

# The Debate on Japan's Foreign and Security Policy During "The Lost Two Decades"

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## Introduction

Since the 1990s, Japan has expanded its participation in areas facing regional and global security issues, with the strengthening of its security alliance with the United States. At the same time, the Self Defense Forces' participation in UN-sponsored peacekeeping and disaster relief operations, and its proactive involvement in global security issues, such as post conflict peace building, disarmament, and arms control is a remarkable phenomenon in terms of Japan's post-Cold War foreign and security policy. In contrast to these actual changes in policy itself, it seems as if the argument around Japan's foreign and security policies has hardly changed at all since the Cold War. During 2014–15, the Abe cabinet's approval of bills to drop the ban on exercising the right of collective self-defense and changes in security-related legislation designed to allow Japan's military to mobilize overseas in cooperation with the United States and Japan's quasi-allies as Australia caused a firestorm of debate on how to interpret the Constitution of Japan in the summer of 2015. Economic and military cooperation between Japan and the United States has often been viewed as Japanese' subordination to America—the U.S. military presence in Okinawa and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) are, for some people, symbols of American domination. Whether the government's decisions on security issues are constitutional or if Japan should align itself to the United States or break away have been major preoccupations within political and journalistic circles from the Cold War era up until today.

In this paper I will summarize the debates on Japan's foreign and security policy since the 1990s<sup>1</sup>, and explore the major areas within the political forces that have been agreed on, or not agreed on as the case may be, regarding Japanese foreign pol-

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1 On literatures dealing with Japan's post-Cold War foreign and diplomatic policy, for example see Miyagi Taizo, *Gendai Nihon Gaikō shi: Reisen no mosaku, shushō tachi no ketsudan. [Contemporary Diplomatic History of Japan: Search for Post-Cold War Japan's Foreign Policy and Prime Minister's Decisions]* (Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2016), Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007); Glenn D. Hook, Julie Gilson, Christopher W. Hughes, and Hugo Dobson, eds., *Japan's International Relations: Politics, Economics and Security*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2001).

icy during the “lost two decades.” I will focus in particular on the arguments of major political leaders over the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and Japan’s role within it, and the so-called “Yoshida Doctrine,” the guiding principle for Japanese foreign and security policy in the post-World War II period, in the hopes of clarifying the changes in Japanese thought on this issue over the years.

### **Japan as a “Normal Country” or “Global Civilian Power”?**

Two international events around 1990, the end of the Cold War and the outbreak of the Gulf Crisis and War, swiftly outmoded the security policy debates in the previous decades between conservatives and socialists, particularly over the constitutionality of Japan’s armed forces and the security relationship with the United States. The former generated a vague sense of anticipation among some political leaders that the diminishing military threat from Communist powers might no longer necessitate sizable American forces in Japan, stationed under the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. It cannot be ignored that this expectation was more fundamentally the representation of a simple but deep-rooted antagonism against foreign troops within the Japanese sovereignty as well as anti-war and peace sentiments. On the other hand, the U.S.-Japan cooperative relationship based on the Security Treaty has been widely accepted as an indispensable and invaluable device in Japan’s foreign policy strategy.

The latter, Japan’s experience of the Gulf Crisis and War of 1990–91 left a sense of “defeat” in many people. Japanese officials failed not only to predict the situation, but also to promptly respond to requests from the United States to support multilateral forces, which provoked fierce criticism from the international community. Despite Japan paying a total of around \$13 billion as a financial contribution, its unwillingness to send personnel to the Persian Gulf during the war and its bit-by-bit financial assistance was dismissed as mere “check-book” diplomacy. Under intense international pressure the Japanese government finally decided to dispatch vessels of the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force to the Gulf for minesweeping operations after the war ended. Its operational success won international praise and motivated Japan to send the SDF overseas to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations through a new bill, the International Peace Cooperation Law in June 1992.<sup>2</sup> Both international

