

Japan's Goldilocks Strategy

Many Japanese analysts do not believe that Japan has a realistic grand strategy, and more than a few insist that it never did. Sadako Ogata, one of Japan's most distinguished diplomats, declared that Japanese foreign policy has long been marked by "a conspicuous absence of strategic thinking."¹ Former ambassador Hisahiko Okazaki maintains that, apart from an "exceptional decade" between 1895 and 1905, Japanese strategy has been "naïve" and, since 1945, "sterile."² These eminent practitioners are hardly alone. The historian Saburo Ienaga dedicated a chapter in his influential book to the irrationality of the prewar military.³ Political scientist Shin'ichi Kitaoka argues that one of the great misfortunes of Japanese history has been the extent to which idealism has dominated realism.⁴ Historian Chihiro Hosoya associated this with General Hideki's famous argument for war to Prince Fumimaro Konoye in 1941: "Sometimes a man has to jump, with his eyes closed, from the veranda of Kiyomizu Temple."⁵

Most Japanese assessments of its postwar strategy have been a little different. Japan is often depicted as "groping" (*mosaku*) for strategy.⁶ For some, postwar strategy has been incoherent for the same reason prewar strategy was: Japan is chasing too many hares at once. By trying to pursue a policy that is simultaneously UN-centered, Asia-oriented, autonomous, and consistent with the goals of the bilateral alliance with the United States, Japan's foreign policy ends up confused and ineffective. The junior partnership with Washington is blamed most frequently for Tokyo's strategic deficit. Having little reason to build a military during the Cold War and having a limited sense of external threat, Japan could avoid strategic thinking and remain in its "cocoon."⁷ The

Richard J. Samuels is the Ford International Professor of Political Science and director of the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 2005–2006, he was a visiting scholar at the Keizai Koho Center in Tokyo. This essay is derived from his forthcoming book *Securing Japan*, supported by the Smith Richardson Foundation.

© 2006 by The Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
The Washington Quarterly • 29:4 pp. 111–127.

consensus is that Japanese leaders practice mere “karaoke diplomacy”: background music and lyrics are set by the United States and Japanese diplomats are left only to decide what to wear and how to sing the songs.⁸

Japanese strategists deserve more credit. Not surprisingly, they receive it from Korean and Chinese analyses, which often posit a Japan once again preparing for regional domination. Many of Japan’s neighbors are convinced that Japanese militarism, supported by an ever recrudescing, nationalist right wing, lurks just beneath the surface.⁹ North American and European analysts seldom go that far, concluding instead that postwar Japanese planners have made a strategic choice to consistently punch below their weight in international politics. The outstanding question is whether they will continue to do so.

Fourth Time’s a Charm

This is a particularly auspicious time to explore this question. Japanese security is once again the object of considerable debate, the fourth such moment in a 150-year-long historical arc of alternating debates and consensuses. A widespread belief in the efficacy of “catching up and surpassing” the West helped elites in the late nineteenth century forge the Meiji consensus on borrowing foreign institutions, learning Western rules, and mastering Western practice. This “Rich Nation, Strong Army” model was a great success, but by the end of World War I, when it was clear that the West viewed Japanese ambitions with suspicion, the consensus had become tattered. After a period of domestic violence and intimidation, a new consensus was forged on finding a less-conciliatory response to world affairs. Prince Konoye’s 1937 “New Asian Order” attracted support from a wide swath of Japan’s ideological spectrum. The new Japan would be a great power, Asia’s leader. The disaster that resulted is well known, and from its ashes, again, after considerable debate, creative reinvention, and consolidation of power, Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida conjured a pragmatic path to provide security cheaply as the Cold War began. This security, however, would not be free. The Yoshida Doctrine, which called for Japan to adopt the U.S. stance on international politics in exchange for military protection, would cost Japan its autonomy, an expenditure increasingly seen as more than Japan should pay. Thus, the strategy that has joined Japan and the United States at the hip is being questioned, both by those who support the alliance and by those who oppose it. The fourth consensus has yet to reveal itself, although its contending political and intellectual constituents are clearly identifiable.

Institutionalizing the Yoshida Doctrine required the political skills of two generations of mainstream conservative politicians, as well as a viable strategic model. At home, it required political management of nationalists on the right and the left. The former, fellow conservatives, were embraced within

the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), while the latter, the leftist opposition, received periodic guarantees that Article IX of the constitution, revoking Japan's right to use force as a means of settling international disputes, would be preserved. Both were kept at arms length, while Yoshida and his political successors deepened their alliance with bureaucrats and downsized Japanese foreign and security policy. They restyled the recently imperial power as an island trading nation. Mercantilism replaced militarism. Yoshida embraced Article IX as his own, both to deflect U.S. demands and to mobilize popular support. By layering pacifist interpretations of the constitution with self-imposed constraints on the expansion of the military and the defense industry, "defensive defense" became the central tenet of Japanese security policy.

