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## Japan's International Relations

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## Japan's International Relations

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Christopher W. Hughes

### Japan's International Relations: A Growing and Dynamic Field of Study

Japan's international relations has moved from being a minor and rather marginalised field of study during the Cold War period to becoming increasingly mainstream and vibrant in the past two decades, and capable of attracting considerable attention from both Japan and non-Japan specialists alike. Indeed, it is even arguable that Japan's international relations, and the related sub-fields of security policy and international political economy, have now shifted to become the dominant arenas for debate on Japanese politics and economics. Japan's perceived domestic political and economic stultification has inevitably engendered a move towards concentrating on the comparatively fresh dynamism of its international relations; although, of course, Japan's domestic and international politics and economics continue to be inextricably linked and influence each other, and thus need to be studied in tandem.

The objective of this chapter is to outline the different ways in which Japan's international relations have been understood in the postwar period, but especially how they have been revisited in the post-Cold War period and ascribed a new importance. The chapter demonstrates how there has been a vigorous and increasingly rigorous debate on the motivations, means, arenas and patterns of Japan's engagement with the external world, and, despite the fact that no overall new consensus has been reached, all sides are agreed that Japan has only become more important to study as an international player capable of maintaining or even challenging the evolving international system.

### The Study of Japan's International Relations until the End of the Cold War

Japan's international relations up until the latter stages of the Cold War were relatively understudied in a number of ways due to a combination of factors. Japan's own concentration of national efforts upon the rebuilding of its economy in the postwar era, and low profile role in international security through reliance on the United States–Japan security treaty (encapsulated in the so-called 'Yoshida Doctrine'), and its subsequent record of spectacular economic growth, meant that it was the Japanese economic model which attracted the major attention of Japan specialists and social scientists. Consequently, the quantity of studies focused on Japan's international relations, either in English or Japanese, was limited in comparison with the near avalanche of studies on the Japanese economy. Amongst this limited number of studies there were some fine and pioneering evaluations of Japan's security policy by primarily Japan specialists written in English (Mendel 1961; Weinstein 1971; Endicott 1975; Chapman, Drifte and Gow 1982; Holland 1988; Welfield 1988) and a few in Japanese (Otake 1983; Chūma 1985). Nevertheless, continuing societal taboos meant that, despite the centrality of security issues to Japan's international relations, their discussion still failed to reach the mainstream of social science debate amongst Japanese scholars, and the discussion of military and security affairs (particularly the role of nuclear weapons) was left more to the critical and Marxist-influenced tradition of Japan Peace Studies (Sakamoto 1982). Moreover, there were only a few studies that purported to provide a more general overview of Japan's international relations with regard to a variety of states and regions (Scalapino 1977; Ozaki and Arnold 1985; Inoguchi and Okimoto 1988), and even these tended to lack an integrated framework to help explain Japan's key international objectives and behaviour. Furthermore, there were virtually no systematic attempts to interpret Japan's international relations embedded within wider theories of International Relations (IR) as a discipline.

Japan's anonymity within mainstream IR was no doubt a reflection of its perceived lack of actual international influence, and its heavy reliance internationally on the shield of US economic and military hegemony, which seemed to provide a ready overall explanation of the limited ambitions of its international relations. In fact, one of the most dominant characterisations and explanations for Japan's international relations, which grew out of this context of Japanese reliance on the United States and which has proved influential to the current day,

is the 'Reactive State' thesis (Calder 1988). This thesis posits that the Japanese state's fragmented domestic policymaking means it finds it difficult to convert its economic resources into proactive international leverage and strategies, thus rendering it passive and reactively pliant to external international pressures, particularly from the United States.

