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The politics of coordination and miscoordination in the post-Cold War United States–Japan alliance: from a Japanese perspective

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Abstract

Alliance coordination involves a multiplicity of equilibria, the resolution of which depends on institutions and knowledge known as focal-point effects. Since the end of the Cold War, the alliance has expanded its missions despite difficult coordination problems by taking advantage of multiple focal factors. Although common threat perceptions have continued to serve as a central focal factor, other factors, such as shared democratic values and international norms, have been used to legitimate the alliance's missions that are beyond what the perceived threats could justify. To be a viable focal factor, common threat perceptions, democratic values, and international norms need to be backed up by the causal knowledge that alliance coordination has stabilizing, confidence-building, and legitimating effects on regional and international security, respectively. More recently, however, the allies' perceptions are becoming more complex and divergent, putting increasing pressures on the other factors for maintaining and expanding the

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missions. Although democratic values and international norms could generate diversionary effects in broadening Japan's policy horizon, this need not be feared insofar as it contributes to the alliance's basic goal.

1 Introduction

The revised United States–Japan security treaty commemorates its 50th anniversary in 2010. Originating in the Cold War era, the treaty has endured to contribute to peace and stability in East Asia well beyond the collapse of the Soviet Union, a primary motive for the conclusion of the treaty. Since the end of the Cold War, the alliance has been reinventing itself in pursuit of expanding missions for the changing security environments in the region. The post-Cold War missions are the outcome of renewed alliance coordination between the members in pursuit of joint interests.

A problem of alliance coordination has been a constant bilateral agenda for Japan and the United States since its inception. During the Cold War, the shared threat perception of Soviet military power functioned as the major focal factor for facilitating alliance coordination. Japan permitted the alliance strategy to link to the US grand strategy and made part of its territorial assets available to the US forces in order to enable them to extend their deterrent capabilities in the region and provide security guarantees to Japan. In the post-Cold War East Asia, a nuclear-armed North Korea and an ascendant China do pose acute security problems for the alliance, but their military capabilities are limited in comparison to the former military might of the Soviet Union, and their intentions are less clear. Such uncertain environments produce variance in threat perceptions between Japanese and American policy-makers, which renders alliance coordination difficult and often acrimonious. Nevertheless, the alliance's missions have expanded substantially by including the protection of regional security, institutional ties with a greater alliance network, and even out-of-area refueling and reconstruction operations that are not easily justifiable by common threat perceptions.

Under such complex conditions, how has the alliance achieved coordination on these new missions? What focal factors has the alliance exploited for such missions? What are the keys to the successful transformation of focal factors into effective facilitators for alliance

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coordination? What are the impacts of the coordination efforts on alliance politics?

This article tries to address these questions. However, the article does not deal with the problem of a US military base in Japan because it involves too much Japanese domestic politics and does not fit well with the analytical framework of the article, although its resolution is critically important for alliance maintenance.[1] This article rather considers focal factors unrelated to the base problem and is structured as follows: Section 2 conceptualizes alliance coordination during a time of peace or nonwar with some evidence regarding the Cold War United States–Japan alliance coordination. Section 3 examines the experiences of alliance coordination in the post-Cold War period. Section 4 concludes the article by summarizing its main argument and suggesting some future prediction as well as policy prescriptions.

2 A logic of peacetime alliance coordination

In general, the primary goals of an alliance during a time of peace are to reduce the probability of military aggression by a third party against either one or more of its members and to develop military capabilities that could minimize war damages should aggression transpire. In order to achieve the goals, the members need to coordinate their defense policies and create the alliance's mission or institution that encompass its military strategy and the division of roles as well as the members' rights and obligations. Despite the common goals, it is likely that members

1 Despite the transformation efforts by the US Defense Department, approximately 75% of the US forces stationed in Japan have remained in the small Island of Okinawa because of its geographical proximity to the areas of potential conflicts in East Asia. In 2006, to alleviate the island's burden, the Japanese and the US governments agreed to relocate the environmentally hazardous Futenma Marine Corps airbase to an off-shore area near Camp Schwab in the city of Nago. But Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of DPJ who defeated LDP in the 2009 general election attempted to renegotiate the deal with the Obama administration in order to move the base entirely out of Okinawa, claiming its sensitivity to the Okinawans' opinions and environmental degradation to the pristine coral reservoir. The Obama administration has refused the renegotiation request and demanded the implementation of the 2006 agreement, which, *inter alia*, led to the resignation of Prime Minister Hatoyama. The new DPJ Cabinet led by Naoto Kan has reversed his predecessor's position and pledged to follow through on the agreement. However, the base problem is still far from being resolved at the time of writing: the Okinawans with the feeling of betrayal may not easily accept the construction of a new base on their island, although it means the continuing use of the Futenma base.

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have different preferences on strategies, rights, and obligations when they hold different military assets, geopolitical positions, and constitutional constraints. Then, the negotiation over an alliance's mission can be understood as coordination in a game with multiple equilibria. That is, many different patterns of behavior between the members may be rationally sustained as unique best responses to each other.

