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The 1998 North Korean Missile Launch and the "Normalization" of Japanese Statehood

BHUBHINDAR SINGH

This paper examines two significant changes in Japan following the August 1998 North Korean missile incident. The first is in the realm of defense, where adjustments such as the revisions to the U.S.-Japan alliance, additions to Japan's military hardware (especially in the area of air defense), and the revivalism of the debate to revise the Peace Constitution are discussed. The second involves a shift in the sentiments of Japanese society. The general populace became more critical of the pacifist nature that Japan had adopted since the postwar years, and instead became more accommodative to a strengthened defense posture and an enhanced political role for the Self-Defense Force (SDF). Such changes in public opinion can be observed through the Japanese people's reactions to the possibility of the country's Peace Constitution undergoing revision, the government's actions of strengthening the defense posture, and the subsequent legalization of the Hinomaru *(national flag) and* Kimigayo *(national anthem) as national symbols. The changes in these two broad areas, as this paper will demonstrate, point to Japan becoming more of a "normal" state.*

KEYWORDS: **Japan's defense; North Korean missile threat; normalization and Japan; U.S.-Japan alliance; Japan's society**

Bhubhindar Singh is an Associate Research Fellow of the Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His areas of specialization include Japanese defense and security policies vis-à-vis the larger East Asian security environment, international politics of Southeast Asia, and international relations theory.

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That Japan is not often conceived of as a "normal" state comes as no surprise to many watchers of Japan. This is due to the stark imbalance in Japan's involvement in the economic versus political/security spheres in the international environment since the postwar years. The policy of separating economics from politics that was implemented during the postwar years—as expounded in the Yoshida Doctrine—meant that postwar Japan played an insignificant role in the political/security sphere, preferring instead to exercise only "checkbook diplomacy." While having reached the position of being the second largest economy in the world, Japan has deliberately avoided taking any political initiative in international affairs. This imbalance in Japan's behavior is supported and perpetuated by such internal controls as the Peace Constitution, social and legal norms that restrict the role of its military (known as the Self-Defense Force, SDF), the limitation of defense expenditures to one percent of the gross national product (GNP), and Japan's adherence to the three nonnuclear principles.[1] Such a structure led to the emergence of a culture of pacifism within Japanese society, which thus became critical of an enhanced political role for Japan in international affairs.[2] As a result, Japan has often found itself left out of the mainstream of international relations.[3]

However, this dominant strategy of focusing on domestic economic development, while avoiding any involvement in international political affairs, came under severe scrutiny in the late 1980s and 1990s. As Funabashi wrote, "The notion that economic power inevitably translates into geopolitical influence turned out to be a materialist illusion" for Japan.[4] The debate for Japan to assume a greater political role in world affairs,

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[1]The three nonnuclear principles refer to Japan not producing, possessing, or letting others bring nuclear weapons into Japan. See Japan's Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan* (Tokyo: 1997), 103.

[2]Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 108.

[3]Javed S. Maswood, *Japanese Defence: The Search for Political Power* (North Sydney, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, c1990), 15.

[4]Yoichi Funabashi, "Japan and the New World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 4 (Winter 1991-92): 58.

which correlates to Japan becoming a "normal" state, intensified in the 1990s.[5] This was especially true after Japan's embarrassing experience in the Persian Gulf War in 1991.[6] Despite Tokyo's huge contribution in terms of funds, reluctance to dispatch noncombat support personnel to the Gulf exposed Japan to sharp criticism from the West and Arab countries alike.[7]

The Gulf War was a telling event for Japan for two reasons. First, the shock of the Persian Gulf crisis challenged Japan to think beyond the defense of its territory and participate in defining new rules for handling international security issues in the post-Cold War world.[8] Second, the Gulf

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[5]Attempts by Japanese prime ministers to restore "Japan's pride and defense consciousness" —efforts suggesting the introduction of the "normalization" process—were evident as early as the 1950s. Prime Minister Nobosuke Kishi "chose to advance their (referring to the conservatives) political agenda by seeking to contest the pacifist social norms that the constitution embodied by advocating constitutional reform and, in broader sense, a return to the substance of prewar politics." See Peter J. Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara, "Japan's National Security: Structures, Norms, and Policies," in *East Asian Security: An International Security Reader*, ed. Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 281. Kishi was a munitions minister under General Hideaki Tojo. He was replaced by moderate Hayato Ikeda due to the fear of a return to militarism. See Thomas U. Berger, "Alliance Politics and Japan's Postwar Culture of Antimilitarism," in *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Michael J. Green and Patrick M. Cronin (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), 194-95. The normalization debate also emerged during Yasuhiro Nakasone's term as the prime minister from 1982 to 1987. Nakasone attempted to lift the established constraints, such as the Peace Constitution and the limit on the defense spending that had contributed to Japan being labeled as a "unique" country.

[6]The principal proponent of Japan becoming a "normal" state was Ichiro Ozawa, who was the secretary-general of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) during the Persian Gulf crisis.

