'Surrounding Areas' and the recalibration of Japan's threat perception

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Surrounding Areas and The Recalibration of Japan's Threat Perception

Abstract: The official narratives of Surrounding Areas in the 1997 New Guidelines are a curiosity: on the one hand, they signify Japan's readiness to enhance its international involvement; while on the other hand, the geographical designation remains vague despite Japan's preoccupation with Asia. This suggests that Asia as Japan's neighbourhood is combined with international developments to facilitate an emergence of an ambiguous language for Japanese policy makers as they seek to adapt to changes in the international environment. As such, Surrounding Areas signify Tokyo's anxieties in facing up to new challenges, as well as willingness by the government to enhance Japan's international role while maintaining its status as a pacifist state.

Japan's use of 'peaceful state' (*heiwa kokka*) as a signifier of its international goodwill cohabitates with Japanese policy makers' preoccupation with Northeast Asia as a primary geographical concern. Following 9/11, Japan participated in the so-called 'War on Terror', and despite domestic debates over the constitutionality of assisting US forces in the Indian Ocean, the previous Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) government adopted a language of omnipresent, yet indeterminate, 'danger' until it was defeated in the August 2009 election. However, even the succeeding coalition governments led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) succumbed to the 'reality' of threat perception.

Superficially, the post-9/11 threat assessments conflict with Japan's regionalised, historical, conception of danger emerging from the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan Strait. The US plans to review its commitment in the Asia-Pacific add new dimension to Japan's post-war identity narrative: a pacifist state pro-actively seeking to maintain peace and stability in Northeast Asia *and beyond*. The 1997 *Guidelines for US-Japan Defence Co-operation* (the New Guidelines) require Tokyo to tread precariously between maintaining its peace state identity and reassuring its Asian neighbours of its good intentions, on the one hand; while seeking to enhance its international role by recalibrating threat perception to extend beyond Northeast Asia,

on the other. The emergence of the official narratives of 'Surrounding Areas'—or more precisely the 'areas surrounding Japan' (*shuhen chiiki/shuhen jitai*)—denotes some form of a rhetorical compromise. At first glance, its definition seems logical; but the political reality is one of ambiguity whereby 'areas surrounding Japan' are not geographical, but situational signifiers (Katzenstein and Okawara, 2001/2: 171, n. 62; *The Economist*, 22 September 2001: 68). Indeed, a former Foreign Minister, Ikeda Yukihiko, suggested in 1997 that 'what happens determines the location' (*Asashi shimbun*, 1 August 1997: 2). This is in stark contrast to the explicit identification of the Far East (*kyokuto*) as Japan's defence perimeter in both the 1978 Guidelines and the Mutual Security Agreement (MSA) of 1960.

The landslide victory by the DPJ in the August 2009 election introduced an element of uncertainty. The Party was initially sceptical of the New Guidelines, and in its election manifesto, the DPJ maintained its intention of establishing an 'intimate and equal (*kinmitsu de taito*) relationship' with the US, while admitting that the US-Japan alliance constitutes the basis for Japanese foreign policy (*Nippon gaiko no kiban*).[1] Following Prime Minister Hatoyama's resignation, the new DPJ prime minister, Kan Naoto, told the Diet in June 2010 that his intention is to pursue a 'realist' (*genjitsu-teki*), rather than 'ideological', diplomacy, reiterating the familiar dictum that 'the US-Japan alliance is an invaluable international asset not only for Japan's security, but for the stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region'.[2] The official language of pacifism remains a salient feature of Japan's international posture revealing the psychological landscape within the Japanese government.

This article is an exploration into a shift in the official language of Japan's threat perception as represented through the narratives of both the Surrounding Areas and pacifism in the pre-August 2009 policy pronouncements. While it is tempting to dismiss this as a mere publicity stunt, the fact that such an ambiguous language exists at policy levels needs to be taken seriously. How are pacifism and Japan's enhanced military role reconciled within the official narratives? Is pacifism a mere lip-service? I argue that the Surrounding Areas constitute a *recalibration* of threat perception while pacifism as a convenient rhetorical tool remains the predominant language through which contemporary threat perception is legitimised. The ambiguities of

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[1] DPJ Manifesto, <www.dpj.or.jp/special/manifesto2009/txt/manifesto2009.txt>. Accessed 2 September 2009.
[2] <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/kan/statement/201006/11syosin.html>. Accessed 19 July 2010.

Surrounding Areas represent the cohabitation of change and continuity—a transformation in the way international environment is seen through a reified perception of 'Asia' as Japan's existential milieu. In the first section, I discuss how we can conceptualise recalibration of threat perception in which the reified signifier of pacifism provides the platform upon which emergent threats are perceived. The second section discusses the transformation of 'danger' as a historical process, whereby Asia as a geographical designation and the defence of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) has always been central to Japanese policy makers. Section three explores the ambiguities inherent within the official Surrounding Areas narratives as signifying the emergence of a convenient rhetorical tool representing the shift in threat perception; and the fourth section analyses how policy makers use ambiguities to mean 'what happens determines the location'. Such official narratives provide a rather sanitised view of Japan's threat perception; but the various official rhetorical contortions provide a useful insight into Tokyo's official worldviews and the associated Asia Imaginary. Put differently, there are apt to be subtle meanings inherent within such official lip-services: it means they warrant further inspection. The final section very briefly explores the prospects for further recalibration under the DPJ government.

Recalibration of Threat Perception

The emergence of Surrounding Areas narratives as a situational, rather than a geographical, term signifies a shift in Japan's threat perception in response to international events. It involves an interplay of identity as a historical product, on the one hand; with the subjective nature of threat perception, on the other. Foreign policy pronouncements are tantamount to speech acts representing an actor's worldviews addressing the perceived challenges in the international environment whereby inputs from exogenous factors reinforce an actor's sense of Self in opposition to potentially dangerous Others. David Campbell (1998: 197) observes that state identity is a 'stylized repetition of practices' constituting a feedback loop involving identity reconstruction along with external factors reinforcing collective worldviews and the language representing them.

This cycle amounts to a macro-level reconstruction of institutional facts. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966: 69-70) point out that 'social order is a human product, or, more precisely, an ongoing human production. It is produced by man in the course of his ongoing externalization'. The end product of this process—an actor's worldview—is fluid and flexible, and as John Searle (1995: 7) argues, '[s]ymbols do not create cats and dogs and evening stars; they create only the possibility of referring to cats, dogs, and evening stars in a publicly accessible way'. In the case of a state actor, the designation of neighbours as 'friends' or 'foes' is a social construction however much they seem 'real' to policy elites. Searle (1995: 96) adds that 'the remarkable feature of institutional structures is that people continue to acknowledge and cooperate in many of them even when it is by no means obviously to their advantage to do so'. This means that anxieties manifest where actors engage in habituated relationships. This is the case since worldviews and ideas about the international environment leave the authorship of the authors to assume the lives of their own (Archer, 1995). As Margaret Archer (1995: 324) argues, '[w]hat we confront in daily life are, in fact, *particular* confirmations and what we meet and treat as amalgams are, in fact, *specific forms of amalgamation*'. Whenever new externalities emerge, they are met with anxiety—only for policies to be adjusted and new reality engaged. Japan experienced such change-*versus*-continuity nexus before. August 1945 meant 'embracing defeat' in order to rebuild a battered nation; but the continuity of Japanese Self across August 1945 became manifest through the forgetting of Japan's atrocities in Asia, sowing the seeds of contemporary conflict and reinforcing the Japanese view—however ethnocentric—that Asia remains a hostile neighbourhood (Dower, 1998; Hicks, 1997; Buruma, 1994).

The recalibration of threat perception takes place when the sense of Self is congealed and the perception of danger shifts as the international environment transforms, precipitating an evolution in the Self-Other dichotomy. Agents refine speech acts through the frame of reference provided by historically reinforced identity, while seeking to address the shifting images of the dangerous Otherness, however vague those threats may be (Roe, 2008). Jutta Weldes (1999: 10) posits that national interests are social constructions

created as meaningful objects out of which the intersubjective and culturally established meanings within which the world, particularly the international system and the place of the state in it, is understood.

Collective memories and identities enable policy elites to share threat perceptions and the common language for addressing them. As Searle (1995: 24-25) argues, it is the act of 'doing things together' that fosters a sense of collective actorhood irreducible to a mere aggregation of individual attributes; and through this process, a dominant narrative of foreign policy emerges.

