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Prologue

Two events within a few months of each other in 2007 symbolize the fluctuating and unstable political dynamics of Japanese re-militarization. The first was the prime minister’s speech welcoming the replacement of the Defence Agency by a full Ministry of Defence. The second was that same prime minister’s resignation over an inability to fulfil a promised military commitment to the United States as a result of a decline in the ruling party’s electoral fortunes.

In a ceremony on January 9th 2007 to mark the upgrading of the Japan Defence Agency to the Ministry of Defence, then Prime Minister Abe Shinzo called the passage of the enabling legislation

"a landmark event that marks the end of the post-war regime and will lay the groundwork for building a new state."¹

Even allowing for the need for political leaders to push their own barrows – modesty is usually not part of the job description - Mr. Abe’s remarks about the rather prosaic act of establishing a new government department might seem to be rather grand claims for a bureaucratic reorganization and expansion. But Mr. Abe was entirely serious, and there can be no doubt that both critics and supporters understood exactly why he was making these claims. Like his immediate predecessor Koizumi Shinichiro, and unlike most of their predecessors, Mr. Abe belongs to the nationalist stream of foreign policy. The key words in Mr. Abe’s remarks for what has been until recently a minority position in the Japanese political elite were “the postwar regime” and “a new state”.

For these representatives of the hitherto lesser nationalist stream of conservative politicians, the postwar period is not just a label for a portion of historical time, and notably a period when most people think that Japan has achieved a great deal, but rather a “regime” marked by shame, a description of Japanese society far too long subject to foreign – i.e. American – influence, if not control.

Most importantly, for the new nationalists of Japan, the postwar state was a fully sovereign state in name only. The Japanese state was and is in the eyes – and words - of many nationalists an emasculated state – a state whose source of full sovereign power was cut-off by the United States in the Occupation period, and which needs to be restored to full potency. Accordingly, Mr. Abe and his fellow-thinkers saw the replacement of the bureaucratic infant of the Defence Agency by a strong and virile Ministry of Defence as the first serious step towards regaining potency by building a new state.

As he made this landmark speech, Mr. Abe was accompanied by his new Minister of Defence, Kyuma Fumio, and, in by the even more significant figure in the Japanese political system of the Administrative Vice-minister of Defence, Moriya Takemasa, widely known as the “Emperor of Defence.

In less than a year, all three were gone, one mocked for political incompetence, and two in disgrace. Mr. Abe resigned from the premiership in September 2007 after failing in his promise to the US to extend Japanese naval support for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.² In July Mr. Abe’s first Defence Minister, Kyuma Fumio, resigned in disgrace after proclaiming the bombing of Hiroshima an historical necessity³. In November Moriya Takemasa was arrested over personal involvement in massive procurement scandals.⁴

Mr Abe’s resignation was closely tied to one of the few occasions defence policy intruded into serious parliamentary politics. In mid-2007, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party coalition in Japan unexpectedly lost control of the Upper House of the Diet following the July 29 election. Completely unexpectedly, Ozawa Ichiro, leader of the main opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan, used the opposition’s newfound parliamentary power to provoke a crisis in Japan’s enthusiastic involvement in the American-led Global War on Terror, and hence in the core of the country’s security system, the alliance with the United States. In a classic act of parliamentary brinkmanship, the DJP under Ozawa refused to pass legislation enabling the long-planned extension of Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force destroyers and supply ships deployed in the Indian Ocean in support of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁵

Again, completely unexpectedly, Prime Minister Abe resigned, citing ill-health, having publicly promised the United States he would ensure the smooth running of Japan’s alliance contribution to the mid-east wars. After much manoeuvring with the opposition, in January 2008 the new LDP prime minister, Fukuda Yasuo, used the LDP’s lower house majority to ram through a new Replenishment Support Special Measures Law to renew the MSDF Indian Ocean mission, but not before an enforced Japanese withdrawal for several months, and the end of American hopes to recruit Japanese combat forces for the ground and air war in Afghanistan.⁶

The half year between the two events encapsulated many of the contradictory elements of Japan’s recent shifts in security policy: increasingly militarised foreign policy, rising nationalism, ambivalence about alliance, heightened sense of threat, and structural instability at the heart of the political system. This chapter briefly explores four elements of the background to these shifts: the culture of Article 9 of the constitution, the constant factor of the US alliance, shifting Japanese anxieties and threat perceptions, and a nationalist and realist shift in security goals. Together these elements have driven the process of remilitarisation of the country over the past two decades.

The culture of Article 9

The inescapable background of any discussion of security policy in Japan is Article 9 of the 1946 Constitution:

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.

