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Economic Security and the Yoshida Doctrine: Continuity and Change in Japanese Grand Strategy

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Introduction

Japan has had quite a particular approach to security since the end of the Second World War. Japan became one of the biggest economies in the world, but did so without becoming a military power in the same way as other major countries. And for many years, Japan kept it's military role relatively limited. Instead, the economy was given a very important place and attention. (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). In terms of security, Japan relied heavily on the alliance with the United States (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014). This very approach is deeply connected to what is called the Yoshida Doctrine (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022).

The doctrine takes it's name from Yoshida Shigeru, who was Prime Minister during a very important period of Japan's reconstruction after the war. The general idea was quite simple: Japan needed to rebuild the economy first. Developing a very large military power and capabilities would cost money and resources that Japan could use somewhere else. And it is the the alliance with the United States that made it possible because then Japan could depend on US protection while concentrating more on the economic recovery. (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008).

Michael J. Green describes this post-war formula around three main elements:

- a close alliance with the United States,
- minimal military rearmament
- a strong focus on economic recovery. (Green, 2001, pp. 11–34).

I find this especially interesting as it is quite different from the normal idea one usually can have of a powerful country. Usually, when a country becomes more economically advanced and more powerful overall, one could expect it's military power to grow at the same time. Japan did not completely follow this path as economic power became much more important. But there is already a problem with calling this a "doctrine". Yoshida did not create an official document called the Yoshida Doctrine. The expression became important later when scholars tried to explain Japan's post-war foreign policy. So we should be careful not to imagine the Yoshida Doctrine as a list of rules created by Yoshida that every government after him simply followed. (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022).

Yoshihide Soeya makes an important distinction between what he calls the “Yoshida Line” and the later idea of the “Yoshida Doctrine”. According to Soeya, Yoshida’s choices during the occupation period were strongly based around the peace constitution and the US-Japan security relationship. Later, academics interpreted the combination of light armament, economic growth and the US alliance as a more general strategy of post-war Japan (Soeya, 2008, pp. 1–17). This distinction truly matters. If the Yoshida Doctrine was never a completely fixed doctrine in the first place, then asking when Japan departed from it becomes more complicated. Japan could move away from one part while still keeping another one. And actually, this is something we can see today. The alliance with the United States is still extremely important for Japan. But Japan’s approach to security is clearly not the same as it was during the early post-war period. Japan has become more active, and It’s defence capabilities have changed. It has also developed security relationships with more countries (Hughes, 2017; Midford and Vosse, 2020; Government of Japan, 2022).

Christopher W. Hughes describes this transformation as a possible movement from the Yoshida Doctrine towards what he calls an “Abe Doctrine”. Hughes argues that the traditional Yoshida approach was based on a minimalist defence posture and dependence on the United States. But changes in Japan’s security environment have pushed the country towards greater military commitments and a stronger integration with the US-Japan alliance. (Hughes, 2017, pp. 72–105). This creates a strange situation: Japan is changing but some of the old structure is still there. It is truly interesting because we can not simply say that Japan became more active and therefore the Yoshida Doctrine disappeared. The relationship is not that easy or simple. Japan can increase it’s own security role while at the same time becoming even more integrated with the United States. (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). Also, the security environment around Japan has changed enormously (Government of Japan, 2022).

China is now one of the largest economies in the world and a major military power. North Korea has nuclear weapons and continues to develop ballistic missile capabilities. At the same time, competition between China and the United States has increased. (Government of Japan, 2022). But this competition is not only military. It is also mainly economic. (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025; Yoshimatsu, 2025).

Technology is probably one of the clearest examples. Semiconductors, telecommunications, artificial intelligence and other technologies have become connected to national security. Governments now care not only about how much something costs or where it can be produced most efficiently. They also care about who controls the technology and whether they can continue to access it during a time of crisis. (Suzuki, 2022; METI, 2021; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). And this is exactly where economic security becomes very important.

Economic security is a relatively broad concept. It can include in itself supply chains, energy, critical infrastructure, strategic technologies and access to important materials. What connects these different areas is the idea that economic dependence can create a security risk. (Farrell and Newman, 2019; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025). A simple example would be semiconductors. Modern economies need semiconductors for a huge number of products. Obviously, cars, phones, computers use them. They are also important for advanced military technologies. So, if a country depends heavily on foreign suppliers for semiconductors, this dependence can become more than merely an economic problem and even turn into a strategic problem. (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022).

The same exact logic can be applied to energy or critical minerals. Globalisation made economies much more connected to each other and this created many economic benefits. Companies can buy components from wherever they are cheaper or more efficient to produce. But of course it also created vulnerabilities. (Farrell and Newman, 2019; METI, 2022).

The question is, what happens if the supply suddenly stops? This question became much more visible after several international crises. And Japan, because of it's position in Asia and it's economic connections with both China and the United States, has particularly strong reasons to think about it. (METI, 2022; METI, 2023; Yoshimatsu, 2025).

Michael J. Green's earlier work is useful here even though Japan's Reluctant Realism was published before economic security became such an important concept in Japanese politics. Green argues that Japan was already becoming more sensitive to changes in the balance of power after the Cold War. The US alliance remained central, but Japanese foreign policy was becoming less passive and more willing to respond to changes in it's regional environment. (Green, 2001, pp. 1–34).

Worth noting that China is particularly important in Green's analysis. He argues that Japan's changing relationship with China was one of the strongest examples of Japan moving towards what he calls "reluctant realism". Japan had traditionally put a lot of faith in economic engagement with China. However, the growth of Chinese power made the relationship more complicated. (Green, 2001, pp. 77–109). We can see how it becomes more relevant when we look at the economic security in today's world. Japan has very important economic relations with China. But it's main security ally is the United States. (Government of Japan, 2022; METI, 2023).

But that is not always an easy position. For decades, economic interdependence was generally seen as something positive. More trade could create more prosperity. Economic connections could also make conflict more costly.

And now economic security introduces another question: Can economic interdependence become dangerous if the dependence is too big? (Farrell and Newman, 2019).

I think this is one of the most interesting changes compared with the traditional Yoshida approach. Under the Yoshida model, economic growth was basically one of the main objectives. Japan could keep it's military burden relatively limited and concentrate more resources on becoming economically stronger. (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022).

Today, economics has a different role. Economic policy itself can become a security instrument. (Farrell and Newman, 2019; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Japan may decide that the cheapest supply chain is not necessarily the safest one. The government can support domestic production of something even if producing it somewhere else would be cheaper. It can also try to reduce dependence on a particular country (METI, 2021; METI, 2022; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). In other words, economic efficiency is not always the first priority anymore. Sometimes security simply comes first. (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). And it is this nuance that represents an important potential departure from the Yoshida Doctrine. But again, it is not a complete departure.

Paul Midford and Wilhelm Vosse show another side of this transformation. They explain that Japan has progressively developed security relationships outside of it's traditional relationship with the United States. During the Cold War, Japan had quite limited military contacts with other

states while the United States was the major exception. Since the end of the Cold War, Japan has developed security cooperation with countries including Australia and India and has become more active in regional security cooperation. (Midford and Vosse, 2020). This is an important development. But it does not mean the United States has become unimportant, of course. Actually, quite the opposite can be argued: Japan has diversified it's security relationships while the US-Japan alliance has continued to strengthen. Hughes especially shows this contradiction. Japan is taking more responsibility for security, but much of this is happening through deeper integration with the United States rather than through complete strategic independence.(Hughes, 2017, pp. 72–105).

So, yes there is change but there is also continuity that is undeniable. And exactly this is the problem at the centre of this thesis. The research question is therefore: To what

extent does Japan's economic security strategy represent a departure from the Yoshida Doctrine?

In this thesis it will be argued that Japan's economic security strategy represents a departure from the Yoshida Doctrine significantly, but not a complete one. The strongest departure is probably in the way economics itself is understood.

Economic strength is not only an objective anymore. Economic tools can also be used to achieve security objectives. Supply chains can be reorganised because of security concerns. Technologies can be protected. Governments can support industries which they consider strategically important, even when there is an economic cost. (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; METI, 2024; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

This is quite different from the traditional image of Yoshida's Japan.(Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008). But still some important parts remain. Japan still depends heavily on the United States for it's security. Economic strength is still central to Japanese national strategy too and many of the changes did not happen suddenly but rather developed progressively. (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022).

For this reason, claiming that Japan simply "abandoned" the Yoshida Doctrine would probably go too far..

Japan changed the relationship between economics and security while keeping important parts of the post-war strategic structure. That is what this thesis aims to examine.

The rise of economic security in Japan

The very idea of economic security did not suddenly appear in Japan in 2022. There were concerns about economic vulnerability before this. Japan has very limited natural resources for example, and energy security has been an important issue for a long time (METI, 2020; METI, 2022). But something has clearly changed in recent years. Economic security has moved much closer to the centre of Japanese national security policy (Government of Japan, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025). This is important as it means that issues which could previously have been discussed mostly by economists, businesses or the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry are now also being discussed as questions of national security (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

Semiconductors are one example, critical minerals are another. There are also pharmaceuticals, batteries, telecommunications infrastructure and advanced technologies (METI, 2021; METI, 2022; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). This list can actually become quite long. What connects all of these things is vulnerability (Yoshimatsu, 2025).

Japan's government is increasingly interested in what could happen if the country loses access to something that it needs. This could happen because of a war. But it does not have to be a war. Political tensions, economic sanctions, export restrictions, natural disasters or problems in global supply chains can also create serious disruptions (METI, 2022; METI, 2023; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). For example the COVID-19 made this problem particularly visible (METI, 2020; METI, 2022). During the pandemic, global supply chains experienced major disruptions. Governments realised that depending heavily on international production for important goods could create problems during a crisis. For Japan, this was another reason to think more seriously about supply chain resilience (METI, 2020; METI, 2022; Katada, 2025).

But the pandemic was not the only reason. The strategic competition between the United States and China was already becoming more important. Technology was becoming one of the main areas of this competition. Also, Japan had it's own experiences with economic dependence and

economic pressure in the relations with China (Green, 2022; Suzuki, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025). So economic security developed inside a much bigger geopolitical change (Green, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). This is something that I believe needs to be kept in mind throughout this thesis. If we only look at Japan's economic security laws, we can miss the larger reason why these laws appeared.

Japan's strategy was already changing (Green, 2022; Hughes, 2022). Michael J. Green's later work is especially useful here. In Line of Advantage, Green argues that Japan under Abe Shinzo developed a much more deliberate grand strategy for dealing with the rise of China. This included defence policy, diplomacy and the US alliance, but also economic questions. Japan wanted to compete strategically with China without completely losing the benefits of economic relations with it (Green, 2022). This is not easy at all. China is too economically important for Japan to simply disconnect from but at the same time, Japan does not want economic dependence to create strategic vulnerability (METI, 2022; METI, 2023; Green, 2022).

So Japan is trying to do both things:

- Maintain economic relations.
- But reduce some risks (METI, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022).

I find this balance particularly interesting because it shows why the word "security" has become attached to economic policy. The objective is not necessarily to stop trade with countries that Japan considers strategically difficult but it is more about controlling how dangerous certain dependencies can become (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

This can also explain why economic security is not exactly the same thing as economic nationalism. Japan is not trying to produce absolutely everything inside Japan (Government of Japan, 2022; METI, 2022). That would probably be unrealistic anyway. Instead, the government is identifying certain sectors and products where dependence is considered more dangerous and in those areas, the government can intervene more directly (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; METI, 2022). The Economic Security Promotion Act is definetly the clearest example of this change. The law was adopted in 2022. It created a legal framework for the Japanese government's economic security policies and initially organised them around several important areas, including the stable supply of critical goods, protection of essential infrastructure,

development of advanced technologies and a system concerning sensitive patents. (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). The title of the law itself is interesting. It directly connects economic measures with national security (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). This would have looked quite different from the economic logic normally associated with the early Yoshida period (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008).

The Japanese government later went even further in 2022 National Security Strategy. The strategy was approved on 16 December 2022. It places economic security directly inside Japan's wider national security strategy. The government states that Japan should strengthen supply chains, protect critical infrastructure, develop important technologies and reduce excessive dependence on particular countries (Government of Japan, 2022). This is a very important primary source for this dissertation. Because It shows that economic security is not simply an academic idea used to describe what Japan is doing. The Japanese government itself officially places economic security within it's national security strategy (Government of Japan, 2022). Also, the language about dependence is important. For many years, global economic policy was strongly based around efficiency. A company might choose a supplier because it is cheaper, faster or simply better. Economic security adds another calculation (Farrell and Newman, 2019; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

What happens if that supplier disappears? What happens if a foreign government can influence that supplier? And what happens if the product is something Japan cannot easily replace? These questions can make the cheapest option less attractive (Farrell and Newman, 2019).