Such multiplicity of equilibria, which is equivalent to a 'bargaining range' in Snyder's (2007, p. 172) analytical framework, is a fact of life in alliance management. If a coordination failure is detrimental to their security interests, then the members try to achieve a particular equilibrium jointly so as to preserve the alliance. One way to do that is to take advantage of a 'focal-point' effect that facilitates their behavioral adjustment.[2] In such a situation, a 'focal factor' provides a crucial determinant of each member's rational behavior precisely because the member expects everyone else's behavior to be influenced by the same factor. Thus, a focal factor may be rationally supplied by selfish states because the factor is a criterion for selecting among equilibria of an alliance's coordination game.

A focal factor could be anything as long as the members are all aware of it. It takes various forms, including shared threat perceptions, political values, international norms, etc. Among the candidate factors, shared threat perceptions are a natural impetus for alliance coordination, given an alliance's basic goal: the severer the threats, the more efficient alliance coordination (Snyder, 2007, p. 173). Yet the members' perceptions may be too divergent to provide an effective focal factor, particularly under uncertain environments where they hold imperfect, asymmetrical information about a rival state's political intention and military capability. In this case, alliance coordination faces the following dilemma.

If the alliance uses either member's less precarious threat perception as a focal factor, another member with a more precarious threat perception will feel less protected by the alliance (fear of abandonment). Thus, the latter will request the former to reinforce the alliance's mission jointly. In contrast, if the alliance relies on either member's more

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2 In a game with multiple equilibria, the indeterminateness of the Nash equilibrium as a solution concept opens the door to other factors influencing the rational behavior of players. Schelling (1960, ch. 3) advanced the notion of a focal point as a solution to a coordination game with multiple equilibria.

precarious threat perception as a focal factor, another member with a less precarious perception may feel at risk of being embroiled in an unwanted military conflict (fear of entrapment).[3] Accordingly, the latter will then believe that the alliance's mission is excessive and is escalating a security dilemma between the member and the rival state and thus will demand a weakening of the mission. Insofar as war is not imminent, there are no real opportunities to evaluate how appropriately coordination is performed. In this situation, the members' fears of abandonment or entrapment can serve as the practical criteria to evaluate the appropriateness of peacetime alliance coordination. Hence, a main task of peacetime alliance coordination is two-fold: one is to facilitate intra-alliance communication to narrow their divergent threat perceptions and the other is to set forth the mission that can keep their fears of abandonment and entrapment at lowest possible levels. Since the fears of abandonment and entrapment are often two horns of the alliance dilemma, the members need to conduct skillful coordination through intense communication and negotiation to re-establish the alliance's optimal mission (Snyder, 2007, pp. 186–192).

As for the United States–Japan bilateral alliance during the Cold War era, the common threat perception of Soviet military power generated a strong focal-point effect in facilitating alliance coordination so as to link the alliance strategy to the US grand strategy (Samuels, 2007, pp. 38–59). Because of the US security guarantee, Japan was released from the task of building a large-scale military that otherwise might have been needed under the Cold War environment. Thus, Japan could maintain the notion of 'defensive defense' that constituted the security policy goal of the Yoshida Doctrine. The doctrine, initiated by Prime Minister Yoshida in the 1950s, served as Japan's post-war grand strategy to promote security and prosperity within the constraints of the war-renouncing Constitution and the difficult economic conditions at the times.

On the basis of the doctrine, the succeeding government led by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) pursued a nonaggressive low-cost security policy with a mercantilist orientation.[4] Instrumentally, the

3 The notions of abandonment and entrapment were advanced by Michael Mandelbaum and also are discussed extensively by Snyder (2007, pp. 180–186).

4 There has been a major debate concerning the robustness of the Yoshida Doctrine in post-Cold War Japanese foreign and defense policy. See Heginbotham and Samuels (1998) for the continuous influence of the Yoshida Doctrine in post-Cold War Japanese foreign

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LDP government set forth nonlegal rules, including the three non-nuclear principles,[5] the defense budget ceiling,[6] the restrictive defense perimeter, and defensive armament. These rules worked as signals to domestic pacifists and foreign skeptics that Japan would not revive pre-1945 militarism. As a consequence, Japan was able to comply with the spirit of the pacifist Constitution and prevent a costly arms race between the lightly armed Japan and the neighboring states that had suffered from its past militarism and were concerned about the resurgence thereof. At the same time, the government sought to minimize the risk of entrapment with America's wars by exploiting the treaty's asymmetric obligations and the constitutional ban on the exercise of collective self-defense. The aversion to entrapment and collective self-defense was also a reason why Japan rejected the American proposal to establish a multilateral collective-defense organization in East Asia similar to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Europe; hence, the United States–Japan alliance has remained bilateral in structure (Pyle, 2008, pp. 223–225).