Given the fluid nature of institutional facts, there are apt to be contradictions. Actors might be socialised into expecting a certain outcome deriving from a familiar social interaction; but due to there being a constellation of external actors, unexpected outcomes emerge. As Searle (1995: 92) notes, 'when institutions are maintained largely by habit, they can also collapse quite suddenly'. To be sure, not all changes occur suddenly. Anthony Giddens (1984: 198) points to the 'fault lines' in the structural constitution of societal systems lending themselves to a slower transformation in intersubjective structures. In Japanese foreign policy, various factors including: geographical constraints; the prevailing domestic identity narratives; and international political factors such as the rise of China and tensions in the Taiwan Strait and Korean Peninsula, delimit foreign policy choices available for Tokyo. Consequently, identity might shift from being a peace state jealously guarding Article 9 of the Constitution to a pacifist state with ambitions to become a 'normal state' (*futsu no kuni*) ready to engage militarily under the auspices of the United Nations (Ozawa, 1995). The reiteration of pacifism might be a lip-service; but this also suggests that the signifier has become a rhetorical tool within which Japanese foreign policy is couched.

People, as well as governments, come and go. But the institutionalised notion of Self and a generalised danger are inherited from one generation of policy makers to another. Colin Wight (2006: 296) argues that,

> Agential power in a social context is dependent upon structural positioning, but is not reducible to it. And social structures have a mode of being and a set of causal powers that are not reducible to the individuals upon whose activity they depend.

There are apt to be slippages between: (1) how one generation of policy makers within a particular international environment of the particular times reconstruct particular worldviews, on the one hand; and (2) the culture of diplomatic practices framing the narratives of Japan's Asian existence, on the other. It is conceivable that the established Self/Other dichotomy within policy circles might shift with the relentlessly evolving international environment. Hence, reified worldviews confront international contexts encouraging policy makers to seek solutions from within the existing tool box available to them, namely the institutional practice. This process needs to be understood as an inevitable part of institutional life which entails recalibrations in the language of threat construction (Schiff, 2008: 363-77; Adler, 2008). As Rafael Narvaez (2006: 66) suggests, collective memories act as a catalyst for not only looking back, but looking forward as well. Hidemi Suganami (2002: 29) adds that,

> Grounded in historically continuous collective consciousness, a state (an effective one) presents itself as a historical, societal, given—or reality—to all individuals inside and outside the state, even though it would be true to say that the state would not exist, or continue to do so, if no individual even held seriously the belief that it existed.

Hence, the collective idea of Self has the potential to act as a template upon which future foreign policy decisions are framed.

New signifiers emerge from the process of threat recalibration; and this shift needs to be experienced by someone. We need to take account of a historically constructed collective identity that allows policy makers to not only experience and address external challenges, but also to bequeath such institutional experience from one generation to another. If we discount collective memory as an integral factor in the construction and recalibration of threat perception, then we fail to account for the vast library of knowledge that institutions possess. This is a reification of collective identity within the policy circles, but we need to take this process seriously because reification is also a social process. As Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000: 5) argue,

> Reification is a social process, not only an intellectual practice. As such, it is central to the politics of 'ethnicity', 'race', 'nation', and other putative

identities. Analysts of this kind of politics should seek to *account* for this process of reification.

Again, it is tempting to treat Japan's pacifism as a lip-service. Yet, it is also telling that Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo reiterated Japan's peace state narrative and regional imaginary in a May 2008 speech to the International Conference on the Future of Asia. In it, Fukuda argued that a new era (*shin jidai*) has arrived in which Japan, China, and South Korea share responsibility for the future of Asia and the wider world. He stated that, 'Japan promises to work hard towards becoming an "International Peace Co-operating Country (*heiwa kyoroku kokka*)" to secure international peace in the Asia-Pacific region and the wider world', adding that a new web of relationships in the region effectively shrinks the Pacific Ocean into a tighter mesh of pan-regional network similar in scope to the Mediterranean.[3] Even if it is a diplomatic nicety, this signifier reappears frequently in policy pronouncements to the effect that if we are to account for the ambiguities of Surrounding Areas, the deployment of such rhetorical devices needs to be take seriously.

Japan's Search for a Narrative

The post-Cold War international environment, particularly after 9/11, compels Tokyo to search for a narrative that conforms to its participation in the so-called 'War on Terror'. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) enthusiastically proclaims Japan's status as a pacifist state having learned the lessons of the past, the Ministry of Defence (MOD; formerly Japan Defence Agency [JDA]), confirms Japan's peaceful intentions only to argue that action is needed to guarantee national security.[4] Victor Cha (2000: 273) argues that the MSA 'has become embedded in [Japan] to the extent that life without it is difficult to imagine', bearing in mind that the Alliance constitutes another signifier of pacifist intentions. The adoption of New Guidelines is one such

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[3] Fukuda Yasuo, 'Taiheiyo ga "nai-kai" to naru hi e'. <www.knatei.go.jp/jp/hukudaspeech/2008/05/22speech.html>. Accessed 23 May 2008. While it is easy to dismiss peace state narrative as a mere lip-service by the LDP government, it is worth noting that the LDP's manifesto for July 2010 Upper House elections pledges to 'preserve pacifism', suggesting that the Party itself sees pacifism as a useful framework. See LDP, *Jiminto seisaskushu: J-fairu (Manifesto)* (LDP, 2010).
[4] MOFA, *Gaiko seisho*; and JDA/MOD, *Nippon no boei*, various issues.

recalibration exercise. Thomas Christiansen (1999: 58-59) argues that the previous 1978 Guidelines were 'viewed in the United States as lopsided and unfair because the United States guarantees Japanese security without clear guarantees of even rudimentary assistance from Japan if U.S. forces were to become embroiled in a regional armed conflict'. Superficially, the New Guidelines respond to such criticisms; but Japan's incremental responsibility under the 1997 version can also be seen as an adjustment within the larger framework of the MSA in order for Tokyo to realign its sense of Self in response to newly emerging dangers. Reiterating the ambiguity of Surrounding Areas, Peter Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara (2001/02: 171) point out that in 'situations where rear-area support may be required, these areas are not necessarily limited to East Asia', adding that 'the scope of the areas surrounding Japan is variable and depends on a functional and conceptual, rather than a geographic and objective, construction of Japan's changing security environment' (172).

Yet, pacifism as a post-war signifier of Japan that is distinct from its pre-war Self, involves a narrative feedback loop whereby it provides a backdrop against which international events are interpreted and Asian imaginary reformulated. Within the mainstream political establishment, pacifism does not preclude military capabilities; but rather, it entails a sensitive balancing act in seeking enhanced international political role for Japan while placating the neighbours. Even the MOD webpage states that its mission is to improve international security environment and pursue confidence-building through communication; and to encourage transparency between and among the various defence authorities.[5] Thus, the policy narratives tend toward militarily contributing to international peace and security. Iriye Akira (1991: 211) argues that,

> Japan has so far decided not to go down the path of remilitarisation. This is because the domestic society and politics colluded in the emergence of public opinion in favour of economic restructuring rather than military revival…. But whether or not Japan will become a military superpower again depends on the existence of an international environment tolerant of such an adventure, meaning it is not just for the Japanese people to decide.

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[5] Ministry of Defence, <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/defense/exchange/index.html>. Accessed 13 March 2008.

To be sure, Japan's pacifism is 'not a monolithic concept' (Izumikawa, 2010: 125). As Yasuhiro Izumikawa (2010: 125) argues, it is an admixture of 'pacifism, antitraditionalism, and the fear of entrapment'. Put differently, he posits that,

> In particular, pacifists' manipulation of the fear of entrapment suggests that just as rational actors use norms to achieve their goals, normative agents seek to maximize the appeal of their ideals by incorporating realist factors into their strategies (126).

For Izumikawa, pacifism derives mainly from left-leaning intellectuals; but the memories of suffering during the War provide a powerful ethical constraint against the use of force (129-30). As for antitraditionalism, it is another intellectual concept whereby the memories of militarism provide a strong incentive to 'improve the quality of Japanese democracy'; and 'security issues become relevant' insofar as government accountability is concerned (130-31). Finally, the fear of entrapment denotes Tokyo's unease at being potentially dragged into conflict as an American ally (131-32). Izumikawa employs these concepts to explain variations in Tokyo's behaviour, including the 1960 MSA revision and Japan's active involvement in the 'War on Terror' under the Koizumi cabinet, suggesting that policy outcomes are determined by how pacifists frame debates, reiterating Sakamoto Yoshikazu's argument that 'the influence of Japanese pacifism derives from Japanese citizens' desire to avoid being entrapped in an unwanted war that might be triggered by the United States' (Izumikawa, 2010: 156-57). This partly explains Tokyo's awkwardness in rationalising the US nuclear umbrella. Strong public opposition to nuclear weapons lend credence to Japan's campaigning on nuclear non-proliferation as a hallmark of its pacifist inclination. However, this enthusiasm is tempered through alliance commitments, treating US nuclear arsenals as a necessary evil (Sato, 2010: 47-48). Hence, Japan's collective sense of danger cohabitates with a fear of entrapment and the deployment of pacifist rhetoric as a default language; but the reality of its Asian existence translates into a fear of abandonment in response to the North Korean nuclear programme and the rise of China (Izumikawa, 2010: 158).