Japan's 2022 National Security Strategy especially discusses reducing excessive dependence on specific countries and strengthening the resilience of supply chains. It also mentions next-generation semiconductors and the need to strengthen domestic manufacturing capabilities (Government of Japan, 2022). This is a big change in the way economic policy is discussed. But not necessarily because governments never protected strategic industries before, they did. But now this protection is being openly connected to national security (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022). And that difference matters for the Yoshida Doctrine.

The Gulf War in 1990–91 created questions about Japan's international security contribution. North Korea became a more serious threat. China became more powerful. The US-Japan alliance

changed. Abe's governments then accelerated several security reforms (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2015; Hughes, 2017). Economic security can therefore be seen as another stage of a transformation that was already happening and not necessarily the beginning of it. (Hughes, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025).

Christopher Hughes had already described Japan under Abe as moving towards a more muscular security policy, with fewer of the restrictions traditionally associated with the Yoshida Doctrine (Hughes, 2015, pp. 1–7).

Michael Green reaches the issue from a somewhat different direction. His analysis focuses strongly on Japanese grand strategy and the rise of China. In his later work, he argues that Japan under Abe increasingly tried to shape its strategic environment rather than simply react to it (Green, 2022). Again, this is different from the image of Japan as a passive economic power. But I do not think "passive" completely describes the Yoshida Doctrine either. The Yoshida strategy can also be understood as pragmatic. Japan had limited resources after the war. The United States was willing to provide security. Concentrating on economic reconstruction was therefore a rational choice (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). Seeing this way, maybe today's economic security strategy is not the opposite of Yoshida. Maybe it is another pragmatic response to a different international environment. That possibility is important.

Research argument

This thesis does not start from the assumption that Japan has completely abandoned the Yoshida Doctrine. It also does not assume that the doctrine basically continues unchanged. Both arguments seem too simple. But instead, I will argue that Japan's economic security strategy represents a significant but incomplete departure from the Yoshida Doctrine. There are several reasons for this: First, Japan is more willing to use economic policy for security purposes. This is probably the clearest departure (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022). Second, Japan is more willing to accept state intervention in areas where strategic vulnerability is considered too high. Supply chains and strategic technologies are good examples (METI, 2021; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Third, Japan's overall security role has become more active. Economic security is happening at the same time as broader changes in Japanese defence and foreign policy (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022; Government of

Japan, 2022). But there are important continuities too. As an example, the US alliance remains central (Government of Japan, 2022; Hughes, 2022).

Shortly, the objective is not to sacrifice the economy for security but to make the economy less vulnerable while keeping it competitive (METI, 2024; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). This makes the answer to the research question less clear than it might first appear: Japan has moved away from Yoshida but it has not simply left Yoshida behind.

Research approach and sources

To answer the research question, mainly use a qualitative approach will be used. The objective is not really to measure Japan's departure from the Yoshida Doctrine with numbers. That would be difficult anyway. There is no percentage that can tell us that Japan is, for example, 60 percent Yoshida and 40 percent something else, in simple terms. Instead, the thesis will compare the main characteristics normally associated with the Yoshida Doctrine with Japan's more recent economic security strategy.

Masahiro Hoshiro is particularly important here. He argues that the conventional understanding of the Yoshida Doctrine is built around three main ideas: reliance on the United States for security, keeping Japan's own military capabilities and expenditure limited, and giving priority to economic growth. However, Hoshiro questions whether these elements really formed a deliberate doctrine created by Yoshida himself. He also challenges the idea that Japan's economic success can simply be explained by it's relatively low defence expenditure (Hoshiro, 2022, pp. 105–128). I find this criticism useful because it stops the dissertation from treating the Yoshida Doctrine as something too simple. If we define Yoshida incorrectly at the beginning, then the comparison with economic security will also be weak.

Academic authors can explain why Japan changed its policies and what these changes could mean. But government documents show how Japan itself describes its strategy. The 2022 National Security Strategy will therefore be one of the main primary sources. This document is useful because it places economic security directly within the wider national security strategy of Japan and It also identifies areas such as supply chains,

critical infrastructure and advanced technologies as important security concerns (Government of Japan, 2022).

The Economic Security Promotion Act will also be important. The Act created a legal framework covering four main areas when it was adopted: stable supplies of critical products, security of essential infrastructure, development of advanced critical technologies and non-disclosure of selected patent applications for security reasons (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). These sources allow us to look at what Japan is actually doing rather than only discussing economic security as an abstract idea.

But government documents have a limitation. Governments describe their own policies in a particular way: They explain what they want to achieve and they do not necessarily tell us whether the policy works or whether their explanation is accepted by everyone. So academic sources are necessary too.

Christopher W. Hughes will be particularly useful for analysing changes in Japan's grand strategy and the US-Japan alliance. His work covers Japan's gradual movement away from some of the military restrictions associated with the Yoshida Doctrine and towards a more active security posture (Hughes, 2015, pp. 1–7; Hughes, 2017, pp. 72–105).

Michael J. Green provides another perspective. Green focuses a lot on Japan's response to changes in the regional balance of power. His work is especially useful for understanding China, the US-Japan alliance and Japan's gradual development of a more active strategic position after the Cold War (Green, 2001, pp. 11–34; Green, 2022).

Paul Midford will also be important, but for a slightly different reason. Midford has questioned some common ideas about Japanese public opinion and security policy. He argues that Japanese public opinion cannot simply be described as pacifist in the sense of opposing almost every use of military force. Instead, support can depend strongly on the purpose and circumstances of military action (Midford, 2011). This matters because the Yoshida Doctrine was not only about what Japanese governments wanted. Domestic politics mattered too and so did the Public opinion, Article 9 and political attitudes towards the use of force placed limits on what governments could realistically do (Midford, 2011). Also, Midford's later work with Wilhelm

Vosse is useful for examining how Japan has developed security partnerships outside the traditional US-Japan relationship (Midford and Vosse, 2020).

Hughes focuses strongly on grand strategy, military change and alliance integration. Green looks at strategy and the regional balance of power. Midford gives more attention to public opinion and Japan's expanding security relationships. They do not always interpret Japanese security policy in exactly the same way. And that is useful.

What does "departure" mean?

There is another word in the research question that needs to be explained: Departure. What would actually count as a departure from the Yoshida Doctrine? If departure means that Japan must abandon every part of the Yoshida Doctrine, then the answer would probably be quite easy: Japan has not done that. The US-Japan alliance remains central to Japanese security (Government of Japan, 2022; Hughes, 2022). But that definition would not be very useful. A strategy can change substantially without every part of it disappearing. So in this dissertation, departure will mean a significant change in one or more of the basic strategic principles associated with the Yoshida Doctrine. There are several ways we can test this. The first is security dependence on the United States. If Japan was moving towards complete strategic independence from the United States, this would clearly represent a major departure. But this is not what we currently see. Japan is increasing its own capabilities, but it is doing much of this while strengthening the alliance (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022). This creates continuity.

The second area is military restraint and here the departure is more clearer. Japan's defence policy has obviously changed since the Cold War. The country has expanded the roles of the Self-Defense Forces, strengthened alliance cooperation and adopted new capabilities (Hughes, 2015; Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). Christopher Hughes sees these developments as part of a long-term erosion of the military minimalism associated with the Yoshida Doctrine (Hughes, 2022). This does not mean Japan has become a completely normal military power. There are still legal and political restrictions (Hughes, 2022). But the direction is different.

When it comes to the relationship between economics and security, under the traditional Yoshida model, economic development was a central national objective. Security arrangements helped

create the conditions for Japan to focus on economic growth (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). With economic security, part of this relationship is reversed (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Economic decisions themselves are being made for security reasons (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022). I find this probably the clearest conceptual departure. A government might accept higher costs to make a supply chain safer. It might subsidise domestic production of a strategic product. It might restrict the transfer of a technology even if selling that technology would produce an economic benefit (METI, 2021; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). In each case, security can limit economic efficiency (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). That does not fit perfectly with the traditional image of Yoshida's economically focused Japan (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). But again, there is another way to interpret it. Maybe economic security is actually protecting Japan's economic strength. If Japan reduces a dangerous dependency, this can make its economy more resilient. If it protects important technologies, it can maintain its industrial competitiveness. If it secures access to critical resources, it can protect economic activity during a crisis (Government of Japan, 2022; METI, 2024; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Seen this way, economic security could actually continue one important Yoshida objective: protect the economic foundations of Japanese power. Yes, the method of doing this has changed but maybe the objective has not changed as much. This is exactly why the words "to what extent" are important in the research question. The dissertation is not trying to produce a yes or no answer but rather, the answer is somewhere between continuity and departure.

Scope of the thesis

This thesis mainly focuses on the period from the end of the Second World War to the contemporary period, but it will not examine every Japanese government in equal detail. That would be too broad.

The early post-war period is important because this is where the Yoshida strategy developed (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). Then several later periods are especially relevant. The end of the Cold War is one. The 1990–91 Gulf War is another important moment because it created strong criticism of Japan's international security role. Japan contributed large amounts of financial support to the coalition effort but did not send the Self-Defense Forces into combat.

The experience contributed to a wider debate inside Japan about what kind of international security role the country should play (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014).

The Abe period will receive particular attention.There is a reason for this: Abe Shinzo's governments introduced some of the most important changes in Japanese security policy in the post-war period. Japan created its first National Security Strategy in 2013. A National Security Council was established. The government also reinterpreted the constitutional framework surrounding collective self-defence and introduced security legislation in 2015 (Government of Japan, 2013; Government of Japan, 2014; Government of Japan, 2015; Hughes, 2015). These changes did not create economic security by themselves. But they created part of the strategic environment in which economic security later developed (Hughes, 2017; Green, 2022).

Hughes argues that Abe attempted to move Japan towards a more active and autonomous strategic role, even though the US alliance remained central (Hughes, 2015). Green also gives Abe a very important role. He argues that Abe's approach was not only about individual defence reforms. It represented a broader attempt to develop a

Japanese grand strategy in response to changes in the Indo-Pacific balance of power (Green, 2022). Then the dissertation will move towards the period and era after Abe. This era is where economic security becomes much more formalised (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022). The Economic Security Promotion Act of 2022 is obviously central and so is the new National Security Strategy adopted in the same year (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022).

The two eras will be mainly compared: Post-war Japan, where economic recovery was prioritised while security dependence on the United States remained very strong (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008) and contemporary Japan, where the economy itself is increasingly treated as part of national security (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). The difference is large. But the connection between the two is still undeniably there.

The Structure

The next chapter will examine the Yoshida Doctrine in more detail. It will look at the historical conditions in which Yoshida made his decisions, the relationship with the United States and the importance of economic reconstruction. It will also discuss whether the Yoshida Doctrine should actually be considered a coherent doctrine. This debate is important because scholars do not completely agree on it (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022).

The following chapter will then examine how Japanese security policy changed after the Cold War. This chapter will not focus only on economic security as that would be too early. Instead, it will show the wider transformation that happened before economic security became such an important concept. The Gulf War, North Korea, China's rise and changes in the US-Japan alliance will all be important here (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014; Hughes, 2015).

A separate chapter will then focus on Abe Shinzo. This is necessary because the Abe period connects many of the earlier changes with Japan's contemporary strategy. It is also where Hughes's idea of a possible "Abe Doctrine" becomes especially relevant (Hughes, 2015; Hughes, 2017).

After this, the dissertation will move directly into economic security. It will examine how the concept developed in Japan and why it became more important. The Economic Security Promotion Act will be analysed in detail. The 2022 National Security Strategy will also be examined (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022).

Then we can look at specific cases: Semiconductors will be one of them and supply chains will be another. Critical infrastructure and technology protection will also be examined. These cases are important because they show what economic security actually means in practice (METI, 2021; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Suzuki, 2022).

Finally, the last analytical chapter will return directly to the research question. It will compare contemporary economic security with the main elements of the Yoshida Doctrine. Where has Japan departed? Where has it not? And maybe more importantly, are some apparent departures actually adaptations of the same basic strategy?

The conclusion part will then bring these arguments together. The expected answer is not that Japan has completely rejected Yoshida. It has not. But it is also difficult to argue that the Yoshida Doctrine remains unchanged. Japan's strategic environment changed too much for that (Green, 2022; Hughes, 2022).

Chapter 2. The Yoshida Doctrine and Post-War Japanese Strategy

If the aim is to understand the Yoshida Doctrine, we first need to understand the situation Japan was in after 1945. Japan had just lost the Second World War. The empire was gone. Many cities had suffered enormous destruction and the economy was in a very difficult condition. Japan was also occupied by the allied powers, with the United States having the dominant role in this occupation (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008). So when Yoshida Shigeru became Prime Minister, the question was not simply what foreign policy Japan wanted. This is important because Yoshida's strategy cannot really be separated from these conditions. Japan did not have unlimited choices after 1945. Its military had been dismantled and the country was occupied. There was also strong pressure for political and institutional reforms (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008).

