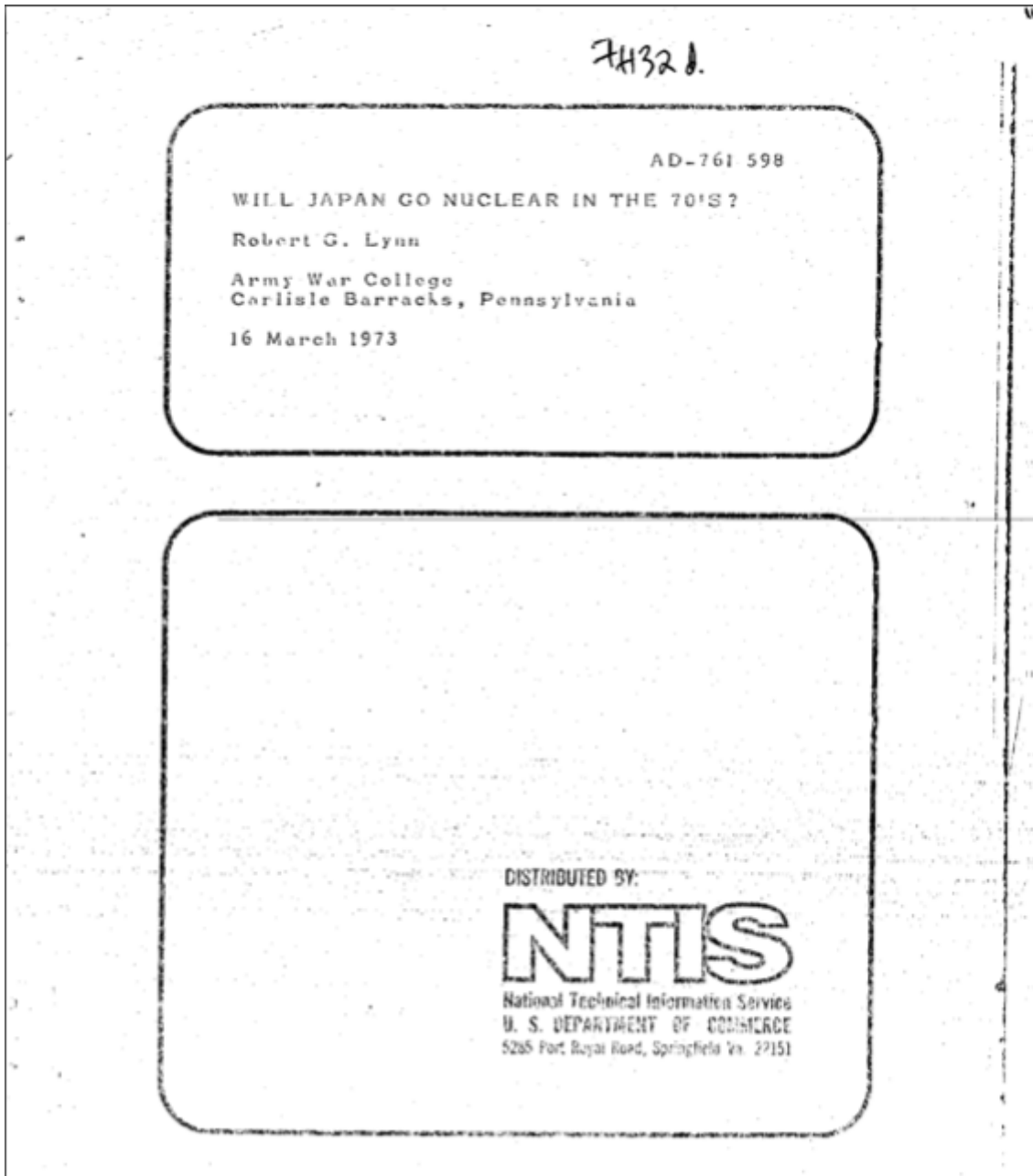


Will Japan Go Nuclear in the 70's?



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Despite the excellent relations enjoyed between Japan and the United States in the years following World War II, during which the U.S. was heavily involved in the security and economic development of Japan, the relationship between the two allies began to cool considerably during the 1970s as Japanese public and political confidence in the U.S. declined in the face of U.S. redefinitions of its interests in Asia, as well as events including President Nixon's overtures to China with a sudden visit to Peking in 1971. With Japan surrounded by Communist threats from China and the Soviet Union, as well as the Nixon Doctrine's (sometimes called Guam Doctrine after the location where he delivered the speech) espousal for countries to bear a greater share of the burden for their own defense, the Japanese public and government began to question its almost complete reliance on U.S. conventional forces and nuclear weapons for their nation's security. Some may see historical parallels between Nixon's overtures of rapprochement to China during his visit to Peking while simultaneously committed to Japan's defense and America's current attempts at preserving regional peace by trying to assuage Japanese security concerns while also seeking to avoid taking sides against China. Such a comparison comes at a time of rising nationalism within both China and Japan amidst heightened tensions due to China's November 2013 unilateral declaration of the East China Sea ADIZ. In short, the stakes are once again high as the U.S. is withdrawing combat forces from a distant location and allies are left wondering where they stand in relation to U.S. core interests.

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the issues and reasons that the author believes are driving Japan toward the acquisition of nuclear weapons. The paper compares Japan's military, political and economic problems with the known incentives for a nation to become a nuclear power. Specifically, an assessment is made of Japan's security issues as they relate to the world environment at the time, the resurgence of nationalism and concern for world prestige, and the benefits of nuclear technology in addressing Japan's legitimate security needs, spurring scientific innovation to help stimulate economic growth. While the times may have changed, basic geography has not changed nor have basic Japanese security perceptions. The factors and elements raised by this War College monograph remain relevant today.

Lynn writes:

"The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security is not a major political issue in Japan, but the treaty is not popular because the Japanese do not like the idea that their security is almost completely dependent on the United States." [page 10]

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