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# **Not Quite the ‘Great Britain of the Far East’: Japan’s Security, the US-Japan Alliance, and the ‘War on Terror’ in East Asia**

## **Abstract**

Japan in responding to US expectations for support in the ‘war on terror’ has displayed a degree of strategic convergence on global security objectives, thus prompting policy-makers and observers to dub it the ‘Great Britain of the Far East’. This article argues, however, that Japan is far from assuming this role. For Japan, the ‘war on terror’ serves more as a political pretext to legitimise long-planned for changes in military security policy that are often only marginally related to the US’s anti-terrorism agenda. Instead, Japan has focussed much more on using the terror threat rationale as a means to push forward its response to the regional and traditional security challenges of North Korea and China, even if at times it attempts to depict both as ‘new security challenges’ or as involving elements of counter-terrorism. The final conclusion is that US military hegemony may be weakened by Japan’s and the Asia-Pacific’s potential divergence from its global security agenda.

## **Introduction: Japan on board the US anti-terrorism agenda?**

It is undeniable that the events of 11 September 2001, and the ensuing US-led military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq as part of the ‘war on terror’, have provided the context for major changes in Japan’s post-war security culture and policy trajectory. Japan’s government—under the leadership of Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō until September 2006, and then from October 2006 under the premiership of Abe Shinzō—has professed support for US objectives in expunging the threats of trans-national terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and to face down ‘rogue states’ and elements of the ‘axis of evil’, especially Iraq and North Korea. Japan has moreover demonstrated a strong degree of support for US methods in pursuing the ‘war on terror’ and for the wider political and military agenda of the presidency of George W. Bush. The Japanese government expressed ‘understanding

and support' for both the US-led military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 (Shushō Kantei 2003), and thus seeming implicit approval for 'preemptive war' and 'regime change' in these states. Japan then further demonstrated its support for US military actions with the passing in the National Diet of the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law (ATSML) in October 2001 and the Iraqi Reconstruction Law (IRL) in July 2003. These laws have enabled the despatch of Japan Self Defence Forces (JSDF) units to the Indian Ocean (ongoing since 2001) and to southern Iraq (2004-2006) in 'coalitions of the willing' through the provision of non-combat logistical and reconstruction support.

Japan has subsequently continued to follow a trajectory in its military security policy that in many ways matches US strategy in the 'war on terror', and in fact in many cases has been planned bilaterally with the US. Japan has committed itself from December 2003 to the procurement of an off-the-shelf Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system from the US; joined the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) from 2003; passed National Emergency Legislation in 2003 and 2004 to cope with military contingencies; released a revised National Defence Programme Guideline (NDPG) in 2004 that sets out its future defence priorities, including 'force transformation'; and recently concluded in 2006 a Defence Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) with the US that has had as one of its objectives the upgrading of the functions and interoperability of the US-Japan alliance to deal not only with regional but now global contingencies—all of these measures drawing on the rationale of the need to respond to the threat of global trans-national terrorism.

These developments, coming relatively thick and fast given the incremental pace of change in the post-war period, mark important changes in Japan's security posture. Japan can be seen to be deviating from its traditional national security culture of

comprehensive security (*sōgō anzen hoshō*)—emphasising a cautious balance of military and non-military elements in security—and to be shifting towards a harder-edged military stance, or as some would posit, more ‘normal’ stance in regional and global security (Soeya 2004; Hughes 2004a). Moreover, Japan’s strengthening position as the US’s key bilateral alliance partner in the Asia-Pacific, both as a purveyor of bases for power projection and increasingly active partner in responding to military contingencies, is set to bolster US regional and global strategy in the ‘war on terror’ and its military hegemony in general.

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Japan it thus seems, in the midst of the ‘war on terror’, is showing apparent signs of convergence with the ‘Bush Doctrine’. Policy-makers and commentators have now begun to speculate that Japan may indeed come to parallel the role of the ‘Great Britain of the Far East’ (Institute for National Strategic Studies 2000; Takahashi 2005; Tanter 2005, 162). Japan is increasingly depicted, whether in positive or negative light given the history of pre-war militarism, as a ‘go anywhere, do anything’ type of potential ally, which shares the US’s strategic world vision, in line with the UK’s perceived position since 11 September. Moreover, regardless of the actual reality of the degree of the UK’s devotion to the US strategic agenda post-11 September, the US-UK alliance has been deliberately help up by US and Japanese policy-makers as a model to be replicated for their own alliance’s future (Institute for National Strategic Studies 2000).