The strategy that has joined Japan and the United States at the hip is being questioned.

Shaping the New Security Discourse

A great deal has changed since the late 1980s, when Japan was known as an economic giant and political pygmy. Japan is still an economic giant, of course, but its willingness to play a political role in world affairs is no longer pygmy-like. Its defense budget, at more than \$41 billion in fiscal year 2006, is one of the five largest in the world, while its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have been dispatched as part of UN peacekeeping operations to Cambodia, Mozambique, and the Golan Heights, among other places. In 1996, in a joint declaration on the U.S.-Japanese security alliance, later passed by the Diet as law in the revised U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines of 1999, Tokyo agreed to expand its security role from the homeland to "areas surrounding Japan." Then, after September 11, 2001, Japan joined President George W. Bush's "coalition of the willing," dispatching forces to the Indian Ocean and later to Iraq. Tokyo had begun to openly embrace a global security role. Influential LDP leaders now publicly advocate collective self-defense and the acquisition of greater offensive military capabilities. Japan may still be punching below its weight in world affairs, but it has been bulking up in preparation for new bouts.

After the Soviet Union disappeared, the most serious threat to Japanese security went with it. Indeed, by any conventional measure of military capabilities, the USSR was a far graver threat to Japan than China is today. The Soviet Union's Far Eastern fleet and its air and ground units in the region were better equipped and better trained than China's People's Liberation Army, which, after all, still depends on a lesser complement of Soviet-era

equipment today. Yet, the Japanese government did not begin its sustained program of military modernization until after the USSR was gone. Something else was also at work.

Rather, four other factors were shaping Japan's security outlook: (1) a rising China, (2) a miscreant regime in North Korea, (3) the possibility of abandonment by the United States, and (4) the relative decline of the Japanese economy. Japan responded to each of

these four with strategic agility. It responded to China by first embracing it economically and then by calling attention to a "China threat." It responded to North Korea by alternating between warm and cold diplomatic initiatives. It responded to the possibility of abandonment by the United States by "hugging it close," thereby enhancing the threat of entanglement. It responded to the specter

A new security discourse has taken shape in a new national leadership.

of economic decline by readjusting familiar techno-national ideas to the complex dynamics of a globalizing world economy.¹⁰ Importantly, each of these threats has been used to justify the modernization of Japan's military. Japanese strategists have determined that they must confront China and North Korea, reassure the United States, and reinvigorate Japan's industrial vitality, not least of all its defense-industrial base.

A second part of an explanation for Japan's force modernization lies in the security dilemma that grips Northeast Asia today.¹¹ North Korea, China, and Japan all have legitimate security concerns. Pyongyang's is existential; the regime fears for its survival in a world in which the lone remaining superpower has identified it as a cancer. China borders more states than any other and perceives, no doubt correctly, that the United States and Japan share designs on containing its rise. The response to these concerns in each country has been predictably excessive: each state is overinsuring against perceived risk. North Korea acquires nuclear weapons; China compensates for a decade of relative military decline by funding a rapid and opaque force modernization; and, with the United States cheerleading, Japan acquires missile defense and force-projection capabilities that it long had denied itself. As each country acts to increase its own security, it makes the others less secure.

This suggests a third, critically important element of Japanese decision-making. Each threat, each response, and each political calculation has been filtered through domestic institutions and debate. A new security discourse with identifiable historical predicates has taken shape in the context of a new national leadership. Revisionists led by Junichiro Koizumi and Shinzo Abe consolidated power during the early 2000s. They combined the four new threats—fabricating none but amplifying all—with the old ambitions

of their forebears, the once “antimainstream” conservatives whose greatest battles were fought against Yoshida himself. Once in power, they seized the opportunity to reform the domestic institutions of national security and to marginalize pragmatists and pacifists.

Meanwhile, Washington's exhortations that Tokyo expand its security footprint have never been so grandiose. The Department of Defense promises to maintain its pledged defense of Japan but now openly expects Japan to cooperate in contingencies far from East Asia. It is Washington's “clear intent” to use its Japanese bases and the alliance overall as instruments in its global security strategy, and it expects Japan to underwrite the costs to a greater extent than ever before.¹² In late April 2006, U.S. deputy undersecretary of defense Richard Lawless announced that Japan would pay \$26 billion to support U.S. force realignment in Japan, a sum that shocked even Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe and which Director General Fukushima Nukaga subsequently denied. Regardless of the precise amount, the *raison d'être* of the alliance has *de facto* already been transformed. What was once a highly asymmetric arrangement, in which the United States was pledged to defend Japan but received no reciprocal commitment, is now one in which Japan has pledged lucre but not yet blood to support the U.S. global strategy. Japanese leaders have long referred to the archipelago as “America's unsinkable aircraft carrier,” but the shared ambitions for this expeditionary platform are bolder and more transparent than ever now that Japan's revisionist leaders have signed on to a global partnership.

