International Relations of the Asia-Pacific Volume 13 (2013) 479–517
doi:10.1093/irap/lct011 Advance Access published on 19 July 2013

Japan's strategic pivot south: diversifying the dual hedge

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Received 6 January 2013; Accepted 7 June 2013

Abstract

Tensions between Japan and its neighbors pose a significant problem for the viability of Japan's strategic 'dual hedge' between China and the United States. Japan's response has been to embrace renewed US commitment to the region while initiating comprehensive strategic partnerships in military, economic, and political spheres with nations 'south' of its traditional domain of strategic interest. Strengthened relationships with Southeast Asian nations, India, and Australia may turn out to be crucial for Japan as it will enable Japan to manage its security affairs without having to depart from its long-cultivated maritime security policy, and will enable Japan to continue to pursue a neo-mercantilist economic policy while also supporting the socioeconomic development of other regional players essential for future multipolar balance. Japan's diplomatic activities provide a useful 'strategic contrast' with China that will likely ensure Japan is accepted in the region. Japan's strategic pivot is also domestically sustainable and, therefore, deserves scholarly attention.

International Relations of the Asia-Pacific Vol. 13 No. 3
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1 Introduction

Strengthening economic cooperation and interdependence between nations in Northeast Asia from the late 1990s seems to have had little impact upon the persistence of diplomatic and security tensions in the region. One side effect of this is increasing Japanese pessimism regarding the wisdom and viability of strongly investing in the development of a Northeast Asian-led regional order to manage Japan's security, economic, and geopolitical well-being. Given the increase in regional tensions over the last five years in particular, Japan will, therefore, welcome the US strategic pivot to East Asia as a short- to medium-term hedge against further deterioration of the geopolitical situation in Northeast Asia. Japan, however, has already been conducting a quiet pivot of its own through the accelerated building of comprehensive strategic partnerships with nations to the south of its traditional Northeast Asia domain of strategic interest. This article's overall argument is that, by looking 'south' to an 'expanded' East Asia made up of Southeast Asia, India, and Australia (Terada, 2010, pp. 72, 80), Japan is attempting to supplement and diversify the 'dual hedge' between China and the United States that has been a feature of the post-Cold War Japanese grand strategy (Samuels, 2007), thereby enabling Japan to acquire for itself greater strategic autonomy in the medium to long term. This article notes that for the first time since World War II, Japan's bilateral diplomatic relationships outside of the alliance with the United States contain explicit military dimensions. The driving strategic logic of these new forms of defense cooperation can, however, be located within Japan's post-war defensive-orientated maritime security tradition. These new defense relationships also supplement Japan's broader geoeconomic and geopolitical interests and support the development of comprehensive strategic partnerships that will accelerate the transition to a balanced multipolar regional system not over-dependent on Chinese economic or diplomatic generosity. The 'diversified' dual hedge outlined in this article is strategically sustainable as a grand strategy due to Japan being welcomed as a 'strategic contrast' to China in much of the region. It is also domestically sustainable as it appeals across the domestic Japanese political and ideological spectrum by accommodating various foreign policy visions.

2 Japan's new strategic dilemma

While a number of scholars have already pointed to Japan's increasingly strong relationships with Southeast Asian nations, India, and Australia (e.g. Ghosh, 2008; Sato, 2008; Sudo, 2009; Jain, 2010; Wilkins, 2011), few have placed Japan's interests in these nations within the broader context of its overall strategic objectives, with the exception of how such relationships support the United States–Japan 'global alliance' (e.g. Cha, 2007; Medcalf, 2008). One notable exception has been Samuels (2007), who argued that, rather than exclusively bandwagon with the United States, Japan would hedge against US and European economic 'predation' by engaging a China-centric East Asia economically, while at the same time continuing to embrace the security alliance with the United States as a hedge against a possibly unfriendly and militarily active China (p. 122). Japan would essentially take advantage of the growing Chinese and East Asian economies by continuing to indulge in a neo-mercantilist foreign policy without fear of Western neo-liberal critique and sanctions, which would inevitably come with dependence on Western markets. Japan would, however, remain confident in engaging with China due to the security assurance provided by its continuing alliance with the United States. Japan would, over time, adjust its foreign policy and through fine tuning would find the appropriate distance between China and the United States so as to not jeopardize its respective economic and military relationships with the two great regional powers. Since a degree of economic interdependence between China, the West, and Japan would also mitigate the severity of likely strategic competition and security tensions between the key nations in the region, such an approach seemed quite plausible as a long-term strategy.

Regional developments over the last five years, however, raise a dilemma for Japanese strategists and challenge the sustainability of the aforementioned approach. The first component of this dilemma is a familiar one. Dependence on the United States for its security makes Japan vulnerable to 'abandonment' due to United States' inability or unwillingness at some time in the future to vouch for Japan's direct security needs (Izumikawa, 2010). It has not escaped Japanese analysts' attention that US economic strength and its domestic fiscal position is now weaker, and its related economic and financial interdependence with China is deeper, than it was even five years ago. This has called into question the long-term

sustainability of the US military commitment to the region. For example, Lt Cdr Seki Hiroyuki, a Staff Officer in the International Planning Section in Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Forces (MSDF), has noted the contradiction between the United States 'severe financial conditions' [*shinkoku na zaisei akaji mondai*] and its desire to strengthen its forward presence in the Asia-Pacific, and recommends caution about overreliance on the United States (Seki, 2012). Japan's 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) also noted the aforementioned concerns about US primacy in the region and even portrayed the United States in 'relative decline vis-à-vis emerging powers such as China, Russia and India' (Fouse, 2011, p. 11).

The second, less discussed component of this dilemma is that overdependence on China in particular for Japan's economic and political well-being erodes Japan's strategic autonomy by exposing it to the possibility of intersecting military and economic coercion in the region. This is not simply a theoretical concern. The possibility of China utilizing coercive economic or diplomatic measures against a vulnerable Japanese economy as it becomes more military and economically confident was indicated by the Chinese government and public reactions to the disputes over the Senkaku Islands in 2010 and 2012 (Reilly, 2012, p. 129; Japan Times, 2013a; Swaine *et al*., 2013). In addition, there is also significant concern about Chinese naval expansion and PLA rhetoric in Japanese security circles. In 2010, the main policy research arm of the Ministry of Defense (MOD), the National Institute for Defense Studies, started publishing an annual 'China Security Report'. In the 2012 defense white paper, the MOD raised its most pointed concerns yet regarding China's naval activities, as well as the more 'complex' relationship between the ruling CCP and the PLA (MOD, 2012a). In particular, there is an increasingly widespread fear that the PLA may no longer be operating under sufficient civilian supervision (Kitaoka, 2011), a fear strengthened by the fire-control radar 'painting' incident in early 2013 (Przystup, 2013). The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA, 2012) has explicitly pointed to an apparent Chinese strategy to challenge Japan's effective control over the Senkaku Islands in a rare publicized position paper. Increasingly militaristic and nationalistic expressions by Chinese elites, including even the questioning of the sovereign status of Okinawa, have been noted by the Japanese media and scholars (Kitaoka, 2011; Jiji Press, 2013a). On top of

this, the Japanese public's distrust of China and one-party CCP rule has increased and accelerated over the last two years in particular.[1]

In terms of regional security, Japanese officials and politicians, already unhappy with a perceived lack of seriousness on the part of other regional actors in addressing the North Korean ballistic missile threat (Auslin, 2011), increasingly perceive China as enabling, not restraining, North Korea. The weak Chinese diplomatic response to the Cheonan sinking, to the Yeonpyeong Island shelling incident, and to further DPRK nuclear and ballistic missile tests has only added to the sense that China is unlikely, unwilling, or unable to restrain its 'blood ally' (Ikegami, 2012). Even the one potential strategic bright spot in Northeast Asia for Japan, the possibility for improving relations with the Republic of Korea (ROK), appears to have not come to fruition. Recent events such as the failure to sign two important military pacts and further provocations and rhetoric over the Dokdo Islands have not only led to diplomatic estrangement between Japan and the ROK, but rather have suggested that the two nations may not necessarily share similar strategic awareness of pressing security issues in Northeast Asia. Deepened perception of regional threat in Japan has, thus, led to it tacking harder back toward the United States since 2010 by embracing further deepening of the alliance, despite the then Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government's initial desire to rebalance relations between the United States and Japan's Northeast Asian partners (Sneider, 2011).

