

## **U.S.-Japan Security Relations, 1945 - 1991: Asymmetry and Secrecy**

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本稿は冷戦期の日米関係における変化と発展をその構造的「非対称性」と機能面の「秘密性」を中心に分析する。具体的には、1) 米国の日本における軍事的駐在と日本の防衛能力強化のための自助努力との非対称性の回復、2) 日本の防衛と東アジアの安定の維持という、日米安保条約の二つの役割の関連性、そして、3) 安保条約とそれに関連する秘密文書に具体化された二国間の安全保障関係の機能面、の三側面を考察する。

This paper examines the major changes and developments in the U.S.-Japan security relations during the Cold War era in terms of their structural "asymmetry" and functional "secrecy" as follows: 1) the restoration of asymmetry between the U.S.'s military presence in Japan and Japan's self-help to build up its defense capabilities; 2) the inter-relationship between the two major roles of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Cooperation and Security Treaty, namely the defense of Japan and the maintenance of stability in East Asia; and 3) the operational aspects of the bilateral security arrangements, embodied in the security treaty and also in its related confidential minutes.

**W**hy has Japan's strategic role in East Asia been so controversial for the last five decades? Is Japan truly a passive power in international security? Or will Japan re-emerge as a key geo-strategic power in the foreseeable future? The origins of these questions can be traced back to the evolution and coordination of U.S.-Japan security arrangements during the Cold War era in which the U.S. pressured Japan to increase its defense capabilities, but simultaneously restrained its autonomous defense policy. This study is based on the three major characteristics of U.S.-Japan relations:

- For the U.S.-Japan relations in the immediate post-World War II period, the "victor-loser" and "conqueror-conquered" structural and psychological asymmetry was central. The development of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty system, therefore, played a vital role as the "cork in the bottle" to contain the re-emergence of Japanese military expansionism. Thereafter, the two sides continued to face difficulty in developing a sense of equilibrium.
- Because of the wartime experiences and memories of Japanese military aggression, the question of Japan's rearmament remained highly sensitive to Japanese citizens as well as their Asian neighbors. Thus, so-called "anti-militarism" developed within Japan. The combination of the post-war culture of anti-militarism and Article 9 of the Constitution had been a key device to restrain Japan's rearmament strictly within its self-defense capabilities.
- Since the late 1960s, the U.S. increased its demand for Japan's further "burden-sharing" for its own defense as well as for the maintenance of regional security in East Asia, which escalated into the U.S.'s criticisms of Japan being a "free-rider" on the U.S.-Japan alliance. Hence, U.S. and Japanese officials continuously discussed the strengthening of Japan's defense capabilities within the U.S.-Japan security arrangements.

In essence, the U.S.-Japan alliance during the Cold War evolved as asymmetrical security arrangements between the United States as a military superpower which assessed merits of the alliance in terms of its international strategic deployment and Japan as a re-

emerging great economic power which perceived changes and developments in the alliance system principally in terms of its own national security.

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### Japan's Postwar Anti-Militarism

After the end of the World War II, U.S. vital interests in East Asia were to terminate the influence of Japanese militarism and to restore regional stability. During the occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952, General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied forces, thus sought to promote Japan's de-militarization and disarmament. On the other hand, many Japanese citizens felt victimized not only by the U.S.'s dropping of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which caused "nuclear allergy," but also by the wartime militarism, where there was no effective check-and-balance system of their own military. The vital issue in the post-war Japan, therefore, was how to prevent the military from becoming a grave danger again. Henceforth, there was a wide-spread powerful sentiment of pacifism among the general public in Japan. Article 9 of the 1947 Japanese constitution declared the renouncement of war as the sovereign right of the nation and prohibited "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential." The constitution thus became the essential legal constraint for Japan in military-security terms. It was against these conditions that the psychological boundary of the so-called "anti-militarism" developed among Japanese.<sup>1</sup> In particular, there were three major factors in Japan's post-war culture of anti-militarism: fear of the revival of wartime militarism leading to fully-fledged rearmament; fear of possible entrapment in Asian regional conflicts because of the U.S.'s military commitment; and unwillingness to play a larger role in military-security terms in parallel with its economic development. Equally important, the remaining deep fear and suspicion among Japan's neighboring states toward the potential danger of the revival of Japanese militarism and aggression played a critical role as a political and psychological brake to restrain Japan from pursuing any active course of rearmament.

### The Evolution of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty System

As the tensions of the Cold War increased during the late 1940s because of the division of Europe by the problem of Berlin and the escalation of the Chinese civil war between Nationalists and Communists, U.S. officials re-assessed the occupation policy in Japan, as a power vacuum which the Soviets' influence might flow into. On October 8, 1948, the Truman administration approved the National Security Council 13-2 (NSC 13-2) regarding the overall U.S. strategy toward Japan. George F. Kennan, then the head of the newly established Policy Planning Staff (PPS) in the State Department, suggested the five great industrial areas in the post-war world, consisted of the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, the Rhine region (Germany-France), and Japan.<sup>2</sup> Within this broader geopolitical framework, Kennan and PPS

<sup>1</sup> See Thomas U. Berger, "From Sword To Chrysanthemum," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4, (Spring 1993), pp.119-150.

<sup>2</sup> National Security Council directive 13/2 (NSC 13-2), October 7, 1948, and Policy Planning Staff 28 (PPS/28), "Recommendations With Respect to U.S. Policy Toward Japan," March 25, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, Vol. VI, The Far East and Australasia* (hereafter

officials recommended the ending of the occupation as a sanction against Japan, and the promotion of Japanese "economic recovery."<sup>3</sup> Their recommendation emphasized the importance of encouraging Japanese independent initiative. Kennan and his colleagues took a view that Japan could be rehabilitated as the cornerstone for the maintenance of stability in Far Eastern Asia. Accordingly, the Truman administration ordered General MacArthur to carry out the NSC 13-2 directive, which signaled the beginning of a "reverse course" for Japan's national security planning.

