

ALTERNATIVE VISIONS OF JAPANESE SECURITY: THE ROLE OF ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE GAINS IN THE MAKING OF JAPANESE SECURITY POLICY

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In the post-cold war world Japanese security policy has grasped at nationalistic elements within Japanese society in attempts to “securitize” itself by means of a foreign policy independent of the United States. The role of absolute and relative gains in the making of Japanese foreign and security policy will be examined in light of alternative security issues. Working from International Security: A New Framework for Analysis by Barry Buzan et al., this article will examine Japanese security policy in light of Japan’s attempts to securitize itself in non-traditional ways that impact traditional security.

Key words: Japanese security policy, alternative security, U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, cultural security

Introduction

Any study that attempts to understand Japanese foreign and security policy since World War II must recognize the impact of Article 9 of Japan’s constitution. It cannot be underemphasized. Article 9 gives up Japan’s “right” as a sovereign nation to wage

war and maintain a military.¹ The realities of the cold war required Japan to “interpret” Article 9 to permit self-defense. This led to the creation of the Self Defense Forces (SDF) as a form of traditional security. The problem for Japan, particularly in the post-cold war era, is how to employ the SDF without violating the constitution.

Given the constitutional limits placed on Japanese security in the post-cold war world, Japanese security policy has grasped at nationalistic elements within Japanese society in attempts to “securitize” itself by means of a foreign policy independent of the United States. While the political right in Japan has proved more capable of securitizing its issues than the political left, most of these attempts have given Japan little more than a psychological feeling of pride rather than any true security benefit in the classical sense. However, when looked at in the wider perspective of alternative security, Japan is making gains in terms of its security situation.

This article will first review what is meant by alternative security. It will then examine the theoretical foundations of Japanese foreign policy. This will be followed with an analysis of Japan’s efforts to securitize itself through alternative means, including a short case study of Japan’s efforts to aid the victims of the Boxing Day tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

Alternative Security

Barry Buzan et al. in their 1998 book, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, examine the “wide versus narrow” debate in security analysis.² This paper examines the “wide” debate in relation to Japanese security policy. Buzan et al. caution against the “intellectual and political dangers of simply tacking the

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1. It should be noted that at the time of this writing that there is a strong movement within and without Japan’s dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to amend, revise, or completely rewrite the Japanese constitution. While the success of these efforts may still be a long way off, it does lend credence to the argument that Japan is on the path to normalization of its foreign policy.
 2. Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998), pp. 2-5 and 239.

word security onto an ever wider range of issues.”³ Issues relating to traditional security concerns will largely be ignored in order to focus on alternative issues. According to Hans J. Morgenthau, traditional security encompasses protection of a state’s people, territory, and economy from outside attack.⁴ For Buzan et al., alternative security issues can be much more wide ranging (with the caveat above on the need for caution against attaching security to too many issues), touching for example on the environment, society, and politics. Even domestic economic issues that are not subjected to international threats may be included in the securitization process. Traditional approaches to security as well as alternative approaches must be incorporated side by side. However, security is much more than any specific threat or problem. Threats or problems may be only political in nature.⁵

It is also important that the issues being securitized are perceived as security issues by those inside as well as outside a state. An issue is not securitized until it is accepted as securitized both internally and externally. There needs to be a “speech act” in which an issue is securitized. The danger must be spoken of in terms of the threat if not dealt with. This can be ad hoc or institutionalized. However, an issue has not been successfully securitized until those on the outside have perceived the speech act as securitizing the issue, according to Buzan et al. There also needs to be a consideration of the side effects of securitizing an issue that may lead to making the issue a greater threat than previously assumed. In these situations de-securitization may be the ideal choice.⁶

The nation-state does not exist in a vacuum. In terms of security a nation-state is part of the larger community of states with which it interacts politically, economically, culturally, and strategically. It is common to perceive these sectors as being independent rather than interdependent. To consider a wider security agenda we must consider the interlinking of the security sectors and how they affect the overall security of the state.

3. Ibid., p. 1.

4. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, revised by Kenneth W. Thompson (New York: Knopf, 1985).

5. Buzan et al., *Security*, pp. 4-5.

6. Ibid., pp. 28-31.

Splitting the sectors into their own subunits is helpful for analysis but troublesome when one needs to examine a state's overall security environment.

Alternative security issues have become ever more important due to the erosion of Western military, economic, and political power by the forces of globalization. Protecting the state is not the same as it once was. Classical security issues of military comparison between border states may be a thing of the past. Relations between states over a host of issues that can be securitized are now normative in their application. As Buzan et al. state, "All of the states in the system are enmeshed in a global web of security interdependence."⁷ However, insecurity is often associated with proximity due to the fact that security threats do not travel well.⁸ States worry more about their neighbors than they do about distant potential threats. This creates what Buzan et al. call "security complexes," which are regionally based clusters "whose security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another."⁹ These security complexes are "miniature anarchies" that operate as a fully functional subset of the larger system.¹⁰

When we look at Japan in light of the arguments of Buzan et al., we can see that Japan sits in what may be called a Northeast Asian security complex. The players in this security complex are Japan, China (including Taiwan), the two Koreas, Russia, and the United States. How these players have reacted and are reacting to Japan's securitization efforts is of vital importance. The primary focus here is on the domestic economic securitization of Japan and the economic subsets of rice and the environment in the Sea of Japan. I will also look at the political and foreign-policy issue of whaling in light of alternative security and Japan's efforts at tsunami relief in Southeast Asia. However, before

7. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

8. *Ibid.* The rise of global terrorism may change this eventually; however, it is important to note that even terrorism (in its current form) does not travel well. It is easier for groups like al-Qaeda to operate in Iraq than in the United States. Culture, language, and even religion offer formidable barriers to would-be terrorists.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

looking at these issues we need to consider what international relations theory tells us about Japan's situation and the limits placed on Japanese policy by Article 9. International relations theory can teach us about what a state hopes to gain by the process of securitization and its motives for engaging in the search for alternative forms of security.

