

# GPJ

## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON JAPAN

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## Scope

“Global Perspectives on Japan” focuses on developing a global perspective on the study of Japan and Asia. The journal promotes innovative, interdisciplinary, inter-regional and transnational approaches to Japanese Studies.

The journal aims to be a venue for scholarship in E.M.E.A. region with a special focus on Turkey and neighboring regions. It especially encourages scholars from the Middle East, Balkans, Central Asia and the Mediterranean but also welcomes scholars from other parts of the world.

GPJ invites papers in the fields of history, humanities, and social sciences including topics of the past and the present. In addition to articles, the journal publishes occasional article size translations, book reviews, and surveys of current trends in Japanese and Asian Studies.

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Assistant Editor: Jennifer Leigh Norris

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No. 5

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日米同盟と東アジアの安全保障\*

## The Japan-US Alliance and East Asian Security\*\*

Sako Susumu

### Introduction

The security environment surrounding Japan is becoming increasingly severe due to the presence of North Korea, which is pursuing nuclear and missile development, and China, which is advocating the promotion of a distinctive great power of diplomacy. Considering the relationship between the two countries, it can be said that the North Korea issue is also closely related to China, and the China issue is the biggest problem in the medium and the long term. Under these circumstances, Japan is taking measures such as developing security legislation. At the same time, its ally, the United States, with the establishment of the Trump administration, has also made a clear shift from its traditional policy of engagement with China and has taken an aggressive stance toward China. The US presence, based on the Japan-US alliance, has contributed to the stability of East Asia in the past. The strengthening of the Japan-US alliance is vital for Japan to effectively deal with the tense security environment in East Asia and maintain stability in East Asia and the region from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean and Africa. This paper considers the Japan-US alliance by examining the security environment in East Asia and the current situation between Japan and the United States.

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\* This is an abbreviated translation of the following article: 佐古丞. 「日米同盟と東アジアの安全保障」、法政論叢、2019年55巻1号。(129-143頁). The original can be accessed at the following link: [https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/jalps/55/1/55\\_129/\\_article/-char/ja/](https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/jalps/55/1/55_129/_article/-char/ja/).

\*\* Summarized and translated by Ayşe Duygu Dayıoğlu.

## **The Security Environment in East Asia**

In the current security environment in East Asia, tensions are heightened by the presence of North Korea, which has been developing nuclear weapons and missiles with the ultimate goal of maintaining the current regime, and the People's Republic of China, which is challenging and seeking to change the existing international order. The 2018 edition of the government report on defense, "Japan's Defense", published on August 24, 2018, states the following regarding North Korea: "Since 2004, North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests and has repeatedly launched up to 40 ballistic missiles. These military moves by North Korea represent an unprecedentedly serious and imminent threat to the security of Japan and seriously undermine the peace and security of the region and the international community". It is evident that North Korea is a threat to Japan, as it has had missiles within range of Japan for some time. Moreover, North Korea now possesses nuclear weapons as well as biological and chemical weapons. North Korea is a dictatorship with very little transparency. On June 12, 2016, the first US-North Korea summit between President Trump and President Kim took place in Singapore, and a joint statement was released. The joint declaration stated that "President Trump pledged to provide security guarantees to North Korea, and President Kim reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula", but did not specify the "Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Denuclearization" (CVID) that the U.S. was seeking, and no concrete results were achieved.

The tone of the debate at the time was mainly along the lines of, "We need to wait and see what happens in the future." Looking at the developments since then, there has been no progress in the "denuclearization of North Korea," as North Korea's attitude was hardened by a direct meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Kim Jong-un. President Trump stated at a press conference that he would suspend joint US-ROK military exercises while continuing dialogue with North Korea. This is a strategic goal that China has been seeking for a long time, and it has led to the removal of US influence from East Asia. At the same time, it is almost common sense for China that North Korea is a buffer state against the US, and China needs to ensure the survival of the North Korean regime. In other words, it can be said

that the North Korean problem is directly related to the Chinese situation.

