

Pacifism or Passing the Buck?

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Testing Theories of Japanese Security Policy

For decades, scholars have pointed to Japan as proof that countries can opt out of the violent world of realpolitik. Constructivist scholars in particular argue that the “culture of antimilitarism” that developed in Japan after its surrender in World War II led it to adopt a highly restrained foreign policy and to forswear the development of offensive military forces. Japan’s postwar behavior, these scholars argue, demonstrates the potential for domestic politics and norms to determine a state’s security policy; it also underscores the salience of constructivist theory in international politics.¹

On the surface these claims appear strong. Japanese society is imbued with pacifist norms. Despite the predictions of realist scholars that Japan will eventually behave as a “normal” great power, Tokyo has continued to show great restraint.² But is there evidence that Japan’s antimilitarist norms actually con-

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1. Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Sun-Ki Chai, “Entrenching the Yoshida Defense Doctrine: Three Techniques for Institutionalization,” *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Summer 1997), pp. 389–412; Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); Peter J. Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara, “Japan’s National Security: Structures, Norms, and Policies,” *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 84–118; Thomas U. Berger, “From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan’s Culture of Anti-militarism,” *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 119–150; Yoshihide Soeya, “Japan: Normative Constraints versus Structural Imperatives,” in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 198–233; Glenn D. Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Peter J. Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara, *Japan’s National Security: Structures, Norms, and Policy Responses in a Changing World* (Ithaca, N.Y.: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1993).

2. For analyses predicting more assertive Japanese policies, see Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise,” *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 5–51; Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 44–79; George Friedman and Meredith LeBar, *The Coming War*

strain its security policy? What other explanations can account for Japanese restraint? What theories best explain both the continuities and changes in Japanese policy since World War II, and what should scholars and policy-makers expect from Japan in the future? To answer these questions, this article outlines and tests two competing theories of Japanese security policy: a constructivist theory of antimilitarism and a realist theory of buck-passing.

This article makes three central arguments. First, the debate about the roots of Japanese security policy suffers from widespread misunderstanding about a fundamental aspect of that policy: the level of Japanese military power. Scholars either have neglected to measure Japanese military power or have measured it superficially, fueling the misconception of Japan as a “military pygmy.”³ Japan, however, is no military pygmy; over the course of the Cold War, Japan transformed itself from a burned-out ruin to one of the world’s foremost military powers. Second, a constructivist theory of antimilitarism, which expects domestic norms to inhibit major changes in Japanese security policy, cannot account for this dramatic transformation. Third, the conduct of Japan’s post-World War II security policy—both the period of meager defense effort and the period of vigorous military buildup—is consistent with a realist strategy of buck-passing.

This analysis has implications for international relations theory and for U.S. foreign policy. Constructivists have persuasively demonstrated that anti-militarist norms pervade Japanese society, and scholars have held up Japan as one of the key examples of domestic norms overriding the influence of the international system and driving a state’s security policy. The failure of anti-militarist norms to restrain Japan casts doubt on their effect on foreign and security policies elsewhere. As for U.S. foreign policy, this article suggests that as long as Japan continues to follow a strategy of buck-passing, the United States will have difficulty convincing Japan to increase its contributions to the alliance. Historically, Tokyo has not significantly expanded its defense commit-

with Japan (New York: St. Martin’s, 1991); and Herman Kahn, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate: Challenge and Response* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970).

3. For example, Richard K. Betts speculates on Japan’s propensity to become “a regular military power.” Betts, “Wealth, Power, and Instability: East Asia and the United States after the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Winter 1993/94), p. 60. Denny Roy comments on “Japan’s military weakness.” Roy, “Hegemon on the Horizon? China’s Threat to East Asian Security,” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 149–168. Eugene A. Matthews writes, “[It is] unnatural for a country with Japan’s international stature not to have a standing army,” and that Japan’s “armed services are unimpressive and weak, even compared to those of some of its neighbors.” Matthews, “Japan’s New Nationalism,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (November/December 2003), p. 79.

ments as a result of American urgings, but rather when the U.S. commitment to the region appeared to wane.

This article is not a general attack on constructivism; nor does it purport to test constructivism or realism. Constructivism and realism are paradigms; they are impossible to falsify because each includes a family of contradictory theories.⁴ Rather than attempt to “test” paradigms, this study tests two specific explanations for Japanese security policy since World War II, with the goal of building a better foundation for predictions about future Japanese policy.

The remainder of this article is divided into four main sections. The first section dispels the myth of Japan’s military weakness. It argues that Japan has far more military power than most analyses suggest. The second and third sections summarize realist and constructivist theories for Japanese security policy, infer predictions from these theories, and evaluate these predictions against historical data from Japanese policy since World War II. The fourth section addresses possible counterarguments.

Japanese Military Might

Most analyses of Japanese security policy greatly underestimate Japanese military power. For example, in 1993 Thomas Berger wrote, “In the short to medium term it is unlikely that Japan will seek to become a major military power.”⁵ Peter Katzenstein noted that Japan is a leader in defense spending, but concluded that Japanese defense expenditure did not make it “a world-class military power,” and that “by conventional measures of military strength Japan ranks far behind its major industrial competitors.”⁶ Paul Midford claimed that Japan has been “underproviding for its security” and “incurring significant risks as a consequence.”⁷ Yoshihide Soeya wrote, “No responsible decision maker in postwar Japan has ever attempted to convert accumulated economic wealth into military might.”⁸

4. For example, in the post-World War II era, either a Japanese strategy of conquest or buck-passing could have been consistent with the realist paradigm. Realism, as a paradigm, therefore is not “confirmed” or “falsified” by Japanese security policy.

5. Berger, “From Sword to Chrysanthemum,” p. 120.

6. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, pp. 194–195. Katzenstein argues that in 1994 Japan was ranked twenty-fifth in the world in terms of ground power, sixteenth in the world in terms of air power, and eighth in the world in terms of naval power. On the evolution of Japanese capabilities in the 1980s, see *ibid.*, pp. 132–138.

7. Paul Midford, “The Logic of Reassurance and Japan’s Grand Strategy,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Spring 2002), pp. 11, 16.

8. Soeya, “Japan: Normative Constraints versus Structural Imperatives,” p. 226.

Analysts often underestimate Japanese military power because they rely on a misleading statistic: defense spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP).⁹ Whereas other great powers spend 1.5–3 percent of their GDP on defense, Japan allocates about 1 percent; analysts frequently infer from this that Japan’s military capabilities are also lower than those of the other great powers. Defense spending as a fraction of GDP, however, is not a valid measure of military power. A state with a large economy devoting only a small share of its wealth to defense can amass a high level of military power. Conversely, a small economy spending even a huge percentage of its wealth on defense can generate only a limited amount of real military capability.¹⁰ Percentage of GDP allocated to defense is a good measure of the level of effort a state is devoting to defense, but it reveals little about how much military power a state wields.

MEASURING MILITARY POWER

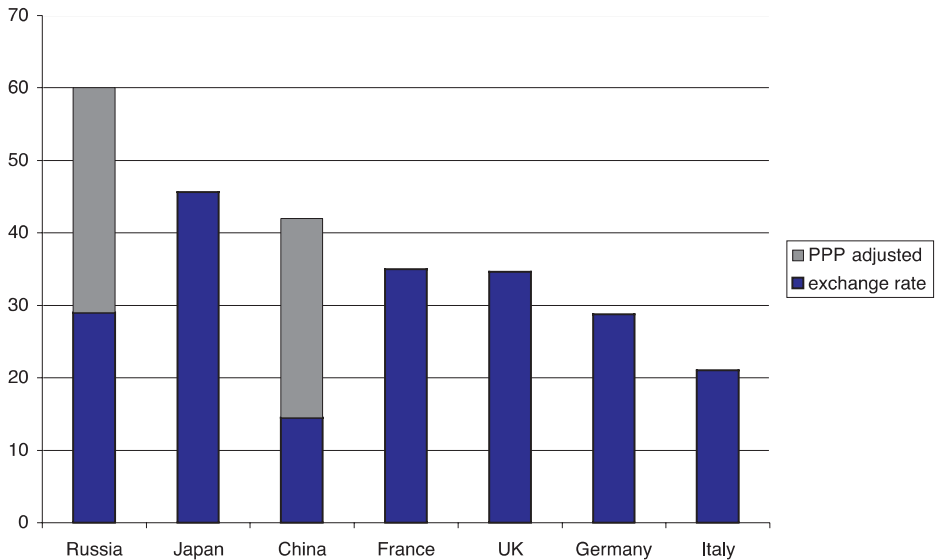
To assess the strength of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, I rely on two measures of military power. The first measure is aggregate defense spending (i.e., total defense spending, not spending as a percentage of GDP). Counting a state’s defense dollars is a rough measure of a state’s defense-related goods—equipment, personnel, and so on.¹¹

Japan ranks among the top two or three countries in the world in total defense spending (see Figure 1). Japan is number two (after the United States) if one looks at aggregate defense spending at market exchange rates. These rates, however, probably underestimate the defense spending of Russia and China (which can purchase goods and pay personnel more cheaply in their own economies). Using purchasing power parity (PPP) numbers to correct for this, Japanese defense spending is the third highest in the world behind the United

9. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*; Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism*; Chai, “Entrenching the Yoshida Defense Doctrine”; Midford, “The Logic of Reassurance and Japan’s Grand Strategy”; and David C. Kang, “Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks,” *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Spring 2003), pp. 57–85.

