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Japan's Foreign Policy Line after the Cold War*

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, Japan has long been searching for a new foreign policy to reflect the change from a bipolar system.¹ Following its convincing defeat in World War II, Japan developed what was later called the Yoshida Doctrine, named after the architect of postwar Japanese foreign policy line, Shigeru Yoshida.² The Yoshida Doctrine is often summarized as doing business for business sake, but with the business of the state being left on the shoulders of the United States. For the first 15 years after 1945, the Japanese public was not entirely persuaded that the Yoshida Doctrine offered the best approach. Rather the opposition captured the postwar pacifist zeitgeist.³ The government was not able to fulfill its own security function, apart from carrying out disaster relief and providing auxiliary assistance in the form of space and freedom to the US forces stationed in, and coming to, Japan, especially during the Korean War, 1950–1953. Thus the Japan-US alliance experienced a bumpy road for a while.

Yet with Japan's miraculous economic rise by the 1960s, Japanese public opinion had shifted to embrace more fully the alliance. The United States fought the Vietnam War, 1966–1973, without being hindered critically by the antiwar pacifism in Japan. The opposition's strategy focused on domestic economic policy of higher wages and shorter work hours.⁴ Meanwhile, the Cold War bipolarity remained

intact. The primary function of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) was to add to US-led deterrence efforts against the Soviet Union. Its focus was anti-Soviet tank forces stationed on the frontier islands of Hokkaido and to support US forces responsible for carrying out the hub-and-spoke operations in the Asia-Pacific. The oil crises of 1973–1974 and 1979–1980 did not cause the bipolar system to break down. The competition between the United States and the Soviet Union focused on strategic nuclear forces in the 1970s and 1980s and occurred within the bipolar structure.⁵ The Japan-US alliance under such structural conditions led Japan to develop the notion of it being a systemic supporter of the US-led international system, in tandem with Japan's rise to number two in GNP (gross national product) in the world. Yasuhiro Nakasone, prime minister from 1983 to 1987, reportedly characterized Japan as an unsinkable aircraft carrier for the US side in the bipolar competition.⁶

The sudden collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe meant the disappearance of bipolarity in world politics. At least one of the structural premises of Japan's alliance with the United States seemed to be gone. Yet, in reality, the aim and scope of the alliance was not particularly specified, thereby enabling it to adapt with flexibility to the changing international circumstances.⁷ The alliance looked adrift,⁸ but this was not entirely the case. In the 1990s, Japan moved in two directions. First, it became involved in UN peacekeeping operations and other activities.⁹ Amid the end of the Cold War uncertainties, the role of the UN was highlighted in Japan as well. The disappearance of bipolarity loosened the restraint of third world countries to act in order to get support from either one of the former bipolar powers. Civil wars became rampant in the developing world. So, naturally the role of the United Nations (UN) increased in importance, especially with the appointment of Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Second, Japan became active in invigorating the alliance's functions. To Japan the end of the Cold War did not mean the end of communism in its regional politics—China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia practice this ideology. In particular, a Deng Xiaoping-led China heightened Japanese awareness that only a two-to-four-hours flight separated it from this power.¹⁰ Dynastic communist North Korea also created a sense of insecurity with its combination of dire poverty and desperate aspiration for nuclear development.¹¹ On the global stage, the United States waged the Gulf War in 1991 and faced anti-US terrorism in conspicuous terms under the Clinton administration.

In the new millennium, the events of 9/11 shattered governments' thinking about terrorism. Japan was frightened in a way that it had not experienced since 1941 when the United States attacked frontally. The Afghan War also gave many Japanese a sense that the United States had entered another Vietnam War. Then came the United States' Iraq War, a third Vietnam War. Japan aligned its defense posture in the 2000s to support the United States' defense posture.¹² The structure and orientation of the armed forces has been shifting from land-focused to maritime- and air-focused, from northern-focused (Soviet Union) to southern-focused (China). It must be noted, however, that Japan's defense expenditure maintained more or less a flat line over the past two decades (Defense Ministry, 2011). The US imperial overstretch¹³ undermined the boast of unipolarity in the United States. For the two decades after the Cold War, it is safe to say that the Japanese foreign policy line continues to be anchored by the Yoshida Doctrine, although considerable, if not major, modifications have been introduced. Next, I discuss Japanese foreign policy doctrine after the Cold War.

Three Pillars of Japanese Foreign Policy Post–Cold War

Three features are dominant in Japan's foreign policy after the Cold War. First, the recognition that Japan is a global power has been widely shared among leaders but less so among masses.¹⁴ Whether Japan is recognized as such outside of its borders is a moot point. Internationally, Japan is often portrayed as a mostly quiet and low-key actor whose influence is appreciated only mildly in the opinion polls by Pew, BBC, CNN, and the AsiaBarometer Survey. Second, Japan recognizes its role as a supporter of the US-led system,¹⁵ which is the combination of the Japan-US security alliance, the Bretton Woods, and the UN. Third, Japan has been perennially plagued by what may be called ontological insecurity because of its past, especially in relation to its conduct during war and colonialism.¹⁶

Self-Recognition of Japan as a Global Power

The global power status is vindicated by its economic strength as reflected by economic fundamentals. Japan's economic power is widely acknowledged as enabling it to be a global power. Its gross domestic product ranks third after the United States and China;

Japan's economic fundamentals and related indicators are strong; per capita national domestic product is high; the level of technology indispensable in navigating the ocean of globalized competition and uncertainty is generally very high; its currency, the Japanese yen, is sought globally as a dependable, stable currency as indicated by the high exchange rates vis-à-vis other currencies such as the US dollar, the euro, the British pound; Japan is the largest creditor country after China; Japanese foreign direct investment has been on the steady increase as its currency drives business abroad; Japanese savings have been high albeit on a gradual decrease; and although Japanese government deficits are extraordinary large, its negative impact has been alleviated by the similarly extraordinary amount of government bond sales mostly among Japanese nationals.

