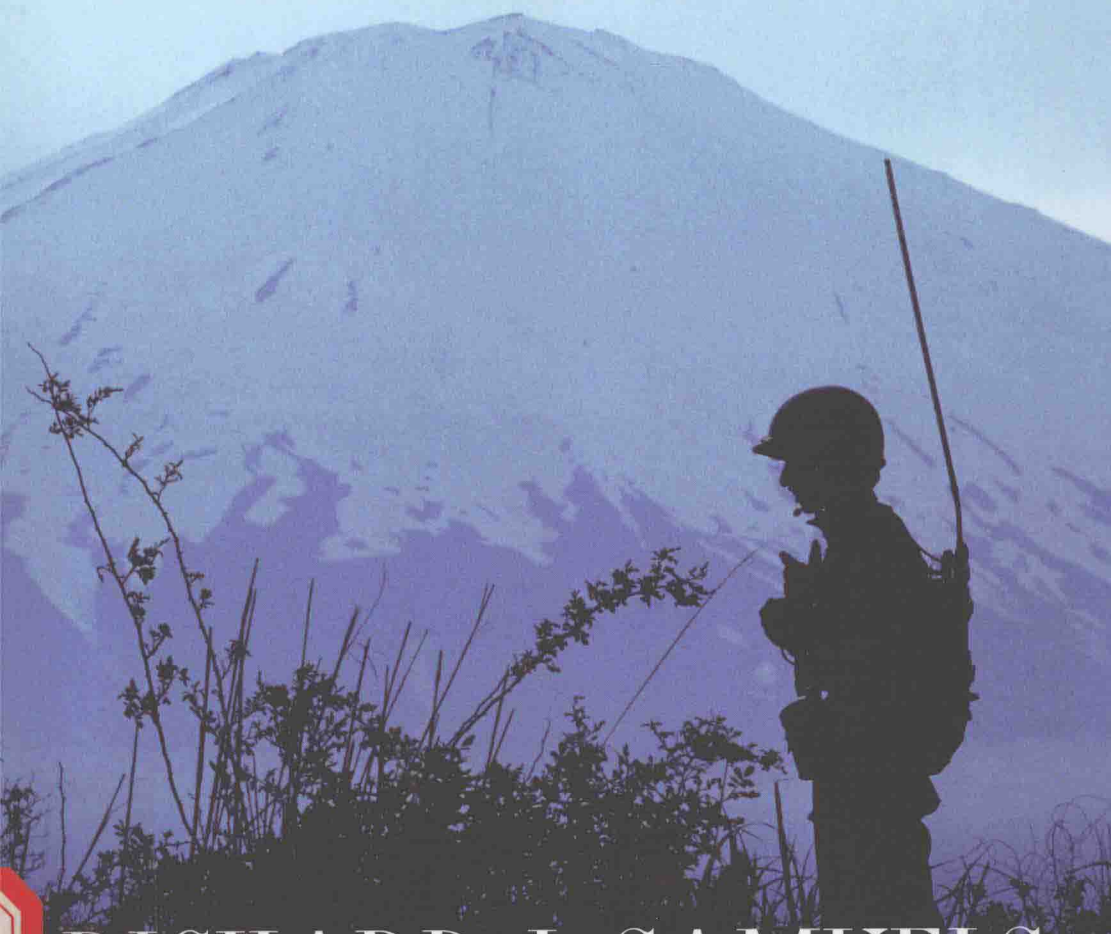


TOKYO'S GRAND STRATEGY AND THE FUTURE OF EAST ASIA

SECURING JAPAN



RICHARD J. SAMUELS

WITH A NEW PREFACE

Securing Japan

TOKYO'S GRAND STRATEGY
AND THE FUTURE OF EAST ASIA

RICHARD J. SAMUELS

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for Roger, with thanks

Preface to the Cornell Paperbacks Edition

Since the Cold War, Japan's long-established consensus on a grand strategy that privileges economic over military strength under a protective U.S. shield has been unraveling. The nation's policy elite has been searching ever more urgently for a new grand strategy that will address the rapid rise of China, the continued lunacy of Pyongyang, and the potential unreliability of the United States both as senior partner in military matters and as guarantor of Tokyo's safety. I argue in this book that we can expect a particular sort of modest accommodation to emerge, a flexible stance that will inform Japan's foreign policy over the next several decades. I believe that policy will have a fairly predictable set of characteristics: Japanese strategists will hedge on various fronts. They will not abandon the United States or give the United States reason to abandon them, but they will distance themselves from Washington to a greater degree than in the past. Likewise, they will deepen economic interdependence with China at the same time that they enhance Japan's own military capabilities. In the process of making these and other adjustments, Japan's policy elite will move, uncertainly and hesitantly, toward a new consensus on Tokyo's foreign policy and the security strategy that will undergird its diplomacy in the region and beyond. Those who are most likely to taste success will be those who embrace what I call a "Goldilocks" position, a strategic posture rooted in modesty that retains options on both the economic and the military fronts. Japan will position itself neither too close to nor too far from either the United States or China.

I completed a final draft manuscript of this book in the latter part of 2006, less than a month before Abe Shinzō became prime minister of Japan. His ascension to power was no surprise, and, in fact, I put in place markers so that subsequent updating would be simple when it came time to correct the page proofs in 2007. By that time, however, a great deal else had changed,

requiring considerable annotation in the margins. Abe had launched his premiership with vigor, but in unexpected directions. I had concluded the book by forecasting change in Japanese foreign and security policy and by predicting the emergence of a Japanese Goldilocks, a "pragmatic leader who will get it 'just right.'" By this I meant that, in pursuing the national interest, Japanese leaders would say "no" a bit more often to the United States and would move to repair relations with a rising China. The book ended with a prediction that Japan would continue to hedge and so rebalance its diplomacy and grand strategy.

