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Japan's Security Policy in the 21st Century – New Implications for an Old Strategy ?

Abstract

While Japan has been allying constantly with the United States during the Cold War, new conditions in a multi-polar world since the early 1990s and new threat perceptions – namely due to the awareness of the phenomenon called ‘global terrorism’ – have shaped Japan’s security perceptions. Based on the dichotomous approach of ‘fear of abandonment’ vs. ‘fear of entrapment’, this article seeks to clarify the motivations for Japan strengthening its alliance with the US after 2001 to counter-balance emerging threats in East Asia.

1. Introduction

After Japan’s defeat in the Second World War, Japan remained occupied by the US and was ruled by the Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP) under General MacArthur until regaining its full sovereignty in 1952 by signing the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Yoshida Shigeru, Prime Minister from 1946–1947 and 1948–1954, introduced the so-called Yoshida Doctrine, which involved focusing Japan’s domestic policy firmly on economic recovery and restructuring Japan’s industry, while giving up the country’s sovereign right of self-defense to the United States, i.e. SCAP under General MacArthur, and keeping a low diplomatic and foreign policy profile. Due to this policy, Japan experienced nearly four decades of economic prosperity. Later, as a consequence of Prime Minister Sato’s *nuclear principles* and Japan’s acceding to the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1969, Japan has since then depended on Washington’s nuclear deterrence capacity. However, due to these *nuclear principles*, Japan will neither possess nor allow production of nuclear weapons on Japanese territory. Furthermore, Japan will never permit the deployment of nuclear weapons on Japanese territory. As a result, in view of a potential nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula or in areas surrounding Japan, or with respect to counter the military expansion of China, expecting Japan to support a nuclear war or American measures to build up nuclear deterrence within Japan does not seem to be an option.¹

This paper will analyze Japan’s shifting security strategy in the 21st century with regards to systemic external determinants. Following the analytical approach of the neoclassical realist approach in International Relation Theory, this paper argues that Japan has been

¹ Kurt M. Campbell and Tsuyoshi Sunohara, ‘Japan: Thinking the Unthinkable’, in *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices*, Kurt Campbell, Robert Einhorn and Mitchell Reiss (eds.), Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2004, pp. 218–253.

following a ‘bandwagoning’ strategy to ensure its safety under the US security umbrella within a bipolar system during the Cold War. In view of a potential abandonment by the US after the end of the Cold War, Japan has been expanding instead of abandoning its alliance with the US by constantly shouldering more of the military and financial burden within the context of the bilateral alliance. Reviewing the theoretical approaches of international scholars such as Kenneth Waltz, Stephen Walt and Randall Schweller has supported this assumption.² Even though these three scholars differ slightly in their theoretical assumptions, all of them would support the thesis of Japan still following a bandwagoning strategy by allying with the US. Therefore this *fear of possible abandonment* after the Cold War, along with the benefit of reducing transaction costs by already institutionalized cooperation (as regime theory suggests), then led to a continuation of the bilateral alliance with the US and to the expansion of Japan’s military capacities during the 1990s and thereafter. To strengthen the bilateral alliance, Japan participated in cooperation with the US in various military conflicts – backed by UN mandates or simply legitimized by US foreign policy interests.³ This strengthening of the bilateral alliance by Japan’s pro-active participation in military actions after the 2000 mainly resulted in a fear of abandonment, a potential loss of external threat that de-legitimized the bilateral security alliance with the US. However, in East Asia, one could argue that the Cold War system did not end in 1989 in East Asia, for Japan was – and is – still facing a nuclear-armed China along with North Korea’s nuclear ambitions. As a result one could argue that the bipolar system of Cold War world order has not yet ended in East Asia. This paper will argue that Japan’s participation in the War on Terror offered Tokyo a convenient opportunity to strengthen its bilateral alliance with Washington in view of a militarily expanding China, regional territory disputes with various Asian neighbors and a potential nuclear-armed North Korea. Paper will thus analyze how the War on Terror and the emerging nuclear threat posed by North Korea, along with an economically and military expanding China have been shaping the Japanese defense strategy in the 21st century. By a deeper understanding of the constituent elements of these agents in Asia, such as threat perception, the security agenda and military development, this paper will help to assess these policies more precisely against this background.

2. Japanese defense policy during the 1990s – a prelude to change?

Japan’s foreign and security policy during the 1990s already marked a turning point regarding threat perception and participation in multilateral operations under the UN’s mandate. Having been one of the main financial contributors to the United Nations since the 1970s, Japan has always regarded an institutionally-based foreign policy as a key factors in its own foreign policy. However, with a newly structured international system,

² Kenneth Waltz, ‘The Emerging Structure of International Politics’, *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1993, pp. 44–79; Stephen Walt, ‘The Progressive Power of Realism’, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 4, 1997, pp. 3–43; Stephen Walt, ‘Why Alliances Endure or Collapse’, *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1997, pp. 174–196; Randall Schweller, ‘Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back in’, *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1994, pp. 72–107.

³ Robert Keohane (ed.), *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World of Political Economy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

the end of the Cold War and with new threats on the rise, Japan contributed to UN Peace Keeping operations for the first time by sending military personnel.⁴

Furthermore, Japan intensified its participation in international regimes in East Asia – namely in cooperation with other ASEAN states – enforcing a complementary approach to its foreign policy strategy.⁵

Nethertheless, even though Japan was evolving a more multilateral approach in its foreign policy, this did not mean Tokyo ded to abandon its bilateral alliance with the United States dating back to the post-war. Japan was rather forced to expand this alliance by various security amendments over time. As a matter of fact, Prime Minister Koizumi assured Washington of Japans full support for the US's War on Terror, following the September 11th attacks.

Given the increasingly threatening situation in East Asia, it is remarkable that the Japanese National Defense Guidelines, first drawn up in 1976, had not been adjusted since 1995 and only started to be implemented in 1997.⁶ On the other hand, this indicates how the new multipolar situation and the uncertain future of the bilateral alliance had been disturbing Japan during the 1990s. Also, this underlines Japan's extreme dependency on the US, and conviction that there was no alternative to this alliance.