10. For example, this flawed measure of military power yields the implausible conclusion that the United States is militarily weaker than Angola, Serbia, or Yemen, each of which spends a higher fraction of its GDP on defense than the United States. The United States spends 3 percent of its GDP on defense; Angola spends 19 percent, Serbia 10 percent, and Yemen 8 percent. From International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2001–2002* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 300–303.

11. For a recent prominent example of an analysis using this imprecise, but useful, measure of aggregate power, see William C. Wohlforth, “The Stability of a Unipolar World,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 5–41.

Figure 1. Leading Defense Spenders, Excluding the United States (U.S.\$ billion, 2000)

SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2001–2002* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001).

NOTE: The United States spends more than seven times as much as any of the countries in this figure.

States and Russia.¹² Although measurement of aggregate defense spending is not precise—Japan might rank second or third in the world—Japan is clearly one of the world’s leading defense spenders.

A second way to measure Japan’s military power is to assess its capabilities across a broad range of military missions: land warfare, air superiority, and sea control. This analysis suggests that while Japan has little capability for ground warfare (either on defense or offense), it has significant capability for offensive or defensive air superiority or sea control operations.

LAND WARFARE. Japan has little combat power for ground warfare. Japan’s Ground Self-Defense Force has only approximately one armored division’s worth of modern equipment.¹³ Although several of Japan’s neighbors have

12. PPP numbers, however, probably overstate Russian and Chinese military power. See *ibid.*

13. A U.S. armored division, by comparison, typically includes about 300 tanks and 250 other armored fighting vehicles. Japan has only 200 Type-90 tanks (which are very modern and of the same

large land armies (e.g., China, North Korea, South Korea, and Russia), Japan is separated from them by a natural moat and relies on its navy and air force—rather than its army—for homeland defense.

Japan has even less capability for offensive ground warfare. The Japanese army lacks airborne or air assault divisions for seizing enemy airfields or ports; it has no marine corps to storm enemy beaches. Japan lacks the airlift, sealift, or logistics capabilities to send its small army to fight abroad. In addition, the Japanese air force has limited ground attack capabilities to support land warfare operations. Japan's F-2 fighter aircraft can drop dumb bombs and cluster bombs, and its Cobra attack helicopters can fire antitank missiles, but Japan lacks a broad inventory of precision-guided weapons.¹⁴ Furthermore, Japan has not acquired the long-range naval ground-attack missile systems, such as cruise missiles, which could be used to support land warfare.

AIR SUPERIORITY. Japan fields a powerful air force that could defend its airspace from any realistic threat. It owns state-of-the-art F-15J aircraft, as well as a small number of advanced F-2 aircraft (similar to the U.S. F-16 fighter); furthermore, its pilots are among the world's best trained. Japanese airborne command and control aircraft (called AWACs, for "airborne warning and control systems") multiply the effectiveness of Japan's air force by improving battlespace awareness and by helping Japanese fighters coordinate their efforts against enemy aircraft.¹⁵ Japan's airspace is also protected by significant numbers of surface-to-air missiles.

Measured by number of modern fighter aircraft, by airborne early warning assets, and by pilot training (one measure of pilot skill), the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) is competitive with those of the other leading military powers (see Table 1). In fact, Japan arguably has the world's fourth most powerful air force, after the United States, Great Britain, and France. Russia fields a large but inadequately trained force (i.e., averaging only twenty flying

generation as a U.S. Abrams M-1 tank) and about 290 other modern armored vehicles (Type-89 and Type-96 armored personnel carriers). International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2002–2003* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002).

14. *Jane's All the World's Aircraft, 2001–2002* (London: Jane's Information Group, 2001), p. 299. Japan appears to be broadening its precision strike capabilities. See Patricia J. Parmalee, "JDAM Kits to Be Installed on Japan's F-2s," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, September 1, 2003, p. 13.

15. Substantial advantages accrue to the air force that enjoys superior command and control and situational awareness. For a description of these advantages in the air war over Vietnam, see Marshall L. Michel III, *Clashes: Air Combat over North Vietnam, 1965–1972* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997), especially pp. 175–178. See also the description of the air battle between Israel and Syria over the Bekaa Valley in 1982, in Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Air Power* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 92–96.

Table 1. Relative Air Capabilities of the Major Powers

Country	Current-Generation Combat Aircraft	Airborne Early Warning Aircraft	Pilot Flying Hours per Year
United States	2,267	102	205
Russia	1,569	16	20
Great Britain	400	7	188
France	242	18	180
Germany	193	0	150
Italy	185	0	—
Japan	180	37	150
China	100	4	80

SOURCES: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2001–2002* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001); and <http://www.globalsecurity.org>.

NOTE: “Current-Generation Combat Aircraft” includes F-14, F-15, F-16, F-18, Mirage 2000, Tornado, Su-27, Su-30, and other comparable aircraft. I consider F-22 “next generation” and F-4 and comparable aircraft “previous generation.” “Airborne Early Warning Aircraft” includes both air force and naval AEW assets. Flying hours are for air forces (not naval aviation).

hours per pilot each year); Japan’s air force is probably more capable than the German or Italian air forces given its comparable levels of training and aircraft, and has far greater capabilities in airborne command and control.

Japan’s air force also has considerable capabilities for offensive air superiority operations. The Japanese archipelago stretches 1,600 miles along the Pacific rim; the location of Japan’s air bases, from Hokkaido in the north to Okinawa in the south, enables Japanese F-15s to project air power over the Taiwan Strait, the Korean Peninsula, and the sea-lanes that are vital to the region’s trade.¹⁶ Japan is currently developing aerial refueling capabilities, which will at least double the range of its fighters.¹⁷ Japan’s air force does have some notable limitations when it comes to offensive air operations; Japan lacks the precision

16. Without aerial refueling, the F-15J combat radius is approximately 550 miles. This radius measures the maximum distance from Japanese air bases at which Japanese fighters could set up airborne patrols. Combat radius data are estimated from U.S. F-15s, which have roughly the same flight characteristics as Japanese F-15Js. See *Jane’s All the World’s Aircraft, 2001–2002*, pp. 575–577. See also David A. Shlapak, John Stillion, Olga Oliker, and Tanya Charlick-Paley, *A Global Access Strategy for the U.S. Air Force* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2002), p. 57.

17. The JASDF is purchasing four Boeing 767 tanker aircraft, with the first aircraft due for delivery in 2006. The JASDF has already begun training F-15J pilots for aerial refueling with U.S. tankers. See “Japan MOF OKs Outlay to Introduce Tanker Aircraft,” Jiji Press wire service, December 20, 2001, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) JPP20011220000032; see also “Japan SDF to Begin Aerial Refueling Training in April,” Jiji Press wire service, November 26, 2002, in FBIS JPP20021126000118.

weapons needed to bomb enemy airfields or to attack enemy air-defense systems. Nevertheless, Japan's fighter aircraft could present a serious challenge to any of its neighbors' air forces.

SEA CONTROL. Japan's greatest military capabilities are in the area of sea control. Its modern warships and maritime patrol aircraft put Japanese naval power among the top two to three countries in the world (see Table 2).¹⁸ Four modern battle groups constitute the core of Japan's naval capabilities. These battle groups have sophisticated air defense and antisubmarine warfare capabilities, allowing them to operate away from the home islands, near enemy shores.¹⁹ Only the U.S. Navy—with large-deck aircraft carriers—is better equipped than Japan to move its fleet into dangerous waters. The well-defended Japanese battle groups could be used to defend Japanese territorial waters or they could be deployed anywhere in the region to monitor (or during a war, to destroy) an enemy's military or commercial shipping. In wartime, the Japanese navy could use its advanced antiship missiles to attack an enemy fleet or an enemy's trade.

