U. S.-Japan Relations: Perspectives from Western Japan and Implications for American Policy*

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Abstract

This paper discusses a sampling of perspectives from western Japan on the current state of U. S.- Japan relations, with particular attention to the security alliance, Japan's international role, economic issues, domestic politics, and the media, and their attendant implications for U. S. policy toward Japan.

Keywords : U. S.-Japan relations, international relations, U. S.-Japan security treaty, U. S. foreign policy

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The recently celebrated (September 8, 2001) anniversary of the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U. S.-Japan Security Treaty provides an opportune time to reflect on the current status of U. S.-Japan relations, and to speculate about their future direction. Over the course of the past half-century, Japan and the United States have forged a strong partnership based on a multitude of common ideals and goals: Asia-Pacific stability, the preservation and promotion of political and economic freedoms, support for human rights and democratic institutions, and economic prosperity. Today the United States and Japan stand as two of the world's foremost powers, inextricably linked in a complex web of interdependent interests, and both parties also recognize the realpolitik imperative of maintaining good relations. As in any partnership, U. S.-Japan relations are continuously evolving. At this point in history both countries are also experiencing significant internal change. Japan in particular appears to be undergoing major political, social and economic transitions, and these domestic changes will inevitably influence the conduct of its international affairs. With this in mind, it is the intent of this paper to discuss a sampling of perspectives from western Japan on the current state of U. S.-Japan relations, with particular attention to a few broad aspects (the security alliance, Japan's international role, economic issues, domestic politics, and media image), and their attendant implications for U. S. policy toward Japan.

Rather than considering conventionally Tokyo-centric viewpoints, this author queried a cross-section of opinion leaders in western Japan (Osaka, Kobe, and Kyoto areas, collectively called the Kansai area, as well as Hiroshima) to garner non-Tokyo perspectives. As anyone who has lived in or worked with Japan knows, Tokyo is the indisputable center of the infamous "iron triangle" of Japanese politics, business, and bureaucracy which has traditionally controlled the policy formulation process. Like Washington, Tokyo leaders have sometimes been accused of being oblivious to ideas and concerns "beyond the beltway", or outside the Tokyo megalopolis, and there has been growing criticism that the Tokyo-centered policy apparatus is constrained by its incestuous pursuit of vested interests[1]. What is more, Kansai observers report a heightened sense of political alienation due to the relative lack of representation in the government. Much of the actual work of governance is carried out by career bureaucrats in the respective ministries, who consequently wield significant political power.

1) For a more detailed discussion of the symbiotic relationship between Japanese business, politics and bureaucracy, see Michael H. Armacost, *Friends or Rivals?* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1996) p. 208.

Most of these top officials are drawn from Tokyo's elite universities, leaving Japanese from other regions feeling somewhat excluded from the virtual Tokyo monopoly of the ministries.

Western Japan, including the Kansai area, presents a good representative microcosm of the Japan outside of Tokyo: with about 20% of the country's population and the world's eighth largest economy, Kansai encompasses both large urban centers as well as rural agricultural areas, manufacturing and industrial enterprises as well as distinguished academic and cultural institutions. As the pre-war commercial center of Japan, Osaka in particular has a long tradition of trade and commerce, and locals pride themselves on their business acumen, pragmatism and resourcefulness. Commerce became so predominant in the Osaka culture that the traditional greeting in the local dialect (Osaka-ben) is "How's business? (moukari-makka?)". Whereas Tokyo residents have a reputation for being reserved, indirect and sophisticated, Kansai people have been characterized as candid, straightforward and down-to earth. Thus western Japan provides an ideal window through which to glimpse a view of local perspectives, and it is this vantage point that is reflected herein.

The U. S.-Japan Security Alliance

More than any other facet of the relationship, to many Japanese the security alliance is the aspect which most defines U. S.-Japan relations. Even before the events of September 11 forced world powers to choose allegiance in the war against terrorism, there had been a long-simmering debate in Japan over the future of the security alliance with the United States. Generally speaking, my interlocutors felt that the majority of Japanese agree that the alliance has served them well. With a "Peace Constitution" that prohibits the development of an offensive military, and under the protection of the U. S. nuclear umbrella, Japan has developed from a war-ravaged nation into the world's second largest economy. Most Japanese, and particularly the older generation, appreciate the significance of the alliance in maintaining stability in the Asia-Pacific region over the past 50 years, while also enabling Japan to focus on rapidly developing its economic prosperity[2]. And yet observers report a decided ambivalence, an uneasy dissatisfaction

2) This begrudging acceptance of the U. S. security role is widespread in Asia. Chong Guan and See Sung Tan note that "Many Europeans - and, needless to say, East Asians - still regard the U. S. role as salient to the existing international order... Complaints of U. S. roguishness or trigger-happy behavior aside, there remains the strong if painful awareness that, if not for the existing security framework provided by bilateral and

with the status quo. In a country where consensus is highly regarded and change is approached with cautious deliberation, debate seems to begin at the edges and nibble its way to the centrist mainstream of public opinion. What began as emotional and strident criticism of the alliance at the far poles of the Japanese political spectrum is now shaping into a more modulated, serious discourse on the future of Japan's security policy.

On the left end of the political spectrum, in western Japan as well as nationwide, there has long been a small but significant minority that advocates a policy of "neutral pacifism" for Japan. Grounded in an ideological abhorrence of war and redoubled by Japan's experience in the Second World War, this movement supports the total rejection of any military role or alliance for Japan. Proponents, most notably from the Social Democratic Party (Shakai Minshuto), include a sizeable following of middle-aged women and also a surprising number of teachers, from the elementary through university levels. (Some Kansai residents even expressed concern that teachers were unduly influencing impressionable Japanese schoolchildren with their Leftist philosophies.) The pacifists envision a nation that embraces peace and seizes the high ground of neutrality to avoid potential military conflict. They would like Japan to serve as a force for peace in the world and a model for other countries to follow. Some factions go so far as to assert that the very existence of the Self Defense Forces (SDF), created in 1954. is itself a violation of the constitutional ban on the maintenance of forces[3].

