

Lowy Institute Paper 03

UNSHEATHING THE SAMURAI SWORD:
JAPAN'S CHANGING SECURITY POLICY
Alan Dupont

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Japan



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Executive summary

This Lowy Institute Paper sheds analytical light on Japan's changing security policy and seeks answers to several important questions that are of major consequence for Australia and the wider region. What are Japan's strategic aspirations and what does Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi really mean when he talks about Japan becoming a 'normal country'? How significant are the mooted revisions to the peace constitution and how different will the Japanese Self Defense Force (SDF) be in capability and structure a decade hence? As domestic anxieties increase will Japan move closer to the US or seek greater autonomy within the framework of the US alliance? Is it conceivable that the alliance itself could fracture or dissolve entirely? Will cooperation with the US on missile defence weaken the prohibition on collective self defence and under what circumstances might Japan acquire nuclear weapons?

The Paper's key judgements are that Japan is moving away from its pacifist past towards a more hard headed and outward looking security posture characterised by a greater willingness to use the SDF in support of its foreign policy and defence interests. This shift is evolutionary, not revolutionary, but it is gaining momentum and represents a defining watershed in Japan's post war security policy. However, there is little likelihood of a reversion to old style militarism. Democracy and the rule of law are firmly entrenched in contemporary Japan, some constitutional restrictions on the use of force will remain, and the US alliance ensures that Japan has no need for the nuclear weapons or major force projection capabilities that would be inherently destabilising and raise alarm bells

in the region. That said, Japan's defence modernisation program and new foreign policy assertiveness are causing some anxieties, especially in China, which will have to be carefully managed as Sino-Japanese rivalry grows. Far from fracturing, the centrality of the US alliance to Japan's security remains undiminished although Tokyo will expect, and be granted, a greater voice in its councils.

If Japan can strike the right balance between excessive timidity and unbridled nationalism in defence and foreign policy then its own security will be enhanced in conjunction with its neighbours, rather than at their expense. As a democracy, maritime trading nation and fellow member of the US alliance, Australia has a vested interest in Japan becoming a more influential and constructive actor in the security affairs of the region and within the alliance. This means that both countries will need to pay greater attention to the strategic dimension of the bilateral relationship and to work more cooperatively on alliance issues. A successful Australia-Japan security partnership will reinforce and add value to the already well established economic relationship, facilitate regional responses to emerging security threats and create new opportunities for shaping US policy in Asia and the Pacific.

In the concluding chapter the author makes seven recommendations for developing and enhancing security cooperation between Australia and Japan.

Recommendation 1

Australia should support Japan's decision to modernise its defence force and encourage Tokyo to play a more active role in maintaining regional security. At the same time we should make clear our opposition to Japan acquiring nuclear weapons or major power projection capabilities.

As a friend and one time adversary, Australia is uniquely placed to reassure Japan's nervous neighbours that there is a difference between normal and untrammelled nationalism. Tokyo's desire to pursue a more proactive security policy is not an unreasonable response to the more

threatening and volatile security environment it faces. After nearly six decades of quasi-pacifism it is time for Japan to move beyond the ideals of the post World War II peace constitution and to participate, more fully, in building and sustaining regional order and combating the emerging threats to security. At the same time Australia should make clear its opposition to Japan acquiring nuclear weapons or major power projection capabilities such as long range bombers or conventional aircraft carriers as these would be inherently destabilising and ultimately antithetical to Japan's own security interests.

Recommendation 2

Australia should urge Japan to clearly articulate the reasons for the shift in its security policy in order to alleviate the concerns of neighbouring states, particularly China, which doubts the benign nature of Japan's regional ambitions and military acquisitions.

A second objective is to ensure that Japanese leaders are cognisant of the need to clearly articulate the strategic rationale for their defence modernisation program and the constitutional changes in prospect to avoid any misperceptions about their intent and purpose. It is important for Japanese to understand that they still carry a great deal of historical baggage in Asia where memories of past Japanese militarism have not completely faded, as continuing Chinese and Korean resentment over visits to the Yasukuni war shrine attest. Australia can help sensitise Japan to the strategic concerns of its neighbours, especially China, by acting as a sounding board and confidant. One message that Australia should convey is that, while Tokyo is understandably anxious about China's naval ambitions and force deployments, these fears are mirrored in China.

Recommendation 3

It is imperative that Australia and Japan develop a clear road map for future collaboration on defence and security in the form of an overarching framework agreement that would complement existing bilateral and multilateral arrangements.

Given the greater policy salience of international security issues for both Australia and Japan, steps should be taken to develop and implement a broad framework agreement on defence and security that provides a road map for future cooperation. This agreement should go beyond the Memorandum of Defence signed in 2003 and existing cooperation on terrorism and WMD proliferation to include piracy, drug trafficking, money laundering, infectious diseases and ocean governance. Care should be taken to clearly explain to other governments that this agreement would be in the long tradition of Australia's strategic cooperation with regional states and that it would complement and strengthen the existing web of bilateral and multilateral security arrangements.

Recommendation 4

In addition to broadening and intensifying existing bilateral defence cooperation, greater attention should be given to joint responses and exchanges on the emerging non-military threats to security which are a growing source of regional instability.

More should be done to strengthen educational exchanges and Japanese language training, and to increase the number of military officers and defence officials at the respective staff colleges and higher level officer training establishments. The SDF could be given access to defence training facilities in Australia under comparable arrangements to those governing visiting defence forces from the US and Singapore. We should also work to identify niche areas for potential cooperation that are not resource intensive but are clearly beneficial to both sides in peace keeping and countering piracy and maritime terrorism.

The Japanese and Australian defence forces have both gained

considerable experience since the early 1990s on peace keeping operations, working together in Cambodia and East Timor. Establishing a well funded, joint training centre for peacekeepers in Japan, or Australia, and more frequent information exchanges and contact at the working level could reap significant rewards for both countries. The SDF and the Japanese Coast Guard are already involved in efforts to combat piracy in Southeast Asia. Australia could assist by providing intelligence and making ships available for counter piracy in conjunction with Southeast Asian navies. These ships could have a dual role, supporting operations to deter terrorism in the South China Sea and the Malacca Straits, which is the maritime cross-road of Southeast Asia and a major potential choke point for sea-borne trade between Japan, Europe and the Middle East. We still need to do more on counter terrorism, and Australia could benefit from Japan's experience in planning for attacks by terrorists using biological and chemical weapons.

Recommendation 5

Australia should work with Japan and other interested states to help construct new security architecture for Northeast Asia based on an enlargement of the 6 Party Talks on North Korea.

At a time when China and Japan are both powerful states with growing military capabilities, strategic dialogue alone is unlikely to mitigate conflict and rising tensions between them without a supporting security architecture. Australia should use what influence it has to persuade Japan and China to develop a range of confidence building measures for Northeast Asia similar to those crafted by the ASEAN Regional Forum but specifically tailored for Northeast Asia. At the same time, Australia ought to encourage Japan to think creatively and positively about ways in which the 6 Party Talks could be expanded into a prototype security arrangement for the sub-region. An enlarged and institutionalised 6 Party Talks should help mollify China's concerns about the Trilateral Security Dialogue (TSD). Regardless, Australia would be wise to move slowly on the TSD initiative which should not be allowed to develop in

a way which would intensify Beijing's fear that the real purpose of the TSD is to contain China.

Recommendation 6

As core members of the US alliance, Australia and Japan should cooperate more closely in order to influence Washington's approach to Asian security issues and to develop a more collegial style of dialogue and exchange in alliance forums.

Often described as the northern and southern anchors of the US alliance in Asia, Australia and Japan both derive substantial strategic benefits from their close defence ties with the US but they have seldom used their influence to jointly shape Washington's policies in the region. Until recently, such collegiality would have been neither feasible nor desirable because of Japan's strategic passivity and the absence of meaningful security links with Australia. But times have changed. A more assertive Japan, particularly one that has greater clout with the US in the post-Iraq world, could usefully caucus regularly on security issues with Australia which, like Japan, has emerged from the Iraq imbroglio with burnished alliance credentials in Congress and among Washington's policy elites. Closer policy coordination would provide Canberra and Tokyo with greater opportunities for leverage over the US and influence in the region.

Recommendation 7

Establish an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to facilitate security cooperation by acting as a source of ideas and an informal channel for high level dialogue.

To help achieve this goal, there would be merit in establishing a small, eminent persons group (EPG) whose principal task would be to facilitate Australia-Japan security cooperation by generating new ideas and acting as an informal channel for high level dialogue. A group of

senior and retired US and Japanese legislators was constituted for a similar purpose in the mid 1980s. This Legislator's Committee reported directly to the US president and the Japanese prime minister and counted among its members two former Japanese prime ministers and Democratic Party presidential candidate, Senator Bill Bradley. The EPG should meet annually, be comprised of no more than five members each from Australia and Japan, and be broadly representative of the respective political establishments and business and security communities.

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List of Acronyms

ACSA	Acquisition and Cross Services Agreement
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Disease
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Process
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASDF	Air Self Defense Force
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defence
CLB	Cabinet Legislative Bureau
CSCAP	Council for Security Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EPG	Eminent Persons Group
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSDF	Ground Self Defense Force
JDA	Japanese Defense Agency
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MSDF	Maritime Self Defense Force
NDPO	National Defense Program Outline
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
ONUMOZ	United Nations Operation in Mozambique
OSIS	Ocean Surveillance Information System
PKO	Peace Keeping Operations
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

SDF	Self Defense Force
SDP	Social Democratic Party
TSD	Trilateral Security Dialogue
UN	United Nations
UNAMET	United Nations Mission in East Timor
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
US	The United States of America
WMD	Weapon of Mass Destruction

Introduction

When Robert Kagan famously wrote that in their approach to power and security Americans are from Mars and Europeans from Venus, what might he have said about Japan?¹ In most respects, postmodern Japan has been more like Europe than America in preferring diplomacy to force, persuasion to coercion and multilateralism over unilateralism. Indeed, it might be said that Japan is further towards the Venusian end of the celestial spectrum than Europe in its aversion to the instruments of military power. No other country in the world explicitly renounces war as a sovereign right; or eschews the threat, or use of force, as a means of settling international disputes; or proscribes land, sea and air forces as well as other war potential.² This deeply ingrained pacifism is all the more remarkable when one considers that Japan is not an Asian Costa Rica but the world's second largest economy, a major financial power and a favoured candidate for a permanent seat on an expanded United Nation's Security Council.

But there is another Japan, one with a long martial tradition embodied in the ancient Samurai of legend, which in the first half of the 20th century destroyed Russia's Baltic fleet, colonised Korea, invaded China and subjugated Southeast Asia before its eventual, catastrophic defeat in 1945. Today, Japan is once again a leading military power, with the third largest defence budget after the US and China and a quarter of a million men and women under arms. Its Self Defense Forces (SDF) are deployed on peace keeping operations around the world and in support of US led coalitions of the willing in Afghanistan and Iraq. More and more politicians chafe at the self imposed constitutional restrictions on

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the military and argue that Japan must be more resolute and assertive in defending its vital interests, including taking pre-emptive military action, when necessary. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has talked up constitutional reform and declared his desire to see Japan become a ‘normal country’. He has even dared to call the SDF what it really is — a modern army, navy and air force.

Is this a dangerous reawakening of Japan’s martial instincts and desire for hegemony, as critics maintain, that threatens to introduce dangerous new tensions into a region already beset with interstate rivalries, internal conflicts and the new scourge of Jihadist terrorism? Or are we witnessing the emergence of a pragmatic, new realism that is a natural and long overdue readjustment to the nation’s much altered and more foreboding external environment.

This study sheds analytical light on Japan’s changing security policy and seeks answers to several important questions that are of major consequence for Australia and the wider region. What are Japan’s strategic aspirations and what does Koizumi really mean when he talks about Japan becoming a ‘normal country’? How significant are the mooted revisions to the constitution and how different will the SDF be in capability and structure a decade hence? As domestic anxieties increase will Japan move closer to the US or seek greater autonomy within the framework of the US alliance? Is it conceivable that the alliance itself could fracture or dissolve entirely? Will cooperation with the US on missile defence weaken the prohibition on collective self defence and under what circumstances might Japan acquire nuclear weapons?

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 charts the evolution of Japan’s security policy from the early 1950s to the present and identifies the principal drivers of change. Chapters 2 and 3 illuminate the path Japan is likely to follow which requires an examination of its future strategy, the US alliance, the prospects for constitutional change and the capabilities and shape of the SDF. Chapter 4 discusses regional responses to Japan’s defence modernisation while Chapter 5 explores the country’s security ties with Australia, identifying strategic commonalities and assessing the prospects for future security cooperation.

JAPAN'S CHANGING SECURITY POLICY

The final chapter concludes that Japan is moving away from its pacifist past towards a more hard headed and outward looking security posture characterised by a greater willingness to use the SDF in support of its foreign policy and defence interests. This shift is evolutionary, not revolutionary, but it is gaining momentum and represents a defining watershed in Japan's post war security policy. However, there is little likelihood of a reversion to old style militarism. Democracy and the rule of law are firmly entrenched in contemporary Japan, some constitutional restrictions on the use of force will remain, and the US alliance ensures that Japan has no need for the nuclear weapons or major force projection capabilities that would be inherently destabilising and raise alarm bells in the region. That said, Japan's defence modernisation program and new foreign policy assertiveness are causing some anxieties, especially in China, which will have to be carefully managed as Sino-Japanese rivalry grows. Far from fracturing, the centrality of the US alliance to Japan's security remains undiminished although Tokyo will expect, and be granted, a greater voice in its councils.