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that Japan now has had its strategic options 'closed off', and is now suffering the 'final entrapment' in its alliance with the United States (Hughes, 2012, p. 137). Japan will neither be content just with 'burden sharing' within the alliance, nor will it be satisfied with simply 'connecting the spokes' of an updated 'hub and spokes system' (Medcalf, 2008). In any respect, the above dilemma is truly troubling because US 'abandonment' may take place precisely at a time when Japan is faced with regional isolation or coercion. Japan has, thus, looked to proactively engage with key regional partners through the

1 According to the annual Government of Japan Cabinet Office survey, in 1993, just one year after the Japanese Emperor's first ever official state visit to China, 53.9% of Japanese felt some or a significant amount of affinity for China. By 2012, this had worsened to 18.0% feeling affinity for China and 80.6% feeling little or no affinity for China. Government of Japan Cabinet Office, 'gaikō ni kan-suru yoron chōsa' [Foreign Policy Attitude Survey], http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h24/h24-gaiko/2-1.html (10 October 2012, date last accessed).

development of diversified comprehensive strategic partnerships, which also include for the first time explicit military content. By embracing the US strategic pivot over the short to medium term, Japan will enjoy a window of opportunity where it can more confidently implement strategic partnerships with regional players without fear of Chinese reprisals or of raising US suspicions of Japan trying to side-line it in the regional order. The implementation of the Japanese 'pivot south' will allow Japan to comprehensively re-establish itself as a geostrategic partner for many of these nations. While not fully resolving the aforementioned dilemma, this pivot will help to mitigate it by increasing Japan's strategic freedom of action in the long term and diversifying the 'dual hedge'.

3 Diversifying the dual hedge: the Japanese strategic pivot south

The 'pivot south' can be conceptualized in two complementary geostrategic dimensions. One is in terms of Japan's security strategy, at the core of which is its maritime strategy. The second dimension relates to Japan's medium- to long-term geopolitical and geoeconomic interests, which are strongly connected to its commercial, aid, and diplomatic activities in the same region. Formulating better relations with countries that have an influence on Japan's traditional energy, resource, and trade interests has always been a key interest for Japan. Japan's current strategy, however, is not a simple mercantilist one of paving the way for the 'economic animal' to penetrate the region and extract resources as it may have been in the past (Sudo, 1992). Through the setting up of strategic partnerships, which include security and economic and political elements, Japan is embracing the full spectrum of security tools in order to achieve its longer term foreign policy goals by assisting future candidate middle and great powers in sustainable political and economic development. These goals are centered on accelerating and supporting the transition to a balanced multipolar system in East Asia that is friendly to a measure of Japanese diplomatic leadership, and provides for a degree of strategic autonomy for Japan and other nations concerned about the undetermined nature of potential Chinese hegemony in the future. Japan, aware of the risks of assuming future Chinese benevolence and/or US commitment to the region, is looking to assist in the construction of a regional geopolitical order that will be resilient to non-traditional security threats as well as be as resistant

as possible to potential Chinese coercive military, economic, and political activities.

4 First geostrategic dimension: security

Since the end of the Cold War, the prevailing interpretive lens for explaining Japan's security policy evolution has been that of its 'normalization' as a military actor within the overarching context of the evolving United States–Japan alliance relationship. This lens usually points to an increasing role for military instruments, including offensive instruments, in Japan's security policy, a role similar to that adopted by other 'normal' great power nations (e.g. Roy, 2004; Ghosh 2008; Hughes, 2009; Wilkins, 2011). In seeking to explain this development, scholars have tended to emphasize the rise of nationalist sentiment in Japan (Robinson, 2010), an increase in 'realistic' thinking regarding security issues among the elite and public (Kliman, 2006), or some mixture of both (Matthews, 2003). However, the exact strategic ends of such remilitarization and changes in Japan's security policy approach have often been underexplored, leading analysts to unreasonably conclude that Japanese policy-makers lack strategic nous in terms of forming a security policy agenda (Hughes, 2007), and that they have for the most part not progressed beyond 'reactive' security policy-making (Manicom, 2010a).

As has been noted by Patalano (2011a), most explanations for Japan's security policy evolution place too much emphasis on security policy changes as products deriving from the post-Cold War geopolitical situation. These analyses ignore the continuing prominence and centrality of Japan's maritime security, which has been at the heart of its security policy since 1950s as a complementary pillar to Japan's support of a US military presence in the region. The events of the post-Cold War period, and the rise of more complex challenges in the maritime security domain, have actually 'reinforced existing trends' in Japan's maritime and general security policy evolution rather than having directly led to fundamental doctrinal shift (Patalano, 2008). A careful analysis of recent Japanese security literature, including Japan's NDPG and expert analysis of maritime military strategy, reveals that Japan has three main overriding maritime security imperatives essential for national defense and survival. These priorities are 'defending forward at sea', the defense of 'offshore islands', and the protection of its Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) from interdiction or

obstruction by both non-traditional and traditional security threats (Graham, 2006; Yoshihara and Holmes, 2006; Manicom, 2010b; Patalano, 2011b). All of these priorities derive from Japan's strategic geography and socioeconomics as a developed, intensively urbanized, trade-dependent, resource-poor, far-flung archipelagic nation with a large maritime EEZ and virtually no strategic depth, all of which make close-in defense of the four 'home islands' extremely difficult and potentially futile.

The development of this strategic orientation was influenced by the defensive lesson Japan received from the United States during World War II, namely that Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and naval escort capabilities are essential to ensure that a state or non-state adversary cannot, through a war of attrition, threaten food, commercial, and energy supply lines essential for the functioning of Japan's economy and society. The defense of SLOCs is also critical to maintaining the integrity of military supply lines that would be essential for the other two components of maritime strategy, defending forward at sea and offshore island defense. Thus, in Japan's first defense buildup plan (1958–60), submarines were identified as the most pressing threat and ASW was prioritized along with the more general protection of SLOCs (Yoshihara and Holmes, 2006, pp. 28–33). This was prescient as the Soviet Union's late 1960s blue-water naval modernization, with its emphasis on subsurface and aerial capabilities that would enable it to conduct a *guerre de course* strategy, was seen to be particularly threatening to Japan. Thus, it was immediately subsequent to the 1976 New Defense Program Outline, not in the post-Cold War era, that we see a strengthening of Japan's military doctrine around the already identified critical elements of ASW and the defense of SLOCs (Patalano, 2011a, pp. 85, 93). In the early 1980s, Japan committed itself explicitly to a maritime role as part of increased *yakuwari buntan*, or division of labor, within the United States–Japan alliance. It chose to take up the defense of its SLOCs out to 1,000 nautical miles, and also reconfigured its interpretation of collective self-defense to allow the SDF to assist in the protection of US ships defending Japan from attack within this defensive perimeter (Samuels, 2007, pp. 48, 89). The MSDF's subsurface arm also played an invaluable but generally silent role from 1976 onward in countering the threat of an ominous and modernized Soviet Pacific Fleet in the Northern and Western Pacific (Patalano, 2008, pp. 869–871). It also started to build Aegis Combat System (ACS)-equipped Kongō-class destroyers for both at-sea

air defense and for dealing with submersed and surface threats to its SLOCs.