From the US vantage point, the asymmetric obligations were acceptable insofar as it could 'defend against Soviet/communist aggression and control the future course of Japanese rearmament, foreign policy and domestic politics' easily under Japan's continued obligation to provide military bases to the United States (Temerson, 1991, p. 3). Furthermore, the stringent Japanese rules were not a major constraint on US military activities because of the use of the double standards by the Japanese government. Recent evidence has revealed that the non-nuclear principles did not restrict US military maneuvers in and out of the bases in Japan because of the secret accords between the both governments that were concluded at the time of the security treaty revision in 1960 and the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty in 1969.[7] The Japanese

policy, Green (2003) and Pyle (2008) for its dilution, and Samuels (2007) for an intermediate position.

5 Japan has relied on the US nuclear shield and need not possess nuclear weapons of its own, but several LDP politicians claimed that it was not unconstitutional for Japan to possess nuclear weapons.

6 This defense budget ceiling was set by the cabinet order in 1967 (Japan Defense Agency, 1976, p. 129).

7 The documents on the secret accords have been disclosed in the United States. Previous Japanese governments led by LDP consistently denied their existence. However, the new

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policy-makers were aware of the need for a balancing act through which they sought to minimize fears of abandonment and entrapment even at the cost of government trust.

Alternative focal factors for alliance coordination may be found in values or norms shared between the members. Security can be constructed through intersubjective processes on the basis of a specific set of values or norms. This view toward security is contingent on the constructivist assumption that states' interests are not wholly materialistic but can be shaped or even constituted by values or norms (Wendt, 1999). According to this account, states sharing a set of values or norms may develop common security perspectives that help coordinate their behavior and lead to the establishment of a security community or an alliance between them (Adler and Barnett, 1998). Historically, many, if not all, alliances were formed based in part on shared values or norms. For instance, liberal values are cognitive bases of the NATO, and the axis powers coalesced around authoritarian values.

Shared values also provide states with a cognitive foundation to develop homogeneous political interests and threat perceptions, given that they acquire similar sets of information about external environments. From a purely rationalist perspective, shared values effectively overlap common threat perceptions and thus hardly constitute an independent focal factor for alliance formation and coordination. Nonetheless, the common threat perceptions do not necessarily mean that alliance members possess similar values. The prewar authoritarian Japan and the liberal Great Britain established a military alliance despite the conflicting values: the alliance was formed based primarily on the common perceptions about Imperial Russia, which threatened their distinct interests in Northeast Asia. Before the Korean War, the liberal United States and the authoritarian South Korea held similar threat perceptions about the totalitarian North Korea that helped form a mutual defense treaty. Thus, shared values ought to be treated separately from the common threat perceptions or common interests: they could provide an independent focal factor for alliance formation or

DPJ government has changed this stance and decided to investigate this matter under the leadership of Foreign Minister Okada (*Japan Times*, 22 November 2009).

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coordination. For instance, the values of democracy and human rights shared among NATO states have led the re-coordination of the alliance's mission for the post-Cold War Europe: under the new mission, NATO states implemented peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations in the Balkans that are not fully explicable by rational instrumentalism (Moore, 2002).

As for the Cold War United States–Japan alliance coordination, shared values had an implicit effect. Anticommunism was a major driving force behind the US Cold War grand strategy but was not shared by Japan at the same level of intensity. The Japanese government, led mostly by pragmatic moderates, was less sanguine about an ideologically charged foreign policy and instead shaped its policy based on purely materialistic interests that could be characterized as 'mercantile realism' (Heginbotham and Samuels, 1998): it was well aware of the need to act pragmatically within the politically heterogeneous region of East Asia in pursuit of security and economic interests. One instrumental approach embodying such pragmatism was the principle of separating politics from economics that the Japanese government used to initiate diplomatic rapprochement toward communist China in the early 1950s and early 1970s. On both occasions, however, Japan was reminded by the United States that pursuing this initiative would undermine the effectiveness of the American anticommunist containment strategy in East Asia (Curtis, 2002, p. 139). Japan chose to coordinate its China policy with the US strategy, not because it was coerced to do so, but because it acknowledged that such coordination could strengthen the US strategic position and thus improve the security guarantee for Japan.

An international norm, another candidate focal factor for alliance coordination, had not produced an overt impact on the bilateral alliance or even Japan's security policy, at least until 1994. In that year, the Japanese government enacted the International Peace Cooperation Law that has given legal grounds for Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping missions authorized under Chapter 6 of the UN Charter. As claimed below, the law that embodies Japan's contribution to international peace has provided an indirect but significant impetus for alliance coordination on the out-of-area operations that could not be justified by the security treaty alone.

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3 Alliance coordination during the post-Cold War era

3.1 Expanded alliance missions

The Cold War paradigm slowly lost influence during the first decade after the demise of the Soviet Union. Increasingly, the bilateral alliance began to reinvent itself, developing a new strategic concept in the mid-1990s that broadened the alliance's mission. Reformists within policy communities in Tokyo and Washington demanded the alliance to play a more prominent role in regional security, not just the defense of Japan from external aggression (Article 5 contingencies). More specifically, they urged the alliance to meet a broader set of challenges that included deterring military confrontation over the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait, combating the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, and providing counterterrorism and perhaps missile defense. They also supported a concept of international partnership with democratic states in the Asia-Pacific and beyond. In their view, the United States–Japan alliance should be a contributor to maintaining the international liberal democratic order. Stated differently, the reformists saw that joint interests could be better served by integrating Japan more deeply into US grand strategic considerations (see Noetzel and Schreer 2009, p. 215 for a similar argument for NATO).