Theoretical Foundations and Japanese Limitations

Political, Economic, and Social Liabilities

As stated previously, Japanese foreign policy revolves around the interpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution. Japan has managed over the years to modify its constitution through reinterpretation rather than through the more traditional method of a straightforward amendment. The constitution and Article 9 have become sacrosanct, and the current attempts to rewrite the constitution are not likely to succeed in the near future in spite of the efforts of the ruling LDP. Amending or rewriting the constitution is likely to result in a political uproar that the Japanese government does not want to see.¹¹ This is largely due to the fact that Japanese bureaucrats and politicians *tend* to be sensitive to public displeasure due to the Asian cultural desire to have *wa*—social balance and harmony.¹² LDP politi-

11. Some Japanese politicians, especially from the ruling LDP, see the possibility of amending the constitution if it is done as a wholesale revision rather than just simply targeting Article 9 for revision. There also seem to be some efforts to couch the need for a rewriting of the constitution in nationalistic terms by emphasizing that it was written largely by Americans and is not Japanese in origin. (See former prime minister Nakasone's comments in the Public Broadcasting System video series by Alex Gibney, *The Pacific Century: Reinventing Japan* (#5), produced by the Pacific Basin Institute in association with KCTS/Seattle, 60 min., Jigsaw Productions, 1992, videocassette.) The LDP has formed a constitutional committee to study rewriting or amending the constitution as a whole. Some politicians (mostly in the LDP) are hopeful, but many (including members of the Social Democratic Party) are openly skeptical. Interview with Kei Hata, member of the House of Councillors of the Japanese Diet, May 18, 1998, Tokyo.

12. For further discussion of the importance of *wa*, see Martin W. Sampson

cians strive to maintain a balance, which means the absence of open conflict. Establishing a consensus is important. Public support or rather the lack of opposition is crucial for many Japanese politicians.¹³

Nevertheless, it is also important to note that while political consensus is helpful it is not always required. Witness the passage of the original Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) law in 1991. The public supported the LDP's efforts in general because the "oxwalk" tactics of the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ)—the predecessor of the current SDP—backfired by causing national embarrassment when they were broadcast worldwide. The result was a solidification of Japanese public support for the LDP on this issue, regardless of personal feelings about the PKO bill. Those who opposed the bill were effectively silenced.¹⁴

Japan is realistic about its political power. It cannot compete with the United States one-on-one. Japan simply does not have the resources or the population to be a true hegemon, nor does it

III and Steven G. Walker, "Cultural Norms and National Roles: A Comparison of Japan and France," in Stephen G. Walker, ed., *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), pp. 105-22.

13. The author's interviews with several members of the opposition parties and even the Socialists (SDP), who were in a power-sharing coalition with the LDP at the time, confirmed the need and desire for political consensus. Those interviewed expressed strong displeasure with the heavy-handedness that was occurring in Japanese politics. In other words, they felt that their views and concerns were being ignored by party leaders, thus creating a loss of harmony.
14. A direct contrast to this concern about balance and consensus would be the U.S. system, which is probably the most open to outside influences, including foreign ones. The majority in Congress over the last twenty-five years has demonstrated an increasing willingness to push or block legislation regardless of the views of the opposition. This trend has been largely attributed to loose American campaign finance laws and the fallout of the Watergate scandal. Money buys influence in Washington but is limited to what constituents will not oppose at the polls. Based on Reinhard Drifte, "The US-Japan-China Security Triangle and the Future of East Asian Security," in Laurent Goetschel, ed., *Security in a Globalized World: Risks and Opportunities* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 1999), p. 1, and a conversation with former U.S. congressman and Republican minority whip John Rhodes of Arizona, at the University Club, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, spring 1996.

seem to be seeking that role. That is, Japan does not have the ability or resources either to seize power or to maintain it. The same problems that plagued it during World War II are still with it today. It is a country that is poor in natural resources, requiring it to import raw materials and export finished products. Part of the problem is that Japan's population is aging at a remarkably rapid rate. By the early part of the twenty-first century over half of Japan's population will be over 65. Japanese live longer than any other nationality in the industrialized world. Life expectancies for men and women are 82 and 86 years respectively. Japan is already facing the severe financial task of providing retirement incomes and medical care to a growing population of retirees who are living longer and longer after retirement. The Japanese social security system is projected to run out of funds by 2010.¹⁵ Fewer and fewer workers are supporting those on government pensions.

At the same time Japan has the highest debt ratio of any developed nation. The government is deep in debt. Japan must already import foreign workers to do "dirty" jobs that Japanese will not do. This may begin to change the social structure of Japan as Japanese intermarry with foreigners, diluting Japan's racial homogeneity, and as imported labor groups establish ethnic communities within Japan, bringing with them their own customs and traditions. Japan has also begun to expand its industrial base overseas due in part to the lack of workers at home.¹⁶

There will be a tremendous burden on the youth of Japan to support this aging population, especially when the ratio of workers to retirees is projected to reach 1:1.4 by the year 2020.¹⁷ Japan has

15. Sheryl WuDunn and Nicholas D. Kristof, "Japan as No. 1? In Debt, Maybe, at the Rate Things Have Been Going," *New York Times*, September 1, 1999, online ed.

16. Some of these overseas jobs are designed to gain access to foreign markets and/or to escape high wages in Japan, but many are jobs that Japanese workers simply do not want to do anymore because they are menial or physically difficult.

