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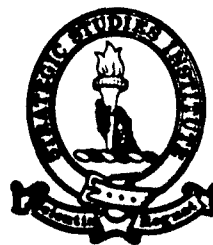
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**JAPAN'S SEARCH
FOR STRATEGIC VISION:
THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE**

Eugene Brown

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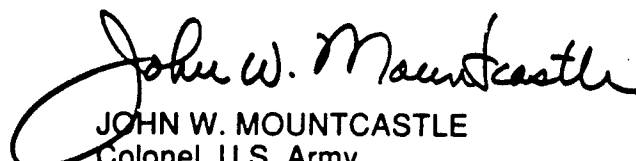
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FOREWORD

In this study the author examines recent efforts by Japan's foreign policymakers and opinion leaders to forge a coherent approach to the outside world. That debate has grown in intensity and significance as Japan has attained the status of economic superpower and now increasingly finds itself viewed as an incipient major power on political and security matters as well. In many ways unprepared for its new role of major power by its four decades as the junior partner of the United States during the cold war, Japan must now think and act beyond narrowly economic horizons and address the full array of political and security issues besetting the post-cold war world.

The author discusses the role of the Persian Gulf crisis in prompting a more thoughtful national reflection within Japan on its proper international role. He then focuses on the recent emergence of a split within Tokyo's foreign policy elite between those who argue that Japan's future lies with Asia, on the one hand, and those who stress the continued centrality of the bilateral link with the United States, on the other. He concludes by focusing on the security perceptions of Japanese officials and opinion leaders, paying particular attention to their insistence that any substantial reduction of current levels of forward-deployed U.S. forces in Japan would undermine the integrity of the 1960 bilateral security treaty, which in turn, they fear, would precipitate an outbreak of arms races, crises, and eventual conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region.

As the United States contemplates its force structure and deployment in the coming years, the author's analysis offers a timely and provocative warning of the possible destabilizing effects of large-scale reductions in forward-deployed U.S. forces based in Japan. The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to publish this report as part of the debate over future Japanese-American relations.


JOHN W. MOUNTCASTLE
Colonel, U.S. Army
Director, Strategic Studies Institute

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

EUGENE BROWN is Professor of Political Science at Lebanon Valley College in Annville, Pennsylvania. A former Army intelligence analyst in Japan and Vietnam, he received his Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Binghamton in 1982. From 1989-91 he was Visiting Professor of Foreign Policy at the U.S. Army War College. He is the author of *J. William Fulbright: Advice and Dissent* and coauthor, with Donald M. Snow, of the forthcoming *Puzzle Palaces and Foggy Bottoms: An Introduction to American Foreign and Defense Policymaking*. He has also written a number of papers, monographs, articles, and book chapters on Japanese foreign policy.

JAPAN'S SEARCH FOR STRATEGIC VISION: THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

Introduction.

Japan's dramatic postwar ascent as an economic superpower has not been accompanied by a comparable rise in its international political and strategic weight. This much-noted phenomenon has given rise in recent years to growing discussions among Japan's opinion leaders over what the nation's international role should be.¹ Similar in many ways to earlier American "Great Debates" just prior to World War II, at the outset of the cold war, and during the Vietnam War, Japan's recent public dialogues are symptomatic of a nation confronting momentous change in its international role and responsibilities.

Lending added urgency to the dialogue are two external forces which together challenge virtually the entire foundation of Japan's postwar international stance: the demise of the cold war and the perceived relative decline of the United States. Occurring separately, either phenomenon would trigger a broad rethinking of Japan's international posture. Occurring nearly simultaneously, they have called into question the core axioms that have guided Japanese foreign policy since 1945.

For four decades after its defeat and occupation in World War II, Japan's international position was circumscribed by its patron-client relationship with the United States. Shielded by the American security guarantee, inhibited by fears of revived militarism both at home and among its Asian neighbors, and obliged to defer to U.S. political and strategic leadership under the rigors of the cold war, successive Japanese leaders clung to the essential elements of the Yoshida Doctrine. Named after Shigeru Yoshida, Prime Minister on two occasions between 1946 and 1954, the strategy called for Japan to keep a low profile on contentious international issues and focus the nation's prodigious energies instead on economic pursuits. If

political and military engagement were equated with conflict, suffering, and humiliation, economic undertakings seemed to provide a legitimate and peaceful channel for Japanese talents. Postwar necessity thus became enshrined as national self-concept. For two generations of Japanese, foreign policy has been virtually synonymous with foreign economic policy.

If during the four decades of the cold war it had been generally sufficient for Japan to cooperate with the American-led effort to contain the Soviets and to otherwise maintain a determinedly apolitical low profile on divisive world issues, by 1990 it was apparent that the familiar fixed compass points from which Japanese diplomacy had taken its bearings were largely gone. The end of the cold war meant that the U.S.-Japan security relationship had lost much of its rationale. In some ways the centerpiece of the bilateral relationship, the security link had allowed Japan to avoid most of the cost of providing for its own security and had generally blunted the anxieties over revived Japanese militarism that pervade much of Asia as well as the broadly pacifist Japanese population. Now that familiar security arrangement would either have to develop a post-cold war rationale for its continued existence or would gradually atrophy into irrelevance, leaving perhaps the outward shell of formal agreement but a hollowed-out reality of declining U.S. force presence and diminished joint operational activity.

Added to the receding political and security verities of the cold war was the spectacle of a seemingly once-invincible America reeling under the weight of mounting domestic ills, including unmanageable budget deficits, overconsumption, underinvestment, declining educational standards, drugs, crime, the erosion of traditional values, and a dangerous decline in the public's confidence in its political leaders and institutions. To a hierarchically-minded Japan that had found much to admire about postwar America, the spectacle of its apparent decline was deeply unsettling. However exaggerated it may be in some quarters, the growing belief in Japan that the once-supreme United States was undergoing a steady erosion of strength and coherence lent added urgency to Japan's debate over its own international role.

The Impact of the Persian Gulf Crisis.

