



The Adjustment of Japan-US Alliance and the Strategic Options for Chinese Foreign Policy

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Abstract

Japan-US Alliance is the product of the Cold War Era. With the end of the Cold War, the further development of economic globalization, the enhancement of political multi-polarization trend, the role and nature of Japan-US Alliance in the international community, are gradually changing, and it brings out the trend of increasing strength. After the Cold War Era, the adjustment of Japan-US Alliance has posed significant challenges to China's diplomatic strategy, and constituted a threat to China's peaceful development. At the same time, the interests of Japan-US Alliance pointing to the Taiwan issue, it has seriously interfered in China's sovereignty, and obstructed China's peaceful reunification. Facing the challenges of Japan-US Alliance, China should establish "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation" as the core of the new security concept in the diplomatic strategy, build more common interests with Japan and America, and strengthen the interdependence; China will correctly handle Taiwan issue, safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and implement the strategy of "partners" in order to promote the construction of China's diplomatic strategy; and what's more, China should hold up stably a banner of peaceful development, enhance the comprehensive national strength, and establish a good international image.

Key words: Japan-US alliance; Strategic adjustment; China's diplomacy; Strategic options

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1950s, Japan-US Alliance has had an important effect on the international relations in East Asia. During the Cold War, it used to be "a bridgehead" against the socialist camp led by the Soviet Union. After the end of the Cold War, Japan and the United States began to strategically modulate their alliance to the changing international situation, with the strategic targets of containing China, while maintaining their strategic interests and dominance in East Asia. These adjustments are having an important effect on China and keep a realistic and intricate issue confronting China's foreign strategies.

1. THE EVOLUTION OF JAPAN-US ALLIANCE

Japan-US Alliance is the central factor that decides the basic character of the relations between the two countries. Since its youth in the early 1950s, the role, nature, and status of the alliance have gone through steady changes and exerted important effect on the development of international relations.

1.1 The Nature of the Japan-US Alliance Has Changed, Turning More Political From A Military Alliance in Its Early Days Into Both Military and Political One

Japan-US military alliance was initially taken shape to meet the strategic demands of both countries and their common interests. Strategically, the alliance could help

the US prop up and then utilize Japan for its own benefits. Meanwhile Japan also asked the alliance for US military protection. With the appearance and intensification of the Cold War, the US rushed to bring Japan into the fold of its overall strategy in the Far East to turn the country into a regional military base, “a major ally” and “an anti-communist bridgehead”. Consequently, the US deemed it necessary to end its military occupation in Japan and dictate Japan’s unilateral obligations in a bilateral treaty. As a defeated state in the Second World War, Japan eagerly asked for US military protection to defend its national sovereignty and interests. Against such a wide setting of the Cold War, Japan-US Alliance developed to respond to their common strategic interests.

After the end of the Cold War and especially the death of the Soviet Union, the military threat, common enemy and strategic target confronting the Japan-US alliance disappeared. At the same time, because of frequent economic frictions between Japan and the US, the alliance was a state on the drift. With the further development of economic globalization and political multi-polarization, Japan is no longer satisfied with its role of “an economic giant but a political midget” and is more inclined to become “a normal state”. Japan-US Alliance can serve as a vehicle for Japan’s bid to become “a normal state” and a major political power. US-Japan Joint Declaration on Security and the new Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation emphasized the basic changes in the post-Cold War Japan-US relations and a turn from purely military to politico-military alliance. After “9/11 Event”, Japan capitalized on the situation and participated in the Iraq war to play a greater political role through Japan-US Alliance, an important step towards becoming a major political power. Japan-US Alliance is deemed to be an important instrument serving Japanese interests and lifting Japan’s international status. Through cooperation with the US at regional and global level, Japan is able to extend its international influence by participating in regional and global security and political affairs as “an equal partner” to “share more responsibilities”. In return for Japanese cooperation with the American “global strategy”, the US has openly expressed its support for Japan’s bid for the permanent membership in the UN Security Council, adding weight to the Japanese efforts to become a major political power. The US would also like to seek more political roles for Japan-US Alliance, making it an instrument for maintaining US strategic interests as well as peace and stability in East Asia.

1.2 The Alliance Has Turned From “Master-Servant” One to “Partnership”, From “Asymmetric Follower” to “Symmetric Partner”

The end of Cold War is an important boundary in the changing status, roles and identities of Japan and the US in the alliance. During the Cold War, the alliance was asymmetrical and unequal. In fact, it was characterized

by the subservience of the loser towards the winner, as the two countries in the alliance were not of equal status. “Master-servant relations” was the main characteristics of the alliance during the Cold War. Japan-United States Security Treaty (1951), an unequal treaty, legitimized US occupation of Japan and access to Japanese military bases. For Japan, the treaty failed to restore its sovereignty and independence, and made the country politically and militarily dependent on the US. Throughout the Cold War, there were endless calls in Japan for rectifying the unequal bilateral relations.

