MILITARY BASING AND THE UNITED STATES – JAPAN ALLIANCE

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Introduction

The United States possesses unrivaled capabilities to project conventional forces around the globe. This force protects U.S. interests by providing the backbone to ensure peace and stability in many parts of the world. However, since the end of the Cold War the United States has struggled to adequately adjust its conventional force posture to provide credible extended deterrence for its allies and to shape behaviors of adversaries; real and potential. Furthermore, Cold War nuclear deterrence depended on mutual destruction and derived its permanence from the resulting balance. With the demise of the Soviet Union the concept of ‘strategic deterrence’ suffers from a lack of credibility. Additionally, the absence of a shared view of security threats between the United States and her allies requires a more tailored approach to extended deterrence and developing shared defense planning. Each of these factors contributes to the importance for the U.S. to possess flexible and agile conventional forces, based strategically throughout the world to address emergent threats, deter potential adversaries and reassure allies. U.S. conventional forces must represent a principal tool of deterrence and reassurance to shape the international security environment favorably for U.S. interests.

Asia offers an excellent focal point to examine how conventional forces can better provide deterrence and reassurance as well as strengthen U.S. credibility within the region. In particular this thesis will offer an analysis of how the planned movement of 8,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam may accelerate Japan’s military expansion and the implications of such an event for the overarching U.S. objective in Asia; to maintain regional stability.¹ The study focuses on three three basic, sequential and interlocked objectives that the alliance achieves for

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¹ This objective is derived from multiple analyst’s assessments as well as U.S. Government strategic documents. See, Armitage and Nye, February 2007, and the Quadrennial Defense Review, February 2010, p. 58.
the United States. First, with the U.S. guaranteeing her security, Japan has shown restraint in developing a military commensurate with her economic and political power. Second, with U.S. forces based in the region and obviating the need for Japanese rearmament, the alliance serves both as a signal of U.S. resolve and a commitment to maintaining the region’s stability. Finally, the alliance serves to deter and shape China. The guarantee of Japanese security lies at the heart of the U.S. – Japan alliance and makes the achievement of these objectives possible. As a tripwire force, these forces reassure Japan of U.S. commitment in the event of hostilities, and, as a force capable of projecting power in East Asia, they reassure the region of a strong and active US presence. Although the 8,000 Marines may seem a modest figure compared to the approximately 47,000 deployed on Japanese territory, their movement 1,500 miles to Guam could significantly alter the perception of the U.S. commitment to Japanese security and therefore the region. The United States clearly recognized this potential when publicly announcing the planned movement of these forces in 2006. The Deputy Secretary of Defense at the time, Richard Lawless, stated that “the Marine relocation to Guam should be seen in the context of the whole range of changes being made to transform the alliance.”

Examining the U.S. – Japan Alliance from the end of the Cold War through the 1995 U.S. initiative designed to reverse post Cold War plans to drawdown global conventional force deployments. The Nye Initiative, as the plan became known, committed the United States to a minimum presence of 100,000 troops in Asia. Joseph Nye (the driving force of the initiative as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs) developed the plan to reassure

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2 These three policy objectives are largely based on key assumptions made in the report The U.S. Japan Alliance; Getting Asia Right Through 2020 written by Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye.

3 See Deputy Secretary of Defense Richard Lawless’ comments in the following article: Eight Thousand U.S. Marines to Move from Okinawa to Guam, by Steven Donald Smith, American Forces Press Service, April 26, 2006.
Japan and other states in the region after a series of security crises in the early 1990’s.

Examining the strategic factors, objectives and ultimately the outcomes of the Nye Initiative, particularly how it contributed to changes in Japan’s defense planning, will guide analysis as to how future U.S. troop deployments in Asia may impact U.S. foreign policy objectives in the region.

The crises of the early 1990’s helped drive Japan toward greater military autonomy and power projection capability. The Nye Initiative aimed to reassure Japan of U.S. commitments to the alliance and to check the structural forces, such as the rise of China and the development of a nuclear weapons capability by North Korea, pushing Japan towards militarization. Assesssing the relative succeess of the Nye Initiative in overcoming these dyadic-level pressures will inform analysis and assessment of the possible changes to Japan’s defense planning and strategy in the future.