### **Japan Re-emerges as an International Actor post-Cold War**

However, both Japan specialists and the discipline of IR began to look again at Japan's international relations with a new sense of importance and depth in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the first instance, this strengthened interest, driven by Japan's ascent to economic superpower status, was even thought at one stage to rival that of the United States, and the concomitant expectations that Japan would look to convert its economic might into political and military power. Japan watchers began to sense a new potential for proactivity or even leadership in its external relations. Japan was touted as the new 'Number One' in the international system, and even a rising hegemonic power in East Asia (Vogel 1979, 1986; Nester 1990). Other observers were less sanguine about the potential benefits of a rising Japan for the international system. Japan was viewed as a 'problem' because of its believed mercantilistic free-riding on the liberal international order, with no strategy other than the pursuit of market share and crushing of economic rivals (van Wolferen 1990). The so-called 'Japan Revisionists' viewed the Japanese economic model as a direct threat to continued US economic and political dominance (Prestowitz 1988; Fallows 1994; Johnson 1995) and argued that the United States could only counter Japan's rise through adopting a similar style of industrial policy.

These predictions of Japanese attempts to exert hegemony over the international system and to displace US dominance were soon shown to be overplayed though by the events of the first Gulf War of 1990–1991 and by the bursting of the Japanese 'bubble economy' at the turn of the decade and onset of the Heisei recession. Japan's inability due to constitutional prohibitions to respond to US and international expectations to provide a 'human contribution' to the military coalition through the despatch of the Japan Self Defence Forces (JSDF), and its resort instead to providing US\$13 billion to underwrite the war effort, often derided as 'chequebook diplomacy', highlighted its limitations as a political and security power. Moreover, the domestic gridlock that ensued in the wake of attempts by the Japanese government to articulate an effective response to the international crisis, and its desperation to try to conform to US requests to support the war effort, seemed to confirm the Reactive State thesis, and that Japan was essentially a follower of US hegemony. Added to this, although the impact of the bursting of the bubble on economic dynamism was only to be slowly and fully revealed by mid-decade, Japan's prospects for dominating the international economic and political system already looked limited by the early 1990s.

Nonetheless, even though the experience of the Gulf War and onset of the Heisei recession thwarted expectations for Japan to establish a more proactive and dominant international role, and thus might have seemed to call into question the initial basis for new scholarly interest in Japan in the post-Cold War period, these events were actually to form a new point of departure for an even deeper and more sophisticated scholarly investigation of Japan's international relations. The reasons for interest in Japan actually deepening after the Gulf War were related to the fact that in revealing its inadequacies as an international actor it had nevertheless begun to reveal new ambitions for an expanded international role in response to its changing external environment, as well as presenting new puzzles concerning the formulation of its international strategy. All of these issues were of central interest to traditional Japan specialists as well as the broader field of IR.

In particular, Japan's demonstration of new attempts to strengthen its international security profile by enacting an International Peace Cooperation Law in June 1992 to enable the first despatches of the JSDF overseas on UN peacekeeping missions was seen as one indication of potential new proactivity growing out the initial diplomatic rout of the Gulf War. In turn, Japan's facing of new security challenges from a more militant North Korea in the postwar period, manifested in ongoing nuclear crises since the mid-1990s, and then the looming issue of the impact of the rise of China on Japan's regional position, have been seen to force Japan into taking steps to strengthen the United States–Japan alliance relationship and its own military options, all of which have attracted scholarly and policy attention. Similarly, rapid change in Japan's wider regional environment, taking the form of greater economic interdependence, but also problems of economic crises, have pushed Japan towards greater efforts in region-building, and raised interesting questions about the possibilities for

Japanese regional leadership and the impact of a more integrated East Asia region on global politics as a whole. Finally, Japan in searching for a new international role has often failed to conform to existing models of its international behaviour. Japan has actually been seen to increasingly defy the reactive state thesis, not simply because it has often shown more regular proactivity, but also because it has shown itself to be less predictably pliant to US and international pressures. Indeed, the fact that the Japanese government in the end did not succumb to US expectations in the Gulf War, and instead domestic politics momentarily trumped these external pressures, has presented Japan and IR specialists with the need to reassess previous standard explanations of Japan's international relations as purely shaped by dependence on the United States.

