

## ***The Redefinition of the US-Japan Security Alliance And Its Implications for China***

By

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**T**he U.S. affirmation of maintaining 100,000 troops in East Asia, the 1996 U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration and the subsequent revitalization of the web of American-led bilateral alliances once caused great concern in China for fear of an encirclement or concerted containment. By 1998, improvements in both Sino-American relations and Sino-Japanese relations have somewhat eased such concern.

This paper examines the evolution of American security strategy toward East Asia, the U.S.-Japan alliance since the end of the Cold War, and the impact on U.S.-Japan-China relations. Developments in recent years illustrate that relations among powers in this region have progressed beyond the rules of a zero-sum game, and have become more interactive and interdependent. The greater the improvement in bilateral relations between each of the three principal powers in the region, the less likelihood of hegemony or confrontation.

### **I. America's East Asia Security Strategy after the Cold War**

As one pole in the bi-polar Cold War era, the United States has been a dominant power in the Asia-Pacific region since World War II. It set up the San Francisco system in the early 1950s, which consisted of several bilateral alliances with Asia-Pacific countries to contain the socialist bloc, and aligned with China in the 1970s against the Soviet Union. With the declining Soviet threat after the Cold War, adjustments in America's security posture still constitute a far-reaching impact on the emergence of a new security structure in this region.

Although some adjustments in the U.S. East Asia security strategy have taken place since the end of the Cold War, these were sometimes criticized as minor tactical changes, with certain features remaining constant over time. The United States has always tried to maintain its leadership and engagement in this region through its

military presence and bilateral security alliances with some regional countries. Unilateral deterrence of threats to U.S. security, regional stability, and preventing the emergence of a hostile competitor or a coalition of such competitors has always been a major object of American policy. Multilateralism was later accepted and pursued as an important supplement to the unilateral and bilateral components of U.S. East Asia Strategy.

### **Minor Adjustments of Military Presence in East Asia During the Bush Administration**

After the end of the Cold War, the widespread perception in Asia was of a declining American role in the region, which resulted from the planned reduction of American military presence in Asia by the Bush Administration and a strong insular tendency in American public opinion. But Asia only turned out to be ascending in importance in America's global security strategy during successive administrations.

The Department of Defense East Asian Strategic Initiative (called EASI report), of 1990 and 1992 outlined a three-phase reduction and adjustments in the American military forces stationed in the Asia-Pacific region, to be carried out through the end of the century.<sup>1</sup> During the first phase (1990-1992), the overall 135,000 deployed personnel in Asia – principally in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines – were reduced by 15,250 or a little more than 10 percent. An unplanned reduction of another 8,100 resulted from the loss of the Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay Naval Base in the Philippines. The second EASI report in 1992 planned for a further reduction of roughly 10 percent for the second phase (1993-1995), with the third phase in the initiative remaining vague. The report acknowledged that this procedure was to be flexible enough to enable modifications in response to regional developments, especially in nations where the United States kept forward-deployed forces. It turned out that the first phase of withdrawal from South Korea was suspended in 1992 because of Pyongyang's suspected nuclear weapons program. The second phase was pushed back to after 1995 and never carried out.

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<sup>1</sup> The Report of the Department of Defense to the U.S. Congress in April, 1990 entitled *A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Looking Toward the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and the report on *A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Report to Congress 1992*. (Department of Defense, April 1992).

This military reduction, coupled with a strong isolationist tendency in the U.S. left many Asian countries to perceive a declining involvement of the United States in the security of the region and a turning inwards of its overall foreign policy. In reality, however, the drawdown of military presence in East Asia was not as significant as it seemed, and was symbolic rather than meaningful. Many Americans working on the implementation of the initiative admitted that it was never a serious indication of real strategic shift or a lessening in significance of this region in American strategic thinking, but was mostly a posture to deflect Congressional pressure.<sup>2</sup>

In military terms, the first phase of reduction was only minor, mostly involving support personnel. At the same time, the Bush Administration endeavored to justify to Congress the continued presence of U.S. forces in the region and to avoid sending misguided signals to Asian countries of an American withdrawal. It reiterated that the reduction did not represent a reduction in capability to respond to anticipated threats – “the remaining 100,000 forces are at least as capable of responding to any potential threat today as the 150,000 were in the heyday of the U.S.S.R.,” many military officials asserted. And to make up for the loss of these bases, the United States started to place more importance on other military bases, such as Guam, and to seek access to the military facilities of other countries in the region – such as Singapore. Furthermore, the importance of an American alliance with Asian countries was also emphasized by many policy-makers and advisors, though it did not take the form of diplomatic initiatives as in 1996. Rather it served as a warning to hedge against a drop in American credibility in East Asia. Then Secretary of State James Baker argued in 1991 that the U.S.-sponsored system of bilateral alliances was still indispensable as a basis for regional order, and he compared the network of alliances to “a fan spread wide, with its base in North America.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Maintenance of Military Presence and Bilateral Alliances**

The Clinton Administration began with a broad strategy of “enlargement” and “engagement.” The so-called bottom-up review of defense policy initiated by Defense Secretary Les Aspin was

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<sup>2</sup> Interviews with American scholars like Michael Green, and Patrick Cronin.

