KOREAN STABILITY AND THE U.S.-JAPAN-CHINA RELATIONSHIP

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seen as "a dagger pointed at the heart" of other states, Koreans have traditionally labeled themselves "the shrimp that gets crushed between two whales." To survive this fate, Korea has historically had to rely on combinations of fortification, accommodation, alliance, isolation, and appeasement. In modern times, threats to Korean sovereignty have not been limited to regional neighbors.

Even before the Korean War, powers outside the region attempted to manipulate political events on the Korean Peninsula to advance their own broader interests. Ultimately, this manipulation led to tragic national division. For the past 50 years both Koreas have looked to varying degrees and with varying success to more powerful states to protect their sovereignty and to secure their economic growth and development. The South has looked to the United States and, to a lesser extent Japan, while the North has sometimes concurrently and sometimes alternately relied on China and the Soviet Union. Accommodating when necessary, and manipulating when possible, the Koreas have seen their division reinforced by the conflicts between their respective allies.

All this, however, was an extension of the Cold War in Asia. The end of the Cold War altered global and regional dynamics. Have the patterns of alliance altered as well? With the re-emergence of China as a regional hegemon, formal changes in the U.S.-Japan security relationship, and the possible impact of these changes on Korea's future policy choices, the future of both Koreas is tied to the growing role of a China accommodated by a declining Japan. Just how stable that future will be and how well it will enhance the peaceful reunification of Korea is dependent on how well the United States maintains its own relations with China and on how it responds to closer ties between the nations of Northeast Asia.

I. Korea, the Future, and International Relations

Since 1950, the Korean Peninsula has consistently been characterized as one of the most likely spots for bloody conflict involving multiple powerful states and, under worst circumstances, escalating to nuclear war. With the April 10th announcement of a planned June 2000 summit between South and North Korea, the divided nation finds itself in world headlines once again.[1] Bitterly politically divided, unable until recent years to match the economic clout of its traditional rival Japan, outgunned by the superpowers of China and Russia on its borders, and reliant on security guarantees from other states, Korea seems an unlikely candidate for the focus of global power. Furthermore, these pending talks are not the first time that hopes of reconciliation have been raised. The recent U.S. initiatives undertaken by former Defense Secretary William Perry produced results that were significant given the obstacles but small and tentative in the minds of outside observers. Former President Carter's 1994 attempts to bring the leaders of North and South together collapsed with the death of Kim Il-Sung. Behind these efforts stretched a long trail of hopeful but ultimately abortive diplomatic openings. As the two states cautiously approach this new opportunity for reunification, it might be easy for some to dismiss the significance of the event.

It is important to note, however, that despite past disappointments the future of Korea matters. Korea matters to the rest world in large part because of broad, troubling questions about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the odds that such weapons will be used in a regional conflict. History demonstrates again and again that

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1 CNN.com, "North Korea, South Korea to hold June summit," April 9, 2000, from http://dailynews.netscape.com/dailynews/cnnnews.tmpl?story=koreas.summit.030409.html, accessed 9 April 2000; Howard W. French, "Mood-Dimming Question in Seoul: What Will Be Cost Of Ties to North," *The New York Times*, April 11, 2000, pg A6.

regional conflicts and divided nations can provide the spark for war between more powerful, stable powers. Korea also obviously matters to Koreans and, as will be discussed, further it matters to Japan, to China, to the U.S., and to the bilateral and multilateral relations between all four nations. Ultimately, it is this regional dynamic that provides the important context for all scenarios of reunification and their realistic prospects for success. The longevity of a peaceful, stable, prosperous East Asia is inseparable from a peaceful, stable, unified Korea.

For almost forty years, the Cold War fueled Korean instability. First as a "hot war," then as the site of an uneasy and heavily armed truce, Korea never enjoyed the gradually evolving detente that marked the Super Power confrontation in Europe. Indeed, when the Cold War ended throughout much of the world, the walls did not come down along the 38th parallel. Nevertheless, there are sporadic causes for guarded optimism. In the South, years of military dictatorship, corruption, and brutal political repression gradually gave way to the hopes for civil democracy, economic growth, and domestic stability. Even after the shocks of the recent Asian banking crises setback economic stability, South Korea was arguably the first nation in the region to show clear signs of recovery. While the North long since lost any economic edge over the South and as famine swept through the nation, the long feared, preemptive, suicidal military strike by the DPRK did not materialize. The predicted domestic upheaval in the wake of the death of Kim Il-Sung never occurred. Even though the formal, peaceful resolution of North-South conflict has not taken place, diplomatic options however imperfect and impermanent always seem to be available to resolve tense and threatening moments.

But the fact that the world's fears have not yet been realized does not mean the peace has been established and maintained of its own accord. Avoidance of war has not been accidental. Nor will future stability in Northeast Asia result from benign neglect of Korea's future. To

predict and prescribe for the future of East Asia and the global economy dependent on its growth and stability, one must do several things.

First, it is important to enumerate those nations other than Korea with a role to play in this process. While the nations in question may be obvious, their roles may not. Domestic politics within and relations between those states are as important to peace and stability as Korea's domestic politics and its relationship with those nations.

Next, it is not enough to say that either the continued absence of war or the immediate act of reunification will provide stability. Constant crisis management is no substitute for consistently reliable processes and institutions that move nations toward cooperation and mutual benefit. The economic, social, and political costs of living on the brink of war are far too great. Likewise a rush to reunify at all costs will become just a hasty and naive act that will consume all economic, diplomatic, and political capital and quickly collapse back into chaos and even greater instability.

Finally, as a consequence of the two factors outlined above, it is important to examine independent, peaceful, and sovereign roles for a new Korea. Efforts at bringing peace and stability are in vain if all that result is a temporarily more stable but ultimately weaker buffer or increasingly more dependent on ally. One must view a successful Korean reunification in the broader East Asian and global contexts, but one still must do so through Korean eyes.

II. The Re-emergence of China[2]

To say China has dominated Korea for thousands of years is to

2 Portions of this section and subsequent sections on the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines are edited from an earlier work of the author, "Japan At Century's End: Climbing on China's Bandwagon?" now scheduled to appear in a forthcoming edition of *Pacific Focus: Inha Journal of International Studies*. I have made every effort to update,

assert the obvious. By the same token, however, this is also an overstatement. As Bruce Cumings notes, Korea was never truly Sinicized. Korean culture and language and even the powerful influences of Buddhism and Confucianism while clearly affected by China soon took on a character unique to the Korean Peninsula.[3] But while China's historic role as a cultural influence should be viewed with greater subtlety and balance, China's modern role as the source of regional stability is sometimes underestimated.

It can be argued that Chinese internal domestic stability particularly in the modern era directly affected regional security and stability. Specifically, the emergence of Japanese imperialism and militarism and the resulting colonization and division of Korea can be directly traced to the end of Chinese stability and sovereignty in the 19th Century. With the collapse of one hegemon, a new one emerged far less benevolent than the first.

China's long "Century of Humiliation" drew to a close on the eve of the Korean War. With the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, China was poised to reassert its traditional role as regional hegemon, but only after restoring domestic order and stability. This would be no simple task. First, the Nationalists forces now established in Taiwan were not ready to concede defeat. Second, with the Cold War already well under way the United States was not about to accept a Communist power at the center of Asia.[4] Much has been written else-

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edit, and modify consistent with the topical requirements of each article, however certain repetitive content is essential to both works. My thanks to the editors of both journals for their understanding, patience, and consideration.

3 Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place In The Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), pp. 19-20; McDonald, while according a greater role for Chinese influence than Cumings, lists long term Chinese influence on Korea in the context of pre-existing cultural foundations as well as influences from Japan and the West. Donald S. Macdonald, *The Koreans: Contemporary Politics and Society*, Third Edition (Boulder: Westview, 1996) pg 26.

4 This is a fact in spite of the convincing argument made by Thomas Christensen that

where about the Chinese role in the Korean War, the further isolation of China, the divisive "Who lost China?" debate in America, and the brutal Cultural Revolution in China. It does not need to be detailed again here. That period drew to a close with the U.S. overtures to China in the early 1970s. Regional and global politics began to take a different turn.

