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TITLE: Transforming the United States Defense Posture in Asia

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: Transforming the United States Defense Posture in Asia

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Thesis: After decades of United States occupation and amid increased nationalism, the Japanese government has proceeded with expanding their defense capabilities. Japan's military ambition would also suggest a revision to Article IX of their Constitution and a reduced United States presence in the region. However, further review of Japanese history, culture, foreign relations, and military capabilities demonstrate the increased relevance of a balanced and credible United States defense posture in the region.

Discussion: By 1945, United States forces occupied Japan and introduced a new Constitution. In an effort to prevent subsequent resurgence of Japanese militarism, Article IX of the new Constitution stated that the Japanese people forever renounce war potential. Under international law, Japan has an inherent right to self-defense and has preserved such minimum necessary capability. However, Japan has subtly called for increased strengthening of their self-defense capability and expanding their reach. Japan's plan for normalization leads to questioning the relevance of United States military bases in the country. This could result in a reformed bilateral alliance that emphasizes technology sharing and a nuclear Japan.

Conclusion: As the emphasis in Asia continues to rise in the 21st century, mutually beneficial arrangements between the United States, Japan, and other key stakeholders in the region become increasingly relevant. A cooperative and balanced posture of forces in Japan effectively addresses the rapidly changing challenges of the region.

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Preface

Early in my military career, I served a couple of tours in Japan. I observed the widespread and fascinating pacifist character that currently describes the country despite an era of militarism that existed decades before. Also, I continuously learned about the increasing relevance of Asia. With the 19th century often dubbed the British Century and the 20th century the American, many often call the 21st century the Asian Century as particular military and economic trends continue. Through the lens of military history, culture attunement, and leadership, I intend to review Japan's ambition to strengthen defense capability and the relevance of United States forces in Asia.

Introduction

“No region is more important to American interests than the Asia-Pacific.” – Winston Lord¹

Due to the rapid development of economies such as China and India, the Asia-Pacific region has gained more global attention. Furthermore, as the regional countries sustain political, economic, ethnic, and religious diversity, conflicts remain between them even after the Cold War. With uncertainty, economic interests, and security concerns continuing to exist, the presence of the United States forces remains relevant. The United States military provides an extremely important role in supporting stability in the region. Simultaneously, further assessment of the security environment needs to occur.² After more than fifty years in existence, the post-World War II United States-Japan security alliance continues to offer significant value. For one, both countries are the two largest economies in the world, accounting for approximately 40 percent of global Gross Domestic Product between them. The bilateral relationship plays an integral role in containing the emergence of an unstable balance of power in Asia. Moreover, Japan provides bases for United States forces and a substantial amount of host-nation support.³

However, in this Post Cold War era, there have been major changes in the regional security environment, resulting in a need to reassess the security alliance. Notably, as nationalistic sentiments revive in Japan and across Asia, the viability of the alliance comes into question.⁴ Japan has gradually increased its defense capability, and sentiment for an independent military has grown. The “normalization drive- to give the government a full array of economic, political, and security tools to preserve Japan’s security interests” has persisted.⁵ Regarding security interests, Japan has begun to bridge the gap between having a self-defense force and a regional

military. In 1997, Japan's defense white paper publicly addressed a regional strategy instead of focusing only on areas near Japan. By 1999, while participating in United States exercises in Guam, Japan deployed fighter aircraft outside its territory. This has not been done since World War II. The Japanese are increasingly willing and more capable to play a larger, more independent role in the security of Asia.⁶

Japan has accelerated its transformation from a nation constrained by a post-World War II constitution to one that is "normal" and free from such constraints. As Japan's "normalization" plan proceeds, it facilitates the reduction of United States forces in the country.⁷ Specifically, it facilitates the reduction of United States Marines. A United States Defense Policy Review Initiative established a framework for the structure in Japan designed to reduce the burden on Japanese communities and create a continuing presence of United States forces in the Pacific Theater. It would involve relocating 8,000 Marines and approximately 9,000 dependents from Okinawa to Guam. A new United States-Japan security alliance would develop with an optimal combination of forward-stationed and rotational forces in the region.⁸