It was the outbreak of the Korean War between South Korea, supported by the U.S. led UN forces and North Korea, backed by the Sino-Soviet alliance in June 1950 that fundamentally shifted the U.S. occupation policy toward Japan.<sup>4</sup> MacArthur ordered the development of Japanese rearmament, but the Japanese were still very reluctant because of the remaining devastation of the war. In July 1950, pressured by the occupation authorities, the Japanese government finally authorized the establishment of the National Police Reserve (consisting of 75,000 men equipped with light weapons). Among senior U.S. officials in Washington, John Foster Dulles emphasized the significance of Japan's future role as a major ally in Asia. On September 8, 1951, as a result of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, Japan regained its independence. Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida signed the Peace Treaty as well as the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. In particular, however, the 1951 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty had two major structural problems: the lack of a reference to the U.S.'s obligation to the defense of Japan; and the inclusion of the provision which allowed the U.S. forces to intervene to resolve Japan's domestic disturbances, at the request of the Japanese government.<sup>5</sup> Thus, many Japanese felt that the security treaty compromised Japan's independence. Moreover, because of Article 9 of its Constitution, Japan was unable to take any overseas military operations for the defense of the United States. On the other hand, the United States benefited from the security treaty by obtaining the rights to dispose its land, air, and sea forces in and about Japan, which could be "utilized to the maintenance of the international peace and security in the Far East."<sup>6</sup>

Yoshida set the post-war fundamental framework of Japanese national security policy, the so-called "Yoshida Doctrine," namely the dependence on U.S. military protection under its nuclear umbrella and the concentration on economic reconstruction.<sup>7</sup> On the basis of this

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referred to as *FRUS*) (Government Printing Office: Washington D.C., 1974), pp.691-719. See also George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950*. (Boston: Little Brown, 1968), p.359.

<sup>3</sup> In February 1948, the Truman administration dispatched George F. Kennan to Japan. Kennan saw the weakness of Japanese economy as fertile soil for the growth of communism and felt that U.S. occupation policies had made Japanese society vulnerable to communist political pressures and may pave the way for the communist takeover of Japan. See Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950*, pp.376-396.

<sup>4</sup> The Korean War began on June 25, 1950 and ended with a ceasefire on July 27, 1953 without any permanent peace treaty. It started as a civil war between two provisional governments, North Korea and South Korea, competing for the control of the entire peninsula. Once the North launched a massive invasion of the South, it escalated into a multinational conflict between North Korea, supported by Soviet military advisers, aircraft pilots, and weapons, and later by the People's Volunteer Army (PVA) of the newly established People's Republic of China; and South Korea, supported by the United Nations, mainly consisting of the United States, Britain, Canada, Turkey, the Philippines and Colombia, together with detachments from many other states. See, for example, Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan Since the Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> *FRUS, 1951, Volume VI, vol. VI, Asia and the Pacific, Part II*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978), pp.857-858.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.1226-1227, and pp.1256-1261.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Masataka Kosaka, *Saisyō Yoshida Shigeru* (Tokyo: Chuoukouronsya, 1968); Narahiko Toyoshita, *The Conclusion of Japan-U.S. Security Treaty: Yoshida Diplomacy and Emperor Diplomacy* (Tokyo: Iwanamishinsyo, 1996); and Hara Yoshihisa, *Yoshida Shigeru* (Tokyo: Iwanamibunko, 2005).

doctrine, the Japanese government interpreted that Article 9 of the Constitution did not necessarily deny the right of self-defense inherent in any sovereign state.<sup>8</sup> In August 1952, the National Safety Force under the National Policy Agency (the former National Police Reserve) was established for the maintenance of domestic social stability. Finally, in July 1954, the Japanese Defense Agency, along with the Ground, Maritime, and Air Self-Defense Forces (SDF), was created strictly for the purposes of self-defense under civilian control.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, however, the Japanese government never clearly clarified the operational linkage between Japan's defense policy and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. For example, the May 1957 Basic Policy for National Defense described only the development of effective defense capabilities and Japan-US. security arrangements as the "basis" of Japan's defense policy and established a principle to develop "incrementally" the effective defense capabilities within the limitations necessary for self-defense.<sup>10</sup>

During the 1950s, there was increasing rivalry between the political right and left in Japanese domestic politics over the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the continued presence of American soldiers in Japan. In the middle, the moderate conservatives of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), who represented the business, rural and bureaucratic sectors, supported the Self-Defense Forces and the U.S.-Japan security relations. Without the revision of the postwar Constitution and with a minimum level of self-defense capability, they decided to depend on the United States for national security, which would enable Japan to focus on its economic recovery, a policy represented by Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida (1946-1947, 1948-1954). On the right, the nationalists supported the U.S.-Japan alliance, but sought to pursue Japan's stronger and autonomous military posture and greater independence from the United States. These assertive groups thus advocated the revision of the Japanese Constitution, which, they felt, was imposed upon Japan under the occupation in order to renounce Japan's sovereign right to wage war, a position represented by Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi (1957-1960). On the left, the Socialist and Communist Parties and the labor unions opposed the moderate conservatives and the right wing nationalists and criticized the Self-Defense Forces and the continued presence of U.S. forces in Japan for being unconstitutional. These progressive groups warned that because of the alliance with the United States, Japan might become drawn into a conflict peripheral to its national interests. Therefore, for example, the Socialists advocated that peace could only be ensured by Japan's complete neutrality in foreign affairs and that Japan should abrogate the Security Treaty with the United States. The United States supported pro-America moderate conservative politicians in the LDP to ensure the continuation of the U.S.-Japan security arrangements, especially the maintenance of its military bases throughout Japan.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, "Constitution and Right of Self-Defense," Defense Agency of Japan ([http://www.jda.go.jp/e/index\\_.htm](http://www.jda.go.jp/e/index_.htm))

<sup>9</sup> The Japanese government defined the three fundamental conditions for the execution of Japan's right of self-defense: the existence of an imminent and unrighteous armed attack against Japan; the lack of other relevant means to dispel it; and the minimum use of its defense forces. Defense Agency of Japan, "Basic Policy for National Defense" and "Other Basic Policies" ([http://www.jda.go.jp/e/index\\_.htm](http://www.jda.go.jp/e/index_.htm))

<sup>10</sup> Ibid; and *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXIII: Part I. Japan*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), pp.328.