Thus equipped, the per capita national income level of Japan has not decreased substantially despite long periods of recession since the early 1990s. Its industrial and economic infrastructure has been renewed more or less during the past two decades; its national health indicators, such as infantile death rate, have been remarkable, and average longevity has been on the steady increase, registering second after Iceland; its environmental indicators, such as emission of CO₂ and other pollutants in the air, water, food, buildings, and roads, are reasonably regulated at low levels; even the 2011 nuclear-disaster-related pollutant is assiduously monitored, substantially reduced, and more or less controlled; and national crime rates have been kept very low, with those punished through imprisonment numbering around just 70,000 (compared to some 2 million or more in the United States).

The state constitution stipulates that Japan seeks an honorable place in the community of nations. The government recognizes that Japan is a global power and acts accordingly. Its attempt to get a permanent position in the UN Security Council in the early 2000s is a case in point. Although it ended in failure, Japan's aspiration is alive and well. Its economic, technological, and financial power cannot be disputed. Its weaknesses as a global power are military and political components. The military aspects of its weakness are widely known. Its constitution and zeitgeist of the Japanese public discourage armed buildups, except for self-defense purposes. Yet its JSDF are well armed with very high-tech weaponry and are well trained, especially in coordinated operations with the United States, albeit without combat experience. Surrounded by five military powers—the United States, China, South and North Korea, and Russia—Japan has been consolidating its JSDF according to the changing environments while

maintaining a moderate defense budget in relation to its GNP. Japan's weaknesses include the lack of nuclear weapons and missiles, and aircraft carriers and submarines, and the general ability to project power overseas in terms of weapons and trained personnel. China's nuclear power has established a quasi-equilibrium vis-à-vis the United States in the Asia-Pacific with its long-range missiles targeting most US military bases on the Korean peninsula and the Japan archipelagoes (Yan, 2006¹⁷). North Korea conducted a third nuclear test in 2013, and this gave North Korea the potential to target Japan. In 2011, China built its first aircraft carrier and with plans to build more, China will gain the capacity to act more globally. A critical component is how Japan copes with China and North Korea in the context of the reputed decline of the United States and its highly orchestrated US "return to Asia" strategy.¹⁸

No less easy to surmount is Japan's political power. Japan's political weakness is summarized as a fragmented power center at the highest level. Japan, having not been subject to colonization for any considerable duration by foreign powers, except briefly by the Allied Powers (1945–1952), its politics have retained a premodern structural feature, meaning power fragmentation and consensus building, which often prevents Japanese politicians and bureaucrats from acting promptly in unison in moments of crises and emergencies.¹⁹ The abortion of absolutism, Japanese style, occurred in 1584 when Oda Nobunaga, a military unifier of the warring states period in Japan, was assassinated.²⁰ Tokugawa Ieyasu, a final victor of the warring states period, shaped the framework and structure of modern Japan on the basis of a fragmented power center and a consensus-building process in decision making at the highest level of politics. Henry Kissinger²¹ belongs to the group of scholars who point to Japanese slowness in decision making. In *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* (2002), Kissinger has given three examples of this pattern: (1) After Commodore Perry of the US Navy conducted coercive naval diplomacy, it took 15 years for Japan to open its country and initiate the policy of "rich nation, strong state"; (2) After Japan's resounding defeat in World War II, it took another 15 years for the Japanese public to accept the security alliance with the United States; (3) After the collapse of the economic bubble in 1991, Kissinger predicted, it would take an additional 15 years before the Japanese public would accept government spending as a fix for financial failures. In retrospect, Kissinger turned out to be correct in the third case as well. With power fragmentation comes the relative weaknesses of high-level professional competence

and organizational transparency and accountability in political parties and bureaucratic agencies.

Other Japanese strengths are no less important as a global power. First, it has close ties with the United States. Quarrelling with the number one superpower, even if reputed to be in a slow decline, would require a lot of unproductive energy. Second, the economic, technological, and financial strengths of Japan are globally acknowledged. Economically, Japan's GNP ranks third in the world. Technologically, its excellence, as measured by published scientific papers, is ranked fourth, after the United States, China, and Germany. Financially, Japan is the largest creditor country after China. A high exchange rate for the Japanese yen attests to this strength. Third, Japan is ubiquitously portrayed as having a moderately positive reputation in global opinion polls like Pew, BBC, CNN, AsiaBarometer Survey, and Gallup International.

During the 20-year recession that started in 1991 and is often referred to as the "lost two decades" in Japan, government and business made two key achievements. First, Japanese business took advantage of the long recession to go abroad, dispersing the risks and maximizing benefits where opportunities abound. Japanese business has been "Asianized" in the sense that it has become ubiquitous throughout Asia, whether through foreign direct investment, exports of key components and key materials for final products, or imports of key natural resources. One significant point to note is that in terms of final products, Japan has been reducing its profile, whereas in terms of key components and key materials that are used to produce final products, Japan has loomed very large and strong in the whole world, especially in Asia. Here the term "two decades lost" is misleading. Japanese business has been focusing on research and development to reduce costs and to improve quality. For instance, Shin Nihon Seitetsu (New Japan Steel) has reduced the sales of total steel production, but it has gained dominance in terms of special variations of steel in which innovation achieved remains difficult to emulate in India, China, or South Korea. Biyadi, a Chinese car manufacturer, has been forced to shift its focus to hybrid vehicle production from electric vehicle production, because it cannot produce with extreme high precision a consistent and massive quantity of good lithium ion storage batteries. At the 2011 Guangzhou Automobile Show, the electric vehicle was de facto marginalized, a fact that prompted Premier Wen Jiabao to ask why not the electric vehicle. Samsung, the world's largest factory of semiconductor and liquid crystal, located in Gumi,

