

The Future Prospects of the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance: A Two-Handed Strategy

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The Future Prospects of the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance: A Two-Handed Strategy

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MIKI HIYASHI, OCT 14 2017

As China has been expanding its political and economic forces as a regional hegemon while U.S. unipolarity has been gradually declining, the U.S.-Japan security alliance currently seems to be at a crossroads. Especially, under the “America First” doctrine of the new U.S. administration, the credibility of the alliance is now questioned more than ever by both sides. However, many scholars and government officials have been pointing out the disparity of the alliance since long before the current administration was launched. Even though the United States has been demanding more military cooperation from Japan, the idea of burden-sharing is not compatible with Japanese pacifist principles, which has been deeply rooted in the nation since the end of WWII. Nevertheless, Japan certainly seems to have started taking the path toward a more balanced alliance in spite of escalating tension at home, since the enhancement of the security alliance is the sole realistic option for Japan, which has been depending on the United States for its defense. In addition, improvement of the security alliance with Japan will provide the United States with a significant advantage as the nation confronts the emerging power of China and tackles the North Korean threat. Therefore, despite the President’s harsh criticism of the defense partnership with Japan during his campaign, it is implausible that the United States will demand its dissolution in the near future as long as Japan is holding a cooperative stance.

This paper examines three independent variables: global power transition as the consequence of China’s rise and the decline of U.S. unipolarity, U.S. domestic politics that is currently unpredictable and unstable, and Japan’s pacifism, which is incompatible with the idea of burden-sharing. These are the key elements in the analysis of the prospects for the U.S.-Japan security alliance as well as the strategic planning in U.S. and Japanese defense policy. Critically considering these factors, I argue that an intensification of the security alliance would provide a mutual benefit to the United States and Japan, in spite of some degree of skepticism and criticism from both sides, by reinforcing the U.S. “Pivot to Asia” strategy and increase Japan’s deterrence in the volatile region. Furthermore, this legitimate partnership between the United States and Japan will contribute to the security of other smaller nations in the Pacific Rim, which have also been threatened by China’s aggressive foreign policy. The upgraded U.S.-Japan security alliance must play a critical role in order to deal with the new balance of power, and maintain regional and global stabilities. At the same time, the principles of liberalism must not be undermined in today’s international relations. Thus, I recommend for the U.S. and Japan to adopt the “two-handed” strategy, which is to intensify the defense alliance while enforcing the political and economic cooperation with the new powerful actor, China. The incorporation of containment and engagement seems to be the most effective strategy to handle today’s rapidly shifting global power.

I will start with discussions of the independent variables in order to demonstrate their influence on the future of the security alliance. Second, considering these independent variables, I will analyze Japan’s sense of insecurity and skepticism toward the alliance. Third, I will prove through using the elimination method that the burden-sharing with the United States is the sole realistic option for Japan. Fourth, I will empirically confirm that the maintenance of the U.S.-Japan security alliance also meets the strategic interest of the United States in the matter of Pacific Rim security. Fifth, I will extend my argument that a more effective U.S.-Japan alliance will contribute to the political and economic stability of all the Pacific Rim nations, and that, at the same time, multilateral security cooperation will play an auxiliary role in supporting the U.S.-Japan security alliance. Finally, I will introduce the “two-handed” strategy as

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the policy suggestion for the United States and Japan, a strategy that incorporates the aspects of both realism and liberalism in order to respond to China's rise and to sustain stability in the South China Sea.

Global Power Shift and the Rise of Authoritarian China

The world is currently undergoing a power transition. Many scholars argue that the relative power of the United States has been declining, while China has been prominently extending its political and economic leverages. According to a new study by PwC, China's economy will surpass America's before 2030.[1] As Shen Dingli, professor at Fudan University in China, claims, "western nations are willing participants in the eastward shift of international power." Most of the main actors, including the United States and Japan, have long been successfully promoting economic cooperation with China.[2] However, there has been tension between these nations in terms of security. Although China is bridging the economic gap with the United States, its military capability is still far from reaching the U.S. level. China's 2015 defense budget was only one-fourth of the United States' military expenditure. (The United States spent \$577,100,000,000, whereas China spent \$145,000,000,000).[3] Therefore, it is not likely that China will catch up to the U.S. militarily in the near future. Nevertheless, by increasing its military force China seems to have become a regional hegemon, clearly altering the entire power distribution in the Pacific Rim. In addition, China's maritime disputes and military base expansion in the South China Sea give credibility to the argument of Roberto Hernandez that China's policies are implemented based on a strong nationalism, that carries the objectives to be a great power and to compete against the U.S.[4] Thus, the global power transition as a consequence of China's rise is one of the major factors urging the consolidation of the U.S.-Japan security alliance, as the transition has brought a sense of insecurity to many nations.

