Anarchic Threats and Hegemonic Assurances: Japan’s Security Production in the Postwar Era

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ABSTRACT: What explains Japan’s security behavior? As an economically powerful state without commensurate military capabilities, Japan has long puzzled theorists of international relations. To explain this puzzle, many scholars have put forth arguments focusing on Japanese domestic institutions and anti-militarist ideas. In contrast, I argue that Japan’s security ‘production’ is primarily driven by two key variables: the regional threat environment and the strength of security commitment from its ally and great power patron, the United States. These two factors vary and interact in ways that determine Japan’s level of security, which drives its security policy. These arguments are illustrated through a longitudinal analysis of Japan’s security behavior, comprised of four temporal ‘cases’ running from 1960 to the present day.

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What explains Japan’s security behavior in the post-WWII era? Why does Japan sometimes ‘do more’ in the security sphere, and sometimes less? As an economically powerful state without commensurate military capabilities, Japan has long puzzled theorists of international relations. While many have focused on the country’s domestic political institutions and anti-militarist ideology, I argue that changes in Japanese security behavior have been fundamentally influenced by two key variables: its external threat environment and the level of security commitment from its ally and great power patron, the United States. The variation of, and interaction between, these two factors has most fundamentally driven the variation seen in Japan’s security ‘production’ in its postwar history. While its domestic political institutions and its pacifist culture have undoubtedly played important roles, these factors appear to be undergirded by, and subject to change due to, the threats emerging from international anarchy and the assurances descending from its hegemonic U.S. ally.

The arguments being put forth here are novel in at least three ways. First, the theoretical framework outlined below provides a parsimonious way of understanding Japanese security behavior, an advantage not seen in many extant realist interpretations of the subject. Rather than having to qualify Japan as a ‘reluctant’ (Green, 2001), ‘post-classical’ (Kawasaki, 2001), or ‘mercantile’ (Heginbotham and Samuels, 1988) realist power, or as a ‘circumscribed’ balancer (Twomey, 2000), the simple framework below shows that, in many ways, Japan can be thought of as like any other state. Second, the arguments below allow us to better explain variation over time in Japan’s security policy. For instance, Lind (2004) claims that Japan is a ‘buck-passer,’ an argument which has a great deal of affinity with my own. But this characterization has a difficult time making sense of Japan’s post-Cold War security behavior, a point Lind readily acknowledges (115-116). Similarly, Calder (1988) argues Japan is a ‘reactive’ state, but his characterization runs into similar problems if extended into the post-Cold War years. Finally, Berger (1993) paints Japan as ‘anti-militaristic,’ but has a hard time explaining the relatively pro-military attitudes of the early post-WWII
years (Miyashita 2007, 107-113). In short, while all of these characterizations are accurate to a certain extent and in some periods, none of them provides an indication of when Japan is expected to be more or less of a buck-passer, more or less reactive, or more or less anti-militaristic, shortcomings which are accounted for in the arguments below. Third, the arguments capture more of the evidence than existing interpretations. While many institutional and ideational studies tend to draw heavily from the 1960s and 1970s, and most security-oriented interpretations focus on the 1980s and post-Cold War years, the arguments and case studies below provide a useful way of understanding Japan’s entire postwar history. In sum, the arguments that follow capture more evidence and explain more variation, with less.

The argument will proceed as follows. First, the current debates over the sources of Japanese security behavior will be reviewed. Second, the two central drivers of Japanese security policy—threats and assurances—will be outlined and explained in detail. Third will be a longitudinal analysis of Japanese security behavior comprised of four temporal ‘cases’ running from 1960 to the present day. And finally, I will conclude with implications for international relations theory and U.S. foreign policy.

*The Sources of Japanese Security Policy*

In order to make sense of Japan’s postwar security behavior, one prominent body of work examines the ideational variables that inhibit its security policy. These arguments highlight various ideational constraints, such as Japan’s pacificist culture of ‘anti-militarism’ (Berger, 1993; Bobrow, 1989; Hook, 1988), the historical memories of its militarist past (Frühstruck and Ben-Ari, 2002; Lawson and Tannaka, 2010), its normative context and comprehensive definitions of ‘security’ (Katzenstein and Okawara, 1993; Katzenstein, 1996), and its identity as a ‘peace state’ (Catilinac, 2007; Hook and Son, 2013; Oros, 2008, 2015; Singh, 2013; see also: Hagström and Gustafsson, 2015).
However, these argument aren’t without their problems. First, anti-militarist norms and historical memory arguments have a difficult time explaining the relatively pro-military attitudes prevalent in Japan in the early post-WWII years (Miyashita, 2007, p. 107-113). If anything, we would expect them to start stronger and weaken over time. Second, if anti-militarism and identity are key constraints, we should expect little variation in security policy, even when external factors such as regional threats and ally assurances change. But as the analysis below will show, it is precisely when these external factors change that we see important variation in policy. Third, if Japan was defined by its ‘peace state’ identity from the end of WWII until 1990, how are we to explain its important advances in security policy through the 1970s and 80s, detailed below? And fourth, even if it is granted that the public is strongly anti-militarist, it is not clear that its opinion is the constraint it is sometimes made out to be (Bobrow, 1989; Hook, 1988; Katzenstein and Okawara, 1993, 100-103). For instance, the major changes in Japan’s security stance seen in the post-Cold War period were undertaken with between just six and sixteen percent of the public being in favor of enhancing the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), whereas between 71 and 82 percent preferred maintaining its current level or reducing it (Cabinet Office, 2015).

A second group of scholars place their focus on Japan’s domestic institutions to explain its security behavior. These arguments focus on the institutional impediments to Japanese security policy formation, such as its war-renouncing constitution (Chai, 1997; Wada, 2010), its unique electoral system and the factionalism it has engendered (Catilinae, 2016; Cowhey, 1993; Pekkanen and Krauss, 2005; Shinoda, 2009; Soeya, 2009), and the historically weak position of the Prime Minister (Calder, 1988; Hughes and Krauss, 2007; Shinoda, 2003).

Yet these institutional arguments have problems as well. First, if factional politics is a key impediment, it is curious that the Tanaka-Fukuda split—which dominated Japanese party-politics for decades (Welfield, 1988, pp. 312-314)—emerged in the early 1970s, precisely when Japan began to
make significant changes in its security policy. Second, it also is puzzling that Japan has made its most significant security strides in the past 27 years (1990-2016), when domestic politics have been their most volatile, with 16 Prime Ministerships and several different parties at the helm. And third, many scholars have pointed to electoral reforms in 1994, and executive branch reforms in 1999 and 2001, to explain Japan’s increased security production in the post-Cold War years (Catilinae, 2016; Hughes and Krauss, 2007; Pekkanen and Krauss, 2005; Shinoda, 2003; Shinoda, 2009; Wada, 2010). But if these institutional structures were a constant until 1994, how do we explain the variation seen in Japan in the 1970s and 1980s?