Like many historical changes, the current reinstitutionalization of Japanese security policy is overdetermined. It has been catalyzed by international events beyond Japan's control; by domestic political struggles, societal change, and institutional reform; and by the transformation of the U.S. defense establishment. The Diet enacted 15 new security-related laws between 1991 and 2003, the most important ones on the revisionists' watch after 2001. The Japanese Defense Agency (JDA) became a policy agency, rather than one merely of procurement. More changes are on the way, including the possibility of Japan acquiring its first democratically crafted constitution that recognizes a fully legitimate military that will assume new roles and missions, including the use of force in collective self-defense.

No single “big bang” forced this transformation, although the end of the Cold War comes closest. Instead, the confluence of shifts in global, regional, and domestic balances of power enabled Japanese security strategists to whittle away at Yoshida's pacifist consensus. This strategy has not been decimated entirely, as suggested both by the delicate placement of lightly armed SDF troops in Samawah, as far from the violence in Iraq as possible, and by the Koizumi cabinet's unwillingness to increase defense spending even to the average relative level of advanced industrial democracies. Still, the facts

that the United Nations never fully blessed the wartime presence of Japanese troops in Iraq, that Tokyo agreed to participate in ballistic missile defense and to relax arms export restrictions, and that Japan acquired new weapons systems that extend its reach all suggest how much has changed.

“Japan [has] become [both] more active operationally and better prepared legally” to act in its own defense than at any time since the alliance was established.¹³ Japan has achieved this incrementally, in a series of discrete steps, which has given Japanese strategists new confidence and increased comfort in assuming additional roles and missions within the alliance. Some U.S. government officials have called this a process of “maturation,” while other analysts have welcomed the “erosion of anti-militarism” and “strategic tinkering.”¹⁴ The most decorously indirect expression of this process is from a report by the JDA’s National Institute for Defense Studies that refers to the “lateral expansion [and] greater depth” of Japan’s defense capabilities since the end of the Cold War.¹⁵ Whether this has been a process of erosion, tinkering, expansion, or slicing, change has been aplenty. However it is expressed, Japan has modernized its military and begun to shift its doctrine, and it is poised to continue.

The Battle to Redefine Japan’s Security Identity Begins

What the next step will entail is currently under active debate in Tokyo, where there are strong disagreements 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 LDP supports the U.S. alliance unconditionally but is divided on how to deal with Asia, while the opposition Democratic Party of Japan is unified on regional integration but divided on the alliance.¹⁶ Moreover, the contemporary discourse about Japanese grand strategy is filled with 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 becoming “normal.” The deck is reshuffled yet again on the issue of accommodation with China.

The security policy preferences of contemporary Japanese scholars, commentators, politicians, and bureaucrats can be sorted along two axes. The first is a measure of the value placed on the alliance with the United States. At one extreme, there 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 to their calculations. U.S. bases in Japan are critical elements of any coherent national security strategy. At the other extreme is the view that, in a unipolar

Table I. Japan's Strategic Options

	Embrace U.S.	Distance from U.S.
More active military	Normal nationalists	Neo-autonomists
Less active military	Middle-power internationalists	Pacifists

world, the United States is a dangerous bully that must be kept at a distance for fear that Japan would otherwise become entangled in its adventures. This entanglement is made all the more likely by the presence of U.S. bases. Located in the middle of this axis are those who call on Japan to rebalance its Asian and U.S. relationships more effectively. They are attracted to the idea of regional institution building but are not yet prepared to walk away from U.S. security guarantees. This first axis, then, is a measure of the relative value placed on 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 status quo oriented. They are divided along a second axis, the willingness to use force in international affairs. Whether an individual supports revision of Article IX, wants Japan to assume a more proactive and global defense posture, desires the integration of Japanese forces with the U.S. military, or seeks the dispatch of SDF abroad are all measures of where Japanese stand on this second dimension. Some who support the U.S. alliance, then, are more willing to deploy the SDF to share alliance burdens than are others who prefer that Japan continue to limit itself to rear-area support. The former 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 nationalists,” 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. The latter, “middle-power internationalists,” 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. Among those who prefer Japan to keep a greater distance from the United States are “neo-autonomists,” who would build an independent, full-spectrum Japanese military that could use force, and “pacifists,” who eschew the military institution altogether (see table 1).

STRUGGLING TOWARD A POST-YOSHIDA CONSENSUS

These four classifications suggest four nominal strategic choices, each consistent with expressed national values. First, Japan can achieve prestige by

increasing national strength. Of course, this is the path on which Japan has already embarked, led by the normal nationalists, who would further bulk up what is already the most modern indigenous military in the Far East. The normal nationalists seek to equalize the alliance to build an even better military shield. They are aware of the risk of entrapment but discount it. Over time, the “unsinkable aircraft carrier” would be configured to launch

Japanese war fighters alongside those of the United States. Joint military operations far afield, formal commitments to policing sea lines of communication out to the Arabian Sea, collective self-defense, and the joint use of force would all be fully legitimated. Japan would acquire even more modern military capabilities, many of which would be interoperable with U.S. systems. It would cease pretending to follow the Yoshida script.