Gyongsangbukdo, where late President Park Chung Hee was born and raised, operated until recently only with the massive import from Japan of silicon wafers and rare gas. This is not an isolated case. The perennial trade deficits of South Korea vis-à-vis Japan are primarily due to the former's inability to indigenously carry out innovation of manufacturing key components and key materials. Two sales-winning aircraft, Boeing 787 and Airbus 380, both rely on wings composed of complex carbon fiber that are manufactured by Toyo Tanso (Oriental Carbon). Carbon fiber for wings is extremely strong for producing insulators.²²

Second, Japanese business has been able to reduce energy costs significantly. Not only energy supply but also energy efficiency have been achieved in the last two decades! Innovation achieved is so extensive that business firms can now manufacture products with great efficiency. Energy supply has been largely resolved through achieving energy efficiency. Steel production once involved the use hundreds of thousands of tons of water. But nowadays only one-tenth or one-hundredth of water usage is attributed to the manufacturing of special kinds of steel. The same applies to the use of electric power for manufacturing special kinds of steel. Although nuclear energy supply was hampered by the Fukushima I nuclear disaster, energy supply has been secured largely through higher energy efficiency, plus the return of thrifty habits for hard times.

Self-Recognition of Japan as a Supporter of the US-Led World Order

Japan's supporter position in the global system is solid. The security alliance with the United States has been very adaptive to the changing configuration of power and wealth.²³ The Japan-US Security Treaty does not specify the aims and areas where the alliance is valid. Hence, it is sometimes called the alliance for all four seasons. It has weathered many wars and many crises. The Korean War and the Vietnam War would not have been waged more or less successfully by the United States without the supporting policy of Japan with regard to free use of military bases and repair and supply stations. Japan in its supporter position helped in the execution of antiterrorist wars and the Gulf, Afghan, and Iraq wars. It was not easy for Japan to take this position because its dependence on oil from the Middle East was so prohibitively high. Most recently, in 2012, Japan's support of the UN Security Council sanctions against Iran on nuclear

weapons development was acknowledged, as more than 80 percent of Japan's oil comes through the Strait of Hormuz. More directly to the Japanese public, the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and the Fukushima nuclear disaster occasioned the large rescue operations known as the Operation *Tomodachi* by the US armed forces along the coast of the Tohoku region. The Japanese public appreciated very much the US readiness to deploy a very large number of soldiers and sailors. In fact, pro-American sentiments reached 82 percent,²⁴ the highest figure since the Cold War.

Japan's supporting position on economic and financial areas related to the US-led global system is more straightforward. Japan has been steadfastly and consistently taking common positions with the United States on all matters concerned with the free trade system of the World Trade Organization, the dollar-centered currency system of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and associated organizations, the development system of the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and associated organizations. Japan has done so solidly and meticulously, even if the impression given is of a nation eclipsing itself under the shadow of the United States if only because Japan's position is not dramatically exciting. Nonetheless, Japan has been a steadfast supporter of the US-led world order, even when the position sometimes conduces negative short-term consequences, such as supporting the Plaza Accord of 1985, which unleashed the massive supply of Japanese yen in the market under the Maekawa Report and led to the spectacular rise and collapse of the Japanese economic bubble in 1991. The very high sense of public appreciation toward the United States and the Operation *Tomodachi* does not appear to hide the feeling of uncertainty about the alliance. The latest *Yomiuri* poll conducted both in Japan and the United States gives a pervasive feeling of anxiety with respect to Japan-US relations (table 2.1).²⁵

According to Question A, the positive perception of bilateral relations is smaller to the negative perception, 35 percent positive versus 41 percent negative. Those who chose "trust very much" or "trust more or less" amount to 47 percent, whereas those who chose "do not trust very much" or "do not trust a bit" represent 42 percent. The positive answer is larger than the negative answer. However, one cannot overlook the respondents who did not answer the question, 12 percent.

A similar set of questions about bilateral relations with China is also posed to respondents. The responses make clear that Japanese

Table 2.1 Japan-US Joint Public Opinion Poll

		<i>Do not answer the question</i>	<i>Very bad</i>	<i>bad</i>	<i>Neither good nor bad</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very good</i>	
Ques. A	“Do you think relations between Japan and the United States are good or bad?”	Japanese respondents	5	4	37	20	34	1
		American respondents	6	2	6	34	41	11
		<i>Did not answer the question</i>	<i>Do not trust a bit</i>	<i>Do not trust much</i>		<i>Trust more or less</i>	<i>Trust very much</i>	
Ques. B	“Do you trust or do not trust the United States?”	Japanese respondents	12	7	35		42	5
		American respondents	1	14	17		51	16
		<i>Do not answer the question</i>	<i>Very bad</i>	<i>Bad</i>	<i>Neither good nor bad</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very good</i>	
Ques. C	“Do you think bilateral relations between Japan and China are good or bad?”	Japanese respondents	5	8	53	18	16	–
		American respondents	2	5	17	48	25	4
		<i>Do not answer the question</i>	<i>Do not trust a bit</i>	<i>Do not trust much</i>		<i>Trust more or less</i>	<i>Trust very much</i>	
Ques. D	“Do you trust or do not trust China?”	Japanese respondents	7	30	55		8	1
		American respondents	2	30	34		32	2

Source: *Yomiuri Online*, December 18, 2011; <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/feature/fe6100/koumoku/20111218.htm> (Accessed January 10, 2012).

are uncertain and full of anxieties about the future relations with the United States and China. Japanese perceptions of bilateral relations with China and the degree of trust in China are possibly the worst since 1972 when both countries normalized diplomatic relations.

One of the pronounced features of the troubled triangle is the duality between security and economy. The question posed to Japanese and Americans respondents are given in table 2.1.1.

Question G, “Which country do you think exerts stronger influence in the Asia-Pacific region, the United States or China?” proves this. As reflected in the perception of Japanese respondents, the United States becomes politically more important (55 percent versus 32 percent), whereas China becomes economically more important (67 percent versus 21 percent). As reflected in the perception of American respondents, the duality is less clear: China is both politically more important (52 percent versus 42 percent) and economically much more important (69 percent versus 24 percent).