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However, this article, whilst acknowledging (as argued elsewhere) the importance of the ‘war on terror’ in generating momentum for genuine change in Japan’s national security doctrines and the US-Japan alliance (Hughes 2004b, 2004c), has the objective of investigating more fully the degree and exact ways in which the need to respond to terrorism has impacted on Japan’s security policy. It argues that, based on

such an investigation, there are equally strong grounds for caution in ascribing Japan anything like the role of the ‘Great Britain of the Far East’, and that, despite the ongoing impact of the ‘war on terror’, there remain major restrictions on Japan’s military ambitions and role and how far it is prepared to support the US in its anti-terrorism agenda. In this sense, Japan, although very much at the forefront of Asia-Pacific allies in supporting the US in the ‘war on terror’ and growing ever closer in terms of security cooperation, still demonstrates a similar reticence to other regional states, including China and a number of ASEAN states, in regard to US objectives and means when it comes to the US imposition of its global agenda in combating terrorism on the regional security context (Dosch 2006: 71-111). Hence, Japan is still far away from achieving a status that matches either the reality or manipulated ideal of the US-UK alliance.

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This article argues that, although September 11 and the ‘war on terror’ have provided the trigger and occasion for increasingly radical changes in Japan’s security policy, at the same time the threat of terror *per se* only provides at best a partial rationale for these changes. In many instances, the ‘war on terror’ serves as a political pretext to legitimise long-planned for changes in military security policy that Japanese policy-makers reveal from their statements and actions to be often only marginally related to the US’s anti-terrorism agenda, or even totally unrelated. Instead, Japan’s during the ‘war on terror’ has been focussed much more on using 11 September, and the Afghan and Iraq wars as an opportunity to push forward its response to the regional and more traditional security challenges of North Korea and China, and energy security, even if at times it attempts to depict both as ‘new security challenges’ or as involving elements of terrorism.

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In turn, Japan's opportunism in exploiting the post-September 11 situation for its more particular security ends, and consequently its lack of a deeper and more pressing shared vision with the US of security centring around trans-national terrorism, also mean that this creates continued potential for divergence between the strategic cultures of Japan and its ally. As the article will argue, Japan's greatest degree of divergence comes over the issues of how far it will extend its functional and geographical cooperation to combating terrorism and WMD, especially in the Middle East. Meanwhile, even though Japan may have a much closer degree of convergence in tackling WMD in the case of North Korea, there are still some grounds for bilateral dissent in this area. The overall conclusion to be drawn from this investigation is that, despite all the evidence of Japan clambering on board specific bilateral military programmes and in working to revamp the alliance's functions, the US cannot count with confidence even upon Japan to assist it to execute its regional and global security agenda, and thus stands on some precarious ground in its pursuit of the 'war on terror'.

### **Japan's strategic culture and the impact of the 'war on terror'**

Japan's strategic culture and security policy throughout the post-war period have involved the pursuit of 'comprehensive security', consisting of both military and non-military (economic and diplomatic) components. In terms of military security, Japan's post-war policy-makers—consisting of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Japan Defence Agency (JDA) (as of January 2007, Japan Defence Ministry of Defence) and the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)—have largely entrusted this component to the US-Japan security treaty and alliance. Japan and the US predicate their security treaty upon a grand strategic bargain: Japan accepting US

military protection in return for its provision of bases to facilitate the projection of US military power in East Asia. Japan has attempted to temper its reliance on the US security guarantee, however, by the build-up of its own national defence capabilities and indigenous defence production, and by careful hedging against the dual alliance dilemmas of abandonment and entrapment in US regional and global military strategy (Hughes and Fukushima 2004).

Japan has thus hedged against entrapment in US military ‘adventurism’ (Heginbotham and Samuels 2002) in a number of ways. It has predicated its entire security policy upon constitutional interpretations that allow the exercise of individual self-defence but prohibit the exercise of collective self-defence. Japan in line with this interpretation has no obligation to defend its US security treaty partner outside its own national territory. In addition, Japan’s concern about entrapment meant that it was highly cautious about any integration of JSDF capacities and missions with those of the US military. Japan’s military security role in the Cold War was geographically restricted to the area immediately surrounding Japan, and limited functionally to providing a defensive ‘shield’ to assist the US offensive ‘sword’ in Northeast Asia (Hughes 2005a).