Like most observers who watched the famously revisionist Abe come to power, who had read his speeches and memoir, who understood his patrimony, and who observed his appeals to the LDP's most conservative constituents, I did not expect that he would be the first to act like Goldilocks. After all, Abe had been Koizumi's hardliner on relations with North Korea and had served as the tip of the spear on constitutional revision, patriotic education, and other causes dear to Japan's right. He seemed poised to continue his predecessor's provocations of China, to hug the United States tighter than ever, and to press still harder to realize the revisionist agenda.

Instead, Abe was surprisingly pragmatic. He was, in fact, post-Koizumi Japan's first Goldilocks. Although he did press for revision of Article Nine of the Constitution (concerning a standing military and the use of force) and for other conservative reforms, he broke the ice with China by visiting Beijing in October 2007 and, apparently, by promising Chinese leaders that he would not visit the Yasukuni Shrine—an open wound in the bilateral relationship. It worked. Abe went a great distance toward unfreezing Sino-Japanese relations and hosted a successful visit six months later by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. Abe also signed on to the apology issued by Prime Minister Murayama in 1995—an apology that Japan's neighbors had welcomed but that Abe had long and resolutely opposed. He even acknowledged the war responsibility of his grandfather, Kishi Nobusuke.

But Abe would move only so far. He maintained his support for the revisionist position in Japan's "culture wars," particularly with reference to history textbooks and to the so-called comfort women, the sex slaves of the Japanese military during the Pacific War. In March 2007, with Washington's full support, he and Australian Prime Minister John Howard inked a security pact—the first for Japan with any country other than the United States since 1945. This agreement was seen as part of his larger initiative, a "values-based diplomacy" in which the democratic nations of India, Australia, the United States, and Japan would form an "arc of freedom and prosperity." That arc seemed to many observers a thinly veiled scheme to contain China, not least because it excluded the democratic Republic of Korea at a time when it appeared to be tilting toward Beijing.

In the event, Abe's premiership was brief, and his career meteoric. After the suicide of one cabinet minister, the resignation of two ministers for financial impropriety, and multiple gaffes by others, Abe's popularity went into a tailspin. The LDP suffered a thundering defeat to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the July 2007 election to the House of Councilors. Abe left office rather suddenly in September 2007, to be replaced by Fukuda Yasuo, the ninety-first prime minister of Japan. As this book argues, that unexpected change in personnel has not substantially altered the strategic landscape for the nation.

