

THE FUTURE OF AMERICA'S ALLIANCES IN NORTHEAST ASIA

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ASIA-PACIFIC RESEARCH CENTER

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PREFACE

Daniel I. Okimoto

When the Berlin Wall fell, symbolizing the end of the Cold War, the global balance of power shifted from a tense military standoff between the world's two superpowers—the Soviet Union and the United States—to one of American dominance. The end of the Cold War, which had gripped the world for nearly a half-century, transformed the parameters and dynamics of international security. For the United States, the disappearance of the communist threat meant that the nature, goal, and missions of America's far-flung network of alliances needed to be reassessed within the context of new threats posed by the post-Cold War security environment. The cohesion supplied by the Soviet threat dissipated and alliance solidarity inevitably weakened. The United States came to rely, increasingly, on ad hoc "coalitions of the willing," going outside the framework of alliance networks to deal with pressing security contingencies. In addition, the revolution in military technology and the proliferation of advanced weapon systems prompted defense planners to review the effectiveness of US bases and force deployments overseas.

Just as the fall of the Berlin Wall symbolized the end of one historic era, the events of September 11, 2001, signaled the start of a new era for the United States and its allies: namely, a high state of mobilization to prosecute the war on global terrorism. A small but dedicated group of terrorists had demonstrated that subnational organizations could inflict serious damage on the financial center and the capital of the world's mightiest power. Long protected by the enormous stretch of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the United States, no longer feeling safe from direct attack, scrambled to redefine its national security strategy. Out of this reassessment came a new post-9/11 doctrine, one explicitly asserting America's right to take preemptive action. Here again, the ever-shifting parameters and dynamics of international security raised questions about the missions and role of America's alliances in the global war against terrorism.

In Asia, several developments since 1993 have raised questions about the operational readiness and political sustainability of America's defense alliances with Japan and South Korea, the twin pillars of the security architecture in Asia. Specifically, the prospect of nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula and North Korea's development of Nodong and Taipodong missiles gave rise to two serious crises. The first, in 1993–94, was temporarily resolved through the signing of the Framework Agreement. The second occurred in 2002, after the Framework Agreement broke down. The outbreak of yet another security crisis in East Asia—that between China and Taiwan—also raised troubling questions about the operational complexities and political fallout associated with

the mobilization of American forces on US bases in Asia, in order to conduct combat missions against China in the Taiwan Strait.

Major changes have also taken place in the domestic political systems of South Korea and Japan since 1993. South Korea has passed through a remarkable transition from military rule to participatory democracy, marked by the emergence of a robust civil society. The political party of conservative military generals like Park Chung-hee—the Grand National Party, which had occupied the Blue House for decades—gave way to the opposition, the Millennium Party, headed by the human rights activist and political dissident Kim Dae-jung.

Between the first and second nuclear crises in Korea, President Kim reoriented South Korean foreign policy from one based on military deterrence of the North Korean threat to a more conciliatory approach based on diplomatic-socioeconomic engagement, known as the Sunshine policy. The huge and growing gap in capacity and output between the economies of South and North Korea—acutely evident in North Korea’s dysfunctional system of self-reliance, or *juche*—boosted the confidence of South Koreans and diminished their perception of the security threat posed by the North. Many South Koreans came to view North Korea, their once-feared enemy, as a crippled and cornered outcast state, more deserving of sympathy and pity than fear and foreboding.

Moreover, South Korea’s demographic composition underwent a decisive generational shift, as the younger generation born after the Korean War (1950–53) came to constitute the majority of the population. This generational transition has given rise to a gathering sense of nationalism, reflected in a deep-seated desire for national autonomy and greater freedom from foreign dependence and external interference in domestic affairs. The conjunction of these structural developments—the emergence of an active civil society, the end of domination by military leaders and by the old conservative ruling party, the rise of liberal opposition forces, North Korea’s economic implosion, the yawning gap between the economies of South and North Korea, the political implications of generational turnover, and the perceived waning of the security threat posed by North Korea—have rendered the bilateral management of the US-ROK alliance significantly more complicated and difficult than was the case as recently as the first nuclear crisis in 1993–94.

Significant changes have also taken place in Japan’s political system, but in ways that have facilitated US-Japan defense cooperation (in contrast to South Korea, where domestic political changes have generated rifts in the bilateral alliance). In 1993, the conservative ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which had controlled majorities in both branches of the National Diet for nearly four decades, fell from power when a dissenting faction split, formed a new party, and entered into a coalition with the Japan Socialist Party (JSP). Although the LDP returned to power in 1994, it was forced to govern in a coalition with other political parties, including, initially, the JSP. Once the JSP joined the majority coalition, and especially after a Socialist became prime minister, the JSP abandoned its long-standing policy of “unarmed neutrality,”

eliminating the ideology of pacifism as an alternative policy platform from Japan's security discourse. The policy dialogue in Japan has shifted toward pragmatic realism. As a result, Japan has ratified several key pieces of legislation, including one for international peacekeeping, paving the way for Japan to contribute actively to the war on terrorism, the campaign in Afghanistan, and the noncombat support for the war in Iraq. It would have been hard to imagine these actions prior to 1993, as evidenced by Japan's reluctance to contribute anything but hard cash during Desert Storm.

Yet, the overwhelming concentration of US bases in Okinawa continues to be a source of underlying tensions. Local resentment over the presence of US troops finds expression in political protests triggered by certain dramatic events, such as a military plane crash, fatal traffic accident, or an outrageous crime committed by American soldiers. For example, the rape of a Japanese schoolgirl ignited a firestorm of protest in 1996, leading to the announcement of plans to close down certain base facilities (such as Futenma), relocate others to different parts of Japan or Okinawa, and redeploy troops there. To date, progress in implementing the plan has been slow.

Taking note of the powerful impact and far-reaching implications of the historic developments alluded to above—specifically, the end of the Cold War, the first nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula, the rise of China, and the China-Taiwan conflict, Professor Michel Oksenberg took the initiative to organize and direct a multiyear study at the Asia-Pacific Research Center (APARC) at Stanford University. The project focused on the history, current status, and future viability of the US-Japan and US-Korea alliances as viewed from the perspective of the major actors in the region—the United States, Japan, South Korea, China, and Southeast Asia. A distinguished group of scholars and policy analysts were invited to write papers. The Smith Richardson Foundation provided generous funding to cover the costs of field research, short-term visits, two major conferences, and publications. All of the individual papers were published in APARC's Occasional Papers Series, and the collected papers were to be edited by Dr. Oksenberg and published as a single volume. Dr. Oksenberg, the organizer and intellectual driving force behind the project, had started to write the conclusion, integrating central themes, summing up major findings, and setting forth policy recommendations about ways to adapt the alliances to recent changes. Dr. Oksenberg's unexpected and untimely passing, however, meant that this key chapter was never completed.

