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**THE JAPANESE STATE IDENTITY AS A GRAND  
STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE**

Dr. Masahiro Matsumura  
CNAPS Japan Fellow, 2006-2007  
Professor of International Politics  
St. Andrew's University (Momoyama Gakuin Daigaku), Osaka

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The Brookings Institution  
1775 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20036-2188  
Tel: 202-797-6000 Fax: 202-797-6004  
[www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu)

## I. Introduction

This study provides American policymakers with strategic insight on how to embrace Japan as a prime ally in countering a rising China.<sup>1</sup> The post-World War II order in East Asia, strategically centered on the U.S.-Japan bilateral alliance, is largely intact. Japan is not only a keystone of U.S. security policy toward East Asia, but also a critical hub of the U.S. global military network of bases and facilities. Japan also has become a chief supporter of U.S. foreign policy since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which strained American relations with Russia, China, and European allies, with the notable exception of the United Kingdom. The United States needs to anchor Japan in the global network and to utilize its political support and limited but significant military power as a supplementary or complementary resource to buttress U.S. global leadership. This challenge is especially acute in East Asia; the United States cannot afford to ignore the geo-strategic implications of an impending power challenge or shift in the region as China gains economic and military strength.

Yet, to many American policymakers, Asia is still a “black box.” Americans are unfamiliar with Asian history in general, and more specifically, American policymakers are not fully aware that the Japanese state identity is the primary determinant of Japan’s vital national interests and therefore drives its grand strategic choices. Only by grasping this identity from a macro-historical and geo-political perspective, as fully explored and elaborated in this paper, can the United States secure Japan as a reliable partner and to effectuate a more durable bilateral alliance. If the U.S. fails to follow such an approach, or if it achieves only a superficial understanding, it will alienate Japan and will bring about the dissolution of the indispensable bilateral alliance.

Confronting a rising China, Japanese strategic thinkers are already changing their geo-strategic calculations, and will soon have to redefine the Japanese state identity, the basis of its geo-strategic choices. The People’s Republic of China has continuously achieved high economic growth and pursued a significant military buildup since its 1978 inception of reform and open-door policies and, as a result, has risen as an emerging great-power aspirant with growing potential to challenge U.S. predominance in world affairs, particularly in Northeast Asia. China’s relative power at present remains modest, but it has, in absolute terms, made remarkable achievements over time, both in macro-economic indicators and military capabilities. Western and Japanese analysts expect that a rising China, if it does successfully transmute into an established great power, will bring about a tectonic shift in the international distribution of power. Thus they are concerned as to whether China’s rise will eventuate in a turbulent power transition involving arms races and wars, specifically between China and the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Since it faces structural impediments to its great power aspirations, Beijing has followed and will follow an approach designed to enhance China’s relative power through economic growth and development, thereby shrinking the gap with U.S. and Japanese power. Beijing currently lacks an adequate economic base to sustain a massive

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was written as a working paper for the 2006-2007 Visiting Fellows Program at the Brookings Institution’s Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies (CNAPS).

arms buildup, and attempting such a buildup would surely invite U.S. counter-offensives in arms buildup which Beijing can never rival. A state can balance against a potential aggressor either by its own capabilities (internal balancing) or by joining with like-minded states against the aggressor (external balancing). The long-term internal balancing approach is the only viable strategy for Beijing, because it cannot find a partner state which is capable and willing to enter into an alliance against the preponderant United States.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Beijing appears to consider peace and stability essential for its rise, as shown by its longstanding acquiescence to the *status quo* of U.S. hegemony. But this does not guarantee peace in the long run. When Beijing identifies an opportunity after the catch-up phase, it could convert economic and technological power into military capabilities, thereby challenging the *status quo*. True, the United States and Japan benefit from trade with and investment in China during the current catch-up phase. But if this phase does not transform Beijing's dictatorship into a stable democracy satisfied with the existing international order, Washington and Tokyo would turn Beijing to be a formidable enemy, thereby digging their own grave. Conversely, to treat Beijing as an enemy now would create a self-fulfilling prophecy: Beijing would be forced to oppose the two allies to protect its vital interests.

Uncertain of Beijing's future intentions and capabilities, therefore, Washington and Tokyo have taken and will continue to take a hedging strategy that combines containment and engagement, through which they encourage cooperation and discourage challenges to the established order. This hedging strategy will be sustainable for the foreseeable future because U.S. and Japanese combined power will persistently outweigh Chinese power.

Yet hedging is not necessarily sustainable in the longer term, because the assumptions on which the strategy rests may turn out to be invalid. A joint hedging strategy assumes that Washington is able and willing to lead Tokyo in the alliance framework and that Tokyo is prepared to accept the potential risk that Washington might shrink from its commitment to Japan's security (perhaps due to an unexpectedly rapid decline in U.S. relative power or growing American isolationism, for example).

Put simply, given current international trends, Japan cannot assume that the current power constellation will endure and that the United States will remain committed indefinitely to the defense of Japan. While remaining committed to the bilateral alliance, Tokyo must envision some scenarios under which the alliance cannot protect Japanese interests vis-à-vis a rising China, and adjust accordingly. Such dynamic thinking is in sharp contrast to the existing static analyses which take the U.S.-Japan alliance for granted and which focus exclusively on fine-tuning within the alliance framework.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see Yuan-Kang Wang, "China's Grand Strategy And U.S. Primacy: Is China Balancing American Power?" The Brookings Institution Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, Working Paper, July 2006; [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2006/07china\\_wang.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2006/07china_wang.aspx).

<sup>3</sup> As a typical example, see, Richard J. Samuels, "Japan's Goldilocks Strategy," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.29, No.4, Autumn 2006.

Against this backdrop, this paper will examine Japan's future strategic choices as a function of its assessment of U.S. power (ranging from U.S. predominance to its decline to its debilitation) as compared to China's power (ranging from a strong revisionist power to a resilient *status quo* power to a debilitated, internally-oriented power). Tokyo's ultimate choice will be determined according to its power calculations and its order of preference of geo-strategic options. Due to the great uncertainty inherent in forecasting the future, however, Tokyo's power calculation cannot but be inferred from Japanese macro-historical geo-strategic experiences, and from patterns in Tokyo's preferences in past geo-strategic choices.

These past choices reflect what historic Japanese decision-makers considered would best serve their national interests and encompass their normative understanding of the ideal Japanese state in world politics. Embedded in the ranking order, therefore, would be an entrenched sense of the Japanese state identity, an essential criterion in evaluating geo-strategic options. In this light, it is crucial to examine how the Japanese state identity has been shaped by the early Japanese experience with the Sino-centric world order prior to the advent of Western imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is also critical to investigate how state identity has influenced Tokyo's geo-strategic choices since the breakdown of the Sino-centric order in 1895, including its strategies during the cold war and the post-cold war period.

This paper will first demonstrate that, in countering a rising China, the Japanese macro-historical experience offers Tokyo a reasonably solid base for inferential power calculations and the identification of a renewed Japanese state identity suited for the emerging geo-strategic landscape in East Asia. Then, the analysis will turn to Tokyo's options given different geo-strategic scenarios presented by possible U.S.-China power balances, and Tokyo's ranked preferences over these options. The discussion will end with policy recommendations designed for American strategic planners on how they can influence Japanese geo-strategic choices, with a focus on high risks involved in the scenarios where Japan should face the less-preferred and least-preferred options.

In this paper, the term "state identity" refers the state's perception of what role it should play and what status it should enjoy in international relations, such as a Western state or a non-Western state on the one hand; and a superpower, a great power, or a middle power on the other hand. A state's identity may shift over time. Each state's political leaders must construct such an identity through practice under inherent domestic constraints—economic growth and development, technological capabilities, military power, and public opinion, among others—and in the context of the changing power structure of dynamic international relations.

For instance, at the time of its independence the United States was a defensive small power, but later became a superpower and a prime global leader of the free world. Similarly, Japan was a non-Western, pre-modern state—a deeply traditional and isolationist state that pursued geo-political independence and autonomy for over two centuries—before the 1868 Meiji Restoration. But today's Japan has developed into a

global economic power in the Western inter-state system that has experienced growing interdependence and globalization. The Japanese state identity since the Meiji Restoration has been, by and large, focused on modernization and development. Socio-economic considerations have outweighed military and creedal factors, except during the *interbellum* period and the Second World War. Such an identity has been based on a veiled sense of *raison d'être*, which is to transform the neighboring East Asian region, including China. This impulse is comparable to the U.S. missionary zeal in spreading freedom and democracy.

State identity is distinguished from national identity, which implies a sense of unity among a population that shares common historical experiences, ethnic backgrounds, cultural heritages, languages, creedal commitments and/or other characteristics. Certainly, national identity may be closely related to state identity, due to the former's implications for the latter. Yet the two concepts are distinct. State identity also differs from *kokutai*, or the political regime of the pre-1945 Japanese state, because the latter concept focuses on the organizing mechanism of domestic political rule and control under the authority of a *tenno* (or an emperor), not on the external behavior of the state in international relations.

