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Mathematical or statistical models are not utilized. Japanese economic and political factors were considered in the development of an argument that the Japanese government would be unlikely to provide authorization for a nuclear aircraft carrier to be homeported in Japanese waters.

Additionally, current forces already in the region can, with only slight modification, negate the strategic impact the loss of this platform would make to regional stability and security.

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A NUCLEAR AIRCRAFT CARRIER HOMEPORTED IN JAPAN: AN UNFEASIBLE REPLACEMENT

by

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A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personnel views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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A NUCLEAR AIRCRAFT CARRIER HOMEPORTED IN JAPAN: AN UNFEASIBLE REPLACEMENT

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Abstract

This research paper identifies the difficulties of determining the correct regional tailoring of aircraft carrier presence in the Western Pacific once the sole remaining conventionally powered aircraft carrier, the USS KITTYHAWK, is decommissioned in 2008.

Mathematical or statistical models are not utilized. Japanese economic and political factors were considered in the development of an argument that the Japanese government would be unlikely to provide authorization for a nuclear aircraft carrier to be homeported in Japanese waters.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report directs the Secretary of the Navy to increase the aircraft carrier battlegroup presence in the Western Pacific while exploring the options of homeporting an additional three to four surface combatants and a guided missile submarine to that area[i]. The current reality of the force structure in the Western Pacific is that in 2008 the venerable USS KITTY HAWK will be decommissioned (as was its predecessor USS INDEPENDENCE[ii]) and leave its homeport of Yokosuka Japan for the last time. This will signify the ending of a 35-year era in which a conventionally-powered carrier has been permanently stationed in Japan[iii] dutifully watching over the Western Pacific (WESTPAC).

On the surface the answer appears simple. The United States should designate another aircraft carrier to be sent as a replacement and the force structure maintained as it has been for the last 35-years. However, in the era of globalization, when the waters of a foreign military presence abroad seem calm, there are generally tumultuous undercurrents stirring just below the surface. Undercurrents such as Japanese national economic factors, internal Japanese political agendas, and the current regional forces already forward deployed demonstrate that permission for the United States to homeport a nuclear powered aircraft carrier in Japan will be diplomatically unachievable and strategically unnecessary.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Then Commander in Chief United States Pacific Command (CINCPAC), Admiral Dennis C. Blair, said it most succinctly: "if recent events in Asia have taught us anything, it has brought home the fact that economics and security affairs are part of a seamless web."[iv] Japan is in the midst of nearly 13 years of constant recession that has eroded public support for the government and dramatically shaken the foundations of Japanese business and banking[v]. While a foreign economy such as Japan being in recession is a reason for concern to global economists and foreign investors, due to the devaluation of the Yen and a weakening international stock trade, it is often difficult for the military officer to view Admiral Blair's quote in a context other than the military's responsibility for maintaining critical sea lines of communication (SLOCs) so that trade can continue to flow into the region. The complexities behind the Admiral's comments go quite deeper than maintaining a flow of oil through a SLOC. There are complex economic factors that will play a critical role in the diplomatic maneuverings to replace the USS KITTYHAWK.

First, the US and Japanese Security treaty is unique in that the Japanese are financially responsible for supporting United States forces in Japan through a Special Measures Agreement within this treaty[vi]. This monetary support pays for equipment, parts, fuel, transportation, repair and maintenance of all American forces deployed in Japan. In 1995 the total amount the Japanese government contributed was roughly 5 billion dollars[vii]. This figure equates to about 100,000 dollars per year for every American soldier, sailor, airman and marine in Japan[viii]. This cost for the current

'standing' forces is high and does not yet account for the additional millions a nuclear aircraft carrier would require.

A 1998 General Accounting Office (GAO) report cited that a shift to a NIMITZ class aircraft carrier would require several significant infrastructure improvements to the naval base in Yokosuka. Nuclear propulsion repair facilities must be created, utilities upgraded to support pierside carrier propulsion plant operations, 200 additional family housing units created, and environmentally impacting undersea dredging completed prior to 2008[ix]. The necessity for these improvements is made more complex by the fact that the city of Yokosuka abuts the base limiting the possibility for the base infrastructure to expand outward. These economic costs are likely more than the Japanese government can afford to spend given the state of their economy and, more emphatically, it is unlikely the Government has the level of domestic support necessary to be able to pass these costs on to the Japanese taxpayer.

