

Japan's Changing Role in the US-Japan Security Alliance

Arpita Mathur

Abstract

The US-Japan security arrangements have formed one of the most significant pillars of Japan's security strategy ever since the end of the Second World War. However, what is noteworthy is the incremental growth in the Japanese profile within the alliance, from the time of its inception to the present. This paper traces the growing Japanese role within the alliance and argues that the relationship is likely to remain robust in the foreseeable future. Japan's changing security policy as well as its augmented role within the parameters of the partnership has ensured that the alliance has made a marked shift from being asymmetrical to a mutually beneficial and reciprocal arrangement.



With the world's second largest economy and a well equipped and competent military, and as our democratic ally, Japan remains the keystone of the US involvement in Asia. The revised guidelines for US-Japan Defence Cooperation, the basis for joint defence planning, should be regarded as the floor, not the ceiling, for an expanded Japanese role in the trans-Pacific alliance.¹

The US-Japan security alliance has formed the bedrock of Tokyo's security calculus since the end of the World War II and the installation of the San Francisco system.² The Japan-US Security Treaty signed on September 8, 1951, heralded the start of one of the most enduring bilateral strategic relationships in Asia. What is, however, salient and noteworthy is the changing complexion of the Japanese role within the realm of this partnership. There is an explicit egression of Japan from the task and role that was set forth for it in the original document of the treaty to its present posture. This paper is an attempt to trace this changing nature of the alliance to accommodate a more 'normal'³ Japan in the partnership.

While briefly touching on the historical evolution of the alliance in terms of the major milestones till the introduction of the new guidelines for US-Japan Defence Cooperation in 1997, perceived as a landmark in the fruition of the alliance, this

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paper will trace the incremental reappraisal of Japanese participation in the alliance and its changing security policy, whetted further following the September 11 attacks and the subsequent US war against terror. There seems to be little reason to believe that either of the two alliance partners would wish to disassociate from the other in the foreseeable future. Rather, what is more probable is that both parties will attempt to adjust their respective roles within the parameters of the alliance, in order to respond effectively to changes both on the domestic and the international front. This paper argues that the partnership will remain riveted in the near future, though the roles of the two allies are bound to change. There has, in fact, been a continued enhancement of Japan's security role as well as reallocation of responsibilities within the partnership, though both have never been in contradiction with the structure or goals of the alliance.

The Milestones Crossed

The trajectory of US-Japan alliance has passed through three major milestones since its inception in 1951, when the two sides signed the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security at San Francisco following Japan's surrender in the war. The treaty served the twin purposes of democratisation and demilitarisation of Japan, whilst ensuring its inclusion in the Western camp's containment process against the communist ideology. The compulsions for Japan – in military and economic doldrums – to sign the treaty document at that time were two-fold: one, it was a vanquished power under US occupation and two, that it followed the 'Yoshida doctrine' that stood in favour of focusing on economic reconstruction, while depending on Washington for its security requirements.

In a speech to the Japanese Diet while presenting the San Francisco Peace treaty for ratification, Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru stated:

The Japanese-American Security Pact...will assure the security of our country for the immediate future following our recovery of independence... to put Japan beyond the reach of aggression is one postulate to the peace of the Far East and to the peace...of the entire world. Herein lies the reason for our conclusion of a security pact with the US...

The 1951 treaty, among other things, allowed the US to station troops on Japanese soil for the dual purposes of safeguarding Japan's security, as well as the security of East Asia. The US could make use of its bases in Japan without consulting the host government. Japan was prohibited from granting bases or military rights to any third party without prior consent of the US. Lastly, Japan was expected to take on a more active role in its own defence in the future. What was significant was the fact that the US also undertook to provide assistance to Japan "to put down large scale internal riots and disturbances..."⁴

By signing the treaty, Japan committed itself to the Western camp and sealed its entity as part of the bulwark against communism. Concurrently, the foundations were laid for a 'minimalist' security posture and an asymmetrical bilateral relationship,

with Japan providing the US bases in return for a security guarantee. The Japanese Basic Policy for National Defence adopted by the Cabinet in May 1957 also called for dealing with external aggression on the basis of the US-Japan arrangements and reiterated dependence on the US for security in its entirety.

The second vital milestone in the progression of the partnership was its revision in 1960. Kishii Nobusuke, who took over as the Prime Minister in 1957, strongly favoured cooperation with the US, though he wanted to renegotiate the treaty on more equal terms.⁵ The revised treaty was signed in 1960. Article V of the treaty was a manifestation of the lopsided nature of the partnership, which recognised “an armed attack against either party in territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety.”⁶ In other words, the two countries were obliged to assist one another in the case of an armed attack on Japan, even though it was understood that Japan would not come to the aid of the US if it were attacked. The US was also granted the use of Japanese “facilities and areas in Japan” for “contributing to the security of Japan and maintenance of international peace and security of the Far East.”⁷ One notable shift from the 1951 agreement was that the clause relating to US contribution to Japanese domestic or internal security was omitted. Secondly, the US agreed to “consult together from time to time regarding implementation of the treaty...whenever the security of Japan” or the peace of the Far East was threatened. The treaty was automatically extended in June 1970 and remains in that form till date.