In turn, Japan’s comprehensive security policy further sought to counterbalance reliance on military power and the US-Japan alliance by utilising economic power. Japanese policy-makers throughout the Cold War and beyond have viewed economic power and diplomatic engagement (often taking the form of the use of Official Development Assistance [ODA] and the promotion of economic interdependence) as effective tools for countering the rise of potential security threats. Japan has long viewed economic engagement with China as a means to promote its peaceful

reinsertion into the international system, and has even persevered, if inconsistently, with the economic engagement of North Korea (Hughes 2005b).

Japan's approach towards terrorism during the Cold War period and prior to 11 September also corresponded very much with this comprehensive security agenda. Japan was prepared to use minimal force, although essentially civilian police rather than military force, to suppress its own domestic terrorism problems in the 1970s—effectively pushing its radical groups such as the *Nihon Sekigun* offshore to the Middle East. Japan's security authorities at the same time, though, recognised that terrorism was a multi-causal phenomenon borne from social discontent, and attempted to reintegrate radicals back into domestic society and to undercut their support base, rather than using policing force alone. Japan's relatively small-scale domestic terrorism problem, its successful elimination of it, and its reluctance to be seen to use major force to overcome terrorism, meant that it often appeared detached from the international norms of dealing with terrorism (Leheny 2006,148-151).

Japanese comprehensive security has begun to undergo significant alterations and challenges in the wake of the end of the Cold War and the impact of 11 September. Japan faced its first major global security crisis during the Gulf War of 1990-1991, when it was presented with and failed to respond to demands from its US ally and the international community to provide a 'human contribution' to the war effort in the form of JSDF despatch. Japan has also confronted heightened regional threats, and most immediately from North Korea. Japanese anxieties focus upon the North's development of nuclear weapons and proliferation of WMD—most graphically demonstrated by the North's announcement of a nuclear test on 10 October 2006. These fears are compounded by the North's ballistic missile programme—Japan's vulnerability to missile attack highlighted by the test launch over its airspace of a



Taepodong-1 missile in August 1998, and a series of North Korean missile tests in the Sea of Japan in July 2006. Japanese policy-makers since the first North Korean nuclear crisis of 1993-94 have also entertained fears of incursions into Japanese territory by North Korean spy ships (*fushinsen*) and North Korean guerrilla attacks.

North Korea represents the most ‘immediate and present’ danger for Japan, and especially in the public consciousness, but China embodies the greatest challenge for Japan’s security over the medium to longer terms. Japan’s greatest concerns revolve around China’s increasing propensity to exercise military power outside its immediate borders. Japanese policy-makers fear a Chinese blue-water naval capacity that might interfere with Japan’s Sea Lines of Communication through the South China Sea, and Sino-Japanese tensions have been heightened by territorial disputes in the East China over the sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands (*Diaoyutai*) and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) gas fields. In addition, Japan-China security relations have been further complicated by the Taiwan issue and Sino-US strategic competition. Japan watched with anxiety the Taiwan Straits crisis of 1996, and fears that China may look to eventually challenge the US militarily in the region over the longer term. Japan’s security planners envisage that in the event of a new Taiwan independence crisis reaching the point of conflict, US bases in Japan are likely to be the target of Chinese ballistic missile attack, China might attempt to use amphibious forces to seize offshore islands to disrupt US-Japan alliance cooperation, and that Japan risks becoming sucked into war with its neighbour through US alliance pressure.

Japan’s preferred options in responding to these global and regional crises have clearly been non-military in nature. Japan has continued to rely on diplomatic approaches to the North Korean nuclear crisis: Prime Minister Koizumi initiating summits with the North in 2002 and 2004, designed to clear away the obstacles to

bilateral diplomatic normalisation and to demonstrate to the US the importance of persisting with negotiations in order to avoid conflict on the Korean Peninsula. Japanese policy-makers have further persisted with their efforts to engage North Korea economically even as high-level diplomatic relations stagnated during Koizumi's premiership (Tanaka and Tahara 2005, 27-29). Moreover, Japan has continued to place great emphasis on issues of economic insecurity and non-traditional security concerns as important in their own right within comprehensive security. Japan has played an important part in articulating conceptions of 'human security' as can be seen in its reaction to the economic and social fallout from the East Asia financial crises of 1997-98 and its humanitarian relief activities in the Asian tsunami of 2004.