With the impending move of United States forces from Okinawa to Guam, Oceania's importance significantly increases. Despite a strong focus on counterinsurgency efforts in the Central Command Area of Responsibility, the United States needs to sustain relations in Oceania as well. China has expanded economic efforts in the region, further supporting the need to remain engaged in this crucial maritime area and further review the defense posture throughout Asia.⁹ However, it is important to note that United States economic and political influence ultimately depends on stability and a sense of security furnished by credible United States military presence not just in Oceania but throughout Asia.¹⁰

As outlined in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), a key component of the United States defense posture includes planning for the relevant combination of forward-stationed and rotationally deployed forces.¹¹ While each region needs a tailored defense posture, the United States-Japan security alliance provides enduring lessons for generating efficiencies and synergies from each country's portfolio of military capabilities. Further review of Japanese history, culture, foreign relations, and military capabilities demonstrate the effective security arrangement in the region.

Feudal Japan (1185-1868)

For centuries, Japan was an isolated and feudal society. In the early 1800s, Western societies began to occupy settlements in Asia in support of their economic interests.¹² Specifically, the United States developed into a Pacific power by 1850 and started to look towards the Far East. Japan was known for having an abundance of coal deposits, and the United States focused on the need for coaling stations there to support the new steamships. This formerly isolated country served as a strategic way station towards the vast Chinese markets.¹³ By 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in modern day Tokyo to compel Japan to trade with the United States merchants or risk an attack from their superior military force. This opened the door for Western influence, specifically in Japan. Five years later, the United States forced the Japanese government to sign a treaty to formalize the humiliating submission. Dubbed as the Unequal Treaties, the imposing Western demands illustrated Japan's subordinate status among other civilizations.¹⁴

Meiji Japan (1868-1912)

Japanese nationalism developed in the late 1800s in response to foreign aggression. Japan changed from primarily an agricultural, feudal society to an industrial power. In 1904, Japan

clashed with Russia over the northern Chinese province of Manchuria. This culminated with the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Japan defeated Russian forces in a series of brilliant battles, and demonstrated their capability to the rest of the world. Notably, it paved the way for rising Japanese dominance throughout Asia.¹⁵ During the Meiji Period, Japan modernized its political, economic, and social institutions to achieve status as a world power.¹⁶

Imperial Japan (1912-1945)

After World War I, the Japanese developed a form of militarism and sought to expand their empire. It started with an invasion of Manchuria in 1931 followed by a second invasion of mainland China by 1937. By January 1940, Japan seized all of China's major ports, industrial centers, and communications hubs. As an island nation, Japan needed the raw materials and space to support its growing militarism.¹⁷ Eventually, Japan had developed into one of the greatest empires in the history of the world, primarily through the use of force.¹⁸

Post World War II Japan (1945-present)

By 1945, the United States stopped Japan expanding militarism and General Douglas MacArthur served as the optimal Supreme Commander for the United States occupation of post-World War II Japan. Having served many years in the region, General MacArthur could claim himself as one of the few Occidentals who could understand the Japanese people. He understood the galvanizing power of the Emperor, and used it to generate public support for United States forces.¹⁹ Japan's Meiji Constitution affirmed the position of divinity for the emperor. As the direct descendant of the gods, the emperor assumed special powers. The emperor acted as supreme commander of the military forces and controlled foreign affairs conducted by the

cabinet.²⁰ The United States decision to retain the emperor proved to be a wise one as it provided the country with an institution through which to effectively implement change.²¹