We should not expect the preferences of any single strategic group to prevail for long.

A second alternative would be to achieve autonomy by increasing national strength, the preferred path of Japan’s neo-autonomists. They too would build a better military shield, but theirs would be nuclear and operationally independent of the United States.¹⁷ In addition to a credible, independent nuclear deterrent, Japan would acquire a full-spectrum military configured not merely to support and supply U.S. forces or to defend against terrorists and missile attacks, but one that could actually reach out and touch adversaries. Armed with a stronger shield and sharpened sword, Japan would seek to maintain a military advantage over peer competitors. Japan would then truly be normal, engaged, like other great powers, in a permanent struggle to maximize national strength and influence. Such a program would certainly generate pressure for the elimination of U.S. bases in Japan and would enhance the prospect of abandonment by Washington. It would also significantly accelerate the security dilemma already underway in Northeast Asia.

A third choice, the one preferred by the middle-power internationalists, would be to achieve prestige by increasing prosperity.¹⁸ Japan’s exposure to some of the more difficult vicissitudes of world politics would be reduced but only if some of the more ambitious assaults on the Yoshida Doctrine were reversed. Japan would once again eschew the military shield in favor of the mercantile sword. It would bulk up the country’s considerable soft power in a concerted effort to knit East Asia together without generating new threats or becoming excessively vulnerable. The Asianists in this group would aggressively embrace exclusive regional economic institutions to reduce Japan’s reliance on the U.S. market. They would not abrogate the military alliance but would resist U.S. exhortations for Japan to expand its roles and missions. The mercantile realists in this group would support the establishment of more

open, regional economic institutions as a means to reduce the likelihood of abandonment by the United States and would seek to maintain the United States' protective embrace as cheaply and for as long as possible.

The final, least likely choice would be to achieve autonomy through prosperity. This is the choice of pacifists, many of whom today are active in civil society through nongovernmental organizations that are not affiliated with traditional political parties. Like the mercantile realists, they would reduce Japan's military posture, possibly even eliminate it. Unlike the mercantile realists, they would reject the alliance as dangerously entangling. They would eschew hard power for soft power, campaign to establish Northeast Asia as a nuclear-free zone, expand the defensive-defense concept to the region as a whole, negotiate a regional missile-control regime, and rely on the Asian Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for security.¹⁹ Their manifest problem is that the Japanese public is unmoved by their prescriptions. In March 2003, when millions took to the streets in Rome, London, and New York City to protest the U.S. invasion of Iraq, only several thousand rallied in Tokyo's Hibiya Park.²⁰ Pacifist ideas about prosperity and autonomy seem relics of an earlier, more idealistic time when Japan could not imagine, much less openly plan for, military contingencies.

Although one of these four views will possibly prevail over the others, none alone seems fully plausible as the basis for the post-Yoshida consensus. One reason is that the Yoshida Doctrine has been institutionalized in ways that make sharp discontinuity less likely than continued incremental change. This is why we have observed "salami slicing" rather than wholesale revision of past practice. Budgeting is one example. As noted previously, despite the expanding roles and missions, cheap-riding realism remains a stubborn fact of life for the JDA. Defense budgets have been effectively flat since 1994. "Deteriorating fiscal conditions" were repeatedly mentioned in the 2004 National Defense Program Guidelines, which insisted that Japan could build a "state-of-the-art" military "without expanding its size ... with the limited resources that are available."²¹ Japan continues to enjoy its cheap ride, an arrangement even the revisionists have not seemed eager to change.

No one should expect the preferences of any single group to prevail for long for several additional reasons. First, Japan is a robust democracy, and democracies tend to self-correct for policy excesses. The Japanese political process is much maligned by analysts and participants alike, but it has never been more transparent on the defense issue. Although Yoshida designed the JDA to be dominated by bureaucrats from other ministries, politicians today understand strategic issues better than at any other time in Japanese history.²² Japanese voters may not be more engaged in the minutiae of security policy than U.S. voters, but they certainly are no less so. They are not likely to reward excessive tilts by their leaders in one direction or another for long.

Second, as befits a complex security discourse in a free nation, each of the quadrants in this notional discourse is internally divided. Among the normal nationalists are globalists, such as Ichiro Ozawa, who believe that Japanese forces should be placed under UN auspices, as well as neo-conservatives such as Abe and realists such as Yasuhiro Nakasone, who would continue to embrace the United States as tightly as possible. Likewise, there are those such as Yohei Kono and Koichi Kato among the middle-power internationalists who would be inclined to reposition Japan closer to Asia than some of their more U.S.-oriented brethren.

