

8. The Role of Japan and Future of the Japan-US Alliance

It is not easy to consider what makes the new roles of alliances important after the Cold War, amidst changes of the environment and the international system. There are a number of access points to consider the roles of alliances. One such access point involves anxiety and dissatisfaction. That is, if an alliance represents an official pledge over security issues between its parties, anxieties and concerns arise over whether or not such a pledge can be fulfilled. Today's alliance represents not only a pledge, but also many rules, standards, organizations and systems to deliver it, making the alliance a huge institution. That makes it necessary to view an alliance from the perspective of systems and organizations. Besides that, an ordinary alliance has a viewpoint to place threats and other problems outside the alliance. At the same time, as seen in the idea that NATO contains Germany, forming an alliance also represents a way of adjusting interests to avoid conflicts among its members.

When discussions take place in the relational framework of the client and the patron, mid- to small-sized powers and a big power, or an empire and minor states, the view often arises that the empire or the big power forces its policies on its smaller counterparts. However, it is rather more frequent that the smaller states manage to take advantage of this environment. When a big power or an empire finds major interest and value in considering international order as a whole, the presence of smaller states itself becomes of major significance. Under these circumstances, it is often the case that policies or intentions of smaller states exert power greater than the actual power of these states. The US believes that Japan's advantage is greater than its own. Besides, a smaller state in an alliance with a big power often faces disadvantages in various ways. This is referred to as the dilemma of an alliance, whereby Japan, for example, could wonder if the big power or its ally would actually serve to help Japan's safety, or if the power would abuse Japan for its own interests. A country could be concerned about the intentions and policies of its alliance counterpart. There have been various discussions on this issue through case studies of Japan-US relations

There have also been various discussions concerning the continuity of alliances, specifically, what enables the Japan-US Alliance or NATO to last up till now. The biggest factor behind it is balance of power. Concerning the creation of an alliance, it is possible to argue in both ways that an alliance is formed automatically and that an alliance is formed intentionally to maintain balance. The concept of balance of power is usually referred to in the argument on alliance behavior taken by a big power. In this context, an alliance or its smaller member states are often seen to be used as tools of the big power.

While the United States is currently the sole superpower on earth, there can be argument as to whether an alliance is necessary now in comparison to the Cold War, whether the US finds alliances necessary, or whether allies find the US necessary. Some political scientists use the term soft balancing. Using this term, some of them argue that smaller states are attempting to resist the US in various ways in the diplomatic and political arenas, even if they cannot resist or rebel against an overwhelmingly mighty US. Some also argue that if a policy, like the one taken by the Bush Administration, lasts, there could be soft balancing to take place against the US. As to why no balance of power actually occurs against the US, there are arguments that the

US, being an oceanic state and a state built on trade, poses no threat, and that the US does not pose a threat as it is located beyond the Pacific and the Atlantic, and that it therefore draws no balance of power.

The concept of bandwagoning is often used to consider alliances of smaller states. Since smaller states are of minor scale, they can expect little balance of power based on themselves, and therefore follow a big power or an empire. This pattern can be observed in the foreign policies of smaller states. On the other hand, big powers, too, use the theory of bandwagoning. Paul Wolfowitz, who is seen as a neoconservative, indicated in a thesis that if the US clearly shows its intention and willingness to act, a collective action will take place. The theory of bandwagoning is not necessarily used only by smaller states, but by big powers as well. A common argument is over which of the following can be used to describe an alliance: balance to cope against a group of strong force or a bandwagon that is tuned with big force. As a supplementary idea, an alliance, once formed, could last even if the environment of the balance of power, in place at the time the alliance started, changes. In other cases, an alliance could last based on the power it gained within. The concept of co-binding can be used in this context. Because members of an ally bind with one another, no conflict takes place among them. This is a discussion to regard an alliance as an institution and to evaluate it in terms of institutional power.

When organizational aspects are discussed, an alliance is no longer a mere embodiment of a pledge as it was in the 19th century, but instead today a means to manage and deploy that pledge, involving budgeting, manpower, organizations, buildings, etc., all of which constitute a kind of power. The concept of the bandwagon effect can apply to alliances, too. As everyone joins the framework, the value of this security framework rises, making it easy for everyone to act together. This could possibly apply to NATO and the Japan-US Alliance.

Concerning the question of why an alliance lasts, one can take a domestic politics approach. This paper has thus far spent most of its time on international politics, as domestic policies were discussed in the context of the international environment. Observing an alliance from the perspective of domestic politics is an inside-out approach. Questioning why the Japan-US Alliance has lasted, one observes that there is hardly any force left in today's Japan that flatly denounces the Alliance as was broadly seen in the past. There are two more points to add. One is a discussion of reassurance, in that the presence of an alliance affords a sense of reassurance to the forces seen as problematic by the alliance itself, preventing unnecessary anxiety or suspicion and fear from emerging on the part of these forces. For example, if the Soviet Union during the Cold War represented one of such forces, it would have gained assurances to avoid a sense of excessive alert against Japan and the US. There is room to debate as to whether this sense of reassurance can be found in today's China and furthermore North Korea. The sense of reassurance can not only be placed outside but also inside. Therefore, by forming an alliance, member countries can avoid occurrence of problems among themselves. Reassurance has an effect of making interest adjustment easier to carry out among allies. An expert on European diplomatic history argues that alliances concluded in Europe during the 100 years up until 1945 proclaimed joint defense based on the assumption that enemies were present outside the alliances, but that practically, those alliances served to adjust internal interests. If an alliance has a hidden purpose of further stabilizing relations among its members, this could apply to today's Japan and the US, whereas

their alliance could serve to avoid fear and suspicion against each other.