Even though it was drafted by the American occupation authorities, for more than 60 years the great majority of the Japanese public have accepted - and indeed embraced - Article 9. On the other hand, virtually all Japanese and US governments opposed it with varying degrees of candour. While moves to revise the Constitution, including Article 9, have gathered serious political momentum, the importance of Article 9 is finally not legal. Despite the clear intent, Japan has a large and powerful armed force.

The power of Article 9 is symbolic and cultural rather than legal: it stands for and invokes a deep and widely-held belief that the militarism of the 1930s and 1940s must be repudiated and never allowed to return. Much of what would be normal levels of defence preparation and activity in other advanced industrial democracies are considered to be unacceptable and potentially dangerous levels of militarisation by large parts of the Japanese population - including many supporters of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party.

There is a culture of Article 9 that has dominated Japanese public discussion of security until recently. Often this culture is labelled “pacifist” from outside Japan, though this is a misnomer. It is not so much a matter of deeply-held principles of rejecting state violence in any form, so much as a deep and abiding scepticism about the final utility of military force and about the ability of governments and publics to control the tendency to excessive use of force inherent in “normal militarisation”.

The culture of Article 9 is visible in almost every aspect of security policy in Japan. It has resulted in many of the restrictions on the activities and powers of the SDF that so clearly differentiated it from its counterparts in Europe and North America - not least in its name. There are dysfunctional aspects of Japanese politics that can be traced to Article 9 culture, as well as many that are admirable and not to be lightly discarded.

For those coming from outside Japan, one of the most striking characteristics of the country is the invisibility of the military. Many Japanese people are unaware of the fact that their country has an army under another name. Uniforms are rarely seen in Tokyo away from the Ichigaya Defence Agency headquarters. The special case of Okinawa apart, in most parts of the country uniformed SDF personnel are little seen away from bases. Even though there are about a quarter of a million Japanese in the military, SDF personnel report experiencing a strong sense of an “SDF allergy”. For substantial parts of the population, the armed forces of the country are not just unconstitutional, but deeply illegitimate.

Over half a century, successive Japanese governments have both expressed this culture as a framework for policy, and at the same time opposed and sought to transform it. Heisei militarisation is the story of Japanese political elites finding the political space - especially after the end of the Cold War and the 9/11 attacks - to roll back and transform the culture of Article 9.

Heisei militarisation

Japanese governments over the past decade and a half have transformed the country's security policy along almost every dimension. This transformation is properly speaking a process of militarisation - an ever-increasing stress on military conceptions of security at the expense of previously well-developed comprehensive conceptions of security.⁷

This process of militarisation includes: a continual and growing government-sponsored hollowing-out of the meaning of Article 9 of the Constitution and of the concept of "defensive defence"; military budgets that put Japan in the top four world military spenders; comprehensive upgrading and expansion of military forces' structural capacities; legitimisation and legalisation of use of military force abroad; a willingness to rely on military solutions to address international problems; and expansion of the domestic coercive powers of the government. There is also a growing promotion of the possibility of the Japanese military acquiring and using strategic offensive weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

For at least four decades after the end of World War II in 1945, Japanese conservative governments largely declined to bow to consistent American pressure to remilitarise. From about the end of the Cold War period, this began to change. In 1989, Japan marked the end of the reign of the Showa emperor (1925-89), usually referred to in the West as Hirohito, and the accession of his son Akihito, with the reign name of Heisei.

If the second half of the Showa emperor's reign was a period of peace and relative foreign policy minimalism, the first part of his reign remains known in Japan as the period of Showa militarism, sometimes called the Dark Valley. The new policy of militarisation can be called Heisei militarisation, to distinguish it both from the militarism of the first half of Showa, and from the militarily quiescent policies of the second half of Showa. Heisei militarisation in democratic Japan is very different from the military dictatorships and expansionism of the 1930s. But it also marks an important and far-reaching shift in the 1990s and 2000s.

For many years, rightist and nationalist politicians and activists promoted the goal of Japan becoming, in the words of the politician Ozawa Ichiro, 'a normal state'. By this, they mostly meant throwing off what they saw as the constraints on the Japanese polity imposed by the American occupation. In external relations, they campaigned for Japan to free itself of legal, political and cultural restrictions on the use of force in international society. The most important symbols of that lack of "normality" were Article 9 of the 1946 Constitution, the name and cultural standing of the "Self Defence Forces", and legal and political limitations on the operations of the SDF abroad.

These goals have now either been achieved or are within reach: “Japan as a normal country” is a phrase that has entered the mainstream of Japanese politics. The goals make it clear that whatever else Heisei militarisation is, it does not in itself add up to the return to militarist fascism so often predicted by some foreign governments unwilling to let the memory of World War Two die. But equally, this kind of “normality” brings its own problems.