<sup>3</sup>The set of bilateral alliances, named the San Francisco system, resulted from a series of agreements signed by the United States with several Asian countries in 1951.

completed in September 1993, and called for sustaining a credible overseas presence of 100,000 troops in East Asia to ensure regional stability. It also raised a threat-based regional security strategy of being able to fight and win two simultaneous major regional contingencies. President Clinton reemphasized the importance of the Asia-Pacific region, reiterating that the United States had major security, political and economic interests in this region, and put a complete end to the EASI reduction of military personnel in East Asia.

In the process of developing a new East Asian security strategy, four elements have played important roles. The first is the credibility of the American engagement in, and commitment to, Asian security affairs – which the U.S. has always tried to maintain. This credibility was seen as declining at the beginning of this decade, creating concern among Asian countries about the possibility of America sliding back to isolationism. By 1994, all the American envoys stationed in Asian countries were writing to the State Department complaining about a down slide in the perception of the U.S. role in Asia after the end of the Cold War. Under such circumstances, the U.S. feared that Asian countries would become more independent in their defense policies, and there would be a new arms race in the region. Asian countries were contemplating new security mechanisms, both multilaterally and unilaterally.

The second element was the Korean issue. The suspected nuclear program in North Korea was a great threat and it caused the suspension of the reduction of American forces in South Korea, and actually in all of East Asia. The Korean issue was the first test of the American commitment to Asian security after the Cold War, and it has become proof of the dedicated initiative of the U.S. in solving the issue. This issue also played a decisive role in redefining the U.S.-Japan alliance. The U.S.-Japan-ROK consultations on how to deal with the Korean issue and on the Korean Energy Development Organization formed the platform of American involvement in, and its coordination with, allies on Asian security.

The third element was Japan. It worried the U.S. when Japan tried to seek a new role and international order by placing greater emphasis on multilateral cooperation, more cooperation with Asian countries, and on developing its own defense capacities. At the same time, there was serious concern in the U.S. about whether Japan would

respond positively in future contingencies on the Korean Peninsula, with the lessons from Japan's inactivity in the Gulf War still fresh.

The fourth element was China. The United States began to see China's economic rise and its military modernization as a potential challenge, especially since China further advanced its open-door policy in 1992 and maintained a high economic growth rate. There was much discussion in the U.S. and Japan about the possibility of China becoming an uncertain power, if not an immediate threat. Americans believed that a strong presence in Asia would strengthen the American position in its relations with China. The China issue increased after the 1995 and 1996 missile tests near Taiwan.

Against this background, a new assessment of U.S. East Asian strategy was undertaken under the leadership of the then Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye, which resulted in a February 1995 report, *The East Asian Strategic Review*. The report formally acclaimed the American "commitment to maintaining a stable forward presence in the region, at the existing level of about 100,000 troops, for the foreseeable future,"<sup>4</sup> "at least to the end of this century," or "as long as they are welcome there."<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, many analysts predicted that in the not-so-distant future, the United States would not be able to maintain the stability of the Asia-Pacific region by simply depending on unilateral actions and forward deployment.<sup>6</sup> The Pentagon also began to place more importance on the sharing of responsibilities with allies in East Asia.<sup>7</sup> Maintaining and reinvigorating the core alliances with Japan, Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand became the top priority in what Warren Christopher called the four-part strategy in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>8</sup> Since 1996, the U.S. upgraded its relations with Asian

<sup>4</sup> Now the United States has a total East Asia-Pacific troop strength of about 104,000, according to the 1995 Pentagon White Paper known as the "Nye Report."

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Nye, at the press conference on Feb. 27, 1995, also see Ralph A. Cossa, *The Major Powers in Northeast Asian Security*, (McNair Paper 51, August, 1996. INSS, National Defense University, Washington, D.C.)

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Stuart and William T. Tow, "A U.S. Strategy for the Asia-Pacific: Building a Multipolar Balance-of-Power System in Asia" (IISS Adelphi Paper Number 299, December, 1995.)

<sup>7</sup> See DOD reports to the President and the Congress since 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Warren Christopher, Former State Secretary, before the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., July 28, 1995. Other goals he outlined include actively pursuing a policy of engagement with the other leading countries in the region, including – and,



allies and friends, especially with Japan where half of the U.S. deployment in Asia is stationed.

## **II. The Redefinition of the U.S.-Japan Alliance:**

The U.S.-Japan alliance is the most important part and linchpin of the U.S. presence in East Asia, and has been upgraded to meet the needs of both countries. The summit meeting between President Clinton and former Prime Minister Hashimoto in April 1996 resulted in the Joint Declaration of Security. Actually, the process of redefinition was started much earlier. The 1990-91 Gulf War left the U.S. worrying about the future of its alliance with Japan, doubting whether Japan would provide any support in another regional crisis. The U.S. felt the need to push Japan about what it would do if something happened close to Japan, such as on the Korean Peninsula. On the other hand, economic frictions and other security issues like that on Okinawa, prompted both governments to reassess their alliance relations and new security and defense strategies in the new era.