Thus, the overall perceptions of Japanese and American respondents on influences in the Asia-Pacific region are similar: China exerts larger influences in the Asia-Pacific region—68 percent versus 21 percent in Japan compared to 74 percent versus 23 percent in the United States.²⁶

How best to construct Japanese foreign policy line given the structural duality between security and economy is at the crux of the problem for Japan. The complexity is further heightened when the United States raises the issue of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agenda. When Japanese-Chinese economic relations are deemed to become more important than Japan-US economic relations, the Trans-Pacific Partnership may serve well as a counterbalance in the opposite direction. In particular, it should moderate the duality. However, one cannot overlook the Japanese respondents who did “not answer the question” (18 percent). If you add those negative respondents and those who did not answer the question and make them a broadly negative response, then the positive and broadly negative answers are the same, 50 percent versus 50 percent.²⁷ It appears that the Japanese are perplexed about the huge uncertainty posed by the Trans-Pacific Partnership and its estimated merits and demerits in terms of both economic and political impacts.

One Internet-based poll, Japan and World Trends, run by Akio Kawato, a former diplomat, registers a possibly more nuanced distribution of Japanese public preferences toward Japanese foreign policy line more directly than major polls like the one conducted by *Yomiuri*.

Table 2.1.1 Japan-US Joint Public Opinion Poll

			<i>United States</i>	<i>Japan</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Both are important</i>	<i>Do not answer the question</i>
Ques. E	“Of the United States (Japan) and China, which country do you think becomes more important in politics?”	Japanese respondents	55	–	32	5	8
		American respondents	–	42	52	1	5
			<i>United States</i>	<i>Japan</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Both are important</i>	<i>Do not answer the question</i>
Ques. F	“Of the United States (Japan) and China, which country do you think becomes more important in economics?”	Japanese respondents	21	–	67	5	8
		American respondents	–	24	69	2	4

Source: *Yomiuri Online*, December 18, 2011; <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/feature/fe6100/koumoku/20111218.htm> (Accessed January 10, 2012).

Table 2.2 Results of One-Click Voting (February 28, 2012)

<i>“Where the power disparity between the United States and China narrows, which of the following options do you think is the best?”</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Neutrality with the current level of armed buildup	20.07
Neutrality after nonnuclear armed buildup	13.38
Neutrality with nuclear armed buildup	21.40
Japan-US security alliance kept as the fundamental pillar plus friendship with China managed	27.42
Japan, being an Asian country, should construct a community with China, not allowing Americans and Europeans to interfere	11.04
Other schemes	6.69

The question asked in the Internet poll was, “When the power disparity between the United States and China narrows, which of the following options do you think is the best?” (responses 99) (table 2.2).²⁸

It comes as a no-small surprise to find that many respondents (54.85 percent) choose various schemes of neutrality (options 1, 2, and 3 combined). Option 1 is similar to the pacifist policy line of the leftist parties in the 1940s and 1950s. It may not be sustainable in the current context of an apparent US decline and a possibly aggressive rise of China. Option 2 may be similar to the government policy if one can detach the alliance with the United States from defense buildup efforts. Without the alliance the option may not be sustainable. Option 3 is unthinkable in the sense of Herman Kahn. Whether option 3 is sustainable or not is a moot question. Whether option 3 is productive or not is also a moot question. Still it registers a huge tidal change of thinking to have a combined 54.85 percent of respondents opting for neutrality. In a similar vein, it is not surprising that the government policy of “Japan-US security alliance kept as the fundamental pillar plus friendship with China managed” (option 4) carries no more than 27.42 percent support. When both the governing party and the largest opposition party hold the same position on this foreign policy line, it is a big surprise. The weak support for the government policy line reflects the worrisome power configuration and the perceived incompetence and ineptitude laid bare when the Japanese government handles some key issues. It is no less a surprise to see that the Asianist foreign policy line, option 5, carries as much support as 11.04 percent. The apprehension about the United States and the European Union, which used to blame Japan for its lack of ability to make astute and

agile decisions on various issues, and yet now seemingly “Japanized” for paralyzed nondecisions²⁹ leads some segments of the Japanese public to distance themselves from the United States and the European Union. If one only examines either the *Yomiuri* poll or the “Japan and World Trends” Internet poll, one might err in understanding Japanese foreign policy line after the Cold War as reassured continuity or tidal change. By reading both we can understand that the foreign policy line encompasses both basic continuity and some departure. The *Yomiuri* poll is based on one of the popular newspapers that regularly conducts polls with a large randomly sampled population, whereas the Internet poll captures young and educated segments of the population. On the whole, this Internet poll is corroborated by other poll results, such as the *Yomiuri* poll examined above. Together they seem to reflect the rapidly changing preferences of the Japanese public on the Japan-US security alliance and the Japanese foreign policy line. The whole exercise here is to show the basic continuity of keeping the alliance with the United States and the friendship with China intact albeit the significant portions of public opinion wavers, reflecting the somewhat inept handling of the US military bases and related issues by both governments.

Self-Recognition of Japan Being Plagued by Ontological Insecurity

Japanese ontological insecurity has been metamorphosing slowly and steadily but largely unnoticed. Let me illustrate the possible metamorphosis in territory, history, and other areas. On territory, Japan's position has been tough. The Japanese territory, Senkaku Islands, is regularly challenged by Chinese intrusions into the area. The Chinese “fishing boat” affair of 2010 is the latest violation of Japanese law. Yet the fact remains that the islands are controlled de facto by Japan. The steadfast positioning of the Japanese government in 2010 is reminiscent of the steadfast position the Japanese government assumed in the diplomatic normalization of Japan-China relations in 1972.³⁰ On issues of history, the South Korean president Lee Myung-bak visited Japan in December 2011, and criticized Japan for not compensating South Korean wartime sex slaves individually. The Japanese government replied that this history issue was settled in 1965 when Japan and South Korea signed the Basic Treaty of diplomatic normalization between the two countries. For Japan, the government is only honoring the treaty and all the issues included in the 1965 negotiation.