5 Japan's offensive remilitarization?

Concern has, however, been consistently expressed that Japan may be offensively remilitarizing and its antimilitarist security approach has been diluted by enhanced power projection capabilities and the acquisition of supposedly 'offensive' platforms in the post-Cold War period (e.g. Tanter, 2005). This concern is nevertheless over-exaggerated, and on closer analysis almost all of these platforms are crucial in some way to Japan's aforementioned maritime priorities, even if we do allow for 'strategic flexibility' also being a motivation in these platforms' acquisition (Patalano, 2011a, p. 105). For example, submersed and surface ships such as the Sōryū and the ACS-equipped destroyers with greater range, along with a multi-role fighter like the F-35 with its beyond-visual-range (AMRAAM) missiles, low observability, and advanced sensors that can link with, and extend, ACS coverage, are all critically valuable assets for 'defending forward at sea' by helping to head off subsurface, surface, and aerial threats within Japan's vast maritime domain before these threats present themselves near Japan's home islands. Japan's Ōsumi-class ships, Japanese 'marines', and other added amphibious capabilities are also important components of offshore island defense. Japan emphasized in the 2010 NPDG the need to upgrade its C^4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) capabilities to ensure that it can detect and respond to low- and high-intensity attacks on offshore islands, something for which the F-35's unique capabilities in this area will be a welcome addition. Finally, Japan's Hyūga-class helicopter 'carriers', while the most controversial acquisition due to their offensive carrier-like appearance, are ultimately ASW assets first and foremost (Koda, 2011). Such vessels take Japan's already proficient ASW capabilities to a new level and, thus, greatly enhance Japan's ability to defend its SLOCs and its fleets from subsurface threats in collaboration with Japan's ISR-enhanced Sōryū submarines, and over 100 anti-submarine and maritime surveillance P-3Cs (Patalano, 2008, p. 887; Oros and Tatsumi, 2010, pp. 54–55).

Clinching evidence of primary Japanese military concern being with its maritime environment is the increase in commitment of resources to the civilian Japan Coast Guard (JCG) over the last decade (Samuels, 2008),

while conventional defense spending has decreased for 11 consecutive years.[2] Even within the decreasing conventional military budget, there has been a focus on maritime assets. Japan has committed to extend its fleet of medium-sized diesel-electric submarines from 16 to 22 and to add ASW destroyers. Ultimately, Japan's ability to deter through punishment and offensive retaliation, rather than through deterrence by prevention, is still woefully inadequate when compared with other great powers, including China. Japan is essentially only a direct offensive threat to the weakest of nations, and until this situation changes talk of 'normalization' is premature. While this bolstering of Japan's maritime capabilities will strengthen its ability to implement its maritime strategy within its own 1,000 nautical mile defensive perimeter, it is, however, only half of the maritime security equation. Many of the important SLOCs and strategic chokepoints for Japan's supply and military security lie beyond this defensive perimeter and while the MSDF and the JCG themselves may technically be able to play a more proactive regional role in the future, Japan's growing strategic partnerships with expanded East Asia offer a way to enhance its maritime security while also avoiding a more costly and provocative approach to achieving its security goals.

6 Maritime security beyond Japan

In the 1990s, Japan started to support multilateral engagement on security issues in East Asia in various ways. First, it played a role in the promotion of the ASEAN Regional Forum (Yuzawa, 2005) as a way to handle traditional security issues at the multilateral level, before moving on to providing assistance to address the causal factors of human security threats (Soeya, 2005; Hsien-Li, 2010; Kurusu and Kersten, 2011), many of which have implications for maritime security. Later, Japan moved to the provision of 'security assistance' in the form of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for maritime security hardware and training by the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG), ostensibly for the purposes of addressing non-traditional challenges to maritime security (Bradford, 2004; Samuels, 2008; Singh, 2010). Japan has since 2006 been notably playing a more significant security role in support of regional partners at the bilateral level. Japan has in particular

2 These statistics can be accessed at the MOD of Japan's Japanese language website at http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_budget/index.html (21 June 2013, date last accessed).

pursued closer bilateral military-level relations with nations close to key strategic chokepoints and SLOCs, a notable development as Japan has in the past been hesitant in pursuing bilateral defense partnerships outside of the United States–Japan alliance. These enhanced relations are discussed below in the context of three geostrategic entities (the Bashi Strait–South China Sea–Strait of Malacca; the Indonesian Archipelagic Waters; and the Bay of Bengal – Indian Ocean) of great significance to Japan's maritime security beyond its own maritime defense perimeter.

6.1 Bashi Strait–South China Sea–Strait of Malacca channel

In a situation where Japan was isolated from Taiwan, South Korea, and the United States diplomatically, it would be possible for China, equipped with an increasingly proficient blue-water navy, to pursue a *guerre de course* against Japanese commercial shipping by focusing on the Bashi Strait and Japanese approaches through the South China Sea. The presence of the Chinese Yulin submarine base on Hainan Island is of particular concern in this respect. The possibility for non-traditional security threats as well as traditional conflict to undermine the integrity of this passage, where 88% of all Japanese goods, including energy and raw materials, pass through, is also well noted (Frecon, 2006). Strategic relations with Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia are, therefore, of increasingly pressing concern for Japan, especially given concerns about the long-term staying power of the United States. As concerns with China's military activities have replaced the (already softening) traditional distrust of a Japanese security role among these nations (Singh, 2002; Clemons, 2013), forging these relationships has become increasingly plausible, and Japan has not missed the opportunity.

For example, in July 2010, the foreign ministers of Japan and Vietnam agreed to implement a subcabinet-level 'two-plus-two' dialog, a close security arrangement that Japan only has with the United States, Australia, and India. After the 2010 Senkaku Islands incident, the prime ministers of both countries committed to further developing the 'Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity' at 'all levels and in all areas' (MOFA, 2010), and in 2011, the two sides signed a bilateral agreement to enhance defense cooperation by 'actively' boosting defense exchange and cooperation and have started to exchange military-level contacts. In August 2012, the MOD also announced for the first time that it would be providing

non-combat military equipment and supplies directly to the militaries of other countries in East Asia on an ongoing basis, including to Vietnam's military, for the purposes of capacity-building (Asahi Shimbun, 2012). In late 2012, former defense minister Kitazawa indicated that, with the relaxing of Japan's arms export restrictions, Japan was considering selling submarines to Vietnam (Fackler, 2012), which would likely come along with ASW training – a particular weakness for the PLA and a world-class strength for Japan's MSDF. Chinese reports suggest that such training is already taking place (Global Times, 2013). In May 2013, among discussions of Japan providing Vietnam with patrol boats, Japan and Vietnam will hold their first first-ever bilateral talks specifically on the topic of maritime security (Japan Times, 2013b), where a potential connection between the South and East China Sea disputes with China will likely be made. Japan will propose that Vietnam set up its own version of a coast guard so that Japan can provide ODA support for its development (Sankei, 2013).[3]

Japan and the Philippines' increasing mutual wariness of China's South China Sea actions has led to the relationship progressing beyond the former focus on economics, aid, and multilateral non-traditional security, to now also include bilateral defense cooperation. Most notably, already willing to provide the Philippines equipment that would better enable it to monitor and protect its maritime environment (de Castro, 2009), in 2012 Japan chose the middle of the Scarborough Shoal standoff between China and the Philippines to announce that it was considering providing up to 12 brand-new ships to the Philippines Coast Guard (PCG), which would greatly boost the PCG's capabilities. This announcement was soon followed by first ever visit by a Japanese Chief of Joint Staff's to the Philippines. While Chinese boats were still surrounding the Scarborough Shoal in July, the Philippines and Japan signed a 'Statement of Intent on Defense Cooperation and Exchanges' which indicated that the two sides would continue to hold high level exchanges at all levels of the defense establishment – ministerial, official, and uniformed – and that the two sides would also conduct 'training activities and exercises on the occasion of mutual ship visits between the PN and the JMSDF' (MOD, 2012b). This

3 As Vietnam's current maritime security agencies are connected to the Vietnamese military, in order to receive money through Japan's official ODA channels, it will be necessary for Vietnam to officially establish a civilian coast guard-like agency.

made it the third such statement that Japan has signed with Southeast Asian nations after Vietnam and Singapore (Jiji Press, 2012).