In an effort to prevent a subsequent resurgence of Japanese militarism, the United States imposed a revolutionary form of Constitutional monarchy. The form of government closely resembled America's and Britain's, with three branches and supreme power vested in the Diet or Parliament. The upper house of the bicameral legislature elects the prime minister, who would serve for four years. If the prime minister were to suffer defeat on an issue, he could choose between asking the house to select a successor or call for new elections. Knowing about Japan's strong value for continuance, General MacArthur made the new Constitution an amendment to the older Meiji one vice having it known as a revolutionary change.²² Of note, Article IX of the new Constitution stated that the "Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation; land, sea, air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained."²³ Two years later, Japan adopted the new Constitution (Shijitai/Kyujitai), also called the Peace Constitution (Heiwa Kenpo) as the founding document of Post-World War II Japan.²⁴

As the Japanese government took ownership of rebuilding, the Japanese military also did the same with their demobilization. By the end of 1945, the Japanese armed forces ceased to exist and the United States further purged proponents of Japanese militarism and aggression. Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and 24 others who were designated as Class A criminals accused of crimes against humanity were brought to trial. By 1947, many United States policy makers already "began to see Japan as a future ally rather than a former enemy." Issues concerning the Cold War with the Soviet Union expedited this developing alliance between recent enemies.²⁵

In 1955, the two main streams of conservative parties united to form the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) and dominate the domestic political scene for several decades. Supporters of the conservative cause included the older generation, traditionally adhering to old customs and old political ties. The LDP was founded as an ally of the United States to contain communism.²⁶

Development of Japanese Self-Defense Forces

In regards to military capability, Japan was able to work within the Article IX restriction with the creation of the National Police Reserve and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF).²⁷ Japan's Self Defense Forces are categorized into three branches: Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF), Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF), and Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) (a.k.a Army, Air Force, and Navy). The Japanese armed forces include approximately 230,000 active-duty personnel. General reserves include 33,800 army, 900 navy, and 700 air force. Service is voluntary (no conscription). Principles for Japan's defense policy include the following:

1. Do not exercise military force until an armed attack is initiated. Japan will not attack first.
2. Japan is not permitted to dispatch Self Defense Forces to foreign countries for the purpose of war.
3. Japan cannot possess sufficient equipment to impose an invasive or aggressive threat to other countries. This would include long-range strategic bombers and offensive -oriented aircraft carriers.²⁸

Japan is moving to transform the SDF to meet emerging security challenges triggered by North Korea. In December 2003, their government called for a defense posture review to ensure that the SDF is capable of effectively responding to threats of terrorism and the proliferation of

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).²⁹ By December 2004, Japan revised its Defense Guidelines to cope with the new international environment, including a rising China, international terrorism and missile and nuclear issues related to North Korea.³⁰ Specifically, the “National Defense Program Guideline (NDPG) for Fiscal Year 2005 and After” and the related “Mid-Term Defense Plan” (MTDP) prescribes a major transformation of the SDF between 2005 and 2015 from a Cold War posture. It envisions a smaller, more flexible force (155,000 personnel). The NDPG emphasizes that the SDF must cope with a diverse range of threats, including low-intensity attacks, ballistic missile strikes, terrorist actions, airspace intrusions, and attacks by guerilla or special operations forces against offshore islands or critical infrastructure.³¹

Japan’s defense development and procurement has included buying in-air refueling capabilities, joining United States missile-defense systems, building Aegis destroyers and a large helicopter destroyer just shy of an entry-level aircraft carrier, complete with a full-length flight deck capable of handling the vertical or short takeoff or landing variant of the Joint Strike Fighter.³² Japan has debated the introduction of aircraft carriers for several decades with the stigma of World War II and image of Pearl Harbor. The approval for more advanced naval capabilities reflect a shift in Japanese thinking, from regarding constitutional restrictions as simply a challenge to the developing more robust and independent defense capability.³³ As of 2005, the Japan Defense Ministry is the largest component of Japanese government. In December 2006, the Japanese parliament approved upgrading the status of the Defense Agency to a full minister and amended the SDF Law, redefining the overseas activities of the SDF, such as changing their participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations from “auxiliary” to “core” missions.³⁴