An often-overlooked component of Japan's sea control capabilities is its large fleet of P-3 maritime patrol aircraft. P-3s have powerful radars for detecting ships and submarines, and they are armed with lethal antiship and anti-submarine weapons.²⁰ Operating from Japan's air bases, these long-range aircraft can project Japanese naval power across thousands of miles: as far away as the South China Sea, over the Spratly Islands, and even south of the Philippines.²¹

18. The United States has the world's most powerful navy. Japan and Great Britain probably vie for second place.

19. Each battle group includes a destroyer with an advanced Aegis radar system, which protects the fleet from air and missile attacks. Of critical importance, the Aegis system, in combination with the Standard Missile, can defend the Japanese fleet from enemy aircraft beyond the range of most antiship cruise missiles.

20. Japan owns eighty P-3C aircraft. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2003–2004* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 159. They have a mission radius of 1,000–1,300 nautical miles and are armed with Harpoon missiles. See <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/aircraft/p-3.htm>. Currently Japan's P-3Cs cannot be escorted to their maximum range by fighter aircraft because the fighters have shorter range. But as the JASDF begins to field aerial refueling aircraft, it can escort their maritime patrol aircraft on long-range missions, greatly multiplying their potential effectiveness.

21. Japanese P-3s could devastate the navy of any East Asian country. None of Japan's neighbors have naval forces with sophisticated air defense systems. In an unpublished analysis, Derek Eaton of RAND demonstrates the extreme vulnerability of surface ships with limited air defense capabilities to modern antiship cruise missiles and aircraft. In his analysis of the 1982 Falklands War, Eaton shows that even the poorly equipped and poorly trained Argentine air force was able to do great damage to the vaunted British navy. With only five antiship missiles in their inventory, the

Table 2. Relative Naval Capabilities of the Major Powers

Country	Major Surface Combatants	Fleet Air Defense Capabilities (nautical miles)	Aircraft Carriers (> 20,000)	Total Tonnage, Major Surface Combatants
United States	131	high (to 90 nm)	12	2,971,671
China	62	low (13 nm)	0	169,480
Japan	54	high (90 nm)	0	224,110
France	36	moderate (20 nm)	1	157,250
Great Britain	35	moderate (25 nm)	3	201,158
Russia	34	moderate (48 nm)	1	332,800
Italy	22	moderate (20 nm)	0	88,550
Germany	14	moderate (20 nm)	0	57,360

SOURCES: Major surface combatants and aircraft carrier counts found in International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2001–2002* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001). Tonnage figures are from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/japan/ship.htm>; and *Jane's Fighting Ships* (London: S. Low, Marston, and Company, 2001). Air defense and surface-to-air missile (SAM) ranges are from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/links-missile.htm>.

NOTE: Under "Fleet Air Defense Capabilities," I evaluate each country's navy by its best naval air defense system and give the range of each navy's longest-range air defense weapons. The best SAM systems in the respective fleets are United States and Japan (SM-2 MR); Russia (SA-N-6 Grumble); Great Britain (Sea Dart); France, Italy, and Germany (SM-1); and China (SA-N-7 Shtil). Antiship missiles with a 25-nautical-mile range are common (e.g., Exocet and Penguin), so only air defense systems with a range in excess of 25 nautical miles have a good chance of defending surface ships from the airplanes that might launch antiship missiles at them.

As Table 2 shows, Japan has the world's third largest fleet in terms of major surface combatants and gross tonnage. Its fleet air defense capabilities are excellent, surpassed only by the United States. In terms of naval capabilities, Japan ranks near Great Britain and above any of the other European great powers. The Chinese navy, with a slightly higher number of major surface combatants, consists predominately of light frigates, and has very poor air defense capabilities relative to the other great powers, particularly Japan. Although Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force is unable to conduct certain missions—for example, projecting naval power ashore through air or missile attacks—Japan's sea control capabilities are as good or better than most of the world's great powers.

Argentines sank two British ships. Eaton notes that the Chinese navy has less capable air defense systems today than the British had in 1982. Eaton, "The Falkland Islands War," 2000. The Chinese navy, or the navy of any other East Asian country, would be highly vulnerable to Japanese P-3s.

In sum, this analysis disputes the prevailing characterization of Japan as a militarily weak state. Measures of aggregate defense spending show Japan to be either the second- or third-largest defense spender in the world. And analyses of the Japanese military show that Japan is a world leader in air and naval power (see Table 3).

Competing Theories of Japanese Security

Scholars have drawn upon theories from the constructivist and realist paradigms to explain Japan's security policy.²² The constructivist school holds that norms and identities have a powerful effect on a state's security policy. Constructivist scholars have argued that a state's international and domestic political experiences may produce norms or a "culture of antimilitarism," an aversion to the military establishment and the use of military force, which becomes entrenched through the development of institutions and laws.²³ In an antimilitarist state, proposals to expand military capabilities or roles will confront opposition from the general public and political groups, and will run up against institutional or legal restraints; these factors will obstruct proposals for military activism.

A number of scholars argue that Japan's disastrous World War II defeat created antimilitarist norms that, more than the international system, shaped Japan's postwar security policy.²⁴ Glenn Hook highlights the "persistent strength of anti-militaristic attitudes" in Japan, including "resistance to a major build-up in the military."²⁵ Katzenstein argues that "there exists no observable relation between Japan's relative position and its security policy," and that "Japan's security policy will continue to be shaped by the domestic rather than the international balance of power."²⁶ Sun-Ki Chai writes, "The incompleteness

22. For a useful survey, see Michael J. Green, "State of the Field Report: Research on Japanese Security Policy," *Access Asia Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (September 1998), pp. 5-39.

23. Chai, "Entrenching the Yoshida Defense Doctrine"; Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism*, p. 10; and Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, p. 3.

24. Constructivists are not the only ones who argue that Japanese security policy is inconsistent with realism. David C. Kang, for example, discusses "Realism's Japan Problem." Kang, "Getting Asia Wrong," p. 73. Chalmers Johnson writes, "The cases of prewar and postwar Japan directly challenge realist theory." Johnson, "The State and Japanese Grand Strategy," in Richard N. Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein, eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 203.

25. Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan*, p. 8.

26. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, pp. 24, 204.

Table 3. Japanese Military Capabilities by Mission

	Land Warfare	Air Superiority	Sea Control
Defensive	low	high	high
Offensive	low	moderate	high

of systemic explanations suggests that domestic factors are essential to explaining the anomalous nature of Japanese defense policy.²⁷

Constructivist scholars argue that Japan's military policy has been—and will continue to be—highly constrained by antimilitarist norms. Katzenstein claims that “strong reactions to anything that smacks of Japanese militarism act as a social restraint on national security policy,” and that “a series of taboos curtail the growth of the military.”²⁸ Berger argues that because of Japanese antimilitarism, “in each instance efforts to significantly expand . . . Japanese defense establishments and international roles foundered on the shoals of domestic opposition.”²⁹ Hook argues that “mass attitudes have been of crucial significance in constraining the normalization of the military as a legitimate instrument of state power.”³⁰ Chai highlights the constraining effects of institutions such as article 9 of the Japanese constitution (which prohibits Japan from owning military forces or using them in the conduct of foreign policy). Arguing that article 9 “inhibits full-scale armament,” Chai asserts that antimilitarist institutions in Japan are “important barriers to changes in Japanese defense policy.”³¹ In sum, constructivist scholars argue that since World War II, domestic Japanese norms have prevented major expansion of Japanese military capabilities and roles.

REALIST THEORY OF BUCK-PASSING

Theories drawn from the realist paradigm are unified by their focus on anarchy and its effects on state behavior. One branch of realism, offensive realism, posits that anarchy causes great powers to seek regional hegemony.³² How-

27. Chai, “Entrenching the Yoshida Defense Doctrine,” p. 393.

28. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, pp. 119, 116.

29. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism*, p. 6.

30. Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan*, p. 8.

31. Chai, “Entrenching the Yoshida Defense Doctrine.” Katzenstein also argues that article 9 is an important restraint on Japanese security policy. See Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, p. 148.

32. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton, N.J.: Prince-

ever, even offensive realists recognize that aggressive foreign policies are unwise under some conditions; security is sometimes best achieved through restraint.³³ Similarly, defensive realists believe that states must be vigilant in an anarchic world. But unlike offensive realists, they argue that expansionism is usually counterproductive; the use of force tends to trigger countervailing alliances, and defense is easier than offense.³⁴ Both schools of realism argue that security concerns trump other factors in the development of foreign policies; they both recognize that countries will sometimes adopt aggressive, and other times restrained, foreign policy strategies.³⁵

Realist thinkers have identified a set of foreign policy strategies that states pursue to mitigate the dangers of anarchy. Two aggressive strategies are conquest (military expansion to gain regional hegemony) and bandwagoning for profit (aligning with a strong, aggressive state to gain some of its spoils).³⁶ One defensive strategy is balancing: building military power, finding allies, and confronting aggressive states.³⁷ A second defensive strategy is buck-passing. Buck-passers recognize the need to balance against a threat, but they do as little of the required balancing as possible by relying on the efforts of others.³⁸

ton University Press, 1998); Samuel P. Huntington, "Why International Primacy Matters," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 68–83; Eric J. Labs, "Beyond Victory: Offensive Realism and the Expansion of War Aims," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Summer 1997), pp. 1–49; and Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 72–107.