If Japan can strike the right balance between excessive timidity and unbridled nationalism in defence and foreign policy then its own security will be enhanced in conjunction with its neighbours, rather than at their expense. As a democracy, maritime trading nation and fellow member of the US alliance in Asia, Australia has a vested interest in Japan becoming a more influential and constructive actor in the security affairs of the region and within the alliance. This means that both countries will need to pay greater attention to the strategic dimension of the bilateral relationship and to work more cooperatively on alliance issues. A successful Australia-Japan security partnership will reinforce and add value to the already well established economic relationship, facilitate regional responses to emerging security threats and create new opportunities for shaping US policy in Asia and the Pacific.

Chapter 1

The winds of change

From pacifism...

To know which path Japan will choose requires an understanding of the journey so far, a journey which began when the country rose from the ashes of defeat in 1945. Although fundamentally different in political complexion and vastly diminished in national power the new Japan was, like its predecessor, acutely conscious of its historical vulnerability as a small, densely populated, resource-poor archipelagic state. Unlike the old Japan, however, pacifism among Japan's surviving population ran deep and neither the US, nor Japan's devastated Asian neighbours, had any wish to see a recrudescence of Japanese militarism. Having learned the limits of military power Japan renounced war and a modern military. However, without a credible military force of its own the country had little choice but to seek a great power protector. There was only one candidate. In 1951, Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida signed a security treaty with Japan's American conqueror which has endured until this day, and has provided the essential foundation for defence against external threats.³

Recognising the need to buy time for national reconstruction and intensely aware of its resource vulnerability, the Yoshida Government pursued a 'market place' foreign policy which effectively decoupled economics and trade from matters of high security in a deliberate attempt to minimise the country's political and strategic risk.⁴ The underlying purpose of this essentially mercantilist strategy was to

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ensure an uninterrupted supply of the food and energy in which Japan was chronically deficient, especially from the turbulent Middle East which supplies around 90 per cent of Japan's oil⁵. The strategy was also designed to reassure Japan's long suffering neighbours that the era of Japanese imperialism was over and that henceforth the land of the rising sun would be the epitome of a modern, peaceful, democratic state.

Pursued with characteristic diligence, Japan's minimalist approach to security served the country well for nearly three decades. Traditional Japanese security concerns were subsumed in US policies designed to shape the post World War II international order and to consolidate US and Western interests in Northeast Asia. However, the Soviet Union's growing power and strategic reach, especially its military build up in the Far East and invasion of Afghanistan, combined with the US defeat in Vietnam and the two oil shocks of the 1970s, eroded Tokyo's faith in the willingness and capacity of the US to act as the sole guarantor of Japan's security.⁶

These events precipitated the first substantial rethink of Japan's security policy in 1980 under the rubric of comprehensive security which advocated promoting closer military cooperation with the US, strengthening Japan's defence capability and ensuring a stable and reliable supply of raw materials essential to Japan's economic growth and prosperity.⁷ Under comprehensive security, Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) became an explicit tool of foreign policy. Tokyo reasoned that it made sense to capitalise on the country's economic strength by using the soft power of ODA to shape developments in the region. By the end of the 1980s, Japan had emerged as the world's largest aid donor contributing, on average, about US\$10 billion a year or around 20 per cent of global official development assistance.⁸

...to pragmatic realism

One of the first signs of an emerging realism in Japanese thinking was a 1990 article on foreign policy written by Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Takakazu Kuriyama. Reflecting the views of many in the Foreign Ministry, Kuriyama argued that Japan needed to take a more active and constructive role in building a new international order

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working together with the US and Western Europe. Reaffirming the centrality of the US alliance, Kuriyama found that while US influence had decreased in relative terms, it nonetheless remained the pre-eminent world power and the indispensable guarantor of Japan's security. Furthermore, the US–Japan Security Treaty was the cornerstone for stability and development in the Asia–Pacific region because it gave international credibility to Japan's fundamental stance that it would not become a major military power 'thus facilitating the acceptance of a larger political and economic role for Japan by its neighbours'.⁹

While a consensus was slowly emerging among Japan's defence and foreign policy elite that the country ought to pay greater attention to its alliance obligations and become more active in global and regional forums, the Japanese people were largely disengaged from the elite discourse on national security. This may have suited the personal and bureaucratic interests of a small group of security experts in the Foreign Ministry, Japanese Defense Agency (JDA) and ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) who monopolised security policy during the Cold War. But the absence of informed public debate meant that there was little domestic pressure on Japanese politicians and bureaucrats to re-calibrate the country's security settings or rethink the role of the SDF as the contours of the strategic landscape altered. Without a popular constituency for change, and given the political strength of the anti-military Socialist Party, those Japanese politicians prepared to challenge the status quo were either marginalised or forced to proceed with their reform agenda at a glacial pace.

But beneath the surface of Japan's opaque body politic, popular sentiment was beginning to shift away from the reflexive pacifism of earlier decades, spurred by a small group of reform minded security experts and politicians. The first obvious manifestation of this new mood was the initially divisive debate on the legitimacy of the SDF's future role in UN sponsored peace keeping operations, a debate which raged for most of the 1990s. By the end of the decade, however, the Japanese public had moved from widespread scepticism to general acceptance of the proposition that peace keeping should be a core task of the SDF.¹⁰

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Table 1.1: The SDF involvement in international peace cooperation activities

Period	Location	No. personnel	Duties
September 1992 to September 1993	Cambodia (UNTAC)	1216	Engineering (98.7%); Cease-fire monitors (1.3%)
May 1993 to September 1995	Mozambique (ONUMOZ)	154	Transport coordination (93.5%); Headquarters staff (6.5%)
September 1994 to December 1994	Rwanda	378	Refugee relief (69%); Air transport (31%)
February 1996 onward	Syria: Golan Heights (UNDOF)	661	Transport (97.5%); Headquarters staff (2.5%)
November 1999 to February 2000	East Timor	113	Air transport unit
October 2001	Afghanistan	138	Refugee relief
February 2002 to June 2004	East Timor (UNTAET, UNAMET)	1892	Engineering (99.5%); Headquarters staff (0.5%)
March 2003 to April 2003	Iraq	56	Refugee relief
May 2004 onward	Iraq	600	Humanitarian relief and Iraq reconstruction

Source: Japan Defense Agency 2003, pp. 462-463

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The PKO debate preceded, but also paralleled, a fundamental reassessment of the threats to national security by the JDA. During the Cold War, the formidable Soviet maritime and ground forces stationed in Siberia and the Kamchatka Peninsula were considered to be the principal strategic threat to Japan. Consequently, the SDF was configured for defence against a conventional military attack from the Soviet Union and priority was given to anti-submarine capabilities, air defence and modern fighter aircraft able to intercept and defeat Soviet fighters and bombers. The proto-type army was organised as a force of last resort to defend the home islands from a Soviet invasion or amphibious assault. Most of its elite armoured units and advanced weaponry were deployed along the west coast of Honshu and the northern island of Hokkaido.

As the Soviet threat diminished it became clear that a major military attack on Japan was far less likely, notwithstanding China's rising power and the uncertainties surrounding North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile programs. However, other threats were beginning to cloud the horizon. In 1994, the Higuchi Report drew attention to the increasing salience of transnational and non-state challenges to Japan's security that were not country specific and were therefore more difficult to anticipate.¹¹ Presciently, the Report concluded that while the likelihood of interstate conflict had receded terrorism, guerrilla warfare, piracy, lawlessness among refugees and other forms of anarchic violence were on the rise particularly in areas where state control was weak. The Higuchi Report helped prepare the ground for the broadening of Japan's security responsibilities within a redefined alliance by feeding into public discussion of the previously taboo issue of collective self defence and raising the possibility of joint US-Japanese military action beyond Japan's territory.¹² These matters were the subject of intense discussion between senior US and Japanese defence officials culminating in the 1996 Joint Declaration of Security and the 1997 Revised Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation which specified a greater operational support role for the SDF within the alliance.¹³

At the same time, Tokyo began to take a harder look at the efficacy of ODA, especially the proportion granted to China, as the incongruity of continuing to pump money into a country that would soon rival,

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and perhaps one day surpass, Japan's power became obvious even to the most ardent supporters of Japan's mercantilist diplomacy.¹⁴ In response to growing public scepticism about the benefits of overseas aid and convinced of the declining strategic utility of ODA the government changed track, re-focusing on the politico-military instruments of policy, reducing overall levels of ODA and redirecting it towards projects that would net tangible, direct benefits to Japan.¹⁵

External shocks

Japanese history is replete with examples of external shocks altering the course of domestic politics and triggering national insecurities. So it was in 1996, when any remaining illusions about a post-Cold War peace dividend were rudely shattered by the face off between China and the US over Taiwan. Although Japan was not directly involved, the Taiwan crisis was a reminder that a powerful China might be a military threat, as well as an opportunity for Japanese trade and investment. Moreover, tensions in other parts of the region, particularly those involving the US, could easily spill over and affect Japan.

Further reminders were in store. In August 1998, North Korea provided an alarming demonstration of its developing missile capability when it launched a Taepo Dong-I missile on a trajectory that took it over Japan before splashing down in the adjacent sea. This was followed in March 1999 by the first of two so called 'suspicious boat incidents'. In the initial confrontation, Japanese P-3C Orion aircraft dropped several bombs while attempting to intercept two special purpose North Korean boats suspected of illegal activities. A second, more serious incident two years later resulted in injuries to three Japanese Coast Guard personnel during an exchange of fire with the occupants of a North Korean ship engaged in possible covert intelligence collection or drug smuggling. Pyongyang's perceived belligerence had a major impact on Japanese public opinion, dampening pacifist sentiment, fostering a greater awareness of defence and strategic issues, and contributing to public anxiety about Japan's deteriorating security environment. In an opinion poll conducted in October 2001, 76 per cent of respondents — an extremely high figure by Japanese standards — evinced an interest

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in defence issues¹⁶

Reflecting the changing public mood, government pronouncements on defence began to take on a much harder edge. Speaking to a Diet Defense Committee in March 1999, the Director General of the JDA, Hosei Norota, declared that Japan had the right to take pre-emptive military action if it felt that a missile attack was imminent.¹⁷ But it was the devastating terrorist strike on the World Trade Centre in New York in September 2001 which had a cathartic effect on Japanese public opinion. In a poll taken immediately after the attack, 71 per cent of respondents supported Japanese counter terrorist cooperation with the US.¹⁸ This shift in public sentiment enabled the Koizumi Government to pass legislation permitting the SDF to provide unprecedented logistical and humanitarian support for US led coalition operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Even more significant, in terms of its impact on public perceptions, was the admission by North Korea's 'Dear Leader', Kim Jong-il, that so called military adventurist elements in North Korea had kidnapped a number of Japanese citizens beginning in the 1970s, a highly implausible explanation given the regime's tight control of the military. Most offensive, in Japanese eyes, was the unexplained deaths of several of these unfortunates while in captivity. Kim's confession had a galvanising effect in Japan, producing an outpouring of public grief and anger that helped a re-energised LDP, under Koizumi's leadership, to adopt a far more robust defence posture than his predecessors could have countenanced.

Alliance pressures

The US has also been an important and frequently underestimated external agent of change, exerting pressure on Japan from the late 1970s to remove the administrative and normative impediments on closer defence cooperation. Underlying US concerns was a growing sense that Japan was not pulling its weight as an ally and that it was time for Tokyo to take on greater responsibility for maintaining regional and global order shaped, of course, by the requirements of *Pax Americana*, an expectation only marginally tempered by the reality

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that the US Japan alliance has never been an alliance of equals. Far from it, in fact, for while the US is expected to come to the defence of Japan there is no reciprocal obligation to go to the aid of the US. From Japan's perspective this would be an act of collective self defence and therefore constitutionally proscribed.