Several years later, when Dr. Michael Armacost rejoined the core faculty at APARC, he was asked to review the manuscript and consider writing a new conclusion. After reading the papers carefully, Dr. Armacost concluded that the pace of events had overtaken the manuscript. Between Dr. Oksenberg's passing and Dr. Armacost's arrival, several seminal events had occurred—the terrorist attack on September 11, the new doctrine of preemption, the wars

in Afghanistan and Iraq, democratic change in South Korea, major shifts in Chinese foreign policy, and the second nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula. These historic events had once again altered the nature of America's military alliances with Japan and South Korea. Dr. Armacost recommended that a fresh set of papers be written.

Under his leadership, and with the financial support of Walter H. Shorenstein and the Shorenstein Forum at APARC, the Center APARC convened a follow-up conference in January 2004. A different but equally distinguished group of scholars and policy analysts wrote papers and participated in the conference proceedings. This updated manuscript is the result.

APARC is grateful to Dr. Michael Armacost for taking the initiative to bring the alliance project to completion. Special thanks also go to the Smith Richardson Foundation, especially to Dr. Marin Strmecki, for their patience and the generosity of their support. We wish to thank the staff of APARC for their role in organizing and executing all the logistics related to the America's Asian Alliances conference, held at Stanford in January 2004—specifically to Shiho Harada Barbir, Claire McCrae, and Debbie Warren. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Neeley Main, who proved herself to be, once again, a superb conference organizer. In completing the burdensome task of editing the manuscript in record time, and with professional competence, Victoria Tomkinson and Megan Hendershott also deserve an explicit word of thanks. And to our beloved colleague, the late Dr. Michel Oksenberg, APARC dedicates this book with appreciation, respect, and a profound sense of loss.

INTRODUCTION

THE FUTURE OF AMERICA'S ALLIANCES IN NORTHEAST ASIA

Michael H. Armacost

There are obvious similarities between America's alliances with Japan and Korea. The United States provides a security guarantee to both, and maintains forward based forces in each country. Tokyo and Seoul have sized and shaped the composition and deployment of their military forces with US support in mind. Local ambivalence about the presence of foreign troops has long been a staple of politics in both countries.

The two alliances are strategically connected. The United States would have difficulty supporting its commitments to South Korea without access to bases in Japan. Japan would find it more difficult politically to sustain support for United States bases if it were America's only ally in the region. Both deterrence and "compellence" vis-à-vis North Korea are facilitated by trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Washington has been the midwife of regular trilateral security consultations.

Yet there are also profound differences between these two American defense partnerships.

- As a global, maritime, trading nation, Japan shares broad strategic interests with the United States that extend well beyond its home islands. US forces in Japan—mainly naval, air force, and marine amphibious units—are available for missions outside Japan (e.g., protecting sea lanes or responding to regional contingencies).
- The scope of the US alliance with the ROK is narrower; its focus has been essentially on North Korea. The United States retains an infantry division north of Seoul to perform a "tripwire" deterrent function. And as a peninsular power, South Korea has fluctuated between "continental" and "maritime" orientations toward grand strategy.
- China (PRC) is perceived by many Japanese as a potential rival; by South Koreans it is regarded as a source of leverage with Washington among some, and as a strategic alternative to the United States among others.
- South Korea is a "normal" nation without constitutional or political prohibitions on the nature of its forces or their use. Japan has long considered itself a "civilian power," with significant legal and institutional constraints on its defense policy.

- At a time when the US-Japan alliance is expanding in scale and redefining its missions, the future of the US alliance with South Korea is beset by uncertainties.

US-Japanese security relations currently thrive. That could not have been said a decade ago. Washington and Tokyo got a wake-up call in the early post-Cold War era that prompted both governments to reconsider the fundamentals of the alliance. Fortunately, they took decisive action to reaffirm its enduring importance and to redefine its rationale and supporting arrangements. Kurt Campbell played an important role within the Clinton administration in promoting these adjustments, and his essay in this volume offers an assessment of the US security posture today.

The US-ROK alliance has yielded mutual benefits for more than half a century. Recurring, and occasionally acute, frictions were a familiar feature of the relationship in the past, but a shared sense of danger from North Korea facilitated the timely accommodation of differing perspectives and diverging interests, when they arose. Today, conflicting perceptions in Washington and Seoul of Kim Jong-il's North Korean regime and how to deal with it raise more basic questions about the future of the US-ROK alliance.

A mid-1990s crisis in US-Japan relations was treated as an opportunity to reshape and update the alliance in the face of changing circumstances. It remains to be seen whether current US-ROK difficulties can be overcome in a similarly salutary fashion.

The Post-Cold War Challenge to US-Japan Security Cooperation

The US-Japanese defense partnership was sorely tested in the 1990s. The disintegration of the Soviet Union undermined the principal motivation and rationale for US-Japan security cooperation. Requested by Washington to share the risks as well as the costs of the Gulf War, Japan punted. Neither its legal framework nor the existing political consensus allowed a prompt, forthcoming response—for which Tokyo paid a steep political price, despite its ultimately generous financial support. The Clinton administration, which had campaigned in 1992 on the slogan “It’s the economy, stupid,” took off the gloves in bilateral US-Japan trade negotiations, and the resulting tensions threatened to spill over into the field of security cooperation. When Japan spurned economic sanctions as a means of responding to North Korean nuclear activities in 1994, Washington was reminded of the alliance’s limited efficacy for dealing with operational contingencies, even in Japan’s own backyard. And a brutal rape case involving American marines in Okinawa triggered such an explosive reaction in Japan that many wondered whether public support for the alliance could be sustained.

Fortunately, neither Washington nor Tokyo was prepared to let matters drift. The Pentagon’s 1995 East Asia Strategy Report—incorporating the policy premises of what became known as the “Nye Initiative”—articulated a firm

defense of the alliance. US force levels in the Pacific were frozen at existing levels—roughly 100,000. A timely accommodation was struck in bilateral trade negotiations over auto parts.

More importantly, Pentagon and Japan Defense Agency (JDA) officials purposefully tackled the immediate issues complicating bilateral defense cooperation. The United States promised to interpret the criminal jurisdiction provisions of the Status of Forces Agreement more flexibly, and agreed to create a new committee—the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO)—to review ways of reconfiguring the US base presence on the island. Japan in turn pledged to negotiate revised Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation.

