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Securing Japan: The Current Discourse

Abstract: A debate over grand strategy is underway in Japan, and its terms are familiar. Like their nineteenth- and twentieth-century predecessors, Japanese security planners choose between economic and military instruments, between hard and soft power, among alliance partners, and for or against construction of multilateral security regimes. The revisionists who came to power in the early 2000s may supplant the Yoshida Doctrine with one of their own. Many are critical of the U.S. alliance and eager to achieve greater sovereignty, but few advocate a complete break. All agree that a nondemocratic China is inimical to Japanese interests. The “middle power” road—amended to allow a fuller hedge against Chinese power and American decline—is in the offing.

There are few truly new ideas about how nations can protect themselves. Each country is armed with its military, its diplomats, its mix of resources, its ambition, and its wits. The rest is, as ever, derivative. This is why students studying international relations, diplomacy, and national security are still required to read The Peloponnesian War by Thucydides, The Art of War by Sun Tzu, and Machiavelli’s Prince. Ideas about strategy endure because geography, demography, and technology endure as constraints on the ability of leaders to make their peoples prosperous and safe. But if there are few original ideas about strategy, there are limitless combinations of existing ones. Because the balance among constraints is always in motion—and because the power of neighbors rises and falls—new circumstances always await the application of old ideas. Contexts change, but ideas endure.

So it has been with Japan. If there are few original ideas about Japanese strategy, there has always been debate about choice among conventional ideas. There is nothing Japan’s leaders could do to change their location as an archipelago at the edge of a massive continent, but they could debate whether Japan should be a maritime or a continental power. There is little they could do to manufacture natural resources, but they could debate how to acquire

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(or substitute for) raw materials cheaply and safely. Having embarked on industrialization before their neighbors, they might not wish to narrow the developmental distance, but they could debate whether Japan would be more secure as an Asian power or as a Western one. Once developed, moreover, there was the question of sizing Japan for the current world order. Should Japan be a big country or a small one? Should it seek military autonomy or rely upon allies? Is technoeconomic autonomy within its grasp or is it chimera? Should wealth or military strength be Japan's national priority?

These contending preferences have seemed historically consistent. “Asianists” and “nationalists” have long argued with “liberals” and “internationalists.” Whether from militarists in the 1920s or from Nihonjinron intellectuals in the 1980s, “nativism” has always attracted a following. Japanese liberals have been debating the merits of economic security for generations. The enemies of liberalism—both on the left and on the right—have been connected across the 1930s to the 1960s. The Asianism of Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintaro—who has advocated using Japanese culture to displace U.S. influence in Asia—connects back to the similarly blunt and accessible views of the Shōwa Kenkyūkai in the 1930s. Direct lines have been drawn from Fukuzawa Yukichi’s liberal internationalism in the 1880s to Ozawa Ichirō’s a century later. The ideas of liberal internationalists who first argued that Japan would be safest as a small maritime trading nation in the early twentieth century inspired the Yoshida Doctrine that governed Japan’s security choices during the cold war. This economics-first national security strategy was modeled on the one that prevailed in the 1920s but was abandoned in the 1930s–40s. Liberal internationalism has been an important security option for generations. The same is true of technonationalism, a preference of many from the Meiji period to the present.

Even if ideas are connected across time, however, changes in world order often skew their applications. For example, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Asianism shares less with twenty-first-century Asianism than the mutual label suggests. During the Meiji period, Asianism often expressed

1. I. I. Morris, Nationalism and the Right Wing in Japan: A Study of Post-war Trends (London: Oxford University Press, 1960). See also Yomiuri shinbun, December 1, 2005, for a comparison of reform bureaucrats (kakushin) during Konoye Fumimaro’s ascendance in the 1930s to the reformism (kaikaku) of Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō 70 years later.
5. Koschmann, “Asianism’s Ambivalent Legacy,” and Sven Saaler, Politics, Memory and Public Opinion: The History Textbook Controversy and Japanese Society (Tokyo: Monographien aus dem Deutschen Institut für Japanstudien, 2005), explore these connections and
opposition to the state. By the 1920s it had taken on a racialist, antiwhite tone, whereas in the 1960s it was common ground for neutralists on both the left and the right. Today, Asianism is a strategy for balancing against excessive U.S. power, as is nationalism. In the prewar period, liberal and nativist variants took turns dominating the national security agenda. After the war, anti-American and anti-Soviet nationalists both argued for Japanese leadership of Asia, and today these disparate groups hold common views of how the U.S. alliance deprives Japan of its national sovereignty. In short, Japanese security thinking is, as ever, rife with variety. This essay explores how this variety reflects (and morphs) long-held preferences by examining the contemporary security debate in two specific contexts: the history issue and the base issue.

*The Landscape*

In the early twenty-first century, there remain strong differences within the chattering classes about how Japan should provide for its security. These differences are not simple matters of left versus right. Nor do they strictly reflect party or other institutional affiliations. For example, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) supports the U.S. alliance unconditionally but is divided on how to deal with Asia, whereas the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) is unified on regional integration but divided on the alliance. Moreover, the contemporary discourse about Japanese grand strategy provokes strange—and shifting—bedfellows. Heirs to prewar nativism share antipathetic views of the U.S. alliance with heirs of the old left. Today’s small Japanists and big Japanists agree that the alliance matters but disagree fundamentally on how much Japan should pay for its maintenance—and whether part of that cost should include Japan’s becoming “normal.” The deck is reshuffled on the issue of accommodation with China. Bureaucrats interested in security issues are more likely U.S.-oriented; economic bureaucrats tend to be Asia-oriented. But this rule of thumb is by no means ironclad.

The security policy preferences of contemporary Japanese scholars, commentators, politicians, and bureaucrats can be sorted along two axes (see Figure 1). The first is a measure of the value placed on the alliance with the United States. At one extreme is the view that the United States is Japan’s most important source of security and must be embraced. On this account, the extent of U.S. power and the limits of Japanese capabilities are central, and the strategic importance of the alliance for Japan’s security is paramount.

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U.S. bases in Japan are critical to any coherent national security strategy. At the other extreme is the view that in a unipolar world, the United States is a particularly dangerous bully that must be kept at great distance, for fear that Japan will become entangled in American adventures. The presence of U.S. bases makes entanglement all the more likely. Located in the middle are those who want Japan to rebalance Asian and American relationships more effectively. They are attracted to the idea of building regional institutions but are not yet prepared to let go of America. This first axis, then, is a surrogate measure of the dangers of abandonment and entanglement. Those with a high tolerance for the former are willing to keep a greater distance from the United States than are those with a higher tolerance for the latter.

Those with a high tolerance for entanglement are not all oriented toward the status quo, however. They are divided by the second axis—the willingness to use force in international affairs. Critics maintain that, stripped to its essence, the idea of a “normal nation” simply means a nation that can go to war. Whether the valence is militarist or neutral, debate over the legality and efficacy of use of force has been a ubiquitous part of the Japanese discourse.

**Figure 1**
The New Discourse

**Use of Force Is Okay**

**Neoautonomists**
Heirs to nativists
Seeking autonomy through military strength
(Ishihara, Nishibe, Nakanishi, Kobayashi)

**Normal Nation-alists**
Heirs to Big Japanists
Seeking prestige through military strength
(Koizumi, Abe, Ishiba, Ozawa)

**Pacifists**
Heirs to unarmed neutralists
Seeking autonomy through prosperity
(Socialist Party, Communist Party)

**Middle-Power Internationalists**
Heirs to Small Japanists
Seeking prestige through prosperity
(Kōno, Terashima, Miyazawa)

**No Use of Force**

for more than half a century, invariably evoking questions of how to understand modern history. After the war, Japanese strategy shifted from the view that force was an instrument of great powers to one that rejected it altogether. Since that time, those who preferred the literal interpretation of Article 9 and those who have endeavored to loosen its constraints have contended for power within the LDP. Support for revision of Article 9, for Japan to assume a more proactive and global defense posture, for the integration of forces with the U.S. military, and for the dispatch of Self Defense Forces (SDF) abroad are all measures of where one stands on this second axis. Because the difference between a great power and a small power is the willingness to use force, moreover, they also define competing Japanese national identities.