Secondly, the United States has done little to correct the economic limitations that President Reagan placed on the Japanese in the 1980's. Early in the Reagan presidency Reaganomics (supply-side economics) was used to boost the lagging United States economy. What Reagan's policy actually did was enable foreign, but mostly Japanese corporations, to supply the American demand for automobiles, tools, consumer electronics and semiconductors at rates, costs and quality that rapidly outstripped American businesses. America's manufacturing sector responded by lobbying to have the United States Congress impose significant trade limitations which would restrict imports to significantly low numbers and placed incredibly high tariffs on what goods were still allowed to flow into the United States[x].

Japan naturally turned to the next largest market for consumer goods, the Soviet Union. Results of this shift had global implications. In 1987 the Japanese came underfire when Toshiba Machinery was found guilty of selling sophisticated tools to aid the Soviet Union's submarine fleet[xi]. As a result the Japanese suffered additional international export limitations further damaging their economy.

The last large consumer market available to the Japanese was one of the closest - China. Whereas exports to the U.S have remained fixed since 1990, the Japanese percentages of exports to China have taken step increases nearly every year, climbing 32.3 percent in 2002 alone[xii]. In 2002 the Japanese shipped 6.5 billion dollars in products to China nearly two-thirds of the value of the exports shipped to the U.S[xiii]. Toyota and Nissan are both producing automobiles in China and Sony has moved their entire Playstation 2® production to China[xiv]. Meanwhile Japanese tourist trips to China just recently outstripped the numbers taken to the United States[xv]. The implication of these economic numbers is the possibility that in the face of Chinese/Japanese trade cooperation, Japan could leverage the denial of homeporting of a nuclear aircraft carrier towards improved trade relations with China.

POLITICAL AGENDAS

The unlikely possibility of homeporting a nuclear aircraft carrier in Japan has been demonstrated by the complex economic relationships Japan maintains with the United States. This homeporting issue becomes even more uncertain in light of the political relationships between Japan and the United States. The political relationship between these two powers can be easily characterized as rife with complex nuances and

punctuated by brute force maneuvering. The current political relationship however, has received little media attention, yet is at a crucial crossroads for United States National Security policy. Two important factors go into this explanation: the historical traditions, specifically Article IX of the Japanese Constitution, from which the Japanese have evolved their views of national security; and secondly, the probable political entities the United States will have to negotiate to resolve the homeporting issue.

Only a few hundred days into the post-World War II occupation of Japan, General Douglas MacArthur instructed the Japanese Prime Minister Kijuro Shidehara that a new constitution would be written for Japan[xvi]. The first draft submitted several months later was, MacArthur felt, too similar to the original Meiji constitution that had been in existence since 1889[xvii]. So General MacArthur called his 27 man (civilian and military) occupation staff together, provided them with his personal margin notes and instructed them to draft a new constitution. Headed by General Courtney Whitney, the entire constitutional process took seven days (February 4th through the 13th, 1947) and has remained unchanged ever since. In comparison, the United States' Constitution of 1787 took 127 days to draft, was composed by fifty-five persons, and has been amended several times in the 216 years since.[xviii]

On May 3, 1947 both houses of the Japanese Diet ratified the new constitution. General MacArthur immediately went before the press and commended the Japanese government on their strong renouncement of war in Article IX. Ironically, this was the one article that General MacArthur specifically included and wrote word for word.

> Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes. In order to

> accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.[xix]

Only two other nations (Italy and Hungary) maintain similar clauses prohibiting belligerency[xx].

This article has framed the defense relationship between the United States and Japanese for the last fifty-six years and today impacts the Japanese Self-Defense Forces' participation in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Article IX is the key component in understanding the role Japan and the United States will cooperatively play both in the WESTPAC region and further abroad. This article (actually its interpretation by Japanese governmental leaders) has in the past permitted only Japanese monetary investment to international coalitions.

Called 'checkbook diplomacy', Japan has in the past been internationally rebuked for failing to act quickly on the international peace keeping scene. In 1991, the Japanese contributed 13 billion dollars to the support of allied forces in the Persian Gulf but did not send troops until two minesweepers were deployed long after hostilities had ceased[xxi]. A few years later the Japanese government passed the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Cooperation Law that allowed for Japanese Self-Defense troops to participate in a limited variety of U.N. peacekeeping missions[xxii]. Meanwhile, Japan has become the second largest contributor to the United Nations and has begun a campaign for its ninth bid to become the WESTPAC region's nonpermanent member of the United Nations Security Council[xxiii]. Most recently, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi authorized 500 Japanese soldiers to deploy to Iraq as peace keepers[xxiv]. This is a direct break with current Article IX interpretation and historical precedent. Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)

was not a United Nations sanctioned effort therefore a large number of Japanese people felt involvement in the conflict exceeded the Article IX bounds. Additionally, in 1999 several committees were established by the Japanese Diet to review the post-World War II constitution and report their findings and recommendations on possible amendments towards a more modern 'twenty-first century' approach. Results are due in the spring of 2005[xxv]. This upcoming report, coupled with an opinion poll conducted in January 2002 asking, "Should article IX be reviewed in light of Japan's commitment to contributing actively to making worldwide peace a reality?" of which 65 percent of the response was in the affirmative[xxvi] might indicate the political possibility of a more forward leaning Japanese defense policy less reliant on an unpopular homeporting of a nuclear aircraft carrier in Yokosuka.