Japan's historical sense of alienation from Asia is another recurring theme in Japanese identity construction throughout the decades on both sides of August 1945, conflating the source of danger from both within and without its immediate

geographical periphery.[6] As such, the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan Strait—and hence China—are very much within Tokyo's anxious gaze; but the so-called 'War on Terror' introduced an extra-Asian dimension to Japan's security concerns. The 2005 *East Asian Strategic Review (Higashi Ajia senryaku gaikan)* published by the National Institute for Defence Studies (NIDS) (2005: 205) reiterates this anxiety, noting that,

> It is impossible to address [the rise of international terrorism] using existing defence strategy alone, given the difficulty of prediction and evaluation. And once they occur, situation can deteriorate and spread rapidly.

The *National Defence Programme Outline* (*Taiko*) of 2004 notes that this can only be augmented by reiterating Japan's resolve to uphold its peace constitution—an assertion still repeated in the 2010 *Taiko*, despite its emphasis on perceived threat from China.[7] Hence, just as Douglas MacArthur's plan to construct a 'Switzerland of the East'—an idealised state forgoing military involvement—was superseded by the reality of Korean War in 1950 and the larger context of the Cold War (Kusunoki, 2006: 101), pacifism remains an ideal embedded in reality of Tokyo's Asian, and the wider international, context.

Asia in Japan's Gaze

The New Guidelines signed on 23 September 1997 signalled Tokyo's willingness to enhance its international military involvement; and the deliberate ambiguity in delineating the defence perimeter effectively addressed the lessons of the 1991-92 Gulf War fiasco during which Tokyo was criticised for its chequebook diplomacy. It was Tokyo's effort to 'show the world [that it is] no longer a chequebook diplomat but an engaged peacemaker' (*Financial Times*, 21 January 2002: 9). The vagueness of Surrounding Areas justifies Japan's military presence *beyond* the confines of Japan's traditional sphere of interest in the Asia-Pacific in the hope of placating China, *vis-à-vis*, the Taiwan Strait. In a sense, this marks a subtle evolution in Japan's defence

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[6] For Japanese identity construction, see Miyoshi, 1991; Yoon, 1997; Drifte, 1998.
[7] See 2004 *Taiko*, Section III-1; and 2010 *Taiko*, Section II.

thinking. As Motoshi Suzuki (2010: 495) suggests, the Yoshida Doctrine 'served as Japan's post-war grand strategy to promote security and prosperity within the constraints of the war-renouncing Constitution and the difficult economic conditions [of the 1950s]'. Yet, by the time Nakasone Yasuhiro became prime minister, the focus shifted towards 'revitalising' Japan while admitting to Japan's war time atrocities (Watanabe, 2007: 138). Part of the solution was to adopt *kokuren chushin shugi* (UN-centrism) in the 1990s as a way to address both the changes in demands from the international community, while satiating Japan's appetite in addressing such concerns (Bergström, 1999: 174). As such, while Tokyo seeks to satisfy its international ambition, anxieties about the role of China remain; and that it will always be concerned about managing its alliance relationship with the US (Kingston, 2011: 140). Hence, Asia as a potentially hostile entity remains an anchorage upon which Japan determines its international posture.

Change and Continuity in Japan's Asia Imaginary

Japan's reified image of Asia as a hostile neighbourhood is a historical construct. Euan Graham (2006: ch. 3) observes that the brute fact of Japan's geography instils a sense of vulnerability, whether be it an invasion of the homeland via the Korean Peninsula or through the blockade of SLOC to the south. This explains both the contemporary threat perception and the concerns of Meiji oligarchs during the late 19th century: for Japanese policy makers throughout the centuries, Asia has been an opportunity as well as a source of anxiety (Duus, 1995: 20-21). Maruyama Masao (1961: 9-10) argues that *kaikoku* (the opening) after 1853 marked Japan's exposure to the *Realpolitik* of imperial powers; and Masao Miyoshi (1996: 186) suggests that this precipitated the emergence of a worldview through which Japan felt it had no choice but to embark upon its own programme of semi-colonialism.

The 1890s saw Field Marshal Yamagata Aritomo identify the 'cordons of sovereignty and interest'. Iriye (1966: 30-31) notes that the 'cordon of sovereignty' referred to the Japanese territory itself, while the 'cordon of interest' remained an 'ambiguous, and a tautological, concept' prescribing a defence periphery necessary for the security of the homeland. Peter Duus (1995: 17) argues that 'the "cordon of

interest" included the weaker neighboring countries that might become the object of Western imperialist aggression' unless Japan took steps to pre-empt it. Consequently, Japan's aggression towards Asia was justified domestically as necessary for national security (Najita and Harootunian, 1998: 212), constructing Asia as an object of desire, as well as a signifier reminding pre-war policy makers of Japan's purported uniqueness as the sole Asian power capable of standing up to the West. By the mid-1930s, Tokyo felt that the conflict with the West over Asia became inevitable (Iriye, 1966: 107-13); and the idea of Greater Far Eastern Co-prosperity Sphere emerged in an effort at consolidating Asian coalition against the West. Once the periphery was understood to be weak and vulnerable, Tokyo decided that the only recourse to defending the homeland was for Japan to preside over the rest of Asia (Ito, 1998). Tokyo realised that Asia and its vulnerability constituted a source of insecurity, legitimising its self-proclaimed, ethno-centric, role as a 'liberator', alter-casting Asia as an Otherness against which the Japanese Self needed protection.

Japan's defeat in the Second World War marked a significant psychological rupture. John Dower (1999: 24) argues that the post-war occupiers 'encountered a populace sick of war, contemptuous of the militarists who had led them to disaster, and all but overwhelmed by difficulties of the present circumstance in a ruined land'. Yet, a further inspection also reveals that the emergent pacifism failed to reject military role for Japan. Indeed, the Cold War gave the impression that threat to national existence remained; and Japan's decision to outsource defence to the US, thereby allowing itself to focus on reconstruction, enabled post-war generations of policy makers to maintain Japan's pacifist demeanour before embarking upon gradual remilitarisation (Chai, 1997). For Jeff Kingston (2011: 131), the sense of 'living in a dangerous neighborhood with unpredictable neighbors has created opportunities in Japan for advocates of enhanced security capabilities to achieve their long-standing agendas'. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo proposed changes to the Constitution, arguing that it was a *diktat* (*oshitsuke kempo*); but Watanabe Osamu (2007: 138-39) cautions that, unlike Nakasone's nationalism, it lacked any sense of recompense towards the past. Indeed, Kingston (2011: 132) suggests that the 'public backlash [to his proposal] was unexpectedly strong'. Similar backlash was witnessed by the Sato cabinet in the 1960s when the then-prime minister admitted that the Korean Peninsula fell within Japan's defence periphery precipitating a media uproar (Watanabe, 2010: 19). Hence, the obscuring of 'definitional lines between Article 5 and Article 6 missions [under

the MSA] between "defensive defense" and "collective self-defense" under Japan's basic defense posture' (Kingston, 2011: 132) became the only viable narrative through which Tokyo was able to address changes in the international system. As such, pacifism acts as a convenient narrative signifying rupture from the pre-war Self while constituting an integral part of the language of post-war foreign policy (Katzenstein, 1996).

The outsourcing of defence also signified the resilience of Japan's perception that Asia continues to be a dangerous neighbourhood. The continuity of this psychological milieu derives primarily from geopolitical constraints; but it is further sustained by an organic continuity in the form of military personnel whose experiences and threat perceptions from the War were deemed necessary in preparing Japan to confront post-war defence challenges. As Graham (2006: 98-99) argues,

> the [Maritime Self Defence Forces (MSDF)] was a direct descendant of the Imperial Navy, retaining many of its personnel, as well as its customs, traditions and institutional forms. As part of this, the MSDF also inherited the ambitions of those whose 'beautiful dream' was to restore Japan's post-war navy to a fully fledged stand-alone force whose mission would be to defend Japan's SLOC…. The presence of Imperial Navy veterans at all key levels of the fledgling MSDF also ensured that the institutional memory of the wartime blockade was passed on.

To be sure, Japan's post-war worldview and policy orientation entail significant US input. As Qingxin Ken Wang (2003: 112) argues, Japanese ambivalence in maintaining its pacifist narrative while simultaneously enjoying the protection under the US nuclear umbrella is a product of socialisation between Tokyo and Washington (*ibid.*). He suggests that,

> It was the deliberate American and Japanese policies and the external events caused intentionally or unintentionally by the United States, such as the occupation of Japan, the 1960 security treaty crisis, and Japan's rapid economic growth that have led to the emergence of the new Japanese security culture and the resultant dominance of pro-American centrists both inside and outside the LDP.