The threat of China is attributed not only to its rapidly increasing leverage but also to its regime type, which occludes the most desirable scenario that the nation will be a benign hegemon. The liberal principle, which is to achieve peace and stability through interdependence, does not thoroughly explain China's aggressive foreign policy. Accepting open trade and being incorporated in the global business model, China appears to have abandoned its communist ideology in the field of economy. Nevertheless, the nation still does not advocate political liberalism, and therefore, it remains unclear whether China's economic growth will eventually bring democracy to the nation. The prominent Chinese Communist Party can easily restrain public actions and speeches. China has been successfully managing to maintain its authoritarian regime while developing its economy. Through central planning and control of workers, Chinese leaders are enjoying the privilege of promoting its economy more efficiently compared to democratic nations. Not only the political leaders but also the Chinese middle-class is overall anti-democratic. The CCP is providing economic freedom and some privilege to the middle class population, and therefore, they are reluctant to risk their economic privilege as the nation adopts democracy. China's relatively low GDP per capita is another factor of uncertainty. According to Zakaria, "countries that marketize and modernize begin changing politically around the time that they achieved middle-income status. Since China's income level is still below that range, it cannot be argued that the country has defied this trend."^[5]

Thus, considering China's authoritarian regime which has been enforcing belligerent foreign policy, and the uncertainty of the nation's democratization in the near future, it is currently implausible that China will be a benign regional hegemon and take an initiative for political cooperation. Thus, the U.S.-Japan security alliance must be redefined and strengthened in order to prepare for the possible increase in tensions in East Asia.

Vacillating U.S. Domestic Politics and the Future of the Alliance

Although global power has been slowly but surely transitioning, the United States currently seems to be too busy to handle its internal problems. Even though bipartisanship is at the heart of U.S. democracy, the recent extreme partisanship not only on Capitol Hill but also in the general public hinders the dialogue and collaboration between the two parties. The instability of their domestic politics could threaten America's coherent identity as well as deprive the nation of its ability to tackle global issues as a global hegemon. The "America First" principle of the new administration indicates the ironic fact that the United States intends to voluntarily abandon its hegemonic role. In conjunction with Britain's EU exit, the world's top nations that have been taking the initiative to implement liberal principles and globalization are moving toward isolationism because they believe they are no longer able to bear the

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negative consequences of globalization, including the threat of terrorism and illegal immigration. Although the President's stance does not reflect the voice of every single American, it is an inexorable fact that many people in the United States have started refusing the nation's responsibilities as a global hegemon, which include sustaining global order and providing political and economic supports to other nations.

Although President Trump was disparaging of the U.S.-Japan security alliance during his campaign, the meeting of the President and Prime Minister Abe gave some relief to Japan. A Kyodo News poll demonstrates the more than 70 percent satisfaction with the meeting among the Japanese public.[6] President Trump overturned his previous remarks and claimed that "[the United States is] committed to the security of Japan and all areas under its administrative control and to further strengthening our very crucial alliance." [7] Nevertheless, the orientation of the new administration is still causing significant anxiety to Japan, since the "America First" ideology may entail the possibility of the United States giving a concession to China depending on the benefits in return even if that would undermine the foundations of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. However, the criticism of Japan being a free rider is hardly new. Many U.S. intellectuals have expressed their dissatisfaction with this perceived disparity in the treaty. In other words, this is not a temporary issue that will evaporate at the end of the current administration. The prospects of the new administration are still up in the air and, therefore, Japan currently seems to be restlessly evaluating the trustworthiness of the President's statement that "the bond between our two nations and the friendship between our two peoples runs very, very deep. This administration is committed to bringing those ties even closer." [8] As long as the voice of dissatisfaction regarding the alliance exists in the United States, the prospect for the security alliance is unpredictable. What would bolster the effective partnership between the United States and Japan would be continuous dialog and cooperation. Especially as it is not inevitable that Japan will accept more of the burden in order to pass on a credible security partnership to the next generation.