17. The ratio is that of the total working age population to the retirement age population (the actual ratio is probably lower when non-workers from the working age group, such as housewives, are factored in). Data is from the (Japanese) National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, *Selected Demographic Indicators for Japan*, online at www.ipss.

more citizens over the age of sixty-five than under the age of fifteen.¹⁸ The Japanese people themselves are acutely aware of the problem. Eri Kimura, who works in insurance sales, is an example of how the younger generation worries about Japan's future because of its aging population. She is twenty-three and says, "The number of young people paying for the older generation is causing a strain on our taxes. . . . And the number of children being born is decreasing so it's become a serious burden."¹⁹

Technology has given Japan the ability to be a powerful nation, but it does not give Japan the global military reach that is needed to be a hegemonic power. So many Japanese couples have only one child or are choosing not to have children that the population is expected to shrink to less than 100 million (from the 125 million today) in the next century. With so few children to grow up to serve in the armed forces, Japan (like the United States, but for different reasons) is very risk averse.²⁰ Japan's primary vulnerability is not to invasion, but to interruptions or the closing of the sea lines of communication. Japan must trade to survive and prosper.

Japan's "Addiction" to the United States

Japan does not and probably never will have the resources

go.jp/English/S_D_I/Indip.html. For more on Japan's aging population see Milton Ezrati, "Japan's Aging Economics," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, No. 3 (May-June, 1997), pp. 96-104.

18. National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, *Selected Demographic Indicators*.

19. Interview taken from John W. Kennedy, "Tokyo: Indifferent to the Risen Son," *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 5, 1999, p. 10.

20. Many couples cite the high cost of raising and educating children as the main reason for not having children or having only one child. Japanese municipal governments are so alarmed at this trend that they are offering financial incentives to couples to have more children, such as paying for the medical costs and the first year's worth of diapers and formula. This is having little effect. People who have children are not willing to risk them in dangerous international conflicts. In several of the author's interviews with Japanese elites, individuals cited the need for Japan to concentrate its resources at home. The clear implication is that while Japan is willing to do its part to protect its interests, it is unwilling to go the extra mile and place itself at risk for the sake of others.

to be a world power in the traditional sense. Japan is much better served by working as a great power within the world community and using its economic strength as the basis of its power. Japan will continue to have conflicts with the United States, but these disputes should remain moderate in the larger scope of things.

Since World War II Japan, recognizing its own limits, has remained in the U.S. shadow through its judicious use of the Yoshida Doctrine. Japan used the doctrine to focus on economic development while depending on the United States for its security. With the end of the cold war and the U.S. unwillingness to permit Japan to continue to be a free rider and to use its position to its economic advantage, Japan has been forced to decide what role and position in the world it will assume. Those within Japan on the right wing, such as Ozawa Ichiro, advocate a more independent Japan. There are even some in academia outside of Japan, like Chalmers Johnson, who advocate a more independent Japan free from the constraints of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the U.S. military presence that comes with it. There are also those on the left, such as the traditional old guard in the SDP and the Japan Communist Party (JCP), who also desire greater independence. But they envision a more neutral or isolationist Japan rather than an activist or assertive Japan.

The obvious reality is that across the political spectrum Japanese do desire a more independent or autonomous role in international security. But they are caught between desires and constitutional restraints. Japan has extraordinary advantages because of its one-way security relationship with the United States. It is to Japan's economic benefit to stay as close to the United States as possible. One might even go so far as to describe Japan as being addicted to its relationship with the United States under the Yoshida Doctrine—the kind of addiction one has to chocolate, however, rather than to drugs or alcohol. One can stop eating chocolate at any time, but why stop when it tastes so good and gives one so much pleasure?

Japan needs an active and in many ways more visible foreign policy outside of the shadow of the United States. As mentioned previously, Japan has an increasing industrial presence overseas that it needs to protect. Traditionally nations have used military power or the credible threat of military intervention to protect

foreign economic interests. Japan will need a more dynamic foreign policy to protect interests that currently require reliance on U.S. power. Milton Ezrati writes:

A more active foreign policy will become unavoidable as the overseas expansion of Japanese industry establishes connections in the rest of Asia that Japan will need to secure. Though such a move goes against present Japanese instincts, no nation, including Japan, can afford to locate its production facilities abroad and not develop the capability to at least threaten to project power to protect those sources of wealth. This new security perspective will be all the more radical because it will run counter to Japan's long standing reliance on U.S. protection of Japanese interests.²¹

The problem for Japan is the constitutionality of power projection capability. Japan depends on the U.S. to protect its overseas interests because of Article 9 and the Yoshida Doctrine. When U.S. and Japanese interests coincide the arrangement works well. But if Japan takes on a more independent role, it stands to lose many of the benefits of its relationship with the United States. Cutting itself loose from the United States would force Japan to change its foreign and security policy, without necessarily making Japanese foreign policy any better.

The following illustration should help clarify Japan's options: The American "father" is trying to raise the Japanese "son."²² The father having raised the son can set the son loose at eighteen and allow the son to become independent, or the father can continue to support, educate, and nurture the son into a more equal relationship/partnership. The son, on the other hand, can choose independence or continue to permit himself to be nurtured into a partnership with the father. This raises the question of whether the son, if he permits himself to be nurtured, will become an equal partner with the father and thus stronger than either would be alone. Alternatively, the son could remain dependent on the

21. Ezrati, "Japan's Aging Economics," p. 101.

22. This "family" illustration is based on the U.S.-Japan relationship since World War II, when the U.S. occupation authorities wrote Japan's constitution and established many of its governmental institutions and norms. The "mother" in this scenario is the democratic values and economics that both nations share.

father and never truly become independent.²³

If the son chooses independence, he makes his own way in the world. Though independent, he is free to rejoin the father at any time provided that the union or reconciliation is mutual. A historical example of this is the Anglo-American relationship: The United States fought for and won independence from the British, but during the course of two world wars America established a "special relationship" with Britain through a common heritage that eventually led the British to acquiesce to U.S. hegemony. This peaceful transfer of power was historically unprecedented; it represented a bond of culture and heritage that helped the British accept the transfer of power because it was still "in the family."