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2 Makoto Iokibe, ed., *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2013), chap. 6; Makoto Iokibe, ed., *Okamoto Yukio: Genba shugi o tsuranuita gaikōkan* [*Okamoto Yukio Oral History: Diplomats who has Kept Hands-On-Approach*] (Asahi Shimbun Shuppan, 2008), chap. 5.

events undermined the premise of Japan's postwar security policy in which Article 9 as an anti-military norm and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty to satisfy security requirements implicitly coexisted.<sup>3</sup>

Ozawa Ichiro's idea of Japan as a "normal nation," perhaps mainly led by a kind of Gulf War trauma, emerged as a bold challenge to the conventional framework of thinking that had fitted into the Cold War. It seemed that Ozawa tried to create a more internationally standardized framework of foreign and security policy. In his *Blueprint for a New Japan*, he argued that Japan must satisfy "two conditions if it is to go beyond simply creating and distributing domestic wealth and become what the world community recognize as a 'normal nation'": first, Japan should be a "nation that willingly shoulders those responsibilities regarded as natural in the international community." Secondly, Japan was required to "cooperate fully with other nations in their efforts to build prosperous and stable lives for their people." Clearly denying Japan as a "normal nation" seeking for military superpower status on the one hand, he on the other advocated that Japan's contribution to world peace "should be carried out in intimate cooperation with the United States" and the SDF should be developed as forces "centered on the United Nations," by making the leap from Japan's passive "exclusive defense strategy" to a "peace-building strategy."<sup>4</sup>

Although sharing the view with Ozawa that Japan needed to actively contribute to international peace and prosperity, Hosokawa Morihiro and Takemura Masayoshi had a more pacifist viewpoint on Japan's course of action. Hosokawa envisioned Japan playing a leading role in nuclear disarmament or building a lasting security system in Asia, as well as participating in the activities of UN forces. Yet he thought it desirable that Japan's exclusive defense strategy was maintained based on the ideal of Article 9 of the Constitution, and the military-oriented U.S.-Japan relationship was transformed into a more comprehensive one.<sup>5</sup> Takemura, calling for "A Small but Shining Country," was not completely positive to Ozawa's argument, since he believed that international

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3 Tetsuya Sakai, "'9 Jō=Anpo Taisei' no shūen: Sengo Nihon gaikō to seitō seiji [The End of 'Article 9 and the Security Treaty' System: Postwar Japan's Foreign Policy and the Party Politics]," *Kokusai Mondai*, March 1991, pp. 32-45.

4 Ichiro Ozawa, Louisa Rubinien (translation), Eric Gower (ed.), *Blueprint for a New Japan* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1994), pp. 94-107. Among conservatives, Watanabe Michio's group in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) developed similar arguments to Ozawa's. See Michio Watanabe, Kōji Kakizawa and Bunmei Ibuki, *Shin hoshu kakumei [Revolution of New Conservatives]* (Nesco, 1994), pp. 72-82.

5 Morihiro Hosokawa, "'Kaikaku' no hata no motoni [Under the Flag of Reform]," *Bungei Shunjū*, January 1993, pp. 160-161.

peace would never be achieved if all nations became “normal nations.”<sup>6</sup> The Socialist Party totally opposed the support for multilateral forces during the Gulf Crisis and War as well as the Diet sessions on International Peace Cooperation Law.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the Socialists began to change their stance around 1991, searching for a new course to be taken in the post-Cold War period. Murayama Tomiichi revealed the fact that there had been an argument inside the Socialist Party that its long-standing stance on the anti-U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, which had exactly meant that Japan should abrogate the Treaty and the U.S. forces should withdraw from Japan, would be neither accepted by many Japanese nor was realistic. While overtly criticizing the Security Treaty as the obstacle to peace between the East and the West, the Socialist Party during the Cold War in fact appreciated the Treaty as the so-called “cap-in-the-bottle.”<sup>8</sup> The Socialist Party announced that it would virtually relinquish its identity, based upon the policy for unarmed neutrality of Japan, by admitting Japan’s own armed forces at the minimum required level for its self-defense and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, both as transitional measures until a universal security system was established.<sup>9</sup>