Sentiment for Independent Defense Capabilities

Japanese sentiment for independent defense capability continues to rise, and with that comes opposition towards United States military dominance. Within the constraints of Article IX of their Constitution, Japan instituted a process of incremental re-armament, creating a powerful military capability over the subsequent decades. From 1987 to 1991, Japan was the largest importer of defense equipment in the industrialized world. A notable feature of Japanese defense industrialization includes their capability for self-sufficiency. More than 90 percent of Japan's military requirements are domestically produced. Increasingly, advocates for military independence questioned the presence of United States forces in Japan.³⁵ In 1998, Japanese Liberal Party Leader Ichiro Ozawa boldly hinted that all that was needed to allow overseas deployment of Japanese troops in combat missions was a reinterpretation, vice revision, of the Japanese constitution. This statement demonstrated the strong sentiment for independent military capability. His party advocated for greater Japanese involvement in United Nations operations and less restrictions on the use of the SDF.³⁶ Opponents and supporters of the ruling LDP agreed that the American influence over Japanese SDF policy is excessive.³⁷ Compounded with robust economic and military development in China, Japan continues to consider constitutional reform that would facilitate more overseas military deployments. This included sending Japanese destroyers in the Gulf of Aden in March 2009 to assist with international counter-piracy operations.³⁸

Japan has even considered developing its own umbrella against a nuclear threat. The most persistent security issue facing Japan comes from North Korea. Surrounded by other nuclear nations (China, North Korea, and Russia), Japan finds itself depending on the United States for security since 1945. Deeply lodged in a potentially volatile region, Japan is reassessing its

defense policy and security relationships. Japan has long opposed pursuing nuclear weapons, but even this has increasingly been an issue for discussion. Few countries would feel confident in relying on another country for their security, especially with a major economic power like Japan.³⁹ Preceded by space-launch vehicles capable of reaching Japan in 1998, 2006 and April 2009, the North Korean nuclear tests in October 2006 and May 2009 raised concern over a potential confrontation on the Korean peninsula.⁴⁰

Contemporary Japan (Domestic Affairs-Politics)

Japanese LDP strategists contend that the path to military independence is one closely linked to the United States. They want to continue having the United States provide for Japan's ultimate security while Tokyo focuses on developing its defense capabilities. This includes taking advantage of technology transfers and joint development of systems with the United States.⁴¹ However, in a Post-Cold War era, the Japanese people assessed the overall relevance of the LDP and sensed that it significantly failed in addressing the decline in quality of life over the last two decades. One indicator of decline is the significant drop of Japan's ranking in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The country was third in the world in 2000 but fell to nineteenth in 2007. Inevitably, the LDP would lose popularity. For the 2009 general election, the opposing Socialist or Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won by a historic landslide.⁴²

As with the LDP, the Socialist Parties consisted of two main streams going through phases of cooperation and splits. The right-wing and left-wing streams of Japanese socialism differed in point of degree as opposed to principle. For domestic affairs, the left-wing stream advocated for extensive nationalization. The right-wing stream supported a mixed economy of government and private interests. For foreign affairs, Socialist views ranged from neutral to communist.

However, unlike the conservatives, Socialists do not advocate for close military and economic ties with the United States⁴³ In fact, the DPJ wants a dramatic reduction of United States forces. It would consist of not just a withdrawal from Okinawa, but from Japan entirely.⁴⁴

Sentiment against Permanently Forward-Stationed Forces

Many Japanese people have expressed support for few United States troops on their soil. In May 1996, an Asahi Shimbun poll reported that 70 percent of the Japanese people support the alliance with the United States and 67 percent prefers a reduction of United States military bases.⁴⁵ In 2004, a majority of Japanese surveyed continued to favor a reduction of United States forces.⁴⁶

Additionally, the Japanese government has taken some steps to increase their own capabilities and reduce the level of forward-stationed forces. In December 2003, the Japanese government announced that they would continue participation with the United States in the development of missile defenses. Japan earmarked \$929 million in Fiscal Year 2004 for missile defense acquisition, and this has continued to be an area of steady growth since then. Deeply concerned with the threat from North Korea, the budget reached \$1.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2007. It would fund early deployment of the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) interceptor missiles and acquisition of Standard 3 interceptors for Aegis-equipped United States warships. This system is scheduled for full operational capability in Fiscal Year 2011.⁴⁷