<sup>11</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) secretly sent millions of dollars to the LDP in the 1950s and 1960s in order to help stabilize the LDP-led government and prevent a leftist government from emerging in Japanese politics. More particularly, before the May 1958 House of Representative elections, the Eisenhower administration authorized the CIA to provide limited covert financial support and electoral advice to a few key conservative politicians. Moreover, in 1959, the CIA sought to institute a covert program to split off the moderate wing of the leftist opposition with the anticipation that a more pro-America opposition party would subsequently emerge. See, for example, *FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol.*

## The Revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty

From August 1958 to January 1960, the Japanese government under the leadership of Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi initiated a series of official and private negotiations with the Eisenhower administration to revise the 1951 Security Treaty. In essence, Kishi sought to restore political, military and psychological asymmetry in U.S.-Japan power relations and pursued Japan's autonomy and its equal status in the U.S.-Japan security arrangements. The origins of Kishi's initiative could be traced back to the 1955 Dulles-Shigemitsu talks in which Kishi, as the Secretary General of the Democratic Party of Japan, accompanied the Hatoyama Cabinet's Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu to meet with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. During the talks (August 29 – September 1, 1955), Shigemitsu suggested revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty.<sup>12</sup> However, Dulles refused the revision pointing out that the timing was still premature because of Japan's limited military capabilities and insufficient responsibility for its national security and U.S.-Japan security relations. In particular, Dulles questioned Shigemitsu whether Japan would be able to send its troops to the defense of the U.S. in the case of an attack against Guam. This statement convinced Kishi that Japan needed to build up its own military capabilities further in order to overcome the remaining inequality in U.S.-Japan security relations and Japan's unilateral dependency on the United States.

The newly revised "Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security" (signed on January 19, 1960), however, still remained problematic. On the one hand, the treaty provided an explicit assurance of the U.S.'s obligation to the "security of Japan."<sup>13</sup> Its preface also declared the promotion of a much closer mutual economic cooperation, by which American and Japanese officials sought to neutralize the military aspect of the new treaty. On the other hand, the 1960 Security Treaty had included secret understandings between the two governments. Under the 1951 security accord, the U.S. had effective control over the use of its forces based in Japan without any need to obtain the permission of the Japanese government or even to consult with it. During the official negotiations from 1958 to 1960, the U.S. military sought to retain as much operational freedom as possible. In particular, the Defense Department had a strong interest in securing the deployment of nuclear weapons in Japan to support U.S. strategic deployment in Asia. Under the new security treaty, the U.S. government would have to consult with the Japanese government to obtain its permission for the use of U.S. forces based in Japan or major changes in their armament, such as the introduction of nuclear weapons. However, through confidential understandings of the consultation provisions, the new treaty also provided significant exceptions to that requirement. It was agreed that in the event of an attack against UN forces in South Korea, the United States could use its forces in Japan to meet this aggression without prior consultation with the Japanese government.<sup>14</sup> There was also the "transit" understanding which allowed the U.S. to move nuclear weapons in and out of Japan without prior consultation. The two governments agreed that prior consultation was required only if the U.S. government proposed to "introduce" or permanently "deploy" nuclear

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XXIX: *Part II. Japan*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), p.1; and "U.S. admits CIA gave LDP money in 1950s, 1960s," *The Japan Times*, July 20, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXIII: Part I. Japan*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), pp.90-118.

<sup>13</sup> "The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>). See also Yoshihisa Hara, *Japan in the Post War Era and International Politics* (Tokyo: Cyuoukouronsya, 1988); Idem, *The Structure of the U.S.-Japan Relations: To Examine the Revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty* (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1991); and Kazuya Sakamoto, *The Ties of Japan-U.S. Alliance: Security Treaty and the Search for Symmetry* (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> "U.S. Policy Toward Japan (Approved 11 June 1960)," Reversion Issues, 1959-1972, 0000036536, Freimuth Collection, Okinawa Prefectural Archives. See also *Asahi Shimbun*, August 30, 2000.

weapons in Japan. The confidential agreement carefully differentiated between the "introduction" of nuclear weapons and the "transits" of U.S. aircraft or naval vessels carrying nuclear weapons through U.S. bases in Japan and Japanese ports. Finally, in geopolitical terms, there was no clear definition of the term "Far East" as the principal geographical area of the application of the new treaty.

Within Japan's domestic political context, when the new security treaty was signed in January 1960, there was an outbreak of violent public demonstrations in Tokyo against the reactivation of Japan's security role. The main focus of the protests was on the fears that the new security treaty would further entangle Japan in America's Cold War conflicts in Asia and leave the Japanese government with little or no voice in crucial decisions affecting its own national security. The leftist and pacifist political groups, such as the Socialist and Communist parties, called for the abrogation of the Japan-US security treaty. Instead, they advocated that Japan maintain strict neutrality in international relations and pursue a just commitment to its Peace Constitution, which renounced war and prohibited all armaments, including the Self-Defense Forces. The general pacifist military allergy reached its peak against Kishi himself who was the former minister of the wartime Tojo cabinet.<sup>15</sup> Finally, Kishi was forced to resign as a result of his decision to push ratification through the Diet against vigorous political opposition by the left wing parties and widespread public demonstrations.

Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda, Kishi's successor, adopted a low-profile defense-foreign policy and put his priority on economic development. As a student of the Yoshida school, he advocated a policy of "doubling workers' incomes" within a decade. Behind the scene, however, the Kennedy administration and the Ikeda cabinet continued to exchange views on secret understandings of the consultation provisions of the new security treaty. On April 4, 1963, American Ambassador to Japan, Edwin Reischauer met the Japanese Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira and discussed the meaning of the "introduction" of nuclear weapons into Japan as used by the U.S. government.<sup>16</sup> The two sides reached an agreement on a confidential interpretation of "introduce" which would not include "transits" by warships and aircraft with nuclear weapons. Since the Reischauer-Ohira meeting, when senior Japanese officials have needed to use the term "introduce," they have used a Japanese translation, "mochikomou," which is more ambiguous and even includes the implication of "transit." Accordingly, a series of LDP governments have repeated the official line: "there have never been nuclear weapons introduced into Japan, including transits, when the U.S. did not offer a prior consultation." The Japanese leaders have thus sought to counter-argue the opposition's criticisms that U.S. carriers and submarines carry nuclear weapons into Japanese ports as well as to defuse their nation's anti-nuclear allergy. The United States had stated publicly that it would never act against the treaty's obligation for prior consultation or contrary to Japan's wishes, however it still moved its nuclear weapons confidentially.

<sup>15</sup> Nobusuke Kishi was one of the top officials who was involved in the industrial development of Manchukuo (created by Imperial Japan in Manchuria and eastern Inner Mongolia, 1932-1945). In October 1941, Kishi became the Minister of Commerce and Industry in Hideki Tojo's Cabinet (and held the position until October 1943). Kishi was imprisoned as a Class A War Criminal until 1948, however, he was never tried by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. When the Allied occupation's purge of members of the old regime was fully rescinded in 1952, Kishi resumed his political career. See Yoshihisa Hara, *Kishi Nobusuke* (Tokyo: Iwanamibunko, 1995); and Idem (ed.), *Kishi Nobusuke Syougenroku* (Tokyo: Mainichishimbunsha, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, August 30, 2000. A five-page telegram on this meeting (Document 374, Telegram 2335, From American Embassy in Tokyo to the Department of State, April 4, 1963, *FRUS*, 1961-63, Volume, XXII: Northeast Asia) is not declassified.

## The Nixon Doctrine and the Emergence of Multipolar World

During the latter half of the 1960s, the United States came to face the limitation of its open-ended military commitment as a result of the increasing stalemate in the Vietnam War. In the meantime, Japan re-emerged as a great world economic power. In January 1965 and November 1967, the Johnson administration held summit meetings with Prime Minister Eisaku Sato, Kishi's younger brother, pressing for Japan's further commitments to assist U.S.'s efforts in Indochina. However, the two governments faced a dilemma, as the Indochina operation made the U.S.'s use of its military bases on Okinawa of greater importance in order to continue the B-52 bombing missions. The highly publicized extensive U.S. use of its Okinawan bases only escalated Japanese political and public demands for the return of the islands, which U.S. officials perceived as "a growing source of potentially serious friction" in U.S.-Japan relations.<sup>17</sup>

In the meantime, the United States attempted to re-define its open-ended containment of the monolithic threat from the Communist bloc and promote "Vietnamization" of its military operations in Indochina.<sup>18</sup> On July 25, 1969, in Guam, President Richard M. Nixon announced major changes in U.S. policy in Asia, in what came to be known as the "Nixon Doctrine":

- The United States will keep its treaty commitments.
- We shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us, or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security and the security of the region as a whole.
- In cases involving other types of aggression we shall furnish military and economic assistance when required and as appropriate, but we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.<sup>19</sup>

Nixon's announcement, however, brought about anxiety among U.S. allies that the United States might withdraw from Asia.<sup>20</sup> The real strategic implications of the doctrine were that while continuing to provide nuclear umbrella, the U.S. would encourage its regional allies for further self-help to enhance their own national security.<sup>21</sup> In particular, the U.S. increased pressure on Japan to make a more active contribution to the maintenance of regional stability in East Asia for the post-Vietnam era.

<sup>17</sup> "Japan: Okinawa Reversion," p.1, attached to Memo from Sneider to Bundy and Brown, "Trip Report: Okinawa Reversion on the Front Burner" December 24, 1968, "Revelations In Newly Released Documents About U.S. Nuclear Weapons And Okinawa Fuel NHK Documentary," The National Security Archive (hereafter referred to as NSA), George Washington University. Under Article 3 of the September 1951 Peace Treaty with Japan, the U.S. had full administrative powers in the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa), including its military freedom of action from its large base structure, especially for "nuclear storage and delivery, and for the launching of military combat operation without consulting Japan." On the other hand, the U.S. government had also recognized that Japan retained "residual sovereignty" over the islands and was "publicly committed to return them at a time and under conditions as yet unspecified." During the Vietnam War, Okinawa had been used extensively in U.S. military activities, including training, logistics, and staging operations. As for the development of the Okinawa issue in U.S.-Japan relations, see Robert Eldridge, *Okinawa in Postwar U.S.-Japan Relations: The Origins of the Bilateral Okinawa Problem: Okinawa in Postwar U.S.-Japan Relations, 1945-1952* (New York: Garland Science, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Richard M. Nixon, "U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's: A Strategy for Peace," February 18, 1970, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), pp.40-41.

<sup>20</sup> "Nixon Plans Cut in Military Roles for U.S. in Asia," *The New York Times*, July 26, 1969.

<sup>21</sup> See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), chapter 9.

## The Okinawa Reversion

From 1969 to 1972, the Nixon administration and the Sato cabinet held a series of official and private negotiations on the reversion of the administrative right of Okinawa.<sup>22</sup> Among the major conflicting issues, the most complex were the U.S.'s conventional combat operations from its bases on Okinawa to continue the Vietnam operation and the treatment of nuclear weapons stored on the island. The Defense Department had a strong interest in retaining maximum free-use of the Okinawan bases for conventional military operations even after the reversion and also in securing the right to store nuclear weapons on Okinawa. However, the State Department estimated that since the Sato cabinet declared the Three Non-Nuclear Principles (the principles of not manufacturing nuclear weapons, not possessing them, and not allowing their introduction into Japan), it would be essential for Japan to materialize a nuclear-free reversion of Okinawa.<sup>23</sup> Hence, U.S. and Japanese officials negotiated public statements as well as private agreements to strengthen the U.S.-Japan security relationship.