JAPAN'S STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Of course, any repositioning of Japan's national security strategy and formation of a post-Yoshida consensus will also depend on strategists' perceptions of the regional and world order. In this regard, three recent, related developments will be prominent. The first is the relative decline of the United States. Although the United States will undoubtedly remain the world's preeminent military power for decades more and possibly longer, Tokyo already sees U.S. diplomatic vigor, moral authority, and economic allure waning.²³ It has not gone unnoticed that Washington needed to share leadership of the six-party talks with Beijing. Nor did Japanese analysts fail to observe that Washington needed but could not coerce cooperation from China and Russia to pressure Iran to abandon its nuclear program. It was also a matter of some discussion that the United States was unable to conclude a regional free-trade agreement with Latin America and that it had exhausted its moral authority after its intervention in Iraq. A widespread Japanese perception that comprehensive U.S. power is declining will likely engender reconsideration of the extent to which Tokyo wishes to continue risking entanglement.

The second development is the rise of a China with soft-power resources and economic opportunities that rival those of the United States. Beijing's economic allure—China is already Japan's largest trading partner—could further blunt the threat that Beijing's military development might continue to present, especially if the Japanese military consolidates its gains. The extent to which China displaces the United States as a target for investment and as a market for goods and services will determine whether the China threat gives way to a China opportunity and, possibly, to progress toward a regional economic bloc. Although the majority of those surveyed in a poll by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* in December 2003 thought the United States was Japan's most important political partner, an equal number (53 percent) already believed that China was Japan's most important economic partner.²⁴

Finally, any overt sign of Japanese ambitions for great-power status and for a fully autonomous security posture is bound to stimulate balancing behavior

by Japan's neighbors and undoubtedly opposition from the United States as well. Japan suffers from what Professor Tadafumi Ohtomo has aptly identified as the "wolf in sheep's clothing" problem, one that is endemic to states with a bad reputation. As he notes, it takes a very long period of good behavior to overcome the distrust of other states, and Japan has not gone nearly far enough to merit the trust of its neighbors. It still has a very poor reputation in East Asia.²⁵ Although the Chinese and the Koreans have reached a common agreement on the language of history textbooks, a mutually acceptable Pacific War narrative between Japan and its neighbors has been impossible. Japan's unwillingness or inability to confront its history squarely is undoubtedly the largest single constraint on its diplomacy.

These several elements of Japan's strategic context—institutional inertia, the dynamics of democratic competition, pragmatism, concern about the future of U.S. power, and shifting regional balances of power—converge to make the discontinuation of Japan's revisionist course seem likely. If Japan does not proceed down a straight path toward muscularity, then what? There remains the possibility of a "Goldilocks consensus" that positions Japan not too close and not too far from the current hegemon and protector, makes Japan stronger but not threatening, and also affords new comprehensive security options. In short, we should expect Japan to hedge.

Tokyo already sees U.S. diplomatic vigor, moral authority, and economic allure waning.

THE HEDGE

Given its centrality to Japan's strategic discourse, it is ironic that the Japanese language has no indigenous word that captures the concept of hedging. The closest approximation has perhaps been offered by one of Japan's leading security policy intellectuals, Tanaka Akihiko. Japan, he said in testimony before the Diet, needs "a strategy to prevent the worst (*saiaku*) while trying to construct the best (*saizen*)."²⁶ As Tanaka explains it, preventing the worst requires a strong alliance with the United States and for Japan to play a more active role in international security affairs. Meanwhile, building an East Asian Community that resembles the stable, prosperous, economically integrated western Europe and that is built on a Japanese commitment to the values of democracy and freedom would, in his view, go a long way toward constructing the best.

This particular framing of the balance between Japan's security insurance and economic optimization strikes at a defining characteristic of Japan's grand strategy: the analytic separation of military and mercantile

Japanese strategists have to repair their relationships with Korea and China.

components.²⁷ Japan not only hedges against U.S. abandonment by courting entrapment, but it simultaneously hedges against predation by courting protectionism. The analogue of the U.S. relationship with western Europe where a U.S.-led security community coexists with a regional trade regime is often invoked. The advantages for Japanese security that would accrue from

such a parallel construction in Asia are easily grasped. As long as Japan properly attends to its security relationship with the United States, it could balance against U.S. and European economic power while simultaneously balancing against Chinese military power.²⁸

This suggests a two-track strategy for Japan to escape the alliance dilemma of abandonment and entanglement. First, Japan would continue to indulge Washington by building a

bigger military shield—the preference of the normal nationalists, who would transform the alliance to reempower Japan by prioritizing globalization of the alliance. They would continue with their salami slicing as opportunities present themselves. Japan would acquire more offensive weapons, allow its defense firms to participate in international weapons systems development projects, lift the cap on defense spending, enlarge Japan’s defense perimeter to include patrols of the Persian Gulf, and abandon the doctrine of defensive defense by formally embracing collective self-defense. Following this path, Tokyo could even establish battlefield legitimacy by placing troops in harm’s way for the first time.