Some who support the U.S. alliance are willing to deploy the SDF to “share alliance burdens.” They wish Japan to become a great power again and are associated with the idea that Japan should become “normal.” In the view of these “normal nation-alists,” the statute of limitations for Japan’s mid-twentieth-century aggression expired long ago; it is time for Japan to step onto the international stage as an equal of the United States. They believe that military strength is the way to prestige, their prime value. Opposing them are “middle-power internationalists,” who believe that Japan must remain a small power with self-imposed limits on its right to belligerency. Japan’s contributions to world affairs should remain nonmilitary. They believe that prosperity is the way to prestige.

Among those who prefer Japan to keep a greater distance from the United States are “neoautonomists” who would build an independent, full-spectrum Japanese military that could use force, and “pacifists” who eschew the military institution altogether. The former believe that military strength is the way to autonomy, their prime value, whereas the latter, who share that prime value, believe that prosperity is the best way to achieve it. All four groups seek security for Japan, but each closely associates security with a different value: neoautonomists seek security with sovereignty, pacifists security with peace. “Normal nation-alists” want security with equality, middle power internationalists seek security through prosperity.

After briefly examining two issues central to any substantive discourse on contemporary Japanese security policy, I explore these views and the relationships among those who hold them. As we shall see, while their discourse is often incongruent, it is more animated than when the Yoshida consensus was most robust, and possibilities for a new grand strategic consensus are improving.

**History**

History, as an active instrument of regional diplomacy, has become an outsized presence in Japan’s relationships with its neighbors. Indeed, the
health of Japan’s bilateral relationships—particularly with the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC)—can be measured by the salience of what Tessa Morris-Suzuki has called “the unresolved problems of historical responsibility.” The list of these problems—virtually all derived from Japan’s imperial expansion in the early-to-mid-twentieth century—is a long one. It includes but is not limited to: the role of the Japanese emperor in encouraging imperial expansion; the nature and social consequences of the colonization of Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria; Japanese denials of the Nanjing massacre; the use of sex slaves by the Japanese military; corvee labor in Japanese mines and factories during the war; the disputed legitimacy of the Tokyo War Crimes Trial; the nuances and frequency of official apologies for Japanese aggression; Japanese textbook revision; and the politicization of Yasukuni Shrine. Nothing about the conflict between 1931 and 1945 is uncontested, not even now that fewer than 10 per cent of living Japanese experienced it. Some Japanese speak of the “Fifteen Year War” (Jügonen Sensō), others of the “Greater East Asia War” (Dai Tō-A Sensō), and still others use the “Pacific War” (Taiheiyo Sensō). In August 2006, the Yomiuri shinbun renamed it the “Showa War.” Was it a war of liberation, of aggression, or of survival? Little has been resolved.

The most prominent physical manifestation of this irresolution is the handsome Yasukuni Shrine compound in central Tokyo. Completed in 1872, the shrine and its priests benefited from the privileged position of Shintō that began during the Meiji period. With each new conquest, the souls of fallen soldiers (and military nurses as well as some colonials) were enshrined as deities (saijin) to glorify both the emperor and the Japanese military. Recruits en route to the battlefields of Asia promised one another they would meet again at Yasukuni. Over time, the compound acquired an extraordinary collection of the accoutrements of war. Swords, cannons, artillery, even fighter planes, locomotives, and bloodied battle flags stand on the grounds of the shrine in mute tribute to the fallen. A museum, the Yushukan, was built to house this collection and to tell the story of Japan’s modern military from a revisionist perspective. Until the end of the war, the shrine and the museum were uncontroversial adjuncts of the Japanese state.

8. Bungei Shunju, ed., Nihon no ronten: 2006, devotes a large section to the contemporary debate on these issues.
Even since Article 20 of the Japanese constitution expressly separated church and state (seikyō bunri), Yasukuni Shrine has remained Japan’s de facto official war memorial. The Ministry of Health and Welfare supplied biographical information to shrine officials for all war veterans—and even for SDF troops. Virtually every postwar prime minister, regardless of political orientation, visited Yasukuni while in office—including the mainstream Yoshida Shigeru (10 times) and the antimainstream Nakasone Yasuhiro (11 times). In October 1978, however, the priests at Yasukuni secretly enshrined 14 Class A war criminals, including General Tojo Hideki. By honoring rather than just mourning fallen soldiers—and by identifying more than one thousand “martyrs of Showa” who were in their view “cruelly and unjustly tried as war criminals by a sham-like tribunal of the allied forces”—Yasukuni became a lightning rod for historical memory. Nearly 60 per cent of Chinese believe that Yasukuni is a “symbol of militarism,” whereas two-thirds of the Japanese see it as “a place to mourn the war dead,” which is why official visits by Japanese prime ministers meet with such controversy. Indeed, a great many Japanese are troubled by these visits as well. By November 2005, after Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō’s fifth official visit, there had been 11 separate Japanese court rulings on the issue, including several that declared the visits illegal. Yasukuni is about far more than the enshrinement of soldiers’ souls. It is a barometer of one’s view of the colonial experiences of China and Korea and, by implication, of history and politics more generally.

Another barometer is history textbooks. Little has been more incendiary in the relationship between former combatants than how their battles are explained to subsequent generations. Some countries have found it helpful to establish joint textbook commissions; France and Germany even agreed on a common textbook to be used in both countries. Japan and its neighbors have never found such deep reconciliation. Instead, they have battled endlessly—and without closure—on the basic facts of the last century. In June 2005, a joint study team of Korean and Japanese historians issued its report on interpretations of the past. The group was established after the ROK protested certification by Japanese authorities of a revisionist textbook prepared by the private Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (Atarashii Kyōkasho o Tsukurukai). The joint commission could not agree

12. See Miura, Yasukuni jinja, p. 36, and Bungei Shunju, ed., Nihon no ronten: 2006, p. 239, for the list of all postwar visits by Japanese prime ministers.
on the fundamentals for a common narrative: the Japanese side insisted that annexation of Korea in 1910 was in accordance with international law, but the Korean side argued it was under threat of force. The historians could not agree on why Korea was invaded—to block Russian expansion or to control the Korean people—and left the table without any prospect of returning to the effort. Similar initiatives between China and Japan have never proceeded even this far.

**Bases**

Japanese culpability is not the only unresolved corner of Northeast Asian history. By the early 2000s, a growing number of Japanese, and not just those on the left, had begun to interrogate American and Soviet war guilt. Serious questions began to surface concerning the justice with which the United States prosecuted its war with Japan and the fairness of the post-war settlement. In an op-ed article in the *Wall Street Journal* on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the war, journalist Matsuo Fumio argued that there had been “no true closure with the [United States] over World War II” and asked Americans to consider apologizing for the indiscriminate incineration of civilians in Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. Films, novels, and cartoons have examined the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, the firebombing of Tokyo, and Soviet prisoner-of-war camps. In August 2005 the Society of Bereaved Families of Victims of the Tokyo Air Raids filed a class-action suit—the first such litigation ever—to demand compensation and an apology. Its complaint is aimed at the Japanese government but has wider implications. The problems associated with “victor’s justice” have begun to gain traction.