American policy to China began to change from containment to encouragement. The U.S. ability to "Play the China Card" against Russia turned on China's sense of security and openness. As early as 1969, the Nixon Administration began reassessing its policy toward China.[5] This dramatic shift in policy was immediately felt by America's Asian allies. The U.S. reversed its long-standing policy of support for Taiwan and began open discussions with the PRC. Some observers expressed cautious optimism at the prospects for East Asia's pro-western developing states in the wake of reduced tensions between the U.S. and China. Confidence was quickly eroded by the failure of the U.S. to come to the aid of collapsing Southeast Asian nations in 1975 and the Carter plan for further U.S. troop withdrawal from Korea in 1977. It was feared that the U.S. might abandon smaller, less influential Cold War nations to gain further advantage in the Super Power competition.[6]

Mao was prepared to establish trade and diplomatic relations with the United States just as he would quickly do with Great Britain. See Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 138-149.

5 Michael Yahuda, *The International Politics of the Asia-Pacific, 1945-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 133. Given subsequent changes in American policy toward Korea, it is worth speculating whether this reassessment was a factor in the U.S. decision to withdraw one of two U.S. Army divisions from Korea in 1970, despite the strong protests of the ROK.

6 For a further discussion of this time period, see Koji Murata "The Origin and Evolution of the Korean-American Alliance: A Japanese Perspective," Asia/Pacific Research Center, Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, August 1998. See also Yahuda, op. cit., pp. 133-139.

China's alliance with the DPRK, combined with its growing relationship with a U.S. now bent on reducing its presence in Asia, seemed to catch South Korea in the middle. Would the U.S. use its new relationship to urge Chinese intervention on behalf of North Korean restraint? Would the North Koreans see a shrinking American presence as an opportunity to attack? Would this be a painful repeat of the American sell-out of Korea by Theodore Roosevelt in the Taft-Katsura Agreement?

In fact, China began to act in ways that few might have predicted. As American initiatives to China increased, so did Chinese openings to South Korea. China was keenly aware that conflict in Korea ultimately led to Chinese intervention in 1950 at a time when the PRC could ill-afford the political, economic, and human costs. Regional fears of Chinese expansion and support for revolutionary insurgencies had helped fuel the Cold War while further isolating China from its neighbors. Any confusion China may have had about the methods it used to exercise power and influence in Asia was further resolved by its disastrous military foray into Vietnam. It was time for new directions.

Beginning in the early 1980s, China initiated a series of Track II style diplomatic initiatives with South Korea. Exchanges of athletic teams and other unofficial interactions began the process of dialogue at low levels. Meanwhile the two nations began to trade despite formal prohibitions of such activity. Slowly at first, Chinese goods would make their way to third party nations most frequently Japan and Hong Kong for transfer to South Korean vessels while Korean goods would make the reverse voyage. By the end of the decade the trade was no longer kept secret and by 1995 China was South Korea's third largest trading partner. Trade in those 15 years had climbed from estimates of less than a million dollars to more than $16 billion.[7]

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7 Macdonald, *The Koreans*, p. 216. I also researched this topic in 1985 for an academic study that was never formally published. At the time, open sources in both Korea and western media reported extensively on ROK-PRC athletic exchanges and spec-

Despite a decade marked by harsh and often violent domestic political upheaval in the South and continuing perceptions of imminent hostilities between the two Koreas, relations between the ROK and the PRC steadily improved.[8] The economic benefits to both countries were obvious. What if any were the political and diplomatic benefits? As the Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union faded, fears of Chinese power re-emerged.

In the 1990s, China began to reassert its traditional regional hegemonic role. The economic modernizations of the Deng era continued with increasing success. China appeared poised on the brink of achieving the economic potential that had so long eluded its grasp. With that economic growth, however, had come pressures for political reform. The tragedy at Tiananmen sobered those who had seen nothing but positive benefits from China's dramatic growth.[9]

Along with the new tensions between open reform and domestic political stability, long standing unresolved issues reemerged. In a throwback to U.S.-China tensions of the 1950s, the Taiwan Strait again became a site for confrontation. The threat of a formally independent Taiwan escalated to show-of-force missile launches by the PRC and the deployment of U.S. Naval vessels within range of the confrontation. The Chinese talked of missiles that could reach Los Angeles, and U.S. rhetoric lumped together China with Iraq and Libya. Now the U.S. saw China as a hostile, emerging power rather than a stabilizing regional force with growing markets.[10] China was depicted in the same grim

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ulated that trades between the two countries had doubled in the course of three years.

8 Meanwhile, North Korea tilted toward the Soviet Union, a move that proved to be a mistake after 1991.

9 Barton Gellman, "U.S. And China Nearly Came To Blows In '96; Tension Over Taiwan Prompted Repair of Ties," *Washington Post*, Sunday, June 21, 1998, p. A01; pp. 8-12; Susan M. Puska, *New Century, Old Thinking: The Dangers of the Perceptual Gap in U.S.-China Relations* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute-Army War College, 1998).

language of aggression last heard in the 1960s. Was Korea about to assume its ancient proverbial role as the "shrimp crushed between two whales?"

The view of China as an powerful, aggressive, militarist state finds challengers from those, like Gerald Segal and Russell Howard, who argue that China's military might and potential political and economic power is far less than imagined.[11] Furthermore, despite the harsh rhetoric, however, China is now clearly "playing by the rules."[12] While critics warn of Chinese aggression and condemn both their domestic and international behavior, Beijing consistently conforms to the unwritten parameters of acceptable state behavior for a "mature" state. Western critics can and do attack China for its human rights record, disputed claims of territory, and bellicose rhetoric. Despite the continued alarm about an aggressive expansionist threat, China's regional behavior largely reflects accepted diplomacy as broadly defined. It is interesting to note that China's most significant threats of military action in recent years (aside from those directed at Taiwan as part of what Beijing considers its internal security and about which more will be said below) were directed not at regional neighbors, but at the United States. The threat to nuke Los Angeles was probably loose talk subject to wide interpretation when taken out of context, but there was no comparable casual aside about setting Osaka or Taegu on fire.[13]

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10 Ibid.

11 Gerald Segal, "Does China Matter?" *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 5 (September/October 1999) pp. 24-36; Russell D. Howard, *The Chinese People's Liberation Army: "Short Arms and Slow Legs,"* Institute for National Security Studies Occasional Paper 28, Regional Security Series, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado, September 1999.

12 For discussions of China's "playing by the rules," see Sheldon W. Simon, *The Economic Crisis and ASEAN States' Security* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, 1998) p. 22, and Xinbo Wu, "China as a Cooperative Power," *Blue Horizon: United States-Japan-PRC Tripartite Relations* (Washington, DC: National University Press, 1997) p. 126.

13 Gellman, "U.S. And China Nearly Came To Blows," ibid.

This is consistent with China's practice in recent years. As fears of China's growing economic power lead to speculation about its ambitions, China continues to focus on internal stability. Even in those matters where other nations such as Taiwan and Tibet challenge China's assertions of sovereignty, China generally opts to stop at the "Line of Departure" for military action and then seek gradual restoration of diplomatic dialogue as quickly as possible. When push comes to shove, China rarely shoves.

Recent statements on Taiwan are certainly worrisome and bellicose and any attempts to turn those words into action would have disastrous results for the region and the world. However, such statements, when read carefully and in their entirety, are completely consistent with previous proclamations from Beijing. Coming in the wake of U.S. Congressional moves to restore U.S.-ROC military ties and the recent national elections in Taiwan, this is not out of the ordinary. Furthermore, observers must constantly be reminded that formal independence for Taiwan is inconsistent with U.S. policy under six Presidents. A reversal of that policy is tantamount to a formal declaration of support for what has historically been China's worst nightmare civil war.

The Chinese has been cautious and diplomatic at other potential flash points. Despite continued assertions of rights under international law and the ongoing presence of PLA troops on contested islands and reefs, China has consistently shied from confrontation in the South China Sea. It has become less not more aggressive as its power has grown and as other states appear to move to contain that power. Meanwhile, the reestablishment of Chinese rule in Hong Kong while not without some expected political controversies has not seen the kind of violent repression that some predicted.