Japan's ontological insecurity stems from its development in the twentieth century: Japan achieved modernization first among non-Western countries; it joined Western powers in colonialism; and it sided with those powers in World War II that were deemed to have conducted war crimes, resulting, at least initially, in the exclusion as a full-fledged member of the UN. The question posed is, should the achievements of Japan between the mid-nineteenth century and mid-twentieth century be negated? If not, when and how did it go wrong? The Far Eastern Tribunal's verdict and thus Allied Powers' answer was that bands of military cliques derailed temporarily what had been a correct course for Japan and that Japan returned to the correct course after 1945.

Yet ambivalence remains in Japan. It has been difficult for many Japanese to admit that the war in the Pacific was entirely wrong. Yoko Kato³¹ traces each decision that led Japan into war. Kato's narrative of history is contrary to the "standard" history textbook narrative in Japan, in which only the military cliques, headed by General Hideki Tojo, wanted such a war. Two distinguished historians, the late Seizaburo Sato and Takashi Ito, refuse to call the war either the Greater East Asian War or the Pacific War. They agree that there is no better name than "that war."³²

The majority of Japanese believe that there were two wars: one among the imperialist powers and the other against Pacific Asians. In the former, Japan was no guiltier of aggression and exploitation than the others. Regarding the latter war, Japanese will admit that they were guilty of causing great suffering for Pacific Asians. The "two wars" idea is at the root of the ambivalence.

Underlying this majority sentiment is a particular conception of national identity that seeks to combine both a high level of Westernization and national solidarity. Despite "that war," Japanese tend to believe that they have been largely successful in achieving both goals set out in 1868. From the point of view of history, Japan's national identity is thoroughly embedded in the continuity and purpose of the modern history of the nation. To interpret the war as severing that continuity—in other words, to deny the modern history leading to the war as purposeless—would be tantamount to denying the national identity.

Hence, many Japanese find it difficult to dismiss "that war" as totally wrong. They invariably feel some reservations in relation to their conception of national identity and the collective memory of modern history. This explains the discrepancy between the repeated

apologies expressed almost every summer for the past two decades at the official level and the vague but widespread absence at the grassroots level of what the rest of the world may feel about genuine repentance. That lack seems to stem from a sense of skepticism about unilateral Japanese guilt for the war, and from the fact that Japanese sympathy for those who suffered from the war has not been elevated to compassion for human beings in general. Thus, suspicions about Japan's true intentions among its neighbors and other countries are slow to dispel.

The disdain many Japanese feel toward the rest of Asia is the product of modern history. Japan was the only non-Western nation that grew strong in the twentieth century without being excessively dependent on the West. Its first major military victory in 1895 against the Chinese was a major source of the disdain Japanese began to nurture vis-à-vis Pacific Asians. Japan's military victory in 1905 against czarist Russia, a Western power, further boosted their pride as a member of the Western-dominated imperialist powers and by default their disdain toward other Pacific Asians.

Economic success attained after the war reinforced Japan's sense of superiority. Japan was at its nadir in 1945, but by the mid-1960s, it had joined the OECD, a club made up of nations of the industrialized world.

The third characteristic of the Japanese relationship with Pacific Asia, detachment, derives from ambivalence. The profound cultural debt to China has nurtured a certain obsession with keeping that country at arm's length. *Kokugaku*, the tradition of nativist thought known as National Studies that developed during the Tokugawa period (1603–1867), was one such manifestation of Japan's endeavor to develop its *own* distinctive system of thought. It contains a few elements that were later to lead the Meiji state to mobilize all the nation's resources for *fukoku kyohei* (enriching the country and strengthening its army) and to assert that Japan is a supreme, divine country. The reinterpretation of Japanese history using Shinto traditions and myths in the early Meiji era is another.

The political debt incurred to other Pacific Asians during World War II has led Japanese to distance themselves from the issue whenever possible. The importance of the issue is played down by arguing that wartime debts have been settled at the government level by peace treaties and other international agreements. And Japanese can defer the salient issues by insisting on the need for more objective historical research and assessment.

These feelings of debt, disdain, and detachment dominate attitudes toward Pacific Asia and create a strong complex among Japanese on relations with other people of the region. To establish more genuinely harmonious relations with other Pacific Asians, the complex needs resolution. In the “lost two decades,” Japanese did a “return to Asia” and some of this complex has been metamorphosed to the better.

World War II is a focal point to explain Japan’s ontological insecurity. When examined through the three lenses of “democracy against fascism,” “anticolonialism against colonialism,” and “democracy against tyranny of all sorts,” the Japanese narratives that emerge are as follows.³³

The first lens of democracy fighting fascism remolded Japanese foreign policy and domestic politics post-1945. Although a substantial number of Japanese agree that World War II was a struggle by democracy against fascism, beneath this agreement lurks, no matter how weakly, the view that World War II was really a fight among imperialist powers. One may argue that Japan was one of these powers, but ultimately it was disarmed, democratized, and formed an alliance with the United States. The Japan-US Security Treaty is the regional linchpin of stability and prosperity.³⁴

Through the second lens of anticolonialism, we have seen decolonization materialize since 1945. Most Japanese agree that World War II prepared the way for the death of colonialism and the national freedom and liberation of Asia. One footnote is that Japan Westernized itself and thus avoided falling prey to Western colonialism and imperialism. Another footnote is also usually added—that Japan destroyed the Achilles’ heel of Western colonialism and imperialism, their colonies and semicolonies. The first footnote is probably easy to accept. The second footnote, however, could create trouble for several reasons.

First, Japan was imperialist and colonialist, causing havoc and calamities to East and Southeast Asia. Second, equating Japan and the Allied Powers is problematic. This equation contradicts the first lens that all the Allied Powers and thus all the UN member countries adhere to till today. Insertion of this footnote bespeaks the ambivalence of the Japanese identity. For the majority of Japanese, their modern history is a success story of Westernization, beginning in the late 1800s. Since then, the Japanese have worked industriously and ingenuously to achieve the “rich country and strong army” status, digressing from this course only in the 1930s and 1940s. This line of identity construction has the historical continuity justifying what Japan had done wrong during the war—that of aggression and

seeking its own colonies. Thus, this line of thought would not sit well with how World War II is interpreted outside Japan.