The network of U.S. military bases in Japan is the most salient physical manifestation of that justice, and it is central to contemporary security politics in Japan. Today, U.S. Forces Japan have exclusive right to over 300 square kilometers of land, three-quarters of it in Okinawa, Japan’s most southern prefecture. The bases are a declaration of American victory and a reminder of Japan’s unconditional surrender. It is impossible to ignore their implications. Every Japanese political party, from the communists to the LDP, has called for a reduction in the “base burden” if not for an outright elimination of the facilities altogether, and even former Japan Defense Agency (JDA) officials rail against U.S. extraterritorial privilege. Under the headline “Tired of Military Presence,” the editorialist Hanai Kiroku


wrote in October 2005: “Nationalism is rising in Japan these days. Although it is correctly directed mainly at China and South Korea, America could become a new target of Japanese nationalism if the base relocation issue becomes complicated.”  

It is no surprise that, asked to identify the single most difficult problem for the future of the U.S.-Japan alliance, former JDA Director General Ohno Yoshinori immediately declared “the occupation-era base structure.” He insists that a new Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) needs to be negotiated.  

This view has long been widely held in Japan. The base arrangement was first negotiated in 1951, when Japan was still under U.S. occupation. Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru offered the U.S. military a Japanese home in exchange for the 1951 peace treaty returning sovereignty. From the outset, however, this arrangement rankled conservatives and progressives alike. In 1960, Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke arranged for a revision of the treaty to reduce the extraterritorial privileges of U.S. forces. Article 6 of the revised treaty provides “the use of facilities and areas in Japan” by the U.S. armed forces “for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East.” The accompanying SOFA stipulates responsibilities for the maintenance of facilities and legal jurisdictions in the event of accidents or crimes by U.S. military personnel (both have occurred with uncomfortable frequency). The National Police Agency investigated nearly 3,000 criminal cases involving U.S. military personnel between 1989 and 2004, including 14 murders and 323 cases of group violence. Not surprisingly, many made the headlines, especially after 1995, when three U.S. Marines raped a young Japanese girl in Okinawa.

The pollution issue is only slightly less volatile. The U.S. military is seen as Japan’s largest polluter. Japanese citizens cannot sue the United States for abatement of noise pollution, however, because U.S. forces enjoy sovereignty on their bases. Thus they have no recourse but to file lawsuits in Japanese courts to seek redress, an act that is similarly inefficacious. Local officials have even less jurisdiction vis-à-vis base issues than does the central government. National associations of governors and mayors from

20. The full text of the treaty is at http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html, accessed August 22, 2006. Shimaguchi “Zainichi Beigun kichi o meguru shomondai,” p. 16, argues vigorously that Article 6 is the source of continued extraterritorial privilege for U.S. forces. (Shimaguchi is the former director general of the Defense Facilities Administration.)
the prefectures that host U.S. bases have pressed the case for greater local jurisdiction, particularly regarding search and seizure powers and environmental standards. But in practice, diplomats and law enforcement officials—elites from Tokyo—are left to attempt to placate increasingly alienated local citizens.

Their placation is made even more difficult by two factors. First, the central government has expropriated land, often through indirect and non-transparent legal means, for U.S. bases. Since expropriation is not otherwise standard practice, local residents complain that the central government cares more about the U.S. military than about its own citizens. The second problem is the regularity of training accidents and the subsequent invocation of U.S. authority off base, as in the case of the 2004 military helicopter crash on an Okinawan university campus which prompted U.S. officials to bar entry of Japanese investigators. As Sheila Smith notes with considerable understatement: “The marriage between U.S. operational needs and domestic law is often an uncomfortable one.” Ina Hisayoshi reflects the widely held judgment that the conduct of the U.S. military in Japan “resembles that of an occupying force.” Although both the treaty and the SOFA have been altered in practice through side agreements that give the Japanese government somewhat greater latitude, neither has ever been formally revised. Nor has the 1996 bilateral agreement to reduce U.S. forces in Okinawa been ever implemented. In fact, at no time in the history of the postwar alliance has the base issue not been characterized by extreme displeasure—either of local residents who put up with base pollution and crime, or of alliance managers who spend endless hours finding ways to co-opt opposition and maintain the status quo. The LDP established its first Base Countermeasures Special Committee in 1961 and today continues to debate how Japan ought to cope with the U.S. military in its midst. Like Yasukuni and the history debate that it feeds, U.S. bases are a unique crucible for the making of Japanese discourse about foreign affairs. Let us turn, then, to a closer examination of this discourse.

22. Such accidents are uncommon but have a long history. In 1964, two U.S. planes crashed near Tokyo injuring 43 people. After another crashed in Yokohama in 1977, the U.S. military refused to reveal the results of its investigation and left compensation payments up to the Japanese side.


25. The 1950s was already a time of antibase furor. Sadō Akihiro, Sengo Nihon no boei to seiji (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003), reviews the most politicized cases, beginning with Ishikawa in 1953 and Sunagawa in 1955.
Three groups dominated elite discourse during the cold war. The first was pragmatic conservatives, led by Yoshida Shigeru, who became the mainstream within the LDP and governed effectively for most of the cold war. The second was antimainstream revisionists within the LDP, led at first by Hatoyama Ichirō and Kishi Nobusuke, and, later, by Nakasone Yasuhiro. Both groups of conservatives were confronted by antimilitarists on the left who wanted unilateral pacifism. By the end of the cold war, the antimainstream right had accepted many of the constraints imposed by the pragmatists, while the latter maintained power by appeasing the pacifists, many of whom were so-called “progressive intellectuals” who believed the only threat to Japan was economic. After the cold war, however, the balance of power within the conservative camp shifted dramatically, and no group suffered more than the pacifists. As former JDA Director General Ishiba Shigeru has noted sardonically, “the number of those who say fires break out because we have a fire department” has shrunk.

The marginalization of the pacifists can be attributed to three factors. The first is the changing security environment in Northeast Asia. Once the cold war ended, “unarmed neutrality” was an instant anachronism. Without blocs from which Japan should maintain neutrality, only disarmament and the antibase movement were left on the pacifists’ agenda. But it soon became apparent that the end of the cold war did not end threats to national security, and disarmament became an increasingly unattractive option. In 1993, just two years after the Soviet Union collapsed, North Korea suddenly withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and poised to declare itself a nuclear weapons state—developments that would shift the regional balance of power in dangerous and very obvious ways.

Increased regional instability contributed to the second reason for the marginalization of the pacifists: the awakening of the Japanese public to issues associated with national security. For the first time in half a century the Japanese public openly discussed a military threat. The percentage of those who believed there could be a war rose, and the percentage of those who believed that pacifism was feasible as a national security doctrine declined. Majorities now accepted the SDF as legitimate and constitutional revision as desirable. Japan was overcoming its “military allergy” (gun wa aku da).

Wishful thinking about peace was being replaced by realistic discussion of war. What little support still existed for the idea that Japan should be a conscientious objector in world councils declined further.

The third nail in the pacifists’ coffin was the effective suicide of the Socialist Party. In June 1994, after the LDP had split and its former members, led by Ozawa Ichirō, had failed in their first attempt to govern, the head of the Socialist Party, Murayama Tomiichi, became prime minister in an extraordinary political deal with the LDP. In doing so, Murayama had to disavow 50 years of Socialist Party history. The leader of the pacifist party had to accept the constitutionality of the Self Defense Forces and the legitimacy of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty. Photos of Murayama standing at attention beneath the rising sun flag (which was still unofficial and highly controversial), on the deck of a Maritime Self Defense Force (MSDF) destroyer, shocked many voters. His administration ran into trouble almost immediately when it responded sluggishly to the January 1995 Kobe earthquake and failed to thwart the Aum Shinrikyō attack in the Tokyo subway two months later.