In contrast to these approaches, the arguments that follow show that these ideational and institutional constraints appear to vary inversely with the net level of security Japan enjoys. In times of security abundance, norms and institutions seem to be more prohibitive, but in times of relative security scarcity, far less so. The argument is not that pacifistic norms and domestic politics do not ‘matter’—they clearly do. Rather, it is that anti-militarist norms and domestic politics constrain security policy in an international context more fundamentally shaped by the combination of regional threats and ally assurances.

**Anarchic Threats and Hegemonic Assurances**

*Security Production*

The outcome of interest, or dependent variable, is what I have termed ‘security production.’ These are state attempts to increase external security through internal means. Security production consists of the following six factors: defense spending; increases in personnel; personnel deployments; defense policy and doctrine; defense-related legislative or institutional change; and alliance responsibility.¹ This broader approach is necessary in the case of Japan, since the country has capped

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¹ This list was largely inductively derived. Reading through the primary and secondary literature on post-WWII Japan, these are the factors that stand out most prominently.
military spending since the mid-1960s, and has seen little growth in personnel over this period (Lind, 2004). Strictly speaking, a more accurate label would be ‘attempted security production,’ since I consider policy decision and implementation rather than outcome. The goal here is to show when and to explain why Japan produces security, not whether this production actually makes it more secure.

**Regional Threats**

The context within which Japanese policymakers decide upon the amount of external security to produce is shaped by two important factors, the first of which is their regional threat environment (Midford, 2002). Threats are made up of both the capability and the intent to do physical harm or to enact violence, with capability alone being necessary but insufficient. Threats here are operationalized as those external developments perceived as threatening by the leading members of Japan’s ruling foreign policy elite. Threatening external developments include adversary personnel or capability increases, nuclear and missile tests, the flaring up of territorial disputes, incursions of Japanese territory, militarized disputes, and actual military conflicts.

**Ally Assurances**

The second key variable shaping the context of decision for Japanese policymakers is the strength of commitment from their external, security-providing patron (Cha, 2000). Changes in commitment strength are operationalized here as U.S. policies that either ameliorate or exacerbate abandonment fears among Japan’s ruling foreign policy elite. The sort of policies that have this effect are treaty commitments, changes in regional military personnel or spending, policy or doctrinal change, personal and public verbal assurances, and changes in regional partnerships and alliances. The U.S.’s commitment is seen as critical because it allows Japan to forego military spending and to pursue other goals, such as economic development or domestic welfare spending.

**Threats, Assurances, and the Production of Security**
Thus, the primary factors shaping the context of security production in Japan are perceptions of external threat and the assurances of their patron. These are the independent variables of the argument that follows. In examining when Japan decides to provide more or less its own defense, we should expect the level of external threat to be positively related to its propensity to produce security. That is, an abundance of factors which are perceived as threatening by leading members of Japan’s foreign policy elite—such as territorial conflict, regional military buildups, or missile tests—should lead them to be more inclined to produce security. When these external threats subside, there should be less support for independent security production. We should expect the opposite to hold true for patron assurances: higher levels of U.S. security commitment should result in lower levels of Japanese security production. That is, an abundance of U.S. behaviors which ameliorate abandonment fears among Japan’s policymakers—such as firm alliance commitments, verbal assurances, and military spending—should lead to less support for security production. Yet when the U.S. decides to provide less certain guarantees, Japan should be incentivised to produce more of its own security. Finally, greater or lesser variation in either of these causal variables (threats; assurances) should lead to more or less variation in outcomes (security production).

With the level of external threat being positively related to the propensity of Japan to produce security, and patron security commitments being negatively related to the propensity for it to do so, the combination of the two should lead to distinct patterns of behavior. For analytical purposes, these two independent variables can be conceived of as dichotomous: external threats can be seen as either ‘higher’ or ‘lower,’ and patron security commitments either ‘stronger’ or ‘weaker.’ Obviously both variables are far more subtle and varied than these dichotomies allow, but this analytical simplification enables us to construct a highly useful and reasonably accurate explanatory typology. As will be seen below (see Figure 1), this typology combines these two dichotomous independent variables to determine Japan’s net level of security, and the three resultant modes of behavior that
follow from it. And the start and end dates of the empirical cases that will follow are determined by important shifts in one or both of these two key variables.

**Figure 1: Typology of Japanese Security Production**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patron Security Commitment Stronger</th>
<th>External Threats Lower</th>
<th>External Threats Higher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Security abundant</em></td>
<td><em>Lower security production</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Japan, 1960-68</em></td>
<td><em>Security moderate</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Moderate security production</em></td>
<td><em>Japan, 1979-89</em></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Patron Security Commitment Weaker</th>
<th>External Threats Lower</th>
<th>External Threats Higher</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Security moderate</em></td>
<td><em>Moderate security production</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Japan, 1969-1979</em></td>
<td><em>Security scarce</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Higher security production</em></td>
<td><em>Japan, 1990-Present</em></td>
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The first net level of security is that of ‘abundance,’ having the least possible effect on Japan’s security behavior. As seen in the upper-left quadrant of the typology, this is a period in which external threats are relatively low and patron security commitments are relatively strong. Since here security is abundant, from the standpoint of Japan this world is doubly safe. Because external threats are positively related to the propensity to build up militarily, and patron security commitments are negatively related to the propensity to do so, the incentives point in the same direction and the expected behavior is the relatively low production of security.² The period of Japanese history that best approximates this combination of threats and assurances will be outlined in the first case, from the signing of the revised security treaty in 1960 right up until the inauguration of Richard Nixon in 1969.

The second net level of security is ‘moderate,’ neither overly abundant nor overly scarce. This is seen in two different combinations. The first, in the bottom-left quadrant of the typology, is one in which external threats are relatively low, but patron security commitments are also relatively weak. Since external threats are positively related to security production, and patron commitments negatively, we have a mixed-incentive environment which should lead Japan to a moderate

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² Security production can be considered ‘low’ when Japan makes substantial advances in few or none of the factors of security production listed above.
propensity to produce security. The era of its postwar history that best approximates this combination will be shown in the second case, beginning with Nixon's inauguration and running up until mid-1979.

But there is a second combination which produces a ‘moderate’ level of security, as the upper-right quadrant of the typology shows. This is when external threats are relatively high, but patron security commitments are also relatively strong. And because external threats incentivize the production of security, and patron commitments disincentivize its production, the countervailing forces in this second mixed-incentive situation should also result in a moderate propensity toward security production. This combination of threats and assurances defines the third case, starting in mid-1979 and running right up until the collapse of the Soviet Empire in late 1989.