At the November 1969 summit talks, President Nixon expressed to Prime Minister Sato his expectation for Japan to "develop a significant military capability" and "assume a greater responsibility for the defense of that area" in the future.<sup>24</sup> In particular, Nixon and Sato agreed that the United States and Japan shared interests in Korea and Taiwan. In the joint communiqué, Sato stated that the security of the Republic of Korea was "essential" to Japan's own security; and the maintenance of peace and security in the Taiwan area was "a most important factor" for the security of Japan.<sup>25</sup> The U.S. also obtained Japan's political support for the continuation of its military operation in Indochina "in bringing about stability." Finally, the two leaders confirmed together that the 1960 U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty would be extended for a considerably long period "beyond 1970."<sup>26</sup>

Behind the scene, moreover, Nixon sought to reach a secret agreement with Sato, through the "strictly confidential" backchannel negotiations between National Security Adviser Henry A. Kissinger and Sato's secret emissary Kei Wakaizumi, that "in time of great emergency" in the Far East, including Japan, the U.S. would be allowed the "re-entry of its nuclear weapons, and transit rights" into Okinawa.<sup>27</sup> Since the November 1969 summit,

<sup>22</sup> The two sides made major decisions on the timing of reversion during the minister-level negotiations for the November 1969 summit, followed by bureaucratic negotiations on technical and administrative aspects. On May 15, 1972, Okinawa was officially returned to Japan. See, for example, Fumihiko Togo, *Thirty Years of Japan-U.S. Diplomacy: Security Treaty, Okinawa, and Afterward* (Tokyo: Cyuukoubunko, 1989); and Masaki, Gabe, *What was the Reversion of Okinawa? : In the History of Japan-U.S. Negotiations in the Post War Era* (Tokyo: NHK Books, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Priscilla Clapp, "Okinawa Reversion: Bureaucratic Interaction in Washington, 1966-1969," pp.34-35, *Kokusaiseiji*, 1974. On December 11, 1967, Prime Minister Sato declared the principles in a speech to the House of Representatives. In private, however, Sato understood the impracticality of the three principles within the harsh reality of the Cold War. On January 14, 1969, in his talks with U.S. Ambassador to Japan U. Alexis Johnson, Sato criticized the Japanese defense authority for their lacking of "sophistication" in military matters and called the three principles "nonsense." State Department Cable from Johnson to Rusk, January 14, 1969, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-69, Box 2249, Record Group 59, National Archives.

<sup>24</sup> Memorandum of conversation (Memcon), November 19, 1969, 10:30a.m., p.8, Visit of Prime Minister Sato November 19-21, 1969 Vol. I (3 of 3), Box 924, VIP Visits, National Security Council Files (NSCF), Nixon Presidential Materials Staff (NPMS), National Archives (NA).

<sup>25</sup> *The New York Times*, November 21, 1969. Sato's speech at the National Press Club confirmed further that if the U.S. should need its bases in Japan to meet an armed attack on Korea or Taiwan, the Japanese government "would decide its position positively and promptly."

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* The 1960 Security Treaty included a clause which allowed either side to abrogate the treaty after 1970 with one year's notice.

<sup>27</sup> Kei Wakaizumi, *I would like to believe that there was no other policy option* (Tokyo: Bungeisyunju, 1994), chapters 13-15.



however, it has been publicly debated whether Japan secretly allowed the U.S. to re-introduce its nuclear-armed planes and ships. On the one hand, the Japanese government has repeatedly denied that the U.S. stored nuclear weapons in and transported them through Okinawa. On the other hand, as a "basic principle," the U.S. government has neither confirmed nor denied the presence of any nuclear weapons on its warships.<sup>28</sup>

### The Evolution of US-Japan-China Strategic Triangle

The U.S.-Japan security relations in the early 1970s saw a major strategic realignment. On July 6, 1971, at his speech in Kansas City, President Nixon introduced the concept of the five great powers' world consisting of the United States, the Soviet Union, Western Europe, China, and Japan.<sup>29</sup> Within this multipolar framework, the U.S. sought to coordinate its relations with the two communist giants, namely the promotion of détente, an easing of tensions, with the Soviet Union by U.S.-USSR arms control talks and the ending of twenty years of Sino-US. hostility by rapprochement with China.<sup>30</sup>

On July 15, 1971, President Nixon announced that as a result of Kissinger's secret trip to Beijing, he would accept an invitation to visit China in 1972 to hold summit talks with Chinese leaders. For Japanese officials, however, it had been a "nightmare" for many years to imagine that one day, Tokyo, which followed Washington in refusing to recognize Beijing as an official representative of China, would find itself by-passed by America's sudden reversal of its position.<sup>31</sup> Hence, the so-called "Nixon Shock (pronounced *shokku* in Japanese)" seriously damaged not only the trust and confidence between the two governments, but also the political credibility of Prime Minister Sato, who received the notice of the upcoming announcement only minutes in advance from U.S. Ambassador Meyer.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> In October 1974, the *Asahi Shimbun* reported that Admiral Gene La Rocque, retired Navy commander of several nuclear-capable warships, testified before the U.S. Congress' Joint Committee on Nuclear Energy [on September 10] that nuclear weapons had been brought into Japan: "My experience...has been that any ship that is capable of carrying nuclear weapons, carries nuclear weapons. They do not offload them when they go into foreign ports such as Japan or other countries. If they are capable of carrying them, they normally keep them aboard ship at all times except when the ship is in overhaul or in for major repair." *Asahi Shimbun*, October 7, 1974. In May 1981, former U.S. Ambassador to Japan Edwin O. Reischauer also admitted that a verbal agreement had been made during U.S.-Japan negotiations over the January 1960 Security Treaty that Japan would allow U.S. warships with nuclear weapons access to Japanese ports and territorial waters. Several former U.S. and Japanese officials, such as former Japanese ambassador to the U.S., Takezo Shimoda, confirmed Reischauer's interpretation that the question of temporary docking or transit through Japanese waters was outside the matter for prior consultation. In public, however, neither U.S. nor Japanese governments made clear their positions. *Mainichi Shimbun*, May 18, 1981; and *New York Times*, May 20, 1981.