While the review of the U.S. East Asia security strategy was on-going, Japan also started to review its own defense policy. Then Japanese Prime Minister Murayama appointed an advisory group chaired by Hirotaro Higuchi to review its defense strategy, with an eye to revising the 1976 National Defense Programs Outline (NDPO). The final report of this advisory group, namely the Higuchi Report,<sup>9</sup> recommended a new, comprehensive security strategy for the post-Cold War Japan. It now places relatively more importance on the United Nations, regional multilateral mechanisms, and a stronger independent military capability, than to the continued reliance on the security ties with the U.S. Many Americans argued that multilateralism was a useful hedge against waning U.S. commitments to the alliance, and possibly a distraction (in terms of Japan's political and financial resources) from bilateral defense cooperation.<sup>10</sup> Some contended that the United States had limited input in the preparation of

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perhaps, especially including – former Cold War adversaries, building a regional architecture that will sustain economic growth, promote integration, assuring stability over the longer term, and supporting democracy and human rights.

<sup>9</sup> Advisory Group on Defense Issues, *The Modality of the Security and Defense Capability of Japan: the Outlook for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, August 12, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick M. Cronin and Michael J. Green, *Redefining the U.S.-Japan alliance: Tokyo's National Defense Program*, (McNair Paper 31, INSS, National Defense University, 1994.), P. 9.

this report, which would have troubling implications for Japan's alliance policy and require clarification.<sup>11</sup>

The American posture of maintaining its presence in Asia and the revived zest for keeping the bilateral alliances, as proclaimed in *The East Asia Strategic Review*, did influence further changes in Japan's defense policy. After a summit meeting between President Clinton and Prime Minister Murayama in January 1995 in which the two sides agreed to advance dialogues in the field of security, a series of consultations and high-level meetings were held between defense officials of the two countries. The two sides also decided in September 1995 to hold annual meetings between their foreign and defense ministers to discuss security issues under the Security Consultative Committee.<sup>12</sup> The discussion ranged from a formal statement of common perceptions of security, issues of burden-sharing and host nation support, ballistic missile defense, an agreement on the provision of logistic support, material and services, and the co-production of FS-X fighter. These consultations and dialogues shaped the new NDPO, approved by Murayama's cabinet in November 1995. The new NDPO emphasized the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance, took into account the American call for Japan's contribution to regional security, and stressed the regional dimensions of Japan's security cooperation with the United States in the post-Cold War era.

Further consultations in late 1995 decided that a joint statement would be issued by the two countries on their common security agenda during the APEC Summit meeting in Osaka – which President Clinton failed to attend for domestic reasons. But before the Joint Declaration was issued, during Clinton's visit to Japan in April 1996, some concrete progress was made in bilateral consultations. The Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement was signed for the mutual provision of materials and services during peacetime training and UN Peacekeeping Operations. The Special Actions Committee on Okinawa brought up a report on the reduction and reconfiguration of American bases in Okinawa, especially the removal of Futenma Marine Air Station.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* P 8.

<sup>12</sup> This was also sometimes referred to as Nye Initiative or Japan Security Dialogue, which was an intensive bilateral review of the U.S.-Japan alliance aimed at coordinating long-term security planning. It resulted in the 1996 Joint Declaration.

The 1996 Joint Declaration confirmed the importance of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, not only for the security of Japan, but also in maintaining peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. The two sides agreed to review the 1978 Guidelines for Defense Cooperation and to promote the interoperability between the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, and the U.S. forces in Japan.

The revised Guidelines for Defense Cooperation were promulgated in September 1997, and clarified clauses concerning respective roles and missions. It assigned Japan a broader role in cooperation with the United States in both peace-time situations and in contingencies in both the territory of Japan and in "areas surrounding Japan." It is stated in the Guidelines that the concept of "areas surrounding Japan" is not geographic, but situational, and does not spell out what type of circumstances would constitute a major threat to Japan's peace and security. Such circumstances might be a contingency on the Korean Peninsula, or a new war in the Persian Gulf. Under the new agreement, Japan has the flexibility to engage in any military action involving the United States.

Currently, the implementation of these principles is evolving incrementally. The principles will guide future legislation in the Japanese Diet and the planning for future operations. However, the most conspicuous change is that the concept of "areas surrounding Japan" will be added to many aspects of the security cooperation. The Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement was amended last April to include mutual supply of materials and services in contingencies in areas surrounding Japan.

### **III. Implications of the Redefinition for Japan**

The U.S. military presence in Japan and the U.S.-Japan Alliance has served several purposes. It has acted as a cap on the remilitarization of Japan, a containment coalition against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and a device to balance the rising power of China after the Cold War. The redefinition of the U.S.-Japan Alliance now gives more importance to the U.S.-Japan cooperation in deterring threats in the region and balancing against China than to the need of constraining Japan from rearming itself. The Alliance has gone even further by requiring Japan to expand its military role in the region.