[7]Japan initially pledged US$4 billion to Operation Desert Shield within weeks after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. After much criticism from the United States, Japan further pledged an additional US$9 billion soon after the land war began in January 1991. See Susan J. Pharr, "Japan's Defensive Foreign Policy and the Politics of Burden," in *Japan's Foreign Policy After the Cold War: Coping with Change*, ed. Gerald L. Curtis (New York: East Gate, 1993), 253. For an insightful account of Japan's role in the Gulf War, see Michael H. Armacost, *Friends or Rivals: An Insider's Account of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). Michael Armacost was the U.S. ambassador to Japan during the Persian Gulf crisis. Also see Courtney Purrington and A. K., "Tokyo's Policy Responses During the Gulf Crisis," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 4 (April 1991): 307-23. Martin Weinstein summed up very nicely the problems Japan faced during the Persian Gulf crisis. He said that Japan's role in the Gulf War was "encumbered by protracted legislative debate on issues of constitutionality, and exacerbated by the inability of a prime minister with a weak power base to win a timely consensus on either allocation of funds or the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces (SDF) personnel overseas." See Martin E. Weinstein, "Japan's Foreign Policy Option: Implications for the United States," in Curtis, *Japan's Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, 220.

[8]Mike M. Mochizuki, "American and Japanese Strategic Debates," in *Towards a True Alliance: Restructuring U.S.-Japan Security Relations*, ed. Mike M. Mochizuki (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), 57; Armacost, *Friends or Rivals*, 98.

War was a clear demonstration to Japan that military power still determined international relations to a significant degree in the post-Cold War era and Japan, moreover, was ill-equipped to address military crises.[9] Japan thus responded to the new international security environment by enacting the International Peace Cooperation Law in 1992. This allowed Japan to play a more active political role through greater participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO). The key development was Tokyo's successful deployment of 1,800 troops to Cambodia as part of the UN-sponsored peacekeeping force in 1992.[10] Following this experience in Cambodia, Japan had successful peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations in Mozambique in 1993, Zaire in 1994, and the Golan Heights in 1996.[11]

Following the Persian Gulf War, Japan's path to normalization gained momentum in the 1990s. In response to the emergence of new external threats, Japan adjusted its security policy to allow for greater contribution to the international security environment.[12] The North Korean missile crisis in 1994 and China's missile exercises over the Taiwan Strait in 1995-96 had a significant impact on reorienting Japanese security policy. These incidents

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[9]Michael J. Green, "State of the Field Report: Research on Japanese Security Policy," *Access Asia Review* (National Bureau of Asian Research) 2, no. 1 (September 1998): 13.

[10]Barbara Wanner, "Japan Strives to Raise Profile on Regional Security," *Japan Economic Institute Report*, no. 8A (February 28, 1997): 4. Prior to the Cambodian experience, Japan sent six civilian UNPKO missions between 1988 and 1992, all of which were low-key and small-scale. These missions included sending one political officer each to UNGOMAP (Afghanistan/Pakistan), UNIMOG (Iran/Iraq), and UNAMIC (Cambodia), as well as twenty-seven election supervisors to UNTAG (Namibia) in 1989 and three electoral observers to UNAVEM II (Angola) in September 1992. See Mayumi Itoh, *Globalization of Japan: Japanese Sakoku Mentality and U.S. Efforts to Open Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 162.

[11]Sadaaki Numata, "Japan: Toward a More Active Political and Security Role," *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Journal*, June 1996, 13. For brief descriptions on each of the missions, see Itoh, *Globalization of Japan*, 164-66.

[12]In addition to external threats, Japan also had to address internal threats, concerns that also pushed the government to review Japan's security and defense policies. The nation's internal security was threatened in 1995 by the Kobe earthquake and the sarin gas attack on Tokyo subway. Japanese crisis management during these incidents attracted much criticism from the media and the public. The government and the media became keenly aware of the inadequacies of the old defense policies. The problem was so acute that even the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP) abandoned their strongly-held pacifist views. See Berger, "Alliance Politics and Japan's Postwar Culture of Antimilitarism," 109-91.

compelled Japan to introduce changes that would not only enhance Japan's political role in the international security environment, but also be better prepared to address new internal and external threats. Some of the changes that occurred were the reformulation of the National Defense Program Outline (NDPO), the first such revision since 1976. The reformulation in 1995 emphasized that Japan takes a greater role in the UNPKOs and that the SDF counters low-intensity threats such as terrorism.[13] The government also entered into talks with the United States in revitalizing the U.S.-Japan alliance in 1996 to make the relationship more relevant to the new post-Cold War environment. In the new Joint Declaration on Security, both countries outlined an agenda that provided a greater role for Japan in expanded defense cooperation, including defense planning, research and development, missile defense, and diplomacy toward China.[14]

Based on this momentum in the 1990s, this paper argues that the North Korean missile incident in August 1998 was another watershed event in the post-Cold War period that caused a reorientation in Japanese security policy. With North Korea's launching over Japan of what was suspected to be a missile, Japanese society felt for the first time a real sense of threat. This resulted in much questioning of not only Japan's crisis management procedures but also the ability of Japan's SDF to both address such crises and ensure Japan's security. This paper aims to show that the incident consolidated the normalization process in Japan. Japan took the step of strengthening its defense posture in order to be better equipped to address both internal and external security threats. Tokyo even reviewed the traditional pillars of Japanese security policy—namely the Peace Constitution and the U.S.-Japan alliance—to allow for a greater political role for Japan in international affairs. These shifts are outlined by this analysis in detailed accounts of changes in two areas—Japan's defense posture and domestic public opinion regarding a more active defense policy.