Many political leaders, including some socialists, developed a more positive attitude toward SDF participation in UN peacekeeping operations in the early 1990s—not full-fledged, but conditionally under principles strictly limiting the use of weapons by the SDF. Importantly there were few that tried to pursue a military superpower status for Japan in the post-Cold War period, no matter how opposing their views on Article 9 were. But there were significant differences between Ozawa’s “normal nation” and Hosokawa or Takemura’s minimalist vision on Japan’s international posture over the role that Japan could play in maintaining international peace and security under the United Nations and the purpose of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Ozawa assumed Japan’s non-military as well as military role to some extent under the United Nations, and he did not rule out cooperation with the United States as far as the U.S. government made an effort to enhance the capabilities of the United Nations.

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6 Takashi Mikuriya and Izuru Makihara, eds., *Kikigaki Takemura Masayoshi kaikoroku* [Takemura Masayoshi Oral History] (Iwanami Shoten, 2011), pp. 98–100. Also see, Michael J. Green, *Japan’s Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 18–19.

7 Hiroki Mori, *Nihon shakaitō no Kenkyū: Rosen tenkan no seiji katei* [The Japan Socialist Party: the process of Its Policy Change] (Bokutakusha, 2001), pp. 164–166.

8 Yakushiji Katsuyuki, ed., *Murayama Tomiichi kaikoroku* [Memoirs of Murayama Tomiichi] (Iwanami Shoten, 2012), p. 104.

9 *Mainichi Shinbun*, May 14, 1993.

## **U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration on Security**

It is interesting that many visions on Japan's future courses of action were presented by the political leaders who left the LDP in the early 1990s. After a series of political scandals, the failure to introduce political reform, and the party split, the LDP lost its majority in the Diet in the 1993 general election, which invited an eight-party coalition—that is, every party other than the LDP and the Communists—under Prime Minister Hosokawa in July 1993. However the end of the LDP's 38 year in power and the coalition government that followed did not necessarily bring about a fundamental shift in Japan's security policy: the Japanese government simply maintained its U.S.-centered defense strategy.

The "Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security, Alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" signed by Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro and President Bill Clinton in April 1996, followed by the new Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation concluded in 1997, confirmed that both countries would reinforce their security ties after the Cold War. In the Joint Declaration both governments indicated that the Japan-U.S. security relationship, based on the 1960 Security Treaty, "remains the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives, and for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region as we enter the twenty-first century." It concluded that both governments "reaffirmed their strong determination, on the eve of the twenty-first century, to build on the successful history of security cooperation and to work hand-in-hand to secure peace and prosperity for future generations."<sup>10</sup> Along with the "National Defense Program Outline" adopted in November 1995, which underscored that Japanese defense capabilities should play appropriate roles in the security environment after the Cold War, and the new Guidelines stipulating that both governments would effectively coordinate their activities in situations in areas surrounding Japan,<sup>11</sup> the Joint Declaration sent a clear signal from both countries to the international community that the U.S.-Japan Security relationship would continue to play a role in maintaining peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region.

There emerged no arguments worth mentioning in Japanese political circles on this joint decision to maintain U.S.-Japan Security framework by redefining its primary objective to deal with post-Cold War international environments, mainly through

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10 "Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security, Alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," April 17, 1996, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/97/1st/234-240.html#n2>.

11 "The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation," <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/guideline2.html>.

working-level consultations between the two governments.<sup>12</sup> Again, international events had an impact on Japanese mindsets: the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula in 1994, and the China-Taiwan Crisis in 1996. Amidst the tension caused by North Korea's development of its nuclear capability and brinkmanship diplomacy, Japanese political leaders were appalled by the fact that Japan's crisis management was less than poor, and no concrete contingency plans were in place with the U.S. government.<sup>13</sup> The Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in January 1995 and Aum Shinrikyo's sarin gas subway attack in Tokyo in March also exposed Japan's vulnerability to internal threats.