The Sino-American standoff in the Taiwan Strait in 1995-96 following the Taiwanese presidential election, along with the North Korean nuclear issue 'paved the way for intense intra-alliance communication for perceptive convergence, with a specific

reminder to Japanese officials that regional peace and stability were no better guaranteed in the post-Cold War than in the Cold War itself' (Suzuki, 2010: 502). The October 2000 Armitage Report urged Tokyo and Washington to 'develop a "common perception and approach" to their relationship' (McDougall, 2007: 108). It is within this post-war context that the narratives of Surrounding Areas restate Japan's geographical predisposition and the notion that the country's destiny is determined by events largely within the Asia-Pacific region but not necessarily confined to it. The 2009 edition of the *Strategic Review* (NIDS, 2009: 243-45) states that the SLOC links the Middle East with Japan's immediate neighbourhood, while regional conflicts and weapons of mass destruction cannot be defined by geography alone. It recognises that Asia remains a significant factor in Japan's threat perception, although the post-9/11 era suggests that the dangers are more diffuse.

Japanese identity has always been oscillating between Japan that is firmly located in Asia as a geographical location, yet sentimentally distinct from it as a notional entity (Yoon, 1997; Koshiro, 1999). The image of Asia as a perceived source of threat has been reified as a reality against which Japan's national security calculations are based. According to the MOD, the MSA functions to guarantee Japanese sovereignty and facilitates in maintaining peace and stability in the Far East. Furthermore, it argues that the close co-operation between Japan and the US contributes towards the peace and stability of the Surrounding Areas, and is indispensable even after the end of the Cold War.[8] The *uncertainties* of future regional developments, coupled with the *certainty* of dangers inherent within Japan's neighbourhood, help frame the ambiguities of the Surrounding Areas. The 'Introduction' to the 2007 edition of the *Strategic Review* (NIDS, 2007: i) suggests that 'the maintenance of peace and stability in East Asia entails an objective understanding of the region's security environment'. Despite its prescription for an objective understanding (*kyakkan-teki na rikai*), the *Strategic Review* represents the fusion of geographical certainties with the uncertainties of *where* the threats are, and *how* they manifest themselves.

Superficially, the evolving language of Japan's defence periphery from the Far East to Surrounding Areas is a significant transformation in nomenclature and sentiment. The language of Surrounding Areas allows for flexibility, while the new

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[8] MOD Website, 'Nichibei anzen hosho'.

psychological landscape calls for enhanced Japanese involvement worldwide. While change must not be over-played given the resilience of Japan's reified geographical imaginary, it must not be trivialised either since the additional flexibility to the language of Japan's threat perception suggests that policy elites in Tokyo recognise dangers that were previously unarticulated. The 2009 *Strategic Review* (NIDS, 2009: 239-40) sums up well:

> The change of language from 'international contribution' (*kokusai koken*) to 'international co-operation' (*kokusai heiwa kyoryoku katsudo*) marks a change in attitude. While '*kokusai koken*' seems to signify Japan that is taking a 'step back' as a spectator, '*kokusai heiwa kyoryoku katsudo*' implies Japan's willingness to partake in international activities. Given the process of globalisation, distant events can potentially threaten Japan's security. To that extent, it is imperative that Japan proactively responds to them as though if the country is directly affected by such events.

Determining whether this change is the result of meticulous calculation or whether it is borne of events superseding domestic policy discussions remains difficult. However, the ambiguities of the official narratives represent Japanese policy makers rationalising exogenous factors such as US pressures and the rise of China.

Surrounding Areas as a New Language

The New Guidelines reiterate Japan's historically constructed threat perception alluding to the familiar symbols of post-war Japanese national identity—a language that invokes revised MSA of 1960 and other defence-related pronouncements. MSA states that the intention of both the US and Japan is to 'uphold the aims and principles of the United Nations Charter in wishing to cohabitate peacefully with all the peoples and governments' along with the desire to 'maintain international peace and security of the Far East' (the Preamble). At the same time, Article 4 states that 'the State Parties agree to regularly consult one another in the implementation of this Treaty; and when a threat to Japan's security, or threats to peace and security of the Far East, emerge, then either of the State Parties can demand consultation'.

The MOD seeks to reassure the public of its peaceful intentions. Its website suggests that peace and security cannot simply be wished: they must be realised

through multiple channels including diplomacy and economic interdependence. Reference is made to Japan's predicament as a resource-poor country dependent on imports, emphasising the need to foster international peace and harmony (*kyocho*).[9] Pacifism is enunciated further as the constitutional constraints are addressed. The various issues of the Defence White Paper, the *Defence of Japan* (*Nippon no boei*) follow a pre-defined format in delineating Japan's defence policy. They begin by invoking the lessons of the War (JDA, 1997: 128; 2000: 66; 2005: 79), followed by employing pacifism to justify maintaining the SDF under the 1947 Constitution. For instance, the 1997 edition (JDA, 1997: 130) talks of the nation's 'efforts at constructing a peaceful state', while the 2000 edition (JDA, 2000: 67) identifies pacifism (*heiwa shugi*) as a constitutional principle, and the 2004 issue (JDA, 2004: 78) reaffirms Japan as a peace state (*heiwa kokka*). In its webpage, the MOD stresses the tragic memories of the War as a psychological backdrop for post-war Japan; but justifies the existence of SDF, *vis-à-vis* Article 9, by invoking the inherent right of self-defence as a sovereign state,[10] emphasising that the MSA forms the 'basis for Japanese diplomacy' and a 'valuable asset in its contribution to international peace and stability'.[11] Hence, the pacifist narrative is amalgamated with the MSA to justify military role for a pacifist state.

Duality in Japan's security interests reappears in the New Guidelines. On the one hand, the narratives of pacifism are apparent. Section II, Paragraph 2, reiterates constitutional constraints as the framework for policy construction; and in Section III, Paragraph 3, the US-Japan alliance is depicted as a crucial ingredient in guaranteeing a stable international security environment. On the other hand, it introduces the concept of Surrounding Areas. For instance, Section IV, Paragraph 1, states that the alliance will bear in mind that 'depending on the developments in the surrounding areas, both the Japanese and American governments will maintain close co-operation' in contemplating counter-measures. Once the present and clear danger is identified, the SDF 'will initiate defensive action primarily within Japanese territory and the surrounding waters and airspace', while the US forces provide support (Sec. IV, Para. 2, 1 [*ro*]). With respect to the protection of shipping, it states that both the SDF and

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[9] MOD, 'Waga kuni no anzen hosho', <www.mod.go.jp/defense/policy/seisaku/kihon01.htm>. Accessed 26 June 2008.

[10] MOD, 'Kenpo to jieitai', <www.mod.go.jp/defense/policy/seisaku/kihon02.htm>. Accessed 26 June 2008.

[11] MOD, 'Nichi-bei anzen hosho taisei no igi', <www.mod.go.jp/defense/policy/seisaku/anzen01.htm>. Accessed 26 June 2008.

the US Navy 'will conduct joint operations necessary for the defence of the surrounding seas and the protection of maritime transport', adding that the main task for the SDF will be 'to defend major ports and channels, along with the surrounding seas' (Sec. IV, Para. 2, 2 [*ro*]).

The New Guidelines reiterate an earlier working paper. The joint US-Japan committee discussing the revision met in Honolulu in June 1997 producing an interim report. It begins with a reference to Japan's constitutional constraints (Sec. III, Para. 2) as defining Japan's defence capability. It also refrains from delineating the defence perimeter, and instead, introduced the term Surrounding Areas in Section IV, Paragraph 1(4), noting that 'the Japanese and American governments shall foster the basis for defence co-operation conducive to effectively supporting military actions aimed at [defending] Japan and its surrounding areas'. Moreover, it argues that 'should circumstances in surrounding areas entail assessments identifying imminent military threat to Japan', the allies will co-operate in preparing counter-measures (Sec. IV, Para. 2 [1]).

Hence, Surrounding Areas emerged as a new language for addressing Japan's anxieties. On the one hand, it seems that the Far East as a signifier for potential threats remains relevant. Japan is growing ever more anxious of China, while remaining reluctant to define Taiwan Strait as a source of nervousness (Mori: 2006: 138-41). On the other hand, Tokyo is under pressure to pursue new international roles. So long as the MSA remains the foundation for Japanese defence posture, Asia or Far East remain a reified entity that Tokyo sees as a source insecurity; while the nature of threat evolves as Japanese policy makers realise there are dangers lurking behind the familiar, traditional, geographical confines. As such, the ambiguities in the language of Surrounding Areas address Japan's foreign policy anxieties, while simultaneously limiting the potential damage to Tokyo's relations with Beijing.