With respect to regional security, the post-Cold War United States–Japan defense cooperation took place in the wake of the 1996 Joint Declaration in which both governments pledged to reinforce the bilateral alliance as the centerpiece of peace and security in East Asia for the twenty-first century.[8] Accordingly, the governments renewed the Guidelines for United States–Japan Defense Cooperation, which were enacted by the Japanese Diet as the Act on Measures to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Perilous Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan. To prepare for regional contingencies on the Korean Peninsula and perhaps Taiwan Strait, Japan's alliance responsibilities were functionally extended to cover the rear-area logistics-support roles and geographically expanded to 'the areas around Japan that have a direct effect on Japan's security' (Article 6 contingencies). With the enhanced

8 See Funabashi (1999, pp. 94–151) for a detailed account on the joint declaration.

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interoperability between the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the US forces, Japan is incorporated deeply into the US East Asia strategy.

Furthermore, in the post-9/11 era, Japan was becoming an active contributor to global security operations by adding 'international peace cooperation activities' of extended geographic reach into the SDF's basic roles. This was also an extraordinary development for Japan, having previously limited its security policy perimeter to within East Asia. Specifically, soon after the NATO attack in Afghanistan, the Koizumi Cabinet swiftly enacted the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law (ATSML), which was the legal authority under which the Maritime SFD (MSDF) provided a refueling mission in a 'noncombat zone' of the Indian Ocean to aid NATO operations. In the aftermath of the Iraq War, the Cabinet also enacted the Law Concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq, which sent units of the Ground SFD (GSDF) to a noncombat zone in the southern region for reconstruction purposes. Both operations were indeed Japan's contributions to the UN-authorized missions but were linked intrinsically to the US Middle-East strategy.

Lastly, Japan has been becoming an even more important provider of bases for the United States (Calder, 2007, pp. 209–224). In accordance with the conclusion of the bilateral Defense Policy Review Initiative in 2006, the United States is relocating approximately 8,000 Marine Corps personnel to Guam, but keeping 30,000 US personnel in Japan. Furthermore, the United States is relocating the US Army I Corps headquarters to Japan, collocated with the GSDF's new rapid reaction force headquarters at Camp Zama, and is also establishing joint ballistic missile defense and airspace control at Yokota, deploying its first missile-defense-capable *Aegis* cruisers to Japan, and promoting the overall integration of the US forces and SDF.[9]

These bilateral moves, along with Japan's introduction of Patriot 3 units, were accelerated by the North Korean missile and nuclear threats in 2006. By extension, the Abe Cabinet considered the deployment of theater misled defense (TMD) launching pads on Japanese soils that

9 With relatively firm alliance guarantees, Japan is unlikely to seek to overturn its non-nuclear stance even in the face of a nuclear-armed North Korea. Also, Japanese policy-makers are aware that exercising a nuclear option would exacerbate not only security dilemmas against North Korea and China but also the dilemma of abandonment by the United States (Hughes, 2007).

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intercept ballistic missiles originated in Asia Rim that over-fly Japan and target the US territory. From an interoperability perspective, the TMD program could lead to a reinterpretation of Japan's use of force restrictions so as to allow the exercise of the right to collective self-defense in selective situations. Equally profoundly, it could lead to a re-examination of Japan's basic defense policy limiting the SDF to the 'defensive defense' posture by obtaining limited pre-emption capabilities (Hughes and Fukushima, 2003, pp. 85–86). To provide legal and doctrinal justifications to the expanded alliance mission, the government revised the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) in 2004 (Japan Defense Agency, 2005, pp. 19–25). As a result, NDPG blurred definitional lines between Article 5 and Article 6 missions under the bilateral security treaty, between 'defensive defense' and 'collective self-defense' under Japan's basic defense posture, and between combat and noncombat zones under the SDF's operational principle, hence arguably effecting revisionist interpretations to the Constitution.

When developing the alliance's missions described above, both the United States and Japan experienced difficult coordination problems. The states' decision-makers held complex, divergent threat perceptions and assessed the missions in their respective security policy frameworks differently, thus creating disagreements on the alliance's missions. In what follows, I examine how multiple focal factors were used to resolve the coordination problems and ascertain keys to the successful use of the focal factors:

3.2 Common threat perceptions

As in the Cold War era, shared threat perceptions could be an effective focal factor for post-Cold War alliance coordination. What helped narrow the states' divergent threat perceptions were precisely the precarious external developments precipitated by North Korea and China.[10] In the early 1990s, US intelligence services uncovered suspicious North Korean activities surrounding graphite-moderated reactors, a type capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium. The suspicion was amplified by their reluctance to comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguard procedures and their subsequent

10 Funabashi (1999, pp. 280–295, 367–385) and Samuels (2007, pp. 136–143, 148–151).

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decision to withdraw from the Nonproliferation Treaty. Furthermore, in violation of the 1994 agreed framework with the United States, North Korea has secretly maintained nuclear weapons programs and conducted its first nuclear and medium-range missile tests in 2006, with clear intentions to acquire nuclear weapons and delivery instruments (Funabashi 2007, pp. 463–465). Likewise, in 1995–96, when a presidential election in Taiwan gained a nationalistic momentum, China reacted strongly by launching large-scale naval exercises and missile tests in the coastal region near the Taiwan Strait. In response, the United States with an informal defense commitment to Taiwan sent two aircraft careers to patrol the strait, whereas Japan stood on the sidelines and was unwilling to openly support Taiwan, exposing 'glimmers of divergence' from the US policy (Crawford, 2003, p. 196).