Fortuitously, a planned visit by President Clinton to Japan, originally scheduled for late 1995, was aborted by a budget crisis in Washington. Before the visit was rescheduled, the PRC, responding to President Lee Teng-hui's 1995 visit to the United States and his subsequent bid for re-election, undertook provocative military exercises off the coast of Taiwan. This offered Japanese and Americans alike a timely reminder of the alliance's value as an insurance policy whose premiums were relatively modest. Prospects for security cooperation turned up, and have followed a generally smoother path ever since.¹

Toward a More “Normal” Alliance

During the Cold War, when “over the horizon” security problems loomed, Tokyo generally expected Washington to handle such challenges; Tokyo extended compensation in the form of increased financial support for US troops stationed in Japan. In the post–Cold War world, however, Japan discovered that it could not sit out conflicts which pitted “outliers” like Saddam Hussein against the international community without risking severe international criticism and diminished self-respect.

This realization prompted Tokyo to undertake adjustments in its strategic division of labor with the United States. Since 1993, Japan has gradually embraced a more balanced pattern of “responsibility sharing” in the field of international security. Peacekeeping operations legislation, passed by the Diet in 1993, was a first step down this road. Revisions in the bilateral US-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation to allow rear-area support for US forces in Japan constituted a second. The assumption after 9/11 of “out of area” responsibilities as an offshore, noncombat provider of logistics and other services in support of the UN-authorized campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan was a third. And Japan's decision to send combat personnel to Iraq to participate in efforts by the US-led “coalition of the willing” to foster economic reconstruction and political development is the most recent manifestation of Japan's more proactive contribution to international security.

As Self-Defense Force (SDF) involvement in distant peacekeeping and counterterrorist operations has become more frequent and routine, Japan has

begun to procure defense equipment which is gradually extending its capacity to project power over greater distances. Aegis destroyers, Standard missiles, aerial refueling tanker aircraft, and a helicopter carrier all fall into this category. None gives Japan “invasion potential”; all promise to augment its defensive strength and improve its ability to perform missions farther from its home islands.

Anxieties about North Korea’s nuclear ambitions and missile tests have prompted Japan to expand collaboration with the United States on ballistic missile defenses. These concerns also encouraged Tokyo to align its diplomacy toward North Korea more closely with Washington’s. In addition, Japan has joined other maritime nations in supporting the US Proliferation Security Initiative, and it is currently participating in joint naval exercises aimed at impeding the transfer of nuclear-related materials and other contraband goods by “rogue nations.”

Domestic constraints on Japanese defense activities are being gradually modified. A long-standing policy proscribing overseas security responsibilities has been modified to permit noncombat peacekeeping, disaster relief, and counterterrorism missions. Tokyo’s recent dispatch of military personnel to Iraq, moreover, places its troops in a country where it is difficult to differentiate between combat and noncombat zones, where the UN’s role is both modest and somewhat ambiguous, and where Japan’s support is being provided to a US-led occupation regime. The realities of joint US-Japan ballistic missile defenses are impelling Tokyo to reconsider a long-standing ban on arms exports. Political inhibitions against exercising Japan’s inherent right of collective self-defense are gradually fading. And Prime Minister Koizumi and opposition leaders are now actively promoting amendment of Japan’s postwar constitution, including Article 9, though disagreements persist on the content of proposed revisions.

Adjustments such as these² have allowed Japan to extend its military missions, enhance its defense capabilities, and gradually modify institutional and political constraints on its defense policy. They also contribute to a more balanced US-Japan alliance that is acquiring broader geographic scope.

To be sure, some extremely important features of Japan’s defense policy have not changed. Its nonnuclear principles remain firmly in place. Limits imposed by Article 9 of the constitution have been loosened, but not abolished. Leading politicians have expressed their intent to revise the constitution, but that will be a lengthy, painstaking process. The government has long affirmed its possession of an inherent right of collective self-defense, but remains reluctant to exercise it. Tokyo is in the process of rearranging its defense spending priorities in the light of new security concerns, yet the level of its defense expenditures, as a percentage of GDP, has changed little.

These residual limitations on its defense efforts notwithstanding, the aggregate changes in Japan’s defense efforts and its expanding security role within the alliance have been quite remarkable. How can one explain them? The realization that Japan lives in a tough neighborhood, and confronts genuine security challenges—most immediately from North Korea—is the

most significant contributing factor. The bitter aftertaste left by the Gulf War experience is another. A third is Japan's readiness to tackle a more ambitious international role in the fields of peacekeeping and counterterrorism: missions which have a certain resonance with its public and promise political rewards in its dealings with foreign friends. A fourth is the realization that the emerging generation of Japanese, for whom becoming a more "normal" nation seems an appropriate ambition, is more comfortable shouldering a broader array of "shared responsibilities" within the US-Japan alliance. Older voters, too, appear to welcome a more active global role, so long as it is compatible with the spirit of prudential limits that Japan has cultivated during the past half-century.

The Bush administration has made steadfast efforts to enhance the cohesion of the alliance. From the outset, key administration officials pointed to the US-UK "special relationship" as an apt model for the long-term evolution of its defense partnership with Japan. They have consistently and subtly encouraged a more expansive Japanese understanding of its international security responsibilities. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage suggested that the Japanese "show the flag" in the Afghanistan campaign, and put "boots on the ground" in Iraq. But he and others have voided heavy-handed public pressure campaigns.

For his part, President Bush has cultivated close personal ties with Prime Minister Koizumi, praised his forthrightness in tackling tough foreign policy challenges, and taken his diplomatic counsel seriously. At the same time, the administration has managed bilateral economic issues deftly, playing down disputes and forswearing gratuitous public advice on macroeconomic questions. It has sought, in short, to foster a constructive, comfortable relationship with Japan in which defense cooperation could flourish.

It remains to be seen whether the current direction and pace of change in the alliance can be sustained. Some items on the future agenda seem clear. For Japan, these include identifying conditions in which to exercise the right of collective self defense; amending current laws to recognize that international operations are central rather than peripheral missions; adjusting budgets and force structures to downgrade past priorities (e.g., countering an invasion of the home islands, the likelihood of which is extremely remote) and finance new requirements (e.g., creating the infrastructure and operational arrangements needed for ballistic missile defense); and further revising the rules of engagement for Japanese troops participating in international peacekeeping ventures. For America, they include refining US force and base structure in Japan in the light of current global security realities, coordinating approaches to regional challenges in Korea and the Taiwan Strait, and bolstering a new division of labor in the struggle against counterterrorism, which capitalizes on Japan's substantial capabilities in the field of "state-building."

While US-Japanese defense cooperation has been expanding impressively, one cannot blithely assume that the current trajectory is fixed and unalterable. The present path could be disrupted by large-scale Japanese casualties in Iraq or Al Qaeda terrorist attacks in Japan, crises with unexpected twists in the

Korean peninsula or Taiwan Strait, insensitive conduct by the United States, or the emergence of more assertive nationalism in Japan.