Regarding bilateral relations between Tokyo and its neighboring countries, such as Vietnam, South Korea and also China, remaining within the bilateral alliance with the US whilst keeping military contributions to this alliance relatively low, Japan could lower the risk of provoking distrust concerning a potential remilitarization among these countries.⁷

The Gulf War in 1991 marked a turning point in Japan/US relations. When Washington asked Japan to contribute to Operation *Desert Storm*, constitutional restrictions and domestic political considerations generated distrust and irritations. The Japanese post-war constitution limits the options to deploy military personnel in overseas missions. The constitutions states that

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. (2) To accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized”.⁸

However, Japan acknowledges the right of collective self-defense. During the US mandated operation *Desert Storm* in 1991, Japan supported the operation both, financiallZ,

⁴ Katsumi Ishizuka, ‘Japan and UN Peace Options’, *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2004, pp. 137–157.

⁵ Christopher Hughes, *Japan's Re-emergence as a 'Normal' Military Power*, London: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 117.

⁶ Andrew Oros, *Normalizing Japan. Politics, Identity and the Evolution of Security Practice*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 176.

⁷ Richard Samuels, *Securing Japan. Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, London, 2007, pp. 2–3.

⁸ Japanese Ministry of Defense, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/dp01.html (accessed 15.05.2013).

with US\$13 billion *Jieitai* personnel⁹ and equipment to evacuate refugees from the Emirate of Kuwait along with six SDF minesweeper vessels.¹⁰ As a result, Japan was internationally isolated and Tokyo's foreign policy was labeled as 'checkbook diplomacy' since Japan refrained from participating in military actions to free Kuwait. The United States were especially disappointed by Japan's limited military support, commenting on Tokyo's slow actions as being too little, too late.¹¹ With respect to these experiences, one can easily understand the Japanese motivation to assure Washington of its wholehearted commitment in the vein of the *War on Terror* and the attacks on September 11th.

While international isolation and Washington's disappointment about Japan's reluctance to participate more actively in multilateral military operations created a clear *fear of abandonment* in Japan, it was not until Prime Minister Hashimoto's term in office that Japan tried to strengthen ties with Washington and create a new atmosphere of mutual trust among both countries. On April 17, 1996, Prime Minister Hashimoto and President Clinton signed the Japan/US Acquisition and Cross-Serving Agreement (ACSA, *niche-bei anzen hoshō kyōdō sengen*) which allowed the bilateral support of fuel and emergency supplies as well as rear-area support for US troops by the Japanese Self-Defense forces.¹² Further, it extended the tasks of the bilateral alliance to intelligence sharing, missile defense and a common China policy. Therefore, experts regard the Hashimoto-Clinton agreement of 1996 as the first wholehearted reassertion of the bilateral alliance since the end of the Cold War.¹³

In fact, this affirmation marked the first turning point in Japan's foreign policy and the strategic realignment of the bilateral alliance. The new ACSA agreement redefined the geographical implications of possible SDF deployment by stating that military operations are not necessarily limited to the Far East any more, but could be extended to areas, "where situations have arisen that threaten Japan's security".¹⁴ Moreover, due to the definition of the SDF's security tasks as protecting Japan's security in "areas around Japan" (*nihon no shūhen*, 日本の周辺), the new security guidelines of 1997 determine Japan's security interests as no longer being defined by certain geographic areas but rather by Japan's national interests that should be protected wherever they seem to be endangered.¹⁵ Along with these expansions, the new Defense Guidelines define Japan's security interest to be carried out mainly in the *Far East*, although they fail to explain to what geographic region this term applies to.

Even though a number of regimes have been established in East Asia to support regional integration, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) which includes 27 member states

⁹ The Japanese Self-Defence Forces are referred as *Jieitai* 自衛隊, in Japanese.

¹⁰ Oros, *Normalizing Japan...*, pp. 86–87.

¹¹ Yukio Okamoto, 'Japan and the United States: The Essential Alliance', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2002, p. 63; Jonathan Watts, 'Japan Revisits the Gulf War', *The Guardian*, 20.9.2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/worlddispatch.afghanistan> (accessed 30.04.2013).

¹² Bhubhinder Singh, 'Japan's Post-cold War Security Policy: Bringing Back the Normal State', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2002, p. 89.

¹³ Akiyama Masahiro, 'Japan's Security Policy toward the 21st Century', *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 143, No. 2, 1998, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

to strengthen bilateral relations and to reduce transaction costs in cooperating in areas such as collective defense policy, the success of International Organizations in East Asia remains limited. Since all three major agents of the East Asian security system participate in these regimes, Japan, China and South Korea are likewise prone to mutually block each other. For example, this was the case during the North Korean nuclear crises in 1998, the incidents in the Taiwan Strait, and the fallout Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo's proposal to establish multilateral cost guard cooperation.¹⁶

Besides, Japan has been successfully expanded its bilateral security cooperation with other countries such as Australia since 1996 and Singapore and Canada since 1997. Furthermore, Japan has established bilateral security dialogues with Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia during the 1990s, however, these forum for cooperation are rather informal and of low importance for Japan's security strategy.¹⁷

As shown above, during the 1990s Japan was looking for new ways to implement other security aspects in its national security agenda, apart from its omnipresent bilateral alliance with Washington. A key issue in this approach was the attempt to enhance Japan's international contribution to the UN budget as well as through participating in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations. Japan had been second only to the US in its financial support of the United Nations budget since 1988.¹⁸ Covering 19.629% (roughly US\$500 million) of the UN budget in 2001, Japan remained second, behind the US (with 22%) and ahead of Germany (with 9.825%).¹⁹ This trend remains consistent in the following years, in 2010, those three countries are still the top financial contributors to the United Nations. Japan is the second largest contributor to the United Nations Regular Budget with US\$264,959,464 (12.53%), while the US contributes US\$532,453,102 (22%) and Germany covering roughly 8% of the budget with \$139,648,230 (6.6%).²⁰ These facts illustrate the high value and importance Japan attaches to the purposes and functions of International Organizations as agents within the international system for promoting international peace and stability.