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[13]Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Economic Power and Security: Japan and North Korea* (London: Routledge, 1999), 189-91.

[14]Green, "State of the Field Report"; and "Completion of the Review of the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation" (U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee, New York, September 23, 1997).

The paper is structured in the following manner. The first section is a brief description of the North Korean missile incident. The second and third provide detailed accounts of the changes that had taken place as a result of the missile launch. The former provides a detailed illustration of the changes in the realm of defense, while the latter shows how Japanese society has become more willing to accept revisions to the Peace Constitution that would result in an expanded SDF role both abroad and at home. The final section discusses the issue of normalization and Japan, attempting to show how the changes that have taken place suggest that Japan is on the path toward achieving normalization.

The North Korean Missile Incident

The date August 31, 1998 will remain in the minds of Japanese people for a long time. North Korea lobbed a suspected missile over Japanese territory, with sections of the projectile falling into the Sea of Japan. This is one of the most important incidents in the post-Cold War era for Japan, becoming a catalyst for significant shifts in Japan's defense posture. This incident caught Japan completely by surprise. For the first time in Japan's postwar history, the government and people felt a real sense of threat from a specific incident.

The Japanese government, in another unprecedented move, reacted more strongly and decisively than did the United States and South Korea.[15] The firm reaction from the Japanese can be attributed to two main factors. First, the test-fired missile breached Japanese territory. Second, the launch showcased the seriousness of the North Korean threat manifested in the

[15]Although the United States and South Korea condemned the missile launch, they were the first ones to reestablish ties with Pyongyang, while Japan maintained its harsh stance against North Korea. However, Japan's attitude has somewhat softened over the years. Tokyo has been gradually lifting the sanctions imposed since 1999. It lifted the charter ban in November 1999, and announced in December the same year the resumption of diplomatic ties with North Korea and lifted the freeze on food aid to the starving nation. Japan has also decided to sign a contract for building a nuclear power plant in North Korea. See "Japan Lifts Remaining Sanctions on North Korea," *Straits Times* (Singapore), December 15, 1999, 27.

considerable advance of Pyongyang's highly developed missile program and the unpredictability of its behavior. The missile, which flew over Japan, was suspected to be the new Taepodong 1 missile, which has a range of 1,500-2,000 kilometers, putting Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong within striking distance. In response to the launch, the Japanese government suspended normalization talks with Pyongyang, banned charter flights, and halted food aid to North Korea. Tokyo also suspended cooperation in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) multilateral project with South Korea and the United States.

Japan's unpreparedness and initial paralysis in its response to the crisis sent two serious messages to the Japanese government and people: First, being in close geographical proximity to North Korea, one of the biggest threats to Japan in the post-Cold War period, made Japan vulnerable.[16] Second, the country's ability to defend itself from external threats was in serious question. The crisis showed that the government failed to function, as there were no detailed prepared procedures to respond to such a contingency. According to one senior Japanese government official, there were numerous problems in the collection of information, crisis management, analysis, and decision-making.[17] Having been too reliant on the U.S. security umbrella, the Japanese government had failed to undertake a more independent review of its own defense policy and emergency response procedures in the post-Cold War period. This incident was a long overdue wake-up call that Japan needed to introduce the much-required changes that would enhance the country's security.[18]

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[16]The 1998 Japanese Defense White Paper highlighted North Korea's missile program as one of the major destabilizing factors in the Asia-Pacific region and the entire world community. See "Japan Warns of Threat from North Korea," *Straits Times*, June 24, 1998, 16. The 2000 Defense White Paper stated that Pyongyang should be carefully watched regardless of the recent promising signs of a relaxation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula. See "Agency White Paper Urges Monitoring of Pyongyang," *Asahi Shimbun* (Internet version), July 28, 2000.

[17]"N. Korea Missile Launch Proves Japan Poor in Crisis Management," *Asahi Shimbun* (Internet version), September 23, 1998.

[18]This need further intensified during the fishing vessels incident in March 1999. Japanese destroyers fired, for the first time since 1954, on North Korean spy boats. The boats were disguised as fishing vessels and had strayed into Japanese territorial waters.

The Impact of the North Korean Missile Launch on Japan

The discussion below examines the impact of the missile incident in two areas—Japanese defense posture and public opinion. The changes in these areas suggest a consolidation of an expressed need for Japan to attain normalcy, or in other words, playing a greater role in international political/security affairs and strengthening the nation's military capability so as to be able to respond to new internal and external security threats facing Japan.

Changes to Japanese Defense Posture

The missile incident proved to be a crucial catalyst for strengthening Japan's defense posture. In response to the September 1998 parliamentary resolution calling on the Japanese government to "take all measures to ensure the security of the people of Japan,"[19] Tokyo took bold steps to better equip itself to deal with military crises in the future. Not only did large investments in the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) project and increased purchases in military hardware strengthen Japan's defense posture, Tokyo also reviewed the Peace Constitution and the U.S.-Japan alliance that had prevented Japan from assuming a greater political role in world affairs.

The TMD project: Following the North Korean missile incident, Japan finally decided—after years of fruitless persuasion by Washington—to collaborate in the sea-based TMD program with the United States.[20] The Japanese government approved the budgeting of 960 million yen to jointly

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[19]"Blueprint for Controversy," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 13, 2000, 20.