The third and final net level of security Japan will face is ‘scarce.’ As shown in the bottom-right quadrant of the typology, this is a doubly dangerous situation in which, not only are external security threats relatively high, but patron security commitments are simultaneously relatively weak. The combined force of the positive incentives provided by the higher threat environment and those provided by the weaker U.S. security commitments should lead Japan to produce security to a greater degree than in any other environment. This security scarce environment is outlined in the fourth case: the post-Cold War period.

The typological theory outlined above carries two methodological benefits. First, it helps deal with the problem of dependent variable selection by having variation on both the dependent variable (lower, moderate, higher production) and the independent variables (higher and lower threats, stronger and weaker assurances). Second, it creates a model that is inherently dynamic. While

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3 Security production can be considered ‘moderate’ when Japan makes substantial advances in some but not all of the factors of security production listed above.

4 Security production can be considered ‘high’ when Japan makes substantial advances in most or all of the factors of security production listed above.
it does provide snap-shot images of Japan’s expected security production incentives, perhaps its primary value is in showing when, why, and in what direction those incentives change.

There are at least three mechanisms through which changes in external threats and allied assurances—and therefore Japan’s net level of security—lead to changes in security policy outcomes. The adjudication of which of these mechanisms is most operative in the cases that follow is beyond the scope of this article, but it is important to highlight them here. First, changes in the external security environment can lead to changes in public opinion, which enables policymakers to enact new security policies (Miyashita, 2007; Shinoda, 2007). Second, changes in Japan’s net level of security may actually ‘change the minds’ of Japanese policymakers, leading previously dovish leaders to become more hawkish, or vice-versa. Third, a changing security environment may strengthen certain coalitions within the policy community over others, giving the security-oriented factions more or less credibility, depending on the circumstances (Miyashita, 2007).

Before moving onto the cases, one final point needs to be stressed. Japan is the U.S.’s longest-running bilateral alliance partner, and throughout the period being considered, ‘weaker’ U.S. security commitments still include, at minimum, a formal alliance, over 35,000 military personnel stationed on its soil, and a nuclear ‘umbrella’ cast over its territory. Thus, variation in the ‘patron security commitment’ will be relatively low, with most changes being slight shifts in emphasis as opposed to large-scale reversals in money, manpower, or materiel. This low variation in U.S. assurances means the differences between ‘lower,’ ‘moderate,’ and ‘higher’ Japanese security production will also be somewhat subtle, but clear and important. And by demonstrating that threats and assurances drive this variation in Japan’s security production over time, it will become clear that these factors better account for change in Japan’s security behavior than its domestic institutions or antimilitarist norms.
Japanese Security since 1960

The Heyday of the ‘Yoshida Doctrine’ (1960-68)

The security environment Japan found itself in from 1960 to 1968 most closely approximates the one of ‘abundance’ outlined above. With a benign external threat environment and a high level of security commitment from the United States, its incentives to produce security were at an all-time low in its postwar history. Given this relative abundance of security, Japan would rely most heavily upon the largesse of its great power patron and eschew the independent production of a great deal of security.

The external threats Japan faced in the 1960s were of a lower level than those of any other period during the entire Cold War. The Soviet Union, for one, had its forces heavily concentrated west of the Ural Mountains to match the NATO forces of Europe, and in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis was steadily moving in the direction of détente with the United States. The conflicts it did have in Asia were mainly offshoots of the Sino-Soviet split, with reports of clashes as early as 1967 and a full-scale conflict by the end of the decade. The Japanese were not particularly threatened by the Soviet Union in this era, doubting whether they could even launch a successful amphibious assault on their northernmost island, Hokkaido (Welfield, 1988, pp. 356-358).

In contrast to the perspective of its American ally, Japan also saw China as posing little threat during the 1960s (Buckley, 1992, p. 109; Schaller, 1997, pp. 173-177; Welfield, 1988, pp. 175-177; Docs. 16, 58 in FRUS 1964-68). When President Kennedy asked Prime Minister Ikeda about how he planned to deal with the regional threat emanating from China, Ikeda replied that this was ‘a difficult problem’ as a result of Japan’s ‘sense of kinship to Mainland China’ (Doc. 330, FRUS 1961-63).

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5 The study begins in 1960 because this is the first year Japan could have possibly had an ‘independent’ foreign policy. The U.S. occupation ran until 1952, and the U.S. stationed between 100,000-200,000 troops in the country for the rest of the decade (Kane, 2005). Furthermore, the original security treaty was deeply unequal, including provisions for the U.S. to ‘put down largescale internal riots and disturbances in Japan,’ and was revised in 1960 (Pyle, 2007, pp. 237-238).
When Prime Minister Sato was similarly queried by President Johnson, his response was that it would be unwise to be ‘unduly hasty with respect to Communist China lest we create new problems,’ and that Japan could not ‘ignore the mainland’s propinquity and its long history of cultural contact [with Japan]’ (Doc. 41, FRUS 1964-68). China itself spent most of the 1960s recovering from the disaster of the Great Leap Forward, internally embroiled in the Cultural Revolution, and externally locked into the Sino-Indian and Sino-Soviet rivalries. While China did join the ‘nuclear club’ with its first test in October of 1964, the Japanese, for the most part, simply refused to find this development threatening, with Sato telling President Johnson in 1965 that the test ‘had not had [a] great impact in Japan’ (Doc. 41, FRUS 1964-68).

Along with this relatively benign external threat environment was a high level of credible security commitment from the United States. First, the Revised U.S.-Japan Security Treaty stipulated that both parties were bound to the treaty for a minimum of ten years, assuring Japan’s security clear through the end of the decade. Second, in waging the Vietnam War, the United States engaged in a massive military buildup in the region, going from 156,000 troops in 1960 to nearly 770,000 by 1968 (Kane, 2006). While the numbers in Japan itself did drop off a great deal from the 1950s, in 1964 the U.S. still maintained 12 large bases, 136 other military facilities, and approximately 46,000 military personnel on the archipelago (Schaller, 1997, p. 195). Along with these treaty-based and material commitments came repeated personal assurances from President Johnson, both to protect Japan’s security conventionally and with the U.S.’s extended nuclear deterrent (Doc. 385, FRUS 1961-63; Docs. 41, 106, FRUS 1964-68).

The abundance of security Japan enjoyed as a result of its low threat environment and high level of security commitment meant that it had few incentives for independent security production. This was the heyday of what is known as the ‘Yoshida Doctrine,’ when Japan relied most heavily for security on the United States and focused most squarely on economic development (Pyle, 2007, pp.
For instance, Japan’s military spending was paltry, despite its economy growing at a tremendous pace. Its defense expenditure as a percentage of its GDP went from just under 1 percent in 1960 down to 0.77 percent by 1968, and as a percentage of its overall budget, from 9 percent down to 7.1 (Statistics Japan, 2016). Restricting military spending to less than one percent of its GDP became an informal convention in this decade, despite the fact that most U.S. NATO allies were spending between 3 and 6 percent on defense (Welfield, 1988, pp. 368-369). In terms of personnel, the aggregate growth of Japan’s SDF stopped well short of expectations, despite the reduction of U.S. forces in the country. By 1968, Japanese military personnel numbered just 250,000 (Statistics Japan, 2016), whereas Britain, France, West Germany, and Italy, all with considerably smaller populations and economies, each had at least 400,000 under arms (Welfield, 1988, pp. 357-359). Regarding deployments, Japan restricted the role of its military to a purely internal one, dispersing its troops evenly throughout the country to deal with domestic contingencies rather than external threats (Doc. 354, FRUS 1961-63).