The following are two of the characteristics seen in the perspective of how the Japan-US Alliance is viewed in studies on strategy, international politics and security. One is that Japan's geopolitical position is often referred to as a major point in debates surrounding its alliances. Japan has formed major three alliances with the UK, Germany and Italy as well as its alliance with the US. Located distant from the European front, it is very hard for Japan to promote joint military actions in Europe with its allies. However, Japan's geographic location does offer a benefit that because its allies stay behind the alliances with Japan, they could use this to divide their enemies' attention for threat into two. In the case of Japan and the US, the two got together due to the Korean War, in which occasion the front was near Japan. As for the question of balance of power or bandwagoning, many political scientists arguing over Japan's post-war alliance say that Japan falls in the bandwagon category. Another frequently used term is free rider and together with the term band wagon, this concept is often used in descriptions of Japan.

How is the prospect of the US in terms of its major or national strategy? One possibility for the US is to become an overwhelming hegemonic state, in which case it would form its policy aims to this end. An opposite possibility for the US is to become isolationist, or to adopt the notion of "the US is the first." In between these two possibilities, but nearer to isolationism, lies the idea of offshore balancing. If the idea of selective engagement is also positioned between hegemony and offshore balancing, each of these scenarios would have US alliances move differently. In the case of global hegemony, the US would establish overwhelming hegemony, regain trust and promote its foreign policy. It would be of course possible to use its alliances through this process. As for the scenario of offshore balancing, the US would commit itself only when necessary to do so and only in highly important regions in Europe, East Asia and the Middle East, for instance. Some argue that the emergence of China should be balanced among Japan, India and Russia. Others, of course, criticize such a view. There are many scholars who emphasize selective engagement. Robert J. Art, for example, argues that the largest difference between offshore balancing and selective engagement is seen in the way to address nuclear issues. Based on this view, the US would not offer a nuclear umbrella if it opted for offshore balancing, which would likely step up nuclear proliferation rapidly. This would deal the hardest blow to the Middle East or South Asia, according to Art's argument. In the question of actions against terrorism, it is argued that a possible set back of the US would help terrorism expand further. There is also argument that the US' withdrawal from Europe would have significant damage done to its security. He says forward deployment is necessary in various regions, including Europe, Asia and East Asia, suggesting significant differences in arguments between selective engagement and offshore balancing. Probably, the policy actually taken by the US will likely be a combination of the two, which would effectively keep the US from being driven into extreme positions.

In the context of East Asian issues, a security dilemma could cause a kind of spiral relationship between the security of Japan and China. There is also an argument that balance of power would take place between the US and China, and that Japan would be excluded. There is also a view that the US and China would approach each other, removing Japan. These moves would degrade Japan's roles. While various names are being raised as members of the Obama Administration, they all appear to have solid standing. The administration has decided the key members for its

economic policy team, and the choices imply that the administration will promote very prudent policies. That would not likely lead to extreme calls on Japan, but the administration could probably make many requests to the country. Japan is often seen as a state without strategy. But a strategy serves as a vehicle to select means to achieve a given goal. Therefore, before presenting a strategy, Japan needs to show its diplomatic and state goals. Some associated this issue with the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, saying that Japan lost strategic perspectives when situations were settled after the establishment of the Guidelines in 1997. After a subsequent decade, which spanned over 9/11 and many other events, it is time for Japan to show its own view, as to the kind of logical structure in which Japan and the US will continue their alliance. There are elements that Japan can carry out subjectively and those that Japan cannot, which should suggest that Japan needs to organize action plans corresponding to each possible action to be taken by the US.

In the context of the 21st century alliance in the course of transformation, it should be pointed out that an alliance itself has different concepts now. In the traditional conception, an alliance represented a pledge, organizations and systems aimed at joint military actions against external threats. In today's conception, however, an alliance is prepared for a much broader scope. One element found in this scope is situations in areas surrounding Japan, a concept laid out in the 1997 Guidelines. As this concept was practically expanded, Japan advanced to the Indian Ocean and Iraq. Encompassing these moves, Japan must consider in which way it must carry out its selective involvement for the benefit of the international community. And to the general public, Japan must explain in plain language for what purpose the US is fighting for Japan. Japan must explain the reasons that require cooperation between Japan and the US, which should exceed the traditional concepts of alliance. There are a number of networks in place to deal with the various problems that present themselves. Japan should consider possible combinations of these networks. In the case of Europe, there are NATO, EU, OUC, and WU. China, too, has a range of options. Japan has networks with the US and in the framework of APEC, among others, with which Japan should consider possible combinations. While the alliance is naturally important, the combinations should include many other ties, as well.

The Japan-US Alliance started as bilateral, weak ties in the military realm, which nevertheless grew stronger and now, despite its bilateral nature, it appears to be developing in multilateral or even global dimensions. This sort of development has not been defined as that of an alliance in the past. Now countries are able to move using an alliance as the base. The preparedness for war, a critical role played by the alliance during the Cold War era, has of course not yet entirely lost its meaning. The Japan-US Alliance today does serve for the defense of Japan. Now, however, various other dimensions must be taken into its scope, including peace building, disaster relief and terrorism, which in the past were excluded from the alliance but now exist and require a reorganization of the alliance. We must consider how Japan and the US can cooperate for these dimensions. These dimensions furthermore could also be addressed in the contexts of various other networks such as those the US has with South Korea and Russia, as well as those that Japan has with South Korea and Australia.