The new Japanese Constitution came into effect in 1947. Article 9 became probably its most famous part. It renounced war as a sovereign right of the nation and rejected the threat or use of force as a way of settling international disputes (Soeya, 2008; Hughes, 2017). This was a major change from pre-war Japan. Only a few years earlier, Japan had possessed a very large military and controlled territories across Asia. After the war, the country was moving towards a political system where military power was heavily restricted (Soeya, 2008; Hughes, 2017). But the international environment around Japan did not stay peaceful. But quite the opposite was happening: The Cold War was developing. In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party won the Chinese Civil War and the People's Republic of China was established. Then in June 1950, the Korean War began. This changed the strategic importance of Japan for the United States (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008).

Japan was no longer seen only as a former enemy that had to be demilitarised. It was also becoming an important part of the American position in East Asia (Green, 2001). This created a strange situation. The occupation had originally been strongly connected with demilitarising Japan. But the United States was now facing new security threats in Asia and wanted Japan to contribute more to it's own defence (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008). Yoshida was cautious about this (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). He did not completely oppose Japan having defensive capabilities.

Japan eventually established the Self-Defense Forces in 1954 but he was reluctant to commit Japan to a large programme of rearmament (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022).

Economic recovery came first (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). I think this is one of the easiest ways to understand the logic usually associated with Yoshida. Japan had limited resources. Rebuilding a major military would require money, industrial capacity and political effort. Yoshida believed these resources were needed elsewhere instead: The economy needed them. (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). Hiroyuki Hoshiro describes the conventional interpretation of the Yoshida Doctrine as having three main pillars:

1. Japan relied on the US alliance for security.
2. maintained relatively limited armaments and military expenditure.
3. placed a strong emphasis on economic recovery and growth. (Hoshiro, 2022, pp. 105–128).

These three elements are connected. At least they are so according to the traditional interpretation.

American protection allowed Japan to keep its own military burden relatively low. Lower military expenditure then allowed Japan to put more attention and resources into economic reconstruction (Hoshiro, 2022). This is the famous logic. But as will be discussed later, Hoshiro questions whether this relationship was actually as clear as academics have often suggested it to be. (Hoshiro, 2022). This in itself is an important debate.

First, however, it is necessary to understand why economic recovery was such a priority. Japan after the war had major problems with production and inflation. There were shortages and living conditions were difficult. The economy also had to be transformed from the system which had supported Japan’s wartime mobilisation (Hoshiro, 2022).

In 1949, the so-called Dodge Line introduced a programme of economic stabilisation (Hoshiro, 2022). Then something unexpected happened-The Korean War. The war was obviously a major security crisis but economically, it created an important source of demand for Japanese goods and services because American forces fighting in Korea used Japan as a major supply base. These special procurements contributed to Japan’s economic recovery (Hoshiro, 2022).

Hoshiro actually uses this point when questioning the traditional economic explanation of the Yoshida Doctrine identifying the Dodge Line and demand generated by the Korean War among several important conditions behind Japan's recovery. Later growth was also connected to factors such as private investment, productivity growth, industrial transformation, consumer demand (Hoshiro, 2022, pp. 105–128). This matters because there is a danger of making the Yoshida Doctrine sound almost too successful. Japan limited military spending and the economy grew. But is this really a hypothesis? Just because two things happened at the same time does not mean one caused another. Hoshiro is quite critical about this. He argues that the supposed causal relationship between restrained defence expenditure and Japan's economic growth is not supported strongly enough by the evidence (Hoshiro, 2022, pp. 105–128). I find this criticism particularly useful.It does not mean the economy was unimportant to Yoshida, clearly it was. But it means we should separate two claims. The first claim is that Yoshida prioritised economic recovery while trying to limit Japan's defence burden (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). The second claim is that this decision caused Japan's later economic miracle. These are not exactly the same thing. And the second is much harder to prove according to Hoshiro. (Hoshiro, 2022).

The peace constitution and the American alliance

Japan had a strongly pacifist constitution. But it also had a security alliance with the most powerful military state in the world. Yoshihide Soeya describes the post-war "Yoshida Line" through these two choices: the peace constitution and the US-Japan security treaty. According to Soeya, these choices became fundamental to Japan's post-war development, but they also created a deep dependence on the United States (Soeya, 2008, pp. 1–17). Dependence is an important word here. Japan was gaining something very valuable from the United States: security. But it is a known fact that relying on another country for security also limits autonomy. This problem would remain present for decades (Soeya, 2008; Hughes, 2017).

The original US-Japan Security Treaty was signed in 1951, at the same time as the San Francisco Peace Treaty. When the occupation formally ended in 1952, American forces could continue to be stationed in Japan (Soeya, 2008; Green, 2001). From Yoshida's perspective, this arrangement had practical advantages. Japan could concentrate on recovery while the United States could provide much of the external security. And Japan did not need to immediately rebuild the type of

large military establishment that had existed before 1945 (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008). But the relationship was unequal. Japan depended more on the United States than the United States depended on Japan for direct protection (Soeya, 2008). Soeya argues that this structure of dependence became one of the major unresolved problems of the Yoshida Line. It later created criticism from Japanese nationalists who wanted greater autonomy, while the United States sometimes criticised Japan for doing too little for its own defence (Soeya, 2008, pp. 1–17). This criticism would come back again and again. The questions arise: Was Japan taking advantage of American protection? Was it doing enough for its own security? Should Japan become more independent? These questions sound surprisingly modern. Actually, they are still relevant today (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). This is one reason why the Yoshida Doctrine remains useful for this thesis. Even if the concept itself is debated, some of the problems connected to it have never completely disappeared (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022; Hughes, 2022). Japan still wants security and still values the American alliance (Government of Japan, 2022). But it also wants some freedom to make its own decisions. There is tension between these objectives (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022).

Christopher W. Hughes places this tension at the centre of his analysis as he argues that Japan largely defaulted to the Yoshida Doctrine during the post-war period because alternative strategies such as greater autonomy, neutrality or multilateralism were seen as less realistic. The Yoshida strategy offered: limited national defence commitments and dependence on the US-Japan alliance (Hughes, 2017, pp. 72–105). Again, the word practical matters. The Yoshida Doctrine was not necessarily an ideological rejection of all military power (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). It can also be understood as a strategic calculation. Why spend enormous resources building an independent defence capability when Japan had access to American protection? Especially when the economy needed rebuilding. From that perspective, Yoshida's approach makes a lot of sense. But there was a price: Japan's security became closely connected to American strategy in Asia (Soeya, 2008; Hughes, 2017). And that dependence would later become one of the main arguments used by people who wanted Japan to have a more autonomous foreign policy (Soeya, 2008; Hughes, 2017).

Was Yoshida really against rearmament?

There is a temptation to describe Yoshida as simply anti-military. That is too easy. The historical situation was more complicated (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). Yoshida resisted American pressure for large-scale Japanese rearmament, but this did not mean that he believed Japan should remain completely without defensive capabilities forever (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). This distinction is important. Japan created the National Police Reserve in 1950 during the Korean War. This later developed into the National Safety Force and then the Japan Self-Defense Forces in 1954 (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). So Japan was already rebuilding a defence capability during Yoshida's period. The real disagreement was more about the scale and speed of rearmament (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). Yoshida wanted to avoid a defence burden that could damage economic recovery or create domestic political problems (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). Also, Japanese society after the war had understandable reasons to be suspicious of militarisation. The memory of the war was extremely recent.

The Constitution also created legal limits and political expectations surrounding military policy (Midford, 2011; Hughes, 2017). Yoshida had both economic and political reasons to resist rapid rearmament (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). This makes the Yoshida Doctrine more subtle than simply saying "Japan chose economics instead of military power". Japan did both but just not equally. Security remained necessary, but the United States carried a large part of the external burden (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2017). This allowed Japan's own defence role to remain limited (Hughes, 2017). Christopher Hughes describes this as a minimalist defence posture rather than complete pacifism (Hughes, 2017, pp. 72–105). I think "minimalist" is probably a better word. Japan still had armed forces and still had scurity strategy and still existed inside the American security system in East Asia (Hughes, 2017). But it tried to keep its own commitments limited (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). That difference becomes very important when we later compare Yoshida with contemporary Japan. Japan today is not abandoning the alliance (Government of Japan, 2022; Hughes, 2022). It is increasing what it does inside the alliance (Hughes, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022). That is not the same thing as becoming independent from the United States. It is a different type of departure.

Economic recovery and the logic of restraint

The economic part of Yoshida's approach deserves more attention because it is the part most directly connected to this research. The traditional Yoshida logic is often described almost like an exchange. Japan accepts dependence on the United States for security. In return, it gains the space to focus on economic development (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). Japan could rebuild its industrial capacity. It could expand exports. Companies could invest in new technologies and production. Over time, Japan became an extremely successful manufacturing economy (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022).

The transformation was enormous. By the 1960s and 1970s, Japan was no longer simply a recovering defeated country. It was becoming an economic power (Hoshiro, 2022). This changed the meaning of the Yoshida strategy too. Because what began as a response to weakness after 1945 could later be presented as a successful model of national strategy (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). Soeya explains that from the late 1970s onwards, scholars increasingly defended the Yoshida approach as a real strategic choice. The combination of light armament, economic growth and US security ties was interpreted as a strategy itself and not just as evidence that Japan lacked a strategy.(Soeya, 2008, pp. 1–17). I find this change quite interesting. The name "Yoshida Doctrine" became more important after the strategy had already produced what looked like successful results (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). In other words, the doctrine was partly understood backwards.

Academics then connected these things into a coherent model (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). Hiroyuki Hoshiro goes much further with this criticism. He argues that the Yoshida Doctrine is basically an analytical concept created by researchers, particularly as Japanese scholars responded to domestic and international criticism of Japan's relatively low military spending during a period when the country had already become economically powerful (Hoshiro, 2022, pp. 105–128). That creates a problem. Are we studying Yoshida's actual strategy? or are we studying an academic interpretation of Yoshida that became influential later? Probably a bit of both.

The research question is about whether contemporary economic security represents a departure from the Yoshida Doctrine. So what matters is not only what Yoshida personally thought in 1950.

It also matters what the Yoshida Doctrine came to represent in Japanese strategic thinking. The conventional model is still useful for comparison.

The problem of economic causality

The economic argument deserves even more attention. Did Japan become economically successful because it spent relatively little on defence? At first, it feels obvious. If a government spends less money on the military, it has more money available for other areas. But national economies do not work quite that simply. Japan's economic growth had many causes (Hoshiro, 2022). Investment was important. Productivity increased, Japanese industry developed rapidly, international trade expanded, consumer demand grew and the structure of the economy also changed (Hoshiro, 2022). And the international environment helped. The Korean War is a good example. American military demand created significant orders for Japanese businesses. Japan was geographically close to the conflict and already served as an important base for American forces (Hoshiro, 2022). So an event that was terrible from a security perspective actually helped Japan economically. There is a historical contradiction here: The Cold War created the security environment that made Japan dependent on the United States but the parts of that same exact environment also supported Japan's economic recovery (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). Hoshiro argues that the relationship between the two is much less certain than the conventional Yoshida Doctrine suggests (Hoshiro, 2022, pp. 105–128). This is important for the comparison with economic security today. Because if we assume that the Yoshida Doctrine was simply about spending as little as possible on security so the economy could grow, then today's policies look like a very large departure. Japan is now spending resources to make it's economy more secure supporting strategic industries, trying to make supply chains more resilient, investing in technologies partly because they have national security importance (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; METI, 2021).

But if the Yoshida Doctrine was really more about using the strategic conditions available to protect Japan's economic position, the difference becomes less clear. Maybe the tools changed more than the objective. This possibility will come back later. For now, the important point is that Yoshida's economic strategy can not be reduced to one equation where low military spending automatically created high economic growth (Hoshiro, 2022). The history is messier than that and that matters.

The Yoshida Doctrine after Yoshida

One important thing about the Yoshida Doctrine is that it survived Yoshida himself. Yoshida left office in 1954. But many of the basic choices associated with his strategy continued for decades. Japan remained closely allied with the United States. Economic growth remained extremely important. Japan also continued to place limits on it's own military role (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). This is why the Yoshida Doctrine can not really be understood only as the personal foreign policy of one Prime Minister (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). It became something bigger. Of course, later Japanese leaders did not all agree with Yoshida. Kishi Nobusuke is a good example to that. Kishi became Prime Minister in 1957 and had a different view of Japan's international position. He wanted Japan to have a more equal relationship with the United States and was more interested in strengthening Japan's autonomy (Soeya, 2008). This already shows that there was political disagreement about the direction Japan should take. The US-Japan Security Treaty was revised in 1960. The new treaty created a more reciprocal security relationship than the original 1951 agreement. The United States remained committed to Japan's defence and continued to maintain military forces in Japan (Soeya, 2008; Green, 2001).