That debate, well along by 1990, was accelerated by the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990-91. Throughout the 7 months bounded by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, and the U.S.-led defeat of Iraq in February 1991, Japanese political and intellectual life was convulsed by an intense debate over the nation's appropriate role in the crisis. Left undisturbed by external crisis, Japan's broad rethinking of its global role would have proceeded at an exceedingly slow and deliberate pace due to two traits of Japanese society: the ingrained desire for broad consensus reached through comprehensive participation, and the traditional absence of commanding public leadership inclined to promote architectonic vision from the top down. However, the eruption of the Persian Gulf crisis found a Japan that was still in the early stages of consensus-building through its newly-begun national debate and without constitutional or statutory mechanisms for dispatching its uniformed personnel to foreign hot-spots.

Lacking an agreed concept of national purpose in the post-cold war environment and hampered by the exceptionally weak leadership of Prime Minister Kaifu,² Japan entered a 7-month ordeal of tepid measures, false starts, and arcane debate that did little to enhance its image as a major power. Kaifu began firmly enough, halting oil imports from Iraq and Kuwait and suspending all commercial relations with Iraq on August 5.³ In late August the government pledged that 100-200 medical personnel would be sent to the Gulf as the first step in a more comprehensive contribution.⁴ A week later \$1 billion was pledged to support the multinational coalition and front-line states, an amount raised to \$4 billion in late September.⁵

For Japan's leaders, opinion elites, and general public, matters would become much more complex and divisive as the nation tried to move beyond its competent initial measures and attempted to formulate a more robust presence in the U.S.-led coalition. At the end of September 1990 Kaifu unveiled his proposed U.N. Peace Cooperation Corps, a mechanism for Japanese personnel to participate in the coalition in noncombat

support roles. In succeeding weeks deliberations became mired in arcane disputes over the legal permissibility of including elements of the Self Defense Forces (SDF) in the proposed corps.⁶ Symptomatic of the debate were protracted discussions of whether overseas deployment of unarmed SDF would constitute merely the sending of personnel (*haken*) or the constitutionally-suspect dispatching of troops (*hahei*). By early November Kaifu was forced to withdraw the U.N. Peace Cooperation Bill in the face of certain Diet rejection.⁷ In late January 1991, with the war to liberate Kuwait well underway, the government pledged to secure Diet approval of an additional \$9 billion to the allied effort.⁸

Not until late April 1991, more than 2 months after the conclusion of the allied drive to expel Iraq from Kuwait, did Japan dispatch four minesweepers to the Persian Gulf. The dispatch was by this point largely of symbolic import, an effort by the Government of Japan to be perceived as an active participant in the international coalition and thus to avoid the potential international isolation and rejection that is a source of chronic Japanese anxiety.⁹

The government's handling of the issue was not an inspiring performance. Japan's conspicuous place on the sidelines prompted broad international criticism. "Where's the New 'Superpower'?" taunted *Newsweek* in its August 27, 1990 issue, expressing a widely-held sentiment. Largely unrecognized amid the apparent public relations debacle, however, was the fact that the Gulf Crisis intensified the broader national debate already underway on Japan's future international role. Competing paradigms advanced by Japan's opinion leaders were brought into sharp relief amid the Gulf debate. Japan's opinion leaders from the media, think tanks, business circles, universities, political parties, and legislative and bureaucratic elites advanced five competing schools of thought regarding Japan's role in the Gulf: the Minimalists, who urged Japanese autonomy from the United States and minimal participation in the U.S.-led effort; the Realists, who argued that the Gulf crisis required Japan to wield greater international clout due to the imperatives of the state system; the Moralists, who advocated a policy of activism grounded in ideological

precepts; the Utilitarians, who saw the crisis as an occasion for Japan to enhance its international stature; and the Bilateralists, who urged robust Japanese efforts to strengthen the key relationship with the United States.¹⁰

Japan's awkward efforts to craft an appropriate role for itself in the Persian Gulf crisis yielded two principal effects. First, the Gulf War greatly intensified Japan's broader debate over its proper international role. The vitality, richness, and thoughtfulness of the debate were readily apparent. Note that four of the five schools of thought called for Japan to accept substantially greater international burdens. Only one, the Minimalists, preferred a continued peripheral role for Japan. Given that opinion polls routinely reflect a mass public whose international views are unusually insular by world standards, it is not surprising that Japan's opinion leaders had only a modest short-term impact on national policymakers and the mass public.

Deeply rooted habits of mind, including those of ethnocentrism and an aversion to firm national stands on contentious international issues, present a challenging environment for the kind of sophisticated analyses and informed policy preferences advanced by most opinion leaders. Similarly, Japanese political leaders traditionally have paid relatively little attention to foreign policy issues, focusing instead on the personalist and pork-barrel character of factional politics within the Diet. Despite its intellectual merits, then, the vigorous foreign policy debate conducted by Japan's elites had little evident immediate effect during the Gulf crisis itself.

The second effect of the Gulf crisis for Japan has been a postwar effort to address some of the principal critiques and prescriptions so ably articulated by the opinion leaders' debate. Efforts are underway to remedy long-standing concerns about both Japan's foreign policy process and its much-criticized image as a check-writing conscientious objector in the maintenance of international order.

In the crisis' aftermath, there has been renewed interest in reforming and strengthening the foreign policy decision-making structure. The problem is two-pronged: an

overworked, understaffed foreign ministry and the absence of effective interagency mechanisms. Japan's foreign ministry is by far the smallest of any of the major industrialized nations. Its 4,300 officers contrasts sharply with, say, Britain's 8,200 or the U.S. State Department's 16,000 foreign service officers.¹¹ Japan's career diplomats are simply unable to keep pace with the mounting volume and complexity of their work. "The Ministry is in chaos," argues Nihon University's Motofumi Asai, himself a former career diplomat. He adds, "the officers are concerned with day-to-day routine, spending little time to collect and analyze intelligence, to engage in research and to work in long-term planning."¹² While some of the attention now being paid to bureaucratic deficiencies smacks of political scapegoating, the most likely result will be increased investment in the foreign ministry's budget and professional personnel.