Nonetheless, Japanese policy-makers have shown signs of declining confidence in their ability to use economic and diplomatic means to respond to security issues such as North Korea and China. These concerns have been prompted by Japan's own relative economic decline vis-à-vis a rising China, and the need to reduce the overall ODA budget (although Japan has indicated from 2006 its desire to once again increase its overseas aid). Japanese policy-makers have thus sought since the mid-1990s to rebalance comprehensive security by strengthening its military components. Japan in response to the global crisis of the Gulf War eventually found a form of military response through the passing in June 1992 of the International Peace Cooperation Law (IPCL) that allows JSDF on UN-mandated non-combat peacekeeping operations.

However, the principal shifts in Japan's military posture have come in response to regional security crises and through the augmentation of the functional and geographical parameters of the US-Japan alliance. The twin crises in the 1990s of the

North Korean nuclear crisis and the Taiwan Straits crisis demonstrated the essential lack of preparedness and interoperability of the US-Japan alliance to respond to regional contingencies—Japan having no ready response to requests from its US ally to provide logistical support in the event of the outbreak of conflict, thereby revealing the essential emptiness of the fifty year old alliance. Japan and the US moved to remedy these alliance weaknesses with the implementation from 1997 onwards of the revised Guidelines for Japan-US Defence Cooperation. The revised Guidelines for the first time outlined the extent of logistical rear-area support that Japan could provide for its US ally in the event of a regional contingency; although they were notable also in stressing Japan's ability to hedge against entrapment in US regional contingencies by stressing that its support was based on 'situational need' rather than strict geographical demarcations that might include Taiwan.

Japan's security policy can therefore be seen to have begun to move into a transitional phase since the mid-1990s, and this shift has been further boosted by threats of trans-national terrorism. Japan was the first state to experience a terrorist group's use of WMD in the Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in March 1995. The Japanese domestic security authorities again responded to the terrorist threat mainly through the use of policing powers and attempts to maintain close monitoring of the group's followers whilst looking to achieve their reintegration back into general society. At the same time, though, the attacks heightened the awareness of the Japanese policy-makers concerning their state's potential vulnerability to these new forms of maximalist terrorism, and the need to consider more military style counter-terrorism through the deployment of the JSDF (Hughes 1998). Nevertheless, it has been the new global crisis of the 'war on terror' which has generated the greatest momentum for change in Japan's security policy, even if it has

not necessarily presented the main rationale for the nature of changes actually undertaken.

Japan's policy-makers and the general public abhorred the 11 September attacks, and Prime Minister Koizumi moved with extraordinary speed to pass the ATSMML and the IRL through the National Diet. In line with the ATSMML, the JSDF has provided logistical support to the coalition in Afghanistan, especially refuelling coalition shipping in the Indian Ocean. The IRL has enabled the despatch of Ground Self Defence Force (GSDF) personnel to Samawah in Iraq to engage in reconstruction activities. Japan's activities indicate a new stage in the expansion of its military responsibilities: marking the first time that the JSDF has been despatched overseas during on-going conflicts in the post-war period; and providing the JSDF with a new mandate to use its weapons if necessary to protect not only its own members but also the military personnel of the US and other states, and refugees. Japan has bought itself a relatively privileged position in the US 'coalitions of the willing', positioning JSDF personnel at US central command in Tampa, and learning the principles of multinational cooperation under US direction by working alongside the UK, Australia, the Netherlands, Thailand and other allies (Hughes 2005b).

Japan's cooperation with the US in Afghanistan and Iraq and the 'war on terror' have also fed back into a second cycle of the upgrading of the functions of the bilateral security treaty. This cycle follows on from the changes of the late 1990s by upgrading the functions of the bilateral security treaty for regional security, but now marks a new shift by emphasising the importance of global cooperation as well. Japan and the US initiated their DPRI in May 2006 in response to two sets of rationales.

