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A Blueprint for a Strong Japan? Abe Shinzō and Japan's Evolving Security System

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Source: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (July/August 2015), pp. 739-765

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2015.55.4.739>

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A Blueprint for a Strong Japan?

Abe Shinzō and Japan's Evolving Security System

ABSTRACT

Abe Shinzō has pledged to “take Japan back” from its constraining postwar regime. Redesigned institutions for intelligence and security policy coordination and “proactive pacifism” have facilitated the exercise of collective self-defense and strengthened the US–Japan alliance. The evolving security system is accelerating the dilution of Japan’s pacifist norms.

KEYWORDS: Abe Shinzō, collective self-defense, Japanese national security, US–Japan alliance, proactive pacifism

INTRODUCTION

In 1993 the former Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Ōzawa Ichirō published a highly anticipated book entitled *Nihon Kaizō Keikaku* (A Blueprint for a New Japan), setting the stage for a debate on Japan’s post–Cold War national security policy.¹ The debate was a response to Tokyo’s passive role in resolving the 1990 Gulf crisis. As a multinational force intervened in Iraq’s invasion and annexation of Kuwait, Japan could “only” provide a USD 13 billion donation in support of the coalition forces led by the US. Despite this large-scale financial support, Tokyo’s “checkbook diplomacy” was dismissed as insignificant. Japan was portrayed as a passive and reactive state, prioritizing its economic interests while free-riding on the security guarantees provided by Washington. Focusing on the policy changes that evolved in the wake of this criticism, the question of whether Tokyo

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1. Ōzawa Ichirō, *Nihon Kaizō Keikaku* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993).

Asian Survey, Vol. 55, Number 4, pp. 739–765. ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X. © 2015 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press’s Reprints and Permissions web page, <http://www.ucpress.edu/journals.php?p=reprints>. DOI:10.1525/AS.2015.55.4.739.

would embark or already had embarked on a reform course toward an enhanced international role, including the deployment of military force, has dominated the academic discourse on the robustness of and change in Japan's security institutions.²

The return of Abe Shinzō as LDP prime minister in December 2012 produced further changes in Japan's security system, and thus provides new evidence on the dilution of the country's postwar pacifist norms that had constrained the exercise of military power and Japan's role as a more reliable US ally. The objective of this article is to outline the recent shift in Japan's security policy, in rhetorical and practical terms, as it has unfolded with the return of Abe. Situating itself in the recent scholarship pointing to a "normalization" of Japan, this article contends that, building on and accelerating the security policy changes initiated by previous governments, the newly constructed policy framework of "proactive pacifism" announced by Abe in September 2013 and the associated policy measures outlined here will further weaken Japan's postwar pacifist norms and enhance its international military role.

Coming as it does from authors of a realist persuasion, the scholarly literature emphasizing Japan's emergence as a "normal" state has pointed to the legislation passed since the 1990s enabling the dispatch of Japanese troops to UN peacekeeping operations, beginning with the deployment to Cambodia in 1992.³ Continuing this gradual departure from postwar institutional constraints, the 2000s witnessed further change under the leadership of Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō in response to the US-led "war on terror." In 2001 Japan dispatched its Maritime Self-Defense Forces (MSDF) to the Indian Ocean to logistically support the US military in conducting

2. Along the social constructivist–structural realist divide, this debate emphasizes the constraints of domestic identity norms in contrast to the impact of external changes in the distribution of power on national security. For recent contributions, see Andrew L. Oros, *Normalizing Japan: Politics, Identity and the Evolution of Security Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); Yoshihide Soeya, Masayuki Tadokoro, and David A. Welch (eds.), *Japan as a "Normal Country"? A Nation in Search of its Place in the World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Bhubhinder Singh, *Japan's Security Identity: From a Peace State to an International State* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

3. "Normalization" in this context and indeed in this article refers to the departure of Japan from its postwar pacifist posture toward an increasingly active role in international relations, including the use of military force. Recent contributions to this reading of Japan include Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007); and Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Remilitarisation* (London: Routledge, 2009).

Operation Enduring Freedom. Between 2004 and 2006 Japan entered the “coalition of the willing” and provided 600 Ground (GSDF) and Air Self-Defense Forces as part of a noncombat reconstruction mission in Iraq. Koizumi’s immediate successor, Abe, pushed for the reform of Japan’s defense institutions and forged closer military partnerships with Australia, India, NATO, and the US, partially as a hedging strategy toward a “rising” China.

Simultaneously, and in response to its changing security environment vis-à-vis the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the People’s Republic of China, Japan has upgraded its military equipment.⁴ Domestic political instability due to a high turnover of prime ministers between 2006 and 2012, a divided Diet since 2007, government change in 2009, and the triple disaster of March 11, 2011, have partly distracted public and political attention from the revision of Japan’s security policy. Nevertheless, in response to an increase in piracy in the Gulf of Aden, in July 2011 Japan dispatched 170 members of the GSDF and MSDF to Djibouti, where Japan operates an overseas base.⁵ In addition, since January 2012 Japan has sent around 400 troops to a UN mission in South Sudan. Change in Japan’s postwar national security system was accelerated by a series of recent standoffs in Northeast Asia. These include disputes over Chinese vessels and military aircraft entering territory controlled by Japan, Beijing’s declaration of an air defense identification zone over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in November 2013, and North Korean missile and nuclear tests in December 2012 and February 2013.

Thus, following the collapse of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government in 2012, Abe has pledged to “take Japan back,” not only from his LDP’s political opponents but also from the institutional constraints of Japan’s postwar regime as detailed below—and to (re)establish a “strong nation.” The revision of Japan’s pacifist 1947 constitution as a prerequisite to enable participation in collective self-defense represents the core of his political agenda. Declaring a strategic outlook branded as “proactive pacifism,” Tokyo’s new conservative establishment has shifted toward a comprehensive strategy to further facilitate Japan’s participation in overseas peacekeeping operations. Crafting the groundwork for Japan’s new security system, Abe has

4. Christopher W. Hughes and Ellis S. Krauss, “Japan’s New Security Agenda,” *Survival* 49:2 (2007), pp. 157–76.

5. Lindsay Black, “Debating Japan’s Intervention to Tackle Piracy in the Gulf of Aden: Beyond Mainstream Paradigms,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 12:2 (2012), pp. 259–85.

introduced institutions for intelligence and security policy coordination in the US–Japan alliance which include the passing of a state secrecy protection law, a National Security Council, a new National Security Strategy, and a review of the National Defense Program Guidelines and Mid-Term Defense Plan. The current shift illustrates a strategic change of the focus from constitutional revision toward the reinterpretation of the current constitutional framework permitting Japan’s participation in collective self-defense ADD (CSD). Hence, on July 1, 2014, the Abe cabinet changed established constitutional interpretation on the use of military force in order to allow for Japan’s exercise of collective self-defense in aid of its security allies. As a result of this initiative, a package of new security bills was introduced to the Diet in May 2015 aiming to adjust the current legal security framework to this new interpretation.⁶ If passed, these laws will broaden the scope of Japan’s military role permitting Japan, for instance, rear-area logistical support of security allies and a robust role in UN peacekeeping operations. Consequently, Tokyo and Washington have revised the Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation in April 2015 to account for Japan’s new proactive security posture. Thus, Tokyo’s new security institutions and grand strategy, outlined in the second part of this article, envision an enhanced Japanese role in East Asia, balancing China through further strengthening of the US–Japan alliance.