Politics of Extended Deterrence

During the Cold War the U.S. – Japan Alliance achieved several security objectives that advanced the interests of each partner by maintaining the security status quo. Formalized as a treaty based alliance in 1960, the security umbrella offered by the United States alleviated regional fears of Japan rearming and committed the United States to the region to provide a more stable strategic environment. It also established long-term, U.S. access to forward bases in East Asia to check the Soviets in the Pacific. With her security provided for Japan could focus on economic redevelopment. In commonly applied alliance parlance, the U.S – Japan Alliance kept the U.S. ‘in’, the Soviets ‘out’ and the Japanese ‘down’. The alliance generated mutual benefits
to both partners, assuring continued and stable commitment to the alliance itself.

The demise of the Soviet Union, however, led to a regional perception of waning U.S. commitment. The U.S. drawdown of its global military presence, including deployments in Asia, reinforced this doubt. Without the assured protection of the U.S., or even with a diminution of this commitment, many states in the region began planning for Japan to eventually rearm to provide for her own defense. Predictions foresaw Japan becoming a ‘normal’ country by developing a military to match its economic might, and an inevitable arms race in the region would follow.\textsuperscript{4} By 1995 this thinking included dire outlooks for Asian security. As a response to these events the United States launched the Nye Initiative early in 1995. This committed the U.S. to a minimum troop presence in the Pacific and on Japanese territory to reassure the region of the U.S. commitment to maintaining security.

The regional security dynamic as well as alliance politics in 1995 share significant commonalities with today. The United States finds herself committed to two wars in other regions and her commitment to Asian security faces questions in the face of a rapidly rising China. Particularly with the growing influence and power of China, some analysts predict a near future when the U.S. can no longer unilaterally maintain security in Asia.\textsuperscript{5} In both the early and mid-1990’s and today domestic economic concerns dominate U.S. political dialogue and signal a waning U.S. commitment to its international responsibilities and obligations.

\footnote{5 (Armitage & Nye, February 2007), p. 20}
Looking forward to how troop movements may alter the U.S. – Japan Alliance, China cannot simply be inserted into the alliance equation vice the Soviet Union. Particular realities undermine such a substitution. Primarily, United States policy toward the Soviet Union ranged between containment and rollback, but, as analyst James Przystup writes, given China’s “size, economic dynamism, and military potential, how China integrates itself into the international system, or fails to do so, will shape the geopolitical landscape of East Asia and the international order of the 21st Century.”

Shaping Chinese behavior rather than simply containing her represents a critical element of U.S. foreign and military policy in Asia. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review clearly identifies China’s expanding military capability as “one of the most consequential aspects of the evolving strategic landscape in the Asia-Pacific region and globally”, but the document holds open opportunities for those military forces to play a “constructive role in international affairs” and welcomes the potential for “positive benefits that can accrue from greater cooperation” between the U.S. and Chinese militaries.

Economic ties also play an important role in determining how the alliance should address the China question. Choosing a policy designed to shape China’s military rise rather than adopting the more confrontational approach of containment and deterrence preserves economic interests and ties between the alliance and China. Responsible U.S. strategy will use the U.S. – Japan Alliance as the principal tool in shaping Chinese behavior into a strategic partner and responsible stakeholder in the international system. Traditional alliances act as a deterrent against a shared adversary or adversaries, but, looking forward, the U.S. – Japan Alliance must adapt itself to shape China’s emergence rather than simply contain her.

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Another important factor distinguishes China as the target of the U.S. – Japan Alliance from the Soviet Union. For obvious geographic reasons, East Asia is China’s primary focus whereas the Soviet’s primary sphere of influence and concern was Europe. Any attempt to contain China in her immediate and central sphere of influence would be interpreted as adversarial. This would set the entire relationship between the alliance partners and China on a path toward confrontation rather than integration. Additionally, China is a rapidly growing power both economically and militarily. This growth, relative to Japan and the U.S., outstrips that of the Soviet Union at any point in the Cold War making the increasing power of the PRC a far more complex and persistent issue.

