negotiated by the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Agency that revolutionized the relationship between U.S. forces in the Pacific and Japan's Self Defense Forces (SDF). The Guidelines were created without any serious debate in the Diet, on the grounds that they did not represent a legally binding treaty and thus did not need to be ratified by the legislature. While supported by pro-defense right idealists, they were also backed by moderate centrists, who believed that growing tensions between the two superpowers necessitated an improvement in Japan's national defenses, but who also wanted to make sure that any such agreement would remain under close supervision by civilians and would contain the Japanese Self Defense Forces by integrating them into the U.S. force structure. With the Guidelines in place, Japan was then able to embark upon an expansion of its defense budget during which defense expenditures grew at a rate of approximately 6.5 percent a year.⁶⁴

The 1992 International Peace Cooperation Law, which for the first time permits Japanese Self Defense Forces to participate in overseas peace-keeping

64. See the chart in the 1987 edition of the *Boei Handobukku* (Tokyo: Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1987), pp. 224–225. While the rate of expansion actually declined after 1978, this should be balanced against the fact that following the second oil shock, Japanese economic growth declined as well. The budget deficit ballooned and a zero ceiling had been imposed on increases in virtually all areas of government expenditures other than defense, foreign aid, and social security, reflecting the high priority that these areas were given. Thus the share of defense expenditures as a percentage of GNP rose from .88 percent in 1977 to over 1 percent in 1987; *ibid.*, pp. 222–223.

operations, also fits this basic pattern. Although the bill was fiercely attacked by the left, the LDP was careful to avoid any hint of nationalist rhetoric in connection with the overseas dispatch of forces, and placed sufficient safeguards in the bill to reassure the political center both within the LDP and in the small centrist Clean Government and Democratic Socialist parties. The new law limits the number of personnel dispatched overseas to 2000, requires Diet approval before any mission, prohibits the use of weapons except for self-defense, and restricts the dispatch of Japanese personnel to situations where there is already a cease-fire in place. Even certain non-military missions, such as supervising the collection and disposal of weapons, have been suspended for the time being.⁶⁵

In this way the Yoshida doctrine has been able to evolve and adapt to the changing pressures of the Cold War. At the same time, beginning in the early 1960s, the domestic basis of support for the Centrist position grew steadily. As Japan began to enjoy enormous economic success and standards of living began to improve markedly, the Japanese people became reluctant to tamper with the basic institutions of the postwar order, including its national security arrangements. This growing support was reflected in public opinion data, which revealed steady growth in public approval of both the armed forces and the Mutual Security Treaty, from less than 50 percent in

65. For the main points of the new legislation see *The Japan Times*, June 17, 1992, p. 1; *Nikkei*, June 16, 1992, p. 1; and *Asahi*, June 16, 1992, p.1. For the full text, see *Asahi*, June 2, 1992, p. 14. The decision to suspend certain missions is not written into the law, but is an added limitation that the government has officially chosen to adhere to for the time being in order to minimize the chance that Japanese personnel might come into combat. The new law was almost immediately put into effect, as Japan for the first time sent Self Defense Forces on a UN peacekeeping mission, to Cambodia. See Philip Shenon, "Japanese Sun Again Rises Overseas," *New York Times*, September 27, 1992, p. 10.

Soon after the bill was passed, the Ministry of Education released a revised version of grammar-school textbooks that stresses Japan's right to self defense under international law while admitting that Japanese forces were guilty of atrocities in East Asia during World War II. See *Asahi*, July 1, 1992, p. 1; and *The Japan Times*, July 1, 1992, p. 3. The linkage of the textbook and defense issues has been a recurring feature of the postwar Japanese defense debate and it is interesting to note that the Japanese government continues to view indoctrination as an integral component of national security policy. The recent revisions indicate that the government is determined to avoid projecting a reactionary image, and in effect has chosen to harden its stance by stressing Japan's right to self defense while giving in to the left by acknowledging the dark corners of Japanese history. Thus the latest revision of the textbooks can be seen as a victory for the pragmatic Japanese political center, rather than of either left or right idealism. For more on the textbook debate in Japan, see Teruhisa Hori, *Educational Thought and Ideology in Modern Japan: State Authority and Intellectual Freedom* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1988), pp. 106-212.