US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage highlighted this anomaly in a February 2004 speech to the Japan National Press Club, noting that 'under the present situation if an American ship was out in the Sea of Japan, outside the territorial waters of Japan, and was attacked, you are technically not allowed to help us... That doesn't seem to be entirely reasonable. By the same token, if anyone attacks Japan or any of the territories under your administration, we absolutely will come to your assistance, even though we don't get the same exact thing in response.'¹⁹ Ironically, this state of affairs is largely an American creation since despite references to mutual aid and cooperation in resisting armed attack, the Treaty was premised on extending to Japan a US security guarantee in exchange for generous base leasing provisions rather than reciprocity.²⁰ Nonetheless, the absence of full reciprocity became an increasing source of irritation to US officials and the Congress after Japan's failure to contribute military forces to the first Gulf War. In the resulting 1997 Revised Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation, Tokyo agreed to expand naval cooperation and logistical support for US forces, opening the door to a qualitatively different, more balanced security relationship between the two allies.²¹

The significance of the revised guidelines and other legislative amendments was three-fold. First, they allowed the SDF to provide rear area support to US forces beyond Japan's territory, paving the way for Japan's later involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. Second, the US-Japan Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) was amended so that the SDF could supply fuel to the US during emergencies near Japan, not just in peacetime. Third, the SDF was permitted to use weapons in self defence although all deployments so far have been in a non-combat capacity.²² One of the most important legislative changes was the 1999 Law on Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan.²³ Although ambiguously worded, this law extended the geographical

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scope and range of alliance tasks in which the SDF could legitimately engage, enhancing the ability of the SDF to operate effectively with US forces and giving higher priority to alliance considerations in Japan's security policy.²⁴

The need for better interoperability with the US military was a final and crucial element in Japan's security calculus. This has become an increasing problem for the SDF since the mid 1990s as the US armed forces began to transform themselves in response to the so called revolution in military affairs (RMA), a military holy grail that held out the promise of 'total situational awareness and battle space dominance'.²⁵ While it could not hope to match the US in military research and development, or the speed and extent of military transformation, Tokyo quickly realised that there had to be a much higher level of interoperability between the SDF and the US military if the alliance was to endure.²⁶ Hence the emphasis on joint training exercises and measures designed to improve the compatibility of equipment, operating procedures and communications protocols.

Looking back over this period, there is no doubt that Japan has moved away from the opportunistic mercantilism and embedded pacifism of earlier years. Elite and public threat perceptions have hardened because of anxieties created by an international security environment in flux, China's burgeoning economic growth and military power, North Korea's bellicosity and pressure from the US to become a more active and responsible alliance partner. When once the alliance had been likened to *dosho imu* — lovers sharing the same bed but dreaming different dreams — Tokyo and Washington are increasingly sharing the same dreams.²⁷ Nevertheless, having reached this critical juncture, there is still a great deal of uncertainty domestically, and in the region, about the path Japan will ultimately choose. Chapter 2 examines Japan's strategic aspirations, the future shape of the US alliance and the prospects for constitutional change.

Chapter 2

Where is Japan going?

Strategic intentions

There are two diametrically opposed views about Japan's strategic intentions. Those sceptical of its peaceful disposition and benign objectives believe that Tokyo is incrementally acquiring the military capabilities and strategic reach to complement its economic strength and give effect to long suppressed regional power aspirations. Sceptics argue that Japan's expanding peace keeping activities, government pressure to revise the constitution, cooperation with the US in missile defence and the procurement of military platforms and weapons systems that can be used offensively are evidence of Tokyo's hegemonic intent. This view is most commonly held by older Asians, with personal memories of Japan's war time record, by the North Korean regime and by many Chinese scholars, officials and military officers innately suspicious of Japan because of historical animosities stemming, in part, from the brutal occupation of China by the Japanese Imperial Army in the late 1930s.²⁸ They are critical of Japan's failure to fully atone for its war time excesses and regard Koizumi's willingness to visit the Yasukuni Shrine as indicative of Japan's recidivist tendencies.²⁹

Pragmatists, on the other hand, consider the changes in Japan's security policy to be largely illusory and believe that the government's commitment to defence reform and greater burden sharing within the alliance are rhetorical, rather than substantive. In their eyes Koizumi's

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promise of military support for the US in Afghanistan fell far short of expectations. And despite the fanfare and flag waving, Japanese forces despatched to Iraq are serving in non-combat roles, forbidden to shoot other than in self defence. Thus, there is very little prospect of Japan being more assertive, regionally, or contributing much of real strategic value to the US globally and in East Asia other than in the defence of Japan. A corollary is that Japan will continue to rely on the US as a military shield while wielding the sword of mercantilism, cultivating a range of partners including US adversaries such as Iran, to hedge against economic dangers.³⁰

Both sceptics and pragmatists have a point. Koizumi has certainly capitalised on domestic perceptions that the country is faced with a deteriorating security environment, to push his reform agenda and create political momentum for a more outward looking foreign and defence policy. Public acceptance of the SDF's peace keeping role has undoubtedly made it easier for the government to interpret the constitution more liberally, than in the past, and to weaken the long standing prohibition on collective self defence. For their part, pragmatists rightly caution that the Koizumi Government's declaratory policy frequently runs ahead of its actions. And one should not underestimate the inertial effect of bureaucratic and political turf wars, and Japan's consensus driven culture, which act as a natural brake on reform. After all it was the old guard in the LDP's General Council who defeated Koizumi's attempt to immediately despatch Aegis equipped naval ships to the Indian Ocean in support of US strikes on the Taliban in September 2001.³¹ All this suggests that sweeping or precipitate strategic change is unlikely.

Pragmatic realism

Neither side of this debate, however, seems to have grasped the real significance of the shift in public opinion or the reorientation of security policy that has been underway since the early 1990s. A close examination of current Japanese attitudes towards security does not suggest the collective mindset of a resurgent hegemon. There is no political constituency for transforming the SDF into the kind of expeditionary force that would be necessary to sustain a new Japanese

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hegemony in Asia. With the possible exception of a small group of ultra-nationalists, who continue to harbour delusions of a return to some form of imperium, 'normalisers' within the major political parties evince remarkably modest strategic aspirations.

Furthermore, as Michael Green and other experienced observers of Japan point out, the country's ageing demographics and the existence of a resilient, mature democracy works against a revival of militarism. Pacifism is being replaced by pragmatic realism, propelled by generational change and the widespread perception that the country confronts a more challenging security environment.³² Given its geo-strategic vulnerabilities, energy dependence and declining birth rate, Japan is hardly in a position to embark on a policy of military adventurism or expansionism in East Asia, not least because it would be vehemently opposed by China, Japan's principal competitor for regional influence, as well as its major ally, the US.

Those who fear a return of militarism in Japan also fail to appreciate the domestic constraints on defence spending which is capped at one per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), far lower than in most comparable countries. China, for example, spends 4.1 per cent of GDP on defence, the US 3.3 per cent, South Korea 2.8 per cent, France 2.5 per cent, and Australia 1.9 per cent. In East Asia only Laos spends less as a percentage of GDP.³³ Admittedly, these are only crude benchmarks because of differences in calculating and defining military expenditure, but even a comparison by purchasing power parity shows Japan's per capita defence expenditure as around one quarter that of the US and half that of France.³⁴ Although this translates into an annual defence budget of US\$41 billion a year, more than 50 per cent goes on salaries and personnel costs. So the money available for military hardware and support systems is less than might be expected for a budget this size. Moreover, Japan's defence budget is being stretched by BMD related research and development which will cost around US\$1 billion in financial year 2004/5 and an estimated US\$10 billion this decade, all of which will have to be absorbed within the existing budget.³⁵

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Table 2.1: Defence expenditures of major countries (FY 2001)

Country	Defence expenditure (million dollars)	Per capita defence expenditure (dollars)	GDP ratio to defence expenditure (%)
Japan	32,926	259	.95
USA	291,015	1,021	2.9
UK	38,154	639	2.5
Germany	25,063	304	1.2
France	31,377	530	2.0

Source: Japan Defense Agency 2003: p135.

Of course, in theory there is nothing to prevent Japan from augmenting its defence budget. Even a relatively small percentage increase would represent a substantial amount of money given the size of the Japanese economy. Doubling the percentage of GDP on defence to the level of Australia's modest investment would add US\$43.38 billion to the defence budget based on Japan's current GDP of US\$4.8 trillion.³⁶ If sustained for five to ten years, the SDF would then be a formidable force indeed and probably without peer in Asia until, and unless, the Japanese economy is overtaken by China in 2020, as some predict.³⁷ However, an increase of this order is unlikely to occur barring a major shock of unanticipated proportions such as a direct Chinese military threat or the dissolution of the US alliance. Despite the recent return to more robust economic growth,

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welfare pressures from Japan's rapidly ageing and falling population will make it difficult to increase defence's share of the national budget. Thus, the scope for order of magnitude increases in combat power, particularly force projection capabilities such as long range bombers and conventional aircraft carriers, is limited by fiscal realities.

But this does not mean that Japan is prepared to remain forever a strategically neutered super-power while others attempt to configure the world according to their national interests or ideological proclivities. Japan's foreign policy and defence elites envisage playing a more constructive role in regional and global affairs, free of constitutional shackles, by building and shaping institutions and norms according to Japanese values and interests.³⁸ This is what Koizumi means when he talks about Japan becoming a 'normal' state. It also implies a greater willingness to use force and despatch the SDF on operations beyond Japan's borders in coalitions of the willing, as well as UN sanctioned peace keeping operations.

Unlike Europe, where war between states has become virtually unthinkable, Japan inhabits a region where interstate conflict is still a realistic prospect. As Akio Watanabe avers it would be foolish, in the extreme, to emulate Europe's security approach which emphasises confidence building measures to resolve intra-mural disputes while reserving force for out of area operations.³⁹ The strategic balance in Northeast Asia is far less stable and predictable than Europe's, and Japan's alliance obligations mandate the maintenance of a modern, military capable of modern war fighting in the region.

What kind of alliance?

How Japan-US relations evolve as Japan becomes a 'normal' nation, willing to assert itself more forcefully on issues of national security, is a second unanswered question for Australian and regional policy makers. The most destabilising outcome would be a precipitate collapse in the relationship or a severely weakened alliance caused by US leadership fatigue, a return to isolationism, or a perception in Washington that Japan matters less. Is this likely?

There are some disturbing portents. Fewer than 10 per cent of

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Americans feel close to Japan as a country and China's emergence as a major trading nation has already eroded Tokyo's influence in the halls of US commerce and industry.⁴⁰ The sense of shared strategic interests that once strongly united Japanese and Americans has dissipated. Although public opinion surveys show that the Japanese public continues to express in principle support for the alliance there is strong, local opposition to the US presence in areas like Okinawa and Atsugi, fuelled by resentment over the sexual peccadillos of US servicemen and the occupation of valuable public land by the US military.⁴¹

Still, it is difficult to envisage the circumstances that would lead to a break down or hollowing out of the alliance. After a period of neglect under the Clinton administration, President George W. Bush moved decisively in his first year of office to reinvigorate ties with Tokyo reflecting his assessment that a strong, regionally engaged Japan is crucial to three important US strategic interests in East Asia — balancing China's rising power, providing greater logistic and intelligence support for the US military and facilitating their deployment to potential trouble spots. The Pentagon knows that it would be virtually impossible to replicate the facilities that it enjoys in Okinawa for political and strategic reasons. Guam is too far away and the Vietnamese are unlikely to permit the US to reoccupy its former base at Cam Ranh Bay. Australia and Singapore are useful stopovers for deployments in Southeast Asia and into the Indian Ocean but not into the Sea of Japan or the Taiwan Straits where any conflict with China is most likely to be played out.

A more likely scenario is that Japan will remain within the alliance but that over time it will seek greater autonomy and equality. By any calculation the alliance is a net strategic benefit for Japan. The US nuclear umbrella provides an unmatched level of extended deterrence against an attack from a nuclear armed state. Tokyo is acutely aware that in Northeast Asia, China and Russia are able to strike Japan with nuclear armed, ballistic missiles and North Korea probably has a rudimentary capability, given its known nuclear weapons research and ballistic missile program. Moreover, the US will be an essential counter weight to China's growing power as demographic, military and economic forces shift decisively in favour of Beijing. Fifty years ago

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there was one Japanese for every six Chinese; by 2050 the ratio will be an unprecedented one to sixteen based on current demographic trends. While the Japanese economy still dwarfs China's and its military packs a powerful punch, Japan's relative position is deteriorating.

If the alliance disintegrated Japan would have to double and perhaps triple defence spending to compensate for the loss of the capabilities that the US provides. Even then it could never replicate the unique military and intelligence assets that the US brings to the table. Moreover, like any genuine partnership, the alliance is greater than the sum of its constituent parts. Aside from the obvious military synergies that accrue, it is worth remembering that between them Japan and the US account for over 40 per cent of world GDP (the US is around 30 per cent and Japan 12 per cent). When directed towards common goals their combined economic power is unmatched and the benefits work to mutual advantage, as evidenced by Japanese financial support for the US led coalition forces in the first Gulf War.

But the real question for Tokyo is how to create more political and decision-making space for itself in a security partnership that can never be one of equals because of the disparities in size and strategic weight. Might the US 'special relationship' with the UK serve as a model for security ties with Japan as US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage and others have suggested?⁴² Despite superficial similarities — both the UK and Japan are maritime trading states anchored off the Eurasian landmass — Japan's vastly different strategic circumstances and the absence of the unique historical, linguistic and cultural ties that underpin the US–UK relationship suggest otherwise. More likely is an evolutionary process in which Japan seeks a greater voice on issues that are central to its security concerns in Asia or when there are opportunities to dilute the unilateralist tendencies of the US and encourage more collaborative behaviour. There are already signs of a subtle change in Japan's engagement with the US. Japanese officials are demonstrating a new found frankness and openness with their US counterparts on missile defence and in the annual US–Japan Strategic Dialogue, while the Koizumi Government has made the running on the abductee issue and lobbied the Bush Administration hard to broaden the coalition in Iraq.