It would get worse. In June 1995, a socialist-drafted Diet antiwar resolution (fusen ketsugi) expressing “deep remorse” for the war and “renewing the determination for peace” was rewritten by the LDP and voted upon in the Diet. More representatives (241) abstained than supported it (230), and clearly pacifism’s day was passing. Pacifism had one last hurrah on August 15, 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Pacific War, when Murayama formally apologized for atrocities committed by Japanese troops. But he failed to gain Diet support for this declaration, which therefore had to be labeled as his “personal view.” Murayama resigned shortly after the next general election in October 1996 when the socialists were sharply penalized by former supporters who resented the party’s abandoning of its stated values. No one was sure what the socialists now stood for. They had refused to criticize Pyongyang, even after it became clear that North Korean agents had been kidnapping Japanese citizens. The voters let the socialists know they were out of touch. Cold-war Japan’s most viable opposition party—which once held 136 seats in Diet—was left with fewer than ten by the early 2000s.

Japan’s other opposition parties also recognize that pacifism has lost its appeal. Reflecting its religious base, Kōmeitō maintains strong pacifist rhetoric in its manifesto, but it has compromised significantly on security policy in return for entry to the ruling coalition. It supported dispatch of the SDF to the Middle East, acquiesced to LDP plans to elevate the JDA to ministry status, and supports debate on constitutional revision.30 The DPJ, for its part, continues to emphasize “peace nation” rhetoric while its leadership

has grown increasingly hawkish. Even the Japan Communist Party (JCP) offered to “freeze” its call for the abrogation of the security treaty following the 1998 Upper House election. Still, it continues to call for the complete implementation of Article 9, for a staged process of military reductions, and for disbanding the SDF. The JCP has had only single-digit representation in the Diet since 2003.

Grass-roots groups have distanced themselves from the parties and persist in efforts to promote pacifism. Japan’s peace activists are less isolationist than before and have broadened their portfolio by adding social justice and sustainable development to nonviolence. Regional solidarity has replaced one-country pacifism. But the peace movement is a shadow of its former self. In 2001, 25,000 people gathered to protest Prime Minister Koizumi’s support of the “revengeful war” in Afghanistan by the United States—just 10 per cent of the crowds that gathered in 1960 to protest revision of the security treaty or in the 1970s to protest Japanese complicity in the Vietnam War. However disappointing this was to organizers, the numbers declined further. In 2002, only three gatherings attracted more than 10,000 participants, and Japanese protest of the Iraq invasion in 2003 paled in comparison to that in the world’s other democracies. By 2004, antiwar protests focused on the U.S. bases, but the pacifists were more out of step, and more marginalized, than ever. As we shall see, they were even beginning to cede leadership of the antibase movement to the right.

**Neoautonomists**

If wartime had been a period of chronic nationalism and the postwar had been one of chronic pacifism, the early twenty-first century was becoming a time of chronic debate. Autonomy was central to it. Autonomy had always been a core value in Japan’s security discourse, but after the most distinguished and powerful advocates of “autonomous defense” (jishu bōei), such as Nakasone Yasuhiro, accommodated to the LDP mainstream, it became an unfulfilled desire rather than a rallying cry. In the debate over Japan’s post-Yoshida direction, however, autonomy has grown new legs. Heirs to the

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31. For examples, see statements on Article 9 and the U.S.-led war in Iraq by Yokomichi Takahiro and Hironaka Wakako at http://www.yokomichi.com/monthly_message/2000.11.01.htm and http://www.hirowaka.com/eng_dietact/plenary_20030321_e.html, both accessed August 22, 2006.

32. For analysis of the changing salience of “autonomous defense” (jishu bōei), see Sadō, *Sengo Nihon no bōei to seiji*, and Soeya, *Nihon no “midoru pawaa” gaikō*. The latter, in particular, relocates Nakasone Yasuhiro in the history of Japan’s postwar security discourse. Ian Nish, *Japan’s Struggle with Internationalism: Japan, China and the League of Nations, 1931–3* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), p. 15, reminds us that the term “autonomous diplomacy” was used by conservative politicians such as Matsuoka Yūsuke and Konoye Fumimaro, who opposed “Shidehara Diplomacy” in the 1920s and 1930s.
early postwar neomilitarists—advocates of a Gaullist armed neutrality—have challenged establishment conservatives’ support for the U.S. alliance.\(^\text{33}\) They doubt the U.S. commitment to defend Japan and feel that Japan’s subordinate position to the United States is an affront to Japan’s national prestige. They demand revision of the constitution and, in some cases, argue a revisionist view of history—one in which the Nanjing massacre did not occur—and criticize Japan for “blindly following”（tsuizui）the United States. Their views now occupy a growing if not yet fully legitimate place in Japan’s security discourse. In one scholar’s formulation, “wishful thinking about peace by some had been replaced by wishful thinking about the utility of war by others.”\(^\text{34}\)

Four neoautonomists—politician Ishihara Shintaro, academics Nishibe Susumu and Nakanishi Terumasa, and cartoonist Kobayashi Yoshinori—became media stars. Ishihara, the most senior, is the best known outside of Japan and is the best credentialed of the autonomists. In 1970, as a young Diet representative, he declared on the floor of Diet that the U.S. nuclear umbrella was unreliable and that Japan needed its own nuclear deterrent. Over the years, he often has insisted that Japan become a “defense-centered nation”（böei kokka）and, echoing the antimaterialism of the 1930s, he repeatedly has decried Japan’s loss of moral values and lack of national purpose.\(^\text{35}\) He was a founding member of a Diet group that called for higher defense spending and constitutional revision, but his views drifted rightward while theirs headed toward the center. Ishihara has made the United States an object of special scorn. In 1992, he coauthored No to ieru Nippon（The Japan that can say “no”), a broadside attack on the relationship with the United States; he followed up two years later with No to ieru Ajia（The Asia that can say “no”). Elected in 1999 to the bully pulpit of Tokyo governor, Ishihara has continued to generate a stream of books, television appearances, and newspaper columns in which he hammers away at revision of the “U.S.-imposed constitution” and autonomous defense. In late 2005 he insisted:

Japan needs to recognize the fundamental weakness of the U.S. military in which it blindly has placed its faith and must prepare to be able to defend itself independently in a crisis. . . . The United States cannot win a war with China and will not fight one to defend Japan.\(^\text{36}\)

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33. “Gaullists” were first identified by Mochizuki, “Japan’s Search for Strategy,” and by Nagai, Gendai to senryaku. See also Sadō, Sengo Nihon no böei to seiji.

34. Interview, Professor Fujiwara Kiichi, University of Tokyo, Tokyo, August 8, 2005.

35. Richard J. Samuels, Machiavelli’s Children: Leaders and Their Legacies in Italy and Japan（Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), chapter twelve, reviews Ishihara’s political development. See also Cheol Hee Park, “Japanese Conservatives’ Conception of Japan As a Normal Country: Comparing Ozawa, Nakasone, and Ishihara,” unpublished manuscript for project on “Japan as a Normal Country”（2005）.

One former administrative vice minister of the Defense Agency identified Ishihara as the “extreme of the extreme.” But Ishihara is joined by Nishibe, Kobayashi, and Nakanishi, and the idea of autonomy has gained traction with the Japanese public. The days when Japanese nationalists saw the U.S. alliance as a “necessary evil”—to combat the greater threat of communism—are long gone.