Japanese has become more interoperable with the technologically advanced United States forces and has begun to narrow the gap between being a self-defense force and a regional military. The United States has advocated for a larger role of Japan in the security of Asia. Japanese naval forces demonstrated more skill at fighting simulated battles during exercises in

2001. Moreover, Japan provided SDF units to the Indian Ocean to supply fuel for allied vessels at the beginning of Operation *Enduring Freedom*.⁴⁸ If Japan could increase military capability to containing an expansionist China, the United States could lower its own presence of forces in the region.⁴⁹

Adjusting the United States Defense Posture in Japan

Worldwide, the United States intends to apply a regionally tailored approach to determining the posture of forces. This would include an optimal combination of forward-stationed and rotational forces and capabilities, prepositioned equipment and basing infrastructure, and relationships, and agreements. With limited resources and the requirement to optimize efforts, the United States needs to generate efficiencies and synergies by working more effectively with allies and partners. Synergizing efforts allows allies and partners to capitalize on existing strengths and military capabilities, enhancing collective abilities to solve global security issues.⁵⁰

The approach entails developing postures strategies based on the security situation in each region around the world. It is also reminiscent of the 2005 Overseas Basing Commission addressing the need to better coordinate a large-scale recall of Department of Defense forces to the continental United States. United States forces routinely conduct exercises with militaries of numerous Asia-Pacific countries, including Japan.⁵¹

The following principles will guide future defense posture decisions:

1. Forward-stationed and rotationally deployed United States forces continue to be relevant and required.

2. The United States defense posture will balance the need for a permanent overseas presence that demonstrates commitment to allies and partners with the need for a flexible ability to respond to contingencies, emerging threats, and global security needs in distant theaters.
3. The United States will balance the need for assured access to support continuous operations with the risks of introducing fragility into its lines of communication.
4. For the United States to maintain overseas bases, America's presence abroad should be welcomed by the host nation and provide a stabilizing influence.⁵²

For the defense posture in Japan, the security treaty of 1951 (revised in 1960) grants the United States military base rights on its territory in return for a United States pledge to protect Japan's security. The United States facilitates Japan's national security through permanent presence in the country, including military facilities in Okinawa and carrier group in the Yokohama area.⁵³ A chief domestic complaint is that the Okinawa prefecture hosts over half of the United States forces in Japan and that more than 70 percent of the Japanese land that United States forces utilize is on Okinawa. Many citizens of Okinawa believe that the United States presence has hampered economic development. The public protest in Okinawa following the September 1995 abduction and rape of an Okinawan school girl by three United States service members brought to light the long-standing concerns among the Okinawan people about the effects of the United States military presence on the island. To address these concerns, negotiations between the United States and Japan began in November 1995. This Special Action Committee on Okinawa developed recommendations on ways to limit the effects of the presence of United States forces by closing Marine Corps Air Station, Futenma, and relocating forces from that base to another base in Okinawa.⁵⁴

The rise of Asian military power portends for a restructured United States military that operates with less reliance on vulnerable forward bases. Some argue that a permanently forward-deployed force in the region is becoming too vulnerable to attack, especially with nuclear states in the region. The argument includes preservation of some forward bases for symbolic reasons (i.e., reassuring allies of a shared defense).⁵⁵ For example, in February 2005, United States and Japan reaffirmed their “common strategic objective” in containing the threats posed by North Korea’s nuclear standoff and rising tension in the Taiwan Straits.⁵⁶ Both sides confirmed their commitment to sustaining deterrence and capabilities of United States forces in Japan while reducing the burden on local communities. With artillery live-fire exercises, highway closures during training, and misconduct of United States military personnel, this concentration tended to aggravate local residents. In May 2006, bilateral negotiations resulted in a provision calling on Japan to cover \$6 billion of the estimated \$10 billion to relocate 8,000 Marines from Okinawa to a facility in Guam by 2014.⁵⁷