Following a hiatus of nearly two decades, the partnership arrived at the third momentous sequence of its evolution, with the adoption of the ‘Guidelines for US-Japan Defence Cooperation’ in 1978. The formulation of these guidelines was a significant development adding pith and substance to the treaty in that they drew out a mechanism for the implementation of the treaty, which did not have any operational rules till then.⁸ The main features of the guidelines were-

- Japan to possess defence capability within the scope necessary for self-defence.
- Japan’s role restricted to repel a limited, small-scale attack. The US was to assist if Japan could not face aggression due to its scale, type and other factors.
- The role of the Japanese SDF (self-defence forces) was to primarily conduct defensive operations in Japanese territory and surrounding waters and airspace. The US forces would handle the functional areas that exceeded the limits on the SDF. The US was to provide a nuclear deterrent capability and forward deployment of combat-ready troops and re-enforcements.
- Cooperation in areas like operations, logistics and intelligence, including joint studies, etc.⁹

The enhanced level of cooperation, both at the policy and the operational level as well as the growing importance of the treaty, prompted former Prime Minister

Suzuki Zenko to refer to the partnership as an 'alliance' (*domei*) for the first time during a visit to Washington in 1981. During the 1980s, the alliance prospered under the premiership of Yasuhiro Nakasone. Nakasone was in favour of a strong bilateral relationship with the US and termed Japan as an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' for its ally.

The *raison d'etre* of the formation of the alliance seemed to have lost much of its relevance with the end of the Cold War. Close on the heels of the end of the Cold War came the Gulf War of 1991, which in many ways became the driving force behind the urgency to reinvigorate the alliance, then under some strain. Japan came under censure for what was widely termed as 'chequebook diplomacy' even after making a financial contribution of \$13 billion towards the war.¹⁰ Tokyo's lack of initiative in a military role was highlighted, as Washington itself faced problems in obtaining its ally's assistance during the war.

Thereafter, the need was felt by both sides to contrive the guidelines in order to acclimatise with the post-Cold War strategic construct and redefine Japanese role within its ambit. The Gulf War was an eye-opener for Japan; along with the post-Cold War challenges of an emerging powerful neighbour in China, the Taiwan Straits issue and the tension in the Korean peninsula. Prominent reports, both in the US and Japan, supported and corroborated the need to redefine the alliance. The report of the Advisory Group on Defence Issues or the Higuchi Report entitled '*The Modality of the Security and Defence Capability of Japan: The Outlook for the 21st Century*' released in August 1994 recommended that it would be necessary to take advantage of the alliance network, centring around the US for security cooperation.¹¹ Besides, the report favoured a re-definition of the alliance oriented towards two objectives – ensuring smooth Japan-US defence cooperation in the event of any military contingency in Japan and contributing to the stability of the region around Japan.¹² The US policy in East Asia at that time was documented in a review undertaken by the US on the security scenario in 1994. The outcome of the review was delineated in a report entitled '*The US Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific*' published by the US Department of Defence in February 1995. Coordinated by the then Assistant Secretary of Defense, Joseph Nye Jr., the report also came to be known as the Nye Initiative and became the prologue and basis of the redefinition of the bilateral partnership. Terming the alliance with Japan as most 'important,' the report stated the following:

- The need to remain engaged and maintain forward deployed and forward stationed forces in Asia for at least the next 20 years as a deterrent against aggression on allies in the region as well as peace in the region.
- The US-Japan security alliance was the lynchpin of US security policy in the region.
- Relationship with Japan to be based on three pillars – security alliance, political cooperation and economics and trade.

- US forces in Japan committed not only to the defence of Japan, but also to the preservation of peace and security in the entire Far East.

The report acknowledged Japan's most generous host-nation support in maintaining American troops.¹³ The new National Defence Program Outline (NDPO) of Japan, introduced in a revised form in 1995, also called for stronger military ties with the US to ensure both the security of Japan as well as the Asia-Pacific region. A US-Japan summit was planned soon after the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in November 1995 in Osaka to reaffirm the security pact. However, the unfortunate incident of the rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl by US soldiers in early September stalled the proceedings. In response to the incident, US forces in Okinawa were reduced and the summit postponed for a while.

