

## Japan and the United States: The Essential Alliance

On November 9, 2001, three ships from the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Forces (MSDF)—the fuel supply ship *Hamana* and the escort ships *Kurama* and *Kirisame*—left Sasebo pier for the Indian Ocean. Two weeks later, two additional vessels, the *Sawagiri* and the *Towada*, left their home ports for the same destination. The five vessels became part of a multinational contingent of U.S.-allied warships in Operation Enduring Freedom. The departure of the ships marked Japan's first wartime dispatch of naval vessels for operations abroad since the end of the war in the Pacific in 1945. On January 29, 2002, the *Towada* supplied fuel to a British warship, marking the first Euro-Japanese cooperative defense action of the post-World War II era.

The twenty-first century presents a dizzying array of challenges for the U.S.-Japan alliance. Rather than a simple global bipolar struggle occasionally interrupted by the movements and plots of a few independent actors, today's world is a complex patchwork of large and small independent states, varied economic interests, and religious and ethnic divisions. These diverse forces demand the attention of the world's sole remaining superpower and its allies.

Even though Japan and the United States share a global agenda, the security alliance between the two nations focuses on the Far East. In terms of threats to peace and stability in the area, the main potential concern is an emerging and enigmatic China. China, however, is only one of a constellation of concerns that may pose a threat to the current political, economic, and military order.

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## The Nature of the Alliance

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**November 2001**  
marked Japan's first  
wartime dispatch of  
naval vessels abroad  
since 1945.

The alliance between Japan and the United States represents the primary bilateral security relationship for both governments. For the United States, the alliance anchors U.S. power projection in the region surrounded by the Indian and western Pacific Oceans. Bilateral ties with other Pacific nations such as the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Australia, though significant, are national in character, not hemispheric. Neither involves the permanent stationing of U.S. naval fighting forces within the country. Japan hosts the only U.S. carrier battle group homeported outside the United States as well as a complete amphibious attack group, including a full Marine Expeditionary Force. Of the 19 U.S. Navy ships with home ports between Honolulu and the Mediterranean, 18 called Japanese ports home in August 2001.<sup>1</sup> Japan plays host to a significant mass of U.S. airpower, including F-15 and F-16 fighter wings. Additionally, Japan provides facilities support to a vast array of U.S. reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering resources, as was amply demonstrated when a mid-air collision with a Chinese fighter

downed a U.S. Air Force E-3 flying out of Okinawa.

For Japan, the value of its alliance with the United States is even more obvious. Since abandoning its sovereign right to the use of force other than for purely defensive purposes, Japan considers the alliance the sine qua non of the country's security. The Japan-U.S. alliance is not just Japan's primary security relationship—it is its only one.

The alliance is a beneficent arrangement. Its goal is not to combine the might of two powers into a single great force bent on transforming the region. The Japan-U.S. alliance is dedicated to preserving the status quo in the Far East, that is, deterring the use of force as a means of altering political borders. In this regard, the goals of Japan and the United States differ from those of other great powers in the area.

One complaint that has been raised against the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty is that its obligations are asymmetrical. According to the treaty, in response to any armed threat, the United States is committed to the defense of Japan under the doctrine of collective security. Japan, however, does not allow itself to participate in collective security. U.S. critics of the treaty cease investigating the relationship at this point, declaring that the alliance is nothing less than Japan getting a free ride in the security sphere.

The Japanese and U.S. governments share the following understanding: Japan's provision of bases and facilities to U.S. forces—allowing those forces

to implement the basic U.S. strategic plan in the region—balances out the U.S. commitment to defend Japan. That exchange is the core of the agreement, and neither side considers the arrangement unfair. The alleged asymmetry is not dangerous to the relationship between the two countries.

