

Toward Reconstruction Aid for Iraq: A Path via the Indian Ocean and the Nile

Okamoto Yukio

Following the Gulf War of 1991, Japan was widely censured. Many believed that its only contribution to the multinational force was financial support. In fact, Japan never cooperated at the working level with U.S. forces more than at that time. As regards the recent hostilities in Iraq the U.S. view of Japan has been by far more favorable, even though Japan's involvement has been minimal. The difference has been in the level of mutual trust, especially between the national leaders of the two countries. That kind of trust makes it all the easier for Japan to formulate distinctive measures of its own for contributing to the reconstruction of postwar Iraq.

Events that occurred a long time ago sometimes turn out to have an impact on the present . . .

At a meeting in Kuwait on 7 April 2003 I met Jay Garner, then head of the U.S. Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) for Iraq. Also present was a tall woman introducing herself as Barbara Bodine. London-based Counselor Oku Katsuhiko, who would later take charge of international relations within ORHA and who was with me at that time, whispered, "Remember? She was in the basement of the Japanese embassy in Kuwait when the Gulf War started."

The events of early August 1990 came back to me. When Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait, Shirota Akio, then a counselor, sheltered nineteen Americans in the embassy basement on his own authority. Japanese embassy officials accepted the risks of protecting the Americans from the Iraqi troops, sharing their food and daily



Jay Garner (center), head of ORHA, at the April 7 meeting in Kuwait. Sitting next to him is General Tim Cross (left) from Britain, who said the Land Cruisers sent by Japan proved very helpful during the Gulf War.

necessities. Among them was Barbara Bodine, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City.

Ambassador Bodine said she had been appointed to serve as civil administrator in central Iraq, one of the three administrative regions established for U.S. control following the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime. Baghdad was to be under her direction.

The conference started. Sitting next to Jay Garner were OHRA deputy director Major-General Tim Cross from Britain, and the heads of the three sections of humanitarian affairs, civil administration, and reconstruction. Garner introduced himself first. Prior to this face-to-face encounter, my impression of the retired U.S. army lieutenant-general had been that he was the consummate businessman. But I was wrong; he turned out to be a military man through-and-through, a fighter to the bone. Perhaps only a tough guy like this could accomplish the job of building a new nation in a tumultuous Iraq. Unexpectedly, I was impressed.

Next, General Cross introduced himself. His eyes fixed upon me, he remarked that during the Gulf War he had driven one of the Land Cruisers sent by Japan, and that the vehicles had proved very helpful. I returned his gaze in silent acknowledgement, and my mind went back to one long day thirteen years earlier.

On 6 September 1990, the *Sea Venus* operated by Kawasaki Kisen, one of Japan's major shipping companies, was stuck at the Kinjo wharf in Nagoya, loaded with five hundred Toyota Land Cruisers and three hundred Mitsubishi Pajeros. For lack of space, I will omit the long story that led up to this point. Suffice it to say that the shipment, ordered at the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of the Japanese government's cooperation with the war effort, was facing non-cooperation and stumbling blocks thrown in its way by the Transport Ministry.

That morning, I had received a phone call from a section chief of the Transport Ministry's Shipping Bureau, saying, "All the crew have left the ship, saying they refuse to transport those 'weapons.' And listen here, we're not taking responsibility for this!" With that reproachful phone call, a very long day began. I hurried to the headquarters of the All Japan Seamen's Union in Roppongi and asked for their cooperation. They refused, insisting on the old line that seamen could not be ordered to transport anything that could be construed as military supplies. I left and then went back, repeating my request, but was turned down again.

After lunch, I got another phone call from the senior Transport Ministry official. He sounded even more self-righteous than before. "The ship is leaving Kinjo wharf. They have decided not to carry the vehicles to Jeddah [the Saudi Arabian city on the Red Sea]. The cars will be unloaded. You'll take all the responsibility for this whole mess, won't you?" "Sure!" I shouted back

at him, “I’ll take any kind of responsibility you name!”

I began to feel that all hope was gone. I sought an emergency meeting with Deputy Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Watanabe Koji, who was in an urgent meeting at the Prime Minister’s official residence. On my way, I plunged into a public phone booth at the Kasumigaseki 1-chome intersection—in those days we didn’t have mobile phones—and telephoned the Cars Section in the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). An assistant section chief named Ito Hajime, among the younger generation of ministry officials, came on the line and gave me totally unexpected news. “Actually, the *Sea Venus* has just moved to another wharf to avoid the [media] flap,” he said, “We’re not going to let the cars be unloaded. We won’t budge an inch!”