Yet it is Japan’s policy and doctrine that show the clearest signs of relatively low security production. For example, in 1966 Prime Minister Sato introduced strict geographic limitations on the SDF, prohibiting their engagement in military contingencies outside of the Japanese archipelago (Welfield, 1988, p. 209). The following year, he enunciated the ‘three nonnuclear principles’ (bikaku san gensoku): that Japan would not produce, possess, or permit the introduction of nuclear weapons onto its territory (Pyle, 2007, pp. 250-251). In 1967 Sato also strictly limited Japan’s ability to export arms with his ‘three principles of arms exports’ (buki yushutsu san gensoku) (Nester, 1996, p. 289). And in 1968, the Japanese government officially interpreted the constitution as prohibiting armed attack as a means of self-defense, giving birth to the concept of ‘defensive defense’ (senshu boei) (Hughes, 2009, p. 25). Japan made no major defense-related institutional changes in these years, and in its alliance

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6 For all military expenditure data, see Appendix A.
responsibility, Japan restricted its role in Vietnam to the provision of nonmilitary aid, despite the fact that South Korea sent over 300,000 troops to support the U.S. (Nester, 1996, pp. 288-289). In sum, Japanese security production in the 1960s was clearly relatively low. But the inauguration of Richard Nixon was just around the corner, and his presidency would bring sweeping foreign policy changes to Japan.

The ‘Nixon Shocks’ and Beyond (1969-79)

Between 1969 and 1979, Japan’s net level of security is best conceived of as ‘moderate.’ While the level of external threat remained relatively low, strong reversals in U.S. policy translated into weaker security commitments from its ally. The moderate amount of security that Japan was afforded in this period meant that it had stronger incentives to produce security than in the 1960s, though not so strong as to lead to radical shifts in its policy.

For most of the 1970s the threat environment surrounding Japan saw little change from its relatively benign state of the previous decade. By this time, U.S.-Soviet détente was in full swing and was consolidated through the decade. Despite the increasing capabilities of the Soviet forces in the region, for most of the 1970s they were still considered incapable of launching an effective attack on Hokkaido (Welfield, 1988, p. 356), and were generally seen to be preoccupied with their European flank (Doc. 7, NSA: 5-6). The two Koreas remained too economically underdeveloped and militarily weak to pose a serious threat. Even India’s ‘peaceful nuclear explosion’ of May 1974 had little impact on the threat perceptions of Japanese leaders (Welfield, 1988, p. 351).

Yet perhaps most importantly, China continued to be seen as posing little threat in the 1970s. Not only was China perceived as economically and militarily weak (Doc. 1, NSA, p. 8), but the continued Sino-Soviet split meant that Beijing was seen as being primarily focused on its Soviet rival (Doc. 9, NSA, pp. 9-10). The U.S.’s rapprochement with China in 1972, as well as Japan’s establishment of diplomatic relations that same year, also went a long way to keeping threat
perceptions low. Echoing his predecessors, Prime Minister Tanaka told National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger in 1972 that rather than posing a threat, China was seen as ‘a traditional friend,’ and as a land ‘of vast and unlimited opportunity’ (Doc. 8, NSA, p. 18). He reiterated these beliefs the following year in meetings with President Nixon, arguing that there was simply ‘no need for Japan to feel threatened by China’ (Doc. 9, NSA, p. 10).

However while the regional security environment remained more or less stable, the foreign policy changes brought about by the Nixon White House implanted deep abandonment anxieties in Japan that persisted for much of the decade (Cha, 2000, pp. 274-279). First, the United States engaged in a massive reduction of military commitments across the region, going from nearly 750,000 troops at the height of the Vietnam War in 1969 down to just over 100,000 by 1979 (Kane, 2006). This started with the ‘Nixon Doctrine’ of 1969, in which President Nixon stated that the United States would expect its allies ‘to assume the primary responsibility’ for their own defense. This was followed just months later with an announcement of a partial troop withdrawal from the Korean Peninsula, causing great alarm in Tokyo (Doc. 3, NSA, p. 5; Izumikawa, 2010, p. 145). A second blow to Japanese confidence was leveled when President Nixon announced in July of 1971 that he planned to visit China the following year (Welfield, 1988, p. 295). While the policy of rapprochement itself was favored by Japan, the manner in which it was initiated greatly stoked abandonment fears, as claims were forwarded that the U.S. had ‘acted over the head of Japan’ (Doc. 4, NSA, p. 3), had ‘pulled the rug from under [it]’ (Doc. 5, NSA, p. 1), and was ‘leaving Japan behind’ (Doc. 6, NSA, p. 5). Japanese confidence was further rattled with the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973, culminating in the fall of Saigon two years later (Cha, 2000, p. 274; Izumikawa, 2010, pp. 148-149).

The final stroke of an already anxiety-ridden decade was the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976, and his campaign promise to withdraw all ground troops from the Korean Peninsula. This proposal ‘sent shockwaves through Tokyo,’ and heightened abandonment fears to levels as high as those that
followed the Nixon Doctrine (Nester, 1996, p. 330; Miyashita, 2007, p. 110). In his first meetings with President Carter, Prime Minister Fukuda urged ‘a cautious approach’ and warned of the adverse ‘psychological impact’ withdrawal might have in the region (Doc. 10, NSA, p. 2). And the U.S.’s abrupt 1979 termination of its security treaty with Taiwan upon diplomatic recognition of the PRC was seen in Tokyo as ‘a very bad thing for both Japan and the U.S. in Asia’ (Doc. 12, NSA, p. 5).

