Responsibility and Remembrance

Finally, what might follow from Japan's participation in the U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq? As **Michael Penn** observes, the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* was one of the few media organizations continuously asking tough questions of Japan and America in the lead-up to the flawed intervention in Iraq. In **"Japan On the Fifth Anniversary of the Iraq War,"** Penn introduces *Asahi* reporter Sato Taketsugu's commentary that Japan needs to re-evaluate its decision to send troops to Iraq before engaging in any more permanent SDF missions. Japanese leaders initially went along with America's rationale that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction because, like other members of the "coalition of the willing," they wanted to support the U.S.-Japan alliance. But Japan "certainly bears a part of the blame for supporting this war," given that there were no WMDs. Sato argues that Japan should reflect on that error as well as seek cooperation with a wider range of the international community to combat terror. Penn offers his commentary next to Sato's, written after the Japanese withdrawal from Iraq, noting that

Iraqis held mostly positive impressions of Japan's activities there. However, citing several examples of mismanagement of funds and the lack of a long-term meaningful commitment to Iraq, he concludes that the SDF mission, like Japan's Iraq policy generally, might have been "hollow at the core."

Japan On the Fifth Anniversary of the Iraq War
Michael Penn and the Asahi Shinbun
March 3, 2008
http://apjjf.org/-Michael-Penn-Asahi/2705/article.html

We have recently crossed the five-year mark since the American invasion of Iraq. President George W. Bush used the occasion to triumphantly declare that, due to his decision to invade, 'the world is better, and the United States of America is safer.'

In Japan, the Asahi Shinbun appears virtually alone in using this occasion to reflect upon the Iraq War. For all its pro-war cheerleading, the Yomiuri Shinbun did not even see fit to produce an English-language editorial on the subject. The Foreign Ministry offered no statement either. Iraq shattered and dying? Hmm, that's too bad -- just so long as it doesn't die on the streets of Tokyo.

Among the political parties, only the Japan Communist Party seems to have marked the anniversary on their webpage. They also called for a small demonstration in the capital.

When a reporter asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs press secretary to comment, he simply talked about the great political progress made in Iraq balanced against a tough humanitarian situation. He then briefly outlined the assistance that the Japanese government

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