The third lens of “democracy against tyranny” appears initially to go well with Japan’s democratic and peaceful position of the past seven decades. The worry of the Japanese is that Japan could be dragged into regional clashes against tyranny and that difficult choices face the country in its steadfast alliance with the United States. In a permissive environment of unipolarity, the US promotion of democracy in China, North Korea, and Myanmar has seen a vindicationist rather than an exemplarist strategy.³⁵ This strategy is militarily aggressive and politically less than adequately contextualized, therefore, imprudently unilateralist. This strategy attempts to alter the politics and economics of many targeted countries by overwhelming military strikes. The development since 2005 of closer linkages in US-Japan political and defense cooperation give Japanese pause for concern. Japan does not want to further aggravate the relationship with China or North Korea, but its US alliance must be kept steadfast. The future may force Japan to choose sides, but for today Japan’s position is that democracy, peace, and prosperity must be the wave for the future in Asia.

The significance of World War II is great and complex to Japan. Its current foreign policy and domestic politics cannot be discussed without even a most cursory reference to this event. Life would be much easier for the Japanese government and people, even if one of the three lenses fits nicely with their construction of their memory, history, and identity. The outpouring of emotions and private histories on August 15 of every year in traditional and online media platforms attests to the struggle the Japanese narrative of the three lenses presents.

Was Leadership Change Prompted by Foreign Policy Needs?

Over the past two decades (i.e., since the end of the Cold War), Japan has had 17 prime ministers (table 2.3). The conventional understanding of leadership change is that weak leaders have to be replaced for domestic reasons, personal incompetence, and ineptitude. A number of factors explain the frequent change of prime ministers in Japan after the Cold War. They include (1) long economic downturns; (2) electoral system change (from choosing two-to-five persons as winners in the medium-sized district to choosing one winner in the small district combined with the proportional representation system);

Table 2.3 Profile of 17 Prime Ministers Who Coped with Foreign Policy (1989–2012)

<i>Prime Ministers</i>	<i>Headache Factors to Prime Ministers</i>
Takeshita	Japan-US trade disputes; consumption tax hike; corruption scandal; resistance to US pressure on SDF shouldering global negotiations
Kaifu	No accomplishment; a trial at improving relations with Russia
Uno	Sex scandal
Miyazawa	Bubble collapsed;
Hosokawa	Political reform; proalliance position adjusted (<i>vis-à-vis</i> Russia and multilateral security)
Hata	No accomplishment
Murayama	Foreign policy alteration reconfirmed; US-Japan alliance reaffirmed; Murayama speech on history issues
Hashimoto	Presidential election defeat; proalliance policy adjustment hinted (responsible stakeholder)
Obuchi	Death; tilting toward non-US (silk road diplomacy)
Mori	Mishaps; tilting toward non-US (Russia)
Koizumi	Party presidential terms ended; political reform executed; proalliance position consolidated; Yasukuni Shrine stalled
Abe	Yasukuni Shrine fixed; coalition extended to India, Australia
Fukuda	Refocus on G8 and global climate; rejected SDF role in Afghanistan
Aso	Proalliance enlarged
Hatoyama	Proalliance position adjustment attempted (Futenma Air Field relocating and East Asian Community Formation)
Kan	Nuclear disaster; crisis management failure
Noda	Proalliance position reaffirmed

Source: Author made this table in reference to the following: Ukeru Magosaki, *Sengoshi No Shotai* [The True Identity of Postwar History] (Tokyo: Somotosya, 2012); Hosokawa Naikaku (1993) *kara Noda Shinshusyo Taniyo Madeno Rekidai Seiken* [Successive Political Power from Hosokawa (1993) to Noda]. <http://jp.reuters.com/article/marketsNews/idJPnTK049757320110831>.

(3) diverging career paths of parliamentarians; and (4) foreign policy adjustment needs. This section attempts to highlight the fourth factor. This section examines which factor worked for leadership change to see whether frequent leadership change after the Cold War has something to do with the trial-and-error nature of Japanese adjustments in swift and complex changes in power, interest, and ideational contiguity in Japan and global environments.

The end of the Cold War coincided with the peak of Japan-US trade and economic disputes and intraparty factional struggles for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Economic bubbles fueled both the US frustration and fierce LDP infighting. Japan-US relations were aggravated and corruption scandals abounded. Amid trade disputes and money scandals, Noboru Takeshita accomplished the consumption tax hike legislation. With it he had to go. Toshiki Kaifu, coming from a minor faction, prolonged LDP rule as a surrogate of the largest faction, the Takeshita faction. Sosuke Uno tried to do the same, but a personal sex scandal forced him to submit his resignation with accomplishing anything. Kiichi Miyazawa faced trade disputes and the collapse of the economic bubble, but failed to attain notable resolutions in either case. The governing party, LDP, lost a substantial number of seats in the general election. The governing party, LDP, was battered by infighting, corruption, mishandling of trade disputes, the bubble, and its collapse.