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Revising the constitution

Another uncertainty is whether or not Article 9 of the constitution will be amended or revised to allow Japan to use its defence force more freely, and for a broader range of contingencies, than has been the case in the past. It is difficult for non-Japanese to appreciate the extraordinarily detailed administrative and constitutional restrictions on what would be considered normal defence activities in most other countries. Typical is the 2001 ruling of the authoritative Cabinet Legislative Bureau (CLB), the bureaucratic guardian of constitutional propriety, which found that the provisions for extending Japan's logistical support to the US under the Revised Guidelines for US–Japan Defense Cooperation 'would violate the constitution if they directly related to the use of armed force'. The CLB's ruling threatened to negate the whole thrust of the revised guidelines by deliberately circumscribing the SDF's support role. The domestic constraints were no less severe and, in some cases, bordered on the ludicrous.⁴³ Japanese officials lamented, only half in jest, that tanks en route to counter an invasion would never get there in time because they had to observe the speed limit and stop at red traffic lights. The point being that there was no mobilisation legislation that would give the government authority to suspend civil law in the event of a military emergency.

However, the government has made a concerted effort to remove and rationalise these restrictions by encouraging more pragmatic interpretations of the constitution and through new laws. In June 2004, seven bills were passed by the Diet augmenting contingency legislation enacted the previous year and designed to facilitate civil-defence cooperation between national government and prefectural/local authorities in the event of an emergency or an attack on Japan.⁴⁴ The bills improve military preparedness and facilitate mobilisation by allowing the Japanese and US military to use seaports, airports, roads, radio frequencies and other public property in an emergency. They also allow the SDF to fire on commercial ships even outside Japan's territorial waters if they refuse inspection during a crisis.⁴⁵

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Table 2.2: Japanese security related legislation

1992	International Peace Cooperation Law
1994	Amendment to Peace Cooperation Law (Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) by SDF aircraft)
1995	National Defense Program Outline (+ Mid-term Defense Build-up Plan)
1997	US–Japan Revised Security Guidelines
1998	Agreement on Joint BMD research with US
1998	Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement with US
1998	Surveillance satellite development and deployment decision
1999	Amendment to Article 100-8 of the SDF Law (NEO by MSDF)
1999	Law Concerning Measures to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan
1999	Amendment to the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement
2000	Mid-Term Defense Build-up Plan 2001–2005
2001	Antiterrorism Special Measures Law
2001	Ship Inspection Law
2001	Amendment to the Self Defense Forces Law (Security of bases)
2001	Amendment to the International Peace Cooperation Law (defreezing)
2002	Decision to deploy Aegis destroyer to Indian Ocean
2003	Decision to extend MSDF refuelling to non-US vessels (Operation EF)

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2003	Launching of indigenous surveillance satellites
2003	Yuji Hosei — Contingency Legislation
2003	Decision to procure PAC-3 and SM-3 ballistic missile defences
2003	Decision to send GSDF ground troops (engineers/support) to Iraq
2004	Revision to the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law
2004	Bill to refuse port calls by North Korean ships
2004	Bill to protect citizens
2004	Bill on the use of designated public transport and communication facilities
2004	Bill to facilitate smoother operations of US military forces
2004	Bill for revision of the Self Defense Force Law (revision of ACSA)
2004	Bill to permit the interdiction of military equipment on foreign ships on the high seas
2004	Bill to penalise violations of international humanitarian law
2004	Bill on the treatment of prisoners of war

Note: Legislation passed as of June 2004. The government is expected to draft an omnibus bill for the 2005 ordinary Diet session which would allow it to deploy the SDF overseas at any time deemed necessary without first seeking parliamentary approval.

Source: Tanter (2004).

Koizumi has also steadily whittled away the constitutional and normative restrictions on overseas deployments. Following a series of

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successful contributions to peace keeping missions around the world during the 1990s, the US led operation (Enduring Freedom) to destroy Al-Q'aida's redoubt in the mountains of Afghanistan gave Koizumi the opportunity to demonstrate that the era of cheque book diplomacy was finally over and that henceforth Japan would pull its weight militarily. Two destroyers and one supply ship were despatched to the Indian Ocean for information gathering and to supply fuel for coalition naval forces, the first time that the SDF had been used in a non-peace keeping role outside Japan.⁴⁶

But Iraq was an even greater break with Japan's pacifist tradition. In an unprecedented decision, Koizumi succeeded in gaining parliamentary approval to send some 600 troops to Samawah in southern Iraq. Admittedly, the troops could only be used in non-combat roles and Samawah was selected because it was notionally free of conflict. But their very presence in Iraq signalled that Japan had crossed a political Rubicon. This was underscored by the call from the usually dovish leader of the Komeito Party that Japanese troops in Iraq should be allowed to defend other nations' soldiers if they came under attack, which technically would be a repudiation of the strictures on collective self defence.⁴⁷

Once the SDF arrived in Iraq public opinion turned dramatically. Before the deployment only 35 per cent were in favour, but within a few months the figure had risen to 53 per cent.⁴⁸ Even after three Japanese nationals were captured by Iraqi insurgents, an event that might easily have triggered massive public opposition to Koizumi's policy shift, 61.3 per cent of those surveyed by the Kyodo News Agency said the government made the right decision not to yield to their captors' demands and only 8.8 per cent said the decision was inappropriate.⁴⁹ The three hostages — aid workers Noriaki Imai, Nahoko Takato and freelance photojournalist Soichiro Koriyama — were later extensively criticised in the press for their recklessness in going to Iraq despite explicit government warnings not to do so. They were also billed US\$10,000 each for the cost of their repatriation.⁵⁰

There now seems a very real possibility that Article 9 of the Peace Constitution will be revised by the end of this decade accelerating the

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transformation of the SDF from a well equipped but combat deficient military to a more usable, deployable defence force. The increased likelihood of significant constitutional reform is due, in large part, to the weakening of the coalition of interests in the Diet that has long defended the constitutional status quo (*goken*). Koizumi has been helped by the precipitate decline in influence of the left leaning Social Democratic Party (SDP).⁵¹ Acting as the political guardian of Japan's pacifist/isolationist tradition, socialists routinely opposed the security treaty with the US during the Cold War, frustrating attempts by reformers to modernise the SDF and revise the constitution. The SDP's impotence has terminally upset the left-right balance in Japanese politics enabling the LDP to choose a coalition partner from the centre left (Komeito) while confronting an opposition (the Democratic Party) which is centrist and broadly supportive of the changes in foreign and defence policy sought by the prime minister. So much has the political tide turned that the SDP has been forced to concede that its self appointed guardianship of the constitution and advocacy of armed neutrality is no longer politically viable.

Recent polls, including one conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun* in April 2004, show that a clear majority of the Japanese people and parliamentarians are in favour of constitutional revision (*kaiken*) and nearly half (48 per cent) want to abandon the prohibition on collective self defence.⁵² Younger people are more in favour of revisions to the constitution than their parents. As a result, the LDP's influential Research Committee on the Constitution is expected to strongly support constitutional change and the opposition Democratic Party intends to produce its own draft revisions in 2006. Even the traditionally pacifist Komeito acknowledges that revision of the constitution is inevitable.

But what form will the amendments take? An analysis of the deliberations of the LDP Research Committee suggests that the war renouncing Article 9 will be significantly diluted. Clause 1 will probably remain ('the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes') but will be qualified by the phrase 'except in cases where Japan exercises the right to self defense.' Clause 2 is likely

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to be totally rewritten. Currently it stipulates that land, sea and air forces as well as other potential war forces will never be maintained. This clause will probably be amended to recognise the SDF and allow activities that contribute to international peace and stability.⁵³

Box 2.1: Preamble and Article 9 of the Japanese constitution

We, the Japanese people, acting through our duly elected representatives in the National Diet, determined that we shall secure for ourselves and our posterity the fruits of peaceful cooperation with all nations and the blessings of liberty throughout this land, and resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government, do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution. Government is a sacred trust of the people, the authority for which is derived from the people, the powers of which are exercised by the representatives of the people, and the benefits of which are enjoyed by the people. This is a universal principle of mankind upon which this Constitution is founded. We reject and revoke all constitutions, laws, ordinances, and rescripts in conflict herewith. (Preamble; First Paragraph)

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized. (Article 9)

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The Committee has cautioned against ‘misguided perceptions of pacifism and human rights’ and is considering adding more clauses to the preamble emphasising patriotism. A third clause in Article 9 stating that ‘it is a duty to defend the country’ is likely to be inserted.⁵⁴ Another mooted legislative revision may allow the SDF to take part in armed peace keeping operations provided they are in accordance with internationally recognised standards.⁵⁵ If these revisions are enacted, as seems likely, future Japanese governments will no longer be seriously encumbered by constitutional restrictions that have clearly outlived their usefulness. Any decision to despatch the SDF will be made, like all other countries, according to the political judgement of the government of the day and calculations of national interest.

But will Japan’s military capabilities match its strategic aspirations and what kind of SDF can we expect to see in the coming decade as Japan moves closer to its goal of becoming a ‘normal’ country? Chapter 3 surveys the evolution of the SDF from its nascent beginnings and identifies the likely force structure and capability changes. This chapter also explains the reasons for Japan’s involvement in missile defence, canvasses the policy implications and assesses the likelihood of Japan acquiring nuclear weapons.

Chapter 3

SDF capabilities

An analysis of the SDF's existing force structure and the changes in prospect provides unique insights into the country's strategic direction. Far from demonstrating a desire to become a suzerain in Asia, Japan has shown considerable self restraint in voluntarily limiting defence spending to one per cent of GDP and eschewing the military capabilities that are normally associated with a first order global military power, namely nuclear weapons, conventional aircraft carriers, ballistic missiles and strategic bombers. But Japan's policy makers must ensure that defence modernisation is driven by a careful assessment of the nation's real defence needs and its alliance obligations, rather than technological momentum or ad-hoc planning decisions. And there must be a judicious balance between developing forces to defend Japan against military attack and acquiring capabilities that have a broader security purpose.

Reconfiguring the SDF

Considering the impressive inventory now available to Japan's defence force it is easy to forget that when formed in 1954 the SDF was little more than a poorly resourced, quasi-military equipped with vintage, surplus US equipment. Although it had developed significant combat capabilities by the end of the 1970s, the SDF could not deploy and sustain force beyond the Japanese home islands and contributed little of real military value to the US alliance. As it matured, the SDF developed the ability to monitor and protect Japan's territorial seas and

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Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extending out to a distance of 1000 nautical miles. Since it was thought that an enemy would first have to penetrate Japan's maritime space before posing a direct threat, the SDF's air and naval elements received the lion's share of funds as the first line of defence against a conventional military attack. The primary role of the ground force was to counter and defeat a land assault.

As the Iron Curtain corroded, and then disintegrated entirely in Europe, reducing the possibility of a Soviet attack, a snap shot of the SDF at the Cold War's end would have revealed a force that lacked operational teeth or a strong public mandate and was encumbered by a host of constitutional and administrative restrictions. Over the past two decades, however, the SDF has been transformed into a highly capable defence force with an expanding and diverse set of core tasks. In addition to deterring and defeating a state adversary today's SDF is responsible for peace keeping, emergency relief, nation building activities and protecting the country from weapons of mass destruction and emerging non-state threats, particularly those posed by terrorist groups and transnational criminal organisations.

Today, the SDF is qualitatively different from its antecedents in three important respects. First, the Ground Self Defense Force (GSDF) is leaner, more mobile, better able to deploy troops over distance and possesses long range strike capabilities such as advanced anti-ship missiles and multiple-launched rocket systems.⁵⁶ Second, aside from the US Seventh Fleet, the Maritime Self Defense Force (MSDF) is now the most powerful naval force in East Asia, a genuine blue water fleet equipped with the advanced Aegis air defence system, state of the art destroyers, maritime patrol aircraft, mine sweepers, fast missile boats and anti-submarine helicopters. Third, aside from its maritime surveillance and strike capability, the Air Self Defense Force (ASDF) maintains a well integrated air defence system including the modern interceptors and early warning aircraft essential to the achievement of air superiority over the maritime approaches to Japan.

SDF CAPABILITIES

Table 3.1. Japan's air capabilities measured against other powers

	Current-generation	Airborne early	Pilot flying
Country	combat aircraft	warning aircraft	hours per year
United States	2,267	102	205
Russia	1,569	16	20
Great Britain	400	7	188
France	242	18	180
Germany	193	0	150
Italy	185	0	—
Japan	180	37	150
China	100	4	80

Source: Lind (2004), p.98

Table 3.2: Japan's naval capabilities measured against other powers

	Major surface combatants	Fleet air defence capabilities (nautical miles)	Aircraft carriers	Total tonnage, major surface combatants
Country				
United States	131	high (to 90nm)	12	2,971,671
China	62	low (13nm)	0	169,480
Japan	54	high (90nm)	0	224,110
France	36	moderate (20nm)	1	157,250
Great Britain	35	moderate (25nm)	3	201,158
Russia	34	moderate (48nm)	1	332,800
Italy	22	moderate (20nm)	0	88,550
Germany	14	moderate (20nm)	0	57,360

Source: Lind (2004), p.100

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Notwithstanding the marked improvements in weapons systems, surveillance, firepower and mobility there are some notable weaknesses in strategic intelligence, command and control, joint war fighting and missile defence. Recruiting sufficient numbers of high quality personnel will become more difficult as Japanese society ages and the pool of suitable recruits shrinks. The SDF is still heavily reliant on the US for much of its strategic and military intelligence and does not have access to the detailed satellite targeting information necessary for directing precision guided munitions. There are also problems in legally protecting classified material and in the internal collection, analysis and coordination of intelligence as well as defence intelligence sharing with other countries, including the US.⁵⁷ These deficiencies are slowly being addressed and SDF units have gained valuable on the ground experience through the 11 peace keeping operations in which they have been involved since 1992.⁵⁸

Future capabilities

Although the SDF has come a long way from its modest beginnings, the next decade will be marked by an accelerated rate of force structure changes and capability improvements, continuing the SDF's evolution from a force primarily configured for defence of the Japanese archipelago to one that is better able to meet the more complex and demanding security challenges of the 21st century. Defence planners are particularly keen to improve the ability to conduct peace keeping and coalition operations far from Japan's shores and protect the nation from terrorist and missile attacks.