Ambiguities as a Language of Recalibration

The official narratives of Surrounding Areas combine the evolving contemporary threat perception with the historical appreciation of Japan's geographical vulnerability. Peter Katzenstein (1996: 148) argues that pacifism constrains Japan's strategic

considerations by placing 'great obstacles in the path of those who want to make Japan a normal country, with a normal military force and normal levels of military spending; the government's room for maneuver has been much smaller for external than for internal security policy'. The cohabitation of an assertion by the JDA/MOD regarding Japan's peaceful intentions, on the one hand; and MOFA's emphasis on pacifism, on the other is telling. The JDA/MOD recognises the necessity of reiterating the peace state narrative, arguing that SDF is a minimum requirement in guaranteeing national security while lending credence to pacifist claims (JDA, 2006: 74-75). Meanwhile, MOFA (2006: 2) seized on the 60th anniversary of the end of the war to devote one section of its 2006 *Diplomatic Blue Book* (*Gaiko seisho*) to emphasise pacifism, stating that, 'from the ashes of defeat, the Japanese nation pledged to build a peaceful and prosperous country (*heiwa de yutaka na kuni*)'. It suggests that Japan should never be complacent as a 'pacifist state' (*heiwa kokka*), pointing out the government's efforts within the UN framework (3); and that its international contributions confer legitimacy to 'Japan as a pacifist state' (*heiwa kokka Nippon*) (4-5). Ambiguities became prominent once the certainties of Cold War were superseded by the uncertainties of post-Cold War environment. Both exogenous- and endogenous factors conspire to reinforce the perception of international environment as an awkward new reality for Tokyo. Externally, while the Soviet threat subsided, a new threat in the form of North Korean nuclear weapons emerged. Moreover, the spectre of Gulf War fiasco remained; and despite the US involvement over Korean Peninsula, and therefore, the implications for alliance commitment, Tokyo 'insisted that it would not carry out sanctions against the North without a UNSC resolution authorizing the sanctions' (Yahuda, 2011: 319). This precipitated a perception gap between the US and Japan in which Washington considered Japan to be a 'free-rider', while Tokyo feared entrapment. Tanaka Akihiko (2010: 38) adds that, by 1994, Tokyo realised the inadequacy of the legal framework stipulating American bases on Japan and Tokyo's ability to provide assistance. This sense of 'drift' in alliance 'led to its revamping' (Yahuda, 2011: 319); and Japan's enhanced international military involvement was considered essential in highlighting Tokyo's continued commitment to the alliance, particularly following the heightened sense of emergency on the Korean Peninsula (Tanaka, 2010: 38).

Domestically, too, there was a shift in Japan's defence posture. According to Chijiwa Yasuyuki (2008: 72-73), the policy makers' understanding that Japan needs

to reinforce its international role translated into an idea that it is crucial to prevent Japan from becoming a 'power vacuum' by maintaining minimum deterrence capabilities. Furthermore, Fujishige Hiromi (2008: 106-07) suggests that public opinion polls conducted by the Cabinet Office in 1994 indicated that the proportion of respondents who feared Japan would be drawn into a conflict was 44 per cent; but in 1997, it rose to 55 per cent, and by 2000, the figure was 65 per cent. Fujishige (*ibid.*) notes that the result for 1997 is striking given the absence of an existential threat in 1997 that was comparable to 1994 at the height of the North Korean nuclear crisis. She suggests that 'those who felt that the security environment has deteriorated' grew in number throughout the 1990s (*ibid.*), indicating that a shift in Japan's security concerns entailed reconstruction in the language of threat perception. Here again, the geographical realities defining Japan's perceived vulnerabilities collided with the constraints of alliance commitments.

It was within these international and domestic contexts that the official narratives of Surrounding Areas emerged. The April 1996 meeting between President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro sought to review the 1978 Guidelines, 'reaffirming the MSA as the basis upon which both the US and Japan seek to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region into the 21st Century' (Tanaka, 1997: 344). Superficially, the *communiqué* was a re-statement of the MSA: the Asia-Pacific region remained squarely within Japan's gaze and Japan was to remain under the US nuclear umbrella. Yet, Tokyo was urged to enhance its military role, as well as expanding the regional scope of its defence periphery. The statement clarified the need to maintain peace and stability, but it remained vague: the Soviet Union disintegrated while China was emerging as a major military power, and Taiwan remained a taboo. This was underlined in the 1995 *Taiko* which concluded that a large-scale military conflict was highly unlikely following the end of the Cold War, but the possibility of small-scale military conflicts in the Surrounding Areas persisted.[12]

The absence of a clear geographical delineation within the evolving official discourse also suggests that Tokyo is cognisant of the potential for *any* danger to emerge *anywhere*. The challenge of reconciling emergent threats in an unfamiliar international setting perceived through the familiar geographical worldview provides

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[12] MOD, *Boei taiko kaisetsu* (1995). <wwwmod.go.jp/j/defense/policy/taikou/kaisetsu/index.html>. Accessed 26 June 2008.

a fertile ground upon which the Surrounding Areas narratives remain obscure. As Graham (2006: 5) argues,

> The elastic spatial definition of sea lanes also gave supporters of an extra-territorial defence role for the MSDF and Air Self Defence Force (ASDF) the flexibility to expand the geographical boundaries of Japan's self-defence zone without directly confronting the proscriptions against overseas dispatch and collective self-defence, which have constrained where, how and with whom the SDF can operate.

The official documents take for granted this vagueness as if the meanings and implications are self-evident. Graham (2006: 182) describes the New Guidelines as an exercise in ambiguity, observing that,

> in a departure from the original [1978 Guidelines], approximately 40 new 'rear-area' joint operational tasks applying to 'situations in area surrounding Japan' were deemed permissible under Japan's interpretation of the right of self-defence,

adding:

> Attempts to delimit the scope of the Guidelines geographically are dropped in favour of a vague formula to minimize controversy, whereby the Guidelines would apply 'in situations and areas surrounding Japan', and at the same time preserving ambiguity over whether Japan would assist US efforts to repel Chinese aggression across the [Taiwan] strait (212).

The 1995 *Taiko* maintains this vagueness. Sado Akihiro suggests that a changing international environment facilitated a transformation in Japan's international role. Crises in the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan Strait, along with 'new threats' emerging in the post-9/11 international environment, compelled Japan to forge closer co-operation with the US (Sado, 2007: 193). Within the MOD briefing document,[13] Asia remains a conceptual focus (Sec. I-1), along with geographical indicators such as Russia, the Far East, and the Korean Peninsula (Sec.II-3). There is also a familiar refrain that the end of the Cold War exposes ethnic and religious conflicts as destabilising factors in the international environment (Sec. II-3), acknowledging the need to countenance terrorist threats and to establish a legal

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[13] MOD, *Boei taiko kaisetsu.* <www.mod.go.jp/j/defense/policy/taikou/kaisetsu/index.html>. Accessed 26 June 2008.

framework to minimise the risks to peace and stability in the Surrounding Areas (Sec. II-3-3-2).

The June 1997 agreement between Tokyo and Washington reviewing the 1978 Guidelines[14] also remains silent on the geographical confines of Japan's military involvement, only to suggest that the US and Japan will 'gather information when the situation changes' (Sec. IV, Para. 2 [1]). Likewise, the New Guidelines do not provide a definition: they reiterate Surrounding Areas throughout the document as if they were self-evident. Section IV, Paragraph 1, casually states that the allies will 'respond to changing events' when 'an attack against Japan is imminent'. Here, the New Guidelines take for granted that the Surrounding Areas adequately address the new dangers for Japan. This is particularly striking given that, in Paragraph II, they refer to the MSA as the guiding principle, when the latter defines Japan's defence periphery to be the Far East (*kyokuto*)(Preamble of the MSA).[15] Collectively, both the 1995 *Taiko* and the New Guidelines represent Tokyo's anxieties within the changing psychological landscape.

The Far East, the Asia-Pacific, and Surrounding Areas

The narratives of Surrounding Areas are not only ambiguous, but in comparing and contrasting the MSA with the New Guidelines, the Far East as a regional signifier is now interspersed with other regional symbols—the Asia-Pacific and Surrounding Areas. The 1978 Guidelines considered invasion of Japan as a prominent threat, along with the wider security concerns in the Far East (Tanaka, 1997: 284). Two years before that, the 1976 *Taiko* reiterated Tokyo's realisation that 'while there seems to be a balance of power between the Soviet Union and China, there are new threats emanating from the Korean Peninsula, and that we need to be mindful of military developments in the neighbouring states' (Iriye, 1991: 165). But by the April 1996 summit, the Far East became just one of many signifiers denoting Japan's

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[14] MOD, *Nichibei boei-kyoryoku no tame no shishin no minaoshi ni kansuru chukan torimatome*, 7 June 1997. <www.mod.go.jp/j/defense/policy/anpo/sisin97/interim/interim.htm>. Accessed 28 September 2007.
[15] MOD, *Nippon-koku to Amerika gasshu-koku to no aida no sogo-kyoryoku oyobi anzen-shosho joyaku*, 23 June 1960. <www.mod.go.jp/j/library/treaty/anpo/anpo.html>. Accessed 22 January 2008.

vulnerability. In Section 3 titled 'The Regional Outlook', their joint declaration states that:

> Since the end of the Cold War, the possibility of global armed conflict has receded. The last few years have seen expanded political and security dialogue among countries in the region. Respect for democratic principles is growing. Prosperity is more widespread than at any time in history, and we are witnessing the emergence of an Asia-Pacific community. The Asia-Pacific region has become the most dynamic area of the globe.
> At the same time, instability and uncertainty persist in the region. Tensions continue on the Korean Peninsula. There are still heavy concentrations of military force, including nuclear arsenals. Unresolved territorial disputes, potential regional conflicts, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery all constitute sources of instability (Hook, *et al.*, 2001: 476-77).