<sup>29</sup> *The New York Times*, July 6, 1971. Critics argued that Western Europe and Japan were not yet able to defend themselves without U.S. help and that China still lacked substantial military and economic power resources. See, for example, Stanley Hoffmann, "Weighing the Balance of Power," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1972; and Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Balance of Power Delusion," *Foreign Policy*, No.7 Summer 1972.

<sup>30</sup> In January 1950, the Soviet Union and China became allies. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, however, the so-called Sino-Soviet rift emerged as a result of Beijing's challenge to Moscow's leadership within the communist bloc. The U.S. thus sought to maximize its leverage to exploit Sino-Soviet rivalry. See, for example, Robert. S. Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China 1969-1989* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), chapter 2.

<sup>31</sup> U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1984), pp553-554.

<sup>32</sup> Armin H. Meyer, *Assignment: Tokyo An Ambassador's Journal* (Indianapolis/New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1974) p.111-114. It was Nixon's political retaliation to Sato regarding U.S.-Japan trade friction. Nixon was provoked by Sato's unfulfilled commitment

From February 21 to 28, 1972, President Nixon visited China, held talks with Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai, and ended two decades of mutual hostility. In particular, the two sides agreed to include the so-called "anti-hegemony" clause, namely the code-name for an anti-Soviet tacit alliance, in the joint communiqué. The U.S. opening to China consequently pushed Japan to pursue its own more independent policy toward China. On September 29, 1972, new Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka visited Beijing, ended the state of war between the two old Asian rivals and negotiated Sino-Japanese normalization.<sup>33</sup> In the joint communiqué, Tanaka and Zhou declared their opposition to hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region. In consequence, the combination of the U.S. opening to China and Japanese opening to China brought about the Washington-Tokyo-Beijing strategic triangle against Moscow.<sup>34</sup>

In private, moreover, Nixon and Kissinger held talks with Mao and Zhou regarding the inter-relationship between Japan's future role in Asia and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. Together, U.S. and Chinese officials came to perceive that as a result of Japan's re-emergence as a great economic power, the U.S.-Japan security arrangements would play a restricting role to prevent any possible revival of Japanese expansive aspirations in Asia.<sup>35</sup> For example, during the July 1971 secret meeting with Zhou, Kissinger explained that: "our defense relationship with Japan keeps Japan from pursuing aggressive policies."<sup>36</sup> Kissinger thus warned Zhou that if Japan felt "forsaken" by the U.S., the emergence of a "strong" Japan would raise a question of "expansionism."<sup>37</sup> Finally, Kissinger sought to assure Zhou that the U.S. was not "using" Japan against China, as that would be "too dangerous."<sup>38</sup> During the February 1972 meeting with Mao, Nixon raised a vital question: "[I]s it better for Japan to be neutral, totally defenseless, or is it better for a time for Japan to have some relations with the United States?"<sup>39</sup> By emphasizing the danger of U.S. withdrawal from East Asia, Nixon sought to justify the continuation of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and simultaneously calm Chinese leaders' long-term concern about the revival of Japanese militarism: "the U.S. policy is opposed to Japan

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(which was made in the November 1969 summit) to achieve Japan's self-reduction of its textile exports to the United States.

<sup>33</sup> James Babb, *Tanaka: The Making of Postwar Japan* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), pp.77-78.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China 1969-1989*; and Sadako Ogata (Yoshihide Soeya translator), *Normalization With China: A Comparative Study of U.S. and Japanese Processes* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1992).

<sup>35</sup> The question of Japan's acquirement of nuclear weapons has been controversial for a long period of time. Hersh reports that during the November 1969 summit, Nixon and Kissinger "broadly hinted" to Sato that the U.S. would "understand" if Japan made a decision to "go nuclear," which made Japanese officials "confused." Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p.381. There have also been arguments among scholars of the so-called "neo-realism" that because of "structural pressures" from the shift of balance of power among the great powers in the international system, a great economic power like Japan will re-militarize and even possess nuclear weapons. See, for example, Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security*, Vol.18, No.2 (Fall 1993), p.55.

<sup>36</sup> Kissinger and Zhou, Memorandum of conversation (Memcon), July 9, 1971, Afternoon and Evening (4:35p.m.-11:20p.m.), p.42, China-HAK memcons July 1971, Box 1033, Foreign Policy Files (FPF), NSCF, NPMS, NA.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3, POLO I.

<sup>39</sup> Nixon and Mao, Memorandum of conversation, February 21, 1972, 2:50-3:55 p.m., p.6, CHINA - President's Talks with Mao & Chou En-lai February 1972, Box 91, Country Files (CF)-Far East, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files (HAKOF), NSCF, NPMS, NA. See also Richard M. Nixon, *RN* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), pp.560-564; and Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), pp.1057-1066.

moving in as the U.S. moves out, but we cannot guarantee that. And if we had no defense arrangement with Japan, we would have no influence where that is concerned.”<sup>40</sup> These statements were the foundation of the so-called “cork in the bottle” argument which would emerge widely in America during the 1980s. While increasing pressure on Tokyo for further “burden-sharing,” Washington sought to continue to “contain” Japan as an independent military player in regional and international security. Finally, the United States thus attempted to enhance Japan’s contribution to East Asian regional security only under its political control.