Japan's international profile and interest in its international relations was then further elevated by its reaction under the premiership of Koizumi Junichirō to the 11 September attacks. Japan's comparatively rapid despatch of the JSDF to support the US 'war on terror' in Afghanistan and Iraq, albeit on non-combat missions, again seemed to challenge the image of Japanese reactivity. Koizumi's generally assertive stance on international affairs, the rising antagonism between Japan and China during his administration, and his high-profile diplomacy towards North Korea, again further raised Japan's international notoriety. Koizumi's successors, Abe Shinzō, Fukuda Yasuo and Asō Tarō, have proved less successful in pursuing a proactive international policy, but again Japan's reversion to a more cautious international strategy has only contributed to its intrigue and attraction as an object of academic investigation.

### **Key Issues and Debates in Japan's International Relations**

Japan now presents a compelling set of reasons in the post-Cold War period for being studied, if not as a hegemonic power, then as an increasingly proactive actor of growing importance regionally and globally, and of central theoretical and empirical significance to mainstream IR. In turn, the evolving study of Japan's international relations can perhaps be divided into four central questions that preoccupied scholars and policymakers (Hook, Gilson, Hughes and Dobson 2005: 21–23), although clearly many of these questions and studies overlap and feed off each other. The first main question has been to try to explain the fundamental roots of why Japan behaves the way it does in the international system, and to focus in particular on questions of whether Japan is driven mainly by external forces or by internal political constraints when devising its security policy. The second main question devotes attention to examining the principal means of how Japan pursues its international relations, often involving detailed studies of its willingness to deploy various types of military, economic and 'soft' power. The third main question and set of studies fix upon the various arenas for where Japan has pursued its international relations, in both the geographical sense of particular relations with a range of other states and regions, and in the sense of interaction with international frameworks, and institutions. The fourth main question, strongly informed by the other three, therefore revolves around exactly what type of behaviour and actor Japan has and will assume in the international system. This question often involves attempts to handily encapsulate Japan as a particular type of state in order to capture the essence of its international behaviour, and attempts to estimate how far the impact of Japan's behaviour is beneficial or detrimental to its own international standing and the strength of the international system as a whole.

### **Explaining Motivations for Japan's International Relations**

The first school of IR theory, which has attempted to grapple with explaining the motivations and drivers of Japan's international stance, has been that of Realism and its subvarieties. Japan appeared virtually off the radar of the Classical Realist and English School examinations of great power politics in the interwar, postwar and periods (Suganami 1984; Suzuki 2005), but with the resurgence of Realism in the shape of Neo-Realism from the late 1970s onwards, coinciding with Japan's own international resurgence, Japan began to appear in the mainstream of Realist analysis, even if still viewed as a marginal actor or apparent exception to Realist assumptions regarding state behaviour. Neo-realists – in line with their theoretical assumptions about the anarchical, self-help international system, characterised by states' search for security determined by the distribution of material capabilities – asserted that Japan would be eventually pushed by the less stable post-Cold War international structure to convert its economic power into military power, to build a supporting regional bloc and to aspire great power status. Japan, it was argued, at the end of the Cold War stood as 'structural anomaly', because it had not yet emerged from the shadow of US hegemony, but that it would inevitably be obliged to give up this status and fend more for its own security and even to acquire nuclear

weapons (Layne 1993; Waltz 1993: 55–70).

Other, more recent, Neo-Realist analysis since the 1990s has reinforced this type of analysis, although working more from the assumption that Japan is a relatively declining power. 'Offensive Realists' view international security as in short supply, and thus argue that states are compelled to take assertive or even aggressive steps to ensure their national interests, and this tendency is particularly pronounced in an increasingly fluid and multi-polar international environment. Hence, Japan, in line with this analysis and encountering conditions of weakening US hegemony, the rise of China as a possible new hegemon, and the weakening of its own economic power, would be tempted to strengthen alliance ties with the United States, but also to convert itself into a formidable independent military power (Mearsheimer 2001: 372–377, 396–400). Indeed, 'Offensive Realism' would argue that the only reason Japan has not yet sought to convert its economic power into truly significant military power is because of its ability to 'free ride' or 'buck pass' on security through reliance on the US security guarantee (Lind 2004).