Even without such developments, it would be imprudent to expect or press Japan to become “the UK of the Orient” within the coming decade. Japan’s nonnuclear norms have deep roots. So does its reluctance to participate in peacemaking, as opposed to peacekeeping, ventures. In these respects particularly, Japanese policy reflexes are decidedly different than those of the British. The concerns of Japan’s neighbors about Tokyo’s expanding security responsibilities, moreover, while currently muted, have not disappeared. And Japan remains a conservative society in which policies tend to change through the almost imperceptible accumulation of nuance, rather than through crisp debates and bold decisions.

Still, Tokyo is on a course, as Ralph A. Cossa suggests in this volume, which may permit it to assume within the foreseeable future the kind of international security role that Germany has embraced over the past decade. Americans should welcome that eventuality. Without articulating that specific aim, the other papers in this section—written by Ambassador Takakazu Kuriyama, Ambassador Rust M. Deming, Ralph A. Cossa, General Noburu Yamaguchi, and Professor Hiroshi Nakanishi—suggest ways to foster a more balanced and more effective alliance enjoying wider domestic support in both countries.

The US-ROK Alliance

Current prospects for the US-ROK alliance are less clear and less encouraging. It is marked by diverging perceptions of the principal threat, difficulties in aligning our respective policies toward North Korea, disagreements over supporting arrangements, (e.g., troop deployments, command relationships, and the Status of Forces Agreement), and a significant erosion of public support for the alliance among elites in both countries.

These developments are as surprising as they are troubling. The US-ROK alliance, which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary last year, is widely and appropriately considered a great historical success. It not only helped safeguard ROK independence for half a century; the secure environment, which it helped to create, facilitated South Korea’s remarkable economic growth and its impressive transition to a robust, pluralistic democracy. By fostering peace on the Korean peninsula, the alliance has become a central feature of Northeast Asia’s security architecture.

But for several years—and especially since early 2001—the alliance has been adrift, a hostage to diverging perspectives.

- American officials have branded the DPRK a rogue state; South Korean authorities view it as a potential partner in peninsular peacemaking.
- Arresting nuclear proliferation has become a top Washington priority, and Pyongyang is recognized as perhaps the most dangerous proliferator. Seoul,

on the other hand, seems more worried about US reactions to North Korea's nuclear aspirations than about Pyongyang's nuclear activities.

- As fears of North Korea abate, moreover, the value many South Koreans attach to the alliance and to the US military presence on the peninsula seems correspondingly to diminish.
- Americans still regard the North-South conflict as the major rationale for the alliance. However, key ROK officials now believe the core dispute on the peninsula pits North Korea against the United States, and they appear to covet the role of mediator—a stance Americans view as akin to declaring neutrality between an arsonist and the fire brigade.

It is possible to exaggerate these differences. Since President Roh Moo-hyun's inauguration in February 2003,³ he has publicly hailed the alliance, visited US bases, pursued bilateral negotiations over the future redeployment of US units, and sent ROK troops to help in Iraq's reconstruction. The United States also has sought to avoid imposing additional strains on the alliance by consulting frequently with ROK officials, putting the discussion of troop redeployments into regular diplomatic channels, expressing a willingness to offer security assurances to Pyongyang under the proper conditions, downplaying talk of military options vis-à-vis North Korea, and deferring efforts to raise the DPRK nuclear issue in the UN Security Council.

Despite these efforts at damage control on both sides, however, palpable elements of distrust are visible in the US-ROK relationship. A January 2003 public opinion survey revealed that 39 percent of the South Koreans polled considered the United States to be the greatest threat to ROK security; only 32 percent regarded North Korea in that light. Foreign Minister Yoon Young Kwan was recently sacked, ostensibly for being too pro-American. With respect to North Korea, American and South Korean policies remain poorly synchronized; indeed, in some respects they seem mutually incompatible. The United States seeks to build a common diplomatic front to pressure Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear program; Seoul appears eager to sustain a business-as-usual approach without much reference to Pyongyang's nuclear activities. Conversely, South Korea urges Washington to "engage" with the North by offering it tangible inducements to freeze its nuclear activities; the Bush administration dismisses such suggestions as "rewarding bad behavior." Whatever the respective merits of these competing approaches, their juxtaposition encourages Pyongyang to drive wedges between its adversaries, rather than confront the baleful consequences of its nuclear activities.

How can one account for the emergence of these conflicting perspectives within one of America's most durable and successful alliances? A number of factors are involved. The following seem most significant.

1. South Korea's Declining Fear of the North

Diminished South Korean fear of the North is perhaps the most notable development. Since the 1970s, there has been a dramatic shift in “the correlation of forces” on the peninsula. The South’s economy has grown steadily and dramatically, permitting Seoul to finance a growing military budget even as the share of GDP devoted to defense declines. By contrast, the North Korean economy has stagnated—indeed, contracted—over the past decade. Acute shortages of food and fuel have paralyzed the North’s industry, imposed extraordinary hardships on its people, and atrophied its military strength. The North’s former allies, Russia and China, ceased providing subventions to the DPRK, and cultivated close political and economic ties with Seoul. Meanwhile, the ROK continued to enjoy US military backing, Japanese diplomatic support, strong commercial links with the world, and growing respect within Asia and the wider international community.

Against this backdrop, Kim Dae-jung, following the June 15, 2000, North-South summit, declared that the dangers of North-South conflict were a thing of the past. This was a convenient conclusion for the architect of the Sunshine policy. It also reflected and reinforced a widespread (if far from universal) consensus among South Koreans, particularly younger people. The recent revival of Pyongyang’s nuclear program has undoubtedly been unsettling to South Korea’s people and its leaders, but it has scarcely produced a general sense of public alarm.

Some South Koreans openly accept the legitimacy of North Korea’s quest for nuclear weapons. Others seem to regard it as Pyongyang’s search for bargaining leverage to be used in negotiations with the United States. Few register a significantly heightened perception of risk. Perhaps this is because Seoul is already hostage to devastating North Korean artillery attack in the event of war. Perhaps most South Koreans cannot imagine Pyongyang targeting such horrific weapons against “blood kin.” Perhaps confidence that reunification will eventually be achieved, on South Korean terms, allows many to expect that the ROK will eventually inherit a nuclear deterrent of potential value against powerful neighbors.

Whatever the reasons, South Korea’s current leaders appear not to be obsessed by dangers from the North. They are anxious to avoid backing Pyongyang into a corner, even inadvertently. They remain hopeful that magnanimous gestures will induce gradual reforms in North Korea. At the very least they trust that such gestures may postpone Pyongyang’s collapse—with all the financial burdens that eventuality would pose for Seoul.

Needless to add, leaders in America—or for that matter, in Japan and China—do not view the resumption of the North’s nuclear activities, and its acquisition of long-range ballistic missiles, with such benign diffidence.