Japan has also pushed forward on increased security relations with Indonesia. Japan has long pursued friendly relations with Indonesia due to its importance as a resource and energy provider during Japan's initial post-war economic modernization. It has since taken on even greater geopolitical importance in the post-Cold War era as the largest modernizing democracy in East Asia. Indonesia's importance to Japan can be seen in Japanese eagerness to assist the nation in difficult times, with its unprecedented provision of both financial and military humanitarian relief assistance in response to the 2004 tsunami, and peace-building activities in Aceh subsequent to the disaster (Williams, 2006; Hall, 2008). In terms of security capability-building, in 2006 Japan decided to extend an unprecedented 'security assistance' grant of three patrol boats to Indonesia to 'fight terrorism and piracy', a seeming exception to its arms export restrictions (BBC, 2006). This was followed up by the provision of maritime surveillance systems and three more Japanese patrol boats in 2009 (BBC, 2009). Indonesia will also be a beneficiary, along with Vietnam and East Timor, of the MOD's aforementioned security 'capability building support project'. During a 2012 visit by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the two sides agreed to have an annual ministerial level dialog on diplomatic, defense, and economic issues separately, which was noted as being rare for Indonesia given its traditional desire to remain aloof from traditional bilateral military cooperation (Jiji Press, 2011; Nikkei, 2011). In early 2013, during a visit by GSDF Chief of Staff Kamizuka Eji, the two sides agreed to increase cooperation between the militaries and Japan was invited to participate in a multi-nation joint anti-terrorism drill in West Java Province in September 2013 (Xinhua News Agency, 2013).

Indonesia, along with Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia, is also an extremely important player for the preservation of maritime security around the busy, long, and narrow Strait of Malacca, one of the most important global strategic chokepoints. The Strait of Malacca, however, probably requires the least direct Japanese security concern for the time being after attention was initially given due to piracy in the area from the 1990s. In terms of non-traditional security threats, from a peak of activity in the 1990s, the incidence of piracy attacks has been reduced to close to zero by 2010, thus making the strait safe for crucial Japanese imports and exports

(Samuels, 2008). Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, with assistance from Japan and others, appear to have the piracy situation in the Straits of Malacca under control. In traditional geopolitical terms, these nations are already aligned in their desire to prevent external great power domination of this crucial regional waterway, and will balance as is required against any hegemonic power looking to carve out for itself a predominant role in the region's geopolitics (Tan, 2012, pp. 127–128). Japan has positive relations with all of these countries and all of them are fiercely independent and unlikely to bandwagon militarily with China in the future. Arguably, Japan's strategy to provide a geopolitical alternative to a China-focused regional order to many of these nations, thus, plays nicely into the 'omni-enmeshment' and 'complex balancing' strategies that Goh (2008) argues is being employed by Southeast Asia states toward great powers.

6.2 Indonesian Archipelagic Waters

The 'Indonesian Archipelagic Waters' are an important route in their own right as ships carrying iron ore and other mineral resources from Australia to Japan often transit through the Lombok Strait up through the Makassar Strait, which separates Borneo and Sulawesi (Noer, 1996). It is also the only cost-effective maritime alternative to the Malacca–South China Sea–Bashi Strait route for Japan's energy imports. The Philippines, Indonesia, and Australia's geostrategic importance for Japan is, thus, obvious in this context. Japan will, therefore, enthusiastically support recently enhanced Australia–Indonesia and Australia–Philippines relations going forward, in addition to looking to strengthen its own security relationship with Australia. In fact, Japan's bilateral defense relationship with Australia is already the most mature outside of the United States–Japan alliance. The genesis of the Australia–Japan defense relationship can originally be seen in the non-traditional security sphere, with the two countries working very closely in Cambodia and East Timor PKOs (Sato, 2008), and crucially during 2004 tsunami relief operations in Indonesia (Sharma, 2010). The two sides have also engaged in unit-level cooperation during PSI training exercises regarding WMDs (Sato, 2008, p. 162). The clear rising trajectory of China leading to an increasingly uncertain global and regional order has encouraged both countries' policy-makers to identify each other as a good 'strategic fit' for more intensive bilateral security

relations (Wilkins, 2011, p. 127), especially given occasional US geopolitical distraction.

Coming together under the 'Trilateral Strategic Dialogue' in 2006 with the United States, and then the 'Quadrilateral' with the United States and India (Sharma, 2010), Australia and Japan have bilaterally taken things to the next level since 2007. Developments have included a 'Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation' after the first ministerial level 'two-plus-two' meeting – Japan's first with a nation other than the United States (Bisley, 2008); Japan's first Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement with a nation other than the United States (Defense News, 2010); a deal to share intelligence (Sydney Morning Herald, 2012); and bilateral military exercises symbolically focused on maritime interdiction exercises as well as 'Under Sea Warfare' (West, 2012). Furthermore, a potentially very significant development in the relationship came to light during ongoing tension surrounding Japan's tensions with China over the Senkaku Islands in September 2012 when Australia's defense minister Stephen Smith announced that Australia was strongly considering a technology transfer deal with Japan for the well regarded diesel-electric AIP Sōryū submarine, which would be a major boost for the strategic relationship as well as the Japanese defense industry so soon after relaxing the arms export restrictions in 2011 (Wallace, 2012a).

6.3 The Bay of Bengal – Indian Ocean

The final geostrategic entity of importance is the Indian Ocean up to and including the Bay of Bengal area which includes the Andaman Sea and the Six-degree Channel. The Six-degree Channel is important as it is the western entry point to the Strait of Malacca from the Indian Ocean for Japan's Middle East energy exports. There are, however, other reasons why the Bay of Bengal waters will be important in the future to Japan. Japan is collaboratively attempting to build a massive economic corridor through the Mekong sub-region to enable it to bypass the Strait of Malacca overland. Crucial to this will be the development of special economic zones adjacent to deep water ports at either Thilawa or Dawei in Myanmar. When the East–West Economic Corridor becomes operational, this will connect the Bay of Bengal to the South China Sea, thus allowing the Strait of Malacca to be circumvented. This will be a boon for Japan as it will improve the cost, timeliness, and security of its trade and energy shipments

(Fukuda, 2011). Furthermore, the formerly worrisome prospect that Myanmar, due to international isolation and economic overdependence on China, would enthusiastically support China's strategic objectives, or perhaps even serve as a staging point for the projection of Chinese naval power into the Bay of Bengal, no longer appears at all plausible. In fact, the Japanese government will, for the first time, send three MSDF training ships to Myanmar in October 2013 for a port visit and goodwill exercises. Prime Minister Abe and President Thein Sein in May 2013 also agreed to strengthen defense dialogs. Both acts are rich in symbolism given China's formerly close relationship with Myanmar and its increasing naval presence in Southeast Asia more generally (Jiji Press, 2013b). With Myanmar's recent 'neutrality' and the Japan–India defense relationship progressing, the final essential components for the implementation of the southward pivot in terms of aligning Japan's maritime security and geopolitical interests are being consolidated.