Nishibe, a controversial figure in Japanese intellectual circles, is every bit as blunt as Ishihara. In 1988 he resigned from the University of Tokyo, setting off a firestorm of debate about political correctness within the Japanese academy. Like Ishihara, Nishibe is critical of Japan’s acceptance of verdicts at the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, arguing they should be ignored because they were for and by the victor. Some of his more general critique echoes rightists of the 1930s: “As a Japanese, I feel deeply ashamed that we praise the concept of markets, an American idea. . . . [If we continue,] our system of government and our lives will come crashing down.”

Nishibe’s views are published with remarkable frequency in monthly magazines, and he appears on national television nearly weekly. He is particularly critical of Japanese politicians. He singles out former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, who sought pragmatically to separate the 14 convicted Class A war criminals from the thousands of others enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine, and former Prime Minister Koizumi, whose North Korea policy was, he said, nothing more than “appeasement” of international criminals from a “third-rate country” which, he insisted, “invaded” Japan.

Nishibe saves his strongest language for Japan’s dependence upon the United States. He points out the hypocrisy of a national security strategy that depends upon the United States for extended nuclear deterrence while eschewing possession of nuclear weapons on moral grounds. He insists that unless Japan plans to become the fifty-first U.S. state, it should assert its independence and go nuclear. The SDF should be made into a proper national military (kokugun) and not be placed at the disposal of the United States. Indeed, much of his vitriol has been directed at those “pro-U.S.” conservatives who would tie Japan closely to Washington. He insists “they are crazy” to believe the United States will

37. Interview, Tokyo, July 15, 2005.
38. Morris, Nationalism and the Right Wing in Japan, p. 423.
41. Ibid.
side with Japan to confront a rising China. He called the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq “a childish attempt to eliminate powers that conflict with U.S. interest,” labeling it “state terrorism.” George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden, he insisted, are “one and the same.” Japan is far too uncritical: “Whether it is the alliance guidelines, the dispatch of MSDF forces with aegis-class destroyers to the Indian Ocean, or the deployment of SDF troops to Iraq, it is entirely a matter of cooperation for America’s sake. [Japan] makes no effort to build an independent military, a diplomatic strategy, or an autonomous defense.”

The popular social critic and professor of international politics at Kyoto University, Nakanishi Terumasa, is similarly troubled by American unilateralism and agrees that Japan must become more capable and more willing to act independently in world affairs. Countries, like Japan, that specialize only in “economic power,” lose influence, and because Japan has “lost its balance,” it must “enter its second postwar period” with the national goal of standing on its own feet, keeping firmly rooted in its history and traditions . . . [in order to] revitalize the national spirit.” Japan is beset by a “social crisis”—crime, educational decline, the loss of social solidarity—and by a “civilization crisis” that follows from its loss of national identity. To combat the erosion of traditional values, Japan should cast off its “misguided pacifism” of the postwar years, establish a national identity of “uniqueness” (yuiitsu no kuni de aru Nihon), and become “self-reliant.”

Although his social critique evokes 1930s nationalism, Nakanishi offers a more pragmatic prescription for achieving autonomy than other Japanese Gaullists. Splitting with Ishihara and Nishibe, he advocates a Japan that can say “yes” to the partnership with the United States—at least for now. The alliance with Washington is necessary because Japan is not ready to wield power or defend its national interests on its own. He is contemptuous of other options for Japanese grand strategy; neither rapprochement with Asian neighbors nor establishing a collective security system is a viable alternative to the alliance. But Nakanishi is convinced that U.S. power is declining globally and that the United States is apt to withdraw suddenly from Asia. To prepare for this day, Japan must establish a “new autonomy [arata na shutaisei]”

based on the awareness that it is our country’s destiny to stand up on its own [Nihon ikkoku toshitemo tatsu].

His support for the alliance is thus openly instrumental. Nakanishi supported Japanese participation in America’s “coalition of the willing” in Afghanistan and, later, in Iraq in the belief it would speed revision of the constitution and hasten the return of Japanese “sovereignty over military affairs as a normal nation.” For Nakanishi, North Korea is Japan’s most immediate threat, one that also presents an opportunity to achieve sovereignty and bulk up national power. He urges Japan to acquire offensive missiles sufficient for use in preemptive strikes against North Korean missile sites. And, departing from Japanese mainstream conservatives, Nakanishi openly supports acquisition of nuclear weapons should Washington decide to leave Pyongyang’s nuclear status “ambiguous.” Nakanishi also advocates acquiring nuclear weapons when China’s navy becomes a credible threat to Okinawa or the Senkaku Islands.

Kobayashi is the most popular of the four among Japanese youth and has attracted considerable attention among adults as well. He first achieved prominence for his cartoon stories in Sapio, a youth-oriented, conservative monthly magazine. These comics, often aimed at revising historical interpretations of the Pacific War and the Japanese empire, have been best sellers for years. He was an author of one of the most controversial textbooks issued under the imprimatur of the Japan Society for History Textbook Revision, which he helped found. Denounced vigorously by Japan’s neighbors for its attempt to “advocate imperialism and whitewash history,” and by both the left and establishment right for stirring up trouble, the society has had more than modest success in Japan. Its textbooks may not have been widely adopted, but its message has become central to contemporary discourse. Like Nishibe, Kobayashi denounces Japanese intellectuals and politicians who have grown too close to the United States. In the run-up to


53. In the January 2003 issue of Shokun! he singles out Okazaki Hisahiko.
the 2003 Iraq invasion, they joined forces to attack pro-American politicians as “crippled idiots” (ahō koshinuke) and vigorously opposed Japanese support for U.S. “aggression.” As one token of his influence, Kobayashi was invited to Ginowan, Okinawa, to speak at an antibase rally on August 14, 2005, one day before the sixtieth anniversary of Japan’s surrender. Echoing the familiar rhetoric of the left that evokes the heroism of the Okinawan people, Kobayashi spoke from the right about “the dangers of the Okinawa bases” and attracted more than 1,200 people—12 times more than a left-wing rally in the larger Naha City that same day.

Few mainstream academics, bureaucrats, or national politicians openly associate with the neoautonomists, and many disparage them. But some do allow that the neoautonomists could find common cause with more decorous conservatives who advocate the building of a more muscular Japan. Indeed, Nakanishi is a member of Prime Minister Abe Shinzō’s brain trust.

“Normal Nation-alists”

These more decorous conservatives, of course, are those who want Japan to be a “normal nation.” The intellectual scion of this perspective was Ozawa Ichirō, who tried and failed to send SDF peacekeepers to participate in the Gulf War in 1991. His effort was not for naught, though, as it led to the first significant debate about Japanese security policy after the end of the cold war and, subsequently, to two decades of policy changes consistent with his preferences. Along the way, “normal nation-alism” has been appropriated by the new LDP mainstream. This perspective takes three forms. The first is Ozawa’s own, a “globalist” perspective advocating the Japanese military be strengthened but deployed only under the banner of UN peacekeeping operations. Ozawa, who once had advocated a close embrace of the United States, had accepted international criticism of Japan as a free rider and agreed that it needed to contribute at a level commensurate with its economic capabilities. In his view, only the United Nations, not the United States, can use force legitimately in the international interest, and Japan needs to limit the exercise of force to legitimate ends. Part of the SDF could be formed as a “UN reserve unit,” a change that could be made independently of his preference for revision to Article 9. But Ozawa miscalculated the attractiveness of placing Japanese forces under UN command, argued against collective self-defense in order to keep one of his early splinter par-

ties (Shinshintō) together, and, distancing himself from the United States, also distanced himself from Japan’s ruling coalition. Ozawa’s globalism withered with his declining political fortunes—at least until April 2006, when he won the leadership of the DPJ. He immediately staked out his position contra the revisionists in power and declared that Class A war criminals never should have been enshrined at Yasukuni.58