By definition that status of “normal,” for an economic giant in the most militarised region of a highly militarised world, is a militarised state with the capacity and willingness to consider the use of force to settle its international disputes. Japan is moving to that kind of normality, which under such conditions carries high risks, risks that the Japanese polity may not be well-equipped to deal with. More importantly, it may be proceeding with confidence into a future role rather different from the one it foresees.

The US-Japan alliance and the Japanese security system

The two cores of the Japanese security system are the Japan Self Defence Forces (SDF) and Japan Defence Agency (JDA), along with the substantial American military forces based in the country.

The SDF, composed of the Ground, Maritime and Air Self Defence Forces, is to all intents and purposes a high-technology army, navy and air force under another name. Until recently, legislation, political preference and strong cultural resistance from the Japanese public limited its role. As a result, while large and well-equipped, the SDF was limited in real-world military capacity, and in fact was even limited in the assistance it could give civilian authorities at times of natural disaster at home. Since the end of the Cold War, however, all three branches of the SDF have been reshaped to closely resemble their counterparts in Britain and France and other advanced industrial countries.

Complementing the Japanese domestic forces are more than 37,000 US military personnel stationed throughout Japan across more than 89 US bases, plus 14,000 afloat nearby. US Forces Japan, headquartered at Yokota Air Base in Tokyo, are part of the wider network of US air, land and sea forces under the Hawaii-based Pacific Command, whose area of responsibility ranges from the west coast of the continental United States all the way to the Indian Ocean.

The Japan-US Mutual Security Treaty provides the legal and political framework that binds the two forces together through a complex institutional and operational set of arrangements. The treaty is the legal heart of an bilateral institutional system that has evolved over half a century. In fact, it is becoming more tightly integrated than ever at the same time as the SDF develops into more potent and effective military force capable of advancing Japan’s national interests abroad.

Following the Korean War, US forces in Japan reached their high-water mark at 247,000. In 2005, US Forces Japan numbered 51,655, including about 14,000 afloat, with by far the largest portion of those on land being Marines and Air Force personnel. US Navy personnel are located all over the country, but especially at Yokosuka south of Yokohama, Sasebo near Nagasaki and White Beach in Okinawa, as well as at naval air facilities in Okinawa and Honshu. Air Force personnel are similarly scattered from Kadena Air Base in Okinawa to Yokota up to Misawa in the north of Honshu. While the Marines are numerically important (and proportionally more disturbing), in the long run they are less important than Navy, Air Force and intelligence deployments, and are starting to be moved offshore to the US territory of Guam.

In 2007, the United States operated 89 military bases in Japan, ranging throughout the country, from north to south, small to large, inescapably prominent and intrusive to small and almost unnoticed.

Four particular burdens have strained the alliance, and continue to do so: the legal status of US forces in Japan; the immense pressure of the US military presence on the island of Okinawa; the level of financial support provided by the Japanese government for the maintenance of US forces in Japan under the heading of “burden sharing”; and the ambiguities of the promise of US extended nuclear deterrence for Japan - the “nuclear umbrella”.

Any foreign basing operation contains inevitable possibilities for legal friction with host countries in the event of criminal and inappropriate behaviour by foreign troops. In the Japanese case, as elsewhere, these are managed by a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the two governments. However, the difficulty has been that even after a number of SOFA revisions at Japanese instigation following public outrage, there is still legal and institutional resistance by the US military to following the SOFA procedures.

The United States military seem to find it hard to accept the more equal relationship on the ground with their alliance partners implied by the revisions of SOFA in Okinawa in particular. More than three decades after the reversion of the Okinawa islands to Japanese control, Okinawa still hosts more US personnel than any of the country’s other prefectures. One-fourth of the main island of Okinawa is made up of US military bases.

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Even though the United States has worked closely with the national government to develop a plan to shift the Futenma facility and reduce the overall burden on Okinawa, the issue remains largely unchanged. US global shifts in deployment are removing some forces from Japan, but at the same time bringing in new elements. The US will move 8,000 Marines and their 9,000 dependents from Okinawa to Guam by 2014. On the other

hand, some carrier-based Marine aviation units are being moved onshore to stations on the main islands. Even with the departure of much of the Marine contingent, the problem of Okinawa will remain.