the late 1950s to well over 70 percent by the mid-1970s.⁶⁶ Equally important, there was a gradual shift towards the center by political actors of both the left and the right. So, for example, in 1970 the LDP party leadership rejected the proposals of Nakasone and other hawks to establish a more independent defense policy. Meanwhile in 1976, the opposition parties at least tacitly accepted the National Defense Policy Outline, the first time that a statement of the goals and missions of the Self Defense Forces was approved by the Japanese diet.⁶⁷

There also emerged a new, widely shared redefinition of the place of the military within national security and of its place in Japanese history. National security became increasingly defined not merely in terms of defending against military threats, but more broadly to embrace a range of goals, including U.S.-Japanese relations, diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and the PRC, energy security, guaranteeing Japan's food supplies, and contributing to global progress through overseas development assistance. All of these goals were increasingly perceived as vital to overall national security, and as requiring tradeoffs against one another. One of the first official formulations of this was the concept of "comprehensive security" developed in 1980 under the Ohira administration.⁶⁸

At the same time there emerged a new view of Japanese history consistent with the preferred centrist image of Japan. Increasingly, Japanese of all political stripes, not only on the left, but on the right and center as well, came to believe that not only is Japan today not a martial culture, but that in fact it never was one. This belief is rooted in the so-called *Nihonjinron* (or the "theory of Japaneseness") debate of the 1960s and 1970s, on what features distinguish Japan from the rest of the world.⁶⁹ One common theme in the vast and disparate literature arising from this debate is that, unlike the European nations and mainland Asia, Japan is a racially homogeneous nation that has never been subjected to successive invasions by different ethnic groups, and that consequently the nature of armed conflict has been far more

66. See *Handobukku*, pp. 496–498; Umemoto, *Arms and Alliance*, pp. 79–85. See also *Asahi*, November 6, 1988, pp. 1 and 12.

67. The best English-language overview of these developments is Welfield, *An Empire in Eclipse*. See also Ohtake, *Nihon no Boei*.

68. See the report of the Comprehensive Security Research Group, *Sogoanzenhoshō kenkyū ruijū hokokusho*, delivered to the Prime Minister on July 2, 1980, pp. 7–13. See also Endo, *Sogoanzenhoshō*, on the evolution of the concept of comprehensive security.

69. For more on the *Nihonjinron* debate see Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*; and Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism*.

circumscribed in Japan than in other countries. It is this aspect of Japanese culture which is said to make the Japanese so inept at the game of Machiavellian power politics as it is played elsewhere in the world. Variations of this theory are sometimes even offered as an explanation for why Japan was “dragged into” the Second World War and why it lost.⁷⁰ What makes this new view of Japanese history all the more remarkable is that until 1945 Japan saw itself as the land of *bushido*, the samurai or warrior spirit. Japanese thinkers of the 1920s and 1930s argued that it was this spirit that distinguished Japan from the spiritually weak and morally corrupt West. Yet, even many members of the older generation, despite direct experience with Japan’s prewar military ethos, seem ready to perceive that militarism in Japan was of a defensive nature, an ultimately inadequate reaction to the more deeply rooted aggressive nature of the West.