Compare contemporary Chinese foreign policy to either its weak and unstable compliance to both Western and Japanese demands in the early half of this century or to the excesses of the Cultural Revolution era. Compare China to the two polar opposites of the diplomatic

and security policy spectrum represented by its regional neighbors, Japan and the DPRK. Compare Chinese rhetoric and actions to any one of the rogue states found in any other region of the world. By any measure, China is far less the outlaw state than it is sometimes perceived to be.

Realists would argue that an aggressive, expansionist power would be more likely to exploit weakness and instability particularly in those states at the periphery, in ways that would be likely to weaken the status quo power. An example of such a target of opportunity would be Korea. A security crisis in Korea particularly one where the United States interest would be challenged and where a lack of U.S. resolve might be demonstrated would seem to be in the interest of an expansive power. Instead, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, China is arguably the only major power capable of productively dealing with both Koreas. In recent years its reaction to DPRK aggressive moves has been more like those of the U.S. than of mischief making expansionist challenger seeking to create turmoil it can then exploit.[14]

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14 In making this assertion, I generally accept the conclusions of those like Sheldon Simon, Fei-ling Wang, and others that see contemporary China as less likely to take unilateral aggressive action consistent with a classic expansionist challenger state. See Simon, "Alternative Visions of Security in the Asia Pacific," *Pacific Affairs*, vol., 69, no.3 (Fall 1996), pp. 386-388 and Wang, "To Incorporate China," *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1997). I also accept the argument that China's traditionally preferred role is that of the cultural, political, economic hegemon avoiding offensive action in favor of defensive. There are examples in this century that would counter this assertion (India 1962, Vietnam 1979), but I would argue that these were limited and ultimately unsuccessful actions. Other actions sometimes categorized as aggressive were either driven by long standing and arguably legal (however distasteful) responses to what were considered internal stability crises (i.e. Tibet, Taiwan) and in the post Revolutionary Era the preference was to resolve these crises with the minimum necessary force. See also Thomas J. Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 49-80 and the subsequent debate between Christensen and Jennifer M. Lind in "Correspondence: Spirals, Security, and Stability in East Asia," *International Security*, vol. 24, no. 4 (Spring 2000), pp. 190-200. While my conclusions

This is not to say China does not seek power. Indeed, China consistently seeks to restore the regional hegemonic role lost in the 19th century with China's political implosion under western imperial pressures and Japan's dramatic emergence from Tokugawa Era isolation. In fact one could argue that by choosing to pursue bilateral relationships with South Korea and Japan and by acting in a manner consistent with the expectations of a status quo power, China is being more of a comprehensive realist, status quo power than is sometimes acknowledged.[15]

This consideration of China's aspirations to hegemony extends to the evaluation of the strategic environment throughout East Asia. China, like other states in Asia, is struggling to achieve economic stability and modernization while maintaining domestic stability. It must also be noted that this view of China as a non-expansionist power does not necessarily make it a benign state that does not threaten American interests or even short-term stability as perceived by the U.S. The U.S., long guarantor of the stability, allowed East Asia (less China) to develop and grow. By re-enforcing its own status quo and constraining the emergence of potential peer competitors, the U.S. is now viewed as a potentially destabilizing hegemon by China and even by some other powers in the region.[16]

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are not wholly supportive of the conclusions drawn by other scholars to include Alastair Ian Johnston and Arthur Waldron, I believe they are still compatible.

15 For a far more cogent and intelligent discussion of China and realist theory, see Thomas J. Christensen, "Chinese Realpolitik," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 5 (September/October 1996). Further discussion of China's role as a status quo rather than an expansionist state can be found in Robert S. Ross, "The Geography of Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century," *International Security*, vol 23, no. 4 (Spring 1999), see particularly pp. 83-86.

16 Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, "Indonesia Re-Thinks Its Military Ties to the United States," 28 March 2000 from http://www.stratfor.com/SERVICES/giu2000/032800.ASP accessed 20 April 2000; See also "United States and Malaysia Volley for Asian Influence" 3 March 2000, from http://www.stratfor.com/asia/commentary/0003030123.htm accessed 20 April 2000. Critics of my argument here will correctly note that in both these instances, American criticism of domestic

U.S. strategic doctrine, exercised through what some have referred to as "peaceful evolution" toward a western style political and economic democracy, is viewed as challenge (and, in fact, as a threat by some) to the stability and growth of individual states. American led NATO intervention in the Balkans further served to heighten those fears, particularly in the context of increased independence rhetoric from Taiwan. The accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade reinforced these concerns and heightened domestic political pressures on Beijing. As a non-expansionist hegemon, China offers to other states in Asia an alternative to this perceived American strategy of political transformation through intervention whether by peaceful engagement or by American air strikes.[17]

This is particularly attractive in Southeast Asia where leaders have resurrected post colonial era rhetoric to blame the West for what are mostly locally generated economic crises.[18] China is in the same boat economically, socially, and, some would argue, politically. The U.S., no longer the guarantor of stability, is now viewed in Asia as the harbinger of ideals and practices that challenge the existing order and threaten to restrain and inhibit the growth and stability of Asia. Furthermore, domestic political pressures in the U.S. on both the right and the left fuel and sustain this approach.[19]

This image of America may be at odds with the empirical data. It

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human rights policies in these states is a more significant factor than any systemic level realist concerns. I recognize this, but contend that this, in fact, reinforces my point.

17 One this particular contention over the issue of human rights, Japan sometimes shares the views of other states in Asia. See Michel Oksenberg, "China and the Japanese-American Alliance," Gerald Curtis, ed. *The United States, Japan, and Asia: Challenges for US Policy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), p. 100.

18 Simon, "Alternative Visions," *Pacific Affairs*, vol., 69, no.3 (Fall 1996), pp. 386-388.

19 See, for example, Stephen J. Yates, "China's Democracy Crackdown Demands a Presidential Response," *The Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum*, no. 567, January 25, 1999.

may be fundamentally contradictory to the principles of self-determination so passionately espoused by many nations in the region. In the long term, it may be a less effective means of achieving and sustaining economic prosperity. That does not mean it is any less salient to those states like Korea that perceive that they must choose between these two competing approaches.

III. Japan From Pacifism and Economic Power To Miscalculation and Decline

It is impossible to assess Korean security without discussing Japan. The other "whale" to Korea's "shrimp," the two nations share a tragic past. In Japan's long history, there are only brief periods of significant militarism and aggression each separated by many centuries. All involve Korea and are still frequently invoked by Koreans as evidence of Japan's true national character. The subjugation and brutal colonization of Korea in this century serve as the start point for modern Korean history.

The sad history of Japan's rule of Korea ends with the defeat for Japan but not the independence of a unified Korea. With the division of the Peninsula, Japan ceased to play a role in the domestic life of Korea, but assumed a new role in Korea's security. The American military in Japan soon became more than an occupying force. With the onset of the Cold War, U.S. troops in Japan were now the forward-deployed guarantor of Asian security and a visible defense against aggression. To the mission of serving as a "cork in the bottle" preventing the re-emergence of Japanese militarism was added the mission of "unsinkable aircraft carrier." The Korean War hastened the end of formal occupation but ensured the continuation of American troop presence. Japan had to move from subservience to partnership. Unfortunately for U.S. strategists, the American sponsored constitution and

the resulting change in Japanese political culture ensured that Japan would not be a full partner. Japan lacked the military might to contribute to its defense, while the new constitution at best restrained and, according to most interpretations, completely prohibited the establishment of a military.

This was perfectly acceptable to Japan's neighbors, particularly Korea. American troops were on South Korean soil to ensure defense of the peninsula and on Japanese soil both to reinforce that defense and to ensure protection from Japan. In one sense, however, this backfired. While South Korea and America both contributed to Korea's defense, Japan initially contributed virtually nothing to its own security. Japan was free to focus its limited wealth on reconstruction. In a just a few decades, Japan the defeated power saw its domestic economy far outstrip that of its former colony.