One major irritant to alliance relationships is what the United States calls “host nation support”. In Japan this is generally known in Japanese as the “sympathy budget”, a term coined by the Liberal Democratic Party senior politician responsible for its introduction in 1978, Kanemaru Shin, in an attempt to assuage Japanese public resentment over US pressures for allied “burden sharing”. Since about 1995, Japanese host nation support has levelled out at about 230 billion yen a year, and according to US military sources, pays for about half of the costs of US Forces in Japan. If and when US forces are moved out of Japan to lower the physical and social burden on Okinawa in particular, Japan pays the lion’s share of the moving costs. According to the US Embassy in Tokyo, Japan will provide 60% of the US\$10.3 billion cost of moving 8,000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam.

Yet the key issue is not so much the absolute cost to Japanese taxpayers, or even the question as to whether the deployment of US forces in Japan is primarily for the defence of Japan or rather simply a part of US global power projection. Japanese commentators of different political stripes display the core ambivalence to the alliance that underlies the whole discussion when they point to the fact that when it comes to demands for burden sharing the United States appears to treat Japan differently from most of its other allies, especially those in Europe. In 2001, for example, Japan paid 75% of the costs of stationing US forces on its soil, compared to Germany which paid only 21% of the same costs. Even South Korea, the other East Asian bilateral alliance partner, paid only 39% of US costs. Why, these commentators ask, should Japan pay at a rate more than three times that of Germany?

For Japan, nothing epitomises the ambiguity of the alliance so much as the American promise of nuclear deterrence.⁸ Originally formulated in the Cold War against the Soviet threat, in particular, successive American administrations have made clear – to both Japan’s potential antagonists and to the Japanese public - that they would mount a nuclear retaliation to a nuclear attack on Japan. In the aftermath of the October 2006 North Korean nuclear test, American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice assured the governments of Japan and Korea that the United States had ‘the will and capability to meet the full range of its deterrent and security commitments’ – diplomatic code for the promise to meet nuclear threat with nuclear threat.⁹

Extended deterrence is a difficult strategic act, dependent on the side making the promise of deterrence convincing the would-be aggressor about its willingness and ability to act. But there is a second question of whether or not the country that is sheltering under the nuclear umbrella is itself convinced of the strength of resolve of the umbrella holder. Perceptions, as well as actions, are critical. The strategic logic of extended deterrence has been the subject of much debate, and is a genuinely complex matter, depending on the forces on each side, the political attitudes, and the effectiveness of communication in particular circumstances.

It is not surprising that there has always been fundamental doubt about the issue, especially as the logic of the three-part scenario of attack on Japan, retaliation on the enemy, and the enemy's second strike on a US target is played out. This is best summed up in the often-asked question: 'Would the United States really be willing to accept the sacrifice of Los Angeles as the result of its willingness to avenge a nuclear attack on Tokyo?'

Despite the continuous balance of government opinion in favour of close ties with the United States through the treaty system, the tensions inherent in that system persisted, as they do today. A core problem is its bilateral and, more importantly, hierarchical character. A comparison with the relationship with Germany makes this clear: the US has had to deal with Germany as an equal and crucial member of the most important multilateral alliance in the world, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato). While there is a clear inequality of power in both cases, the hierarchical character of the US-Japan bilateral relationship is evident in institutional arrangements, the economics of the alliance, and even the tone of language used by US officials. This is much resented by ruling party nationalists in Japan.

A more threatening world

Clearly shifts in the global and regional strategic situation have increased the Japanese sense of threat, and diminished feelings of security. Globally, the 9/11 attacks and those in Europe and Bali, together with the American-led response in Afghanistan and then in Iraq, all affected Japan deeply. The eruption of Islamist violence targeting foreigners in Southeast Asia amplified this sense of threat, and brought it closer to home to a region Japan knows well. Moreover, Japan has had its own experience with non-state terror and indiscriminate use of weapons of mass destruction in the Aum Shinrikyo Tokyo subway sarin attack in March 1995.

In East Asia, Japanese insecurity derived from three main sources. The multifaceted North Korean crisis has had the most direct effect on the Japanese strategic debate in three stages. First came the August-1998 launch of the three-stage Taepodong missile. This was followed by the admission by North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in September 2002 that under his father's leadership two decades before the country had abducted 13 Japanese citizens. The third stage was the North Korean missile tests of July 2006 and nuclear test on 9 October.

Relations with China have steadily deteriorated in recent years, despite closer economic ties and moves towards greater levels of economic integration. Tensions have derived from three main sources. The failure of the two countries to effect reconciliation 60 years after the end of the China-Japan War, is visible in the conflicts over Japanese leaders' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and Japanese government-approved history textbooks. Both sides, but especially China, have used the demonisation of the other to gain domestic political advantage. And the ongoing conflict over maritime boundaries, island territories and resources rights in the East China Sea, which should have been relatively easy to

resolve, has been managed poorly by both sides and allowed to smoulder and occasionally flare up quite dangerously.