The political entities that make up the Japanese system of government would at first glance not seem too difficult to understand. The incumbent Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was formed in 1954 as a coalition of conservative-reactionaries and, with the exception of one year in 1993, has driven the course of Japanese government[xxvii]. The LDP's political hegemony over Japan's political processes has lasted 50 years but cracks have recently begun to appear due to the lingering recession, widespread political corruption and a surge of Anti-Americanism. The LDP has been forced to rely on political coalitions to ensure that their majority is maintained[xxviii].

The current Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, has presided over this fragile coalition and still manages to maintain a strong relationship with President Bush. The Prime Minister faced his most daunting domestic clash when he recently dispatched elements of the Japanese Self-Defense force to Iraq[xxix] as mentioned before. This close

association with President Bush and the military efforts in Iraq has placed the Prime Minister's coalition government in a precarious position dependent on a successful outcome of the Iraq situation. Domestic opinion was against Japanese support of the United States efforts in Iraq and should Prime Minister Koizumi still be in power by 2008 another polarizing split with domestic opinion –homeporting a nuclear aircraft carrier- would be politically unfeasible given the LDP's shaky domestic hold.

The next likely political figure that the United States may have to deal with is the current governor of the rural Nagano Prefecture, forty-five year old Yasuo Tanaka[xxx]. Originally a writer, Tanaka entered politics following the Nagano Olympics of 1998 when the local LDP government was mired in a $12.5 billion debt[xxxi] and the region was awash in bureaucratic turmoil. Announcing his candidacy just five weeks before the election, Tanaka won the governorship on a green platform of tightened environmental controls, balanced budgets, and antinuclear peace movement[xxxii]. Upsetting the bureaucratic applecart of the LDP with his grassroots citizen movements, Tanaka was given a vote of no confidence by the LDP controlled assembly on July 5, 2002[xxxiii]. Rather than resign, Tanaka called for new elections and won an even more decisive victory than his first election. Eighty percent of the voters turned out and his margin of victory was over two to one[xxxiv]. Tanaka's reforms have begun to win him national support and, given the timeline towards 2008, make him a possible coalition Prime Minister candidate. Tanaka's current politics would make him an unlikely supporter of a nuclear powered aircraft carrier being homeported in Japan.

The last political player in contention for the future role of Prime Minister is perhaps the most anti-American, bombastic, yet likely potential candidate –Shintaro

Ishihara. An outspoken opponent of the current Prime Minister Koizumi, Ishihara is undoubtly Japan's most dominant neonationalist and xenophobe[xxxv]. Ishihara espouses a platform of Japanese nationalism as well as the elimination of any American influence on Japanese foreign policy. He is ardently outspoken against America's global influence as well[xxxvi]. Ishihara was originally a writer/media mogul who rose to power within the LDP until breaking with the party. Ishihara is in his second term as governor of Tokyo and in 2001 was asked to form a coalition of conservatives to become the new Prime Minister. He eventually declined allowing the current Prime Minister Koizumi to take power[xxxvii]. Ishihara has spoken vehemently against the United States and would provide no assistance in expanding our interests or forces in the region much less support the homeporting of a nuclear aircraft carrier in Japan. Should the Japanese economy not improve and the Koizumi coalition break apart Ishihara would be the most likely person to form a new coalition and ascend to the Prime Ministership.

To date, the Department of State has merely noted that the entry of nuclear powered ships into Japan remains sensitive and that there "would have to be careful consultations with the Government of Japan should the United States Government wish to homeport a nuclear-powered carrier in Japan."[xxxviii] This is a dramatic understatement of the actual political/diplomatic conditions that exist in Japan today and for the foreseeable future.

STRATEGIC FORCES IN THE REGION

Since 1973,[xxxix] Commander, Seventh Fleet and, more strategically, the President of the United States, have enjoyed the flexibility for regional response provided by a

conventionally powered aircraft carrier homeported in the challenging WESTPAC region. Undeniably a cornerstone of the United States forward presence policy the question of 'Where is the nearest aircraft carrier?' has become a reflexive response in today's crisis driven international environment. Traditionally the first force component of any Joint Task Force into a region, the Carrier Strike Group (CSG) can quickly establish local air and maritime superiority to support follow-on Joint Task Force (JTF) Commander's operational movements. Tradition and transformation however, are generally not able to coexist in the current defense environment. The Department of Defense's transformation policy in the WESTPAC region is simplified when all the other regional force assets are considered in light of the economic and political limitations already discussed.