'Defensive Realists' take a different tack, viewing the dangers of the international system as mitigated somewhat by the superiority of defensive weapons systems, geographical distance between rival states, and an aversion to unnecessary conflict built up in response to past costly wars. In accordance with this interpretation, Japan is set to concentrate on simply augmenting its defensive military capabilities, seeking to avoid conflict with a rising China, and to make only the minimal necessary commitments to the United States–Japan alliance so as to function as a 'circumscribed balancer' against China (Twomey 2000). Other 'Defensive Realist' analysis argues that Japan is certainly wary of the dangers of the international system but seeks to ameliorate tensions that might lead to conflict through a strategy of reassuring its neighbours about its purely defensive intent (Midford 2002). Similarly, other Realist-style interpretations of Japan have pointed to these highly defensive and cautious motivations behind its foreign and security policy (Pharr 1993), and a tendency to hedge against over-reliance on the alliance with the United States in order to avoid the dilemmas of 'entrapment' (becoming drawn into a conflict on the side of the United States) and 'abandonment' (becoming distanced from the United States if not seen to be a reliable ally) (Heginbotham and Samuels 2002). These 'Defensive Realist' analyses have been further refined through definitions of Japan as a 'mercantile realist' state which seeks to navigate its way through the hazards of the international system relying principally on economic power (Heginbotham and Samuels 1998; Samuels 2007a); and as a state undergoing a conversion to 'reluctant realism' (Green 2001) or 'transitional realism' (Kliman 2006), whereby Japan is gradually cajoled by new security challenges to undertake enhanced alliance and international commitments. Meanwhile, other analysts, even if not explicitly using the language of Realist theory, share in the view that Japan is being pushed by the transforming international system to revisit some of its prewar assumptions about how to secure its national interests (Pyle 2007).

The second school of IR theory, less mainstream in recent years but still offering potentially useful insights into Japan's international motivations, is Marxism and its Critical Theory derivatives. These theories are driven by different assumptions from Realism concerning the purpose of theory, the key actors in the international system and the possibility for escape from an endless historical cycle of international conflict. Nevertheless, Marxism and Critical Theory converge somewhat with Realism in emphasising the inherently conflictual nature of international politics, especially around economic issues, the material motivations driving state behaviour and the propensity of states to aspire to hegemonic and even imperialistic power designs. Analyses of Japan in an overt classical Marxist framework are relatively rare, especially in the post-Cold War period, and tend to emphasise Japanese ambitions to assert a form of neo-imperialism over East Asia and other regions. Japan is seen to do this by locking developing states into a relationship of direct economic subordination and into new regional frameworks geared to reinforcing its dominance (Stevens 1990). Critical Theory has viewed Japan as asserting its potential hegemony not only through economic ties but also more subtly through setting ideological agendas and international institutions (Cox 1989). The influence of Marxist and Critical Theory can also be seen to have filtered through into other critical analyses of Japan's foreign relations, even if they are not explicitly termed in line with these theories. For instance, Japanese perceived subservience to the United States in political and security affairs as an example of the Japanese ruling elites' complicity with and the Japanese population's victimisation by a form of near US neo-imperialism, and Japanese remilitarisation is seen to be driven by narrow military–industrial commercial interests in Japan (McCormack 2007). Indeed, much of the later work of the members of the 'Japan Revisionist' school, as mentioned earlier, appears to have shades of Marxist interpretations in regard to Japan's supposedly

relentless drive for material domination over other societies.

The third IR theory school to tackle Japan, and which, in contrast to Marxism, is strongly opposed to Realist assumptions and predictions, is Liberalism and its subvarieties of Idealism, Liberal Internationalism and Neoliberal Institutionalism. Liberalism's emphasis on the role of democracy, institutions and economic interdependence in governing the international system has meant that Japan is seen to have powerful incentives to pursue international cooperation. Japan has been examined as a new form of 'civilian power' (Maull 1990–1991; Funabashi 1991–1992) or 'trading state' (Rosecrance 1986), seeking to pursue its interests in the post-Cold War period, not through military power, but through economic ties and international institutions.