### A Cap on Japan

There was a time immediately after the Cold War when the Alliance was useful as a cap on Japanese remilitarization. During the Bush Administration, the strategy of continued involvement in this region was based on the assumption that, with the disappearance of the Soviet threat, economic competition would become more severe and vital in international relations, and other regional powers would challenge the leading role of the U.S. With U.S.-Japan economic relations severed by a huge trade imbalance, Japan was often portrayed as a candidate for the world's "super-state" with the most superior form of capitalism, and a challenger or even replacement of the preeminent role of the U.S. This concern was reflected in the drafted and leaked DOD document called Defense Planning Guidance in 1992, which listed Germany and Japan as the top two among the aspirants to global power status. The document called upon the U.S. to discourage them from challenging the leadership, and to maintain military dominance capable of "detering potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role."

It was widely perceived then that while few U.S. individuals or groups have openly called for an abrogation of the U.S.-Japan security relationship, many – including administration officials – see the main purpose for preserving it as a means to control and contain Japan for the sake of its neighbors.<sup>13</sup> The 1992 EASI report stated that preventing "the rise of any hegemonic power or coalition" in the region was a key U.S. objective in the post-Cold War era. While pointing out that there was no Asian power threatening regional stability, Japan and China were implied as candidates. But the report noted that "China continues to place military modernization at the bottom of its 'four modernizations' and thus its posture does not currently present a major military threat." The report stressed the importance of a continued U.S. presence in Asia and the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan security relationship as "reassuring to many nations in the region."

The political realignment in Japan and waning support in Japan's major political parties for the alliance with the U.S. prompted new cautions from American policy analysts. In particular, demands in Japan for autonomous defense capabilities and for emphasizing

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<sup>13</sup> *U.S.-Japan Treaty Now Seen as Leash on Tokyo*, Far Eastern Economic Review, 13, December, 1990.

multilateral dialogues in Asia aroused concern in America about a shift in Japanese budget resources away from alliance themes such as host nation support and TMD toward domestic issues. Others felt that policy recommendations like the 1994 Higuchi Report were signs that Japan was distancing itself from the U.S. and becoming more independent.

The rationale of the U.S.-Japan Alliance as a limitation on Japan's military posture was frequently used by the United States to explain the benefits from the revived U.S.-Japan alliance to China. Americans frequently ask the Chinese, who doubt the motives of the redefinition, what would happen if the U.S.-Japan Alliance were abolished? They assert that it is in China's interest to keep Japan from developing its own military power. To some extent this has relieved China's concerns. More recently, this argument is mentioned less, in consideration of the feelings of the Japanese. The prospect of a remilitarized Japan is quite remote. But new doubts exist about whether the alliance itself and the new role assigned to Japan will prepare Japan for future independence from the U.S. This concern results from the fact that Japan is expanding its military capacity and scope of defense incrementally in the framework of the alliance, and is trying to revise its constitution in this direction without causing domestic political struggles.

This is also the concern of many American strategists, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski. Although he admits that "a disoriented Japan, lurching toward either rearmament or a separate accommodation with China, would spell the end of the American role in the Asia-Pacific region" and destabilize Asia, he nevertheless objects to any significant increase in the geopolitical scope and the actual magnitude of the Japanese military efforts as undesirable. "American pressure on Japan to assume a greater military role can only damage the prospects for regional stability."<sup>14</sup>

### **Japan's Strategic Calculation**

Although the security alliance has been asymmetrical, and there have always been anti-American and anti-base sentiments in certain sectors of society, the Japanese government is more than ready to maintain the

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<sup>14</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard—American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, (New York, NY, Basic Books, c 1997.) p. 180.

security arrangement with the U.S. Most major strands of Japanese analyses of the Alliance share the point that it is in Japan's interest to "exploit the special relationship with the U.S. in order to gain global recognition for Japan, while avoiding Asian hostility and without prematurely jeopardizing the American security umbrella."<sup>15</sup>

First, the Alliance continues to safeguard Japan's national defense in a traditional way since Japan is an island nation endowed with little natural resources and energy, and dependent on the sea route in East and Southeast Asia for transportation of oil from the Middle East. In addition, Japan has territorial disputes with Russia, South Korea, and China. In the post-Cold War era, the U.S. nuclear umbrella is still perceived as a necessity for Japan – although it already has the potential to develop nuclear weapons in short order.

Second, the Alliance allows Japan to concentrate on its economic and social problems. Though criticized by many American thinkers as a security "free-rider," Japan has benefited in the past from this protection by being able to concentrate its resources on its economic development. At the present time, with the Japanese economic recession deteriorating along with associated social and political problems, Japan is not likely to regain the momentum of the 1980s in the coming years, and its initiative on security issues will remain minimal. It is thus likely that Japan will continue to depend on its alliance with the United States.