[20]The causal relationship between the missile incident and Japan's decision to participate in the TMD program with the United States is suggested in Charles E. Morrison, *Asia-Pacific Security Outlook: 1999* (New York: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1999). Morrison states, "North Korea's missile test of August 1998 apparently prompted Japan's decision in September to proceed with upgraded research on theatre missile defense (TMD) with the United States" (p. 99). The causal relationship is also suggested in the following works: Michael J. Green, "The Forgotten Player," *National Interest*, Summer 2000, 46; Dennis V. V. Hickey, *The Armies of East Asia: China, Taiwan, Japan, and the Koreas* (Boulder, Colo. and London: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 57; George Wehrfritz and Hideko Takayama, "Smoke Alarms" (Special Report), *Newsweek*, March 29, 18; "Japan's Constitution," *The Economist*, February 27, 1999, 22-25; Don Kirk, "Anxious Japan Reviews Defence Options," *Straits Times*, September 12, 1998, 44; and "North Korea Offers Opportunity for Japanese Hawks," *Global Intelligence Update*, September 9, 1998.

study the TMD system with the United States.[21] In defending the government's move, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiromu Nonaka declared that TMD is the most effective and productive means for the nation's defense. He added the government's decision to adopt the TMD system did not violate the 1969 parliamentary resolution limiting space programs for peaceful purposes because the Navy Theater-Wide Defense (NTWD) system is "purely defensive," and is the only alternative for Japan in view of the proliferation of ballistic missiles.[22] If the system could be made to work, TMD would provide Japan with the ability to track and shoot down threatening incoming ballistic missiles and reach out across China to the borders of Mongolia and Tibet and over the South China Sea to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.[23]

Revisions to the U.S.-Japan alliance: The alliance that had been a cornerstone of peace and security for the Asia-Pacific for more than three decades was revised in early 1999. Although talks of the revision of the alliance began during the Hashimoto-Clinton meeting in 1996, there was no progress on the Japanese side. The bills were submitted to the Diet in early 1998, but due to the Japanese government's preoccupation with addressing the economic crisis, did not receive the deserved attention. The North Korean missile incident might have hastened the Diet's passing of the revised defense bills.[24]

The Japanese legislature passed three bills. First, Japan's military was authorized to take various measures in the event of "emergencies near Japan." This legislation allows the SDF to engage in a collective defense

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[21]"960 Million Yen Earmarked for TMD Study," *Asahi Shimbun* (Internet version), December 25, 1998.

[22]See "Japan, U.S. Agree to Join in Missile Defense System," *Washington Post*, December 26, 1998. Japan refers to the TMD project as the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) program. According to then Press Secretary Sadaaki Numata, "used BMD as opposed to TMD because what we have in mind as we are entering into joint technological research, as opposed to joint development or joint deployment of the system with the United States, is a system which is purely defensive, which is purely designed to defend Japan against the threats of ballistic missiles." See Press Conference, March 23, 1999, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, at <whats@www-cgi.mofa.go.jp>.

[23]"Japan's Constitution," *The Economist*, February 27, 1999, 25.

[24]Green, "The Forgotten Player," 46, makes this causal relationship between the missile incident and the passing of the revised defense bills.

exercise by allowing the SDF to provide rear-area logistical support to U.S. forces during crises near Japan. Also allowed now was for the SDF to conduct rear-area search and rescue operations for military personnel in situations that do not involve a threat of force or use of military power. Second, the Japan-U.S. Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) was revised, expanding bilateral cooperation to include the supply of fuel and necessary goods during emergencies near Japan; the old agreement limited such cooperation to peacetime only. Third, the SDF Law was amended to allow SDF ships to be dispatched for the evacuation of Japanese citizens from overseas. SDF personnel could use weapons for self-defense in providing rear-area support and engaging in search and rescue operations for U.S. military personnel.[25]

Although the impact of these revisions will not be evident until a crisis occurs (during which the U.S.-Japan alliance would be activated), these revisions point to greater reciprocity between Japan and the United States in the U.S.-Japan alliance and an expanded role for Japan in international security affairs. Although Japan's role is limited to providing logistical support to the United States, these changes are a positive development that hints that Japan is assuming greater responsibility in international political affairs alongside the United States.

Possible revisions to the Constitution: The missile launch also resulted in a groundbreaking agreement between executives of the five political parties in Japan to establish research panels in both the lower and upper houses of the Diet to review the Constitution—a subject that has long been considered taboo.[26] There has since been increased questioning regarding Japan's inability to launch a preemptive strike on foreign targets that are perceived as threats. Based on the current, commonly accepted reading of the Constitution, the SDF is only allowed to strike foreign tar-

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[25]Naoko Aoki, "Diet Panel Approves Japan-U.S. Defense Bills," *Kyodo News*, April 26, 1999.