From the US perspective, the paramount objective—in line with the Global Posture Review (GPR) was to activate its regional bases and alliances to combat global threats

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of terrorism and WMD proliferation, and most especially in the ‘arc of instability’ running from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. In the case of Japan, the US sought to relocate the US Army I Corps, a rapid deployment force covering the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, from Washington State to Army Camp Zama in Kanagawa. The ramification of this was that Japan would serve as a frontline command post for US global power projection to as far away as the Middle East. From the Japanese perspective, although there was acceptance of the need to respond to the US’s new anti-terrorism agenda, the initial domestic political priority was to take the opportunity of the GPR to push for the realignment of US bases in order to reduce the burden on Japanese local communities of hosting US forces, especially in Okinawa. Japan and the US engaged in hard bargaining until the conclusion of the DPRI in May 2006.

Japan succeeded in securing the scaling down of US Marine forces in Okinawa, whilst the US and Japan also appeared to converge on the future global agenda of the US-Japan alliance. Japan accepted the hosting of the US Army I Corps, thus marking a *de facto* breaching of the interpretations of the scope of the US-Japan security treaty and US bases as covering only Japan and the Far East. Japan and the US also issued through their Security Consultative Committee (SCC) a joint statement in February 2005 which stressed the common global strategic objectives of the alliance, including the eradication of terrorism and prevention of WMD proliferation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2005).

Japan appears to have begun to back up these statements with specific military planning. In December 2005, the Japanese government released the revised NDPG, the document that sets out strategic doctrine alongside the necessary force capabilities, and also released a new Mid-Term Defence Programme (MTDP) which

sets out the key military assets that Japan seeks to acquire. The NDPG opens by stressing the need to gear the JSDF to respond to ‘new threats’, including WMD and ballistic missile proliferation and international terrorist activities, as well as regional threats such as attacks on Japan’s offshore islands, guerrilla incursions and full-scale invasion. Moreover, it focuses upon the need for Japan to consider the importance of the security of the area ‘spreading from the Middle East to East Asia’, thereby indicating Japan’s mapping of its own security interests onto the US’s ‘arc of instability’. The NDPG seeks to convert the JSDF from a force largely still structured to fight Cold War adversaries to become one that is ‘multifunctional, flexible and effective’ (Japan Defence Agency 2004). This is to be done by reducing the numbers of JSDF main battle tanks, frigates and interceptors, and placing emphasis instead on more mobile rapid-reaction GSDF units, on Maritime Self Defence Force (MSDF) amphibious and BMD systems, and on Air Self Defence Force (ASDF) long range transports—in short a new focus on power projection for ‘international peace cooperation’ including UN PKO and US-led multinational operations.

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### **Japan’s caution in the ‘war on terror’**

Given this Japanese activity in the midst of the ‘war on terror’, and its impact in generating substantial change in Japan’s military posture, it is understandable that US policy-makers and other commentators might assume Japanese strategic convergence with the US based principally on the rationale of expunging terrorism. However, it is important to recognise that the strengthening of alliance ties is predicated on countering terrorism as only a semi-rationale, or even as a highly marginal rationale, from the Japanese perspective.

*Japan-US divergent strategic objectives in the 'war on terror'*

Japanese policy-makers and public opinion expressed strong sympathy with the US in the wake of the 11 September attacks and for JSDF despatch under the ATSMML to assist in dealing with the relatively clear cut threat of terrorism in Afghanistan. However, Japan's support for the US-led invasion of Iraq appears to have been based on less of a sense of strategic convergence over the terrorist and WMD threat emanating from this state. Japanese policy-makers prior to the invasion in 2003 certainly condemned Iraq's perceived evasion of international inspections of its WMD programmes, and urged compliance with UN resolutions. Nevertheless, Japanese policy-makers also displayed in consultation amongst themselves considerable ambivalence about the final necessity of military action; the international legality and legitimacy of military action without clearer UN approval; the ability of the US to smash and then reconstruct the Iraqi state; and the risks of Japanese entrapment in US military strategy. However, in the final calculation, Japan's lack of a strong strategic vision in common with the US in the case of Iraq was overridden by lingering concerns over WMD proliferation, and even more importantly the alliance imperative of being seen to show support for the US in order to enlist its support in countering the renewed nuclear threat from North Korea from 2002 onwards (Kamiya 2004, 14-15).

Japan in then enacting the IRL and announcing the Basic Plan for JSDF despatch sought to justify this action on the basis of alliance management. Prime Minister Koizumi began by stressing at the start of the announcement the need to assist the will of the international community (conflating this with essentially the two states of the US and the UK, and the weaker UN mandates of 1458 and 1511) in reconstructing Iraq. But Koizumi then moved to pack the second half of his statement with emphasis

upon the unique importance of the US for Japan's own security and the need to maintain confidence in the bilateral alliance through the despatch of the JSDF to Iraq (Prime Minister of Japan Office 2003).