Article 9 had also become an important part of Japan's post-war political identity (Midford, 2011; Hughes, 2017). Paul Midford's research is useful when looking at this issue because he challenges the idea that Japanese public opinion can simply be described as permanently pacifist. According to Midford, Japanese attitudes towards security are more complicated. The public has generally been cautious about the use of military force, but this does not mean that it opposes every military role for Japan. Support depends a lot on the circumstances and the purpose of the action (Midford, 2011). I think this distinction is important. If we just say "Japan was pacifist", we lose a lot of the complexity. Japan created the Self-Defense Forces, hosted American military bases and etc. so clearly, post-war Japan was not pacifist in the sense of completely rejecting military power (Midford, 2011; Hughes, 2017).

And in a way, the Yoshida Doctrine fitted quite well inside this compromise (Hughes, 2017). Japan had security. But its own military role stayed relatively restricted (Hughes, 2017). This arrangement was not always comfortable, but at least it was politically sustainable for a long period (Soeya, 2008; Hughes, 2017).

The 1960s and the economic priority

The 1960s probably show the economic side of post-war Japanese strategy at its clearest. Japan was growing very quickly (Hoshiro, 2022). Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato introduced the famous Income Doubling Plan in 1960. The objective was ambitious. The government wanted to achieve very rapid economic growth and substantially increase living standards (Hoshiro, 2022). The focus on growth was obvious. By this period, economic development was not only about recovering from the destruction of the war anymore. Japan was becoming rich. This is a major difference. A strategy originally connected to post-war weakness continued even when Japan was becoming economically much stronger (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). And this raised a question: If Japan was now wealthy, should it continue to have such a limited defence role? From the American perspective, Japan's growing economic strength could also make its relatively limited defence burden look increasingly difficult to justify. Why should an economically powerful Japan continue to depend so heavily on the United States? (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). This criticism did not immediately destroy the Yoshida model. Far from it. Japan continued to maintain relatively restrained defence spending and relied on the alliance (Government of Japan, 1976; Ministry of Defense of Japan, 1976; Hughes, 2017). In fact, restraint became even more institutionalised. The 1976 National Defense Program Outline is important here.

The Japanese government adopted the first National Defense Program Outline on 29 October 1976. It introduced what became known as the Basic Defense Force Concept. The idea was to maintain the basic functions needed for national defence and to be capable of responding to limited and small-scale aggression (Ministry of Defense of Japan, 1976).

The Ministry of Defense's own historical explanation describes the 1976 concept as maintaining the minimum necessary defence capability as an independent state rather than just continuously expanding military forces according to the capabilities of potential adversaries (Ministry of Defense of Japan, 1976).

And one week after the 1976 defence outline was adopted, the government also introduced a guideline concerning defence expenditure. On 5 November 1976, the Cabinet decided that

annual defence-related expenditure should, for the time being, remain within approximately 1 percent of Japan's gross national product (Government of Japan, 1976). The 1 percent figure became symbolically very important (Hoshiro, 2022). It made Japanese military restraint easy to see. Japan was an increasingly wealthy country, but it was limiting defence expenditure to around a small part of its overall economy (Government of Japan, 1976; Hoshiro, 2022). This was not directly created by Yoshida. He had already been dead for almost a decade by this point. But it shows how the general pattern associated with the Yoshida Doctrine continued after him (Hoshiro, 2022).

Economic power as international power

Japan had become one of the world's major economic powers by 1970s and 1980s. (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). Japanese companies were highly competitive in industries such as automobiles and electronics. Japanese products were exported around the world. Trade relations with the United States became extremely important, but they also became a source of tension (Green, 2001). Japan now had influence. But much of this influence was economic rather than military (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014). This is probably one of the clearest results of the post-war strategy. Japan had found a way to become a major international actor without following the traditional route of building a very large independent military (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014).

Money, trade, investment and development assistance became important instruments of Japanese foreign policy (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014). But there was a weakness in this model. What happened when money was not enough? This problem became much more visible after the Cold War (Green, 2001). During the Cold War itself, Japan's relatively limited military role could be understood within the wider US-led alliance structure. The United States had enormous military capabilities in Asia. Japan provided bases and maintained its own Self-Defense Forces (Hughes, 2014; Hughes, 2017). But after the Cold War, international expectations started to change (Green, 2001). Japan was now extremely wealthy. The Soviet Union was disappearing as the main Cold War threat. So the old strategic arrangement started to face new questions (Green, 2001).

Michael Green describes post-Cold War Japan as increasingly searching for a clearer strategy and identity. The international environment had changed, but many of the institutions and

political habits created during the Yoshida period remained (Green, 2001, pp. 11–34). This is where the Yoshida Doctrine started to become more difficult to maintain in exactly the same form (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2017). Not because the economy had become less important but actually Japan's economic position was still extremely important. The problem was that other countries expected Japan to contribute to international security in ways that were not purely just economic (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014). And then came the Gulf War.

The Gulf War

The era of 1990–91 Gulf crisis is also essential to look at if the aim is to analyse Japan's post war security policy. Japan supported the coalition financially and provided a very large monetary contribution (Green, 2001; Midford, 2011). But Japan did not send the Self-Defense Forces to participate in the combat operation (Green, 2001; Midford, 2011). The expression of "checkbook diplomacy" became associated with this criticism (Green, 2001). For a country whose post-war strategy had placed so much emphasis on economic power, this was truly a serious problem. Money had been one of Japan's strongest instruments and now Japan was being told that money was simply not enough.

I find this moment particularly important because it exposes one of the limits of the Yoshida model. The strategy had worked extremely well in an environment where Japan could rely on the United States and focus heavily on economic development. But Japan had become a major global economy and with that position came expectations (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014). What should the Self-Defense Forces be allowed to do abroad? Could Japan contribute to international peacekeeping? How could this be reconciled with Article 9? These were the important questions not to avoid. (Midford, 2011).

In 1992, the Diet passed the International Peace Cooperation Law, known as the PKO Law. This created a legal framework allowing Japan to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations under specified conditions and there were still significant restrictions (Government of Japan, 1992; Midford, 2011). Paul Midford's work is especially relevant to understand why this did not necessarily mean that Japanese society suddenly abandoned its post-war caution about military power. Midford argues that Japanese public opinion accepted some international security

roles when they were seen as defensive, multilateral or connected to international peace, while it remained more cautious about the offensive uses of force (Midford, 2011). Japan could become more active without completely abandoning restraint (Midford, 2011; Hughes, 2017).

The Gulf War did not immediately end the Yoshida Doctrine nor did Japan suddenly become a normal military power in 1991 (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014). But the Gulf War exposed a problem that would become harder to ignore (Green, 2001; Midford, 2011). Michael Green describes the 1990s as a period when Japan moved towards a more realist understanding of strategic environment and surroundings. This was not only because of the Gulf War but the North Korea became more important as a security threat. China's military and economic power was also increasing. At the same time, uncertainty existed about what the end of the Cold War meant for the American role in Asia (Green, 2001, pp. 11–34, 77–109). The Yoshida framework had not broken yet but it was being asked to do more than before. The changes that eventually made economic security possible were already starting during this period (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2017; Midford and Vosse, 2020).

Chapter 3 Another expansion of Japan's security role

September 11

Japan had been criticised for contributing large amounts of money but not personnel after the Gulf War. The Japanese government clearly did not want to repeat the same experience ten years later. (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014). Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro's government introduced the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, which was passed by the Diet on 29 October 2001. The law allowed Japan to provide cooperation and support to US and other foreign forces involved in operations against international terrorism. It also authorised search and rescue activities and humanitarian assistance under specified conditions. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2001; Government of Japan, 2001).

The government then adopted a Basic Plan on 16 November 2001 which allowed Self-Defense Force activities including supply, transportation, medical assistance, repair and maintenance. Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels could operate in the Indian Ocean and provide supplies to foreign vessels participating in counter-terrorism operations. (Government of Japan, 2001). And the government was very careful about how the operation was defined: The Basic Plan stated that Japanese activities had to remain within the Constitution and that operations would take place in areas where combat was not occurring or expected to occur while the activities were being conducted. (Government of Japan, 2001). The Maritime Self-Defense Force eventually conducted replenishment activities in the Indian Ocean for years. Under the original Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, MSDF vessels operated from December 2001 until November 2007, supplying materials to foreign naval vessels and supporting counter-terrorism operations (Government of Japan, 2001; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2001). Japan was supporting forces involved in a real international military campaign (Government of Japan, 2001; Hughes, 2014). But again, not combat. But the distance between this and the security posture of the 1950s is obvious (Hughes, 2017).

Koizumi and the importance of political leadership

Koizumi's style of leadership is interesting because he shows that international events do not automatically create policy change but political leadership matters too. But Koizumi was willing to move rather quickly after 9/11. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2001; Government of Japan, 2001). Japan was becoming more active internationally. But this activism was often happening through the American alliance (Hughes, 2014; Hughes, 2022).

Christopher Hughes later describes this pattern as increasing Japanese capabilities combined with greater alliance integration. So, Japan's security transformation involves both a larger national role and deeper bilateral military cooperation with the United States at the same time. (Hughes, 2022).

Iraq pushes the boundary again

Japan enacted the Law concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq in 2003. The law created a framework for Self-Defense Force participation in humanitarian and reconstruction activities following the Iraq War (Government of Japan, 2003). On 9 December 2003, the Koizumi government approved the Basic Plan for dispatching the Self-Defense Forces to Iraq. Koizumi emphasised that Japanese forces would conduct humanitarian and reconstruction activities rather than combat. Also, he specifically stated that they would not participate in combat activities or use force as part of the operation (Government of Japan, 2003). The activities included medical assistance, water supply, rehabilitation and maintenance of schools and other public facilities, as well as transportation of humanitarian and reconstruction materials (Government of Japan, 2003). Ground Self-Defense Force units were deployed to southern Iraq. (Government of Japan, 2003; Hughes, 2014). The government insisted that Japanese personnel were there for reconstruction rather than combat.That difference was essential legally. (Government of Japan, 2003). The interesting part is that Japan still did not simply remove the old restrictions. Instead, it found a way around some of them while formally keeping the basic framework. (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022).

Is this already a departure from Yoshida?

Japan had departed from some elements of the Yoshida model already, especially military minimalism (Hughes, 2017). Economic security is not the first departure. It is part of a much longer transformation. (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). Christopher Hughes's work makes this quite clear. His argument about the transition from a Yoshida Doctrine towards a more active strategic posture does not begin with the Economic Security Promotion Act in 2022. But it develops through changes in alliance policy, Self-Defense Force roles, defence capabilities and Japanese strategic thinking over a much longer period (Hughes, 2017, pp. 72–105). So why is economic security different? Because it changes another part of the Yoshida model: The economy. Earlier security reforms mainly expanded what Japan could do militarily and internationally (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). Economic security goes into the area that had been at the centre of Japan's post-war success (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). The military boundary had already been moving and now the boundary between economics and security starts moving too. (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

The alliance becoming broader

The division of labour had been straightforward: Japan provided bases and maintained limited defensive capabilities and The United States provided the larger military guarantee. (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2017). And Japan was taking on more roles such as missile defence and logistical support and etc. (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). International operations became another one of those roles eventually. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1996; Government of Japan, 2001; Hughes, 2022). And so the alliance became less about the United States simply protecting Japan and more about the two countries cooperating across a wider range of security activities. (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). The United States retained capabilities that Japan did not possess and continued to provide extended deterrence but Japan was not playing exactly the same role anymore. (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022).

But the reason the alliance allows Japan to remain militarily minimalist becomes weaker because Japan is now doing more inside the alliance (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). Japan's economic

security strategy can look like an attempt to become more autonomous and resilient. But many of its policies are coordinated with the United States (Government of Japan and Government of the United States, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022; METI and U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022). So once again it is important to note that, more resilience does not mean more independence.

China becoming impossible to ignore economically

Japan's economic relationship with China was also becoming more important (Green, 2001; METI, 2020). Japan can not consider China only as a security problem. Japanese companies trade with China, invest there and use chinese suppliers and chinese demand obviously matters to japanese businesses. Michael Green's idea of "reluctant realism" is useful because it captures this uncomfortable combination. Japan recognised the strategic challenge created by China's rise, but it also had strong reasons to avoid a purely confrontational policy because of economic interdependence and the importance of regional stability. (Green, 2001, pp. 77–109). If Japan cuts economic relations with China, Japan also pays a price. If Japan becomes too dependent on China, that can create vulnerability (METI, 2020; Government of Japan, 2022).