[26]See "Panels in Diet to Discuss Constitution," *Asahi Shimbun* (Internet version), March 2, 1999. Green, "The Forgotten Player," 46, makes the causal relationship between the missile incident and the revisions to the Constitution. Green wrote, "In the wake of the Taepodong launch, ··· in the Diet, Japanese politicians even debated the constitutionality of unilateral 'preemptive strikes' and the need for an independent 'counterstrike' capability."

gets in retaliation for an attack on Japan. However, in an unexpected statement, then Defense Agency Director-General Hosei Norota said that a preemptive strike against foreign forces would be possible under the Constitution if a military offensive (including possible military attacks) against Japan was deemed under way.[27] This view was further asserted in the 1999 Japan's Defense White Paper, which stated that the SDF may launch preemptive strikes against other countries if Japan feels threatened by them.[28]

Japan launched a formal review of the Constitution in January 2000, where panels are being given full five years to complete deliberations.[29] Although the debate is likely to be complicated by political rivalries and fears that reforms could herald resurgent nationalism, this review process is a crucial step taken by the Japanese government on an issue that has been sensitive for so long.

This review will have a significant impact on Japanese security policy. The Constitution has forced Japan to maintain an exclusively defensive posture and prevented Japan from becoming involved in regional conflicts. A review of the Constitution would definitely lead to a more active Japan in regional conflict management and peacekeeping activities.

Reconnaissance satellites: North Korea's missile launch revealed the weaknesses of the Japanese intelligence-gathering system, thereby leading to calls from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and some opposition parties for the introduction of a multipurpose information-gathering satellite. On March 31, 1999, the Japanese government decided to introduce a domestically produced information satellite.[30] With this intelligence

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[27]"Constitution Permits First Strikes, Norota Says," *Daily Yomiuri* (Internet version), March 4, 1999.

[28]See Hickey, *The Armies of East Asia*, 60, originally cited in Ginny Parker, "Japan Strengthening its Forces," Associated Press, September 10, 1999, in Taiwan Security Research on the World Wide Web at <http://taiwansecurity.org>.

[29]"Japan Launches Historic Review of Constitution," *Straits Times*, January 21, 2000, 31.

[30]See *Daily Yomiuri* (Internet version), April 1, 1999. According to reports, the decision is based on the government's assessment that (1) while U.S. satellites have better resolution, Japan can develop sufficient technologies that cover reconnaissance, disaster-response, and other needs; (2) while the U.S. satellites are cheaper, in the medium term, home-made satellites are easier to maintain; and (3) home-made satellites are more suitable for contingencies where the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Japanese Maritime Safety Agency have to cooperate with each other.

satellite, the Japanese authorities will be able to collect and analyze photographs and other data without having to rely on American cooperation. The Japanese government hopes to launch four of these spy satellites by 2002 and eight by 2007.[31]

The plan to launch such an apparatus would mark a significant departure from Japan's postwar dependence on the United States for crucial satellite data, and is being justified as not going against the 1969 Constitution because the satellite is for defensive purposes only. Then Minister of International Trade and Industry Kaoru Yosano said that such satellites can be used for many purposes—not just for military applications. Yosano stated that these satellites can also be used for such purposes as environmental research and to detect smugglers and illegal fishing boats.[32]

In addition to intelligence satellites, the Japanese government also inaugurated an intelligence council in the wake of the North Korean missile launch. The panel is aimed at strengthening the Defense Agency's information-gathering and analysis capabilities. The council, which is headed by the Defense Agency chief and comprised of ten other uniformed and civilian top defense officials, is charged with preparing for various possible attack scenarios, a precautionary step that was seriously lacking when the North Korean missile incident occurred.[33]

Military hardware: The Japanese Defense Agency strengthened the nation's defense capabilities, especially in the area of air defense. The Defense Agency initiated plans to purchase tanker planes that would enable the Air SDF aircraft to refuel in flight.[34] The introduction of tanker planes strengthened Japanese air defense in two ways. First, fighter planes and aircraft equipped with the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWAC) will be able to stay airborne for longer periods of time and, in turn, enhance

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[31]Jin Zeqing, "Japan's Military Build-Up Worrying," *China Daily* (Beijing), September 6, 2000, at <http://ptg.djnr.com/ccroot/asp/publib/story.asp>.

[32]*Asahi Shimbun* (Internet version), September 8, 1998.

[33]"Defense Panel Eyes Possible Taiwanese Dilemmas," *Mainichi Shimbun* (Internet version), February 9, 1999.

[34]The Security Council of Japan, *Monda*, has approved the Defense Agency's budget request for fiscal 2001 that includes 23.8 billion yen for the acquisition of a mid-air refuelling aircraft. See Kyodo News Service, Tokyo, in English, August 28, 2000, at <http://ptg.djnr.com/ccroot/asp/publib/story.asp>.

Japan's ability to detect any possible threats as early as possible. Second, the introduction of the tanker planes would greatly extend the range of the SDF F-15 fighters and F-2 air-to-surface attack planes, thereby providing the capability to attack bases in neighboring countries.[35]

The introduction of the tanker planes compliments Japan's more proactive policy of managing the security affairs of the region. The Japanese Defense Agency stated that the introduction of tanker planes would help strengthen the nation's ability to participate in international operations—including UN peacekeeping operations—as such aircraft could facilitate the long-distance transportation of equipment and people.[36]

Changes in the Social Sphere

The North Korean missile launch not only led to the beefing up of Japan's defense posture, but also caused a significant shift in domestic popular sentiment toward promotion of a more active political role for Japan. Japanese society has always been labeled pacifist—rejecting any military role for Japan—ever since the end of World War II. Public opinion has been the strongest voice calling on Japan to avoid any engagement in international political/security affairs. However, the North Korean missile launch altered these popular attitudes.