Third, the Alliance conforms with Japan's long-term goal of becoming a major political and military power without offending either its own public or other countries in the region. The alliance with the United States supports Japan in its quest for an expanded political role in the United Nations and various other international organizations, and on international issues like arms control, peacekeeping, and environmental protection. The United States is also encouraging Japan to expand its military activity within the framework of the Alliance from mere self-defense to providing support to American troops in regional contingencies. In so doing, Japan moved a step forward in terms of scope of activities of the JSDF operational training and acquisition of weapons and military technology.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

Fourth, Japan needs the Alliance with the United States to balance against China's power in case China becomes aggressive – especially concerning China's stance on territorial issues like Taiwan, South China Sea, and the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Although the U.S. has kept itself outside the issue of the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, Japanese rightists are already exploiting the weight of the U.S.-Japan security alliance in Japan's disputes with China on this issue. Shintaro Ishihara, the author of *"Japan Can Say No"* asks "why should we pay the price for supporting the Security Pact" if "...the U.S.-Japan Security Pact does not include the Senkaku Islands?"<sup>16</sup>

The Japanese attitude toward the U.S.-Japan Alliance is not just responsive to the American initiative, as some American scholars think. It has been very proactive and cooperative in this process. It is the Japanese NDPO of 1995 that, for the first time, introduced the Japanese role in "areas surrounding Japan" and broadened the geographic scope of its national defense. On one hand, this reinforces the American presence in East Asia, and incorporates Japan into the American strategic calculation. On the other hand, it also allows Japan to broaden its role in not only the defense of its own territory, but also in the security of the region, in both geographic scope and operational terms. Many Japanese appear ready to go well beyond the new Defense Guidelines. One poll found over one-third of all Japanese Diet members in favor of revising the constitution or reinterpreting it to allow expansion of Japan's military role. Only about one-sixth are committed pacifists.<sup>17</sup>

### **Japan's Role in Regional Security**

The first test to the U.S.-Japan Alliance after the end of the Cold War was the 1990-91 Gulf War. Japan was sharply criticized by Western countries, especially by the U.S., for its reluctant response to the American call for support, and for its minimal military participation in the American-led intervention in the war. This "checkbook diplomacy" by Japan was regarded as insufficient for the sustainability of the U.S.-Japan Alliance.

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<sup>16</sup>Shintaro Ishihara, *"Asia's Destiny, Japan's Destiny,"* he quotes a remark made by Walter Mondale, U.S. Ambassador to Japan, to a New York Reporter, and protests against such a remark, (Harvard Asia Pacific Review, Summer 1998.)

<sup>17</sup>Mike M. Mochizuki, and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *"Japan as Full-Fledged Ally,"* (the Christian Science Monitor, Nov. 12, 1997).

In light of the Korean issue and other regional contingencies in which U.S. forces might be involved, the U.S. was suspicious of whether Japan will provide sufficient, if any, future support to American actions. The process of redefining the Alliance and reviewing the Guidelines is a joint attempt to prepare Japan for a mutually acceptable role in future regional contingencies. Nonetheless, the two countries agree in the new Guidelines that "Japan will conduct all its actions within the limits of its constitution and in accordance with such basic positions as the maintenance of its exclusively defense-oriented policy and its three non-nuclear principles."

American analysts use various scenarios to study Japan's possible responses and their impact on the future of the Alliance itself. They conclude that the current review of the Defense Guidelines did nothing to change the situation. Every regional contingency, like a Korean conflict, hostile Sino-U.S. relations or a conflict in the South China Sea will put the alliance to critical tests. Even a deteriorated U.S.-Japan economic relationship, with the American economy suffering from an expanding trade deficit with Japan, is seen as a plausible threat to the sustainability of the Alliance. On the other side, favorable developments toward reunification on the Korean Peninsula would pose the questions of necessity of the alliance. A continued U.S.-Japan Alliance under such conditions would be interpreted by many in China as a real containment policy against them.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, Japan's role in regional security will continue to be controversial. It seems that a more symmetrical alliance with a more active military role for Japan will prove difficult given domestic restrictions and the sensitivity of regional countries concerning Japan's military posture. There have already been signs that Japan will remain reluctant to cooperate with U.S. forces in regional conflicts.<sup>19</sup> Therefore one possibility will be that Japan's role in regional security

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<sup>18</sup> The study group of the Council on Foreign Relations carried a series of studies on the future of the alliance. Assessment of different scenarios can be found in the background papers. Michael J. Green and Mike M. Mochizuki, *the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Study Paper, CFR (New York, NY, 1998), Bruce Stokes and James J. Shinn, *The Test of War and the Strains of Peace - the U.S.-Japan Security Relationship*, Study Group Report, CFR, (New York, NY, 1998), and Susumu Awanohara, *Scenarios that Divide: An Abiding Need For Diplomacy*, Background Paper for the December 4, 1996 meeting of the CFR Study Group on the U.S.-Japan security relationship.