FORMATION, ENTRENCHMENT, AND CHANGE OF JAPAN’S POSTWAR SECURITY REGIME

In pursuit of political rehabilitation and economic recovery following its defeat in 1945, Japan entered into a close security alliance with the US. Enshrined in the 1951 Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan, the US extended its nuclear umbrella over Japan in exchange for Japan’s

6. Following Abe’s cabinet decision on constitutional reinterpretation in July 2014, a package of eleven bills addressing the necessary legal changes for the exercise of collective self-defense were introduced to the Diet. The legislation allows for Tokyo’s exercise of CSD in support of a “foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan” if three conditions are met: an armed attack against an ally that threatens Japan’s survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people’s right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness; “when no other appropriate means are available to repel the attack; and “that the use of force is kept to a minimum”; see “Insight: Conditions for Exercising Right to Collective Self-Defense Open to Interpretation,” *Asahi Shimbun*, May 12, 2015 <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201505120059> (accessed August 15, 2015). The lower house has passed the security bills on July 16, 2015.

hosting of US troops. Japan's grand strategy, in the form of the Yoshida Doctrine, calibrated US pressure for an early remilitarization with a low-profile defense posture and a high-profile foreign economic policy. In light of the antimilitarist culture nourished by the US-sponsored constitution of 1947, Japan's security posture evolved into a key cleavage structuring Japanese domestic politics from the 1950s.⁷ As public opposition to the LDP's early security policy of revising the pacifist constitution and Japan's military posture jeopardized the conservatives' prospects for continued electoral victory in the 1960s and 1970s, the party began to embrace a political realism that adopted key positions from the socialist opposition. The core principles of Japan's security system, in the form of the restriction of arms exports (1967); the prohibition of the production, possession, and introduction of nuclear weapons in Japan (1967); the peaceful use of space (1969); the restriction on deploying Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) overseas; and the 1%-of-GDP ceiling on the defense budget (1976), were developed during this period of LDP policy adaptation.⁸ Addressing concerns of abandonment by the US in the early 1970s and balancing its defense restrictions, Japan formulated a clear outline of its defense policy and military structure for the first time in the form of the 1976 National Defense Policy Outline, and revised the scope of bilateral cooperation in the 1978 Guidelines for Defense Cooperation.⁹ A new rhetoric in Japan in the 1980s referring to the US–Japan security partnership as an “alliance” finalized the formation of Japan's postwar security system.

The long-standing domestic cleavage over national security shifted with the end of the Cold War. The collapse of Japan's political Left in the 1990s opened space for conservative forces to promulgate their views on the course of Japan's national security regime. A mix of domestic institutional changes,

7. Thomas U. Berger, “From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-militarism,” *International Security* 17:4 (Spring 1993), pp. 119–50; Sun-Ki Chai, “Entrenching the Yoshida Defense Doctrine: Three Techniques for Institutionalization,” *International Organization* 51:3 (Summer 1997), pp. 389–412.

8. The processes and mechanisms of LDP policy adaptation across public policy fields are described in Kent E. Calder, *Crisis and Compensation: Public Policy and Political Stability in Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

9. Japan's fear of abandonment mainly derived from the US's new strategic outlook in the form of the Nixon Doctrine issued in light of the Vietnam war in July 1969, and the rapprochement between the US and China in the early 1970s; see Michael Yahuda, *The International Politics of the Asia-Pacific*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 87–115.

most importantly the 1994 electoral reform and the 1998 central government reform, in combination with the proliferation of new foreign security challenges, have forced national security issues onto the political agenda. As the central government reform went into force in January 2001, then Prime Minister Koizumi was able to combine personal leadership with a new core executive into strong top-down decision-making. This enabled a proactive Japanese response to the global “war on terror”.

The institutional redesign was continued by Abe, who elevated the Japan Defense Agency to a full-fledged Ministry of Defense in 2007, thus enhancing the roles of the Ministry of Defense and the JSDF in managing Japan’s security affairs.¹⁰ While there are alternative explanations for the motives that drove many of these institutional changes,¹¹ it is reasonable to argue that many were indeed implemented in response to changes in Japan’s regional security environment. In this vein, North Korean missile launches in 1998, 2006, and 2009; nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009; and spy ship incursions in 1999 and 2001 have in the eyes of Japanese defense experts highlighted Japan’s vulnerability. This triggered Tokyo’s commitment to a USD 10 billion ballistic missile defense system sponsored by the US, the development of satellite surveillance capabilities entailing an incremental militarization of space, and a debate on developing nuclear and preemptive strike capabilities.¹²

Following a historic electoral defeat in August 2009, the LDP government was replaced by the DPJ. While the DPJ has advocated a foreign policy shift toward Asia, this has not resulted in a broader change of course with regard to Japan’s security policy.¹³ The government change has destabilized the US–Japan alliance, mainly as a result of then Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio’s

10. Frances McCall Rosenbluth and Michael F. Thies, *Japan Transformed: Political and Economic Restructuring* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 160–62; Tomohito Shinoda, *Contemporary Japanese Politics: Institutional Changes and Power Shifts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

11. See e.g. Key-young Son, “Constructing Fear: How the Japanese State Mediates Risks from North Korea,” *Japan Forum* 22:1 (2010), pp. 169–94; David Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local: Sex, Violence, and Anxiety in Contemporary Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

12. Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo’s Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); Saadia M. Pekkanen and Paul Kallender-Umezū, *In Defense of Japan: From the Market to the Military in Space Policy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

13. Christopher W. Hughes, “The Democratic Party of Japan’s New (but Failing) Grand Security Strategy: From ‘Reluctant Realism’ to ‘Resentful Realism,’” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 38:1 (Winter 2012), pp. 109–40.

abortive pledge to revise a 2006 agreement on the relocation of the Futenma US military airbase in Okinawa. After failing to deliver on his promise to relocate the airbase, Hatoyama was forced to resign in June 2010.¹⁴ Departing from the party's initial policy views, consecutive DPJ cabinets embraced a realistic strategy influenced by policymakers such as Maehara Seiji. As a result, the DPJ continued the LDP's security policy. In December 2010, the government of Kan Naoto passed National Defense Program Guidelines that called for the establishment of "dynamic defense capabilities." These included a concentration on maritime surveillance and defense capabilities in response to China's enhanced presence near Japanese waters and the renewed tensions over disputed territory in the East China Sea. Twelve months later, Kan moved toward deregulating Japan's ban on arms exports, allowing weapons deals with Australia, the US, and NATO members.¹⁵

The March 11, 2011, triple disaster offered an opportunity for the Japanese and US military to engage in joint disaster relief efforts along the coast of the Tohoku Region. The US military's Operation Tomodachi (Friend) has consolidated the US–Japan military alliance and its public perception.¹⁶ The deep changes in Japan's security environment and domestic institutions described above generated the basis on which accelerated institutional shifts have unfolded with the return of Abe in 2012. These will be detailed in the next section.

THE RETURN OF ABE SHINZŌ AND THE RHETORIC OF REVISIONISM

Abe Shinzō is commonly described as a modern-day representative of Japan's revisionist policy elite, advocating a hawkish foreign and security policy.¹⁷

14. Paul O'Shea, "Overestimating the 'Power Shift': The US Role in the Failure of the Democratic Party of Japan's 'Asia Pivot'", *Asian Perspective* 38:3 (2014), pp. 435–59.

15. Ken Jimbo, "Gaikō, Anpō – Rinen Tsuikyū Kara Genjitsu Rosen e" [Diplomacy, National Security: From Ideational Claims Toward a Realistic Course], in *Minshutō Seiken no Shippai no Kenshō – Nihon Seiji wa Nani ka o Ikasu ka* [Examining the Failure of the DPJ Government: What does Japanese Politics Build On?], ed. Nihon Saiken Inishiathibu (Tokyo: Chukō Shinsho, 2013), pp. 125–58.

16. Richard J. Samuels, 3.11: *Disaster and Change in Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 80–109. In a survey by the Cabinet Office in January 2012, more than 79 percent of respondents evaluated the role of the US military positively in the response to the 3/11 disaster <<http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h23/h23-bouei/2-4.html>>.

17. Richard J. Samuels, "Securing Japan: The Current Discourse," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 33:1 (Winter 2007), pp. 125–52.

