

Briefing Memorandum

The Japan-US Alliance Structure in the Eyes of China:

Historical developments and the current situation

(an English translation of the original manuscript written in Japanese)

Yasuyuki Sugiura, Research Fellow, 6th Research Office, Research Department

1. Introduction

In 2010, the Japan-US Security Treaty celebrated its 50th year since revisions were last made in 1960. The Japan-US Security Treaty continues to serve as the axis for Japanese diplomatic and security policy even today.

The milestone year of 2010 was also a year of heightened attention to China's security stance towards other countries in Japan. In April, a Chinese naval vessel passed between Okinawa Island and Miyako Island, heading due east into the Pacific Ocean, and thereafter conducted a training exercise and refueling in Pacific Ocean waters. In September there was an incident where a Chinese fishing vessel collided with a Japan Coast Guard patrol vessel in the waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands, Japan-China relations were quickly exacerbated. Amidst this string of events, there has been recent debate over the US military's deterrence capabilities against China in light of the relocation issue of Futenma Air Station, while another question has surfaced pertaining to whether the Japan-US Security Treaty applies to the Senkaku Islands. These new issues have caused a significant amount of attention to the Japan-US Alliance as well as to relations with China.

How does China recognize the Japan-US Alliance? This is a vital question in order to understand China's policy towards Japan and the United States. With a view to answering this question, this paper will examine the historical developments starting with the signing of the Japan-US Security Treaty in 1951 to when the Japan-US Alliance was redefined in 1996, and then, based on that, offer observations on how China currently views the alliance.

2. From *opposition to tolerance* (1951 to 1972)

When the Japan-US Security Treaty was signed in 1951, China strongly opposed the treaty along with the San Francisco Peace Treaty, which was concluded without inviting China to join. China's logic was that the United States was an imperialist nation and Japanese Government was a traitorous sub-force of the United States. At the same time, China thought of Japanese people as power that opposed these forces and anticipated the outbreak of an anti-US campaign in Japan.

In March 1955, China created its first post-WWII policy guideline for Japan. The guideline was to estrange Japan from American influence by directly and indirectly encouraging pro-Chinese forces and anti-US campaign in Japan, and normalize diplomatic relations between China and Japan by working together in a united front against the United States. Meanwhile, however, the Japanese Government these policies, which focused on disrupting Japan-US relations, as policies aimed at neutralizing Japan and thus Japan decided to remain cautious.

Opposition to the Japan-US Security Treaty based on this “Japan neutralizing policy” peaked when the Security Treaty began to undergo revision. In November 1958, as Japanese people voiced their demand for the abolition of the Japan-US Security Treaty, China released a statement clarifying the existing policy to neutralize Japan, which indicated that, “Chinese people offer their full support for Japan in its fight for independence, peace, and democracy, and are sincerely looking forward to Japan becoming a peaceful, neutral nation.” Later, the campaign against Japan-US Security Treaty in Japan intensified and China continued to release a lot of statements in the Chinese newspaper the *People’s Daily* indicating support for this campaign.

The dispute would come to an end, however, and as voices of opposition in Japan to the Japan-US Security Treaty started to dampen, criticism in China of the treaty also began to cool down. However, China displayed fierce objection to the so-called Taiwan clause that was included in the joint statement by Prime Minister Sato and President Nixon in November 1969, and also launched a campaign criticizing the “revival of militarism in Japan” in 1970.

China’s stance on the Japan-US Security Treaty was quite literally altered by a US-Sino rapprochement in 1971 owing to a confrontation between China and the Soviet Union and the normalization of relations between Japan and China that occurred in the following year, 1972. Within the context of a US-Sino rapprochement, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai expressed to Henry Kissinger that China would *tolerate* the Japan-US Security Treaty, based on the logic of “cap in the bottle of Japanese militarism”. Meanwhile, in normalization negotiations between Japan and China, Premier Zhou Enlai presented a more negative stance, indicating that, “China is not satisfied with the Japan-US Security Treaty,” but commented that, “I will not talk about Japan-US relations. That is Japan’s problem. The situation in the Taiwan Strait is changing, so the effectiveness of treaties (Japan-US Security Treaty, Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty) is also changing.” He also commented that, “There is no need to talk about the Japan-US Security Treaty when discussing the normalization of diplomatic relations. Relations between Japan and the United States should just continue on just as it is.” In this way, China expressed its *tolerance* for the Japan-US Security Treaty by avoiding talking about the subject.