At the local level, a vocal minority of Kobe residents view security relations with the U. S. through the perspective of the 1975 Kobe Declaration, which provides that any military ships calling at Kobe ports must assert that they are not carrying nuclear weapons. Although this is intended as an anti-nuclear measure, it has come to be regarded as anti-American because U. S. ships as a matter of policy decline to either confirm or deny their non-nuclear status (even if they are indeed non-nuclear) and thus have not been welcome at the port of Kobe. Several foreign affairs experts faulted the Japanese central government for failing to abide by the terms of its bilateral agreement

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multilateral alliance commitments borne by the United States, the world could, or perhaps would, be a more perilous place." See Chong Guan and See Sung Tan, "The Keystone of World Order", The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Summer 2001), p. 99.

3) Chapter II, Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution reads:

"Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of the belligerency of the state will not be recognized."

and allowing municipal regulations to override national treaty obligations. While many Kobe residents view the Declaration as passé, in the recent (October, 2001) Kobe mayoral election, none of the candidates dared to oppose the Kobe Declaration for fear of losing political support from the crucial socialist and communist party bases. Meanwhile, down the coast at the port of Osaka, when the U. S. S. Vincennes called for a routine port visit in November, 2001, it was met by about one hundred well-organized protesters who paraded quietly on the dock for the requisite time before laying down their placards and joining the nearly 12,000 other locals who enjoyed a guided tour of the aegis-class vessel. Further down the coast, Hiroshima's tragic history has spawned a strong international peace movement with that city as its symbolic center. Yet, while acknowledging the important contributions of the peace organizations, forward-looking leaders in Hiroshima are anxious to move beyond the victim mentality of the anti-nuclear movement that would base Japan's international policy on that one-dimensional issue. Many foreign affairs experts in western Japan dismiss neutral pacifism as an unrealistic ideal for a modern nation, but admit that the Japanese have a general sympathy for pacific sentiment that cannot be discounted since it has a significant influence in tempering the security debate.

At the other political extreme, an even smaller minority of right-wing conservatives, such as the controversial, outspoken governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara, favors the outright abandonment of the U. S.-Japan security alliance and the rapid development of a state-of the-art military whereby Japan could declare independence from American security dominance. Harshly critical of what they perceive as Japan's postwar subservience to U. S. military, economic and political interests, they urge the country's leaders to emerge from the shadow of their superpower ally and propel Japan to its rightful position among the global powers. These are the same conservative academics and politicians who caused a stir of controversy over their attempts to reinterpret Japanese history in school textbooks. Such ultra-nationalism not only alienates Japanese moderates who fear a resurgence of right-wing militarism, but also alarms Japan's Asian neighbors who suffered at the hands of the Japanese imperial army. Moderate politicians in western Japan believe that right-wing nationalism does not have a strong appeal among the populace at present, but worry that a further deterioration of domestic economic conditions could leave some elements of Japanese society vulnerable to exploitation by extremist groups.

Western Japan commentators agree that the pragmatic majority of Japanese support the continuation of the security alliance with the United States as the best possible arrangement, given Japan's own constraints as well as the current world situation. From a practical standpoint, an economically strapped Japan can ill afford to take on the enormous expense of developing a completely self-sufficient military force equipped with advanced weapon systems, much of which would be unnecessarily redundant with American assets. Moreover, Article 9 of the Japanese constitution presents a self-imposed legal constraint against the formation of a true military force. While sensitive to the accusation that Japan is shirking its international security responsibilities by "hiding" behind the peace constitution, my interlocutors maintained that popular attitudes toward the constitution are complex. The question of whether or not the constitution should be amended has long been debated but still remains highly controversial. Many Japanese, particularly the older generation, have a strong emotional attachment to the constitution, which served as the foundation for the modern Japanese state, and which has come to be associated with the political stability and prosperity the country has enjoyed over the past 50 years. To them, the constitution has acquired a virtual sacred cow stature and there seems to be a visceral aversion to any form of alteration or amendment. But the younger generation does not share this emotional attachment to the constitution, and is much more receptive to the prospect of change.

Undeterred by the technical limitations of the constitution, the Japanese government has sometimes applied a very broad interpretation of Article 9 to suit its policy exigencies. (Although this tactic was rejected by the Diet in responding to the September 11 crisis, instead passing the separate "Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law".) There have been locally based proposals to officially codify a liberal interpretation of Article 9 that would formalize the right to collective self-defense and give the government broader powers in dispatching the SDF, but some opponents argue that the constitutional ambiguity actually allows greater flexibility to respond to unforeseen emergencies. Observers in western Japan note that the constitutional debate has intensified since the events of September 11. The Japanese public, including most Kansai residents, were strongly supportive of the government's decision to dispatch Japanese self-defense forces (still within the confines of the constitution) to provide rear guard support for the U. S.- led anti-terrorist actions in Afghanistan. Opinion leaders welcome the public debate on crucial security issues as healthy and long-overdue, hoping it will

lead to a less polemical, more rational and constructive discussion of the issues and eventual informed action, perhaps even a public referendum on the issue of constitutional reform[4].

Exasperated by the vagaries of constitutional interpretation, a growing number of moderate realists and progressive thinkers (both in western Japan and countrywide) advocate a stronger role for Japan within the context of the existing security alliance with the United States. Many of them would like to see the constitution eventually changed to give Japan the unfettered ability to participate fully in global security issues[5]. In the meantime, unless and until the Japanese public is ready to accept constitutional reform, they argue that even within the constraints of Article 9 much can be done to improve the alliance and strengthen Japan's security posture. According to this view, first and foremost, Japan should insist on a more equal partnership with the United States and correct the real and perceived imbalances in the alliance. Acknowledging widespread criticism that the alliance has been dominated by American interests, progressive moderates (for want of a better label) charge the Japanese government with passively acquiescing to a subordinate role it has long since outgrown. Rather than actively assuming a greater share of the security burden, Japan has tried (with increasingly disappointing results)[6] to buy off its responsibilities by resorting to "checkbook diplomacy." Instead, they believe Japan should develop a clear international policy based on its own national interests, and vigorously assert those interests within the U. S.-Japan security alliance.

Proponents of this view point to concrete measures that Japan can immediately undertake to improve existing security arrangements. A more serious, higher level focus

4) The U. S. Government has studiously avoided taking a position on this issue. In a January 1, 2002 interview with The Japan Times, U. S. Ambassador to Japan Howard H. Baker, Jr. said, "The question of collective defense is one that Japan must address. It is not appropriate for me to comment, nor for the U. S. government to try to advise Japan on how it conducts itself in that field, given the requirements of the Japanese constitution."