2. *South Korea's "New Nationalism"*

A new spirit of nationalism has appeared in South Korea over the past decade. It has undoubtedly been spurred by pride in the nation's economic success. Hardships experienced during the 1997 financial crisis reinforced such sentiments, and gave them an anti-foreign and anti-American edge. Incidents involving US Olympic athletes and military troops, Bush administration criticisms of Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine policy, a perception of US "hegemonism," and the visible presence of American bases in the national capital may have broadened South Korean susceptibility to such attitudes.

This "new nationalism" has fostered sympathy for the North, and heightened ambivalence toward the United States. It has encouraged pan-Asian sentiments among South Koreans, increasing their sense of identity with China, while reinforcing their resentment of US "unilateralism" and US-led "globalization." It has deepened divisions between the Roh administration and its predecessors, since the mixture of pro-democratic, pro-labor, anti-American, nationalistic sentiment it reflects conflicts with the anti-communist, pro-United States, pro-business views of much of the Grand National Party's constituency. These differences in outlook tend, moreover, to reflect and exacerbate the pronounced and growing division between older and younger generations in contemporary Korean politics.

How durable this new brand of nationalism will be is unclear. It is stirred by events, and emotions tend to cool as memories of specific incidents fade. It is also marked by pragmatism, and underscores the "Korea first" attitudes of people who have always maintained a certain aversion to outsiders. For some South Koreans, this implies a foreign policy more independent of the United States. For others, it suggests a more balanced alliance with the United States, consonant with Korea's growing stature in the world.

Anti-American nationalism in Korea naturally evokes reactions in the United States. What is particularly noteworthy in this connection is that conservative commentators who have long supported the alliance with South Korea—e.g., William Safire, Dick Allen, Ken Adelman, and Charles Krauthammer—have expressed sharp criticism of recent ROK policies.

3. *America's Post-9/11 Grand Strategy*

The September 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon triggered profound changes in US grand strategy. This has altered, among other things, the way American leaders view US commitments, forces, and bases in Korea. For Washington, the "main enemies" were readily identifiable after 9/11: international terrorist groups "with a global reach," and the states that extend them safe haven or support. The "fulcrum of international politics" shifted away from Europe and Northeast Asia to the Middle East and other regions in which Muslim populations predominate. Formal alliances were not necessarily downgraded, but traditional allies were valued mainly as potential enlistees in

“coalitions of the willing” targeted against new foes—above all, terrorists and nuclear proliferators. The current deployment pattern of US military forces and bases around the world is under review in the light of these new dangers.

From Washington’s vantage point, in recent years South Korea’s commitment to the war on terrorism has appeared tepid, its seeming indifference to North Korean nuclear activities mystifying, and its evident preference for the role of mediator or broker between Pyongyang and Washington perverse. With US forces now stretched thin to handle mopping-up campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Defense Department has hinted at reductions in the size of the US presence in Korea, and declared its misgivings about leaving the 2nd Infantry Division in static positions to perform a “tripwire” function that South Korea is capable of shouldering. Some reports suggest the United States might be prepared to relinquish operational control over ROK forces in wartime out of deference to South Korean political sensibilities.⁴ Ironically, evidence of US flexibility on these matters has apparently inspired second thoughts among ROK officials, some of whom now worry that such steps might be misread in Pyongyang and elsewhere as heralding a hasty US retreat from security responsibilities on the peninsula, and others fear might allow the United States greater flexibility to consider coercive options against the DPRK.

4. China’s Pivotal Role

These diverging perspectives have been reinforced in some respects by China’s emergence as a key player on Korean issues. Until the spring of 2003, Beijing exhibited surprising passivity about Pyongyang’s nuclear ambitions. The Chinese tended to consider Washington’s assessments of the North’s nuclear prowess as exaggerated. They discounted PRC political influence in Pyongyang, and they urged the United States to resolve its concerns through bilateral negotiations with the DPRK. In spring 2003, however, Beijing abandoned its aloof stance.

One can only speculate on the reasons for this change of perspective. Certainly the North’s withdrawal from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) had a major effect. China had to worry anew about a neighbor, inclined to “brinkmanship,” equipped with nuclear weapons. The possibility that North Korea’s nuclear activities would encourage other Northeast Asian nations—above all, Japan—to emulate them inspired even greater apprehension. The United States, moreover, had made clear it had no intention of tackling this problem by itself; it insisted that it was a regional security issue. Nor could the Chinese rule out the possibility that if diplomacy failed, the United States might consider coercive options.

Whatever its motivation, during the past year China has become the principal broker of Six-Party Talks on the North Korean nuclear issue—a diplomatic format that Pyongyang initially resisted. Beijing has reportedly communicated China’s own “red lines” to the DPRK leadership with clarity and precision. Coincidentally, as the thoughtful papers in this volume by David M. Lampton

and Jing Huang make clear, the PRC has ceased public criticism of US alliances in Northeast Asia.

Two rounds of Six Party Talks on the North Korean nuclear issue have been held. Little substantive progress has been made. Further discussions are expected. All parties appear willing to “buy time” in hopes of avoiding a crisis. Local political concerns are driving decisions in the key capitals. But time may not be the answer, since the North Koreans are presumably continuing their development of nuclear weapons.

In the negotiations, China’s substantive and tactical instincts appear at times more akin to Seoul’s than Washington’s. That is scarcely surprising. Both fear a military conflict more than the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and seem to prefer “buying off” the North rather than confronting it. Each is anxious to avoid Pyongyang’s collapse—an eventuality Washington would welcome—because of the consequences they might face, including massive emigration, possible civil-military discord in the North, and new financial burdens.

Moreover, Sino-ROK relations have expanded dramatically in recent years. China is now Seoul’s largest export market, and South Korea invested more in China in 2003 than it did in the United States. Leaders in both countries exhibit a keen interest in Northeast Asian economic cooperation, and political consultations have flourished.

This robust Sino-ROK relationship no doubt gives South Korea wider diplomatic flexibility in pursuing its preferred approach to North Korea. Korea’s historical and cultural affinity for China is well established, and some South Korean officials may even regard reliance on China as a plausible and attractive alternative to long-standing dependence on the United States. In short, both Seoul and Washington are paying greater attention to Beijing. Ironically, this reflects some frustration in both capitals with the US-ROK alliance.

5. Democratization in South Korea

South Korea’s democratization has brought huge benefits. In the long run, shared democratic values surely strengthen relations between states. That has been seen in US-ROK relations over the past decade and a half. Yet the results of elections—in both the ROK and United States—may on occasion complicate the coordination of bilateral diplomacy toward the North. American and South Korean politics periodically slip out of sync. President Bush leads the most conservative US administration in several decades; the Roh government is South Korea’s most liberal. Their divergent perspectives certainly pose an obstacle to joint diplomatic initiatives toward Pyongyang. Since elections are looming in both countries, new leaders—in one or both capitals—might find it easier to harmonize existing differences, and develop a concerted strategy toward the North.