Here, we can identify several geographical signifiers: the 'Asia-Pacific'; the 'countries in the region'; and the 'Korean Peninsula'. Simultaneously, the recognition that the developments in 'the weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery' imply that the 'sources of instability' are omnipresent, to the extent that a flexible delineation of Japan's defence perimeter is seen as an imperative.

This ambiguity survives within the narratives of New Guidelines and beyond, with Tokyo's sensitivities toward Beijing reflected in the triumvirate of under-defined regional designators. The 1997 edition of the *Defence of Japan* (JDA, 1997: 101-2) suggests that the 'Asia-Pacific is different from Europe' and 'for the security of our country, events in the surrounding areas need to be stable'. It refers to MSA as a tool for peace and stability in the Far East; but also points out that the alliance is crucial to 'maintaining peace and stability in areas surrounding our country' (145). The 1998 issue (JDA, 1998: 103) follows the basic framework, referring to Surrounding Areas as implying a situational concept that addresses security within the international environment, but specifically refers to the Far East within the context of MSA (104-5). But in reference to the 1996 *communiqué*, both the 1997 and 1998 editions revert to the Asia-Pacific as a regional signifier for US-Japan co-operation into the 21st century (JDA, 1997: 147; 1998, 106-7). Subsequent issues maintain this format, juggling the Far East, the Asia-Pacific, and Surrounding Areas to describe the various aspects of activities under the alliance. The 2002 edition (JDA, 2002: 84) refers to 'new dangers' (*aratana kiken*) in the wake of 9/11 attacks; but states that such dangers are present in the Asia-Pacific region as well (JDA, 2002: 89). Its discussion of Japan's enhanced

obligations under the New Guidelines points to the security of the Far East under Article 6 of the MSA; but argues that the close co-operation between Tokyo and Washington enhances the security of Surrounding Areas in order to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific (90-92).

Hence, the official narratives of Surrounding Areas denote ambiguities within Japan's own deliberations of its defence periphery: it is the Far East in reference to the MSA, but becomes the Asia-Pacific once the attention turns to enhanced co-operation. Yet, the addition of 'new dangers', not to mention further pressures from the US, necessitates a switch to the language of Surrounding Areas. Furthermore, this helps to obscure Tokyo's concern over the Taiwan Strait, *vis-à-vis* Beijing, presenting an additional incentive to frame future foreign policy considerations in a situational, rather than a geographical, language.

What Happens Determines the Location

Policy makers insist that Surrounding Areas are a situational term rather than a geographical one. The cohabitation of the Far East, the Asia-Pacific, and Surrounding Areas in the JDA/MOD documents suggests that geography matters and situational anxieties are prevalent. Yokota Koichi (1997: 52-53) argues that geographical ambiguities are not new: the February 1960 interpretation by MOFA insists that the term, Far East, is 'not proven geographically' but both Japan and the US are 'interested (*kanshin no mato*) in the areas surrounding Japan, including South Korea and areas under the jurisdiction of the Republic of China'. Yokota adds that the proliferation of the phrase, the Asia-Pacific, within the 1996 *Communiqué* implies an area wider than the Far East but distinct from Surrounding Areas (54-55). Hence, the more we try to define Surrounding Areas, let alone the Far East and the Asia-Pacific, the less clear they become.

Perhaps it is Japan's Asian anxieties that obscure the boundaries of various regional narratives. *East Asian Strategic Reviews* represent official willingness on the part of Japan to engage more pro-actively in its own defence as well as in the Surrounding Areas. The 2003 *Strategic Review* (NIDS, 2003: 2) argues that the so-called 'War on Terror' entails knowledge of information technology and finance, such

that 'victory depends on maintaining international co-operation'; and that the Cold War mentality of forward deployment (*zenpo yokushi taisei*) 'maintaining armed forces only in Western Europe and Northeast Asia is inadequate in responding to potentials for conflicts in various regions' (215-16). It then questions the nature of contemporary threats: *what kinds* of threats exist; *where* they are located; and *how* to anticipate them (218). The 2004 edition argues that the efficacy of the MSA improved following the passage of The Surrounding Areas Act of 2000[16] in guaranteeing co-operation in situations adversely affecting the peace and security of Japan and its surrounding areas (NIDS, 2004: 207).

Here again, the emergence of the situational term to symbolise Japan's threat perception and the concomitant need to show Tokyo's willingness to enhance its international involvement derives from an admixture of external- and domestic factors. The memories of the Gulf War fiasco made it an imperative to react proactively to international crises following 9/11. The terrorist attacks provided the extra momentum for Tokyo to reassert its international commitment. Shinoda Tomohito (2010: 26) notes that, already on 19 September 2001, the government outlined seven steps in response to the attacks, including its readiness to deploy naval vessels for reconnaissance, as well as preparing to facilitate humanitarian and economic assistance in the surrounding areas. Furthermore, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro visited Washington on 25 September, promising to co-operate with the US forces (*ibid.*). Shinoda (2010: 26) also states that the Diet passed a series of anti-terrorist legislations by 29 October, with the Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo suggesting that 'the memories of the Gulf War were vivid in the minds of the government and the ruling party. The Liberal Democratic Party [LDP] felt it necessary to pass these bills quickly'. Hence, the anti-terrorist legislations were in place by November 2001; and throughout 2003, Tokyo made it possible for the SDF to partake in the Iraq War, culminating in the deployment of Ground SDF to Iraq in January 2004 (Tanaka, 2010: 39). Thus, Japanese policy makers felt the pressure to respond positively this time round; and in doing so, the recalibration of Japan's defence perimeters became necessary as well.

The 2004 *Taiko* and Mid-term Defence Programme (*Chukibo*) reflect this evolving perception. *Taiko* identifies 9/11 as symptomatic of newly emerging threats

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[16] The Act—*Shuhen-jitai anzen-kakuho ho*—is designed to implement the New Guidelines.

(Sec. II); and while the degree of interdependence increased after the Cold War, uncertainties remain in the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan Strait (Sec. II-2). It argues that Japan has maintained minimum armaments in order to prevent power vacuum from developing in the Surrounding Areas (Sec. III-2-3). While the Korean Peninsula, Taiwan Strait, and the Asia-Pacific region are all mentioned, *Taiko* is nevertheless nebulous on geographical designators (Sec. III-3). The non-definition continues with the proclamation of Japan's 'geographical uniqueness' (*chiri-teki tokusei*) that demands flexible deployment of military capabilities (Sec. IV-1-1). *Chukibo* elaborates on the uncertainties, arguing that the new threats and fluid situations call for flexibility (Sec. I, Para. 1) in order 'to take note of developments in the surrounding areas' (Sec. III-2). The 2005 edition (NIDS, 2005: 2-3) reiterates the inherent uncertainties of the post-9/11 world and the potentials for instability within the Asia-Pacific region, suggesting that danger is everywhere. It further admits that the SDF, as they stand, are inadequate in tackling international terrorism (205-6), arguing that the previous geographical definition of Japan's vulnerability is a product of the Cold War; and that it is incapable of addressing the fluid nature of contemporary threats—the wide-ranging potential dangers ranging from North Korea to guerrilla warfare (207). The 2006 edition (NIDS, 2006: 8) argues that globalisation compels international co-operation in order to 'eliminate potential and underlying threats'; and while there is a diminished overall threat in the shape of territorial invasion, such consideration is superseded by 'new forms of threats' in 'multifarious situations' (220-26). The uncertainties of an unclear, yet omnipresent, dangers are exacerbated with the US plans to transform American troops around the world. The 2007 edition (NIDS, 2007: 6) illustrates this concern, stating that 'the Bush administration has not enunciated its East Asian strategy, but its basic approach is to tackle global security issues through alliances'. Chapter eight of the edition is titled, 'Responding to a Liquid Security Environment', reiterating Japan's concern over the US deployment and its implications in addressing the unknowns (243-45).