A wide coalition of opposition parties, excluding the Japan Communist Party, formed the cabinet led by Morihiro Hosokawa. Hosokawa accomplished political reform. His consumption tax hike attempt failed. His foreign policy adjustment vis-à-vis Russia was hinted on one occasion, but not really attempted because of his resignation, for which no clear reason was given. Tsutomu Hata, notable for being the shortest serving prime minister since 1945, left the position without accomplishment. Tomiichi Murayama, the socialist prime minister, accomplished two major tasks, left undone by his predecessors. The proalliance position was reaffirmed and Murayama's speech on the history issues was elevated as the standard government statement for his immediate successors. Ryutaro Hashimoto,³⁶ LDP, accomplished the consolidation of the proalliance position by agreeing to abolish the Futenma Air Base in 1996 with President Bill Clinton. Also, he handled the Asian financial crisis reasonably well. In contrast, his IMF speech was marred by his remark that hinted at the possibility of the Japanese government selling US Treasury bonds, if deemed necessary. The electoral setback of the LDP in an upper house election forced him to resign. Keizo Obuchi, a low-key individual, was lucky in that his tenure coincided with a business minirecovery after the collapse of the bubble. He attempted to adjust what might be termed as the leaning to one side (the United States) line from which his predecessor tried to do so in vain. He died abruptly from the stresses related to political deal making. Yoshiro Mori, the first man who was not under the LDP's largest faction's reign, tried to rescue the LDP but

to no avail. He hinted at improving relations with Russia. However, repeated mishaps characterized his tenure and led to isolation from mass media and the populace, causing him to resign.

Junichiro Koizumi, a maverick prime minister, consolidated the governing party's position and reconstructed to a considerable extent Japan's proalliance position with President George W. Bush, Jr. Japan's full-fledged support of the US policy on the Afghan War and the Iraq War was carried out entirely within the framework of the constitution. His Yasukuni Shrine visits provoked China and South Korea. It must be noted, however, that the stated reason of his visits to Yasukuni Shrine was "to share the sorrow with those killed in war." The universal language employed by Koizumi has been used in later prime ministers' speeches in the National Diet.³⁷ These two sets of bilateral regional relations were semifrozen during his term. Koizumi's two visits to North Korea to seek the release of forcibly abducted Japanese citizens succeeded, if not completely. The late Kim Jong Il admitted to the abduction by North Korea and some of the abductees returned to Japan. It is remarkable that Koizumi personally visited North Korea and that he managed to get Kim Jong Il to confess culpability at a time when the United States was engaged fully in the Afghan and Iraq wars. Koizumi impressed President George W. Bush immensely by providing unflinching support and sending troops to Iraq and naval ships to the Indian Ocean to supply US fighters waging war in Afghanistan. On the domestic front, the Koizumi government also passed successfully the legislation to deregulate the government-run postal service. At the end of his party's presidential term, the prolongment of LDP rule appeared successful. Shinzo Abe, a young man of a sansei (third generation) parliamentarian, ameliorated the tensions on history issues with China and South Korea by not visiting Yasukuni Shrine. Although Abe is known for his hawkish view of the history issue, his personal views were not reflected in his diplomacy policy. Also, he extended proalliance position to India and Australia. Yasuo Fukuda, a son of the former prime minister, focused on the Group of Eight meeting held in Hokkaido and the Kyoto climate change conference, both highlighting an eco-conscious Japan. He rejected the US suggestions that the SDF shoulder some roles in Afghanistan. Taro Aso, another sansei parliamentarian, attempted to consolidate the proalliance position with his Arc of Freedom and Prosperity vision with those Eurasian countries adjoining China. The massive defeat in the general election led the opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), to form the government.

Yukio Hatoyama, another son of a sansei parliamentarian with a PhD in engineering from Stanford, attempted to adjust what he thought was too much of leaning to one side (i.e., the United States), by proposing the East Asian community formation and relocating Futenma Air Base to places either outside Okinawa prefecture or abroad. The policy manifesto of the DPJ crumbled as government and tax revenue soured and government expenditure continuously climbed upward to meet rising social policy expenditures for the ever-growing segment of the population over 65 years old. Naoto Kan, a nongovernmental citizens movement leader, faced the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster of 2011. He failed to manage the complex crises promptly and professionally. The Lehman Shock that triggered serious US and global recessions permeated Japan as well. Yoshihiko Noda, son of a JSDF officer, managed to legislate a consumption tax hike in August–September 2012. With the party leadership of the DPJ term approaching (September 2012), voices were calling loudly for an early general election, citing the lack of a general election since 2009 despite a prolonged economic recession, government deficit, major earthquake and disasters, foreign policy ineptitude, and nonaction.

To conclude, leadership change is triggered by many factors. The need to fix some unresolved and often hidden foreign policy issues appears to be a major reason for leadership change. Needless to say, leadership change is carried out constitutionally. Most foreign policy issues may not be cited as a major reason for leadership change, however, because it is hidden. It is not difficult to see that domestic issues—such as corruption, scandal, factional infighting, political realignment, inflation, economic recession, collapse of the bubble, administrative reform, consumption tax hike—prepare the way toward political exits and justify these exits. Seen chronologically as a group of prime ministers' achievements and nonachievements, one can see the outstanding structural homework, irrespective of who the prime minister is. Which homework should be prioritized toward resolution depends on the strength of government, the prime minister, the whole context, and whole path of dependence. Trade disputes, transparency and governance of business and government, expansion of domestic market demand, US military bases, transborder JSDF engagement, and so on come to mind as potential homework. It is not difficult to see that the government tries to fix undone homework when a leadership change occurs. It is not difficult to speculate that some homework happens to be foreign policy related since Japan during the past two decades has been more or less stripped of one of the

major rationales of the alliance, that is, their Soviet military threat with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Under such circumstances any attempts at redressing the equation of the alliance by Japanese Prime Ministers must have been confronted by the counterbalancing efforts at home and abroad.³⁸

Is Japan Most Befitting This World Order?