The North Korean missile launch came as a rude shock to Japanese society, providing, for the first time, a real sense of threat. The incident illustrated to the Japanese public the dangers of being geographically proximate to Pyongyang, an unpredictable regime with the propensity to upset peace in the region. Moreover, Japanese society also witnessed the ineffectiveness of their government in responding to the crisis. The public realized that the presence of internal constraints and the overreliance on the United States for security has prevented Japan from being prepared for military crises. These feelings resulted in the populace being more receptive to a stronger and more active Japanese military.

The change in public opinion was most evident in popular reaction to

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[35]"In-flight Refueling," *Mainichi Shimbun* (Internet version), March 23, 1999.

[36]"Defense Agency Set to Buy Tanker Planes," *Daily Yomiuri* (Internet version), February 26, 1999.

the suggestion of revising the Peace Constitution—a pillar that perpetuated pacifism in Japanese security policy. In an annual *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll conducted in late March 1999, a majority of the respondents (53 percent) supported revision of the Constitution—the highest figure recorded since such surveys began.[37] In a *Mainichi Shimbun* poll conducted in April 2000, about 50 percent of the respondents supported the revisions to the Constitution.[38] The poll by *Yomiuri Shimbun* conducted during the same period showed that about 60 percent of pollees favored a proposal to revise the nation's basic law.[39] Such a shift in the popular sentiment demonstrates that the era in which the mere suggestion of change was considered "evil," and therefore a social and political taboo, seems to have come to an end.

The change in popular opinion—from a pacifist toward a more accommodative stance vis-à-vis a more active SDF—can also be seen in the way Japanese citizens reacted to subsequent policies of the Japanese government. One issue was the legalization of the *Hinomaru* (national flag) and *Kimigayo* (national anthem) as national symbols. Despite being linked to Japan's militaristic past, emergence of this issue did not raise widespread concern among the general populace. Instead, the Japanese people were willing to debate and discuss this controversial issue, something that would not have occurred in the past.[40] In January 2000, a seminar entitled "The Biggest Lie of the Twentieth Century: Documenting the Nanjing Massacre," organized by a Japanese nationalist group, was allowed to be held despite protests by Beijing.[41] This Nanjing Massacre issue, being quite a sensitive topic, had heretofore been a taboo subject for public discussion.

Given that Japanese society had been one of the biggest checks on the

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[37] On the other hand, 31 percent were against changing the supreme law. See "Views on Constitution Changing," *Daily Yomiuri* (Internet version), April 9, 1999. According to the results of the polls, the growing support for amendment comes from those in their twenties and thirties.

[38] "Renewed Interest in Changing Japan's Charter," *Straits Times*, May 5, 2000, 31.

[39] See the second Yomiuri Shimbun proposal for revision of the Constitution, at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/kenpou-e/survey.htm>.

[40] One thirty-six-year-old Japanese businessman commented, "There is nothing wrong with respecting our own national flag and anthem." See "Youth in Japan Untouched by Flag Rift," *Straits Times*, July 9, 1999, 24.

[41] "Osaka Can't Stop Meet on Nanjing Massacre," *Straits Times*, January 20, 2000, 26.

role of the SDF, this shift in sentiment is crucial for facilitating an expanded role of the SDF in international security affairs. This change, moreover, is also in line with the recent shifts in attitudes of the main opposition parties in Japan. One of the most significant shifts has been the Japanese Communist Party's (JCP's) endorsement of the use of the SDF in the event of military attack on Japan. This is an unprecedented change for a party who holds that the existence of the SDF itself violates the Constitution. According to the JCP Chief of Secretariat Kazuo Shii, "If the nation faces an extreme emergency, it is only natural that the SDF be utilized for the safety of the public."[42] Even Yukio Hatoyama, the leader of the largest opposition party in Japan (the *Minshuto*, or Democratic Party of Japan), recently called for a review of the five principles regarding deployment of the SDF in UN peacekeeping operations—a move in keeping with his positive attitude of revising the Constitution.[43]

Normalization and Japan

The changes discussed above point to Japan becoming more of a "normal" state. This would mean Japan will be playing an expanded political role in both the regional and international security affairs commensurate to its existing economic influence. This section attempts then to answer the question: How do the changes highlighted above demonstrate that Japan is on the path to normalization? Japan is often regarded as a "unique" country for two reasons. First, legal and social norms have pre-

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[42]"JCP to Accept the Use of SDF If Security at Risk," *Daily Yomiuri* (Internet version), September 20, 2000.

[43]See "Minshuto Shaken by UN Mission Issue," *Daily Yomiuri* (Internet version), September 29, 2000. The International Peace Cooperation Law set forth five preconditions for participation in UNPKO: (1) the parties in the armed conflict have agreed on a cease-fire; (2) the parties in the armed conflict and host countries have given consent for deployment for the operation and to Japan's participation in the operation; (3) the operation must ensure strict impartiality; (4) the Japanese contingent must withdraw should any of the above requirements cease to be satisfied; and (5) the use of weapons is limited to the minimum amount necessary to protect the personnel's lives. See Itoh, *Globalization of Japan*, 164. These principles are seen as rather rigid and prevent Japan from assuming a greater political role in UNPKO.

vented Japan from playing an active role in the international and regional security environment. Japan has a Constitution, which renounces war as an instrument of national security policy. The core of this distinctive aspect of Japan's policy is the famous Art. 9 of the Constitution, which imposes severe restraints on the conduct of Japan's security policy. Based on Art. 9, Japan renounces war as a sovereign national right, repudiates the use of force as a means for settling international disputes, and does not recognize the right to belligerency of the state.[44] Renouncing the right to belligerency engendered a "pacifist" sentiment common among the Japanese people at the time. Both the Peace Constitution and the pacifist orientation "served to limit the growth of the military and facilitated the task of economic reconstruction."[45] To complement the Constitution, a number of auxiliary constraints were developed. First, there was a limit of one percent of GNP imposed on defense spending to ensure that the military did not grow unchecked.[46] Second, Japan also announced the three nonnuclear principles —Japan will not produce, possess, or let others bring into Japan nuclear weapons.