In the U.S.-Japan relationship the situation is more abstract. There is no common language, culture, or heritage. In many ways one can hardly find two more different nations. There is, however, a common recent history, particularly since World War II. America gave Japan its democratic process and institutions. It also helped to promote and develop its capitalist economic system.²⁴ The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty cemented this "adoptive" relationship whereby the United States took a willing Japan (which practiced the Yoshida Doctrine) under its wing and helped it to rebuild.

Japan has been faced with a choice for some time now as to whether it stays with the United States or goes its own way. The debate within Japan on this issue rose throughout the 1990s. There are activist local leaders such as Okinawa's former governor Ota and the current governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintaro, who want the U.S. military out of Japan or at least have its role greatly reduced.²⁵ The events of September 11, 2001 seem to

23. A proverbial "loser" who has no real ambitions and never leaves the nest; Japan is clearly not in this category.

24. During the occupation the United States broke up the *kiressu* cartels that worked hand in hand with the government and gave legal legitimacy and independence to trade unions. This permitted Japan to develop a much more truly capitalist economic system than it had before the war and it laid the foundation for Japan's post-war prosperity and economic boom.

25. Nicholas D. Kristof, "Seeking to Be Tokyo's Governor, Politician Attacks U.S. Presence," *New York Times*, March 26, 1999, p. A12.

have pushed Japan to decide to stick with the American security relationship. The ruling LDP and the ministry of foreign affairs have long been inclined in that direction; but it was the special relationship that Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro and President George W. Bush forged after 9/11 that has propelled Japan into maintaining and strengthening the alliance.²⁶

Another factor that has propelled Japan into a closer relationship with the United States is the recognition of the threat to Japan posed by North Korea. The abduction by North Korean agents of Japanese youth in the 1960s and 1970s and their negotiated repatriation by Koizumi had a startling effect on the Japanese public. For the first time many in the Japanese public saw a clear danger to Japan. A nation that would kidnap children off the streets of a foreign country was such a danger. The fact that North Korea had, in violation of treaty agreements, been developing nuclear weapons was a further indication of the danger it posed. Japanese leaders do not want to deal with North Korea alone, and its U.S. ally remains the best counter to an external threat.

Japanese Realism

On the whole, however, Japan's domestic needs trump its foreign-policy concerns. In fact under the Yoshida Doctrine Japan has, since World War II, pursued a foreign policy governed by domestic needs. Since the end of the occupation Japan has pursued a foreign policy based on realism or "self help": It sought to maximize its economic potential given the limitations imposed by the U.S. occupation. Realism as described by Joseph M. Grieco

encompasses five propositions. First, states are the major actors in world affairs. Second, the international environment severely penalizes states if they fail to protect their vital interests or if they

26. Both Koizumi and Bush have served at the same time. This has enabled them to form a strong working and personal relationship over the last four years. Former President Bill Clinton did not have this advantage in that the Japanese prime ministers during his tenure in office turned over at an almost annual rate.

pursue objectives beyond their means; hence, states are “sensitive to costs” and behave as unitary-rational agents. Third, international anarchy is the principal force shaping the motives and actions of states. Fourth, states in anarchy are preoccupied with power and security, are predisposed toward conflict and competition, and often fail to cooperate even in face of common interests. Finally, international institutions affect the prospects for cooperation only marginally.²⁷

Japanese foreign-policy Realism has not been the traditional power-based realism of Hans J. Morgenthau.²⁸ Rather, Japan’s foreign policy has been largely based on an assessment of its foreign-policy limitations under Article 9. The constitutional limitations that Article 9 places on Japan have meant that Japan has been forced to *realistically* pursue an institutionalist/neoliberalist foreign policy.²⁹ Institutionalists would say that Japan is simply following an institutionally based foreign policy, not realism. But they are wrong, as Grieco correctly argues:

. . . in fact, neoliberal institutionalism misconstrues the realist analysis of international anarchy and therefore it misunderstands the realist analysis of the impact of anarchy on the preferences and the actions of states. Indeed, the new liberal institutionalism fails to address a major constraint on the willingness of states to cooperate which is generated by international anarchy and which is

27. Joseph M. Grieco, “Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism,” in David A. Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 118-19.

28. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, revised by Kenneth W. Thompson (New York: Knopf, 1985).

29. The terms institutionalism and neoliberalism are used interchangeably and are seen as synonymous for the purposes of this article. The author is indebted to his friend and colleague Tong Ge for first introducing him to the notion of a realistic approach to institutionalism. Tong Ge argues that China, in spite of a long standing (and continuing) opposition to institutionalist approaches to foreign policy, is now pursuing just such options out of a realistic need for international legitimacy. Japan in the same way seems to have used institutions for realist purposes. See Tong Ge, *Realism and Chinese Foreign Policy in East and Southeast Asia in the Post-Cold War Era*, M.A. thesis, Arizona State University, Department of Political Science, Spring 1999.

identified by realism. As a result, the new theory's optimism about international cooperation is likely to be proven wrong.³⁰

Japan has depended on the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty³¹ and the United Nations for its security needs. Japan's institutionalist approach to its foreign policy was not based on belief in institutionalism, but on a realistic assessment of the country's options, which were few.

The premise underlying this argument is that realism *dominates or influences* all the calculations that Japanese leaders make about international relations. This view runs counter to that of many political scientists, who hold that there are multiple theoretical explanations for the behavior of nation states. As Sheldon Simon states, two "alternative visions," realism and neoliberalism,

currently compete for the attention of many statesmen in the post-cold war world, who are searching for policies to secure and advance their governments' fortunes. While realists concede that states may be concerned in the long run with absolute gains, they insist that immediate survival needs take precedence and require independent military and economic capabilities that attenuate cooperation. Neoliberals counter that strong empirical evidence of cooperation in international politics and the creation of institutions to facilitate cooperation show that states do not necessarily concentrate on relative gains exclusively. Theoretically, under zero-sum conditions, there is no basis for international cooperation regimes because one actor's gain is another's loss. Indeed, in the realist world, a hegemonic state determines the structure or rules of international relations.³²

Simon argues that both realism and neoliberalism are evi-

30. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation," p. 117.