After Abe flamed out, two new Goldilocks appeared. The first was Ozawa Ichiro, who engineered the DPJ victory in the July election. Ozawa's first move was to use his plurality in the upper house to pull the plug on Japanese support for U.S. and British forces in Afghanistan. Although the election had been fought largely on economic policy issues, Ozawa immediately took up Goldilocks' cause. In August, a few months before the expiration of the Anti-Terror Special Measures Law passed by the Koizumi government just after 9/11 to support Operation Enduring Freedom, Ozawa declared that the war in Afghanistan had not been sanctioned by the United Nations and thus was not one in which Japan should participate. He made a public display of rejecting the entreaties of the U.S. ambassador to Japan, J. Thomas Schieffer, that his DPJ should support renewal of the law so that Japanese tankers could continue to refuel allied vessels. Ozawa held his ground, and the law expired in November 2007. Meanwhile, Ozawa continued to ridicule LDP leaders who were overly compliant vis-à-vis the United States. He also visited Beijing and other capitals in an effort to repair relations and explore new mechanisms for regional cooperation.

But it was Fukuda Yasuo, an LDP pragmatist, who was now prime minister, and he was not prepared to align with Ozawa on the relationship with the United States. Fukuda rededicated his government to support U.S. forces in Afghanistan. In January 2008 Fukuda used the LDP's two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives to override the upper house's opposition to the Anti-Terror Special Measures Law and reauthorize the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. Yet, like Abe and Ozawa before him, he made overtures to Beijing. In October 2007, just days after the Chinese refused a scheduled port call from the USS *Kitty Hawk*, the Fukuda government welcomed the Chinese guided-missile cruiser *Shenzhen* at Yokosuka, headquarters of the Maritime Self-Defense Force. The visit was unprecedented. Two months later, he went to Beijing and apparently reiterated the Abe pledge not to allow the Yasukuni issue to poison Sino-Japanese relations. But Fukuda wanted no part of Abe's values-based diplomacy, which he saw as unnecessarily provocative. In Goldilocks fashion, he allowed "values" to meld into "interests" as guidelines for Japanese diplomacy. Plans for the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity

that had been trumpeted on Japan's diplomatic blue books in 2007 disappeared from public discourse. On his watch, as 2008 unfolded, local support for U.S. bases continued to erode, as did Australian enthusiasm for Abe's initiative. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd repudiated the idea and assured the Chinese that as far as Canberra was concerned, containment was off the table. There is no more talk of the idea in Tokyo now, except as a historical reference.

All of these developments suggest that the longer-term Japanese security conundrum is unchanged. It is no surprise that we have seen Goldilocks arise in Japan's post-Koizumi political firmament, and we should expect more. That said—as we have already seen—not every Japanese leader will move at the same pace and in exactly the same direction. Some, as the recent moves by Abe, Ozawa, and Fukuda attest, will act more decisively than others to bring Japanese policy into a healthier balance with the United States and China. But getting the balance just right makes too much sense for any leader to ignore. As I argue throughout this book, Japan's leadership is both pragmatic and strategic. It will continue to hedge in multiple ways—against the relative decline of the United States, against the costs of entanglement and abandonment, and against predation and protectionism. Neither the strategic choices confronting Japanese leaders nor the central features of their political life have changed. As I also insist throughout this book, Japan is a robust and mature democracy. Intra- and inter-party competition remain (and will remain) remarkably vigorous. Perhaps by the time I prepare a second edition, there will have been an alternation in power, though admittedly the wait for such an event has been more about Godot than about Goldilocks!