Second, the role of Japan's military has been deliberately restricted by social and legal norms. As the euphemism implies, the SDF is to be limited to self-defense, and is not to take part in collective defense efforts.[47] True, the SDF's role has expanded over the years—from an organization devoted to relief and welfare to one adopting a greater role in managing regional security, international peacekeeping, and disaster relief; public opinion and social norms, however, are still very influential in shaping the role or re-

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[44]See Katzenstein and Okawara, "Japan's National Security," 284, originally cited in Kyoko Inoue, *MacArthur's Japanese Constitution: A Linguistic and Cultural Study of its Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). The peace clause of the Constitution, Art. 9, reads as follows: "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." See Maswood, *Japanese Defence*, 2.

[45]Maswood, *Japanese Defence*, 2.

[46]Ibid., 3.

[47]Glenn D. Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996), 46.

sponsibilities of the SDF. The highly critical Japanese public is not supportive of an enhanced military role for the SDF, as public opinion holds that the SDF lacks a convincing political rationale.[48] This has resulted in the military being remarkably insulated from the Japanese public.[49] As a result, the SDF draws its greatest political strength from outside Japan, as the security arrangements with the United States are what have reinforced the military element in Japan's security policy.[50]

In addition to these social norms, many controls have been placed within the Defense Agency to restrict the role of the SDF in defining Japan's security policy. Japan's defense establishment is still known as the Japanese Defense Agency (JDA), with the head known as an agency chief, not minister, in order to downplay the importance of the role of the military in the bureaucratic structure of Japan. There are many control mechanisms installed in the JDA. Some of the controls are as follows: the security policy of Japan is not made by JDA, but rather by an interministerial coordination process which includes the Ministry of Finance (MOF), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and the Cabinet Legislation Bureau;[51] there is outside penetration in both the higher and lower echelons of the JDA;[52] and inside the JDA the uniformed officers of the SDF are subordinate to a layer of civilian personnel. Such a structure introduces a system of strict supervision of the professional military by a civilian bureaucracy that lacks all military ethos and perspectives.[53]

How Is Japan Becoming "Normal"?

The changes highlighted above seem to challenge the very features

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[48]Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, 108.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid., 100.

[51]Important ministries such as MOF, MOFA, and Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) have placed their officials inside JDA, thus influencing the process of defense policymaking. See Katzenstein and Okawara, "Japan's National Security," 273-76.

[52]Four of the top eleven bureaucratic posts are always reserved for officials from other ministries. Moreover, officials from other ministries also staff positions at the lower levels. Ibid., 276.

[53]Ibid., 277, originally cited in Taketsugu Tsurutani, "Japan's Security, Defense Responsibilities, and Capabilities," *Orbis* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 100.

that led to Japan being labeled a "unique" country. First, the North Korean missile incident resulted in increasing calls, from both the Japanese government and society, for a revision in the interpretation of the Peace Constitution. The setting up of a panel to examine this issue signals Japan's realization that the country has to assume a more active political role in the new post-Cold War security environment—a role which the current interpretation of the Constitution does not permit. Although the outcome of the review panel's finding is highly uncertain, the mere formation of this panel is a strong reflection of the current sentiments that Japanese society holds in regard to the Peace Constitution.

Second, the incident also had an impact on the kind of role the SDF should play. Due to the abovementioned entrenched pacifist nature, Japanese society has been accustomed to a limited SDF role. However, the incident introduced changes to the SDF, which would result—for the first time since World War II—in a more active role for the SDF. The strengthening of the U.S.-Japan defense cooperation through the implementation of the revised guidelines points to two important political implications for Japan. First, the revised guidelines commit Japan to take active responsibility for regional security beyond its borders. The guidelines provide the framework for the legitimacy of the bilateral defense cooperation not only for the defense of Japan but also for the "areas surrounding Japan."[54] Second, Japan would provide active support to U.S. forces, not just permission for Americans to use Japanese bases.[55] Although the guidelines only refer to Japan providing logistical support to U.S. forces, the revisions serve as a crucial initial step for Japan's playing a greater role in collective defense efforts in the future. The SDF has been strengthened in terms of military hardware, intelligence-gathering capability, and crisis management procedures. These improvements not only make the SDF a better-equipped ally for the United States in terms of collective defense efforts, but also provide the SDF with the enhanced capability to autonomously

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[54]Paul S. Giarra and Akihisa Nagashima, "Managing the New U.S.-Japan Security Alliance: Enhancing Structures and Mechanisms to Address Post-Cold War Requirements," in Green and Cronin, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance*, 101.