- The decisive constituency which swept President Roh Moo-hyun into office in February 2003 consisted of voters under the age of forty-five. They possess scant recollection of the US role in defending ROK independence. Many—particularly those in their late thirties and early forties—are inclined to regard the United States less as a liberator than past patron of authoritarian regimes; an accomplice of the ROK military at Kwangju; a bully in trade negotiations; and a predator seeking to buy up ROK assets at fire-sale prices during the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Harboring little apparent fear of the North, many of these voters tend to regard US military forces in the country as, at best, an unnecessary inconvenience, and, at worst, a slur on ROK sovereignty. A training incident in 2003, in which two young girls were killed by American soldiers, crystallized their outrage, which was intensified when the offenders were acquitted by a US military tribunal. The resentments generated by that incident, and the displays of hostility it inspired against US troops, have never fully dissipated.
- Among the salutary effects of the ROK's transition to democracy has been enhanced civilian control of the military. This has been accompanied by a steady decline in the policymaking influence of South Korea's uniformed services. A possibly inadvertent by-product of this development has been diminished institutional support within the ROK government for the alliance with the United States.
- Divided government is among the potential consequences of South Korea's mixed constitutional system. At present the legislative branch is controlled by the Grand National Party, which recently impeached the president. The current political deadlock in Seoul—however it is resolved—seems destined to stymie virtually all legislative initiatives for some time.⁵ This in turn will inevitably divert attention away from needed adjustments in the alliance. Needless to add, fundamental differences within the Bush administration over policy toward North Korea have posed an obstacle to policy coordination with Seoul.

6. Globalization and Its Skeptics

Despite the benefits that “globalization” has brought to South Koreans, many still regard the financial “contagion” that forced the ROK to the brink of bankruptcy in 1997 as a symptom of globalization's dark side. That memory, among others, encourages some South Koreans to bolster the nation's defenses against globalization. Regional integration in Asia offers one such defense, and this may explain efforts invested in the rapid expansion of trade and investment links with China, the ROK's interest in negotiating a free-trade agreement with Japan, Roh Moo-hyun's enthusiasm for transforming Korea into the hub of a Northeast Asian economy, and South Korean enthusiasm for ASEAN Plus

Three (and the closer consultations among China, Japan, and the ROK which its frequent meetings encourage). None are necessarily inimical to US interests; all serve as potential or actual counterpoints to Seoul's long-time reliance on the United States.

Redefining the US-ROK Alliance

The concatenation of these developments has generated deep concerns about the future of the US-ROK alliance. As the papers in this volume attest, this has prompted officials on both sides to turn their attention away from managing the defense partnership toward redefining its terms. It is about time.⁶ The forces, deployments, and command relationships supporting the alliance remain strangely fixed, despite profound changes in the balance of power on the peninsula, and the shifting contours of American and South Korean domestic politics and foreign policy priorities. This situation is not sustainable.

The chapters in this volume by William M. Drennan, Donald P. Gregg, Lee Chung-min, Kim Won-soo, Victor D. Cha, and General Kim Jae-chang all address the need for change in the alliance. Each offers suggestions for accomplishing such change. Collectively, they provide the basis for a healthy discussion that is long overdue. I shall not argue the merits and demerits of specific proposals, but applaud the fact that Washington and Seoul have begun to discuss such issues in a serious way.

- Proposals for the consolidation and eventual redeployment of US forces south of the Han River are well defined, and have been extensively discussed between the US and ROK governments.
- Plans for upgrading US deterrent capabilities in Korea, even as they are being redistributed geographically, are appropriate and timely. ROK forces are well qualified to shoulder those military roles and missions that heretofore have been performed by US troops stationed north of Seoul.
- The US-ROK Status of Forces Agreement was amended in 2000 to assure its comparability to similar agreements with Japan and Germany. It remains to inform the South Korean people more widely about the changes agreed upon, and to demonstrate that Seoul and Washington can interpret its terms with greater flexibility.

Parallel command structures, as the United States learned in Japan, are compatible with a healthy alliance. A return of wartime operational control to the ROK would unquestionably pose significant challenges in the face of tough military contingencies. But there are good reasons to reconsider the current command arrangements. Timely adjustments would place responsibility for South Korea's defense where it properly belongs, bolster the cohesion of the alliance, and undercut North Korean propaganda which defames the ROK

military as “puppets of the Americans” and dismisses the ROK government as a consequently unworthy interlocutor on security issues.

High-level efforts by Washington and Seoul are essential to underline the enduring importance of the alliance. Even more important is the task of refining its purpose. Deterrence is a necessary but insufficient aim. Associating the alliance more clearly with the task of enhancing future prospects for reunification—an aim virtually all Koreans ultimately share—could enhance its durability and augment political support.

Yet the most immediate policy task remains clear. Only if we can develop a shared US-ROK analysis of the current North Korean challenge, and a common strategy for combating it, will the alliance retain the relevance and reflect the promise that marks the US-Japan alliance today. Given the stakes, one must hope that Washington and Seoul will muster the necessary political will to address current problems purposefully and promptly. This volume seeks to offer practical suggestions to assist policymakers in accomplishing that goal.

NOTES

¹ While an April 1996 joint communiqué signed by President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto reaffirmed the importance of the alliance as an instrument for defending shared interests and promoting shared values, the United States continued to experience occasional ups and downs on security matters. Japanese doubts about American intelligence on North Korean missile testing, and/or the US disposition to share that intelligence in a timely way, prompted Tokyo to develop its own autonomous satellite surveillance capability following the Taepodong test in August 1998. There was also acute discomfort in Japan when the Clinton administration began to characterize its relationship with Beijing as a “strategic partnership,” a description which invited questions such as “partnership for what?” and “against whom?”

² Japan recently passed “Emergency Laws,” which languished in the Diet for more than twenty-five years. They strengthen Japan’s defense posture by establishing a National Security Council, and clarify the central government’s authority vis-à-vis local authorities in the event of an attack on Japan.

³ He was impeached by South Korea’s legislature in March 2004, but whether the courts will uphold this decision appears problematic.

⁴ Peacetime operational command was returned to the ROK in 1994.

⁵ At least until the legislative elections on April 15, 2004.

⁶ Post-Cold War adjustments in other alliances occurred more promptly. In the 1990s, NATO was expanded; US bases were withdrawn from the Philippines; and the US-Japan alliance was reaffirmed and its strategic division of labor adapted to changing times.