31. The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is viewed by this author as a bilateral institution with multilateral implications rather than simply a bilateral security arrangement between Japan and the United States. This is because of the threefold role that the treaty plays in providing Japan with a security guarantee, promoting East Asian security, and giving other East Asian countries the psychological benefit of bottling up Japanese nationalism.

32. Sheldon W. Simon, "International Relations Theory and Southeast Asian Security," *The Pacific Review*, vol. 8, No. 1 (1995), p. 6.

dent in Southeast Asian security policy. I do not question this finding; instead, I offer an alternative hypothesis for why nations pursue an alternative or institutionalist foreign policy. An institutionalist foreign policy is based on the use of multilateral fora such as the UN and the ASEAN Regional Forum rather than traditional alliances for security. I also explain why nations accept absolute gains in cooperation with other states rather than compete over relative gains.

Realists argue that as the United States, the current dominant hegemon, declines,³³ other nations will vie for the right to be "top dog." Neoliberals argue that states with an investment in the current hegemon's "regime" will have an interest in preserving or in creating frameworks that will continue the rules and regulations imposed by the reigning hegemon.³⁴ This argument by the neoliberals should be seen as nothing more than an attempt by nation-states to augment their power through institutionalism. Nations are motivated by the need for "self help," but the realities of the post-cold war world are forcing them to pursue *relative gains* through *absolute gains*. State leaders see the competition to be "top dog" as resulting in a net loss in terms of *relative gains* for themselves. Part of the reasoning behind this is, as Grieco writes, that "For realists, a state will focus both on its *absolute and relative gains* from cooperation, and a state that is satisfied with a partner's compliance in a joint arrangement might nevertheless exit from it because the partner is achieving relatively greater gains."³⁵ With survival foremost on their minds, state leaders practicing realism choose *absolute gains* over a net loss in *relative gains*. States will return to relative gains only when

33. I would disagree with the view that the United States is currently in decline. In fact the opposite seems to be occurring: U.S. power is on the rise and other nations are trying to align themselves with the United States or to counterbalance the United States through other alliances.

34. Simon, "International Relations Theory," p. 7.

35. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation," p. 118, emphasis added. The idea of a partner exiting from a relationship is very significant for Japan in light of its fears of abandonment by the United States. Japan can easily be seen as deriving more than the United States from the relationship and thus, according to Grieco, becoming a possible candidate for abandonment. As a nation that is fundamentally practicing realism, Japan realizes this and hence fears abandonment.

they are more profitable than absolute gains.³⁶ With the world becoming more interdependent, states are less likely to find themselves pursuing *direct relative gains* when *absolute gains* offer so much more.

Japan and Relative Gains

To illustrate this relative/absolute gains concept let us look at the case of Japan. As states are maneuvering for “top dog” status, Japan realizes that it is not in a position to be a serious contender for hegemony because of its limitations under Article 9 among other reasons. Realizing its limitations it tries to position itself for relative gains through absolute gain methods. Japan needs the stability offered by the “regime” of the current hegemon, the United States, to continue in order to pursue relative gains. This requires that Japan pursue a neoliberal approach to its foreign policy and the resulting absolute gains. Japan’s calculations tell it that *absolute gains* will give it a *greater relative gain* than if it only pursued *relative gains*. That is, the *absolute gains* from the U.S. relationship outweigh any conceivable *relative gains* from abandoning the relationship.

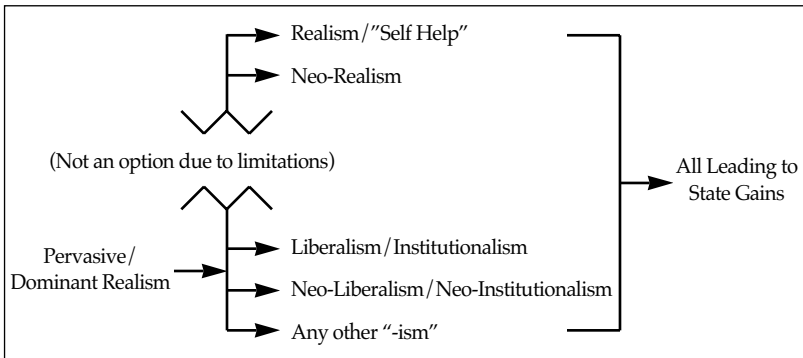
A nation may thus choose to pursue a purely realist path or not. It may choose to follow a liberal path because it is the rational thing to do. This is a kind of “localized rationality” on the part of Japan.³⁷ Part of this logic is based on the belief that peo-

36. To give a crude illustration, a nation facing a net loss of, say, 100 points in *absolute gains* versus a net loss of 50 points in *relative gains* would likely choose the relative gains over the absolute gains in order to keep the “game” close so that as the situation improves, it has less ground to recover. It is a delaying action if you will. It is important to remember that in this scenario there are no gains, only a choice of greater or fewer losses. While some authors have argued as to the types of *gains* that a state practicing realism might choose, my argument concerns the choice a state facing two different levels of *losses* might make in order to position itself for the future. In other words, a state will choose to minimize losses and focus on the future.

37. This concept of “localized rationality” partially comes from comments by Paul Bracken and Ralph Cossa at the National Bureau of Asian Research’s *The Many Faces of Asian Security: Beyond 2000* conference at Arizona State University, Tempe Arizona, April 27, 2000 (author’s personal notes).

ple and nations must have incentives to work for goals and interests beyond their immediate selfish needs and agendas. Thus, the behavior of nations can be explained in realist terms no matter what form of policy they seem to be practicing. The circumstances in which they make a “realist” choice may reflect a view of mankind in which a nation can choose to work for the “common good” because it is in the nation’s particular interest to do so.