[55]Ibid.

guarantee security for Japan. Moreover, there have also been calls from some quarters in Japan to raise the profile of the Defense Agency to the ministerial level.[56] Such changes to the SDF reflect the changing attitude of the Japanese people toward the SDF.

However, Japan's normalization process does not refer to a return to its militaristic past. A strict distinction needs to be drawn between normalization and remilitarization. Part of laying claim to being a "normal" nation means that Japan not only takes a responsible role in international affairs but also does not threaten its neighbors.[57] The pacifist nature and evolution of social and legal norms since World War II are widely accepted by Japanese society today. The social and legal structures make any repetition of history quite difficult. As Hans Maull said, even if domestic developments were to evolve in the direction of remilitarization, Japan would find enormous difficulty in extricating itself from the complex web of integration within which Japan has become bound and to develop its own independent military capabilities.[58] Cossa adds, "Japan, in the wake of the devastation of World War II, lacks the political will to once again become an aggressor nation. It is also heavily reliant on external sources of energy and raw materials."[59] Those concerned with Japanese remilitarization should feel encouraged by Japan's unswerving commitment to its three nonnuclear principles, the recently strengthened U.S.-Japan security alliance, and Tokyo's emerging activism in multilateral diplomacy.[60]

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to demonstrate that the North Korean mis-

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[56]*Asahi Shimbun* (Internet version), August 9, 2000.

[57]*Asian Wall Street Journal*, October 4, 2000.

[58]Hans Maull, "Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers," *Foreign Affairs* 69, no. 4 (Winter 1990-91): 98.

[59]Ralph A. Cossa, "Avoiding New Myths: U.S.-Japan Security Relations," *Security Dialogue* 28, no. 2 (1997): 223.

[60]Ibid., 227. For multilateralism and Japanese foreign policy, see Denis T. Yasutomo, *The New Multilateralism in Japan's Foreign Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1995).

sile incident was an important event in the post-Cold War period. This missile launching not only caused Japan to strengthen its defense posture, but also resulted in significant shifts in the attitudes of the Japanese people toward support of a more active political role for the Japanese military. These changes seem to promote the normalization process in Japan. The adjustments in the defense area suggest a stronger Japanese military, both in terms of military capability and operational readiness. Such a defense force would be better prepared for both collective security efforts with the United States and for exercising autonomous defense to guarantee Japanese security. The changes in Japanese domestic popular sentiment are also telling, as the Japanese people are willing to accept revisions to the Peace Constitution, an institution that has traditionally restricted the role of the SDF. This would allow Japan to play a more active political role in the international security environment through greater participation in UN peacekeeping missions and collective defense efforts alongside the United States.

Japan's attainment of "normal" state status would have widespread implications for the U.S.-Japan alliance and the general East Asian security environment. A "normal" Japan would assume a different role within the U.S.-Japan alliance. The U.S.-Japan alliance would engender more reciprocity between the two countries, with Japan playing a more active role alongside the United States in regional security mechanisms and during times of conflicts. There would be a greater balance between Japan and the United States in military burden sharing and crisis decision-making.[61] The emergence of this reciprocity would be a sign of a healthier alliance, where the U.S.-Japan alliance could then evolve toward something akin to America's strategic relationships with the major West European allies.[62]

Japan's attainment of normalcy would likely raise the level of suspicion and distrust among East Asian countries for two reasons. First, by achieving normalcy, Japan would play a more prominent role in managing regional security. Japan's neighbors—particularly China and the two

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[61]Mike Mochizuki and Michael O'Hanlon, "A Liberal Vision for the U.S.-Japanese Alliance," *Survival* 40, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 127-28.

[62]Mochizuki, "American and Japanese Strategic Debates," 36.

Koreas—may not be prepared for such a development, as such a renewed posture conjures up memories of Japanese aggression committed during World War II. The neighboring countries would require time to adjust to seeing the Japanese *Hinomaru* (national flag of the rising sun) during multilateral security efforts. Second, Japan's path of normalization would inevitably aggravate Asian fears and concerns of a Japanese remilitarization. In order to achieve normalcy and, in turn, play a more prominent role in international affairs, Japan would continue to strengthen its military. This would result in suspicions or fears that Japan is seeking to fulfill its hegemonic ambitions in the region. Such fears would likely lead Japan's neighboring countries to embark on their own militarization programs, inducing an arms race and, in turn, undermining peace and stability in East Asia.

To prevent such suspicions and fears from emerging, Japan has a key role to play in enhancing the confidence level of and improving relations among its East Asian neighbors. The most important task for Japanese leaders is to deal more forthrightly with Japan's militarist past in order to reassure the East Asian countries that militarism is not growing.[63] The Japanese government would have to express greater willingness to participate in collective defense and security measures in order to show their commitment to preserve international peace and stability. As a result, Japan needs to introduce revisions to the Peace Constitution and the controls on the SDF, so as to be able to deploy the SDF in such instances.

In turn, the international community also has a responsibility to ensure that Japan's normalization process allows Japan to emerge as a responsible actor in the international environment. The international community would need to accept Japan's rising involvement in regional security affairs, being required to engage Japan through both multilateral and bilateral means. In this way, the international community could ensure Japan keeps off the path of rising nationalism and consequently allows for a lessening of fears and distrust of Japan among neighboring countries.

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[63]Ibid.