Second, Japan would move to ameliorate the concerns of its neighbors by honing a sharper mercantile sword. Japan would use regional and bilateral preferential-trade agreements to reduce the risk of U.S. and European predation, to protect against the possibility of Chinese economic dominance, and to enhance the chance for China’s smooth integration into the regional system, while gaining trade benefits for itself. The challenge for Japanese diplomats and strategists is to make this dual hedge, what is sometimes called “strategic convergence,” acceptable to the United States and to neighbors who might fear its “soft expansion.”²⁹ Their hope is that the United States will respond positively as long as the new economic architecture is open and built on a liberal vision. They would have to showcase universal principles of human rights and democracy and suppress “Asian values.”

Such are the dreams of some strategic thinkers in Tokyo. Before the possibilities for such a strategic convergence can even be tested, however, Japan has to repair its relationships with Korea and China, the other two of the three in the ASEAN Plus Three core of the new East Asia Council (EAC). Revisionists have stumbled on the history and textbook issues, exacerbating

mistrust and undermining the prospects for an effective EAC in the near term. Such problems reinforce Japan's need to rebalance its recently acquired hard-power resources and security doctrines with renewed attention to building its soft-power attractions in the region.

Even the most enthusiastic supporters of the alliance insist that Japan must leave room for independent action on matters of vital national interest, such as access to Middle Eastern oil.³⁰ Not surprisingly, the Japanese government has retained a number of opt-out clauses in its tilt toward globalizing the alliance. Its missions, all to "noncombat zones," have been authorized through temporary "special measures" laws with sunset clauses, limiting the precedent set by these actions and providing an opt-out option, if desired.³¹ Japan may have lost some of its fear of entrapment, but it has not abandoned its pragmatism altogether. Its close hug of the United States, rather than being debilitating, generates options for Japanese national security that can potentially render Japan stronger and more independent. Just as the end of the Cold War and the subsequent reconfiguration of the U.S. alliance created space for the realignment of Japanese domestic politics, it also has created new possibilities for Japan's security strategy.³²

These new possibilities are normally couched in terms of the additional muscle Japan must provide for the United States, even if the alliance is replaced by a more flexible security arrangement.³³ Yet, there are many others as well. If Tokyo is diplomatically competent, its newly acquired strength and confidence could make it more attractive to other potential security partners in the region, such as India and the ASEAN states.³⁴ Former JDA director general Shigeru Ishiba made this point by deftly shifting the conventional argument for collective self-defense. In addition to making Japan a more attractive alliance partner for the United States, he insisted that collective self-defense would also enable Japan to offer assistance to ASEAN states if they are threatened by China.³⁵ In his view and in the view of other realists, a stronger Japan would create new possibilities for regional security.³⁶ Of course, Tokyo would first need to reassure its neighbors and avoid isolation, which is why a continued tether to the United States makes sense. Some have even suggested that, by enhancing its role in the alliance, Japan could become the cork in the American bottle.³⁷

The Goldilocks Approach

These shifts await a skilled consensus builder who will see new possibilities for Japanese security and can soften the harder edges of the contemporary discourse. Potential leaders who can move their faction toward the middle to build a wider national strategic consensus reside in each corner of Japan's strategic discourse. For example, on becoming head of the Democratic Party

Potential leaders
reside in each corner
of Japan's strategic
discourse.

of Japan in early 2006, Ozawa, the godfather of normal nationalism, lost no time in criticizing Koizumi for visiting Yasukuni Shrine, dedicated to Japan's war dead, including 14 Class A war criminals, and for tilting too far in favor of the United States. In so doing, Ozawa was articulating an increasingly popular position in Japan. Ozawa insisted that Japan needs to mend its relationships with Asia and that it must distance

itself from the hegemonic tendencies both of China and the United States. Abe, for his part, could begin to deemphasize Japan's military power and stress Japan's soft-power advantages over China, including its democratic political system and its protection of human rights and political liberty, as a way to soften his hawkish image, an approach Taro Aso, a competitor for party leadership, already ad-

vanced in a policy speech in Washington, D.C., in May 2006.³⁸ Even neo-autonomists such as Terumasa Nakanishi have voiced limited support for the U.S.-Japanese alliance, while Terashima considered "how to be pro-American and part of Asia at the same time."³⁹ Mercantile realists who already argue for improved ties with China, such as Kato, would have to accede to the idea that a stronger Japan is here to stay. Yet, if the 2001 conversion of his mentor, Kiichi Miyazawa, is any indication, this should not be too far a distance to travel. Moreover, once-confirmed pacifists, such as Naoto Kan, have already migrated to a more central position in the discourse.