## II. The traditional Japanese state identity *vis-à-vis* the Sino-centric world order

The Sino-centric world order was an established international system at the eastern end of Eurasia for well over two thousand years. It vacillated between unification and fragmentation, centralization and decentralization, and expansion and contraction; these cycles derived from China's own dynamics and political order. The Sino-centric world order was concentric. At the middle was China proper, populated by ethnic (Han) Chinese. On the periphery were non-Han, barbarian tributary states. Some Chinese dynasties were ruled by Hans, others by non-Han foreigners. Two-thirds of the history of the Sino-centric order are characterized by unification and centralization; the other third by fragmentation and decentralization. The peripheral regions were continuously subjected to these dynamics of expansion and contraction. During this entire period, the use of force was endemic.<sup>4</sup>

Certainly, Chinese dynasties varied in external aggressiveness according to their comparative wealth and military power. But, when capable, they occasionally annihilated barbarian states on the periphery that did not demonstrate allegiance or submission. These dynamics are well explained by the realpolitik-dynastic cycle model. The model assumes that the decision-makers of a dynastic state always seek to expand the capabilities of the state, on the grounds that greater relative capabilities improve the state's chance of survival or at least enable power-maximization advantageous to creating conditions for survival. As Alastair Iain Johnston describes, the model predicts that,

as the empire consolidates and mobilizes in the earlier stages of the dynastic cycle, it will adopt increasingly expansionist, coercive strategies (i.e., extended

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<sup>4</sup> Figure 2 – Major Chinese Campaigns Against the Periphery, 221 B.C. to the Present, in Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future*, RAND, 2000, p.48.

campaigns beyond the frontiers, preventive colonization, formal annexation of new territories, etc). ...As the dynastic cycle peaks, the empire is overextended financially and militarily. ... As decline sets in, the state turns to less offensively coercive, more static defensive strategies, and from there to more accommodating strategies – peace treaties, bribes, territorial concessions, etc. ... In the final period of imminent collapse, one might expect to see an increasing reliance on military means – static defense of contracted frontiers – in a last-ditch fight for survival.<sup>5</sup>

The cyclical model stands up well against an alternate, development perspective. One may argue that each unified dynasty is stronger than its predecessor due to evolutionary internal growth and development. But such changes never transformed the core nature of the Sino-centric system and its cyclical dynamics. As a result, the last Chinese dynasty—the Qing—was far weaker than Western imperialist powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that had survived competition and war in the Western inter-state system.

The states in the peripheral regions, including the Japanese state, had been exposed to the Sino-centric dynamics of unification and fragmentation that entailed expansion and contraction. At the early stage of the dynastic cycle, these states suffered from a strong dynastic expansionism involving grave security threats. They often were subject to aggression, invasion, occupation, and annexation that imperiled their political survival. Conversely, in the declining phase of the cycle, these states were less vulnerable to the Chinese dynasties, which became increasingly defensive as their power waned. When a dynasty collapsed and China proper was fragmented, the surrounding states were essentially freed from serious security threats, although they occasionally faced massive waves of refugees from China proper that jeopardized their internal stability.

Unlike those states adjoining China proper and its contiguous territories, the Japanese state had detached itself from the Sino-centric world order thanks to its insularity and natural geographic barriers. The Japanese state had never been incorporated into an integral part of the tributary-state system nor subjected to its effective suzerainty. Certainly, Japan on several occasions adopted short-lived and nominally tributary postures *vis-à-vis* China for the sake profit-making through trade. Yet the Japanese state, by and large, did not belong to the Sino-centric order; it was merely situated on its fringe.

Under the uninterrupted reign of a single monarchy throughout its history, the Japanese retained a very strong sense of political independence *vis-à-vis* the Sino-centric world order and even mobilized necessary armed forces for defense against invasion from that world or in preparation for invasion. Although the Japanese efforts were crucial, the survival of the Japanese state was made possible, arguably, by a combination of political factors including concurrent resistance of other Asian states and ethnic forces on the peripheral regions against expansionist Chinese dynasties.

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<sup>5</sup> Alastair I. Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture And Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, Princeton University Press, 1995, p.57.

The degree of unification and centralization of the Japanese state through history shows a significant positive correlation with similar dynamics in the Sino-centric world as did other states on the Chinese periphery. When Chinese dynasties were secure and expansion-minded, the Japanese state came to bear an acute sense of crisis and met the challenges from continental Asia by centralizing political power and mobilizing military capabilities. During periods of dynastic decline, on the other hand, China's imperative to address threats on its internal frontiers minimized its opportunities to engage in adventures on its maritime frontiers. Always under the authority of a single monarchy, the Japanese state in such times operated a very de-centralized political power structure. This institutional characteristic was a result of the interplay of topography and political culture: numerous semi-autonomous political communities were physically separated by mountains and rivers across the Japanese archipelago, far away from the continent. In the ancient formative era, the archipelago remained politically fragmented since the Sino-centric world also underwent protracted fragmentation.

Three events in Japan's history around the time of these dynastic cycle turning points<sup>6</sup> capture some critical attributes of the Japanese approach to the Sino-centric world order. The first is Regent Prince Shōtoku's exploration of formal diplomatic relations with the Sui dynasty (581-619 AD). Shōtoku, who was pursuing Japanese independence and *amour propre* (self esteem), sent a diplomatic message to a Sui emperor that claimed an equal and reciprocal bilateral relationship. The second is the countrywide fortification of the Japanese state in preparation of conceivably impending invasion by the combined armed forces of the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) and the Silla monarchy (356-935 AD) situated on Korea, a military campaign that did not transpire.<sup>7</sup> The third is the successful Japanese defeat under the feudal Kamakura shogunate, of two Mongolian expeditions in 1274 and 1281 AD, followed by a protracted military mobilization against anticipated invasions by the Mongolian Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 AD). The extended sense of crisis helped the Kamakura shogunate centralize its military command, despite its origins as a local polity in the early Japanese medieval era, a period characterized by feudal interpersonal relationships and a decentralized political order.

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<sup>6</sup> Hidehiro Okada, *Chuugoku Bunmei No Rekishi* (The History of the Chinese Civilization), Tokyo: Kodansha, 2004, p.260. Okada divides Chinese history into three periods. The first period began in 221 BC with unification, by Shi Huang-di of the Qin dynasty, of what today is China proper. The first period continued some eight hundred years, ending in 589 AD with the fall of the Ch'en dynasty. The Hans had been hegemonic over this period, gradually declining after the Yellow Turban Rebellion in 184 AD which was accompanied by a massive intrusion of the northern barbarians. The second period spanned some seven hundred years, starting from 589 AD with the unification of the Sino-centric world by the Sui dynasty and ending in 1276 with the fall of the Southern Song dynasty. This period is characterized by hegemony of the Sinicized northern barbarians who identified themselves as the "Hans" and who faced a new wave of northern barbarians such as Turks, Uigurs, Tungus (including Manchus) and Mongols. The third period extended over some six hundred years, starting from 1276 with the unification of the Sino-centric world by the Mongolian Yuan dynasty and end in 1895 with the crushing defeat in the Sino-Japanese war. This period is divided into the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and the Qing dynasty (1616-1912) where the Qing succeeded in reviving a Yuan governance system of multi-ethnic unification.

<sup>7</sup> Kimiyuki Mori, *Hakusonkou Igo: Kotsu'ka Kiki To Higashi-Ajia Gaikou* (After the Hakusonkou: A National Crisis and East Asian Diplomacy), Tokyo: Kodansha, 1998.

The crisis passed, and the Yuan dynasty collapsed in the next century. The Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD), and later the Qing dynasty (1616-1911 AD) dynasty inherited the multi-ethnic Yuan governance system of unification and centralization.<sup>8</sup> These dynasties were focused on, if not satisfied with, continental expansion. Therefore, they did not endanger the survival of the Japanese state. During the Ming's rise and fall, the Japanese state was largely fragmented and occasionally unstable. In face of the Qing's rise and expansion, the feudal Tokugawa shogunate established implicit domestic hegemony. Although the pre-modern Japanese state was united at the time of the Qing's expansion, the Tokugawa retained the de-centralized shogunate system, which was comparable to pre-unification Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In sum, the way in which the Japanese state changed over these periods reflects the rise and fall of these Chinese two dynasties.

Based on this brief review one may draw several conclusions concerning the traditional Japanese state identity. First of all, it evolved as a function of the dynamics of the Sino-centric world order and crystallized into total rejection of subjugation within that order. Second, Japan was the most successful East Asian state in resisting the encroachment of external powers, which began with the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century and continued in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and other Europeans attempted to penetrate the region. The Japanese state was strong and competent enough to repel European political-military interventionists while utilizing the Europeans' knowledge, goods, and technologies, especially guns. Third, while the traditional Japanese state identity is defined primarily in terms of its response to Chinese power, the continued independence from the Sino-centric order solidified its identity as the only unique state in the region with full political orthodoxy under the allegedly uninterrupted single succession line of the imperial throne, in contrast to the numerous Chinese dynasties that had lost any link with the legendary period long before the first Chinese dynasty. Consequently, pre-modern Japan in 1867 had a state identity that was not only detached from the Sino-centric order but also untouched by it. Aside from that major feature, the state identity was essentially inward-looking.