5) An INSS Special Report did not avoid taking a strong position on this issue: "Japan's prohibition against collective self-defense is a constraint on alliance cooperation. Lifting this prohibition would allow for closer and more efficient security cooperation. This is a decision that only the Japanese people can make. The United States has respected the domestic decisions that form the character of Japanese security policies and should continue to do so. But Washington must make clear that it welcomes a Japan that is willing to make a greater contribution and to become a more equal alliance partner." Richard L. Armitage et al, *The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership*, (Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, October, 2000) Subsequently known simply as "the Armitage Report," this report gained significance when several of the authors were appointed to high level positions at the NSC, State, and Defense Departments in the new Bush Administration.

6) Japanese officials and academics are still smarting from western criticism that Japan's $13 billion contribution to the 1990 Gulf War effort was "too little, too late."

is needed to expedite implementation of the 1997 revised Guidelines for U. S.-Japan Defense Cooperation and the 1996 Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) agreement, both of which include worthy revisions that have been progressing slowly. A particularly important provision of the SACO agreement is a critical review of the number and distribution of U. S. forces in Japan, which most Japanese believe is too large, especially as currently concentrated in the Okinawa area. Residents of western Japan (and other areas where there are no U. S. military facilities) recognize the strategic importance of the American bases but have ambivalent feelings of relief at not hosting a base "in their backyard" and guilt over Okinawa's disproportionate burden (75%) of bases. Pundits in western Japan maintain that the efficient coordination of U. S. forces and Japanese Self Defense Forces can be greatly improved by clarifying respective roles and responsibilities, increasing joint planning, training and operations exercises, rationalizing and integrating functions to eliminate redundancies, formalizing emergency response procedures, and improving intelligence sharing. What is more, all of these measures should be undertaken with a view toward Japan's long-term national interests and preparation for possible transition to a more independent defense capability. In that regard, progressives would also urge Japan to give more consideration to the multilateral implications of the security alliance, leaving open the possibility of future regional security agreements.

Japan's International Role

There was general consensus among my Kansai interlocutors that Japan can and should play a stronger role in the international arena. They report that Japanese people increasingly recognize that, as a major world power, Japan should not limit its international contributions to the economic sphere alone, and there is growing public support for more active and expanded participation in global issues, international organizations, NGOs, and multilateral groups[7]. Political critics of all stripes call for the government to develop and articulate a pragmatic international policy without undue influence from Washington. The big question seems to be whether Japan can play a world role commensurate with its economic power while still maintaining a national policy of peaceful

7) See Makoto Iokibe (Professor of Diplomatic History, Kobe University) on the role of Japan as a "global civilian power" in "Japan After the Cold War" (The Japan Center for International Exchange [2002] jcie.or.jp/thinknet/insights/iokibe.html)

neutrality.

The majority of Japanese, both in western Japan and nationwide, would like to see Japan succeed in its bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. They feel it would enhance their international prestige, bolster national pride, and earn Japan deserved recognition as a leader of the world community. The United States also supports Japan's bid for UNSC permanent membership. After all, Japan contributes 20.6% of the UN budget, more than any other member nation except the United States. But some academics expressed concern that many Japanese do not fully realize the implications of Security Council membership. A permanent member vote is crucial to the decision-making process, and Japan would be obliged to make serious judgments that might affect the outcome of major world events. Japan would no longer be able to remain passively above the fray, and to criticize Security Council decisions from the sidelines, but would be an integral part of the process. In so doing, Japan might also incur the antagonism of some of the member nations. Reconciling Security Council obligations with its constitutional restraints on the use of force would also pose serious policy challenges for Japan[8], not least in the area of PKO participation. In fact, a UNSC seat might have a greater impact on Japan than on the UN itself. Kansai commentators note that the Japanese government is eager to obtain permanent Security Council member status, and believe there are some important considerations for the United Nations as a whole. If admitted, Japan would be the first non-nuclear power to gain a permanent seat on the Security Council. This would be a significant symbol of the United Nations' renewed emphasis on peaceful policies for the 21st century. Some progressives would like to see Japan use its position on the council to work for reform of the veto-voting system. In their view, the international situation has changed dramatically since the establishment of the United Nations, and the veto system has rendered the UN increasingly dysfunctional as key members have unilaterally blocked UN action on important issues[9]. While the long-established permanent members are unlikely to

8) Prime Minister Koizumi is quite clear on this subject: "...the five permanent members of the Security Council take it for granted that... resorting to threats of the use of force or the use of force can be tolerated as a means of resolving international conflicts in some cases. Japan is different. Should there be an international dispute, Japan could not support the threat of or use of force if it were a member of the Security Council. Japan can only make its contributions in non-military areas. It is with that clear understanding that I believe Japan should raise its hand and say it wants to become a member of the Security Council." From an interview published in the Fall, 2001 issue of *Churo Koron*, as quoted in *New Perspective Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Fall 2001).

9) As an example of the misuse of the veto, one foreign affairs expert cited the UN Security Council vote on

initiate voting reform, Japan could provide a fresh and objective reform impetus that would better represent the interests of the majority general membership.

In other areas, political observers in western Japan were pleased to note that the government is drafting important changes to the regulations governing participation of Japanese self-defense forces in UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs). In accordance with the constitution, the current provisions set strict conditions aimed at precluding the use of weapons, and these will be revised to give Japan more flexibility to participate in PKOs. Japan is already sending forces to East Timor as part of the UN force there, and that is seen as a step in the right direction. Moreover, polls indicate that a majority of Japanese support increased participation of the SDF in UN and other multilateral operations provided it is within the existing confines of the constitution. While some isolationist elements argue that Japan should shun international involvement and focus on domestic issues, most academics and journalists would like to see Japan contribute more to international policy debate and conflict resolution. As an impartial observer, Japan could be a particularly effective mediator in international conflicts. They would especially like to see Japan play a stronger leadership role in East Asia to help ease regional tensions, support fledgling democracies, foster multilateral cooperation, and use its diplomatic power and prestige to promote regional interests.

Several university professors commented that the younger generation of Japanese are more outward looking and have a much greater interest in and curiosity about other countries than the older generation (although they did note that some students are woefully ignorant about world history)[10]. Young Japanese (especially young women) are traveling in greater numbers than ever before, they have more exposure to foreign cultures and ideas, and tend to be more realistic about international relations. On the other hand, political pundits criticized most Japanese politicians as being weak in their knowledge of foreign affairs and neglecting this important area to curry favor with voters on domestic issues.