India is worthy of more specific attention in this sense. In a strategic division of labor, it could offer assistance to Japan through the provision of security for Japanese ships in and around the three most Western strategic chokepoints of the Gulf of Aden/Somalia, Persian Gulf, through to the Bay of Bengal and the Western approaches to the Strait of Malacca (Khurana, 2007b, p. 142). Of particular interest to Japan is India's potentially decisive influence in the Bay of Bengal region as entry points to both the Strait of Malacca or Myanmar's deep water ports. In 2012, India established a 'Far Eastern Naval Command (FENC)' off Port Blair on the Andaman Islands and also inaugurated of INS Baaz naval port, one of the world's largest, at Great Nicobar's Campbell Bay (Ramachandran, 2012). Ostensibly, this base is for surveillance and maritime traffic protection purposes, but with India's stealthy, supersonic BrahMos anti-ship missile soon to be operating, India will not only be able to assert increasing sea control themselves but will be able to deny other nations access to the Bay of Bengal region. Contrary to Indian concern about a 'string of pearls', one Chinese naval analyst has suggested that India is constructing a 'metal chain' that could threaten China's and other nations' shipping and maritime energy security (Rehman, 2010). Given India's proactive military engagement with nations in Southeast Asia, including Singapore, Indonesia, and Vietnam (Gokhale, 2011), it is possible that India, rather than China, will, in the medium to long term, have the maritime upper hand to the

west of Singapore, thus making substantive relations with India absolutely essential for Japan.

The two nations have already begun the process of deepening security relations. The year 2007, 'Indo-Japan Friendship Year', proved to be a turning point for defense relations (Manchuri, 2010). Indo-Japanese naval coordination had previously been somewhat limited to antipiracy activities, coast guard cooperation, and port calls and visits by senior officials (Paul, 2012, p. 112). Japan was, however, included for the first time in the two 2007 Malabar exercises in April and September. The April exercises with the United States and India off the coast of Okinawa included sea control operations and maritime interdiction operations, and the September exercises with India, United States, Australia, and Singapore took place around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and included ASW, maritime interdiction, and anti-piracy search and seizure operations (Khurana, 2007a). The MSDF again joined the India–United States Malabar naval exercises in April 2009 in Okinawa undertaking similar exercises. In late 2009, when new DPJ Prime Minister Hatoyama visited New Delhi, the two sides committed to an annual subcabinet 'two-plus-two' dialog. In 2012, India and Japan also conducted their first ever joint bilateral naval exercises and the two countries confirmed in 2013 that such exercises would become a regular event (Al Jazeera, 2013). Under the DPJ, Japan has also relaxed its arms exports restrictions. India in particular had previously been pressuring Japan to provide India not only assistance in building its manufacturing capability but also with defense technology (Brewster, 2010). While India has traditionally purchased Russian and Israeli systems, they will in the future purchase more American- and possibly even Japanese-developed systems, thereby further strengthening the strategic security partnership.

7 Second geostrategic dimension: geoeconomics and geopolitics

As strategic and military tensions with China in the maritime domain look likely to persist into the future, these tensions will increasingly force Japan to deploy most of its critical maritime assets closer to home. India will, thus, become an essential maritime security partner for Japan west of Singapore, especially if the United States reconsiders its role in the Indian Ocean as has been suggested (Green and Shearer, 2012). One of the most

significant things that Japan can do in return for Indian security guarantees is actually geopolitical in nature. Indeed, Japan is seeking to legitimize and establish India's place as an important economic and political player in Southeast Asia in line with India's 'Look East Policy' (Chandra and Gopalan, 2009). The most salient example of this strategy for Japan was the promotion of Indian (as well as Australian and New Zealand) membership in the East Asia Summit against Chinese reservations (Sharma, 2010, p. 238). In fact, despite the more explicit military-focused content of Japan's recent diplomatic moves noted above, not one of Japan's new strategic collaborations has been initiated solely on the basis of simple alignment of security needs. Japan's ultimate strategic objective is to not only play a part in fostering a robust regional security network that might deter China from using its military for coercive purposes in the future, but also to ensure that China will not be able to engage in coercion and isolation of Japan or regional players through the selective and concentrated exercise of overwhelming hegemonic economic or political power.

Therefore, Japan also has a strong interest in strengthening the economic partnership with India, both as part of its own 'China-plus-one' economic strategy (Fujita and Hamaguchi, 2006), but also in terms of facilitating Indian influence and enmeshment in Southeast Asia. The genesis of such a strategy can again be identified in Abe's visit to India in 2007 when he noted that 'a new dynamism for growth is being generated in Asia as a result of economic development in India and in other countries as well as heightened efforts toward regional integration', and that the Japan–India relationship would be an 'essential pillar for the future architecture of the entire region'. After his visit, he put significant pressure on Japanese officials to conclude the stalled Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) for these geopolitical purposes (Ghosh, 2008, p. 296). In addition to a slow but steady increase in trade volume and the new Japan–India EPA, Japan also made good on its commitment to keep ODA at current levels specifically to help India to improve its infrastructure. By 2010, gross annual ODA disbursements totaled $1.708.29 billion, having more than doubled over the last decade in spite of rapid growth in the Indian economy during the last five years (MOFA, 2011). Notably, ODA to China during the same period started to decrease (Drifte, 2006). Furthermore, Japan's China ODA has transitioned from economic infrastructure to a social and environmental focus, as Japan has become more concerned with China's military rise on the back of its Japanese

ODA-assisted economic modernization (Takamine, 2006, p. 68–71). Japan's ODA to India and Southeast Asia has in contrast been dedicated to various infrastructural projects such as economic corridors, setting up special economic zones, and transportation infrastructure such as seaports and rail investment. In India's case, this plan seems to have paid off. In 2006, total new Japanese investment in India was only a mere $208 million. By March 2012, this number had increased to $2.972 billion, which in itself was a significant increase over the 2010 record figure of $1.183 billion.[4]

Australia holds a different type of geoeconomic and geopolitical importance for Japan. Australia's primary agricultural and resource exports to Japan are critically important in meeting Japan's deficiencies in terms of food and resource security, while Australia also relies on Japanese FDI in its primary and 'resource- and energy-intensive manufacturing sectors' (Sato, 2008, pp. 154, 167). While China seemingly got ahead of Japan in the early 2000s in terms of trying to negotiate an FTA with Australia as well as in accessing crucial mineral resources, Japan has since increased its investment in Australia's resource sector and has also paid greater attention to EPA negotiations with Australia. Between December 2011 and June 2012, the two sides met for four rounds of negotiations in the space of six months, a contrast to the more sluggish pace after the initial burst of activity when negotiations started in 2007. In September 2012, it was announced that Australia and Japan would redouble efforts to make a breakthrough in negotiations and conclude an EPA (Callick, 2012). Like India, Australia, along with New Zealand, is a critical partner for the development of ASEAN and the 'expanded' East Asia region (kakudai higashi ajia). There is a strong Japanese bureaucratic and political preference for comprehensive engagement by India, Australia, and New Zealand with East Asia in order to supplement Japan's own multifaceted engagement (Terada, 2010, pp. 72, 80), thereby mitigating potential future Chinese dominance.

In terms of ASEAN itself, Japan had, however, until the mid-2000s been accused of lacking focus in terms of a leadership role in Southeast Asia, much to China's diplomatic and economic benefit (Ott, 2012,

4 These statistics can be found at the Indian Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion website at http://dipp.nic.in/English/Publications/FDI_Statistics/2012/india_FDI_March2012.pdf.

p. 118), a sentiment apparently held by many Japanese themselves (Hsien-Li, 2010, p. 178). China's skillful diplomacy and engagement with the region from after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis was, according to one prominent analyst, becoming 'a principal catalyst in shaping a new order in Asia' (Shambaugh, 2005, p. 65). During the Koizumi administration in particular, there was a perception in the region that Japan adhered to a 'US first, Asia second' worldview, which, on top of Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, led to some commentators questioning whether Japan was genuinely committed to 'Asia' (e.g. Yeo, 2006, p. 266). A stunned Japan seemed to finally take note in 2005 when in its bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council only Singapore and Vietnam showed support for the Japan due to diplomatic pressure applied to other nations in the region by China (Yoshimatsu, 2010). This event, along with China's EPA agreements in the region, seems to have led to a greater sense of urgency in Japan regarding Southeast Asia, and again the first Abe Shinzō administration seemed to herald a new, more coordinated, active, and government-wide approach for the management of Japan's ASEAN relations (Sudo, 2009, pp. 142, 146). Japan has signed a number of EPAs with nations in the region, with the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia being the most notable recent examples. Japan's East Asia EPAs are considered to be comparatively comprehensive (Solis and Urata, 2007, p. 234), as they not only include provisions on trade and investment but also include 'cooperative measures' in fields of agriculture, SMEs, human resources, ICTs, transportation, and energy security. Support for industrial capability building is a critical component of these agreements, which have arguably facilitated record high two-way trade volumes in all three nations. Japan also in 2007 signed the ASEAN–Japan Comprehensive EPA, which Japanese officials believed put Japan back on level pegging with China and Korea in the region economically (Hsien-Li, 2010, p. 178).