Also, triggered by the experiences of the Gulf War and the subsequent nationwide debate about a possible revision of Article 9 of the post-war constitution, the Japanese Diet passed the *Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations* in June 1992 extending Japan's participation in UN Peace Keeping Operations.²¹ This bill expanded Japan's means of cooperation in UN Peace Keeping

¹⁶ Toshi Yoshihara, 'Japan's Emerging Strategic Posture in Asia: Headed Toward Leadership or Rivalry?', in *Strategic Stability in Asia*, Amit Gupta (ed.), Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, pp. 59–86.

¹⁷ Japanese Ministry of Defense (ed.), *Heisei 17 nenban. Nihon no bōei: Bōei hakusho* [The Defense of Japan 2005: Defense White Paper], Tōkyō: Gyōsei, 2005, p. 187.

¹⁸ Tsuneo Akaha, 'Japan's Comprehensive Security Policy: A New East Asian Environment', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 1991, p. 329.

¹⁹ Peter Opitz, *Die Vereinten Nationen. Geschichte, Struktur, Perspektiven* [The United Nations. History, Structure, Perspectives], Dachau: Bayerische Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung (ed.), Dachau: Hofmann-Medien Druck und Verlag GmbH, 2002, p. 30.

²⁰ Marjorie Ann Browne and Luisa Blanchfield, *United Nations Regular Budget Contributions: Members Compared, 1990–2010*, Congressional Research Service (ed.), 2013, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30605.pdf> (accessed 24.08.2013).

²¹ Toshiya Nakamura, *Transforming Japan's Security Policy: Diplomacy and Domestic Politics*, Melbourne: Asian Studies Association of Australia, 2008, p. 10.

missions, humanitarian relief operations, election monitoring etc²² as long as the following 'Five Principles' are met:

1. Agreement on the ceasefire shall have been reached among the parties to the conflicts.
2. The parties to the conflict, including the territorial states, shall have given their consent to deployment of the peacekeeping force and Japan's participation in the force.
3. The peacekeeping force shall maintain strict impartiality, not favoring any party to the conflict.
4. Should any of the above guideline requirements cease to satisfy the government of Japan, she may withdraw its contingent.
5. Use of weaponry shall be limited to a minimum necessary to protect personnel's lives.²²

Where there is the necessity to expand the tasks of SDF personnel in UNPK operations that are not covered by the UNPKO-Law, the Japanese Diet has to decide individually on the possible broadening of these boundaries.²³ Based on this law, Japan participated in UN Peace Keeping Operations in Afghanistan 2001, Angola 1992, Bosnia (1998 and 2000), Cambodia (1992–93), El Salvador (1994), the Golan Heights (1996), Iraq (2003), Kosovo (2001), Mozambique (1992–94), Rwanda (1994) and Timor-Leste (2001–2004) with 4633 SDF members in total.²⁴ Japan participated in the UN disaster relief mission in Indonesia as part of the humanitarian aid for the victims of the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, deploying 1000 SDF members, three rescue vessels, five helicopters and two C-130 military transport aircrafts.²⁵

Even though this increase in participation in UN Peace Keeping Operations during the 1990s is remarkable, this cannot be seen as a fundamental change in Japan's security agenda. There are probably several reasons for this: on the one hand, participating in UNPKO ~~meant an opportunity for Japan~~ to act outside of the bilateral alliance with the United States and still bear responsibility on an international basis. Second, contributing to UN missions, not only financially but also with military equipment and SDF personnel, helped Japan to regain its international reputation, especially among its East Asian neighbors. However, this shift towards a more proactive foreign policy was rather negligible compared to Japan's participation in the "War on Terror", in particular by carrying out counterterrorism missions in the Indian Ocean in 2001.

In any case, the extended participation in UN missions during the 1990s clearly indicate Tokyo's attempt to strengthen the US–Japan Alliance, caused by a fear of the potential abandonment by Washington after the end of the Cold War and the demise of potential direct threat posed to Japan by Soviet nuclear capacities. However, Japan's participation

²² William Middlebrooks, *Beyond Pacifism. Why Japan Must Become a 'Normal' Nation*, Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008, p. 41.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Japanese Foreign Ministry (ed.), A record of Japan's International Peace Cooperation Activities based on the International Peace Cooperation Law can be found on: www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/pko/pamph2005-2.pdf (accessed 31.05.2013).

²⁵ Toshi Yoshihara, 'Japan's Emerging Strategic Posture in Asia...', p. 73.

in UN peace keeping cooperation was not uncontroversial. In fact, these missions not only conflicted with the Japanese constitution, but they also did not correspond with traditional geopolitical assumptions among Asian countries, in which UN peace keeping operations were considered to undermine the sovereignty of those countries in which UN troops were deployed to settle conflicts.²⁶ Acharya claims this resistance to UN peace keeping operations is deeply rooted in Asia's geopolitical culture, in which certain artifacts from the Cold War era still remain and determine the awareness of the principle of non-intervention in those countries.²⁷

Irrespective of the constraints and obstacles United Nations peace keeping operations pose, Japan still regards international organizations as of fundamental concern to its foreign policy – despite its bilateral alliance with Washington.