Japan's motivations in seeking to support the US can thus be seen to be only semi-rationalised on the same basis as that of the US. Its principal alliance concern was to avoid any form of abandonment by the US in the case of dealing with security threats closer to home, rather than sharing the vision of the 'war on terror'. In certain regards, it might be argued that Japan does in fact share similar characteristics with the UK as both states have plumped for a strategy of being seen to display close cooperation with the US in order to attempt to remain relevant and retain leverage over the unilateral behaviour of their key US ally. However, few would also doubt the commitment of large sections of the UK's political leadership to the anti-terrorism and anti-WMD cause in Iraq, and Japan can also be seen to clearly differ from the UK in terms of how far it is willing to even consider extending the 'war on terror' and the military means by which to pursue it.

Japan, for instance, has clearly not bought much of the logic of the 'axis of evil'. It has been highly reluctant to line up with the US and its other allies over Iran. Japan's concerns about energy security, and the need to secure oil resources in the Middle East, have meant that, even in the wake of 11 September and US condemnation of Iran's nuclear programme, it has pushed ahead (albeit with great difficulty, and needing to cut the partly Japanese state-owned INPEX's state in the field to 10 per cent from seventy five) with plans to retain a foothold in the development of Iran's Azagedan oil field (Heginbotham and Samuels 2002). Moreover, even as international tensions with Iran have increased since mid-2006, Japan, whilst backing US-EU proposals to halt Iran's nuclear programme, has continued to portray itself as a

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mediator in the dispute. It has maintained close dialogue with Iran and resisted any form of active pressure such as financial sanctions.

*Divergence over methods in the 'war on terror'*

Japan's divergence with the US becomes more apparent when it comes to the types of measures that it is prepared to utilise to address the questions of terrorism. Japan has been forthcoming in the despatch of the JSDF to the Indian Ocean and to Iraq, and once again it is important to reiterate that these are potentially radical precedents for its exercise of military power in the future. But just as significant is the continued military operational hedging behaviour that Japan has displayed in limiting its involvement in conflicts.

Japan has delimited its commitments in the Indian Ocean and Iraq by predicating the ATSMML and Iraqi reconstruction law on extant UN resolutions, thus creating a potential escape route from future US requests for military cooperation that are deemed not to have sufficient UN legitimisation. These laws for JSDF despatch also set limited, although extendable, time limits on JSDF despatch so as to avoid open-ended commitments to US-led operations.

Japanese hedging is further demonstrated by the specific locations and missions for JSDF despatch. The JSDF are deployed purely in non-combat zones to limit the risks of embroilment in a conflict. The MSDF deployment to support the Afghan campaign in the Indian Ocean clearly removes Japanese exposure to the risks of ground war. The GSDF deployment in Iraq is far more hazardous, but Japan's government did deploy to the relatively safest zone of Iraq it was possible to find, and its troops have relied on Dutch, Australian and UK forces for their security. JSDF forces have been deliberately limited in their capabilities so as to avoid any over-extension of their

commitment or ‘mission creep’. Japan’s government delayed despatching the MSDF’s Aegis destroyers to the Indian Ocean due to the fear that their interoperable systems would lead to US requests for them to be used as substitutes for US assets. Similarly, in Iraq the GSDF were provided with sufficient equipment to protect themselves, but not the type of weaponry that would mean they could become the object of US requests to assist active combat operations (Hughes 2004a: 131-133).

The converse to Japan’s military hedging in its military deployments has been its emphasis instead—in line with its comprehensive security traditions—on a non-military contribution to combating terrorism. Japan hosted in Tokyo the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan on 21-22 January 2002. At the conference Japan pledged up to US\$500 million for rebuilding the government and physical infrastructure of the country, and the conference itself raised a total of US\$4.5 billion. Similarly at the International Donors’ Conference on the Reconstruction of Iraq in Madrid in 2003, Japan pledged up to US\$5 billion in grant and soft loan financial assistance, to be disbursed through the Iraqi government and international organisations. Japan’s economic-focussed approach to fighting terrorism is also demonstrated in its approach to the problem in East Asia. Japan’s government has viewed intra-state separatist conflict and terrorism in the Mindanao area of the Philippines as in part the outcome of the relative failure to date of that state’s developmental agenda, and the resultant severe economic disparities imposed on Mindanao. Consequently, the Japanese government in December 2002 unveiled a ‘Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao’. It argued that strife in this Mindanao had, ‘aggravated the issue of poverty the area, creating a hotbed of terrorism’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2002, 2). Japan’s ODA package for Mindanao has aimed to break this cycle by improving the training of human resources

in the region, and by providing basic human needs such as medical care, rural development and infrastructure. Japan's stance contrasts to some degree with that of the US which has looked to increasingly reengage militarily in the Philippines and Southeast Asia to counter radical Islamic insurgencies (Haacke 2003).