The third East Asian contribution to Japanese insecurity came in relations with South Korea, which had been progressing well after former President Kim Dae-jung had loosened legal restrictions on access of Japanese movies and manga in Korea. Despite Kim's efforts to encourage South Koreans to move beyond the wounds of the colonial period, as with China, the Yasukuni and textbook issues ensured the wounds remained open, particularly with the more nationalist - though leftist - administration of President Roh Moo-hyun.

Japan has border disputes with all of its neighbours: the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands dispute with China (and Taiwan), the southern Kurils/Northern Territories dispute with Russia (with whom there is still no peace treaty after six decades), and the Tokdo/Takeshima dispute with South Korea. The Tokdo/Takeshima dispute flared at the same time as the textbook and Yasukuni issue, and overlapped with an otherwise fairly readily soluble dispute about fishing resources.

For many Japanese, even if they did not support Prime Minister Koizumi's casually provocative invocation of nationalist symbols during his six years in office, there was an accumulating sense of unease, of trouble with every neighbour, in a world where terror, nuclear proliferation and energy insecurity seemed, rightly or wrongly to be coalescing into a more diffuse and powerful threat.

Shifting defence policy

The centre of gravity of defence and foreign-policy debate in Japan has undoubtedly shifted in the direction of nationalism and great power realism. One cause of this tendency is the diversification and intensification of a sense of threat. But another is a spread of doubt about the continuing validity of key assumptions of the Yoshida doctrine: Is it still true to say that Japan has no important international interests distinct from those of the United States?

Defence policy through this period has been guided by a number of different formulations. The Basic Policy for National Defence adopted in 1957 set very general aims for effective defence and collaboration with the United States.

Four goals still at least nominally retained from that approach are: an "exclusively defensive defence"; not becoming a military power; following the three non-nuclear principles; and a firm policy of civilian control. All four goals were, at least in part, aimed at assuaging the doubts of a population that by and large took the wording of Article 9 of the Constitution at face value. They were of course also aimed at neighbouring countries with even stronger doubts and longer memories.¹⁰

Security policy formulations today invoke the Basic Policy, but no longer much talk about exclusively defensive defence, and at least two of the other basic aims - the

avoidance of becoming a military power and the adherence to the three non-nuclear principles - are somewhat less certain outcomes than in the past.

The 2005 National Defence Policy Outline aimed to set the framework for security planning for the following decade and beyond. It pushed well beyond the “exclusively defensive defence” concept to a language of basic defence needs in response to threats - regional and global - including the spread of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism. This emphasis on a response to threats in the regional neighbourhood, as opposed to a “threat insensitive” perimeter defence of the country was a shift to what some Japanese analysts talk of as a “proportional defence policy”, where the SDF response is in some measure at least proportional to the claimed threat.

New military initiatives

The 2005 National Defence Policy Outline announced a need to respond to new types of threats such as ballistic-missile attacks, guerrilla or special operations attacks, and invasion of outlying islands. It also required the development of heightened capacity to contribute to the international security environment through participation in multilateral operations overseas. In many respects, this decision formalised developments that had been underway for a number of years in a range of new military initiatives. Two of these initiatives illustrate these shifts and their difficulties: long-term overseas deployments in Iraq and the Indian Ocean and theatre missile defence.

Long-term overseas deployments

Under the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law passed after the 9/11 attacks, MSDF destroyers and refuelling supply ships have been continually on-station in the Indian Ocean since November 2001, apart from a brief hiatus in late 2007. In December 2002, after considerable controversy inside the ruling party and cabinet, Aegis air defence system-equipped Kongo-class destroyers were included among the escort vessels, ostensibly to meet the air-defence needs of the supply ships. The supply ships have done prodigious service for the multinational naval force in and passing through the Indian Ocean, although by late 2006 action had slowed, and the rate of refuelling had dropped to only 10% of the peak rate.¹¹

Following the passage of the Iraq Reconstruction Special Measures Law in 2003, the Koizumi cabinet dispatched ground, air and maritime forces to the Iraq theatre. More than 600 GSDF personnel were deployed to a “non-combat zone” in southern Iraq to assist with reconstruction in the southern city of Samawah, capital of that country’s Al-Muthanna province. The GSDF troops engaged in reconstruction activities were protected by a comparable number of Australian Defence Force troops. Ten rotations of GSDF troops took part in the Samawah operation until the Koizumi cabinet decided in mid-2006 to not extend the deployment.