Strategists seem comfortable in emphasising the fluid nature of new threats represented through the concept of Surrounding Areas, while politicians and bureaucrats seem discomfited. Following the 1996 *Taiko*, Chief Cabinet Secretary Nosaka Koken stated that Surrounding Areas do not alter MOFA's February 1960 interpretation of the Far East (Koike and Maeda, 2007: 221). In response to MP Ikeda Katsuya's confusion over Surrounding Areas, Foreign Minister Ikeda Yukihiko stated

in February 1996 that the Far East is a term used in the MSA, while the Asia-Pacific encompasses 'wider areas surrounding the Far East', adding that Surrounding Areas 'are not interchangeable with particular states, but the concept needs to be assessed according to situations that might affect our peace and stability' (223-24). Responding to a similar question in April 1996, Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro refused to define the Asia-Pacific, saying it is 'counter-productive to determine which countries are included and which ones are excluded' (228-29). Moreover, Foreign Minister Komura Masahiko argued in January 1998 that the activities of the US troops are not restricted to the Far East, but conceivably include areas around the Far East; and whether or not areas surrounding Japan stretches beyond the Far East is beyond the purview of the MSA (239). With respect to Surrounding Areas, the Director-General of JDA, Kyuma Akio, reiterated Hashimoto's October 1997 assertion of the need to disaggregate them from the Far East. In November 1999, he stated that the New Guidelines include activities not mentioned within the MSA to the extent that Surrounding Areas need to be understood as a situational concept (242-43). In January of that year, Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo suggested that it is not possible to determine which geographical location is included in Surrounding Areas before an event emerges (243).

Furthermore, the North Korean nuclear issue makes it even more difficult to reconcile 'situational concept' with events with clear geographical focus. During the 1999 Diet session, the Director General of Defence Agency, Norota Hosei, was asked to define what is meant by the Surrounding Areas. Instead of providing a definition, Norota explained various manifestations, including: conflicts in Surrounding Areas; situations in which conflicts in Surrounding Areas might emerge; situations whereby conflicts have ceased, but instability remains in Surrounding Areas; and situations within which the UNSC determines that there are threats to peace and security that might influence Japan's safety (Tamaki, 2007: 217). According to Tamaki Kazuhiko (2007: 217-16), sanctions against North Korea, including visitation rights on vessels, might fall within the purview of Surrounding Areas, thereby forcing Tokyo to identify Pyongyang's provocation as an emergency—with obvious consequences. Thus, situational notion might be useful in addressing potential, domestic, opposition; but its ambiguity also carries inherent foreign policy risks for Japan.

Taiwan or Not to Taiwan

The cohabitation of the under-defined Far East, the Asia-Pacific, and Surrounding Areas within the official narratives represents the resilience of perceived threats from the Korean Peninsula and especially the Taiwan Strait. The former JDA Vice Minister, Akiyama Masahiro, recalls that the 'primary concern was the Korean Peninsula; and that Japan's role in forging global peace and stability was an abstract concept' at the time when the 1996 US-Japan *Communiqué* and the New Guidelines were negotiated.[17] *Asahi shimbun* notes that the Japanese government remains reluctant to admit whether the Taiwan Strait is part of the Surrounding Areas as a way to placate China.[18] This sensitivity dates back to the normalisation talks between Tokyo and Beijing in 1972 during which Taiwan became an issue. The then-Prime Minister, Tanaka Kakuei, stated in July 1972 that there is no reason to believe MSA is compromised as a result of normalisation, given that the Chinese government had decided not to raise significant issues with respect to Taiwan (Tanaka, 1997: 241-42; Mori, 2006: 73-74). The emergence of China adds to the uncertainties in which Taiwan remains a taboo, but the 'reality' of China as a potential threat in the region and beyond exacerbates Tokyo's anxieties. The 2005 edition of the *Defence of Japan* (JDA, 2005: 96) is noteworthy in its explicit mention of China and the Taiwan Strait. In addition to the usual constellation of signifiers, it takes note of Chinese submarines within Japanese territorial waters, urging Beijing to become a responsible member of the international community (137-38). The 2010 edition of the Whitepaper reiterates Tokyo's anxieties over an 'increasingly confident' China and that the 'uncertainties in their security and military policy-making process' are disconcerting (*kenen jiko*).[19] Such concerns compel MOD to encourage closer co-operation with the US on 'Chinese affairs' (*Chugoku josei*) and 'China-Taiwan relations' (*Chu-Tai kankei*) (JDA, 2005: 138) to address 'new threats and various events, as well as indeterminacies in the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait' (142). Anxieties are magnified by the multifaceted nature of Japan's perceptions of China. The 2009

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[17] Akiyama quoted in, 'Boei to kokusai-heiwa-kyoryoku to ampo gaiko-senryaku do kakuka', *Asahi shimbun* (Web edition), 20 March 2007. <www.asahi.com/strategy.0320a.html>.

[18] 'Shuhen jitai taio ni fushin to kitai', *Asahi shimbun* (Web edition), 17 April 2007.<www.asahi.com/strategy/0417a.html>. Accessed 17 June 2010.

[19] MOD, *Nippon no boei* (2010). <www.clearing.mod.go.jp/hakusho_data/2010/2010/index.html>. Accessed 20 September 2010.

Strategic Review (JDA, 2009: 260) identifies various 'implications'. First, the military implication centres on Tokyo's ambivalence towards China as *both* a potential stakeholder in the stability of the region, as well as a potential threat underpinned by 'their activities in surrounding areas' (*shuhen ni okeru katsudo*) (*ibid*.). The second implication is diplomatic: either China is a potential threat to Japan's diplomatic prestige, or it can engage in a 'healthy competition for regional stability' (*ibid*.). Finally, China is a potential 'transnational' partner (*ibid*.). They reflect traditional security concerns, while at the same time, Tokyo remains circumspect that China as a stakeholder might facilitate Japan in addressing new dangers beyond the Asia-Pacific region.

It is not surprising that Taiwan remains within Japan's gaze, along with the Korean Peninsula, as it involves balance of power between China and the US, and hence, Japan's alliance commitments. Yahuda (2011: 325) argues that Japan expressed concern during the 1995-96 Sino-American standoff given that the Chinese 'missiles [were] being directed to the north of Taiwan near the territorial waters of one of its most southern islets'. Despite the rhetorical conundrum in determining whether or not the Taiwan Strait falls within the purview of Surrounding Areas, Tokyo's concern with Chinese military spending became more paramount. Coupled with the Korean Peninsula, Japan felt that 'the Chinese side appeared to be pressing for the long-term withdrawal of American forces from Japan without the Chinese acknowledging that the Japanese had any legitimate security needs of their own' (326). For Tokyo, the dangers were evident in the Taiwan Strait; but the question was whether this warranted labelling as Surrounding Areas.

This ambivalence translates into an official muddle. An LDP delegation to China, led by Secretary General, Kato Koichi, reassured the hosts in July 1997 that the Surrounding Areas refer to the Korean Peninsula but not Taiwan. However, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kajiyama rebuked Kato, insisting that there is 'no question that the Korean Peninsula remains our primary concern, but it is inappropriate to rule out other places' (Shimoda, 2006: 83). Kajiyama 'clarified' that Taiwan is, indeed, included, provoking an uproar from Beijing (*ibid*.). However, a MOFA official, Takano Toshiyuki, told the Diet Foreign Affairs Committee in May 1998 that Surrounding Areas do not cover areas beyond the Far East as defined within the MSA (Koike and Maeda, 2007: 248). This implied that Surrounding Areas are, indeed, a geographical concept (Shimoda, 2006: 84)—something vehemently denied by Kyuma,

arguing that it is a 'mistake' to suggest that Surrounding Areas are geographical (Shimoda, 2006: 84; Koike and Maeda, 2007: 248-49). The transition from 'where' to 'what' had been fraught with difficulties; and the sensitivities toward China add to the sense of creeping dangers. Indeed, the 2009 *Strategic Review* (NIDS, 2009: 231) recognises that Japan still operates neither in a 'normal' (*heiji*) or 'emergency' (*yuji*) situation, but within an 'intermediate realm' (*chukan ryoiki*).

The official ambiguity of Surrounding Areas represents Tokyo that is in between change and continuity. On the one hand, the change is easier to detect. The regional designation—whether be it the Far East or the Asia-Pacific—was augmented by an even more ambiguous, but equally ambitious, situational term. The new delineation provides Japan with a justification to send troops to areas beyond the purview of its previous defence periphery, citing unknowable, yet omnipresent, danger that satisfies Japan's urge to become a responsible member of the international community. On the other hand, the continuity exposes itself in the form of resilient threat perception emanating from the Korean Peninsula and China, as well as a sense of vulnerability deriving from the need to secure SLOCs.[20] China's nervousness over Taiwan remains a reality for Japanese foreign policy; but it provides an opportunity for the Surrounding Areas narrative to enhance its potency as a foreign policy signifier. Hence, it denotes a recalibration, rather than a re-definition, of Japan's Asia imaginary.

Prospects for Further Recalibration?

