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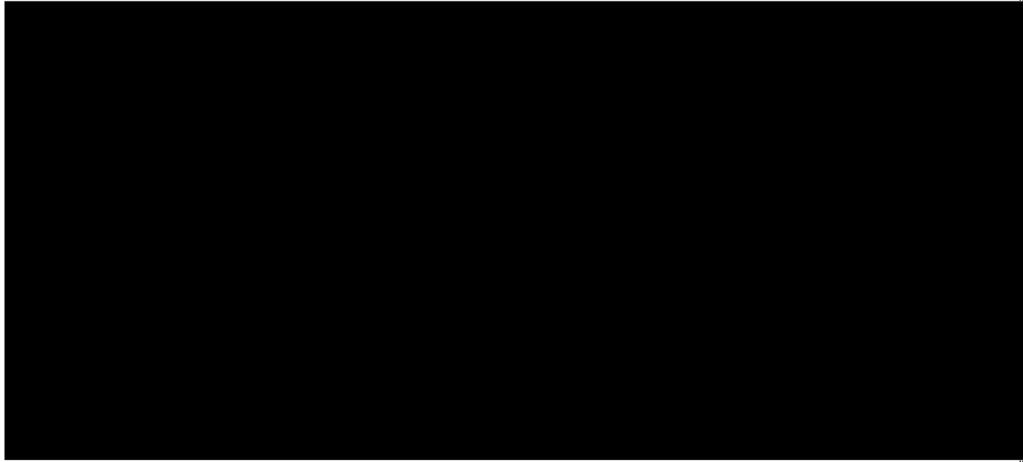
## Japan's Changing Relations With China and the USSR

### Overview

Japan's tilt toward China and away from the USSR over the past decade portends a fundamental shift in the strategic equilibrium in Northeast Asia. Tokyo can no longer plausibly claim—as it did in the mid-1970s—to be pursuing an evenhanded policy toward the two Communist powers. Instead, Tokyo is steadily weaving closer ties with Beijing, while its relations with Moscow have cooled considerably.

Barring unexpected changes in the determinants shaping Tokyo's policy, Soviet-Japanese relations probably will remain cool through at least the mid-1980s. Sino-Japanese relations, on the other hand, probably will continue to grow stronger. On the assumption that this will take place in a context of continued coolness in US-Soviet relations, a healthy US-Japan alliance, and further improvement in Sino-US relations, the Soviet Union will find itself increasingly isolated in Northeast Asia.

This does not mean that Japan desires to align itself with China against the Soviet Union or to adopt an antagonistic stance toward that country. The Japanese Government believes that either policy would endanger national security and will be careful that the realignment does not proceed too far. Particularly in areas of Soviet sensitivity, Tokyo will resist pressure to make its policies conform to those of Beijing. Moreover, Japan is likely to experience frustration in its economic dealings with China and to retain a lively interest in stable, if not greatly expanded, trade with the USSR.



Nonetheless, Tokyo has decided that its policies cannot remain unaffected by the policies that China and the Soviet Union adopt toward Japan. China has demonstrated that it desires good relations with Japan, but the Soviet

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Union has been unwilling to take the steps that Tokyo believes are necessary to improve bilateral relations and objects to friendly relations between Japan and China. Moreover, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has heightened Japanese concerns about Soviet foreign and defense policies. As a result, Tokyo has decided to consolidate the link with Beijing and wait for Moscow to indicate an interest in negotiating a reasonable settlement of their outstanding issues.

