

REMILITARIZING JAPAN

WHO HAS BEEN Bush's most faithful follower on the world stage, Koizumi or Blair? Both men can make a strong case. Blair's enthusiasm for Bush's wars has been well documented: he can boast not only the 13,000 British soldiers currently battling in Iraq, but the dismissal of two BBC chiefs for broadcasting doubts about the government's dossier on Saddam's WMD, and the promotion of that document's author, John Scarlett, to head of MI6, with barely a squeak of complaint from the Labour Party or liberal press. Koizumi's contribution has been less reported outside his own country, but in some ways it is more interesting. Unlike Blair, he has effected a major transformation in his country's security policy over the past three years, accompanied by a significant shift in domestic opinion.

Despite the geographical symmetry of the two Eurasian-rim archipelagoes, geopolitically the pair occupy very different positions. Only one was a frontline Cold War state. Abutting the Red Continent, Japan's situation was more comparable to that of Germany in the west—face-to-face with the Soviet superpower, the People's Republic of China and the DPRK, with thousands of miles of ocean at its back. The American conquerors of 1945 had equipped the Constitution which they rapidly drafted for Japan with a permanent renunciation of the nation-state's right to war, or to the maintenance of a national military force of any kind. Article 9 famously states that, in the unvarnished prose of its uniformed drafters:

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Instead, us 'land, sea and air forces' were installed across Japan, as Washington's forward base in Asia. With the loss of China, however, the us began to have second thoughts about Article 9. Washington started pressing for it to be rescinded, so that Japanese troops could be deployed in 'free world' causes, almost before the ink on the Constitution had dried.¹ For large sections of the Japanese population, however, Article 9 had come to stand for the adamant rejection of the military-imperialist programme that had brought the country to such ruin, a constitutional 'never again!'. Although the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party was committed, from its foundation in the 1950s, to the American goal of deletion of this troublesome clause, it was unable to muster any substantial political or popular support for its amendment. Instead, the establishment of Japan's Self-Defence Force in 1954 had to be justified on convoluted, extra-constitutional grounds: Article 9 could not have been intended to cancel the country's inherent right of self-defence. The SDF was therefore legitimate regardless of what the Constitution said, as the minimum necessary force 'to protect the peace and independence of Japan against direct or indirect threat'.² The SDF thus exists without constitutional warrant, on the basis of this higher principle, something akin to natural law. The Japanese public slowly came to accept the compatibility of the SDF with the Constitution, although the 'peace camp' position on Article 9 retained its overwhelming popular legitimacy and it was unthinkable—as even the most reactionary of prime ministers agreed—for the SDF ever to function outside Japan.³ Within the logic of the Cold War, therefore, Japan's only national defence in a hostile neighbourhood was the us military shield.

Washington's new strategy

By the 1990s, this entire landscape had been transformed. The Soviet Union had vanished from the map, and the Russia that had replaced it was not a Pacific power. Above all, the People's Republic of China had emerged as a booming capitalist economy, rapidly forging trade and diplomatic links throughout the region. The DPRK alone could still be claimed

¹ For details: Glenn Hook and Gavan McCormack, *Japan's Contested Constitution*, London 2001.

² Article 3 of the Self-Defense Law, 1954.

³ Kishi Nobusuke, Prime Minister 1957–60, addressing the lower house of the national Diet on 30 September 1958. (Hayano Tōru, 'Kishi shushō mo idai na hato-ha datta!?', *Asahi shimbun*, 14 January 2004.)

to pose a conventional Cold War threat. Japan too had changed. By the late 1980s, its economy—though not, of course, its diplomatic or military weight—seemed set to overtake that of the us. Washington was at first slow to formulate a new East Asian policy; initial thinking suggested a tilt to China, to ‘balance’ a Tokyo that, in 1990, had been publicly (if briefly) grudging in its support for the first Gulf War. American arm-twisting had been necessary to extract Japan’s eventual \$15bn contribution.