Of course these new redefinitions are more than a bit self-serving. Naturally the Japanese seek to capitalize on their comparative strengths as a nation, which now lie primarily in the non-military area.⁷¹ Likewise, the reinterpretation of Japanese history can be viewed as an effort to legitimate this new definition of security. Conveniently, at the moment when the international environment seems to favor economic over political-military strength, the Japanese like to believe that their prowess in this area is innate and deeply rooted in their history. A larger role in world affairs thus seems almost predestined.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that to a very large extent those espousing these new views of national security and Japanese history seem to believe in them. These redefinitions are at least as much wishful thinking as cynical manipulations. Japanese hope that the world has changed in a way that makes their particular approach to military security not only logical, but even compelling. And rather than face up to the reality of their sometimes brutal past, as the Germans have, they have reinterpreted that reality to lend legitimacy and historical roots to the patterns of behavior that they prefer today. The broad acceptance of these points of view by the public⁷² and,

70. A sophisticated version of this argument can be found in Hisahiko Okazaki, *Senryakuteki Kangaekata to wa Nani ka* (Tokyo: Chukoshinsho, 1983), pp. 9–13, 24–26.

71. There is an additional domestic political factor in that many Japanese bureaucratic actors wanted to take advantage of the increased interest in national security of the early 1980s and therefore advocated a broader definition of security that would include their institutional interests. That this was perceived as being legitimate, however, is again a reflection of Japan’s postwar political culture.

72. One reflection of this is the extraordinary Japanese reluctance to approve the use of force

perhaps more importantly, by a broad spectrum of the political elite⁷³ is a very good indication that the new political-military culture, and the anti-militarist ideals that it supports, have now become embedded in the larger political culture of the society and have achieved a certain degree of stability.

The strength of Japan's culture of anti-militarism is reflected by a number of other indicators as well. Japanese public opinion, despite the end of the Cold War and growing trade frictions with the United States, continues to favor a gradualist approach to defense policy, and opposes any large increase in the Japanese defense budget.⁷⁴ Japanese elites as well, though deeply concerned by the erosion in relations with the United States, see no alternative to the Mutual Security Treaty system,⁷⁵ and are deeply worried by the implications for Japanese domestic politics of an independent defense posture.

Finally, Japanese defense policy making continues to reflect the deep suspicion with which much of the Japanese political system views the Self Defense Forces. At the time of the Gulf crisis, the Kaifu government deliberately excluded Defense Agency personnel from reporting directly to the cabinet for fear that, if they were allowed to do so, the influence of military thinking would distort government decision making.⁷⁶ Few nations in the world would exclude the advice of their own military experts from the councils of government at the time of a national security crisis. Likewise the new International Peace Cooperation Law, while allowing the Self Defense Forces to be dispatched abroad for the first time, has also placed a wide variety of restrictions on their use which are designed to maximize civilian

to resolve international disputes. According to a recent poll only 26 percent of those Japanese surveyed felt it appropriate to use military force to maintain international order and justice, while 70 percent felt it was not. In contrast, 72 percent of Americans surveyed felt the use of force was justified, and a mere 20 percent felt it was not. See *New York Times*, December 3, 1991. 73. In interviews in Tokyo during 1988–89, the author found these views widespread among a broad range of Japanese political elites, including pro-defense diplomats, hawkish members of the LDP, and even senior officers in the Self-Defense Forces. Groups vary, however, in how they believe Japan should cope with its supposedly anti-military nature. The left feels that this makes unarmed neutrality the only natural course of action for Japan, while the right idealists feel it is a handicap that has to be overcome in a sometimes hostile world through a program of promoting national and defense consciousness through the schools.

74. Large majorities prefer that defense expenditures be kept at their present level (55.6 percent in 1991) and only a small minority (8.1 percent) favor increasing spending on defense. *Hando-bukku*, p. 517. See also *Asahi*, November 6, 1988, pp. 1 and 12.

75. See for example Yasuhiro Nakasone, Seizaburo Sato, Yasusuke Murakami, and Susumu Nishi, *Kyodo Kenkyuu 'Reisenigo'* (Tokyo: Bungeishunju, 1992).