How the economic interdependence starts looking different

Economic interdependence was most of the time, treated as something positive in Japanese relations with the rest of Asia (Solís, 2017). But there is another side to it: Dependence can become leverage (Farrell and Newman, 2019). Imagining that Japan imports a product from another country because that country can produce it more cheaply? Normally, that is simply trade. But if Japan can not function without that product, and there is no alternative supplier, then the relationship starts to look different. This distinction is at the centre of economic security (Farrell and Newman, 2019; Government of Japan, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025).

The 2010 tensions with China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and the disruption of rare-earth exports would be an important example (World Trade Organization, 2014; Sojitz Corporation and Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation, 2011). We will examine that event properly in the economic security chapter rather than going deeply into it here.

Japan also starts looking beyond the United States

Paul Midford and Wilhelm Vosse describe Japan looking beyond the US alliance as a development and as a movement towards security cooperation that was increasingly non-US-centric, while also still recognising that the American alliance remained the core of Japanese security policy, without a doubt. Japan developed fairly strong security connections with partners like Australia, India, European states and regional institutions (Midford and Vosse, 2020).

This matters for our research question because economic security follows a similar structure. Japan does not only want domestic production and does not only want American production. A supply chain can become more resilient by spreading production between Japan and several friendly countries instead of concentrating everything in one place (METI, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India, 2021; Government of Australia and Government of Japan, 2022). So, what Japan builds is not complete autonomy, but simply networks.

From Koizumi towards Abe

By the end of Koizumi's premiership in 2006:

- the Self-Defense Forces had participated in UN peacekeeping (Government of Japan, 1992).
- Japanese ships had supported counter-terrorism operations in the Indian Ocean (Government of Japan, 2001; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2001).
- Japanese personnel had been deployed to Iraq for reconstruction activities (Government of Japan, 2003).
- Missile defence cooperation with the United States had expanded (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1996; Hughes, 2014).
- The alliance itself had become broader (Hughes, 2014; Hughes, 2017).

None of this meant that Article 9 had disappeared. It had not. None of this meant Japan had become strategically independent from the United States. But many of the things that supposedly defined the old model were still there (Hughes, 2017).

Abe did not start from Yoshida's Japan. He started from the Japan created by all of these smaller changes:

- The PKO Law already existed (Government of Japan, 1992).
- The 1997 Guidelines already existed (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1997).
- The post-9/11 missions had already happened (Government of Japan, 2001; Government of Japan, 2003).
- Missile defence cooperation already existed (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1996).
- The political idea that Japan should make a larger international security contribution was no longer new (Hughes, 2014; Hughes, 2017).

Abe could push further and that is what he did.(Hughes, 2015; Green, 2022).

But there is an important point before we move on to Abe. It would be very easy to write this history as if every change was moving towards one predetermined destination. History is not really like that. Different governments had different priorities and Changes were contested and some policies slowed down while others accelerated because of external crises. And sometimes Japan expanded its role in one area while remaining extremely cautious in another (Midford, 2011; Hughes, 2017). So, this thesis is not going to argue that Japan decided in the 1990s to eventually abandon the Yoshida Doctrine. There was no master plan like that. Instead, pressure accumulated because different problems required different responses. And those responses gradually changed the overall structure (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022).

There were individual problems first: Technology competition, supply chain disruption, dependence on critical materials, China, The United States, COVID-19, Semiconductors (METI, 2020; METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022). Each of these problems pushed the government a little further (Suzuki, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025).And eventually those individual concerns started becoming something that looked like a coherent economic security strategy

(Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025). And exactly this brings us to Abe Shinzo.

The rare-earth shock of 2010

In September 2010, tensions between Japan and China increased after a Chinese fishing trawler collided with Japanese Coast Guard vessels near the Senkaku Islands, which are administered by Japan and claimed by China as the Diaoyu Islands (METI, 2025). Japanese companies experienced major difficulties obtaining rare-earth materials from China (METI, 2025; World Trade Organization, 2014). Rare earths are used in many industrial products and technologies. They are important for areas such as high-performance magnets, electronics and other advanced manufacturing applications (METI, 2025). METI's later assessment of Japanese supply-chain resilience identifies the 2010 Chinese rare-earth export restrictions as a major turning point in Japan's recognition of the risks created by excessive dependence on China for critical raw materials. According to METI, China accounted for approximately 85 percent of Japan's rare-earth imports in 2009 (METI, 2025). Japan responded in several ways: METI records that the government promoted the development of alternative upstream sources, supported research aimed at reducing the amount of rare earths required in industrial production, and challenged Chinese export restrictions through the World Trade Organization. And these all contributed to reducing China's share of Japanese rare-earth imports from approximately 85 percent in 2009 to 58 percent in 2020 (World Trade Organization, 2014; METI, 2025). This response is important because Japan did not try to eliminate trade with China. It diversified (METI, 2025). The objective was not complete economic independence. It was to make dependence less dangerous (Farrell and Newman, 2019; METI, 2025). This is very close to what Japan later calls as economic security (Government of Japan, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025).

This all creates one of the most important tensions in the whole thesis: Efficiency vs the resilience. The rare-earth experience demonstrated this problem quite clearly for Japan (METI, 2025). When trade functioned normally, a highly concentrated source of supply had economic advantages. But concentration also created strategic exposure (Farrell and Newman, 2019; METI, 2025). If the priority is economic growth and efficiency, then accepting the cheapest

reliable supplier can surely make sense. If the priority is resilience, then the government may encourage firms to use a more expensive supplier simply because that supplier reduces strategic dependence (METI, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). So, economic security does not mean that Japan has stopped caring about economic growth. Rather it means that economic efficiency is no longer always the only calculation (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025; Yoshimatsu, 2025). Sometimes the government accepts economic costs for security reasons (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

The 2011 natural disasters and another kind of vulnerability

The Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011 caused enormous human and economic damage. This disaster also disrupted industrial production and exposed how dependent entire industries could be on a relatively small number of specialised suppliers (METI, 2025). METI's later review of supply-chain resilience notes that damage to important semiconductor manufacturing facilities following the 2011 earthquake made it difficult for automobile and other manufacturers to be able to obtain important components which contributed to production reductions and awareness that supply chains needed enough resilience to maintain production during emergencies rather than just being organised purely around efficiency during normal periods (METI, 2025).

The flooding in Thailand which occurred in 2011 created more disruptions for Japanese manufacturers. This time as well the concerns were similar about concentrated production networks and business continuity (METI, 2025). This is interesting because not every economic-security vulnerability is geopolitical. So resilience becomes useful against several kinds of risk at the same time (METI, 2020; METI, 2022).

Another development which happened in during the second half of the 2010s, made these questions more serious: Competition between the United States and China intensified (Government of Japan, 2022; Green, 2022). And this competition was not only military. Technology became part of it (Green, 2022; Suzuki, 2022). When economic competition between Washington and Beijing becomes a security issue, Japan can not easily separate it's alliance policy from it's economic policy (Green, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025).

METI'S reports during the COVID 19

METI reported that Japanese imports from China fell by 47.1 percent year-on-year in February 2020 as Chinese production was disrupted during the early spread of COVID-19. Imports of automobile parts from China fell by 46.8 percent year-on-year in the same month, and interruptions in Chinese component supply affected automobile production inside Japan (METI, 2020). METI's 2020 White Paper described disruptions across automobiles, IT products, medical supplies, clothing, housing equipment, electric bicycles and etc. It was concluded that the pandemic demonstrated how interruptions to production, logistics or the movement of people can spread through international supply chains and eventually even stop the wider production network (METI, 2020).

Medical supplies also created another problem: Demand suddenly exploded as masks and protective equipment became difficult to obtain. Countries also introduced export restrictions on some medical goods, and added political restrictions to already serious production and logistics problems (METI, 2020).COVID turned supply chains from something most people barely thought about into a visible national problem (METI, 2020; METI, 2022).

In 2020, METI introduced subsidies that were designed to encourage investment in domestic production for products and materials which their supply chains were considered important to public health (METI, 2022). The purpose was connected to resilience. METI explained that the pandemic had revealed vulnerabilities in Japanese supply chains and that the programme would support the establishment of domestic production bases in order to secure stable supplies of important products and components (METI, 2022). The government allocated ¥220 billion in the first supplementary budget for domestic supply-chain investment and another ¥23.5 billion for diversification of overseas supply chains. Additional funding followed in the third supplementary budget (METI, 2022). The government is spending public money to influence where production takes place (METI, 2022). And is doing it because concentrated production creates risk (METI, 2022). That means security considerations are changing economic incentives (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

Semiconductors become strategic

Semiconductors reflect the transformation in a more clear way than rare earths. Modern economies depend on them (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). Cars, phones, data centres, artificial intelligence that depend on advanced computing and etc. need them. So, a semiconductor is an industrial product and a strategic technology (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). Japanese firms which were dominant in the global semiconductor industry declined over decades from their positions. METI's states in it's assessment that Japanese companies accounted for 50.3 percent of global semiconductor sales in 1988, but approximately 10 percent by 2019.(METI, 2023). This started looking like more than an industrial competitiveness problem. It became a security problem as well. (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022).

In June 2021, METI published it's Strategy for Semiconductors and the strategy connects manufacturing capacity with economic security. It was argued there that Japan needed to secure domestic manufacturing foundations, which included through cooperation with overseas foundries, at the same time as strengthening strategically important technologies in semiconductor equipment and materials (METI, 2021). And this was 2021, which was before the Economic Security Promotion Act.

What Japan wants is to be able to access semiconductors even in the case of international supply chains being disrupted. (METI, 2021). A factory does not need to be evaluated only according to economic efficiency. It can have strategic value (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). And this is where the state becomes more willing to intervene in markets and in selected sectors such as batteries, semiconductors, telecommunications, cloud services and related sectors. (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; METI, 2022; METI, 2024) The government has to decide which parts of the economy are important strategy wise to protect. (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

From Abe to Suga

Abe resigned as Prime Minister in September 2020 and was succeeded by Suga Yoshihide. But the change of prime minister did not stop the movement towards economic security (METI, 2021; Yoshimatsu, 2025). METI's June 2021 semiconductor strategy argued that securing domestic manufacturing capacity was important from the perspective of economic security and that Japan needed to strengthen indispensable positions in semiconductor materials. (METI, 2021). Economic security was not only Abe's personal project.

The transition to Kishida

Kishida Fumio became Prime Minister in October 2021. By this point, many of the pieces were already there. Japan had experienced the rare-earth shock (METI, 2025). It had experienced the 2011 supply-chain disruptions (METI, 2025). US-China strategic competition had intensified (Green, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022). COVID had exposed dependence on concentrated production. (METI, 2020). Semiconductor shortages had become a major international problem (METI, 2021; METI, 2022). So, Kishida did not invent economic security. What his government did was push the existing trend much further and give it a stronger strategic framework. (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025).

Under the Yoshida's framework, economic growth was one of Japan's central strategic priorities. This did not dissapear. (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). But the meaning of economic strength changed (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Having a large economy was no longer enough. Japan also needed to ask itself what that economy depended on. (METI, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022). If we are to compare the old and emerging model at that time the differences would be: Old model benefited from global integration economically but the emerging one asks where integration causes vulnerability instead.(Farrell and Newman, 2019; METI, 2022). Also, the old model separated military security from economic security. But the emerging model can not.(Government of Japan, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025).

Actually, economic security exists partly because Japan wants to protect that strength (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). This is why I would not describe economic security as the opposite of the Yoshida Doctrine. That would be too simple.

Japan still wants prosperity. It just no longer assumes that maximum economic efficiency will always protect it.

And importantly for this thesis: How much of this really breaks with Yoshida?

Chapter 4 The Economic "2+2"

Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide and US President Joe Biden agreed to establish the US-Japan Competitiveness and Resilience Partnership in april 2021. This is usually called the CoRe Partnership. CoRe Partnership included in itself cooperation in areas such as digital technology, science, competitiveness, innovation, secure information, communications technology and resilient supply chains, etc. (Government of Japan and Government of the United States, 2021). This happened before the Economic Security Promotion Act. And again, this shows that the shift was already underway.

In 2022 Japan and the United States created an Economic Policy Consultative Committee, which is called the Economic "2+2" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, 2022). This format brought together the foreign and economic ministers of both countries. On the Japanese side, this meant that the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry would be involved while on the American side, there were the Secretary of State and Secretary of Commerce (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, 2022). That combination says a lot by itself. Foreign affairs and economics are being discussed together.

At the first meeting in Washington on 29 July 2022, the two governments discussed economic security, critical and emerging technologies, resilient supply chains and the rules-based international economic order (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, 2022). Japan and the United States said that economic security was "indispensable to overall security" and that diplomacy and economic policy required a coordinated approach as they were interconnected. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). That is quite a statement and for this thesis, it is extremely useful. Because the two governments themselves are basically saying that economics can not be separated from security anymore. This is exactly the transformation we have been following. The alliance did not disappear. It expanded. This creates an important problem for any argument that Japan has simply abandoned the Yoshida Doctrine. If Japan had moved away from Yoshida by becoming strategically independent from the United States, the argument would be easy. But that is not what happened. Japan became more active. Yet cooperation with the United States expanded too (Hughes, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022).