Japanese Pacifism and Ideological Tension

One of the biggest obstacles to consolidating the security alliance is the pacifism which has been deeply rooted in Japanese political culture since the end of WWII. Unlike the former Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, who notably jeopardized the U.S.-Japan partnership during his term of office from 2009 to 2010, current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) have been trying to boost the alliance. Abe's compromise is well represented by his decision to allow Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defense. However, his decision has been harshly criticized by the pacifists who call the new law "war legislation," fearing that Japan will be dragged into a military conflict. [9] According to a survey by the liberal daily *Mainichi Shimbun*, "over 45 percent of respondents think the laws are unconstitutional." [10] Demonstrative of the high disapproval rate is the fact that many people went to the streets to protest Abe's decision on collective self-defense. At the same time, the survey represents the discrepancy of opinions between the government and the public that "while Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been eager to rewrite the supreme law, including Article 9, 51 percent were against any constitutional amendments under the Abe administration, compared with 45 percent in favor." [11]

In spite of the prominent pacifist force at home, it appears to be the acid reality for Japan that the nation cannot continue to afford the luxury of pacifism. Maher emphasizes that the military bases in Okinawa are indispensable despite the controversy surrounding them, because providing the bases and logistical supports are the minimum requirements for Japan to maintain the bilateral alliance. In addition, he admonishes the Japanese pacifists that "the vague assumption that Okinawa can live in harmony without the presence of a military is not only unrealistic but also extremely dangerous when Okinawa faces a real threat" (author's translation). [12] Breaking up the first island chain in order to secure an area, including Okinawa, from which to oppose the United States is a significant feature of Chinese military doctrines. Therefore, he maintains that "what is the most important for Japan is not to create a power vacuum in East Asia and the Western Pacific Region" (author's translation), because China will immediately fill the vacuum once the U.S. Army retreats from Okinawa. [13] Considering the instability in East Asia and the rising dissatisfaction in the United States with the current alliance, Japan can no longer afford to be in its peace stupor.

Japan's strong pacifist force is the most serious hindrance keeping the nation from stepping toward greater cooperation with the United States. Maher states that "the peace activists and I have the same agreement that wars should be avoided if at all possible. Our disagreement comes from how to avoid wars. While I believe the possession

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of deterrent force is essential, the peace activists claim that wars can be avoided by eliminating military force. And their belief seems to be too naïve and dangerous to me” (author’s translation).^[14] The authenticity of his statement is proved by the example of Switzerland, which is a permanent neutral state but practices conscription and possesses a powerful army. The credo of the peace activists, which is that the abandoning of combat power brings peace and stability, would be persuasive only if Japan’s neighbors were also adopting the same pacifist policies. However, the Pacific Rim is one of the most volatile regions due to the presence of powerful undemocratic nations who also possess nuclear power, including Russia, North Korea, and China. As a matter of fact, South Korea and Taiwan also enforce conscription systems, since these nations are well aware of the potential danger. In contrast, “the Japan Self-Defense Forces is not permitted to possess regular military force. Furthermore, Japan is the only country in the region which has been reducing its military budget, while China, Russia, North Korea, South Korea, and Australia have been rapidly increasing their defense” (author’s translation).^[15]

The origin of Japan’s vulnerable pacifist ideology that claims that “the elimination of military power contributes to peace and improves its diplomacy” (author’s translation) is well explained by historical and cultural analyses.^[16] According to Xu Dunxin, a Chinese ambassador to Japan, “China was invaded by great powers in the past, and the Japanese invasion caused the most extensive damage. China’s painful history taught the nation the lesson that a weak state becomes the target of attacks” (author’s translation).^[17] Thus, China is well aware that “a nation should not show its vulnerability to other states that have territorial ambitions; instead, a nation must always demonstrate its deterrent force” (author’s translation).^[18] In contrast, the devastation of WWII has deeply instilled a strong anti-war sentiment within Japanese society. Japan’s naïve attitude toward security may also be attributed to the historical fact that the nation has never been invaded by any great powers. Since Japan practiced a Western-style imperialism and colonized its neighbors under a “prosperous country and strong army” propaganda, some Japanese people today may hold the dangerous and arguably self-centered illusion that the nation will not be attacked as long as it does not attack others. As a matter of fact, peace activists cannot present any convincing alternatives to answer the question of what must happen if Japan gets attacked.