Both Japan's ODA and EPA policy now appear to be strategically geared toward laying the groundwork for private investment and the expansion of production networks to follow (Manger, 2005, p. 805). In addition to encouraging economic 'Asian dynamism' (Solis and Urata, 2007, p. 237), Japan's EPA and ODA policies are also ostensibly configured to support the cultivation of stable and resilient societies and governments in the region (Jimbo, 2013). This echoes Japan's attempt to accommodate China's post-1978 economic rise and to stabilize reform-orientated pre-1989 CCP rule (Takamine, 2006, pp. 53–55; Jerdén and Hagström,

2012). ODA and economic, political, and security capability-building activity between Japan and its key 'southern' partners are effectively creating a geopolitical 'China-plus-one' option for Japan and other nations. Again, it appears to be paying dividends, with Japan's total 2011 investment in ASEAN totaling US$19.6 billion in 2011, a significant jump on the 2010 figure of $8.9 billion. In 2012, the total is expected to be higher again (Wallace, 2012b). Although the high value of the yen up until 2013 is a significant driving factor for this investment, without government infrastructural investment or the signaling of long-term strategic commitment to the region Japanese investors would likely hesitate to invest such high amounts of capital. Japanese private sector investment in Vietnam and the Philippines has stood out in particular.[5]

Japan's relationship with Vietnam serves as a particularly good example of Japan's strategy. Both nations are concerned about Chinese military modernization but are also increasingly concerned about the strategic implications of economic overreliance on China's future economic growth and the potential for intersecting economic and military coercion. Ogasawara (2011), for example, straightforwardly argues that Japan's help in 'developing Vietnam's export industries will help keep it from being overwhelmed by China in competitiveness. Japan and Vietnam should avoid a heavy dependence on China that would narrow both countries' freedom of action.' Japan has thus committed to a low-intensity form of 'nation-building' (Luong, 2009), elements of which can be seen in Japan's assistance in reforming Vietnam's judicial system, public finance management, and other areas that need to be attended to for a business-friendly environment and social stability. The Japanese government and Japanese companies will also work directly with Vietnam to implement large-scale infrastructure projects such as two nuclear power plants and a high speed train service (Cooper and Matsuda, 2012). The relationship goes further than this however, with Japanese advisors being the only foreign government representatives assisting with the development and implementation of Vietnam's new industrialization strategy to develop human resources, ports, transportation, and other infrastructure (Saigon Times, 2012), for the purpose of assisting Vietnam to become a 'modern industrial country' by 2020. Cooperation on industrial strategy extends to the identification of

5 Japanese trade and investment statistics can be accessed at http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/reports/statistics/.

key industries for economic cooperation and educational exchanges to better prepare Vietnamese industry for competition ahead of the beginning of the lifting of Vietnamese trade barriers in 2018 as required by the ASEAN Free Trade Area. In early 2013, six key industrial sectors, namely consumer electronics, food processing, shipbuilding, agricultural machinery, environment and energy conservation, and automobile/spare part manufacturing, were selected by both countries for direct Japanese government investment. Vietnam in return will establish two specialized industrial zones for Japanese investors inside the country (Tuoitrenews, 2013).

Arguably, Japan is now looking to expand the Vietnam model to the rest of the Mekong region. Japan's main vehicle for the application of this model to other parts of the region is through public and private investment in the East–West Economic Corridor (EWEC). The EWEC, mentioned above as an alternative for Japan's energy and trade flows, is significant for other reasons. The EWEC connects Vietnam with Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and ultimately India, socioeconomically, and also helps Mekong countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar address the 'development gap' that separates them from the rest of ASEAN (Yoshimatsu and Trinidad, 2010, p. 210). In 2007, Japan initiated the Japan-Mekong Region Partnership Program to assist in the 'integration of the economies in the region and beyond through improving socio-economic infrastructure and institutions', and the 'expansion of trade and investment between Japan and the region through developing legal frameworks (EPA), improving business environment for trade and investment, and promoting industrial cooperation'. These ambitious aims sat alongside other goals which included the promotion of the rule of law, and 'common goals of the region', such as poverty reduction and environmental protection (Luong, 2009, pp. 110–111). For the most part, Japan appears to be following up on these aims with the dedication of significant resources. For example, in 2011, it was announced that the Japanese government and private investors had coordinated a pledged $26.1 billion in 'infrastructure construction support' to ASEAN for 57 projects to connect southern Vietnam with Myanmar, and eventually India (Ozawa, 2012). The Japanese government is also well aware how Japan's own geoeconomic interests are well served by such commitments (Fukuda, 2011).

8 The 'strategic contrast'

Furthermore, Japan appears to be pursuing a 'strategic contrast' with China in its regional diplomacy. Japan has attempted to place focus on its role as a sensitive and sustainable diplomatic partner for these nations as a contrast with the perception of Chinese investment and diplomatic interest being opportunistic (Fuller, 2012), and connected to the often environmentally destructive extraction of energy resources (Yoshimatsu, 2010). China's dam-building projects on the Mekong and in Northern Myanmar and the related local controversies are a good example of such a concern. Japan on the other hand has put much more emphasis on the concept of the 'Green Mekong' in its diplomacy to demonstrate its commitment to sustainable economic development, although there are not surprisingly potential commercial opportunities for Japanese companies interested in exporting green technology and infrastructure (Okano-Heijmans, 2012). Another dimension of sustainable development is the development of 'soft infrastructure' (Yoshimatsu, 2010, p. 99), which includes emphasis on human resources development as well as changes to the legal and business environment that would support investor confidence that hard infrastructure investments can be properly utilized (JICA, 2009, pp. 148–149; Sudo, 2009, p. 151). Sustainable development in both the environmental and economic sense is an essential part of assisting in integrating 'the Mekong countries into the broader regional and international economies' in particular. The logic behind this is 'to support the industrial growth of these countries and … [thereby] reduce their dependence on China' by allowing them to utilize their own human and natural resources (Yoshimatsu, 2010, p. 100).

Another element of the strategic contrast is Japanese ODA generosity. In addition to important maritime partners such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia, which have seen significant gross ODA disbursement consistently increasing above global Japanese ODA baseline commitments over the last decade, Japan accelerated its commitment to the riparian communities in ASEAN with the first 'Japan-Mekong Summit' in Tokyo in November 2009. This meeting yielded the 'Tokyo Declaration' in which Japan committed more than 500 billion yen (US $6.37 billion) of official development as part of a coordinated ODA disbursement policy over three years for further development of both infrastructure and environmental conservation. At the Fourth Japan-Mekong

Summit in April 2012, not long after Myanmar's 'opening up' in late 2011, Japan proposed an increase of 100 billion yen in ODA to the whole Mekong region for the subsequent three years, bringing the total planned disbursement to a significant 600 billion yen (US$7.65 billion) for the 2013–15 three-year period. To achieve its aims in the region, Japan is deepening its already significant economic relationship with Thailand by embracing it as the key developmental and diplomatic partner (MOFA, 2011, p. 105), as well as co-investing with Thailand and Myanmar in the development of the strategically significant Dawei Port Special Economic Zone in Myanmar. After the project looked to be faltering in early 2012, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation announced the possibility of up to $3.2 billion in soft yen loans to assist investment in the Dawei project (Slodkowski, 2012a). Not only is much of Japan's ODA focused on economic infrastructure, but it is designed to address pressing regional human security issues at both bilateral and multilateral levels, with the endgame being a socioeconomically resilient and connected Southeast Asia region (Hsien-Li, 2010, pp. 167–172).