The first Economic “2+2” included discussions on semiconductor supply chains, storage batteries, critical minerals, export controls and critical infrastructure. The two governments also agreed on the need to work with other like-minded countries to build

more resilient supply chains. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, 2022). So, the alliance pillar of Yoshida is not becoming weaker here but in some ways it is spreading. The United States was already central to Japan’s military security and now it becomes important to Japan’s technological and economic security too (Government of Japan and Government of the United States, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). That looks like continuity, yes but it is continuity in a completely new area. The contradiction here is interesting as we see that Japan wants more autonomy but it is pursuing some of that autonomy through more cooperation with the United States. (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). At first this sounds strange. But autonomy does not necessarily mean independence from everybody. Also, it can mean reducing dependence on actors that Japan considers risky while strengthening relationships with actors it considers more reliable.

How Semiconductors show this perfectly

Semiconductors make the point very clearly. Japan wants stronger domestic semiconductor capabilities (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). That sounds like national autonomy. But Japan is not trying to rebuild the entire semiconductor industry alone (METI, 2021; Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022).

In May 2022, Japan’s Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Hagiuda Koichi and US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo agreed on Basic Principles on Semiconductor Cooperation. The principles called for semiconductor cooperation based on open markets, transparency and free trade, at the same time as strengthening supply-chain resilience in Japan, the United States and other like-minded countries and regions (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022). The two countries identified several areas for cooperation: Production capacity, workforce development, supply-chain transparency, emergency responses to semiconductor shortages, and etc.(Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022).

Australia and India matter too

The United States is the most important partner, but of course, not the only one. Japan has also worked with Australia and India on supply-chain resilience.

In April 2021, the trade ministers of Japan, Australia and India formally launched the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, or SCRI. The initiative's intention was to strengthen

supply-chain resilience in the Indo-Pacific and included measures such as sharing information, supporting investment and encouraging diversification (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India, 2021). This is another example of Japan trying to solve dependence through networks rather than isolation. It also connects economic security to Japan's wider Indo-Pacific strategy (Government of Japan, 2022).

There is an important danger here. If we only look at economic-security policies, Japan can start looking protectionist. Japan continues to strongly defend international trade (METI, 2023). METI's 2023 White Paper says that trade openness contributes to productivity and economic growth. At the same time, it argues that growing uncertainty, geopolitical fragmentation, supply-chain vulnerability and sensitive technologies require new economic-security measures (METI, 2023). So Japan wants two things:

1. It wants openness.
2. it wants protection from some of the risks created by openness.

That is not an easy balance at all. Actually, there is probably no perfect balance. Too little security creates vulnerability. Too much security can damage trade, competition and innovation. This is also why it is useful to distinguish between de-risking and decoupling. Complete decoupling from China would mean a much more radical separation of the two economies. That would be extremely difficult for Japan (METI, 2023). China is deeply connected to Japanese trade and production networks (METI, 2023).

METI's 2023 White Paper argues that Japan should reduce risks associated with free trade through cooperation with like-minded partners at the same time of continuing to support a free

and fair trading system. It promotes reliable supply-chain networks characterised by transparency, diversity, security, sustainability and trustworthiness (METI, 2023). This distinction matters.

Export controls are another area where this becomes visible. Normally, companies want to sell their products cause that is how they make money. From a commercial perspective, a large foreign customer is good. But if the product is a sensitive technology, the government may decide that the sale creates a security risk. Then the commercial interest and the security interest can point in opposite directions. METI's 2023 White Paper notes that countries have strengthened export controls on sensitive and emerging technologies because these technologies can affect future competitiveness and can also be diverted for military or other security-related uses. The same section discusses tighter foreign-investment screening as governments become concerned that acquisitions can provide access to sensitive technology (METI, 2023). This is another important change from a growth-first economic logic. A Japanese company might lose a sale because the government considers the technology strategically sensitive. That has a real economic cost. So, maximum commercial opportunity is not always the priority anymore.

Technology protection can create another problem

There is also a downside. If Japan restricts technology too much, Japanese companies can become less competitive. Let's imagine a company develops an advanced product. Its biggest market happens to be abroad. If export controls prevent the company from selling there, revenue falls. Lower revenue can mean less money for research. Less research can eventually make the company technologically weaker. So a policy designed to protect technological advantage could, if badly designed, damage that same advantage. This is not just a theoretical problem but technology industries depend on scale. Semiconductors especially require enormous investment (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). Factories and research is expensive so Japan has to protect sensitive technologies without cutting its own companies away from too much of the global market. Again, there is no perfect solution. Economic security creates trade-offs. And I believe the thesis should point this out clearly rather than treating every economic-security policy as automatically good because it improves "resilience". Resilience has a price.

Companies now have to think like geopolitical actors

Another interesting change is happening inside Japanese companies. A company could make many international business decisions mainly through commercial calculations, this has been the case for decades. But now a question comes up: What happens if relations between these countries deteriorate? METI's 2023 White Paper specifically examines how Japanese companies are responding to economic security. A survey cited in the White Paper found that only 11.4 percent of surveyed companies pointed out they were already taking economic-security measures, meanwhile another 6.6 percent expressed that they were preparing to do so. Almost half, 49.1 percent, said they had not yet decided whether to take such measures (METI, 2023).

The government can create an economic-security strategy quite quickly. Companies cannot necessarily reorganise themselves that quickly. In simpler terms, a ministry can write "diversify supply chains". A company then has to actually find another supplier. Policy language can move much faster than the real economy.

But this creates another tension. The government thinks about national resilience. A company thinks about it's own survival and profitability. These interests can overlap. Let's imagine a case of a Japanese company can save 20 percent by buying a component from one supplier in China. The government would prefer two suppliers in two countries. The second option is safer for Japan despite being more expensive for the company. Who pays the difference? This is why subsidies matter. Government support can change the calculation (METI, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Instead of simply ordering companies to behave differently, the state can make the preferred choice financially easier. That is exactly what we saw with supply-chain subsidies after COVID. Economic security therefore changes the relationship between the Japanese state and private industry (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). The government is not replacing companies. But it is trying to influence where they invest, what they protect and how they organise supply chains (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; METI, 2022). That is a stronger strategic role for the state.

The first US-Japan Economic "2+2" joint statement expressed concern about the harmful use of economic influence, including economic coercion and argued that these practices were best addressed collectively rather than instead by individual countries acting alone (Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). This is important because collective responses can change the calculation of coercion. If one country is isolated, pressure may work. If several partners help replace the lost trade or supply, the pressure becomes less effective. So networks are not only useful for supply chains but can also provide political protection as well. And once again, the alliance and economic security begin overlapping.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 as an example, reinforced many of these concerns (METI, 2023). Energy became an obvious example. Europe's dependence on Russian energy showed how commercial relationships can become strategic vulnerabilities when political relations collapse (METI, 2023). For Japan, the lesson was broader than Russia itself. METI's 2023 White Paper links the strengthening of economic-security policies internationally to US-China technological competition, COVID-19 and the vulnerabilities exposed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine (METI, 2023). Different crisis, same lesson. Dependence looks different during peace than during conflict.

What this tells us before the case studies

Sometimes technology protection conflicts with commercial opportunity and sometimes autonomy requires international cooperation and even working closely with allies creates another form of dependence. Economic security is therefore not one clean policy. It is an attempt to manage these contradictions (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). And maybe that is why the Yoshida Doctrine is still useful as a comparison. Yoshida's strategy also managed contradictions. Japan was pacifist but protected by American military power. Japan limited it's own military role but existed inside a military alliance. And pursued economic strength while depending on an international order that it did not control (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). The contradictions are different today, surely but they have not disappeared.

Chapter 5 Case Studies

Japan was once a semiconductor giant

According to METI, Japanese companies reached 50.3 percent of global semiconductor sales in 1988. By 2019, their share had fallen to around 10 percent (METI, 2021; METI, 2023). But later Japan's overall semiconductor market share declined. (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). Japan is weak in some parts of the chain but strong in others. Japan wants to rebuild advanced manufacturing capacity while protecting the areas where it is still difficult to replace (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). That is basically autonomy and indispensability again.

METI's 2023 White Paper connects the decline of Japanese semiconductor competitiveness with the need to secure domestic production bases from the perspective of economic security. It also notes that increasing concentration in Japan's import sources for semiconductor devices and integrated circuits (METI, 2023).

METI adopted it's Strategy for Semiconductors and the Digital Industry in June 2021 (METI, 2021). The strategy made strengthening semiconductor production in Japan a government priority. (METI, 2021). Japan wanted to secure production of semiconductors which was already needed by Japanese industries. It wanted to strengthen advanced semiconductor technology and preserve strengths in materials and manufacturing equipment. And it wanted stronger international cooperation (METI, 2021). But instead, the strategy combines domestic capacity with foreign partnerships (METI, 2021; Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022).

The TSMC project in Kumamoto is probably the clearest example to this. TSMC, Sony Semiconductor Solutions and Denso became involved in Japan Advanced Semiconductor Manufacturing, or JASM, in Kumamoto. In June 2022, METI approved the plan for the first JASM facility under Japan's legislation supporting advanced semiconductor production. METI announced a maximum subsidy of 476 billion yen for the project. The government was not simply publishing a strategy and hoping companies would respond. But it was putting a very large amount of public money behind it.

The JASM strategy strengthens production capacity. But Japan also wants access to the technological frontier (METI, 2021). This is where Rapidus enters the story. Rapidus was established in 2022 with backing from major Japanese companies. It's objective is to develop production technology for next-generation logic semiconductors, specially the 2-nanometre generation. TSMC already knows how to manufacture advanced semiconductors. Rapidus has to develop the capability. That is a completely different type of bet.

In April 2024, METI approved an additional 590 billion yen of support for Rapidus. Of this, up to 536.5 billion yen was directed towards front-end process development and up to 53.5 billion yen towards advanced back-end processes. This brought the government's support ceiling at that stage to approximately 920 billion yen. The government is accepting a very large financial exposure because it of course considers advanced semiconductor capability strategically important. METI later described the Rapidus project as very important to recovering Japan's semiconductor industry. This is probably one of the strongest examples of security and industrial policy merging (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). If Japan has no capability in advanced semiconductor technologies, it becomes dependent on foreign production for something that may shape large parts of Japan's future economy (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). This is not only about fixing today's chip shortage. It is about who controls tomorrow's computing capacity.

The semiconductor case and Yoshida

The japanese government is deciding that the location of production matters for national security. And it is accepting that pure market efficiency may not create enough resilience. (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). These are meaningful departures. But there is continuity. And the United States remains the central strategic partner (Government of Japan, 2022; Hughes, 2022). So once again, Japan can depart from Yoshida and continue it at the same time. Under the Yoshida logic, security restraint helped Japan concentrate resources on economic growth (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). Here, Japan is spending economic resources specifically because of security (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). The direction has changed. But the objective has not completely changed as Japan still wants economic strength. It is just Japan believes that economic strength can not survive without economic security.

Critical minerals

Critical minerals show another side. Here, Japan's problem is often something it can not easily build at home. Japan does not possess unlimited reserves of all the minerals it's industries need. This country has been worrying about resource security for decades. The oil shocks of the 1970s made the country's dependence on imported energy impossible to ignore. METI itself places contemporary supply-chain resilience in this longer history, noting that Japan had already developed a strong awareness of resource and fuel vulnerabilities following the oil shocks (METI, 2025). But the contemporary problem is wider as it includes the rare earths, lithium, nickel, graphite, materials for batteries and so on. These resources are important for electric vehicles, renewable energy, electronics and advanced manufacturing (METI, 2022; METI, 2025). So the energy transition does not remove resource dependence. It just changes what resources matter.

Rare earths and the 2010 shock

METI's assessment states that China's share of Japanese rare-earth imports reached approximately 85 percent in 2009 (METI, 2025). METI now especially describes the 2010 episode as a trigger for Japan recognising the risks associated with excessive dependence on China for raw-material supply because of China's restrictions and how it showed the vulnerability clearly. (METI, 2025). Japan responded by supporting upstream development projects that could provide alternative sources, promoted research and development which were aiming to reduce the amount of rare-earth materials required and challenging China's export restrictions through the World Trade Organization (METI, 2025; World Trade Organization, 2014). METI reports that China's share of Japanese rare-earth imports fell from approximately 85 percent in 2009 to 58 percent in 2020 (METI, 2025). China remained important. But Japan had more options. That is resilience not independence.