### **III. Shifting Japanese state identities in turbulence (1868-1945): from a Western power in Asia to a non-Western, revisionist power**

With the advent of imperialism in East Asia, the Japanese state encountered unfamiliar perils wielded by imperialist Western powers, which created an imminent sense of crisis in state survival. In addition, the Sino-centric world order—upon which Japan had traditionally premised its own state identity—began a serious decline in 1842, and would collapse altogether in 1895. To confront these challenges, the Japanese state was compelled to centralize political power for achieving modernization and transformation and implementing the strategy of attaining “rich nation, strong army.” Concurrently, the state also was impelled to redefine its identity in a manner to enable its participation as a

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<sup>8</sup> The Yuan dynasty was simply a small part of the Eurasian-wide Mongolian empire. The empire completely colonized the Sino-centric world, and the Mongolians were never Sinicized. The empire remained active for some 130 years as the Northern Yuan dynasty (1368 -1634) even after it had fled to the Mongolian heights.



full-fledged player in the global inter-state system that had originated with the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. This redefinition involved a radical shift from the traditional Japanese state identity to an embodiment of a modern, Western (initially, Westernized) state after the 1868 Meiji Restoration.

The debilitation and ensuing collapse of the Sino-centric order reinforced Japan's need for a renewed state identity. Already in decline, the Qing dynasty suffered a miserable discomfiture at the hands of the British Empire in the Opium War (1840-1842). Subsequently, major imperialist powers encroached on the Qing's Sino-centric order, extracting territorial and non-territorial concessions. The Japanese state joined the predatory game as the last entrant, but eventually reached for the lion's share. The milestone was the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Treaty of Shimonoseki that delivered the final, fatal blow to not only the Qing but also the Sino-centric order *per se*. The Yi monarchy in Korea, which constituted the last integral part of the tributary system, was stripped from China's orbit. Without any tributary states, the Sino-centric order by definition simply ceased to exist.<sup>9</sup>

With the breakdown of the Sino-centric system, the Japanese state began to exercise its power and influence to transform the former Sino-centric world into a peripheral part of the Western inter-state system. Hidehiro Okada presents a unique socio-political conceptualization of civilization that focuses on what political order is deemed desirable. Seen from this approach, Japanese civilization is starkly heterogeneous compared to Chinese civilization, given that the former had been oriented to fragmentation and decentralization while the latter had orientated itself to unification and centralization. Okada's approach is in direct contrast to the more familiar socio-cultural conception of civilization that is based on tradition, customs, manners, and languages as defining characteristics. According to the socio-cultural model, Japanese culture, although recognized as highly sophisticated and unique, is often considered as a derivative of Chinese civilization. However, from Okada's perspective, Chinese civilization came into existence with the birth of the Sino-centric world order through unification in 221 BC by Shi Huang-di of the Qin dynasty, and ceased to exist after the 1895 crushing defeat of the Qing in the Sino-Japanese War. Before the Qin, Chinese civilization simply did not exist. And since 1895, the traditional Chinese civilization has been extinguished, only to be replaced with Chinese emulation of the Japanese variant of the Western civilization.<sup>10</sup>

Most critical in this change was the Japanese impact on uprooting the traditional nucleus of the Sino-centric government system: mandarin bureaucracy and traditional military. Okada emphasizes that the Chinese writing system was pivotal in maintaining the integrity of the Chinese civilization and the Sino-centric world order; it was the sole common means of communication in a civilization in which many diverse spoken dialects hindered smooth oral communication. After 1895, China significantly transformed the traditional Chinese language system and chose to introduce large new

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<sup>9</sup> Korea under the Yi existed as a sovereign independent state briefly from the 1895 independence to the 1910 annexation by Japan; the Yi increasingly lost its substantial sovereignty in the later half of this period.

<sup>10</sup> Hidehiro Okada, *Chuugoku Bunmei No Rekishi*, *op.cit.*, p.250.

Japanese-made vocabularies using Chinese characters that had crowded out traditional and local vocabularies from social and natural sciences. Only by relying on these vocabularies could China explore modernization and Westernization. As a result, the Qing dynasty could not but abolish the traditional Chinese civil service examination system on the grounds that it only required thorough mastery of Chinese classics and classical rhetoric, knowledge that had lost its utility. With the modern Chinese language so metamorphosed, Chinese history lost its uniqueness and was incorporated into a Japan-centered East Asia history as an integral part of world history. Okada also stresses the comprehensive Japanization of the post-1895 Qing army and the post-1912 early Republican army, in which the core officer corps received extensive education and training at the Imperial Japanese Army Academy.

From Okada's perspective, no unique Chinese civilization has existed since 1895; instead the "Japanization" of China has continued with one period of interruption (from the 1945 Japanese defeat in the Second World War to the 1978 normalization of Sino-Japanese relations). Okada emphasizes that the Chinese identity since 1895 has been shaped by Japanese civilization, and that the Chinese national consciousness has emerged in response to Japanization pressures and resistance against these pressures.<sup>11</sup>

With its new identity as a Western power situated in East Asia, the Japanese state strived in vain to manage the rapidly disintegrating political sphere that used to be the Sino-centric world.<sup>12</sup> Japan, perhaps, was most vulnerable to this disintegration due to its geographic proximity and new outward-looking identity: it had growing economic interests in the sphere such as trade, investment, an increasing number of Japanese residents there, and the growing potential threat of massive refugee flows from China proper to Taiwan (a new Japanese colony), and even the main archipelago, jeopardized internal stability. Thus the Japanese state frequently interfered in the region's internal politics and even intervened militarily in the hope of controlling instability and disorder there.<sup>13</sup> Japan's early unilateralist approach to managing regional instability was exemplified by the Twenty-One Demands it presented to the fledgling Chinese government in 1915.

In the 1920s, the Japanese state adopted a more multilateralist approach and tried, futilely, to manage the peaking post-Qing instability and repercussions by relying on the U.S.-led Washington Treaty system,<sup>14</sup> a cooperative arrangement designed to create and

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<sup>11</sup> Okada, *Ibid.*, pp.250-263.

<sup>12</sup> For Japanese efforts in foreign policy, see, Arthur Waldron, ed., *How the Peace Was Lost: The 1935 Memorandum "Development Affecting American Policy in the Far East,"* prepared for the State Department by Ambassador John Van Antwerp MacMurray, Hoover Archival Documentaries, Hoover Institution Press, 1992. For Japanese interference and intervention *vis-à-vis* China, see Ryouichi Tobe, *Nihon-Rikugun To Chuugoku: Shina-tsu Ni Miru Yume To Satetsu* (The Imperial Japanese Army and China: Dream and Fiasco of the China Hands), Tokyo: Kodansha, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Ralph Townsend, *Ways That Are Dark: The Truth about China*, New York: G.P. Putnam, 1939; Kiyoshi Karl Kawakami, *Japan in China: Her Motives and Aims*, London: J. Murray, 1938.

<sup>14</sup> The system consisted of a cluster of treaties and agreements on the Far East centered on the China question. They offered necessary foundations and conditions for a naval arms control agreement among the United States, the Great Britain, Japan, France and Italy

maintain a regional order that would manage the China question. All the parties agreed to respect the territorial integrity of China and to carry out phased abolition of their imperialist or semi-colonial interests and privileges there. Tokyo hoped that this system could serve as the main pillar of Japan's foreign and security policy, in place of the recently abrogated Anglo-Japan alliance. This new multilateral approach blocked Tokyo from taking unilateral measures to preserve its interests and privileges in China.

But the imagined new regional order existed only on paper, and the situation continued to worsen for several decades, until the People's Republic of China was established in 1949. The U.S. administrations after the First World War were increasingly susceptible to prevailing pacifist and anti-imperialist public sentiment. The United States had few interests at stake in East Asia and lacked a consistent strategic approach to the China question. These realities seriously constrained the U.S. political leadership as well as the diplomatic establishment. As a result, Washington undertook frequent verbal interferences, but never threatened the use of force to preserve the Washington Treaty system.<sup>15</sup> A concert of great powers in East Asia never materialized.

Having failed to secure its vital security interests through the Washington Treaty system, the Japanese state gradually broke away from the system and reluctantly marched on an independent, revisionist path that challenged the Western imperialist order and eventuated in a showdown with the established great powers, particularly the United States. Tokyo initially sought the establishment of a Japan-centered open East Asian economic order coexistent with the Western inter-state system. Toshikazu Inoue depicts how Tokyo explored such an open regional economic order in the 1930s when exclusive economic blocs had spread world-wide. In this period, the United States continued to be China's biggest trade partner, even during the protracted armed conflict between Japan and China in which Tokyo relied on trade with the United States to finance the arms imports essential for the continued fighting of the conflict.<sup>16</sup> In other words, Washington's active engagement was indispensable.

Increasingly isolated, however, Tokyo finally concluded that the Western inter-state system was essentially unjust due to imperialism, colonialism, and racism. Japan therefore attempted in vain to build a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere under its aegis, which ended in total war with the United States and national annihilation.