The question of how to deal with the challenge to the existing international order posed by China, an emerging superpower that has achieved rapid development, has become a problem not only for East Asia, but for the entire world. As fundamentalist extremists in the Islamic world until about 100 years ago, China has a different view of the international order than the Western European-originated international order. China was the center of the East Asian global system. The international order of Western European origin was based on the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, in which equal independent sovereign states coexisted. On the other hand, the Sinocentric order has a unipolar structure putting China at the center under the moral rule of the Son of Heaven and the surrounding barbarians. The Xi Jinping administration is implementing a diplomatic security policy with the aim of the Great Reconstruction of the Chinese People. At the party's Central Foreign Affairs Workshop in November 2014, Xi Jinping said that the current world is a world of change, a new opportunity. It is recognizing that in a world of new challenges, a world in which the international system and order are considerably coordinated, China has reached a critical stage in realizing China's dream of the Great Reconstruction of the Chinese People. He emphasized the importance of promoting China's own distinctive great diplomacy with its unique Chinese character, style, and spirit. Furthermore, in June 2018, at the same Party Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference, he again advocated "great power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" based on the recognition that conditions are favorable for China's diplomacy in the future, and said, "We will be actively involved in leading the reform of the global governance system." He also called developing countries "natural allies." He said he would further promote cooperation with them. Suppose China has a mixed view of the modern international and Sinocentric order. In that case, it makes China's foreign policy unique and, of course, a clear challenge to the existing international order that originated in Western Europe. It is necessary to pay close attention to how the Great Reconstruction of the Chinese People will be promoted and realized under the Xi Jinping administration. It also points to a change in China's system. In other words, Xi Jinping's dictatorship may be on the rise: Xi Jinping's New Era of China's Characteristic Socialist Thoughts was enshrined in the party constitution at

the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2017. It is believed to be the first ideology to be named after an individual since Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. In addition, at the National People's Congress in March 2018, Xi Jinping abolished the term system of the president up to the second term, opening up the possibility for him to hold office for up to three terms. There is growing concern that he may be seeking to return to the Maoist era. Deng Xiaoping's tactic of "hiding one's abilities and waiting for the right moment," which led China to become the great power today, has been abandoned.

One of the most notable policies of the Xi Jinping administration is the "One Belt, One Road" policy, which he proposed in 2013, and which was put forward at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit held in China in 2014. To build the "Silk Road Economic Belt" from western China to Central Asia and Europe, the policy calls for the construction of railroads, roads, and ports through economic aid to countries along the route. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is the first of its kind globally, and it will support this initiative. This "One Belt, One Road" policy has been criticized as a "debt trap" or "neo-colonialism" that puts recipient countries under China's influence by imposing huge debts on them. China's maritime expansion has also been seen as a problem. Former Chinese President Jiang Zemin set the national goals of "Strong Military and Wealthy Country in the 21st Century" and "Unification of the Motherland." It is believed that the Hu Jintao administration inherited these goals. In 1992, during the Jiang Zemin era, the People's Republic of China enacted a domestic law called the "Law of the Territorial Waters and Connected Waters of the People's Republic of China," which unilaterally declared Taiwan and islands in the South China Sea and the East China Sea as its territory. In December 2006, during the Hu Jintao era, Hu Jintao said in front of naval officers, "Our country is a maritime power. The navy has an important position in protecting the sovereignty and security of the nation and safeguarding our maritime interests." In addition, during a visit to China in May 2007 by the U.S. Pacific Command Commander John Keating, he testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee the following year that China had proposed that the Pacific Ocean be divided into East and West and managed by the United States and China.

What is particularly alarming about China's maritime expansion is the

reclamation of reefs in the South China Sea and their use as military bases. China has unilaterally claimed the sea area within what it calls the nine-dash line in the South China Sea as its own territory and has been in conflict with neighboring countries over territorial rights. The South China Sea is rich in seabed resources and is strategically important for Chinese submarine operations due to its deep waters. Furthermore, the route from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea through the Malacca Strait is a critically important maritime transportation route for coastal countries and Japan, which depends on the Middle East for oil imports. The East China Sea is an area that serves as a passageway for China's attempts to enter the Pacific Ocean. China conducts military exercises in the waters around Taiwan to exert pressure, sends Chinese patrol vessels and fishing boats into the waters and territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands, which are Japan's inherent territory, and Chinese naval vessels pass through the Miyako Strait and enter the Pacific Ocean. Recently, it has been said that China's stance toward Japan has been softening. This may be due to the worsening of US-China relations, and it is necessary to keep in mind that this may be considered a tactical policy change.