American amendments to the legal framework of the bilateral alliance, newly introduced laws and emerging threats towards the end of the decade, such as the 1998 North Korean missile test, established a turn in the bilateral alliance. A fundamental result of this turn was Japan's foreign policy after the attacks of September 11th when Prime Minister Koizumi assured military support to the US and Japan participated in the anti-piracy Mission in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden for the first time fighting terrorism within a multilateral alliance that did not perform as a humanitarian mission. In fact, this participation in oversea missions with MSDF combat vessels marked another turning point in evolving a more pro-active approach in Japan's foreign policy, and happened several times in the years following.²⁸ The participation in US 'War on Terror', as presented in MSDF's participation in Missions in the Indian Ocean can be interpreted as an attempt to strengthen the bilateral alliance with the US with regards to North Korea as a potential emerging nuclear power and due to Japan's experiences following the Gulf War in 1990/91 when Japan declined the US any military support. Following the assumption of Stephen and Randall Schweller, one could interpret Japan's participation in the 'War on Terror' as an attempt to strengthen Tokyo's 'bandwagoning' strategy via Washington and to demonstrate the ability to share responsibility within the bilateral alliance. As a result, the bilateral alliance would create trust among the two allies and ensure US support for Japan and protection under Washington's nuclear deterrence umbrella, since a nuclear threat posed by North Korea became more and more relevant to Japan after 1998.²⁹

Therefore the emergence of a more flexible and more proactive Japanese Self-Defense Force participating in the War on Terror was not completely unforeseen, but rather a further development of a strategy that had already been introduced in the 1990s.

²⁶ Satomi Ho, 'Japan's Human Security Policy: A Critical Review of its Limits and Failures', *Japanese Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2008, pp. 106–107.

²⁷ Amitav Acharya, 'Redefining the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Intervention', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 3, 2001, pp. 378–379.

²⁸ Japanese Ministry of Defense (ed.), *Heisei 18 nenban. Nihon no bōei: Bōei hakusho* [The Defense of Japan 2006: Defense White Paper], Tōkyō: Gyōsei, 2006, p. 74; *Japan Times* (22.06.2013), 'MSDF to join drill in Gulf of Aden', <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/06/22/national/msdf-to-join-drill-in-gulf-of-aden/#.UgJ5AX9GNqM> (20.0.2913) (accessed 1.08.2013).

²⁹ Stephen Walt, 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power', *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1985, pp. 3–43.

3. Regional threats and nuclear deterrence – Japan’s emerging military cooperation

As described above, Japan’s participation in the bilateral alliance was mainly financial and logistical during the Cold War. Since the Cold War had ended, Japan intended to strengthen the alliance and to assure its commitment to the US due to a *fear of abandonment*, since the direct threat posed by the Soviet Union had vanished. The expansion of the legal framework of the bilateral alliance and Japan’s participation in multilateral U.N. missions had already been introduced during the Cold War. For instance, on June 19, 1995 Japan passed the United Nations Peace Keeping Operation Law (*kokusai rengō heiwa iji katsudō nado ni taisuru kyōku ni kansuru hōritsu*) and introduced the National Program Defense Guidelines defining Japan’s long-term security strategy, to be revised every ten years. (MOD 2005-83) Also, new amendments to the US-Japan joint cooperation were introduced with regards to a possible military crisis that might occur in the Taiwan Strait. These amendments lowered the restrictions on SDF personnel arms and equipment.

Additionally, Japan’s more proactive part in supporting the United States was further backed-up by the Armitage-Nye report in 2000, increasing Japan’s defense responsibilities within this framework.³⁰ These developments must be taken into account when investigating the developments of Japan’s security policy development after 2001 because they illustrate that the growing strategic implications for the Japan-US cooperation and the new definition of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces did not result from the change in global security architecture after September 11, 2001. A closer look reveals that a fear of abandonment and Japan’s experience of international isolation after the Gulf War motivated the country to engage in multilateral alliances more actively. To this end, Japan introduced new laws to make participations in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations possible and to expand the limitations of SDF personnel. On the other hand, it was exactly due to these legal expansions that Japan participated in US War on Terror as a strong ally. To conclude, Japan’s introduction of the UNPKO Law and new legal expansions to be able to send military personnel to international conflict zones marked not only a first step in Japan’s pro-active security strategy but also laid the foundation for its participation in out-of-area-missions after 2001, such as the Mission in the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean 2001–2005, and the multilateral anti-piracy mission in the Horn of Africa.³¹

In fact, under the new Security Guidelines of 1995/97, the expansions of the UNPKO law, along with the introduction of Japan’s security responsibility as defined by the ‘surrounding areas’ (*nihon no shūhen*) demonstrate that the strengthening of the bilateral alliance, mainly the military participation of Japanese forces within operations carried out by the US after 2001 were not all surprising, since Japan had already expanded its military contributions to International Missions during the 1990s.³²

³⁰ Emma Chanlett-Avery, *The US–Japan Alliance. Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33740.pdf>, 2011, pp. 3–4 (accessed 20.05.2013).

³¹ Geoffrey Till, ‘Chapter Four: Non-traditional missions’, *Adelphi Series*, Vol. 52, No. 432–433, 2012, pp. 163–216; Japan Times, *Japan Times* (22.06.2013), ‘MSDF to join drill in Gulf of Aden’, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/06/22/national/msdf-to-join-drill-in-gulf-of-aden/#.UgJ5AX9GNqM> (accessed 20.07.2013).

³² Oros, *Normalizing Japan...*, pp. 86–87.

These developments were in fact direct results of structural changes within the bilateral alliance that were introduced during the 1990s to strengthen Japan's role as a strategic partner in East Asia.

Beginning in 2001, the Koizumi administration passed three laws to reinforce Japan's position within the bilateral cooperation system with the US the *Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law* (テロ対策特別措置法) by October 2001, the law on *Japan's International Peace Cooperation Activities based on the International Peace Cooperation* (国際連合平和維持活動等に対する協力に関する法律) and the *Act on Special Measures concerning Humanitarian Relief and Reconstruction Work and Security Assistance in Iraq* (イラクにおける人道復興支援活動及び安全確保支援活動の実施に関する特別措置法).