A leading ideologue of the period, Shumei Ohkawa, offered a rationalization for this shift in Japanese policy and a definition of the resultant state identity. Ohkawa understood that the U.S. open door policy essentially demanded U.S. participation in the reallocation of colonial interests in China,<sup>17</sup> with its focus on other imperialist powers' extraterritoriality, customs receivership, and concessions including railways and other related possessions. His understanding was in fact warranted, at least from a then-

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<sup>15</sup> Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China: A History of Sino-American Relations*, Columbia University Press, 2000, Fourth Edition; Akira Iriye, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: The Globalizing of America 1913-1945*, Vol. 3, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Toshikazu Inoue, *Ajia-Shugi Wo Toinaosu* (Rethinking Asianism), Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> The International Military Tribunal for the Far East indicted Shumei Ohkawa for Class-A war crimes.

prevailing Japanese perspective, given the evolution of the China question in U.S.-Japan relations—from John Hay’s open door notes in 1899 and 1900 to the Katsura-Harriman memorandum in 1905 to the Ishii-Lansing agreement in 1917 to President Wilson’s disapproval of special Japanese interests in China. Ohkawa considered the Japanese state to be the sole Asian leader at that time, which justified temporary Japanese forceful re-colonization of Western colonies and semi-colonies in East Asia, including China, as necessary for their subsequent political independence. However, this approach was based on an apparently contradictory combination of Asian solidarity and Japanese exceptionalism. He also defended Japan’s war against the United States on the grounds that hegemonic U.S. policy had rejected Japan’s vital interests, particularly its legitimate vested interests in China, and that Japan would be forced to be a U.S. protectorate or a semi-colony if it continuously compromised with the United States without fighting back. In sum, Ohkawa’s ideology was constructed on the pre-1945 Japanese state identity, a non-Western revisionist power—an identity aimed to deconstruct, not to reverse, the Western colonial relationship of the ruling and the ruled.<sup>18</sup>

Grounded upon the above compendious analysis, one may gather that Tokyo’s quest for an open regional order collapsed not because Japan failed to effectively challenge Washington for regional hegemony but because it failed to anchor Washington to East Asia, particularly with respect to Sino-Japanese relations.

During the turbulence of 1868-1945, the Japanese state underwent a major identity shift from being a Western power situated in East Asia to a non-Western power that led East Asia to reject the Western inter-state system. It should be noted that Tokyo preferred the former state identity and chose the latter only when it came to believe that it had no other options.

#### **IV. Competing Japanese state identities during the Cold War, and their legacies**

Since the 1945 defeat and subsequent occupation primarily by the United States, the Japanese state identity has been so internally conflicted that Tokyo has never regained the great-power status essential to participate in the management of the power structure of the Western inter-state system, instead resigning itself to a probationary status devoid of any independent foreign and security policy. New international conditions temporarily freed Japan from the traditional dynamics of its state identity formation. At the international level, it was the Soviet Union—not China—that posed a serious existential threat to Japan. Post-1949 China did not pose a threat due to its domestic instability and exclusively internal orientation, as symbolized by the failed Great Leap Forward (1958-62) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). At the domestic level, a U.S.-drafted pacifist constitution, stipulating the renunciation of war in principle and the right of belligerency in particular, was imposed upon the Japanese state.

Tokyo has been unable to amend its constitution due to both the procedural impediments built into the constitution, and to persistently bipolarized public opinion on

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<sup>18</sup> Shumei Ohkawa, *Bei-Ei Toua Shinryaku-Shi* (The History of U.S. and British Aggression in Asia), Tokyo: Daiichi Shobo, 1942.

foreign and security policy that contemporaneously aspires to great-power autonomy and to pacifism.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Japan faced competing state identities during the Cold War and it could not fully adopt either one. The bipolar international system deprived Japan of both a great power's freedom of international action and the neutrality essential for genuine pacifism; it could neither participate as an independent nation within the system nor opt out of the system in defiance against the United States and the Soviet Union. The ambiguity of Japan's state identity made it impossible for the Japanese state to recapture the integrity of historical outlook and value-system of a great-power that is a prerequisite to articulating foreign and security policy and for exercising unilateral use of military power, if necessary.

Rather, Tokyo accepted U.S. hegemony, and became the junior partner in a bilateral alliance. It therefore possessed modest armed forces in size, although it has progressively been equipped with high-tech weaponry that is either U.S.-produced, U.S.-licensed, or U.S.-derived. In order to not challenge U.S. predominance, Tokyo has restrained itself from acquiring major power projection capabilities, to say nothing of nuclear weapons. During the Cold War, the Japanese state was arguably a U.S. protectorate; it was a civilian power but not a conventional great military power. Tokyo accepted this role in the U.S.-dominated Western inter-state system and has exploited the system to the maximum to attain Japan's reconstruction and development, a vital national interest defined primarily in economic terms. Indeed, Japan's peaceful resurgence as a great civilian power possessing economic and technological prowess that is arguably second only to the United States. This limited role precluded a negative spiral of arms races in East Asia, but the resulting economic strength creates long-term political implications for military capability and potential.

Currently, however, the Japanese state is an economic giant but remains a political dwarf. Even though it has attained the potential to be a great power, Tokyo has in fact pursued a niche-diplomacy typical of a middle-power and consistent with the bilateral alliance with the United States.<sup>20</sup> It has declared its intention to pursue a U.N.-centered, Asian-oriented, autonomous approach with Japan playing the role of an "economic great power." Within this role, Tokyo has adroitly exploited the common and divergent interests of great powers to make its foreign policy more proactive and autonomous. In the 1970s, for example, Japan took advantage of the international context—which included the Sino-Soviet split, Soviet-U.S. détente, and Sino-U.S. rapprochement—to normalize relations with China, develop an entente with South Korea, and, achieve rapprochement with Southeast Asian countries. When it practices this kind of veiled niche-diplomacy, Tokyo only reinforces the seriously bipolarized nature of domestic public opinion about Japan's state identity.

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<sup>19</sup> Extreme was the idea of unarmed neutrality long advocated by Masahi Ishibashi, Head of the Japan Socialist Party (1983-1987), the largest opposition party in Japan during the Cold War period. In the context of the Cold War, the idea hardly made practical sense without a U.S. security assurance to Japan as its *de facto* protectorate. See, Masashi Ishibashi, *Hibusou-Churitsuron* (On Unarmed Neutrality), Tokyo: Japan Socialist Party Press, 1980.

<sup>20</sup> For example, see Yoshihide Soeya, "Japan's Dual Identity and the U.S.-Japan Alliance," Stanford University Asia/Pacific Research Center, May 1998.

Domestic controversy further intensified in the 1980s when Washington pressed Tokyo to undertake a much higher level of economic and military burden-sharing to buttress the then-economically weakened U.S. hegemony under which the Japanese state prospered. Tokyo would appear to lose autonomy if it simply paid the U.S. “levy,” and to contravene the pacifist constitution if it readily fought hand in hand with the United States, or exercised the right of collective self-defense. Japanese politicians and thinkers promoted two diametrically opposed concepts of state identity to justify a new activism: the Japanese state as a “global civilian power” and as a “normal state.” A leading Japanese liberal journalist, Yoichi Funabashi, argued that Japan should be a global civilian power focused exclusively on non-military civilian contributions to international society without becoming a conventional great power. Funabashi did not envision Japan as a conventional great power, and disagreed with any use of military instruments, including active participation in U.N. peace-keeping and/or peace-enforcement operation.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, conservative Japanese political leader Ichiro Ozawa insisted that Japan must be a “normal state” that resolutely takes part in such U.N. operations, while distinguishing the concept from a conventional great power by refusing to exercise the right of collective self-defense and only endorsing those military operations under the aegis of the United Nations.<sup>22</sup>

Due to the effects of the persistent internal conflict in terms of state identity,<sup>23</sup> Tokyo has been obliged to contain itself to the discourse based on pacifist tenets and doctrines on foreign and security policy. Tokyo’s decision-makers and policy intellectuals employ pacifist symbols and symbolic strategies in order to secure legitimacy and portray a sense of competency. The self-contained pacifist discourse occurs on the symbolic and rhetorical levels, but is divorced from the world of policy challenges and policy choices. Yet the pacifist discourse is vulnerable to a protracted sense of crisis engendered by imminent threat perceptions, and will ultimately break down if overwhelming realities and challenges impose themselves on the state. In sum, the durability of the self-contained pacifist discourse in Japan is a function of the international security environment. This arrangement was very stable during the Cold War period and for a while after, when it was understood that the United States would bear Japan’s security burden. But now the Japanese state faces new global and regional security challenges.

After the September 11, 2001, attack against the United States, Japan extended meaningful military support to the U.S. global war on terrorism and U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, primarily in the form of Japan’s Self Defense Force’s logistical and rear-area support and humanitarian assistance, which fall short of exercising the right of collective self-defense. Over the last decade, Japan has been exposed to a growing threat from North Korea and its rudimentary nuclear weapons capability, as demonstrated by Pyongyang’s diplomatic brinkmanship, a series of

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<sup>21</sup> Yoichi Funabashi, *Nihon Senryaku Sengen* (Japan’s International Agenda), Tokyo: Kodansha, 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Ichiro Ozawa, *Nihon Kaizou Keikaku* (Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation), Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993.

<sup>23</sup> For example, see, Thomas U. Berger, “From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan’s Culture of Anti-militarism,” *International Security*, Vol. 17, No.4, spring 1993.

ballistic missile tests, and a nuclear explosion test in October 2006. Furthermore, Japan faces a growing potential threat from China due to its rapid, non-transparent military buildup and modernization, as well as the Chinese navy's submarine intrusion into Japanese territorial waters, the Chinese navy's extensive underwater exploration in Japanese exclusive economic zones, anti-satellite weapon tests, and continued increase of ballistic missiles targeting Taiwan.