Japan's policy toward the resource-rich and geopolitically critical Myanmar itself is a good example of the confluence of Japan's regional geopolitical intentions to counterbalance China's influence through a strategic contrast, and its desire to enhance its own geoeconomic interests. After many years of 'quiet dialog' with the former pariah state, Japan reacted with unusual and unmistakable alacrity to signs of Myanmar's commitment to opening up to the international community and taking initial steps toward democratization in late 2011. At the same time as the aforementioned Fourth Japan-Mekong Summit, Japan announced that it would forgive up to $3.7 billion of Myanmar's past debt (Foster, 2012). In addition to resuming ODA yen loans, Japan also offered bridging finance to help Myanmar clear a combined $900 million of arrears to the ADB and World Bank, which was needed for the two lenders to resume assistance programs and bring other investors back into the country (Slodkowski, 2012a). The Japanese and Myanmar governments have agreed that the two countries alone would jointly develop and own the massive 2,400-hectare Thilawa Special Economic Zone, 25 km south of Yangon, a plan subsequently backed by the Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, and Marubeni corporations, which will take on a 49% shareholding stake. The Japanese government and private companies have also been involved in drawing up plans with the Myanmar government, and deploying engineers

for the redevelopment of sewerage, water supply, communications, and transport systems of Yangon (Fuller, 2012). Japan is also providing assistance to Myanmar for the construction of a new share market, the overhaul of the financial sector (Nakata, 2012), an information technology backbone focused on the capital Nay Pyi Daw, Yangon, and Mandalay (Slodkowski, 2012b), for training young administrators (Straits Times, 2013), and even for the utilization of space (Xinhua News Agency, 2012). Japan's bureaucrats, businessmen, and cabinet-level politicians consciously worked to put together 'a fast-track deal in less than a year [which] has paved the way for Japan to provide at least $18 billion in aid, investment and debt forgiveness from government and private sources' in 2012 alone (Slodkowski, 2012a). The significant moves continued into 2013 when Prime Minister Abe, during the first visit by a Japanese prime minister to Myanmar since Fukuda Takeo in 1977, committed Japan to the nationwide revival of Myanmar's debilitated electricity sector through the deployment of infrastructure for more efficient and less environmentally destructive supercritical coal-fired power plants with pollutant control technology (Nikkei, 2013). Abe directly connected Myanmar's growth to Japan's own further development, saying that he wanted to utilize 'all [of] Japan' to 'support Myanmar's growth' (Jiji Press, 2013c).

Japan is even playing a low-profile role in assisting the Myanmar government in its human security challenges, particularly the peace and reconciliation process with non-Bamar ethnic groups. The head of the Nippon Foundation (NF), Sasakawa Yohei, has been named Japan's goodwill ambassador for the welfare of Myanmar's ethnic minorities, and the NF has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Myanmar government for the delivery of emergency assistance in October 2012. The NF in late 2012 then delivered humanitarian aid from the Japanese government directly to internally displaced persons in Mon state, the first time a foreign NGO had ever been permitted to deliver direct humanitarian aid to internally displaced persons in minority areas. Sasakawa has also been invited to observe peace talks between the Myanmar government and at least four minority groups (Thin, 2013). Subsequent to the first Japan–Myanmar Human Rights Dialogue in Nay Pyi Daw in February 2013, which focused on issues relating to peace negotiations, the release of political prisoners, and Japan's cooperation with Myanmar on human rights issues, Prime Minister Abe and other high-ranking ministers in April met with the representatives of the United Nationalities Federal Council

(UNFC) in Tokyo to discuss the provision of humanitarian assistance. The UNFC is an umbrella organization for some of Myanmar's minority groups, including the Kachin group still currently engaged in armed conflict with the Myanmar military (Naing, 2013). This would not be the first time that Japan has taken on such a role and interest in human and non-traditional security and reconciliation in the ASEAN region. Japan's peace-building in Mindanao (Lam, 2008) and Aceh after the 2004 tsunami (Hall, 2008; Lam, 2009) are previous examples of similar types of constructive engagement. Such involvement shows a deepened level of diplomatic engagement as trust between the respective states and the insurgent groups tends to be low and sensitivity is crucial, suggesting that Japan must have acquired the respective governments' trust in order to play this role. These activities further strengthen the aforementioned strategic contrast, with Japan supporting democratization by connecting debt forgiveness to further reform, economic supporting development through both hard and soft infrastructure likely to generate employment, and also supporting national reconciliation. This is in contrast to the Chinese government, the main diplomatic backer of the isolated, former military regime in Nay Pyi Daw, and perceived enabler of exploitative resource extraction by Chinese companies.

9 Diversification of the dual hedge: is it a grand strategy?

The above discussion has clearly demonstrated that Japan is paying considerably more attention in its foreign and security policies to nations 'south' of its traditional domain of geopolitical interest. The key question then is whether this more concentrated policy can be reasonably argued to be part of a Japanese 'grand strategy' and thus likely to be sustainable over the long term in terms of resourcing, regional strategic acceptance, and domestic politics. Taking Layton (2012) as a guide, 'grand strategy' is a very specific type of strategy not simply built around matching the resourcing ends to the means of the current national strategy. Grand strategy according to Layton is not a 'whole of government' policy but is a 'whole of nation' approach to resolving key economic, political, and security dilemmas, and accessing and regenerating essential strategic economic, diplomatic, and military resources. Crucial to the implementation of a grand strategy is the 'strategic synthesis' at home and abroad, without which a

grand strategy cannot be sustained, resourced, and implemented, and would be susceptible to short-term political exigencies. Another requirement for grand strategy is that it must be forward-looking and 'impose a preferred state of order on the future' (Layton, 2012, pp. 56–58). In this sense, a grand strategy must, according to Steven Metz, demonstrate an awareness of the interaction between the elements of 'time, space and milieus' by identifying likely geostrategic trends and providing a sense of how a nation can respond to likely changes in geopolitics over time (Layton, 2012, p. 59).

Ironically, Layton specifically singles out Japan as the epitome of a nation that does not have a grand strategy and instead 'succeeds' through 'opportunism' (Layton, 2012, p. 59). To the contrary, however, this article has shown how Japan is aiming to shape the region in a way that is in line with its preferences for a secure multipolar region, through the coherent and 'whole of nation' utilization of diplomatic, economic, military and societal resources and power. Japan's key security priorities will be met by focusing resources on its own maritime defense perimeter while relying on the United States in the short-term, as well as other partners in the medium to long term, for its supply security beyond its defensive perimeter. Japan is still wary of heavily investing in military resources that would jeopardize the 'strategic solvency' of its grand strategy by diverting resources away from fundamental maritime interests at home, or from the capacity to dedicate resources to ODA and diplomacy essential for the achievement of its geopolitical and geoeconomic goals in the broader region. Indeed, an overinvestment in unnecessarily military hardware now may well harm Japan's capacity to regenerate the resources needed to financially and technologically support a robust military presence in the future should it be required. The investment in diplomacy and ODA, as well as the maintenance of a mostly non-offensive military posture, also supports the maintenance of relationships of trust with crucial geopolitical players in the region. As Mazarr notes, the United States' strategy is potentially insolvent not only due to the expense but also because it 'presumes an American relationship with friends, allies, and rivals that is the hallmark of a bygone era', suggesting careful attention also needs to be given to the appropriate manner in which to approach sensitive geopolitical relationships (Mazarr, 2012, p. 8), something Japan has arguably done in the case of the 'expanded' East Asia at least.