Japan's cautious resistance to the US's global anti-terrorism military has been demonstrated again most recently by the DPRI in 2006. Japan's government has certainly shifted part of the way to meet US demands—acceding to the use of its bases for US actions outside the scope of the Far East, signing on to increased command and control integration with the US, and emphasising common global strategic objectives in the SCC statement of February 2005. Nevertheless, even in the midst of these important changes in the bilateral alliance, Japan has shown the capacity to elude US requests in the future for active cooperation in anti-terrorism activities. It is striking that in the final intense phases of bilateral negotiations in late 2005 and early 2006 Japan switched its emphasis almost solely to reducing the US base burden on Okinawa. The US was singularly unsuccessful in subsequent SCC meetings in October 2005 and May 2006 in extracting from Japan any further talk of common global strategic objectives, or specification of activities that it might undertake to combat terrorism (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005b, 2006). This led US policy-makers to label the DPRI as more of a 'real estate' negotiation over bases, rather than a negotiation amongst allies with genuine new strategic objectives in a post-11 September world (Katō 2006).

*Exploiting the war on terror for regional security ends*

Japan can thus be seen to have only partially signed on to the 'war on terror' and to have exhibited limited strategic convergence with the US. But even though Japan may

have limited its military commitments in the ‘war on terror’, it is clearly not above utilising the threat of terrorism as a means to legitimise the driving forward of its security policy and alliance cooperation with the US in order to deal with more traditional threats to its own immediate security in its own region.

Japan’s principal security concerns in the post-Cold War period, as explained in the introductory sections of this article, have been North Korea and China. These state-centred threats have continued to occupy a central position in Japanese security thinking even after 11 September, and most of the developments in Japan’s individual national capabilities and the US-Japan alliance have been geared to responding to them. Hence, even though Japan in its NDPG and MTDP is developing power projection capabilities that can serve for global as well as regional security, the primary focus for the usage of these still remains for the defence of its own immediate territory. The GSDF rapid-reaction force is to be co-located alongside the US I Army Corps at Camp Zama and will certainly become increasingly experienced in bilateral operations for global deployments, but its main function will still be to respond more quickly to the possibility of North Korean or even Chinese incursions into Japanese territory. Similarly, the MSDF’s new amphibious capabilities provide the potential for further deployments of the JSDF overseas in UN PKO and coalitions of the willing, but they also provide for improved defence of Japan’s outer islands. The MSDF’s BMD system is also a possible candidate for deployment beyond East Asia to provide defensive support for US operations, but its prime purpose still remains homeland defence in Japan and of US bases for dealing with regional contingencies. The ASDF is set to acquire new power projection capabilities as well, which can serve to support the US out-of-area, but the bulk of its interceptor force remains arrayed for defence against North Korea and most importantly Chinese incursions (Hughes 2005a).

Japan's force structure is thus adding capacity for global operations and growing in experience of supporting the US in 'coalitions of the willing', but still the priority of Japanese defence planning remains focussed on immediate regional threats. This is not unsurprising perhaps, given Japan's relatively unstable regional environment, China's perceived military rise, and unsettled territorial disputes with its neighbours. Nevertheless, what is more surprising is the use of the rhetoric of the 'war on terror' and its accompanying changed strategic environment in order to justify a response to traditional security problems.