The Lynas example

Japanese public and private actors supported the development of an alternative rare-earth supply through the Australian company Lynas in the period after the 2010 shock. In March 2011, Sojitz and the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation, (later became the current JOGMEC) structure, concluded financing and supply agreements with Lynas. And in exchange, the

arrangements secured an allocation of at least approximately 8,500 tonnes of rare-earth products per year. This was for the Japanese market for ten years, with the agreement that allowed around 500 tonnes. (Sojitz Corporation and Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation, 2011). Through JOGMEC, the state became involved in creating an alternative supply chain (Sojitz Corporation and Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation, 2011).

Then Japan goes further in 2023

In March of 2023, Japan deepened the Lynas relationship again. Sojitz and JOGMEC announced an additional investment worth approximately AUD 200 million through JARE. Under the arrangement, up to 65 percent of the dysprosium and terbium produced by Lynas from Mount Weld feedstock would be supplied to the Japanese market (Sojitz Corporation and Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security, 2023). JOGMEC stated that production of these heavy rare earths was, at the time of the agreement, concentrated in China. It therefore presented the Lynas investment as a way to add a supply source outside of China. And also strengthen stable supply to Japan. (Sojitz Corporation and Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security, 2023).

Japan does not expect all production to take place inside Japan.Instead, Japan wants a secure domestic base and competitive Japanese firms operating internationally. This includes domestic resilience and global competition both. We can see so in METI's 2024 report: Japan aimed to secure a domestic battery manufacturing base of 150 GWh per year by 2030, while Japanese companies were targeted to reach approximately 600 GWh of global manufacturing capacity by 2030 (METI, 2022; METI, 2024). METI also places securing upstream resources directly inside it's battery strategy, along with the domestic manufacturing and recycling. (METI, 2022).

When it comes to Australia, this state is not only a security partner to Japan. It is a resource partner (Government of Australia and Government of Japan, 2022). The 2023 Lynas agreement is a good example because Japanese public financing helps to expand Australian production while arrangements on contracts secure a big share of heavy rare-earth output for Japan. (Sojitz Corporation and Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security, 2023). So, this proves economic security can reinforce strategic partnerships in a broader way.

Then we arrive at the cloud

Modern digital activity depends on cloud services as companies store information there, applications run there. Government systems also use cloud services and etc. Japan has identified this as a strategic vulnerability. METI states that companies with a business base in Japan account for only around 30 percent of Japan's domestic market for basic cloud services. This means that the country has become quite dependent on services provided from abroad. (METI, 2024). This is a very different kind of dependence from rare earths. But strategy wise the question remains the same: What happens if Japan can not access to it? METI's explanation is direct: It states that basic cloud services perform information-processing functions and warns that if Japan can not maintain the capacity to develop basic cloud systems domestically, then it could become completely dependent on services from other countries. (METI, 2024).

In February of 2024, METI approved a plan which was submitted by Sakura Internet to develop a domestic public-cloud platform that is more advanced. METI justified the support through Japan's dependence on foreign basic-cloud services. And also supported the need to maintain domestic technological capabilities for secure cloud provision (METI, 2024). Again, the government is not banning foreign providers. It is simply building an alternative.

A CEO now has to think about geopolitics

METI's 2026 Economic Security Management Guidelines encourage corporate executives to incorporate economic-security risks into medium- and long-term business strategy rather than treating them only as short-term compliance issues (METI, 2026). The state is basically telling companies: Geopolitics is now part of management. If every foreign supplier is treated as suspicious, then in that case economic security becomes protectionism and if every software component requires government approval, innovation slows. Too little screening creates risk and obviously too much screening creates inefficiency. So, economic security is a balancing exercise (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

Another Yoshida comparison related to cloud

METI worries about Japan becoming completely dependent on foreign basic-cloud services for important information-processing functions (METI, 2024). Japan still accepts deep dependence on the United States in military security (Government of Japan, 2022; Hughes, 2022). But in

economic and technological security, it talks about autonomy. (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). So, not every dependence is treated equally. The government is subsidising domestic AI computing capacity (METI, 2024). Companies themselves are also expected to integrate geopolitical and security risks into business strategy. Japan is not withdrawing from the global digital economy at all. But instead, it is trying to create alternatives to reduce situations where a one external dependency could become impossible to replace. (METI, 2024). This logic is almost identical to rare earths. But the object has changed because in 2010, Japan worried about minerals but today it has to worry instead about computing capacity. And it also tells us why the Yoshida Doctrine alone can not completely explain contemporary Japanese strategy anymore. Economics is still central. But economics is no longer only what security protects. Actually, economics is where security happens.

Foreign investment normally sounds positive. So why screen it? Because investment can also provide access. Imagine a foreign investor acquires influence over a company with sensitive technology or a company operating critical infrastructure. The investment is economic, yes, but the consequences may be strategic. Japan therefore strengthened it's foreign-investment screening system under the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Act, usually called FEFTA. The Ministry of Finance explained the purpose of the 2019 amendment very clearly. Japan wanted to continue promoting foreign direct investment that contributes to economic growth at the same time as ensuring review of investments that could create national-security risks (Ministry of Finance of Japan, 2019).

Export controls

Export controls ask another question: Who should be allowed to receive important Japanese goods and technologies? In March 2023, METI announced that Japan would strengthen export controls covering advanced semiconductor-manufacturing equipment. The japanese government decided to add 23 categories of semiconductor-manufacturing equipment to the export control. (METI, 2023b). Because Japan is globally competitive in exactly this area.

This is one of the clearest departures from Yoshida

Japan limited the military commitments partially so that resources and political attention can concentrate on reconstruction and growth. (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). Contemporary economic security does something different. Security concerns now reach directly into economic decisions. A profitable export can be controlled (METI, 2023b). A patent can be kept secret and foreign investment can be screened. (Ministry of Finance of Japan, 2019; Ministry of Finance of Japan, 2020b). This is a real departure.

Chapter 6 Returning to the main question

To what extent does Japan's economic security strategy represent a departure from the Yoshida Doctrine? Japan has clearly changed. The semiconductor subsidies alone show that. (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). And so does the diversification of critical minerals (Sojitz Corporation and Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation, 2011; Government of Australia and Government of Japan, 2022) and the screening of critical infrastructure. (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). What is unchanged is the United States remains Japan's central security ally (Government of Japan, 2022; Hughes, 2022). And economic prosperity also still remains as a major national objective. (Government of Japan, 2022). So, there is departure but there is also continuity. First, we need to remember that the Yoshida Doctrine itself is contested. As discussed in Chapter 2, the "Yoshida Doctrine" was not a formal strategy document written by Yoshida Shigeru himself. (Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022).

Hoshiro argues that the concept was constructed by scholars and became established as an explanation for post-war Japanese foreign policy. The interpretation normally combines three ideas in itself: reliance on the United States for security, limited Japanese military capabilities, and concentration on economic growth. (Hoshiro, 2022, pp. 105–128). Hoshiro questions whether these elements really formed a coherent doctrine attributable to Yoshida himself. He also challenges the common argument that low military expenditure can explain Japan's economic growth. (Hoshiro, 2022, pp. 105–128). This criticism matters. If the Yoshida Doctrine was never as coherent as later scholars made it appear, then saying Japan has "abandoned" it becomes difficult.

Yoshida accepted dependence. Economic security worries about it.

The traditional Yoshida strategy accepted an external dependence (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). Japan depended on the United States for much of military security. Though, contemporary economic security looks at dependence much more suspiciously (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).Not every dependence but concentrated dependence. Dependence is no longer judged by whether it is economically efficient. But it is judged by how dangerous it's interruption would be (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

But Japan does not reject dependence itself. TSMC is Taiwanese, Rapidus cooperates with IBM and imec. Rare-earth diversification depends on Australia. (Government of Australia and Government of Japan, 2022; Sojitz Corporation and Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security, 2023). So. Japan has not moved from dependence to independence. But rather has moved from accepting some concentrations of dependence towards trying to manage dependence. (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

Japan accepts more state intervention for security

Shiro Armstrong and Shujiro Urata make exactly this distinction. They argue that Japan's revived industrial policy draws on older developmental-state practices. These include sectoral targeting, coordination and public support. But now these operate in a different geopolitical environment shaped by supply-chain vulnerability, technological competition and economic security. (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). The instrument may look old but the purpose is different.

Resilience costs money (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). So, when Japan chooses resilience, it may be choosing something less economically efficient in the short term. (Suzuki, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

There is also another reason for why contemporary Japan can not simply be described through the original Yoshida model. Military restraint has changed as an example. In the analysis of Japanese grand strategy, Hughes describes the post-Cold War period as one in which the Yoshida Doctrine was adapted as Japan faced changing regional security pressures and this caused to eventually produce a strategic shift under Abe (Hughes, 2017, pp. 72–105). Such as the 2014 reinterpretation of collective self-defence (Government of Japan, 2014). Or deeper alliance integration can be another. (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). And eventually the much more ambitious defence policies associated with the 2022 strategic documents (Government of Japan, 2022; Hughes, 2022).

And then we reach the biggest continuity: The United States. If the Yoshida Doctrine is reduced to three pillars, the alliance pillar is probably the one that survives most clearly (Hoshiro, 2022; Hughes, 2017). Japan has not replaced the United States but actually, alliance cooperation has become deeper (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022).

This all create a strange result

Japan is becoming more autonomous and more dependent on the alliance. But at the same time Japan's actual strategy is different as he wants more options in critical economic areas.

Basically contemporary economic security adds other dimensions to the traditional scope of the Yoshida. One of which is the ability to survive coercion (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025; Yoshimatsu, 2025). Economic power is therefore not only about how large the economy is but It is also about how difficult the economy is to disrupt.

As another example of continuity, economic security has not replaced economic prosperity as a national objective. The government does not want resilient supply chains for the pleasure of having resilient supply chains but it wants Japanese industry to continue functioning. The government wants growth (Government of Japan, 2022; METI, 2024a). The 2022 National Security Strategy itself connects national security with economic prosperity and calls for a positive relationship between security and economic growth. (Government of Japan, 2022). So, the Yoshida priority given to economic strength still survives it is just the method that changes.

Hoshiro makes us careful about claiming too much continuity too

If Hoshiro is right that the Yoshida Doctrine was partly a retrospective scholarly construction, then contemporary policies do not need to be interpreted as either following or abandoning a Yoshida blueprint. Hoshiro's revisionist argument suggests that, scholars should be cautious about turning post-war policy choices into a coherent doctrine. (Hoshiro, 2022, pp. 105–128). We can use the Yoshida Doctrine as an analytical baseline instead.

Yoshida is a baseline rather than a rulebook

So, if we treat Yoshida as a base or baseline instead of a rulebook, this doctrine is useful because it represents relationship between three things: the United States; Japanese military restraint; and economic growth (Hoshiro, 2022; Soeya, 2008; Green, 2001). We can compare contemporary strategy against those three pillars. US alliance offers strong continuity and possibly even stronger integration (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). Then comes the Military restraint which is a significant erosion (Hughes, 2014; Hughes, 2017; Government of Japan, 2014; Government of Japan, 2015). And when it comes to defining economic priority, it is strong continuity in the

objective, but a major change in how economics relates to security. (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). This is probably the cleanest answer we have.

A useful way to think about it would be comparing the old and new questions. The old question was: How can Japan remain secure while concentrating on becoming economically strong? And The new question is: How can Japan organise its economic strength so that it also makes Japan secure? This is a major and undeniable shift. The economy moves from mainly being an objective to also becoming an instrument (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). But this change didn't happen because of or after the Economic Security Promotion Act. The act simply formalised it.(Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025). The process itself actually began much earlier from the the 2010 rare-earth episode, the 2011 disasters, security reforms of Abe, COVID, semiconductor shortages, US- China rivalry and even Ukraine (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2014; Hughes, 2017; METI, 2020; Suzuki, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025).

The danger is that "critical" keeps expanding

Shiro Armstrong and Shujiro Urata warn that the revival of industrial policy under economic-security pressures create trade-offs which involve efficiency, fiscal sustainability, openness and international trading system. (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Economic security needs boundaries, or otherwise security becomes an argument for protecting everything.

So how large is the departure?

The departure is significant because economic policy itself has become part of national-security policy (Government of Japan, 2022; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). And also because Japan accepts economic costs to reduce strategic vulnerability. (Suzuki, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Another reason would be because the government intervenes in supply chains, technology, infrastructure, investment and research for security reasons. (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2021; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Ministry of Finance of Japan, 2020b; METI, 2023b). Military minimalism has also weakened which is another reason. (Hughes, 2014; Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). But the departure itself is incomplete. Because the US alliance remains central

and so does the economic prosperity. (Government of Japan, 2022; Hughes, 2022). And Japan still prefers cooperation with partners over national self-sufficiency. (Government of Japan and Government of the United States, 2021; Government of Australia and Government of Japan, 2022). So, I think the best description is therefore not that the Yoshida Doctrine is dead but It is that the logic has been transformed. Japan's economic security strategy represents a significant but incomplete departure from the Yoshida Doctrine. The strongest departure is not the abandonment of economic growth as Japan has not done that at all. The strongest departure is definitely the changing function of economics inside national strategy (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Under the conventional Yoshida framework, economic development was the principal beneficiary of security restraint. (Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022). And this is the transformation.