Figure 1. Why a Nation Practicing Realism Might Choose Other Options for Realist Reasons



This argument adds to the ongoing debate between Grieco and Powell over the issue of relative versus absolute gains in international relations theory.³⁸ Neoinstitutionalists argue that

Localized rationality reflects thinking from the perspective of those locally making the decision. It may not appear to be rational from an outsider’s perspective, but it is very rational for those making the decision. Examples of this are Saddam Hussein’s decision to invade Kuwait in spite of the strongly interdependent relationship between the two states, and Japan’s decision to attack Pearl Harbor in spite of the fact that it knew that it would most likely lose a war with the United States. Both of these cases led to disaster, but this does not have to be the case. A “localized rationality” may be the best choice for a nation.

38. Joseph M. Grieco, “Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation,” pp. 116-40; Robert Powell, “Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 85, No. 4 (December, 1991), pp. 1303-20; and Powell, “Anarchy in International Relations

states are only interested in their own gains and do not care about the gains of other states. Grieco disagrees with this and argues that nations will pursue relative gains over absolute gains if they can. Powell tries to marry both these schools of thought by arguing that the choice of relative or absolute gains is situational in nature. A state will pursue relative gains from a state that it fears as a security threat. If it does not regard a state as a security threat, it will pursue absolute gains. What I am arguing, particularly in the case of Japan, is that there is a simultaneous element in this process. States will pursue relative gains in any given situation even when on the surface they appear to be pursuing absolute gains. If a state does not have the option or ability to pursue a realist or neorealist strategy, it will then attempt a neoliberal strategy focused on absolute gains in economics and security. In the case of Japan its economics are strong but its security options are weak due to its limitations. It thus rationally pursues a pragmatic strategy of diplomacy in order to make relative gains in terms of intangibles such as goodwill and influence. On the surface Japan is currently pursuing absolute gains using a neoinstitutionalist strategy, but underneath it is seeking relative gains in the form of intangibles since it cannot make relative gains in the traditional forms of economics and security.

For example, Japan needs open sea-lanes. If Japan cannot trade internationally it will starve. To keep the sea-lanes open it must either use force (which it can only do to a limited extent if at all constitutionally) or it must work with other nations through institutions to keep the sea-lanes open. Japan's need to keep them open is self centered, but it carries a benefit for other nations as well because cooperation in most cases is better than conflict. In realist terms, considering Japan's limitations, collaboration with the United States is Japan's best option. Furthermore, in realist terms security cooperation adds to Japan's power by strengthening it as a nation through goodwill and economics, thus giving it status and influence that it would not have been able to achieve by military means. Japan has made a relative gain by letting other nations gain in absolute terms. In sum, the argument here is that Japan's security policy can be explained through realism. If one

Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate," *International Organization*, vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring, 1994), pp. 313-44.

looks at Japanese options and limitations one can see a realist strategy governing Japanese foreign policy even when at first glance it appears to be an exclusively institutionalist policy.

In Japan's case, after the occupation it was forced to deal with the reality of Article 9. Without the constitutional ability to raise an army, wage war, or threaten to wage war, Japan was forced to pursue an institutionalist foreign policy. During the cold war Japan institutionalized its foreign policy through the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and to a lesser extent through the United Nations. Since the end of the cold war Japan has continued to follow an institutionalist foreign policy, with the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty still the centerpiece.

At first glance the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is simply a self-help effort on the part of Japan. The treaty provides Japan with a security guarantee by the world's leading power. The treaty serves other purposes for Japan besides security. It legitimizes Japan's role in East Asian security by assuring other Asian nations that the "Japanese genie" will be kept "in the bottle." Furthermore, the treaty helps to stabilize East Asia, since it keeps U.S. forces forward deployed and thus engaged in the region.

However, the significance and importance of the security treaty has declined since the end of the cold war. Japan is not as crucial an ally to the United States as it was when America was trying to contain communism. The end of the cold war reduced Japan's leverage vis-à-vis the United States because Japan was no longer seen as an essential ally in the fight against communism. Benefits from the relationship are now tipped in favor of the Japanese in that Japan's relative gains are greater than the U.S. gains even though both sides share absolute gains.³⁹ The full impact of this is that Japan is more vulnerable than previously to abandonment by the United States if the Americans should ever feel it necessary to do so. The fear of abandonment is particularly great on the right wing of Japanese politics.⁴⁰ One result of this is

39. In addition to the benefits listed above, Japan is still exempted, because of the treaty, from having to provide its own security. In many ways part of the Yoshida Doctrine still works for Japan. Japan does not have to invest as much in its own defense as it would if the U.S. were not allied with it.

40. Off the record interview with a government researcher in the employ of

that Japan has been searching for new options to raise its stature and increase its power and thus its importance to the United States and to the world in general.

Japanese foreign policy is increasingly UN-centered; but at the same time it is an active participant in regional fora such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the ASEAN Regional Forum.⁴¹ It is also championing a larger role for itself within the UN. Its quest for a permanent seat on the Security Council is supplemented by the championing of its nationals for important positions within the UN. Japan has in fact been accused of using its economic power to allegedly "purchase" important positions within the UN for Japanese. An example of this is the "check-book" campaign that Japan is said to have waged on behalf of the head of UNESCO, Ambassador Matsuura Koichiro.⁴² In these cases, money becomes a foreign-policy tool to increase Japan's political influence in international bodies.

Japanese politicians for the most part believe the revision of the constitution and the removal or amending of Article 9 is a political impossibility because of the disruption it would cause and its dubious chances for success. At the same time, even without a wholesale revision of the constitution, change is taking place in Japanese foreign policy. Four sources of this change are seen in Japan as having caused this restructuring. The first and most obvious is the end of the cold war and the repercussions it brought to the world system. The influence of this event cannot be overemphasized for its effect on Japanese foreign policy since 1990. It alone, without the other three, can be seen as a causal factor for change. The second source is the 1994 internal rule changes within the Japanese electoral system. They loosened the strangle hold that rural interests had on Japanese poli-

the Japan Defense Agency (JDA), Tokyo, May-June 1998, tape recording in the personal possession of the author.