Japan has been able to enjoy peace for many decades in spite of its unrealistic pacifism thanks only to the U.S. security umbrella. However, some people in Japan seem to take the security protection from the United States for granted. People must realize that a legitimate security alliance can be maintained only by the continuous efforts and participation of both sides.

The Fear and Insecurity of Japan

According to Chuei Takubo, “the balance of military power in Asia has collapsed in the last 20 years” (author’s translation) due to China’s dramatically increasing military budget.^[19] Especially considering the recent island dispute over China and North Korea’s missile issues, the sense of insecurity has always been present in Japan despite the nation’s pacifist principles. The degree of anxiety was dramatically spurred on the President Trump’s rhetoric during his campaign; however, many Japanese scholars and government officials have always admonished that Japan should not completely trust the current alliance relationship in light of China’s rise. Japan’s concerns are well described by Armitage and Nye, who say that “Japan is torn between its desire to see a nonnuclear world and its concern that if the United States decreases its nuclear forces to parity with China, the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence will be weakened and Japan will suffer the consequences.”^[20]

Yoshiko Sakurai expresses her restless concern that Japan will be left behind by the G2 politics between the United States and China. The recent pro-Chinese attitude of the United States is also implied by the Hillary Clinton’s statement that “no relationship will be as important to the twenty-first century as the one between the United States and China.”^[21] Former President Barack Obama also stated that “Japan has been an outstanding ally of ours for many years, but obviously China is rising, and it’s not going away. They’re neither our enemy nor our friend. They’re competitors.”^[22] In addition, Maher admits that “some U.S. government officials hold the ostrich policy, which is not to stimulate China regarding the Senkaku islands dispute” (author’s translation).^[23] Taking into account the concessionary attitude of the United States toward China in recent years, Sakurai admonishes Japan to critically judge whether the United States is willing to sacrifice its economic relationship with China for the security alliance with Japan.

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Although the majority of Japanese people assessed that the first in-person meeting of President Trump and Xi Jinping was successful overall, Chinese media criticized Trump directly afterward for his retaliatory military strike in Syria, even though Xi expressed his understanding of Trump's decision on the scene. Trump's reaction to Syria possibly could be interpreted as a sign that the new U.S. administration will take a tougher stance on China; however, at this moment it is still vague as to what kind of political relationship the United States and China will be cultivating. At the same time, the United States' firm attitude toward China does not necessarily mean a stronger alliance relationship with Japan. Thus, it is comprehensible that Japan cannot afford tranquility in the current situation fraught with such uncertainty.

The Elimination Method to Prove Burden-Sharing is the Single Realistic Option

In spite of the anxiety and skepticism among Japanese public, I strongly believe that the enhancement of the defense partnership with the United States is the best and only realistic solution for Japan to ensure its security and respond to the global power shift. Sakurai suggests three different possibilities for Japan to handle the current defense issue: "1) Strengthening the security alliance with the United States and expanding its role within the alliance. 2) Diminishing the relationship with the United States and instead establishing a new relationship with China. 3) Abandoning the U.S.-Japan alliance and embarking on its own defense policy" (author's translation).^[24] I agree with Sakurai's argument that the majority of Japanese people would choose the first option, burden-sharing, even though the government will face the challenge of convincing the pacifists and gaining their understanding. Through using the elimination method, it is clear that Japan has no choice but to upgrade the alliance.

Security cooperation with China does not seem convincing because of the different regime types, historical antipathy, and the current political tension between Japan and China. Although these two nations have been strengthening their economic partnership, it is highly dubious whether their economic cooperation can spread to the political realm. Japan conceives of China as a menace not only because of its authoritarian regime but also because of the historical hostility and competing nationalisms between the two nations, which aggravate their current political conflict. Although nationalism plays an essential role for a nation to achieve political integration, economic successes, and social order, it also can generate hatred toward other states. According to Zakaria, "having abandoned communism, the Communist Party has been using nationalism as the glue that keeps China together, and modern Chinese nationalism is defined in large part by its hostility toward Japan."^[25] The Chinese government often uses people's anti-Japanese sentiment as a political tool to handle public discontent with the authoritarian regime. Furthermore, many scholars argue that China's nationalism was boosted by its recent economic development. Thus, in contrast to the liberalist principle that modernization promotes peaceful cooperation, China's dramatic economic growth could actually make Chinese-Japanese political cooperation more challenging.