By the mid-to-late 1990s, however, a new us strategy was beginning to take shape that clearly aimed at the eventual containment of China. As Zalmay Khalilzad outlined in 2001, its central objective was:

the need to preclude the rise of a regional or continental hegemon. This is important for two main reasons: to prevent the us from being denied economic, political and military access to an important part of the globe; and to prevent a concentration of resources that could support a global challenge to the United States on the order of that posed by the former Soviet Union.⁴

One key aim would be to prevent the formation of any close Sino-Japanese security alliance—‘the formation of such a relationship would deal a fatal blow to us political and military influence in Asia’. As well as pushing for an expansion of the free-trade-wto agenda, the us must actively ‘manage Asia’s transformation’ using a mixture of political, diplomatic and military means: both ‘offshore balancing’, playing large regional powers (China, India, Russia) off against each other to prevent any one emerging as dominant, and a ‘mini-NATO’ containment strategy—a security alliance with the us, Australia, Japan and (hopefully) Korea as its core members, along with lesser fry such as Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines.⁵

The implications for Japan within this strategic vision are far-reaching. Article 9 of the Constitution would have to be rescinded and the sdf further expanded in order to support us-led operations as a fully-fledged

⁴ Zalmay Khalilzad et al, *The United States and Asia: Toward a New us Strategy and Force Posture*, Rand Corporation, 2001, p. 43.

⁵ Khalilzad et al, *The us and Asia*, ch. 2 and 3. A united Korean peninsula is taken for granted in this medium-term view. Better to proactively scale back the American military presence there, and above all render it less provocatively ‘visible’, Khalilzad argues, in order to be able to keep this vital security foothold for the us–Japan–Korea axis. us troops on the peninsula could both ‘reassure Korea and influence Japan toward peaceful behaviour’, pp. 48–9.

'mini-NATO' partner (the 'Britain of the Far East', as one American strategist puts it).⁶ Japan should also be pressed to accelerate its participation in the US Missile Defence programme.

Although the hardware still involves detecting, and pre-emptively destroying, the enemy's missiles, the concept of Ballistic Missile Defence has changed fundamentally since the days of Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative, the unworkably ambitious 'Star Wars' project. Today's US security strategists freely admit that preventing potential missile attacks is only a subsidiary feature of the BMD programmes developed from the Clinton Administration onwards. Far more important is the military-to-military integration that such systems demand, especially at the level of command, control and communications. The installation of BMD in Japan would entail extensive upgrading of the SDF's infrastructure to make it more 'interoperable' with US command systems.⁷

Tokyo had rebuffed 1980s requests for Japanese involvement in BMD, at first fearing a spiralling arms race, then suspecting US designs on Japanese technology. In 1994, however, the Japanese Defence Agency initiated an intensive research project, spurred on the following year by China's deployment of short-range missiles in the Taiwan Straits crisis. The JDA report, published in 1998, concluded that BMD was 'both technically feasible and marginally affordable'. Public support for the project jumped hugely after the firing of a North Korean Taepodong missile over northern Japan in the summer of 1998, ostensibly a failed satellite-launch attempt.⁸ The Diet unanimously urged the government to 'undertake every means to secure the safety of the population', and funding for collaborative BMD research with the US was agreed the following year.

⁶ Recommendation 3 of the Khalilzad report reads, 'Support efforts in Japan to revise its constitution, to expand its horizon beyond territorial defense, and to acquire capabilities for supporting coalition operations.' The 'Britain of the Far East' is from Richard Armitage, 'The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership', Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defence University, Washington 2000.

⁷ Michael Swaine, Rachel Swanger and Takashi Kawakami, *Japan and Ballistic Missile Defence*, Rand Corporation, 2001.

⁸ One commentator at least referred ironically to the fortuitous timing of the North Korean projectile, which far overshot the Japanese coastline and plunged harmlessly into the sea: *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 2 September 1998; see Swaine et al, *Japan and BMD*, p.43.

The country of origin of the Taepodong missile is important. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea exercises a powerful hold over the Japanese imagination, one that has become far more salient since the end of the Cold War. An astonishing six hundred books about the country have been published in Japan during the past decade, the overwhelming majority of them hostile. One comic-book account of Kim Jong Il as violent, bloodthirsty and depraved, published in August 2003, sold half a million copies in its first few months, probably more than all the other books in all languages ever written about North Korea. This peculiar wave of Japanese fear and hatred for North Korea has played a large role in the transformation of Japan's security policy.

Boots on the ground

Clinton-era initiatives had also gone some way to transforming the SDF. The Peace-Keeping Organization Law, adopted in 1992, permitted the dispatch of SDF troops to participate in peacekeeping missions in post-conflict Cambodia, Mozambique, the Golan Heights and East Timor. Although confined to road-building or the construction and running of hospitals and refugee camps, these missions nevertheless involved a steady widening and loosening of the official interpretation of Article 9: a force whose only justification was the defence of Japan against direct or indirect threat was committed, however innocuously, to various global theatres. In 1997, the Revised US–Japan Defence Guidelines broadened the SDF's remit again, outlining forms of bilateral cooperation 'in areas surrounding Japan' that included repairs and provisioning of US vessels and aircraft, providing communications equipment, transporting and evacuating civilians, surveillance, intelligence and minesweeping. As the 1998 *US Security Strategy for the East Asia–Pacific Region* noted: 'the concept "situations in areas surrounding Japan" embodied in the revised Guidelines is not geographical but situational', to be defined on a case-by-case basis.⁹

Nevertheless, here as elsewhere, the US security wish-list has been hugely accelerated since 9/11—and Bush could not have hoped for a more cooperative opposite number in pushing this through than Koizumi Junichirō. From his first press conference as Prime Minister, in

⁹ US Department of Defence, *The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia–Pacific Region*, Washington, DC 1998, p. 21.