However, it is fair to say that Liberalism, despite its mainstream position in IR theory, has proved less prevalent as a form of analysis of Japan's international relations and as a counter to Realist interpretations of Japan. This is due largely to Japan's own behaviour, which, whilst it has been seen to not always conform to Realist assumptions of the pursuit of great power military status, has also not always conformed to Liberal assumptions either, due to the apparent prioritisation of economic interests to the detriment of other states and the reticence to provide leadership as an advanced democracy in international institutions. Instead, in recent years, a fourth school of IR theory, Constructivism, has provided the main counterpoint to Realism. Constructivism rejects the Realist proposition that the condition of anarchy is inherently conflictual and instead posits that states through a process of socialisation construct identities and norms that may allow for more cooperative outcomes. In addition, other varieties of Constructivism stress that domestic norms constitute and regulate state interests and behaviour, and in many cases these domestic norms may prove more dominant than international structural pressures in shaping a state's international orientation. In the case of Japan, Constructivists' analysis has been particularly innovative in relation to the role of domestic norms, and argued that deeply vested societal norms of anti-militarism account for why Japan has been so resistant to moving towards becoming a major military power, despite its economic size and growing international pressures (Katzenstein and Okawara 1993; Katzenstein 1996, 2008; Berger 1993, 1998; Hook 1996; Dobson 2003; Leheny 2006; Oros 2008). Constructivist analyses have also been used to demonstrate why Japan adheres to particular environmental and economic policies, apparently at times even against its own rational interests in the international system, due to the contestation between its domestic and international norms (Miyaoaka 2003; Sato and Hirata 2008). Many of these Constructivist approaches have tended to fix upon more 'progressive' norms such as anti-militarism, pacifism and internationalism, and thus come to similar conclusions to Liberalism about Japan's military-averse and cooperative international stance (Berger 2004).

Constructivism and Liberalism's focus on more domestic-oriented explanations of Japan's international behaviour have also been increasingly complemented and reinforced by foreign policy analysis (FPA) studies. These FPA studies help to open up the proverbial 'black-box' of Japanese internal decision-making and to create a bridge between theoretical explanations located at the international systemic level and developments in domestic politics that readily impact on external policy. Japan's foreign policy has thus been analysed from the perspective of interactions between the international and domestic levels in the form of 'two-level games' in trade negotiations, whereby effective trade negotiations between Japan and the United States can only be pursued if the conditions satisfy both national governments and domestic constituencies (Schoppa 1997). More recent analyses have demonstrated the increasing pluralism and expanding range of actors involved in the formation of Japanese foreign policy (Hashimoto 1999; Shinoda 2006). Recent studies, for instance, have focused on the growing role of the prime minister, especially during the tenure of Koizumi, in leading Japanese foreign policy (Ijima 2007; Shinoda 2007), the role of the National Diet (Nakano 2000), of local government actors in international affairs (Jain 2005), and also the role of public opinion in continuing to restrain political leaders' international ambitions (Eldridge and Midford 2008).

Constructivism's and FPA recent success as a theoretical approach can largely be accounted for by its apparent ability to explain the motivations in Japan's international behaviour that are supposedly inexplicable to Realism. Consequently, Realist and Constructivist approaches spent much of the 1990s butting heads and claiming to definitively refute each other. However, by the end of the decade it became clear that both schools had over-caricatured and over-simplified each others' key assumptions and that they actually shared a degree of common ground and explanatory leverage on Japan's international relations. Despite the fact that both Classical Realist and Neo-Realism had never neglected the role of 'second image' domestic