A replacement for the USS KITTYHAWK would have been straightforward if another conventionally powered aircraft carrier had been built as some future carrier production plans recommended. These alternative propulsion plans did not materialize and Admiral Rickover's specter and prophetic words regarding nuclear propulsion remain powerful and accurate to this day.

> Nuclear power on surface warships gives them the ability to operate continuously at high speed; this affords them the protection not available to non-nuclear ships. This could mean the difference between victory and defeat in battle. As the number of our advance bases decreases and the size of the fleet continues to shrink, the need for ships independent of the logistical umbilical cord for oil will continue to increase.[xl]

Strategically, the Department of Defense's 'regionally tailored forces' can accomplish the mission of deterring forward[xli] without a nuclear carrier homeported in Japan.

The United States maintains a robust presence of forces in the WESTPAC region as a result of the United States and Japanese Security Treaty – a direct reflection on Article IX of the Japanese Constitution which implicitly obligated the United States to help defend the Japanese homeland. Specifically, Commander, Seventh Fleet maintains a complete Carrier Strike Group (CSG) and the principal components of an Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG). In total over 17 ships are permanently forward deployed in Japan[xlii]. For combatant ships,these include the USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19), USS Vincennes (CG 49), USS Cowpens (CG 63), USS Chancellorsville (CG 62), USS Curtis Wilber (DDG 54), USS John S. McCain (DDG 56), USS O'Brien (DD 975), USS Cushing (DD 985), USS Gary (FFG 51), USS Vandegrift (FFG 48), USS Essex (LHD 2), USS Juneau (LPD 10), USS Germantown (LSD 42) and USS Fort McHenry (LSD 43). This maritime component is augmented with the presence of the Carrier Air Wing Five in Atsugi as well as the frequent presence of other CSGs transiting through the Western Pacific (WESTPAC) region enroute to duty under the Commander, Fifth Fleet, the regional commander in the Persian Gulf. A standard 14-16 knot speed of advance allows transiting CSG's to spend 30 days each direction (arriving and departing from the Persian Gulf) under the operational control (OPCON) of Commander, Seventh Fleet[xliii]. This 60-day transit period is an integral transformation piece of our 'regionally tailored forces'. Theoretically, it is impossible to plan these transits around the times a regional crisis might occur but this 'free' presence taken in concert with the other regional forces demonstrates the lack of strategic necessity for homeporting a nuclear aircraft carrier in Japan.

The United States Air Force is strongly represented as well with several squadrons on the ground in Northern Japan. Specifically, the 18th Wing is forward deployed to Kadena with two squadrons of F-16s. The 374th Airlift Wing is forward deployed in Yokota, Japan providing necessary lift assets.

The Army maintains a smaller presence with United States Army Japan (USARJ) maintaining a small support group of 'boots on the ground' at Camp Zama, Japan. A much more impressive Army presence is maintained by the Eighth Army in Korea as part of our commitment to the security and defense of South Korea.

The Marine Corps has maintained a Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF) forward deployed and permanently based in Okinawa for many years. This 24,000 strong force can be used in a variety of ways through its air, ground, and logistical components. The Okinawa Marines of III MEF remain linked to the ESG ships homeported in Yokosuka for their transportation throughout the region in the event of crisis.

These individual component groups and their combined joint capabilities demonstrate a sincere commitment of the United States to meet the promises of the 2001 QDR to "assure our allies of the United States steadfastness of purpose and its capability to fulfill its security commitments."[xliv] However examples of "disjointness" have threatened these forces. The diplomatic leverage conserved by not expending efforts to replace USS KITTYHAWK, can be applied in these areas to maintain our forward forces.

EXAMPLES OF "DISJOINTNESS"

Over the last several years little has been reported by the media regarding US forces in Japan other than the sensational problems associated with military units

stationed in the region. These tragic events diminish our national credibility and can threaten the political standing of local politicians who support the United States. On Okinawa, several rapes over the last few years have garnered significant media attention. Rapes in 1995, 2001 and 2003, and on more than one occasion, the blundering comments on these cases by senior military officers, have polarized the Okinawans against those forces stationed on the island.