In terms of foreign economic assistance, Japan is already the world's largest donor, contributing more than $13 billion dollars in overseas development assistance (ODA) in 2000, according to Foreign Ministry statistics. At the January 2002 donor conference to

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the use of UN PKO forces for Macedonia, which China vetoed because that country had extended diplomatic recognition to Taiwan.

10) One professor at a commercial college in Kyoto lamented that some of her students were not even aware that Japan had gone to war with the United States.

raise money for reconstruction of Afghanistan, Japan pledged $500 million over the next 2-1/2 years, second only to the United States. Foreign affairs scholars agree that Japan should continue its humanitarian assistance programs and nation-building efforts, and view ODA as an important foreign policy tool. But they feel that the international community has not sufficiently recognized Japan's aid contributions. Moreover, they emphasize that Japan should develop a coherent strategy for dispensing its foreign assistance programs, specifying certain conditions for the aid and more closely monitor assistance to avoid corruption and ensure maximum efficiency[11]. Economists also recommend that Japan place greater focus on improvements in global and humanitarian conditions that can be effected through research and development in agriculture and food sciences, biotechnology, health and medicine, and other high-tech applications. Recently, as Japan's own economic conditions steadily decline, Japanese taxpayers increasingly feel that scarce budget resources should be devoted to domestic problems rather than to shoring up developing economies that compete with their own[12]. Such sentiments are particularly strong in the Kansai area, which has been especially hard hit by the economic recession.

Economic Issues

According to some Kansai economists, U. S.-Japan relations in the recent past have been directly related to the strength of the U. S. economy. If the American economy was healthy, then Japan enjoyed smooth relations with the United States; but if the United States was experiencing economic problems, those problems gave rise to tension in the relationship. Japan often seemed to be reacting to issues raised by the United States, and the American government, particularly under the Clinton administration, seemed to be fixated on the trade imbalance. During the 80's, economic and commercial issues dominated the relationship, and high profile, sometimes protracted trade negotiations led to increased friction between the two countries. Once the U. S. economy gained momentum in the 90's, and the Japanese economy faltered by comparison, the

11) The recent (February, 2002) scandal over Diet member Suzuki Muneo's alleged interference in ODA project decisions has already focused Japanese public opinion on this area.

12) A recent article from the *Asahi Shimbun* cited China as an example: "China has borne the brunt of recent (aid) reductions. Japanese lawmakers have found it increasingly difficult to explain to voters why their government should dole out billions in aid to a country whose economy is growing 7 percent a year and that is churning out low-cost exports that squeeze Japanese producers." Akiko Kashiwagi and Clay Chandler, "Financial Ills Dent Japan's Readiness to Give Aid", *Asahi Shimbun*, February 2, 2002, p. 5.

friction decreased despite the continued high trade imbalance. Especially after September 11, the United States is less focused, for now, on international trade issues, and U. S.-Japan relations have regained a greater sense of balance and global cooperation.

Still, economic observers report some residual resentment of what is viewed as excessive U. S. pressure on the Japanese to mold their economic policy to suit U. S. interests[13]. A small minority claim that Japan is a casualty of the global standards imposed by the United States, a criticism more frequently heard in the developing world. Some economists go so far as to attribute current Japanese economic problems to the 1980's American policy of encouraging increased Japanese domestic spending and consumption in order to bring down the trade imbalance. When the Japanese government began funding large public works projects, there was a short-term boost to the economy, but the government funding only exacerbated the inefficient practices of the Japanese business sector. (Other experts point out that the Japanese government took the easy route by injecting large amounts of money into the economy through public spending, but neglected more long-term and difficult but effective approaches such as deregulation, financial system reform, and opening markets to foreign and domestic competition.) Now the Koizumi government is faced with the challenge of eliminating and reforming these huge quasi-official projects that have been draining the public coffers and have left the country dotted with superhighways and bridges to nowhere[14].

From a local perspective, the depressed economy is the single most important issue to voters. The Kansai area has been hit even harder than Tokyo by the recession. Whereas western Japan used to boast a thriving network of small and medium-sized enterprises, many of these small businesses have been unable to weather the economic storm. Large companies had already pulled out in the 90's, eliminating branch offices and centralizing their operations in the capital. Heavy industries have decreased, there

13) The U. S. government seems to have learned from this criticism. Officials in the current Bush administration, while generally supportive of Koizumi's reforms, have avoided (at least publicly) offering specific advice or solutions to Japan's economic problems. In a February 2001 interview with the New York Times, U. S. Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill said, "Japan will no longer get Clinton-like lectures about how to reverse its decade-long economic decline."

14) Yoichi Funabashi maintains that "No serious attempt has been made so far to reduce accumulating public debt; instead, budgetary stimulus has been used as a desperate means to bring about economic recovery... The official justification for accumulating public debt and the government's endless bond-issuing practices is that economic recovery depends on massive injections of money. The truth is that these enormous expenditures conveniently serve the pork-barrel politics of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), as they keep thousands of construction companies and more than six million employees engaged in government-funded public works projects." See Yoichi Funabashi, "Japan's Moment of Truth", *Survival,* Vol. 42, No. 4 (Winter 2001), pp. 73-8.

is little new investment, bankruptcies and unemployment are steadily increasing. There is a widespread perception that the government's economic policies have favored larger companies and industries headquartered in Tokyo, and there is pressure on local politicians to redress this imbalance. Residents of western Japan were particularly heartened by the appointment of Heizo Takenaka as the new Minister of Economic Policy, since he is from Kansai and personally familiar with local conditions. Takenaka has also instituted an ongoing consultative process with academic and private sector experts in the Kansai and other regions, a move considered indicative of the new cabinet's desire to stay in touch with the real world beyond the Tokyo ether. People are hopeful but skeptical of Koizumi's planned economic reforms, and everyone, from economists to factory workers to housewives, is waiting for results. Koizumi has warned that the reforms will require sacrifices and hardships, and the weaker segments of the population, the elderly, the unemployed, part-time workers, first-time job seekers and single mothers, are fearful that the social safety net will be among the first casualties. Moreover, a reduction of public works projects will further damage the largely blue-collar construction and manufacturing sectors that have a strong constituency in Kansai.