The moderate amount of security Japan was afforded in this period due to the combination of a benign external threat environment and relatively weak U.S. security assurances translated into greater Japanese security production than that of the 1960s. In fact, as Izumikawa (2010) points out, ‘many scholars consider [the 1970s] a turning point in Japan’s defense policymaking’ (p. 143). On defense spending the record is mixed. A look at the data shows a steady decrease in defense expenditure as a percentage of its national budget, from 7.0 in 1969 down to 5.4 by 1979 (Statistics Japan, 2016). In 1976, Japan also formally and indefinitely capped its spending at one percent of the country’s GDP (Samuels, 2007, p. 56). However, within this one percent bound, military expenditure as a percentage of GDP increased, going from 0.74 to 0.93 (Statistics Japan, 2016). Furthermore, in 1978 Japan began to contribute to the costs of maintaining U.S. bases in its territory (Pyle, 2007, p. 258). This was a clear indicator of Tokyo’s desire to stave off ‘free rider’ criticisms, and to maintain U.S. commitments in light of its increasing economic heft. On the other hand, Japan’s military personnel remained at the stubbornly low levels of the previous decade. While there was a moderate increase in numbers through these years, going from 258,000 to 267,000 (Statistics Japan, 2016), overall the SDF remained significantly smaller than other U.S. allies. And while the Ryukyu Islands (including Okinawa) were returned to Japan after 27 years of U.S. administration in 1972, overseas military deployments were wholly absent.
Japan’s defense-related policy and doctrine, however, saw important changes. For example, just months after the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine, Prime Minister Sato agreed to refer to South Korean security as ‘essential’ and Taiwan’s as ‘a most important factor’ in a joint communiqué with President Nixon, going well beyond Japan’s previously mute stance on regional security (Doc. 2, NSA). Japan also released its first Defense White Paper in 1970, which would later become an annual publication. And in 1976, Japan released of the ‘National Defense Programme Outline’ (NDPO), Japan’s greatest defense policy advance in nearly twenty years (Kawasaki, 2001, pp. 232-236).

However, legislative and institutional efforts were decidedly negative. For instance, in May of 1969 the Diet passed a resolution limiting government activities in outer space to peaceful, nonmilitary purposes (Pyle, 2007, p. 254). In 1975, Prime Minister Miki prohibited the export of all dual-use technologies, broadening Sato’s 1967 ban (Nester, 1996, p. 323). Yet in these years Japan’s alliance responsibility also saw some impressive changes, starting with the August 1975 establishment of ‘The U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation Subcommittee,’ a taskforce created for the discussion of joint planning, operations, and exercises. In 1978, the taskforce culminated its efforts in the adoption of the ‘Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation,’ in which Tokyo expanded its area of responsibility from the home islands to the ‘peace and stability’ of the region at large (Lind, 2004, p. 113). Thus, Japan’s security production in the 1970s was mixed. But with the increasing regional threats of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the imminent ‘Reagan revolution’ in U.S. foreign policy, change was again on the horizon.

The ‘Ron-Yasu’ Years (1979-89)

Japan’s surroundings between 1979 and 1989 most closely approximate the second ‘moderate’ security environment outlined above. While the level of external threat began to increase rapidly, this was matched by a renewal of U.S. security commitments to Japan and to the region. This moderate
amount of security allowed by the combination of high threat levels and strong U.S. commitments meant that Japan would produce security at a rate similar to that of the previous decade.

In the latter years of the 1970s, threat levels in Japan’s immediate security environment began a sharp turn upwards, driven primarily by the Soviet military buildup in its Far East. As early as 1977 Japanese security officials began showing real concern to their American interlocutors (Doc. 11, NSA, p. 5), and with the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, security threats in the region seemed to be at an all-time postwar high. JDA Director General Yamashita called Japan’s defense expenditure ‘inadequate… in light of [the] Soviet invasion’ (Doc. 14, NSA, p. 2), and Foreign Minister Okita told Secretary of State Cyrus Vance that Japanese ‘fears… had been intensified by Soviet action in Afghanistan’ (Doc. 15, NSA, pp. 2-3). Aside from the invasion, what was truly alarming was the Soviets’ ever-increasing regional military capabilities. By 1980, the Soviet Union was believed to field 21 divisions, over 5,000 tanks, nearly 1,000 fighter aircraft, and a formidable naval force, including a carrier battle group, in the region (Doc. 19, NSA, pp. 21-22). This was supplemented by nuclear-capable ‘Backfire’ bombers, at least two-dozen ballistic missile submarines, and nearly 200 intermediate-range SS-20 ballistic missiles (Green, 2001b, p. 137), contributing to a security environment that was described by top Japanese officials as ‘severe’ (Doc. 17, NSA, pp. 6-7) and ‘grave’ (Doc. 18, NSA, p. 9). Despite a slight reduction of threat perceptions after the rise of Gorbachev, regular Soviet intelligence activity, incursions into Japanese airspace and territorial waters, as well as their continued occupation of the disputed ‘Northern Territories,’ kept threats relatively high through most of the decade. And intense Japanese engagement efforts seemed to do little to dampen their concerns (Doc. 22, NSA).

Yet the high levels of threat coming from the Soviet Union were partially moderated by the foreign policy sea change in Washington in these years. This new era of high-level security commitment to Japan was initiated in mid-1979 when President Carter reversed his South Korea
troop withdrawal, a move that was met with great relief in Tokyo (Doc. 13, NSA, p. 2). This was followed by the inauguration of the Reagan administration, which came to office bent on rebuilding Japan's faith in its defense commitments. As Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger assured Foreign Minister Ito in their first meeting, ‘the U.S. [was] determined to become a reliable ally again’ (Doc. 20, NSA, p. 3). These words were matched with manpower commitments, with regional troop levels going from roughly 99,000 in 1980 to 113,000 by 1988 (Kane, 2006). And they were accompanied by material commitments as well, with overall U.S. military expenditures going from $206.6 billion to $295 billion over the same period (SIPRI, 1990, p. 191).

The reassertion of U.S. primacy in the region had a ‘profound impact’ on Japanese leaders (Welfield, 1988, p. 443), and greatly ameliorated abandonment fears in Japan (Cha, 2000, p. 283). The strong personal bond shared by President Reagan and Prime Minister Nakasone—what became known as the ‘Ron-Yasu relationship’—only added to this confidence (Buckley, 1992, p. 144). As Nakasone put it, sharply responding to questioning in the National Diet, if the country was threatened ‘America will definitely come to Japan's aid… We have a firm promise, and it would be carried out’ (Associated Press, 1983). And as George H.W. Bush emerged as Reagan's successor at the decade’s close, he was seen as likely to continue this approach.

The counter-veiling effects of strong U.S. security commitments and the increased Soviet threat meant that Japan was, again, prompted to only moderate levels of security production. And it is clear that leaders at the time saw this production as being largely driven by the regional security environment. For instance, Prime Minister Ohira relayed to President Carter in 1980 that ‘in this age of increased tension in the international situation, we realize the need to improve our defense efforts more than ever’ (Doc. 16, NSA, pp. 2-3). That same year, Prime Minister Suzuki told Secretary of Defense Harold Brown that given the ‘severe international situation, there was growing national consciousness of [Japan's] security needs' and stated his intention to ‘nurture this view’ (Doc. 17,
And in 1983, Prime Minister Nakasone told Secretary of State George Schultz that ‘the Soviet Union [is] a country that respect[s] power, and to deter it we must build up our strength’ (Doc. 21, NSA, p. 3).