Meanwhile, Ryutaro Hashimoto took over as the Japanese Prime Minister following Murayama's resignation in 1996. The precipitators of the revision of the guidelines were the volatile situation prevailing on the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1996¹⁴, which reaffirmed the importance of the alliance for both countries. They realised the potential dangers and existing security risks in Asia, and the significance of American bases on Japanese soil. Prior to the summit meeting, now scheduled for April 1996, the two countries also decided to review the 1978 guidelines to enhance cooperation in "situations that may emerge in areas surrounding Japan and which will have an important influence on the peace and security of Japan."

With these concerns and rationales as a backdrop, the two countries signed a joint declaration on April 17, 1996. The declaration, signed by US President Bill Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto, reaffirmed the two countries "strong determination, ... to build on the successful history of security cooperation."¹⁵ While agreeing upon the need for "continued US military presence in the region as being 'essential for preserving peace and stability in the region,' the declaration called for 'studies on bilateral cooperation in dealing with situations that may emerge in the areas surrounding Japan.'¹⁶

An Expanded Japanese Role: The Revised Guidelines 1997

Signed in September 1997, the new guidelines clearly enumerated many suggestions made in the joint declaration and brought about a marked change in the security relationship. As mentioned in the declaration, they called for defence cooperation in three circumstances:¹⁷

- Under normal peace-time conditions
- In response to an armed attack on Japan
- In response to situations in "areas surrounding Japan that have an important influence on Japan's security."

Emphasising on the 'geographic' rather than the 'situational' nature of the phrase

'areas surrounding Japan,' the two sides envisaged functions and fields of cooperation in situations as follows:

- Cooperation in activities initiated by either Government, including relief activities, and measures to deal with refugees, search and rescue, and non-combatant evacuation operations.
- Japan's support for activities by US forces encompassing the use of SDF facilities and civilian airports and ports for supplies and other purposes by US aircraft and vessels, use of SDF airfields by US aircraft and provision of training and exercise areas, among other things.
- Rear Area Support – This form of support was to include supplies (construction of office, accommodations, etc., inside US facilities, provision of material except arms and ammunition), transportation (including land, sea and air transport of personnel, materials inside Japan), maintenance of US aircraft, vessels and vehicles, provision of medical services, security of US facilities and areas, communication and others (water, electricity, etc.).
- Japan-US operational cooperation, including surveillance, mine-sweeping and sea and airspace management.

In other words, the guidelines envisaged an expanded role for Japan's forces in the case of any contingency in the defence of not just its own territory, but also in 'areas surrounding it.' Besides, the guidelines called for the two partners to cooperate not only on matters of regional, but also global concern. This would include increased Japanese assistance in the United Nations peacekeeping operations and provision of humanitarian aid.

September 11 attacks and beyond: Japan and the US War on Terror

The September 11 attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon marked the beginning of a new chapter in international relations. The crisis, related events and their fallout on the world's sole superpower had momentous implications for Japan – not only because it is a close ally of Washington, but also because it provided Tokyo with a rationale to review its own security construct within the parameters of the peace constitution. The 'mistakes' of the first Gulf War and Japan's 'chequebook diplomacy', which drew widespread censure, provided a grim reminder to the Japanese government and policymakers, that any further reluctance to measure up to the expectations of its ally would translate into a crack in the partnership and expose them to the risk of 'abandonment'.

Expressing shock and 'anger' over the attack, Japan offered its support and assistance to the US in its war against terror.¹⁸ Japan announced a seven-pronged action plan to deal with the situation.¹⁹ Prime Minister Koizumi rushed to the US for a two-day visit and announced that his country would "provide cooperation that suits its national power."²⁰ The US responded by hitting back at terrorist camps in Afghanistan soon after, even as Japan set up a task force comprising the Prime

Minister and cabinet ministers to take crucial decisions pertaining to assistance to the US and addressing domestic security concerns. “Strongly supporting” the American air strikes, Koizumi said he had conveyed to President Bush respect for the US “stand against terrorism...from a long-term perspective.”²¹

During the US action in Afghanistan, Japanese mine-sweepers, destroyers and Coast Guard cutters escorted US aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk* from the Yokosuka naval base. The anti-terrorism bill was passed to enable the SDF to provide non-combat and humanitarian assistance to the US and multinational forces. Japan then took the unprecedented step of sending MSDF ships *Hamana*, *Kurama* and *Kirisame* to the Indian Ocean. These ships set sail from the Sasebo naval base for Deigo Garcia, a major US base, to provide rear-area support for refuelling American and British ships after the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law.