Japan's attempt to support the medium- to long-term economic and political development of the southern nations also connects with Japan's own neo-mercantilist interests. Not only does this relate to Japan's interest in diversifying and expanding regional production networks connected to its own export industry, but regional growth will also enable Japan to utilize its comparative advantage in manufacturing and green infrastructure, especially as Japan's own state and domestic demand is weakening. This has led Japanese industries, with the assistance of Japanese bureaucracies (Manger, 2005; Terada, 2010), to seek out alternative markets for their long-term well-being. It should also not be forgotten that unlike Japan, China, as an emerging nation, is as much competitor as partner for many nations in the region. Thus, Japan, through 'strategic contrast', is also trying to increase its soft power resources in the region through embracing more mutually beneficial relationships with nations in the south which will likely compare favorably with the more resource extraction-focused policy that China is trying to implement. While China will obviously remain a partner for these countries, and for Japan itself, the Japanese government will attempt to shape the regional order in a way that enables a number of other potential middle and great powers the chance to rise at the same time. This will ensure that Japan's security, economic, and political options are not solely dependent on Chinese benevolence or US commitment to Japan's well-being. As long as Japan itself does not attempt to assert economic or military dominance over the region, this role will be accepted by other regional players.

Another element of a sustainable grand strategy is domestic political sustainability. While both Koizumi Junichiro's strong but single-minded embrace of a 'global alliance' with the United States (Easley *et al*., 2010, p. 52; Terada, 2010, p. 77) and Hatoyama Yukio's desire to create 'equidistance' between the United States and China offered grand strategic visions (Hagström, 2010, p. 519), both ultimately failed to be sustained after the promoters of the vision left office (Hughes, 2012). Indeed, the lesson from both of these examples is that solely political visions, without public, commercial, or bureaucratic buy-in, are unlikely to be sustainable. However, the diversified dual hedge appears to have sufficient 'whole of nation' buy-in as seen in the coordination between private industry and Japan's various bureaucracies. It also has the support of politicians and other important political elites of different ideological shades. While the LDP was bitterly critical of the DPJ's foreign policy toward China, Korea, and the

United States during its three years in power, Abe Shinzō, subsequent to regaining power in late 2012, actually went as far as praising the DPJ for 'continuing' the strategic outreach to the wider region while it was in government (Abe, 2012). Indeed, the second administration of Abe Shinzō has seen this strategy virtually raised to a declaratory policy with the promulgation of the 'Abe Doctrine', the successor to the 1977 Fukuda Doctrine. Abe's foreign policy toward the region will place emphasis on maritime security and Japan's identity as a sea-faring nation in 'maritime Asia', which includes India and Australia, and will promote further interconnectivity in terms of trade and investment, people, and culture between Japan and ASEAN. This is in addition to the expected reinvigorated commitment to the United States–Japan alliance (Abe, 2013).

At the level of analysis of political ideology and in the broader intellectual community, the strategy will also be acceptable throughout most of the ideological spectrum. While the diversified dual hedge as outlined here makes sense *a priori* for so-called neo-mercantilists and traditional realists, other key groups, pro-US conservatives, ideological conservatives, pro-Asia progressives, and middle-power internationalists (Samuels, 2007), will also find it an acceptable approach to accommodating their foreign policy visions. Pro-US conservatives will find the strategy acceptable as it does not foreclose stronger future relations with the United States and does not commit Japan to an overly intimate relationship with China in particular. The overlap with current US strategy in terms of the strategic pivot will also reassure this grouping. Additionally, many ideological conservatives, with nostalgia for good relations with India, Myanmar, and Vietnam, are likely to be some of the strongest supporters of such an approach (Seekins, 1999; Brewster, 2010, p. 102). Soeya (2005) argues that, in any respect, many Japanese conservatives have ultimately over time come to at least rhetorically adopt 'middle-power preferences' through the use of the language of internationalism, and by pursuing multilateral enmeshment in the global security order, rather than the unilateral assertion of military strength. The abovementioned Abe Doctrine, with its focus on 'binding' Japan to the region and the importance of economic and human security as well as democracy and human rights, somewhat confirms Soeya's argument (Abe, 2013).

Pro-Asia progressives and middle-power internationalists will also find the comprehensive approach acceptable as not only do the economic and human security dimensions of the diversified dual hedge strengthen

Japan's relations with Asia more generally, a goal of both these groups, but the strategy still reserves pride of place for Japan as a defensive-orientated 'maritime state' (kaiyō kokka) and 'trading state' (tsūshō kokka) going forward (Kōsaka, 1964, 1975), rather than embraces a 'continental' or offensive-orientated security doctrine (Iokibe, 2011, p. 8). Even the sole remaining 'pacifist' party of note in Japan, the Buddhist New Komeitō party, sees strengthening maritime security in particular, through support for the strengthening of the JCG and its regional role, as a relatively acceptable security policy approach (Samuels, 2008; Black, 2012, p. 278), suggesting that support for 'one-country pacifism' has indeed diminished in post-Cold War Japan (Soeya, 2005, p. 104). As long as regionally focused 'human security' approaches with an emphasis on social and economic development continue to be embraced as an important part of Japan's security policy tool kit (Kurusu and Kersten, 2011), then those along the center to center-left of the political spectrum in Japan will accept gradual development in maritime military capabilities as well as defense relations with nations in the expanded East Asia region. Furthermore, preferences for a maritime-focused but still non-offensive security policy seem to be even stronger among the next generation of Japanese throughout the political spectrum, suggesting that political and bureaucratic generational change will not challenge the legitimacy of a diversified dual hedge approach to foreign and security policy.[6]

10 Conclusion

As described, we are seeing the genesis of deeper military-level relations between Japan and important strategic partners 'south' of its traditional geopolitical domain of interest. None of these relations are however solely about the security geostrategic dimension and also overlap with economic and political dimensions and an alignment of strategic interests. In line with the perception of a new strategic dilemma in Japan surrounding its security, the diversified dual hedge underway looks to facilitate

6 This author, in his interviews with a wide range of up-and-coming Japanese elites and opinion leaders interested in security policy, found that while wariness of China was pervasive, very few saw the solution as being offensive remilitarization and/or blind acceptance of Japan's alliance with the United States and preferred a more maritime-focused approach and a more strategic approach to ODA in regard to the Asian region. Almost all 52 interviewees, regardless of their ideological predisposition, were enthusiastic about increased security as well as economic and ODA partnerships with nations outside of Northeast Asia.

comprehensive relations with partners outside of both the United States and China in order to mitigate the potential for military, economic, or political coercion in the future. While this is not a containment policy, Japan has identified the need for itself and others to be an important player in the region as a constructive alternative to Chinese geostrategic dominance in various domains. As long as Japan does not seek to assert dominance over the region economically or militarily, Japan will likely be welcomed as a comprehensive partner. If executed successfully and bought into by political, economic, and public interest groups, as appears to be the case, Japan could well acquire considerable strategic autonomy for itself in the medium to long term. The main risk is that China, as indicated in its 2013 defense white paper (Blanchard, 2013), will see Japanese actions as contributing to a US containment strategy, which in turn will further undermine any pretense of there being a 'mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests' between Japan and China (Gao, 2008). While such suspicions will be difficult to manage, in addition to continuing engagement with China at the bilateral and multilateral level, Japan should continue to ensure its security cooperation with the region is implemented incrementally and embedded within a broader economics and diplomacy-focused foreign policy framework. This will allow smoother and deeper rapprochement between the two nations should more promising regional dynamics present themselves after a period of seeming inevitable tension as the region adjusts to China's continuing rise.

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