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**Afghanistan & Pakistan: Time for the Hatoyama Administration
to Show Japan's Latent Power**

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Leaders in both Washington and Tokyo confront a range of imperatives, from restoring economic growth to reforming the role of government in education, health care, and other sectors of society. But more than domestic renewal, matters of war and peace historically form the crucible in which leaders are judged. Today, that crucible is the theater of conflict in Afghanistan, where the difficulties of the international military and civilian mission have raised hard questions about the staying power of the Western democracies, the ascendance of violent extremism, and the implications of the Taliban's resurgence for neighboring (and nuclear-armed) Pakistan.

The challenges of war and state-building in Afghanistan, and their implications for the stability of Pakistan, provide an opportunity for the new government in Tokyo to put its distinctive stamp on foreign policy by charting a progressive path for Japan as an active provider of collective goods of peace and security in a rapidly changing international system. A bold new Japanese initiative on "AfPak" would advance multiple goals of the new Democratic Party-led government: strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance while putting the allies on more equal footing; putting Japan's moral and material weight even more firmly on the side of majorities in the region who seek security, good governance, and economic opportunity; and signaling to both Japan's friends and competitors in the international system that a country wrongly believed to be in a state of terminal decline can renew itself as a civilian great power that punches its full weight and should not be dismissed amid premature euphoria over the inexorable rise of the "BRICs."

In short, the Pakistan-Afghanistan crucible may provide exactly the opportunity the new government in Tokyo is seeking to move Japan beyond the ossified foreign and security policy dictums of the past in ways that are responsive to changes in Japanese society, expectations in the United States, and a transformed international security environment. Can the new DPJ government overcome inexperience, bureaucratic inertia, and the outmoded theology that Japan cannot decisively project its influence in the world to do exactly that on the most pressing international challenge of our day?

The Stakes in Afghanistan and Pakistan

There is little time for prolonged deliberation of these questions because the situation in Afghanistan is dire. The past few months have cost the lives of more international forces there than in any equivalent period since 2001. Levels of fraud in the Afghan elections call into doubt the legitimacy of the Afghan government at exactly the moment the Afghan people crave credible and accountable leadership to build state institutions and the rule of law. In the United States, President Obama -- despite repeated promises during his campaign and as commander-in-chief to pursue victory in Afghanistan and his deployment of 21,000 additional U.S. forces toward that end -- now appears worried by the domestic politics of the conflict and may seek to temper U.S. objectives there. This likely will not constitute a successful exit strategy. It is more likely to embolden the adversary and make it harder to eliminate the conditions of insecurity, misgovernance, corruption, and economic desperation that feed the insurgency.

A new assessment by the top American commander in Afghanistan warns that unless the international community and its Afghan allies quickly put in place a full-spectrum counterinsurgency strategy to protect the Afghan population while building up Afghan security forces and governing institutions, the conflict there could become unwinnable -- even though the Taliban enjoy very little popular support and lack the kind of superpower patron

that enabled the mujahadeen in the 1980s to defeat the occupying Soviet Army and the Vietnamese communists to outlast American forces in Southeast Asia a decade earlier.

Japanese and Western skeptics of today's Afghan mission should make no mistake: unlike those earlier conflicts, the international community's objectives in Afghanistan align closely with those of the Afghan people. The Taliban cannot win by popular consent – polls regularly show that only 5-7 percent of Afghans support them or their aims -- which is why they terrorize civilians through the threat and use of violence and sustain their campaign through revenues from illegal narcotics rather than any legitimate revenue base. Put bluntly, the Taliban can only prevail if the international community loses its will to help the Afghan people build a functioning state and society governed by law rather than the barrel of a gun.

The fate of Pakistan is intimately bound up with the success or failure of the state-building process in Afghanistan. Pakistan is strategically situated at the crossroads of the Middle East and Asia, armed with a growing arsenal of nuclear weapons, and populated by nearly 180 million Muslims increasingly radicalized by spillover from the insurgency in Afghanistan and the failure of the Pakistani state to deliver for its people. With the continued support of the international community, Afghanistan's evolution into a state that can provide its people with a basic framework of security, law, and development would strengthen civilian democracy, economic opportunity, and the writ of the state in Pakistan, crowding out violent radicals who flourish in the absence of these values.

Conversely, should international forces withdraw before the Afghan state is strong enough to govern and secure itself, Afghanistan's re-Talibanization would dangerously and perhaps fatally destabilize Pakistan. Ascendant Islamic radicalization in Afghanistan raises the specter of a possible "Balkanization" of the country, with serious implications for the security of its nuclear arsenal. Another scenario is that the spillover from a Talibanized Afghanistan's pathologies would induce what Indian strategists describe as Pakistan's "Lebanonization," with the Pakistani Taliban aping Hezbollah by employing terrorist violence against both the state and neighboring countries that do not share its extremist agenda. Either scenario would condemn the majority of Pakistanis who reject violent extremism to a bleak future, potentially compromise the integrity of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, and create the conditions for Al Qaeda and other terrorists with global ambitions to develop sanctuaries in which to plot further attacks against the developed world.