Chapter 7 : Conclusion

The main question of this thesis is “To what extent does Japan’s economic security strategy represent a departure from the Yoshida Doctrine?”

The Yoshida Doctrine is associated usually with a version of Japan that depended heavily on the United States for it’s external security, and kept it’s own military role limited and concentrated strongly on economic reconstruction and growth (Green, 2001; Soeya, 2008; Hoshiro, 2022). Contemporary Japan looks different, surely. Because now Japan has a more active security policy. (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022). Japan now spends enormous amounts of public money on semiconductors (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022) and worries about supply chains and critical minerals (METI, 2022; METI, 2025). Screens some foreign investment (Ministry of Finance of Japan, 2019; Ministry of Finance of Japan, 2020b). The main conclusion of this thesis is therefore that Japan’s economic security strategy represents a significant, but incomplete departure from the Yoshida Doctrine. The reason it is significant because the relationship between economics and security has changed. (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). And the reason why It is incomplete is because two central elements associated with the Yoshida framework still remain important: economic strength and the US-Japan alliance (Hoshiro, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022; Hughes, 2022).

One of the first findings of this thesis is that we need to be very careful with the term “Yoshida Doctrine” itself. It is argued that the Yoshida Doctrine was not really a formal doctrine designed by Yoshida Shigeru and is not systematically followed by the governments that came after. But instead it was constructed by scholars trying to explain Japan’s postvwar foreign policy behaviour. Hoshiro also questions the commonly assumed causal relationship between limited military expenditure and Japan’s rapid economic growth (Hoshiro, 2022, pp. 105–128). So, if there was never one perfectly coherent Yoshida Doctrine in the first placed, then there can not be one exact moment when Japan abandoned it. And this is exactly why this thesis has treated Yoshida mainly as analytical baseline rather than a rulebook. The three elements mentioned by Green and Hoshiro: reliance on the United States, military restraint, priority to economic growth, these allow us to compare post-war and contemporary Japanese strategy even if the historical reality was more complicated.(Green, 2001; Hoshiro, 2022).

In terms of evidences of continuity, the clearest one is the United States. And what continues this trend is:

- economic security,
- Semiconductors (METI and U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022).
- Critical technologies.
- Supply-chain resilience.
- Export controls.
- Critical minerals.
- Economic coercion (Government of Japan and Government of the United States, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan and Government of the United States, 2023).

This obviously does not look like Japan escaping dependence on the United States. This is clearly an alliance becoming even broader which is the strongest continuities with Yoshida.

The second pillar shows much more departure as Japan remains constrained compared with many other major powers. Because Article 9 still exists, legal and political restrictions still matter but the long-term policy direction is difficult to ignore. If we consider the steps that moved Japan further from the concept of interpretation of post-war military minimalism, they would be:

- The PKO legislation of the 1990s (Government of Japan, 1992).
- The post-9/11 deployments (Government of Japan, 2001; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2001).
- The Iraq mission (Government of Japan, 2003).
- The reinterpretation of collective self-defence (Government of Japan, 2014).
- The 2015 security legislation (Government of Japan, 2015).
- Greater integration with the United States (Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022).
- The 2022 strategic reforms (Government of Japan, 2022).

But there is a nuance where the answer gets more complicated: Economic priority is the most difficult pillar. Japan is willing to spend enormous amounts of public money for security-related industrial objectives (METI, 2021; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). He is also willing to reorganise supply chains (METI, 2022; METI, 2023a). But this is not where it ends as Japan is also willing to:

- screen some investments (Ministry of Finance of Japan, 2019; Ministry of Finance of Japan, 2020b).
- restrict some technology exports (METI, 2023b; METI, 2023c).
- prevent publication of certain sensitive patents (Japan Patent Office, 2024a; Japan Patent Office, 2024b).

And all of this shows that security is imposing costs on economics. This obviously is different from the conventional Yoshida bargain. But of course, economic strength itself remains extremely important as Japan has not replaced economic growth with security but rather trying to protect economic growth through security.(Government of Japan, 2022).

Critical minerals showing the same exact logic

Japan responded through alternative projects such as overseas projects, technological substitution, resource efficiency, stockpiling and international trade rules when the rare-earth episode of 2010 showed the danger of concentrated dependance. China also remained an important supplier. (Sojitz Corporation and Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation, 2011; WTO, 2014; METI, 2025). So, Japan did not achieve independence but achieved more options. This is why I argue that resilience describes Japanese economic security better than self-sufficiency does. The objective here is not necessarily to dependence but to make dependence survivable.

The technology-protection case in the other hand may provide the strongest evidence that security can now override immediate economic interests. Export controls can reduce commercial opportunities (METI, 2023b; METI, 2023c). Investment screening can make foreign investment more difficult (Ministry of Finance of Japan, 2019; Ministry of Finance of Japan, 2020b). Patent non-disclosure can restrict normal publication (Japan Patent Office, 2024a; Japan Patent Office,

2024b). And Research-security measures can complicate international cooperation (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2021). None of these measures necessarily maximise short-term economic efficiency but actually they exist because the government believes some economic activities create security consequences. (Government of Japan, 2022; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022).

But openness still matters. And At the same time, Japan has not chosen economic closure. Japan still needs international trade, foreign investment, international research, foreign technology, foreign resources, global customers etc. Japanese companies are deeply integrated into international production networks (Solís, 2017; METI, 2023a). And this creates a basic contradiction inside economic security that Japan wants to reduce vulnerability without destroying the openness that created much of it's prosperity.

Strategic autonomy also has limits

Japan cannot become completely autonomous, so strategic autonomy has to remain relative. (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). The objective is not that "Japan can do everything" but rather it is closer to: "Japan should not be unable to act because one external relationship fails". This is much more realistic.

Strategic indispensability may therefore be just as important

This is why strategic indispensability complements autonomy (Suzuki, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Because Japan does not need to dominate every technology but rather needs to remain important in enough strategically valuable areas that it has a strong position inside international networks. Semiconductor materials and manufacturing equipment are obvious examples to this. (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). Japan does not need to own the whole supply chain but needs to matter inside it.

This is not autarky

Economic-security strategy of Japan is not a strategy of autarky. Because this strategy is not trying to make Japan economically independent from the world. The evidence does not support that interpretation (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). JASM itself involves TSMC, Rapidus works internationally and Critical-mineral diversification relies on foreign producers. (Government of Australia and Government of Japan, 2022; Sojitz Corporation

and Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security, 2023). So, Japan continues to support international economic rules (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022; METI, 2023a). Therefore, the strategy is about changing the structure of interdependence instead of ending interdependence (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025).

Also, the interdependence itself is no longer assumed to be harmless at all. Economic relationships can produce mutual benefit but dependence can be asymmetric. Because, one country may have alternatives but the other may not. Economic security is most importantly an attempt to identify these asymmetries before somebody exploits them or before a crisis exposes them. (Farrell and Newman, 2019; Government of Japan, 2022). The market price of something does not necessarily show it's strategic value.

But the transformation was gradual

What this thesis also finds is that there was no single turning point but rather there were several ones:

- The 2010 rare-earth episode (METI, 2025).
- The 2011 disasters (METI, 2025).
- US-China technological competition (Suzuki, 2022; Yoshimatsu, 2025).
- COVID (METI, 2020).
- Semiconductor shortages (METI, 2021; METI, 2022).
- Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Government of Japan, 2022)

All of these mattered.

Then Kishida formalised much of the economic-security framework. (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022). So, the transformation is cumulative. There was not such a case that on a one random day Japan suddenly stopped following Yoshida.

The 2022 Economic Security Promotion Act is therefore a consequence as much as a cause. The Economic Security Promotion Act is extremely important (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). But it did not invent Japanese concern about economic vulnerability. Because Rare-earth diversification already existed and foreign-investment screening had already been strengthened (Sojitz Corporation and Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation, 2011). And

Semiconductor policy was already changing (METI, 2021; Suzuki, 2022). The 2022 Act brought several strands together and gave them a stronger legal framework (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). And therefore this Act represents institutionalisation. To assume it is a creation from nothing is definetly false.

The three pillars give the clearest final answer

US alliance proves there is strong continuity as it remains the foundation of Japanese security and it has expanded into economic and technological cooperation as well. (Government of Japan, 2022; Government of Japan and Government of the United States, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022).

Then comes the military restraint but this time there is significant departure. Japan has expanded it's security role, capabilities and alliance responsibilities since the Cold War under Abe specially, and through the strategic reforms that later followed. (Hughes, 2015; Hughes, 2017; Hughes, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022).

Then we look again at the economic priority and this time there is both continuity and transformation. Economic strength remains one of Japan's main national objectives (Government of Japan, 2022). But economics is no longer only the beneficiary of security. Economic capabilities themselves are now treated as security instruments (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). This is exactly where economic security changes the Yoshida logic most directly.

The answer to "to what extent?"

To a significant extent, but not completely. Japan's economic-security strategy represents a departure from the Yoshida Doctrine in the means used to pursue national security and in the relationship between economics and security. Definitely does not represent a complete departure in Japan's fundamental preference for economic strength or in it's reliance on the United States. (Hoshiro, 2022; Government of Japan, 2022; Hughes, 2022). If departure means every Yoshida principle has disappeared, then the answer is without a doubt no. But in case if departure means that major elements of the strategic logic have changed, then the answer is definetly yes. This is the position this thesis.

But still there are several limitations to this research. Japan's economic-security framework is still new relatively and The Economic Security Promotion Act was adopted only in 2022, and different parts of it entered into operation gradually (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). Other several essential industrial projects discussed in this thesis are also still developing at this moment. Rapidus is the obvious example to this. It is therefore much easier to evaluate the direction of Japanese policy rather than it's final success. The important distinction here is that, what we know is what the government is trying to do but not yet whether every policy will work.

Government spending does not prove successful resilience. Large subsidies show political commitment. They do not prove policy success. This thesis therefore uses these policies as evidence of strategic change, not automatic evidence of successful outcomes which is an important difference.

And yet here is another limitation which is that economic-security strategy depends on companies. Government policy can encourage diversification and companies still have to do it. Government can provide subsidies and businesses still need commercially sustainable projects. Armstrong, Solís and Urata find differences among Japanese firms in their adoption of economic-security measures, particularly according to company size. Their research shows that the institutionalisation of economic security at government level does not automatically produce uniform implementation across the private sector and this gap truly deserves more research. (Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025, pp. 265–275).

Another limitation is the Yoshida concept in itself. As Hoshiro argues, the Yoshida Doctrine may be a problematic historical concept. (Hoshiro, 2022). This thesis has used it because it remains influential and because the three conventional pillars provide a useful comparative framework. But future research could analyse economic security without using Yoshida at all. For example, contemporary economic security could be compared with Japan's older concept of comprehensive security or with the developmental state or with Japanese economic statecraft during the Cold War and these comparisons could reveal continuities that the Yoshida framework hides.

And when it comes to future research, it should definitely follow the outcomes. Does Rapidus achieve commercially viable advanced production? Does Japan significantly reduce concentrated

dependence on critical minerals? Do Japanese companies actually adopt stronger economic-security management? How expensive do export controls become for Japanese technology companies? And etc. The answers to these questions will determine whether Japanese economic security becomes a durable grand-strategic transformation or a period of expensive and costly policy experiment instead.

Japan does not want security at the expense of prosperity and also does not want prosperity that creates unacceptable security vulnerabilities (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). Japan wants both. A cheaper supplier may create more risk and a safer supply chain may cost more. The Japanese government has simply decided that security deserves more weight in those decisions than it did before and this is the change.

Conclusion

Japan's economic-security strategy does not reject globalisation as it instead tries to make globalisation safer and is an attempt to deal with this reality. United States nor dependance are neither rejected in this strategy. It cooperates with the United States even more instead. (Government of Japan and Government of the United States, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). And instead of rejecting economic growth, what really happens is trying to protect growth by treating economic capability itself as part of national security (Government of Japan, 2022; Armstrong, Solís and Urata, 2025). This is why Japan's economic-security strategy should be understood as a significant but incomplete departure from the Yoshida Doctrine. The pillars such as alliance, economic still exist despite their meanings changing.

Military minimalism has weakened and the old boundary between economics and security is becoming much harder to find. Japan itself did not stop believing in the importance of economic power but started believing that economic power itself has to be secured. And without a doubt, that economic power can provide security too.

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