The Air Force and Navy have also come under increasing scrutiny as greater and greater restrictions have been placed on flight operations from their respective bases. Noise reduction efforts during routine operations, night flight restrictions, and air traffic limitations have hampered the successful completion of operational training requirements.[xlv]

Overall, the presence of a conventionally powered aircraft carrier in Japanese waters has been no less diplomatically bothersome than the Marines in Okinawa or the F-16s in Kadena[xlvi]. However, given the Japanese feelings towards nuclear power experts have noted that when the USS KITTYHAWK must be replaced it is unlikely that the Japanese public and government support can be expected to continue forever[xlvii].

RECOMMENDATIONS

None of the following recommendations discount the strategic value of an aircraft carrier or the joint flexibility a platform this large provides the JTF commander. Simply stated the assertion not to replace the USS KITTYHAWK with a nuclear aircraft carrier is grounded in the reality of the transformation our regionally homeported forces will soon undergo. Recommendations are provided that directly support the 2001 QDR's

policy shift to the creation of a "new planning construct that calls for maintaining regionally tailored forces forward stationed and deployed…to assure allies and friends, counter coercion, and deter aggression against the United State, its forces, allies and friends."[xlviii]

The first recommendation is to augment the already existing ESG with an even more robust aviation (fixed wing) component. This would be accomplished by the addition of another large-deck aviation capable amphibious ship that can provide the Combatant Commander (COCOM) or JTF Commander with a greater capability to project local air superiority into a crisis within the region.

Secondly, it is recommended that the forward-based Air Force fighter squadrons be augmented with an increased number of organic tanking assets. These tanker assets, forward deployed in Singapore or Japan, would facilitate the ability of the COCOM or JTF Commander to range his land based fighter support when other joint assets could not provide immediate air superiority.

Lastly, pursue other forward basing opportunities to include completion of pier and infrastructure upgrades in Singapore that will welcome NIMITZ class carriers[xlix]. Pearl Harbor also represents a viable alternative that can facilitate a more forward presence while shortening transit time from the mainland of the United States.

CONCLUSIONS

In conducting research to determine if a nuclear powered is necessary to meet the demands of the United States and her allies in the WESTPAC region it is clearly evident that too high a political cost will be leveled for a marginal strategic gain that can already

be achieved by other methods. Economically, Japan is not in a position to support the increased costs either from an infrastructure improvement position or from potential lost trade revenue with China. Politically, Japan's long standing political hegemon, the LDP cannot maintain a fragile coalition government that has generally been supportive of the United States under new requests for the stationing of a nuclear powered aircraft carrier. More importantly, the potential list of future political leaders already opposed to U.S. influence will have their anti-American agendas advanced should we not compromise on the presence of a nuclear powered aircraft carrier. Finally, the robust forces already present in the region along with a potentially less carrier centric role of the United States in the Persian Gulf should allow for the transformation away from homeporting an aircraft carrier in Japan with negligible impact on the regions stability, the region's Joint forces capabilities, or the United States commitment to Japanese Security.

ENDNOTES

[i] QDR, September 30, 2001, Page 27.
[ii] Davis, Aircraft Carriers and the Role of Naval Power in the Twenty First Century, Page 12.
[iii] Chap. 4, Page 100, GAO/NSIAD-98-1 Nuclear Carrier Cost Effectiveness report
[iv] Blair, 1999 USCINCPAC Asia-Pacific Economic Update.
[v] www.cnn.com, 14 June 2001 and 9 December 2001
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[vii] Slocomb, Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) 7 May 1998 on www.usembassy.state.gov
[viii] Ibid
[ix] Chap. 4, Page 101, GAO/NSIAD-98-1 Nuclear Carrier Cost Effectiveness report
[x] Nathan, Japan Unbound, Page 236
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[xii] Ibid, Page 244.
[xiii] Ibid, Page 244
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[xv] Ibid, Page 246
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[xvii] Nathan, Japan Unbound, Page 161.
[xviii] Finn, Winners in Peace, Page 95.
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[xxi] Kitamura, Yale International Forum, Spring 1997
[xxii] Ibid
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[xxv] Nathan, Japan Unbound, Page 167.
[xxvi] Ibid, Page 167.
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[xxxii] Ibid, Page 204.
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[xxxiv] Ibid, Page 224.
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[xxxvi] Ibid, Pages 180-192
[xxxvii] Ibid, Page 200.
[xxxviii] Chap. 4, Page 101, GAO/NSIAD-98-1 Nuclear Carrier Cost Effectiveness report
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[xl] Lehman, 1978, Aircraft Carriers: The Real Choices, Page 51.
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[xlii] Seventh Fleet Website. www.c7f.navy.mil
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[xliv] QDR, September 30, 2001, Page III
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[xlvi] Ibid
[xlvii] Ibid
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