How the U.S. deploys its conventional forces in the region is a critical element in the future development of the U.S. – Japan Alliance and, therefore, how China either integrates with U.S. security interests or balances against them. A balance between provocation and an overly conciliatory approach must be achieved within the alliance. If the alliance’s target [now China] adopts an expansionist approach to the region, a policy of firmness promises the desirable effects of deterrence and enhances one’s own reputation for resolve. However, if the opponent orients itself toward the status quo, a tough stance may be provocative, increase tension, and induce, as Glen Snyder observes, an “insecurity spiral – that is, a vicious circle of ‘unnecessary’ power competition” and arms racing based on the interpretation that enhancement of one state’s security represents potential aggressiveness towards another.\(^8\)

Elements of extended deterrence theory informs specific requirement that the U.S. – Japan Alliance should strive for to find the balance between provocation and conciliation in shaping the rise of China. The deterrence offered by the United States over Japan must be

understood in the context of general rather than immediate deterrence. General deterrence includes the possibility of military-diplomatic crises, but is distinguished from immediate deterrence in a study by political scientists Paul Huth and Bruce Russet as “the absence of crisis” and is more an expression of power relationships. The Huth and Russet study examined data from previous general deterrence scenarios from the perspective of rational deterrence, or relative power, and noted that “change in military balance – arms races and power transitions” have a disproportionate impact on predicting the commencement of disputes. Both the growth of military expenditures and the presence of power transition between the protégé state (Japan) and the challenger state (China) indicate a greater likelihood that a dispute will arise.

Applying these observations and results as a guide to U.S. policy making reinforces the importance of maintaining a relative balance of power with China as a way to ensure future stability. As Chinese military capabilities continue to increase, the U.S. – Japan Alliance must develop and evolve to include capabilities and commitments able to maintain a relative balance in the power relationship with China. However, a stronger U.S. – Japan Alliance cannot simply be based on a remilitarized Japan without risking a confrontational response from China and other powers in the region. For example, the abandonment of Article IX of the Japanese constitution may improve the relative balance of security for the alliance, but, such a step would likely push China towards a greater military buildup and developing counter balancing coalitions against the U.S. – Japan Alliance. A principal objective of U.S. policy in the region is to

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9 Huth and Russet, p. 61-62.
10 Huth and Russet, p. 69.
11 Huth and Russet conclude that synthesizing elements from each of the models employed for their study (relative power, domestic political conditions and physiological models) provides the best predictive capability for dispute initiation. However, this thesis will limit its scope to the realist, relative power, model.
12 Article IX forswears a Japanese military: “...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.”
maintain stability and peace; arms racing and power competition among adversarial blocks of power would stand athwart this goal.

Outstanding questions exist regarding China’s long-term intentions. This paper does not aim to predict such outcomes. However, in the absence of clear indications of China’s intentions, the U.S. should use its alliance with Japan to shape China in to a partner, interested in sustaining stability and peace and the security status quo in the region.13

Post Cold War Crises Strain the Alliance

The U.S. – Japan Alliance matured from its Cold War beginnings of providing deterrence and stability to now include a global function to achieve a broader set of shared global strategic interests.14 Throughout the Cold War Japan’s Self Defense Force (JSDF) emerged and evolved. However, the U.S. presence and commitment to Japan and Asia prevented that force from developing to a point where it threatened the U.S.-led security status quo in Asia.

Two crises in the immediate aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet Union (as well as the dissolution itself) created a sense of doubt and uncertainty within the alliance and reinforced the aforementioned regional doubts of the future of the U.S. commitment to Asian stability and security. First, in 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. While the Japanese government provided significant monetary contributions to the coalition’s effort to end the Iraqi occupation, Japanese leadership could not determine whether it could legally deploy the JSDF overseas even under United Nations command.15 Despite continual reinterpretation of the prohibitive language in Article IX of the Japanese Constitution and the subsequent development of the JSDF during

14 (Calder, 2009), p. 164.
15 Cooney, p. 38.
the Cold War, the exact function of these forces, as well as their legal legitimacy, remained an open and politically contested question in 1991. These uncertainties led to widespread popular criticism of Japan. Ineffectual efforts to shape opinion to the contrary led to severe criticism of the Japanese Government for its inability to decisively contribute forces to the liberation of Kuwait.\(^{16}\) The negative popular reaction in the United States in particular led the Prime Minister to declare publicly that “it just makes me gnash my teeth that the kinds of things we've done have not been properly valued.”\(^{17}\)