The grandson of former Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke, Abe entered the world of politics in 1982 working as the personal secretary of his father, Abe Shintarō, who served as foreign minister and LDP secretary general. Witnessing the LDP's short-term loss of power, Abe inherited his father's constituency for a lower house seat and became a member of parliament in 1993. Appointed to the post of deputy cabinet secretary in 2000, the sudden rise and influence of the young Abe developed through his advocacy of an assertive policy toward North Korea. An early supporter of the families of those abducted by the North during the 1970s and 1980s, Abe became a key figure in the influential abduction lobby. Organized in 1997, the network evolved into a strong political movement as a result of Kim Jong-il's official acknowledgment of the abductions on the occasion of Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang on September 17, 2002.

As the resolution of the abduction issue became Abe's declared life work, the North Korea problem offered him a political platform for his explicit criticism of what he describes as Japan's "postwar regime" which failed to ensure the security of its citizens.¹⁸ Hence, in the brand of nationalism propounded by Abe and his followers, North Korea and the abduction issue are causally linked to the normative claim of an "autonomous state" (*jiritsu suru kokka*). Such a state is capable of protecting Japan from infringements on its sovereignty. Naturally, Abe demands constitutional revision and the strengthening of Japan's military capabilities and its role in managing international security affairs. This view is outlined in his 2006 political manifesto, *Utsukushii Kuni e* (Toward a Beautiful Country), republished in 2013 as *Atarashii Kuni e* (Toward a New Country).¹⁹

Thus equipped with a strong public reputation in security politics, Abe succeeded Koizumi as prime minister in September 2006. In office, Abe was expected to continue Koizumi's course of structural reform. Instead, he shifted the focus to the revision of Japan's constitution, passing legislation for a public referendum on constitutional revision and Japan's fundamental law of education. Yet, while Abe focused on his revisionist agenda, the public was largely concerned with economic and social issues. A mixture of poorly thought-out decisions and political scandals, including the reintegration of

18. Nogami Tadaoki, *Dokumento Abe Shinzō – Kakureta Sugao o Ou* [Documentation Abe Shinzō: Tracing His True Face] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2006).

19. Abe Shinzō, *Utsukushi Kuni e* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 2006); Abe Shinzō, *Atarashii Kuni e* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 2013).

Koizumi opponents into the LDP, the loss of 50 million pension records, and the suicide of Agriculture Minister Matsuoka Toshikatsu, resulted in Abe's defeat in the 2007 upper-house elections and his resignation in September. The failure of Abe's administration marked the beginning of a series of short-lived cabinets and resulted in the LDP's historic defeat in the August 2009 lower-house elections.

Moving forward five years, Abe realized his return to leadership first by defeating his internal party rival Ishiba Shigeru in the race for the LDP presidency in September and then by leading his party to victory in the December 2012 lower-house elections. Abe took over the LDP just as public approval of the governing DPJ under then Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko was falling due to internal party conflicts, political scandals, public criticism of post-Tohoku tsunami crisis management, and the introduction of a contested tax reform. The DPJ's allegedly poor handling of the collision of a Chinese fishing trawler with two Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) vessels on September 7, 2010, in the disputed territory of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, bolstered public discontent. The conflict raised tensions as Japan took the trawler's captain into custody, and Tokyo's heavy-handed political intervention in the ongoing jurisdictional process spurred public criticism.²⁰ The DPJ's attempt to de-escalate the tensions was further undermined by the leaking of video footage of the incident by a JCG member, who uploaded the material to YouTube in November.

The standoff with China culminated in the "nationalization" of the islands by the Noda government in September 2012. Again, this step itself was taken in an attempt to de-escalate tensions with Beijing in the wake of an assertive sub-governmental diplomacy conducted by then Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintarō. Ishihara announced in April that he would purchase three of the five islands and thus challenge the status quo in the dispute over the Senkakus.²¹ Ties with South Korea similarly deteriorated in the aftermath of then Korean President Lee Myung-bak's visit to the contested island of Dokdo/

20. Linus Hagström, "Power Shift? in East Asia? A Critical Reappraisal of Narratives on the Daiyou/Senkaku Islands Incident in 2010," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5:3 (Autumn 2012), pp. 267–97.

21. The 2010 and 2012 incidents were inflamed by political actors in Japan (and China). The status quo of the Senkakus was challenged by the post-Hatoyama DPJ's breaking the secret agreement on nonprosecution and by Ishihara's attempted island purchase. Noda announced the purchase only two days after he met with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, thus making the move coincide with the anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. I thank Paul O'Shea for clarifying these

Takeshima on August 10, 2012. Japan's response to these territorial disputes has caused public opinion on neighborly relations to fall to historic lows, as shown in Figure 1. Moreover, the December elections were held amid mounting tensions on the Korean Peninsula as North Korea tested its long-range Unha-3 rocket.

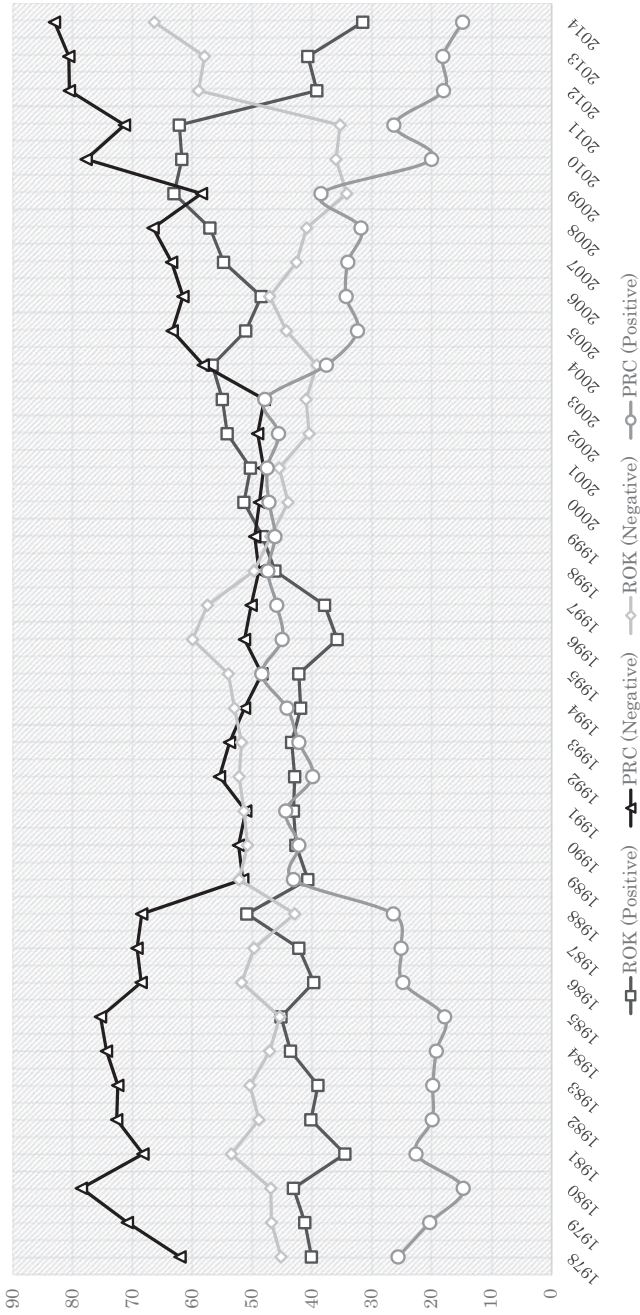
Of course, Abe's landslide win, which delivered the LDP–New Komeitō coalition a stable two-thirds' majority in the lower house, cannot be traced solely to the impact of regional tensions and strained bilateral relations with China and South Korea.²² Yet, it seems reasonable to argue that these developments have relaxed public opposition to Abe's agenda, which initially included a pledge to re-examine the Kōno statement of 1993 on the “comfort women”²³ issue and a promise to upgrade the JSDF to a National Defense Force (*Kokubōgun*), as well as to station state officials on the Senkaku Islands. As Abe returned to power, however, he immediately redirected his focus to reforming Japan's ailing economy. In his attempt to tackle Japan's chronic deflation Abe forced the Bank of Japan to support his 2% inflation target while he announced a new growth strategy featuring a heavy fiscal stimulus package and public investment program. In focusing on his “Abenomics” agenda, Abe has temporarily toned down his revisionist agenda in an attempt to build up political capital and to secure public support for his government in the July 2013 upper-house elections and thus break the political deadlock caused by the divided Parliament in place since his first term in office. In fact, as Japan's economy grew at an annualized rate of 3.8 percent during the first quarter of 2013, Abe's economic reform gained public support in the run-up to the July elections. The LDP victory consolidated Abe's government and opened the reform agenda for an intensified debate on security issues, including collective self-defense.

developments for me. See also International Crisis Group, “Old Scores and New Grudges: Evolving Sino-Japanese Tensions,” Asia Report no. 258, July 24, 2014.