3. Change in the meaning of *tolerance* (1978 to 1995)

After normalization of Japan- China diplomatic relation, criticism of the Japan-US Security Treaty by China greatly fell off. Thereafter, China even began to practically use the Japan-US Security Treaty to restrain the Soviet Union. At the simplest level this manifested as China's adherence to the clause on antihegemonism in the negotiations process for the Japan-China Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Moreover, the comments from China began to occasionally include expressions like "affirm" with regard to the existence of the Japan-US Security Treaty in that time. In August 1978, Deng Xiaoping told Japanese Foreign Minister Sunao Sonoda, who was visiting China to negotiate the conclusion of the Japan-China Treaty of Peace and Friendship, that Japan and China should both strengthen their self-defense capabilities. Furthermore, Deng Xiaoping, who visited Japan in order to take part in the signing ceremony for the treaty, noted a his concern over Viet Nam invading Cambodia in talks with Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda, voicing that China approves of the Japan-US Security Treaty and the development of self-defense forces.

China maintained this type of stance for several years. In May 1980, in a press conference on his visit to Japan as Chinese Premier, Hua Guofeng commented that, "Independent sovereign nations must be allowed the right to defend themselves. Whatever Japan chooses to do, we will not interfere in its domestic affairs." Also, in January 1982, Deng Xiaopeng noted that, "I welcome Japan to strengthen its alliance relationship with the United States." In light of this series of comments, it can say that during this period China began to lean towards a more *positive* tolerance of the Japan-US Security Treaty.

This form of *positive tolerance* began to fade, however, as a problem arose between the United States and China due to the United States' supply of weapons to Taiwan, and as Japan and China faced other issues such as over school textbooks and prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine. Nevertheless, no particular criticism of the Japan-US Security Treaty arose and China maintained its stance of *tolerance* towards the treaty.

Later, together with the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, and as China faced sanctions from western countries, centered around the United States, in response to the Tiananmen Square incident, a slight change became apparent in China's *tolerant* stance.

Firstly, after the Cold War, China began to interpret the concept of the alliance itself in a negative light. Secondly, as a sense of vigilance towards the United States grew, Chinese academics began to propose the effectiveness of a "wedging" foreign policy where they would make use of confrontations between the United States and other advanced nations.

China's anticipation towards Japan also grew during this period. In response to western powers' sanctions after the Tiananmen Square incident, China used Japan as a breakthrough in their efforts to improve their international relations. Coincidentally, the Japanese Government also hoped that China would soon recover its place in the international community, and therefore, ahead of other western powers, Japan-China relation were the first to be repaired. In October 1992, the Japanese Emperor visited to China, China realized their long-cherished wish.

Under these circumstances, China began to display a more acquiescent stance towards Japan's growth into a political superpower. In April 1992, the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences concluded a report entitled, "Analysis of Japan-US relation trends and recommendations for measures that China should take." The report recommended that, while the Japan-US Security Treaty would not change in the immediate future, "China should somewhat strengthen its support of Japan's progress towards becoming a political superpower, which can also serve to restrain the United States. However, China should adopt a stance of firm opposition against Japanese moves towards becoming a military superpower." In this way, even after the Tiananmen Square incident, China basically maintained its stance of *tolerance* towards the Japan-US Security Treaty. Meanwhile, however, the meaning encompassed by the term "tolerant" began to change, as China began to think of the Alliance concept itself in a negative light and at the same time anticipated Japan's political rise to a superpower as a means of restraining the United States.

4. Redefinition of Japan-US Security and the New Guidelines (1996 to 2000)

In 1996, when the Japan-US Security Treaty was redefined, another change occurred in China's *tolerant* stance. In April 1996, in the initial stages after the release of the Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security Alliance for the 21st Century, China's reaction to the redefinition of the treaty was fairly calm and evenhanded. Subsequently, however, the People's Liberation Army newspaper *PLA Daily* and the government white paper published by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs called *Chinese Diplomacy* both presented a more critical opinion of the Japan-US Security Treaty. Behind this change there was the situation that China was cautious about Japan and the United States' involvement in the Taiwan problem, resulting from the third Taiwan Straits crisis, which took place between July 1995 and March 1996. At the same time, Prime Minister Ryotaro Hashimoto visited Yasukuni Shrine in July 1996, causing the emergence of discussions that associated the strengthening of the Japan-US Security Alliance with a conservative and militaristic shift by Japan.