This experience forced almost immediate changes to Japan’s foreign and military policy. Adopting a more proactive approach to global security affairs, Japan could shoulder a greater amount of the burden in maintaining international order and relieve the United States of some of the burdensome costs.\(^{18}\) By mid-1992 this sentiment resulted in the Japanese Diet settling the question of deploying Japanese forces under the aegis of United Nations actions by passing the Law Concerning Cooperation in U.N. Peacekeeping and Other Operations (the PKO Law). The law finally provided the domestic legal framework for future Japanese participation in United Nations led peacekeeping operations and signaled a significant change to Japan’s defense posture.\(^{19}\) The PKO Law would allow Japanese Defense Forces to contribute more directly to these operations, albeit without serving in combat roles. The impact of this change in military posture would have important ramifications on regional security particularly as a new global crisis would emerge in North East Asia itself.


\(^{17}\) Ibid.


This second crisis emerged in 1994 with the public exposure of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. The fiery rhetoric from Pyongyang in response to international condemnation of its weapons and missile programs forced the crisis from a diplomatic track towards a military one. As the United States took preparatory steps in the event North Korea turned its belligerent words into action, Japan proved unable to provide the logistical support U.S. planners anticipated and expected. In particular, Japan could not commit to the use of its civilian airstrips or ports to support U.S. troops.\(^20\) If the crisis had evolved further towards war, Tokyo may not have been able to provide any overt or tangible support of any kind.\(^21\) Japan’s uncertainty in the face of a crisis in its own region would have a profound impact on Japan’s security and defense outlook.

**Japan’s Alternative, Security Independence**

Each of these incidents, coupled with the global strategic shift resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union, created a feeling among Japanese policy makers that U.S. resolve to provide for Japanese defense and the alliance had weakened.\(^22\) The logic follows alliance politics and security dilemma theory. Japan’s inability to contribute to two significant global crises reduced the relative value of the alliance for the United States thus increasing the likelihood of U.S. abandonment of the alliance.\(^23\) The security agreement had endured for decades despite rifts in the strategic alliance emanating from trade disputes, and other significant differences, but the


\(^{22}\) (Funabashi, 1999), p. 219.

\(^{23}\) Cooney, p. 79.
first few years of the post Cold War environment stressed the alliance to a critical point. The United States reached its “unipolar moment” and Japan needed to reassure its hegemonic partner of an equal contribution to the alliance. In addition, Japan began hedging and also took steps to prepare for a future without the U.S. security umbrella.

With the bond of the alliance weakening in the face of the crises of the early 1990’s, Japan underwent a significant political debate to reassess the role its military should play in world affairs and how basing U.S. troops on Japan affected these decisions. In particular, a Constitutional debate unfolded to determine how Article IX could be further re-interpreted or amended to accommodate a growing role for Japan’s defense forces. In addition to this argument and the adoption of the PKO law, Japan’s Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama altered his party’s platform in 1994 declaring the JSDF legal thus abandoning the long held position of the Japan Socialist Party opposing any form of a Japanese military.

The underlying strategic question informing this political debate was how Japanese policy makers could prepare for a future where Japan provided for its own security. In December of 1994 a military report commissioned by the Japanese government “emphasized the need for autonomous might” at least in part as a “reflection of uncertainty about U.S. intentions.” In 1995, the government debated a new National Defense Program Outline (NDPO), a 5 year strategy and corresponding budget dictating weapons procurement, force structure and military planning. Determining the future of the U.S. troops based on Japan

26 In his book Alliance Adrift, Yoichi Funabashi provides excellent detail of the growing concern of Japanese policy makers towards China’s expanding military beginning in the mid-1990’s and how this informed security cooperation with the United States.
became an important part of the broader question of Japanese defense budgeting and the role of JSDF. According to former Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama, these questions required reflection “from the perspective of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole, not from the narrow perspective of the bilateral relationship.” To play a role in global affairs Japan required a military capable of supporting U.N.-led peacekeeping operations and defending its territory. It could no longer depend on the guarantee of the U.S. These hedges against the possibility of a reduction of U.S. interest in Japan and Asian security resulted in changes to Japan’s strategic outlook that will guide an understanding of how future U.S. troops redeployments may in turn further alter Japan’s strategic outlook.