The problem of interagency gridlock has long existed in Japan and was particularly apparent throughout the Gulf crisis. The National Security Council, composed of cabinet ministers and chaired by the prime minister, lacks the institutionalized staff expertise of its American counterpart and, in any case, was never convened until actual hostilities were underway in the Gulf. The Cabinet Secretary, Misoji Sakamoto at the time, is the prime minister's liaison with the individual ministries and is expected to facilitate interagency coordination, but his influence is only as strong as that of the prime minister he serves. The much-noted political frailties of Prime Minister Kaifu thus undercut Sakamoto's ability to forge interagency consensus on Japan's Gulf policy.

The government's weak performance has stimulated efforts to reform the overall foreign policy process. A government council on administrative reform has recommended a strengthening of the prime minister's interagency apparatus and the creation of a unified command center for crisis management.¹³

Beyond matters of process, Japan is rethinking its 45-year long aloofness from international peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts. The most tangible expression of that rethinking is the measure adopted by the Diet in June 1992 to

permit up to 2,000 members of the Self Defense Forces to be dispatched overseas for U.N.-sponsored peacekeeping operations. The September 9, 1991, agreement by the opposition Komeito and Democratic Socialist parties to back the ruling Liberal Democratic Party proposal ensured the eventual adoption of the measure in some form.¹⁴ The bill did indeed pass the House of Representatives on December 3, 1991.¹⁵ Later in the month, however, the interparty coalition dissolved in the House of Councillors, leaving the historic piece of legislation as well as the political future of newly-installed Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa shrouded in doubt. By the summer of 1992, however, Miyazawa's forces had regrouped to win passage of the Peacekeeping Operations Bill in the House of Councillors on June 9 and in the House of Representatives on June 16.¹⁶ Once the landmark measure was adopted, the Miyazawa government moved quickly—by Japanese standards—to deploy a 600-man contingent of the Self Defense Forces to participate in U.N. peacekeeping operations in Cambodia, the first overseas deployment of Japanese armed forces for purposes other than training since World War II.¹⁷

There can be little doubt that the growing consensus that "Japan must do more internationally" was solidified by the broad criticism directed at Japan for its aloof image in the Gulf crisis. Its \$13 billion contribution to aid states near the fighting made Japan the allies' fourth largest financial supporter, ranking behind only the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Its large contribution was financed with the help of a \$5 billion tax hike adopted by the government. Yet the hesitant, reactive character of its support and its refusal to send personnel to assist the multinational effort led to broad international criticism rather than praise of Japanese efforts.

Surely never before has a nation contributed so much and received so little credit in return. In March 1991 two events further clarified Japan's unpopularity among its allies. A *Washington Post* - ABC News poll showed that 30 percent of Americans said they had lost respect for Japan because of the Gulf crisis, while only 19 percent said their respect for Japan had increased. Then the Kuwaiti government published a

full-page ad in *The New York Times* to thank members of the U.N. coalition for restoring Kuwaiti sovereignty. Japan was conspicuously absent from the list of countries named in the ad.¹⁸

The first major crisis of the post-cold war era thus left Japan smarting over what it saw as the world's lack of understanding of its efforts. To a nation chronically anxious about what the rest of the world thinks of it, the experience was a singularly painful and bitter one. The Gulf crisis marked a major turning point in Japan's relations with the outside world. Its most immediate legacy was to intensify the debate among Japanese opinion leaders and policy elites over the nation's appropriate international role.

Regionalism Versus Bilateralism.

That debate has recently revolved around a broad reexamination of the fundamental orientation of Japanese foreign policy. Simply put, the debate centers on which axis is most crucial to Japan's future: the bilateral axis linking Japan in a global partnership with the United States or the regional axis linking Japan with the rest of Asia. The two paradigms are not, of course, mutually exclusive. It is axiomatic that both its trans-Pacific ties to the United States and its regional links with the rest of Asia will constitute Japan's principal external interests in the coming decades. It is also the case, however, that among Japanese opinion elites there is a competition under way over which of the two paradigms should lie at the heart of Japan's nascent effort to construct a coherent foreign policy strategy. We turn now to an examination of the core arguments being advanced by representative opinion leaders in the debate now under way.

The Regionalists. Japan's disastrous attempt at regional hegemony under the rubric of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere has cast a long shadow. As Yoichi Funabashi of the *Asahi Shimbun* has recently observed, "its failure created profound political and psychological inhibitions for Japan. Whenever Japan tried to assert itself and assume a regional leadership role, Asian leaders recalled its culpability

in the Second World War and repeatedly warned of its 'new ambition' and aspiration toward becoming a 'military giant' once again."¹⁹

However, recent strains in U.S.-Japan relations combined with the emergence of regional economic groupings in Europe and North America have stimulated a growing call for Japan to regard its regional role in Asia as its principal foreign policy focus. Among those advocating a policy of regionalism is Professor Tatsumi Okabe of Tokyo Metropolitan University. The author of a number of books on Asia, Professor Okabe argues that "the central task for Asia-Pacific cooperation is to carry out smoothly the adjustment of industrial structures, or the establishment of a division-of-labor structure, based on comparative superiority."²⁰ Though emphatically rejecting arrangements that would exclude non-Asian participation, it is clear that Okabe believes a regional structure "based on comparative superiority" would be a Japan-centric one.

Similarly, the influential business leader, Yotaro Kobayashi, has urged Japan's "re-Asianization." Asia, he argues, is Japan's natural "home." He has proposed that Japan explore the role of regional "co-chairman" with China.²¹ While advocating continued close ties with the United States, Kobayashi urges Japan to "foster close ties with the rest of Asia and be prepared to play a central role" in the region's affairs.²²

Echoing Kobayashi's themes is the commentator Naoki Tanaka, formerly chief of the economic forecasting section of the Research Institute of National Economy. Tanaka laments the fact that "since the end of World War II, Japan has not participated in any plan that would significantly alter the political map of Asia."²³ Insisting that there is a "need for Japan's active participation in building an Asian political and diplomatic order," Tanaka asserts that "we are starting to move far beyond the simple theme of 'whither Japanese money?'"²⁴ If economics provides the basis of Japan's stature in Asia, the very magnitude of its economic stature and interests require it to wield power in ways that transcend economic issues alone. "Japan's great economic potential for creating order leaves it no choice but to participate in building a political order" in the region, concludes Tanaka.²⁵

Calls for Japanese geopolitical strategy to focus on Asia seek to bring diplomatic practice into line with emergent economic reality. Recent years have seen an extraordinary surge in Japanese direct investment in the region, especially in Southeast Asia. Between 1988 and 1990, for example, Japan's direct investment in the six nations of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia totalled \$17.6 billion. In the same period, U.S. firms invested \$4.6 billion in the six countries.²⁶ 1990 marked the 14th consecutive year that Japanese companies invested more in the dynamic economies of Asia than U.S. companies did.