For instance the *Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law* states that

(1) The Government of Japan (GOJ) shall implement Cooperation and Support Activities, Search and Rescue Activities, Assistance to Affected People and other necessary measures (hereinafter referred to as 'Response Measures') in an appropriate and swift manner, thereby contributing actively and on its own initiatives to the efforts of the international community for the prevention and eradication of international terrorism, and ensuring the peace and security of the international community including Japan.

(2) These measures must not constitute the threat or use of force.

(3) These measures shall be implemented in the following areas:

– Japan's territory

– Following areas where combat is not taking place or not expected to take place while Japan's activities are being implemented.

The high seas, including the exclusive economic zone stipulated in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and airspace above

Territory of foreign countries (Implementation shall be limited to cases where consent from the territorial countries has been obtained.)

(...)

4. Measures To Be Taken (...)

(1) Cooperation and Support Activities

Cooperation and Support activities are the provision of materials and services, convenience and other measures implemented by Japan in support of Foreign Forces.

Relevant government agencies, including the Self-Defense Forces, shall implement these activities.

The contents of materials and services that the Self-Defense Forces provide are supply, transportation, repair and maintenance, medical services, communications, airport and seaport services, and base support. (Nonetheless, the Self-Defense Forces shall not undertake the supply of weapons and ammunitions and shall not supply fuel or conduct maintenance on aircraft preparing to take off on military sorties, or undertake the land transportation of weapons and ammunitions in foreign territories.)³³

³³ For detailed text of the The Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law see: Cabinet of the Prime Minister (ed.): http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/policy/2001/anti-terrorism/1029terohougaiyou_e.html (accessed 10.08.2013).

The contents of materials and services that the Self-Defense Forces provide in implementing Search and Rescue Activities are supply, transportation, repair and maintenance, medical services, communications, billeting and decontamination. (Nonetheless, the Self-Defense Forces shall not undertake the supply of weapons and ammunitions, supply fuel or conduct maintenance on aircraft preparing to take off on military sorties, or undertake the land transportation of weapons and ammunitions in foreign territories.)

This was mainly for the same reason that the UNPKO laws were passed in the 1990s to expand the option for SDF personnel in peace missions, that is the fear of potential abandonment or being regarded as reluctant to share responsibilities within the alliance.

Revising the 1995 security guidelines provided a possibility for a more comprehensive support of US troops, and therefore established a new framework for Japanese security policy within this alliance, ending the crisis of legitimacy it had experienced after the end of the Cold War. It was not until the Taepedong incident in 1998 that the necessity for US troops and missile deterrence to ensure the security of Japan could no longer be ignored.

As a direct result to these developments the *Japan-US Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement* (ACSA, *Nichi-bei buppin ekimu sōgo teikyōkyōtei* 日米物品役務相互提供協定) was revised, now providing the legal basis for refuel missions and rear area support during peacetime and in emergency situations.³⁴ The ACSA included further expanding SDF tasks to the evacuation of Japanese citizens from abroad, use of armed force for self-defense in rear area missions and the engagement in *search-and-rescue*-missions to free US soldiers.³⁵ With this in mind, the Japanese participation in providing rear-area support for US troops in Iraq in 2003 and engaging in post-war reconstruction can only be regarded as a contribution to strengthen the bilateral alliance. When Japan engaged in providing rear-area support to US troops in Iraq and in reconstructing the country in the aftermath of the war, the US scholar Daniel Kliman, senior advisor to the US Marshall Fund and author of *Japan's Security Strategy in the Post-9/11 World*, sees this behaviour mainly as an attempt of Japan to strengthen the bilateral alliance with respect to the potential rising nuclear threat posed by North Korea.³⁶ Since Tokyo has never declared any particular strategic interest in Iraq – except perhaps for economic and investment possibilities – it should be assumed that Japan's participation in restructuring post-Iraq and in providing military rear area supply during the US War in Iraq in 2003 was an attempt to strengthen the bilateral alliance with Washington. Ishibashi comes to a similar conclusion assuming that Japan's support in Iraq is to be regarded as a response to US requests in order to strengthen the security cooperation so the US will support Japan in case of an attack from North Korea. Ishibashi remarks that perceptions of threat among the Japanese population from the DPRK and Iraq are different. Ishibashi shows in his survey that the Japanese perception of threat from North Korea exceeded the importance of Japanese security interests in the Middle East, being important by 74% of the

³⁴ Singh, 'Japan's Post-cold War Security Policy...', p. 89.

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ Daniel Kliman, 'Japan's Security Strategy in the Post-9/11 World. Embracing a New Realpolitik', in *The Washington Papers*, Walter Laquer and Donna Spitler (ed.), Westport, London: Praeger, 2006, p. 139.

exchanges.⁴¹ Prime Minister Koizumi passed the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law on October 29, 2001. This step was actually far beyond President Bush's expectations, who had only asked Japan to support the War on Terror financially by contributing approximately US\$40 million and engage in diplomatic and intelligence cooperation. Instead, implementing the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law Japan was now able to engage in further rear area support missions and medical support from SDF units.⁴²

This might have been caused by Japan's urge to demonstrate its ability to share responsibility at an international level. In addition, in 2007 the *Armitage-Nye Report* on the US–Japanese security alliance mentioned the firm desire of the Bush administration to deepen this alliance and the need to encourage Japan to consider itself as the 'Great Britain of Asia' led by the example of the Anglo-American alliance.⁴³

Further, only all of the conflicts Japan were engaged as a form of contributing to the alliance had been security concerns to Washington and less vital for Japan's own security posture. This can only be explained by the fact that the fear of potential international isolation experienced during the 1990s has influenced Japan's turn towards a more proactive *hedging strategy* in its foreign policy. This fear of abandonment accumulated together with the growing risk to Japan posed by a potentially nuclear-armed North Korea.

Since President Bush was focussed on the Middle East after 2001, Tokyo was desperate to assure Washington that Japan remained a reliable partner in East Asia. Also, not only did North Korea pose a potential risk to Japan, but also an economically and military expanding China was on the rise to become a regional hegemon in East Asia and conflicts with Japan over disputed territory were already indicated.