AMERICA'S ASIA STRATEGY DURING THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

Kurt M. Campbell

The United States has for decades asserted central, strategic interests in maintaining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and in preventing the region from coming under the domination of any power. This core US interest is not merely rhetorical but has been tested repeatedly, including in four major conflicts in Asia during the latter part of the twentieth century—against the Imperial Japanese Empire, on the Korean peninsula, in Vietnam, and during a long twilight struggle against the Soviet Union involving a sustained military buildup and near continuous preparations. For generations, the United States has not shirked the prospect of spending blood or treasure in pursuit of these national objectives. The Bush administration came to power at a moment when American power and position were unrivalled in the world and the United States was at the very center of the Asia-Pacific region's political consultations, commercial and trade developments, financial interactions, and military affairs.

This predominant position was neither preordained nor inevitable. Indeed, only a decade ago, conventional wisdom situated the United States in the midst of an inevitable and irrevocable decline spurred by wasteful Cold War preoccupations, and with Japan as the beneficiary. Yet, reports of the US demise were greatly exaggerated. As America's power and influence staged a comeback in the 1990s, nowhere was that influence more clearly felt and understood than in Asia. American staying power was a consequence of a resurgent economic performance, a bipartisan commitment to maintaining a substantial military presence in Asia, a continued nurturing of key bilateral relationships in Asia broadly, and a generally accepted view in the region that despite Washington's occasional unpredictability, the United States remained the only honest broker in the region.

It is probably not an exaggeration to say that despite a generally strong US position in the region for the time being, each of the above attributes associated with American power is now in play in ways almost unthinkable just a few years ago. The United States has gone from being a strong status quo power in most senses to one that now promotes a vision of change. In this sense, the

Bush administration approaches Asia in some ways as a revisionist power, bent on promoting its own vision of change.

The general belief on September 10, 2001, the day preceding the terrible attacks against the American homeland, was that US attention was shifting gradually but inexorably from a traditional preoccupation with Europe toward new strategic challenges in Asia. For the first time in modern history, every major challenge to peace and stability was now located on the Asian subcontinent, rather than on the European landmass. The Korean peninsula was dangerously divided and increasingly militarized, with a deeply unpredictable leadership in the North. China was seen by some prominent Bush administration members as a “strategic competitor” to the United States and the cross-strait dynamic with Taiwan was taking on dangerous military dimensions, given the PRC’s continuing investments in missiles and power-projection capabilities. There was also the worrisome nuclear dynamic to the competition between India and Pakistan, which threatened to escalate with little or no warning. For these reasons and others, it was thought the Bush administration would focus like a laser on Asian developments and take extraordinary steps to revitalize America’s traditional security partnerships in the region, particularly in Northeast Asia.

September 11, 2001, in retrospect if not immediately at the time, has altered expectations about American perceptions and performance in Asia more than perhaps in any other region with the possible exception of Latin America, where it was expected that President Bush would usher in a renaissance in hemispheric relations. The changes in Bush administration Asia policy as a result of the war on terrorism are perhaps more consequential, however, than elsewhere, with reverberations possible for generations to come.

The most important feature of American power and policymaking in the last two-plus years is the essential preoccupation with developments in the Middle East and South Asia, often to the disadvantage of the Asia-Pacific. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have sucked up most of the available bandwidth of the senior members of the administration, and to the extent there has been sustained diplomacy in Asia, it has been conducted through the singular lens of the war on terrorism. There has been intensive diplomacy directed toward the region, but mostly in service to the wider pursuit of gaining support for American initiatives in the global war on terrorism.

In this respect, one of the most intriguing new features of Bush administration policy in Asia is its determination to enlist various Asian states in out-of-area pursuits, military and otherwise, in the Middle East and South Asia. This approach has been more welcome and successful with some states than others, but in most of Asia it is seen as a choice between lending assistance to a peculiarly American pursuit and joining a grand coalition based on a shared sense of struggle. Although it would be going too far to characterize this American preoccupation as strategic neglect, virtually all Asian statesmen have sensed the “engaged elsewhere” quality of their interactions with senior American policymakers in recent years. Americans are not as attuned to specific Asian

concerns and region specific worries, and the major interactions of Asian leaders with President Bush tend to be dominated by one topic: terrorism.

Another feature of Bush administration diplomacy and security policy felt strongly in the region is the deeply divided quality of the administration's internal foreign policy deliberations. This would not normally complicate the ultimate execution of American foreign policy, but the current discord is so acute that it has compromised the US ability to communicate clear and consequential messages. Normally, the major political battles are between the two political parties, with each vying to present a coherent international strategy that promotes security and prosperity. In the past few years, however, the most interesting and intense debates have been internal to the Republican party, with a small but well-coordinated cohort of neo-conservatives punching well above their weight in policy debates. Rarely before have there been such major ideological and political divisions housed within one administration. The unfortunate consequence of this divide is an overriding bewilderment in Asia and elsewhere as to the true red lines and bottom lines when it comes to American policy on a range of major policy challenges, such as over North Korea and Taiwan currently and on China policy at the outset of the administration.

North Korea is truly the land of lousy options, but the Bush administration's tortuous path to a slow-motion multilateral engagement of Pyongyang has taken years simply to launch, with every step of diplomacy fought over relentlessly among the various factions inside the administration. After another prolonged review of the options for dealing with North Korea, ranging from the simply unpalatable (engagement), to the unattainable at least for now (regime change), and finally to the unimaginable (war), the administration appears to have settled on the first, with occasional hints that its real policy preference may be none of the above.

The conundrum over North Korea policy has had several consequences. First has been the almost complete alienation between Seoul and Washington, a state of affairs to which both countries have contributed substantially, and which shows few signs of moving toward reconciliation or easing significantly. The second consequence has been the empowering of China in the regional diplomacy over North Korea. China is currently playing the honest broker role on the peninsula, a mantle normally reserved for the United States. This is a role that Beijing did not actually seek, but one that was thrust upon it by Washington. The surprise has been just how effectively China has performed at the pinnacle of diplomatic pressure and the extent to which other countries are beginning to look at China as a stabilizing actor in Asia. While the Bush administration has no doubt viewed China's role on the peninsula as useful in moving the ball forward in the short run, there is perhaps a lack of awareness about how well China's recent actions have set it up for the long term. Beijing's relations with Seoul, in sharp contrast with Washington, are good and improving, and China is well positioned for major strategic changes on the peninsula that sooner or later will arrive.

A further problem posed by North Korea is the apparent contradiction between how the United States is prepared to deal with a potential proliferation problem posed by Iraq (by preventing war) as opposed to an actual proliferation challenge in North Korea (by essentially stalling). The inclusion of North Korea in the “axis of evil” taxonomy was absolutely accurate, but it probably unnecessarily complicated joint United States, South Korean, and Japanese efforts to work with a thoroughly unpredictable regime in Pyongyang.

If the Bush administration has struggled mightily with how to deal with North Korea, it deserves very sincere credit for its handling of several key bilateral relationships, notably with Japan, China, Australia, the Philippines, and Singapore. Much of the rationale for improving relations is ostensible cooperation in the war on terrorism. Even if these countries did not share exactly the new American preoccupation with fighting terror, they could certainly hum a few bars and fake it. Nevertheless, the Bush administration has advanced true military cooperation and interaction, with these states and others, faster and further than at any time since Vietnam.