According to *Newsweek*, "over the last five years corporate Japan has poured \$26.8 billion into Asia's eight fastest-growing economies (compared with \$7.4 billion for the United States), while Japanese government overseas development assistance kicked in an additional \$10 billion."²⁷ It is little wonder that, as a Japanese diplomat posted in Southeast Asia put it, "Japan and Japanese companies view Asia as their sphere of influence."²⁸ Indeed, it would be surprising were it otherwise. According to David Sanger of *The New York Times*,

The most remarkable change wrought by the Japanese is what they have built over the last six years—at a cost of more than \$25 billion, three times what the United States has spent in the same period. Piece by piece, corporate Japan has created a startling replica of itself. ... As a result, a region that only 15 years ago was seen by the United States as on the brink of communism has instead embraced a decidedly capitalist model—but capitalism Japanese-style.²⁹

The stakes for Japan in this strategic focus are enormous. Sanger put it:

In their more candid moments, Japanese officials say that how they harness Asia's talent and energy in the next few years will determine whether, in the early part of the next century, Japan's economy overtakes that of the United States. For them, Asia is the critical cog in the machine, a cure for Japan's shortage of talented labor and inexpensive land, a way to free up Japan's resources for more profitable, research-oriented work at home.³⁰

Given the economic significance of Asia to Japan's strategic future, the question arises as to how Japan can best wield influence in the region. Three competing paradigms have recently been advanced and debated by Japan's opinion elites: Japan as Asia's voice in the councils of the Western industrial democracies; Japan as active participant in regional security arrangements; and, Japan as the hub of an Asian regional economic grouping.

Representative of the *first* strategic concept is Mr. Tadao Chino, the influential Finance Ministry's Vice Minister for International Financial Affairs. Upon assuming his new position in July 1991, he proclaimed a strategy of Japan using its position in the ranks of the G-7 nations to "draw the world's attention to Asia. ... Asia has more potential power than other areas."³¹ Declaring himself "pro-Asia," Chino declared that "it is Japan's role to raise Asian economic power, and the improvement of the Asian area is important for Japan and the world."³² In a similar vein, the daily *Nihon Keizai* editorialized in late 1991 that "Japan will push policy coordination between Asia and the U.S.—this is Japan's task in the Asia-Pacific region."³³ More recently, on the occasion of the visit to the U.S. by Prime Minister Miyazawa in the summer of 1992, the daily *Tokyo Shimbun* urged the Japanese leader to define his mission as principally one of helping "prevent the U.S. from falling into isolationism" and, specifically, of conveying to America's leaders the Asian perspective, including the broad agreement on the necessity of the United States remaining fully engaged in maintaining Asian security.³⁴

Yet, two aspects of the strategic concept which envisions Japan as Asia's spokesman in the councils of the industrial democracies remain problematic. First is the question of what values, precisely, Japan stands for which would define the character of its advocacy on behalf of other Asian nations. Two recent cases suggest that Japan's exertions on behalf of Asia amount to little more than pleas for business-as-usual stability unanchored in any transcendent ideals such as democracy or human rights. At the July 1990 Houston G-7 summit, for example, then-Prime Minister Kaifu won wide praise at home for his success in winning U.S. and European approval for

Japan's resumption of yen loans to China, less than a year after the Tiananmen Square massacre of young dissenters in Beijing. In doing so, Japan indeed "spoke up" for China to the powerful Western democracies, but it did so in the name of no principle other than seeking to avoid isolating the Communist giant and risking the instability that an angry and chastened China could provoke.³⁵ Similarly, the violent response of the Thai government to pro-democracy unrest in May 1992 was met by strikingly different responses in Japan, on the one hand, and among the Western democracies, on the other. As the daily newspaper *Sankei* noted, there was "once again ... a difference in the responses of various Western advanced nations as the U.S. and Europe, which view the problem from the standpoints of human rights and democracy, and the Japanese government, which places importance on political and economic stability."³⁶ Those who envision Japan as Asia's "voice" among the Western powers have thus not made it clear that it would be a voice articulating a purpose other than maintaining the status quo.

Secondly, it is not at all clear that the nations of Asia are enthusiastic over the prospect of Japan speaking on their behalf in G-7 and other Western forums.³⁷ A broad suspicion regarding Japan's ultimate intentions remains among its neighbors who retain memories of Japanese aggression of the 1930s and 1940s. Those memories continue to surface with regularity, as illustrated by the bitterness and resentment on the part of ordinary Chinese occasioned by Emperor Akihito's October 1992 visit to China.³⁸ Japan's uneasy relations with its neighbors was also illustrated by the collapse of the long-awaited visit to Tokyo of Russian President Boris Yeltsin in fall 1992.³⁹ At issue was the unresolved dispute over the small, southernmost islands in the Kurile chain north of Hokkaido, but beyond the immediate territorial dispute was yet another reminder of Japan's unpopularity among both its heavily-armed neighbors of China, Korea, and Russia—against all of whom Japan has waged war—and the developing nations of Southeast Asia, many of whom were victims of Japanese aggression.

