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Asia Security Initiative

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Posted by [Tobias Harris](#) on March 26, 2010. Filed under [Asia-Pacific](#), [Australia](#), [Defense & Military Affairs](#), [Japan](#), [United States](#).

Writing at The National Interest Online, the Cato Institute's Ted Galen Carpenter [points](#) to a "dual uneasiness" in Australia, that "is creating an incentive for Canberra to hedge its bets and become, ever so quietly, more independent regarding security issues and capabilities."

Change a few of the proper nouns and this article could be a fair account of the direction that Japanese foreign policy will trend in the years to come. As Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio wrote in an essay in the Japanese monthly VOICE, an essay that was translated into English and syndicated in various American publications, "How can Japan, caught between an America struggling to remain a hegemon and a China wanting to be and planning to be a hegemon, maintain its political and economic autonomy and defend its national interests? The international environment is which Japan will be placed from now on is not straightforward." (My translation, originally [here](#); original Japanese [here](#).)

Both Japan and Australia — not to mention other countries in the region — are seeking alternatives to dependence on US power that may become more unreliable over time, but, at the same time, neither wants to be wholly dependent on the goodwill of China either. Developing independent capabilities is way to ensure autonomy, one that is more open to Australia than Japan, which has constitutional, political, and budgetary constraints on its ability to strengthen its armed forces (although Kamei Shizuka, a member of Hatoyama's cabinet and head of one of the ruling DPJ's coalition partners, [said](#) Thursday that Japan must think about developing its own deterrent capabilities). Deepening ties among the middle powers of Asia is another, something that the Rudd and Hatoyama governments [are in the midst of doing](#) despite their dispute over Japan's whaling.

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