Japan's policy-makers and media have consistently labelled North Korea a 'terror' state, evidenced by its abductions of Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s and by the *fushinsen* incursions, and have use this as a justification for Japan to strengthen its coastal protection and MSDF capabilities (Hughes 1999; Leheny 2006, 157-164). North Korea's ballistic missile capabilities have also been conflated with these 'terrorist' activities, and this has provided legitimisation for Japan to proceed with BMD to deal with what is essentially a traditional security issue that has been a concern since before the end of the Cold War. Japan's revised NDPG also utilises the language of terror as a means to justify the response to essentially traditional threats from North Korea and China. The NDPG headlines Japan's restructuring of its military by labelling this as a response to 'new threats and diverse situations' and gives prominence to the impact of September 11. But it then goes on to stress the sources of insecurity that Japan faces in the region originating from North Korea and China, and scenarios of ballistic missile attack, guerrilla incursions, and the occupation of its outer islands—state-centred threats, and hardly the stuff of trans-national terrorism and the US and UK post-11 September agenda (Japan Defence

Agency 2004), but useful justification for military restructuring, especially when the mentioning of China as a threat is still largely a diplomatic taboo in Japan.

### **Conclusion: Not Yet the ‘Great Britain of the Far East’**

Japan is not yet the ‘Great Britain of the Far East’, as seen from its record in the ‘war on terror’. Those US policy-makers who have posited this as a role for Japan may in part have been setting an objective for Japan, rather than seeing this a finalised identity, but have clearly hoped that Japan would move in this direction. Japan, as argued elsewhere, is in many ways moving to become a more dependable and dependent US ally, and its activity in the ‘war on terror’ is a portent of this. But the key point to stress is that much of this alliance strengthening is being driven not by a strongly shared agenda on the objectives and means to respond to terrorism post-11 September, but is being driven by Japan’s more parochial security concerns in the East Asia region relating to North Korea and China. Japanese policy-makers despatched the JSDF to the Indian Ocean and to Iraq to help their US ally combat terrorism, but they believed this was the price they had to pay in order to obtain the US’s assistance in facing down North Korea and most especially China over the longer term. Hence, the ‘war on terror’ has only been a semi-rationale at best for closer US-Japan alliance ties. The fundamental glue that holds the Japan-US alliance together remains regional East Asian threats. Consequently, the ‘war on terror’ has served more as a convenient rationale for camouflaging responses to traditional state-based threats in East Asia.

In this way, Japan has not followed the UK’s path in the ‘war on terror’. For sure, as pointed out above, there are similarities in intent by which Japan and the UK have both offered military support to the US in order to maintain close ties and hoped for

relevance to and leverage over the US. Moreover, both have shown an interest in departing from the US agenda and emphasising from the outset state-building as means to respond to terrorist phenomena. Furthermore, both Japan and the UK have clearly looked to avoid ultimate entrapment in US military strategy by attempting to hedge where possible. However, Japan's degree of hedging, resistance to military commitments, and divergence in understanding of the centrality of terrorism in the contemporary security agenda, still differs greatly from the UK, with the result that is a far less forthcoming ally.

The final conclusion that is thus drawn from the knowledge that Japan is not yet and is unlikely to be on a par with the US as an ally is that US policy-makers will need to tread warily in pushing allies in their commitments. The US has focussed on Japan as the fulcrum of its traditional and post-September security agenda in East Asia and has aspirations for the US-Japan alliance beyond this region. However, the US-Japan alliance, despite US prodding and hopes, is not yet fit for this purpose. This then calls into question much of the wider basis of current US defence planning and its role allocation to certain key allies.

**Acronyms**

<u>ASDF</u>	<u>Air Self Defence Force</u>
<u>ATSMML</u>	<u>Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law</u>
<u>BMD</u>	<u>Ballistic Missile Defence</u>
<u>DPRI</u>	<u>Defence Policy Review Initiative</u>
<u>EEZ</u>	<u>Exclusive Economic Zone</u>
<u>GPR</u>	<u>Global Posture Review</u>
<u>GSDF</u>	<u>Ground Self Defence Force</u>
<u>IPCL</u>	<u>International Peace Cooperation Law</u>
<u>IRL</u>	<u>Iraqi Reconstruction Law</u>
<u>JDA</u>	<u>Japan Defence Agency</u>
<u>JSDF</u>	<u>Japan Self Defence Forces</u>
<u>LDP</u>	<u>Liberal Democratic Party</u>
<u>MOFA</u>	<u>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</u>
<u>MSDF</u>	<u>Maritime Self Defence Force</u>
<u>MTDP</u>	<u>Mid-Term Defence Programme</u>
<u>NDPG</u>	<u>National Defence Programme Guideline</u>
<u>PSI</u>	<u>Proliferation Security Initiative</u>

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