The *second* regionalist paradigm focuses on the creation of an Asian security framework and the insistence that Japan find a way actively to participate in maintaining regional security. Advocates of this reasoning include Koji Kakizawa, a prominent member of the House of Representatives and current Parliamentary Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To Kakizawa, it is imperative that Japan "contribute to peace in Asia" by participating in "an Asian U.N peacekeeping force" made up of "military contingents of various Asian countries."⁴⁰

Two aspects of Kakizawa's proposal are noteworthy. First, though not explicitly calling for the abrogation of the U.S.-Japan security relationship, Kakizawa ignores it altogether, suggesting that it is largely irrelevant to the emphatically regional focus he advocates. "Modern weaponry makes membership in a collective security system essential to deter military aggression. This is vital for the security of Japan as well as for the sake of promoting peace and security in the region," he argues.⁴¹ Clearly, Kakizawa's worldview downgrades, if not eliminates altogether, the significance of the U.S.-Japan security link in promoting an Asian security framework with active Japanese participation.

Secondly, Kakizawa is not one to let the burdens of history block Japan's assuming a robust role in Asian security arrangements. "It is true," he writes, "that China and South Korea remain somewhat concerned about a Japanese military role." However, concludes Kakizawa, Japan should not "indulge too much in self-castigation over the past and in exaggerated self-restraint."⁴²

Echoing Kakizawa's essential theme is Tatsuro Kunugi, a former U.N official and currently a professor at International Christian University. Kunugi argues that "until very recently, all debates on what role Japan should play in Asia have been conducted largely within the framework of economics. However, in a world where economic strength is becoming increasingly politicalized, we have to consider the Japanese role also from the perspective of peace and security. Maybe we cannot avoid ... discussing the military aspect."⁴³ To Kunugi, Japan's growing influence in the region coincides with

"the gradual retrenchment of the U.S. military presence in Asia."⁴⁴ Kunugi, like Kakizawa, believes that Japan's military contribution to maintaining Asian regional stability will best occur through "participating fully in U.N. peacekeeping activities."⁴⁵

Japan's first, tentative steps towards providing leadership on regional security came during the July 1991 Kuala Lumpur meeting of the six ASEAN nations plus seven nations outside the region. Japan's Foreign Minister Nakayama proposed institutionalizing an annual forum on regional security matters at which ASEAN and other interested parties could exchange views on the region's security requirements. Innocuous though the proposal appeared to be, it met with a decidedly cool response from the ASEAN states. As the *Economist* put it, "he reckoned without the memories still alive in some of Japan's once-occupied territories. The idea of Japan seeking a greater security role in the region was enough to ring alarm bells all over the Pacific."⁴⁶ Similarly, the editors of the *Nihon Keizai* noted that even though "the Japanese government has repeatedly announced that it has no intention of becoming a military big power," it is understandable that ASEAN's "sense of guardedness against Japan's initiative is deep-rooted" due to Japan's past record of militarism and conquest.⁴⁷

More recently, Prime Minister Miyazawa has expressed support for the proposal advanced by Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating that the 15-members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum conduct regular summit meetings on regional political and security matters.⁴⁸ Miyazawa's announced willingness to participate in a multilateral security forum for Asia modeled on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is a sharp departure in Japan's declaratory policy. Prior to 1992, Japan's leaders had maintained that the geopolitical diversity of the Asia-Pacific region militated against the creation of a multilateral security architecture for the region. It remains to be seen if APEC—created in 1989 under Australian leadership as a forum for promoting regional economic integration—can be transformed into a viable political and security vehicle and, if so, to what extent Japan will participate and lead the grouping.

Certainly any unilateral attempt by Japan to play a larger role in the maintenance of Asian regional security will be strongly resisted for the foreseeable future. For Japan itself, such a role would entail the repudiation of the long-standing Fukuda Doctrine announced in Manila in August 1977 by Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda. According to the doctrine, Japan would never become a major military power; would promote constructive nonmilitary ties with the members of ASEAN; and, would act to promote cooperative relations between ASEAN and the nations of Communist Indochina.⁴⁹

A more robust independent Japanese military role would meet with even greater resistance in Northeast Asia. South Korea in particular retains an ill-concealed dislike and suspicion of Japan. Those suspicions are intensified by prospects of further retrenchment of U.S. forward-deployed forces in the Pacific. In October 1991, Korea's Ministry of Defense issued a White Paper which warned of Japan's growing military capabilities. More troubling than the forces themselves, said the report, was Japan's evident shift away from a narrowly defense-oriented posture.⁵⁰ Similarly, concern about Japan's role in regional security arrangements causes chronic anxiety among China's leaders and mass public.⁵¹

Given the broad resistance to overturning the Fukuda Doctrine that exists both within Japan and throughout much of Asia, a unilateral enhancement of Japan's regional military presence is most improbable. Should an expansion of its regional security role be undertaken at all, it will most likely occur through the modality of small peacekeeping forces deployed under U.N. auspices—along the lines of the 600-man SDF contingent dispatched to Cambodia in September 1992—as advocated by Mr. Koji Kakizawa of the House of Representatives. It is thus notable that upon returning home from an Asian trip in May 1992, former LDP Secretary General Ozawa reported that "Asia is not concerned about Japan's playing an active role within the framework of the U.N."⁵² The point seems to have escaped Toru Yano, Dean of the Center of Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, who wrote recently that the "dispatch of Self-Defense Forces personnel to Cambodia to join in the United Nations' peacekeeping

mission there boldly reflects unprecedented confidence that the formation of a new order in Southeast Asia should be done under Japan's initiative."⁵³ Surely Ozawa was right to conclude that Japan's participation in regional security matters is permissible precisely because it is limited in scope and occurs under the institutional imprimatur of the United Nations. Yano's conclusion that such a role indicates "Japan's initiative"—wrongheaded though it is—remains worth noting as symptomatic of an identifiable school of thought among contemporary Japanese opinion leaders regarding Japan's proper role in world affairs.