### **What is the Japan-US Alliance?**

The term 'alliance' generally refers to the cooperation of groups or individuals with common interests or goals. For example, there are custom unions, currency unions, and city unions. It is a pact between two or more states to cooperate in diplomatic, military, political, or economic relations in international politics. While some nations have adopted a policy of non-alignment, such as Britain's 'honored isolation' and the United States' 'isolationism', the reality is that most nations have some form of alliance. Why do we need allies? One can say that they are necessary because they can complement the weaknesses of one's own country and provide an advocate for one's position. On the other hand, alliances can also make the other party wary, and there is a danger of forming a rival alliance. Therefore, it is natural that we need to weigh the benefits and risks of entering into alliances. There is an argument that by allying, there is a risk of being drawn into the conflicts of the alliance partner. Still, since the partner country also bears the same risk, it becomes logical

to choose isolationism. Japan's historical experience should suffice: In 1902, the British Empire made a major shift from its previous 'honored isolation' policy and entered into an alliance with Japan. This was in preparation for the southward expansion of the Russian Empire in East Asia. This alliance allowed Japan to raise funds for the war effort during the Russo-Japanese War and obtain information from Britain about the movements of the Russian Baltic Fleet. In addition, Japan's credibility in the world was enhanced by its alliance with Great Britain, which was considered the most powerful nation. In 1940, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy, eventually resulting in Japan's defeat in the war and the occupation by the United States. It was an alliance that led Japan into isolation. Independence from the U.S. occupation was achieved through the San Francisco Peace Treaty; at the same time, the Japan-US Security Treaty was signed. The Japan-US alliance can be said to have been established at this time. At the time, the term *Japan-US Alliance* was not used, but it is well known that in 1960, the Japan-US Security Treaty was revised and became the new security treaty we know today.

The fact that having an alliance with the US is important not only because of the international environment of the Cold War and the fact that the US occupation made it impossible to have any other ally after independence. It is also important to note that the US and Japan have come to share universal values such as freedom, human dignity, human rights, democracy, the market economy, and the rule of law. The Japan-US alliance provided the conditions for Japan to achieve rapid economic growth by relying on the US for security, adopting a basic postwar policy of light armament, and emphasizing economic growth. When economic relations with the US deteriorated after the Cold War, the argument to 'turn back to Asia' became popular. The argument emerged that Japan should form an alliance with China instead of the US. At that time, the combined trade volume between China and Southeast Asian countries exceeded that with the United States, and China's economic development, in particular, was attracting attention. However, China's political system is a one-party dictatorship of the Communist Party of China, and its values differ greatly from Japan's in other respects. One can say that Japan should continue to maintain its alliance with the US, which maintains the world's greatest military, economic, and influence power, shares its values, and has strong soft power. As for the current situation in the

U.S., it can be said that American society is in a state of confusion, as it is often referred to as divided. The reasons for this division have been pointed out to include income disparity, educational disparity, racial issues, and religious issues. The Republican Party's Trump administration was formed in the United States in 2017. A major reason for Trump's election to the presidency can also be seen as the 'division of America'. Candidate Trump was elected due to his appeal for "America First", his strong criticism of the current state of affairs in America, and his promise to change America. If you recall that former President Barack Obama won the election by saying that he would change the United States, it is quite understandable. Trump is often described as antisemitic, eccentric, and more. In foreign policy, Trump tends to favor a unilateralist and hardline approach with his "America First" policy, which is also being used against allies, such as his aggressive criticism of NATO. Japan and the US are allies, but there are fears about the Trump administration's policies regarding the trade deficit with Japan. In the 1980s and 1990s, trade relations between the US and Japan became so tense that some in the media referred to the situation as the "Eve of Pearl Harbor". The future of the Japan-US alliance must be considered on the premise that such a situation that could damage the alliance between the two countries is possible. The Trump administration is unstable, including the the perception of Russian collusion, and there is the problem of a divided America, so one can expect the US to have a wide range of policies depending on the administration. The Japan-US alliance should not be seen as a given relationship, and efforts should be made to maintain it.