Ruling conservatives agree with Ozawa on the need to revise the constitution but part company on the importance of the U.S. alliance and of collective self-defense.59 There are two views within this ruling group, views that reflect the widening division within a conservative camp split between straightforward realists and more ideological neoconservatives. This split first surfaced in 2005 when the Yomiuri shinbun, Japan’s largest-circulation daily newspaper and a conservative institution, began editorializing against visits to Yasukuni Shrine by public officials and in favor of a clear accounting of Japan’s war responsibility. Yomiuri president and chief editorial writer Watanabe Tsuneo, an aging veteran of the Pacific War, saw Prime Minister Koizumi’s shrine visits as needlessly provocative. He criticized the Yūshūkan for purveying “misleading history,” a view shared by LDP Diet representative and Vice Minister for Justice Kōno Taro, who likewise insists that “the ideology of Yasukuni is wrong. Priests built the Yūshūkan with the wrong idea of history.”60 In January 2006, Kuriyama Takakazu, a former Japanese ambassador to the United States, called upon Koizumi to cease visiting Yasukuni because the government’s views of history and those of its priests are inconsistent.61 The realists strongly support a secular memorial for Japan’s war dead—a plan whose funding was cut off by Prime Minister Koizumi and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzō in late 2005.62

Watanabe also confronts deniers of the Nanjing massacre: “Whether there were 3,000, 30,000, or 300,000 victims, there is no mistake that there was a massacre there.” He has called for a Diet History Examination Committee (Rekishi Kenshō in linkai) to formally sort out war responsibility. Watanabe is no leftist. He is unapologetic about the importance, size, and sophistication of Japan’s military: “If a nation is ‘normal,’ it has a military,”

58. Mainichi shinbun, April 11, 2006. Nakanishi Terumas also uses the term “normal nation” but chastises Ozawa and other conservatives for positing the “immature” idea that the United Nations might provide Japan security. Nakanishi, “Nihon koku kakusho e no ketsudan.”


one that ought to be referred to as such [guntai]. Calling it a military instead of a self-defense force, he insists, has nothing to do with the "foolish notion" that Japan is switching from peaceful to aggressive. In Watanabe’s view—and in the view of fellow realists such as former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro and former Ambassador Okazaki Hisahiko—Japan needs to tilt toward the United States as long as China is rising and North Korea is unpredictable.

Japan’s leading realists were unhappy with what they saw as the excessively provocative position of the neoconservatives on history issues—particularly Yasukuni and textbook reform—and actively disavowed nostalgia for the prewar military. Nor did they see apologies for wartime aggression as a sign of national weakness. Instead, their project has been one in which Japan could highlight its democratic present and provide for a secure future without entangling itself in its authoritarian past. Thus, Nakasone apologized to the Koreans and stopped going to Yasukuni in the 1980s after consulting with the Chinese. He has also, moreover, made efforts to detoxify the shrine, appealing for the de-enshrinement of the Class A war criminals.

The realists recognize that defending Japan is not the only thing on the U.S. agenda and insist, therefore, that Japan pay special attention to the relationship. Their preferred characterization of the realist perspective is what former JDA Director General Ishiba Shigeru has called “robust pacifism” (honebuto na heiwashugi).

But their neoconservative coalition partners—Japan’s “new conservative mainstream”—have been less apologetic about the past—and more willing to pander to those who feel nostalgia for it. In power since the 2001 election of Koizumi Jun’ichirō, this group of revisionists has kept the history pot boiling by visiting Yasukuni Shrine in their capacity as government officials—visits that Chinese officials insist should be as unimaginable as visits by a German chancellor to Adolf Hitler’s grave. They point out that between 1978, when the 14 Class A war criminals were enshrined, and 1984, Japanese prime ministers visited Yasukuni 20 times without any objection from Beijing. This, they insist, is evidence that Beijing has manufactured the Yasukuni problem for its own political purposes. Koizumi held

63. Watanabe in Ronza, February 2006, pp. 26–39. For analysis of Nakasone’s realism, see Park, “Japanese Conservatives’ Conception of Japan,” and Soeya, Nihon no “midora pawaa” gaikō. Maehara Seiji, former head of the DPJ, is also a realist but was reluctant to tilt too vigorously in America’s direction. See Tōkyō shinbun, November 24, 2005, and Yomiuri shinbun, December 10, 2005.
64. See Mochizuki, “Japan’s Search for Strategy,” for an analysis of this position during the cold war.
65. Ishiba, Kokubō, p. 151.
66. The term “new conservative mainstream” was suggested by Son Kissup. Interview, Seoul, November 30, 2005.
67. Nihon keizai shinbun, July 28, 2005. In February 2006, Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing compared Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine to visits to
that his own freedom of religion overruled the separation of church and state and, ignoring court rulings, continued his visits against the strong preference of realists within the party and LDP supporters in industry and the media.68 His foreign minister, Aso Tarō, even suggested that the emperor visit Yasukuni, something that has not happened since the “martyrs of Showa” were enshrined in 1978.69

Realists can accept official visits to Yasukuni if they are accompanied by apologies and do not glorify war criminals and if they are sensitive to the objections of Japan’s neighbors to the political use of the shrine. Neconservatives, by contrast, deny that apologies, war crimes, and neighbors’ preferences have anything to do with their visits.70 They insist, moreover, that the religious beliefs of the Japanese are no matter for the Chinese or Koreans. When the Diet issued an apology to Japan’s neighbors on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Pacific War—one that many on the left could not support because it was diluted—Abe Shinzō and other Koizumi allies walked out of the chamber because the language was too strong.71

Japan’s neconservatives and realists hold a common view of the importance of the U.S. alliance. In his first policy speech after becoming foreign minister in 2005, Aso declared that the United States should come first, Asia second. They are of one mind on the base issue as well. Both want better coordinated bilateral command relationships, more joint training, more fully coordinated force planning, and shared bases—all building blocks for a more equal security relationship. They share a concern for civilian control and worry about “military types who want command autonomy [shikiken].”72 But they also want the United States to recognize that the base issue is fundamentally about national sovereignty. In their view, without fuller sovereignty and an end to extraterritorial privileges for the U.S. military, the alliance will always be handicapped. A Committee for Revision of SOFA and the Establishment of a True U.S.-Japan Partnership, chaired by a former vice foreign minister, attracted more than 100 Diet members from several parties, but predominantly realists and neconservatives.73


69. Aso was also of the opinion that Koreans “voluntarily” adopted Japanese names during the colonial period. Tōkyō shinbun, February 2, 2006. In July 2006 it was learned that the Showa emperor stopped visiting Yasukuni because he did not wish to be associated with the war criminals enshrined there. See Asahi shinbun, July 19, 2006.

70. Kitaoka, Nihon no jiritsu, lists the realists’ criteria.

71. Sankei shinbun, August 3, 2005. If the realists’ views are best reflected in the pages of the Yomiuri shinbun, the neconservatives’ position is found in the smaller, but still influential daily, the Sankei shinbun.

72. Interview, LDP Member, House of Councillors, Tokyo, December 21, 2005.

73. Ina, “Implementing the SACO and Revising the SOFA,” p. 42.
These two groups also share the view that China is a potential threat. Whereas realists focus on China’s growing military power, the neoconservatives leaven the argument with a dash of disdain. In addition to sounding the alarm about the PRC’s rapid defense buildup, they also question the extent of civilian control of the Chinese military. They resent Beijing’s sustained anti-Japanese rhetoric and patriotic education campaign as well as what they consider China’s lectures on the history issue. Thus, rather than rush to improve relations with Beijing when they became frayed in 2003–5, Koizumi instead turned up the heat by continuing his visits to Yasukuni Shrine.74 This split the LDP along familiar lines. There has been a “pro-China faction” since the days of Tanaka Kakuei, the prime minister who followed President Richard Nixon to China, and a so-called anti-China faction tracing its ancestry back to Kishi Nobusuke.75 China policy became a major issue in the competition to succeed Koizumi, in which Abe Shinzō, Kishi’s grandson, prevailed in September 2006.