33. Offensive realism is often mischaracterized as predicting that states will always pursue aggressive policies. For a clarification, see Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 76–79, 164–165.

34. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979); Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 50–90; Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (October 1997), pp. 171–201; Jack L. Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999).

35. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 17–22; Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Winter 2000/01), pp. 128–161; Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (October 1998), pp. 144–172; Stephen G. Brooks, "Dueling Realisms," *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Summer 1997), pp. 445–477; Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "Realism and America's Rise: A Review Essay," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 157–182; and Benjamin Frankel, "Restating the Realist Case: An Introduction," *Security Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 1996), pp. ix–xx.

36. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 162–164; and Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit."

37. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; and Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987). For a discussion of other strategies, see Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, chap. 5.

38. Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance

Buck-passing is often preferable to balancing; balancing, after all, is costly and may undermine one's own long-term security through depletion of manpower and wealth. Buck-passing transfers as much of these costs as possible to other states.³⁹

Realists have theorized about the conditions under which buck-passing is most attractive. For example, states are more likely to choose this strategy when geography or military technology makes them less vulnerable to immediate invasion.⁴⁰ Buck-passing is also particularly appealing to countries that are relatively secure, and to those that have powerful allies that can contain foreseeable threats.⁴¹

Realists have only begun to specify and test theories of foreign policy; that is, they have only begun to develop strong theories that describe when a state will choose one strategy over another. As critics of realism have correctly noted, many different foreign policy strategies—conquest, bandwagoning, buck-passing—could be claimed by realists, in an ad hoc fashion, as consistent

Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 137–168; Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (July 1984), pp. 461–496; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*; Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984); and Robert Powell, *In the Shadow of Power: States and Strategies in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999). For an example of a realist buck-passing strategy for the United States, see Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Spring 1997), pp. 5–48. On Japanese buck-passing, see Susan J. Pharr, "Japan's Defensive Foreign Policy and the Politics of Burden Sharing," in Gerald L. Curtis, ed., *Japan's Foreign Policy after the Cold War: Coping with Change* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 235–262.

39. On the distribution of alliance costs, see Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," *Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 48 (1966), pp. 266–279; Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics"; and Powell, *In the Shadow of Power*.

40. On the connection between geography and buck-passing, see Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 273. On the role of military technology, see Christensen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks"; Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1978), pp. 167–214; and Stephen Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Spring 1998), pp. 5–43.

41. Offensive realists focus on the presence of a wealthy ally that is willing to pay the costs of containing a threat; other scholars have also noted the importance of that ally's credibility. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics"; and Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The U.S.-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999). On what causes states to appear credible, see Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, forthcoming). Realists have hypothesized numerous other conditions that make states more likely to adopt strategies that transfer the costs of containing a threat onto others. For example, both offensive and defensive realists note that buck-passing is most common in multipolar systems. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 76–79; and Christensen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks." Barry Posen has written that states will prefer to pass the buck when the expected cost of fighting is high. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*. And Robert Powell has argued that states will engage in buck-passing (or, "wait") if the extent to which military capabilities cumulate is low. Powell, *In the Shadow of Power*.

with their expectations.⁴² Nevertheless, it is still possible to determine whether a given state at a given time is pursuing one of these strategies or is following a foreign policy driven by nonrealist factors. For example, although realism does not predict which security strategy Japan should have adopted after World War II, it is possible to test whether Japanese policy has been consistent with a realist strategy (e.g., balancing or buck-passing) or whether Japan followed a foreign policy driven primarily by domestic norms, as constructivist scholars have claimed.⁴³

Testing the Theories

To understand whether Japanese security policy has been driven by domestic norms and values or by changes in the balance of power, I code the explanatory variables of the two theories to generate predictions. In so doing, I seek to test these predictions against evidence from Japanese security policy since World War II.

CODING AND PREDICTIONS

Constructivists argue that Japan's domestic norms have been the key factor in determining Japanese security policy. Scholars argue that these norms have remained largely robust since World War II. Katzenstein notes that in Japan, "generational effects have been rather small," and that "the end of the Cold War did not lead to great changes. . . . Japan's antimilitarist social norms have been remarkably stable."⁴⁴ Berger agrees that "the same antimilitary themes and rhetoric that were prevalent in the 1950s continue to be voiced in the 1990s with scarcely diminished fervor."⁴⁵

If Japanese antimilitarism has been strong since the end of World War II, antimilitarist theories make the following predictions for Japanese security

42. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, p. 23; Peter J. Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara, "Japan, Asian-Pacific Security, and the Case for Analytical Eclecticism," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Winter 2001/02), pp. 153–185.

43. Previous analyses of Japanese security and realist theory include Paul Midford, "The Logic of Reassurance and Japan's Grand Strategy," *Security Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Spring 2002), pp. 1–43; Christopher P. Twomey, "Japan, the Circumscribed Balancer: Building on Defensive Realism to Make Predictions About East Asian Security," *Security Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Summer 2000), pp. 178–219; Tsuyoshi Kawasaki, "Postclassical Realism and Japanese Security Policy," *Pacific Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2001), pp. 221–240; and Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels, "Mercantile Realism and Japanese Foreign Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Spring 1998), pp. 171–203.

44. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, p. 116.

45. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism*, p. 194.

policy. Japan should have developed little military power, and Japanese military activity should have been limited and restricted to defensive roles.

Realists would argue that Japan had a range of foreign policy options during the Cold War (e.g., conquest, balancing, bandwagoning, and buck-passing). A realist Japan might have pursued any of these policies, but the conditions Japan faced during this time correspond to those identified by realist scholars as most conducive to buck-passing. For example, Japan had a rich and credible ally in the United States,⁴⁶ and it enjoyed favorable geography (a natural moat from the Asian continent).⁴⁷

If Japan has followed a buck-passing strategy since World War II, what policies would it have adopted? Japan should have contributed as little to the alliance as possible. If the balance of power shifted unfavorably, Japan should have tried to transfer the costs of restoring the balance to its allies. The buck-passing theory predicts that Japan should have increased its military power and expanded its military roles only when allies failed to respond to growing threats. To determine whether Japanese military power and roles have been consistent with a realist buck-passing strategy, the next section tracks the balance of power in East Asia since World War II.

THE BALANCE OF POWER IN EAST ASIA, 1950–2000. From 1950 until the mid-1970s, the United States and Japan enjoyed a favorable balance of power relative to their adversaries. During this era, the Soviet Union devoted the bulk of its military power to the European rather than the East Asian theater. After the Sino-Soviet split in 1959, the Soviets deployed more military forces to the Asian region, but their deployments consisted mainly of ground forces on the Chinese border.⁴⁸ China and North Korea were hostile to Japan, but their militaries also emphasized ground forces.

46. Some scholars have argued that U.S. credibility to defend Japan varied during the Cold War. See, for example, Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism*. I argue, however, that during the Cold War, U.S. credibility may have varied somewhat, but it always remained relatively high. The primary U.S. security strategy during the Cold War was to deny the Soviet Union control over the major industrial centers of the world. Japan was consistently singled out as one of these centers.

47. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 76–79.

48. Before the Sino-Soviet split, the Soviets maintained only 12–14 divisions in the Far East (out of their 160 total divisions). Even after the rift with China, the Soviets deployed only 30 ground divisions in the Far East. They also deployed tactical nuclear weapons and bombers in the region, but these were deployed near the Chinese border and were clearly aimed at China. Lowell Dittmer, *Sino-Soviet Normalization and Its International Implications, 1945–1990* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), p. 193. For information on Soviet divisions, see International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1962–1963* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1962); and International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1970–1971* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1970).