U.S. domestic politics soon threatened to end that advantage. As Japan's economy to compete with that of the U.S., Americans began to question why the U.S. paid the lion's share of defending both Japan and South Korea. In the 1970s disturbing new questions arose about American commitments to Asia in general and Japan in particular. The so-called "Nixon Shocks" of both the China initiatives and the change in the gold standard, the collapse of U.S. military support for Southeast Asia, the debate over reducing force levels in Korea, and growing U.S. resentment of Japan's economic policies all focused attention on Japan's dependence on the U.S. defensive umbrella.

Slowly and incrementally, Japan took steps to reduce that dependence. Each step, however, was an individually negotiated revision rather than the implementation of a long-term strategy. Every change meant a domestic political battle in a Japan. Every failure to change raised doubts in Korea. Murata and Cha, both citing Glenn Snyder, have noted that the relationship between the two states was marked by Japan's fear of entrapment in a war in Korea and Korea's fear of abandonment by the U.S.[20]

Often the changes were two steps forward and one back. Positive progress would be made, only to see Japanese officials "explain" the action that been so painstakingly constructed. For example, the Sato Government's "Korea Clause" of 1969 stated that "the security of the Republic of Korea is essential to the security of Japan." Shortly thereafter, in a process that would repeat itself over the years, a Japanese government official would come forward and provide a contradictory "explanation" of the policy, undercutting the specific, carefully crafted agreement that lead to this statement.[21]

All the while, tremendous economic strength gave Japan a false sense of international power and influence. With the end of the Cold War, Japan saw itself as a role model for others; a pacifist state whose anti-militarism combined with economic strength would make it a natural leader for all those states now adjusting to a new world order. This euphoria was short lived. Soon a combination of embedded pacifism, diplomatic miscalculation, and economic setbacks would combine to reverse Japan's progress and to render the Japanese incapable of effectively responding to changing dynamics in the international system.

While the original so-called "Peace Constitution" had renounced the need for a Japanese military, subsequent bilateral treaties and defense guidelines had established a role for a Japanese Defense Force.[22] The Japanese Self Defense Force had evolved beyond that of a national police force. It had a part to play in buttressing the American Cold War response to perceived threat from China and particularly in the 1970s from the growing Soviet Pacific Fleet. But unlike the West

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20 Murato, "Origin and Evolution" op. cit.; Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The U.S.-Korea- Japan Triangle* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999).

21 Murato, op. cit.

22 Japan Defense Agency, "Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America," (1960) and "Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation," (1978) [web site] (Tokyo, Japan: Boeichho Jieitai, February, 1999, accessed 12 February 1999); available from http://www.jda.go.jp/policy/f_work/sisin4_.htm; Internet.

German military, which had developed into a professional fighting force with an important military role in NATO, Japan's military role was far more symbolic than functional.[23]

Japan's military, seriously constrained at its outset, became even more so as the Cold War continued. Two major barriers emerged that virtually assured the unlikelihood of a mainstream military force consistent with what some observers have termed a "normal" nation. The first constraint was cultural. One purpose of the American directed Peace Constitution was the suppression and eventual elimination of what was perceived as a traditional Japanese militarist culture.

In point of fact, this militarist tradition was and continues to be overstated. The western mythology surrounding the Samurai and their Bushido Code generally overlooks the fact that the Samurai traditions were centered on Japanese domestic politics and not the tactics and doctrine of a professional military. Furthermore, what is also often forgotten is that the overwhelming majority of instances of Samurai actually fighting involved fighting with other Samurai. Particularly when compared to other states in other regions, foreign invasion of Japan or instances of Japan aggressively venturing beyond the home islands were rare and ultimately unsuccessful. Japan's "militarism" was primarily domestic. For more than 300 years while European states engaged in a series of major conflicts Japan's Army did not march beyond its own borders. Indeed, a Japanese "Army" comparable to those of Europe did not exist.

When the Meiji Era military did march, their victories were against weak armies of overextended imperialist powers or of divided and unstable nations. In every case until 1942, they confronted militaries

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23 For an overview of the roots of this security posture and an alternative to my views on its future, see Hidekazu Sakai, "From Defense to Prevention: Japanese New Defense Strategy in the Post-Yoshida Doctrine," unpublished paper presented at the 40th Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association (ISA), Washington, D.C., 16-20 February 1999.

that failed to keep pace with Japan's modernization in tactics and technology.[24] At first, Japan was effective at capitalizing on China's collapse and Korea's failure to keep pace with modernization. Other nations particularly those western states still pursuing imperialist policies of their own initially accommodated and even aided Japan, facilitating its rise to regional power. Japan could not, however, consolidate and sustain this newfound power. As soon as other nations took seriously the threat and moved to confront it, Japan's offensive military power was checked and defeat was inevitable. Faced with their failure to match the superior technology and logistics of allied armies on the front lines and their inability to fully suppress resistance and effectively rule their Korean and Manchurian colonies, the vastly overrated Japanese forces were ultimately defeated.

The militarism the post WWII Constitution sought to crush (and that every subsequent agreement guarded against) was inspired by the relatively brief anomaly of Japanese strategic behavior between 1885 and 1945. Furthermore, opposition to a stronger role for the Japanese military was already rooted in the domestic political consciousness. Japanese at all levels of society were aware that the one consistent pattern in Japanese military behavior over centuries was disruptive involvement in domestic politics and the enforcement of a repressive police state first under the Shoguns and then under the restored

24 This history was actually a barrier to militarization during the early stages of the Meiji Restoration. Japanese government officials were among those who consciously created and nurtured the myth of the warrior ethic, misappropriating Japan's history and even adapting elements of Shinto to advance nationalist objectives. The mass, western style Meiji Army was, in fact, a corruption of the elitist traditions of the Samurai. Ironically, some of the military mythology used to enhance the fighting spirit of Japanese units in the Pacific War were taken from examples of units who fought against the Meiji forces at the end of the reign of the Shogunate. See for example John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Knopf, 1993); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Paul Varley, *Warriors of Japan as Portrayed in the War Tales* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

emperors. The Japanese people did fear the resurgence of a strong place in society for the military. These fears were based as much or more on the domestic costs as they were on the international ones.[25]

This anti-militarism is reinforced by the historical absence of a strong, effective institutional role for the military in particular and national security in general. Government agencies not only reflect the culture of anti-militarism in practice, but also do so by formal design. As Katzenstein and Okawara note, "Japan's security policy is formulated within institutional structures that bias policy strongly against a forceful articulation of military security objectives and accord pride of place instead to a comprehensive definition of security that centers on economic and political dimensions of national security."[26]

After 45 years the Cold War ended and with it the premise of much of America's security policies based on a bipolar world. However, despite the apparent end of an immediate Soviet threat, the perceived need for the American security umbrella over Japan did not change. The first serious challenge to the existing security order would come from something other than the collapse of the Soviet Union; the 1990-1991 Gulf War.

As the rest of the world's industrialized nations found ways to visibly and actively support the allied coalition in the Gulf, Japan looked

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25 These and numerous other conclusions and observations about Japanese security beliefs and attitudes are based on more than 100 "non-attribution" interviews conducted in 1995 and 1996 with Japanese government officials, scholars, journalists, and businessmen as well as with foreign observers with extensive residence and professional experience in Japan. See also Thomas U. Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-militarism," in Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, ed. *East Asian Security: An International Security Reader* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996); Peter Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara, "Japan's National Security: Structures, Norms, and Policies," in Brown, Lynn-Jones, and Miller, ed. East Asian Security; and Jay M. Parker, "The New Melians? Japan's Security Dilemma," unpublished paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, March 1997, Toronto.

26 Katzenstein and Okawara, ibid.

for ways to avoid any involvement. The Constitutional constraints were cited, but Germany had found ways to bypass constraints on its post-war Constitution in order to contribute to the defense of the oil fields vital to its industrial capabilities. Japanese officials used back channels to contact American friends and professional counterparts. How much, they asked their stunned U.S. colleagues, would Japan have to pay to be a part of the effort? When told that other nations willing to pay in flesh and blood would not consider payment in Yen a comparable sacrifice, Japanese officials seemed surprised.[27] Japan had so thoroughly embraced the perceived role of "pacifist" economic superpower during the Cold War that it was unable to change that role in the new strategic environment when its own economic survival was at stake.