### **The Current Situation in Japan**

It can be said that Japan is currently being asked to reconstruct its national image. There is an urgent need for further clarification of the national image, although there seems to be consensus on living as a maritime trading nation. With the end of the Cold War, the bipolar structure of the US and the Soviet Union collapsed, and the international environment became more fluid, with the term "Anarchical International System" being used at the time. The 21st century began with the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, and the world became more chaotic. At the same time, China has

achieved rapid economic development, and its economic development has enabled it to build up and modernize its military. Answering how Japan will cope with such a new situation is the key to clarifying the image of the nation. Indeed, it can be said that Japan is gradually changing, but it needs to respond to the rapid changes in the world fully.

For Japan to survive in the international arena while maintaining stability and prosperity, nations need to share a common understanding that it is essential to protect a system in which political and economic liberalism values are accepted worldwide. It is essential to think carefully about Japan's role in maintaining such a world. The fact that there is a debate on constitutional revision, which was unthinkable in the past, indicates that it is time to reconstruct the nation's image. In particular, the national debate is divided between revisionists and conservatives over the issue of what to do about Japan's security, namely Article 9 of the Constitution. This issue naturally directly impacts the nature of the Japan-US alliance. Japan's current situation concerning security is clearly different from that of a normal independent sovereign nation. This is because of the existence of Article 9 of the Constitution, which calls for the non-preservation of force, the renunciation of the right of belligerency, and the possession of the Self-Defense Forces, which is not a conventional military force. Whether Japan can protect the lives and property of its citizens, which is the basic role of a state, and maintain a stable international order in which Japan benefits, is at the center of the revision debate. In 2007, the Defense Agency, which had been an external agency of the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Office, was transformed into the Ministry of Defense, which is under the control of the Cabinet. In 2014, the government made a cabinet decision to allow, albeit on a limited basis, the exercise of the right of collective self-defense, which had previously been constitutionally unacceptable. Security legislation was enacted in 2015 and came into force the following year. This expanded the scope of activities of the Self-Defense Forces, improved the deterrence and coping power of the Japan-US alliance, and contributed to the defense of Japan and the peace and stability of the East Asian region. In response to China's maritime expansion, it has become necessary to solidify the defense of Distinct Islands, especially the Nansei Islands, therefore, in March 2018, the Ground Self-Defense Force established a new Hydro Land Task Force for island defense.

## Change in America

Since the beginning of the Trump administration, there has been constant criticism of Trump, but the question is whether it is enough to criticize him. His unilateralist, threatening, and provocative behavior may be a tactic he uses to gain an advantage in negotiations. Certainly, President Trump raises many questions, but it is clear that he is trying to make significant changes to the traditional United States. Of course, some of his promises are good for Japan, and some are not. One thing that could be considered favorable is a clear shift from a policy of 'engagement' with China. The previous Obama administration, which had initially adopted a policy of engagement, became increasingly concerned about China's activities in the South China Sea in the latter half of the term and began to shift away from a policy of engagement. The engagement policy is based on the idea that economic development will lead to democratization and aims to promote trade and investment in China. It leads China into the international community and promotes regime change over the medium to long term. Looking at China's recent developments, one can see that although it is growing economically, it is not leading to democratization. It is modernizing and building up its military, which is trying to overturn the dominance of the United States. In 2015, during the former Obama administration, Michael Pillsbury published "The Hundred-Year Marathon," pointing out the fallacy of the engagement policy. Since the Nixon administration, Pillsbury has worked as a China expert in government agencies for 30 years. He was a pro-China "panda hugger," but by the turn of the 21st century, he realized that his view of China was wrong. For a long time in the US, he held the view that "China is led by a leader who thinks like us. If we help a fragile China, China will become a democratic and peaceful superpower. But even if China becomes a great power, it does not plan to dominate the region, much less the world", and he was convinced of this. He said, "I, like many people working in the U.S. government, have been hearing for decades that democracy will become in China. I've read about it in countless books and articles. And I believed it." In December 2017, the White House released the National Security Strategy of the United States of America. It states that the United States advocates a free and open Indo-Pacific, with the support of regional partners and allies who uphold international

law, freedom of navigation, and freedom of commerce and thought. The US interests in a free and open Indo-Pacific go back to the earliest days of the republic. In January 2018, the Department of Defense released a Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States. The opening section, "Strategic Environment", states "China is using military modernization, influence tactics, and predatory economics as leverage to force its neighbors to realign the Indo-Pacific region for its dominance...In the short term, China will continue to pursue its military modernization program to pursue Indo-Pacific hegemony. It will seek to supplant the United States in achieving global excellence in the future."