Although their opponents suspect them of harboring grand ideas about Japanese national identity, both the neoconservatives and the realists have eschewed identifying Japan as a great power. Perhaps because they are still reeling from Japan’s awkward response to the first Gulf War and the 1993 North Korea crisis, they continue to hew to the Yoshida rhetoric of Japan as a peace-loving nation.76 Rather than bang the drum for increases in defense spending or for independence, they argue vigorously that Japan and the United States should build a more equal security relationship. Toward that end they have made Japanese troops available for training and deployment with American forces in unprecedented ways. Unlike the neoautonomists and the pacifists, all three streams of “normal nation-alists” are comfortable with the idea that the Japanese military might have to use force as a means of settling international disputes, and they support constitutional revision. They all believe that incremental improvement of Japan’s military posture is in the nation’s long-term interest.

**Middle-power Internationalists**

Middle-power internationalists are not so sure. They continue to oppose use of force and question whether increased military power, incremental or...
otherwise, is really the best path toward national security. Like the “normal
nation-alists,” this group is divided internally by attitudes regarding the U.S.
relationship. “Mercantile realists” believe Japan should continue to eschew
military power and remain close to the United States for its security,
whereas “middle-power Asianists” accept the alliance, in some cases grudg-
ingly, but believe Japanese policy should strike a better balance between the
United States and Japan’s neighbors. The former come predominantly from
within the LDP, the latter from the opposition DPJ. Both groups are con-
vinced of the salience of economic over military power and prefer that
Japanese security policy derive its legitimacy from international institutions
rather than through unilateral action.

Kōsaka Masataka, an adviser to both Yoshida Shigeru and Ōhira
Masayoshi, first introduced the terms “maritime state” (kaiyō kokka) and,
later, “mercantile state” (tsūshō kokka) to describe the optimal posture for
Japan. Kōsaka compared Japan to thirteenth-century Venice and to seven-
teenth-century Holland, nations that prospered while other states kept the
peace, and argued that while they had navies to protect their sea lanes of
communication, they were not excessively aggressive.77 Soeya Yoshihide
has further developed the concept of middle-power diplomacy.78 By his ac-
count, it is necessary to convince Korea, China, and ASEAN countries that
Japan has no great power ambitions. Japan must remind its neighbors that it
has not acted like a great power since 1945 and that it has instead promoted
economic growth throughout the region. Like other middle powers—
Canada and Germany often are invoked—Japan is and should remain a
trading nation whose contributions to international security are under multi-
national auspices. Middle-power internationalists would maintain the al-
liance with the United States but would also try to construct overlapping
regional trade and security regimes. They have championed Japan’s peace
cooperation diplomacy (heiwa kyōryoku gaikō); some even elevated interna-
tional contribution over national interest in the national security dis-
ourse.79 Great powers may not hesitate to use force to realize national
interests, but Japan must never threaten its neighbors again. It must remain

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77. Kōsaka Masataka, Kōsaka Masataka gaikō hyōronshū: Nihon no shinro to rekishi no
America and Southeast Asia.
78. Soeya, Nihon no “midoru pawaa” gaikō.
Nihon gaikō ronshū (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1995), pp. 32–37. See also
Takemura Masayoshi, Chisukatomo kirari to hikaru kuni Nippon (Tokyo: Köbunsha, 1994), and
the discussion between Miyazaki Kiichi and Kōsaka Masataka in Utsukushii Nihon e no chōsen
(Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1984). Kōsaka was a mercantile realist who never failed to argue for
security policy in the national interest. See Kōsaka, Kōsaka Masataka gaikō hyōronshū.
a “civilian power” that creates global public goods in the economic arena, and its aspirations must remain limited. If the United States is the indispensable global cop, Japan should position itself as the indispensable global merchant, and it would be dangerous to conflate these two roles. This, according to Kyoto University Professor Yamamuro Shin’ichi, requires not “losing self-control”: “when Japan thinks of itself as a small country or as a middle power, it conducts its diplomacy with deep care and consideration for its neighbors. But, when it embraces a big-power idea [of itself], it fails.” Clearly, there are echoes here of earlier debates.

Mercantile realists are the direct heirs of the pragmatic conservatives who brought Japan back to prosperity from wartime devastation, in the process reinventing the small Japanism of Ishibashi Tanzan and other pioneers of nonexpansive economic liberalism in the early twentieth century. As we have seen, the core of their once-dominant security doctrine was comprehensive security and a cheap ride on the United States. Like the pacifists with whom they tacitly allied, however, Japan’s mercantile realists have been out-boxed by the revisionists within their own party. One by one, during the ascent of the antimainstream in the early 2000s, powerful mainstream pragmatists such as Nonaka Hiromu, Kōno Yōhei, Miyazawa Kiichi, and Katō Kōichi were shunted aside and their faction, the Kōchikai, splintered. Some like Kōno fought back with vigor, but to no avail. Mercantile realism has not disappeared to quite the same extent as pacifism, but it has ceded the mainstream and control of government.

The second stream of middle-power internationalists was the more vigorous by the early 2000s. It involves those who eschew the use of force but would prefer Japan to distance itself from the United States and focus on Asia. If the mercantile realists saw Japan as the “lead goose” flying ahead of a developing Asia, the new Asianists prefer to imagine Japan as another lamb within a larger flock, rather than as a bellwether. Unlike prewar Asianists, who sought to decouple Japan from the world economy, these are liberal Asianists who seek to build regional institutions to counterbalance U.S. unilateralism and to accommodate the rise of China. This requires an end to Japan’s neglect of regional concerns and its excessive orientation to the pref-


82. This distinction was made by Keio University Professor Tadokoro Masayuki, interview, July 6, 2005. See also Morimoto Satoshi, Morimoto Satoshi no me: Nihon no boei to anzen hosho (Tokyo: Gurafusha, 2005), p. 162.

ferences of the United States. It also requires more attentiveness on the history issue. Koga Makoto, the former secretary general of the LDP, openly took aim at Abe Shinzō and other “normal nation-alists” by declaring that building trust with Asian neighbors is more important than reaffirming relations with the United States.84 He was joined one year later by a New Generation Forum for Cooperation with Asia, formed by first-term Diet members.85 The business community also has mobilized on this issue. In May 2006 the Japan Association of Corporate Executives (Keizai Dōyūkai) issued proposals to improve Sino-Japanese relations, including sharp criticism of Yasukuni visits by the prime minister and support for a secular memorial to the war dead.