Starting in the late 1970s, the military advantage enjoyed by the U.S.-Japan alliance began to erode. First, the Soviet Union began building up its Pacific Fleet, until it became the largest of the four Soviet fleets. The buildup included significant increases in the number of Soviet ballistic missile submarines and surface ships, as well as improvements in amphibious capabilities. Soviet Kiev-class heavy aviation cruisers, introduced in 1978, were perceived by U.S. military analysts as “a first step in challenging Western carrier and air-power dominance on the high seas.”⁴⁹ The Soviet navy made its presence felt by conducting numerous exercises during this period, such as the 1975 Okean fleet exercises in which the Soviets practiced attacks on Western naval forces in the Pacific. The Soviets also began expanding their air assets in eastern Siberia, with larger deployments of MiG-23, MiG-27, and Su-19 attack aircraft, as well as the 1979 deployment of Backfire bombers to Siberia. New Soviet bases in Vietnam gave Soviet air and naval forces greater reach throughout the region. Particularly worrisome to Japan was the Soviet buildup of amphibious capabilities in the Kurile Islands.⁵⁰ Summarizing changes in Soviet power, Norman Levin wrote in 1983, “Until the late 1960s, there was a marked asymmetry in the geopolitical positions of the United States and the Soviet Union. The U.S. was a global power with both the military capability and political will to act accordingly. The Soviet Union, despite pretensions to the contrary, was basically a regional power, with its over-riding concern focused on Europe. Today the situation has changed dramatically.”⁵¹

Second, not only was the Soviet Pacific Fleet growing more powerful in the 1970s, but many of its policies were aimed at Japan in particular. Attempting to discourage Tokyo from closer trilateral alignment with Beijing and Washington, the Soviets issued numerous threats to Japan and deployed amphibious troops to the Kurile Islands.⁵² After Japan signed the Friendship Treaty with China in 1978, the Soviets stepped up pressure in a variety of ways.⁵³ They boosted amphibious troop strength in the Kuriles, extending the buildup to an-

49. David F. Winkler, *Cold War at Sea: High-Seas Confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000), p. 142.

50. Larry Nicksch, “Japanese Attitudes toward Defense and Security Issues,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (July/August 1983), pp. 57–72.

51. Norman D. Levin, “The Strategic Environment in East Asia and U.S.-Korean Security Relations in the 1980s,” RAND N-1960-FF (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, March 1983), p. 2.

52. The Kurile Islands (north of the northernmost Japanese island, Hokkaido) were deeded to the Soviet Union after World War II, but Japan continues to claim ownership.

53. Derek Da Cunha, *Soviet Naval Power in the Pacific* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1990), p. 94; and Kensuke Ebata, “Soviets Simulate Attack on Japan,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, September 28, 1985, p. 664.

other island (Shikotan). The Soviets increased the number of SS-20 tactical nuclear missile launchers deployed in Siberia.⁵⁴ They enhanced the visibility of their fleet by doubling the number of transits through the Sea of Japan straits over the 1976–88 period. In 1985 the Soviets held an amphibious landing exercise that simulated an attack on Japan's Hokkaido Island.⁵⁵ Thus Soviet intimidation was aimed explicitly at Japan to discourage it from closer trilateral alignment with the United States and China.

Third, the United States did not initially balance against increases in Soviet military power. Rather, as Levin notes, "a remarkably rapid buildup of Soviet military capabilities over the course of the 1970s was accompanied by a concomitant diminishing of those of the United States."⁵⁶ The United States had pulled its forces out of Vietnam, was planning to remove all U.S. forces from the Korean Peninsula (under Jimmy Carter's administration), and was reducing the size of its forces deployed in the region. As Soviet Pacific Fleet naval tonnage grew to displace 1.6 million tons by 1982, the U.S. Seventh Fleet had fallen to 600,000 tons.⁵⁷

In the 1980s Washington embarked on a major military buildup, but it committed only some of these forces to the East Asian theater. After the overthrow of the shah in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, both in 1979, Washington directed more forces to the Persian Gulf and began insisting on greater Japanese burden sharing in East Asia. U.S. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown visited Tokyo in 1980 to discuss the recent Persian Gulf crises, informing Japanese leaders that "because the United States had chosen to deploy Pacific naval forces to the Indian Ocean, it had become apparent that the security of the West Pacific could no longer essentially be the sole responsibility of the United States."⁵⁸ The military buildup that occurred during Ronald Reagan's administration enhanced U.S. military power, but it was stretched thin between rising commitments in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. The United States needed more help from its Asian allies.

Fourth, observers in Tokyo noticed both the increase in Soviet power and the

54. Richard H. Solomon and Masataka Kosaka, eds., *The Soviet Far East Military Buildup: Nuclear Dilemmas and Asian Security* (Dover, Mass.: Auburn House, 1986).

55. Da Cunha, *Soviet Naval Power in the Pacific*.

56. Levin, "The Strategic Environment in East Asia and U.S.-Korean Security Relations in the 1980s," p. 2.

57. Hisahiko Okazaki, "Japan's Security Policy: A Time for Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall 1982), pp. 188–197.

58. Quoted in Thomas B. Modly, "The Rhetoric and Realities of Japan's 1,000-Mile Sea Lane Defense Policy," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (January/February 1985), pp. 25–36.

extent of U.S. balancing against it. Takashi Inoguchi writes, "The growing number of Soviet military activities near Japan and throughout the globe have produced intense discomfort in the Japanese government, which had [recently] adopted defense plans based on the premise of *détente*."⁵⁹ In its 1977 Defense White Paper, the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) commented, "Although a military balance still remains between the United States and the Soviet Union, this [a marked expansion of Soviet forces during the past decade, in striking contrast to a quantitative decline in the previously overwhelming U.S. posture] has been a significant factor in the recent world military structure."⁶⁰ The JDA further commented, "The United States can no longer unilaterally provide its Western allies with the same amount of military potential it offered in the past."⁶¹

Since the end of the Cold War, Japan's security environment has changed in three ways. First, conventional military threats to Japan have dropped significantly. The Soviet Union collapsed and neither Russia, China, nor North Korea has the military capabilities to directly challenge the military power of the U.S.-Japan alliance.⁶² Japan no longer faces a serious maritime competitor in the sea-lanes or a threat of amphibious invasion. Second, the probability of war in East Asia has arguably increased since the Cold War's end. Pyongyang's efforts to develop nuclear weapons have provoked repeated crises, increasing the chance that the United States will use force against North Korea in a nuclear antiproliferation operation. Furthermore, the United States and China may be on a collision course. Tensions ran high between the two states in 1996, when the U.S. sent two aircraft carriers to the Taiwan Strait in response to Chinese missile tests; another crisis occurred in 2001, when a Chinese fighter jet crashed in midair with a U.S. naval surveillance aircraft. Third, the nature of Japan's threat environment has changed. In the superpower standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States, Japan faced the prospect of major air and naval battles for control of East Asian sea-lanes, and—given Japan's strategic significance as the hub of U.S. military operations in Asia—the threat of a nuclear strike from thousands of Soviet nuclear weapons. In the post-Cold

59. Takashi Inoguchi, *Japan's International Relations* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991), p. 78.

60. Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan* (Tokyo: Japan Defense Agency, 1977), p. 7.

61. *Ibid.*

62. China is not yet a serious military competitor, but it is on the path to becoming one. See Avery Goldstein, "Great Expectations: Interpreting China's Arrival," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Winter 1997/98), pp. 36–73; and Robert S. Ross, "Beijing as a Conservative Power," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (March/April 1997), pp. 33–44.

War world, Japan no longer faces a major conventional military challenge or a significant prospect of massive nuclear attack; rather, a war over Taiwan or Korea might lead to a handful of conventionally or nuclear-armed ballistic missiles falling on Japanese territory.⁶³ The Japanese government has recognized that North Korea poses a particularly dangerous missile and terrorist threat.⁶⁴ In sum, in many respects Japan's threat environment has improved relative to the Cold War era, but Japan still faces serious threats from North Korea and potentially from China in the future.

PREDICTIONS FOR THE CASE OF JAPAN: A REALIST BUCK-PASSING STRATEGY. The coding of the balance of power described above generates predictions for Japan's postwar security policy. If Japan has been following a buck-passing strategy, it should have maintained small military forces and undertaken limited roles in the early period (when the balance of power was favorable to the U.S.-Japan alliance). Starting in the late 1970s, a buck-passing strategy would require Japan to increase its contribution to the alliance. As the Soviet naval threat grew and the United States failed to rectify the regional balance of power, Japan should have increased both its military power and participation. In the post-Cold War world, conventional threats to Japan have declined, which suggests that Japan should decrease its military efforts. At the same time, an important threat—the risk of attack by small numbers of ballistic missiles possibly armed with weapons of mass destruction—has worsened. Unless Washington seems prepared to solve this problem for Japan, Tokyo should build up its capabilities to counter this threat itself. In sum, during the post-Cold War period, Japan should be reducing its conventional military power and military roles and focusing more on the ballistic missile threat.

JAPANESE SECURITY POLICY, 1950–2000

To test the predictions of the competing theories, this section traces the evolution of Japanese security policy (military power and roles) from 1950 to 2000. The first section of this article demonstrated that Japan is currently a major military power; testing the realist and constructivist explanations of Japanese

63. Japan agreed in 1996 to provide rear-area support for U.S. operations in the event of a Korean war. Although it has made no explicit commitments regarding a war over Taiwan, Japan would likely permit the United States to use its bases, and it would probably provide U.S. forces with logistical and medical support. This support might lead adversaries to target Japan with ballistic missiles during a war; North Korea or China might threaten Japan with missile attacks to keep Japan out of a conflict, or might strike U.S. bases in Japan to disrupt rear-area operations.