22. Amy L. Catalinac, “Not Made in China: Japan's Home-grown National Security Obsession,” *East Asia Forum*, March 6, 2013 <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/03/06/not-made-in-china-japans-home-grown-national-security-obsession/>>.

23. Issued on August 4, 1993, by Kōno Yōhei, then Chief Cabinet Secretary of the LDP-led Miyazawa cabinet, this statement acknowledges the role of the Japanese Imperial Army in coercing women into sexual slavery during the Pacific War and is regarded as Japan's official posture on the “comfort women” issue. For the full statement, see <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html>> (accessed August 15, 2015).

FIGURE 1. Public Opinion on Japan's Bilateral Relations with the PRC and ROK, 1978–2014 (in Percent)



SOURCE: Cabinet Office (various years).

The Rhetoric of Political Change

In December 2012, as well as in July 2013, Abe and his LDP campaigned on the promise to “take Japan back” (*Nippon o torimodosu*).²⁴ This phrase contains a multitude of messages as it is designed for international and domestic audiences. On February 22, Abe delivered a highly anticipated speech at the Washington, DC–based Center for Strategic and International Studies, entitled “Japan is Back.” Abe outlined his reform agenda, pledging to balance economic reform with new security policy measures. Promising to intensify cooperation in the US–Japan alliance, Abe declared that Japan “is not now and will never be a tier two nation” and therefore “Japan must stay strong, strong first in its economy, and strong also in its national defense.” In defining Japan’s international role, Abe outlined Japan as a “rule promoter” and a “commons’ guardian,” as well as an “effective ally and partner of the US and other democracies.”²⁵

Abe detailed his policy views to his US partners in an interview featured in the July 2013 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Declaring that Tokyo will move forward in increasing its military capabilities as part of the US–Japan alliance, he stipulated that “Japan is also willing to fulfill its responsibilities. Over the past ten years, my country has continued to cut its defense budget. China, on the other hand, has increased its military spending 30-fold in the last 23 years. Therefore, this year, for the first time in 11 years, my government chose to slightly increase the defense budget. That is a sign of Japan’s willingness to fulfill its own responsibility.”²⁶ The rhetoric of “Japan is back” is designed for an international audience and attempts to re-establish trust in Japan as an ally in US policy circles, as well as trust in the Japanese market, as a precondition for the success of Abe’s economic and security policies.

Abe’s message highlights a continuation of the conservative value-based diplomacy (*kachikan gaikō*) begun in 2006, which emphasizes common democratic norms in efforts at hedging China. During Abe’s first term, then Foreign Minister Asō Tarō launched an initiative designed by his Vice Foreign Minister Yachi Shōtarō, entitled “arch of freedom and prosperity” (*jiyū*

24. “Nippon o Torimodosu” [Taking Japan Back] (official LDP campaign video), November 29, 2012 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5rhUHmPbZc>>.

25. Abe Shinzō, “Japan is Back”, speech at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, February 22, 2013 <http://csis.org/files/attachments/t30222_speech_abe.pdf>.

26. “Japan is Back: A Conversation With Shinzo Abe,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2013 <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/discussions/interviews/japan-is-back>>.

to *han'ei no ko*).²⁷ Building on this, Abe, in a widely syndicated English-language op-ed on December 27, 2012, called Japan “Asia’s democratic security diamond.” He argued that while Japan’s relations with China are vital, Japan “must first anchor its ties on the other side of the Pacific; for, at the end of the day, Japan’s diplomacy must always be rooted in democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.” Focusing on maritime security in Asia in response to an assertive China, Abe promulgated a stronger Japanese alliance with India and an increased presence of the “sea-faring democracies” of Britain and France.²⁸

Abe’s plan for a strong Japan is aptly described in *Atarashii Kuni e*, which evaluates diplomacy under the aegis of the DPJ as *gaikō haiboku* (diplomatic defeat). Thus, he argues, victory can only be achieved through a firm commitment to the US alliance and collective self-defense.²⁹ Hence, in contrast to the “Japan is back” rhetoric, the Japanese phrase *Nippon o torimodosu* represents a normative statement that translates as “taking Japan back.” While this slogan is in reference to economic reform and the aim of restoring Japan’s economic success, it also establishes the basis for Abe’s strategy of “escaping from the postwar regime” through the revision of political institutions. As such, this rhetoric provides the frame for the implementation of change in Japan’s security system.

Departing from his first-term policy, Abe has shown patience and an ability to reverse his agenda. While he has put constitutional reform at the core of his second term, he departed from focusing exclusively on debating Article 9,³⁰ shifting the debate toward revision of the procedural basis of constitutional change as stipulated in Article 96. In Japan, constitutional revision requires two-thirds majorities in both houses of the Diet as well as

27. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Jiyu to Han'ei no Ko,” speech by Foreign Minister Asō Tarō, November 30, 2006 <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/enzetsu/18/easo_1130.html>.

28. Shinzo Abe, “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” *Project Syndicate*, December 27, 2012 <<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe>>.

29. Abe, *Atarashii kuni e*, pp. 246–50.

30. Constituting the core of Japan’s postwar pacifism, the two clauses of Article 9 read as follows: (1) aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes; (2) in order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized; see <http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html> (accessed August 15, 2015).

a majority in a public referendum. Abe's new proposal attempted to lower these quotas to a simple majority required for Diet approval. The idea was introduced in May 2013, but the debate was quickly taken off the agenda as broad public opposition formed against it, with assertions that the implicit intention remained the revision of Article 9. As a result, Abe reversed his agenda in preparation for the July upper-house elections, refraining from further discussing constitutional revision.

At that point a new rhetoric of reform and revisionism was established, balancing economic and political change. A publication by LDP Secretary General Ishiba Shigeru in June 2013, *Nippon, o Torimodosu. Kenpō, o Torimodosu* (Taking Japan Back. Taking the Constitution Back), illustrates this.³¹ Deputy Prime Minister Asō Tarō's controversial statement that "Germany's Weimar constitution was changed before anyone realized [it]" hinted that Japan should "learn from that technique."³² This further forced Abe to redirect attention away from constitutional revision, as these remarks were met with fierce public criticism.

As Rikki Kersten notes, the electorate has proven to be selective in its support for Abe, whose success at the polls is mainly based on his "Abenomics" agenda.³³ While a majority does support constitutional revision when such modification includes concerns such as human rights, this support diminishes when the discussion turns to Article 9.³⁴ As a result, Abe has stepped back from challenging public opinion over constitutional revision and has moved toward reinterpreting the constitution with a focus on the principle of collective self-defense. He appointed a former ambassador to France, the late Komatsu Ichirō, as director of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau in August 2013. While this bureau is the main government body in charge of interpreting and determining the scope of the Japanese constitution, Komatsu was known as a proponent of CSD.³⁵ Yet, circumventing any impression of forcing this issue onto the agenda, Komatsu's appointment was accompanied by the selection of Yamamoto Tsuneyuki as Justice of the Supreme

31. Ishiba Shigeru, *Nippon, o Torimodosu. Kenpō, o Torimodosu* (Tokyo: PHP, 2013).

32. Antoni Slodkowski, "Japanese Minister Aso Retracts Nazi Comment Amid Criticism," Reuters, August 1, 2013 <<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/08/01/uk-japan-aso-idUKBRE97008F20130801>>.