On the other hand, current Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is also known for his hyper nationalism. As a recent example, even though Abe never admits his involvement, his wife's ties to an ultra-nationalist school was revealed when she "endorsed the school's attempts to foster national pride through moral education – an approach that harks back to pre-war militarism."^[26] In addition, the school "often does things to the children that verge on abuse, and uses discriminatory language toward Chinese people and others in its newsletters."^[27] Abe's expression of his nationalism, including his visit to the Yasukuni shrine, has been arousing anti-Japanese sentiments in China and South Korea, that are deeply rooted in history. These examples represent the profound division between China and Japan, which negatively influences their current political conflict. The recent island dispute between China and Japan is one of the examples of their political tension. The issue was escalated after the Japanese government purchased the island from a Japanese citizen and nationalized it, which led "China [to send] nearly twenty marine surveillance ships to patrol through the islands, prompting a full alert by Japan's Coast Guard."^[28] Furthermore, "anti-Japan demonstrations spread across China, reaching more than 100 cities, with Japanese businesses targeted for looting and damages."^[29] The territorial conflict also negatively affected their economic cooperation. According to the video documentary *China-Japan Trade Limpers into New Year* trade between China and Japan has been shrinking due to the islands dispute. Japan was China's 5th largest trade partner in 2013; however, bilateral trade declined 5.1%, which is \$313 billion, after the dispute.^[30] This illustrates not only their sensitive political relationship but also their vulnerable economic partnership.

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Therefore, it is indubitably more challenging for Japan to establish a credible alliance relationship with China than to maintain its already-existing partnership with the United States. And most importantly, the option to collaborate with China would endanger U.S.-Japan relations. It is completely absurd for Japan to give up its amicable relationship with the United States, who possesses the world's largest military, for an uncertain relationship with China. The devastating failure of former Prime Minister Hatoyama reinforces the superiority of the first option to the second. Sakurai strongly criticizes Hatoyama's Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) for trying to "take distance from Japan's long-term ally, the United States, and instead of approaching China regardless of its different regime type and ideology" and for suggesting that "U.S., Japan, and China relations [are] an equilateral triangle" (author's translation).^[31] The DPJ's diplomacy was too outrageous because it expected the United States to devote more military effort to stabilize the East Asian region while rejecting the United States interference in Japanese political and economic dimensions. Moreover, the party unrealistically demanded orderly economic development and military mitigation from China. In addition, Hatoyama allowed China to potentially dominate the region through the East Asian Community Initiative. Hatoyama's biggest mistake was to disregard the security issue in the Pacific Rim and to undermine a *realpolitik* based on his pacifist principles.

In addition, Sakurai's third option, which is that Japan will find a new defense policy on its own is neither sound nor realistic. Strongly rebuking Japan's dependency on the United States, Ukeru Magosaki, a former ambassador to Iran and current professor at the National Defense Academy of Japan, suggests cooperating with the European Union in his book, *Nichibei domei no shotai*.^[32] However, even though Japan and the EU share the same democratic ideologies, establishing a legitimate security cooperation with the EU as an alternative lacks reliability due to their geographic distance, and most importantly, the EU does not have any incentive to support Japan in their security issues. On the other hand, Japan's need to bolster its self-defense to the level that the nation confidently feels secure in the region also seems to be credible. Due to the nuclear power of China, Russia, and North Korea, Japan must nuclearize itself in order to complete its self-defense. Nevertheless, Japan's nuclearization is highly unlikely because of the nation's strong anti-nuclear sentiment as well as the issue of its security dilemma in East Asia. According to Kunihiko Miyake, a former Japanese senior diplomat, Japan "will be the last country in that part of the world to possess nuclear weapons because of its legacy as the only country to have suffered an atomic attack."^[33] At the same time, Japan's nuclearization would strongly encourage nuclear armament in South Korea, which would end up nuclearizing the whole region and increase security risks.

From eliminating the feasibility of the other two options, we can conclude that the best and only realistic choice for Japan is to accept greater military cooperation with the United States. Japan has already gradually started taking the path of burden-sharing. According to Nye, "although [Abe] increased the fiscal 2014 defense budget by a relatively small 0.8 percent, it was the first time in 11 years the budget had been raised."^[34]

The Japanese government has to gain public approval by persuading them of the idea that the possession of a reasonable deterrent force is crucial for national security, and that will never be an easy path. However, the process of reaching a compromise with the pacifist force would be clearly more attainable than any other alternatives.