The JDA and SDF not only gained a great deal of experience in multilateral operations from the Iraq and Indian Ocean deployments, but also learned a great deal about the

practicalities of power projection. Until these operations, most discussion about power projection in Japan had centred on the need to avoid offensive capacities under existing government interpretations of Article 9. Accordingly there were no long-range bombers or long-range missiles or large landing craft. But in Iraq and the Indian Ocean, the SDF learned a great deal more about what is actually needed to deploy substantial numbers over long periods far from home bases. Perhaps more importantly still, while most of the Japanese public was opposed to the Iraq deployment, there was little effective opposition, loosening one more brick in the wall of Article 9 culture.

Missile defence

Current global missile-defence programs are a response to the proliferation of ballistic missiles, both with conventional warheads and nuclear warheads. The basic idea of missile defence is that with a suitable early warning of launch of an enemy missile it will be possible to launch an interceptor missile from land or sea and physically hit and destroy the enemy missile. The United States is deploying a National Missile Defence (NMD) system. A number of US allied countries, including Japan, are deploying theatre missile-defence systems, as well as assisting in with the US NMD program by hosting elements of the system such as radar facilities.

A formal decision to support joint research for a Theatre Missile Defence system was taken by the Hashimoto administration in 1998 in the immediate aftermath of the launching of the North Korean Taepodong missile. Between 2007 and 2011, the Japanese government will deploy four MSDF Aegis-equipped destroyers with Standard-3 missiles to attack enemy missiles in the outer atmosphere, and six ASDF high-altitude air defence units equipped with Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missiles to attack those that reach the lower atmosphere.

In 2006, the US Navy also deployed the Aegis cruiser USS Shiloh to the joint naval base at Yokosuka, as well as deploying Aegis ships in a fixed operational zone off Hokkaido in the Sea of Japan to carry out test surveillance and tracking of North Korean missile launches.¹² These American deployments are as much part of the US NMD system as they are directly involved in the defence of Japan, as is the deployment of a transportable X-band radar system to the ASDF base at Shariki in northern Honshu – the two systems are in fact technologically inseparable.

The Japanese missile-defence program involves many serious uncertainties and difficulties. The first of these is cost, which is somewhat open-ended. The initial announcement put the cost of spending in FY3/05 for the upper- and lower-tier systems alone at 100 billion yen, but these figures were almost immediately abandoned. The JDA initially estimated overall costs at 500 billion yen, then doubled, and then expected to be at least double again. The US informed Japan that the cost of the Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) under joint development would be triple that of 2003 estimates.

The second set of difficulties concerns the long-term political consequences of the missile-defence decision. In order to locate an incoming missile in flight in a very short time, the SPY-1D radar at the heart of the upper-tier Aegis sea-based system will need to

be cued in real-time as to the fact of the launch and the missile's general trajectory. Once the relevant small box of lower space or the upper atmosphere is correctly and rapidly specified, the Aegis system has a much higher chance of precisely determining the interceptor missile's trajectory and destroying the enemy missile. Without such cueing, chances of success are much lower. The only source of such cueing is the still-evolving suite of ground- and satellite-based radar and infrared surveillance systems planned for the US National Missile Defence System. Consequently, the nature of the technology involved means that the Japanese system is dependent on its connection to that of the United States for any chance of success.

There are two political problems here, one minor and one of great consequence. Firstly, the technological integration renders the missile-defence system a matter of collective defence, at present regarded as unconstitutional by the interpretation of the government's Cabinet Legislation Bureau (CLB). According to the CLB, "the Japanese government nevertheless takes the view that the exercise of the right of self-defence as authorized under Article IX of the Constitution is confined to the minimum necessary level for the defence of the country. The government believes that the exercise of the right of collective self-defence exceeds that limit and is not, therefore, permissible under the Constitution."¹³ Missile defence, which may involve the defence of the US as much as Japan, is held to violate that proscription. In fact, the constitution does not prohibit collective defence explicitly, and both legal specialists and the US government have on occasion indicated that Japanese administrations can readily change the interpretation, but have chosen not to for political reasons. It is likely this situation will change in the near future.

But the nature of the technology carries more serious political implications. Not only does it leave Japan dependent on US technological support in time of crisis, but equally, it implicates Japan in the activities of US missile defence systems in relation to Japan's regional neighbours. Like it or not, Japanese technological dependence on the US for its missile-defence system's viability reinforces the perception by China that a Japanese system and an American system are not separate entities. As far as China is concerned the combined systems have a potential - at least in the future if not yet - to nullify China's small strategic ICBM nuclear deterrent force.