That phone call was the only time in my career that tears came to my eyes. Encouraged, I resolved not to give up. I went to the seamen’s union headquarters for the third time that day, this time determined to sit there until they agreed to give the okay. Finally I persuaded them. This was the memorable beginning of cooperation extended by the All Japan Seamen’s Union and the Seafarers Bureau of the Transport Ministry to the Gulf effort. Someday I will write down those events in detail. On the 6:00 a.m. television news the following morning everyone saw the *Sea Venus* leaving Nagoya Port early in the morning, bound for Jeddah. The long trail of the ship’s wake stretching behind it, visible in the scene shot by helicopter from high overhead, seemed to be filled with special meaning. Miyake Kunihiko (now the Japanese Minister in China) and I, who had stayed up all night monitoring the situation, gazed at the scene without a word.

“So he’s one of those who drove one of those vehicles.” When I returned to the present from my reverie, General Cross was still speaking at the meeting in Kuwait.



Okamoto
Yukio

After graduating from Hitotsubashi University, Okamoto entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he served, among other important posts, as director of the National Security Affairs Division of the North American Affairs Bureau and director of the same bureau’s First Division. In 1991 he left the foreign ministry and founded Okamoto Associates, Inc., a strategic and business consulting firm. In 1996–98 he served as a special advisor to Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro (in charge of Okinawa affairs). In 2001 he became chairman of the prime minister’s task force on foreign relations, and in April of 2003 assumed the post of advisor to Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichiro. Among his works is *Nippon saisei saizensen* [The Front Line of Japan’s Renewal] (Toshi Shuppan, 1997).

Mutual Trust Vital to the Alliance

With General Tim Cross and Ambassador Barbara Bodine on board, persons favorably disposed to Japan from the outset, I thought the group assembled to lead ORHA would be a good team. Things did not unfold as I anticipated, however. Deeming both Jay Garner and deputy director Cross unsuitable for their jobs, the U.S. and U.K. governments replaced them with career diplomats. ORHA itself is no more, having been renamed the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

An atmosphere favorable to Japan remained, however. Counselor Oku, who was reassigned to Baghdad from London, later related to me by phone that Japan's host nation support (HNS; support extended to U.S. forces in Japan in such forms as providing land and facilities and bearing the cost of workers on American bases) had enormous impact. "All U.S. forces-related people here in Baghdad say they benefited from Japan's HNS support. They all are Japan's friends from the beginning. This makes our job here by far easier, and it's all thanks to you, Okamoto-san, and your colleagues."

I knew that he thanked me by name as a courtesy. I nevertheless felt gratified by the deep appreciation he expressed for the efforts made by those in the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Agency who had worked in support of the U.S. forces stationed in Japan despite the bullying tactics of leftist lawmakers at the Diet in the decades-long period when socialists exerted power as the largest opposition party. Counselor Oku's comments came as good news. Surely this boded well for Oku's efforts in Baghdad.

There are some in the U.S. forces who dislike Japan. Often they are the ones who became infuriated over the formalistic stance Japan took during the Gulf War. One problem then was the Japanese government's firm policy of "no Japanese ships transporting war-related supplies." The government had been providing supplies to the U.S. forces by chartering ships from the private sector, but under the Cabinet Order Concerning Foreign Exchange Control, steel helmets, gas masks, and the like were military supplies—insofar as they were being sent to a war zone—and thus had to be unloaded from the ships. The Americans in charge at first welcomed the transport cooperation Japan offered. But if the Japanese logic were applied consistently, even blankets and other supplies that everyone else in the world considered non-military would be untransportable. If that was to be the case, said these Americans, almost exploding with anger, then Japan should not have offered such cooperation in the first place.

In an alliance, mutual trust between the peoples of both countries is decisive. In both Japan and the United States, however, there are those who put protection of their own interests before anything else. It was because of these persons that Japan–U.S. relations quickly worsened at the

time of the Gulf War, as mentioned in a previous article in this journal (*Gaiko Forum*, English edition, Vol. 2, No. 1).