The resulting Japanese strategic posture included a greater role in international peace keeping and humanitarian missions. Additionally, military budgets increased slightly, but in a country with a cap on defense spending at 1% of GDP, the increase was significant. From 1990 to 1995 Japan’s defense budget increased at an average of 2.1% per year, but the new budget expanded this to 2.25%. The focus of the budgets indicates an important shift too. Planners sought to reduce the number of ground defense forces (GDF) in favor of maritime and aviation capabilities. Considering the regional geography this indicates an important shift from a purely defensive force designed to deter aggression against the homeland, to one with a capability of projecting power.

29 Ibid.
Easing Regional Tensions

Japan’s expanding role in peace keeping operations as well as ongoing enhancements to the SDF, created concerns in Asia of a resurgent Japanese military and the development of capabilities comparable to her economic status. Japan’s defense forces by this point, particularly air and maritime capabilities, were very modern and comparatively large in Asia.\(^{31}\) In the context of a reduced U.S. presence and therefore commitment to Asian security, other states in the region “feared that a large-scale reduction in the U.S. presence would be dangerously destabilizing” particularly as Japan’s capabilities evolved toward greater independence and capability.\(^{32}\)

In response, Japan undertook foreign policies aimed to alleviate these regional reactions and to better manage security relationships in the absence of an engaged United States. The primary result of these efforts came in 1994 with the first meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum with security issues as the central issue. ARF “became the most successful security framework developed in the Asia-Pacific region over the 1990’s”, and Japan played an important and active role in the forum.” One of the results of ARF’s efforts at confidence building measures, for example, was the publication by participating states of Defense White Papers, aimed at reducing suspicions within the region of other states’ intentions.\(^{33}\) Clearly Japan understood the potential impact of the expansion of the JSDF and took political steps to reduce resulting misgivings.


\(^{33}\) Togo, p. 212.
While these multilateral, diplomatic efforts tried to alleviate fears of Japan’s military build-up, they could not beguile the region from the reality of Japan’s newly developed power. Although still mired in political debate prohibiting the establishment of a clear military policy, Japan’s economic power meant that even the modest steps toward an independent military capability sent chills throughout the region. One common regional reaction to the development and expansion of the JSDF was to engage the United States diplomatically to request a stronger commitment to regional security.

The Nye Initiative

In response to this diplomatic pressure and in recognition of the role U.S. forces played in maintaining stability in Asia, the United States altered existing troop basing policies in early 1995. The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia Pacific Region (better known as the Nye Initiative) detailed reassurances and commitments by the United States to maintain a military presence in Asia at a minimum of 100,000 troops, and declared the alliance with Japan as the “linchpin of United States security policy in Asia.” Nye’s new strategy aimed to counter the regional perception of U.S. drift in establishing a long-term, Asian force structure and to reestablish U.S. credibility of its commitment to the region. From 1990 to 1994, the U.S. troop presence shrank from 135,000 to 100,000 and the Nye Initiative would end that trend.

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34 While Japan’s NDPO clearly stated the intent to develop a more independent JDSF, the political leadership at the time resisted a broad debate and discussion of these issues out of fear of fractures that would emerge within the Cabinet that included the typically anti-military Socialists. A degree of ambiguity, or hedging, remained in Japan’s military strategy through this period of time.


37 Funabashi, p. 268.
the 100,000 figure served a symbolic purpose indicating U.S. commitment to Asia as it exactly matched the number of U.S. troops remaining in post-Cold War Europe. Additionally, China played a central role in this new U.S. commitment. The security strategy itself noted “that Beijing’s military buildup has generated uncertainty about its plans and urges greater transparency in China's defense programs, strategy and doctrine.”

The effect of the initiative and the resulting new security order for the alliance gave new meaning to the relationship and halted the drift it had experienced throughout the early part of the 1990’s. By the end of 1995 Japan released a new National Defense Program Outline (NDPO). While this program had been several years in the making its central treatment of the alliance with the United States was viewed widely as a positive response to the Nye Initiative. Ultimately Japan’s ‘response’ to the Nye Initiative recommitted her to the U.S. – Japan Alliance as a source of stability not just for Japan but also for the region. In addition, the NDPO clearly stated Japan’s willingness to possess the “necessary defense capability for an independent nation.” The latter half of these two elements of the NDPO clearly indicates Japan’s continued movement towards a more autonomous military.

