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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

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**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 for legitimating long-planned changes in military security policy that are often only marginally related to the US's anti-terrorism agenda. Instead, Japan has focused 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 counterterrorism. The final conclusion is that US military hegemony may be weakened by Japan's and the Asia-Pacific's potential divergence from the US global security agenda.*

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

It is undeniable that the events of September 11 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 postwar 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 the US objectives of expunging the threats of transnational terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and of facing 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, respectively (Shushō Kantei 2003), thus seeming to give implicit approval for 'pre-emptive 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 dispatch 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 noncombat 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 procuring 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 (NDFPG) in 2004 setting out its future defence priorities, including ‘force transformation’; and recently concluded in 2006 a Defence Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) with the US that has as one of its objectives the upgrading of the functions and interoperability of the US–Japan alliance to deal with both regional and global contingencies. All of these measures draw on the rationale of the need to respond to the threat of global transnational terrorism.

These developments, coming relatively thick and fast given the incremental pace of change in the post-World War II 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*)—emphasizing a cautious balance of military and nonmilitary elements—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 as an 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.

It thus seems that Japan, amidst the ‘war on terror’, is showing 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 a positive or negative light given the history of pre-war militarism, as a ‘go anywhere, do anything’ type of potential ally, which shares the strategic world vision of the US, in line with the United Kingdom’s perceived position since September 11. Moreover, regardless of the actual degree of the UK’s devotion to the US strategic agenda post-September 11, the US-UK alliance has been deliberately held 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).

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 to and exact ways in which the need to respond to terrorism has impacted on Japan’s security policy. It argues that there are equally strong grounds for caution in ascribing to 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 on 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.

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 provides at best only a partial rationale for these changes. In many instances, the 'war on terror' serves as a political pretext for legitimating long-planned changes in military security policy. The statements and actions of Japanese policy-makers reveal that these changes are often only marginally related to the US's anti-terrorism agenda, or even totally unrelated. Instead, Japan during the 'war on terror' has been focused much more on using September 11, 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.

In turn, Japan's opportunism in exploiting the post-September 11 situation for its own security ends, and consequently its lack of a deeper and more pressing shared vision with the US of security centring around transnational terrorism, creates continued potential for divergence between the strategic cultures of Japan and its ally. As this article will argue, the greatest degree of divergence comes over the issues of how far Japan will extend its functional and geographical cooperation to combating terrorism and WMD, especially in the Middle East. Meanwhile, though there may be 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 working to revamp the alliance's functions, the US cannot confidently count on even Japan to assist it in executing its regional and global security agenda, and thus stands on precarious ground in 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-World War II period have involved the pursuit of 'comprehensive security', consisting of both military and nonmilitary (economic and diplomatic) components. In terms of military security, Japan's postwar policy-makers—consisting of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan Defence Agency (as of January 2007, Ministry of Defence [Japan]) and the governing Liberal Democratic Party—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 accepts US military protection in return for providing 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 national territory. In addition, Japan's concern over 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 counter-balance reliance on military power and the US–Japan alliance by utilizing economic power. Japanese policy-makers throughout the Cold War and beyond have viewed economic power and diplomatic engagement (often through 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 September 11 also corresponded with this comprehensive security agenda. Japan was prepared to use minimal force, although essentially civilian police rather than military force, to suppress domestic terrorism problems in the 1970s—effectively pushing its radical groups such as the *Nihon Sekigun* offshore to the Middle East. At the same time, Japan's security authorities recognized that terrorism was a multicausal phenomenon born from social discontent. It therefore also attempted to reintegrate radicals back into domestic society and to undercut their support base. Japan's relatively small-scale domestic terrorism problem, its successful elimination of it, and its reluctance 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 undergone significant alterations and faced significant challenges in the wake of the Cold War and September 11. 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 a JSDF dispatch. Japan has also confronted heightened regional threats, most immediately from North Korea. Japanese anxieties focus upon North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and proliferation of WMD—most graphically demonstrated by North Korea's announcement of a nuclear test on 10 October 2006. These fears are compounded by North Korea's ballistic missile programme. Japan's vulnerability to missile attack was 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. Since the first North Korean nuclear crisis of 1993–1994, Japanese policy-makers have also feared

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, 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 Sea 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 the Taiwan Straits crisis of 1996 with anxiety, and fears that China may eventually challenge the US militarily in the region. Japan's security planners envisage the following 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 Japan risks being drawn into war with its neighbour through US alliance pressure.