April 2001, Koizumi had spoken in favour of revising the Constitution to make it easier for Japan to support the US militarily and to clarify the position of the SDF. Footage of his first meeting with President Bush, two months later, shows Koizumi grinning with delight from his seat on the presidential golf cart. The Japanese media has delightedly reported that not since the days of 'Ron-Yasu' (Reagan and Nakasone) has the relationship between the two countries' leaders been so close.

In October 2001, bluntly advised by Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to pull its head out of the sand and make sure the Rising Sun flag was visible in the Afghan war, Japan adopted a Terror Special Measures law and sent a flotilla of 24 naval ships, including an Aegis destroyer, to the Indian Ocean; in due course, this provided nearly half the fuel consumed by US Coalition forces in Operation Enduring Freedom. In March 2003, Koizumi promised 'unconditional' support for the coming war in Iraq, ignoring once again the lack of a UN warrant. From early April 2003, with the heavy fighting barely over, he came under increasing pressure to make good his promise by putting Japanese 'boots on the ground' in Iraq. Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz is believed to have been the source of the 'boots' phrase, but the substance of the message was conveyed to Tokyo by multiple routes. Armitage, a frequent visitor to Tokyo, preferred a sporting image: 'It is about time that Japan should quit paying to see the game, and get down to the baseball diamond.'¹⁰

In May 2003, visiting the presidential ranch in Crawford, Texas, Koizumi gave Bush his *ishin denshin* ('heart to heart') promise to send Japanese troops to Iraq, and also pledged to speed up Japan's BMD review. In return, Bush declared his own 'unconditional' support for Japan's position on the families of the North Korean abductees. This was crucial in terms of winning Japanese domestic support for the dispatch of troops to Iraq: the US forces in Japan were essential to defend the country from North Korean totalitarianism and, in return, Japan could scarcely deny any reciprocal US request.¹¹ Back in Japan, however, Koizumi still confronted formidable domestic opposition. American pressure was renewed. An anonymous Defence Department spokesman bluntly demanded of his Japanese counterpart, 'Why don't you shape up?', while Armitage

¹⁰ 'Head in sand', *Asahi shimbun*, 5 October 2001; 'boots', *Asahi shimbun*, 9 October 2001; 'baseball diamond', *Yomiuri shimbun*, 11 June 2003.

¹¹ *Asahi shimbun*, 19 March 2004.

warned Arima Tatsuo, Japan's special ambassador to the Middle East: 'Don't try to back off.'¹²

Beyond constitutionalism

In dispatching an armed body of men to Iraq, Japan was committing itself for the first time in sixty years, albeit in a subordinate and non-combat role, to an illegal and aggressive war. Koizumi was leading his country into uncharted constitutional waters. At one level, his response was to attempt to brush this aside. Constitutional difficulties were so much 'theological quibble'. 'Common sense' was what really mattered—something which, as Prime Minister, he was uniquely qualified to offer: 'In the common sense terms of the people, the SDF is surely "military force" . . . if we talk in terms of principles rather than of pretence . . . the fact is that the constitution itself is out of step with international common sense.' As he put it on another occasion, 'The SDF is an army. To describe it as not a military force goes against common sense . . . It should be called the *Nihon kokugun* [Japanese Army].'¹³ The contemptuous populist demagoguery with which the Prime Minister of the world's number two economic power dismissed half a century of constitutional debate, riding roughshod over the basic principle of the rule of law, raised scarcely a murmur in Washington, Canberra or London. On the contrary, Koizumi's casual manipulation of his country's Basic Law at a word from the White House was seen as admirably tough.

Under pressure from domestic critics, he produced a phrase from the Constitution's preamble about the desire to 'occupy an honoured place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace' suggesting that this vague sentiment should take precedence over the specific clauses in the body of the text. It was an interpretation without warrant in law that left constitutional scholars aghast. Koizumi claimed that the SDF intervention in Iraq would be confined to humanitarian and reconstruction work in the 'non-combat' area around Samawah (midway

¹² *Kyodo*, 15 September 2003; *Asahi shimbun*, 9 October 2003.