If an asymmetrical nuance exists, it is the relative importance each party places on Article 5 and Article 6 of the treaty. The United States, seeing the security treaty as a component of its overall global strategy, places a greater priority on the maintenance of peace and security in the Far East (Article 6) than in the narrower defense of the territory and territorial waters of Japan (Article 5). The U.S. side believes that a direct attack on Japan is one of the least likely scenarios for an outbreak of hostilities. In the U.S. view, a threat to Japanese security will come as the result of a buildup of tensions or an outbreak of violence elsewhere in the region; thus, for overall security, preparing for contingencies outside of Japan is more important. For obvious reasons, the Japanese government puts a priority on the defense of Japan.

In practical terms, the two sides have tried to reconcile these nuanced interpretations of the agreements' statements on the supporting roles Japanese forces must play in "situations in areas around Japan" (*shuhen jitai* in Japanese). In a future Diet session, legislators must consider measures that will establish a legal framework allowing such coordination. Areas of cooperation should include providing food, logistical support, fuel, and landing areas for the crisis response of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the U.S. Forces in Japan (USFJ), as well as rescue equipment to the USFJ.

### **Frictional '-isms': U.S. Unilateralism and Japanese Pacifism**

A few years ago, Japanese nationalists were incensed at a U.S. military commander's remark that the Japan-U.S. alliance was the "cork in the bottle" restraining latent Japanese militarism. Some in Japan and Asia now argue that the opposite is true and that the alliance is the "cork in the bottle" of a U.S. drift toward unilateralism.

Some of the actions that recent U.S. administrations have taken in the conduct of foreign policy have been interpreted in the region as giving little consideration to the opinions of close U.S. allies, much less to world opinion. Some perceive the United States as acting in a manner that maximizes its own power and profits while undermining the legitimacy of international institutions. The Japanese are concerned that this behavior may eventually adversely affect the strong political ties between the two nations.

On a number of international issues, Japan has already felt it necessary to part ways with its ally. Former prime minister Keizo Obuchi was a good friend to the United States, but he strongly believed that Japan should become an

original signatory to the Ottawa land mine treaty and acted accordingly, despite U.S. opposition. The Japanese do not understand the reason for the U.S. failure to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and its doubts about other multilateral conventions dealing with weapons of mass destruction. Japanese also do not understand why the United States abandoned the Kyoto Protocol without offering an alternative. Many Japanese were unable to comprehend the Bush administration's recent announcement of its intention to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Many believed that the United States failed to make its case to the international community that pursuing a national missile defense system was more desirable than other cooperative means of increasing U.S. and global security.

Although Japan's biggest concern with the United States is the U.S. tendency toward unilateralism, the United States finds worrisome Japan's pacifist tendency in the face of international security issues. Prior to September 11, Japan was making only economic contributions to the security of the world beyond its immediate neighborhood. Through trade, soft loans, and Official Development Assistance, Japan has made sizeable contributions toward improving the lot of the world's poor. Japan is the world's greatest donor of nonmilitary aid and one of the most generous per capita providers of economic assistance.

**F**or Japan, the United States is the country's only ally.

Japan's generosity on the economic aspect of world affairs has contrasted with a near total absence of contributions on the military side. Under Japan's "peace constitution," successive Japanese governments steered clear of international cooperation or interaction that the world might construe as having a military component. The Japanese took pride in the absence of a military dimension to their foreign policy.

In international circles, Japan's strict pacifism had its admirers. Certainly, U.S. conservatives and members of Congress hated it, despite the fact that the U.S. Occupation authorities had drafted the peace constitution. Japan's pacifism helped China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) keep Japan perpetually on edge about the mythological threat of a return of Japanese militarism.

Japan's strategy of fighting the good fight without sending a single soldier, however, ran its course. In the 1970s and 1980s, Japan's pacifism became a flimsy shield, behind which the country's opposition lawmakers proclaimed that they were "proud of the fact that not a single person in the world has been wounded by a shot fired by a Japanese soldier since 1945."