<sup>19</sup> Former Prime Minister Hashimoto has more than once pointed out that Japan will make its own decision whether to take action in regional contingencies.



will continue to be based on its peaceful Constitution and providing American troops with bases on its territory. Such a relationship will be sustainable only in the status quo environment. It will face a challenge in any crisis if the U.S. expects more support from Japan. On the other hand, a militarily active Japan also has the potential to cause problems.

Another possibility for Japan's regional role is that Japan will assume greater military capabilities through allied cooperation with the U.S., and will amend its legislation step by step to lessen restraints on its military activities. It might even assume a formidable military role and have more influence in regional security arrangements. This will arouse suspicion about Japan's future intentions not only from China, but also from other countries in this region. It is hard for East Asia to accept that Japan might be responsible for regional security before it has expressed contrition toward its militarist past, and has more explicitly spelled out its future intentions for regional security. A Japan with a formidable military power becoming or seeking to become independent will also pose a policy dilemma for the United States.

#### **IV. Implications for China**

China is one of the countries that has expressed certain concerns and reservations on the redefinition of the U.S.-Japan Alliance. Foremost of these concerns, China would not like to see the alliance used as a device of containment against itself. With respect to the scope of defense of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, China is strongly opposed to the inclusion of Taiwan – a sovereign part of Chinese territory. Many Chinese believe that while avoiding containment, the Alliance serves as a hedge or balance against a powerful China while its intentions on the Taiwan issue remaining ambiguous.

These two factors add mistrust, which led to China's criticism of the redefinition of the Alliance. However, explanations and reassurance from both the U.S. and Japan along with improvement in both Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japanese relations have reduced such open criticism. But the debate is still going on in China, especially on the purpose of the Alliance, Japan's military role, and the scope of the Alliance. Some in China admit that the Alliance is a remnant of the Cold War, and in this way is still a stabilizing factor in terms of assuring other Asian countries of Japan's military posture as set forth in its Peace Constitution and non-nuclear principles. But too much

uncertainty in the scope of Japan's military activities within the Alliance, and its purpose towards China may cause new instability to the regional security and increase distrust in relations. How bilateral relations with China develop will determine China's attitude toward it.

*Hedging against China.* The Alliance has the intention of reassuring other Asian countries that Japan will not resort to militarism in the bilateral security framework with the U.S., and it was asserted during the redefinition process that Korea was the foremost and biggest issue. But the China factor has always existed in the background. Although official policy statements and recommendations by analysts in the United States all deliberately avoid defining China as a major factor in upgrading the security alliance with Japan, none fail to mention the uncertainties caused by the emergence of a more powerful China. The Alliance is meant to balance against the rising power of China. "Japan and the U.S. jointly face the task of dealing with a rising China." According to Michael H. Armacost, President of the Brookings Institution and former U.S. envoy to Japan, China is not an immediate military threat to either the U.S. or Japan, nor will it be for some time. But he does support the preservation of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, as a "fallback" in the event that China's future conduct should make containment necessary.<sup>20</sup> Opponents of the U.S.-Japan Alliance assert that the Alliance could easily slide into containment against China.<sup>21</sup>

According to many Americans and Japanese, the real purpose of the Alliance came out only after the Chinese missile tests of 1995 and March 1996. Once the China factor came out, it became a major issue throughout the summit and in the U.S.-Japan security dialogues.<sup>22</sup> The U.S.-Japan consultation on this issue at the summit, coupled with the dispatch of one U.S. aircraft carrier from Japanese

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<sup>20</sup> In more than one occasion, Armacost listed the benefits of the alliance as three fold: as a means of **detering threats**, a source of **reassurance**, and providing a framework for promoting **preventive diplomacy**. All three benefits are applicable to the China factor, deterring the threat of a more assertive China, assuring Japan and other Asian countries of an American security guarantee should such a threat appear, and making an American initiative to prevent any future crisis related to any uncertain conduct by China.

<sup>21</sup> Representative of this kind of opinion are remarks made by Chalmers Johnson, on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1998 at the SAIS of John Hopkins. He argued that while China is becoming more proactive and cooperative, the U.S.-Japan Alliance is creating a new front against China.

<sup>22</sup> Defense Secretary William Perry discussed the issue during his visit to Tokyo in March, 1996 to prepare for the Clinton-Hashimoto summit.

ports to the Taiwan area, led many Chinese to conclude that the upgraded alliance's intention is containing China.<sup>23</sup> In reality, although both the U.S. and Japan were quick to assert that the Alliance is not directed against China, both countries do regard the U.S.-Japan security relationship as an underpin for a strong diplomatic partnership, allowing both to better manage their relations with China.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, neither the U.S. nor Japan can afford a confrontation with China. And neither wants the Alliance to drive China into a confrontational position – that is why both countries tried hard to explain that the strengthening of the Alliance is not directed against China. The recent improvements in Sino-U.S. relations and Sino-Japanese relations will help reduce the role of the Alliance in balancing or hedging against China.