¹³ 'Theological quibble', Maeda Tetsuo, 'Tōhoku Ajia no anzen hoshō to kempō 9-jō', *Sekai*, October 2003, p. 46; 'international common sense', Amaki Naoto, 'Jieitai hitei wa higenjitsuteki gomakashi wa genkai da,' *Ronza*, February 2004, p. 31, quoting Koizumi speaking on 23 October 2001; 'national army', *Asahi shimbun*, 22 February 2004. When, in April 2004, a Fukuoka District Court found Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine to be unconstitutional, he simply shrugged it off, calling the ruling 'inexplicable'. *Asahi shimbun*, 17 July 2004.

between Najaf and Nasiriyah, some 150 miles south of Baghdad). In an effort to win over a reluctant Diet a special investigative commission was dispatched to Iraq, which duly reported that security problems in Samawah were minimal and the SDF would be safe to go. It later transpired, however, that the commission's report had been drafted by Tokyo bureaucrats even before the group left for Iraq in mid-September, and that it had been further edited before being submitted to the Diet to delete any negative details.¹⁴

The government's decision to send air, sea and ground units of the SDF to Iraq was finally ratified in the House of Representatives at the end of January. But the opposition in the parliament and the country was such that the vote had to be postponed till after midnight, and then the chamber was boycotted *en masse* not only by the main opposition Democratic Party, which protested that the law was unconstitutional, but even by some of the most influential members of the ruling LDP itself, including three of its leading figures: Kamei Shizuka, former head of the LDP Policy Planning Committee, and two ex-Secretaries General of the party, Katō Kōichi and Koga Makoto. A former Posts and Telecommunications Minister and Parliamentary Vice-Defence Minister, Minowa Noboru, launched an action in the Sapporo District Court on 28 January 2004 to have the troop dispatch declared unconstitutional, insisting that reconstruction and humanitarian aid could only be undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Japanese ambassador to Lebanon, Amaki Naoto, wrote to the Prime Minister protesting that the deployment would breach both the Japanese Constitution and international law; for his pains he was summoned to Tokyo and peremptorily sacked.

The history of post-1947 Japanese constitutionalism is replete with examples of governments taking initiatives in the teeth of hostile public opinion and against the considered views of constitutional scholars. An armed force was first created and justified on an exclusively self-defence basis. Its role was then steadily expanded, winning over opposition through the principle of *fait accompli*. None of these previous moves, however, had been as swift or as far-reaching as the transformation that occurred in 2003–4. The restraints that had blocked the SDF, first from existence, then from any role outside Japan, then from any role in hostilities abroad, have one by one been swept aside, till only the

¹⁴ Okamoto Susumu, 'Donna kokkai ga haken o shōnin shitaka', *Sekai*, April 2004, p. 23.

finest of lines now separates it from frontline war. Helped by the axis of fear and hostility towards North Korea, Koizumi had taken giant steps towards accomplishing the goal that previous conservative leaders had only dreamed of: setting aside forty years of constitutional principle and transforming the SDF into a *de facto* regular army.¹⁵

Luxury fortress

Koizumi's argument that Samawah was a non-combat zone, since no hostilities were being conducted there by 'states or quasi-state organizations', was of course mere casuistry, worthy to rank with the lies and manipulations practised by Washington and its other allies to justify the war. For the US authorities under whom the SDF served, all of Iraq was a combat zone. Many thousands of Iraqi civilians and hundreds of US soldiers had been killed between Bush's formal declaration that 'major combat operations' were at an end, in May 2003, and the dispatch of Japanese troops in January 2004. For Deputy Defence Secretary Wolfowitz the war was still 'not over yet' in March 2004 and, during the Japanese hostage crisis the following month, Koizumi himself conceded that the situation was so dangerous that Japan should maintain no presence in Iraq other than that of a well-armed military unit.