The *third* and final paradigm for an Asian-centric Japanese strategy envisions Japan as the hub of a regional economic grouping. Interestingly, debate on this issue among Japan's opinion leaders and policy elites has been framed by a call for an exclusive Asian economic bloc articulated by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir. Mahathir's proposed East Asian Economic Grouping (EAEG) would include the six nations of ASEAN plus Japan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Burma, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.⁵⁴

Although endorsed by some opinion leaders, including most notably Dietman Koji Kakizawa,⁵⁵ most Japanese commentators and policymakers have been notably skittish about the concept. As the editors of the *Nihon Keizai* put it, "Prime Minister Mahathir seemingly is trying to bring the 'North-South problem' into the Asia-Pacific region."⁵⁶ The observation is revealing, for it has been Japan that arguably has benefitted more than any other nation from the liberal international economic order embodied by GATT, an order that would be undermined by exclusionary economic blocs. Recognizing this, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been decidedly cool towards the Malaysian proposal⁵⁷ while the editors of Japan's leading business newspaper have openly worried that "if Japan's power of influence over Asia becomes stronger, there is the possibility that a newly formed North American bloc will increase its exclusive nature," thus calling into doubt the GATT vision of a liberal, open international order upon which Japan's postwar prosperity has depended.⁵⁸

It is certain that Japan's search for a strategic vision will continue to evaluate various calls by some opinion leaders for a greater regional focus whereby Japan would play a leadership role in the dynamic Asia-Pacific region. As the preceding discussion has shown, however, not only is the primacy of the Asia-centric paradigm in doubt among Japan's opinion elites, but there are severe obstacles—both conceptually and politically—that Japan's Asia-firsters have yet to address successfully regarding the implementation of such a strategy.

The Bilateralists. Opposed to advocates of an Asia-centric strategy for Japan are those opinion leaders and policy elites who emphasize the continued centrality of the bilateral relationship with the United States. To them, the American connection is the *sine qua non* of Japan's contemporary international position and from this axiom Japan's proper global strategy should be deduced.

Given the centrality of the United States to Japan for the past 45 years, it is scarcely surprising that many Japanese elites respond to specific foreign policy issues through the intellectual prism of the U.S.-Japan relationship. Interviews with numerous opinion leaders and policymakers in Tokyo in July 1990 and May-June 1992 underscored the importance that many opinion elites place on maintaining a sound partnership with the United States. This was true, for example, in media circles. Mr. Yoshio Murakami, foreign editor of the prestigious *Asahi Shimbun*, argued that most Japanese realize that there is much to lose if Japan-American relations break down: "they want to go with the winning horse," as he put it.⁵⁹ Similarly, Mr. Mikio Haruna, deputy editor on the foreign desk of the Kyodo News Service, believes it is essential to keep the U.S. militarily engaged in Asia, less to curb the Russians than as a "guarantor of regional stability."⁶⁰

A number of policy intellectuals voiced similar sentiments, including professors Nushi Yamamoto of Tokyo University, Tomohisa Sakanaka of Aoyama Gakuin University, and Shigekatsu Kondo of the National Institute for Defense Studies.⁶¹ All stressed the need to maintain and strengthen the bilateral tie, both in security and economic links.

Officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan Defense Agency echoed the sentiment. For example, Mr. Toshinori Shigeie, then Director of the National Security Affairs Division in the Foreign Ministry, stated emphatically that "the U.S. must stay in the Pacific. Nobody can replace it. Japan must educate its people and support the U.S. and the basic structure in Asia, whose main pillar is the U.S. presence."⁶² Shigeie's sentiments were seconded by Jiro Hagi, Counsellor of the Japan Defense Agency, who stated flatly that "the U.S. presence is indispensable for peace and stability in Asia."⁶³

Perhaps more than any other single opinion leader, it is Mr. Motoo Shiina who has stressed the centrality of the U.S. relationship longest and most consistently. For many years the LDP's acknowledged leader on security issues in the Diet, Mr. Shiina continues to promote his views as a private citizen. A central imperative for Japan, he argues, is to keep the United States engaged in the security of Asia, and to do that it "must help the U.S. feel comfortable staying in Japan."⁶⁴ In August 1990, Shiina urged a robust Japanese effort in the Gulf largely as a means of maintaining "the Japan-U.S. security structure."⁶⁵ Shiina added that "if public opinion in the U.S. were to view that the Soviet Union, which they had thought to be an enemy until now, did more to help, it will be considerably troublesome. Japan ought to do as much as it can."⁶⁶

Shiina's central premise was repeated in a November 1990 editorial in the daily *Nihon Keizai*, in which the paper's editors urged Japanese support of the U.S.-led effort out of fear that America might otherwise withdraw into isolationism.⁶⁷ From this premise of the criticality of America's continued engagement in the world and in Asian security especially, it follows that Japan must be closely attuned to American perceptions of Japanese cooperation. In August and again in November 1990, the daily *Sankei* reported on American "dissatisfaction with a Japan which does not bear risks"⁶⁸ and noted its fear that "Japan's awkward or belated measures toward the Middle East crisis" could lead to a breakdown in U.S.-Japan relations.⁶⁹ Sharing this anxiety over American opinion were Yukio Okamoto, then with the Foreign Ministry, who feared that American mistrust of Japan's policy reluctance

had created the most severe crisis in the bilateral relationship in years,⁷⁰ and Mr. Masashi Nishihara of the National Defense Academy, who told reporters that "if I were an American, I would see Japan as not reliable as a friend."⁷¹

From these premises, it follows—according to adherents of the bilateralist paradigm—that Japan's responses to international crises must be framed with the requirements of the United States clearly in mind. Writing in the prestigious foreign affairs magazine, *Gaiko Forum*, Foreign Ministry official Shigeo Takenaka framed the issue this way: "the policy which Japan ought to take must be a policy which will foster sound U.S. internationalism. It must be a policy which will give self-confidence to the American people that the United States can manage with internationalism, because there is the cooperation of Japan and other countries, even at a time like the present when the United States has fallen into financial difficulties."⁷²

In a similar vein, former Ambassador to the United States Nuburo Matsunaga has argued that in the post-cold war world marked by uncertainty and instability, it is more imperative than ever that the United States remain fully engaged in global affairs as an honest broker and a force for stability, democracy, and international economic openness. His call for Japan to do more to "share international responsibility" is explicitly linked to his fear that unless Japan does so, "the isolationist trend in the USA" will grow and bring with it a dangerous new degree of international uncertainty.⁷³ Likewise, the editors of *Sankei* fretted about the apparent inward shift of American sentiment.⁷⁴

As noted earlier, Japan's reactive and much-criticized response to the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990-91 stimulated a broad rethinking of Japan's international role among policymakers and opinion elites. An extensive round of interviews conducted in Tokyo in May and June 1992, with senior officials in the foreign ministry and the defense community, legislators, journalists, and leading policy intellectuals, vividly underscored the extent to which that broad rethinking of national purpose has led Japan's most influential officials and opinion molders to embrace, more ardently than

ever before, the bilateral tie with the United States and to insist that Japan's policy must be one of persuading America to remain fully engaged in maintaining security in Asia, in general, and to continue its robust security, political, and economic interdependence with Japan.