While the ability to counter new threats is a key driver of the changes underway, there are two equally important operational considerations. One is the reality that all defence planners face. It is impractical and prohibitively expensive to redesign a force from scratch for the simple reason that so much national treasure has already been invested in the existing force. So in addition to funding new capabilities, the legacy force must be continually upgraded to ensure that the capacity for defence against symmetrical, state on state conflicts is not fatally eroded. A second consideration is the heightened requirement for interoperability with US and regional defence forces.

SDF CAPABILITIES

An analysis of public comments by Japanese defence officials, recent defence white papers and an October 2004 report issued by the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities (also known as the Araki report) suggests that in the next five to ten years, the JDA will concentrate on measures designed to:⁵⁹

- increase the operational effectiveness of the SDF;
- expand core capabilities to better deal with emerging transnational threats such as cyber attacks, criminal activities, terrorism, NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) attacks and raids by guerrillas/special forces;
- remove impediments to interoperability with the US;
- modernise the legacy force;
- acquire a limited capacity to support and sustain distant operations;
- improve intelligence collection and analysis;
- revamp the command structure of the SDF;
- defend against ballistic missiles.

The forthcoming National Defense Program Outline (NDPO), which sets out capability improvements and details military procurement, will provide a much clearer picture of the SDF's future direction. The NDPO is expected to confirm the purchase of four B-767 refuelling aircraft which will significantly extend the range of the ASDF's F-2 and F-15 fighter aircraft and is contentious because in-flight refuelling has offensive connotations. Much more controversial, however, would be any decision to acquire Tomahawk cruise missiles and other precision air-to-surface munitions since they could strike targets on the Asian mainland including North Korea's missile sites. In what would represent a major departure from past practice, should it become policy, the LDP is edging towards a position where such weapons could be used preemptively to attack foreign missile bases when they are considered to pose a direct and imminent threat to Japan.⁶⁰

Plans to develop larger and more capable transport aircraft for peace keeping and coalition operations are well advanced and additional

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early warning aircraft will act as a force multiplier, giving Japan an unmatched ability in the region to control its airspace and maintain a qualitative edge over China's rapidly modernising air force. The MSDF will be augmented by two more Aegis destroyers; helicopter carrying destroyers that will enhance the MSDF's sea based air power especially if equipped with vertical take off and landing aircraft; another six Oyashio class submarines and a new class of submarine equipped with an air-independent propulsion system; two Osumi class amphibious support ships and an even larger heavy lift ship which could double as a light aircraft carrier depending on its configuration and fit-out. These purchases will go a long way towards redressing the MSDF's lack of sea based air support, fleet defence and amphibious lift and will enhance the defence force's capacity to conduct distant operations.⁶¹

Intelligence collection and surveillance will be given a significant boost with the launch of two reconnaissance satellites to complement two launched in March 2003 (a second pair was destroyed when the launch vehicle failed in August 2003). One of the satellites in orbit is equipped with optical imaging while the other has radar imaging for use at night and for penetrating cloud cover.⁶² While the imagery from these satellites is of insufficient resolution for military targeting purposes it nonetheless allows Japan to monitor developments in North Korea and China from space, independently of US systems. The GDSF is slated to receive a modest increase in personnel, probably numbering around 5,000, although the number of main battle tanks, heavy artillery and anti-tank missiles will be cut because of the much reduced threat of invasion. An elite 300 member anti-terrorist unit was established in March 2004 to supplement existing units in the MSDF and Coast Guard, foreshadowing an expanded role for the GDSF in counter terrorism.⁶³

No less important are the mooted changes to the JDA and the SDF's fractured and uncoordinated command structure. Long the 'black sheep' among the powerful ministries which determine security policy the JDA will soon be elevated to the status of a full ministry and a new 650 strong joint staff organisation, modelled after the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, will centralise operational control of all three services beginning in 2006. This should improve the conduct and management of military operations

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especially in the area of counter terrorism and joint operations with the US. Missile defence will be similarly centralised under the Air Defense Command.⁶⁴ A parallel restructuring of the US military commands in South Korea and Japan may see all US ground forces in both countries placed under one operational commander in Japan.⁶⁵

Missile defence

One area that is receiving high priority in the JDA's future plans is defence against ballistic missiles. Currently, Japan is not able to detect and intercept incoming ballistic missiles without US assistance, a conspicuous deficiency given that two contiguous states, China and Russia, are armed with nuclear missiles and North Korea is strongly suspected of having secretly developed a handful of nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them.⁶⁶ In the absence of a countervailing missile capability, which is forbidden under the current interpretation of the constitution, Tokyo has opted to participate in the US Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) program. The central aim is to construct a 'missile shield' able to protect Japan against a limited strike from North Korea although it is unlikely to be an effective prophylactic against China's or Russia's more numerous and capable missile forces.

Joint tests are expected to commence in late 2005 and the proposed system, comprising land and sea based interceptors, will be activated in 2007. The sea based Standard (SM-3) interceptor missiles are designed to shoot down ballistic missiles in their mid course phase. They will be based on US and Japanese warships permanently stationed in the Sea of Japan and Pacific Ocean equipped with the Aegis air defence system. The first US Aegis guided missile destroyer will be despatched to the Sea of Japan at the end of 2004 where it will be joined, at a later date, by similarly equipped Japanese Kongo class destroyers.⁶⁷ If the incoming missiles are not destroyed by the SM-3s, land based batteries of upgraded Patriot missiles (PAC-3) will intercept them during their descent stage. Both the SM-3s and PAC-3s use kinetic, hit-to-kill technology which is an advance on the less precise, blast fragmentation warheads of earlier variants.⁶⁸ The final, critical component is a land based radar system, designated the FPS-XX, which will boost the effective reach of the SM-3

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and allow earlier detection of missile launches.

Aside from lingering doubts about whether the shield will actually work as hypothesised, participation in BMD with the US poses some real policy conundrums for Tokyo. Neighbouring states, particularly China, are concerned that the expertise acquired in sensitive areas of missile technology would be readily transferable to a ballistic missile program should Japan decide to develop its own missiles and arm them with nuclear warheads. Japanese scientists are involved in research on four components of the SM-3 missile — the propulsion system, infra-red sensors, lightweight nose cone technology and the kinetic kill warhead.⁶⁹ China is also worried that Japan might export missile technology to Taiwan. Extending the shield to cover the approaches to the island could negate China's current missile advantage over Taiwan.

Production of missile components could force a reassessment of Japan's long standing prohibition on arms exports. In 1967 Japan adopted a three point policy against weapons exports that included a ban on sales to communist states. This was later tightened to a blanket ban on the export of weapons to all states although the US was granted a partial exemption in 1983.⁷⁰ Since the US, as well as other members of the BMD network, would expect to access missile defence technology developed by Japan, it is almost certain that a future Japanese government, regardless of its political complexion, will have to amend or abrogate the 1967 policy once BMD moves into the joint development and production phase.⁷¹

US-Japan cooperation on missile defence has major implications for Japan's approach to collective self defence since the technology being developed to protect Japan against North Korean missiles will also constitute an integral part of the US national missile defence system. Many Japanese politicians have been reluctant to support BMD because they fear enmeshment in US conflicts and war planning should Japan become part of an extended missile defence system. The FPS-XX radar, for example, will improve the Pentagon's ability to track ballistic missiles targeted against the US. There are also difficult problems to overcome with respect to command and control. A ballistic missile launched from North Korea would take only about 10 minutes to reach

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Japan, so each minute of delay lessens the probability of a successful intercept. Yet in 2003 Gen Nakatani, the former Director General of the JDA, made clear that it would be virtually impossible to intercept an incoming missile in the short time available because, under the present cumbersome command and control arrangement, the SDF would first require a mobilisation order from the prime minister. This cannot be given until after the prime minister has convened a cabinet meeting and obtained agreement to declare a state of emergency by which time it would be too late to take preventative measures.⁷²

Another difficulty is that it may not be possible to predict the intended target of a missile on launch and therefore whether or not it is aimed at Japan. But shooting down a missile targeted against another country would, *prima facie*, breach the current constitutional injunction against collective self defence. The government has attempted to circumvent this ruling by arguing that regardless of its ultimate destination a missile flying towards Japan or over its airspace can be legitimately shot down in self defence. However, such interpretative gymnastics may not be enough once the system is fully deployed. Ultimately, the only sensible recourse is to amend the constitution by allowing a limited right of collective self defence, which is Koizumi's intent.⁷³

Thus, over time, the future architecture and modalities of missile defence could substantially alter the power structure of the alliance and reshape Japan's approach to national security planning as Tokyo and Washington work through this complex set of political and operational considerations.⁷⁴ Successful collaboration on missile defence would be a powerful reaffirmation of shared US-Japan strategic interests, accelerating the trend towards greater equality within the alliance and stimulating reform of the SDF's structure, organisation, intelligence systems and national security decision-making. Already, Japanese officials have indicated their desire to have greater input into BMD planning and to share data obtained from the FPS-XX radar.⁷⁵ Conversely, any failure by Japan to deploy an effective missile defence system, or shoot down missiles bound for the US because of constitutional niceties, could rupture the alliance with profoundly negative consequences for East Asia's stability.

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Japan's nuclear allergy

While Tokyo considers options for protecting the country from incoming missiles, especially those armed with nuclear warheads, others worry about Japan's own nuclear ambitions. This is not a new concern, but as defence reform gathers momentum Japan's neighbours fear that Tokyo may reconsider its aversion to nuclear weapons. After all, if the peace constitution can be amended and the strictures on collective self defence loosened, what is to stop the final taboo on nuclear weapons being broken?

In a country well known for its nuclear allergy this question is no longer as implausible as it once might have seemed. Senior officials aver that Japan has the right, in principle, to possess nuclear weapons for defensive purposes and there is a greater willingness to discuss the issue publicly. Most of the capabilities necessary for making crude nuclear weapons and delivering them to their targets already exist. By 2010, Japan will have produced an estimated 100 tons of plutonium from its nuclear power program that could theoretically be used to fuel a nuclear arsenal. Although some scientists argue that this plutonium is not sufficiently high grade for nuclear weapons others demur, including the authors of an authoritative report commissioned by the US National Academy of Science in 1994.⁷⁶ And while it would be a complex and time consuming process to convert the H-2 civilian rocket program to military purposes or to develop sophisticated inertial guidance systems, these problems could be overcome with sufficient political will and resources.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to see Japan acquiring nuclear weapons for at least three reasons. First, a decision to go nuclear would be opposed by the vast majority of Japanese and be disastrous for the country's reputation. Internationally, it would be seen as a reversal of half a century of Japanese opposition to nuclear weapons, a repudiation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and an abrogation of the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime under which Japan has agreed to develop its plutonium program for peaceful purposes. While public opinion has become more accepting of the need for capable defence forces, the proposition that Japan should possess its

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own nuclear weapons has been firmly rejected in all recent polls and is unlikely to be advocated by any of the major parties.⁷⁷

The fact is that most Japanese remain implacably opposed to the possession of nuclear weapons and anti-nuclear sentiment is particularly strong among the older generation. A survey conducted in 1998 found that 78 per cent of Japanese favoured the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. And in a 1999 poll by the National Institute for Research Advancement, only seven per cent were in favour of Japan possessing its own nuclear weapons even if the US–Japan Security Treaty were to be abrogated.⁷⁸ Japan’s elites are even less well disposed to the idea. Only 17 of 431 Diet members surveyed in 1998 were ‘in favour’, or ‘somewhat in favour’, of nuclear armament.⁷⁹

Second, unless Tokyo embarked on a major nuclear weapons program, which would be a lengthy process and enormously expensive, acquiring a handful of ‘nukes’ would have marginal political and military utility as well as minimal deterrent value for a densely populated, heavily urbanised country like Japan that has little strategic depth. In a nuclear exchange with China, a few ballistic missiles targeted against Tokyo and Yokohama would devastate Japan economically and cause an immense number of casualties. China, with its greater land mass and population could better absorb a Japanese first strike. In the arcane calculus of nuclear war fighting Japan could not win a nuclear exchange with China. Moreover, since it has no second strike capability in the form of strategic bombers or ballistic missile submarines, Japan would be forced to operate on an inherently destabilising hair trigger alert, requiring the SDF to launch on warning or risk losing its nuclear weapons to an adversary’s first strike.