Consequently, when concerned policymakers realized that the pacifist creed had gone too far, they found that decades of refusing to send govern-

ment personnel into conflict zones had bred a strong domestic resistance to casualties. Although Japanese citizens in the mid-1980s agreed that the SDF might have a role to play in maintaining international peace and security, no consensus developed on the possibility that SDF personnel might have to kill or die for international security. When suspected Khmer Rouge assailants shot and killed just one Japanese civilian police officer serving in Japan's first United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission, some voices called for an immediate end to Japanese participation in UN peacekeeping. Today, attitudes on deployment are different, as the recent dispatch of SDF personnel to the Indian Ocean theater demonstrates, but no absolute consensus exists on the use of deadly force by the SDF.

**F**or the United States, Japan is one ally among many.

### **The Legacy of Old Scars and Misunderstandings**

Underlying the strong Japanese collaborative response to the current U.S. war against terrorism are the bitter memories of the attitude that the United States displayed toward the relationship during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The near-humiliation that Japan endured at that time filled the Japanese government with an undeniable sense of failure. So deep was the trauma to Japan's institutional memory that, to this day, policymakers remind themselves that they must never again allow the country to be subjected to the charge of "checkbook diplomacy."

Widespread U.S. criticism of Japan's refusal to send government personnel to the Persian Gulf in 1991 was misguided. Many Japanese engineers and sailors did serve in the Gulf in support of Operation Desert Shield. Japan provided huge amounts of noncombat materiel that was delivered to the war zone mostly by Japanese merchant ships. Japan sent six MSDF minesweepers and 500 personnel to the Gulf, albeit after hostilities had ended. Of all the countries in the world, only Japan raised taxes in order to pay for its contribution to the Persian Gulf War effort. Additionally, after enduring intense pressure and criticism, particularly from the U.S. Congress, Japan provided \$10.8 billion to the total war cost of \$60 billion (in 1991 dollars). Yet, because Japan had not sent its SDF vessels, planes, and personnel at the campaign's most dangerous time, Japan was treated like a second-class citizen of the world.

For Japan, the United States is the country's only ally. Japan concentrates all its attention on smoothing its relations with the United States, routinely making difficult political decisions to keep the alliance on an even keel. For

the United States, however, Japan is one ally among many. Surrounded by so many supporters, the United States rarely feels pressured to make extraordinary sacrifices in order to preserve one particular relationship. Indeed, U.S. members of Congress and others have been unable to resist suggesting to allies that they copy one another's practices so that the United States can reap maximum benefit.

In its relationship with the United States, Japan has craved respect. Treated with consideration, the Japanese government delivers on its promises. As former defense secretary Caspar Weinberger noted in his memoirs:

I was surprised and pleased by the speed with which the Japanese agreed to share defense responsibilities with us, and add to their own defense capabilities. [The] agreement vindicated my view that we could make progress with the Japanese, if we approached them with the respect and dignity they deserve as a world power, and that defense was an issue we could discuss frankly with them as befits a true partnership.<sup>2</sup>

## **Japan's Response to September 11**

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Of the three major members of the trilateral group of powers that dominate global economic and security affairs, Japan had to travel the longest political and procedural distance to respond to the events of September 11. Because the United States was the direct victim of the attacks, the Bush administration was able to claim the right of self-defense. On September 12, NATO leaders invoked Article 5 of the NATO charter, enabling the member states to participate in an institutionalized, collective self-defense military response.

Japan, on the other hand, had no mechanism permitting the government to offer aid to its treaty ally. In order to become an active participant in the U.S.-led military campaign, albeit at a logistical level, the Japanese Diet had to pass an unprecedented new law—the Antiterrorism Measures Special Law of 2001. Prior to the passage of this enabling legislation, the Japanese government had no legal authority to order MSDF vessels even to travel to the theater of operations in the Indian Ocean, except in the special circumstance of travel to “conduct survey and research” under the Japan Self-Defense Agency Establishment Law.

The Diet's concerted effort to pass the special antiterrorism legislation in less than two months was both a marvel and an embarrassment. Leaders of other countries could immediately engage in flashy diplomatic displays, promising close cooperation with the U.S. military campaign and holding dramatic meetings with the leaders of neighboring countries. In contrast, Japan's leaders had to remain subdued, locking themselves inside the confines of Nagata-cho, Tokyo's political quarter, for two agonizing months in

an attempt to produce a legal foundation for a credible Japanese contribution to the war effort. The situation recalled the old Japanese expression about a house being so unprepared that, “when the robber came, the residents first had to make the rope they needed to catch him with.”