Economic survival was highlighted in other ways at the end of the Cold War. Trade friction between the U.S. and Japan had increased significantly since the 1970s. As heated as the trade conflicts were, they did not seriously threaten the defense alliance. The common security threat, more than a shared economic ideology, kept trade tensions from escalating to trade war. Now, however, the common threat was gone and domestic political voices in the U.S. called for an end to what were seen as unleveled playing fields.

Furthermore, those critics of Japanese trade practices were also

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27 This story, verified by several individuals, was from officials who understandably insisted on non-attribution. A comparable example was noted by Thomas Berger, who noted that JDA and JSDF officials were deliberately cut out of even routine interaction with Japan's political leadership during the Gulf War for fear that their suspected militarist thinking might poison the minds of Japanese decision makers. See Berger, "Tangled Visions: Culture, Historical Memory and Japan's External Relations in Asia," paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, September 6, 1998. 21-22. This official pacifism spilled over into the domestic role of the JSDF. Following the devastating earthquakes in 1995, many JSDF units were prevented from carrying out disaster relief efforts despite their unique skills and equipment.

beginning to highlight the pacifist advantage provided to the Japanese economy. Our fiercest economic rival, it was argued, suffered no domestic economic drain from a fully mature defense capability, and enjoyed actual, measurable financial return on Japanese maintenance of U.S. troops and their facilities in Japan.

It was against this backdrop that Japan was next met with several new challenges that forced a reconsideration of traditional approaches to security. These challenges and the resulting reevaluation would produce a number of adjustments in Japanese policies and practices and would eventually culminate in new U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines. However, these adjustments are clearly not yet permanent and, in fact, in some ways the old beliefs and practices have become more entrenched.

First, in the aftermath of the Gulf War, Japan saw its international image as economic role model tarnished by the perceived willingness to let others fight and die to provide the oil fueling Japanese economic power. Many Japanese interviewed after the war cited the exclusion of any acknowledgment of Japan's financial support in the full page "Thank You" newspaper advertisements purchased by the Kuwaiti Government.

Next, Japan bashing a recurring phenomenon in American Politics reemerged in the 1992 American Presidential race. Patience with unfair trading practices had worn thin. Several candidates saw no reason to accept these trade barriers now that they were no longer excused by the Cold War threat. At issue was Japan bearing the costs for its own defense as well as its ill-defined role in securing and stabilizing the region. If the U.S. is committed to the defense of South Korea in large part to ensure the economic security of Japan, and if the defeat of South Korea would have relatively minor effects on the U.S. economy and major effects on Japan, why was the U.S. bearing this obligation with little or no formal Japanese support?[28]

New international demands were also being placed on Japan. The

campaign for a Japanese permanent seat on the Security Council had first been undercut by Japan's refusal to provide troops for UN mandated actions in the Gulf War.[29] Now the post-Cold War world was demanding more UN help in the form of peacekeeping missions. What seemed like a perfect role for a "pacifist force" still faced domestic political hurdles. The proposal to send JSDF troops to Cambodia was hotly and emotionally debated in the Japanese Diet. The Cambodian mission involved observing and protecting free elections in a nation where commitment to a cease-fire was tenuous.

Japan eventually deployed an all-volunteer force, comprised of JSDF personnel and National Police. This ad hoc organization was committed only after very specific restrictions on everything from the types of equipment deployed to the rules of engagement governing actions of individual members of the force. The death of one member of the force brought immediate fears of a dramatic public backlash against this and any future missions.

The tragedy was tempered in part by family members of the peacekeeping force member who lost his life. Their pride in his sacrifice and their endorsement of the continuation of the mission seemed to calm public opinion. This combined with the perceived success of the mission to enhanced prestige of the JSDF. The JSDF was now perceived by some as a positive organization. Anecdotal evidence pointed to greater

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28 During the same campaign, American policies of engagement with China became the target of Democratic candidate and eventual victor Bill Clinton who criticized incumbent President George Bush for coddling Chinese dictators.

29 In fairness to Japan, the Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers were serving in greater numbers than their counterparts, the U.S. Peace Corps. Despite suspicions of a deliberate role in advancing global Japanese economic influence, JOCV continues to do valuable development work around the world. However, it was also noted in numerous interviews that returning volunteers receive no benefits or returnee assistance comparable to that of the Peace Corps. Furthermore, volunteers and Japanese businesses both report that service in the JOCV is viewed as a professional setback. Far from being viewed as valuable assets in a global economy, they are thought to be behind the professional power curve; sometimes irretrievably so.

public acceptance of those in uniform.[30] When the Japanese Diet again debated proposed peacekeeping roles for the JSDF, protests were smaller and more subdued.

This new JSDF mission was not accepted by all, however. Some JSDF officers and JDA officials mirrored concerns of the American military as they took on peacekeeping missions. These missions, it was argued, were inconsistent with the training and purpose of a military force. Preparing for and conducting these missions undercut unit cohesion and effectiveness. Despite the first opportunity in almost fifty years to take part in a real operation, arguments were made that taking this step would leave the JSDF unprepared to conduct missions it was forbidden to conduct under the existing Japanese Constitution.[31]

The Cambodia mission was further confused by the assertive role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in ultimately bringing about the accords that led to free elections. Despite its own initial, long standing, official rejection of any security role in the region, ASEAN had helped secure negotiations with the various Cambodian factions. What had been the loose trading links between newly emerging, recently decolonized economies had grown into an effective, assertive, collective voice in Asian affairs. This came at a time when Southeast Asian economies had gone from being Japan's customers to being Japan's competitors. One began to hear of "Japan Passing"—the bypassing of Japan and its markets by those now investing in the rapidly growing economies of Southeast Asia. In fact, many of those investments came from Japan. This was more than just concern over reduced market share. Japan's powerful economy appeared to be in serious trouble. Declining rates of economic growth, rising unemploy-

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30 Shortly after the Cambodia mission, stunned observers told of seeing JSDF personnel assigned to the Headquarters in Tokyo's Roppongi district wearing uniforms in public outside the compound during the lunch hour.

31 Author's interviews with JSDF officers conducted at the National Institute for Defense Studies in the summer of 1995.

ment, reduced hiring of new graduates by some firms, and rumors of pending bank collapse undercut Japanese domestic confidence. The American image of Japan continued to be one of a threatening economic juggernaut.[32]

Finally, old threats to Japanese security were reasserting themselves, replacing any perceived loss of dangers with the end of the Cold War. North Koreaa perennial regional rogue power now seemed to be capable of possessing nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. Always a destabilizing threat, the stakes of ignoring North Korea had considerably increased. Negotiations to contain the feared nuclear capability were further complicated by the early phases of a national agricultural crisis that would soon become a widespread famine and by the death of DPRK leader Kim Il-Sung. Facing crushing economic pressures, a series of natural disasters, uncertainty over the continuity of regime leadership, and traditional ally China adhering more to mainstream diplomacy than to revolution, the fear and perceived respect accorded to North Korea's new power fueled nationalism and Japanese fears of DPRK military actions.[33]

In the midst of all this uncertainty and turmoil, both North Korea

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32 American public awareness of Japanese economics traditionally lags behind fact. In the years when Japan first began to emerge as an economic power, "Made in Japan" was still a punchline alluding to shoddy goods. When American's trade imbalance with the Netherlands outstripped that with Japan, Americans still chose to sledge hammer Toyotas and VCRs instead of tulips and wooden shoes. Some observers saw any talk of declining Japanese power as, at best, premature. Some like Chalmers Johnson and other "revisionists" used sophisticated analyses of Japanese politics and comprehensive evaluations of economic data to counter alarmist accounts of the bursting of the Japanese economic bubble. See Johnson's Japan: Who Governs? (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995) and "Correspondence: Japan's Miracle Economy," Orbis, vol. 40, no. 3 (Summer 1996). See also R. Taggart Murphy, *The Weight of the Yen: How Denial Imperils America's Future and Ruins an Alliance* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).