Academics, politicians, economic experts and journalists all agree that economic reform is long overdue. After the war, Japan enjoyed three decades of peace and prosperity during which the economy flourished. Economic prosperity came to be closely associated with the existing political and economic structures; since the system worked so well, there was a strong resistance to change. Add to this the normal Japanese propensity to be risk-averse, and the aforementioned system of symbiotic political and economic interests, and you get the current phenomenon of the world's second largest economy declining for ten straight years while its political leaders debate what should be done to save it. Several economists ventured the theory that up until now, economic conditions had not been desperate enough for the Japanese people to demand drastic change. They argue that Japan has built up a huge reservoir of wealth and personal savings, and until those residual resources are depleted and average people really begin to suffer economically, the government will not be forced into action. But many believe Japan has now reached that point of desperation.

To be sure, the economic problems are numerous, the solutions elusive. Japanese and foreign economists seem to agree on the main problems: perhaps as much as $1 trillion

worth of non-performing bank loans; continuing deflation; excessive and intrusive government regulations; an arcane financial structure and accounting system; a closed, highly regulated market; underfunded pension funds and medical entitlement programs, and government debt equal to almost 140% of GDP, higher than any other industrialized nation, and consuming 65% of tax revenues in debt service alone. Japan's economic problems are further complicated by the increasingly interdependent nature of the global economy. As the world's second largest economic power, Japan's stagnating economy has repercussions throughout the Asian region and the world, not least in the United States. With an extensive network of mutual capital investments and as major trading partners, the United States and Japan are both vulnerable to fluctuations in each other's economies. Thus the recent downturn in the U. S. economy has also had a negative effect on Japan, especially in the areas of IT, airlines, shipbuilding and manufacturing. Moreover, some economists warn that, in attempting to resolve the non-performing loan crisis, Japanese banks and institutional investors may be forced to sell some of the estimated $ 350 billion in U. S. government bonds which they now hold and which have helped to curb interest rates and fuel the American economy[15].

In June, 2001, Prime Minister Koizumi announced a sweeping economic plan in which he promised to implement structural reform, dispose of the bad loans, ease government regulations, reduce publicly-funded corporations, reform public and private sector fiscal policies, and pare down the budget deficit. (Kansai area officials and economists would add to the list reform of the tax system, which they see as currently favoring lowly populated rural areas; they view a more equitable distribution of tax revenues as essential to the revitalization of urban areas and businesses.) But since Koizumi assumed office in April 2001, the voters have seen no forward movement on his proposed plan, and the economy has continued its downward spiral. Amid intense speculation on how long the prime minister can sustain his popular support, economic experts in Kansai, like many of their counterparts throughout the country, still feel that Koizumi represents the best hope for economic reform in Japan. Although many Japanese believe Koizumi has good ideas and the political will to implement them, Kansai observers admit that his way is fraught with political obstacles: besides the expected antagonism from the opposition parties, there is also opposition from within his own (LDP) party

15) For further discussion of this possible scenario, see Kenichi Ohmae, "Fixing Japan May Break America", New Perspective Quarterly, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Summer 2001) pp. 39-41.

factions anxious to preserve their special interests, not to mention resistance from an entrenched government bureaucracy. Taking advantage of a recent decline in the prime minister's popularity ratings, these elements have launched a campaign to criticize Koizumi for failing to deliver a quick fix for the country's economic woes. None of my interlocutors was willing to speculate how long Koizumi could survive in this political maelstrom.

Domestic Politics

Although Japanese domestic politics may not have a direct bearing on U. S.-Japan relations, they do have a significant influence on Japanese foreign policy, including policy toward the United States. Most opinion leaders in western Japan agree that Japanese politics is undergoing a major transition. Up until about nine years ago, Japan was virtually a one-party country. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)[16] had maintained a solid majority in the national Diet since the party's inception in 1955, and enjoyed an unbroken monopoly over the government ministries. Under the traditional political structure, local politicians built up bases of political support among special interest groups, organizations and labor unions (such as farmers, teachers, construction workers, local businesses and industries, etc.) in exchange for pursuing the political agenda of their support groups. Kansai political analysts observe that this system seemed to work fairly well until the late 1980's. They point out that Japan has a very short history as a participatory democracy, since the populace only obtained voting rights after World War II. Prior to that, citizens left the business of governance to the "experts," and the remnants of this attitude carried over into modern times and contributed to a traditionally low voting rate, which is still evident today[17]. Besides, in the postwar period Japan flourished for thirty years under the Liberal Democrats and the

16) Newcomers to Japanese politics should not be misled by the LDP party's name. As the Congressional Research Service aptly puts it: " Long-time observers of Japanese politics often quip that the LDP is 'neither liberal, nor democratic, nor a party.' It is not considered liberal because most—though by no means all—of its members hail from the conservative end of the political spectrum in Japan. It is not considered democratic because major decisions typically have been made by party elders in closed-room sessions out of the view of the public and with little input from the party's grassroots. Finally the LDP is not considered a political party in the traditional sense because it has long been riven by clique-like factions that jealously compete for influence with one another." Mark Manyin, "Japanese Political Developments," Japan-U. S Relations: Issues for the 107th Congress, Congressional Research Service, IB-97004 (September 19, 2001) p. 12.

17) Japan's low voting rate is attributed to a combination of complacency, apathy and political alienation. In the July 2001, election for the lower house of the Diet, voter turnout was estimated at 56% ; in the Kobe mayoral election held in October 2002, the voting rate was a mere 45%.

existing political system; although there was no evidence of a causal relationship, the LDP nevertheless came to be equated with that happy state of affluent stability.

But, beginning in the late 1980's, a succession of political scandals caused an already disinterested public to become increasingly disenchanted with politics in general and the LDP in particular. The economic downturn of the 90's underscored the ineffectiveness and corruption of the traditional political system, and in 1993 the LDP for the first time in history lost its majority in the Diet. Since then, although the LDP has remained the dominant party nationwide, neither the Liberal Democrats nor any other party have been able to muster an absolute majority in the legislature, and the parties have been forced to resort to uneasy coalition governments. Thus we see the recent phenomenon of the revolving prime minister, whereby the country has had nine prime ministers since 1990. In a jocular vein, one political analyst likened the Japanese political system to the old fairy tale "The Emperor's New Clothes": the politicians spend their time maneuvering for re-election, the prime minister serves to juggle all the political factions, and everyone pretends not to notice that the bureaucrats actually run the government. Meanwhile, the economy is in shambles and voters are defecting from traditional political parties at unprecedented rates.