76. Interviews with Japanese Defense Agency and Foreign Ministry officials, Fall 1991.

control and prevent the armed forces from running out of control.⁷⁷ Although Japanese defense policy has changed, the basic pattern of policy making, and the underlying culture of anti-militarism that shapes its leadership's perceptions of the military as an institution and of the use of force, still reflect their postwar origins.

Conclusions

Although Japan today is perfectly capable of acquiring greater independent military capabilities, and the changing international security environment provides it with some opportunities and incentives to do so, I have argued that it is highly unlikely that the Japanese would set out to become a military superpower. Even if Japanese policy makers were to conclude that dramatic change was necessary, given the existing culture of anti-militarism they would encounter strong opposition from the general populace as well as from large sections of the elite. Japan's approach to defense will certainly continue to evolve as a result of changes in the international system. Yet change is likely to be incremental, and the direction in which it evolves will be influenced by the preferences that the Japanese people and their leaders have formed over the past forty-five years.

Popular fears that economic tensions between the United States and Japan will develop into a classic hegemonic political-military struggle need not be realized, and comparisons with either the pre-1941 situation in the Pacific or the pre-1914 situation in Europe are misleading. This does not mean that U.S. and Japanese policy makers should rest secure in the knowledge that all is well. Japan's current stance on defense is viable only as long as the U.S.-Japanese relationship is sound. That relationship is coming under increasing pressure both as a result of trade frictions⁷⁸ and tensions over security burden-sharing. Even if these strains develop to the point where they start to undermine the Mutual Security relationship or make the U.S. security guarantee less credible in Japanese eyes, this does not mean that Japan will rush to develop an independent defense capability. Rather the immediate result would be to make Japan more vulnerable to external shocks

77. See page 143 above for a list of such safeguards.

78. This friction is reflected dramatically by the controversy over the planned development of Japan's next generation of fighter aircraft, the FSX. Prestowitz, *Trading Places*; and Ryuichi Teshima, *Nippon FSX o Ute* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1991).

generated by the relatively unstable security environment of East Asia. If a serious threat to Japan's security arose without the insulation of the Mutual Security Treaty, Japanese political leaders would find themselves unable to respond. At first Japan would be likely to try to appease a potential aggressor, or to look to the United States for assistance, but if such policies seemed to lead to disaster (for example if Japan were threatened with nuclear attack or its oil supplies were cut off), the Japanese government would be compelled to consider a dramatic expansion of Japan's military capabilities, including the acquisition of nuclear weapons and of the means of defending its sea lines of communication.

In such an eventuality, given the persistence of Japanese suspicions towards their own military, Japan would then be plunged into the most serious political crisis of the postwar era, and the political culture would be likely to change. Cultures can and do change, but usually they do so in an evolutionary fashion. Dramatic change only occurs when the type of behavior that a culture produces no longer meets its basic needs.⁷⁹ Since 1945, Japan has been enormously successful operating on the basis of its present culture of anti-militarism, and as long as that approach seems viable, change will be incremental, and core preferences for a small military and avoidance of the use of force will remain unchanged. If, however, this approach appears to have led to a disaster then, as at the end of World War II, the fundamental assumptions of the existing political culture would be thrown into doubt. It is hard to predict what kind of government would emerge under such circumstances, but there exists the potential that a very different political leadership could take control, one perhaps less opposed than the present elites to stoking the fires of ethnocentric nationalism in order to legitimate military expansion.

Two main steps could forestall such an eventuality. First, in the short to medium term it is vital that the United States remains involved in East Asian security and that the U.S. military alliance with Japan be preserved. Second, in the long run it is also important that the United States help Japan gradually adapt its political culture so that it can use its growing power to help sustain a stable regional and global security order. The best way of doing this is to strengthen the U.S.-Japan security relationship by broadening it. The Mutual Security Treaty system is but a single anchor for Japan's new culture of anti-

79. See Harry Eckstein, "A Culturalist Theory of Change," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82 (1988), pp. 789-804.

militarism, and is thus vulnerable to the strains produced by the tossing and turning of a sometimes stormy U.S.-Japanese relationship. In contrast to Germany, which is embedded in a network of transnational institutions for dealing with security issues, Japan is secured only by a single bilateral link, the Mutual Security Treaty with the United States. This link, and with it Japan's culture of anti-militarism, would be greatly stabilized if a network of lesser transnational anchors could be added, designed not to replace the relationship with the United States, but to strengthen it.