Under lingering pacifist premises, Tokyo remains subject to the existing pacifist legal and constitutional arrangements that prohibit it from exercising the right of collective self-defense with the United States. Increasingly, these overly pacifist obligations have straitjacketed Japan's foreign and security policy. Tokyo has already reached to the outer limits of legal maneuvering in favor of the United States, the author of the pacifist constitution which now favors a more robust Japanese role in regional and global security. Nudged by Washington,<sup>24</sup> Tokyo has seriously explored avenues for constitutional amendment.<sup>25</sup>

Tokyo also has loosened two self-imposed policy restrictions that are non-legal corollaries of the pacifist legal arrangements: the exceedingly strict Three Principles of Arms Export was modified in a way to permit U.S. access to Japanese military technologies and products, and the rigid Diet resolution on the peaceful use of outer space is about to be placed on the legislative agenda for revision that would endorse the acquisition and deployment of state-of-the-art military surveillance and intelligence satellites.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the Koizumi administration (2001-06) achieved unusually swift and extensive passage of sweeping extensive security-related legislation and dispatched Japan's armed forces to the Indian Ocean and Iraq to support the U.S. global war on terrorism. Most critical is the rapidly deepening integration of the U.S. and Japanese command and control systems, driven by the development of parallel theater missile defense systems in which the two militaries share and exchange real-time electronic data. As a result, the integration is increasingly blurring the line where collective self-defense starts and ends.

Based on the above analysis, one might conclude that through the Cold War and the post-Cold War periods, the Japanese state identity has been a function of U.S. hegemony, and lacking consistency, integrity, and unity. Owing to such a dysfunctional integration of the state identity, Japan has so far been ensnared in an excessively bipolarized debate, featuring bipolarized polemics from autonomy-oriented and pacifism-

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<sup>24</sup> "The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward A Mature Partnership," INSS Special Report, *Strategic Forum*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, October 11, 2000;

<sup>25</sup> Rust Deming, "Japan's Constitution and Defense Policy: Entering New Era?" *Strategic Forum*, No. 213, November 2004.

<sup>26</sup> This is an overdue policy change essential to upgrade the current low-resolution satellite programs that Tokyo abruptly deployed after North Korea launched a Taepodong missile over the Japanese archipelago in 1998. January 25, 2006, the Special Policy Committee on Space Development of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's Policy Research Council adopted a decision to revise the 1969 Diet resolution on the peaceful use of outer space. With its overwhelming majority in the Lower House and its majority with the coalition partner, the Komei Party, in the Upper House, the LDP will soon introduce the proposed revision of the resolution to the Diet deliberation process.

oriented approaches and their multiple derivatives and hybrids. Roles such as Gaullist great power, semi-neorealist “normal state,” mercantilist global economic power, multilateralist middle power, and internationalist global civilian power have been fought over by various combatants in the battle to define Japan’s state identity.

This battle is reaching a crucial stage, and the Japanese state is entering a self-redefining moment. It remains fettered by its historical legacy—its internally conflicted identity in general and its self-contained pacifist discourse in particular. These fetters, however, may break abruptly if the state should confront an acute security shock, or may unexpectedly fall apart if the state should face a chronic security peril. It is impossible to predict when such a transformation may occur, and what a renewed state identity would be like. Yet, one can derive an exhaustive list of Japan’s geo-strategic options, based upon the Japanese macro-historical geo-strategic experience, and rank them in order of preference.

## **V. The rise of China and Japan’s strategic options**

### **1. Two independent variables of regional order: Japan’s response to U.S. power and U.S. strategic orientation versus Japan’s response to China’s power and China’s strategic orientation**

Japanese macro-historical geo-strategic experience suggests two independent sources for determining Japan’s geo-strategic behavior: China and the United States. To be more specific, the two axes of determining Japan’s behavior are (1) Japan’s response to U.S. power and its strategic orientation and (2) Japan’s response to China’s power and its strategic orientation. These two factors shape the regional power structure and hence Japan’s geo-strategic calculations as the basis of its geo-strategic choice and behavior. This comprehensive approach is in sharp contrast to a comparative foreign/security policy analysis focusing on a single country, as exemplified by a recent article by Richard J. Samuels, “Japan’s Goldilocks Strategy,” published in *The Washington Quarterly* in autumn 2006.<sup>27</sup> In his study, Samuels examines the post-war evolution of Japan’s security strategy, tracing major contemporary discussions of Japan’s strategic options among Japanese policy and intellectual circles. Then he concludes that Japan will most likely take a comprehensive risk-hedging strategy while retaining major features of the current mainstream strategic thinking: light armament and bilateral alliance with the United States. He states:

Japan’s repositioning will not be linear. A new consensus will depend on the selection and construction of a national identity, whether Japan comes to see itself as a great or middle power and whether it will define its role in regional or global terms. It will depend also on shifting balances of power, particularly between China and the United States. Above all, it will depend on the way Tokyo opts to balance its need to hedge risk against its chance to optimize for gain. Japan may never again be as central to world affairs as it was in the 1930s nor as

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<sup>27</sup> Samuels, *op. cit.*



marginal to world affairs as it was during the Cold War, but once revisionism has run its course and once necessary accommodations are made in its economic diplomacy, Japan will have constructed for itself a post-Yoshida policy space in which it can be selectively pivotal. ... It will be normal. It will hedge. ... Japan will be neither too close to China nor too far from the United States.<sup>28</sup>

But Samuels's elegant analysis is only a partial success on the grounds that his two independent variables are (1) Japan's response to U.S. power and its strategic orientation and (2) Japanese willingness to use military power. As a result, Samuels takes the stability of U.S. hegemony as a given, while Japan's response to China's power and its strategic orientation is not evaluated as an independent variable. His selection of variables leads to a static analysis that captures some major characteristics of the ongoing policy discourse in Japan, driven by the bipolar dilemma of great-power autonomy *versus* pacifism. His analysis presumes that the discourse, if it takes place under a skilled leadership, will reach a viable consensus through a gradual fine-tuning process. His approach assumes no swift, drastic changes in the regional security environment that would pose serious threats to Japan. The assumption that takes the security environment as a constant may or may not hold. However, Samuels presumes that Japan's niche-diplomacy, typical of a middle power, is unshakable or least at least highly durable, given that the so-called Yoshida doctrine has been so firmly institutionalized.

In addition, "Japanese willingness to use military power," is not a proper independent variable but instead must be treated either as a dummy variable for Japan's security environment or a variable serially correlated over time with a number of factors such as Japan's wealth and technological power. In Samuels's reasoning, for instance, it is impossible to specify why the Japanese state has followed a mercantilist approach. The state may do so to obtain purely economic gains or to build political leadership *via* economic and related soft-power measures or to beef up its economic power in pursuit of military power. In this regard, Samuels's approach is insufficient to characterize the nature of a potential East Asian Community to be developed, either as a community based on a common identity or an economically integrated system with a single currency unit or a tightly interwoven network of production and distribution.

Conversely, Samuels's approach fails to offer a dynamic analysis that captures possible patterns of the regional power-structure, such as U.S.-centered, China-centered, Japan-centered, bipolar, or multi-polar. Nor does his static analysis explain under what conditions Japan will continue or abandon its strategic dependence on the U.S.-Japan alliance. Nor does his analysis take into account of the potentially dynamic levels of constraints on Japan's strategic dependence that may bring about a dramatic shift of Japan's geo-strategic behavior. Japan's distancing from (or embracing of) the United States is not the sole determinant of its strategy. On the contrary, Japan's strategy is defined by a combination of its assessments of the roles to be played independently by the United States and China. What Japan does with respect to China is not just the opposite of its approach to the United States, as Samuels implies. He takes the post-1945 *status quo* for granted, without considering the changing patterns of regional security

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<sup>28</sup> Samuels, *op. cit.*, pp.124-125.

order before and after the advent of Western powers in East Asia. Samuels's static analysis may be included as a special case within the dynamic macro-historical geo-strategic analysis explored in this study, reaching a similar conclusion under his specific set of geo-strategic conditions.

Samuels may have settled on this framework because he uses the two dichotomies of great power *versus* middle power and a nuclear, independent Japan *versus* a non-nuclear Japan under the U.S. nuclear umbrella. In light of various indicators, such as GNP, population size, and strategic depth, Japan cannot rival other great powers, but it surpasses middle powers. It stands somewhere between a middle power and a great power. Thus, reflecting solely on these internal structural indicators will not enable Japan to determine its state identity and, in turn, influence its geo-strategic choices. Instead, in the reverse, Japan's decision on its military-strategic role as well as its development of military power to fulfill such a role will determine its state identity—a great-power or otherwise.

At this juncture, it is critically important to examine the possibility that Japan will continue to hold such an in-between status and develop a small nuclear arsenal. In fact, the nuclear armament issue is already under active debate in Japanese political, policy, and intellectual circles, due to the recent North Korean missile tests and the October 2006 nuclear test; this debate exists despite the taboo in post-war, pacifist Japan and the current absence of the issue from the official government agenda. The growing potential threat from China, especially the modernization of China's nuclear arsenal, has occasionally intensified the debate. If the U.S. nuclear umbrella should be found porous, and hence ineffectual in deterring China from attacking Japan with conventional weaponry, the Japanese state may choose limited nuclearization just as the United Kingdom and Israel have done in a way that does not challenge U.S. nuclear supremacy at the strategic level.

The following analysis will investigate the possible future power structures in East Asia, with the focus on U.S. power relative to China, and will explore Japan's geo-strategic options and policy choices for each possible structure.

## **2. Logical and practical possibilities**

Japan's strategic approach to the United States will vary according to U.S. power and strategic orientation: political-military predominance (strong hegemony), dominance (weak hegemony), or loss of hegemony. Similarly, Japan's response to China will vary in accordance with China's power and its strategic orientation: a strong revisionist power, a resilient *status quo* power, or a debilitated internally-oriented power. The two sets of variables will make up a three-by-three matrix.