### **Toward the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation: “Burden-sharing” or “Free-riding”?**

In the late 1970s, the Japanese government took a series of initiatives to respond to the 1969 Nixon Doctrine’s pressure on Japan to take more responsibilities for its own defense policy as well as East Asian regional security.<sup>41</sup> In October 1976, the Miki cabinet introduced the National Defense Program Outline. It claimed that the “equilibrium” between the three great powers, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China, and the presence of the Japan-US. security relationship played a major role in maintaining stability in Asia, and in “preventing full-scale aggression” against Japan. In particular, the outline stressed the importance of maintaining the credibility of Japan-US. security arrangements and ensuring the effective functioning of the system, including Japan’s continuing dependence on the U.S. nuclear deterrence. Finally, the outline focused on Japan’s basic defense concept against “limited and small-scale aggression.” Accordingly, in November 1976, the Japanese government set the limit of its defense budget under 1% of GNP.<sup>42</sup>

In parallel with the drafting of the 1976 outline, the U.S. and Japan sought to institutionalize U.S.-Japan security relations. While U.S. officials sought to focus on contingencies in the Taiwan Strait and the Korean peninsula along the lines of the November 1969 Nixon-Sato communiqué, Japanese officials attempted to limit the final agreement to the defense of Japan against direct attack. In November 1978, the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation were announced as the first official approval of the joint military planning for the case of armed attack against Japan and situations in the Far East.<sup>43</sup> The guidelines defined broad responsibilities for the respective sides calling for joint exercises and training as well as cooperation in intelligence activities.

With regard to the decline of U.S. economic power in the post-Vietnam era, the Ohira cabinet introduced the concept of “Comprehensive Security” in terms of the maintenance of the Japan-US. security treaty supplemented by such factors as economic cooperation and cultural diplomacy. In July 1980, the study group under Ohira’s authorization issued the Comprehensive Security Strategy Report which stressed the increased importance of military-security issues for Japan.<sup>44</sup> The report argued further that for the first time in the postwar era,

<sup>40</sup> Memorandum of conversation, February 22, 1972, 2:10-6:00p.m., p.12, CHINA – President’s Talks with Mao & Chou En-lai February 1972, CF-Far East, NSCF, NPMS, NA.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Hidetoshi Sotooka, Masaru Honda and Toshiaki Miura, *Japan-U.S. Alliance Half Century: Security Treaty and Secret Agreement* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 2002), chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>42</sup> See Tsuyoshi Kawasaki, “Japan and two theories of military doctrine formation: civilian policymakers, policy preference, and the 1976 National Defense Program Outline,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Volume 1, Number 1, 2001.

<sup>43</sup> Defense Agency of Japan, “Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation,” November 27, 1978. ([http://www.jda.go.jp/e/policy/f\\_work/sisin1e.htm](http://www.jda.go.jp/e/policy/f_work/sisin1e.htm))

<sup>44</sup> Comprehensive Security Study Group, “Comprehensive Security Strategy,” cited in Hand M. Kristensen, “Japan Under the US Nuclear Umbrella,” Japan FOIA Documents, Nuclear Strategy Project, The Nautilus Institute. (<http://www.nautilus.org/archives/library/security/foia/japanindex.html>)

Japan had to consider seriously its self-help for defense and prepare for the effective function of Japan-US. military relations.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 marked the end of détente and brought about the so-called "Second Cold War" in which U.S. President Ronald Regan called the Soviet Union an "evil empire." The Sino-Japanese of Peace and Friendship Treaty of September 1978 and the Sino-US. full diplomatic normalization of January 1979 reinforced the Washington-Tokyo-Beijing strategic triangle against Moscow.<sup>45</sup> While Japan became the second largest economic power in the world, the United States increased its pressure on Japan to make further efforts to strengthen its defense policy. During the May 1981 summit, Prime Minister Susuki expressed willingness to promote the "division of roles" in the Japan-US. "alliance" for the defense of Japan and the maintenance of peace and stability in the Far East.<sup>46</sup> In particular, Susuki agreed to make efforts in the defense of the "sea lanes" 1,000 nautical miles west of Guam and north of the Philippines.

On the basis of his personal friendship with President Reagan as symbolized by their "Ron and Yasu" relationship, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone sought to expand the scope of the U.S.-Japan alliance beyond the existing bilateral framework in order to enhance Japan's national prestige in international security.<sup>47</sup> In the January 1983 summit, Nakasone described U.S.-Japan relations as a "community of common fate" and illustrated Japan as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>48</sup> In particular, the Nakasone Cabinet made a decision to supply arms technology to the United States as an exception to the Japanese governmental ban on arms exports. The Japanese government also increased its defense budget to over 1% of GNP during the early 1980s. In response to the Soviet military build-up, including a new ballistic missile submarine fleet in the Sea of Okhotsk, Japan regularly monitored the activities of the Soviet Pacific Fleet and aircraft in the waters and air space around Japan, and the Japanese defense budget increased by an average of 6%. Overall, Japan under Nakasone's leadership attempted to strengthen its self-help for defense policy in accordance with the development of its economic power.

During the late 1980s, however, the United States repeatedly claimed that there was an increasing gap between Japan's global economic influence and its contribution to regional and international security. Accordingly, tension on trade, including Japan's "high tech-competitive challenge," had become a major issue of conflict in U.S.-Japan relations.<sup>49</sup> Because of increasing frustration in U.S. Congress and business community, so-called "Japan bashing" emerged: the United States had criticized the Japanese market for being closed unfairly and even resorted to protectionism against Japan's greatly increasing exports to the American market. In essence, realizing the relative decline of its economic power, the United States had been increasingly irritated by Japan's economic and technological advancement in contrast to its limited commitment to regional and international security. Therefore, the U.S. government continuously demanded that Japan have greater burden sharing in military-security terms, and criticized Japan for being a "free-rider" in the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty system.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China 1969-1989*; and Ogata., *Normalization With China: A Comparative Study of U.S. and Japanese Processes*.

<sup>46</sup> Sotooka, Honda and Miura, *Japan-U.S. Alliance Half Century: Security Treaty and Secret Agreement*, pp.361-362.

<sup>47</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *Japan: Who Governs?* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), chapter 12.

<sup>48</sup> *The Washington Post*, January 19, 1983.