In Samawah the 550 SDF troops, two-thirds of whom were devoted to security or administration, were housed in 'one of the most formidable military camps planet earth has ever seen': an isolated fortress, secure behind its own moat and barricades, that was also a (fabulously expensive) luxury compound with its own karaoke bar, massage parlour and gymnasium.¹⁶ The troops themselves were being paid 'danger money', a fee of \$275 per day. The fresh water that they were due to supply—80 tons daily to 16,000 people—came at enormous cost: approximately \$360 million, or ¥40 billion, for the first six months. By comparison, a French NGO was providing gas, healthcare, sanitation and 550 tons of fresh water to 100,000 people in Al-Muthanna province for a cost of just

¹⁵ The actual scale of the SDF is not widely appreciated. Its army, at 148,000, is bigger than the British, Italian or French; its navy, in pure tonnage terms, is the fifth largest in the world (after the US, Russia, China and the UK); and its airforce, the twelfth largest in the world, is bigger than Israel's. It has a high proportion of officers and its equipment is the very best. Military spending, at 1 per cent of Japan's vast GDP, is currently second in the world.

¹⁶ *Asia Times*, 19 February 2004.

over \$500,000 per year.¹⁷ Political purpose trumped economic sense or humanitarian need.

With the upsurge of Iraqi resistance from April 2004, the SDF men were often confined to base, protected by a combination of American mercenaries and local troops, their humanitarian mission drastically curtailed. It was possible to glimpse something of a behind-the-scenes bureaucratic struggle over these issues when Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it would take over the funding of the French NGO operation—in other words, that it would provide nearly seven times as much water as the SDF, at a fraction of the cost.

Koizumi hailed the June 2004 UNSC resolution 1546 as 'a victory for America's righteous cause'. Without consulting the Diet, he promised Bush (as opposed to Iraq's interim government) that Japanese troops would be committed to the UN-backed Multinational Force. Once again, this was in contravention of the Constitution which proscribes participation in any multinational *force*. Koizumi finessed this by declaring that SDF participation would be subject to four conditions, which had been accepted by US and British authorities (all that counted, he implied): non-use of force, confinement to non-combat areas, adherence to constitutional limits and operation under Japanese command.¹⁸ The 'unified command' specified in both the UN resolution and Colin Powell's accompanying letter to the Security Council was rendered not by the precise Japanese equivalent but by an unfamiliar and equivocal term that suggested a joint command headquarters; something very different.¹⁹

The decision to send the SDF to Iraq was taken in the face of popular opposition running at 70 to 80 per cent in early to mid-2003. But by early 2004 Koizumi had successfully turned that into a small majority in favour.²⁰ Constitutional qualms seem to have been overcome by a flood of patriotic sentiment. Koizumi described the SDF troops as the 'pride

¹⁷ *Japan Times*, 16 May 2004.

¹⁸ NHK television, 17 June 2004.

¹⁹ The UN term *tōitsu sareta shiki* was rendered as *tōgō sareta shireibu*. Editorial, *Asahi shimbun*, 18 June 2004.

²⁰ *Asahi* polls reported opposition falling to 55 per cent in December, 48 per cent in January, and 41 (vs 42 in favour) in March. *Yomiuri* found 53 per cent in favour by January, and 58 by February. *Mainichi* found a low of 16 per cent pro-dispatch rising to a high of 50 per cent by March 2004. *Asahi shimbun*, 23 February and 21 March, 2004; *Yomiuri shimbun*, 27 February 2004; *Mainichi shimbun*, 8 March 2004.

of their families, the pride of Japan and the pride of the Japanese people'. The media cooperated enthusiastically, portraying the hometown boys (and some girls) in boots as heroes, lavishing attention on their every move: training in Hokkaido's snow for the Iraq desert, performing rituals of regimental colours, bidding farewell to their tearful families and crowds of flag-waving supporters. Colonel Banshō Kōichirō, the SDF commander, became a media favourite for his rough, homespun sincerity. He appeared day after day on Japanese tv, giving friendly speeches in halting Arabic, discussing how to revive the local hospital or presenting gift sheep to a local community.

The extent to which Koizumi's gamble had paid off, at least in the short run, was starkly revealed during the Japanese hostage crisis of April 2004. While the SDF unit remained largely invisible inside their impregnable, five-star encampment it was, ironically, three young representatives of the Japanese 'peace camp' who were suddenly thrust into the world-media spotlight when they were taken hostage by an Iraqi group. One was a volunteer who had been working with abandoned street children in Baghdad under Saddam Hussein's regime; another a student, trying to publicize the risks of depleted uranium; the third was a photo-journalist who wanted to cover the sufferings and struggles of the Iraqi people. Held for the week of 7–15 April 2004, they were released through the good offices of the Islamic Clerics Association. Koizumi refused to meet with the hostages' families during the crisis and the media, taking its cue from the government, took up the cry of 'irresponsibility' and 'recklessness', of causing Japan trouble and expense. The telephones, faxes and home pages of the abductee families were filled with abusive and intimidating messages. The victims were held to be responsible for their own plight. The hostages arrived home to a barrage of hostile criticism that left them, at least initially, stunned, exhausted, humiliated—and, apart from mumbled words of apology, silent.