64. See the discussion of these threats in Japanese Defense Agency White Papers. For example, Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan* (Tokyo: Japan Defense Agency, 2003).

security policy, however, requires an understanding of how Japanese military power, as well as military roles, evolved over time.

MILITARY POWER. After World War II, Japan spent far less on defense than did other wealthy states. By the 1990s, however, Japanese defense spending had surpassed that of the European great powers (see Figure 2).

As Japanese spending increased, so did Japanese military capabilities. In 1945 the once-powerful Japanese military was in ruins. Any military equipment that had survived the war was destroyed by the Americans or transferred to U.S. allies. In the early 1950s, Japan began initial steps toward rearmament, acquiring U.S. hand-me-downs and other less modern systems. As late as 1970, Japan had acquired only one guided missile destroyer and fielded Korean War–vintage aircraft.

Starting in the late 1970s, Japan took the steps that would transform it into one of the world's major military powers. Tokyo acquired a world-class air force; in 1978 it procured top-of-the-line F-15 fighter aircraft and advanced E-2C naval command and control aircraft. Japan also undertook a substantial naval buildup. The JDA purchased 100 state-of-the-art P-3C naval patrol aircraft, quiet Yushio-class diesel-electric submarines, and four highly advanced guided missile destroyers equipped with sophisticated Aegis radar.⁶⁵ John Welfield writes, "The range and strike power of the Japanese air force was to be extended. Naval and ground forces were to be further strengthened through updating of equipment. Japanese military spending rose steadily. . . . [This buildup] laid the groundwork for increases in military power of a kind that could eventually project Japanese influence far beyond the shores of the home archipelago."⁶⁶

In the post–Cold War world, Japan continues to strengthen its military, particularly its navy and its theater missile defense capabilities. Tokyo has made some moves to bolster its air force—principally through the acquisition of aerial refueling aircraft⁶⁷—but has not yet embarked on a major upgrade of its principal combat aircraft.⁶⁸ Japan has, however, made substantial additions to

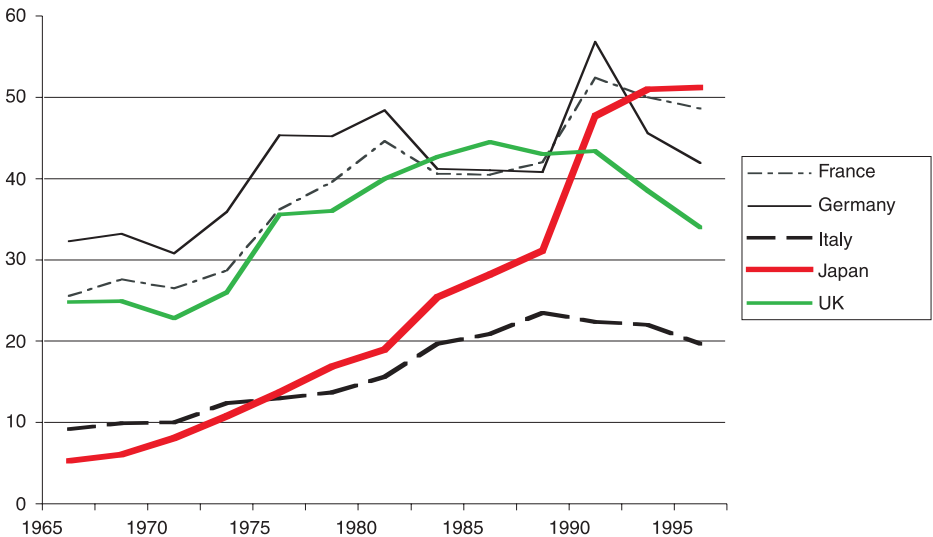
65. Da Cunha, *Soviet Naval Power in the Pacific*, pp. 221–223.

66. John Welfield, *An Empire in Eclipse: Japan in the Postwar American Alliance System* (London: Athlone, 1988), p. 446.

67. "Japan to Procure 4 Aerial Tankers in 5 Years," Jiji Press wire service, December 15, 2000, in FBIS JPP20001214000127; and "ASDF Begins Midair Refueling Drills with U.S. Air Tanker," Japan Economic Newswire, April 23, 2003.

68. Tokyo has not yet decided to procure any of the next-generation fighter aircraft (e.g., the U.S. F-22 and Joint Strike Fighter); instead it relies on F-15Js and continues to produce the F-2 (a domestic F-16 equivalent).

Figure 2. Comparative Defense Spending over Time among Spending Leaders, Excluding the United States and the Soviet Union, 1965–2000 (U.S.\$ billion, constant 1996)



SOURCE: *Arms Control and Disarmament Handbook*, various years.

its navy. The Maritime Self-Defense Force added three large amphibious assault ships to the fleet that are capable of launching helicopters or “vertical take-off and landing” aircraft. Recently the JDA has requested two even larger “helicopter carriers”; these will be the largest ships in the Japanese fleet and will be capable of carrying both helicopters and vertical/short take-off aircraft.⁶⁹ In 2002 the JDA announced that it will procure two additional

69. “Japan Eyes Helicopter Carrier to Bolster Defense,” *Mainichi Daily News*, August 30, 2003, p. 8. Analysts have long speculated on when Japan might acquire aircraft carriers. Depending on how one defines an “aircraft carrier,” Japan may have already done so. There are many different kinds of aircraft carriers, with substantial differences in combat power. The U.S. “supercarriers,” displacing 80,000–100,000 plus tons, have catapults that permit them to launch high-performance aircraft. By contrast, France and Britain own substantially smaller ships that are also called “carriers”; they displace only 20,000–40,000 tons and can launch only vertical or short take-off and landing aircraft, which have limited range and capabilities. A handful of other nations deploy a still-smaller variety of carrier typically restricted to helicopters, although sometimes also vertical take-off and landing aircraft: for example, Spain’s 17,000-ton carrier, or Italy’s two carriers of 7,500 and 10,000 tons. Japan’s amphibious assault ships are similar in size to Italy’s; the two additional carriers will be larger than those owned by Italy and slightly smaller than that owned by Spain. For tonnage data, see <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/index.html>.

Kongo-class destroyers with latest-generation Aegis systems designed for ballistic missile defense.⁷⁰ And the four existing Aegis destroyers are being up-graded to give them ballistic missile defense capabilities.⁷¹ The powerful Aegis ships often attract the greatest attention, but Japan has also built thirteen other advanced destroyers and nine new submarines since the end of the Cold War.⁷²

Table 4 compares Japan's post-Cold War naval buildup with the new naval deployments of the other great powers. Japan's naval buildup is outpacing every country except the United States. The data clearly show the commitment of the United States to maintain its large lead over the rest of the world in naval power; it also shows the concerted efforts of a major power to retain formidable naval capabilities: Japan. Beyond that, the other countries of the world are modernizing their naval forces at a much more relaxed pace.

MILITARY ROLES. In the early post-World War II era, Japan took on minimal roles within the U.S.-Japan alliance. The 1954 Self-Defense Forces law had made the overseas deployment of Japanese troops illegal. Opposition parties argued against Japan's participation in joint military exercises with the United States on the grounds that collective security was unconstitutional.⁷³ When Washington sought Japanese participation in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, Tokyo refused by invoking this constitutional prohibition.

In the late 1970s, Japan began to increase its roles within the alliance. In 1978 the United States and Japan signed the Guidelines for Defense Cooperation, in which Japan formally agreed to expand its military participation from operations confined to the home islands to operations for the provision of "peace and stability" throughout East Asia. The guidelines were not empty diplomatic rhetoric. The U.S. and Japanese militaries began a series of joint studies on sea-lane defense, joint operations, and interoperability. More significantly, all branches of the Japanese military began joint training and exercises with the U.S. military.⁷⁴ And in 1981, Prime Minister Suzuki Zenko announced that Ja-

70. Patricia J. Parmalee, "Fifth Aegis to Japan," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, May 13, 2002, p. 15.

71. "Patriot Plus," *International Herald Tribune*, September 1, 2003; and "Defense Agency Requests 142.3 Billion Yen for Missile Defense," *Japan Economic Newswire*, August 29, 2003.

72. These numbers include only those vessels acquired in 1995 or later to omit those ships that had been ordered and nearly completed during the Cold War. *Jane's Fighting Ships, 2002* (London: S. Low, Marston, and Company, 2001).

73. Sheila A. Smith, "The Evolution of Military Cooperation within the U.S.-Japan Alliance," in Michael J. Green and Patrick M. Cronin, eds., *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999), p. 89.