China is also concerned about the mobile character of the Japanese sea-based missile-defence capacity, especially given its linkage to the US system. While the protection of Japan and US bases in Japan are undoubtedly the key objectives, clearly MSDF Aegis destroyers could be moved south to assist in the defence of Taiwan. Japan has no formal defence ties with Taiwan, and deep and growing economic links with China. Yet the studied ambiguity of Japanese interpretations of the area to which its treaty obligations with the United States apply has not eased Chinese threat perceptions.

The technology of Japanese missile defence then becomes a source of longterm structural antagonism between Japan and China, which can only be obviated by abandoning the technology. A more likely consequence is that China will exercise its

long-held options to hasten and deepen its strategic nuclear-modernisation program, and set off a regional strategic arms race.

Conclusion

Japan is proceeding towards full normalisation, moving closer to throwing off all the externally and self-imposed restraints which for half a century produced a gap between its economic status as the world's second-largest national economy and its restricted status in global security activities. In the existing world system, normalisation of this kind necessarily means militarisation, and that is precisely what Japan has undertaken, a process accelerated, but not caused, by the demands of the current US administration. All of the political, legal and military-technical processes of Heisei militarisation that have developed within the US alliance also greatly increase the basis of an autonomous foreign and security policy beyond that alliance.

The chances of Japan soon becoming involved in further militarisation on the basis of meeting its own perceived security needs, irrespective of the consequences of further demands from the US empire, are now very high, as with all such normal states, especially when they are economic superpowers. Like France and Britain, this will very likely involve Japan in military interventions abroad - to protect its citizens and crucial economic interests. The Malacca Straits, Japan's lifeline to the Middle East, Aceh at the top of the straits on whose gas refinery is part owned by the city of Osaka and the Philippines where Japanese businessmen have been kidnapped for ransom come to mind as possibilities under certain circumstances. None of this could happen without the agreement of the "host" countries, and this would be no easy development. Yet if Indonesia and the Philippines fail to join the solidly developing democracies of Southeast Asia and move back to their militarised pasts, scenarios for intervention by a democratic Japan are conceivable.

A new breed of great power realists and nationalists in Japan, and many outside are applauding and encouraging this historic shift in Japanese security policy. Nationalists of different stripes feel that half a century of semi-sovereign status is ending, and a new era of national glory is beginning. Realists worried about a defenceless and dysfunctional Japan in an increasingly threatening world take heart from Japan moving into the international mainstream with the capacity to defend its interests and match its economic power with political muscle. Foreign supporters of the new muscular turn see new opportunities for alliance, collaboration, and strategic balancing of China.

Many outside Japan misread the depth of commitment to what we have labelled Article 9 culture or regard it as a rather difficult to explain international oddity that no sensible person would take seriously. The dispatch of GSDF forces to Iraq was rightly seen as a turning point. One of the dominant figures of Japanese conservatism in the 1980s and 1990s, former Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiromu Nonaka, responded by commenting on what he felt to be an ominous quality of the almost daily release of new military-related

policies and initiatives, and criticized what he called Prime Minister Koizumi's "politics of dread":

This recent business of '[abandoning] the three principles of arms exports,' or again, '[s]end the SDF overseas to guard our embassies,' it's the same tempo as in the time when the war broke out, when one incredible story after another came tumbling out.

The people, Nonaka said, are 'drunk on these words':

Isn't this just like 1941? While I don't think anything like war is about to break out, what I'm really becoming afraid of is that it is like that same feeling of a portent that Japan is again taking a mistaken path.¹⁴

Old men, perhaps yesterday's men, Nonaka and a number of eminent conservatives with long records of government service were warning of dangers that lie in the path so confidently recommended by the newly dominant realists and nationalists. One source of their anxiety was the enthusiastic association with the American crusade in Iraq, from which Prime Minister Koizumi pulled back before the inevitable crash. But Nonaka was hinting at another set of difficulties – not an inevitable return to militarism as many suggest, but rather some internal limitation in the capacity of the Japanese democratic political system to steady itself and make prudent choices in the faces of the siren calls of a muscular foreign policy.

Political scientists, noting that all existing democracies fall well short of their own ideals, would note that Japan has a particular set of democratic deficits that will impair the ability of the Japanese public to act as an effective restraint on a democratically elected government with a taste for international adventure. There has only been one substantive change of government party since 1948. There is no effective and coherent parliamentary opposition.

Elected politicians and ministers have incomparably less actual power than descriptions of their legal authority imply. Japanese democracy is characterised by a lack of policy transmission belts from the community level to national party level and into the national policy arena. The judiciary has not been notable for its fierce independence from government, especially at the higher levels. The post-war extra-parliamentary opposition founded on strong trade-unions and a community-based peace movement has dissolved, but has yet to be replaced by a nationally coherent new structure. These are not problems unique to Japan, and in time may well be ameliorated. But in the meantime, Nonaka's warning should be taken seriously.