It is apparent that Japanese foreign policy elites proceed from a notably more sophisticated analysis of international relations as a result of the post-Gulf War introspection. A new degree of realism is evident, as is notably more systematic thinking and sober analysis of Japan's dependence on regional stability and potential threats to that stability. Throughout Tokyo's foreign policy community there is a pervasive belief that the post-cold war environment in Asia is not necessarily a more secure one. Turmoil in the former Soviet Union; possible instability on the Korean peninsula after the death of Kim Il Sung; the issue of North Korea's nuclear and missile development efforts; China's growing power-projection capability, especially at sea; the potential for political instability after the passing of Deng Xiaoping; and the prospects of greater arms proliferation in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union—these are the common anxieties that pervade Japan's foreign policy community.

The common view in Tokyo that the demise of the cold war means a less stable security environment in Asia has led to a *greater* emphasis than ever before on the centrality of the U.S.-Japan security relationship. Repeatedly, one hears among Japanese elites—and with a sense of urgency that cannot be detected in open source published accounts—that from Tokyo's perspective, above all else the U.S.-Japan security relationship must be maintained. Alongside this heightened significance attached to the American connection is a palpable anxiety among many of Japan's foreign policymakers and opinion elites that the loss of its security link with the United States would leave Japan an international orphan, disliked, distrusted, and vulnerable to the predatory ambitions of its heavily-armed neighbors. The blunt assertion of a senior diplomat that "no country in Asia would want to deal with a Japan that was severed from the U.S." illustrates this sentiment.⁷⁵

Japan's bilateralists are challenged by two patterns that have recently become acute: concern over whether the United States will be able to restore the domestic health needed for its global leadership, and alarm over the evident deterioration of affection and goodwill between the United States and Japan. As to the former, a 1991 study of U.S.-Japan relations commissioned by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and conducted by the International Institute for Global Peace (sometimes referred to as the "Nakasone Institute" after its founder, former Prime Minister Nakasone) concluded that

it is apparent that the U.S. economy is not recovering and its capacity to manage its foreign strategy is declining—for example, its inability to bear the full costs of the Gulf War. The American people and policymakers seem to refuse to acknowledge the country's decline and need for improvement. ... If the entire U.S. political system is not reformed, the illogical, inefficient budget procedure is likely to continue.⁷⁶

The unusually harsh words bore the stamp of the study's principal author, noted Tokyo University political scientist Seizaburo Sato. On another occasion, Sato told an interviewer that

there have always been ups and downs in the image of the United States in Japan. But there is a growing concern in Japan over the decline of American work ethics, moral principles, the quality of American products. Most Japanese realize that the world needs a strong, healthy, and economically dynamic United States. So all these trends are a source of concern.⁷⁷

Doubts about America's capacity to get its domestic house in order have pervaded in the Japanese media. For example, the editors of both the *Sankei* and the *Tokyo Shimbun* have expressed the widespread alarm about America's precipitous decline and pessimism about its ability to restore its former strength, a strength which most Japanese policy elites consider to be a necessary pillar of the kind of stable world order which they believe is manifestly in Japan's interest.⁷⁸

Mr. Naohiro Amaya, a former MITI senior official who now heads the Dentsu Research Institute, voiced the blunt conclusion that America "has lost its footing" and looks upon

Japan as a convenient scapegoat for its own ills. In nearly the same breath, however, Amaya insists that U.S.-Japan cooperation is necessary to design the post-cold war world. Similarly, the *Mainichi's* editors worry that talk of a Japan-U.S. global partnership will be rendered meaningless unless the United States successfully tackles the "illness of its own country's economy."⁷⁹

The growing perception of a United States that has lost its economic vitality was captured vividly in public comments by two of Japan's principal leaders. In January 1992 Yoshio Sakurauchi, the Speaker of Japan's House of Representatives, asserted that America's economic problems are rooted in the fact that, as he put it, "U.S. workers are too lazy. They want high pay without working."⁸⁰ A powerful member of the LDP who has a long record of dealing with the United States, Mr. Sakurauchi's comments appeared to reflect both Japanese frustration at being blamed for America's economic problems and a genuine alarm that the pillar of postwar stability could crumble if it did not address its eroding industrial capabilities.

Less than two weeks later, no less a figure than Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa weighed in with the remark that America "may lack a work ethic."⁸¹ Miyazawa, an ardent advocate of a Japanese-American global partnership, voiced the concerns of many of his fellow bilateralists that a crippled, self-indulgent United States will be unable to uphold its pillar in Japan's strategic vision of bilateralism.

A second source of concern for Japan's bilateralists is the apparent decline in respect and affection between the two nations. Numerous opinion polls reflect the hardening attitudes on both sides. For example, a survey of American opinion conducted in late 1990 showed that 60 percent polled consider that Japan's economic might will be a "critical threat" to the "vital interests of the U.S. over the next ten years."⁸² A *Nihon Keizai* poll conducted in both the United States and Japan found that solid majorities in each country identified the other as the most important to its future, but that while 61 percent of Japanese "appreciate" America's role in the world, only 31 percent of Americans felt the same way about Japan. Interestingly, Japanese appeared to be much more pessimistic

about the future of the bilateral tie, with only 10 percent believing that the two countries' relations will improve compared to 35 percent of Americans who expected to see the relationship get better.⁸³

Perhaps Japanese pessimism arises from the findings of a *Mainichi Shimbun* poll which showed that over half of Japanese both regard American "Japan bashing" as unreasonable and expect it to get worse in the future.⁸⁴ Despite their disappointment at what they perceive as unreasonable American pressure on Japan, a resounding 69 percent of Japanese respondents believed that the Japan-U.S. alliance should be maintained as is, as against only 13 percent who wished to see it "weakened further."⁸⁵

