

Consequences of War in the Middle East

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Japan can—and must—play a role in the peace process that will follow after the war in the Gulf. While Japan enjoys credibility with the Arab countries of the Middle East, it will be pressed by the United States to take more positive action than it has until now.

Introduction

Even in this region of great volatility, never have the consequences of war in the Middle East been so grave for the international community. War has come; the coalition of the united front won the military battle. The regime in Baghdad has lost. The implications are crucial for the United States, for Japan, and for all members of the united front against Iraq. For Japan, especially, the consequences will be immense.

Positive and Negative Aspects

On the positive side, there are opportunities for innovative diplomacy, for involvement in what will necessarily be a large-scale reconstruction effort; the investments in the region will skyrocket; and business opportunities have never been greater—for construction, maintenance, and reconstruction.

On the negative side, it is certain that Japan will be pressured to make direct military commitments for any united action in the future. Pressures for remilitarization will come largely from the United States. In combination with U.S. pressures on the economic front, Japan will find increasingly in a defensive position.

The Japanese Role

Both government and business in Japan need to develop a robust strategy to manage these pressures. The stresses that they will bring will simply not go away. They must be carefully managed.

What happens next diplomatically in the Middle East? The spiral of chronic violence in that region can be brought under control only if the international community, especially the united coalition against Iraq, gives attention to four factors:

1. **Political Process:** It is not so much the fact of settling the political conflicts that is relevant, but the process of trying in itself. The deliberations—the dynamics of discussion—diffuse hostilities and engage the antagonists in a dynamic of peace. A process of settlement is necessary to diffuse what will surely be street-corner anti-U.S. sentiments everywhere in the Arab world.

2. **Strategic Security.** A system guaranteeing the sanctity of borders through a regional security system, buttressed by United Nations and major powers participation, must be put in place. And when the borders are contested—as most are in the Middle East—then engaging in a resolution process is needed (bilateral, multilateral, or international; arbitration, adjudication, or otherwise). A strategy

for regional security is necessary to buttress those regimes that have stood firm with the united alliance.

3. **Economic Management.** Every state in the region, barring none, is currently in a condition of acute economic strains. Economic conditions do not in themselves create conflict; but without management of economic problems, any processes for peace will be undermined. Multilateral efforts for reducing regional economic hardships and for designing strategies for reconstruction are essential. Economic management is necessary to make sure that disintegration does not come from within and that the economies can withstand the shocks of war.

4. **Protecting the People:** Providing international guarantees is crucial for protecting ethnic diversity, protecting the people from tyranny of governments, and protecting minorities from tyranny of majorities. Internationally sanctioned supports for the protection of people will make population, rather than only governments, a constituency for peace in the region. Protecting the people is absolutely essential in order to dampen the inevitable anti-American passions.

Although the best possible outcome for the present Gulf crisis has occurred—total victory,

including unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait and restoration of legitimate governance—the problem of managing the consequences remains. The consequence of victory could, in itself, undermine the joint enterprise by underscoring the presence of foreign military forces, which could be used by opponents of the coalition to erode the legitimacy of the regimes in the Middle East.

Conclusion

None of these factors alone will create long-term peace in the region. Only by moving now, and moving decisively in these four directions, could some plausible regional order emerge from what will undoubtedly be monumental political dislocations in the aftermath of war in the Gulf. Japan can—and must—play a role in this peace process. Japan has credibility with the Arab countries of the Middle East; it will be pressured by the United States to take more positive action. The business opportunities in the Gulf after the war will be immense. All of this requires a new strategy for Japan toward the Middle East. If it is carefully planned, it can be a winning strategy.