John Mueller³⁹ published a book over 20 years ago arguing that war is possibly like slavery, which was abolished abruptly in the mid-nineteenth century. Mueller's work sounded like the premature announcement of Mark Twain's death at that time. In 2011, Joshua Goldstein⁴⁰ went on to say that wars are on the decline. Since 1945 no nuclear wars have taken place; major powers have not waged interstate wars of global importance bar the US wars; interstate wars have been declining in terms of occurrence; civil wars have taken place as before but also are slowly decreasing; peacekeeping operations have been largely effective in deterring former warring parties from reigniting conflict. Focusing on Asia, we see the same long-term trend: interstate wars are decreasing in number and small-scale skirmishes have taken place only intermittently. But big wars have become very rare. War fatalities and casualties are declining. The number of those killed in war in Asia has not been on the rise and has remained at the lowest level since 1979 till today. In the late 1970s, a number of key events coincided: China's peace with the United States (1978), China's friendship treaty with Japan (1978), and China's peace with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (1979), including the termination of China's military intervention in Vietnam and the mutual perception of the quasi-nuclear deterrence between China and the United States.⁴¹ Most pronounced is Japan's noninvolvement in any war, large or small, since 1945. Ironically, the trend of Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping and peace-building operations has been increasing. In Cambodia, Japan participated in UN operations. But the personnel sent came from the Police Agency. It meant that Article 9 of the constitution was interpreted as not encouraging JSDF personnel to be sent abroad. One policeman was killed during the mission. The Police Agency took action to legislate a law, whereby the death of an on-duty police personnel be compensated by the state, even if occurring abroad. JSDF are eager to have a similar set of legislation passed. But Article 9 of the constitution was effective in preventing legislators from passing a new law that would have allowed JSDF

personnel to be dispatched to foreign countries. It was early 1990s. After the Cold War, UN peacekeeping operations were activated in part due to the activism of the UN secretary general Boutros Boutros-Ghali. UN peacekeeping operations became less active by the mid-1990s. The unipolarity and associated tendencies of the United States in the 1990s and its unilateralism in the 2000s led observers to think peacekeeping and peace-building operations were not really effective. International relations were overshadowed by the United States. Peacekeeping and peace-building operations were highlighted not by their effectiveness but by their messy processes. After the US unilateralism of George W. Bush, the international community started to realize that UN peacekeeping operations overall have prevented conflicts from starting again. These findings are based on the long-term decrease of wars and the effectiveness of peacekeeping and peace-building operations in terms of combat death and civilians negatively affected. Steven Pinker,⁴² a psychologist, argues in his book *The Better Angels of Our Nature* that human beings are becoming less violent as they evolve over thousands of years, even with the two violent wars of the past century being located in the context of the civilized evolution of human nature.

If peace and stability prevail, Japan's strength will be more appreciated. In the region around Japan, what has taken place tends to be skirmishes and small-scale disputes. North Korea's bombardment of Yongbyungdo in 2011 was small in scale. Thai-Cambodian skirmishes in 2008–2011 were also small in nature. Japanese-Chinese skirmishes near Senkaku Islands in 2010 were also restrained. All of these factors must have contributed to the rise of the Japanese yen exchange rate vis-à-vis the US dollar and other currencies. Stability is strength. Amid economic difficulties in the United States and the European Union, Japan is recognized as an oasis of stability and strength, even if it is a somewhat wounded-knee-holding power.

After characterizing the three key features of the Japanese foreign policy line after the Cold War, self-recognition of a global power, self-recognition of a US-led world order supporter, and self-recognition of ontological insecurity and their evolutions, I now turn to the question: Is Japan most befitting this emerging world order in its ongoing transition? It must be noted that the three key features of the Japanese foreign policy line remain the same. But the metamorphosis of each feature is in the offing with unprecedented speed: (1) Japan's rank of GNP has become number three after the United States and China; the United States may be losing "its superpower status"⁴³ and

may be becoming more like Britain after World War II; (2) Japan is replacing “bilateralism at any costs” by “multilateral regionalism.” In tandem with the transition from the hub-and-spoke hierarchical order to the “ad hoc coalition of the temporarily willing” and further to the multilateral regional groupings by the United States, Japan is placing the key terms of its foreign policy line from loyalty to trust, from compliance to coordination; (3) Japan’s ontological insecurity has become less acute, gaining in self-confidence to assert that foreign policy action is more often justified, not narrowly by national interests, but more broadly by the universal language such as “sharing the sorrow with those killed in war.”

If nuclear war has not taken place since 1945; if war among major powers has not taken place since China’s war against Vietnam in 1979 and Britain’s war against Argentina in 1982; if interstate wars are rare, except for such wars as the Thai-Cambodian war on the border; if civil wars have not seen a reduction in frequency then they have witnessed a reduction of those killed, combat or civilian; if peace-keeping and peace-building operations have proved their effectiveness in preventing conflicts from reigniting, the question should be asked: Is Japan most befitting the twenty-first century? In other words, is Japan *zeitgemäss* (in harmony with the time)?

Of course, asking this question does not lead to the view that Japan should disarm itself. Rather the opposite is the case, in that at each stage of history and at each level of war, playing the classical American football strategy of pitting oneself against the enemy step by step and making advances two inches or ten inches forward or absorbing retreats three inches or seven inches backward. The game is not necessarily among sovereign nation-states but sometimes among various war institutions. Nuclear powers have been reducing nuclear weapon-loaded missiles on a steady basis, primarily between the United States and the Russian Federation. Conventional forces may not be disarming themselves in terms of procurement costs. But in terms of the kind of frontier technology weapons, the Richardson-like dynamics seems to be working. That is to say, not the fatigue of nations but the long-term and astronomical costs of research and development processes of frontier technology weapons seem to reduce the very utility of the exercise. This dynamics applies primarily to the United States. Why primarily only to the United States? Because of the structural unipolarity of the United States. Although the unipolarity has started to erode, multipolarity remains to be formed. But in terms of military forces, the unipolarity of the United States is still fairly absolute, distancing itself from

the rest in terms of technological level of weapons produced (precision, delivery vehicle, and destructive capability) and armed forces trained and tested in combat. What happens is not the balancing but the nearly endless catching up with the slowly declining unipolar power. Balancing needs a few actors whose power is more or less equal, a fact that does not exist. What exist are the superpower and the far distanced rest that are trying to modernize and catch up with the superpower. Among those few who modernize and dare to catch up with the superpower, fatigue will sooner or later come. Meanwhile the superpower steadily overstretchers itself not only in its self-appointed missions but also in terms of astronomical budgets for weapons research and development. The question—Is Japan most befitting the changing world order in the current transitional phases?—must be continuously asked.

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