From an American point of view such a network of relationships would have the disadvantage of reducing the potential leverage of a U.S. threat to withdraw its security guarantee and thus increasing the likelihood that Japan would pursue a more independent foreign policy. At the same time, it would reduce the dangerous temptation for U.S. politicians to make use of this leverage in trade negotiations. More importantly, a security system with a multi-national dimension would enhance the legitimacy of Japan's security arrangements in the eyes of the Japanese people, who all too often tend to see Japan's defense and foreign policies as being dictated by U.S. interests. Given the present political-military culture, broader Japanese participation in any future military operations requires such a multi-national framework.

The passage of the 1992 International Peace Cooperation Law is an important first step in this direction, but it is not enough. In the long run Japan should be prepared to share the risk of any future Gulf-like confrontation, if only to forestall American isolationism fed by a perception that Japan is free-riding. As an intermediate step, Japanese forces could become active in a variety of non-combat missions, such as mine sweeping, intelligence gathering, logistics, and the like.⁸⁰

While the UN is the most convenient vehicle for Japanese involvement in global security (and Japanese participation in the Security Council is desirable), Japan should also be supported in its efforts to establish and participate in regional security arrangements. Prime Minister Miyazawa has indicated that Japan is interested in pursuing such a two-track approach to Asian security, based on the alliance with the United States but also using regional consultative groupings, such as the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, to discuss security issues.⁸¹ Beyond this it might be possible

80. Some of these ideas are similar to recent proposals by former diplomat Hiroyuki Kishino, "Creating a Japan-U.S. Global Partnership," International Institute for Global Peace (IIGP) Policy Paper 68E, September 1991.

81. See *The Japan Times*, July 4, 1992; and *Asahi*, July 3, 1992.

to explore the creation of a "Conference on Security and Cooperation in East Asia and the Pacific," similar to the CSCE. Such an institution should be open to all nations in the region, including Japan, China, Russia, and the United States. (Korean and Taiwanese participation, though highly desirable, pose some thorny diplomatic problems.) It would seek to enhance cooperation between the major military actors and would focus on instituting confidence-building measures.

It might also be useful to establish an East Asian Security Fund, which could help foster the exchange of information on security-related developments, conduct research on defense problems in the region, and help defray the costs of basing and training exercises by member forces in the region. The Fund could also provide a venue for intensified consultations on security affairs between Japan and other U.S. regional allies. It would include all current U.S. friends and allies in the region; Japan, along with the United States, might play a pivotal role.⁸²

The U.S. government has been suspicious of such initiatives for fear that they would hamper America's latitude for action in the region and possibly undermine existing U.S. bilateral security ties.⁸³ Nonetheless, the creation of such a network of regional institutions for dealing with security issues might not only serve a useful function in building trust and cooperation among the nations of East Asia, but more importantly would help Japan transcend its self-centered stance on military security and aid the further evolution of Japan's culture of anti-militarism so that it can continue to meet Japan's and Asia's security needs pragmatically. A policy that moors Japan's security in a broader internationalist framework is the best way of ensuring that the Japanese sword will remain sheathed.

82. Such a fund has been proposed by Masashi Nishihara, *Senryaku kenkyu no Shikaku* (Tokyo: Ningen no Kagakusha, 1988), pp. 274–275.

83. Interviews in April 1992 with senior and mid-level officials responsible for East Asian policy in the U.S. State Department and National Security Council.