In the case of the war in Iraq the opposite happened. The events of 9/11 made the United States more strongly aware of the distinction between friends and enemies. Japanese officials in charge this time around were stubbornly determined to help the United States. As they are still actively serving in government, I cannot mention them by name. The responses of the staff in the Maritime Self Defense Force following 9/11 strengthened American trust in Japan as an ally. It was such people in both countries who were supporting the Japan–U.S. alliance.

Koizumi's Decision

One might say that management of a security treaty system boils down to “guts.” Of all the various actions of a nation, none affects outcomes more definitively than the conviction—and the gutsy decisions—of security affairs policymakers. A good example was the Japanese government's decision to dispatch an Aegis-equipped ship to the Indian Ocean in late 2002.

Regarding Iraq, Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro made up his mind. He was at a loss for a while as to whether to express support for the war or not, even after it became certain that the United States would launch an armed attack on Iraq. His hesitation was only natural, as supporting the war was certain to lower his popular support ratings. After a short time he did decide to support the war in Iraq and he did not waver thereafter.

How would he explain to the people his support for America's use of force? The government officials in charge wrote out explanations and a preliminary meeting was held. The bureaucratic language of the drafts clearly irritated Koizumi. I don't remember exactly what he said in the meeting, but he declared he wouldn't just read from text prepared by the officials. He had thought about the matter himself and he would tell the people his conclusions in his own words. If he did not speak his own thoughts, no one would be convinced. So, he ordered the ministry officials, “You just give me the information I need [to make a decision]!” Later I told that story to the American side and asked that it be passed on, all the way up to President Bush.

During the Gulf War, regrettably, the widespread impression was that all Japan provided to the multinational forces was money. That image is wrong. On a working level, at least, Japan had never before made greater efforts to assist U.S. forces. It procured a wide range of supplies in large quantities—from four-wheel-drive vehicles and troop housing to computers—and transported them in its own ships to the Persian Gulf. It arranged for airplanes to carry U.S. troops. The 10 billion dollars donated on top of the supplies and transport in support of the war effort did not include the amounts extended to countries in the Gulf region in the form of economic aid. Despite all these

efforts, Japan was rebuked as a selfish country that did not take seriously the issue of restoration of law and order to the world.

Japan was little involved in this year's war in Iraq, yet U.S. esteem for Japan is far higher today than it was following the 1991 Gulf War. The reason for this, I am convinced, is mutual trust, especially that between the leaders of the two countries. Even before the war, Bush and Koizumi had worked to develop trust in each other at the personal level. In the United States the power of the president is tremendous. The work of administration officials is always guided by what the president wants to do. The president's personal view of Japan is therefore decisive. Koizumi's stance supporting the United States was enough to place Japan among the first-ranked allies of the United States

Koizumi's notable start of cooperation with Washington came with the prompt enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law in the autumn of 2001. The Law allowed the government to send five Self-Defense Force vessels to the Indian Ocean. In that dispatch, the Indian Ocean became the symbol and the stage for a major shift in the U.S.-Japanese alliance. The result has been American recognition of Japan as a genuine ally. Since then, Washington has expressed appreciation for whatever Japan has done in support of U.S. efforts, and showed understanding even when Japan did not act. This virtuous circle contrasts sharply with the vicious circle created during the Gulf War, when anything Japan did in support of the multinational force was censured for being "too little, too late" and when failure to do something as expected led to denunciations of Japan in the U.S. Congress. It was a situation aptly summed up by the phrase "damned if you do, damned if you don't." This time, put in the simplest terms, Prime Minister Koizumi saved Japan a huge amount of grief by taking a firm policy stance from the outset.

Can the War's Objectives Be Achieved?

As of early 2003, I opposed United States use of force against Iraq. I was sure that it would result in the sacrifice of Iraqi civilian lives. I also worried that it would provoke an intensification of anti-American sentiment in the Arab world. My expression of these views in a newspaper article drew immediate attack in the Japanese media by a number of opinion leaders, including some whom I respected. They labeled my arguments absurd. One said, "Americans who read the Okamoto article will wonder how he could come to such conclusions." Another said, "He ought to translate this daydream-like argument into English and let it be tested among American and European intellectuals."