The Alliance and the Strategic Interest of the United States

Despite Japan's anxiety, it is implausible that the United States will demand the abandonment of the alliance anytime soon. Many American politicians who are specialized in Japan understand the importance of maintaining a trustworthy alliance. Thus, as Nakayama from Keio University says, it is important for Japan not to fall into the "Trump Trap" — overreacting to the new American president amid an overreliance on its longtime security partner."^[35] As a business-minded president, the intention behind Trump's rhetoric about the alliance seems aimed at inducing more financial support from Japan, instead of putting an end to the long-term bilateral partnership. Second, the security alliance with Japan is not a priority matter for the United States that requires rapid resolution. Instead, the U.S. is currently facing some serious problems, including the fight against terrorism and chaos in the Middle East, as well as various domestic issues, including health care and immigration. Furthermore, President Trump is adopting a tough stance on North Korea, admitting the possibility of major conflict. Thus, for today's U.S., the North Korean issue is obviously a more urgent than the matter of the security alliance with Japan, especially since the new administration has recently disparaged China's ambiguous attitude to North Korea, which would have

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emphasized the value of Japan's authentic partnership. Furthermore, an urgent dissolution of the U.S.-Japan security alliance would jeopardize not only the new administration's global reputation but also its domestic reputation. There is a strong voice in the United States to oppose the U.S. exit from TPP, worrying about potential extreme isolationism. Therefore, considering the polarization and ideological chaos already existing at home, it is not expedient for the United States to abandon the security alliance with Japan. Nevertheless, it is an indisputable fact that Japanese conventional "checkbook diplomacy," which means to fulfill its global responsibility with monetary contributions, is losing its validity due to Japan's economic decline and the accumulated frustration of the United States with the partial alliance relationship.

For example, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance—Anchoring Stability in Asia*, which is also known as the Armitage Report III, clearly represents the U.S. cooperative stance on the alliance as well as demanding more burden-sharing from Japan in order to achieve a balanced alliance.^[36] Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye state in the introduction that "together, [the United States and Japan] face the re-rise of China and its attendant uncertainties, North Korea with its nuclear capabilities and hostile intentions, and the promise of Asia's dynamism. Elsewhere, there are the many challenges of a globalized world and an increasingly complex security environment. A stronger and more equal alliance is required to adequately address these and other great issues of the day."^[37] Armitage and Nye express their frustration with Japan's defense dependency on the United States and cast the acerbic question: "does Japan desire to continue to be a tier-one nation, or is she content to drift into tier-two status?"^[38] Kyle Mizokami also admonishes the status-quo of the U.S.-Japan security alliance in that "[it] freezes the relationship in time, forcing both to adhere to antiquated policies. It views the regional security environment through a Cold War lens, distorting how other countries are perceived. Perhaps most importantly, it prevents Japan from evolving into a modern state and accepting the responsibilities that come with it."^[39] In order to upgrade the alliance that effectively handles the current situation, he encourages Japan to share the burden with the United States as a modern state, "responsible for all aspects of its own defense, including defense of its allies and interests abroad."^[40]

Needless to say, one of the major incentives for the United States to strengthen the security alliance with Japan is to contain China. China's real objectives still remain unclear; however, the entire power structure in the Pacific Rim would be challenged if China keeps increasing in strength. Under the Obama Administration, the "pivot to Asia" policy was launched in order to ensure U.S. control over the Pacific Rim, because "the dominant issues of the 21st century will be decided in [the Asia-Pacific] region."^[41] In order to avoid a huge conflict in that unstable region, the United States should play the role of the cornerstone and maintain the balance of power. Although the United States and China have been vigorously enhancing political cooperation, the U.S. knows that China cannot be a trusted political partner in the near future. Therefore, achieving a more cooperative security treaty with Japan is a rational choice for the United States to circumvent the power conflict in the Pacific Rim and fulfill its strategic goal.