The Antiterrorism Measures Special Law has a fixed life span of two years and is limited to responding to the events of September 11. A wide range of the political spectrum agrees, however, that Japan needs to avoid the hurried and chaotic experience of redrafting legislation for every SDF deployment. Japan needs a legal framework that will make the measures permanent. The best outcome would be a basic international cooperation law permitting SDF deployments in times of crisis with a proviso that a deployment could only proceed after a basic operating plan for the action receives Diet approval. Such a model should cut down the amount of time Japan would need to respond to an appeal for international cooperation from the already-demonstrated two months to a matter of days.

**Think the U.S. has an aversion to military casualties? Look at Japan...**

## **Constitutional and Legal Reforms**

Article 9 of Japan’s peace constitution prohibits “the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes” and the possession of “land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential.” The article reflects the historical mistake Japan made when it allowed the imperial armed forces to control the country’s foreign policy in the 1930s and 1940s. The article’s formulation is unnatural, however, because the wording, if taken at face value, can be construed as prohibiting Japan from defending itself or even possessing the means to do so. The premise of Article 9 is the not-quite-realistic philosophy that Japan’s security and survival should be entrusted to, as the constitution’s preamble sets forth, “the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world.”

An almost insurmountable barrier stands in the way of a revision of Article 9. Amending the constitution is such an onerous process that it has never been attempted in the 50-plus years of its existence. A revision to a provision as sensitive as Article 9 would require a concerted effort over the terms of several prime ministers and cabinets.

An interim solution is to have the Cabinet Legislation Bureau (CLB)—the governmental office in charge of interpreting Japan’s laws—investigate whether any of the peace constitution’s provisions allow Japan to enter into

collective self-defense arrangements. Such a reinterpretation has been supported by some influential experts as a major potential avenue for change in Japan's fundamental security posture.

Prior to such a drastic reinterpretation, however, the CLB should first abandon the excessive restraints it has imposed on Japan's right to self-defense. In the 1980s, CLB interpretations were so narrow that, in one instance, it argued that the SDF could not come to the aid of a U.S. warship en route to Japan even if that ship had been sent to protect Japan from a military attack. In the buildup to the Gulf War, the CLB determined that Japanese government ships could not transport weapons and other ordnance, meaning that the Japanese government had to find civilian companies willing to help move U.S. military units from their bases in Japan to the Arabian Peninsula.

In the decade since the Gulf War, the CLB has softened its stance. It has since lifted the ban on the SDF transporting and delivering weapons and ordnance. It still maintains, however, that MSDF Aegis destroyers cannot share their battle-theater imagery with U.S. forces because doing so would be an exercise of collective self-defense. If the CLB's deliberations were focused on promoting Japan's national interests and not merely semantics, many of the alliance's needs for greater levels of cooperation could be addressed while avoiding a divisive national debate over revision of Article 9.

## **A Future Shaped by Technological Change**

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Even though some believe that the drift in the political goals of the two countries could potentially affect the alliance adversely, another important element to watch may be technological change. The basis of the original security treaty was the perpetuation of the physical presence in East Asia of a mass of U.S. forces sufficient to repel a large invading army. Since the Gulf War, however, the United States has participated in a series of military actions in which the importance of U.S. troop strength has diminished. In the campaigns in both Kosovo and Afghanistan, long-range bombers based in the United States or on islands in the middle of the sea dropped laser-guided or Global Positioning System-targeted munitions on their targets from high altitudes. In the Kosovo campaign, technology completely eliminated the need for ground forces while the Afghanistan conflict required only a handful of U.S. Special Forces troops providing intelligence and weapons guidance to the air campaign. The increased use of unmanned reconnaissance vehicles, some with war-fighting capabilities, has given rise to visions of a battlefield where almost no U.S. soldiers are physically present. Given this new, highly mobile, remotely controlled style of warfare, the forward deployment of forces seems less of an imperative.