33. Rikki Kersten, "Japan's Turn to Nationalism? Not Quite," *The Interpreter*, July 23, 2013 <<http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2013/07/23/Japans-turn-to-nationalism-Not-quite.aspx>>.

34. See the *TV Asahi* survey conducted in April 2013 <<http://www.tv-asahi.co.jp/hst/poll/201304/>>.

35. "Komatsu Posting Sets Stage for Reinterpretation," *Japan Times*, August 8, 2013 <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/08/national/komatsu-posting-sets-stage-for-reinterpretation>>.

Court. Yamamoto served as head of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau until December 2011 and has expressed his doubts on the constitutional legitimacy of the exercise of CSD.³⁶

THE INSTITUTIONAL BASIS OF “PROACTIVE PACIFISM”

As collective self-defense has evolved into the main policy objective, the Abe administration has moved forward with implementing a new security system aimed at strengthening Japan’s intelligence and policy coordination capabilities as a precondition for enhancing Japan’s role in the US–Japan alliance. The newly evolving security system includes three basic policies: establishment of a National Security Council, enactment of a state secrecy protection law, and formulation of a new strategic outlook.

The National Security Council and the State Secrecy Protection Law

The establishment of a National Security Council (NSC) represents the core of Abe’s security system and is based on the US intelligence architecture. The NSC is located within the Cabinet Office and is designed to replace the Security Council established in 1986, which itself superseded the 1956 National Defense Council. Its primary objective is to improve the information flow between government agencies involved in crisis management by breaking up inter- and intra-agency sectionalism. As such, the NSC is intended to enhance the role of the Prime Minister’s Office and the Cabinet Secretariat as the core executive in security policymaking. The amendment of the Act for Establishment of the Security Council to create an NSC was advocated during Abe’s first term and was discarded in 2008. In February 2011, the DPJ government under Kan Naoto reinvigorated the NSC idea. The DPJ proposed the establishment of an NSC with a secretariat staffed by 100 officials divided into 13 bureaus covering issues such as terrorism, energy security, and nuclear accidents. At the head of the institution, the DPJ envisioned a deputy cabinet secretary in charge of national security.³⁷

36. “Amendment ‘Needed’ for Shift on Self-Defense,” *Japan Times*, August 21, 2013 <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/21/national/amendment-needed-for-shift-on-self-defense/>>.

37. Asai Kazuo, “Nihon-ban NSC (Kokka Anzen Hoshō Kaigi) no Gaiyō to Kadai – Nihon-ban NSC Kōsō, Eibei to no Hikaku, Kadai o Chūshin ni” [Overview and Task of the Japanese NSC], National Diet Library Issue Brief no. 801, October 10, 2013 <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/view/download/digidepo_8316138_po_0801.pdf?contentNo=1>.

On the inauguration of the second Abe cabinet a new NSC initiative was launched in February 2013 with the establishment of the Advisory Council on the Establishment of a National Security Council. Chaired by Abe, the council included Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide, Isozaki Yosuke as special adviser to the prime minister in charge of the NSC, and 10 experts from Japan's defense and security policy community, including the aforementioned Yachi Shōtarō.³⁸ Abe's renewed initiative toward creating the NSC was strengthened by the hostage crisis at an Algerian gas plant, which saw the killing of 10 Japanese nationals who worked for the Japanese company JGC, as well as the North Korean missile and nuclear tests in December 2012 and February 2013, respectively. At the fourth meeting of the council, Abe pointed to the North Korean security crisis as a challenge necessitating efficient central structures and strong leadership.³⁹ After six rounds of discussions the expert panel submitted its final report on May 28, 2013. Based on the panel's recommendation, the Cabinet Secretariat's division in charge of establishing the council drafted the NSC Establishment Act, which was passed for submission to the Cabinet on June 7. During Diet deliberation Abe emphasized Japan's changing regional security environment, which he stressed would require new intelligence gathering and defense capabilities. Amid growing tensions with China over the Senkakus, the bill passed the Diet on November 27. The NSC swiftly launched operations in December 2013, approving the JSDF's lending of ammunition to South Korean forces in South Sudan—a move that sparked protest in Korea, resulting in the ammunition's quickly being returned.

The new NSC has institutionalized and centralized crisis management in the form of a permanent National Security Bureau established within the Cabinet Secretariat, featuring a staff of about 60 and headed by former Vice Foreign Minister and close Abe adviser Yachi. The new council will convene every two weeks, with the prime minister, the foreign minister, the defense minister, and the cabinet secretary as its core members, setting Japan's diplomatic and defense policies.⁴⁰ The former Security Council, in contrast, consisted of eight cabinet ministers meeting on an irregular basis. After its

38. A list of the advisory council's members is available from the Prime Minister's Office, February 14, 2013 <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/ka_yusiki/pdf/konkyo.pdf>.

39. "Advisory Council on the Establishment of a National Security Council," Prime Minister's Office, April 11, 2013 <http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/actions/201304/11anpo_e.html>.

40. Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2013), pp. 105–06.

inauguration during the Nakasone administration, the council convened a total of 222 times between 1986 and 2012.⁴¹ As the NSC and National Security Bureau will be closely linked with the US Security Council, critics fear that Japan will be unable to oppose Washington's policy course or to push for an independent policy line and that this structure will erode the influence of the Diet and MOFA.⁴² Moreover, as the NSC meetings do not feature clear mechanisms for keeping proper records of the discussions, concerns over lack of transparency in decision-making and public accountability have been expressed.⁴³ Lastly, as the NSC is interpreted as a clear sign of Abe's prioritization of the military over diplomacy, critics remark on the danger of an increased influence of JSDF officials in decision-making.⁴⁴

The second main pillar of Abe's redesigned security architecture is a new state secrecy protection law (*tokutei himitsu hogo hō*), which passed the Diet on December 6, 2013. The new bill aims at tightening the government's control over security information critical to state legislation. It allows the Japanese government to designate 23 types of information, including diplomacy, counter-terrorism, and defense, as "special state secrets." The legislation is seen as a prerequisite for enhancing Japan's role in the US–Japan alliance, and for the exercise of CSD. Indeed, proponents of the law pointed to Japan's reputation as a paradise for spy activities, noting the many incidents in which confidential information was leaked, undermining Japan's credibility in Washington. Recent leaks included the coverage of a fire which broke out aboard a Chinese submarine in the South China Sea by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* in May 2005, referencing confidential photo material produced by American surveillance satellites. This raised questions about the information control procedures in Japan's military.⁴⁵ The mentioned leakage of the video footage of the September 2010 Senkaku incident further

41. "Seifu no Anzen Hoshō Kaigi, 27-nen no Rekishi ni Maku/NSC ni Kaiso de" [The End of the 27-Year History of the Government's Security Council], *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, December 3, 2013 <http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASFS0303B_T01C13A2PP8000>.

42. "NSC and Secrecy Bills Pose Dangers," *Japan Times*, November 8, 2013 <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/11/08/editorials/nsc-and-secrecy-bills-pose-dangers>>.

43. "NSC Council Has Dangerous Flaws," *Japan Times*, December 1, 2013 <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/12/01/editorials/nsc-council-has-dangerous-flaws>>.

44. "Shasetsu: Gunji no Shireitō ni Suru na" [Editorial: Don't Turn It into the Military's Headquarters!], *Asahi Shimbun*, October 29, 2013, p. 14.