*The scope of defense.* In the process of redefining the U.S.-Japan alliance, Japan's taking responsibility for regional security is sensitive not only to the Japanese public but also to other countries in the region, including China, who suffered from Japan's military expansion in the past. According to American scholars, the terms used in the process such as "the Asia-Pacific region," and even "global partnership" are only diplomatic rhetoric without concrete meaning in military terms.<sup>25</sup> But the review of the 1978 Defense Guidelines, including the change in scope of defense and Japan's military role, will make a real difference in military terms and on an operational level, which may have far-reaching implications for the regional security situation.

What worries China most about the scope of defense is whether it covers the Taiwan area. The 1960 treaty stipulated that U.S. forces could use its bases in Japan "for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East." The Japanese Government definition is that the "Far East" in the article roughly covers Japan and its surroundings down to the northern Philippines, including South Korea and Taiwan, and that the scope of U.S. actions nevertheless would not be limited to

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<sup>23</sup> It was also asserted that the deployment of another aircraft carrier from the Middle East was to show that the United States does not need the bases in Japan to deal with China on the Taiwan issue.

<sup>24</sup> Winston Lord, October 25, 1995

<sup>25</sup> Interviews with Michael Green, Professor of Japanese Studies, The Johns Hopkins University, SAIS.

those areas. Japan's military role, however, was not allowed to go beyond its own territory.

In political terms, Taiwan should have been excluded from the definition since the U.S. and Japan established diplomatic relations with China in 1972 and acknowledged China's position that Taiwan is a part of China. The inclusion of Taiwan into the scope of the U.S.-Japan defense cooperation is no different from the inclusion of other provinces of China. The U.S. government has remained ambiguous on the Taiwan issue, maintaining a balance between two extreme actions of a declaration of independence by Taiwan and the use of force by the mainland. The scope of the U.S.-Japan defense cooperation made it even more complex, coupled with the factor of Japan's overseas military role. Although both the U.S. and Japan have officially declared that the "areas surrounding Japan" is a situational rather than geographical concept, they have kept ambiguous and refused to clearly state that Taiwan is not included, for fear that China may be encouraged to take radical action toward reunification.

On the other hand, in light of the upgraded military cooperation between U.S. and Japanese forces, whether directed against China or not, if Taiwan is convinced that it is under the protection of the joint forces of the U.S. and Japan, the forces for independence will gain more momentum. This will undermine the prospect of reunification to which both the U.S. and Japan officially proclaim support, and hence threaten regional stability.

In reality, the Japanese Government has long abandoned the original "Far-East" definition, which included Taiwan. The government has remained ambiguous on this definition though certain officials, like the Chief Cabinet Secretary Mr. Kajuyama, occasionally disclose the intention of including Taiwan in the U.S.-Japan defense cooperation. There is a consensus in Japan, however, that "there is no need now for the government to hammer out a unified definition," and "it is extremely inaccurate to argue whether or not the guidelines surpass a vague area"<sup>26</sup> like the "Far East."

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<sup>26</sup> Japanese Defense Agency Director Gen. Fumio Kyuma. Toshiyuki Takano, former Director-General of the Foreign Ministry's North American Affairs Bureau, told House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs in March 1998 that the scope, as a general idea, would not surpass the Far East and its vicinity, but the Vice Foreign Minister Shunji Yanai and Gen. Fumio Kyuma later criticized this definition as "extremely inaccurate." See *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, FE/3237, 27 May 1998.

*Future role of the alliance and its relations with China.* The future of the U.S.-Japan Alliance will largely be shaped by the evolution of the triangular relations among the U.S., Japan and China, and the future regional security situation. It will have significant implications on China's perception of its own security and that of the whole region. This perception will determine China's attitudes toward the U.S.-Japan Alliance.

There are several scenarios in which China may take different attitudes toward the alliance. The premises of these scenarios are a continued military presence of the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific Region and the web of security alliances it maintains with some countries in this region, and that no multilateral security mechanisms will develop to address the regional security issues. These premises are not just assumptions, but will remain realities in the region.

*Scenario one:* Sino-U.S. relations will continue to improve with the momentum created by the mutual visits of both President Jiang Zemin and President Clinton, with the two sides strengthening their cooperation on major international issues, especially regional security issues and promoting mutual trust. At the same time, Sino-Japanese relations are also improving through both economic and military exchanges. The U.S. and Japan will remain strong allies, concentrating on bilateral cooperation in defense and economic areas. Under this circumstance, the containing or balancing factor of the Alliance against China will be weakened. The three countries will cooperate on regional issues like the Korean Peninsula, the Asian financial crisis, and other regional issues with broad implication for peace and stability. This scenario will be the most conducive to the interests of the three countries and the whole region.