The Japanese have played an active role in Iraq also. Despite massive protests on the domestic front, the Japanese government sent the SDF to the region – a step taken for the first time after World War II. Two significant aspects of the dispatch were: One, the area was still a combat zone, and two, no UN sanction was backing the US attack. War contingency bills were passed to support US operations. A basic plan defining the scope of the SDF mission was drawn up and troops dispatched for humanitarian and reconstruction work like supplying water and medical care in areas like Samawah. Defending his decision to send troops for a ‘non-combat’ role, Koizumi said: “We desire to occupy an honoured place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, ...We are not going to war...The SDF will not participate in combat.”²² It was, however, clear that no zone in Iraq could really be demarcated as a non-combat zone at that time. The Japanese government also decided to keep the SDF troops in Iraq as part of the multinational force following the handover of sovereignty on June 25, 2004. The SDF is under its own command chain, even while assisting the force set up under the UNSC resolution, lest it is forced to take actions that violate the constitution.²³ This is for the first time that the SDF joined such a multinational force.²⁴

The significance of the Japanese decision to send troops to Iraq cannot be denied. It can be attributed to Japan’s assertiveness at two levels – one, as an important member of the international community, and two as an effective and dependable ally of the US. In fact, Japan stood in support of the US decision to attack Iraq even without UN sanctions, when prominent European countries like France and Germany opposed the step and refused to send troops. The gradual expansion in the scope of activities of the SDF to meet the requirements of the situation in Iraq thus simultaneously increases Japanese contribution to the alliance.²⁵ According to former Japan Defense Agency Director General Shigeru Ishiba, the twin reasons for sending troops to Iraq were to serve Japan’s national interests by bringing stability to a region from which Japan imports almost all its oil and secondly, to strengthen the US-Japan alliance.²⁶ There is no doubt that after the crisis faced by Tokyo during the first Gulf War, it has chosen to be a more active participant– a step taken to maintain its relevance in the alliance.

The Supporting Legal Framework

A series of laws have been passed by the Japanese Diet as a means of support to the US-Japan treaty provisions to ensure Japan's active participation in the alliance. Besides these domestic laws, Washington and Tokyo have signed certain bilateral sub-agreements that clarify and document the role and functions of both parties in cooperating under various situations they may have to face together as allies.

The Status of Forces Agreement, Special Measures Agreement and the ACSA have all been periodically revised to ensure the smooth implementation of the treaty provisions. According to figures relating to cost sharing between the two countries (under the SMA), Japan provides as much as 75 per cent of the cost of US forces stationed on its territory as host nation support.²⁷ [Note: The FY2004 budgetary allocation to provide host nation support to the US totals 244.1 billion yen.²⁸

Table 1: **Bilateral Cost Sharing Host Nation Support/Defence Cost Sharing (2002)** (in \$million)

| | |
|--|------------|
| Direct Support (Rent, Labour, Utilities, Facilities, Miscellaneous) | \$3,456.63 |
| Indirect Support (Rent, Taxes, Miscellaneous) | \$1,158.22 |
| Total | \$4614.85 |
| US Stationing Cost Offset | 75.3% |

Source: *Report on Allied Contributions to the Common Defence* from US Department of Defence, http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/allied_contrib2003

The laws passed by the Japanese Diet like the one regarding situations in areas surrounding Japan, the Ship Inspection Law and the partial amendment of the SDF law have been designed to improve on the support rendered to US forces in Japan. The most recent were the war contingency legislations, two of which were specifically addressed to support the treaty provisions. What is relevant here is the fact that they received support from not only the ruling LDP and New Komeito, but also the main opposition party, the DPJ. As many as 90 per cent of the members of the House of Representatives and more than 80 per cent of the House of Councillors approved the bills.²⁹ As stated in an editorial appearing in *The Japan Times*, "Such broad political backing for defence-related measures was simply unthinkable in Cold War years."³⁰ The Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law was, in fact, the direct fallout of the September 11 attacks on the US and was purported to assist its ally in its declared war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A series of as many as seven bills were proposed to be tabled in the Japanese Diet in 2004, of which one relates to 'measures that Japan should implement to facilitate actions of the US armed forces in situations of armed attack and other situations.' Besides, the government is also expected to pursue the passage of an

amendment to the Agreement between the Japanese and US governments concerning the Reciprocal Provision of Logistics Support, Supplies and Services between the SDFs and the armed forces of the US.³¹ Indications have also been given pertaining to the possible revision of the SOFA following an accident involving the crash of a CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopter at the Okinawa International University, adjacent to the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station. Differences arose between Tokyo and Washington over the clause whereby Japanese authorities have to seek permission from US forces for investigation of US military property.³²