In addition, the most focalized and thus contentious issues in Japanese domestic politics in the late 1990s were not the foreign and security policies, but political, administrative and financial reforms for one thing, and economic and financial policies to tackle the burst of the bubble economy and lingering recession for another. After repeated party realignments partly caused by these issues, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) was established finally in 1998. In the meantime, the coalition government of the LDP, the Socialist Party and the Sakigake, led by Takemura Masayoshi, undertook a streamlining of the SDF for post-Cold War missions and promoted a redefinition of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Socialist Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi recalled that he had not been willing to sign the Joint Declaration, but he did not show his reluctance to the Foreign Ministry or in the Defense Agency's explanation since he had made up his mind to resign shortly.<sup>14</sup>

It seems impossible to ignore that under the coalition government the Socialist Party was relatively flexible to the redefinition process, while the LDP refrained from going far beyond the realm of the official interpretation of the Peace Constitution. Sakigake functioned as an in-between. The Japanese government denied any intention to use the right of collective self-defense at that moment, consequently displaying the reinforcement of the U.S.-Japan Alliance under which the SDF, through developing capabilities more suited to post-Cold War international security, strengthened military cooperation with U.S. forces as a moderate change in Japan's security policy within the constitutional framework.

The Joint Declaration and the 1997 Guidelines were accepted as premises in the

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12 On the entire process of redefining the U.S.-Japan Alliance, see Yōichi Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations press, 1999).

13 Takashi Mikuriya and Watanabe Akio, eds., *Shushō kantei no ketsudan: Naikaku kanbō fukuchōkan Ishihara Nobuo no 2600 nichi* [*Decisions by the Office of the Prime Minister: 2600 Days of Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Ishihara Nobuo*] (Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2002).

14 Yakushiji, ed., *Murayama Tomiichi kaikoroku*, pp. 195–196.

DPJ's foreign and security policy. Its "1998 Policy Outline" and the "Basic Policy on Security Issues" adopted the following year stated that Japan should place the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty at the center of its security policy, while making an effort to enhance the effectiveness of this alliance for peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. One thing that made the DPJ's argument distinct from the government's was the DPJ's stress that Japan's independence should be preserved as much as possible in the alliance's management through bilateral dialogue or consultations on an equal basis. It is also notable that the DPJ indicated a regional multilateral security system, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), as the goal for Japan to pursue.<sup>15</sup> Among many of the political leaders both in the ruling parties and the DPJ a kind of security consensus was built at the end of the 1990s: placing the U.S.-Japan Alliance at the center of Japan's security policy, thereby enhancing its role in the regional order; promoting Japan's participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations; and developing Japan's own defense capabilities in order to cope with new international environments while maintaining the exclusive defense strategy or *Senshu bōei*. It could be said that the idea of Japan as a "Normal Nation" was absorbed in the U.S.-Japan Alliance-centered strategy led by the Joint Declaration and the 1997 Guidelines.

### **U.S.-Japan Alliance for Global Security**

The principles of postwar Japan's mercantile foreign policy, the so-called "Yoshida Doctrine," came under critical review in the 1990s in academic as well as political circles, along with other security policy debates. Among political leaders some conservatives had negative views on the Yoshida Doctrine, criticizing it for depriving the Japanese people of the will of self-defense. Koizumi Junichiro for instance, argued that Japan's dependence on the United States for its security for 50 years produced the illusion among the Japanese that they were able to protect the country without armaments.<sup>16</sup> Abe Shinzō expressed his belief that the Japanese might have lost something important in their spirits as a result of pursuing economic prosperity without enough being spent on defense.<sup>17</sup> Asō Tarō, Yoshida's grandson, stood in the same line with them when he suggested that Japanese identity had been torn apart by self-distrust

15 Democratic Party of Japan, "1998 nen kihan seisaku [the 1998 Policy Outline]," April 27, 1998, <https://www.dpj.or.jp/about/dpj/policy>; "Minshutō anzen hoshō kihan seisaku [the Basic Policy on Security Issues]," June 24, 1999, <http://www1.dpj.or.jp/news/?num=10838&mm=print>.