Costs of compliance

Watching the Japanese scurrying to comply with Washington's escalating demands, Armitage remarked that the us was 'thrilled' to see that Japan was not 'sitting in the stands any more' but had come out as 'a player on the playing field'.²¹ Yet the costs to Japan have been enormous.

²¹ *Asahi shimbun*, 26 September 2003.

In cash terms alone, the country has contributed a staggering sum in subsidies for the US global empire since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, since 9/11 alone Japan has paid around \$30 billion (¥3.3 trillion) to support the American bases on its territory, as well as an annual subsidy of around \$150,000 per head for the 39,691 US troops stationed there.²² It has also promised to build a brand-new base for the US marine corps in the waters of northern Okinawa, likely to cost at least an additional \$9 billion. On Japan's side, these sums are grudgingly tolerated as the 'taxes' that will guarantee US military backing in the event of a showdown with North Korea. On the American side, the denial by a Senior White House official that the US president would ever think of Japan as 'just some ATM machine' was so bizarre as to suggest that perhaps that might be precisely how he saw it.²³

Washington has no other ally in this league of open-pocket generosity. Asked for additional reconstruction aid for Iraq, and told that 'billions' was the appropriate unit, Koizumi promised \$5 billion, far in excess of any contribution other than that of the US itself and about three times the sum levied from the whole of Europe. Under further pressure, Tokyo indicated its readiness to forgo a large part of the \$4 billion debt owed it by the government of Iraq. The same willingness to cooperate is evident in the scramble to agree the purchase of the Ballistic Missile Defence system. The Rand Corporation has estimated that a basic system, capable of intercepting 'only a few North Korean missiles', would cost approximately \$20 billion, and a full-coverage system more than the current Japanese defence budget.²⁴

Such costs must be set in the context of Japan's decade-long stagnation. The country's bubble-era excess liquidity has long evaporated. Bad debt, chronic unemployment and under-employment, bankruptcies, the virtual

²² See table in Maeda Hisao, '2004 nendo bōei yosanan o kiru', *Gunshuku mondai shiryō*, April 2004, p. 47.

²³ Takao Hishinuma and Eiji Hirose, 'US official says Japan "not just some ATM"', Daily Yomiuri Online, 10 October 2003.

²⁴ Swaine et al, *Japan and BMD*, p. 67. Whether it would work is unknown. The best scientific and military opinion seems to be that the present system is unproven, but that protection would be confined to places within a 15km radius of the PAC-3 batteries. The capital and major (US) base complexes might be protected, but much of Japan would not be. See Handa Shigeru, 'Misairu bōei tōnyū giman o abaku,' *Gendai*, March 2004; Leo Sartori, 'Bush's Missile Defense System: Does it Pass Muster?', Centre for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, Washington, DC 2003.

or actual nationalization of major banks, social despair in the country's peripheries, gloom and anxiety for the future, especially for the public welfare and pension systems, even among the supposedly comfortably employed middle class, persist. The 2004 Budget projects tax revenues of just under 42 trillion yen and expenditure of 82 trillion yen: in other words nearly 45 per cent is dependent on bonds, or borrowing.²⁵ The prospect is one of falling population, spending cuts and tax increases. Education, welfare and overseas aid costs are being shaved, small and medium-sized businesses cut loose to fend with 'market forces'. While demonstrating its 'faithfulness' to Washington, the Japanese government has plundered the savings of past generations and the patrimony of the unborn, raising a Mt Fuji of debt over the land.²⁶

In assessing the country's changing world role after 9/11, the Japanese media have for the most part been reluctant to address the issue of responsibility for the totality of the system it thereby supports. As the first anniversary of the Iraq war passed in spring 2004, the American-led occupation was increasingly mired in violence, its legitimacy in tatters. Since then, civilian casualties have mounted, Muslim holy places have been attacked, the Abu Ghraib tortures have been exposed and Iraqi opposition has begun to coalesce into resistance. By the time the US Administrator, Paul Bremer, stepped aside on 28 June, leaving his hand-picked Interim Government in place, the occupation was unraveling in a series of scandals and atrocities. Japan's 'unconditional' support has meant commitment to a process of torture, assassination and apparently indiscriminate attacks on civilian and religious targets. This is the system to which Japan's own SDF is expected to accommodate itself. If Japan has indeed become what Armitage describes as a 'player', there can be no mistake as to who is the captain of the team, and no doubting the deadly seriousness of the game, as Armitage has spelled out in another context: 'Australian sons and daughters . . . would be willing to die to help defend the United States. That's what an alliance means.'²⁷

Yet even these financial and moral costs pale compared to the prospect of a spiralling East Asian arms race, driven by the installation of fabulously expensive BMD systems in the East Pacific and a 'mini-NATO' aiming at

²⁵ *Asahi shimbun*, 20 December 2003.