In the post-Cold War era, Japanese great-power chauvinism keeps on rising with growing demands from politicians for elevating Japan’s international status and “a global partnership” with the US. Urged by Japan, the two countries began to adjust their relations. An American strategic report on East Asia issued in February 1995 stressed that “the US-Japan Alliance is the foundation of American Asia-Pacific security policies and global strategy (United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region, 1995).” Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security-Alliance (April 1996) expanded Japan’s security responsibilities and military role in Asia Pacific, which helped promote Japan’s supporting role in bilateral security cooperation to a major player. The Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation (1997) enhanced Japan’s role as a major player in the alliance by allowing it to provide logistic support for US operations in the Far East.

1.3 The Alliance Tends to Be Strengthened

With the evolving world and domestic situation in Japan and the US after the end of the Cold War, Japan-US Alliance is being adjusted and strengthened with a comprehensive legal framework, sophisticated negotiation and consultation mechanisms, and diversified areas of cooperation. In the comprehensive legal framework, the two allies enjoy more equal legal status each other. The alliance functions more smoothly because of better coordination. The rules and norms in the alliance are being constantly revised in according to the changing times. In the sophisticated negotiation and consultation mechanism, negotiations and consultations are expanded to different levels in the alliance with better organized and established mechanisms. In the diversified areas of cooperation, the alliance cooperation has extended from regional to global operations, from military to other fields (Zhang, 2006). It should be stressed that the strategic targets for Japan-US Alliance is no longer limited within Asia Pacific, but has already become global. The “common strategic objectives” issued in February 2005 by the US clearly defined the global character of US-Japan alliance, whose common global strategic objectives include, promoting human rights, democracy, the rule of law and other basic values; promoting world peace, stability and prosperity; preventing WMD proliferation ; eliminating terrorism ; strengthening the role of the UN; and stabilizing global energy-

supply and so on (Joint Statement of US-Japan Security Consultative Committee, 2005). Just as Ralph A. Cossa, an American scholar commented, "In terms of width and depth, US-Japan cooperation after 9/11 is unprecedented, far beyond American expectation (Ralph, 2005).

2. THE CHALLENGES TO CHINA BY THE ADJUSTED JAPAN-US ALLIANCE

In the post-Cold War Era, the evolution of Japan-US Alliance has come as not only a response and adjustment to the new threats and surroundings, but also the result of a general revision of the two countries' regional and global strategies. During the Cold War, Japan-US Alliance was mainly aimed at defending against a Soviet attack and counterbalancing Russian influence. After the end of the Cold War, Japan and the US made strategic adjustment of their alliance taking China as a target to guard against. There are a number of reasons behind such a move. A rising China becomes the main issue in East Asia confronting Japan and the US. The US regards an emergent China as the biggest challenge to its leading role in East Asia; meanwhile, Japan, in its bid for dominance in East Asian affairs, tries to keep China in check through its alliance with America. Consequently, the adjustment of Japan-US alliance poses challenges to China.

A stronger Japan-US Alliance demonstrates that the US intends to turn Japan into its strategic stronghold in East Asia to counterbalance China's power and eliminate the possible challenges and threats to it so as to safeguard its strategic interests in the region. Hedging its bets, the US, on the one hand, attempts to contain, with its political, economic, military might, China's peaceful development by using political means to bring about a peaceful evolution in the country, to demonize China by making use of such issues as democracy and human rights, to pressure China on exchange rates and trade issues, and to spare no effort to hinder Chinese economic development through "the encirclement of interests"; on the other hand, the US also encourages China to play the role of a responsible major power in the international community and take part in the mechanism-building of the international system so that China is able to share some of the benefits of globalization. Through the regional mechanism based on Japan-US Alliance, America also tries to incorporate China into the world system, encouraging an active Chinese role for peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia and Chinese recognition of the current system and commitment to take up responsibilities. At the same time, the US also shows the strength of its alliance to deter China from getting off the track (Xing, 2007). The Princeton Project Report (29 September, 2006), which aims at building the foundation and framework for the American grand strategy in the new era, admits that "Sino-US relationship may be the

most important bilateral relationship of the 21st century", and "America's strategic goal should not be to block or contain China, but rather to help it achieve its legitimate goals within the present international order and to become a responsible stakeholder in Asian and international politics." Meanwhile, the report also displays concern about China's growing political, economic and military power and its expanding influence in East Asia. In response to the situation, the report suggests that the US should consolidate bilateral military alliances in East Asia, Japan-US Alliance in particular, and establish a regional security mechanism involving China, Russia, Japan and South Korea to discuss regional issues. Whatever the tactics, the US' goal to guard against China through Japan-US Alliance remains unchanged.