Acknowledgments

Each year, a number of midcareer Japanese government officials and businesspersons sent by their ministries and firms to improve their English and make connections come to study here at MIT. Some are unsure how to intervene in seminar discussions and remain quiet, but most enhance these discussions considerably with their contributions. One foreign ministry official particularly stands out in my memory. About a decade ago, in the mid-1990s, she interrupted my opening day introductory lecture to a class on Japanese security policy and insisted that I stop referring to a "Japanese military." Japan, after all, had only a "Self-Defense Force." This was not the first time I had been confronted by such self-deception, but it was the first time it had been offered up in my own classroom. What a wonderful teaching opportunity! I set aside my lecture notes and focused the diplomat's attention on what Japan's \$45 billion defense budget actually was buying. Then I focused the attention of the non-Japanese in the class on how frightfully defensive Japanese officials could be about such matters. What seemed to some as Japanese quibbling over trifles was actually the warp and woof of Japan's security debate. Thanks to the diplomat's intervention, we all learned something important about Japanese security. Just as important, though, was a parallel intervention four years later in the opening session of the same course, when another Japanese student, a retired Maritime Self-Defense Force flag officer, proudly introduced himself to the class as an "admiral of the Japanese navy." Again, I had to set aside the lecture notes, but this time the unplanned lesson focused on how much had changed in four years!

And indeed, while much had changed, the willingness of Japanese government officials, journalists, politicians, and intellectuals to chat has not. I am grateful to each of more than three dozen government officials affiliated

with the Japanese Ministry of Defense—at its headquarters in Ichigaya, at the National Defense Academy, and at the National Institute for Defense Studies—and to the many uniformed officers who took the time to answer my questions. While I have complied with their wishes not to identify them by name, I do regret that I cannot thank them publicly. I can, however, thank several academic colleagues who were reliable guides and arbiters of information: Soeya Yoshihide, Sadō Akihiro, Nishikawa Shinichi, Tanaka Akihiko, Ueki Chikako, Watanabe Tsuneo, Michishita Narushige, and Tadokoro Masayuki were especially generous with their time and insights. Likewise several journalists, among whom Katō Yōichi and Honda Masaru of the *Asahi Shimbun*, Ina Hisayoshi of the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, Takahata Akio of the *Mainichi Shimbun*, and Hayashi Michio of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* were particularly helpful. So were the librarians at the library of the National Institute for Defense Studies and Shimizu Isao, Japan's leading cartoon archivist. I also thank more than one dozen LDP and DPJ Diet politicians (including four cabinet ministers) who granted me interviews and consented to be identified.

Back at MIT, Laurie Scheffler was an unerring assistant of incalculable (and indefatigable) energy and wisdom. There is no way to adequately thank her for looking after this project (and me)—first from long distance, later right next door. It could not have been easy, and her considerable pluck and resourcefulness does not go unappreciated. Llewelyn Hughes, Pat Boyd, and Reo Matsuzaki were energetic research assistants for whom no request was too large or small. Their knowledge of Japanese politics and public policy is extraordinary, and they were my colleagues from the day they arrived on campus. Thanks, too, to Yumi Shimabukuro and Nathan Cisneros, who arrived at MIT a couple of years later—just in time to help police the manuscript.

In this business, as I tell my graduate students, it is always helpful to have really smart friends. I am especially grateful to two friends of long-standing, Mike Mochizuki of George Washington University and Eric Heginbotham of the RAND Corporation, for their willingness to wrestle with (often undigested) draft chapters. Their thoughtful and unyielding critiques meant a lot to me as I worked on the manuscript. Ken Pyle, T. J. Pempel, and Bob Art helped enormously in the final stages.

Thanks, too, to Allan Song, who first suggested this project, and to the Smith Richardson Foundation, which funded my year in Japan. My host institution, the Keizai Kōhō Center of Keidanren, could not have been more hospitable. I am grateful to its director, Hayashi Tadashi, and to all of his staff for providing such a comfortable and supportive setting. Thanks are also due to Nakamura Yoshio and Aburaki Kiyooki of Keidanren for helping make such congenial arrangements. The Istituto Pedro Arrupe in Palermo was a particularly hospitable place to isolate myself while producing

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a rough first draft. After remarking on this extraordinary gift of time and solitude to one of my Jesuit hosts, I was lectured on the benefits of monasticism. I could not disagree. But Palermo itself was hardly monastic. After spending all day in unprecedented silence, my wife Debbie and I could meet in the *piazze* to enjoy their many charms—food, chaos, new friends. I took a lot of good-natured ribbing from Japanese and American friends who had trouble imagining that I could possibly get any work done in Sicily, where the food, wine, and people are so famously congenial. But I cannot recall ever working with more focus—or enjoying it more. I can only hope the book has benefited from this combination of hard work and wide-eyed discovery. Debbie and I are still working off the collateral damage.