The U.S. – Japan Alliance would also be treated on more equal terms with each partner possessing equal diplomatic influence over basing and joint operations development. Additionally, while many heralded the new plan’s reduction in ground forces (from about 180 to 150 thousand) as a reduction in Japan’s military capability, the savings from these ground force reductions allowed for a corresponding increase in maritime and air capability. This recognized

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38 Paul Giarra, director of the Japan Desk at the Pentagon in the mid-1990’s, stated this. See Funabashi’s Alliance Adrift, page 249.
39 From The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia Pacific Region, February 1995 as found; http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA298441&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf
40 From the NDPO as quoted in Alliance Adrift, p. 265.
the need for a shift from the Cold War-style forces to a smaller but qualitatively strengthened JSDF capable of power-projection.\textsuperscript{41} For an island country with a cap on defense spending at 1\% of gross domestic product, this shift of resources represents an important evolution toward power projection and developing a greater military capability to influence overseas events rather than pure self-defense.

For the purposes of examining future U.S. troops movements away from Japan, the Nye Initiative brought mixed results. The commitment of a minimum number of troops to Japan certainly revived the U.S. – Japan Alliance and gave impetus to talks and dialogue that resulted in the creation of new roles and missions for the alliance in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century; an important achievement for U.S. foreign policy objectives. Japan’s role in international peacekeeping and in humanitarian missions around the globe expanded greatly since the mid-1990’s and stands in stark contrast to her halting and uncertain steps in 1990 during the first Persian Gulf War. The interoperability and joint operation capability of the two military’s has also improved dramatically in the intervening years. In addition, the U.S. – Japan Alliance began to focus its attention on China as a rising power, and planners began examining how she could be integrated into the existing Asian security arrangement. However, the Nye Initiative could not placate Japanese security and defense needs. As a result, the JSDF continued to develop and expand its autonomous defense capabilities. These developments can be attributed to the growing pressures on Japan emanating from China’s expanding military.

Evidence for this conclusion also exists in the 1995 NDPO – largely viewed as a positive response to the Nye Initiative. It recognized the rise of China and resulting concerns of regional security. Obviously Japan – China relations resist myopic or over simplified analysis solely

\textsuperscript{41} Hughes, p. 36.
through the lens of antagonism. Trade between the two doubled to $60 billion from 1992 to 1996, and Japan became the number one trading partner for China and China the number 2 trading partner for Japan in the same period. These economic forces play an important role in the evolving dynamics of the relationship. However, over the critical period of 1995-1996, when the U.S. and Japan worked to establish security cooperation for the post Cold War world, China clearly and unequivocally demonstrated her military capability and her willingness to employ it to shape regional events to favor her interests. In mid-1995, to influence the outcome of upcoming elections on Taiwan, China began a series of missile tests over the Taiwan Strait. The United States countered by sending two aircraft carriers as a show of strength and resolve for its commitment to prevent the militarized reunification of the Republic of China with the People’s Republic of China. Additionally, in 1996 China conducted two nuclear weapons tests. The commitment of U.S. troops to Japan and the Asian region, as detailed in the Nye Initiative, could not shield Japan from responding to China’s rapidly developing military capability. Japan’s efforts to provide more value to the alliance with the United States represent an important development of the alliance, but Japan also adopted a more independent outlook in planning for its security needs.

**Current Plans for U.S. Troops Redeployments**

Today the U.S. permanently deploys approximately 50,000 troops (Army, Navy and Air Force) across a variety of bases in Japan. The current plans for force reduction foresee 8,000 Marines moving from the Futenma Airbase, located in the heart of Okinawa, to the rapidly expanding U.S. base on the island of Guam. However, the impact of this movement goes beyond

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42 Togo, p. 148.
just their numerical weight. According the published reports, the 14,200 Marines “who train with aircraft from Futenma are the only mobile U.S. ground forces based in East Asia.” The commander of Marine forces in the Pacific, Keith J. Stalder, stated in January 2010, that those Marines dependent of Futenma, “bring a lot of stability and security that allows the Asia Pacific region to be a relatively peaceful place.” In 2006, the U.S. and Japan codified plans for a replacement airbase, however, Japanese domestic politics complicated this and suitable, alternative site for the airbase remains in dispute. Regardless of the outcome of the current debate regarding a new airbase on the island, the overall reduction of 8,000 Marines will proceed. This represents a significant number of forces considering the overall deployments in Japan and the region. As the only mobile ground forces in the region the importance of these troops to preserve regional security greatly increases.