Having said that, the decision to send 600 SDF ground troops to South Iraq to engage in reconstruction and medical support between 2004 and 2008 was merely a contribution to the security alliance and to President Bush in particular, due to the fear of potential abandonment. After all, since Japan is still relying on its three nuclear principles with regards to the North Korean nuclear threat, it has no other option but to rely on the US security umbrella and its nuclear deterrence.⁴⁴ However, it is questionable whether this strategy will pay off. There are two reasons for this. One the one hand President Obama announced the US's 'pivot to Asia', turning the focus of American foreign policy towards East Asia which could make Japan an even more important partner to the US.⁴⁵ However, Obama has announced a full troop deployment for US soldiers from Okinawa to Guam and Hawaii in April 2013 and is still planning to close down the US military base in Futenma and deploy the troops to the coast of Haneko, Nago by 2014. Due to these restructuring plans along with the ongoing financial and economic crises in the US which will also have an impact on US military and oversea missions,

⁴¹ Hughes, *Japan's Re-emergence...*, p. 125.

⁴² Ishizuka, 'Japan and UN Peace Options', pp. 137–157.

⁴³ Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye, *Getting Asia Right through 2020*, Washington DC.: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2007.

⁴⁴ Tomohiko Shinoda, 'Costs and Benefits of the US–Japan Alliance from the Japanese Perspective', in *The US–Japan Security Alliance: Regional Multilateralism*, Takashi Inoguchi, G. John Ikenberry and Yoichiro Sato (eds.), New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pp. 26–27.

⁴⁵ *Japan Times*, 17.02.2012.

the future of US military bases in Japan remain uncertain. ⁴⁶ does the role Japan will play in the bilateral alliance regarding the announced *pivot*. ⁴⁷ In the end, the major shift announced in US' ⁴⁸ foreign policy by turning the focus to *Pas Asia* might be just another way of passing over the military burden to the US's *allies*, such as Japan, South Korea and the Philippines.

On the other hand, the election of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in December 2012 may indicate a possible return to a much more reliable and predictable Japanese foreign policy than under the previous Hatoyama administration. ⁴⁷ For instance, one major step in changing Japan's foreign policy was the ending of the SDF mission in the Indian Ocean by the Hatoyama cabinet. This action had raised doubts about Japan's contribution to the bilateral alliance as a strong partner in Washington. ⁴⁸ Along with a fast economic recovery, Prime Minister Abe has announced that a revision of the constitution, particularly Articles 9 and 96, is a matter of personal importance ⁴⁹ to him. A first step was his announcement to revise article 96 of the Japanese constitution, which states that a two-thirds majority of the Diet is needed to change the constitution. Removing this hurdle would bring Abe a huge step closer to achieving constitutional revision, and therefore to change article 9. ⁴⁹

While Abe has succeeded in promoting the Japanese Defense Agency to a Ministry of Defense, and therefore in shifting Japanese defense policy towards a more proactive direction, he failed in establishing a more profound legal basis for the deployment of Japanese Self-Defense personnel in missions not backed up by a UN mandate. ⁵⁰

In March 2003, the United States and Japan worked ⁵¹ to revise the conditions of the bilateral alliance and extend their tasks on a global basis, which then led to the Joint Summit on US-Japanese Defense (*nichi-bei bōshunō kaidan*, 日米防首脳会談) in November 2004. On this occasion US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Japan's Minister of State for Defense Ono Yoshinori agreed to deepen the cooperation in the ~~field of~~ security policy field. ⁵¹ As a result of this meeting, 11,300 Japanese and US troops participated in a joint military exercise in November 2004, aiming to deepen mutual understanding in the field of strategic coordination and synchronizing troop units. ⁵²

The changes described in the previous chapter are to be regarded in the context of a military expanding China and potential ⁵² near buildups in North Korea, which have forced Japan into a counter-balancing strategy and therefore promoting ⁵² a higher dependence on and alliance with the US. Japan's China policy will be subject of the next section in this paper. Along with this, the encouraged expansion of Japanese security issues in more

⁴⁶ *The Japan Times*, 'Armitage: Futenma, Japans responsibility' 13.04.2013, www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/17/national/armitage-futenma-japans-responsibility/#.UaIjOdhc3kU (accessed 17.04.2013).

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁹ *The Japan Times*, 'Politicians Open Debate on Article 96', 10.05.2013, www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/10/national/politicians-open-debate-on-article-96/#.UaJ519hc3kU (accessed 19.05.2013).

⁵⁰ Chanlett-Avery, *The U.S.–Japan Alliance...*, p. 4.

⁵¹ Japanese Ministry of Defense (ed.), *Heisei 17 nenban...*, p. 137.

⁵² Ibid., p. 139.

distant areas, especially under Prime Minister Koizumi, dramatically increased the risk of Japan to be entrapped in US security concerns dramatically. Therefore, a deeper analysis of the transformation of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces from a protecting army into a special boarding unit (*tokubetsu keibitai*, 特別警備隊) will demonstrate that Tokyo's security concerns in the beginning of the 21st Century are deeply influenced by a changed perception of the threat from China and North Korea. While these perceptions concerning North Korea are leading to a strategy of closer alliance with the US, increased economic interdependency with China hinders Japan from simply employing a strategy of containment.

3.2. Japan's quest to counterbalance China in the East Asian security architecture

With a militarily strengthening China on the rise, Japan has become obliged not only to reconsider its strategic position within the bilateral alliance but also to build up its own military capacity irrespective of US–Japanese cooperation. Therefore, when investigating Japan's recent security policy perceptions, the next chapter will take a closer look at how consistent these perceptions are with Tokyo's long-term security strategy and Japan's part within the bilateral alliance.