Americans may be startled to learn that resentment of U.S. criticisms of Japan has triggered a wave of counter-criticism of the United States. Best captured by the word "*kenbei*," a broadly critical Japanese dislike of the United States has surfaced in poll after poll.⁸⁶ Yet there is little to suggest that today's freely-expressed mutual frustration need presage a breakdown in the bilateral relationship. For example, while a poll conducted in the fall of 1991 by the *Yomiuri* found that more Japanese (24 percent) identified the United States as a potential security threat than any other country named, it remains the case that the United States also ranked number one as a "country which can be relied upon" (56 percent).⁸⁷

Japan's bilateralists believe that the nation's well-being is bound up with its economic, security, and political ties with the United States. It is perhaps inevitable that an affluent, self-confident Japan will find itself frequently at odds with the wounded colossus which defeated it in World War II, occupied and reformed it along American lines, and for the past four decades has served as its mentor and protector in a remarkably successful relationship. Transforming what Richard Holbrooke has recently termed "the unequal partnership" into a genuine global partnership of peers will surely be a complex and difficult process for both sides.⁸⁸ Japan's bilateralists are betting that the transition can successfully be made.

Conclusions and Recommendations.

The central question of Japan's contemporary strategic debate—should priority be given to the regional affairs of Asia or to the bilateral partnership with the United States?—is symptomatic of a nation seeking to define its international role in the post-cold war environment. It will continue to generate broad debate and reflection among Japanese opinion leaders and policy elites. How this fundamental issue is ultimately resolved will be of immense significance for Japan, for Asia, for the United States, and for the emerging post-cold war international system. In 1993, however, two conclusions are apparent. First, those advocating an Asian-centric Japanese orientation are clearly losing ground to policymakers and opinion leaders who ardently reaffirm the centrality of the bilateral link with the United States.⁸⁹ It is true that since the latter often view the American connection as a necessary precondition to Japan being trusted by the other nations of Asia, their "pro-American" stance does not rule out a greater political and security role by Japan within the Asia-Pacific region.⁹⁰ This leads to the second conclusion, which is that the prime concern of Japan's bilateralists is their anxiety about the U.S. will and capability to maintain the health and vigor of the robust U.S.-Japan security link *at its present level*. Stated differently, since it self-evidently matters a great deal to the United States whether the regionalist or the bilateralist paradigm eventually crystallizes as the core of a new consensus undergirding Japan's strategy, it is significant to note that America's own actions in the years immediately ahead will do much to resolve this fundamental debate among Japan's elites.

Numerous Japanese policy elites voice the concern that while the United States may continue the formal commitments institutionalized in the 1960 security treaty, its mounting domestic requirements will erode public and congressional support for continuing to maintain forward-deployed U.S. forces at or near current levels. It is striking to what extent Japanese policy elites equate the continuation of robust levels of forward-deployed U.S. forces in Japan with the very integrity of the treaty itself and hence, with the maintenance of a stable

political, economic, and military environment in the Asian-Pacific region. For example, Seizaburo Sato, arguably Japan's leading foreign policy intellectual and a consultant to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asserted bluntly that "you can leave the Philippines, you can eventually leave Korea, but you must not remove your forces from Japan."⁹¹ Similarly, Professors Shigekatsu Kondo and Shinichi Ogawa of the National Institute for Defense Study (NIDS, Japan's equivalent to the National War College) both insist that any reduction of forward-deployed U.S. forces would have dire consequences. Dr. Kondo argues that "U.S. withdrawal would be read as a signal that the United States is declining and collapsing and it would trigger arms races throughout Asia."⁹² Dr. Ogawa draws an even darker conclusion. "U.S. forces are symbolic of the treaty," he argues. "Their withdrawal would raise the question of the credibility of the U.S. commitment. ... If the United States reduces its security commitment in Japan, conflict among Russia, China, Korea, and Japan is inevitable."⁹³

In the face of these dark fears about the Asian security environment if the United States proceeds with substantial reductions in its forward-deployed forces in Japan, it is little wonder that Japanese policy elites have also contemplated the unwanted steps that Japan would be forced to take if the U.S. drawdown continues. In the words of Mr. Toshi Ozawa, the Director of the National Security Affairs Division in the Foreign Ministry, any substantial reduction in U.S. forward presence "would force us to rethink our force structure."⁹⁴ Unless the meaning of such a "rethinking" be lost, the influential Seizaburo Sato stresses that "we [Japan] could build a nuclear bomb within six months."⁹⁵

Clearly, no one believes that security in the Asian-Pacific region will be enhanced by actions that could lead to these kinds of worst-case scenarios of arms races among the leading Asian powers, the eventual outbreak of major Pacific war, and a nuclear-armed Japan de-linked from its stabilizing relationship with the United States. Given the pervasive conviction among Japan's policymaking and opinion elites that maintaining forward-deployed U.S. armed forces at or very near their current levels in Japan is the single most important

variable in determining the region's security environment, it follows that U.S. military leaders, DoD, State Department, NSC officials, and congressional leaders must approach the issue with the utmost caution and thoughtfulness. In light of Japan's generous host-nation support for U.S. forces; the currently very high level of Japanese anxiety regarding the dependability of America's security commitment should further substantial reductions in forward-deployed U.S. forces occur; and, the absence of a regional security architecture for Asia and the Pacific and the presence of a number of heavily-armed nations with lingering historical antagonisms among them, any financial savings that may be realized by reducing U.S. air, land, and sea forces stationed in Japan might well entail a much higher price in the form of region-wide arms races, crises, and, eventually, conflicts.

The current climate of peace, economic growth, and progressive democratization enjoyed by the Asia-Pacific region is in many ways the hard-won fruit of a half-century of American efforts to defeat imperial expansion, contain communism, and promote political and economic liberalization. It would be an irreparable tragedy if the remarkable successes of U.S. Asian policy over the past 50 years were placed in jeopardy in the name of relatively meager budgetary savings acquired through substantial reductions in forward-deployed forces in America's most important global partner.

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