45. Nagaoka Yoshihiro, "Himitsu Hogo Hō to Mōsō Hōdō no Tsumi" [The Crime of the Paranoid Media Coverage of the Secrecy Protection Law], *Newsweek*, December 24, 2013, pp. 31–33.

illustrates the potential scope of this new law, under which the JCG member responsible could have faced charges that could result in imprisonment for up to 10 years. Interestingly, though, as the debate over the new law frequently referred to Japan's changing security environment, especially in the form of a more assertive China, this particular example of whistle-blowing was not prominent in the discussion, as this material has since 2010 been employed by many conservative lawmakers in their criticism of Chinese behavior in the East China Sea.

The bill has mobilized mass protest in Japanese society, as the Abe government has refrained from clearly defining what constitutes a state secret and who decides what information the new law will cover. Thus, critics of the law see the public's right to know at risk. In response to these criticisms Abe has suggested in parliamentary hearings that a control body will be established within the Cabinet Office—a step which would place information control under the direct authority of the prime minister.⁴⁶ Naturally, Abe's secrecy bill has triggered an (albeit late) avalanche of public criticism, which found its expression in street protests. As these demonstrations intensified, in November 2013 the LDP's Ishiba Shigeru called them “act[s] of terrorism,” framing the public's criticism to the legislation as a security threat to Japan.⁴⁷ Joining the opposition to Abe's move were Japan's liberal media and lawyers, who voiced concern that this legislation will constrain freedom of the press and consequently result in the diminishing of Japan's postwar democracy. The country's largest newspaper, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, however, backed Abe's move in dispatching the company's president, Watanabe Tsuneo, to the seven-member expert council in charge of clarifying the standards for designating and declassifying government secrets under the new law. Launched in January 2014, this council includes Shimizu Tsutomu, head of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, the only member who is on record expressing opposition to the secrecy law.⁴⁸

46. “Himitsu Shitei Kenshō no Daisha Kikan ‘Setchi Subeki da’ Abe Shushō” [PM Abe: An Independent Body for the Designation of Secrets “Should Be Established”], *Asahi Shimbun*, November 26, 2013 <<http://www.asahi.com/articles/TKY201311260087.html>>.

47. Ayako Mîe, “Secrecy Law Protests ‘Act of Terrorism’: LDP Secretary-General,” *Japan Times*, December 1, 2013 <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/12/01/national/secrecy-law-protests-act-of-terrorism-ldp-secretary-general/>>.

48. “Limits of Secrecy Oversight Panel,” *Japan Times*, January 24, 2014 <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2014/01/24/editorials/limits-of-secretary-oversight-panel-2/>>.

Essentially, Abe and his followers, particularly Ishiba, consider this new law an integral part of a planned departure from Japan's postwar regime.⁴⁹ The quick passing of this legislation illustrates the strength of the broad conservative coalition in the Diet. This coalition includes opposition parties such as the Japan Restoration Party, Party for Future Generations, and Your Party and has diminished the mediating influence of the LDP's pacifist coalition partner, New Komeitō. Coalition realignment that has strengthened the neoconservative establishment in the Diet is also expressed by the growing membership of the bipartisan Sōsei Nippon (Rebirth Japan) group led by Abe. While in 2009 this group counted only 23 lawmakers, its membership has increased to 200 in 2013.⁵⁰ Domestic political realignment with an opposition in flux has opened the way for a broad new hawkish coalition in the Diet, in control of a stable two-thirds majority in the lower house.⁵¹ Moreover, China's move has forced the US to intervene on Japan's behalf, sending two B-52 bombers over the Senkakus on November 26, 2013, thus showing its support for the Japanese government. This commitment was backed by then US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's repeated statement that the mutual defense treaty covers the disputed islands, further consolidating the pro-US conservative establishment in Japan.⁵²

Reformulating Japan's Security and Defense Policies

Abe's new security system includes a National Security Strategy (NSS), which functions as a blueprint for a grand strategy. Issued on December 17, 2013, the NSS is the first official attempt of this sort by Japan to outline its security strategy for the upcoming decade. Given its immediate publication in the

49. Ishiba Shigeru, "Himitsu Hogo Hō de Jōhō Kōkai wa Susumu" [Proceeding with Information Disclosure under the State Secrecy Protection Law], *Will* (February 2014), pp. 44–55.

50. Toshiya Takahashi, "Abe's Yasukuni Visit: The View from Japan," *East Asia Forum*, January 24, 2014 <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/01/24/abes-yasukuni-visit-the-view-from-japan/>>.

51. A hawkish coalition in the lower house consisting of the LDP, Japan Restoration Party, Your Party, and Party for Future Generations would create a supermajority of 363 seats (out of 480). The current "hawks–doves" LDP–New Komeitō coalition controls 325 seats. In the upper house a hawkish coalition would be in control of 141 seats (out of 242), while the current LDP–New Komeitō coalition has 134 seats. See also Michael Cucek, "Abe Shinzo One Year On: What Have We Learned," public lecture given at Temple University, Japan Campus, January 9, 2014.

52. Thomas Shanker, "U.S. Sends Two B-52 Bombers into Air Zone Claimed by China," *New York Times*, November 26, 2013 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/27/world/asia/us-flies-b-52s-into-chinas-expanded-air-defense-zone.html>>.

aftermath of the establishment of NSC and the secrecy bill, the strategy paper indicates that Abe's new security architecture is functioning and capable of formulating a coherent roadmap for Japan's security policy amid mounting regional tensions. At its core, the NSS stresses the shifting power balance in East Asia, marked by a rising China and declining US influence. In the light of the perceived changing geopolitics, this strategy emphasizes the need for Japan to strengthen its defense capabilities and seek a larger regional role as a balancer of this power shift. Penned by a governmental panel of experts appointed by Abe, the strategy outlines three core areas for a more proactive Japanese foreign and security policy: maintaining a regional balance of power, resolving proximate contingencies, and strengthening Japan's role in UN-led international security activities. The first two objectives are mainly directed toward China; the document accuses Beijing of having "taken actions that can be regarded as attempts to change the status quo by coercion based on their own assertions, which are incompatible with the existing order of international law, in the maritime and aerial domains, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea." The report continues in claiming that China "has rapidly expanded and intensified its activities in the seas and airspace around Japan, including intrusions into Japan's territorial waters and airspace around the Senkaku Islands"; in order to tackle these security challenges, the NSS argues that Japan needs to "strengthen its own capabilities" and "expand and deepen cooperative relationships with other countries, with the Japan-US Alliance as the cornerstone."⁵³ Finally, a strengthened range of deterrence and defense capabilities includes a call for Japan to be a "proactive contributor to peace," a concept Abe introduced in September 2013 as "proactive pacifism" (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*).⁵⁴ Abe himself has called the NSS paper a "historic document" marking Japan's departure from its constitutional constraints on the exercise of collective self-defense.⁵⁵

53. "National Security Strategy (Provisional Translation)," Prime Minister's Office, December 17, 2013, pp. 12–16 <http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/18/NSS.pdf>.

54. "Remarks by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the Occasion of Accepting Hudson Institute's 2013 Herman Kahn Award," Prime Minister's Office, September 25, 2013 <http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/statement/201309/25hudson_e.html>.

55. CHANGE TO Toko Sekiguchi, "Japan's First Defense Strategy Approved by Advisory Panel," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 11, 2013 <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB100014240527023044777045792517518051842>>.