16 Jun'ichiro Koizumi, *Koizumi Jun'ichiro no bōron, seiron* [*Koizumi's Wild and Immature Arguments*] (Shūeisha, 1997), pp. 142-146.

17 Shinzō Abe, *Utsukushii kuni e* [*To the Beautiful Country*] (Bungei Shunjū, 2006), pp. 126-128.

for more than 50 years.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, these critiques neither tried to deny Japan's cooperation with the United States, nor pursued a military superpower status for Japan. Regarding the U.S.-Japan alliance as indispensable for Japan's survival and as the best strategic choice for Japan in considering U.S. military and economic power as well as universal values of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law, all of which were shared with Japan, they demonstrated that Japan needed to further strengthen security ties with the United States and to enhance its role in the alliance.<sup>19</sup>

The prompt decision by the Koizumi Cabinet to support America's war on terror and to dispatch the SDF to Iraq after major combat operations were over for humanitarian and reconstruction assistance undoubtedly came from the traumatic experience of the Gulf War in 1990–91, on the one hand. Yet at the same time, the later coalition government of the Liberal Democrats and Kōmeitō determined to reinforce U.S.-Japan security relationships in the post-9/11 world, seeing the rise of China and North Korea's nuclear threat. The end result was the joint statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi in 2006, in which the two leaders "reviewed with great satisfaction the broadened and enhanced cooperation achieved in the alliance under their joint stewardship, and together heralded a new U.S.-Japan Alliance of Global Cooperation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Both governments reached an agreement to manage the alliance in terms of regional as well as global security.<sup>20</sup>

It seems that the Democratic Party of Japan reacted against such developments. Hatoyama Yukio, one of the founders of the DPJ, interestingly shared the view with Abe that Japan's dependence on the United States for its security for decades in the postwar period had eroded Japanese spirit of independence. However, unlike Abe or Koizumi, he therefore considered it desirable for Japan to weaken the security relationship with the United States and pursue a more autonomous foreign policy, building more cooperative relationships with other Asian countries. In this context he advocated the "East Asian Community" for peace and security in Asia, while also remodeling the shape of the Security Treaty with the United States to achieve the withdrawal of U.S. forces stationed in Japan. Allowing foreign troops within the territory of a sovereign state to maintain the nation's defense, in his point of view, had been unprec-

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18 Tarō Asō, *Jiyū to han'ei no ko* [*Arc of Freedom and Prosperity*] (Gentōsha, 2008), pp. 11–12.

19 See Koizumi, *Koizumi Jun'ichiro no bōron, seiron*; Abe, *Utsukushii kuni e*; Asō, *Jiyū to han'ei no ko*.

20 "The Japan-U.S. Alliance for the New Century," June 29, 2006, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/summit0606.html>.



edented in world history.<sup>21</sup> Hatoyama's view was another anti-thesis to the "Yoshida Doctrine," and had something attractive for the people aspiring to define defense and diplomatic measures that could be an alternative to the U.S.-Japan alliance and with a more peaceable perspective.

Throughout the 2000s the DPJ became increasingly oriented toward more autonomy or independence, and UN-centered foreign and security policy, setting a goal of creating a "Northeast Asian Forum" and later an "East Asian Community," within which member countries and areas cooperated with each other in a variety of fields such as finance and trade, environment and energy issues, as well as disaster relief. While accepting the necessity of the U.S.-Japan alliance for regional security, DPJ leaders strongly denounced the stance of the LDP-Komeito coalition government as too dependent on the United States, exemplified by its prompt support for America's war on Iraq and the dispatch of the SDF to the Middle East. Many of them advocated that Japan should transform the present bilateral relationship into a more equal one based on mutual trust. Hence, the DPJ continuously and publicly stated its commitment at national elections in the 2000s to reviewing the Agreement under the Security Treaty regarding Facilities and Areas and the Status of U.S. Armed Forces in Japan (SOFA), and to easing the burden of U.S. military bases exclusively carried by Okinawa.<sup>22</sup>