The movement of U.S. forces will likely serve to enhance the pressures on Japan driving it toward a more autonomous military capability. Common logic dictates that the presence of friendly troops on an ally’s territory, committed to the security and defense of that state, will reassure the host country of its own security. This is the traditional ‘trip-wire’ force. However, China’s rapid expansion places additional pressure on Japan’s security planning and dictates a corresponding military build-up.

The same forces responsible for Japan’s movement toward a more independent and capable defense force in the mid-1990’s continue to influence the Asian security environment. First, the DPRK’s nuclear program has matured to the point of developing and testing a weapon capability while its missile program remains largely unchecked. Secondly, China’s rise in to a global economic and military power has quickened since the mid-1990’s, and few

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dispute her political influence over global events or her intentions to continue to develop a correspondingly powerful military. China’s aspirations to develop a blue-water Navy could easily disrupt sea lanes of communication and Japan’s economy would be rapidly crippled.\textsuperscript{44} These forces pressed Japan to develop and grow its military capabilities in mid-1990’s despite U.S. assurances to commit to her defense. A reasonable conclusion is that China’s growth and development as a regional power will continue to be the primary driver of Japan’s defense outlook. U.S. troop redeployments to Guam will likely provide added pressure on Japan to continue to develop its military, but the experience of the Nye Initiative indicate these will have a secondary impact.

\textbf{Achieving U.S. Policy Objectives}

To achieve the three interlocking policy objectives as outlined in the introduction (reassurance of Japan, maintenance of regional stability and shaping the rise of China) the U.S. must balance between reassurance of Japan’s security and provocation of China and the rest of the region. According to theory and Cold War experience, U.S. credibility, reinforced by forces deployed on Japanese territory, provided the necessary assurance to Japan and reduced the pressures on her to develop a more independent and powerful military. However, with troop reductions scheduled and expected (and the near impossibility of reversing this course of action) the U.S. must adopt additional measures to achieve its policy objectives in Asia of stability.\textsuperscript{45} Failing to take such action would likely result in regional arms racing and the development of

\textsuperscript{44} Hughes, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{45} Domestic Japanese politics also play a role in necessitating a reduction of U.S. forces deployed on Japanese territory. However, this paper examines principally dyadic level pressures. Additionally, because the scope of this paper is to look at the current plans for the closing of Futenma, this is actually a placatory step for domestic Japanese pressures rather than a contrarian one.
counter-balancing alliances. This would undermine the principal, goal of U.S. policy in Asia to maintain stability.

Quelling China’s fear of a resurgent and independent Japan requires specific U.S. action. Absent such efforts China would likely form counter-balancing alliances and offer an alternative security framework to the one that exists today. This would undermine the principal objective of U.S. foreign policy, maintaining stability in Asia. To reassure China the U.S. must maintain its alliance with Japan as a framework for mutual security cooperation despite the reduction of U.S. troops on Japan. Intertwining U.S. and Japanese defense planning, through greater cooperation and transparency, will reassure China and others who view a resurgent Japan as a source of instability. Greater military cooperation and coordination, in particular contingency planning regarding shared threats such as the DPRK nuclear and ballistic missile programs, and the possibility of North Korea collapsing, could provide useful venues to engender greater transparency. Focusing on humanitarian missions could also engender greater trilateral cooperation and trust.

Additionally, the U.S should take further steps to ensure it retains its influence over both Japanese strategic decisions and regional security issues. Maintaining an ongoing alignment of U.S. and Japanese security interests would also help to maintain the strength and viability of the alliance in the face of growing Japanese independence. The George W. Bush Administration took such steps to ensure that Japan and the U.S. shared a vision for both Asian and global security with the revitalization of the Joint Security Consultative Committee (SCC).46 This

harmonization of security objectives and interests could reassure China against the possibility of Japan developing too great an autonomy over its military objectives in the region.