Additionally, the carrier air wing attached to the USS *George Washington*, the only United States Navy aircraft carrier permanently deployed abroad, will be moved. It will go from the heavily populated Yokohama to sparsely populated Iwakuni in western Japan, reducing noise pollution and disturbance to the local population caused by night landing practice. Both the relocation of United States Marines and redeployment of Navy aircraft initially appear as politically astute steps intended to minimize the negative impact of American bases in urban Japan. However, it also transforms the United States-Japan security relationship into one that is more unitary, operational, and ambitious than any other arrangement established in the Pacific.⁵⁸

Sustaining the United States-Japan Alliance

With adjustments planned for the defense posture in Asia, the United States-Japan Alliance remains relevant. In the rapidly globalizing world of the 21st century, there is no bilateral relationship more delicate and complex in sustaining than the United States-Japan alliance. Both countries are different in cultural terms and national character, representing Eastern and Western interests. America is the world's lone superpower and Japan is the culturally unique, leading modernizer of Asia. After forming a humiliating teacher-pupil relationship in the wake of Japan's opening by Commodore Perry's black ships, Japan had minimal historical interaction to speak of other than geopolitical rivalry, racial exclusion, and war. Despite a long history of challenges, the United States-Japan relationship since World War II has been relatively smooth and placid. However, that relationship has focused on the military dimensions.⁵⁹ The new United States-Japan alliance involves intensified, globalized military cooperation on a delicate political-economic base. It operates not only in Northeast Asia, but around the world, requiring broad-based new liaison mechanisms.⁶⁰

For approximately half a century, the United States-Japan alliance and United States military presence has facilitated the foundation for security, stability, and prosperity in East Asia. Permanently forward-deployed forces in Japan have supported the United States in maintaining vital economic and strategic interests in the region, including security commitments to Japan, the Republic of Korea, and other Asian allies and friends. For Japan, the alliance offers security in compliance with its "peace constitution" at less than one percent of gross domestic product (GDP), extended deterrence against potential weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threats, and safeguard against any future Chinese attempt for regional hegemony. In 1991, the United States needed to project power nearly halfway around the world in the Persian Gulf War. The alliance

with Japan was critical to the coalition's success. Ten years later, the deployment of the USS *Kitty Hawk* to the Persian Gulf from Yokosuka, accompanied by the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force escort ships in Operation Enduring Freedom, highlighted the significance of the United States presence in Japan and the mutual benefits of the United States-Japan alliance.⁶¹

United States-Republic of Korea Alliance

Over sixty years have passed since the end of World War II. New generations have emerged, yet memories of Japanese colonization have not faded. Issues of responsibilities for atrocities and the adequacy of apologies continue to strain Japan's relations with its neighbors.⁶² Japan's development of defense capability raised concern in China and the Koreas over the possibility of an expansionist Japan.⁶³ A troubling trend includes the increase in anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korea. In 2005, 80 percent of South Koreans expressed unfavorable views of Japan, and 90 percent felt relations with Japan were poor.⁶⁴

Simultaneously, most Republic of Korea political leaders believe that the United States remains a significant safeguard against instability in the peninsula and a balancing factor in relations with Japan. Revival of the United States-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group could serve as a useful mechanism to improve trilateral cooperation on a wider range of issues. This could be analogous to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Partnership for Peace Program that engaged Russia and other former Warsaw Pact countries in humanitarian and peacekeeping activities. Trilateral participation in future humanitarian and peace support operations along with China and other Asian countries could demonstrate that the alliance relationships can contribute to regional security.⁶⁵

Japan-Republic of Korea Relationship

Korea and Japan are two significant United States allies in East Asia. Both countries can continue to serve as models of postwar democratization and economic advancement in a free world. Bilateral trade between the two countries increased from \$240 million in 1965 to \$78.5 billion in 2006. Sustained security facilitation of the United States for both allies after the Cold War provides a stage for upgrading their global status.⁶⁶ However, since the end of the Cold War, Japanese-Republic of Korea relations has had substantial ups and downs. The two countries would move closer together but at other times push each other widely apart.⁶⁷