²⁶ See my *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence*, New York 2001, and 'The End of Japan's Construction State?', *NLR* 13, Jan–Feb 2002.

²⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 September 2001.

Chinese containment. Locking itself into the American embrace, ‘turning away’ from Asia—more properly: turning towards it with a hostile, militarized face—engenders a vicious cycle, further blocking Japan from reconciliation and cooperation with Asia and in turn emboldening the us to escalate its own demands. It is an attitude that Sakakibara Eisuke, once known as ‘Mr Yen’ for his power over global currency markets, has described as ‘depraved ideological conservatism’, under which Japan follows the us at all times and under any circumstances.²⁸ Yet there is an alternative path. If the North Korean problem were resolved, then relations between Japan and North Korea, as between North and South Korea, could be normalized. With military tensions drained from the region, the comprehensive incorporation of Japan within Washington’s global hegemonic project could become harder to justify. Japan could turn its attention towards its Asian neighbours and shift its policy priority from being a trustworthy ally for the us to attending to its own multiple problems and becoming a trustworthy member of a future Asian commonwealth.

Has Koizumi’s recent policy on North Korea reflected signs of Japanese ambivalence on these questions, forcing a change of tack in Washington—or, on the contrary, has Tokyo merely followed the us lead as, bogged down in Iraq, it turns toward a ‘Libyan’ solution for Pyongyang?²⁹ As noted, well-fanned populist fears of the DPRK have played a critical role in the post 9/11 transformation of the SDF. Without North Korea, it would most likely have been impossible to pass the raft of ‘contingency’ war legislation adopted in 2003–4, including laws that had been on the wish list of conservative governments throughout the Cold War but had always been blocked by socialist and communist opposition. Now they could be pushed through, with little debate and the support of around 80 per cent of Diet members. Some of the new laws were explicitly designed with North Korea in mind: authorizing interdiction of suspect shipping,

²⁸ Sakakibara Eisuke, ‘Japanese nationalism: Conservatives have derailed’, *Japan Times*, 2 May 2004.

²⁹ On 22 July 2004 the *Financial Times* reported that: ‘John Bolton, us under-secretary of state for arms control, said in Seoul yesterday that Libya’s decision last year to abandon its nuclear programme was a blueprint for how North Korea could improve relations with the outside world. Mr Bolton urged Kim Jong Il, North Korea’s leader, to consult his Libyan counterpart, Colonel Muammer Gadaffi, about Tripoli’s decision. He said Libya was already benefiting from the lifting of some us sanctions, saying hotels in Tripoli were “teeming with western businessmen”.’

the blocking of foreign-exchange transactions or exclusion of ships of a designated country from entering Japanese ports. Others spelled out special emergency powers, enabling the Prime Minister to impose a virtual martial-law regime and compel compliance by local authorities and citizens if he deemed it necessary.³⁰

Koizumi both benefits from and plays his part in feeding the national paranoia. Nevertheless, he has also now clearly adopted the cause of normalization of relations with North Korea as his major political commitment. Alone among current world-political leaders he has visited Kim Jong Il twice, in 2002 and 2004. Departing for Pyongyang on 22 May 2004, Koizumi pledged to restore trust between Japan and North Korea, so that ‘abnormal relations can be normalized, hostile relations turned to friendly relations, and confrontation to cooperation’, and to strive to normalize relations within his remaining two years of office, if possible within a single year. After their meeting he declared Kim to be ‘mild-mannered and cheerful’, ‘very smart’ and ‘quick to make jokes’—in other words, someone to do business with.³¹ During their talks, Koizumi seems to have gone beyond the official US position of CVID (complete, verifiable, irreversible disarmament), and afterwards pressed the Dear Leader’s suit for direct talks with Bush. With Japan’s voice added to the Chinese, Russian and South Korean calls for a negotiated solution to the North Korean question, the US has also for the first time presented elements of a ‘roadmap’ for settlement.

Beyond neo-nationalism?