Table 2: **Bilateral Sub-agreements**

| Agreement | Main provisions |
|--|---|
| Status of Forces Agreement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Relating to Article VI of the security treaty on granting the US use of land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan. o Stipulates provision of facilities and areas for use by US forces, access to any port or airport of Japan by US vessels and aircraft, use of public services by the US forces, etc. |
| Special Measures Agreement (April 1, 2001-March 31, 2006) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Relates to facilities and areas and the status of United States Armed Forces in Japan o Delineates expenses to be incurred by Japan in areas like electricity, water supply, fuel and for any training relocation. o US to make efforts to economise costs. |
| ACSA (Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Based on principle that if either side requests provision of goods or services, the other side should provide them. o Examples of goods and services are food, water, transport (including airlifts), petroleum, clothing, medical services, spare parts and repairs and maintenance. o With support from domestic war contingency legislation enacted in June 2004, sharing of ammunition also permitted in case of an attack on Japan. o Scope of application includes joint exercises, UNPKOs and international humanitarian operation and cooperation in activities conducted in response to unstable situations in areas surrounding Japan. |

Table 3: **Some Supporting Domestic Laws**

| | |
|--|---|
| Amendment to the SDF Law (May 28, 1999) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Law partially amending SDF law authorises the use of ships and ship-borne helicopters to transport Japanese citizens overseas in emergency situations. o Authorises the use of weapons to protect SDF persons and Japanese evacuees. |
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|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Training conducted in November 2000 for transport of Japanese nationals overseas during a Japan-US combined exercise, using 3 transport planes and 3 transport helicopters. |
| <p>Law regarding situations in areas surrounding Japan (25 August 1999)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Japanese government authorised to undertake in the face of unstable situations in ‘areas surrounding Japan’ - rear area support, search and rescue operations in rear areas, inspection of ships, etc. o JDA Director General to specify actions to be included in rear-area support, search and rescue and order the SDF to take such actions. o PM requires Cabinet approval to go ahead with draft of basic plan of action to ensure timely response rather than wait for Diet approval. o SDF personnel permitted to use weapons in cases deemed necessary to protect themselves or those working with them. o If Parliament does not ignore approval, course of action to be suspended. |
| <p>Law Concerning Conduct of Ship Operations in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan (November 2000)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Conducted by Japan in its territorial waters or surrounding high-seas (including EEZ) to inspect and confirm cargo and destination of ships (excluding warships) and request, if necessary a change of route in keeping with UN Security Council or consent of flag state. o Ship inspection operations include monitoring navigation, onboard inspection and confirmation and requests for route change. o SDF units, in conducting ship inspection operations can provide goods and services to US forces engaged in activities equivalent to ship operations that contribute to accomplishment of purposes of the US-Japan Security treaty. o Goods and services include supplies, transportation, repair and medical services. |
| <p>Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law (November 2, 2001)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Adopted after September 11 attacks on US o To engage in cooperation and support activities as far as possible within range permissible by Constitution against terrorism. o Cooperation and support activities to include supply of fuel for vessels, transportation of people, construction material for maintenance of US air stations used by their forces, repairs and maintenance and medical facilities. o Extent of area for cooperation and support activities to include Japanese territories, Indian Ocean including Persian Gulf and related airspace, Deigo Garcia and territorial water and air and Australian territory. |

- o Search and rescue activities for assistance to affected people or victims of terrorist attacks or if the US or other countries ask for support activities or assistance in areas where Japan carries out such cooperation and support activities to affected people.

Supplements to Japan's War contingency legislation
June 2004

- o Seven bills to supplement Japan's war contingency legislation enacted in June 2004.
 - o Two of seven laws intended to facilitate US military operations in the event of an attack or an imminent attack on Japan and enable the SDF to supply provisions to US not only in peacetime but in emergency too.
 - o Authorises the PM to permit the use of privately owned land or buildings if an attack is anticipated. Government authorised to prosecute people who refuse request.
 - o Japanese SDF and USFJ can share goods, including ammunition and services if Japan is under attack (to support the new ACSA).
 - o Before revision, SDF and US Marines could provide logistical support on a reciprocal basis only during drills and international peacekeeping operations such as UNPKOs. Source: Compiled and tabulated from various sources: Defense of Japan 2003, Defense of Japan 2001, *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, *The Asahi Shimbun*, *The Japan Times*, East Asian Strategic Review (EASR) 2004, EASR 2003, EASR 2001.
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The Emerging Contours

Developments in recent times are also bound to have an impact on the form, complexion and future shape of the US-Japan alliance. These developments are rooted in both a shift in focus of US global strategy as well as Japan's incrementally expanding security profile.