74. Japan began participating in regional exercises such as Fleet-ex and RIMPAC (with not only the United States but also other aligned nations in East Asia). See Smith, "The Evolution of Military Cooperation within the U.S.-Japan Alliance"; and Da Cunha, *Soviet Naval Power in the Pacific*.

Table 4. New Major Naval Combatants since 1995

Country	Aircraft Carriers	Amphibious	Destroyers and Cruisers	Frigates	Submarines	Total Delivered
United States	2	5	30	0	6	43
Japan	0	3	13	0	9	25
China	0	0	2	8	8	18
South Korea	0	0	6	0	5	11
Great Britain	0	3	0	4	2	9
Germany	0	0	0	4	2	6
Russia	0	0	0	1	5	6
France	0	0	0	2	2	4
Italy	0	0	0	0	1	1

SOURCE: *Jane's Fighting Ships, 2002* (London: S. Low, Marston, and Company, 2001).

NOTE: Ships counted are those launched between 1995 and 2003. I chose the year 1995 to exclude ships that were ordered and partially constructed during the Cold War. This table includes major naval combatants, including amphibious ships if they displace more than 10,000 tons. I included South Korea to show the regional naval buildup as well as the global buildup.

pan would accept responsibility for patrolling sea-lanes up to 1,000 nautical miles from Japanese coasts.

Japan's expanded military role produced vociferous domestic political opposition. Opposition leaders argued—just as they had before—that the constitution prohibited joint military exercises; the Japanese government, however, claimed that military exercises merely enhanced tactical training and did not commit Japan to collective defense. Thus in this period, Japan began participating in joint exercises despite the objections of the political opposition.

Since the end of the Cold War, Japan has continued to broaden its military roles, though its steps in this direction have been small and principally symbolic. In 1992 Tokyo amended the 1954 Self-Defense Forces law to allow Japan to send peacekeepers overseas under highly restrictive conditions.⁷⁵ Four years later Japan signed the revised Guidelines for Defense Cooperation, which clar-

75. According to the 1992 peacekeeping operations law ("PKO law"), the following five conditions must be met for Japan to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations: a cease-fire must be in effect; Japan must be totally neutral in the conflict; all sides in the conflict must agree to the presence of the Japanese peacekeepers; the peacekeepers must be withdrawn if any of the forgoing conditions are not met; and finally, the peacekeepers cannot use force except to defend themselves, other peacekeepers, or supplies. Japanese peacekeepers are permitted to carry only sidearms and rifles.

ify its missions in the event of a Korean war and allow it to participate in missions in “areas surrounding Japan.” Japan abstained from participating in either Persian Gulf War (Desert Storm in 1991 or the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003), but in 2001 it sent naval ships to the Indian Ocean in support of the U.S. operation in Afghanistan.⁷⁶ Japan also sent peacekeepers to assist in the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2004.

In sum, in the years immediately following World War II, Japan’s military power was low, and its participation in the U.S.-Japan alliance was heavily restricted. Both capabilities and roles began to grow in the 1970s; Japan’s military became one of the world’s most powerful, and Japan expanded its military activities. In the post–Cold War era, Japan is continuing a robust naval buildup and is tentatively expanding its military roles.

SUMMARIZING THE EVIDENCE

How do predictions from the antimilitarist and buck-passing theories fare against the pattern of Japanese security policies since World War II? Was Japanese security policy driven by domestic antimilitarist norms or by the dictates of a buck-passing strategy?

The antimilitarist argument explains Japanese security policy before the 1970s, but it cannot account for Japan’s security policy thereafter. Most glaringly, it is inconsistent with the dramatic transformation of the Japanese military that began in the late 1970s. Contrary to the expectations of the antimilitarist explanation, Japan built one of the best air forces and navies in the world. Its sustained buildup in the post–Cold War era is also inconsistent with the expectation that norms will restrain major increases in Japanese power.

The buck-passing theory performs substantially better. It explains Japan’s weak military and restrained posture in the 1950s through the early 1970s, when the Soviet threat to Japan was low. More critically, the buck-passing theory explains the growth in Japanese military capabilities and roles in the 1970s and 1980s. Japanese military analysts and leaders are explicit about the reasoning behind the Japanese buildup: Japan needed additional military force to compensate for the growing Soviet threat and declining U.S. protection.

In the post–Cold War era, the buck-passing theory receives mixed results. On the one hand, the decline in conventional military threats to Japan predicts

76. Paul Midford, “Japan’s Response to Terror: Dispatching the SDF to the Arabian Sea,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (March/April 2003), pp. 329–351.

a reduction in Japanese military power and roles. This has not happened. On the other hand, the post-Cold War world has seen new dangers to Japan arise: the threat of regional wars has increased, and a war could trigger attacks on Japan with small numbers of nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. The United States has offered to help Japan address the new ballistic missile threat but has demanded Japanese participation.⁷⁷ Not surprisingly, much of the recent Japanese military buildup has involved weapon systems designed explicitly to counter ballistic missiles.⁷⁸

It is difficult to assess the nature of—and intentions behind—Japan's ongoing military buildup. In ten years, Japan's behavior since 1990 may appear consistent with its Cold War buck-passing strategy. Japan's post-Cold War policies would be consistent with buck-passing if its new military acquisitions are merely aimed at the ballistic missile threat, and if Japan continues to rely on the United States to defend it as much as possible. On the other hand, it is at least possible that Japan's current military buildup marks the early stages of a more assertive grand strategy that relies less on the United States.⁷⁹ For now, the buck-passing theory performs very well throughout the Cold War, but receives neither a strong "pass" nor "fail" for the post-Cold War period.

77. Washington had sought Japanese participation in theater missile defense (TMD) since 1993 but, as the buck-passing theory would predict, Japan resisted. In the fall of 1998, a month after North Korea launched a Taepodong rocket over Japan, the Japanese government agreed to participate with the United States in joint research on TMD, and a year later the two countries agreed to codevelop the system. See "Missile Deal Talks with U.S.," *Financial Times*, February 11, 1997, p. 6; "Defense Agency Gets OK for U.S.-led Missile Research," *Mainichi Daily News*, October 24, 1998, p. 1; and "Japan, U.S. Agree to Joint Research on Anti-missile Defense Program," *Mainichi Daily News*, August 17, 1999, p. 1.

78. The two new Aegis destroyers and the upgrades to existing Aegis destroyers are specifically designed to give these ships antiballistic missile capabilities. The other new destroyer escorts will likely support these TMD-capable Aegis ships. Even Japan's new submarines, aerial refueling capabilities, and satellite reconnaissance capabilities can be understood under an antiballistic missile rubric. If Japan later acquires land attack cruise missiles (which the JDA has already requested), Japan will have a significant offensive capability against enemy ballistic missile launchers. Japanese satellites could be used to locate missile launchers, and cruise missiles could be launched against them from Japanese submarines and aircraft (whose range is expanded by Japan's aerial refueling capabilities). The JDA has justified recent acquisitions—and requested cruise missiles—for exactly this mission. See Patricia Parmalee, "Japan Orders Feasibility Study on Introduction of Tomahawk Cruise Missile," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, April 14, 2003, p. 13; and "Japan Not Mulling Cruise Missiles for Actual Use," *Japan Economic Newswire*, March 28, 2003.

79. For speculation about recent developments and the future of Japanese security policy, see Norimitsu Onishi, "Mission to Iraq Eases Japan toward a True Military," *New York Times*, January 16, 2004, p. 3; Howard W. French, "Japan Faces Burden: Its Own Defense," *New York Times*, July 22, 2003, p. 1; "Onward and Upwards," *Economist*, May 31, 2003, p. 40; Richard Lloyd Parry, "Japan Flexes Military Muscle Over Korea," *Times* (London), May 22, 2003, p. 18; Amy Webb and Hideko Takayama, "Japan's Military Complex," *Newsweek*, December 9, 2002, p. 22; Shane Green, "Asia's Old Empire Thinks Once Again of Disturbing the Peace," *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 5, 2003, p. 18; and Matthews, "Japan's New Nationalism."

Counterarguments

At least three counterarguments might be raised in response to the preceding analysis. First, one might argue that although Japan has developed a great deal of military power, it developed less than it would have absent domestic antimilitarist norms. Critics note that Japan has abstained from building many kinds of military forces: nuclear weapons, powerful ground forces, ballistic missiles, large aircraft carriers, and other forces needed for offensive operations.⁸⁰

Japan does have gaps in its military force structure, but such gaps are common—even among many countries that clearly lack antimilitarist norms. States tend to structure their military forces on the basis of their geography, threat environment, and security strategy. Israel, for example, emphasizes its army and air force and has a much weaker navy: not because Israel is antimilitarist, but because that force structure best suits its needs. Until recently South Korea has focused on ground and air forces at the expense of naval power; it faces a land-based security threat from North Korea. Japan's emphasis on air and naval forces is not evidence for the influence of domestic norms, but rather shows that Japan behaves like other states. Its force structure reflects its maritime environment and its choice of strategy—buck-passing.