However, the following analysis will not consider the scenario in which China is debilitated and internally-oriented. This scenario is unlikely for the foreseeable future, due to China's continuing robust economic growth. Given serious socio-economic

bottlenecks for growth and development, however, there is growing potential for domestic social unrest and instability.<sup>29</sup>

Neither will the current study focus on a scenario in which China is a resilient *status quo* power. Theoretically, this scenario suggests that China may be somehow satisfied with the international and regional *status quo* and remain resilient even under the Communist dictatorship, opting to pursue a concert of power with the United States and Japan. In this rosy scenario, China would play a secondary role in conjunction with Japan and a strong, hegemonic United States. If the United States were to decline in power or to lose its hegemony outright, China would still strive to maintain the extant norms and rules of the liberal democratic international order while sharing international and regional leadership roles in concert with Japan and a debilitated United States.

The above scenario is improbable because history shows that a rapidly rising power tends to challenge a dominant power in international power transitions,<sup>30</sup> and because a democratizing authoritarian state is prone to taking a revisionist external policy by manipulating nationalist sentiments at home, thereby diverting growing popular discontent with its authoritarian rule to such an external policy.<sup>31</sup>

Certainly, as Alastair Iain Johnston discusses,<sup>32</sup> some current facts suggest China's potential to be an accommodationist power, rather than a revisionist power. However, such an assessment of China's strategic intentions at the present does not at all preclude the widely-accepted relevancy of a U.S.-Japan hedging strategy *vis-à-vis* China given uncertainty as to China's future intentions and capabilities. Johnston follows a micro-level sociological approach to a negative spiral of interactive threat perceptions among the United States, Japan, and China, which he warns would transform an undecided China into a committed foe. Johnson's rationalist, *a*-historical and static analysis also cautions against relying unduly on historical analogies or the worst case scenario (China's pursuit of a revived Sino-centric order).

The Japanese macro-historical geo-strategic experience has demonstrated that Johnston's worst case scenario is in fact a reasonably worrisome possibility, if not a probability: a macro-historical dynamic is more than a historical analogy. This is because the dynamic is embedded in a durable configuration of various factors, including China's geography, topography, ethnic composition, and the political culture that involves its approaches to the outside world, particularly to the peripheral regions. Seen from this perspective, as long as a similar configuration of factors exists, China will have a strong propensity to repeat or at least try to repeat the behavioral pattern. The macro-historical

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<sup>29</sup> Friedrich Wu, "What Could Brake China's Rapid Ascent in the World Economy," *World Economics*, Vol. 7, No. 3, July-September 2006.

<sup>30</sup> For the power transition theory, see A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kulger, *The War Ledger*, University of Chicago, 1980.

<sup>31</sup> For the democratic transition theory, see, Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War," *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Spring 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, "Beijing's Security Behavior in the Asia-Pacific: Is China a Dissatisfied Power?" in J.J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carlson, ed., *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power and Efficiency*, Stanford University Press, 2004.

approach in this study is thus dynamic and *non-rationalist* (or historicist) with regard to the understanding of historical dynamics as the initial condition. Based on a macro-historical perspective, this study will employ a realist calculation in that context.

For practical purposes, therefore, the following analysis will concentrate on the combination of a strong revisionist China with the three scenarios of U.S. power and its strategic orientation. Accordingly, as Table 1: Japan's Strategic Options shows, this study will use two independent variables: (1) Japan's response to the future of U.S. hegemony in East Asia and (2) Japan's response to China's rise. To make the discussion analytical, the first variable is divided into three stages: strong hegemony, weakened hegemony and loss of hegemony. When the United States retains hegemony, either strong or weakened, Japan is assumed to bandwagon with a hegemonic United States and to choose continuation of the U.S.-Japan alliance with different degrees of freedom of its external action, rather than to challenge the hegemon. Conversely, if the United States loses hegemony, Japan is expected to abrogate the alliance.

The second variable is broken down into two choices for Japan: (1) distancing from a strong China which includes options to resist or prepare for resisting China and (2) embracing a strong China.

Table 1: Japan's Strategic Options

Japan's Response to the U.S. Hegemony	Continuing the U.S.-Japan Alliance		Abrogating the U.S.-Japan Alliance
	Hegemony	Weakened Hegemony	Loss of Hegemony
Distancing from a strong China	A <i>(second choice)</i>	C <i>(third choice)</i>	E <i>(first choice)</i>
Embracing a strong China	B <i>(first choice)</i>	D <i>(fourth choice)</i>	F <i>(fifth choice)</i>

Table 1 consists of three columns multiplied by two rows. These combinations are:

- (A) bandwagoning with a strong U.S. hegemon by continuing the U.S.-Japan alliance and distancing from a strong China;
- (B) bandwagoning with a strong U.S. hegemon and embracing a strong China;
- (C) bandwagoning with a weakened U.S. hegemon by continuing the U.S.-Japan alliance and distancing from a strong China;
- (D) bandwagoning with a weakened U.S. hegemon by continuing the U.S.-Japan alliance and embracing a strong China;
- (E) breaking from a former U.S. hegemon by abrogating the U.S.-Japan alliance and distancing from a strong China;
- (F) breaking from a former U.S. hegemon by abrogating the U.S.-Japan alliance and embracing a strong China.

The following analysis elucidates each of the six possible power relationships between the United States, China, and Japan, and elaborates on feasible geo-strategic options for Japan, adducing some major historical precedents of its “balancing” and “bandwagoning” *vis-a-vis* the United States and China and the ongoing discourse on those options now held in Japan.

### 3. Japan’s five options

#### Option A: Continuing the U.S.-Japan alliance under strong U.S. hegemony, and distancing from a strong China

The first power relationship involves Japan’s full bandwagoning with the United States and strong balancing against China. In such a relationship, Japan would be severely subjected to U.S. hegemonic policy against China in not only foreign and security policy but also economic policy, and would have little freedom of geo-strategic action while enjoying U.S. security protection from Chinese threats. In this environment, the United States would be predominant and, therefore, possess both the ability and willingness to effectively meet any Chinese challenge. Japan would not be allowed to have any independent military capabilities of a magnitude that could challenge U.S. military supremacy, such as nuclear weapons and major power projection capabilities, and instead would carry out its own limited military buildup in response to U.S. pressure or with U.S. consent. Even former prime minister Yasuhiro Nakasone (1982-87), known as one of the most conservative nationalists, consistently advocated a Japan with significant conventional military capabilities, evidently modeled after the United Kingdom or France, yet without any nuclear arsenals. In essence, the United States would only permit Japan to play a supplementary role in logistical and rear-area supports, not a complementary role in major combat operations. The notable exception in the Cold War period was Japan’s anti-submarine warfare capabilities to complement U.S. roles.

The first power relationship is comparable to the U.S.-Japan alliance *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union, and Japan’s strategic options would be similar to those available during the Cold War period, because the self-contained pacifist discourse in Japan would most likely continue to weigh ponderously on discussions about state identity. Tokyo would continue to pursue typical middle power niche-diplomacy consistent with U.S. hegemony, while striving to enhance its economic and technological power and thereby military potential. Tokyo would be less interested in becoming an active military power, and instead might be satisfied to develop into Ozawa’s “normal state” by expanding its security role in humanitarian, peace-keeping, and possibly peace-enforcement operations, particularly those under the aegis of the United Nations.

Under this power structure, an East Asian Community must be a regional subsystem of the U.S. hegemonic system and, therefore, must include the United States as *de facto* leading member state, despite its outsider status; Japan would play only a secondary leadership role, serving as the hub to other U.S. regional allies. A corollary of such a community is a Free Trade Agreement of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) that

Washington has promoted through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The community would be an economic expression of the U.S. regional security mechanism, serving to engage and, if necessary, contain China's economic power. This is because China remains undemocratic under a communist dictatorship and does not share common values, such as freedom, democracy, and free market, on which all of East Asia could build a genuine regional community comparable to the European Union.

The protracted military counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have weakened U.S. hegemony, perhaps significantly, due to the substantial expenditures on the conflicts and domestic public opinion that is increasingly anti-war. Concurrently, the United States has gradually experienced substantial relative economic decline *vis-à-vis* the expanding European Union (with the Euro as a key alternative currency) and the newly emerging Brazilian, Russian, Indian, and Chinese (BRIC) economies. The first power relationship is a strategic environment congenial to the self-contained pacifist discourse but, as current trends indicate, is an unlikely scenario even though revitalization of U.S. hegemony may not be impossible over the long term.

Option B: Continuing the alliance under strong U.S. hegemony, and embracing a strong China.

This combination is in fact not an option, as it implies that Japan would be under a Sino-American condominium. Given that the existing U.S.-Japan alliance is integral to the U.S. hegemonic system, such a situation is not practical. A strong U.S. hegemony precludes Japan's embrace of a strong China that may challenge the U.S. hegemony. Japan possesses geo-strategic value too great for the United States to relinquish. China's challenge to U.S. hegemony would be formidable if it could utilize Japan's economic, industrial, technological, and limited but significant military capabilities as well as military bases and facilities. This judgment is reinforced by the fact that the U.S.-Japan alliance is based on values of freedom and democracy while China remains undemocratic under a communist regime.