<sup>49</sup> Memorandum from Secretary of State Shultz to President Reagan, Visit of Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone, April 29 – May 2," April 21, 1987, p.1, *Japan and the United States: Diplomatic, Security, and Economic Relations, 1977-1992*, NSA.(<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB175/index.htm>)

Finally, the outbreak of the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf Crisis and War was a major turning point in re-defining the U.S.-Japan security relations and defense and security issues. On the one hand, U.S. officials hoped that Japan would find its own way to shoulder substantial "burden-sharing" in terms of "the risks as well as the costs."<sup>50</sup> In reality, however, Washington criticized the delay of Tokyo's financial assistance (13 billion U.S. dollars) to the U.S. led UN forces and its decision to deploy minesweepers to the Persian Gulf in the spring of 1991 following the liberation of Kuwait for being "too little, too late." In private, moreover, U.S. leaders felt that the Gulf Conflicts provided a crucial opportunity to assess the major "obstacles" in order for Japan to transform its "essentially passive approach" to "a mature foreign policy." These obstacles included the "enduring pacifist sentiment and distrust of the Japanese military," and the "gap between the desire for recognition as a great power and willingness to bear the associated risks and responsibilities."<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, the Japanese government sought to make more active manpower contributions to international security, a policy embodied by the June 1992 passage of the Peace-Keeping Operations Cooperation bill which, for the first time, legalized the Self Defense Forces' participation in UN peacekeeping activities.<sup>52</sup> The Gulf Conflicts and Washington's criticisms of Tokyo's slow response in the early 1990s became a long-term trauma for Japanese leaders regarding their thinking on Japanese foreign and defense policy for the rest of the decade, forcing them to question Japan's role in the post-Cold War world and re-define its roles in U.S.-Japan security relations.

## Conclusion

During the Cold War era, the asymmetry in U.S.-Japan relations was never overcome. The U.S.-Japan security arrangements not only restrained, but also simultaneously enhanced Japan's defense capabilities as well as its roles in East Asian regional security.

On the one hand, the U.S.-Japan Mutual Cooperation and Security Treaty played a significant role in containing the revival of Japan's expansionism, symbolized by the term "cork in the bottle." Equally important, Japan's defense policy was restrained by such major factors as the Article 9 of its Constitution, the postwar culture of anti-militarism and nuclear allergy, strict civilian control of the Self-Defense Forces, and the remaining fear and suspicion among its Asian neighbors for the revival of its wartime militarism and aggressions. On the other hand, the U.S. pushed Japan to take further responsibility in "burden-sharing" the costs as well as risks, which was reflected in Washington's criticism of Tokyo "free-riding" on the U.S.-Japan alliance.

The preservation of operational and functional secrecy in the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty by the exchange of confidential minutes played a crucial role for the United States in securing the continuing effective use of its military bases in Japan and the right to re-introduce and transfer nuclear weapons in cases of great emergency in East Asia. For Washington, its alliance with Japan was, perhaps, the most economical military security arrangement in its global strategic deployment because the U.S. could not maintain its effective physical presence and nuclear deterrence in East Asia without its bases in Japan. Finally, it was the maintenance of the U.S.'s centrality based on its worldwide military deployment and nuclear deterrent capabilities that provided essential credibility for the U.S.-Japan security relations.

<sup>50</sup> Ambassador Armacost to Secretary Baker, "GOJ Contributions and Gulf Crisis," January 16, 1991, p.3, *Japan and the United States: Diplomatic, Security, and Economic Relations, 1977-1992*, NSA.

<sup>51</sup> Ambassador Armacost to Secretary Baker, "The Gulf War: Impact on Japan and U.S.-Japan Relations," *ibid.*, March 14, 1991, p.1.

<sup>52</sup> Ichiro Ozawa, *Blueprint for a New Japan* (Tokyo, New York, London: Kodansha International, 1994), pp.114-115.

Japan attempted to pursue a more autonomous defense policy as well as equality in U.S.-Japan security arrangements. Thus, despite the constitutional, political, and cultural restraints over fully-pledged rearmament, Japan continued to institutionalize its defense policy and upgrade the military equipment of the Self-Defense Forces without substantially enlarging its scale in the eyes of the general public and the international community. In reality, however, there still remained a perception gap between Japan and its Asian neighbors in their respective views. Any initiative from Tokyo to increase its contributions to the maintenance of East Asian regional security could be perceived by the other Asian states as a sign of the revival of its expansionism.

Japan's re-emergence as a great economic power also caused tension within U.S.-Japan relations. There was a danger that the escalation of the U.S.'s continuing criticisms of Japan for being the "free rider" on the U.S.-Japan alliance could push Japan toward isolationism or unilateralism. In consequence, Washington's pressure might bring about the rise of a new nationalism within Japan leading Tokyo to a more active pursuit of an autonomous defense policy. Moreover, Japan's economic development during the 1980s brought about imbalance in U.S.-Japan trade relations. Thus, Japanese economic success became the cause of annoyance, suspicion and even jealousy in U.S.-Japan relations. In the end, Japan continued to face a dilemma between its increasing willingness to be recognized as a great power in world politics and its remaining reluctance to play a major role in military-security terms.

Finally, there remained a geopolitical and strategic perception gap between the United States and Japan: while Washington, as a military superpower, perceived its security arrangement with Japan within the broader framework of regional and global security, Tokyo, as a great economic power, saw the security treaty system with the U.S. as the fundamental framework of its defense policy. For Washington, its alliance system with Japan played "a major" role in its strategic alignment in Asia along with NATO in Europe. For Tokyo, the Security Treaty was "the most important" bilateral military security arrangement. Therefore, the remaining ambiguous balance between pressures and restraints often caused irritation in the management of the alliance system, importantly, however, this never led to a major crisis in U.S.-Japan relations as a whole. While pressuring Japan for further self-help to strengthen its own defense capabilities and increase its contributions to regional security, the U.S. never intended to allow Japan to go it alone in the pursuit of an independent and autonomous defense policy. In essence, the U.S. wanted Japan to be neither too weak nor too strong, and wanted any possibility for its autonomous defense policy contained within the framework of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. On the other hand, despite continuing U.S.'s pressure, Japan never intended to break the alliance system and thus sought to find a balance between its intentions and capabilities to restore asymmetry in the U.S.-Japan security arrangement. In the end, both enhancing and restricting factors over Japan's security role were under the political control of the United States. Hence, the two sides sought to preserve the alliance system despite its remaining structural and psychological asymmetry.

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