In fact, I *had* tested my argument with the U.S. government. At the beginning of a certain meeting with a team of American representatives, I offered my personal views on Iraq, saying that I was opposed to an armed attack the United States was about to launch, and gave my reasons. Those statements went on record on the

American side, so I think that at least it became known that there were Japanese with different views. My American counterpart in the meeting was a high-ranking and influential government official, his subordinates were present, and the opening of hostilities was imminent. However, he did not simply retort that my view was absurd. He listened carefully to what I had to say and went on to explain his own view. His response made me envious of the United States, where debate can proceed calmly without getting emotional.

I thought from the outset and went on to argue in the media that should the United States choose the unfortunate option of war, Japan should fully back it up. The reason was simple: once the best-option—the removal of the threat of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons without war—became no longer viable, the only remaining options were either to criticize the United States, as did France—which was equivalent to supporting Saddam Hussein—or to support the United States.

In military terms, the United States won an overwhelming victory. Whether it is able to achieve the objectives of the war remains a question. Neither nuclear nor chemical/biological weapons have been discovered in Iraq. The United States may not be too concerned about this issue, since the major war objective shifted midway through the campaign to the elimination of the Saddam Hussein regime. The issue may not be put so easily to rest in other countries that supported the United States on the grounds that Iraq had to be rid of its weapons of mass destruction. It is my belief, nevertheless, that those weapons are still hidden somewhere in Iraq.

The United States had the further, strategic objectives of implanting a market economy in Iraq and giving it a new start as a democratic state. Unlike Afghanistan, which lacks economic resources, Iraq has the second largest reserves of oil of any country in the world. The Iraqi people, moreover, have been custodians of the bazaar economy since ancient times. They have a great talent for business. It has been difficult for a middle-class-dominant society to emerge in the Middle East because wealth is concentrated in a very small wealthy elite. Often there are no significant industries other than oil. If various industries can be fostered and a market economy successfully established in Iraq, a domino effect could spread market economics and democracy to neighboring countries as well. Naive as the idea may seem, this is the thinking of the United States. Instead of leaving Iraq alone as its people suffered under a cruel leader, the United States chose to start a war to liberate the Iraqi peo-

The United States may be unwilling to admit it, but poverty and the Palestinian issue are largely responsible for terrorism.

ple. In that sense, the war was a principle-based war for the United States, not a war to protect national interests or in quest of state hegemony.

Events may not unfold in accordance with the optimistic American scenario, however. Some of the Shiites, who form the majority of the Iraqi population, have already begun to assert an anti-American position. Internal troubles have also arisen between different Shiite groups. The United States probably has a geopolitical strategy of reconstructing Iraq into a powerful pro-American state to be included in the belt of pro-U.S. countries extending westward, including Jordan, Israel, and Egypt. If the United States fails to stabilize Iraq, however, radical factions might take power and join hands with Iran to form an anti-American zone. The formative process of a new Iraq in the coming months could shape the political configuration in the Middle East for several decades. The future of Iraq, in return, will determine the future of the world. The interests of Japan will be closely bound up with Iraq's reconstruction.

The View from the Mideast

For the past few months I have been involved in Mideast affairs as an advisor to Prime Minister Koizumi. I suggested he visit the Middle East as early as he could, and was delighted when he approved the idea. Joining me in urging a prime ministerial visit to the Middle East was Ando Hiroyasu, chief of the Foreign Ministry's Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau. A few years ago, when I was a special advisor to the prime minister on Okinawa affairs, Ando, then secretary of the prime minister Hashimoto Ryutaro, had been continually supportive as I grappled with the difficulties of my position. He very willingly agreed to team up with me in formulating a plan for a Koizumi visit to the Mideast.

Resolved that Koizumi's visit to Egypt and Saudi Arabia should succeed, I went to the Middle East in April and then again in May. I first stopped in Amman, Jordan. During my April visit, I met the foreign minister and other ministers involved in external relations. The fate of Jordan hinges on a resolution of the Palestinian issue. In charge of the Palestinian issue once during my service in foreign ministry, I knew full well that with a background history of two thousand years, it is perhaps the most difficult and acute in the whole world.

Recently, with Mahmoud Abbas elected Palestinian prime minister and a "road map" for peace formulated by the United States, it is said that Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations will move forward. In May, I went from Jordan to Palestine to see what was going on for myself. On my way to a meeting with Prime Minister Abbas, I witnessed the oppressive conditions of the Israeli occupation. I stated at various times during my trip that I thought "Israel is going too far." Soon after my return to Japan, the Israeli ambassador in Tokyo

paid a visit on me to protest my remarks. It was only natural for him to do that, considering his position.