To meet some of these threats, Japan made important strides in terms of defense spending. In contrast to previous decades, its defense expenditure as a percentage of its budget increased, albeit moderately, going from 5.4 in 1979 up to 6.0 by 1989 (Statistics Japan, 2016). But perhaps symbolically most important, Japan breached its one percent of GDP limit in defense spending in 1987, 1988, and 1989—a standard that had held fast for over 20 years (Hughes, 2009, p. 149). And this was all while Japan’s overall growth had slowed considerably, averaging 4.2 percent between 1970 and 1989 (IMF, 2016). However Japan continued to show little growth in its personnel, going from 268,000 to just 274,000 (Statistics Japan, 2016). And again, overseas deployments remained a political impossibility in Tokyo.

Japan’s responsibilities in the U.S.-Japan alliance too, saw marked improvement from previous decades. In this era a true division of labor emerged within the alliance, with Japan’s SDF beginning to act as an effective ‘shield,’ protecting its territory, alongside the U.S.’s military ‘spear,’ projecting power into the region. Joint defense planning, military exercises, personnel training, logistics, communications, and intelligence gathering reached levels of sophistication not before seen in the partnership (Schaller, 1997, p. 254). In 1981, Prime Minister Suzuki publicly referred to the U.S.-Japan relationship as an ‘alliance’ for the very first time, and committed the country to patrolling sea lanes up to 1,000 nautical miles from the Japanese coast (Hughes, 2009, p. 24; Lind, 2004, p. 114; Nester, 1996, p. 347). In 1983, during a trip to Washington, Nakasone promised that Japan would soon

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7 Though, importantly, PM Suzuki reversed his characterization of the relationship as an ‘alliance’ upon return to Japan, leading to the resignation of his foreign minister.
assume ‘complete and full control’ of the straits surrounding the Sea of Japan, and referred to the archipelago as an ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier’ in U.S. Cold War strategy (Pyle, 2007, p. 272).

However Japan’s record on policy and doctrine in this period is mixed. For example, in the 1980s Tokyo began to define its security ‘comprehensively,’ meaning that it would plan to deal with security threats through measures beyond the military, such as with foreign aid, diplomacy, and energy diversification (Katzenstein and Okawara, 1993; Katzenstein, 1996). And yet in 1983, Prime Minister Nakasone managed to attain cabinet approval for a dual-use technology export agreement with the U.S., allowing Japan to export military technology for the first time since 1945 and violating the 1967 ‘three principles of arms exports.’ This same year at the G-7 summit, Nakasone had the statement, ‘the security of our countries is indivisible, and must be approached on a global basis,’ inserted into the final communiqué (Washington Post, 1983), a far cry from the ‘defensive defense’ concept of the 1960s. And, in late 1986, Japan agreed to participate in Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative, a blow to Japan’s 1969 peaceful use of outer-space clause (Welfield, 1988, p. 446). There were also important institutional changes. In 1980 defense committees were created in both upper and lower houses of the Diet. And with the 1986 creation of the Security Council, the role of the Prime Minister in the security policy process was also strengthened (Pekkanen and Krauss, 2005, p. 437-438).

But it is important not to overstate the changes of the 1980s. For all of his dynamism and flare, Nakasone’s tenure was characterized more by style than substance (Buckley, 1992, pp. 139, 147; Pyle, 1992, pp. 103-104). Despite his globe-trotting diplomacy, his bold pronouncements, and his grand vision, he was constantly frustrated by entrenched political interests and a rigid bureaucratic structure at home (Nester, 1996, p. 348; Samuels, 2007, p. 57). And it seems that the moderate security environment played no small part in this. As Kenneth Pyle (2007) notes, ‘So strong and embedded was the Japanese trait of dependence on the external structure to provide the motivation
for change… that Nakasone’s determination… ultimately failed’ (p. 276). But momentous change was afoot, as the U.S. was to soon rise unmatched as the preeminent world power, bringing profound implications for Japan.

*Japan in the Post-Cold War World (1990-Present)*

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Japan entered its scarcest security environment since 1960. Within a few years of the Soviet decline, new regional threats began to emerge just as U.S. security assurances began to look somewhat suspect. And it was this particular concurrence of continued threats and increasingly weak security commitments that prompted the higher levels of security production seen in Japan.

While the Soviet Union’s massive conventional and nuclear threat essentially vanished in 1989, new threats soon began to develop, the first of which was North Korea. It started in 1993, when North Korea threatened to pull out of the NPT and announced its intention to produce nuclear weapons, bringing the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war. This was followed in 1998 by an intermediate-range ballistic missile test, which traversed Japanese airspace before splashing down into the Pacific off of Japan’s northeast coast. North Korea’s nuclear and missile program progressed steadily in the post-Cold War years, with Pyongyang restarting its plutonium reactor in 2002, unveiling a uranium enrichment program in late 2010, and conducting ballistic missile and nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, 2012-2013, and 2016. But perhaps most importantly, the revelation in 2002 that the North Korean government had abducted over a dozen Japanese citizens did more than anything to place the Kim regime as Japan’s most immediate and pressing threat. Japan’s National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) of 2010 called North Korean actions ‘an immediate and grave destabilizing factor to regional security,’ and the NDPG of 2014 referred to them as ‘a serious and immanent threat to Japan’s security’ (Ministry of Defense, 2010, p. 4; Ministry of Defense, 2013, p. 3).
But while North Korea was seen as the most critical short-term threat, the economic and military rise of China was undoubtedly seen as a greater longer-term threat (Hughes, 2009b). This perception began to be widely shared when China conducted nearly a dozen nuclear tests between 1992 and 1996, forcing Tokyo to suspend aid to Beijing. China’s bracketing of Taiwan with a series of missile tests in 1995 and 1996 did little to settle nerves in Tokyo, with one missile landing just 60 kilometers from Okinawa. But more broadly, China’s economy continued to grow at an astounding pace in this period, averaging nearly 10 percent per year between 1990 and 2015, and surpassing Japan to become the world’s second-largest economy in 2010. During the same period, Japanese growth stumbled along at 1.1 percent, in what became known as the ‘lost decade’ and ultimately more like a lost generation (IMF, 2016). China’s military budget has swelled alongside its economy, estimated to have gone from $48 billion in 2002 up to $143 billion by 2011, passing Japan’s aggregate military expenditure in 2004, if not earlier (SIPRI, 2012). And a marked turn in Chinese behavior from about 2009, with increasingly aggressive actions over disputes in the South and East China Seas, has raised eyebrows, if not pulses, in Tokyo. Japan’s 2015 Defense White Paper makes reference to China’s ‘dangerous acts,’ its ‘assertive’ behavior, and its ‘coercive attempts at changing the status quo,’ noting Japan’s ‘great concern’ over the future direction of Chinese security policy (Ministry of Defense, 2015, pp. 3, 33, 35).