33 Victor Cha, "Is There Still a Rational North Korean Option for War?" *Security Dialogue*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1998; United States Institute of Peace, "Special Report: North Korea's Decline and China's Strategic Dilemmas," October 1997.

and China heightened traditional nationalist anxieties by pointing to a Japanese threat. In official publications, academic gatherings, and in private conversations accusations ranged from a subtle increase in Japanese cultural militarism to the Japanese development and deployment of expensive, modern weapon systems (many of which were not even in the Japanese inventory).[34] Japanese officials did little to defuse these fears.

The recurring issue of Japan's apology for aggression during World War II was rekindled by the debate over compensation for "comfort women," forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military in World War II. Attempts to resolve or even downplay public attention to this issue were frequently foiled by Japanese government officials who would issue denials and even rationalizations for these abuses, fueling hard line nationalists in China, Korea, and throughout Southeast Asia.[35]

Against this backdrop the Nye Initiative began in 1994. Aimed at focusing U.S. strategy in Asia and solidifying a long term U.S. presence in the region, this effort became the new centerpiece of the U.S. alliance with Japan. It was meant to clarify Japan's defensive role, ending some speculation that had begun to erode domestic U.S. support for the alliance. Furthermore, it reasserted America's commitment to remain forward deployed in East Asia. In this role, the U.S. could serve as offshore balancer / honest broker among Asian nations to help preserve

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34 One alarmist story in DPRK news publications during 1995 excitedly reported the building and launching of Japanese aircraft carriers. Meanwhile, numerous Chinese participants in U.S. academic conferences insisted that Japan was rearming and conditioning its public for a reassertion of the "traditional" martial culture. One senior Chinese academic told a 1996 APSA panel that "All the signs are there!"

35 Cameron Barr, "The Politics of Apology in the Orient," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 30, 1998, p. 1; Berger, "Tangled Visions," ibid.; Yinan He, "The Effect of Historical Memory on China's Strategic Perception of Japan," unpublished paper prepared for 94th Annual Conference of the American Political Science Association, September 3-6, 1998, Boston, MA; Puska, *New Century, Old Thinking*, ibid.

stability during important years of economic growth.[36]

The Nye Initiative was also a way to reassure other powers of American willingness to continue to serve as the "cork in the bottle," restraining Japanese militarism by eliminating the need for Japan to play a dramatically increased role in its own security. The Cold War was over, but fears of regional instability still existed. In some specific cases, such as Korea, those fears were justified. The U.S. maintenance of a forward presence in Asia would continue with a clearer outline of Japanese responsibilities exercised under U.S. restraint.

The Nye initiative led to the formal 1994 proposal to conduct bilateral discussions aimed at revising the 1978 Guidelines. After overcoming bureaucratic obstacles and delays within the U.S. foreign and defense policy establishment, the revision process gained further momentum provided by the 1996 Clinton-Hashimoto talks. In September 1997, after long negotiations, numerous trial balloons and press speculation throughout Asia, the new Guidelines were formally announced.[37]

A portion of the guidelines was the clarification of the role Japan would play in the defense of Korea. Sensitive to Korean objections to Japanese troops on its soil, but mindful of the need for Japanese basing for vital logistics and support elements, America and Japan had appeared to have carefully threaded a path that met the strategic needs. America also managed to resist domestic political pressure for

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36 Joseph Nye, Jr. "The Case for Deep Engagement," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 4 (July / August 1995), pp. 90-102; see also The White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, February 1996, and *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, May 1997.

37 Asher, "Fresh Perspectives on East Asia's Future: A U.S.-Japan Alliance for the Next Century," *Orbis*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp. 343-373; "The Grunts Behind the 'Nye Initiative'," *Tokyo Insideline*, no. 38, March 31, 1995. For a further summary of the guidelines negotiations, their outcome, and an analysis of their consequences, see Jay M. Parker, "Japan At Century's End: Climbing on China's Bandwagon?" *Pacific Focus*, forthcoming.

linkage between trade and the security alliance. Cooperation in the event of war in Korea was at least clarified if not fully and favorably resolved.

The Guidelines also sent an important message to the remainder of the region. Fears of unchecked Japanese resurgence were put to rest. The DPRK was put on notice that Japan would not effectively block a U.S. defense of South Korea. Most important of all, the U.S. was still committed to Asia for the long run.[38] As for any threat from China, former U.S. Ambassadors James Lilly and Richard Solomon were optimistic that the proper balance had been struck. "Instead of fulfilling any of the more pessimistic assessments of Chinese behavior, American policy has struck a balance between engagement and deterrence. U.S. efforts to develop a theater missile defense for the region and the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan Guidelines have been offset by substantive gestures to China on a range of issues. This has been a workable and desirable approach that seems to function well, incorporating as it does elements of engagement and deterrence."[39]

Despite all this, however, the Guidelines would soon prove to be more strategic challenge than strategic success. At the center of the challenge was the important provision on actions outside Japanese territory. As noted above, this section led to the long sought clarification of Japan's potential role in support of any U.S. contingencies in Korea. Instead, China immediately perceived this as a potential opening for Japanese involvement in future crises in the Taiwan Strait. A Japanese cabinet minister fueled this perception by stating that the new Guidelines, in fact, meant a potential opening for Japanese involvement in

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38 Associated Press, "Japan, U.S. OK Military Compact," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 24, 1997, Wednesday, p. 06A.

39 James Lilley and Richard Solomon, "Strategic Perspectives," in Strategic Trends In China, ed. Hans Binnendijk and Ronald N. Montaperto (Washington, DC: Institute For National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 1998); available from http://www.ndu.edu/ndu/ndu/inss/books/china/chinasess9.html, accessed 12 February 1999; Internet.

future crises in the Taiwan Strait. Japan was now empowered (or trapped, depending on the perspective) to act in future crises.[40]

The fact that China was an indirect target of the new Guidelines had been acknowledged and published well before the final draft was completed. During the process of the Guidelines negotiations, the fear of a growing China was frequently cited as a rationale for clarifying the existing relationship.[41] China's reaction to a general perception of opposition to its traditional regional hegemony was not unexpected. "We cannot help but suspect that there is something new (in the guidelines) because you have produced new ones," the Chinese foreign minister said.[42] In all likelihood, such rhetoric actually helped reinforce elements of contemporary Chinese nationalism. However, the perceived interference in what was viewed as the strictly domestic political matter of Taiwan was viewed as a dangerous threat.

Korea also responded to the guidelines. As expected, the DPRK was scathing in its criticism. Somewhat unexpectedly, South Korea was only cautiously supportive. Publicly, ROK government officials said both Japan and the U.S. should "continue to hold close consultations with South Korea on matters related to its sovereignty." Off the record, ROK officials "expressed concern that the new defense guidelines might pave the way for heightened Japanese military influence in the region."[43]

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40 Mary Kwang, "Hashimoto admits he failed to win China over on U.S.-Japan pact," *The Straits Times* (Singapore), September 27 (?) 1997, p. 21; Goro Hashimoto, "China blasts revised defense guidelines," *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), September 30, 1997, p. 1.

41 "Views From Abroad / More consultation needed on security pact," *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), September 26, 1997, p. 11. Lexis-Nexis accessed 12 February 1999; Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Japan-U.S. pact renews fear of militarism," *Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), May 2, 1996, Thursday, p. 8

42 Goro Hashimoto, "Chian blasts revised defense guidelines, *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), September 30, 1997, p. 1.

43 "Seoul Wants Say in Expanded Japanese Defense Role," *The Korea Herald*, September 25, 1997.

Once the guidelines were announced, governments in Southeast Asia were cautiously supportive. Southeast Asia's support, however, came as the region's banking crisis was just beginning. Within a year, anti-Western themes would underlie much domestic political rhetoric. The U.S. was now blamed, in part, for the financial crises that had cut short the once promising domestic economic growth of the region.