The Influence of the Effective Alliance and Multilateral Security Cooperation

The enhancement of the U.S.-Japan security alliance would contribute to the security of the entire region. For instance, many Asian nations, including the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia, have been increasingly anxious because of China's aggressive territorial expansion. According to Rowan, "the situation in the South China Sea—where sovereignty and oil and natural gas interests are converging—creates a flashpoint with significant policy implications for the U.S., Japan, and other Asian nations. Only the U.S.-Japan security alliance, operating in conjunction with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, can safely foster a long-term solution."^[42] De Onis focuses on China's obsession with natural resources for its survival and notes that "China's lack of water limits its ability to produce food needed to feed its population of 1.3 billion," and that, therefore, China "relentlessly quests for oil, minerals, and food."^[43] ^[44] It is also the case that "in the next 20 years, oil consumption in Asian nations is expected to rise by 4% annually, with half of this demand coming from the People's Republic of China (PRC)."^[45] Based on this analysis, China may not cease pursuing its aggressive foreign policy in the near future.

The U.S.-Japan security alliance can mediate the ongoing territorial disputes between China and some ASEAN nations over the South China Sea. Although ASEAN officials have been seeking a peaceful solution, their territorial conflicts with China have not been resolved yet. It seems that ASEAN cannot manage the issue by itself, and therefore, the member states have to internationalize the issue. ASEAN has been especially eager to cooperate with

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the United States and Japan, because “the U.S.-Japan security alliance can ensure a more long-term solution to the conflict.”[46] The South China Sea will remain unstable and conflict-prone because it is “the world’s second-busiest international shipping lane.”[47] Therefore, a more effective security alliance will contribute not only to the security of the United States and Japan but also to the long-term political and economic stability of ASEAN nations.

While strengthening its alliance with the United States, Japan is also expected to play a leadership role in the defense partnership with its allies, not only with ASEAN states but also with India and Australia, two powerful actors in the region. For example, Japan and Australia have been expanding their substantial security relationship since the end of the Cold War, and their cooperation was recently boosted by the creation of the “Special Strategic Partnership” in 2014, which also handles the cyber security issue. As a consequence, Australia was identified as a “first-ranked security cooperation partner” on Japan’s 2014 Defense White Paper.[48] Furthermore, rapidly increasing its economic and political leverage, India is a significant ally of the United States and Japan. The relationship between Japan and India was augmented by the “Special Strategic and Global Partnership” in 2015, which is “a deep, broad-based and action-oriented partnership, which reflects a broad convergence of their long-term political, economic and strategic goals.”[49] Furthermore, the two nations have recently announced “Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World” as a joint statement which would substantially enhance their security and economic ties.

The future agenda for Japan is to fulfill its responsibility as a modern state through reinforcing the alliance with the United States as well as the defense cooperation with other allies. However, we should not forget that the security treaties between Japan and ASEAN, Australia, and India only play a subsidiary role. The U.S.-Japan alliance must take the initiative to maintain stability in the region, and therefore, Japan’s developing partnerships with other allies must never be a reason for the nation to undermine the alliance with the United States.

The Two-Handed Strategy

My argument, which is that the U.S.-Japan security alliance must be upgraded in order to ensure stability in the South China Sea, and that Japan must start adopting more burden-sharing with the United States, is made within a realist framework. However, today’s integrated world proves the validity of the doctrine of liberalism. Thus, we must examine not only the power and security interests of each state but also the economic interdependencies among states due to the strong interconnectedness of economy and politics. Alongside power and security, economic cooperation plays a critical deterrent role, as Doyle indicates, in that “citizens appreciate that the benefits of trade can be enjoyed only under conditions of peace. Thus the very existence of liberal states, such as the U.S., Japan, and our European allies, makes for peace.”[50] Nevertheless, we should not undermine realist principles because of the significance of liberalism, since “economics is not a zero-sum game—the rise of other players expands the pie, which is good for all—but geopolitics is a struggle for influence and control.”[51] Therefore, as I have argued, China’s economic integration does not guarantee its political cooperation.