During the Cold War period, both countries antagonized North Korea. However, they have acquired diverging perceptions of North Korea during the past decade. This has laid the foundation for a submerged but potential conflict.⁶⁸ If Korea and Japan can transfer a few of the more problematic issues from a bilateral agenda that incites tension to a multilateral form, there is hope that the tensions can be reduced and issues can be seen in a more comprehensive context that would include enhanced cooperation.⁶⁹ The continued engagement of the United States in the region is important not only for alleviating the security tension between the two countries but also for developing a reliable partnership. Specifically, the United States should not take one side over the other, but place itself evenly between both.⁷⁰

Relevance of a Multi-Lateral Approach

China and Japan account for almost three-quarters of the region's economic activity and more than half of the region's military spending. Also, some equate current Sino-Japanese relations to the Pre-World War I Anglo-German rivalry. Both states are adopting confrontational stances partly due to resurgent nationalism and revived memories of World War II.⁷¹ The United

States-Japan alliance not only serves as a significant counterweight to China's rising strength and assertiveness, but likely offers the best means to bring stability to this potentially hostile region. As the existing bilateral relationship changes in the new strategic environment, the United States-Japan alliance must sustain two fundamental qualities. First, it must allow room for Japan to move from its current status as a United States diplomatic client to pursue interests beyond its own homeland. Second, the alliance must assure other Asian nations of a continued American ability to impose limits on Japan's policy. This would include a multilateral approach involving South Korea, the Philippines, and regional associations. It would allow Japan to develop without alarming its own neighbors. The new Japan would be a stabilizing force in Asia, especially if it is engaged in multilateral arrangements with the United States and other regional stakeholders.⁷² Japan's increased involvement international security issues will likely continue.⁷³

A few key factors illustrate the relevance of continued United States presence in Asia. A United States-China conflict over Taiwan would institute a "lose-lose-lose" situation not just for each stakeholder but for the region as a whole. A complete United States withdrawal from forward bases in Korea and Japan would allow a Chinese military claim of Taiwan and disputed territories in the East and South China Seas. This would lead to Japan's remilitarization and renewed Sino-Japanese confrontation.⁷⁴ The challenge for the United States and its regional security partners remains assessing the value of basing arrangements. Even without forward bases, the United States would remain a strong influence in the region. However, United States economic and political influence ultimately depends on stability and sense of security furnished by credible United States military presence.⁷⁵

The 21st century will consistently include globalization and transnational threats. Therefore, the United States and its allies will face numerous shared challenges and

opportunities. The United States will seek to increase cooperative measures to address shared security threats and capitalize on the expertise of key allies and partners. With limited resources, the United States needs to generate efficiencies and synergies from other military capabilities.⁷⁶ The United States has emphasized working with allies and key partners to facilitate a peaceful and secure Asia-Pacific region.⁷⁷

New security arrangements are available without sacrificing United States or Japanese interests. One alternative would include a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-like multilateral balancing alliance. However, the establishment of a North East Asia Treaty Organization would require the further rise of China that would appear more threatening to regional actors. Another less comprehensive alternative does exist with the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum (NPCGF) as the most impressive example. It consists of the coast guards of China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea and the United States cooperating actively to enhance maritime security. However, its mission is limited to non-military activities. Therefore, a favorable one would include the formation of a regional security community modeled on the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE). The Six Party Talks and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are often regarded as proto-versions of an Asian OSCE. Such an arrangement would allow the United States to draw down its presence in the region.⁷⁸