Japan's response to regional reactions was first to work to reassure China. While moving forward with legislation and administrative policies to support implementation of the Guidelines, Prime Minister Hashimoto worked quickly to reassure China of Japan's unwillingness to be drawn into the controversy over Taiwan. Traveling to Beijing the same month the Guidelines were released, Hashimoto pledged that Japan would never support Taiwan's independence.[44]

China was not completely reassured by Japan's efforts. However, Chinese officials did begin to subtly distinguish between the official Japanese position on the question of Taiwan, the U.S. position, and the requirements of what were described as bilateral U.S.-Japan issues in the "vague" Guideline definition of the "areas surrounding Japan". Pointedly criticizing the U.S. while downplaying Japan's role, the Chinese moved toward greater dialogue with Japan while specifically rejecting three way U.S.-China-Japan talks. Within six weeks of the announcement of the Guidelines, Japan and China began to increase discussions on bilateral security.[45] These talks continued, and within a year the two nations planning for the unprecedented 1998 exchange visits between senior JSDF officials and their PLA counterparts.[46]

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44 Kwan Weng Kin, "China rejects security dialogue with Japan, US" *The Straits Times* (Singapore), October 1, 1997, p. 2; Masahiko Sasajima, "China still on guard over guidelines," *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), October 1, 1997, p. 6; Mishio Suzuki, "Japan, China seek new Asia security framework" *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), November 13, 1997, Thursday p. 3.

45 Ibid.

46 Editorial/Boost Japan-China defense ties *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), February 5, 1998, p. 6.

Meanwhile, the legislation to implement the guidelines began to bog down in the Diet. In the wake of increased threats of missile attacks by North Korea and with growing reports of DPRK missile capabilities focused on the United States, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi—Hashimoto's successor and U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen met. They issued calls for greater U.S.-Japan-ROK cooperation that is confronting what was seen as a growing nuclear threat from North Korea.[47]

Despite this meeting and increased evidence of the specific threat to both nations from the DPRK and despite Obuchi's public assurance to Cohen that the Diet would act, the Diet has balked. Two weeks after the Cohen-Obuchi meetings, the ruling parties in the Diet moved to amend the bills. Still at the center of the dispute is the issue of "areas surrounding Japan." Government officials maintain that the term is "circumstantial" rather than "geographic". Meanwhile, in a speech in Tokyo that same week, the Chinese Ambassador focused his criticism on the U.S. for "taking extreme measures to strengthen Japan-U.S. security cooperation.[48]

Despite all the success they appeared to achieve, the new Guidelines were not the bureaucratic and diplomatic triumph they were hoped to be. Aimed in part at confronting China, they led to an increase in Japan-China diplomacy. Meant to draw Japan and the U.S. closer together, Japan now sought to balance its relationships with the two countries. The agreement was designed to ensure the reliability of America's commitment to defend Korea. Ironically, some three years after the signing of the guidelines, Korea sees China playing a greater diplomatic role in reducing the tensions that serve as much of the rationale for the U.S.-Japan Alliance.

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47 "Japan, US agree close ties needed to curb N. Korea," *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), January 15, 1999, p. 1.

48 "Govt, ruling parties to clarify Japan-U.S. defense legislation with Japan, U.S.," *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), February 2, 1999, p. 1.

IV. The Shape of Future Alliances

As the new century begins, U.S. forces are still in Asia, Korea is still divided, and Japan conducting a healthy and important but ultimately unresolved political debate on security issues has not set course for an independent military capability nor is it likely to in the near term. Japan once a rising "pacifist" role model and economic superpower is an increasingly weak and ineffective state. Unable to restart its economy and still incapable of approaching its own security without the expressed consent and oversight of other states, it is not now nor in the foreseeable future either a serious threat to or a credible guarantor of Asian stability and security.[49]

Many of the points about the U.S.-Japan relationship that should bring cause for optimism now lead to concern. Within days of completing years of comprehensive and painstaking talks with its partner in what is constantly referred to as the world's most important bilateral relationship, Japan made significant overtures to China. The Japanese leadership perceived (and perhaps correctly so) that it had little choice but to concede to its largest, most powerful neighbor; the state that for thousands of years served as regional hegemon and as Japan's social, cultural, and political mentor. Perhaps most significantly, China ensured the restoration of a Japan-China security dialogue not through rhetorical bluster or military threat but by conducting the diplomacy expected of a normal nation.

Meanwhile Japan is likely to view a unified Korea and not China as a threat. Japan cannot successfully face such a challenge alone. One

49 With his assumption of the Prime Minister duties in the wake of Keizo Obuchi's recent stroke, Yoshiro Mori put forth an economic program in the wake of recent market turmoil that some predict will make Japan's economic problems even worse. Stratfor analysts state "Despite the unfettered stupidity of this plan, Japan will likely implement it." See Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, "Japan's Misguided Stock Market Bailout" 18 April 2000 from http://www.stratfor.com/SERVICES/giu2000/041800.ASP accessed 20 April 2000.

could assume that the U.S. will continue to serve as a shield and intermediary between the two states. However China certainly has no less at stake than the U.S. in ensuring peace in East Asia and has the added advantage of access and a degree of diplomatic credibility on both Seoul and Pyongyang. Japan may perceive a means of restoring and maintaining its powerful economic role without the political, diplomatic, and economic costs of re-militarizing. If it could do so under the sponsorship of a non-expansive China rather than with a confrontational U.S. urging costly and controversial Japanese security revisions, the recent past would seem to indicate that Japan would take that gamble.

This is a particularly attractive option when China may be best able to restrain the DPRK while maintaining good relations with the ROK. With China as a reliable intermediary in Korea and restrained regional power in its dealings with Japan, the U.S. role in Asia could rapidly change. China can take the "cork in the bottle" mission now held by the U.S. and further reassert a traditional regional hegemony it long held.[50]

The ROK is already setting a course separate from that of the U.S. In recent months, South Korea has taken a number of steps to include testing missile capabilities that demonstrate a greater degree of independence.[51] These actions if left unchecked are likely to stimulate an

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50 Edward Olsen argues that the U.S. can build on recent successes and serve the key intermediary in any Korean reunification. His bold and compelling argument has much to offer from the perspective of U.S. foreign policy in East Asia. However, from the Korean perspective a post-reunification threat environment and defensive posture center less on U.S. perceptions of China and more on regional harmony and stability is both politically and economically more advantageous. See Olsen, "U.S. Security Policy and the Two Koreas," *World Affairs*, vol. 162, no. 4 (Spring 2000), pp. 150-157.

51 Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, "South Korean Popeye Purchase No Replacement for Domestic Ballistic Missiles," 28 July 1999 from http://www.stratfor.com/asia/specialreports/special38.htm accessed 14 March 2000; see also Stratfor, "U.S. Concerned By South Korean Missile Test," 20 April 1999 from http://www.

arms race. At the same time, however, the ROK appears prepared to take other actions most notably the reduction of U.S. troops that some speculate could have reassuring affect on the DPRK and other neighbors. As some observers have noted, the desire to maintain its "Sunshine Policy" toward the North while sustaining its own precarious security creates a classic security dilemma for the ROK.[52] Extending more diplomatic initiatives and greater accommodation toward its most powerful but less threatening neighbor particularly when that neighbor can effectively mediate with the nation that poses the greatest threat to South Korea provides an alternative to escalating confrontation.

Meanwhile, the message from the DPRK is still typically mixed and hard to discern. On the one hand, the summit with the ROK appears on track and nuclear negotiations with the U.S. continue. Track II diplomacy efforts, to include sporting events between the two Koreas, go on. There was even preliminary talk in Seoul of the U.S. lifting sanctions against the DPRK, provided the North's leadership moves forward on resolving the dispute over the suspected underground nuclear weapons site.[53] Despite continuing economic pressures and uncertainty over the Kim Jong-Il's succession to the DPRK's leadership, no war has occurred, and diplomacy seems to be on equal footing with ideological rhetoric.