For these reasons, I advocate Aaron Friedberg’s “two-handed strategy,” which is also called the “conengagement strategy” because of the integration of containment and engagement. The strategy encourages the United States to cultivate good economic and political relations with China while strengthening its military force and partnerships with its allies. The United States and China have been rapidly and significantly developing their economic ties. Thus, I strongly believe that the nation must keep pursuing a cooperative relationship with China, while strengthening its national defense as well as the alliance treaty with Japan. This seems to be the most effective policy strategy since it combines both realist and liberalist principles. Friedberg claims that China has also followed a “two-handed” foreign policy, which includes preserving good relations with Washington, building alternative architectures, and preserving a stable strategic rear area, as the best scenario for China is “to win without fighting.”[52]

Because of its efficiency, not only the United States and China, but also Japan seems to be willing to use this strategy. Abe has started enhancing the security alliance with the U.S. while also promoting engagement with China. For example, he had a landmark meeting with Xi Jinping in November 2014, for which Smith explains that “economic needs may be driving Xi, but strategic concerns are on the top of Abe’s agenda.”[53] Abe and Xi made some

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significant agreements during the meeting: First, they agreed to make an effort to establish “a mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests.”[54] Second, they promised to overcome political difficulties. Third, they expressed “their differences over their East China Sea island dispute that did not in fact back away from each country’s official position on the sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands.”[55] Finally, they reached a consensus to “make an effort to build a political relationship of mutual trust.”[56] The meeting seemed to be an important first step toward improving their economic and political relations.

In addition, Japan’s use of its “soft power” will provide a remarkable support to the two-handed strategy. Most importantly, it alleviates the anti-Japanese sentiment of China, which will be stimulated by the consolidation of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. While expanding military cooperation with the U.S., it is crucial for Japan to overcome the issue of a “security dilemma” and to increase its deterrence without presenting a threat. The nation’s wartime aggression will be a negative element contributing to its neighbors’ concerns about the resurgence of Japanese militarism. What can assuage their anxiety and anti-Japanese sentiment is Japan’s soft power, including its unique culture and peaceful post-war ideology.

As I have argued, the U.S.-Japan security alliance should be upgraded and strengthened, and Japan must adopt more burden-sharing in order to avoid a major conflict while maintaining order in the Pacific Rim. Nevertheless, while increasing their deterrence, the United States and Japan should also promote economic and political cooperation with China in order to sustain global peace. This strategy not only decreases the possibility of conflict but also promotes the economy of each nation, thereby easing the global anxiety.

Conclusion

The global power balance is gradually but steadily shifting as China has successfully become a regional hegemon and is belligerently expanding its territory over the South Asia Sea. On the other hand, the future of American politics is still uncertain, and today’s extreme partisanship and possible isolationism in the U.S. are factors of contributing to anxiety. At the same time, the U.S.-Japan security alliance is currently at a turning point. Japan has felt an increasing concern that the United States will abandon the security alliance in the near future as China’s political and economic leverages rise. The new administration’s “America First” principle is especially exacerbating Japan’s anxiety, since the nation has been depending on the U.S. for its defense for many decades. The United States has been demanding more burden-sharing from Japan, and Japan can no longer postpone the issue since the defense partnership with the U.S. is Japan’s lifeline. Therefore, in spite of its strong pacifist force at home, Japan has already started adopting more military cooperation because the nation has no better alternatives.

I strongly believe that the enhancement of the U.S.-Japan security alliance will provide a significant advantage not only to Japan but also to the U.S. and other Asian nations, because it will strengthen the “Pivot to Asia” strategy, which enables the U.S. to maintain balance with China, to handle the increasing North Korean threat, and to maintain the security order in the entire Pacific Rim. Therefore, it is implausible that the United States will dissolve the security alliance with Japan anytime soon despite the rising levels of skepticism and criticism from both sides. Japan’s agenda is to take the initiative of sharing the burden with the United States as well as developing its security partnerships with other allies in the region while alleviating the anti-Japanese sentiment of its neighbors. In order to fulfill its responsibility as a modern state, the Japanese government has to gain more support from the public. It will be challenging for the pacifist nation to install the logic that the increased in deterrence, which entails more security cooperation with the United States, reduces the probability of war. Nevertheless, it seems to be more rational and also attainable than other alternatives, such as a legitimate security cooperation with China or Japan’s nuclearization.

While the U.S. and Japan must strengthen their deterrence through the expansion of the bilateral alliance, they also should enhance political and economic integrations with China. This “two-handed” strategy, which is the incorporation of containment and engagement, ensures peace and decrease the possibility of major conflict. Interdependence among nations plays a significant role in today’s international relations. Nevertheless, it will never be a reason to undermine the logic of deterrence. The effective security alliance is maintained by the continuous efforts of both sides. The United States and Japan should work toward a more effective partnership and strategically deal with the current transition of global power.

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