Third, going nuclear could end the alliance because a nuclear armed Japan would be antithetical to Washington’s interests, encouraging further proliferation, initiating a possible arms race with China, alienating the two Koreas and greatly complicating US strategy in Asia. The unstated purpose of the US nuclear umbrella has always been to obviate any need for Japan to possess nuclear weapons of its own. Thus, Japan would be trading off the substantial military, political and intelligence benefits that it derives from the alliance in return for a

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nuclear capability that would not only be highly contentious but also of little practical use. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a succession of internal reviews by government agencies, including an unofficial study conducted by the SDF in 1994, all concluded that nuclear weapons had little strategic merit for Japan.⁸⁰

Unfortunately, regional sceptics are not persuaded by these arguments. Some Chinese analysts and policy makers, for example, are convinced that Japan's abundant stocks of plutonium, work on missile defence and technological savvy translate into a virtual weapons capability that could be actualised in the space of a few months.⁸¹ No matter how ill conceived they are, such suspicions bring into stark relief the perception problem Japan faces. As other long standing taboos fall and Japan's involvement in missile defence intensifies, the government needs to work much harder to convince doubters, both at home and abroad, that Japan will adhere to its three non-nuclear principles rejecting the possession and production of nuclear weapons and their introduction into Japan.

The transformation of the SDF will clearly have political and strategic ramifications well beyond Japan's shores. Regional responses to the shift in Japan's security policy and defence posture are explored in Chapter 4 which assesses whether misperceptions of Japan's strategic intentions could lead to an increase in regional tensions, reawakening dormant antipathies in Southeast Asia and fuelling strategic rivalry with the two Koreas and China.

Chapter 4

Regional responses



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Southeast Asian equanimity

There is no doubt that Japan still has a lingering image problem in Asia and the Pacific despite its low key foreign policy and the billions of aid dollars disbursed to the region. As the pace of defence reform picks up Tokyo must be careful that its strategic intentions are not misconstrued, since regional states still have painful memories of Japan's militaristic and imperial past. So far, most Southeast Asian governments have been remarkably accommodating of the shift in Japan's security posture and, for the most part, they accept that the country's changed political and strategic circumstances require new responses. Japan's active involvement in the ASEAN Regional Forum and associated 'second track' security dialogues has helped to reassure Southeast Asians that Japan is a force for stability. That is why the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia endorsed Tokyo's decision to send troops overseas on UN sanctioned peace keeping missions and there was little adverse reaction to the 1997 Revised Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation or the despatch of the SDF to the Indian Ocean in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.⁸²

Southeast Asia's equanimity is also a function of *real-politik*. Aside from the need for access to Japan as a market and source of investment, Southeast Asians know that only Japan, in Asia, can effectively balance Chinese power and prevent the Middle Kingdom from reasserting its historical dominion over the region. A modest and incremental improvement in SDF capabilities is therefore unlikely to attract significant ASEAN opposition, especially while China remains at loggerheads with several member nations over the ownership of the resource rich Spratly Islands. But this does not mean that Tokyo can allow the SDF to muscle up without regard for regional sensitivities. Singapore excepted, a Japanese proposal to conduct joint anti-piracy patrols in the Malacca Straits has been received with little enthusiasm in Southeast Asia, indicating that there are still attitudinal barriers to closer defence cooperation. Any attempt by Japan to acquire nuclear weapons would be trenchantly opposed.⁸³

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Korean wariness

While Southeast Asians generally see Japan as a benign power, Tokyo's Northeast Asian neighbours are far less sanguine or accommodating, reflecting their geographical propinquity and traumatic experience of Japanese occupation in the previous century. North Korean hostility continues unabated, notwithstanding concessions made to Koizumi in allowing the return of kidnapped Japanese and Tokyo's tolerance of the activities of the *Chosen Soren*, an influential group of pro-Pyongyang Koreans who reside in Japan. However, Japanese forbearance is waning fast. The *Chosen Soren* (known as *Chong-ryun* in Korean) is no longer as free to proselytise for the North Korean regime as it once was. With the softening of Seoul's previously hard line stance towards the North, Japan has effectively replaced South Korea as Pyongyang's *bete noir*. A modernising SDF and Japan's less conciliatory approach to the North Korean regime will irritate Kim Jong Il and likely exacerbate existing bilateral tensions. As will Tokyo's involvement in BMD because an efficacious missile shield would virtually eliminate North Korea's capacity to threaten Japan with ballistic missiles and therefore remove one of Kim's few sources of leverage.

The hardening of Japan's security policy is also raising South Korean hackles. Although a US ally and major trading partner, South Korea maintains an uneasy co-existence with its eastern neighbour because of residual anti-Japanese feelings emanating from Japan's colonisation of Korea in the first half of the 20th century. Both countries have a vested interest in maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula and resisting North Korean aggression, a mutuality of strategic interests that has ameliorated the historical animosities between them. But these bonds are weakening as the government of Roh Moo-hyun pursues *détente* with Pyongyang and distances itself from US policy in Northeast Asia on the back of rising anti-Americanism, particularly among younger South Koreans. Without better dialogue and a conscious effort by Tokyo to allay Seoul's concerns, the risk is that a more outward looking security posture will intensify South Korean suspicions about Japan's regional ambitions and fuel military competition between them.

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Chinese suspicion

A far greater challenge for Japan, however, is reassuring a nervous China of its good intentions. This will be no easy task because of the wide spread view in Chinese policy and military circles that Tokyo's strategic shift foreshadows a more assertive and possibly adversarial Japan. Of course, there is nothing new or surprising in this reaction as Sino-Japanese rivalry has long historical roots. It is manifest today in Chinese anxieties about Japan's support for Taiwan and BMD and resentment over legacy issues, notably Koizumi's repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. The shrine honours Japanese war dead but in Chinese eyes is a symbol of Japan's imperial past. Until recently these anxieties have been moderated by Japan's peace constitution and Beijing's recognition that, whatever its dangers, the US alliance has prevented a revival of Japanese military power. But as Japan breaks free from its constitutional shackles and the red sun makes its reappearance across the globe on the uniforms and flags of a reinvigorated SDF, Chinese strategists are drawing conclusions that are troubling for future Sino-Japanese relations.

Among them is the belief that Japan wants to be a military as well as an economic power; that it is moving from a preoccupation with self defence to accepting the broader alliance objectives of collective self defence; that it is developing the capability to intervene militarily in the region; that the Koizumi Government is playing up the North Korean threat so that it can break the constitutional taboo on collective self defence; and that Japan is concealing its real strategic intentions by using peace keeping and the war on terrorism to desensitise the region to an expanded military presence.

Not all Chinese hold these views. There is disagreement about the likelihood of Japan detaching itself from the US alliance and ambivalence about the outcome. Some hold that a truly independent Japan would be more deferential and friendly towards China, others that Japan would attempt to make up the security deficit by increasing military spending and developing nuclear weapons.⁸⁴ Most doubt Japan's ability to become a global military power and few believe that it will become a direct threat to China. Chinese defence analysts are in general agreement that over the next 10 to 15 years, Japan will acquire significant force projection capabilities in

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the form of long range cruise missiles, de facto light aircraft carriers and additional amphibious ships, aerial refuelling tankers and more airborne early warning and control aircraft.⁸⁵

However, a minority of liberals are critical of China's 'narrow minded prejudices' towards Japan. They call for a new approach that emphasises the positives in the relationship and recognises that the futures of both countries are inextricably bound together, as indeed they are. Among the most influential are Shi Yinhong, from the Center for American Studies at the Renmin University of China, and Ma Licheng, a senior editorial writer for the *People's Daily*, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party. Shi warns that if unchecked, mutual antagonisms could aggravate anti-Chinese sentiment in Japan and lead to a vicious cycle of recriminations that would be dangerous for China. Ma urges China to accept that its demand for an apology has been met and that there is a clear cut distinction between Japan's policy of 'achieving a normal state of affairs in the military field and a bid to have past militarism restored'.⁸⁶

Japanese anxieties

Ambivalence also characterises Japan's approach to China, particularly on security matters. Economic interdependence is generally regarded as a positive for the business sector because of the commercial opportunities offered by the dynamism and potential of the huge China market. The growth in Sino-Japanese trade is spectacular, having jumped 30 per cent in 2003 to US\$132 billion. Japan now imports more from China than the US.⁸⁷ Yet many in the foreign policy and defence community resent China's thinly disguised preference for a strategically impotent, passive Japan and regard Beijing's criticisms as hypocrisy of the worst kind given the lack of transparency in China's defence spending and military programs.⁸⁸ Mirroring their neighbour's concern about a revival of militarism, Japan worries about recent double digit increases in Chinese military spending, the acquisition of advanced fighter aircraft and naval combatants from Russia, the rapid pace of defence modernisation and the build up of China's missile inventory.⁸⁹

These anxieties are not without substance. China's recently purchased advanced *Kilo*-Class submarines can interdict the key maritime trade routes

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that are crucial to Japan's economic survival and there has been a dramatic rise in the frequency of Chinese naval incursions into Japan's exclusive economic zone since 2000.⁹⁰ Tokyo is particularly concerned about Chinese hydrographic surveys and oil drilling near Japan's EEZ, as well as what appear to be intelligence gathering operations by Chinese submarines. Beijing has recently challenged the island status of Okinotorishima, a small offshore rock claimed by Japan, that is uninhabited and slowly sinking but which could be significant in any future conflict over maritime resources.⁹¹

Tensions have already flared over a number of unresolved territorial disputes at sea, notably the Senkaku islands (*Diaoyu* in Chinese), which are located near rich deposits of oil and natural gas in the underlying sea bed.⁹² So far these have been confined to polemical exchanges between Tokyo and Beijing and symbolic protests by Chinese activists. But the potential for miscalculation will increase as an energy hungry China steps up its oil exploration activities in the seas around the Senkakus and Japan responds by augmenting its maritime patrols and surveillance of the region. A Japanese intelligence officer warned in early 2004 that 'a competition [between China and Japan] over natural resources in these waters is about to begin'.⁹³

However, it is the future status of Taiwan, and China's determination to reunify the island by force, if necessary, that has the greatest potential to lead to military conflict between the two East Asian states. Japan has long standing commercial and people-to-people links with Taiwan, dating back to its colonial occupation of the island in the first half of 20th century and would not welcome the loss of influence that would follow if Beijing's rule was forcibly imposed on Taipei. Strategically, Chinese control over Taiwan would be a major setback for Japan, allowing the PLA to dominate the Taiwan Strait and the sea lines of communication to Europe and the Middle East.

But the critical issue for Japan is how a conflict between the US and China over Taiwan would play out and whether Japan could avoid having to choose between its major ally and Asia's rising power. If hostilities broke out the US would expect Japan to provide intelligence and rear area support for the US carrier groups that would be despatched to defend Taiwan

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against a Chinese attack. This would expose the SDF to a Chinese counter strike and risk drawing Japan into direct combat with China for the first time since World War II, the consequences of which would be incalculable for both countries.

Thus, the fundamental paradox of Sino-Japanese ties is that mutual mistrust is growing in parallel with deepening economic interdependence. Japan's greatest long term security challenge will be to manage relations with China so that tensions between them do not lead to open conflict or spill over and infect the wider region. This will require a much higher level of trust than has been evident to date in Sino-Japanese relations and a willingness to consider new mechanisms for mediating and preventing disputes in order to avert major crises. Military transparency is the key to establishing trust as both countries modernise their defence forces and develop force projection capabilities. The danger is that Tokyo and Beijing will feel threatened by the other's acquisitions and react accordingly, leading to a destabilising arms race. Japan can play its part in avoiding such an outcome by continuing to engage China in strategic dialogue, by crafting a regime of military trust building measures and by maintaining what is, by regional standards, an impressive degree of openness in its defence programs and budgetary processes.

Chapter 5

The Australia–Japan security relationship

Strategic commonalities

Given these sensitivities and Beijing's obvious suspicion about the extent and real purpose of Tokyo's regional ambitions what scope is there for Australia and Japan to broaden and deepen their defence cooperation? Not much, sceptics might argue, since the two countries seem odd strategic bed fellows with very little in common. Japan is a populous, archipelagic nation situated at the maritime cross roads of Northeast Asia which remains a technologically advanced global power despite its poor recent economic performance and historical natural resource deficiencies. Australia, by contrast, is a lightly populated, resource rich, island continent — a middle sized regional power geographically distant from the fulcrum of Asian affairs and inhabited by an increasingly cosmopolitan, but essentially transplanted European society, that has traditionally viewed Asia as a threat, rather than an opportunity.

However, although these stereotypes capture important elements of each society, they obscure significant commonalities and shared strategic interests that are not widely recognised by either country's elites. As maritime trading nations, Japan and Australia are vitally interested in the security of the major sea lanes running from Northeast Asia through the Malacca Strait to the Middle East and Europe. Both countries are mature democracies with highly educated populations. They share an abiding sense of vulnerability and consider their alliance relationship

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with the US to be the bedrock of their security. Each country has worked cooperatively with the US for over half a century to enhance regional stability, create the conditions for economic prosperity and shape the basic security architecture of Asia and the Pacific. Australia and Japan are also committed to the development of a regional security community which goes beyond the existing framework of bilateral security arrangements and multilateral institutions like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference process (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific (CSCAP).