*The 'Base' Issue*³³

The most significant development *vis-à-vis* the US in this regard pertains to its decision to realign US forces globally and its possible impact on Tokyo. The blueprint for the realignment of US forces announced by President George Bush in a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars at Cincinnati on August 16, 2004, was perhaps the first official statement confirming long time speculation that such a plan was in the offing. The proposed alterations in force posture are based on the twin principles of 'greater flexibility and agility' to face new security threats and challenges "associated with rogue nations, global terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction."³⁴ Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld also argued in favour of the theory that "capability can be maintained, and sometimes upgraded, even if the number of troops who pose a burden to hosting communities is cut."³⁵

Hinting at such a plan in June 2003, Andy Hoehn, the Deputy Assistant Secretary

of Defence for Strategy and the main architect of realignment, had said that the US would “still maintain a ring of permanent military ‘hubs’ on US territory, such as Guam, and in closely allied countries such as Britain and possibly Japan.” In an article in *Foreign Affairs*, Kurt M. Campbell and Celeste Johnson Ward observed that redeployment *vis-a-vis* Japan is expected to entail the following:

- Small “lily pads” or “warm bases” would be set up to be linked to a few “large, heavy-infrastructure bases. (such as Misawa and Yokosuka in Japan)”³⁸ – *which means the heightened significance of these Japanese bases.*
- The US likely to maintain most of its major air and sea bases in Japan as hubs, but might consider moving some marines out of Okinawa to less-populated areas in the north of the island.

Mirroring this argument, the *Asahi Shimbun*, quoting South Korean government officials is said to have stated that the US government planned to classify its military personnel stationed overseas into four levels, depending upon their strategic importance. Of them, the most important category or the ‘power projection hubs’ would incorporate troops in Japan, Guam and Britain.³⁹

Present reports on American proposals with regard to redeployment in Japan, indicate the following possibilities:⁴⁰

- a. Moving US Army’s I Corps headquarters based in Washington to Camp Zama (Kanagawa Prefecture).
- b. Merging 13th Air Force Command in Guam with 5th Air Force Command at Yokota (Tokyo).
- c. Relocation of Marines from Okinawa to other parts of Japan, and relocation of the Futenma Air Station.
- d. Shifting night take-off/landing practice of carrier-based aircraft from Atsugi Naval Air Station to Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station (Yamaguchi Prefecture).

Speaking on the realignment of American troops in Japan, Rumsfeld stated that the new arrangements will be “completely satisfactory to Japan as well as the United States,” adding that the US “certainly intend(s), as a country, to stay engaged in the region. It’s an important part of the world and Japan is an *enormously important ally* (emphasis added).”⁴¹

The American bases in Japan offer Washington a very economical and effective platform from where not only can they meet any contingency in the region, but also deploy troops flexibly. However, one of the major friction areas is over Okinawa, which holds as many as 75 per cent of the American bases in Japan. US facilities take up 20 per cent of land on the island. Problems have centred on the fact that most of the population of about 1.3 million depends primarily on agriculture, and US forces have occupied much of the arable land. Besides, the unfortunate rape case by

American soldiers, the native people also suffer from problems like high-noise levels due to low flying US aircraft.⁴² The proposed realignment of troops, which includes their reduction and relocation from Okinawa, will decrease the burden on the island, and remove a major irritant in the security alliance. This step should smoothen ties between the allies, which have faced major frictions on that front.⁴³ A reduction in the presence of US troops in South Korea would also mean an increase in the significance of Japanese bases to deal with the Asia-Pacific region, especially with regard to developments on the Korean peninsula, as well as the Taiwan Straits and China. Moreover, considering the current proposed movements with regard to Japan, the first two possibilities (a and b) are significant since they would translate into the movement of command centres to Japan – yet another indicator of the rising role and significance of Tokyo. The Japanese defence establishment has also signalled its support for a reduction in the number of troops in the Asia-Pacific region. JDA Director General Yoshinori Ono has called for such a reduction as “an effective way to deal with the new security environment and having effective defence capabilities...”⁴⁴

BMD: A Long Term Commitment

Washington and Tokyo are cooperating on the development of the ballistic missile system. The Japanese decision to take part in the BMD system was precipitated by the North Korean test-firing of the Taepodong-1 missile that flew over Japanese territory into the Pacific Ocean off the coast of the Tohoku region. The Chinese missile tests during the Taiwan Straits crisis also played in the Japanese mind. In reports that North Korea had more than a hundred such missiles, coupled with Pyongyang’s incessant nuclear weapons programme, Tokyo found enough source of discomfort to accede to the US offer of participation. The 1997 Revised US-Japan Guidelines called on both the US and Japanese forces to “cooperate and coordinate closely to respond to a ballistic missile attack.”