Building on the strategic objectives outlined in the NSS, Abe put forward the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) as a blueprint for Japan's defense forces for the next 10 years. The last revision of the NDPG was conducted in December 2010 under the Kan government. This introduced the concept of a "dynamic defense force" (*dōteki bōeiryoku*) in contrast to the prevailing concept of a "basic defense force" (*kibanteki bōeiryoku*). Dynamic defense requires a restructuring of the JSDF for rapid deployment, particularly in Japan's southwestern maritime areas of the Ryukyus, as the new security challenges are believed to converge over Chinese military build-ups and not along the northern borderlines of Hokkaido, as the Cold War strategy assumed. The new NDPG formulated under Abe continues defense planning along these lines, envisioning a Japanese army equipped with amphibious forces and capable of greater mobility. As the Senkaku dispute looms large in Japan's defense planning, the new program guidelines also feature the establishment of new military units similar to the US Marines, capable of landing and recapturing territory. The core unit of this force, known as *suiriku kidōdan*, consists of 700 men who are currently conducting training at the GSDF base in Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture.⁵⁶ Finally, the new NDPG promulgates a stronger navy, with advanced missile and air defense capabilities, as well as an air force with enhanced surveillance and transport equipment. Japan's new defense strategy also mentions, with reference to North Korea's missile program, the possibility of developing preemptive strike capability.⁵⁷

With a five-year horizon in defense planning, the Mid-Term Defense Plan passed together with the NDPG includes the procurement of 52 amphibious landing vehicles, 99 maneuver combat vehicles produced in Japan, 17 Osprey transport aircraft provided by the US, and 3 Global Hawk surveillance drones. Moreover, 5 destroyers, 5 submarines, and 23 patrol aircraft will be added to Japan's naval forces. In addition, Japan's air force will be upgraded with 28 F-35 Lightning fighter jets, 3 aerial refueling and transport aircraft, and 5 early-warning aircraft. At the same time, the numbers of GSDF tanks

56. "Chikara de Taikō, Shisei Senmei – Abe Seiken, Kokka Anpo Senryaku, Bōei Taikō o Sakutei" [Opposition by Force: The Abe Administration's National Security and Defense Posture], *Asahi Shimbun*, December 18, 2013, p. 2.

57. National Defense Program Guidelines, Prime Minister's Office, December 17, 2013 <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/kakugikettei/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/20131217-2_1.pdf>.

and artillery pieces will be reduced.⁵⁸ While the Mid-Term Defense Plan does not represent an increase in the quantity of Japan's military forces, it certainly means an increase in quality. As such, the Abe government allocated JPY 4.88 trillion (USD 45.9 billion) to the Ministry of Defense (MOD) for fiscal year 2014, an increase of 2.8 percent from the previous year. For the fiscal year 2015, the defense ministry has been allocated JPY 4.96 trillion. For 2016, the MOD has requested a budget of JPY 5.2 trillion—the highest budget request so far.⁵⁹ For 2013, Abe had already raised the defense budget by 0.8 percent, to JPY 4.68 trillion (USD 51.7 billion). ADD Abe has increased the MOD budget since his return in 2012, thus compensating for the steady decline in defense spending since the budget peaked in 2003. The budget of Japan's Coast Guard was similarly increased, by 5.5 percent, to JPY 183.4 billion (USD 1.79 billion), in 2014. In 2013 the JCG budget was raised by 1.9 percent, to JPY 176.5 billion.⁶⁰ Yet, as Richard Samuels has pointed out, since the JCG is administered by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism, it is not part of the defense budget calculus, which explains its growing budget throughout the 2000s.⁶¹ Overall, Abe has put an end to the stagnating defense spending which marked the last decade but has not breached the 1%-of-GDP ceiling on government defense spending (see Figure 2).

Finally, Abe has lifted Japan's ban on arms exports, continuing the 2011 policy line of the DPJ. Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori argued that Japan's arms industry would fall behind if the ban were not lifted and Japan's industry was not enabled to engage in joint weapons development.⁶² This move is in part designed to enhance the interoperability of Japanese forces

58. Mid-Term Defense Plan, Prime Minister's Office, December 17, 2013 <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/kakugikettei/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/20131217-3_1.pdf>.

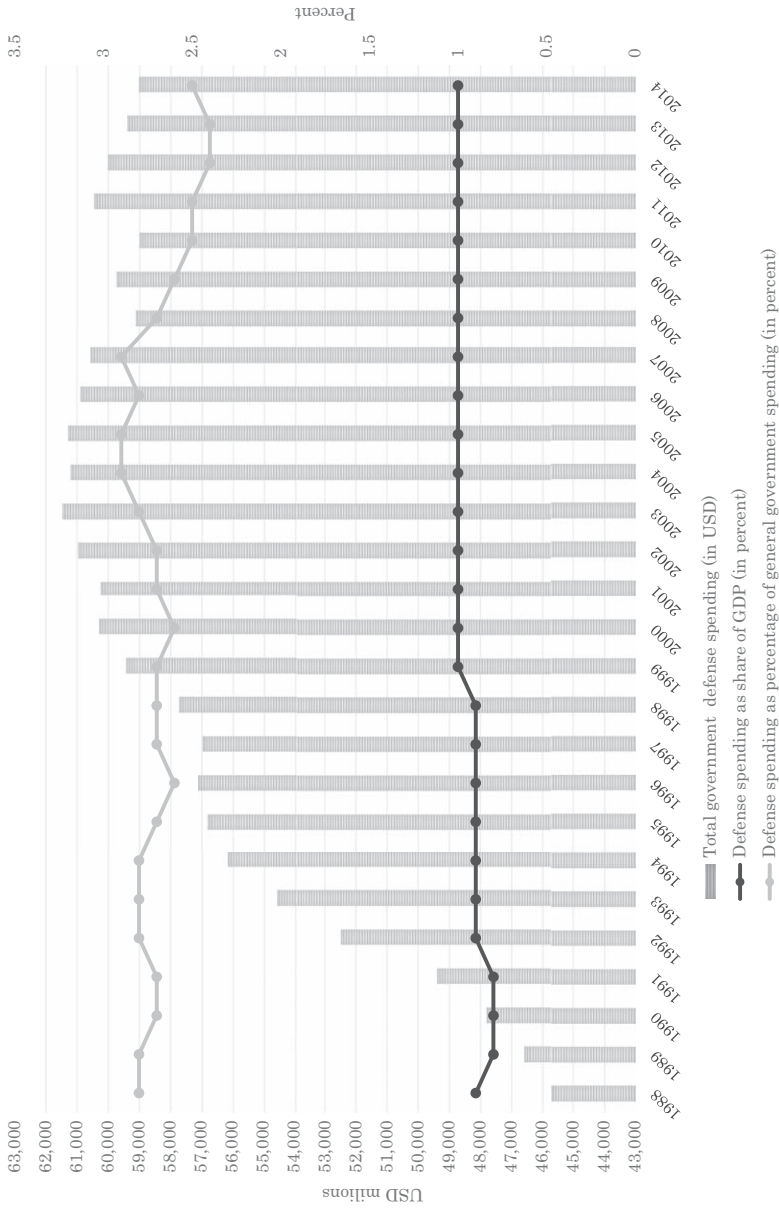
59. "Japan Defense Ministry to seek record-high ¥5.2 trillion budget for next fiscal year," *The Japan Times*, August 9, 2015 <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/09/national/politics-diplomacy/ministry-to-seek-record-high-¥5-2-trillion-defense-budget-for-next-fiscal-year/#.Vc9izbQTHFI>> (accessed August 15, 2015).

60. Isabel Reynolds, "Japan Defense Budget to Increase for First Time in 11 Years," *Bloomberg News*, January 30, 2013 <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-01-29/japan-s-defense-spending-to-increase-for-first-time-in-11-years.html>>. The fall in the value of the yen since the 2000s has caused a decline in the dollar value of Japan's defense budget.

61. Richard J. Samuels, "New Fighting Power!': Japan's Growing Maritime Capabilities and East Asian Security," *International Security* 32:3 (Winter 2007), pp. 84–112; "Budget to Strengthen SDF, Japan Coast Guard in Defense of Senkakus," *Asahi Shimbun*, January 30, 2013 <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201301300065>.

62. "A Troubling Move on Arms Exports," *New York Times*, December 30, 2013 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/31/opinion/a-troubling-move-on-arms-exports.html>>.

FIGURE 2. Japan's Military Spending, 1988–2014



NOTE: Data for defense spending as percentage of general government spending accounts for the defense spending by all government branches at the local, prefectural, and national levels of government. Data for total government defense spending are reported at constant 2011 currency exchange rates and price levels.