A strong, regionally engaged Japan is crucial to three important Australian strategic interests in East Asia — balancing China's power, providing vital support for US forces in the region and as a market for Australian goods and services. Japan sees Australia as a stabilising force in Southeast Asia, a natural economic and strategic partner and an influential regional player. How to deal with a rising China is the central foreign policy question for both Tokyo and Canberra because the Middle Kingdom has a unique ability to shape the regional security environment, for better or for worse, due to its size, political weight and central geo-strategic location at the heart of Asia. A peaceful, benign and economically prosperous China would be the optimal policy outcome for both Australia and Japan.

Indonesia presents challenges of a different order. Australia and Japan have invested considerable political and economic capital in what each acknowledges as the most important state in Southeast Asia and the key to the region's stability. A weak, fractious, and impoverished Indonesia is not in the long term economic or security interests of either Tokyo or Canberra not least because renewed tensions between Australia and Indonesia over East Timor and Papua could negatively impact on Japan's capacity to work cooperatively with Australia in Southeast Asia.

As already discussed, hostilities between China and the US over Taiwan and the unresolved conflict on the Korean peninsula are contingencies that continue to exercise the minds of Japanese defence

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planners. But they also pose dilemmas for Australia. Neither country would want to see an outbreak of hostilities over Taiwan, which could have potentially devastating consequences for the whole region. Japan and Australia would find it difficult not to be drawn into any future Korean conflict — Japan due to its proximity and supporting role for garrisoned US forces and Australia because of its residual UN commitments as a member of the United Nations Command and Military Armistice Commission.⁹⁴ Combating the spread of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism and transnational threats to security are other shared interests.

Bilateral security ties

Despite these commonalities, it is only in the last decade and a half that Australia and Japan have begun to seriously explore defence and security cooperation, in marked contrast to the economic relationship which has burgeoned since the watershed 1957 Agreement on Commerce. This can be partly explained by the constitutional restrictions on the SDF and residual hostility towards Japan among older Australians, stemming from their wartime experiences. But it is also a reflection of Japan's post war preoccupation with economic development, strategic passivity and the absence of a tradition of security cooperation with Australia, which until recently seldom featured on the policy horizons of the Foreign Ministry or the JDA.

All this began to change towards the late 1980s with the shift in Japan's security priorities and a greater awareness of Australia's potential as a defence partner. Australia also began to view Japan in a more congenial and positive light, a reappraisal signalled by the despatch of General Peter Gration, the Chief of the Australian Defence Force, to Tokyo in 1989. This was the first of a series of high level visits by senior Australian Defence officials and military officers. A breakthrough reciprocal visit took place a year later when Yozo Ishikawa became the first Japanese Defense Minister to come to Australia.⁹⁵

Although still modest by the standards of other countries, defence and security ties have grown considerably since these early visits and fall into three broad categories — intelligence exchanges, security

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dialogue and defence cooperation/exchange, the key elements of which are set out in a Memorandum signed by the Australian and Japanese defence ministers in September 2003.⁹⁶ Formal intelligence cooperation began in the mid 1970s and now encompasses virtually all agencies of the Australian Intelligence Community and their Japanese counterpart organisations.⁹⁷ Strategic dialogue between senior officials and uniformed officers of the respective defence forces is conducted on a regular basis and extends to intelligence and foreign ministry officials. Australia was only the second country, after the US, with which Japan established a regular security dialogue. Annual political–military and military–military consultations commenced in 1996 and are conducted at the senior official level, but there are also regular meetings between both country’s defence ministers and defence force chiefs.⁹⁸

Less well known is the fact that Australia and Japan now cooperate operationally on an expanding range of defence activities including ocean surveillance, counter terrorism, counter proliferation, Japan’s space program and through their participation in US led maritime exercises such as the RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific) series. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and Japan’s MSDF participate in the US Navy’s Ocean Surveillance Information System (OSIS), and P-3C (Orion) aircraft from both countries provide airborne surveillance of the South China Sea and Malacca Straits.⁹⁹ When using common codes these aircraft are able to exchange data on shipping movements because of their compatible data links.

Japan and Australia are leading proponents of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which involves over 60 countries in a concerted effort to prevent the illegal trade and transportation of weapons of mass destruction. The Australian Navy and Japanese Coast Guard have cooperated in PSI exercises such as Pacific Protector, during which participating ships practised, in a training scenario, interdicting, boarding and inspecting vessels suspected of carrying WMD.¹⁰⁰ The Japanese Coast Guard is also prominent in regional efforts to control piracy and transnational criminal activities.¹⁰¹ Collaboration on missile defence will increase opportunities for research and development as well as intelligence sharing on regional missile capabilities.¹⁰² The

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satellite ground station at Landsdale in Perth, Western Australia, for example plays a significant role in supporting Japan's recently launched reconnaissance satellites.¹⁰³ Counter terrorist cooperation received a major boost with the signing of a 'joint statement' in July 2003.¹⁰⁴

The way ahead

All this is indicative of a maturing security relationship between Australia and Japan that is a far cry from the arid distrust of 60 years ago and the studied indifference of the Cold War era. Notably absent, however, is any overarching sense of how, and to what purpose, security ties might be strengthened or the limits on future defence cooperation. It is important to get this right because an effective security partnership with Japan would create new bilateral synergies and advance Australia's regional foreign policy and defence interests in ways that would be difficult to achieve without Japan's active support. Preventing WMD proliferation is a case in point. But there are risks too, as well as practical constraints, such as Japan's peace constitution which remains a significant though declining impediment to closer defence ties.

Perhaps the most difficult problem confronting Japan and Australia is how defence cooperation can be strengthened without alienating China. Missile defence is illustrative as this is an emerging source of tension between China and Japan. And Chinese officials are clearly wary of the developing trilateral security dialogue (TSD) between the US, Japan and Australia which was first mooted in 2001 at the Australia–US Ministerial Talks in Canberra. From Beijing's perspective, the TSD looks suspiciously like the first step on the road to forming a new security bloc in Asia aimed at containing China. While China's fears that the TSD could evolve into an Asian style NATO are misplaced, and China should not be permitted to exercise a veto on any aspect of Australia–Japan security cooperation, it would be unwise to antagonise Beijing by further institutionalising the TSD and transforming it into a clubby, de facto trilateral alliance. A far better approach would be to create a security mechanism that allows China to directly discuss Northeast Asia's security problems with Japan and the US.

Such a mechanism already exists in the form of the 6 Party Talks

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which were established in 2003 to defuse the North Korean nuclear issue and includes among its members all the Northeast Asian states as well as the US. China has rejected previous attempts to inaugurate a sub-regional security arrangement fearing that it could be used as a vehicle for foreign intervention in China's affairs, especially Taiwan. But Beijing is more comfortable with the format of the 6 Party Talks and feels some ownership of the process. So there is every prospect that the Chinese would be favourably disposed to broadening the scope and agenda of the talks at some future date. Institutionalising the 6 Party Talks would be an important confidence building measure as well as providing strategic reassurance to China that should help soften its opposition to extended Australia–Japan–US defence cooperation.

Notwithstanding Chinese sensitivities, there is considerable room for closer policy coordination between Australia and Japan within the existing framework of the US alliance. At present, the best metaphor to describe the way the alliance works in practice is the hub (the US) and radiating spokes of a wheel (Australia, Japan, South Korea and Thailand). The critical dialogue is between the hub and the spokes, seldom between the spokes, despite the growing defence exchanges between Japan and Australia and Japan's cooperation with South Korea and Thailand. If the alliance is to adapt and prosper in today's vastly different strategic circumstances, the essentially mono-directional pattern of dialogue needs to become much more multi-directional and the alliance less dominated by US interests and policy preoccupations. Australia and Japan could improve their leverage with the US, and add value to the alliance, by consulting more regularly and putting their views jointly to Washington when they converge. This would mean moving towards a more consultative European style of alliance management. A key aim would be to moderate Washington's unilateralist tendencies and sensitise US policy makers to Asian security perceptions and political realities.

Australia should also work to ensure the continued health of the US–Japan enterprise by using its good offices to mediate tensions which periodically surface between the two allies and by reminding Washington that domestic and regional realities limit Japan's capacity to support the US militarily. For its part, Tokyo must recognise that a

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regression to the lacklustre economic performances of the past decade and a perceived unwillingness to carry out much needed political reform could one day force a hard headed reassessment of Japan's strategic value and economic weight in Washington, as well as elsewhere. A weakened US–Japan alliance and the beginning of a long term decline in Japanese power could foreshadow an extended period of uncertainty and destabilising strategic change. This would be detrimental to Australia's interests because of Japan's pivotal role in the region and its status as our largest export market. A diminished, less influential Japan would reduce Australia's voice in Asia's affairs.

Outside the traditional arena of defence and security cooperation, Australia and Japan ought to devote more attention to the emerging transnational challenges to security. Although primarily non-military in nature, they are nonetheless beginning to have a profound effect on the regional security environment. Some of these challenges are economic; others relate to the earth's physical environment; many are contemporary manifestations of age-old afflictions. They stem from demographic pressures, resource depletion, global warming, unregulated population movements, transnational crime, virulent new strains of infectious diseases like AIDS and SARS as well as a plethora of other issues not previously associated with international security.¹⁰⁵

This new security agenda has important implications for the conduct of foreign and defence policy. Many of the emerging transnational causes of conflict are the result of forces outside the traditional framework of strategic analysis. They have little to do with the exercise of coercive power by competing nation states, but everything to do with the stability of states and human survival. Transnational phenomena are likely to become more prominent causes of conflict and insecurity in Asia and the Pacific, as pressure on natural resources increases, people become more mobile and non-state actors compete with states for money, influence and power.

In summary, a relationship which was once heavily weighted in favour of trade and economics has evolved into a more mature and multi-dimensional partnership in which political and security issues have assumed far greater prominence and policy import than at any time

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in recent history. The years that have passed since General Gration's ground breaking visit to Tokyo has seen impressive growth in defence cooperation. Japan now ranks among Australia's most important regional defence relationships, along with Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, while Australia is a significant and increasingly important security interlocutor for Japan. This trend is likely to intensify as Tokyo gradually removes the normative constraints on collective self defence and seeks closer ties with like minded nations. For historical and geopolitical reasons, Australia is one of the few Asia Pacific countries that Japan could consider as a genuine strategic partner.

Containing WMD proliferation and the spread of transnational terrorism will be important new drivers of bilateral security cooperation. The whole region stands to benefit if Australia and Japan can work together effectively to combat these emerging threats. Although missile defence, counter piracy, peace keeping and maritime security are already providing significant new opportunities for collaboration there is still no long term vision or strategic framework agreement in the defence arena that compares with the 1957 Agreement on Commerce. There also needs to be a clearer understanding of the political limits to bilateral defence cooperation which are still mainly on the Japanese side and are attitudinal as well as constitutional. Multilateral security cooperation, by contrast, is a less sensitive area for collaboration as the strictures on collective self defence loosen and the region becomes acclimatised to an expanded Japanese security presence.

Ultimately, alliance considerations and Washington's policy prescriptions will be the critical determinants of future Australia-Japan security cooperation, providing new opportunities for cooperation but also complicating the strategic choices for Canberra and Tokyo. There is a direct correlation between the amount of political space Australia and Japan can create for themselves within the alliance and their ability to advance a new, bilateral strategic agenda. A more independent Japan will enhance the prospect of an expanded security partnership with Australia that is greater than the sum of their alliance relationships with the US, positioning both countries to play a more constructive and influential role in the security affairs of the region.

Conclusion and policy recommendations

It is evident, from this analysis, that neither Japan's imperial past nor its post World War II pacifist consensus sheds much light on the country's future strategic direction. The unique circumstances that led Japan down the disastrous road to war in 1941 — emperor worship, a military dictatorship, strategic ambition and resource vulnerability — either no longer exist or have been ameliorated by Japan's largely successful experiment in parliamentary democracy and emergence as a major economic power and trading nation. To argue that the country will return to its militaristic past once the constraints of the peace constitution are lifted, like an alcoholic plied with whisky, misconstrues the nature of contemporary Japanese society and the forces driving strategic change.¹⁰⁶

Expectations of a continued aversion to all things military are equally misplaced. Historically, Japan has demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt to new threats and changes in its external environment. Nearly 60 years after the promulgation of the peace constitution and amidst growing anxieties over terrorism, North Korea's nuclear ambitions and the rise of a newly powerful China, it should come as no surprise that the government of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has taken a far more robust and internationalist approach to defence and foreign policy than its predecessors.

Five main conclusions can be drawn from this study of Japan's

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security policy. First, Tokyo is moving away from the embedded pacifism of the past half century towards what might be described as pragmatic realism, characterised by a greater willingness to use and deploy the SDF in support of Japan's national security and foreign policy objectives. Although this transition is evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, it is gathering momentum. If sustained, as seems likely, the result will be a transformed SDF better able to project force and defend the home islands against conventional military attack, even without the assistance of the US. The future SDF will also be more versatile than today, skilled in peace making as well as war fighting and equipped for the new, transnational challenges which confront the country in the form of terrorism, WMD proliferation and non-military security threats.