Why AfPak Matters for Japan – and What Tokyo Can Do

Why does the fate of Afghanistan and Pakistan matter for Japan? Americans asked the same question about their own national interest in this region until the terrorist strikes of 11 September 2001 -- planned in Pakistan and made possible by Al Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan -- provided the answer. A second reminder came with the exposure of the global smuggling operation in nuclear weapons components run by Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan, which seeded the nuclear weapons programs of Pakistan, North Korea, and several countries in the Middle East. A third reminder has been a string of attempted and actual terrorist attacks in Europe and Southeast Asia with links to training camps and ideological radicals in Pakistan. A fourth reminder was the extraordinary terrorist attack on Mumbai, India in late November 2008 by Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Taiba, which risked military conflict between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan until Indian restraint silenced the drums of war.

Possessing an economy deeply dependent on energy imports from the broader Middle East, a society premised on individual liberty, and an indispensable alliance with the United States, vital Japanese national interests are at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan. To its considerable credit, since 2001, Japan has contributed \$1.8 billion for security, reconstruction, development, and humanitarian relief in Afghanistan and is currently paying the salaries of the entire Afghan police force. Under Prime Minister Koizumi, Japan took the historic step of deploying military forces to the Afghan theater of conflict to refuel NATO warships supporting operations there. In Pakistan, Japan provided considerable humanitarian relief (including deploying members of the Self-Defense Forces) following the 2005 earthquake and, more recently, hosted an important donors' conference in Tokyo in which it pledged \$1 billion in civilian assistance to Pakistan.

These are impressive measures, but they pale in the light of the growing crisis in Afghanistan, the dangers it poses to Pakistan, and the consequences of failure in "AfPak" for the world's leading democracies. Possessing a

popular mandate for bold change and a window of opportunity to introduce a revitalized Japan to the world, Prime Minister Hatoyama's government could seize this moment to put in place a bold new strategic framework for the region. This would be particularly important in light of the DPJ's pledge to end the Japanese refueling mission of NATO vessels in the Indian Ocean. Such an initiative could achieve the triple goal of asserting newfound Japanese confidence and global vision, reinforcing its U.S. alliance, and signaling to all who doubt the country's staying power that Japan is back -- and will remain a key driver of a world that is more humane, prosperous, and peace-loving, in keeping with the values of the Japanese people.

A new Japanese framework for peace, security, and prosperity in Afghanistan and Pakistan could include the following components:

- Rapid delivery and effective targeting of Japan's important pledge of \$5 billion in civilian assistance to Afghanistan over the coming five years, with a focus on job-creation programs and police training;
- deployment of Japanese Ground Self-Defense Forces to Afghanistan as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, as previously proposed in the Diet by then-DPJ leader Ichiro Ozawa;
- a major Japanese financial contribution to an international trust fund to support the long-term expansion and training of the Afghan army to build their capacity to secure their country against terrorists and the Taliban;
- deployment of Japanese civilian trainers to instruct Afghans in developing the civil service, education system, judiciary, and basic health infrastructure to consolidate the civic foundations of the Afghan state;
- significant new Japanese support for a World Bank-administered Frontier Trust Fund to support grassroots development and infrastructure construction in Pakistan's remote tribal regions to create economic alternatives to militancy; and
- a new Japanese-led development initiative to invest in a regional energy infrastructure linking Pakistan and Afghanistan to the resources and markets of Central Asia and India, perhaps through construction of a regional electricity grid and joint development of the region's hydropower resources.

Japanese democracy and prosperity cannot be secure in a world in which terrorists rampantly launch mass-destruction attacks on the West and its allies from safe havens in South and Central Asia, or in which nuclear weapons are proliferated or used in conflicts generated by terrorist attacks emanating from Pakistan. Nor can Japanese interests and values flourish in a world in which Japan's closest allies, led by the United States, lose a war against violent zealots in Afghanistan. The ensuing Western retreat into isolationism would call into question the future of Pakistan, raise doubts about the legitimacy and staying power of liberal values, and create more space for rising powers that do not share those values -- including China -- to shape the emerging international system at the expense of Japan and its democratic allies.

Japan's people have voted for change, however murkily defined. Their new government should seize the moment and clearly explain to its citizens what is at stake for Japan in a dangerous world. A new strategic initiative for peace and development in Afghanistan and Pakistan could define Japan's edge as Asia's principal provider of the public goods that sustain a liberal and prosperous international system -- and the security and well-being of the Japanese people within it.

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