Finally, I dedicate this book to its extraordinary editor, Roger Haydon. Like each of his authors, I stand in awe of his good judgment and great talent. Roger is surely used to being thanked in prefaces, but he needs to know that he has always deserved much more.



Japanese names are presented in the conventional style—family names first. Parts of this book have appeared in the *Journal of Japanese Studies* and the *Washington Quarterly*.

Contents

Preface to the Cornell Paperbacks Edition	ix
Acknowledgments	xiii
Introduction: Understanding Japan's Grand Strategy	1
PART I. HISTORICAL CONTEXT	
1. Japan's Grand Strategies: Connecting the Ideological Dots	13
2. Baking the Pacifist Loaf	38
PART II. A WORLD IN FLUX	
3. The Change to Change	63
4. Whither the Yoshida Doctrine?	86
5. The Discourse	109
PART III. THREATS AND RESPONSES	
6. The New Threat Environment	135
7. Meeting (and Making) Threats	158
Conclusion: Japan's Evolving Grand Strategy	185
Notes	211
References	249
Index	273

Introduction

Understanding Japan's Grand Strategy

Many Japanese analysts do not believe Japan now has a coherent grand strategy, and more than a few insist that it never had one. One of Japan's most distinguished diplomats declares that Japanese foreign policy has long been marked by "a conspicuous absence of strategic thinking."¹ A former ambassador maintains that apart from an "exceptional decade" between 1895 and 1905, Japanese strategy has been "naïve" and, in the postwar period, "sterile."² These eminent practitioners are hardly alone. A distinguished historian dedicates an entire chapter of his influential book to the irrationality of the prewar military.³ Another scholar argues that one of the great misfortunes of Japanese history has been the extent to which idealism has dominated realism.⁴ Compare that view to Gen. Tōjō Hideki's famous argument for war, which he made to Prince Konoye Fumimaro in 1941: "Sometimes a man has to jump, with his eyes closed, from the veranda of Kiyomizu Temple."⁵

Much Japanese assessment of postwar strategy is not much more positive. In 1981, an outspoken general, Takeda Gorō, was forced to resign from the Joint Staff Council after complaining publicly that Japan's security policy was based on uninformed political debate and lobbying rather than careful strategic analysis.⁶ Most observers agree that Japan has been unable to play a great power game because the ratio of noise to knowledge is too high; and Japan is left "groping" (*mosaku*) for strategy.⁷ For some, postwar Japanese strategy is incoherent for the same reason prewar strategy was—Japan is chasing too many hares at once. A foreign policy that is simultaneously UN-centered, Asia-oriented, autonomous, and consistent with the goals of the bilateral alliance with the United States ends up as porridge.⁸

But the most common explanation for Japan's strategic deficit is its partnership with the United States. U.S. security guarantees, critics say, have left Japan with only a limited sense of external threat. Japan had little reason during the cold war to build a military or to develop its own strategies to deter aggression or to affect the outcome of conflict, so the nation could avoid strategic thinking and remain in its "cocoon."⁹ Sakuma Makoto, former chair of Japan's Joint Staff Council, believes that Japan can no longer afford to live in a "closed space" (*heisa kukan*).¹⁰ Even one of the prime minister's own commissions makes this claim: "Reliance on the United States to uphold Japan's security and the international order became an ingrained habit during the Cold War, diminishing both Japan's sense of responsibility regarding its international role and its ability to make decisions for itself."¹¹ Rather than grand strategy, then, Japan had mere "karaoke diplomacy"—background music and lyrics are determined by the United States, and all that Japanese diplomats have to decide is what to wear and how to sing the songs.¹² As late as 2006, one of Japan's leading dailies declared Japan had a "strategy allergy" (*senryaku arerugii*) and launched a yearlong series "in search" of one for Japan (*shin senryaku o motomete*).¹³

