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NOVEMBER 25, 2009

Japan Goes Nuclear



The DPJ government is **causing quite a stir**:

Japan's new government, already bickering with the United States about the location of a Marine air station on Okinawa, appears intent on revealing evidence of a decades-old secret pact between Tokyo and Washington that allowed U.S. ships and aircraft to carry nuclear weapons on stopovers in Japan.

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada said that the investigation is in its final stages and that its findings will be announced in January. "We'll be unburdening ourselves of the insistence of past governments that a secret agreement did not exist," Okada said in a speech last weekend.

The pact violates a Japanese law that prohibits nuclear weapons from being made, possessed or stored on its territory.

Japan's new-found assertiveness is **causing some heartburn in the U.S.** but it could also be an opportunity. As Cato's Justin Logan [notes](#):

But the broader point is that for those of us who have been advocating a larger role in Asia for Japan and a smaller one for the United States, the increasingly independent nature of the new DPJ government ought to be seen as a feature, not a bug. If the Japanese are really feeling their oats and aren't too excited at continuing the LDP's lockstep alliance with the United States, more power to them. If they want fewer US troops in

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Japan, terrific. We're militarily overextended as it is and have serious economic problems to deal with.

Indeed. For **all the worry** about other countries not "stepping up" and helping the U.S. lead the international system, Japan seems like an ideal test case of a new way forward. You cannot lead without power and Japan cannot have greater power without greater independence from the United States. If handled correctly, the U.S. could enjoy a twofor: we save money that we're now spending on defending Japan and we get a more capable Japan, albeit one less deferential.

Of course, the hegemonists greatest fears may be realized and a newly empowered Japan may really try to stiff-arm the U.S. out of Asia and take other measures detrimental to our interests.

(AP Photos)

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