Furthermore, some critics might argue that antimilitarist norms led Japan to restrict itself to only defensive military capabilities. Although Japan has abstained from building ballistic missiles or so-called power-projection forces such as large-deck aircraft carriers, Japan has impressive offensive capabilities in both naval and air power. Japan's extensive base network, long-range P-3 aircraft, and powerful navy give it the ability to bottle up vital sea-lanes in East Asia (from the South China Sea to the Kamchatka Peninsula north of the Kurile Islands). The ongoing development of an aerial refueling capability will enhance Japan's already substantial ability to project power throughout the region. Japan has followed a defensively oriented grand strategy, and nothing suggests that it will become aggressive in the near future. In support of its defensive posture, however, Japan has acquired offensive maritime capabilities that far exceed those of its neighbors.

The antimilitarist argument is equally strained when it comes to nuclear ca-

80. Analysts have long cited a standard list of military capabilities that Japan has forgone; the list, however, has been shrinking over time. Previously, Japan's failure to procure amphibious assault craft, helicopter carriers, precision-guided air-to-ground munitions, aerial refueling, and military satellites has been cited as evidence of Japanese antimilitarism; now Japan is acquiring all of these capabilities.

pabilities. Japan currently has no nuclear weapons, but many states have been content to live under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, even some facing a more hostile environment than Japan. Like Japan, neither South Korea, Taiwan, nor Italy has acquired nuclear weapons—none of these states are called antimilitarist. Japan’s willingness to forgo nuclear weapons in exchange for protection under the U.S. nuclear umbrella is neither exceptional nor surprising.

Even more significantly, the Japanese government has repeatedly denied that Japan’s constitution or “nuclear allergy” prevents it from acquiring nuclear weapons. For decades, leading Japanese politicians have publicly stated that nuclear weapons are perfectly consistent with Japan’s “peace constitution.”⁸¹ For example, Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei said in 1973, “While we are not able to have offensive nuclear weapons, it is not a question of saying that we will have no nuclear weapons at all.”⁸² Later, former Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro declared, “It is in the interest of the United States, so long as it does not wish to see Japan withdraw from the NPT [Nonproliferation Treaty] and develop its own nuclear deterrent, to maintain its alliance with Japan and continue to provide a nuclear umbrella.”⁸³ These statements are not empty threats; Japan owns a large stockpile of plutonium.⁸⁴ As Ariel Levite observes, “Japan provides the most salient example of nuclear hedging to date.”⁸⁵ Japan’s nuclear weapons policy is driven by its ability to pass the buck to the United States, rather than by an antimilitarist nuclear allergy.

A second counterargument concedes that Japan’s military buildup in the 1970s and 1980s is inconsistent with strong antimilitarist norms, but argues that the buildup occurred because, by that time, Japan’s antimilitarist sentiment had faded. According to this argument, the antimilitarist theory is cor-

81. For statements by Fukuda Takeo and Prime Minister Sato Eisaku in 1969, see Selig Harrison, *Japan’s Nuclear Future: The Plutonium Debate and East Asian Security* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996), p. 7. The Japan Defense Agency argued in 1970, “As for defensive nuclear weapons, it would be possible in a legal sense to possess small-yield, tactical, purely defensive nuclear weapons without violating the constitution.” The Defense Agency reiterated this position in its 1980 Defense White Paper. Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 12–13. In 1993, when North Korea announced its withdrawal from the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Japanese officials discussed the need to keep Japan’s nuclear options open in the event that North Korea developed nuclear weapons. *Ibid.*, p. 29. Most recently, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo discussed the conditions under which Japan might decide to acquire nuclear weapons. See Howard W. French, “Koizumi Aide Hints at Change to No Nuclear Policy,” *New York Times*, June 4, 2002, p. 10.

82. Quoted in Harrison, *Japan’s Nuclear Future*, p. 13.

83. Quoted in Ariel E. Levite, “Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited,” *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Winter 2002/03), p. 71.

84. Eugene Skolnikoff, Tatsujiro Suzuki, and Kenneth Oye, “International Responses to Japanese Plutonium Programs,” Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, August 1995.

85. Levite, “Never Say Never Again,” p. 71.

rect; as the norms of antimilitarism weakened—perhaps due to generational change—Tokyo was able to expand Japan’s military power and roles.

It is possible that Japanese antimilitarist norms have eroded; new studies that carefully measure and document Japanese norms over time would be helpful. In this article, rather than code Japanese antimilitarism myself, I relied on the assessments from the most prominent studies of Japanese norms. These studies—I believe—persuasively document the continuity of Japanese antimilitarism throughout the Cold War and even today.⁸⁶ If other scholars wish to reconcile the dramatic changes in Japanese security policy with a decline in Japanese antimilitarism by recoding the strength of Japanese norms, they must demonstrate where these seminal works erred and show that Japanese norms really did change in the 1970s. It is essential, however, that scholars not assess Japanese norms by observing Japan’s security policy and reasoning backward (i.e., “we know norms weakened in the 1970s because Japan increased its military power and took on new military roles”).

A third counterargument concedes that Japan has followed a strategy of buck-passing, but argues that Japan’s decision to adopt this relatively restrained foreign policy was influenced by its antimilitarist norms. Had these norms been absent, Japan would have either balanced more vigorously against the Soviets, or even tried to assert itself as an independent pole in the Cold War.

It is not clear why Japan chose the strategy it did. Realist explanations center on geography and the availability of a willing U.S. ally. Constructivist explanations emphasize Japanese norms, Japan’s fear of empowering the military establishment, and its desire to avoid the intense domestic political upheaval that would result from the deployment of military forces. Neither argument is entirely persuasive. Realists must explain why Britain, similarly situated, chose a more assertive balancing strategy than Japan. The constructivists have difficulty explaining the substantial gap between Japan’s antimilitarist values and the actual policy it adopted. Japan’s buck-passing strategy involved close military cooperation with the United States, the exposure of Japanese bases (and cities) to attack in the event of superpower war, and, as described earlier, the creation of a world class military.

The disjuncture between antimilitarist norms and Japan’s post–World War II security policy appears even larger when one considers that Japan actually had an antimilitarist option that it decided not to take. A grand strategy based on

86. See Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, p. 116; and Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism*, p. 194.

antimilitarist norms would have led Japan to gradually distance itself from the United States and increasingly favor neutrality in the superpower standoff. Japan would have built a truly defensive military—one organized to protect the home islands from invasion, rather than equipped to fight air and naval battles across East Asia. And Tokyo would have urged the United States to reduce its military presence and activism in the region. Instead, Japan worried when the U.S. military presence decreased; it responded to U.S. force reductions by substantially increasing its own military power. A truly antimilitarist foreign policy was possible—and was advocated by the Japanese Left throughout the Cold War—but was not pursued.

The bottom line is that international relations scholars do not have well-developed theories of foreign policy. We do not have good answers yet as to why countries choose one foreign policy from the range of plausible and potentially attractive options. But the notion that Japan's powerful commitment to antimilitarism led it to adopt a hard-nosed realist policy of buck-passing is, on its face, a difficult argument to make.

Conclusion

Although antimilitarist norms are widespread in Japan, they have not constrained Japanese security policy. They have not prevented it from building one of the most powerful military forces in the world, with potent offensive and defensive capabilities. And, as Japan's leaders have said repeatedly, if Japan felt threatened, these norms would not even prevent Japan from building nuclear weapons. Since World War II, Japan has followed a highly restrained foreign policy, but this restraint is explained by a strategy of buck-passing rather than by antimilitarist norms.

One implication of this analysis is that the emphasis on Japanese antimilitarism—by scholars and policymakers—overstates the constraints that domestic norms impose on Japanese leaders. For example, claims that Japan would like to contribute more to the U.S.-Japan alliance, but is constrained by the peace constitution, are essentially bargaining rhetoric; the pacifist article 9 has proven to be as malleable as Tokyo wants to make it. Because many Japanese people hold deeply antimilitarist views, U.S. leaders should be cognizant of the sensitivity of military issues in Japanese society. Nevertheless, Tokyo can bring its public along when it wants to.

A second implication is that as long as the Japanese adhere to a buck-passing

strategy, it will be hard to convince them to build additional costly military capabilities or to take on major new roles within the U.S.-Japan alliance. Japan will deflect U.S. requests for substantial increases in its military contributions unless the United States reduces its military presence in East Asia, or unless other events cause Japan's threat environment to deteriorate significantly.