One of the objectives of my May trip, however, was to see an influential former Iraqi leader, who had split with Saddam Hussein and had settled in Amman. I had been told in Japan that he wanted to contribute to the reconstruction of his homeland but that he was reluctant to work with the United States. Upon hearing that, I had decided that he might work with Japan. I had called him from Japan and received an appointment.

From London I flew to Amman. It was past 2:00 a.m. when I arrived at my hotel in Amman. I visited him at his home that morning. I would have to hurry directly to the airport after the meeting. I had only one hour to talk to him, and in that short time I had to see judge his personality and character and ask his cooperation. Someday I will be able to tell what we talked about. Among other things, I asked him for advice and cooperation in reconstructing Iraq.

I then flew to Cairo. Barely four weeks had passed since I had been there last. It was a holiday, and, having some extra time before an appointment, I hired a *felucca* (sailboat) to take me out along the Nile River coast. The Blue Nile and the While Nile, originating far to the south, join to create the great Nile, and the vast current flows slowly over the gradual plain to the sea. With only the boatman and me aboard, the boat moved out into the middle of the sedately flowing stream. Over the vast expanses of desert the skies were azure. The sails swelled soundlessly with the wind, and all was quiet save for the water lapping against the sides of the boat. For a moment I pondered the reasons I was so busily scurrying to and fro.

The peaceful Arab landscape notwithstanding, violence in the Middle East is a major factor behind instability elsewhere in the world. The United States may be unwilling to admit it, but poverty and the Palestinian issue are largely responsible for terrorism. Just look at the poverty. The disparity between rich and poor, I am convinced, is greatest anywhere in the world in China and the Middle East. In China,

there is an appalling and unattended gap between the upper class who make up one-fourth of the population and the lowest classes who comprise another one-fourth. In the Middle East a depressing gap yawns between a handful of wealthy families who dominate control of the country and the rest of the population.

As for the Palestinian issue, Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Hizbollah, the Abu Nidal Organization, the Palestine Liberation Front, etc. are all dedicat-



Okamoto suggested to Abul Naga, Egyptian minister of state in charge of economic cooperation, that Japanese aid be used to help bridge the gap between rich and poor in her country. On the table is a photograph showing her meeting with Prime Minister Koizumi.



Okamoto discussed ways Japan and Egypt could work together to support the reconstruction of Iraq with Egyptian Foreign Minister Maher.

ed to use terror to take back the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from Israel. Money from rich Saudis is being poured into these terrorist groups. *Madrasas* (Islamic schools) in Pakistan produce future terrorists in large numbers.

In almost all the Arab countries wealth is monopolized by the ruling class. This monopoly is all the more conspicuous in the oil-producing countries because oil revenues belong to the state, and thus are at the mercy of the ruling class.

The American grand plan to democratize Iraq is not going to be an easy job. It will be impossible to achieve real democratization without a fundamental change in the structure of income distribution. For the ruling class monopolizing both power and wealth, democratization is not friend, it is the enemy.

In April, in a meeting with Fayza Abul Naga, Egyptian minister of state in charge of economic cooperation, I suggested that Japanese aid be used to help bridge the gap between rich and poor in her country. My remark constituted a rather sensitive proposal that might have been considered interference in her country's domestic economic policy. However, she replied that she agreed, seriously responding to what I had to say.

“Japan-Arab Cooperation Support” Plan

I met also with Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher. His analysis of the Iraq situation was very persuasive. We talked again about how Japan and Egypt could work together to support the reconstruction of Iraq. The “Japan-Arab Cooperation Support” plan, which I have pursued with the approval of Prime Minister Koizumi, was what had brought me to Egypt.

As part of the effort to realize the plan, I visited a children's hospital in Cairo. Japan built the hospital in 1981 and has provided it with technical support over the last two decades. At the hospital, I was told, 300 doctors see 2,000 patients a day. Dr. Asem, the supervisor of this and twelve other hospitals affiliated with Cairo University, showed me around. I was impressed with the gentle looks and dedication of the doctors as they tended their patients, and with the nurses bustling about among sick children in their beds.