41. For more on Japan's role in regional fora, see Paul Midford, "From Reactive State to Cautious Leader: The Nakayama Proposal and Japan's Role in Promoting the Creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)," paper, Department of Political Science, Columbia University, 1998.
42. Gilles Paris, "Le Japonais Koichiro Matsuura a succède à Federico Mayor à la tête de l'Unesco," *Le Monde*, October 22, 1999, as cited by H-Japan <H-JAPAN@H-NET.MSU.EDU> #1999-91, November 5-7, 1999.

tics by establishing a better proportional electoral system.⁴³ The result was changes in the type of representation and the orientations and interests of elected Diet members. Traditional-style politicians began losing ground to politicians from urban Japan.

The third causal factor for change is a byproduct of the second. A younger generation of leaders is emerging in the Diet. This generation is more likely than not to have been at least partially educated overseas and desires to see Japanese politics and policy reflect the elected leadership they have seen in other countries, rather than the bureaucratic leadership that has prevailed for so long in Japan.

The fourth causal factor for change is the Persian Gulf War and the resulting criticism that Japan suffered for its minuscule role in it. Japan's "checkbook diplomacy" during that war led to passage of the PKO Law and continual revisions that are giving Japan a more normal role in UN peacekeeping missions. Major Motomatsu Takashi, former commander of a SDF-PKO mission to the Golan Heights, describes how difficult and professionally embarrassing it was when he had to explain the exceptionalism of the SDF in a combat situation to his Polish UN commander in the field. The Polish officer responded by asking Major Motomatsu, "What kind of military force are you?"⁴⁴ Recent changes in the PKO Law have made such conversations less necessary, but they illustrate the problems that Japan faces when attempting to adapt its foreign policy, and the legacy of Article 9, to the realities of the post-cold war world.

43. The inequalities in the Japanese electoral system resulted in a gap between rural votes and some city votes of 10 to 1 in favor of the rural voting districts. For more information see Raymond V. Christensen and Paul E. Johnson, "Toward a Context-Rich Analysis of Electoral Systems: The Japanese Example," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, No. 3 (August, 1995), pp. 575-98.

44. Major Motomatsu is currently stationed with the Planning Section of the Plans and Operations Department Japan Defense Agency. Interviewed by the author, June 5, 1998, Tokyo.

The "Wide" View of Japanese Security

The Need for Refocusing on the Economy

The events of 9/11 and the emergence of the North Korean threat in the minds of the Japanese public have embarked Japan on its most radical foreign and security policy changes since the end of the cold war. The SDF supported *Operation Enduring Freedom* and is now serving as part of the reconstruction effort in Iraq. Japan has come a long way from being the nation that until the end of the cold war was content to sit on the sidelines of international conflict. However, as Japan increases its role globally, its regional security complex is growing increasingly critical. First and foremost is Japan's need to securitize its domestic economy.

Japan's status as a major world power is based entirely on the size and strength of its economy. In the late 1980s Japan was on top of the world. It was seen as the up-and-coming challenger to the United States. Its economy was the second largest in the world behind the United States. The Japanese yen was strong and stable. People around the world were studying Japanese as the "it" language for movers and shakers who wanted to succeed. At the same time trouble was brewing for Japan. Land speculation had led the Tokyo metropolitan area to achieve a paper value greater than that of the 48 contiguous United States. The Japanese bubble economy was about to burst. Soon after it burst the rest of the Japanese economy started to decline. This decline continued throughout the 1990s. While the United States and most of the world boomed during the decade, Japan sunk deeper into recession and is currently in a deflationary spiral.

The major blame for the continued stagnation of the Japanese economy has been placed on Japan's unwillingness to implement meaningful economic or political structural reform. The Japanese government has continued to prop up bankrupt firms and financially insolvent banks, while implementing one stimulus package after another, none of which works. Currently the political leadership in Japan is fighting an uphill battle against cultural and political norms to implement structural reforms needed to bolster its sagging economy. A series of prime ministers, the latest being Koizumi, have promised structural change but have failed to muster the political capital needed to break

down the existing structures.

The recognition of the need for Japan to securitize its economy has been very slow in coming, but the rise of China economically has pushed Japan to move forward more aggressively than in the past to spell out the terms of its security needs in the global context. Japan's November 28, 2002 executive report to the prime minister on strategies for the twenty-first century highlights this need. It states:

Japan will be more directly influenced by Chinese economic development than any other country and has a responsibility to articulate a national economic vision under this new paradigm. *The essential first steps will be to quickly dispose of non-performing loans and at the same time reform the economic structure itself.*

The promotion of science and technology will be an absolute prerequisite to achieving this. *Nor can regulatory reform be avoided.* Japan must rectify high-cost structures, enhance educational facilities, and accept more foreign students, with the ultimate aim of attracting direct investment from overseas in high value-added areas such as high technology industries and research and development.

*Structural reforms in the agricultural sector are also essential. Japan must study mechanisms to mitigate the impact on domestic agriculture and to ensure food security.*⁴⁵

This acknowledgment of the need to reform its economy in light of the challenge from China is remarkable when one considers Japan's economic problems of the last decade and its slowness in dealing with its structural problems.

During the last round of the GATT trade talks, Japan (along with South Korea) attempted to negotiate an exemption for rice as a staple food in which Japan felt the need to remain self-sufficient. Successive crop failures in the early 1990s destroyed the myth that Japan could ever be self sufficient in rice. The political need to protect domestic agriculture remained. Japan imports over 40 percent of its domestic food consumption. Much of the

45. Task Force on Foreign Relations for the Prime Minister, *Basic Strategies for Japan's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century New Era, New Vision, New Diplomacy*, November 28, 2002, Executive Summary (unofficial translation), emphasis added. Online at http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/policy/2002/1128tf_e.html.