Military officials are also speaking out in alarm against China. In June 2018, the United States Indo-Pacific Command was replaced by Navy Admiral Philip Davidson, who made clear his wariness of China, stating, "As stated in the National Security Strategy, the United States advocates a free and open Indo-Pacific, with the support of regional partners and allies who uphold international law, freedom of navigation, and freedom of commerce and thought. It is becoming increasingly clear that China is attempting to create a consistent world with its own authoritarian and above-mentioned model. China is undermining the rules-based international order through its coercive diplomacy, predatory economic policies, and rapid military expansion. We must unabashedly and continuously oppose such actions by China. China is pursuing a long-term strategy to reduce US access and influence in the region, and it has already achieved great success in doing so. China is no longer a rising power but a great power, an equal power competing with the US in the region. In 2018, President Trump called China a 'rival,' stated that "Davidson and I fully agree" in the Senate Armed Services Committee. In this way, the U.S. perception of China has shifted, and it has taken a confrontational stance toward China. For example, the U.S. has enacted the Taiwan Travel Act, which permits direct exchange of government officials with Taiwan, which China claims to be a part of, and endeavors to strengthen relations, such as technical assistance in submarine manufacturing, as well as the implementation of freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea. Furthermore, the U.S. aggressive policy toward China, known as the U.S.-China Trade War, also shows that its aggressive stance towards China is not limited to the security field.

## **The Japan-U.S. Alliance and East Asia**

As mentioned earlier, the U.S. has made a clear shift from its previous 'engagement policy' toward China. This can be said that the change in the situation in favor of Japan, as Japan sees China's military power and its expansion into the East China Sea as a threat. For the U.S., too, China's growing military power and maritime expansion into the Pacific Ocean are perceived as threats, and the value of the Japan-U.S. alliance has increased because the perceptions of Japan and the U.S. toward China have become more similar. In addition, the Japan-U.S. alliance can serve as a basis for taking joint steps not only with East Asia but also with Southeast Asian countries, India, Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Island nations, to counter China's expansionist policies. In August 2016, Prime Minister Abe announced the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" at the 6th African Development Conference. The key to the stability and prosperity of the international community is the dynamism created by the intersection of the two continents: Asia and Africa, which are growing rapidly and full of potential, and the two oceans: the Pacific and Indian Oceans, which are free and open. Japan can promote diplomacy that integrates these two. This is an extension of the Abe Cabinet's consistent belief that a free and open ocean is the source of peace and prosperity. At the same time, it also states that it will provide support to African countries in terms of development politics and governance, respecting their own governance rather than imposing or intervening. Furthermore, to realize this strategy, Japan will further strengthen strategic cooperation with India, which has historically had strong ties with East Africa, and with the United States and Australia, which are its allies.

In November 2017, President Trump responded in Vietnam that he was honored to share our vision for a free and open Pacific. During his visit to Japan in the same month, he emphasized the importance of stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, which is at the heart of the world's vitality. Significantly, the U.S. agreed to Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" that was proposed. This is because Japan's diplomacy has been criticized for its inability to develop a foreign policy based on broad principles. In 1947, the U.S. established the Pacific Command, responsible for Asia, Oceania, and India. Still, with the change of commanders, it was renamed

the Indo-Pacific Command, and recently the term 'Indo-Pacific' has become widely used. How can Japan continue to contribute to the maintenance and development of an international order that upholds political and economic freedom?

## Conclusion

While North Korea is a threat, the more important threat is China in the medium to long term. Japan cannot stand alone against China, which is advancing its One Belt, One Road policy under the slogan of "The Great Revival of the Chinese People" and is developing maritime expansion measures through the Pacific Ocean. There are limitations, such as the Japanese people's awareness of security, Japan's economic strength as the basis for its defense capability, and the legal issue of Article 9 of the Constitution. Of course, it can be said that no nation in the modern world can fulfill its security alone. Under these circumstances, Japan has no choice but to implement its security policy based on the alliance with the United States. Nevertheless, there is currently no such alliance. To continue the alliance, Japan must realize that it is first and foremost responsible for the defense of its own country and adopt appropriate policies. Is there a nation that can help a nation that is unwilling to protect its own country?

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