Missile proliferation also seems to reduce the deterrent effect of large numbers of forward-deployed troops and materiel. The DPRK, which in its present state could not mount a sustained conventional attack of any appreciable length, nevertheless manages to use its stock of missiles to blackmail its neighbors and the United States into providing a continuous supply of fuel and food aid, as well as facilitating the construction of two nuclear power stations. China uses its missiles to intimidate Taiwan and press Japan to think twice about including Taiwan within the areas of “the Far East” to which Article 6 of the security treaty applies.

At the darkest edge, the multiplication of means of destruction and points of attack accessible to terrorists may render today’s international security architecture obsolete. Members of secretive religious organizations, not governments, organized and carried out the worst post-1945 attacks on Japanese and U.S. soil—the 1995 sarin gas attack on Tokyo’s subways and the September 11 attacks—using everyday objects in unconventional ways. Wide dissemination of the technical knowledge required for assembling and delivering a nuclear bomb, dispersing biochemical agents, or poisoning water and food supplies gives individuals destructive power that was once reserved for states. In response to this new threat, governments may feel forced to concentrate their security efforts on the domestic front, creating fortress societies where citizens are under constant surveillance and outside connections are limited.

**The Japanese government felt an undeniable sense of failure after the Gulf War.**

## Regional Concerns

The U.S.-Japan alliance is a source of concern for other powers in the Asia-Pacific region. Because of the legacy of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonialism and imperialism, a prickly sensitivity remains against basing non-Asian forces in the area. Resentment over Japan’s wartime behavior in the region and the perception—legitimate or not—that Japan has been insufficiently apologetic about the events and incidents of the period are also still evident.

In addition, Japan’s quietly growing military might—propelled by the size of its gross domestic product and large government budgets (as compared with those of its neighbors)—reinforces a sense of distrust both in China and on the Korean Peninsula. As the Chinese and ROK governments’ strong negative reactions to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s

visit to the Yasukuni Shrine on August 13, 2001, suggest, Beijing's and Seoul's unease remains intense. In particular, China may be concerned that its nuclear arms may be insufficient to cope with Japan's increasing defense capabilities. Despite its unpopularity in certain quarters, the U.S.-Japan alliance has roles to play that are vital to the stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region.

## **CHINA AND TAIWAN**

Opinion is divided about the rise of China as a political, economic, and military power. Some view China's admission into the World Trade Organization, the emergence of a civil society in the country, and the decline of the Communist Party's revolutionary ideology as hints of a bright future in which China will seek peaceful coexistence with the rest of the world while its political and human rights practices slowly evolve toward global

norms. Others see echoes of the rise of the great imperial powers in the nineteenth century and foresee a fearful global struggle against a vengeful, recidivist Chinese state. Recent events, including the Chinese government's quiet support of the U.S. war on terrorism and the absence of criticism of Japan's 2001 dispatch of the SDF, tend to support the first, more optimistic view.

Regardless of whether China's development takes the bright path or the fearful one, however, reason for concern exists on one issue: the resolution of the status of Taiwan. Chinese citizens from all walks of life have an attachment to the reunification of Taiwan and the mainland that transcends reason. The U.S.-Japan alliance represents a significant hope for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan problem. Both Japan and the United States have clearly stated that they oppose reunification by force. When China conducted provocative missile tests in the waters around Taiwan in 1996, the United States sent two aircraft carrier groups into nearby waters as a sign of its disapproval of China's belligerent act. Japan seconded the U.S. action, raising in Chinese minds the possibility that Japan might offer logistical and other support to its ally in the event of hostilities. Even though intervention is only a possibility, a strong and close tie between Japanese and U.S. security interests guarantees that the Chinese leadership cannot afford to miscalculate the consequences of an unprovoked attack on Taiwan. The alliance backs up Japan's basic stance that the two sides need to come to a negotiated solution.