On the other hand, the DPRK continues its traditional rhetorical belligerence. Talks with the U.S. broke down as North Korean domestic political concerns loomed. The reports of massive starvation and political unrest (albeit isolated and extremely limited) could explain a harder

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stratfor.com / asia / aiuarchive / b990420.htm accessed 14 March 2000,

52 Stratfor, "South Korea Preparing For U.S. Troop Withdrawal," 0043 GMT, 000309, from http: // www.stratfor.com / asia / commentary / 0003090043.htm, accessed 14 March 2000.

53 Compilation of international and regional press reports in "Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network Daily Report," from http: // www.nautilus.org / napsnet / latest.html accessed February 9 and February 10, 1999.

foreign policy line. A threatened resumption of missile tests has led to an escalation of western pressure and a resulting return to traditional DPRK rhetorical offensives. At the same time, China and the DPRK have stepped up their traditional ties.[54] While this can be seen as a potential threat to the South, this is directed more at the U.S. than at the ROK. China is most likely attempting to complicate the American decision making calculus on Taiwan. With a heightened threat to Korea, the U.S. is less likely to fully commit its military assets to the defense of the ROC, particularly when those threats seem ambiguous.

What does all this mean for Korean reunification and stability? There are many possible scenarios.[55] In one, Korea and Japan draw closer to China even at the expense of their relationship with the U.S. China eager to continue modernizing without instability on its borders and unwilling to trust Japan's unrestrained power draws on its successful experience with Hong Kong and continues to uses its influence to mediate between the North and South. The two powers establish a "One Nation/Two Systems" pattern of gradual reunification under China's umbrella.

This gradual course allows for the evolution of open and effective institutions in the North as both Japan and China provide the economic and technical capacity needed to rebuild the DPRK. Such a process softens the expensive and destabilizing blow that sudden reunification

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54 Stratfor, "China and North Korea Coordinate," 7 March 2000 from http://www.stratfor.com/SERVICES/giu2000/030700.ASP accessed 14 March 2000.

55 Ming Zhang and Ronald Montaperto draw a number of fascinating scenarios involving the future stability of East Asia. However, these scenarios focus on the U.S.-China-Japan alignment and do not see Korea either divided or unified as major actor in those scenarios. Zhang and Montaperto, *A Triad Of Another Kind: The United State, China, And Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999). Neil E. Silver also highlights the importance of Korea to any future stability in "The United States, Japan, and China: Setting the Course," (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2000) when he notes the need for both Japan and the U.S. to develop and foster relations with North and South Korea to "enhance the prospects for multilateral security dialogue and cooperation in East Asia." pp. 56-57.

would certainly bring. Meanwhile the U.S. seizes the opportunity to encourage China as a means of reinforcing positive behavior while hailing China's behavior as indicative of that required of a nation that deserves greater recognition from and membership in organizations like the WTO.

In the next scenario Japan and the two Koreas seek to accommodate China as a hedge against American pressures. For Japan, the trade off is avoiding the domestic battle of rearming while South Korea sees the need to chart a more independent course. Both fear being drawn into the Taiwan conflict because of ties to the U.S. Both seek avenues to restrain the DPRK. Meanwhile the U.S. forces the issue of alliances with both powers as tensions in Taiwan increase. The two states opt to openly bandwagon with China. The U.S. now becomes the aggressor on every issue from open trade to recognition of Taiwan.

In yet another scenario, however, the immediate dangers are less evident and the actions of all states are more ambiguous. China continues to re-emerge as a regional hegemon. Japan continues to open initiatives towards China as a means of forestalling re-armament and reassuring other states threatened by Japan's potential for militarism. South Korea continues to walk a narrow and dangerous path between its Sunshine Policy and the establishment of a more independent, credible defense against China while hedging its bets with a continued U.S. presence. Meanwhile the weak regime in Pyongyang stumbles from one crisis to the next, bolstered by China's desire to force Taiwan's allies to watch their back and by the domestic capital gained from escalating ROK offensive capabilities.

Which scenario if any is most likely? The key to the future is premised on an increased role for China and that, in turn, hinges on how Beijing exercises its diplomacy. There are already signs that the most optimistic assessments noted in this article may be in jeopardy.[56]

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56 For a summation of the pessimistic view of the future of China-U.S. relations as they might affect this argument, see Puska, *New Century, Old Thinking.* See also Richard

At the center of this is the ongoing dispute over Taiwan. As noted above, domestic political stability is the first among equals in any Chinese calculation of policy options. Western observers often equate any PRC move against Taiwan with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. In the Chinese view, a more appropriate analogy would be Fort Sumter. To China, the relationship between Taiwan and the mainland is a strictly domestic issue and Taiwan's independence would mean civil war.

The perceived threat posed by Taiwan's moves toward independence places significant hard-line pressure on the Beijing government. Such pressure translates into a tougher stance in other disputes. In the Spratly Islands, for example, some observers now see a more visible and unyielding claim of ownership on the part of China. While such moves are unlikely to disrupt China's attempts to mediate in Korea, they will certainly not reassure a Japan seeking greater evidence of China's mature, reliable diplomacy.

A generational shift in leadership may bring new directions in Japanese policy.[57] While that is less likely than domestic hard-line pressure in China, the combination of accelerated economic decline and a frustration with the caretaker government of Yoshiro Mori could finally challenge the current direction of Japanese policy and encourage a more independent course. Even if this were to occur, however, Japan is unlikely to have the fiscal wherewithal to provide its own defense. It is also more likely that newer, younger leadership will set a course independent of U.S. control.

How, then, can the two Korean nations achieve a peaceful, lasting unification and an independent and sovereign role in this important region? As it has for centuries, Korea will be pictured as the weak state

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Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, "The Coming Conflict with America," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 2 (March / April 1997).

57 Kevin J. Cooney, "The Maturation of Japanese Foreign Policy," Paper Presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, Los Angeles, CA, March 15-18, 2000.

forced to respond to the actions of others. This view, however, only reveals a portion of the broader picture. Every other power in the region is as dependent on the outcome of Korean reunification as the two states on the Peninsula. For China, the threat of conflict on its border (particularly if Taiwan's status remains unresolved) brings unpleasant reminders of 1950. The consolidation of their first revolution was hampered by the perceived need to intervene in Korea. The future of the second revolution this time an economic one can never be secure until Korea is stable.

Like China, Japan is also haunted by its past in Korea. Failure to either come to terms with its history or to prepare for the potentially staggering costs of a "hard landing" reunification across the Strait makes Japan dependent on the success of diplomatic initiatives between North and South Korea. The same economic and political factors that make it too late for Tokyo to effectively contend with a Korean collapse make Japan unable to prepare for a reunified and militarily daunting power next door.

Meanwhile the United States is caught in its own dilemma. The more it pressures Japan to change and the more it paints China as a threat the more it makes both countries move closer together. In doing so, it opens the possibility for a reunification of Korea with only a supporting role played by the U.S. America's role in Asia particularly since the end of the Cold War has been tied in large part to the need to face a major regional contingency (or MRC) on the Korean Peninsula. With the resolution of Korea's division and with China playing facilitator rather than threat, the stated rationale for America's strategic role in Asia must be revisited and redefined.

This is both a dangerous and an optimistic time for Korea. Some picture Korean unification as something to get out of the way so that larger states can settle the issues of regional stability.[58] In truth,

58 Zhang and Montaperto, *Triad,* ibid.; Silver, "U.S., Japan, and China," ibid.

however, Korea is the key and not the pawn. South Korea's admittedly painful recovery from the banking crisis and its growing willingness to confront the need for political reform make it both an important market and a role model for other states.[59] Meanwhile North Korea's economic implosion, it's military capabilities, and its unpredictable intentions make it impossible to ignore. Once again, swimming between whales that have much of their own at stake in a peaceful outcome, Korea's success will determine the peaceful stability and economic success of East Asia.

59 Michael Baker, "Koreans demand democracy, one protest at a time," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 12, 2000, p. 7; Stratfor, "New South Korean Parliament Presents Challenge for President Kim," 0030 GMT, 000415, from http://www.stratfor.com/asia/commentary/0004150030.htm, accessed 17 April 2000