Thus, a sense of insecurity has prevailed in the post-Cold War years, but unlike the 1980s, these perceptions have generally not been ameliorated by the perception of a steadfast U.S. ally. With the dawn of the post-Cold War era, Japanese abandonment fears again rose to great heights (Cha, 2000, p. 283; Hughes, 2009, p. 32; Izumikawa, 2010, pp. 151, 157-158; Pyle, 2007, pp. 290-293). The first concern was over the U.S.’s major drawdown in global military commitments. While in 1989 the total number of troops in East Asia sat at 110,000, by 2005 it was just 67,000, with the number of troops in Japan seeing a commensurate 30 percent reduction (Kane, 2006). U.S. military spending
also declined, going from $357 billion in 1990 to just $260 billion by 1999 (SIRPI, 2000, p. 271). The Japanese took a great interest in this new direction of U.S. policy, with Prime Minister Kaifu telling President George H.W. Bush that U.S. disarmament was ‘a major worry for the Japanese people’ (Doc. 23, NSA, p. 2).

And the rise of China only made matters worse. Japanese frustrations with American ‘Japan bashing’ in the early nineties turned to fears of ‘Japan passing’ by the latter nineties, as the Japanese feared the Clinton administration was ‘more enchanted with the strategic and economic promise of China than with the reality of Japan’s strategic and economic importance’ (Doc. 24, NSA, p. 3). In 1998, President Clinton did little to allay these fears by traveling to Beijing for nine days and declaring China a ‘strategic partner’ without so much as a stopover in Tokyo. But perhaps most important of all, the unprecedented unipolar structure of international politics meant that the U.S. could now credibly threaten the abandonment of a Japan that was more dependent than ever (Arase, 2007, p. 568; Cha, 2000, p. 284; Miyashita, 1999, p. 703; Pempel, 2011, pp. 266-267). As a result, Japanese abandonment fears have persisted throughout the post-Cold War era, despite sharp increases in the U.S.’s global military posture after 9/11 and the close relationship between Prime Minister Koizumi and President George W. Bush. On occasion, Japanese policymakers have made their abandonment concerns known. For instance, in justifying troop deployments to Iraq in 2003, Prime Minister Koizumi pointed out that Japan has ‘only a single ally, the United States… [and] must not be isolated in international society’ (Samuels, 2007, p. 98). Similarly, during Prime Minister Abe’s announcement of controversial security legislation in 2014, he hypothetically asked, ‘if U.S. vessels on patrol in order to defend Japan were to be attacked, and Japan’s SDF vessels… did not … take any measures in order to protect the vessel… Will we continue to enjoy their will to defend Japan?’ (Abe, 2014). And while the U.S. did announce that it was ‘pivoting’ or ‘rebalancing’ toward Asia in
2011 (Clinton, 2011; Obama, 2011), crises in the Middle East and Europe seem to have sucked most of the meaning out of this pronouncement thus far (Zakaria, 2015).

The conjunction of an increasingly threatening region and the perception of weak U.S. security commitments has prompted Japan, in this security-scarce environment, to produce security at a higher level than any other in its postwar history (Green, 2001; Pyle, 2007, pp. 278-374; Samuels, 2007, pp. 63-209). Though Japan got off to a sputtering start with its flat-footed responses to both the Gulf War in 1991 and the North Korean nuclear crisis in 1993, it did not take long to catch up. Of all of the aspects of security production, only two were not clear increases. First, the record on defense spending is mixed. Japanese defense expenditures as a percent of the national budget held steadily during most of the 1990s at roughly 6 percent, but have fallen in the 2000s, dipping under 5 percent after 2008 (Statistics Japan, 2016). And while defense spending has increased slightly under Prime Minister Abe since 2012, this is only after over a decade of steady decline (Liff, 2015, 91). Second, Japan’s personnel numbers similarly declined back to 1960s levels, though this was in keeping with global trends. On all other factors, Japanese security production saw clear gains.

In terms of legislative and institutional change, the Japanese Diet passed the International Peace Cooperation Law in 1992, allowing it to send military personnel abroad for the first time since 1945. In 2001, a law was passed allowing the Japanese Coast Guard to use force if necessary, which that very year it did, sinking a North Korean spy ship and reportedly killing 15 North Koreans in the process—Japan’s first use of lethal force since World War II (Samuels, 2007, p. 148). In 2007, the Japan Defense Agency was elevated to full ministerial status, and in 2009, an anti-piracy law was passed by the Diet. In December of 2013, under Prime Minister Abe, the largely-ineffectual Security Council was replaced by a far more significant National Security Council, an inter-agency coordinating body for Japan’s defense policy. And in September of 2015, legislation was passed in
the Diet that allows the SDF to engage in ‘collective self-defense’ for the first time in the postwar period.

Japanese deployments also saw important changes. Since the passing of the 1992 law, Japan has sent peacekeeping forces to Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique, El Salvador, the Golan Heights, East Timor, Haiti, and (South) Sudan. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Koizumi, the SDF was dispatched to the Indian Ocean to aid in the War in Afghanistan in 2001, joined the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative in 2003, and most controversially, sent troops to Iraq without a UN mandate in 2004. These actions were certainly partially motivated by a broad interest in international security, but a more important motivator was undoubtedly to retain U.S. ties in the face of rising regional threats (Arase, 2007, p. 571; Hughes, 2009b, p. 309; Izumikawa, 2010, p. 152; Samuels, 2007, p. 177; Pyle, 2007, p. 297; Wada, 2010, pp. 422-423). And the passing of the 2009 piracy law led to the stationing of 580 SDF personnel, two destroyers, two P3-C maritime surveillance aircraft, and a military facility in Djibouti on the Gulf of Aden, Japan’s first military base abroad since WWII (Ministry of Defense, 2015, pp. 291-295).8

Japanese policy and doctrine also saw advances. For example, due to its vacillation during the North Korean nuclear crisis of 1993, Japan revised its NDPO in 1995, enabling the SDF to respond to ‘situations in the areas around Japan that have a direct effect on Japan’s security’ (Arase, 2007, p. 567). In 2010, Japan introduced its ‘Dynamic Defense’ policy, which stresses the need to ‘respond to various contingencies, and to proactively engage in activities to further stabilize the security environment,’ replacing its traditional emphasis on deterring and repelling attacks on Japanese territory (Ministry of Defense, 2010, pp. 6-7). In 2013, the Cabinet adopted a new ‘National Security

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8 While peacekeeping and anti-piracy operations are not directly tied to the physical security of Japan, and therefore may not seem like “security production,” they do provide at least four indirect security benefits which undoubtedly help motivate them: (1) a quid-pro-quo for continued U.S. military support; (2) operational training and experience for the SDF for potential future military conflicts; (3) a way of getting the Japanese public “used to” a global military presence; and (4) a less-threatening reason for continued arms procurements.
Strategy—the first of its kind in the postwar era—and again updated its NDPG. In 2014, new principles for arms exports were adopted that continued the severe weakening of Japan’s self-imposed ban on arms exports. And in February 2015, Japan adopted a new ‘Development Cooperation Charter,’ enabling it to provide foreign military aid for the first time since WWII, though only for non-traditional security purposes.