Over the years Japan has supported medical care in Egypt, the center of medicine in the Arab world. Japan has developed a close human network with pro-

professionals there. There is no reason why Egypt's medical professionals and high caliber of medical care they provide could not be put to use in the reconstruction of Iraq. I was told that a team of doctors from the children's hospital, unable to just stand by doing nothing, had gone as far as the national border of Iraq. They tried to offer medical care to Iraqi citizens, but had been refused entry and had had to return to Cairo. When I asked them if they would come with us Japanese to Iraq, they smiled, replying that "That is exactly what we would like to do."

On May 24 and 25, Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro visited Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It was a tough schedule. He was the first Japanese prime minister to visit the Middle East since Murayama Tomiichi's goodwill visit there in 1995. Koizumi's visit was not just to promote friendship but to give shape to Japan's Middle East policy, including the Palestinian issue, as well as policy on the reconstruction of Iraq. By helping improve relations between Iraq and the Arab countries, Japan can contribute greatly to the stabilization of Iraq.

Putting Goals First

There are two approaches to policymaking. One is to spread out all the existing tools on the desk, tools meaning laws, cabinet orders, cabinet ministers' replies to parliamentary interpellations, precedents, and so forth. You examine these existing frameworks and practices from various angles and then put them together to formulate a policy.

The other approach is to set your goals first. To achieve the goals you use everything available. If there are not enough tools that can be used or if some tools get in the way of what has to be done, you create new tools (including new laws if they are needed by all means). If there are no precedents you create precedents.

Arguments can be made for both approaches, and it may be said that neither is superior to the other. Problems arise when you stubbornly cling to only one of the two. For example, an organ of administration may be too stubborn to digress even an inch from rigid formality. (Recently, my brother, who practices law in New York, came all the way to Japan



Exploring the possibilities for collaboration between Japanese initiatives and doctors in Iraq, Okamoto toured a children's hospital in Cairo with Dr. Asem, the supervisor of this and twelve other hospitals affiliated with Cairo University.

to submit a document to the Legal Affairs Bureau. Because in this document he wrote New York in Japanese as “Nyu Yoku,” instead of the customary “Nyuyoku,” the document was not accepted. He wasted an entire day because he had to redo it all.) My point is that whatever the matter may be, it is always easy to find a pretext for not being able to do something. But policy, in my view, is something one forges in order to achieve a goal, it is something that should evolve while adapting to changing circumstances.

The same is true with foreign policy. We should establish our objectives and mobilize all possible administrative tools toward achieving those objectives. Numerous tasks, which may seem impossible at first, can be made possible with perseverance. When the highest-ranking political leader in the prime minister's office asked me to help him with the Iraq problem, I thought of what a tough job it would be. What in the world could I do? And especially when you are told to think up something new, you know that using only the existing tools will get you nowhere. I would have to think of objectives first.

What should Japan's objectives be? Ordinarily, there are long-term and mid-term objectives. The long-term objectives of Japan's Iraq policy should be formulated in realistic terms based on what Japan really aims for. If, for instance, the long-term objective is to stabilize the Middle East through the reconstruction of Iraq, it is indeed an objective shared by every country, but that objective alone is so broad that you cannot make specific, mid-term objectives toward that goal.

If a long-term objective is to prevent Iraq from becoming an anti-U.S. state founded on Islamic fundamentalism, then Japan's mid-term goals are first—though this may sound paradoxical—keep from following the U.S. line too

faithfully by pursuing an Iraq reconstruction policy peculiar to Japan, second, work together with Arab countries to assist in the Iraq reconstruction effort, and third, help unite Iraq with moderate Arab countries. Once such specific mid-term goals are agreed upon, we can work single-mindedly to attain the goals. If existing tools are not enough, we should create new tools, build new bridges to cross over, so to speak. This is the approach we must take today.

When I was living in the Middle East in my youth, I could drink local tap water without encountering difficulties. During my recent visit I did the same, only to develop diarrhea that continued to trouble me upon my return. In the past, I could cure myself with the Egyptian antidote—a strong cup of coffee laced with plenty of lemon juice—but apparently it no longer works with me. It is too bad that my body, softened by life in the relatively germ-free conditions in Japan, seems

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Toward Reconstruction Aid for Iraq

unfit for the rigors of the Middle East. Soon I will be returning, the bug still in my bowels. As they say, he who drinks the water of the Nile will return.

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