This is a lazy way to explain grand strategy—Japanese strategists deserve more credit. Not surprisingly, they get that credit from Korean and Chinese analysts, who see a Japanese diplomacy that is once again being configured for regional domination. Japan's neighbors are convinced that Japanese militarism, supported by an invigorated nationalist right wing, lurks just beneath the surface.¹⁴ Most North American and European analysts do not go so far. Although no one ignores the extent to which Japanese strategy has been reactive, most grudgingly credit Japanese strategists with dexterity, if not vision.¹⁵ The consensus is that postwar Japanese planners made a strategic choice to consistently punch below their weight in international politics. The United States would provide deterrence, and Japan did not need, nor would it seek, to act like a great power. It was eminently rational for Japan to acquire just enough "basic defense capabilities" to repel aggressors—but no more than that.¹⁶ In 1975, the Japanese government adopted the Basic Defense Force Concept (*Kiban Bōeiryoku Kōsō*), what one analyst has called "postwar Japan's only comprehensive and sophisticated national security strategy."¹⁷ It had five key assumptions, each realist: the global security environment would remain stable; the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) could perform essential defense functions; Japan had adequate intelligence and surveillance capabilities to cope with limited aggression; the SDF could be rapidly reinforced if the need arose; and the worst thing Japan could do would be to establish an independent military capability that would upset the regional balance of power. On this account, Japanese strategists were quite sophisticated. They considered the Soviet Union's intent as well as its capability, and concluded that since no threat was imminent Japan need

not reach beyond its grasp.¹⁸ Indeed, one of the early analysts concluded that "Japanese leaders had a well thought out defense policy, based on their own strategic views, several years before the United States government formulated its Far Eastern security policy."¹⁹ A more contemporary analysis concludes that it is not the passivity of karaoke but the defensive nature of the martial art aikido that best characterizes Japanese security policy.²⁰

During the 1980s and 1990s, other analysts—I was one of them—were impressed by Japan's "comprehensive security" strategy, which creatively combined economic and technological capabilities with a low-cost military posture.²¹ Japan subordinated military to economic security, deliberately practicing mercantile realism to generate prosperity and provide security at the same time.²² As long as the United States was a credible partner, Japan was smart—indeed, strategic—in building a military that could deter but not punish. It was also acting strategically in amassing wealth to accumulate prestige and buy friends.²³

We should not be surprised. Pragmatic strategic thinking is not unique to postwar Japan. Even if Japan's first modernizers were dealt a weak hand, and even if they were not able to steer Japan directly toward peace and prosperity, they understood power politics from the very beginning. What could be more realist than the observation of one of Japan's leading intellectuals, Fukuzawa Yukichi, in the early 1880s: "The English export opium, a poisonous drug, to China. The Chinese lose money, injure their health, and year by year their national strength is sapped.... This depends solely on the fact that one country is stronger and one weaker."²⁴

His junior contemporary, Yamagata Aritomo, would become Japan's pre-eminent military strategist for the first half century of Japan's industrialization. Observing in 1890 that "the heritages and resources of the East are like so many pieces of meat about to be devoured by tigers," Yamagata drew a "line of sovereignty" around the archipelago and a "line of interest" around the region. Japan now had its first modern strategic plan—one that served it well, even though it left considerable room for doctrinal differences. Yamagata's plan guided Japan toward a maritime alliance with Great Britain and into cooperative arrangements with most of the other great powers.²⁵

There is no mystery to the ends-means rationality of this or any grand strategy. In practice, a coherent grand strategy requires that national objectives not be mutually exclusive, and that the means to achieve them—soft power, diplomacy, military force—be consistent with national capabilities. If they are met, these requirements ensure viability on the international stage, a necessary but not sufficient ingredient for success. A viable grand strategy also demands effective management of domestic politics. If power is not consolidated at home, it cannot be used effectively abroad. So, like much else in the bare-knuckled, chaotic world of international politics, grand

strategy is easier to discuss than to construct. Every country talks about it—and each country has made horrible mistakes trying to execute it. To be sure, grand strategies serve as mirrors of national identity and communal longing; they are best built on a platform of ideas about a nation's place in history and its people's aspirations for the future. Inspiration, as I have suggested in a different context, is cheaper and more efficient than bullying or buying.²⁶ Still, grand strategies cannot be merely rhetorical devices. They must mobilize political, economic, and military resources to ensure a nation's vital interests as well.²⁷