Enhancing the Defense Posture in Oceania

With a reduction of United States forces in Japan, it would increase flexibility of the defense posture with less reliance on host nation support. In modernizing the military posture in Asia, Oceania provides the United States with significant geographic alternatives. Moving troops from Japanese (Okinawa) to American soil (Guam) would allow the United States to remain

strategically positioned within Asian geopolitics without aggravating Japanese domestic affairs. Consumed with counterterrorism and democracy building in the Middle East, the United States has allowed relations in Oceania to wither while China has expanded its efforts in the region. As Chinese trade and aid has expanded, the United States has disengaged, closing its United States Agency for International Development regional office, decreasing the number of Peace Corps missions, and eliminating its United States Information Agency presence in the area. The time has come to rebuild America's relationship with this crucial maritime area.⁷⁹

Conclusion

Post World War II, United States-Japan relations transformed from two opposing belligerents with different cultural characteristics to a strong alliance that has endured through the Cold War and into the 21st century. Two distinct and opposing wills have managed to posture efforts in support of managing common security threats. The United States-Japan alliance has demonstrated long-term effectiveness, despite some differences in eastern and western culture and memories of the humiliating Commodore Perry era. While the United States occupation of Japan appears as model for post-war stabilization, it also demonstrates that nationalism and sentiment for sovereignty has a strong potential to emerge.

After decades of foreign occupation, Japan stands ready to operate outside the limits of the Peace Constitution. While Japan moves forward with expansion of their defense capabilities, the renewal of alliances in the region need to take a multilateral approach that includes at least the Republic of Korea. This is especially needed in a globalized world with hybrid, transnational, and rapidly changing threats. In analyzing the defense posture for Asia, planners need to simultaneously consider numerous factors.

For one, consider the willingness and capability for host nation support, notably in Okinawa. With emphasis on their sovereignty, economy, domestic political issues, and development of their defense capabilities, the Japanese people and government continuously show some sentiment for a reduction of United States forces in their region. Simultaneously, the credible presence of United States forces in the region continues to demonstrate significant value. With a struggling economy and other domestic issues, Japan would continue to benefit significantly from a nuclear umbrella funded by and/or with the United States. Furthermore, with memories of World War II and Japanese militarism continuing to linger in China and the Koreas, an independently nuclear Japan has the potential to further escalate regional tensions.

Second, in a post-Cold War era that includes a nuclear North Korea, rising China, hybrid challenges, and transnational threats, the United States does need to transform the defense posture in Asia. The transformation needs to provide for increased flexibility and mobility for a wide range of overseas contingency operations. Sustaining forward-deployed forces in Okinawa would keep forces engaged in Asian affairs. Simultaneously, relocating forces to Guam would mitigate Japanese domestic political issues and other host nation support concerns. An optimal balance of forward-deployed and rotational forces in the region requires consideration from the perspective of numerous stakeholders and sustained multi-lateral discussions.

Multi-lateral discussions will delay agreements on the security alliance in Asia with the need to gain consensus from numerous stakeholders. However, understanding the frame of reference from key stakeholders supports the rationale for defense posture decisions. As current military and economic trends continue, China will remain the dominant power in Asia. In response to China's rising power, Japan has pushed to increase defense capability. The Sino-Japanese power struggle gets further complicated with issues surrounding a nuclear North Korea.

Considerations in the region expand to include Oceania. However, a significant reduction of United States forces could lead to a regional power struggle, strained Sino-Japanese relations, and instability in the region. A balanced presence of forward-deployed and rotational forces between Okinawa and Guam would provide a sense of security and stability, especially as Japan continues to increase military capability. Considering the perspective of each stakeholder, in addition to understanding the history and culture in the region, does provide a sound foundation for analyzing defense posture initiatives.

As the emphasis in Asia continues to rise in the 21st century, mutually beneficial arrangements between the United States, Japan, Republic of Korea and other key stakeholders in the region become increasingly relevant. A cooperative and balanced posture of forces in Japan effectively addresses the rapidly changing hybrid challenges of the region. As Japan proceeds with expansion of their defense capability, it facilitates the reduction of United States occupation. However, the presence of United States forces remains relevant. The credible presence of United States forces provides a military balance of power in the region.

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