In fact, Japan's security policy in East Asia on the one side and the rising economic interdependency between Japan and China on the other, at times, present a strange picture. This appears to be even more disturbing since China seems to be the key growing market not only in Asia but worldwide. Therefore, this paper seeks to explain, how Japan could interact with China in matters of low politics while still pursuing a counter-balancing-strategy against Beijing along with a close bandwagoning approach towards Washington in its foreign policy.⁵³

At a second level, this paper will take a closer look at maritime security in the Asia Pacific region, not only because of Japan and China's territorial disputes with their neighbors, but also because leading naval scholars regard the sea in general as the most important security issue in this century.⁵⁴ However, one need not necessarily take President Obama's announcement of the US' 'pivot to Asia' and the 'new' focus on the East Asian region as the prelude to a new 'East Asian century', for the following reasons.

First of all, the US' pivot to Asia can be firmly understood as a *reaction* to China expanding its maritime and military strength in the Pacific region. Therefore the pivot resembles rather a reassurance of US protection its allies than a genuine new approach. This is the case in particular for Japan, South Korea and several South-East Asian countries with whom China is currently carrying out territorial disputes (for example Vietnam).

Second, the 'pivot' presents a political doctrine that is quite consistent with US foreign policy in East Asia than actually presenting a genuine new shift. In fact, with territorial claims on the rise, there have been several incidents between Chinese and Japanese vessels that could have triggered an armed conflict. Additionally, the 'pivot' can be interpreted as reaffirming the bilateral alliance with Japan due to the US' policy of neutrality in past disputes such as the Senkaku / Diaoyu Island conflict. According to this strategy, the US is aiming for a closer strategic defense network with security partners in the region and is

⁵³ Derek McDougall, 'Response to «Rising China» in the East Asian Region: Soft Balancing with Accommodation', *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 21, No. 73, 2012, p. 1–17.

⁵⁴ Eric Grove, 'The Sea and Global Security', presentation on the 15th Annual Strategic Studies Conference, University of Calgary, Calgary. 01.03.2013.

trying to establish a regional security regime, based on rules and principles as well as shared values.

In line with this approach, Obama is not only seeking to deepen the alliance with Japan, but is also seeking to establish and carry out security partnerships with South Korea, Australia and Thailand as well as with the rising economic powers in the region such as India, Malaysia or Singapore.⁵⁵

Several reasons for Obama's shift towards Asia might be identified. The most obvious seems to be the potential share of the burden that is inevitable in regards to the US' current fiscal situation and the ongoing global recession. Further, President Obama has to fulfill the promises made when running for office, in particular to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and to focus more on domestic issues than international politics. After all, the current situation in the US recalls the Clinton administration, when the only goals in domestic politics were to create jobs and bring the economy back on track.

The growing war-weariness of the American people and the US economy's growing dependency on Chinese markets leaves little opportunity but to adopt a moderate counter-balancing strategy, not only for Japan, but also for the US. Washington needs to strengthen economic ties with Beijing while counterbalancing China with military means, stopping it from expanding its influence in East Asia and elsewhere. However, the downgrade of the US economy and continuing the War on Terror (which has now been on for over a decade with no or little outcome), Obama's 'pivot to Asia' seems rather to be sharing the burden among US' allies in the Asia-Pacific region rather than an overall expansion of US forces in East Asia.

Furthermore, with Washington already shifting its focus towards the high-tension Middle East, the actual impact of the 'pivot to Asia' on US foreign policy and therefore on the bilateral alliance with Japan seems rather uncertain.

3.3. Restructuring Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and Japanese Coast Guard

By providing a broader legal framework for expanded authority and restructuring its internal organization, the Japanese Coast Guard became *de facto* the fourth section of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. For instance, the Japanese Coast Guard is now responsible for border security around Japanese territory.⁵⁶ It was not until the first North Korean nuclear crises in 1998 that the Japanese Self-Defense Forces detected fundamental deficits it had in preventing potential attacks on the Japanese coast. In order to redress these shortcomings, the Japanese government planned a restructuring of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense units, expanding the responsibilities and defining the tasks of the Japanese Coast Guard.

As a matter of fact, the Japanese Coast Guard now has more power than the Maritime Self-Defense Forces regarding the protection of Japan's border security. For instance, in the case of suspicious vessels entering Japanese territorial waters, the Coast Guard is allowed to use armed forces to stop the vessel or even sink it if warning shots are ignored. This is an

⁵⁵ Alexandra Sakaki, 'Die neue Asien-Strategie der USA: Japanische Reaktionen und Perspektiven. Aus japanischen Fachzeitschriften und Think-Tank-Publikationen der Jahre 2011 und 2012', in *Zeitschriftenschau*, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, p. 2, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/zeitschriftenschau/2012zs04_skk.pdf (accessed 19.05.2013).

⁵⁶ Samuels, *Securing Japan...*, p. 77.

even more dramatic revision, since the Japanese Coast Guard should be regarded as branch of the Japanese national police, and not as part of the Self-Defense forces.⁵⁷

In addition to this, a potential threat posed by terrorist bombings in ports of Japan, endangering domestic seafaring was another reason for enhancing the authority of the Japanese Coast Guard.⁵⁸

As a result, Japan began to reinforce its ocean peace keeping program in multilateral cooperation with other ASEAN+3 member states.⁵⁹ However, due to Japan's past, numerous misgivings and hesitations against Japan are deeply rooted in neighboring Asian societies. As with Japan's approaches for multilateral cooperation in the 1990s, difficulties arose among the participating nations. China in particular, led to cooperate with the regional regime to prevent piracy among ASEAN members because Beijing saw China's security interests as being endangered by proposed mutual cooperation with member states. Tokyo seems to be put a 'catch 22' situation with China mistrusting Japan for potentially using the regional regime to strengthen the US-Japanese alliance in Asia on the one hand, and with Tokyo's fears that China would use ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to weaken Japan's bilateral alliance with Washington on the other.⁶⁰