Nevertheless, these events paved the way for intense intra-alliance communication for perceptive convergence, with a specific reminder to Japanese officials that regional peace and stability were no better guaranteed in the post-Cold War than in the Cold War period itself (Funabashi, 1999, pp. 248–279; Samuels, 2007, pp. 63–85). The converging threat perceptions were the driving force behind for the 1996 Joint Declaration with which both allies recommitted themselves to stepping up alliance coordination for a higher level of defense cooperation to deal with the emerging security environments in the region. The Japanese Council on Defense Studies (National Institute for Defense Studies, 2003, p. 15) concluded that neither treaties nor shared values would suffice to hold partnerships together: 'The key to alliances now is risk sharing'. The consequence of renewed alliance coordination has been the expanded missions with respect to regional security and missile defense described earlier.

More recently, however, there has been a noticeable shift in Japan's China policy. Prime Minister Abe, soon after his inauguration in 2006, toned down his predecessor's hard-line China policy by engaging in diplomatic rapprochement toward Beijing and endorsing official government apologies for wartime aggression, despite his conservative credentials. These moves had the immediate effect of restarting Japan–China defense consultations and Japan–China–Korea 'plus 3' group meetings. This was followed by the actions of Prime Minister Hatoyama of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) who took a step further by canceling the deployment of SDF units, ordered by the Aso Cabinet, on the southwestern end of the Ryukyu Islands adjacent to Taiwan. Equally

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important, the Hatoyama Cabinet proposed the establishment of an 'East Asian Community' in an attempt to pursue policy independence and multilateral diplomacy that prioritizes Asia. Although Hatoyama's alliance drift was often pronounced in mass media, as described above, the strategic adjustment had taken an initial step even before the DPJ's electoral victory over LDP in August 2009.

Also in the United States, toward the end of the first term, the George W. Bush administration moderated its initial hard-line China policy by redefining China as a strategic partner rather than as a strategic competitor. As in Japan, this shift has been accelerated by the new Democratic administration, which entices China to become a responsible stakeholder committed to maintaining the international order, by drawing it closer to the core of the international community. In his first trip to East Asia in November 2009, President Obama gave a reassurance that the United States remains eager to engage fully in Asia-Pacific relations and to promote a cooperative partnership with China, not contain it. President Obama rejected the zero-sum nature of power in an interconnected world and claimed that 'China can be a source of strength for the community of nations' (*New York Times*, 14 November 2009).

In their relations to China, both newly inaugurated liberal governments in Washington and Tokyo began to undertake conciliatory policies in varying degrees. As Mochizuki (2004) argues, American and Japanese conciliatory policies toward China are mutually reinforcing to a degree. The conciliatory pressure on Japan is relatively large because of its cultural and geographical proximity to China as well as its protracted economic stagnation that motivates it to seize growth opportunities with a prospering China. In foreseeing the recent shift in Japan's China policy, Samuels (2007, p. 197) had noticed three related developments: the first is the rise of China with considerable soft power and economic opportunities; the second is the relative decline in the United States with respect to its diplomatic vigor and moral authority, together with its already waning economic allure, particularly in Asia; and the third is Japan's ambitions for great power status and autonomy through balancing vis-à-vis China and the United States.

Conciliation has its own strategic rationale: if the alliance members are strongly committed to military cooperation for joint gains, this action might be viewed as being offensive by the adversary and induce its offensive reaction, which undermines a positive effect of the commitment strategy (Snyder, 2007, pp. 17–20, 180–183). Indeed, China has feared that

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the new guidelines extended the jurisdiction of the United States–Japan security treaty into the Taiwan Strait and that the enhanced interoperability between the US forces and the SDF substantially reinforced their combined military capabilities in Northeast Asia, thus transforming the nature of the alliance from a defensive 'shield' to an offensive 'spear' (Takagi, 1999; Midford, 2004). Also, the foreign policy community in Washington has noticed that if the United States stresses the severity of external threats to induce Japan's alliance commitment, it might strengthen the domestic political influence of Japanese ultra conservatives whose nationalistic views unnecessarily worsen Japan's political relations with its neighbors. Furthermore, improving security guarantee to Taiwan through the empowerment of the United States–Japan alliance commitment might encourage its movement toward political independence, complicating the potentially destructive sovereignty problem with China. The policy of conciliation is expected to have a moderating effect on these backlashes derived from the policy of commitment.