Japan’s decision to take part in the technical research on the BMD was announced in December 1998. In August 1999, Japan joined the US as co-researcher in the TMD project, under which Japan carried out research in four areas. The Japanese government also decided to purchase (and deploy in 2006) a missile system from the US in 1993.⁴⁵

The Japan-US joint commitment to the development of the BMD systems portends both a stronger as well as closely knit partnership for the two allies. Positive implications for the alliance include a closer US commitment for the defence of Japan. According to Umemoto Tetsuya, the impact of the system on the alliance might include:

- An increased scope for Japan to protect US forces in regional contingencies in the future;
- Greater coordination on equipment to translate into more solid ties;

- Joint development and production of anti-missile systems could draw US and Japanese defence industries closer.⁴⁶

One possible constraint on the joint development of the system could have stemmed from the three-principle ban on arms export adopted by Japan in 1967. The ban would have made it difficult for Tokyo to carry out joint research and development on BMD with its ally, since the process would require taking steps like export of components to the US. Prominent reports like the draft of the new NDPO drawn up by the government and the Araki Report of 2004 stressed on the need for Japan to reconsider and relax such a ban. A decision to this effect was finally announced by Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda in December 2004, when he stated that the missile shield would be excluded from the weapons export ban. This is a landmark deviation in Japan's security policy following the approval of the new National Defense Program Outline.⁴⁷ Moreover, the fact that the research and development, and later deployment would involve a time span of more than a decade is itself an indication of the long-term commitment from both sides to the alliance.

Proposal for an Altered Japanese View on Collective Self-Defence

The ongoing change in the debate on collective self-defence will have significant consequences on both the role of the SDF, as well as the alliance. It would be of relevance to mention that several American voices have oft spoken in favour of Japan taking on the mantle of a more active military role by revising the constitution. US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage expressed the hope that Japan would legalise collective self-defence, which according to him is viewed as "common sense" by many in the global community.⁴⁸ A report by 'A Bipartisan Group to the President-elect on Foreign Policy and National Security Transition' (November 13, 2000), amongst other things, recommended US support to efforts in Japan "to revise its constitution, to allow it to expand its security horizon beyond territorial defence and to acquire appropriate capabilities for supporting coalition operations."⁴⁹ Similarly, a report entitled 'The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership' brought out by another bipartisan group on bilateral relations headed by Armitage in October 2000, stated: "Japan's prohibition against collective self-defence is a constraint on alliance cooperation. Lifting this prohibition would allow for closer and more efficient security cooperation... Washington must make clear that it welcomes a Japan that is willing to make a greater contribution and to become a more equal alliance partner."⁵⁰

From the Japanese side, the latest development has been the draft outline on constitutional revision released by the LDP panel, which calls for establishing a "self-defence military force" for defending the country as well as permit the nation to exercise the right of collective self-defence.⁵¹ Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi also spoke in favour of the need to revise the Constitution to enable the SDF to engage in collective self-defence with the US forces for the defence of Japan based on the Japan-US security arrangements.⁵² Speaking at a televised debate on the NHK

(Japan Broadcasting Corporation) in the backdrop of the Upper House elections, Koizumi said: “The issue...is not about Japan joining the fight when US forces engage in combat. However, if Japan is unable to take joint action with US forces when they are fighting for the defence of Japan. I find that wrong.”⁵³ He added that the role of the SDF and its activities should be clearly spelt out in the Constitution.⁵⁴ It is still unclear whether the scope of the proposed alteration to the collective self-defence law would encompass SDF troops participation with US forces outside Japan. However, the initiation of such a debate means much in terms of the future course of Japanese security policy as well as its impact on the alliance with the US – a partner that would support any such Japanese initiative, especially keeping in mind any future situation in the region that might warrant American action, like the Taiwan Straits or the Korean Peninsula.

An Assessment

An assessment of the US-Japan Security Alliance exhibits an incremental transformation in its role, purpose and scope. It is more importantly a saga of the noticeable growth in the Japanese profile within the overarching paradigm of the partnership. The alliance, which was initially meant to perform the function of being the proverbial ‘cork in the bottle’ in the rise of Japanese militarism as well as containment of communism, has grown both in purpose and scope, even as it has proved to be a boon for Japan in the long run. It is now not limited to being a mechanism instituted for the defence of Japan and the Far East, but has become a partnership that looks beyond borders into the region, and has even been termed a ‘global alliance’ –the keyword at the Koizumi-Bush Summit of 2003. The two leaders declared that their countries are intertwined in a ‘global alliance’ and are “addressing threats to our common security and meeting our common responsibilities” around the globe.⁵⁵ The US war on terror and the Japanese assistance to its ally is a significant case in point. The dispatch of SDF to Iraq was of symbolic importance, being the first troop dispatch of its kind by Japan.