variables in shaping states' foreign policy, Realists felt the need to respond to the challenge of Constructivism and Liberalism through articulating a new form of 'Neoclassical Realism'. This variety of Realism looks to demonstrate how, whilst international anarchy sets the general parameters for state behaviour, the actual form of responses selected by states will be heavily conditioned by domestic variables such as norms (Rose 1998). At the same time, Constructivist analysts also began to acknowledge the need to break down often artificial barriers with other paradigms and to combine the best of insights of Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism and even Critical approaches, and especially to combine domestic and international level approaches, in order to produce a new 'analytical eclecticism' to explain Japan's international behaviour (Berger 1996; Katzenstein and Okawara 2001; Hook, Gilson, Hughes and Dobson 2005). This move to integrate different IR theoretical approaches promises to provide a rich area for future analysis of Japan's external relations, in regard to the interaction between international systemic change, multiple domestic actors and a variety of norms, including less progressive norms connected with historical memory and nationalism (Berger 2003).

### **Japan's Instrumentalisation of Its International Relations**

Japan's choice of means to pursue its international relations has been scrutinised from an ever-widening series of perspectives as its own range of international activities has increased. In turn, there has been a widening series of perspectives on how effective these means have been for Japan to achieve its international ends.

In line with Japan's traditional image as a major economic power, but enjoying lesser political and military capabilities, many early studies focused on the Japanese advancement of interests through economic means. In the 1980s, as Japan climbed to achieve the position as the larger provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in East Asia and globally, so there was a mini-plethora of studies on the Japanese strategic use of aid to augment its international economic and political influence, and to compensate for its relative lack of military power (Orr 1990; Igarashi 1990; Islam 1991; Rix 1993; Arase 1995; Soderberg 1996; Yasutomo 1986; Hughes 2004a).

However, as Japan's relative economic power declined in the 1990s, and as Japan began to undertake enhanced international security responsibilities, an increasing number of studies began to emerge relating to the evolution of its security policy and growing military power (Tanaka 1997; Sadō 2003a, 2003b; Asahi Shimbun Jieitai 50nen Shuzaiha, 2005; Nakajima 2006). The first of these studies examined the linkages between Japanese economic and technological prowess (or 'techno-nationalism'), defence production, and national security objectives (Green 1995; Samuels 1996). More recent studies have examined the Japan Self Defence Forces (JSDF) new found societal confidence (Früstück 2007), and its expanding military capabilities and international role (Maeda 1993, 2007; Hughes 2004b, 2004c), in areas such as maritime security (Woolley 1999; Graham 2006), UN peacekeeping operations (Dobson 2003) and the response to the 'war on terror' (Hughes 2004a, 2009a). The Japan Coast Guard has also been examined as a form of 'second navy', augmenting Japan's military capabilities (Samuels 2008). Japan's interest in acquiring a nuclear weapons option to guarantee its own security has also been a subject of study in line with fluctuations in Japan's security ties with North Korea and China and its confidence in the US 'nuclear umbrella' (Self and Thompson 2003; Hughes, L. 2007).

Even more recent studies have fixed upon new Japanese approaches to furthering international influence, such as using 'aggressive legalism' and turning international rules against the United States and other states in order to pursue its interests in international trade negotiations (Pekkanen 2008); and 'soft power' in the form of Japanese high and popular culture (Drifte 1998; McGray 2002; Watanabe and McConnell 2008).

### **Japanese Arenas for the Exercise of Its International Relations**

Japan, in addition to employing new forms of power to pursue its international relations, has been seen in the post-Cold War period to have widened the range of arenas for where it has pursued its international relations. These arenas encompass traditional and new bilateral relationships, and a new-found interest in regional and global multilateralism.