However, excessive conciliation puts an alliance at risk. From the perspective of extended deterrence, alliance members need to demonstrate strong commitments to their obligations and constrain their foreign policy options within its strategic framework in order to signal its credibility to a potential adversary (Morrow, 1994). If a member were to explore policy options outside the alliance, such a move might weaken its credibility because the move would be viewed by the partner and possible third parties as disrespect to the alliance commitments. A conciliatory policy is accommodative and may embolden a rival state whose aggressive behavior the alliance seeks to deter.

These points imply that an alliance's coordination game based on threat perceptions is extremely delicate. Yet this does not suggest the demise of the United States–Japan alliance, insofar as Japan has no alternative measure to maintain its hard security other than the bilateral alliance. What this means to the alliance, therefore, is that successful coordination is associated with close communication to reduce the members' perceptive gaps and to deepen the causal knowledge that threats are derived mainly from the lack of alliance credibility: the members' strategic relations with a potential adversary can be stabilized by improving it.[11]

11 The recent shift in Japan's concern before the inauguration of the DPJ government is noticed by Hughes (2007, p. 90).

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3.3 Democratic values

The democratic values held by Japan and the United States could be an empathetic focal factor for alliance coordination. Foreign Minister Aso of the Koizumi Cabinet referred to his desire to design 'an arc of freedom and prosperity' stretching across the outer rim of Eurasia and located the United States–Japan alliance at the center of the arc. The aspiration was echoed by the subsequent Abe Cabinet in its pursuit of the value-oriented diplomacy: Prime Minister Abe stressed the importance of liberal democratic ideals underpinning the alliance and sought to promote the ideals through the United States–Japan policy collaboration. From this perspective, the bilateral alliance can be linked conceptually to a greater alliance network that encompasses mature democracies in North America and Western Europe, emerging democracies in Eastern Europe, India and Pakistan in Southwest Asia, and America's democratic allies in East Asia and Oceania.

Japan's elevation of democratic values in its diplomacy has corresponded closely with the major change in the post-Cold War US foreign policy posture. In the wake of the collapse of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe, the United States has weakened its Cold War anticommunist rhetoric and instead strengthened the democratic commitment considerably. The change was manifest in the Bill Clinton and the George W. Bush presidencies, which sought to promote the spread and promotion of democracy across various regions of the world through a multitude of foreign policy instruments, including diplomatic persuasion, foreign aid, peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, and even military coercion.

Likewise, Japan with its own democratic success has become increasingly comfortable with defining democratic values as an important policy concept that guides its external behavior (Berger, 2007). According to the opinion survey taken by the Cabinet Office (2009), the Japanese public is supportive of the efforts to promote universal values that include freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Although Japan and the United States share democratic values, the bilateral alliance is often viewed as being built on the pragmatic calculation of the states' overlapping security interests defined by political and bureaucratic elites, devoid of meaningful citizenry involvement (Calder, 2009). The alliance definitely needs an empathetic foundation, as old generations who hold direct experiences with American benevolence and

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contribution to Japan's post-war democratic and economic rebuilding have gradually been retiring from politics and business. Shared democratic values can incorporate an empathetic dimension into the rationalistic security institution and cultivate wider public support for it by building confidence and by promoting mutual trust and even friendship between the nations.

However, shared democratic values do not mean that Japanese citizens are willing to fight side by side with Americans or exercise the right to collective self-defense: for instance, the Koizumi Cabinet rejected the proposition that the United States–Japan alliance be an Anglo-American alliance in Asia.[12] In addition, opinion surveys have consistently shown that a majority of the Japanese public opposes a revision of Article 9 of the Constitution that denies the exercise of the right to collective self-defense.[13] Among recent cabinets, the Abe LDP Cabinet was most enthusiastic about revising Article 9 or at least reinterpreting it to allow the right to exercise collective self-defense. But sensing the public opposition, the subsequent LDP and DPJ Cabinets have not shown a strong will to make such a revision or reinterpretation on Article 9. This is attributable not only to the elites' political passivity, but also to democratic politics at work.

Despite the limitations, democratic values have helped enlarge the geographical horizon of Japanese security policy. By nature, democracy is a general concept that exceeds the confine of United States–Japan bilateralism. As democracy has been expanding steadily in Northeast and Southeast Asia, democracy, along with human rights and the rule of law, has been becoming an acceptable diplomatic terminology in many parts of Asia. Accordingly, Japan has exploited rich opportunities to promote security cooperation with other democratic states in the region with respect to weapon nonproliferation, counterterrorism, antipiracy, counternarcotics, etc.

Such multilateral cooperation diversifies Japan's security policy into something known as 'bilateral-plus' even if it might have started as part of the bilateral efforts in dealing with the new East Asia political

12 The Prime Minister's Task Force on 'Basic Strategies for Japan's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: New Era, New Vision, New Diplomacy', November 2002. Such a proposition was advanced by the first Armitage Report prepared by conservative Japan specialists in the United States in 2000 (Armitage, 2000).