Observers in western Japan report that, as the old political organizations break down, more and more independent (mutohaso) voters are choosing candidates not on the basis of their parties but their policies. Likewise, there are a growing number of unaffiliated candidates (mushozoku) responding to this trend, sometimes temporarily attaching themselves to a party only for political expediency. (One successful Kansai Diet member has changed parties in every election for the past 14 years, and has been consistently reelected.) Some commentators attribute the changing political landscape to generational differences. They note that the younger politicians are more active, open-minded and policy-oriented; many have traveled abroad and have a more realistic grasp of Japan's international position; they are genuinely concerned about Japan's political and economic problems, and approach the voters directly with their ideas. But many local politicians, while acknowledging that the label of independent candidate is trendily appealing, contend that independent voters are much too fickle to be relied upon, and that candidates are still bound by the traditional party system. Candidates cannot simply formulate their own policies and gain support to run for office without the backing of a recognized political party. Thus, even while denouncing the system and wishing its

demise, most politicians feel forced to strike an alliance with some political organization, and the vicious cycle grinds on. However, some point out that, as the major parties compete for voters no longer bound by traditional political allegiances, the party policies are changing to respond more to the needs of the people.

At the local level, Kansai voters are not always mindful of U. S.-Japan relations or foreign affairs in general. With the deepening economic recession in many sectors, "It's the economy, stupid!" could be the mantra of politicians in western Japan. They would like to see the central government maintain the status quo on security and international issues while focusing all its attention on solving the country's economic problems. Although the LDP is still the dominant party in the region, others such as the Democratic Party, the Clean Government Party (Komeito), and the Socialist and Communist Parties all have substantial appeal among the working class based on their stances on practical issues such as employment, welfare, taxes, medical benefits, and child and elderly care. But while local politicians may be elected on the basis of local issues, most policy (including economic) debate and decisions take place in Tokyo, and local politicians must adhere to the party policies set in the capital in order to maintain party support.

At the national level, political disaffection among the general populace seemed to peak by the spring of 2001, when former Prime Minister Mori staggered to the end of his term with an abysmal 9% support rating. When the cabinet reshuffled, emerging from the witch's brew was an unlikely hero in the figure of the enigmatic new Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi. Charismatic and controversial, Koizumi quickly soared to an 86% support rating with his unequivocal promise to implement structural reform (kouzou kaikaku) of the Japanese economy. Kansai commentators, like their compatriots all over Japan, are sharply divided in their opinions of Koizumi and his ability to turn the economy around. Supporters (and much of the public, at least initially) view him as the self-described "lone-wolf", boldly opposing the old guard factions that represent all that is failed and corrupt in the existing political system; his blunt manner of speaking, refreshing style and reformist stance have fired the imagination of a people hungry for a leader. Critics, on the other hand, brand Koizumi as a political opportunist, cynically cultivating a maverick image to capitalize on the public's craving for change. They dismiss his popularity as shallow, based not on the substance of his policies but on a personality cult that reduces politics to just another form of popular entertainment.

Both admirers and detractors, however, welcome the lively public debate and heightened political interest spawned by the Koizumi phenomenon, and hope at least that aspect continues.

A larger majority of academics, politicians and journalists in western Japan give a more balanced assessment of Koizumi as a political realist with a reformist agenda. Acknowledging that Koizumi himself is a product of the traditional ranks of the LDP, they still believe he has the heart of a reformer and the determination to see his plans through. In fact, political analysts maintain that Koizumi's ascendance is a tribute to his political wiles. Koizumi needed the LDP to become Prime Minister in order to put forward his reform proposals; in turn, his popularity helped carry many LDP candidates to victory in the July, 2001 upper house election. Ironically, the mainstream LDP faction is Koizumi's main obstacle in carrying out his reforms, which threaten the old political power bases. Now Koizumi is caught in a delicate balancing act: as long as he can maintain his popular support, the LDP cannot oust him from power; but, in compromising parts of his reform program to ensure its passage through the legislature, Koizumi jeopardizes his own integrity and raison d'être in the public's eye. Koizumi's support ratings plunged dramatically in February 2002, following his abrupt dismissal of the popular Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka, a fiercely independent reformer in her own right[18]. Although a few news columnists are gleefully predicting Koizumi's imminent demise, some political observers say that his drop in the polls was an inevitable correction to a more realistic level. The popular rumor is that if the LDP fails to pass his reform program, Koizumi will appeal to the will of the people by dissolving the lower house and calling for new elections, perhaps even defecting to another party (the Minshuto?) or forming his own party. For the American government, Koizumi has not only proved to be a strong ally in the war against terrorism, but also appears to be the best hope for Japan's economic recovery. In his February 2002, visit to Japan, U. S. President George W. Bush enthusiastically praised Koizumi's leadership, reiterated his confidence in Koizumi's economic reform plan, and renewed his pledge of continued American cooperation[19]. With political events and intrigues unfolding at an accelerat-

18) With the news of Tanaka's dismissal in February, Koizumi's support rating plummeted almost overnight from about 78% to 45%; at the time of this writing, his ratings had fallen even more to about 40%.

19) At their first summit in June 2001, Bush and Koizumi announced the establishment of a "U. S.-Japan Economic Partnership for Growth." According to the press release issued at the summit, the Partnership is "a cooperative mechanism through which the two countries will tackle a wide range of global, regional, and bilateral economic and trade issues... The Partnership sets up a new structure for engagement that better

ing pace, no one is able to forecast the Japanese political barometer from one day to the next.

Media Image

Japan has the largest circulation of newspapers per capita of any country in the world, and a highly developed broadcast system offering an extensive variety of programming. But my interlocutors differed sharply on the quality of the news coverage. Many Kansai observers, with the notable exception of the journalists, felt that the Japanese news media was not as mature as its Western counterpart. They charge that the media does not fulfill its journalistic responsibility to keep the public fully informed and to present a broad public debate of the issues. Academics point to a long tradition whereby Japanese journalists developed close relationships with individual politicians and had to be careful not to jeopardize their sources by betraying their trust. Some say the media still retains the vestiges of this cozy relationship with the establishment, and its objectivity is thereby compromised. Others allege that prominent journalists go directly from elite universities to the large media companies, bypassing the real world and never shedding their ivory tower perspectives. Furthermore, rather than using investigative reporting to fulfill a watchdog function, the Japanese media generally reports scandals or other negative reports only after they are publicly revealed by the authorities. Not surprisingly, Kansai journalists disagree with this assessment, insisting that the Japanese media is every bit as vigorous and objective in pursuit of the truth as the Western press. But on both sides of the aisle there is unanimous agreement that the mass media is a powerful force in shaping Japanese public opinion.