**Amending the constitution is so onerous, it has never been attempted...**

## THE KOREAS

Despite its years of famine; its evaporating industrial and energy infrastructure; and its choking, inhumane society, the DPRK government still refuses to retreat to its place on the ash heap of history. Despite the poverty of the people, the North Korean military maintains an arsenal of thousands of rocket launchers and pieces of artillery—some of which are possibly loaded with chemical and biological warheads—awaiting the signal to wipe Seoul off the map. The DPRK's immense stock of weapons includes large numbers of No-dong missiles capable of striking Japan's western coastal regions and probably longer-range missiles capable of hitting every major Japanese city.

The United States has two combat aircraft wings in the ROK, in Osan and Kunsan. In addition, some 30,000 U.S. Army troops are stationed near Seoul. Most military experts admit that the army troops serve a largely symbolic function; if an actual war were to erupt, a massive North Korean artillery bombardment could pin down both the U.S. Eighth Army and the ROK armed forces at the incipient stage. The firepower the USFJ can bring to bear upon the Korean Peninsula within a matter of hours makes the U.S.-Japan alliance the Damoclean sword hanging over the DPRK. The DPRK leaders are masters of deception and manipulation, but they know that launching a military strike against the ROK will expose them to a strong and final counterstrike from U.S. forces in Japan.

...The Cabinet  
Legislation Bureau  
offers an alternative  
by reinterpreting  
Japan's laws.

## SAFETY OF THE HIGH SEAS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

In the 1980s, Japan pledged to develop a defense capacity to protect the Asia-Pacific sea lanes extending 1,000 nautical miles outward from Japan. Around the same time, Japan accepted a special mission to develop an incomparable antisubmarine warfare capability. The choice of the latter mission was a result of a quirk of geography: Japan had effective control of the three straits—the Tsushima, Tsugaru, and Soya (La Pérouse)—that the Soviet Pacific Fleet's submarines had to use in order to pass between the Pacific and their home ports in Vladivostok and Nakhodka.

One of the outcomes of these two programs is that Japan now has a considerable store of expertise and equipment applicable to surveillance and interdiction of targets in the mid-ocean and coastal areas. By many measures, the MSDF is now the world's second-most powerful maritime force, counting

among its assets an aerial armada of 100 P-3C Orion patrol aircraft. With the deterioration of Russia's submarine and surface fleets, the MSDF could shift its focus from the Japan Sea to the East China Sea and the western Pacific.

**Japan's biggest concern with the U.S. is its tendency toward unilateralism.**

Japanese MSDF vessels and U.S. Navy vessels can work in tandem to assure that these areas remain empty of threats to free commerce and travel.

The Japan-U.S. alliance also probably serves as a deterrent against any one nation seizing control of the Spratly Islands and, by extension, the sea lanes and resources of the South China Sea. Formally, the area is outside the Far East region that the United

States and Japan agree is covered by Article 6 of the security treaty. For the countries vying for control of the sea, however, the proximity of two of the world's great maritime forces must at least urge them to use caution as they pursue their competition.

## **RUSSIA**

In military terms, the U.S.-Japan alliance's struggle with Russia is dramatically reduced. Now the allies will need to work together to bring Russia into the circle of advanced, industrialized democratic states. Despite the Putin administration's current apparently pro-Western policies, Russia will need many decades to extinguish its long-standing profound mistrust of the United States. NATO's repeated rejections of Russian requests to be considered a candidate for membership, coupled with that body's relentless expansion toward Russia's borders, has led Russian leaders to express an aspiration to become a greater power in the Pacific. Although Russia's continuing refusal to return the Northern Territories to Japan and the lack of a peace treaty ending World War II clouds Japanese sentiment toward Russia, Japan remains the key for Russia's entry into the Pacific. In this context, Japan has a role to play as a less threatening representative of the West and as an example of non-Euro-U.S. democratic tradition. Putin's personal attachment to Japan may also make the relationship between Japan and Russia an important conduit of communication between the West and Moscow in the years to come.