Others have gone further, calling for an “Asian Restoration” and the “re-assertion of an ‘Asian spirit.’”86 Distinctly “Asian values,” such as discipline, social solidarity, and family, ought to provide the basis for a regional spiritual identity that would trump Western decadence.87 Yet the idea of a nascent pan-Asianism notwithstanding, most middle-power Asianists acknowledge that the region needs—and even wants—a continued U.S. military presence and the stability it provides.88 The DPJ platform in the September 2005 elections struck just this chord. After acknowledging that the U.S.-Japan alliance is the “lynchpin” of stability in Asia, it added that “blindly following the United States does not contribute to strengthening the alliance. The value of the alliance will increase if we transmit the views of the Japanese and Asian peoples, and urge the United States to exercise self-restraint.”89 Ozawa Ichirō reiterated this point upon assuming leadership of the DPJ in April 2006 and two months later made Beijing the site of his first overseas visit as shadow prime minister.90

Some neo-Asianists value the U.S. contribution to regional security less than others. Terashima Jitsurō maintains that a strengthened Japan-U.S. alliance has already led to the dissipation of Japanese influence in the Middle East and risks future conflict with China. He insists that Japan be explicit about not intervening in a Taiwan crisis and not supporting the United States if it does.91 He would not fully decouple Japan from the United States but does

84. Tōkyō shinbun, July 7, 2005.
89. Mainichi shinbun, August 17, 2005.
90. Asahi shinbun, April 7, 2006.
argue for a reduced U.S. military footprint and revised SOFA.\(^92\) Japan, after all, must be prepared for a time when U.S. affections will shift from Japan toward a triangular model of equidistance among Japan, China, and the United States—a model invoked by Ozawa during his June 2006 trip to Beijing. Sounding more like a descendant of prewar pan-Asianists and a kissing cousin of contemporary neonautonomists than like a liberal internationalist, Terashima suggests that “before long the Japanese will have to extricate themselves from the self-satisfied embrace as the only advanced nation of ‘honorary Caucasians’” and insists that America is a “worn-out superpower” (\(tsukareta\) \(chō\)\(taikoku\)).\(^93\) Japan must abandon its identity as a country near the United States (\(Beikoku\) \(shūhenkoku\)) and establish true independence and self-respect (\(shin\) \(no\) \(jiritsu\) \(jison\)).\(^94\) He calls for progress toward construction of an East Asian Community (\(Higashi\) \(Ajia\) \(Kyo\)\(do\)\(tai\)) as the only way to stabilize the explosive growth of the region.\(^95\) Asia is not a place to rediscover when things go bad with the United States; it is a regional identity that Japan must vigorously take the lead in constructing.\(^96\)

This view is shared in other, less vituperative, analyses. Shiraishi Takashi reminds us that the reconstruction of East Asia after 1945 was an American project, one guided by Washington’s desire to contain communist expansion and to get Japan back on its feet. U.S. power defined the region’s borders and the U.S. dollar defined much of what went on within its constituent parts. But the once-overwhelming United States has reached the “limits to empire,” and a region that was shaped under its values is now generating values of its own. A “pan-Asian cultural sphere” is emerging, which, while it may result in a distinctive Asian identity, has been driven by market forces. A burgeoning, well-educated middle class that once made only \(things\) increasingly produces, consumes, and shares \(culture\) as well. Japan, for its part, has been constrained by U.S. power but retains “great freedom of action” in the region (\(ōkina\) \(kōdō\) \(no\) \(jiyū\)—freedom built upon informal networks of economic relationships that could be expanded.\(^97\)

\(^{92}\) \(Gendai,\) February 1, 2005, p. 70; \(Nihon\) \(keizai\) \(shinbun,\) June 5, 2006.

\(^{93}\) Terashima Jitsurō, \(Rekishi\) \(o\) \(fukaku\) \(suikomi,\) \(mirai\) \(o\) \(omou:\) \(1900\) \(nen\) \(no\) \(tabi,\) \(Amerika\) \(no\) \(seiki,\) \(Ajia\) \(no\) \(jison\) (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2002), p. 262, and \(Gendai,\) February 1, 2005, p. 67. In \(Rekishi\) \(o\) \(fukaku\) \(suikomi,\) chapter three, Terashima explores the lives of twentieth-century Asian intellectuals such as Okakura Tenshin, who first argued for “self-respect” in a Western-dominated world order.

\(^{94}\) Terashima Jitsurō, “Seiki \(o\) \(koeta\) \(Nihon\) \(no\) \(kodoku\)” (Tokyo: \(Mitsui\) \(Bussan\) \(Senryaku\) \(Kenkyūjo),\) June 2005.

\(^{95}\) “Ajia \(o\) \(butai\) \(ni\) \(21-seiki\) \(no\) \(genu\) \(ga\) \(hajimatte\) \(iru,\)” \(Ronza,\) March 2005, p. 45.

\(^{96}\) Terashima Jitsurō, “Shinbei \(nyūō\) \(no\) \(sōgō\) \(senryaku\) \(o\) \(motomete,”\) \(Chūō\) \(kōron,\) March 1996, pp. 20–38.

\(^{97}\) Shiraishi Takashi, \(Teikoku\) \(to\) \(sono\) \(genkai\) (Tokyo: \(NTT,\) 2004), pp. 13, 132, 162–65, 182. Such cultural elements include Japanese manga, Korean television dramas, and Hong Kong films.
On Shiraishi’s account, there are three separate patterns of Asianism. The first, at the macroeconomic and political levels, is one in which English is the dominant language and the United States is a critical source of technology, security, and consumers. The second is the microeconomic level that Japan leads through its domination of production systems and industrial policy strategies. The third, Sinitic, level builds upon the widespread Chinese diaspora in the region and the rise of China as a production base. It is clear that the three powers are players and that none necessarily displaces the others. For Tokyo to take advantage of the significant opportunity that exists to exert influence, its diplomacy needs to respond less to U.S. demands and better anticipate regional needs. It can start, Shiraishi insists, by supporting a regional infrastructure—in energy, trade, standards, intellectual property, and finance.98 Articulating the strategic preference of his fellow middle-power internationalists, Shiraishi insists that in the process of generating these regional public goods, Japan can help manage China’s rise without confronting it militarily or on the history issue.

Soeya Yoshihide agrees. He insists that Japan cannot exclude the United States from the region.99 A middle-power Japan allied with the United States is particularly reassuring to Japan’s neighbors, each of which is suspicious of the normal nation ideal. On the other hand, rather than fearing the rise of China and treating it as a rival, Japan ought to contribute to the construction of a stable, China-centered regional order.100 This order would be one in which a middle-power Japan could find common cause with other democratic middle powers, such as Australia and the Republic of Korea, neither of which can compete one-on-one with the new China.101

Conclusion

As we have seen, there is nothing new under the (rising) sun vis-à-vis the contemporary Japanese debate over grand strategy. Much like their predecessors in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Japanese security planners now discuss and make choices about the balance between economic and military instruments, between hard and soft power, among alliance partners, and for or against construction of multilateral security regimes. And like their predecessors, they get lots of advice from across a growing spectrum of political groups. What is striking—and what ought to be reassuring to the United States and to Japan’s neighbors—is that there is no debate over fundamental values of democracy and freedom. Indeed, all agree that Japan

99. Soeya, Nihon no "midoru pawaa" gaikō, p. 223.
can champion both to its national advantage, and in particular vis-à-vis China.\textsuperscript{102}

It remains to be seen how this discourse will evolve. Perhaps the revisionists who came to power in the early 2000s will consolidate their preferences as national policy and continue to trim away until nothing is left of the Yoshida consensus. But they have already demonstrated their commitment to the pacifist ideals of the 1947 constitution, and they do not advocate an autonomous defense buildup, so it is not likely that the Yoshida consensus will be displaced entirely. Some advocates of a normal nation seek greater autonomy, just as autonomists, pacifists, and some middle-power internationalists are not yet ready to sever all ties to the United States. While critical of the alliance with the United States and eager to achieve greater sovereignty, few advocate a complete break.

Likewise, no significant party in the Japanese security discourse refuses to accept the legitimacy of the SDF. All agree, moreover, that China, with all its great power ambitions, needs to be integrated peacefully and that a nondemocratic China is inimical to Japanese interests. Thus, it seems at least plausible that the “middle power” road—amended to allow a fuller hedge against Chinese power and American decline—will be an attractive successor to the Yoshida Doctrine. This new consensus is likely to resemble Goldilocks’s preferences: Japan’s relationships with the United States and China will be neither too hot nor too cold, and its posture in the region will be neither too big nor too small.

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