Residents of western Japan say that, in the past, most newspapers and television stations seemed to provide much the same coverage, but in recent years they have developed individual editorial positions that are readily discernible. For example, most would agree that the Sankei Shimbun would be considered a conservative publication, and that the Asahi represents the opposing liberal view (most prone to take an anti-government stance), with the Yomiuri and the Mainichi Daily falling somewhere in between, depending on the issue. The national dailies compete with local papers in providing coverage of local political, social and economic events as well as editorial

reflects the importance that each country places on the other as a principal ally and largest overseas trading partner."

comments on local developments. There are also a number of monthly magazines that publish commentary on a wide variety of current political and social topics. While some television viewers complain about the excessive sensationalism of the political talk shows, realists admit that the aggressively opinionated hosts (talento) are competing for ratings in the "info-tainment" category. More indirect and perhaps insidious, however, is the selective presentation or interpretation of the facts to suit a company's editorial policy. Although there is no such thing as complete objectivity (in any country) and a certain amount of prioritizing is inevitable, academics claim that in the case of the Japanese press the bias is sometimes blatant. As an egregious example, foreign affairs experts cite press coverage of the U. S. bases in Okinawa. Almost all reporting of issues relating to American military facilities is done by the local press in Okinawa, and is picked up by the mainland press, complete with the local anti-military stance. The Okinawa press often has a strong bias against the U. S. bases, exaggerating the negative news and rarely reporting any favorable news relating to the military facilities. The mass media is so one-sided on this issue that it's almost impossible for Okinawans (and, by extension, most Japanese) to get a balanced view.

Many Kansai commentators believe that the Japanese public has a more sophisticated grasp of the issues than media managers assume. Most Japanese have a healthy skepticism of the media, and thinking people consult more than one news source to get a variety of facts and opinions. While there is no doubt that the media strongly influences public opinion, media managers also keep a wary eye on opinion polls and adjust their editorial stance accordingly. In the waning days of the Mori administration, for example, emboldened by the prime minister's sinking polls, the media bullied Mori mercilessly, thereby contributing to his demise. By contrast, in the initial uncertain days of the Koizumi administration, while the jury of public opinion was still out, some newspapers ventured to criticize Koizumi, only to back off when it became clear that the public was firmly in the Koizumi camp. Now that Koizumi's support ratings have dropped, press criticism has increased proportionately, leaving one to wonder which is the chicken and which the egg.

With respect to the United States and U. S.-Japan relations, media coverage is extensive if not always balanced. Many Kansai observers noted that certain newspaper and television companies, Asahi in particular, were consistently more critical of American actions and policy, most recently the military action in Afghanistan, as

evidenced both on their editorial pages and also in the selection and tone of the news content. However, more disturbing than objectively anti-American editorial policies is the general impression among my interlocutors that a more subtle negative image of the United States is creeping into the media in news coverage itself and from there into the Japanese psyche. Kansai commentators observe that average Japanese people seem to make a clear distinction between the American people and their government. According to this view, the Japanese have generally positive impressions of American people as friendly, sincere, hardworking and generous (among other qualities). Naturally, these favorable impressions are strongest among those Japanese who have lived or traveled in the States or who have otherwise had personal contact with Americans through their work, family, education, etc. Academics also point out that over the past 50 years the United States has built up a deep reservoir of good will among the Japanese people, and that overall impressions of the United States remain positive among the majority of Japanese[20].

But over the last few years, with the help of Japan's media managers, thin but unsightly cracks have begun to appear in the formerly placid image of the United States as the benevolent superpower. The United States is sometimes depicted as a bully that uses its military, political and economic power in pursuit of its own interests, and dominates international fora such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the IMF to impose its own standards in the name of globalization. Likewise, there are occasional signs of a nascent backlash against the perceived dominance of American culture. Whereas a few years ago such sentiments might have been voiced in hushed tones in private gatherings, or by radical fringe groups, nowadays they are being carried with increased frequency by mainstream publications and popular television programs. While some commentators dismiss such criticism as the envious resentment that is an inevitable by-product of superpower-dom, others express more serious concern. Young Japanese, like most youth anywhere, are not keen students of history; they are not sipping from the reservoir of goodwill toward the United States, but drinking from the trough of current events replenished daily by the Japanese media.

In contrast to this minority view, mainstream Kansai representatives believe that most Japanese agree with the major policies of the United States, but may not always

20) In an October 2000 poll conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 73% of Japanese said they had a positive image of the United States.

agree with the methods employed in developing and articulating those policies. In this regard, the American government is sometimes viewed as shunning international consultation and cooperation in favor of unilateralism, and as being culturally insensitive to the views of other countries. Foreign affairs experts point out that, in actuality, U. S. policy is usually thoroughly reasoned and well substantiated in fact; yet a pre-existing image of the United States may at times color, even unconsciously, the public's perception or interpretation of the facts. Thus it is with a sense of disappointment that Japanese friends express their concern that the media image at times overpowers the real message on U. S.- related issues such as the Kyoto Protocol, Mideast peace, trade disputes and the ABM treaty. Academics are also concerned about the broader scope of an American fall from grace. If a negative image of the United States is appearing in Japan, one of America's closest allies with a free press, then one can only imagine the extent of misunderstanding in countries less favorably predisposed and with a controlled media.

Implications for American Policy

A number of policy implications may be drawn both from the Japanese perspectives expressed herein as well as in response to them. These implications may be stated in the form of general principles for U. S. policy makers, many of which might apply to policy towards other countries besides Japan.

1. Aim for greater policy consistency. Some interlocutors felt that U. S. policy toward Japan has been somewhat inconsistent in recent years, with each change of political administration bringing new policy makers with new philosophies, goals and styles in American policy toward Japan. Often, the strength of U. S.-Japan relations seemed to depend on the states of the respective economies. Sometimes different factions within the U. S. government had opposing views and sent Japanese leaders conflicting signals. Kansai commentators suggest that both American and Japanese policy makers should aim for greater stability in the long-term relationship and not allow it to be derailed by petty or temporal differences, trade squabbles, minor incidents, or other bumps in the political road. One recommendation to solidify the relationship would be to further strengthen the many working level groups focusing on specific bilateral areas: security, economic and political. These should not just be crisis-driven or problem-centered, but rather should make use of the relatively quiet periods in the relationship to build solid

foundations and systems that can weather the stormy times. Also, Japan and the United States could increase both the stability and breadth of the relationship by expanding cooperation on global issues such as health and population, the environment, narcotics control, technology, economic development, etc.