SOURCE: Numbers for 1988–2014 are based on data provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database>.

with security partners in the US or Australia. On his visit to Australia in July 2014, Abe and Prime Minister Tony Abbott discussed the purchase of Japan's ultra-quiet Soryu submarine propulsion technology. On July 17, the NSC approved the sale to the US and the UK of seeker sensors, used for example in surface-to-air PAC-2 missiles.⁶³ As the lifting of the 1967 and 1976 bans on arms exports leave no doubt on Japan's departure from its pacifist postwar norms, Abe's security strategy marks a new Japanese proactive realism which balances security dynamics in East Asia while departing from Tokyo's "defense-oriented defense" (*senshu bōei*) principle.

JAPAN'S RELUCTANT REALISM: *QUO VADIS?*

In April 2013 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Asō Tarō told the *Wall Street Journal* that "many people know that the real interest of Prime Minister Abe is not economics"; instead, "when he is equipped with the full power and authority, he would rather work harder for his pet interests such as education and constitutional amendments."⁶⁴ Following Asō's prophecy, Japan's Ministry of Education in January 2014 reviewed its curriculum guidelines for junior high school textbooks, calling for teachers to emphasize that the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu and Dokdo/Takeshima islands are "integral parts of Japan" and "to make students understand that there is no territorial issue."⁶⁵ Despite sustained public opposition to constitutional revision, Abe has realized his key objective of enabling Japan to exercise its right to collective self-defense. On July 1, 2014, the cabinet approved, though only in "limited cases," a reinterpretation of the constitution allowing the use of overseas military force in support of Japan's allies. This marked a clear proactive turn in Japanese security policy.

This article has sought to outline the institutional foundations of Japan's emerging security system. Japan's newly emerging grand strategy builds on incremental security policy changes since the early 1990s. During these years,

63. Shinobu Konno, "Japan Approves Weapons Transfer after Arms Ban Relaxed," *Asahi Shimbun*, July 18, 2014 <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201407180025>.

64. Mitsuru Obe and David Wessel, "Japan's Aso Calls Recovery 'Few Years' Away," *Wall Street Journal*, April 20, 2013 <<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324493704578434681803143390>>.

65. Yuichiro Oka, "Teaching Manuals to Describe Takeshima, Senkakus as Japan's Territory," *Asahi Shimbun*, January 11, 2014 <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201401110046>.

external crises and domestic political realignment have weakened Japan's liberal coalition and empowered a broad neoconservative network behind Abe. Abe's return has dramatically accelerated Tokyo's departure from its reluctant role in international security affairs. Abe's agenda has also sparked broad protest, with an estimated 40,000 people participating in demonstrations against collective self-defense on June 30, 2014. While recent Cabinet Office surveys show growing public support for increased JSDF capabilities, large portions of the Japanese public remain opposed to constitutional revision if it is focused on the "war-renouncing" Article 9.⁶⁶ Adding to the controversy over nuclear energy, public protest against Abe's security agenda contributed to the LDP's defeat in July's Shiga gubernatorial elections. National security and constitutional issues have further affected the outcome of gubernatorial elections in Okinawa and Fukushima in 2014. However, public protest did not translate into a political opposition capable of challenging Abe in the December 2014 lower house elections. Focusing on economic reforms, Abe and his LDP secured a two-thirds majority together with its New Komeitō Party coalition partner. Yet, if public protest is sustained, the LDP's New Komeitō Party coalition partner, long considered the "final break" ADD (*hadome*) in the government's push for enhanced military capabilities, may also become the target of electoral punishment for its role in supporting Abe's security agenda. The New Komeitō Party has a long history of pacifist activism and depends on the support of the members of the Sōka gakkai Buddhist organization. Yet the effect of public opposition remains limited, as the LDP has maintained intra-party stability, in contrast to an opposition in disarray. With a consolidated conservative elite in power, the trajectory of change in Japan's security system is likely to continue.

In addition to Abe's careful balancing of economic reforms and security issues, mounting tensions with China in 2013 further modulated opposition to the changing security system. As a result, Abe has consistently challenged what some have termed Japan's "pacifist isolationism."⁶⁷ He has pushed Japan

66. In 2009, 14.1 percent expressed their support for enhanced JSDF capabilities; this jumped to 24.8 percent in 2012. Similarly, the positive image of the JSDF increased from 80.9 percent to 91.7 percent during the same time period; see <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/others/pdf/public_opinion.pdf>. According to a *Tokyo Shimbun* poll of June 22, 2014, 60 percent oppose revision of Article 9, versus 35 percent in favor of such a change; see <<http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/politics/news/CK2014062202000137.html>>.

67. Narushige Michishita, "Japan's Security Road Map," *Strait Times*, January 15, 2014, p. A24.

toward a proactive realism freed from the enduring limits imposed on its military capabilities. Abe's new security strategy has opened the way to enhanced intermilitary operability through policy and intelligence coordination, and arms exports to Tokyo's security partners. In view of the tensions between China and various ASEAN members over territories in the South China Sea, Japan has made significant efforts toward enhancing its presence in South and Southeast Asia. Abe has made the region his first and most frequent travel destination, as India and the ASEAN states are considered vital partners in balancing China. As such, Japan has applied a mix of strategic and economic policies, including the expansion of trade and investment across the region. As Japan aims at an enhanced role in the US security alliance, a radical departure from its defense posture toward military capabilities including nuclear weapons remains unlikely; such a move would require a costly re-adjustment of the US–Japan security alliance. Thus Abe has invested heavily in improving US–Japan security relations. Parallel to the implementation of collective self-defense, Abe has restarted the process of relocating the US Futenma air base to the Henoko site in Okinawa. While Washington's criticism of Abe's Yasukuni Shrine pilgrimage on December 26, 2013, caused strategists in Tokyo to question Washington's reliability,⁶⁸ these recent efforts have tempered US protests.

A test case for the robustness of Japan's newly evolving “proactive pacifism” is its current deployment of 400 Japanese peacekeepers to South Sudan, a deteriorating security environment. While many in Japan call for the withdrawal of the peacekeepers for fear of casualties, the UN is asking for reinforcements. Dispatching Japanese troops with a robust mandate for a combat mission might provide Abe with new momentum to relax public opposition to collective self-defense. Anticipating the passing of Abe's security bills, the Japanese public learned that the MOD has already engaged in drawing plans for an expanded role of the JSDF in South Sudan.⁶⁹ Japan's expanded military role under Abe is further illustrated by Tokyo's desire to join US Navy patrols of the South China Sea. In response to China's growing assertiveness, MSDF Admiral Kawano Katsuyoshi has suggested Japanese

68. Takashi Oshima, “Japan Questions Whether It Can Still Rely on U.S. Alliance,” *Asahi Shimbun*, February 4, 2014 <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201402040046>.

69. “Defense Ministry Mulling SDF's Expanded Role in S. Sudan,” *The Mainichi*, August 12, 2015 <<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150812p2g00modmorj500oc.html>> (accessed August 15, 2015).

patrol and surveillance activities in the area.⁷⁰ Finally, as a caveat, the validity of this article's argument, that is, an accelerated departure from Japan's postwar pacifist institutions under Abe, will critically depend on the sustainability of his economic reforms. Reflecting on the LDP's years between 2009 and 2012, this concern is echoed by Asō Taro, who reminds us that "in the past three years while we were in the opposition, we found out what the general public was really looking for. It was not education or constitution, but the economy."⁷¹

70. "Japan May Conduct South China Sea Patrols, Says Military Chief," *The Guardian*, July 17, 2015 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/17/japan-may-conduct-south-china-sea-patrols-says-military-chief>> (accessed August 15, 2015).

71. Mitsuro Obe, "What Keeps Aso Awake at Night: Abe," *Wall Street Journal* blogs, April 21, 2013 <<http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2013/04/21/what-keeps-aso-awake-at-night-abe>>.