Despite the fact that Japan's international relations continue to be so heavily influenced by bilateral ties with the United States, it is perhaps surprising that there are still few major comprehensive studies of United States–Japan relations which take in political, economic and security ties. The most prolific types of United States–Japan studies tend to be those focusing on security relations. These studies have highlighted the efforts Japan and the United States have made to upgrade the alliance in response to emergent threats from North Korea and China, and to the issues of transnational terrorism and weapons of mass destruction post-11 September. Hence, studies have covered issues such as the revision of the United States–Japan Guidelines for Defence Cooperation in the late-1990s (Funabashi 1999); US force realignments with regard to Okinawa; Ballistic Missile Defence; cooperation in defence production; and general alliance management (Muroyama 1992; Mochizuki 1997; Green and Cronin 1999; Sotooka, Honda and Miura 2001; Ikenberry and Inoguchi 2003; Samuels 2003; Hughes 2004a, 2009a; Calder 2007, 2009). However, set alongside the United States–Japan military alliance studies, there are a smaller number of prominent edited collections and co-authored collections that examine the full gamut of bilateral relations, including security, trade, finance, technology and societal interchange (Schaller 1997; Iriye and Wampler 2001; Vogel 2002; Krauss and Pempel 2004; Hook et al. 2005: 87–176).

Japan's key bilateral ties with other states in its own immediate East Asia region have seen a very strong expansion in recent years. Japan's ties with South Korea and North Korea with regard to the issues of history, economic ties and security have been explored and debated as sources for cooperation but also continuing tensions (Bridges 1993; Cha 1999; Hughes 2009b; Hyon 2006; Hagstrom and Soderberg 2006a; 2006b). Academic analysis of Japan's relations with China has also expanded as a result of China's rise relative to Japan and a host of interconnected policy issues often leading to bilateral tensions. Some forms of analysis have focused on Sino–Japanese ties as characterised by increasing competition and even the potential for conflict, as seen in frictions over history, trade, energy resources, the shaping of the East Asian regional order, territorial disputes and military security (Whiting 1989; Green and Self 1996; Rose 1998, 2005; Austin and Harris 2001; Drifte 2003; Hagstrom 2005; Wan 2006; Ichika, Matsuda and Dan 2007; Heazle and Knight 2007; Hughes 2009c). For other perspectives, the relationship, whilst full of potential tensions, has been viewed in more cooperative terms as economic interdependency and political pragmatism take hold (Zhao 1993; Howe 1996; Kokubun and Wang 2004).

Japan's other key sets of bilateral relationships in the East Asia region are with individual Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) states and with ASEAN as a collective whole. More recent studies have sought to demonstrate how Japan has attempted to build a special relationship in this subregion in order to bolster its overall economic and political regional influence vis-à-vis the United States and a rising China (Mendl 2001; Sudo 2002; Seekins 2007). Japan's wider region-building efforts, and the place of these in its wider international strategy, have also garnered considerable attention in the last two decades.

Japan has been seen as buttressing its overall international position by variously seeking to integrate the East Asian region in line with its own developmental state model (Hatch and Yamamura 1996; Lee 2008), and to forge more effective multilateral frameworks for economic cooperation through the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (Funabashi 1995; Terada 2001; Krauss 2003), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (Wan 2001), and the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) and East Asian Community (EAC) (Satō and Tanaka 2005). Japan has been viewed increasingly as contributing to regional integration not only through economic engagement, but also through new political and security ties in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) (Yuzawa 2007), and working through informal, non-state business actors, and soft forms of power (Katzenstein and Shiraishi 1997, 2006; Miyashita and Sato 2001; Pempel 2005; Rozman, Togo and Ferguson 2007). Japan is regarded as having been particularly active in pushing forward its leadership in regional monetary cooperation in the wake of the East Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s – as seen in its abortive proposals for an Asian Monetary Fund and subsequent support for ASEAN's Chiang Mai Initiative regional liquidity fund – in order to insulate the region from further shocks of globalisation (Hughes 2000; Katada 2001; Hayashi 2006; Grimes 2009); and to promote bilateral free trade agreements (Urata 2002; Watanabe 2007), with one objective being to counterbalance the rise of China.