2. Treat Japan like an equal partner. A common perception voiced by many of my interlocutors was that Japan continues to play a subordinate role vis-à-vis the United States, whether it be in the security alliance, economic issues or political affairs. While many foreign affairs specialists say the Japanese government is partially to blame for its complicity in this arrangement, some feel that American leaders still define the alliance in terms of Japan's agreeing to U. S. foreign policies rather than developing its own independent policies. Others say that Americans seem to have an innate prejudice that only military power equates to political power. Japanese sensitivity to its perceived inferior status was underscored recently when the inadvertent omission of Japan from a list of allies participating in the Afghan campaign caused a stir in the local press (but was barely mentioned in the Western press). Kansai observers believe that a more active and independent Japanese foreign policy would not only benefit Japan but would also serve the United States as an objective touchstone: the honest view of a trusted ally who has the confidence to differ. Many would agree with the Armitage Report's view of "the special relationship between the United States and Great Britain as a model for the alliance"[21]. Japan is already respected as an economic and political leader in Asia, where many nations look to Japan as a spokesman for regional interests in fora such as the G-8, OECD, and APEC. Japan could play an expanded role as a conduit between the United States and other Asian countries. Moreover, Japan's lack of military prowess and self-avowed neutrality would make it an ideal candidate to serve as mediator or intermediary in conflicts worldwide, a role that Japan has heretofore been reluctant to assume. As previously noted, Japan is already the world's second largest aid provider and, with its advanced technology and skilled human resources, could become a world leader in multinational efforts to resolve global problems.

3. Be attentive to local conditions. In western Japan as well as other parts of the country, politicians are elected not on the basis of their foreign policies but on the basis of local issues. "All politics are local", even in Japan. Residents of western Japan main-

21) Armitage et al. *op. cit.* p. 6.

tain that it is especially important to consider the views of people outside the capital, since they are more representative of the common people and more indicative of the future direction of the country. To the extent that American policy makers understand Japanese domestic conditions and the driving forces behind Japanese politics, they can better understand the influences and pressures on Japanese leaders and policy formulation. This understanding should extend to an awareness of cultural and historical contexts that may influence foreign relations, policies, and even negotiating styles. Kansai observers also note that, in general, Japanese people seem to know much more about the United States than Americans know about Japan, which often seems limited to outdated stereotypical images. While admitting it is natural that the entire world is interested in and affected by American policies, foreign affairs experts caution that what American policy makers don't know about other countries can hurt them. What is more, they are concerned about a thin but persistent isolationist streak that recurs in the United States, particularly during troubled times. In an increasingly interdependent global community, isolationism is viewed as an anachronism that is incompatible with the status of superpower.

4. Nurture a positive image. It is a source of puzzlement to many Japanese that the United States, home of Hollywood and the world's most sophisticated communications industry, does not always succeed in projecting a positive image abroad. Today, there seems to be a growing disparity between the perception that Americans hold of themselves and the way they are perceived in other parts of the world, even in friendly countries like Japan. My interlocutors felt that the international image of the United States should not be entrusted solely to the random whims of foreign editors, who may or may not give a complete and objective rendition of the facts. Several journalists and academics in western Japan suggest that the United States could benefit from an even more assertive public relations function to project a more positive image worldwide. This is meant not in a cynical sense of manipulating public opinion with propaganda, but in the true sense of more actively disseminating information on American activities and policies. For instance, U. S. opposition to the Kyoto Protocol and to the ABM treaty both received wide coverage, mostly negative, in the Japanese press. Yet a closer look at the newspaper articles on these issues reveals very little substance on the actual content of the U. S. policy and the reasons for the American stance on these issues. To this day, most of the Japanese public retains only a vague notion that the American

policy positions are "bad" in opposing these "good" treaties.

Foreign affairs experts suggest that the United States increase and expand current public relations activities such as speeches, radio and television talk show appearances, newspaper commentaries, and panel discussion programs to reach a wider audience. Besides providing facts and explanations of current policy issues, the United States could also increase public awareness of its innumerable positive activities, with particular emphasis on the areas most affecting the host country. Since the foreign press tends to focus on negative or controversial issues, the Japanese public may be largely unaware of the less newsworthy but very socially worthy U. S.-sponsored economic, humanitarian and development assistance programs. Moreover, the United States could help to foster a more objective and sophisticated domestic media in Japan by promoting more journalist training programs, internships, exchanges, seminars, etc. Lastly, in addition to the more immediate and direct media resources, existing educational and cultural exchange programs such as international visitors and scholars, sister city programs, academic and student exchanges are all excellent means of building long term bilateral understanding and should be continued and expanded.

5. Lead as a great power, not a mere superpower. At this particular moment in history, it is the singular destiny of the United States to be the earth's only superpower, encompassing with it not only the heady glory of unprecedented power but also the terrific responsibility to use it wisely. In Japan (as in many other parts of the world) the exercise of wisdom entails a certain degree of modesty, a recognition that one does not have all the answers, and a willingness to learn from others. A great power is magnanimous in its leadership, consults and heeds the opinions of others, and truly values the role and contributions of "lesser" powers. From a position of strength one is not afraid to cooperate and even to compromise. Above all, a great power should be seen as advancing the common good and improving the overall condition of mankind and the earth. Most Kansai observers emphasize that the majority of Japanese firmly support U. S. military actions against terrorism, and acknowledge that the use of force is regrettably sometimes necessary. However, many just as firmly believe it is within the power of the United States to prevent and resolve most major world conflicts. Isn't that, after all, what a superpower is for?! As strange as it may seem to (some) Americans, some Japanese hold greater hopes and aspirations for the United States than Americans themselves might articulate. Possessing unparalleled wealth, unchallenged

military might, and inestimable human resources, the United States is seen as having the unique opportunity to preside over a utopian world of peace and prosperity guaranteed by a "Pax Americana". While such sentiments may sound naive to American leaders grappling with the harsh complexities of the modern world, they nonetheless reveal the stark standards to which those leaders are being held. Foreign affairs experts in western Japan believe that most Japanese sincerely want the United States to provide the wise leadership which the world so desperately needs and which only the Americans seem to be in a position to provide. And they would urge American policy makers to rise to the occasion and lead, not from a standpoint of unilateral self-interest, but with a wider vision of global interest.