Additionally, the U.S. and Japan could consider lashing its alliance more closely with regional security forums and cooperation organizations. By aligning the alliance with these multilateral forums China would get a message that the alliance aims less to thwart China than to ensure the maintenance of regional peace and security. Engaging the alliance with multilateral security forums also provides reassurances to other states with potential concerns about Japan’s build up of capabilities. Coincidentally the efforts to demonstrate to the region that the U.S. remains involved and aligned with Japan’s military build-up, despite U.S. troop draw downs will also serve to reassure Japan that the United States remains committed to Asian security.

Policy objectives with Japan prove complex as well. Some analysts and observers have periodically called for a policy of pressing Japan towards becoming a ‘normal’ country; i.e. one with a military commensurate with its economic and political influence and power. Two significant challenges make this a difficult proposition. First, even if ‘normalization’ became the policy of the United States, the U.S. can avail itself of few tools to actually achieve such an outcome. The United States already sells a large variety of weapons systems to Japan to include elements of a missile defense system for use against North Korea. The application of direct pressure on Japanese leadership to pursue normalization frequently finds scorn and rejection among the Japanese public and political leadership. Indirectly, the U.S. could propose the dismantlement of the alliance as a way to force Japan’s hand towards normalization, however, this would sacrifice two U.S. policy objectives, maintaining influence in Asia and shaping China in to a stakeholder in the existing international system, for the sake
of a rearmed Japan.

‘Normalization’ of Japan is an important issue to manage for U.S. policy makers and the Nye Initiative also provides useful guidance on this point. Shortly after announcing the Initiative, Assistant Secretary Nye urged Japan to “continue expanding its global commitment through participation in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions”. However, in the same year he also exclaimed that “if ‘normal’ means an independently armed Japan that sets off a regional arms race, then the Japanese themselves do not think it in their interest.” Again, a balance between greater autonomy and capability, on one hand, and outright provocation of other states, on the other hand, must be achieved. Additionally, throughout the mid-1990’s both the U.S. and Japanese governments took steps to reassure the region that the growing capability of the JDSF would contribute to greater stability in the region. These efforts attempted to prevent arms racing and instability in the region.

An important element has changed since Assistant Secretary Nye uttered the warning above. While the United States continues to seek stability in Asia as an overarching policy objective that stability has been shaken since 1995 due to China’s continued rise and relative lack of transparency in its military buildup. As established above, Japan will continue to develop and expand its military capability in response, but the U.S. too must take steps to ensure that its alliance with Japan maintains pace with China so as to guarantee a balance of power. To achieve this, the U.S. must both welcome and support Japan’s rearmament, and take those steps outlined above to reassure China and the region that the alliance aims to maintain stability and not threaten it.

49 (Funabashi, 1999), p. 265.
Conclusion

The Cold War allowed for the United States to base troops in Japan as a forward deployed force against Soviet encroachment in the Pacific. Simultaneously, these forces reassured the region against a resurgent Japan despite its miraculous economic growth. With the end of the Cold War the U.S. began a process that continues today of balancing between maintaining a presence in Asia as a guarantor of security while recognizing the need for burden sharing. The early 1990’s witnessed a growing sense of U.S. abandonment of the region until the Nye Initiative resuscitated the U.S. – Japan Alliance and reaffirmed U.S. commitments to maintaining the security status quo in Asia. However, these commitments could not address the growing fear in Japan of China’s rapidly expanding military. This progression towards autonomy began with the end of the Cold War, was accelerated by the rise of China’s military capabilities, and even the efforts of the Nye Initiative did little to forestall this process.

Based on this experience in the mid-1990’s Japan’s strategic planning for its military seems more based on regional events than solely on the presence of U.S. troops. Therefore the movement of 8,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam will at best have a secondary effect on Japan’s military growth in the future. Regardless of the precise correlation between U.S. troop numbers on Japanese territory and the development of Japan’s military capabilities, the U.S. must take steps to reassure the region, and China in particular, that Japan’s growing military represents a force of stability and does not threaten the security status quo the U.S. wishes to preserve.


Hughes, Christopher, Japan’s Remilitarisation, (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009).