Option C: Continuing the alliance under weakened U.S. hegemony, and distancing from a strong China

The second possible power relationship entails Japan's full bandwagoning with a weaker United States—primarily in security policy—and strong balancing against China. Under this scenario, Japan must support the U.S. hegemony without challenging U.S. military predominance on the grounds that the United States would be fully willing yet only marginally able to effectively meet China's challenges. In this relationship, therefore, Japan would be able to perform its own significant military buildup in response to U.S. pressure or with U.S. consent, and to enjoy a noticeably higher level of freedom of action in foreign, security and economic policies. More specifically, the United States would press Japan to acquire limited power projection capabilities and, as the U.S. hegemony underwent further relative decline, to develop significant projection capabilities such as surgical strike capabilities and aircraft carriers as well as strategic air- and sea-lift capabilities. In essence, the United States would demand or accept Japan playing a major

complementary role in peacetime as well as supplementary role in combat operations, in addition to a major supplementary role in logistical and rear-area support.

Particularly noteworthy would be the changing prospects for Japan's nuclear armament under the condition of U.S. hegemonic decline. Japan must not possess strategic nuclear arsenals that would challenge U.S. nuclear superiority so long as Japan bandwagons with the United States and relies on the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Tokyo could choose limited nuclear armament as the United Kingdom and Israel have done. Such a strategic choice could entail the production and development of 100-200 tactical nuclear warheads loaded on cruise missiles that can be launched from platforms such as submarines, major surface vessels, and long-range aircraft. If the U.S. hegemony were ever seriously debilitated, Japan might be forced to develop a limited strategic nuclear arsenal of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM). Surprisingly enough, even former Prime Minister Nakasone, once an unflinching proponent of a non-nuclear Japan, now emphasizes the need to study Japan's nuclear options in case the state should face sudden abrogation of the U.S.-Japan alliance and loss of the U.S. nuclear umbrella.<sup>33</sup>

The second power relationship has already unfolded to some extent, as demonstrated by Japan's post 9-11 approach to the U.S.-Japan alliance, which includes Japanese overseas military operations in the Indian Ocean and Iraq. This changed relationship will seriously shake the self-contained pacifist discourse in a way that enables Tokyo to exercise the right of collective self-defense with the United States through modification of overly pacifist Japanese legal arrangements and, probably, constitutional amendments. The relationship will drive Tokyo to depart from the established *de facto* niche-diplomacy typical of a middle power toward conventional great-power behavior, while translating its economic and technological power into military capability. Thus Tokyo would become increasingly interested in being militarily active and less inclined to confine itself to Ozawa's "normal state" which focuses on non-combat missions and combat operations under the U.N. aegis. Yet as long as Tokyo could bandwagon with a hegemonic United States, Japan would be very cautious about going nuclear. In sum, Japan's nuclearization is a function of U.S. hegemonic decline that may range from a moderate decline to a serious debilitation.

Under this power structure, an East Asian Community could be a Japan-centered regional economic association that remains interdependent with the U.S. economy and anchored with the U.S. military hegemon. Hitoshi Tanaka, Japan's former vice-minister of foreign affairs (2002-05) once a leading government strategist, proposes an East Asian Community which includes not only the ASEAN+3 (the ASEAN member states, China, South Korea and Japan) but also India, Australia and New Zealand. The latter three states would be essential to contain China, since they would supplement the military, political, and economic power of the U.S.-Japan alliance amid declining U.S. hegemony. With such an expanded community, Tanaka veils his strategic goals to contain China, force the country to accept Western common values, particularly freedom and democracy, and eventually create a Japan-centered East Asian Community that observes Western values

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<sup>33</sup> "Kaku-Mondai No Kentou Wo (Nuclear options must be studied), *Sankei Web*, September 5, 2006 <http://www.sankei.co.jp/news/060905/sei009.htm>, accessed on September 11, 2006.

and rules.<sup>34</sup> In the 2006 ASEAN economic ministerial meeting, Toshihiro Nikai, then-Japanese Minister of Economics, Trade and Industry, announced his strong support for an East Asian Free Trade Agreement (EAFTA) based on the above expanded vision of a regional institution.

This approach is characterized by open regionalism. The United States, although an outsider, would be welcome to play an active role, and China would be included as a major member state, yet without having any strong leadership role. At its core, this strategic choice is very similar to Japan's futile attempt in the 1930s to achieve open regionalism with a strong U.S. engagement in the region.<sup>35</sup>

Option D: Continuing the alliance under weakened U.S. hegemony, and embracing a strong China

The third power relationship is characterized by Japan's full bandwagoning with the United States primarily for security reasons and partial bandwagoning with China in diplomatic and economic issue-areas. In this relationship, Japan must form an *entente* with China that is consistent with the U.S.-Japan alliance. This strategic option is inevitable if Japan should be unwilling and/or unable, while relying on U.S. security protection that would become increasingly unreliable due to a U.S. hegemonic decline, to increase its military power to a level adequate for defense against China. Then Japan would be compelled to appease China on many specific diplomatic and economic issues, on the grounds that the United States would be only interested to buttress the fundamental security framework; Japan's specific diplomatic and economic interests would not necessarily overlap those of the United States. Logically, this trilateral power relationship may evolve into an integral part of a global and/or regional concert of power. However, as long as China continues to seek the revival of a Sino-centric order, its competitive psychology will preclude this scenario.

The Sino-Japanese *entente* would most likely result from the interplay of Japan's fiscal inability to engage in an arms race and its staunch, self-contained pacifist discourse. Should the U.S. hegemony undergo a serious decline, in parallel with worsening budgetary deficits and rapid demographic changes in Japan, Tokyo might become reluctant to fill the regional power vacuum, thereby reinforcing the self-contained pacifist discourse. Then Tokyo would be less interested to be an active military power to meet China's challenge and instead choose to enter into an *entente* with China.

Under this power structure, an East Asian Community would be a China-centered regional economic association in which China plays the leadership role and shapes the regional geo-economic landscape through agenda-setting, rule-making, and business transactions. Beijing has already pursued a corollary of such a community, an East Asia Free Trade Agreement (EAFTA) that consists of the ASEAN+3 countries, but excludes India, Australia, and New Zealand. Certainly, Japan would continue to have the largest or

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<sup>34</sup> Hitoshi Tanaka and Souichiro Tahara, *Kottosuka To Gaikou* (State and Diplomacy), Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005, pp.181-189.

<sup>35</sup> Inoue, *op.cit.*



second largest (after China) national economy and to function as the chief provider of capital and technology for the Community, and as a major trade partner. Yet, with this arrangement, Japan would be unable to exercise the primary leadership role and instead would suffer from geo-economic marginalization. Practically, this strategic option would be a likely product of Beijing's current approach to regional community building.

Option E: Abrogating the alliance as a result of the end of U.S. hegemony, and distancing from a strong China

The fourth power relationship involves Japan's full balancing against both the United States and China. This relationship would require a full military buildup, including full nuclear armament across strategic and tactical levels and possession of major power projection capabilities that are commensurate with other great powers, making Japan a pole in world politics. The transformation would become feasible only after a tectonic power shift in the region disintegrates the self-contained pacifist discourse in Japan and, as a result, Tokyo becomes prepared to finance the extensive arms buildup. The sea-change also assumes that a post-hegemony United States, still possessing significant military power, would maintain off-shore balancing *vis-à-vis* Japan as well as China, and would not form a Sino-U.S. alliance against Japan. In other words, it would be essential for Tokyo to ensure that Washington would be willing to coexist with Japan and China as equals in a great-power game, perhaps even leading to a concert among them.

Under this power structure, an East Asian Community simply cannot exist, but the contemporary version of a Japan-centric East Asian Community will come into being, composed of maritime, coastal, and peninsular states in East and Southeast Asia minus China. Yet, the Community would hardly be autarkic as that of the 1930s suggests and, therefore, would not be viable without an open economic environment for trade, investment, and finance amid the geo-strategic estrangement between the United States, China, and Japan. The constraint would be all the more robust under the growing economic interdependence that characterizes contemporary economic relations.

Option F: Abrogating the alliance as a result of the end of U.S. hegemony, and embracing a strong China

The fifth power relationship entails Japan's full bandwagoning with China and full balancing against the United States. In this relationship, Japan would be unable to depend on U.S. protection *vis-à-vis* China, including the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Such a relationship would come into existence after Japan fails to carry out a rapid and sufficient arms buildup to match China's challenge, including sufficient strategic nuclear weapons. Then Japan would be incorporated into China's orbit as a *de facto* tributary state in a revived Sino-centric world order. Tokyo would lose the substantial political independence that it has enjoyed in the Western inter-state system under U.S. hegemony. Instead, Japan would find itself with little freedom of geo-strategic action, tied tightly to Beijing's balancing policy against the United States in not only foreign and security policy but also economic policy. Japan's security would be seriously degraded given that the tributary system does not necessarily involve the same high level of security

assurance guaranteed by security-treaty commitments under what Beijing may see as Western international law, such as the U.S.-Japan alliance. Neither would Beijing tolerate a Japanese arms buildup that could challenge China's domination. At the same time, Tokyo would have to face U.S. foreign and security policies that were hostile to China and its *de facto* tributary states, including Japan.

Under this power structure, an East Asian Community cannot exist; Beijing's *de facto* tributary system will prevail. In this system, Tokyo would be forced to provide Beijing with the necessary capital and technology for China's modernization and development, and to contribute to Beijing's balancing policy against the United States. On the other hand, Beijing would reinforce or reinstall the self-contained pacifist discourse in Japan, so that Tokyo would not deviate from the tributary system and challenge a revived Sino-centric order.