With the revision work to the guidelines that was announced in the Japan-US Joint Declaration underway, China continued to express concern over the Japan-US Alliance. Amidst these circumstances, in 1997 Jiang Zemin visited the United States, whereupon a Joint US-China

Statement was released indicating that both countries were “determined to build toward a constructive strategic partnership.” In June 1998, President Bill Clinton visited China, where he laid out the “three no’s” related to the Taiwan problem, which indicated that the United States 1) did not support an independent Taiwan, 2) did not support two Chinas, or one Taiwan and one China, and 3) did not support Taiwan in being a member of any international organizations for which statehood is a requirement. President Clinton’s efforts allowed US-China relations to take a gradual turn for the better. Meanwhile, however, opposition between Japan and China over the strengthening of the Japan-US Alliance remained firm until around 1999. Mainly, China presented a harshly critical stance on Japan’s position regarding the definition of “situations in areas surrounding Japan” within the new guidelines. Later, in May 1999, the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was shelled by a NATO bomber, which skyrocketed domestic anti-US sentiment in China. From around May 1999, when bills related to the establishment of the guidelines were on the verge of being passed by the Diet, China began to show signs of softening on its stance towards Japan. Furthermore, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi’s visit to China in July 1999 represented much smoother waters than the fluctuation caused by the history issue when Jiang Zemin visited Japan in 1998.

In November 2000, the Press Secretary from China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized Japan and the United States’ joint development of a theater missile defense system as “sure to provoke caution and alarm by countries in the region, including China, and their residents.” However, this criticism was not in response to the actual strengthening of the Japan-US Alliance itself. In this way, China’s stance on the Japan-US Alliance began to recover to one of *tolerance* over the ensuing several years. Nonetheless, China was not necessarily satisfied with the alliance and was unable to find any positive component in it for itself. In that sense, without any way to change the current situation of the Japan-US Alliance, it can say that China was left with no other option than to take a stance of passive tolerance.

5. Current situation

Since the start of the 21st century, Japan-US Alliance are showing a tendency to further strengthen, perhaps somewhat due to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. China is also strongly interested in these developments. Specifically, when the joint statement released by the 2005 Japan-United States Security Consultative Committee (2+2 Meeting) mentioned the issue with Taiwan, China criticized this as interference with internal affairs.

But, China still recognized that there was no change in the two countries’ policy to strengthen the Japan-US Alliance for the foreseeable future. For that reason China has not gone beyond asserting that the alliance should limit the applicable scope of the bilateral framework. Also, while Japan-China relations worsened during Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni

Shrine, there were Chinese researchers that appeared to have returned to the “cap in the bottle” logic, argued that the United States was able to prevent Japan from turning into a military superpower. In that respect there was no major change in China’s stance of *passive tolerance* during this period.

In September 2010, the same month of the collision incident with a Chinese fishing vessel around the Senkaku Islands, the United States commented that the Senkaku Islands lay within the scope of the Japan-US Alliance. In response, China staked claim over the islands to Japan and criticized the United States by commenting, “the United States must show restraint in its comments and behavior, and must not report on any unwarranted them.” However, the alliance is a bilateral agreement, and there is no apparent change in China’s stance of passive tolerance, which claims that the alliance should not violate the interests of a third country.

Beginning with the United States’ rapprochement with China in the 1970s, China has fundamentally continued to firmly maintain its tolerant stance towards the Japan-US Alliance. At the same time, in view of past developments, the term “tolerance” may have held disparate meanings at different times. This is because China’s understanding of international circumstances has changed, and consequently the country’s policy toward the United States and Japan has also transformed over time. Even now, China does not possess the power to change the Japan-US Alliance to make it more in tune with its own interests, and there is little potential for its tolerant posture to change either. Due to the rise of China, however, there will have to be considerable changes in the future to US-Sino and Japan-Sino relations, while more attention will likely gather around what *form* of tolerance China will present in the future.

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Planning and Coordination Office, The National Institute for Defense Studies

Dedicated lines: 8-67-6522, 6588

Telephone: 03-3713-5912

Fax: 03-3713-6149

NIDS' website: <http://www.nids.go.jp>