Second, underpinning this transition has been a major shift in public attitudes towards defence and national security. While there is still widespread opposition to the acquisition of nuclear weapons and continuing unease about the risk of being drawn into other nations' conflicts, the need for a modern defence force is now generally accepted and the SDF's involvement in peace keeping is no longer contentious. This trend is most evident among younger people who are unburdened by war guilt, more outward looking than their parents' generation and increasingly anxious about Japan's perceived vulnerabilities. One consequence of the steady decline in pacifist sentiment is that future Japanese governments will become progressively more willing to use force in defence of the national interest. However, a dramatic hardening of security policy is unlikely, barring a seminal event such as a direct attack from North Korea or a major terrorist strike resulting in substantial casualties or spectacular infrastructural damage.

Third, it is clear that the constitutional prohibitions against the use of force and collective self defence are eroding, although the extent of constitutional change and its strategic import are still difficult to fully discern. Many Japanese politicians, including within the ruling LDP, are change averse and the dampening effects of bureaucratic inertia in Japan can never be discounted in assessing the prospects for reform. But the decline of the Social Democratic Party and their

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allies on the political left has increased the probability that Article 9 of the constitution will be substantially rewritten to explicitly recognise the existence of the SDF and sanction its deployment, with allies and coalitions of the willing, in a wide range of contingencies. However, for the foreseeable future, these international contributions are likely to be limited to non-combat roles.

Fourth, despite residual fear of entrapment in US wars and frustration with Washington's penchant for unilateralism and military solutions, there is little prospect that Japan will abrogate the US alliance, pursue an autonomous security policy or 'go nuclear', in the near term at least. The alliance is still a major strategic asset for Japan and it is likely to become more so over time as China's power increases and North Korean adventurism remains a distinct possibility. Economically, Japan derives a substantial net benefit from its US partnership, equivalent to between one and two per cent of GDP, which is the extra spending on defence that would be required to replace the capability provided by US forces in Japan, excluding the considerable deterrent value of Washington's nuclear umbrella. Nevertheless, as defence cooperation intensifies, and Japan's military contribution grows, Tokyo will seek a greater voice on alliance issues and will be more prepared to lead when its core security interests are engaged, as they are in North Korea.

Finally, these changes will inevitably impact on the Asia Pacific balance of power in a number of important ways. A more assertive and militarily capable Japan will complicate the strategic equation in Northeast Asia, placing a premium on preventive diplomacy and conflict management particularly in disputes between China and Japan. Although the old adage that two tigers cannot live together peacefully on the same mountain no longer holds true in today's global village where tigers of all kinds co-exist to mutual benefit, amicable Sino-Japanese relations cannot be assumed. If Japan's strategic aspirations should prove too ambitious, or its security objectives are pursued aggressively without regard to regional sensitivities, then it will not only be China which reacts negatively.

Policy makers in Tokyo are keenly aware of these sensitivities and are unlikely to make a miscalculation of this magnitude due as much to

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domestic sensibilities as to regional constraints. Moreover, democratic Japan's established track record as a responsible member of the international community suggests that a more active and resolute Japan is not a reason for apprehension or condemnation. Nor should Japan be expected to abjure the right to collective self defence when that right is guaranteed to all states under the United Nation's charter.

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Policy recommendations

Recommendation 1

Australia should support Japan's decision to modernise its defence force and encourage Tokyo to play a more active role in maintaining regional security. At the same time we should make clear our opposition to Japan acquiring nuclear weapons or major power projection capabilities.

As a friend and one time adversary, Australia is uniquely placed to reassure Japan's nervous neighbours that there is a difference between normal and untrammelled nationalism. Tokyo's desire to pursue a more proactive security policy is not an unreasonable response to the more threatening and volatile security environment it faces. After nearly six decades of quasi-pacifism it is time for Japan to move beyond the ideals of the post World War II peace constitution and to participate, more fully, in building and sustaining regional order and combating the emerging threats to security. At the same time Australia should make clear its opposition to Japan acquiring nuclear weapons or major power projection capabilities such as long range bombers or conventional aircraft carriers as these would be inherently destabilising and ultimately antithetical to Japan's own security interests.

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Recommendation 2

Australia should urge Japan to clearly articulate the reasons for the shift in its security policy in order to alleviate the concerns of neighbouring states, particularly China, which doubts the benign nature of Japan's regional ambitions and military acquisitions.

A second objective is to ensure that Japanese leaders are cognisant of the need to clearly articulate the strategic rationale for their defence modernisation program and the constitutional changes in prospect to avoid any misperceptions about their intent and purpose. It is important for Japanese to understand that they still carry a great deal of historical baggage in Asia where memories of past Japanese militarism have not completely faded, as continuing Chinese and Korean resentment over visits to the Yasukuni war shrine attest. Australia can help sensitise Japan to the strategic concerns of its neighbours, especially China, by acting as a sounding board and confidant. One message that Australia should convey is that, while Tokyo is understandably anxious about China's naval ambitions and force deployments, these fears are mirrored in China.

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Recommendation 3

It is imperative that Australia and Japan develop a clear road map for future collaboration on defence and security in the form of an overarching framework agreement that would complement existing bilateral and multilateral arrangements.

Given the greater policy salience of international security issues for both Australia and Japan, steps should be taken to develop and implement a broad framework agreement on defence and security that provides a road map for future cooperation. This agreement should go beyond the Memorandum of Defence signed in 2003 and existing cooperation on terrorism and WMD proliferation to include piracy, drug trafficking, money laundering, infectious diseases and ocean governance. Care should be taken to clearly explain to other governments that this agreement would be in the long tradition of Australia's strategic cooperation with regional states and that it would complement and strengthen the existing web of bilateral and multilateral security arrangements.

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Recommendation 4

In addition to broadening and intensifying existing bilateral defence cooperation, greater attention should be given to joint responses and exchanges on the emerging non-military threats to security which are a growing source of regional instability.

More should be done to strengthen educational exchanges and Japanese language training, and to increase the number of military officers and defence officials at the respective staff colleges and higher level officer training establishments. The SDF could be given access to defence training facilities in Australia under comparable arrangements to those governing visiting defence forces from the US and Singapore. We should also work to identify niche areas for potential cooperation that are not resource intensive but are clearly beneficial to both sides in peace keeping and countering piracy and maritime terrorism.

The Japanese and Australian defence forces have both gained considerable experience since the early 1990s on peace keeping operations, working together in Cambodia and East Timor.¹⁰⁷ Establishing a well funded, joint training centre for peacekeepers in Japan, or Australia, and more frequent information exchanges and contact at the working level could reap significant rewards for both countries. The SDF and the Japanese Coast Guard are already involved in efforts to combat piracy in Southeast Asia. Australia could assist by providing intelligence and making ships available for counter piracy in conjunction with Southeast Asian navies. These ships could have a dual role, supporting operations to deter terrorism in the South China Sea and the Malacca Straits, which is the maritime cross-road of Southeast Asia and a major potential choke point for sea-borne trade between Japan, Europe and the Middle East. We still need to do more on counter terrorism, and Australia could benefit from Japan's experience in planning for attacks by terrorists using biological and chemical weapons.

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Recommendation 5

Australia should work with Japan and other interested states to help construct new security architecture for Northeast Asia based on an enlargement of the 6 Party Talks on North Korea.

At a time when China and Japan are both powerful states with growing military capabilities, strategic dialogue alone is unlikely to mitigate conflict and rising tensions between them without a supporting security architecture. Australia should use what influence it has to persuade Japan and China to develop a range of confidence building measures for Northeast Asia similar to those crafted by the ASEAN Regional Forum but specifically tailored for Northeast Asia. At the same time, Australia ought to encourage Japan to think creatively and positively about ways in which the 6 Party Talks could be expanded into a prototype security arrangement for the sub-region. An enlarged and institutionalised 6 Party Talks should help mollify China's concerns about the Trilateral Security Dialogue. Regardless, Australia would be wise to move slowly on the TSD initiative which should not be allowed to develop in a way which would intensify Beijing's fear that the real purpose of the TSD is to contain China.

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Recommendation 6

As core members of the US alliance, Australia and Japan should cooperate more closely in order to influence Washington's approach to Asian security issues and to develop a more collegial style of dialogue and exchange in alliance forums.

Often described as the northern and southern anchors of the US alliance in Asia, Australia and Japan both derive substantial strategic benefits from their close defence ties with the US but they have seldom used their influence to jointly shape Washington's policies in the region. Until recently, such collegiality would have been neither feasible nor desirable because of Japan's strategic passivity and the absence of meaningful security links with Australia. But times have changed. A more assertive Japan, particularly one that has greater clout with the US in the post-Iraq world, could usefully caucus regularly on security issues with Australia which, like Japan, has emerged from the Iraq imbroglio with burnished alliance credentials in Congress, and among Washington's policy elites. Closer policy coordination would provide Canberra and Tokyo with greater opportunities for leverage over the US and influence in the region.

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Recommendation 7

Establish an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to facilitate security cooperation by acting as a source of ideas and an informal channel for high level dialogue.

To help achieve this goal, there would be merit in establishing a small, eminent persons group (EPG) whose principal task would be to facilitate Australia–Japan security cooperation by generating new ideas and acting as an informal channel for high level dialogue. A group of senior and retired US and Japanese legislators was constituted for a similar purpose in the mid 1980s. This Legislator’s Committee reported directly to the US president and the Japanese prime minister and counted among its members two former Japanese prime ministers and Democratic Party presidential candidate, Senator Bill Bradley.¹⁰⁸ The EPG should meet annually, be comprised of no more than five members each from Australia and Japan, and be broadly representative of the respective political establishments and business and security communities.

Appendix

Memorandum on Defence Exchange between Japan Defense Agency and Department of Defence of Australia

The Japan Defense Agency (JDA) and the Department of Defence of Australia (DOD) (hereinafter referred to as both defence authorities) recognise that the Japan–Australia Creative Partnership, established at the Japan–Australia summit meeting in Canberra on 1 May 2002, will form the basis of a strategic plan for the development of the Australia–Japan defence exchange.

Based on this recognition, and noting that Australia and Japan have many common interests in the defence area, both defence authorities further recognise that the development of a good working relationship between both defence authorities will be instrumental in promoting mutual understanding and trust between the two countries, and in consolidating peace and stability in the Asia–Pacific region. Accordingly, to ensure the smooth advancement of a defence exchange, both defence authorities hereby express the following intentions.

1. Both defence authorities share the intention to implement the following joint defence activities, within legal and budgetary constraints of each country.
 - (a) High Level Exchange
 - (i) Hold reciprocal visits by the Minister of State for Defense of Japan and Defence Minister of Australia.

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- (ii) Hold high-level dialogue between the Administrative Vice Minister of the JDA and the Secretary of the DOD; between the Chairman of the Joint Staff Council of the Self Defense Force and the Chief of Defence Force of the Australian Defence Force (ADF); and between the Chiefs of Staff of the Ground, Maritime and Air Self-Defense Forces and their respective ADF counterparts.
- (b) Working Level Exchange
- (i) Regularly hold military-to-military consultations on security and defence matters at the director-general or deputy director-general level.
 - (ii) Hold a working level PKO dialogue on the occasion of the above MM consultations.
 - (iii) Regularly hold staff talks between the JDA Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) and the Australian Army.
 - (iv) Regularly hold staff talks between the JDA Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) and the Australian Army.
 - (v) Regularly hold staff talks between the JDA Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) and the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) or the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as relevant to a particular subject matter.
 - (vi) Regularly hold staff talks between the JDA Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) and the RAAF.
 - (vii) Participate in multilateral staff level consultations held by both defence authorities.
- (c) Unit-to-Unit Exchange
- (i) Propose to participate in exercises conducted by each defence authority (including observer participation).
 - (ii) Implement unit-to-unit exchange between GSDF of JDA and the Australian Army.
 - (iii) Implement friendship exercises on the occasion of mutual ship visits by the MSDF and the RAN.

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- (iv) Implement friendship programs on the occasion of mutual aircraft visits by the MSDF, ASDF and RAAF.
- (d) Other
- (i) Exchanges of students between educational institutions of both defence authorities.
 - (ii) Exchanges of representatives between educational and research institutions of both defence authorities.
 - (iii) Active participation in the Tokyo Defense Forum organised by the JDA.
 - (iv) Visit by the MSDF Icebreaker “Shirase” to Australian ports.
2. Cooperation measures between both defence authorities are not limited to those listed above. Both defence authorities will make efforts in exploring new areas of cooperation for promoting and deepening Japan-Australia defence exchange.
 3. Both defence authorities express their intention to ensure that the information acquired in the processes of their defence exchanges is administered appropriately, in line with their respective laws and fully taking into account the requests from the other side.
 4. Both defence authorities may review this Memorandum at any time and amend it by mutual consent in writing.

29 September 2003

Shigeru Ishiba
Minister of State for Defense
Japan

Robert Hill
Minister for Defence
The Commonwealth of Australia

Endnotes

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