The landslide victory by the DPJ in the August 2009 general election provides an interesting moment of reflection. It is still premature to assess whether the new government will instigate fundamental changes to the dominant narratives of Japanese threat perception; or whether the process of recalibration will continue. Leif-Eric Easley *et al*. (2010) argue that there are potentials for change; but in the short- to intermediate term, Japanese foreign policy under the DPJ should not transform dramatically. On the one hand, the DPJ election Manifesto calls for more 'equal' partnership with the US (*kinmitsu de taito na Nichibei domei*), pledging to proactively

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[20] For Japan's continuing sense of vulnerability with respect to the security of SLOCs and piracy in Southeast Asia, see Graham, 2006: ch. 7; Acharya, 2001: 75.

(*sekkyoku-tekin ni*) carry out its responsibilities (Paragraph 51).[21] This is striking, given that the Party was opposed to extending refuelling activities in the Indian Ocean beyond the January 2010 deadline, as well as its earlier intention of renegotiating the relocation of US Marines from Okinawa. On the other hand, the Party seeks to maintain international contribution, including combating piracy (Paragraph 54), albeit without a clear suggestion of how this is to be accomplished. Indeed, the DPJ only mentions that it will 'consider' subsequent policy options in due course.[22]

Despite DPJ's promise to create a more equal partnership with the US, the Party suggests that the MSA still forms the basis of Japanese security policy and forms the linchpin of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.[23] While in opposition, the Party proclaimed its unease over the New Guidelines, pointing out that they equate to constitutional amendment by stealth in widening the constitutional reinterpretation, enabling forward deployment of SDF without the United Nations mandate.[24] Yet, it also suggests that the DPJ is not complacent in addressing exigencies (*Nippon yuji*); but rather it is making sure that events in Surrounding Areas (*shuhen jitai*) be considered in relation to Japan's policy of exclusive defence (*senshu boei*).[25] Hence, the MSA remains the basis for DPJ's foreign policy as well, refraining from revoking the New Guidelines for the time being.

The geographical signifiers of Japan's defence periphery remain vague, although the Party seems to redefine Surrounding Areas into something more concrete. While it suggests remaining within the framework of MSA, it nevertheless points out the importance of maintaining peace and security in the Far East and *areas around* the Far East (*kyokuto oyobi kyokuto shuhen no chiiki*)—the kind of linguistic gymnastics reminiscent of the muddle in the mid-1990s.[26] Superficially, this indicates an implicit move away from a situational definition back into a more specific, geographical, delineation. However, the vagueness remains to the extent that the DPJ is equally aware of new dangers facing Japan. Coupled with the Party's suggestion that the Coast Guard, rather than the MSDF, should be involved in efforts to combat piracy in

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[21] DPJ Manifesto. <www.dpj.or.jp/special/manifesto2009/txt/manifesto2009.txt>. Accessed 2 September 2009.

[22] *Nihon keizai shimbun* (Web edition), 2 September 2009. <www. nikkei.co.jp/senkyo/2009shuin/elecnews/20090902AS350200L02092009.html>. Accessed 9 September 2009.

[23] DPJ, 17 February 2009. <www.dpj.or.jp/news/?num=15257>. Accessed 2 September 2009.

[24] DPJ, 26 April 1999. <www.dpj.or.jp/news/?num=1-836>. Accessed 2 September 2009.

[25] DPJ, 26 April 1999. <www.dpj.or.jp/news/?num=1-836>. Accessed 2 September 2009.

[26] DPJ, 28 October 1998. <www.dpj.or.jp/news/?num=10834>. Accessed 2 September 2009.

the Indian Ocean,[27] it seems that the DPJ agrees with the LDP that Tokyo should enhance its international contribution. Easley *et al*. (2010: 6) note that,

> The vast majority of DPJ members consider the US-Japan alliance an essential stabilizer in the Asia-Pacific region but are reluctant to work with the United States in ways that involve dispatching the Japanese Self-Denfense Forces (JSDF) overseas…..The DPJ's 'Basic Policy' puts the alliance with the Untied States at the center of Japan's security policy, and other major policy statements also endorse the alliance.

Even on the eve of the Upper House election in July 2010, the DPJ Manifesto repeats its pledge to forge a closer, yet equal, partnership with the US. As for Okinawa, the U-turn by the Hatoyama cabinet is reflected in the ambiguous phrase in referring to the Futenma airbase, stating that 'we will work towards alleviating the burden borne by Okinawa in accordance with the bilateral agreement' (DPJ, 2010: 11). As it is expected from a largely centre-left party, the DPJ intends to uphold the principles of pacifism (12).

Superficially, the difference between the new DPJ government and its LDP predecessor lies in the determination of the circumstances under which the SDF can be deployed for national security, as well as maintaining Japan's international prestige. Indeed, the June 2011 US-Japan *Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee* reiterates the familiar set of themes, ranging from North Korea (p. 3); calling for China to play a 'responsible and constructive role in regional stability and prosperity' (p. 4); as well as maintaining 'safety and security of the maritime domain' (p. 5).[28] Given that the DPJ does not reject MSA, but instead, proposes to enhance Japan's role in it, the issue of how far the SDF can and should be utilised will remain contested. However, given the DPJ's stress on the MSA as the basis for Japanese foreign and security policies, along with its reiteration of 'peace and stability', references to pacifism remain intact, suggesting that future debates will centre on *how*, not *whether*, Japan should maintain its international role.

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[27] DPJ, 28 January 2009. <www.dpj.or.jp/news/?num=15092>. Accessed 2 September 2009.
[28] It is noteworthy that the Joint Statement mentions that Tokyo and Washington 'welcome India as a strong and enduring Asia-Pacific partner' (p. 5). This seems to be a clear indication that both the US and Japan identify China as a contemporary source of danger. See *Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee: Towards a Deeper and Broader US-Japan Alliance: Building on 50 Years of Partnership*. 21 June 2011.

Conclusion

Ambiguities inherent within the official narratives of Surrounding Areas fulfil the dual purpose for Japanese policy makers seeking to improve Tokyo's international reputation by rationalising its involvement in the so-called 'War on Terror', while simultaneously re-discovering the newly emergent sources of danger that are present but not fully realisable. In one respect, this process might be understood as Japan acquiescing to the US pressure in augmenting its own military involvement in the 'War on Terror' and the security of the Asia-Pacific in general. To that extent, the elaboration of Surrounding Areas into a situational term simply expands the scope of Far East as Japan's defence perimeter in order to satisfy the alliance partner. Indeed, the new DPJ government objects to this, which explains its assertion that the Party seeks 'equal partnership' with the US instead. Yet, a detailed reading of the Surrounding Areas narratives suggests that there is a cohabitation of Japan's resilient image of Asia as a potentially dangerous neighbourhood, on the one hand; with Tokyo's perceived imperative to live up to its self-proclaimed role as a pacifist state willing to take initiatives in promoting interdependence, on the other (Tamaki, 2010: ch. 3). Perhaps the previous DPJ government's dithering over Futenma Air Base is one illustration of the new recalibration process.

The cohabitation of resilient danger and the ever-changing international environment attests to the reification of Asia within Japan's identity construction. Whether be it Yamagata's delineation of the cordon of sovereignty or interest; or the anxiety over the security of SLOC both before and after the War, they all converge on one point: that Asia has always been a source of danger for Japanese existence.[29] Moreover, Tokyo's gaze upon the post-Cold War—and post-9/11—international environment suggests that danger is now 'everywhere' to the extent that Asia as a notional signifier and as a source of danger is consolidated into a new narrative of anxiety. This shows that the reconstruction of Japanese Self goes hand in hand with the re-assessment of threat; and that the urge to re-define and redress danger is very much an integral part of identity reconstruction. Needless to say, the change is incremental rather than drastic; but the subtlety is characteristic of how the recalibration of threat perception based on a familiar frame of reference takes place. It

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[29] For detailed discussions on Asia as a historical source of insecurity for Japan, see Duus (1995); Miyoshi (1991); Maruyama (1961); and Graham (2006).

is a process based on addressing the contemporary worldview informed through a historically constructed regional imaginary.

The significance of Surrounding Areas as an ambiguity indicates that Asia is still very much a dynamic region that necessitates flexibility and entails contingency; and even the DPJ's designation of the Far East and *areas around* the Far East attest to this. Tokyo's emerging sense of threat beyond the familiar confines of the Asia-Pacific region provides ample source of anxieties for Japan. Obscuring the regional term into a situational signifier needs to be understood as a recalibration of Japan's Asian existence whereby Japan seeks to resolve this slippage. As such, Tokyo's penchant for the pacifist narrative remains robust in spite of the alarm within the neighbouring capitals. The seeming contradiction between this and Japan's enhanced role in the so-called 'War on Terror' is representative of this regional dynamism. This implies that the challenges ahead for Japanese policy makers to tread a fine line between maintaining its international profile, on the one hand; and placating sceptical Asian governments, on the other, are formidable. Tokyo is, and will be, recalibrating its threat perception no matter who is in charge of the country.

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