¹ "Abe Calls Launch Of Defense Ministry Basis For Building 'New State'", *NikkeiNet*, 2007-01-09 <http://www.nni.nikkei.co.jp/AC/TNKS/Search/Nni20070109DA9J1092.htm>

² "What led Shinzo Abe to resign?" Chris Hogg, *BBC News*, 12 September 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6991545.stm>

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- ³ “Japanese Defense Minister Resigns”, Heda Bayron, *Voice of America*, 3 July 2007. <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2007-07/2007-07-03-voa5.cfm?CFID=274110384&CFTOKEN=10829267>
- ⁴ “Japan defence ministry raided in bribery scandal”, Justin McCurry, *The Guardian*, 29 November 2007. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/nov/29/japan.justinmccurry>>
- ⁵ See Gavan McCormack, *Japan's Afghan Expedition, Japan and the World* (Iwanami), 5 November 2001 < <http://www.iwanami.co.jp/jpworld/text/Afghanexpedition01.html>>; and Richard Tanter, "Japan's Indian Ocean Naval Deployment: Blue water militarization in a 'normal country'", (March 21, 2006), *Japan Focus*, 549. <http://japanfocus.org/products/details/1700>; and “The End of Alliance “Business as Usual”? Ozawa’s Rejection of Japan’s Indian Ocean Deployment, *Japan Focus*, 899, August 12, 2007.
- ⁶ *Statement by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda On Enactment of the Replenishment Support Special Measures Law*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 January 2008. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/fukuda/state0801.html>
- ⁷ The concept of Heisei militarisation is discussed at greater length in Richard Tanter, 'With Eyes Wide Shut: Japan, Heisei Militarization and the Bush Doctrine' in Melvin Gurtov and Peter Van Ness (eds.), *Confronting the Bush Doctrine: Critical Views from the Asia-Pacific*, (New York: Routledge, 2005). See also Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan Rising: the Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, (PublicAffairs Books, 2007) and Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of Northeast Asia*, Cornell University Press, 2007.
- ⁸ The most interesting Japanese work on extended nuclear deterrence is that of Jimbo Ken. In English, see, for example, his "Rethinking Japanese Security: New Concepts in Deterrence and Defense", Benjamin Self and Jeff Thompson eds., *Japan's Nuclear Option: Security, Policy and Option for 21st Century*, Henry A. Stimson Center, 2003. See also Morton H. Halperin, *The Nuclear Dimension of the U.S.-Japan Alliance*, Nautilus Institute, July 1999.
- ⁹ “Japan's Aso urges atomic debate”, BBC News, 18 October 2006. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6061620.stm>>
- ¹⁰ On the development of security policy see Tanter, “Eyes”, *op.cit.*, and Pyle, *op.cit.* and Samuels *op.cit.*; and also the annual government White Paper accounts in *The Defense of Japan*, Ministry of Defense. http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/index.html.
- ¹¹ Differences in the debate over the extension of the MSDF Indian Ocean mission were deepened in September 2007, when the peace researcher Umebayashi Hiromichi documented the transfer of fuel from the MSDF contingent to US tankers which in turn refuelled US Navy warships on station in the Persian Gulf. “MSDF fuel was used in Iraq war, group charges”, Reiji Yoshida, *Japan Times*, 21 September 2007. <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20070921a2.html>>
- ¹² For details see Umebayashi Hiromichi, “Missile Defence Response to the July 5, 2006 North Korean Missile Test by US Naval Vessels Home-Ported at Yokosuka”, *NAPSNet Special Report 07-054A*, 24 July 2007 (English translation by Richard Tanter) < <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/07054Umebayashi.pdf>>; and Umebayashi Hiromichi, “US Navy Set Missile Defence Operations Area in the Sea of Japan 190 Kilometres West of Okushiri: Japan as a Base for the Defense of the US Homeland”, *NAPSNet Special Report 06-42A* May 30th, 2006 (English translation by Richard Tanter). < <http://www.nautilus.org/napsnet/sr/2006/0642Umebayashi.pdf>>
- ¹³ See Richard J. Samuels, “Politics, Security Policy, and Japan’s Cabinet Legislation Bureau: Who Elected These Guys, Anyway?” *JPRI Working Paper No. 99* (March 2004). <http://www.jpri.org/publications/workingpapers/wp99.html>
- ¹⁴ "Nonaka Hiromu talks about 'Dangerous Japan'" (Japanese), *Asahi Web News*, 29 January 2004, <http://webnews.asahi.co.jp/you/special/2004/>.