13 For instance, see the separate opinion surveys on constitutional revisions conducted by *Yomiuri* newspaper on 15–16 March 2008 and by *Asahi* newspaper on 19–20 April 2008.

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environments. In fact, it was outlined by the second Armitage Report released in 2007 whose primary purpose was to reinforce and expand the missions of the bilateral alliance (Armitage and Nye, 2007). Thus, the new security links outside the United States–Japan alliance could be part of the bilateral alliance's framework. Nonetheless, multilateral cooperation can contribute to the alliance's basic goal of securing regional peace and stability by building confidence among nations in the region, insofar as such cooperation is carefully crafted so that it may not be interpreted as a political strategy to encircle a particular nondemocratic state (Tanaka, 2009, p. 195).[14] Thus, democratic values have the effects of enriching the empathetic foundation of the United States–Japan alliance and improving the confidence-building function of multilateral cooperation in the region.

3.4 International norms

A norm of internationalism has been another focal factor used to transform Japan's post-Cold War security posture. In order to expand its security portfolio, Japanese political leaders, including both LDP and DPJ officials, have invariably emphasized how strong the demand is in the international community for defense activities beyond the areas surrounding Japan. They seek to alter the self-centered view pervasive among the public by claiming that Japan's security is an integral part of international security to which it ought to make an improved contribution. For this reason, they refer to the notion of 'international contribution' more frequently than any other justification to legitimate the expansion of Japan's security policy. According to Samuels (2007, p. 89), 'one need not be cynical to appreciate that international contribution is much more attractive than U.S. pressure'.

In October 2001 when NATO forces began to attack the Taliban and al-Qaida forces in Afghanistan for conspiring in the terrorist attacks against the US mainland, the Koizumi Cabinet quickly enacted the Antiterrorism Special Measures Act to enable SDF to engage in 'cooperative and supportive activities' for the NATO forces. Specifically, MSDF ships refueled the NATO vessels navigating in the Indian Ocean, clearly a

14 Prime Minister Abe was conscious of this risk (Abe, 2006, pp. 158–161). Also, see Haftendorn *et al.* (1999) for a general theory of multilateralism and its risk reduction effect.

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'noncombat zone' where MSDF ships were unlikely to be involved in the use of force or retaliatory military activities. The MSDF mission gained political approval in Japan also because it sought to oppose terrorism and cooperate with the NATO operations with international legitimacy and was supporting UN Security Council resolutions. In contrast, Japan's support for Iraqi reconstruction was politically untenable at home because the legitimacy of the Iraq War was problematic and because noncombat zones were inseparable from combat zones within the post-war Iraq. Even with UN Resolution 1483, the Koizumi Cabinet, committed to sending a reconstruction mission to Iraq, was drawn into a long bitter parliamentary process that could only be settled with forced votes: the cabinet sent a GSDF mission to a 'noncombat zone' in southern Iraq where heavy protection by British and Australian troops was available.

The Japanese government's seemingly internationalist behavior draws multiple interpretations.[15] From a normative perspective, it can be interpreted that Japan wanted to fulfill its obligation as a signatory of the UN Charter and sought to comply with the national pledge in the Preamble to the Constitution: 'desire to occupy an honored place in an international society designed and dedicated to the preservation of peace'. This normative drive is rooted in the bitter memories: in 1933, Imperial Japan withdrew from the League of Nations—the UN predecessor—and turned to aggressive militarism and warfare that destroyed many other states and itself. More recently, in the UN-sanctioned Gulf War, Japan was humiliated for its 'checkbook diplomacy' in spite of the large financial contribution and the belated dispatch of a mine-sweeping MSDF unit to the Persian Gulf. These experiences have become embedded deeply within Japan's normative conscience, influencing its subsequent foreign policy behavior. In contrast, it can be reinterpreted from a rational-instrumental perspective that the Koizumi Cabinet used a cover of international legitimization to cooperate with the US Middle-East strategy in an attempt to promote American involvement in East Asia for greater security guarantees. Within this alternative interpretation, internationalism works to strengthen bilateralism (Hughes and Fukushima, 2003).

However, there exist limits in the use of international norms to facilitate alliance coordination in out-of-area operations. In fall 2009, the DPJ

15 See Dobson (2003) for similar interpretations on Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping missions in the post-Cold War period. See Keohane (2002) for a general account.

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government terminated the MSDF refueling mission by claiming that Japan should no longer provide support for the security operations in Afghanistan because they are collective self-defense operations and not authorized by the United Nations. In fact, there are two separate but increasingly integrated military operations being conducted in Afghanistan: one is Operation Enduring Freedom commenced based on the right of individual and collective self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter (Martin, 2007). It predominantly, but not exclusively, comprises the US forces and focuses primarily on counter-insurgency operations against Taliban and al-Qaida forces. Another operation is that of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), comprising the armed forces of 26 NATO countries (including those of the United States) and 11 other countries. ISAF, established by the authority of the UN Security Council with Resolution 1386, is mandated to assist in maintaining security in Afghanistan and authorized to use force, pursuant to Article 42 of the UN Charter. ISAF is a UN collective security operation that involves nation-building and counter-insurgency. The initial authority and mandates of the two operations were thus different.[16]

As Martin (2007) argues, the DPJ's position is that if the operations in Afghanistan are UN-authorized, then SDF involvement would not violate Article 9 of the Constitution. However, if the operations are not fully authorized by the United Nations and are viewed as collective self-defense operations, then SDF involvement would be prohibited by Article 9. Since the enactment of the International Peace Cooperation Law, participation in UN peacekeeping operations, authorized under Chapter 6 of the UN Charter, has been interpreted as being permissible, but only under conditions that there is no use of armed force. It is generally interpreted in Japan that Article 9 prohibits both the exercise of collective self-defense and participation in collective security operations (Chapter 7 of the UN Charter) because of the use of armed force.