Japan's preferred responses to these global and regional crises have clearly been nonmilitary in nature. Japan has continued to rely on diplomatic approaches to the North Korean nuclear crisis, as demonstrated by Prime Minister Koizumi initiating summits with North Korea in 2002 and 2004 to clear away the obstacles to bilateral diplomatic normalization 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 economic security and other nontraditional security concerns as important within their own right within comprehensive security. Japan has played an important role in articulating conceptions of 'human security', as can be seen in its reaction to the economic and social fallout from the East Asia financial crisis of 1997-1998 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 relative economic decline vis-à-vis China, and the need to reduce the overall ODA budget (although since 2006 Japan has indicated its desire to once again increase its overseas aid). Since the mid-1990s, Japanese policy-makers have thus sought to rebalance comprehensive security by strengthening Japan's military components. In the face of the global crisis of the Gulf War, Japan eventually found a form of military response through the passing in June 1992 of the International Peace Cooperation Law that allows JSDF on UN-mandated noncombat 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 lack of preparedness and interoperability of the US–Japan alliance in responding to regional contingencies: Japan had no ready response to requests from its US ally to provide logistical support in the event of the outbreak of conflict. This revealed the essential emptiness of the 50-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. They were also notable for stressing Japan’s ability to hedge against entrapment in US regional contingencies by emphasizing that its support depended on ‘situational need’ rather than on strict geographical demarcations that might include Taiwan.

It is therefore possible to view Japan’s security policy as beginning to move into a transitional phase since the mid-1990s—a shift that threats of transnational terrorism have further boosted. Japan was the first state to experience a terrorist group’s use of WMD in the Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attack in 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 closely monitor the group’s followers whilst working to reintegrate them into general society. At the same time the attacks heightened the awareness of 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’ that 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 undertaken.

Japan’s policy-makers and the general public expressed abhorrence for the September 11 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; in particular, refuelling coalition shipping in the Indian Ocean. The IRL has enabled the dispatch of Ground Self Defence Force (GSDF) personnel to Samawah in Iraq to engage in reconstruction work. Japan’s activities indicate a new stage in the expansion of its military responsibilities in two respects: this is the first time that the JSDF has been dispatched overseas during ongoing conflicts in the post-World War II period; and the JSDF has a new mandate to use its weapons if necessary to protect not only its own members, but also the military personnel of the US, other states and refugees. Japan has bought itself a relatively privileged position in the US ‘coalition 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 in the ‘war on terror’, has also fed back into a second cycle of upgrading 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 also marks a new shift by emphasizing the importance of global cooperation. 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 of terrorism and WMD proliferation, in particular, 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. Although the Japanese accepted the need to respond to the new anti-terrorism agenda of the US, their initial domestic political priority was to utilize the GPR to push for the realignment of US bases to reduce the burden on local Japanese 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 hosting the US Army I Corps, thus marking a *de facto* breach 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 that stressed the common global strategic objectives of the alliance, including the eradication of terrorism and prevention of WMD proliferation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan 2005a).

Japan appears to have backed 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 still largely 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 peacekeeping operations (PKO) and US-led multinational operations.

### **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 commentators might assume Japanese strategic



convergence with the US based principally on the rationale of expunging terrorism. However, it is important to recognize that from Japan's perspective, the strengthening of alliance ties may be only partly or even marginally predicated on a rationale of countering terrorism.

*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 September 11 attacks and support for JSDF dispatch 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 does not appear to have been based on a sense of strategic convergence over the terrorist and WMD threats 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 in consultation amongst themselves also displayed 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 destroy 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 justified enacting the IRL and announcing the Basic Plan for JSDF dispatch 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 US and the UK, and the weaker UN mandates of Resolutions 1458 and 1511) in reconstructing Iraq. But in the second half of his statement, Koizumi emphasized the unique importance of the US for Japan's own security and the need to maintain confidence in the bilateral alliance through the dispatch of the JSDF to Iraq (Prime Minister of Japan Office 2003).

Japan's motivations in supporting the US do not represent a complete acceptance of American security goals or methods. Its principal alliance concern was to avoid any form of abandonment by the US in 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 in fact shares 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 remain relevant and retain leverage over the unilateral behaviour of their key ally. However, few would doubt the commitment of large sections of the UK's political leadership to the anti-terrorism and anti-WMD cause in Iraq. Japan clearly differs 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 September 11 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 stake in the field to ten per cent from 75 per cent) 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 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 considering the measures Japan is prepared to utilize to address the questions of terrorism. Japan's forthcoming nature in the dispatch of the JDSF to the Indian Ocean and to Iraq—potentially radical precedents for its exercise of military power in the future—contrasts significantly with its hedging of military operations by 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 legitimization. These laws for JDSF dispatch also set limited, although extendable, time limits on JDSF dispatch so as to avoid open-ended commitments to US-led operations.

Japanese hedging is further demonstrated by the specific locations and missions for JDSF dispatch. The JDSF are deployed purely in noncombat zones to limit the risks of embroilment in a conflict. The MSDF deployment to support the Afghan campaign in the Indian Ocean 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. JDSF forces have been deliberately limited in their capabilities so as to avoid any overextension of their commitment or 'mission creep'. Japan's government delayed dispatching 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 make them the object of US requests to assist in active combat operations (Hughes 2004a, 131–133).