Thus, although we cannot identify with full certainty the Japanese leader with whom the new security consensus will be identified, we can expect him to be a (small c) conservative and a (small d) democrat possessed of an independent, full-throated voice on security issues and a keen eye for economic advantage. He will neither lead Japan too far toward great-power status and abandonment, nor will he allow it to remain so dependent on the United States as to risk further entanglement. He will abandon cheap-riding realism and consolidate the military gains of the revisionists' tight embrace of the United States, without allowing Japan to be dragged into undesirable territory. In short, he will appreciate that the costs of remaining a U.S. ally—still Japan's most attractive option—are escalating but will avoid allowing them to become too great to bear.

As in the past, Japan's repositioning will not be linear. A new consensus will depend on the selection and construction of a national identity, whether Japan comes to see itself as a great or middle power and whether it will define its role in regional or global terms. It will depend also on shifting balances of power, particularly between China and the United States. Above all, it will depend on the way Tokyo opts to balance its need to hedge risk against

its chance to optimize for gain. Japan may never again be as central to world affairs as it was in the 1930s nor as marginal to world affairs as it was during the Cold War, but once revisionism has run its course and once the necessary accommodations are made in its economic diplomacy, Japan will have constructed for itself a post-Yoshida policy space in which it can be selectively pivotal. In getting there, Japan will reduce associated risks by being cautious. It will be normal. It will hedge. The security strategy and institutions abetting this hedge will be neither too hard nor too soft. Japan will be neither too close to China nor too far from the United States. We await the appearance of Japan's Goldilocks, the pragmatic leader who will get security just right.

Notes

1. Sadako Ogata, *Normalization With China: A Comparative Study of the U.S. and Japanese Processes* (Berkeley: University of California Institute of East Asian Studies, 1988), p. 99.
2. Hisahiko Okazaki, *A Grand Strategy for Japanese Defense* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986), pp. 75–76, 129.
3. Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931–1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan's Role in World War II* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), pp. 33–54.
4. Shinichi Kitaoka, "Sengo Nihon no Gaiko Shiso [The concept of postwar Japanese diplomacy]," in *Sengo Nihon Gaiko Ronshu* [Collected essays on postwar Japanese diplomacy], ed. Shinichi Kitaoka (Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, 1995), pp. 11–12.
5. Chihiro Hosoya, "Retroggression in Japan's Foreign Policy Decision-Making Process," in *Dilemmas of Growth in Prewar Japan*, ed. J. W. Morley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 92.
6. See "Shinsenryaku o Motomete [Searching for a new strategy]," *Asahi Shimbun*, April 2006 (year-long series).
7. Okazaki, *A Grand Strategy for Japanese Defense*, pp. 75–76, 129.
8. Jain Purendra and Takashi Inoguchi, *Japanese Politics Today* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. xv.
9. Chinese officials, interviews with author, Seoul, December 2005; Chinese officials, interviews with author, Tokyo, May 2006; Cheol Hee Park, "Japanese Conservatives' Conception of Japan as a Normal Country: Comparing Ozawa, Nakasone, and Ishihara" (unpublished paper, "Japan as a Normal Country" project, Shibusawa Foundation, Tokyo, 2005). Park makes this point but does not share this view.
10. For an evaluation of contemporary Japanese techno-nationalism, see Richard J. Samuels, "Give and Take: The Outlook for U.S.-Japan Industrial Cooperation," *Armed Forces Journal* (February 2006): 24–29.
11. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 167–214.
12. Christopher W. Hughes, "Japanese Military Modernization: In Search of a 'Normal' Security Role," in *Strategic Asia 2005–2006: Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty*, eds. Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Wills (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2005), p. 124.