Although the DPJ's position contains legal ambiguities, the major thrust of its policy action implies that the party is more receptive to collective security than to collective self-defense. This seems to be consistent with the notion of a 'normal' state defined by former Party Secretary General Ichiro

16 The two operations are increasingly indistinguishable. The cooperation of ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom activities has been encouraged by the Security Council with Resolutions 1510 and 1707. See Myjer and White (2002) for the legal problem.

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Ozawa (Ozawa, 1993) and is manifested in the following DPJ's security policy outline: in July 2009, the DPJ, citing the Preamble to the Constitution as well as its obligations as a UN Charter signatory, adopted a security policy outline that advocates the establishment of – and presumably Japanese participation within – an international emergency police squad for post-conflict operations.[17] This leads to Japanese participation in a wide range of operations, such as policing, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance activities in post-conflict areas. Consistent with the outline, the DPJ government has continued to support the antipiracy policing mission off the coast of Somalia, sent by the previous LDP government under UN Security Council with Resolution 1816: the mission broadens the eligibility criteria of MSDF protection to third-country ships and relaxes rules on the use of weapons beyond individual self-defense (*Japan Times*, 15 March 2009).

By this account, the DPJ subscribes to normative internationalism more strongly than does the LDP. But, the usual caveat regarding pure internationalism is that a collective security institution rarely possesses the immediacy, flexibility, and sufficiency in deterrence and damage-limitation capabilities that are associated with an alliance. It is unclear as to whether the normative force leads Japan to accept the exercise of collective self-defense, which will in turn transform the asymmetric bilateral alliance into a symmetric one. Even under the constitutional constraints, the norm of internationalism can still be a viable facilitator for Japan's participation in out-of-area operations that enjoy international legitimacy, with modified rules on the use of weapons.

4 Conclusion

During the Cold War period, the United States and Japan managed their alliance using common threat perceptions as a primary focal factor. Such coordination constrained Japan's security policy within the alliance's strategy linked intrinsically to the US Cold War strategy, which in turn kept Japan as a quasi-protectorate, or 'semi-sovereign'[18] state. Since the end of the Cold War, the alliance as a provider of regional and

17 The related document was found in former Prime Minister Hatoyama's personal website at http://www.hatoyama.gr.jp/tentative_plan/shian1.doc (26 February 2010, date last accessed).

18 The terminology is used by Shiraishi (2004, p. 111).

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international peace has expanded its missions despite difficult coordination problems by taking advantage of multiple focal factors. Although the common threat perceptions have continued to serve as a central focal factor, other factors, such as shared democratic values and international norms, have been used to legitimate the missions that are beyond what the perceived threats could justify. To be a viable focal factor, common threat perceptions, democratic values, and international norms need to be backed up by the causal knowledge that alliance coordination can produce stabilizing, confidence-building, and legitimating effects on regional and international security, respectively.

More recently, the allies' perceptions are becoming more complex and divergent because of a number of elements, including existential but uncertain external threats, shifting Japanese domestic politics, the declining US hegemony, and abundant conciliatory opportunities vis-à-vis an ascendant China. As a result, increasing pressures have been put on the other factors for maintaining and expanding the missions. Democratic values and international norms could generate diversionary effects in enlarging Japan's policy scope toward the directions of bilateralism-plus and even multilateralism. Yet, multilateralism need not be feared insofar as it contributes to the alliance's basic goal by building confidence among nations in the region through inclusive communicative channels and reducing the limitations associated with the bilateral alliance that is exclusive in nature.

At any rate, multilateralism would be far from replacing the bilateral alliance as a provider of hard security, which will continue to occupy Japanese policy-makers in the time of precarious external environments. Even though multilateralism might be normatively more attractive to Japanese political elites, the bilateral alliance maintains its utility not only by cementing the existing formal US commitment to East Asia security, but also by providing the institutional framework within which both major states can coordinate their interests.

The United States–Japan alliance will continue to provide security and stability in East Asia and beyond. As there simply is no credible alternative to Japanese security, there exists an imperative for Japan to maintain the alliance as the cornerstone of its security policy, despite its desire for multilateralism and policy independence.[19] That said, however,

19 Mochizuki (2005) notes the dilemma between Japan's desire for policy independence and the need to rely on the bilateral alliance for security guarantees.

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the challenges to alliance coordination, if left unaddressed, would have disturbing effects on the alliance's integrity.

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