With the enhanced authority of the Japanese Coast Guard (*kaijō jieitai*) it now covers tasks such as missile defence, carried out by AEGIS-equipped destroyer.⁶¹ In total, the total tonnage of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Forces measures 440,000 tonnes, while capacities of the People's Liberation Army Navy is estimated to measure 135,000 tonnes of equipment.⁶² Further, five Japanese destroyers constantly cruise along the coast of Japan to be able to respond flexibly to unexpected dangerous situations that might occur.⁶³

According to the Defence Guidelines laid out in FY 2005, additional 16 submarine units of the *kaijō jieitai* (海上自衛隊) cruise between the East China Sea and the Sea of Japan, protecting Japanese territory and shipping traffic.⁶⁴ Japan even increased this number ~~were~~ by an additional 2 AEGIS vessels in 2008.⁶⁵ In addition to this, the force's capacities were increased between 2001 and 2005 by 60 Boeing AH-64Ds *Jets* along with airborne refillable aircraft. All these numbers show a dramatic increase in the pace at which the Japanese Self-Defense Forces have been modernizing.

4. Conclusion

As the previous chapters have shown, Japanese security perceptions are still linked closely to US military strategy even after the potential threat posed by the Soviet Union ~~is~~ disappeared. However, new regional emerging powers such as China and North Korea

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 78 –80.

⁵⁸ Toshi Yoshihara, 'Japan's Emerging Strategic Posture in Asia...', p. 75.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

⁶¹ Japanese Ministry of Defense (ed.), *Heisei 17 nenban...*, p. 137.

⁶² Japanese Ministry of Defense (ed.), *Heisei 23 nenban. Nihon no bōei: Bōei hakusho*, Tōkyō: Gyōsei, 2011, p. 445.

⁶³ Japanese Ministry of Defense (ed.), *Heisei 17 nenban...*, p. 102.

⁶⁴ Ibidem.

⁶⁵ Kliman, "Japan's Security Strategy in the Post-9/11 World...", p. 23.

seem more than ever to confirm the importance of the US security umbrella. However, ~~that~~ Japan had to take on more responsibility due to a fear of abandonment by the US after the end of the Cold War, and Washington no longer considers Japan as just a financial contributor to US military missions but also as an active military partner. Furthermore, Japan has been actively engaging in promoting its own security interests, establishing its own foreign agenda outside the bilateral alliance (by introducing overseas bases and following a path of diplomacy towards Iran that differs from that of the US) and built up its military equipment in a dramatic way. In hindsight, this development even increased after the events of September 11, 2001 with respect to Japan's growing fear of abandonment and to the potential withdrawal of US troops away from East Asia. As a result, Japanese participation in rear-area support for US troops in the Indian Ocean and should be regarded as an attempt to strengthening the bilateral alliance and to build up trust between the allies.

In order to ensure this support, several laws implemented by Japan's governments, especially by the Koizumi administration. Yet, even though these amendments and laws resembled a turn in Japanese foreign policy towards becoming a more proactive security alliance partner for the US, it should be remembered that this turn had already begun with the revision of the 1976 security guidelines in 1995, and was triggered by a feeling of international isolation after denying material and troop supplies for the US/UN intervention in the Gulf War in 1990/91. In short, the increased support for the US after 2001 in terms of military means is not to be understood as a completely unforeseen turn in Japanese global security strategy.

However, due to the increased support for US military actions as a security ally, this change has triggered skepticism and fear of Japan's possible military expansion among other Asian countries. Nevertheless, because of unforeseen turns within the East Asian security architecture, such as North Korea's nuclear program, Japan seems more dependent than ever on US nuclear deterrence. As a result, Japan has evolved security perceptions which are no longer limited to East Asia, but which apply on a global scope in order to protect Japan's security – or more likely, to make it possible to interact within the framework of the bilateral alliance.

By establishing the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era, (*anzen hoshō to bōei ryoku no kondan kai*) in 2004, Prime Minister Koizumi placed greater emphasis on Japanese foreign policy and the need for a genuine Japanese security strategy (as a complement to the bilateral alliance with the US).

According to this, the Araki Commission placed several recommendations on Japanese foreign policy, such as regarding the defense of Japan and the improvement of cooperation within the international community in order to prevent global threats (*tōgōteki anzen hoshō senryaku*), which meant an important amendment to US–Japanese security cooperation.

Considerations about the need to build up further defense capacities (*nihon jishin no doryoku*) (in addition to those of the bilateral alliance) provided another benchmark for Japanese foreign policy. With this approach, along with intensifying cooperation among its allies – particularly the United States – Japan tried to enforce cooperation on an

⁶⁶ Japanese Ministry of Defense (ed.), *Heisei 17 nenban...*, p. 89.

international level (*kokusai shakai to no kyōryoku*).⁶⁷ This approach also marked an attempt to escape from possible entrapment in US military actions due to an exclusive fixation on the bilateral alliance as core to Japanese foreign policy.

However, this attempt has not yet been successful. Moreover, Japan's defense white paper of 2005 stresses that approach might cost more losses of SDF members in combat activities than previous foreign policy approaches. Also, military spending to secure international peace will therefore rise (*kokusai teki anzen hoshō kankyō no kaizen ni yoru kyōi no yobō*).⁶⁸

To conclude, Japanese security policy has become much more globalized due to a fear of potential abandonment on the one hand and the growing potential threat posed by North Korea and territorial disputes with China on the other hand. However, fear of abandonment has shifted the Japanese foreign policy in a pro-active direction, hence the Japanese Self-Defense Forces have also become more prone to become entangled in US security concerns and major third-party conflicts. Future developments in international security, especially within the East Asian security architecture, will show, how recently re-elected right-wing Prime Minister Abe Shinzo chooses to intensify the bilateral alliance and define Japan's role within President Obama's 'pivot to Asia'.

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ Japanese Ministry of Defense (ed.), *Heisei 23 nenban...*, pp. 321–322.