The United States has worked tirelessly in recent years to encourage Japan to play a more prominent role in regional security and global affairs. Now Japan may well be on the verge of both a modest economic recovery and a new assertiveness in the formulation and execution of its security policies. US relations with China during the Bush administration have risen like a phoenix from the ashes and most in the region are genuinely pleased to see greater comity between these two important though occasionally combustible partners. Although the United States by most measures dwarfs China’s power, a funny thing happened while America went to war. China’s influence in diplomatic situations, in boardrooms of corporate power, in military councils, and in multilateral settings has risen inexorably and exponentially. This is probably the most significant strategic development in Asia in over a decade, the importance of which cannot be underestimated, but there is little real recognition in the United States of the ground moving under their feet in Asia.

The Bush administration has also made enormous efforts to upgrade relations with Australia, the Philippines, and Singapore, and has also engaged deftly with Indonesia during a delicate stage in their democratic development and in their own internal struggle with Islamic fundamentalism and home-grown terrorism. The Bush team has also moved smartly to develop much closer ties with India and to draw it more energetically into the dynamic economies of Asia and away from its zero-sum calculations and political machinations with Pakistan. In another major strategic initiative, the Bush administration has moved toward greater clarity in terms of the traditional US policy of strategic ambiguity in cross-strait relations. The manner of communicating US intent was in the grand tradition of American clumsiness in these matters, the ultimate import of a change in US policy that both opposes Taiwan independence and promises to rally against any future PRC military adventurism is extremely significant.

These intensive diplomatic forays reveal a strong Bush administration penchant for acting bilaterally at a time when Asia is beginning to put much greater store in the conduct of its multilateral interactions. And here, US preparations and proclivities have not fared as well, while China's efforts at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and elsewhere suggest a greater comfort with and commitment to multilateral engagement.

Economic and trade policy has also been partially subsumed under the larger banner of the war on terrorism. The most notable Bush administration initiative has been the use of bilateral free-trade agreements to reward loyal allies in the global struggle with violent Islamic fundamentalism. What has been missing is a serious financial or trade agenda designed to promote further market opening and economic integration among the Asia-Pacific countries on a larger scale. Indeed, the Bush administration's stealth efforts to transform APEC into a security forum—in a sense replicating the actual mandate of the ARF—again reflect a preoccupation with terrorism and security pursuits. While these issues are doubtless important, the United States must also appreciate how central economic concerns continue to be among the leaders of the region. China's leaders now talk more about Asia's economic prospects and promise and their words are turning heads in Asia.

The Defense Department—without much internal coordination or examination—is now contemplating dramatic changes in where and how US armed forces are based overseas. Changes being considered for Asia include moving forces away from the Demilitarized Zone in South Korea, new access and deployment arrangements in Southeast Asia, and possibly substantial reductions over time in Japan. American defense planners want to create a global network of bare-boned facilities that could be expanded to meet crises as they arise. Taken together, the adjustments now under consideration—in where bases are located, in the arrangements Washington makes with host countries, in troop and ship deployments, and theaters of operation—will constitute the most sweeping changes in the US military posture abroad in half a century, greater even than the adjustments made after Vietnam and at the end of the Cold War. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that these ambitious American plans will come as an almost complete surprise to most everyone in the region. While many of these moves may be commonsensical from a narrowly operational standpoint, they are raising profound anxieties in Asia. The new defense deployments will be designed to meet the new challenges of the global war on terrorism; the worry is that the traditional mission of promoting peace and stability in Asia may be compromised in the process. These anxieties have been exacerbated by a substantial lack of consultation on a matter of deep interest to strategic planners and politicians alike in the region.

Given the importance and power of the United States, virtually every strategic document is pored over and analyzed to glean insights into strategic shifts and policy priorities in Washington. There are several important texts to consult from the Bush era to get a sense of just how Asia fits into Washington's

plans. Then-governor Bush's Citadel speech, the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review, the 2002 National Security Strategy, and the Pentagon's report on Chinese military power all provide specific language about the region, its threats, and prospects for the future. The problem is that there is little consistency among the documents and in many places there are deep disagreements about worldviews and ultimate aspirations. These contradictions raise confusion, and the absence of a seminal or authoritative presidential statement or document about overarching US policy priorities in Asia is seen as a missing piece in the Bush administration's declarations of policy.

Despite some of the shortcomings listed above, the United States still enjoys enormous influence in the region and the Bush team has handled many diplomatic issues with dispatch. There is, however, a profound paradox associated with American power. America's "hard power" in terms of military capacity and resolve has never been greater; yet America's "soft power," in terms of the appreciation for its values and ideology, has never come under such duress. It is this enormous gap between our precision-strike munitions and the perceived adherence (or lack thereof) to our own political values that has led to near historic levels of anti-Americanism throughout much of Asia. These trends, if unaddressed, threaten to undermine general goodwill towards the United States and its citizens in the long run in ways that are bound to be inimical to larger American interests.

This growing gap has led to some complex coping and hedging strategies throughout Asia. There are worries about a preoccupied American colossus, a militarizing Japan (old worries die hard), growing instability in Southeast Asia, and most importantly, the rise of a confident, economically dynamic, and more subtle China. Every country in Asia today seeks closer ties with China and each secretly hopes that the kinder, gentler China we have seen on display in recent years is the one we will continue to see. And yet, the greatest uncertainties currently in the region are not over what China will do but how the United States will conduct its policy now and in the future. The enormity of American power coupled with the unpredictability of its policy decisions is unnerving to many in Asia and further reinforces efforts to seek greater certainty and stability through other measures, either alone or in combinations with other states.

US alliances with Japan and South Korea, respectively, remain the linchpins for larger American pursuits in Asia, and it is difficult to imagine how the United States could manage effectively without close partnerships in Tokyo and Seoul. Yet, just as US relations with Japan are probably stronger than at any time in modern history, US ties with South Korea are weaker and under greater tension. This imbalance puts a strain on both Japan and South Korea, but each in different ways. For Japan, the alienation between Washington and Seoul raises the prospect that someday soon Japan will "bear the burden" of hosting the US military presence alone in Asia and serve as the lone security "entry point" for the Americans into the region. For South Korea, the newfound closeness between Washington and Tokyo simply underscores the distance that now exists

in the US-ROK relationship. There are also persistent anxieties in South Korea surrounding Japan's new assertiveness in the security arena and concern over what that might mean for the future of the peninsula. It is this imbalance in the two bilateral relations—more than any single development with either ally—that ultimately raises concerns about the future of US standing in Northeast Asia, a commanding position that America cannot afford to lose.