Some young DPJ members, Maehara Seiji or Nagashima Akihisa for instance, held views closer to the LDP on Japan's regional and global roles through the U.S.-Japan Alliance. However, the younger generation of the DPJ generally failed to show their leadership within the party, which often suffered from an apparent lack of integrity due to the ideological differences among intra-party groups. Consequently, Hatoyama and Kan Naoto, the founding fathers, Okada Katsuya, and Ozawa Ichirō—relatively the older generation and more or less reform fundamentalists who cast deeply skeptical eyes on the political, social, economic, and security systems that the LDP had developed throughout the postwar period—dominated the power positions within the DPJ.<sup>23</sup> It seems that Ozawa's participation in the DPJ in 2003 had a particularly significant impact on the party: under his leadership the DPJ became more focused on socially and economically vulnerable groups with the aim of ousting the

21 Jirō Yamaguchi and Kōji Nakakita, eds., *Minshutō seiken towa nandattanoka: Kī pāson tachi no shōgen* [Reviewing the DPJ Government: Interviews with Leaders] (Iwanami Shoten, 2014), pp. 96–107.

22 DPJ Manifestos in 2003–2009, published in Kaieda Banri ed., *Minshutō kōshiki handbook* [Official Handbook of the Democratic Party of Japan] 2014 (Bensei Shuppan, 2014), pp. 181–264.

23 Yamaguchi and Nakakita, eds., *Minshutō seiken towa nandattanoka*.

LDP-led government, namely adopting dole-out policies. In the meantime its defense and security policies were perhaps left unexamined and remained somewhat abstract. The only clear position of the Democrats was their objections to the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition government's decision to support America's war on Iraq. In the end there was still a security consensus between the LDP and DPJ on the necessity of the U.S.-Japan alliance for regional peace and stability or Japan's participation in non-combat activities overseas, but the distance between them widened in the 2000s over Japan's role in the alliance with the United States.

### **Conclusion**

The most serious problem with the foreign and security policies of the Democratic Party of Japan was that it was difficult for the DPJ to present a comprehensive and realistic picture of regional peace and security. Accordingly, the DPJ government advocated the necessity of revising SOFA, or the withdrawal of a part of U.S. forces in Okinawa, namely the relocation of the Futenma Air Station to outside Okinawa, which only complicated relationships with the United States. The DPJ's vague aspiration for an autonomous or independent foreign policy, motivated by simple but strong sentiments that U.S. forces stationed in Japan should be reduced and removed in the near future, that Japan should maintain an exclusive defense strategy based on Article 9, and that building a framework for regional cooperation—including China—would achieve lasting peace and stability in East Asia, did not create real alternatives, but merely functioned as protests against the reality of the present situation.

It seems, however, that this was not the case only for the DPJ. Twenty years of security debates in the post-Cold War period has produced a consensus among many political leaders: maintaining the U.S.-Japan alliance; and SDF participation in non-combat activities overseas, such as UN Peacekeeping Operations, disaster relief, sea patrols, and minesweeping. Yet there have still been disagreements among such leaders over Japan's role in the U.S.-Japan alliance for regional and global peace and security. Many political leaders within the LDP pursue Japan's more active role, including limited military activities; in contrast, others do not necessarily believe that Japan's close cooperation with the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty will contribute to international peace and security. The former believe that Japan will be able to maintain its independence through enhancing its role in the bilateral alliance, while the latter fears that Japanese sovereignty might be infringed by strengthening of U.S.-Japan security relations. No common ground has truly been found between these conflicting visions since the days of the Cold War.