60 percent it does not import comes from the seas surrounding Japan, particularly the Sea of Japan. It is for this reason that environmental issues in the Sea of Japan should have the highest priority for Japan. However, Japan has largely failed to prioritize the Sea of Japan as an essential issue. Instead it has chosen to focus on the recently ratified Kyoto Protocol which, without the participation of China, the United States, and India (the three largest polluters respectively) seems meaningless. While the Kyoto Protocol focuses on greenhouse gases, the Sea of Japan faces the twin threats of Chinese industrial growth and the resulting pollution, and the nuclear waste disposed of by the Soviet navy in the Sea of Japan during the cold war.

Japan's strategies for the twenty-first century include seeking an international framework that would include the establishment of "environmental rules in Asia, particularly for Chinese companies" that it sees as potentially as the largest polluters.⁴⁶ Notably absent from this is any mention of Russia. This may in part be due to the continuing dispute over the Kuril Islands and the economic need for diversified oil resources. Over 90 percent of Japanese oil currently comes from the Middle East. Japan is looking to Russian oil as an alternative to dependence on the Middle East. To this end Tokyo has lobbied strenuously, and seemingly successfully, for an oil pipeline to be built from the Siberian oil fields to the Siberian coast of Russia rather than through China's Northeast region. Japan does not want to trade dependence on the Middle East for dependence on China, a potential rival within their security complex.

Cultural Security

A second area of securitization for Japan that is of interest for those studying alternative security is culture. Japan is a huge importer of Western culture and for the most part it is like Britain and the Scandinavian countries in permitting it to be absorbed without hindrance. An exception is whaling. Japan has time and time again stood up in international fora to support a dying and economically unessential and unneeded industry. It claims the need to preserve the traditional culture of whaling in Japan. This

46. *Ibid.*

reasoning is basically false in that the whaling that is being fought for today is the product of Japan's post-World War II need to feed itself.⁴⁷ However, as Miyashita and Sato argue, Japan is willing to fight for continued whaling for primarily political rather than economic reasons. First, Japan is looking for ways to prove to the world that it can stand up to international pressure. Second, it wants to demonstrate that it can have a foreign policy independent of the United States. Third, it worries that if it gives in on the whaling issue other Japanese sea-based industries might begin to face international pressure to shut down.⁴⁸ It wants to draw "a line in the water," if you will, to protect its dependence on the sea for much of its national food supply.

Japan is willing to spend international goodwill in order to protect what it considers a vital area for its security, its food supply. At the same time its leaders believe that it needs a more internationally assertive foreign policy in order to boost its standing in the world. This can be likened to a new kid in school picking a fight with the school's toughest kid. The object is not to win but to gain the respect of his peers by demonstrating his toughness. Japan is trying to demonstrate its willingness to stand virtually alone on an international issue. The issue is high-profile, but the consequences are not strategic in the long term.⁴⁹

Cultivating Goodwill

A third area of alternative security is international goodwill, augmented by the assets of the SDF. The December 26, 2004 tsunami, also called the Boxing Day Tsunami, that struck the Indian Ocean provided Japan with an opportunity to demonstrate its ability to be a major player in disaster relief. Tokyo drew on both the SDF and its famous "checkbook-diplomacy" aid program.

On January 1, 2005 Prime Minister Koizumi pledged a half billion dollars in aid (the largest pledge at the time, but since

47. Akitoshi Miyashita and Yoichiro Sato, *Japanese Foreign Policy in Asia and the Pacific* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 27.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-30.

49. Japan can always draw a new line if and when there is pressure to give up some of its fishing industry.

passed by others) to the stricken region. However, much of the aid is being targeted at Indonesia, which is not only the hardest-hit nation, but also the nation in Southeast Asia with which Japan most wishes to build stronger relations. More significantly, however, is the fact that Japan was able to quickly deploy over 1,000 SDF personnel to the region along with multiple Maritime SDF ships that were soon followed by much needed helicopters. The incredible abilities of the Japanese SDF and other military forces (most notably American) to render aid and assistance quickly and efficiently shocked traditional relief workers. The two greatest needs were transport and fresh water. Naval ships contain desalinization plants that can turn seawater into fresh drinking water in massive quantities. The naval helicopters provided transportation of workers and supplies to areas where local land-based transportation could no longer go.

Through its efforts to alleviate the suffering from the Boxing Day Tsunami, Japan was able to securitize its goodwill efforts. Japan needed to demonstrate why it should be taken more seriously in international forums. To use an old adage of the late President Theodore Roosevelt, Japan wants to speak softly but carry a big stick. The "big stick" in this instance was a demonstration of capabilities that most nations lack when it comes to rendering aid. Japan's efforts were in marked contrast with those of its regional rival, China, which in spite of its new status as the world's second largest economy (in PPP terms) was only able to give a paltry sum in aid and rendered virtually no military assistance due to its lack of a blue-water navy.

In terms of alternative security, then, Japan is just beginning to examine its options and to prioritize them. Domestic economic issues are rightly at the forefront with whaling close behind. Japan is nothing without its economy. If it can securitize and then fix its economic problems, Japan has the potential to be a player of consequence in the new century. The world has long since recognized that Japan's economy is essential to its security; now it is waiting for Japan to take the needed actions in order to fix the problems that have lost it a decade of international progress. The risks of doing nothing are great considering China's rising economic and military power.

The fact that Japan has only partially securitized its environment presents a great challenge in light of alternative security

issues. Pollution in the seas surrounding Japan will continue to grow unless Japan, the country most affected by the pollution, creates a securitized awareness in the Northeast Asian security complex. There are competing interests that Japan must weigh in light of the dynamic nature of East Asian security in the coming years. However, in spite of its limitations Japan is moving forward to deal with its future and its role in the world community.

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