The converse of Japan's hedging in its military deployments has been its emphasis—in line with its comprehensive security traditions—on a nonmilitary contribution to combating terrorism. Japan hosted the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan on 21–22 January 2002 in Tokyo. At the conference, Japan pledged up to US\$500m for rebuilding the government and physical infrastructure of the country, and the conference raised a total of US\$4.5b. Similarly, at the International Donors' Conference on the Reconstruction of Iraq in Madrid in 2003, Japan pledged up to US\$5b in grant and soft-loan financial assistance, to be disbursed through the Iraqi government and international organizations.

Japan's economic-focused approach to fighting terrorism is also demonstrated in its approach to the problem in East Asia. Japan's government has viewed intrastate 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. The Japanese government argued that strife in Mindanao had 'aggravated the issue of poverty in the area, creating a hotbed of terrorism' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan 2002, 2). Japan's ODA package for Mindanao has aimed at breaking 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 increasingly sought to re-engage militarily in the Philippines and Southeast Asia to counter radical Islamic insurgencies (Haacke 2003).

Japan's cautious resistance to the military approach of the US to global anti-terrorism was demonstrated again most recently by the DPRI in 2006. The Japanese government has certainly shifted part of the way to meet US demands by 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 emphasizing 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 demonstrated the capacity to elude future US requests 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 Japan 2005b, 2006). This led US policy-makers to label the DPRI as more of a 'real-estate' negotiation over bases than a negotiation amongst allies with genuine new strategic objectives in a post-September 11 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. Although Japan may have limited its military commitments in the 'war on terror', it is clearly not above utilizing the threat of terrorism as a means to legitimize driving forward 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.

As explained above, North Korea and China represent Japan's principal security concerns in the post-Cold War period. These state-centred threats continue to occupy a central position in Japanese security thinking even after September 11, and most of the developments in Japan's individual national capabilities and the US-Japan alliance are geared to responding to them. Even though Japan in its NDPG and MTDP is developing power-projection capabilities that can serve global as well as regional security, the primary focus still remains

the defence of its own immediate territory. The GSDF rapid-reaction force is to be 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 remains homeland defence in Japan and defence 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 Korean and most importantly Chinese incursions (Hughes 2005a).

Japan's force structure is thus adding capacity for global operations and growing in experience through supporting the US in 'coalitions of the willing', but the priority of Japanese defence planning remains focused on immediate regional threats. This is perhaps not unsurprising, 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 used this as a justification for strengthening Japan's 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 legitimization 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 utilizes the language of terror as a means to justify the response to 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. These represent state-centred threats; hardly the stuff of transnational terrorism and the US and UK post-September 11 agenda (Japan Defence Agency 2004), but useful justification for military restructuring, especially when mentioning 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, hoping that Japan would move in this direction, rather than seeing this as a finalized identity. Japan, as argued above, is in many ways moving to become a more dependable and dependent US ally. Its activity in the 'war on terror' is a portent of this. However, the key point to stress is that much of the alliance strengthening is being driven not by a strongly shared agenda on the objectives and means to respond to terrorism post-September 11, but by Japan's more parochial security concerns in the East Asia region relating to North Korea and China. Japanese policy-makers dispatched 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 assistance of the US in facing down North Korea, and most especially China, over the longer term. Hence, the 'war on terror' has only been at best part of the reason for closer US–Japan 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'. Certainly, 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 with, relevance to and leverage over the US. Moreover, both have shown an interest in departing from the US agenda and emphasizing from the outset state-building as a means to respond to terrorist phenomena. Furthermore, both Japan and the UK have clearly to avoid ultimate entrapment in US military strategy by attempting to hedge involvement where possible. However, Japan's degree of hedging, resistance to military commitments, and divergence in understanding the centrality of terrorism in the contemporary security agenda still differ greatly from the UK, with the result that Japan is a far less forthcoming ally.

The final conclusion that is to be drawn from the knowledge that Japan is not yet and is unlikely to be on a par with the UK as an ally is that US policy-makers will need to tread warily in pushing allies in their commitments. The US has focused on Japan as the fulcrum of its traditional and post-September 11 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 calls into question much of the wider basis of current US defence planning and its allocation of roles to certain key allies.

#### **APPENDIX: glossary of acronyms**

ASDF	Air Self Defence Force
ATSMML	Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defence
DPRI	Defence Policy Review Initiative
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
GPR	Global Posture Review
GSDF	Ground Self Defence Force
IRL	Iraqi Reconstruction Law
JSDF	Japan Self Defence Forces
MSDF	Maritime Self Defence Force



MTDP	Mid-Term Defence Programme
NDPG	National Defence Programme Guideline
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PKO	Peacekeeping Operations
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
SCC	Security Consultative Committee
WMD	Weapon(s) of Mass Destruction

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