On the other hand, Japan concentrates more on East Asian strategy to depend on its alliance with the US to control a rising China, and to turn itself into an independent politico-military power with global political influence and capabilities for overseas military operations. Through the alliance, Japan is inclined to take on greater political role, increase military power, and dominate East Asian, Asian and world affairs together with the US. Japanese military buildup is closely linked with its objective of containing China's peaceful rise. With the second largest military expenditure in the world, Japan has far better defensive and offensive air and sea dominance capabilities than its neighbors (Jennifer, 2004). With China's peaceful rise, Japan becomes more worried and suspicious about China's future development. Japan's National Defense Program Outline (2004), for the first time, noted with concern the development of Chinese nuclear, missile, air force and naval modernization and expanding maritime activities. In order to control China's peaceful rise, Japan-US Alliance raise a hue and cry the "China Threat" theory to slander China's international image, and stimulate suspicion and fear in the neighboring countries against Chinese peaceful development.

Japan-US Alliance also set its interests on the Taiwan issue and utilize it to prevent China's peaceful reunification. The Law Concerning Measures to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan (1999) expanded their cooperation area to include South China Sea and the Taiwan Straits. On December 10, 2004, Japan published the new National Defense Program Outline to list the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Straits as factors of "obscurity and uncertainty". On February 19, 2005, in the Joint Statement of US-Japan Security Consultative Committee, the Taiwan Straits was labeled a "common strategic goal" for the two countries. In April 2005, Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura openly claimed, "Taiwan has always been part of Japan-US security arrangements". And what's moer, "The Japanese government only uses clearer

language to reiterate Bush Administration's resolute but prudent determination to defend Taiwan." Japan and US designation of Taiwan as their common strategic objective poses a serious challenge to the Chinese efforts to settle the Taiwan issue.

3. CHINA'S STRATEGIC OPTIONS IN RESPONSE TO JAPAN-US ALLIANCE

How to respond to the challenges of Japan-US Alliance remains one of the most important issues confronting China's foreign policy-makers. Japan-US Alliance represents the paradigm of efforts made by the two countries in reshaping the new security framework in Asia Pacific after the end of the Cold War, i.e. the hegemonic stability paradigm characterized by the military alliance promoted by the US and Japan. Such a paradigm brings more instability to Asia-Pacific countries, failing to set up mutual trust and creating new security dilemmas. In contrast, China actively calls for the setup of mutual trust mechanism, promoting political trust and confidence in the region. In response to the "hegemonic stability paradigm", China strongly initiates a new security concept centered on "mutual benefit, mutual trust, equality, and consultation" and the establishment of a security paradigm for mutual cooperation. China proposes that apart from traditional military security, more emphasis should be put on promoting comprehensive security in areas such as economy, culture, environment, and energy, etc. The new security concept stresses that maintaining regional security and co-operation is for the common interests, and building mutual trust establishes the basis for regional security. China is committed to driving and developing the new security concept, searching for the effective ways to peace and stability.

Japan-US Alliance is the core and basic axle of their relations. China must handle properly its dealings with the two countries for more mature and stable bilateral relations to impose restrictions on the negative impact from the alliance. China-Japan-US triangle is the crucial factor affecting stability and peace in East Asia and Asia Pacific as a whole. The strategic goal of Japan-US Alliance is to bring China into the international society first, and then into the tracks of Japan-US strategic framework to play its due role therein. In the meantime, the alliance also tries to control China and to hold back its peaceful rise. Hedging its bets, the alliance has an obvious target, and it is unrealistic to expect them to change their policies. However, it is possible for China to find more

"common interests", increase the interdependence with Japan and the US in economic, political and military affairs and develop wider cooperation with them. Only in this way can Japan and the US have a deeper understanding of China's indispensable role in the world politics today. China, on the other hand, should also take the opportunity to decrease the passive influence of Japan-US Alliance in the international community.

In response to the great challenges from Japan-US Alliance, China has opted for "partnership strategy", which is a rational choice for Chinese foreign policy. China's "partnership strategy" is different from the British, American and Japanese "partner strategies" of the past which were based on capitalist hegemonic oppression of medium and small countries and were essentially measures of expediency to implement world hegemony. On the contrary, the Chinese "partnership strategy" is based on the presupposition of independence, self-reliance and five principles of peaceful coexistence. Serving the fundamental Chinese national interests in the all-out efforts to build a socialist market economy, it is a rational choice made on account of the initiative changes in the international system towards peace and cooperation. The "partnership strategy" has its down-to-earth significance in counterbalancing the challenges from Japan-US Alliance.

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