In Japan, as elsewhere, the combination of political, economic, and military means shifts with world affairs *and* with domestic politics. Peter Katzenstein probably overstates the importance of the latter by insisting that "Japan's security policy will continue to be shaped by the domestic *rather than* the international balance of power."²⁸ And Kenneth Pyle probably exaggerates the ease with which domestic politics fell in line behind shifts toward new world orders: "Repeatedly, through the course of 150 years of its modern history, each time the structure of the international system underwent fundamental change, Japan adopted its foreign policies to that changed order and restructured its internal organization to take advantage of it."²⁹

Neither Pyle nor Katzenstein is entirely wrong, and both acknowledge that domestic and international politics play off each other in Japanese history. Both appreciate how domestic political processes can mediate international pressures on policymakers—and vice versa. But as there is no telling a priori which would drive the construction of Japanese grand strategy, there is no compelling reason to privilege one or the other.

This has never been more evident than it is today. With the end of the cold war, the Soviet Union disappeared and with it the most serious threat to Japanese security. Indeed, by any conventional measure of military capabilities, the USSR was a far graver threat to Japan than China is today: its Far Eastern fleet and its air and ground units in the region were better equipped and better trained than China's People's Liberation Army (PLA). Yet the Japanese government did not begin its sustained program of military modernization—a subject of this book—until after the USSR was gone. Something else was at work.

A large part of that "something else" was the emergence of four "new" threats: (1) a rising China, (2) a miscreant regime in North Korea, (3) the possibility of abandonment by the United States, and (4) the relative decline of the Japanese economy. Japan responded to each—and to lesser ones, such as the weakening nonproliferation regime—with strategic agility. It responded to China first by embracing it economically and then by pushing back against a newly envisioned "China threat." Its response to Pyongyang has been to alternate between warm and cold diplomatic initiatives.

It has responded to the possibility of abandonment by the United States by “hugging it close”—thereby enhancing the danger of entanglement.³⁰ And it has responded to the specter of economic decline by readjusting familiar technonational ideas to the complex dynamics of a globalizing world economy. Each of these threats has been used to justify the modernization of Japan's military. Japanese strategists have determined that China and North Korea need to be confronted, the United States needs to be reassured, and Japan's industrial vitality—not least of all its defense industrial base—needs to be reinvigorated.

A second factor in Japan's force modernization lies in the security dilemma that grips Northeast Asia today.³¹ Japan, China, and North Korea have legitimate security concerns. Pyongyang's is existential—the regime fears for its survival in a world in which the lone remaining superpower, with “globo-cop” pretensions, has identified it as a cancer. China borders on more states than any other and perceives (no doubt correctly) that the United States and Japan want to contain its rise. Japan is concerned about losing its protector (and enabler), the United States, as the latter becomes distracted by its “war on terror.” The response to these concerns has been predictably excessive—each state is overinsuring against perceived risk. North Korea acquires nuclear weapons, China compensates for a decade of relative military decline by funding a rapid force modernization, and, to U.S. cheers, Japan overinsures by acquiring missile defense and eyes force-projection capabilities. Japan's military posture has not been this robust since before the Pacific War. And as each country acts to increase its own security, of course it makes the others less secure.

This textbook security dilemma suggests a third, critically important, part of this “something else.” Each regional power has made tough choices *within constraints*. Each threat, each response, each political calculation has been filtered through domestic institutions and (presumably) through domestic debates. The ones in Tokyo have been the most transparent. A new security discourse—one with identifiable historical predicates—has taken shape in the context of a new national leadership. Those who believe Japan should be more “normal” are only one of four groups participating in the contemporary security discourse in Japan. These “normal nation-alists” believe that national strength is the key to national prestige, their core security value. Others argue that strength should serve the goal of greater autonomy from the United States. Contrary to both these groups are two groups that insist that prosperity ought to be the nation's core security value. These ideas—held both by liberals and by leftists—were marginalized as “normal nation-alists”—revisionists led by Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō—consolidated their power during the early 2000s. They combined the new external threats—fabricating none, but amplifying all—with the old ambitions of their forebears, the “antimainstream” conservatives.