13. Narushige Michishita, "The Changing Faces of Defense Policy: Past and Future," in *Global Economic Review* 32, no. 4 (2002): 91–93.
14. "United States–Japan Strategic Dialogue: Beyond the Defense Guidelines," *Issues & Insights* 1, no. 1 (May 2001): 1–2 ("Agenda for the U.S.–Japan Alliance: Rethinking Roles and Missions" by Michael J. Green and Robin "Sak" Sakoda referring to a "maturing alliance"); Paul R. Daniels, "Beyond 'Better than Ever': Japanese Independence and the Future of the U.S.–Japan Relationship," *IIPS Policy Paper*, no. 308E (July 2004), p. 11 (speaking of "erosion"); James L. Schoff, Tools for Trilateralism: referring to "tinkering").
15. National Institute for Defense Studies, ed., *2001–2002 Report on Defense and Strategic Studies: Council of Defense-Strategic Studies* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2003), p. 17.
16. For an incisive analysis of these differences, see Takashi Shiraishi, "Toajia Kyodotaino Kochiku wa Kanno Ka? [Is it possible to create an East Asian community?]," *Chuo Koron* (January 2006): 118–127. See also Bungei Shinju, ed., *Nihon no Renten: 2006* [Issues for Japan: 2006] (Tokyo: Bungei Shinju, 2005), p. 197.
17. See Terumasa Nakanishi, "Nihonkoku Kakubuso e no Ketsudan [Japan's decision to go nuclear]," *Shokun* (August 2003): 22–37. Nakanishi is a sometimes supporter of the alliance. For less ambiguity, see Susumu Nishibe, "Kakubusoron ga Jishu Boei e no Michi o Kirihiraku [The debate over nuclear armament will pave the way for autonomous defense]," *Seiron* (September 2003): 86–98; Susumu Nishibe, "Amerika Senryaku ni Haramareru Kyoki [The madness inherent in American strategy]," *Seiron* (April 2003): 64–77.
18. See Yoshihide Soeya, *Nihon no "Midoru Pawaa"* [Japan's "middle power" diplomacy: Postwar Japan's choices and conceptions] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho, 2005).
19. These plans are laid out by one such group, Peace Depot, on their home page and in associated reports. See <http://www.peacedepot.org/e-news/frame.html>.
20. For links to reports on activities of these groups, see <http://www.worldpeacenow.jp>.
21. Government of Japan, *National Defense Program Guidelines* (provisional translation), 2004, pp. 5–6.
22. For a good example, see Shigeru Ishiba, *Kokubo* [National defense] (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2005).
23. For a prominent example, see Kenichi Ito, *Japan's Identity: Neither East nor West* (Tokyo: Japan Forum on International Relations, 2000), p. 1. See also Japan Forum on International Relations, ed., *New World Order of No-War Community and Future of Japan-U.S. Alliance* (Tokyo: Japan Forum on International Relations, 2004).
24. James J. Przystup, "Dialogue of the Almost Deaf," *Comparative Connections* 6, no. 1 (First quarter 2004), <http://www.ciaonet.org>.
25. Takafumi Ohtomo, "Bandwagoning to Dampen Suspicion: NATO and the U.S.–Japan Alliance After the Cold War," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, no. 3 (2003): 29–55.
26. Akihiko Tanaka, "Yosan Iinkai Kochokai Giroku: Dai Ichi Go [Budget committee public hearings: Number one]," February 23, 2005, p. 18 (testimony before the House of Representatives Budget Committee).
27. For the introduction of the concept of a "dual hedge," see Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels, "Japan's Dual Hedge," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 5 (September/October 2002): 110–121. See also Hughes, "Japanese Military Modernization," pp. 105–134.

28. See Soeya, *Nihon no "Midoru Pawaa"*; Takashi Shiraiishi, *Teikoku to Sono Genkai* [Empire and its limits] (Tokyo: NTT, 2004).
29. National Institute for Defense Studies, ed., *East Asia Strategic Review*, 2005 (Tokyo: Japan Times, 2005), pp. 8, 35–36.
30. For a particularly clear example, see Fumio Ota, "Joho" to *Kokka Senryaku* ["Intelligence" and national strategy] (Tokyo: Fuyoshobo, 2005), p. 174.
31. Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Security Agenda: Military, Economic, and Environmental Dimensions* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2004), p. 181.
32. See Mike M. Mochizuki, "Japan: Between Alliance and Autonomy," in *Confronting Terrorism in the Pursuit of Power: Strategic Asia, 2004–2005*, eds. Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Wills (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2004), p. 104. For the impact of the end of the Cold War on domestic Japanese politics, see Richard J. Samuels, *Machiavelli's Children: Leaders and Their Legacies in Italy and Japan* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003).
33. Rajan Menon, *The End of Alliances* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
34. See Hughes "Japanese Military Modernization"; Daniels, "Beyond 'Better than Ever.'"
35. Shigeru Ishiba, "Nitchu Arasowaba Katsu no wa Dotchi Da [If Japan and China were to fight, which one would win?]," *Bungei Shunju*, May 1, 2006, p. 141.
36. For the weighing of Japanese strategic options from the perspective of a former Ground Self-Defense Forces general, see Hiroaki Yokochi, "Chugoku no Tainichi Senryaku no Akumu: Nihon wa Chugaku to Do Mukaiaubeki Ka [The nightmare of China's Japan strategy: How should Japan confront China?]," *Anzen Hosho o Kangaueru*, no. 604 (September 2005).
37. Yukio Okamoto, "Japan and the United States: The Essential Alliance," *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 61.
38. A senior U.S. alliance manager has already made this suggestion to Abe. U.S. official, interview with author, Tokyo, April 25, 2006. For Aso's speech, see "Statesmen's Forum With Taro Aso, Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs," Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 3, 2006, http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_events/task,view/id,975.
39. Terashima, "'Shinbei Nyuo' no Sogo Senryaku o Motomete [Seeking an integrated strategy for being both 'pro-American' and 'part of Asia']," *Chuo Koron* (March 1996): 20–38.

