James D Brown, Temple University, Japan Transformation of the security environment in East Asia in the 21st century and its implications for Japan

Sheltered by its alliance with the United States and with its population having embraced pacifism, during the second half of the 20th century Japan played a relatively minor role in global political and security issues. However, with intensifying regional threats and growing uncertainty about the reliability of the United States as an ally, it is increasingly clear that Japan must become more proactive and self-reliant internationally. This paper examines how Japan's security posture has already evolved in recent years and assesses what further changes can be expected in the near future. In this regard, emphasis is placed on Japan's domestic policy in terms of its armed forces and Constitution, as well as on its external relations with regional partners. The main argument is that, although Japan will continue to emphasise the United States as the cornerstone of its security, Tokyo is simultaneously preparing for a time when it can longer depend on Washington to fulfil its alliance commitments.