Japan's new proactivity has been further detected on the margins of the East Asia region and in developing new sets of relations in regions much further away. Japanese policymakers have been seen to seek stronger ties with Australia (Beeson 1999; Terada 2006; Bisley 2008) and India (Jain 1996; Emmott 2008) as

potential new partners in diluting and counterbalancing the rising influence of China in the East Asia region. Japan's troubled relationship with the Soviet Union and Russia over the disputed sovereignty of the Northern Territories has long been chronicled (Wada 1999; Williams 2007; Kimura 2008). However, more recent studies are also beginning to examine Japan's attempts to construct a more comprehensive relationship with Russia in the fields of energy, industrial cooperation and wider diplomacy, again as a means to soft balance against the rise of China (Kuhrt 2007). Finally, Japan's expanding diplomatic horizons have been seen to take in the Middle East (Sugihara and Allan 1993; Miyagi 2008), Africa (Ampiah 1997) and the European Union (Gilson 2000; Davies 2003), as it seeks new partners to tackle questions of energy and resource security, international trade, economic integration, and reform of international institutions.

Japan has been further analysed as an increasingly effective actor within a range of international institutions. The degree to which Japan's international relations have been influenced by the United Nations have been examined (Pan 2005; Hook et al. 2005: 367–388), and in turn the degree to which it has attempted to reform the United Nations in order to gain for itself a permanent Security Council seat (Drifte 2000). Similarly, Japan has been revealed to be a much more adept actor in supplying norms and ideas to other UN family organisations, such as the World Bank and World Health Organization (Tadakoro and Shiroyama 2004), and the G-8 and G-20 processes (Dobson 2004).

## Conclusion

### The Character of Japan as an International Actor

This overview of the motivations, methods and arenas now brings forward consideration of the final main question relating to Japan's international relations, which concerns itself with the character and direction of the international role that Japan is capable of fulfilling. It is safe to say that most analysts of Japan view it as an increasingly proactive, assertive and even efficacious actor, regardless of their particular theoretical stance, or focus on types of power or areas of international interaction (Iokibe 2000; Hook et al. 2005; Berger, Mochizuki and Tsuchiyama 2007). However, where analysts diverge is over how far Japan is diverging from its traditional low posture international role and the overall impact on the international system of a more assertive, rising or even declining Japan.

For some analysts, Japan is demonstrating more proactivity in responding to a changing international system, and especially in response to the rise of China and United States relative hegemonic decline. However, these analysts see the deviation in Japan's international line as marginal. Even though Japan may continue to add military capacity to compensate for its reduced economic power, nevertheless its intention is not to make a dash for new autonomy, but to continue to support the US-inspired international system and preserve its cautious foreign policy posture (Samuels 2006, 2007a, 2007b). Other analysts echo this line by insisting that Japan will remain nearly immovable in terms of its adherence to an anti-militaristic culture (Friman, Katzenstein, Leheny and Okawara 2006), or an attachment to related liberal institutions and values (Berger 2004).

Other analysts take an alternative line and see Japan as acquiescing in its decline, but attempting to manage this process by maintaining good ties with the United States, whilst playing a fuller part in constructing more cooperative relations in East Asia, and functioning as a 'middle power' (Soeya 2005) rather than great power.

However, other analysts take yet another tack and see Japan as struggling to cope with the possible eclipsing of itself and the United States by a new hegemonic China. In this instance, a Japan, feeling itself on the defensive with frustrated great power ambitions, may become more proactive and assertive, but also less predictable and more erratic as an international partner (Funabashi 2007; Hughes and Krauss 2007; Hughes 2009a). In this instance, Japan could actually become a destabilising influence in the international system.

Arguably, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, all these scenarios and characterisations of Japan remain open possibilities. However, one point is indisputable at this juncture concerning Japan's international relations, and that is that Japan only promises to become ever more fascinating as a subject of study in the future. Japan remains of ever-more interest to mainstream IR as the key to understanding

much of the trajectory of the dynamic East Asia region and as a central actor in determining the future of US hegemony and the maintenance of the international system. Japan has moved far from the model of the Reactive State. Any student of IR, or any policymaker, would be mistaken to not take more seriously this dynamic and challenging Japan.

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- Japan
- international relations
- international system
- realism
- proactivity
- North Korea
- security

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