#### **4. Japan's preferences among the five geo-strategic options**

As shown in this study, the traditional Japanese state identity evolved out of its macro-historical geo-strategic experience with the Sino-centric world. This state identity was based on all-out rejection of subjugation to the Sino-centric world order; this was the bottom line in Japan's geo-strategic decision making. With the breakdown of that order, Japan redefined its state identity in the context of the Western inter-state system, striving to protect its vital national interests on a par with Western great powers. Japan's experience in this process was influenced primarily by its difficulties regarding how to cope with a weak, zealously nationalistic China. The modern Japanese experience after China's breakdown, both before and after 1945, demonstrates that Japan needs to maintain cooperative security relationships with the United States in general and to secure active U.S. engagement with East Asian security in particular, with a primary focus on how to counter China. The experience also presents a stark precedent in which Japan took a high risk in asserting geo-strategic independence when it was cornered and without any other option. The interactive causation of Japan's state identity and past geo-strategic choices offers a solid base to rank the five geo-strategic options discussed above.

Most preferred is Option E, in which Tokyo enjoys full sovereignty and autonomy by abrogating the bilateral alliance with the United States and distancing from China. According to realist doctrine, this will be the top choice of any state actor in the classical Western inter-state system. However, a Japan-centric regional order would be only sustainable under very specific geo-strategic and geo-economic conditions that are unlikely to materialize. In addition, in order to take necessary democratic procedures for carrying out full arms buildup, Tokyo must terminate its self-contained pacifist discourse, which induces strong inertia in Japanese strategic decision making. Option E may or may not be feasible, and involves high risks because it rests on an ideal model that exists only in textbooks.

Ranked second is Option A, in which Tokyo continues to rely on U.S. protection *vis-à-vis* China and maintains its military potential by enhancing its economic and technological power. While distancing itself from a strong China, this option will enable

Tokyo to retain its self-contained pacifist discourse. This choice prevailed in the Cold War period when Washington maintained a robust hegemony. However, the post-Cold War U.S. unipolar moment has apparently passed as a result of the quagmire in Iraq and Afghanistan, bringing about significant hegemonic decline.

Ranked third is Option C, in which Tokyo remains reliant on diminished U.S. protection *vis-à-vis* China but concurrently builds up limited military power in a manner that does not challenge declining U.S. hegemony. Japan's military buildup proceeds in an inverse relationship to U.S. hegemonic decline, subject to a dynamic fluctuation. Thus, the uncertainty about the degree and rate to which U.S. hegemony will decline will precipitate hyper-active Japanese discussion of the specific details of its necessary military buildup, raising tensions between realist strategic assessments and the self-contained pacifist discourse. It is reasonable that, assuming the international *status quo* under a gradually declining U.S. hegemony, static analyses focus on competing options of how to rationalize and fine-tune the Japanese military buildup. This approach will make sense if U.S. hegemony somehow endures for an extended period of time, but won't hold if the hegemony should become seriously debilitated or cease to exist.

Ranked fourth is Option D, in which Tokyo can barely rely on evaporating U.S. hegemony and, as a result, must appease China on many geo-economic issues that would not immediately worsen Japan's basic geo-strategic standing and vital security interests yet would involve serious encroachment upon geo-strategic interests over the long term. Also, Japan would become a marginal actor situated on the fringe of a Sino-centric East Asian Community that would exert substantial centripetal influence on other East and Southeast Asian countries. This option might accelerate China's consolidation of geo-strategic power, eventually resulting in fully-revived Sino-centric regional order. It does not fit at all with the traditional Japanese state identity and would disintegrate the self-contained pacifist discourse in Japan. Beijing would exploit such a scenario, encouraging Japan's continued decline by reinforcing the geo-strategic and geo-economic factors that forced Japan to accept this option.

Ranked fifth, or least preferred, is Option F, in which Japan totally submits to a revived Sino-centric regional order and becomes China's *de facto* tributary state. This option also completely contradicts the traditional Japanese state identity and will most likely be rejected.

Based on the above order of preference, however, Tokyo would surely choose Option E (full geo-strategic independence) despite the high risks involved, if it could no longer depend on U.S. hegemony and if its only other option were to become China's tributary state (Option F). Also, Tokyo would probably make the same choice if it was pushed into Option D (a Sino-centric East Asian Community) with the strong prospect that Beijing would establish a Sino-centric regional order (or domination) in the foreseeable future.

While Japan undertakes its geo-strategic decision according to its own power calculations and state identity, Washington could exercise significant influence in the

process in one specific area: the self-contained pacifist discourse. Washington could facilitate the debilitation of this discourse by actively informing the Japanese general public of the evolving geo-strategic imperatives that render a pacifist approach to Japan's foreign and defense policy obsolete. Alternatively, Washington could reinforce the discourse by stressing the relevancy of Japanese pacifism for the bilateral alliance. In particular, U.S. influence would be crucial if Japan had to choose between Option C and Option D, Japan's balancing or bandwagoning *vis-à-vis* China. With a well-calibrated approach, therefore, Washington, even in hegemonic decline, would be able to help consolidate Japan's renewed Western state identity, which rejects regional dominance of a strong, revisionist China.

## VI. Conclusion

This study began by demonstrating, from a macro-historical perspective, that the Japanese state identity has persistently played the pivotal role in determining Japan's geo-strategic choices. Yet, as the first and second so-called Armitage Reports show,<sup>36</sup> even relatively well-informed American Japan policy experts have consistently failed to appreciate the Japanese state identity as a decisive factor. The first report, published in 2000, focuses exclusively on strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance through specific policy proposals that involve operational and administrative details, but does not even mention the critical importance of the Japanese state identity in the context of the geo-strategic triangle of the United States, Japan, and China. Likewise, the second report, issued in 2007, stresses the strong continued relevancy of the current hedging strategy by the U.S.-Japan alliance *vis-à-vis* a rising China but fails to grasp a dynamic of the complex strategic interaction, driven by Japan's evolving state identity, involved in Japan's "bandwagoning" and "balancing" *vis-à-vis* the United States and China.

This paper has explored Japan's geo-strategic options beyond the current hedging strategy by the U.S.-Japan alliance, a strategy designed to safeguard the two countries' security during the uncertain transitional phase of China's rise. As an alternative, the study has posited a scenario in which China completes the rise to great power status without adopting Western values and rules—instead following an active, possibly aggressive, hegemonic approach toward East Asia. This approach stands in marked contrast to that of numerous studies which focus on how to manage the uncertainty inherent in transition.

Assuming a strong and aggressive China after its rise, this analysis has identified the future of U.S. hegemony as the primary determinant of Japan's geo-strategic choice-making. This is because Japan's macro-historical geo-strategic experience has shaped the traditional state identity in a manner to reject any Chinese domination over Japan and because the modern Japanese experience has shown that U.S. engagement with East Asia is essential for regional stability consistent with Japan's identity. Using the state identity

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<sup>36</sup> "The United States and Japan: Advancing toward a Mature Partnership," *op.cit.*; Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, "The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020," CSIS Report, February 2007 [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/070216\\_asia2020.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/070216_asia2020.pdf).

as the essential criterion, the study has ranked Japan's five geo-strategic options in order of preference.

The currently prevailing discourse on Japan's security policy in the United States and Japan has coincided with Option C (continuation of the U.S.-Japan alliance under a weakened U.S. hegemony and Japan's distancing from a strong China). This option is acceptable, if not most desirable, for Japan as long as Washington is able to sustain its hegemony and to offer necessary U.S. military power to secure regional stability, and as long as Japan is expected to maintain its own sufficient military forces under U.S. hegemony. Then, all that Washington and Tokyo have to agree on is the magnitude of Japan's military buildup, both in quantity and quality. Washington also should press Tokyo to address the legal obstacles to exercising its right of collective self-defense with the United States, by encouraging the weakening of the self-contained pacifist discourse in Japan. Washington also has to support a Japan-centric East Asian Community while hindering the Sino-centric counterpart.

Yet, when the sustainability of Option C is in question, Washington must debilitate the self-contained pacifist discourse and encourage Japan to develop and deploy a limited nuclear arsenal. Otherwise, given Japan's preferences, Tokyo's geo-strategic choice might swing to Option E (geo-strategic independence) that entails full nuclearization. This choice would not only bring about high economic and political costs to Tokyo but could also generate strong instability in the regional order, leading to a protracted disorder featuring arms races, armed conflicts, and, possibly, wars between Japan and China.

With the scenario of China as a strong, revisionist power in mind, American strategic planners must be aware that the rise and fall of U.S. hegemony plays the pivotal role in shaping the future East Asian security order. But policymakers must recognize that the most preferred option for Japan as well as for the United States, an option that requires strong U.S. hegemony, is no longer possible for the foreseeable future. Also, they must acknowledge that a worse option (China's regional dominance under a weakened U.S. hegemony) and the worst option (China's predominance after U.S. hegemony) will open a strategic Pandora's box for Washington and Tokyo. Thus it is imperative for American leaders to strive for the preservation of U.S. hegemony. If U.S. hegemony enters a serious and irreversible decline, Washington will have to adopt a very cautious and detailed approach in support of Japan's development and possession of power projection capabilities and nuclear weapons, and to a Japan-centered East Asian Community. Such an approach is essential to prevent Japan from taking a high risk and asserting an independent state identity and grand strategy.