*Scenario Two:* Japan will assume a larger military capability and role under the Alliance and the new Guidelines. The rightist forces in Japan may push for changes in its pacifist constitution, the exclusively self-defense purpose of the SDF, and Japan's non-nuclear principles. This may cause suspicion among China and other Asian countries about Japan's future military posture in this region, given the fact that Japan has not gained the confidence of the region. At the same time, under the pressure of the rightist forces, Japan may become aggressive on territorial issues like the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute, and may even express ambitions on the Taiwan issue. In this case, China



will most likely respond sharply and criticize the U.S.-Japan Alliance for giving rise to conflicts. Sino-Japanese and Sino-American relations will be adversely affected, which will destabilize the entire region.

*Scenario Three:* If separatist tendencies in Taiwan become stronger, and the cross-Strait relations deteriorate, leading to worsening Sino-American relations, the U.S. will expect support from Japan in a possible confrontation against China. The U.S.-Japan Alliance will become a real element of containment against China, and China will find it necessary to fight against the alliance. In this scenario, another possibility is that Japan remains reluctant to support the U.S. in a confrontation against China. The alliance will face a serious test or even crisis. This will be the worst scenario for the U.S.

*Scenario Four:* The situation on the Korean Peninsula may become tense if the North-South dialogue continues to stagnate, and there is no improvement in U.S.-North Korea and Japan-North Korea relations, or progress in the Four-Party Talks. Aggression by the North is not likely given its economic crisis and the lack of support from either Russia or China. The U.S. may exert high pressure on North Korea, including military pressures, which will create open differences between China and the U.S. on how to solve the Korean problem, but not to the extent that China will support the North in an open war. Rather, the difference may lead to more criticism of the U.S.-Japan Alliance from China.

Of all these scenarios, the first one seems the most likely in light of the present situation, and it is the direction in which China, the U.S. and Japan are jointly working. There will be more consultation among the three powers on regional security issues. China will support improved relations between the U.S. and North Korea, and between Japan and North Korea. China will push forward with cross-Strait dialogue more confidently, and China will continue to take on greater responsibilities in other regional security issues. At the same time, this scenario will create an atmosphere in which other countries in the region will be less suspicious of China's future intention – which will only be conducive to the stability and prosperity of the region as a whole.

## V. Conclusion

If the United States is to help maintain regional peace and stability, it will not succeed by basing its strategy on its bilateral alliances with

specific countries. For Chinese strategists, the traditional concept of alliances is always threat based, or interpreted as a hedging strategy. Accordingly, the U.S.-Japan Alliance will not be able to promote trust in the region. Its characteristics and limitations dictate that the U.S.-Japan bilateral alliance will not help in resolving regional disputes, and will not be sustainable in real crisis scenarios. Regional security should be the result of consultations and contributions by all countries in the region. The negotiations among the concerned parties for a permanent Korea peace treaty are making progress. It is the joint efforts of the international community that are rightly addressing the South Asian nuclear competition. And it is the engagement with all countries in this region, especially with China, that is promoting trust and understanding. As for the triangular relations between China, the U.S. and Japan, as long as the United States maintains amicable relations with both China and Japan, the U.S.-Japan Alliance will not become a tool of containment against China, which would not be beneficial to any party.

In the future evolution of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, Japan's roles should be more clearly defined to the Japanese people and the region. Liberal Americans may argue that Japan's military power is and will remain moderate, and it is under civilian control, therefore it is not dangerous at all – but the redefinition of U.S.-Japan Alliance should not make it dangerous by expanding Japan's military role. In order to gain better understanding from other countries in the region, Japan should do more to assure the region that it will not turn to military aggressiveness again. Japan should also express a candid attitude toward its militarist past and make greater contributions to issues facing the region such as the current Asian financial crisis.

Nor should China overreact to the redefinition of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, which might lead to a confrontational relationship. It is the post-Cold War reality that China should deal with in a realistic way. The Alliance still plays a positive role in regional stability, in terms of its limitations on Japan's resuming militarism, but it also causes some uncertainty in terms of its and scope aims. China is demonstrating to the region and to the world that it is and will be a responsible power – through its positions on regional issues like the South Asian nuclear issue, the Asian Financial crisis, the Korean issue, and in China's bilateral relations with the U.S. and Japan. The integration of China into the international community is inevitable. But a favorable multilateral security environment will depend on each and

every bilateral relationship that is amicable and trustful. Improved relations with both Japan and the United States will prove beneficial to China's position and to the avoidance of a confrontation between China and the U.S.-Japan Alliance.

In conclusion, the U.S.-Japan Alliance is a reality inherited from the Cold War, therefore it maintains certain features of the Cold War – a strong U.S. military presence in the region, vague terminology on sensitive security issues, and a focus on bilateralism rather than multilateral cooperation. The redefinition and strengthening of the Alliance should not be based on the sometimes false perception of threat, and should not make another country's territory its object, since, in so doing, it will make the alliance itself a threat to other countries. I appreciate the liberal idea of developing the alliance toward inclusion of other powers in the region, even China, in jointly maintaining regional peace and stability. But this will not happen until genuine mutual trust is established among the U.S., Japan and China. It is hoped that the current momentum of relations among the three powers will continue to develop toward this end.



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