## **THE ARAB AND MUSLIM WORLD**

Recent events have focused international attention on relations between the United States and Islamic countries, which, with a few exceptions, are strained. Some have suggested that Japan can become a potential intermedi-

ary between the United States and the Muslim world because of Japan's close relations with Arab governments, Muslim oil-producing states, and the nations of Central Asia; its relatively more flexible stance on human rights policies; and the absence of a strong tie to Israel.

Japan can contribute to a U.S.-Islamic dialogue by asserting its view that vast disparities in income and an inconsistent U.S. commitment to human rights are impediments to the U.S. goal of stemming the rise of terrorism in the Islamic world. In recent years, the United States has drifted away from the consensus prevalent in most of the industrialized world that extreme poverty is a primary driver of terrorism and political violence. The United States also needs to explain its reluctance to confront the regimes of its friends in the Middle East with the same human rights standards as those applied to Myanmar, China, or Indonesia.

### **SOUTHEAST ASIA**

In recent years, Japan has had to begin sharing the foreign affairs spotlight in Southeast Asia with China. Although some claim that Japan's status in the region is in irreversible decline, Japan's intentions are probably viewed with far greater warmth than those of its erstwhile regional rival. Some consider China a ferocious competitor, a country that has robbed Southeast Asia of foreign direct investment (FDI) and export markets for its manufactured goods. Conversely, Japan is seen as a complementary power, a country that provides technology, FDI, general finance, and a market for Southeast Asia's products. In terms of security, the perception of Japan is shifting from that of a former conqueror to a significant member of an evolving security network answering the challenge of rising Chinese military and political might.

Japan and the United States must work together to meet other serious, long-term foreign policy challenges in Southeast Asia. Indonesia must be guided back to stability. The political stalemate in Myanmar must be resolved and the state returned to membership in the international community. Vietnam and Cambodia must emerge from the ravages of war and calamitous social policies.

### **Another Fifty Years?**

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Fifty years have passed since Japan and the United States signed the original security treaty and more than 40 years have passed since the current 1960 treaty came into force. Neither Japan nor the United States has a desire to alter the treaty obligations, much less abrogate the alliance. Nevertheless, exploring potential alternatives to the alliance is worthwhile, if only to illu-

minate why it is likely to survive. For Japan, treaty abrogation would result in a security vacuum that could be filled in only one of three ways. The first is armed neutrality, which would mean the development of a Japan ready to repel any threat, including the region's existing and incipient nuclear forces. The second is to establish a regional collective security arrangement. This option would require that the major powers in Asia accept a reduction of their troop strengths down to Japanese levels and accept a common political culture—democracy. Neither of these conditions is likely to be met for decades. The third option, the one outlined in the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, is for Japan's security to be the responsibility of a permanent UN military force, ready to deploy at a moment's notice to preserve peace and stability in the region. Such a force, of course, does not yet exist. None of the three possible replacements for the Japan-U.S. alliance is realistic. The alternatives also seem certain to increase the likelihood of war in the region, not decrease it—the only reason that Japan would want to leave the U.S.-Japan alliance.

An overview of aftereffects on the United States of an abrogation of the alliance runs along similar lines. In the absence of a robust, UN-based security system, relations between the giant countries of Asia would become uncertain and competitive—too precarious a situation for the United States and the world. The United States would lose access to the facilities on which it relies for power projection in the region. Much more importantly, it would also lose a friend—a wealthy, mature, and loyal friend.

Given the magnitude of the danger that an end of the alliance would pose to both Japan and the United States, both sides will likely want to maintain their security relationship for many years to come. A completely new world would have to emerge for Japan and the United States to no longer need each other. Despite frictions over trade, supposed Japanese passivity, purported U.S. arrogance, and the myriad overwrought “threats to the alliance,” the truth is that this military alliance between two democratic states is well-nigh unbreakable—because there are no acceptable alternatives.

## Notes

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1. Since September 2001, the U.S. Navy no longer identifies the current deployment status of the vessels in the Pacific Fleet. Home port designations have so far remained unchanged.
2. Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), pp. 228–229.