Up till now, Koizumi’s nationalism has been more pose than substance. Faithful to Washington on almost all issues—with a possible deviation on North Korea—he has sought to disguise himself with strong Japanese accents. The more he serves foreign purposes, the more important it is that he seem and sound the nationalist. Controversial gestures such as his visits to Yasukuni Shrine to pay his respects to the country’s war dead are probably best seen not as a sign of a reviving nationalism but as an empty gesture to compensate for an abandoned one; the affirmation at an abstract and purely symbolic level of what has been repudiated in

³⁰ For a comprehensive list of the legislation: Richard Tanter, ‘With eyes wide shut: Japan, Heisei Militarization and the Bush Doctrine’, Peter Van Ness and Mel Gurtov, eds, *Asia and the Bush Doctrine*, New York, forthcoming.

³¹ *Asahi shimbun*, 28 May and 3 July 2004.

substance.³² Political and military subordination to the us require such rhetoric and symbolism—in fact, a form of neo-nationalism. However, resolution of the North Korean issue could transform this equation.

The Japanese convention of serving the empire loyally and unquestioningly has been sanctified by half a century of evolution as an affluent imperial dependency. During the Cold War, the benefits were large and the costs acceptable. However, the blueprints for the twenty-first century call for a new level of subjugation. On Iraq, Japan toes the line, but the prospect of future developments on the Korean peninsula may cause it to waver. In the ‘Pyongyang Declaration’ of September 2002, for the first time since the ignominious collapse of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere in 1945, the Japanese Prime Minister announced a commitment to the building of a ‘Northeast Asia’ of peace and prosperity. That he chose to make such an affirmation in the context of a joint declaration with the North Korean leader made it so much more remarkable.³³ On Iraq, Koizumi has gone far beyond even Blair in proving his commitment to Washington: steamrolling military deployment through a more petulant parliament, all but tearing up the Constitution. At the same time, Tokyo may not be immune to the traditionalist Asian dreams of Japanese conservatism, albeit in twenty-first century terms. How long Koizumi, or whoever might succeed him as prime minister, can contain the contradiction, pursuing simultaneously Asianism and Americanism, remains to be seen.

In the first half of the twentieth century seven million Japanese soldiers marched off to distant battlefields, shouts of ‘Banzai’ ringing in their ears. Not one of them was ever sent, officially, on a mission of ‘aggression’. Like Colonel Banzhō, their task was always honourable: to resist the aggression of others (the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5), to fulfill duties to allies (the Boxer China war of 1900 and World War One), to

³² For recent discussion on the theme of reviving nationalism: Eugene Matthews, ‘Japan’s New Nationalism’, *Foreign Affairs*, November–December 2003, and Steven Clemons, ‘Nationalism—Old News or New Worry?’, *Daily Yomiuri*, 9 December 2003. See also McCormack, ‘New Tunes for an Old Song: Nationalism and Identity in Post-Cold War Japan’, in Roy Starrs, ed., *Nations Under Siege: Globalization and Nationalism in Asia*, New York 2002; Ishida Hidenari, Ukai Satoshi, Komori Yōichi and Takahashi Tetsuya, ‘21 seiki no manifesuto—datsu “parasaito nashonarizumu”’, *Sekai*, August 2000.

³³ Wada Haruki, *Tōhoku Ajia kyōdō no ie*, Heibonsha 2003, p. 166.

help a neighbouring people (the catastrophic intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1918–1922), to defend Japanese lives and property against bandits, terrorists and warlords and help construct an order of justice, peace and prosperity (in China and later Southeast Asia from 1927 to 1945). Only long after the event did history render a different, much harsher judgement. Some Japanese scholars have argued that the same will be true of the Koizumi dispatch to Iraq.³⁴

However Japan addresses the future dilemmas of regional and global policy, its security posture has already been transformed. The Constitution has steadily been emptied of content, the constraints of Article 9's pacifism dismissed and the country set on the path towards becoming a regional military power, closely integrated with the us. Even in the context of normalizing relations with North Korea, these developments already make it harder for Japan to play an independent 'Asian' role in any emerging East Asian community of nations.

³⁴ See, for example, the analyses by the military affairs specialist Maeda Tetsuo, 'Kyūsoku ni rinsen jōsei totonoeru jieitai', *Sekai*, April 2004, and Kang Sangjung of Tokyo University, in Kang Sangjung and Katō Shūichi, 'Rekisho no bunkiten ni tatte', *Ronza*, April 2004. Kang has described the us operations in Iraq as an aggressive war comparable to Japan's 1931 invasion of China—both characterized by the belief that military superiority would be decisive. In his view, Iraq was America's Manchukuo, a base from which to try to transform the Middle East as Japan had once thought to transform the whole of China, and just as likely to mark the beginnings of imperial decline.