Alliance responsibility also shows clear improvements. After the Taiwan Straits crisis in 1995 and 1996, Prime Minister Hashimoto and President Clinton set out ‘Revised Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation,’ shifting the emphasis of the treaty from the defense of Japan (Article V) to the stability of the region as a whole (Article VI). These new guidelines were passed in the Diet and became law in 1999, after the 1998 North Korean missile test effectively forced the hands of lawmakers. The North’s test also served as the primary impetus for the Japanese government to agree to theatre missile defense cooperation with the U.S., a violation not only of Japan’s ban on arms exports, but also its ‘peaceful use of space’ clause. And in April of 2015, new alliance ‘Guidelines’ were adopted which characterized the U.S.-Japan alliance as having a ‘global’ nature.

In sum, with the end of the Cold War and through the 1990s and beyond, Japan’s security production was higher than any other period of its postwar history. However, it is important not to overstate the magnitude of these changes (Hagström and Williamsson, 2009; Liff, 2015; Midford, 2002, pp. 6-12). First, all Japanese overseas deployments have been in strictly non-combat capacities, well out of harm’s way, and with sometimes questionable contributions to the missions at hand (Hughes, 2009, pp. 80-83). Second, the rules of engagement for Japanese peacekeeping forces and other military personnel stationed abroad are highly restrictive. For example, until the most recent security legislation was passed, in the event of hostilities in its deployment in South Sudan SDF members were to rely on Rwandan troops for protection, a state Japan outspends militarily 590-fold (SIPRI, 2016). And third and most broadly, the vast majority of Japan’s defense production through
the post-Cold War years has been explicitly or implicitly intended to draw it closer to its great power
patron, the United States (Hughes, 2009, pp. 90-97).

To sum up, the above-outlined cases have shown that Japanese security behavior is best captured
by focusing on the regional threat environment and the security commitment of its great power
patron, the United States. In the 1960s, the combination of a low threat environment and strong
security commitments from the U.S. led to low security production in Japan. In the 1970s, the
weakening of U.S. assurances led to moderate production. In the 1980s, stronger security
commitments but a more threatening environment continued this trend of moderate production.
And in the post-Cold War years, both relatively weak security assurances and a fairly threatening
security environment have led to greater security production than ever before. Figure 2 (below)
summarizes the cases. With the exception of ‘Spending’ and ‘Personnel’ (which, as noted above,
remain largely fixed), all aspects of Japan’s security production track the changes in threats and
assurances with clear consistency.

**Figure 2: Summary of Japan’s Security Production**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960-68</th>
<th>1969-78</th>
<th>1979-89</th>
<th>90-present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spending</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↑↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deployments</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy/doctrine</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↑↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative/inst change</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance responsibility</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

↑ = high ↓ = low ↑↓ = mixed

Therefore, far from emerging as a ‘fully-fledged major power’ as some have predicted (Johnson,
1992, p. 32), it seems that Japan is aiming to become more dependable, and therefore more
dependent, as time goes on. But again, this is precisely what we should expect. With such low
variation in U.S. security assurances, radical change in Japan’s defense posture remains unlikely. And
absent truly profound increases in the regional threat environment, or drastic reductions in U.S.
security provision, this dependence is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.
Theoretical and Policy Implications

Change in Japan’s security production has been shown to be based primarily on regional threats and U.S. assurances. These arguments carry with them three important implications for broader debates in international relations theory. First, the cases outlined above lend support to an argument realists have long made: that states can be seen as ‘unitary’ actors. While this is most often employed as an analytical assumption, there appears to be some ontological basis for it as well. As the historical cases have suggested, the institutional and ideational constraints on the Japanese state’s exercise of its security policy have tended to wax and wane with its level of security—with the state becoming more unitary in times of security scarcity and less unitary in times of abundance. In short, Japan’s postwar history indicates that state unity can be seen as, in some sense, ‘real,’ but that it is a variable, not a constant. Second, the arguments above hint at one of the reasons why some realists have gotten Japan wrong on so many occasions: their assumptions about the implications of unipolarity (Layne, 1993; Waltz, 1993, pp. 55-62). Assuming that the system would quickly return to a multipolar structure, these scholars saw Japan as likely to rearm and claim great power status. In fact, the stability and persistence of the unipolar structure has meant that Japan’s security interests are better served being allied with the U.S. than arming against it (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2008; Monteiro, 2014; Wohlforth, 1999). Third, this article has illustrated the importance of recognizing that anarchy is not monolithic and the incentives it carries are not uniform (Brooks, 1997). The interaction of regional threats and hegemonic power can create subsystems within which there is a great deal of variation in systemic pressure. As demonstrated above, in some places and times security is relatively scarce, and in others it is relatively abundant. And where and when it is either abundant or scarce has important implications for how states react to it.

9 I thank an anonymous reviewer for this point.
The arguments also carry one simple but profound policy implication. Since the onset of the ‘reverse course’ in the occupation of Japan in 1948, academics, policy experts, and government officials in the U.S. have poked and prodded Japan from every conceivable angle to get their partner to ‘do more’ to look after its own security. But the historical record indicates that the effectiveness of this sort of pressure is questionable. As the theory and the case studies above have shown, Japan tends to independently produce security when either the threat environment is high, or when U.S. security assurances are weak, or both. And so expecting Japan to ‘do more’ while stationing tens of thousands of troops on its territory may turn out to be mutually contradictory. In the end, if the United States really wants Japan to do more, it is possible that it will simply have to do a little less.

### Appendix A: Military Expenditure Data

**Unit: Millions of Yen**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>General Account (Budget)</th>
<th>National Defense Expenditure</th>
<th>Gross Domestic Product</th>
<th>Defense/Budget</th>
<th>Defense/GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1,743,148</td>
<td>156,900</td>
<td>16,680,600</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.0094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2,063,468</td>
<td>180,300</td>
<td>20,170,800</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.0089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>2,556,617</td>
<td>208,500</td>
<td>22,328,800</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.0093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>3,044,292</td>
<td>241,200</td>
<td>26,228,600</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.0092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>3,310,969</td>
<td>275,100</td>
<td>30,399,700</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.0090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>3,723,017</td>
<td>301,400</td>
<td>33,765,300</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.0089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>4,459,196</td>
<td>340,700</td>
<td>39,698,900</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.0086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>5,113,035</td>
<td>380,900</td>
<td>46,445,400</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.0082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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**Works Cited**


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