There are new expectations from Japan both as an ally of the US as well as a member of the international community – both of which has spurred Tokyo to recast its defined role. However, what is essentially intrinsic to all these developments relating to the changing Japanese security role is the fact that they have dovetailed well with the development of the partnership and have been in consonance with needs of the alliance. Prominent changes in its security policy, including the augmented role and overseas dispatch of the SDFs, passage of new domestic laws to support the US war on terror have all added value to the substance of the bilateral partnership.

For Japan, the path from being targeted as a ‘free rider’ on security matters to that of an ally that shares risks and is restructuring its security policy to take on a more active role has indeed been long. While there remains no doubt that Japan is taking on the mantle of a more assertive and ‘normal’ State, there seem to be no indications that it wants to play an independent security role *outside* the purview of

the alliance with the US in the foreseeable future. Neither does it seem to exercise its nuclear option despite possessing the requisite technical know-how and seems comfortably placed under the American nuclear umbrella. In reviewing the augmented Japanese role in the alliance (as a consequence of changes in its security policy), it is noticeable how the alliance has accommodated and absorbed these changes willingly. Besides, Tokyo realises the need to become more forthcoming on actively participating with its ally in order to be able to garner its assistance to meet its own security concerns emanating from North Korea and China.

What has been of particular assistance has been the overall favourable domestic support for the alliance. Fundamental to the foreign policy doctrine of any country are the domestic actors shaping the formation of these policies. Opinion on the partnership within Japan can broadly be divided into two groups on opposite ends of the theoretic continuum – those favouring the need, relevance and continuity of the alliance on one side and those favouring the dissolution of the partnership. Both sides generically support the incremental growth of Japan's security capability, while differing on the role and the need of the alliance. A prominent section of the political and ruling elite subscribes to the first school of thought that is in favour of both maintaining and strengthening the alliance, keeping it as the plinth of Japan's security policy. A majority of them, however, are in favour of revitalising the alliance to suit the requirements of the new international order, as well as the growing Japanese role in the international arena. The major proponents of this stream of thought include the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Liberal Party and the *New Komeito Party* – significant members of the ruling coalition. The main opposition party - the Democratic Party of Japan (*Minshuto*), recognises the Japan-US Security Treaty as “the most important pillar of Japan's security policy,” while mentioning the need for Japan to engage in close dialogue with the US, keeping in mind its own national interests, which will require more autonomous decision-making by Tokyo.⁵⁶ A recent *Asahi Shimbun* poll among supporters of major political parties, 84 per cent of LDP supporters, 80 per cent of *New Komeito* supporters and 73 per cent of the opposition DPJ supporters were in favour of the treaty.⁵⁷

It is imperative to add here that even within this school of thought, some call for an independent Japan that does not depend totally on Washington to meet its security needs. Shintaro Ishihara, Governor of Tokyo, has argued against the alliance because it entails Japanese military dependence on the US. Even though he has criticised the presence of US bases on Japanese soil, it must be noted that Ishihara has not spoken in favour of abrogation of the alliance, but sought it as a partnership of equals. In his book, Ishihara states:

Our relationship with the US is of fundamental importance and we owe much to the treaty...Japan and the US should constitute a group of two that works to solve global issues.... Granted, the mutual security treaty remains the bedrock of our national defence, but the specific arrangements first elaborated in the early post war years should be drastically changed...The choice is not all-or-nothing-abrogate to keep the unequal

arrangements...Thus it is time to think about a security pact in which Japan would have more to say.⁵⁸

At the other end of the ideological spectrum are political groups like the Japan Communist Party, which has criticised the Japanese alliance with the US. In its official programme document, the party has eloquently expressed its disapprobation of the alliance, calling it a tool of US imperialism. The Social Democratic Party (formerly the Socialist Party) belonged to this grouping (before it merged with the LDP forming a coalition government under the leadership of Tomichii Murayama in 1994) and opposed the alliance as being unconstitutional. But, it has now softened its stand and generally supports it.⁵⁹ The overall dominance of the conservative right-wing LDP on the Japanese political scene has ensured homogeneity in the Japanese policy towards the US. A second aspect relates to the generational change from the time of the war, due to which the perception of Japan being a 'victim' has modified. The alliance is thus no longer perceived as a tool of American domination.

Domestic public opinion reflects a stance in favour of the partnership. A comprehensive survey conducted by the Japanese Government's Public Information Office, the Cabinet Secretariat Office and the Cabinet Office on defence issues (appendix attached) reflects this trend clearly during a span of the past decade. Similarly, the percentage of people who are in favour of the present bilateral arrangements and the SDF to protect the security of Japan is the highest. A miniscule number is in favour of abrogation of the partnership. (Refer to Tables 1 and 2 attached in Appendix). In a poll conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun* in May 2004, as many as 70 per cent of the respondents felt that the treaty with the US serves as the main core of Japan's national security.⁶⁰

The expectations from Japan are high – and it is taking steps to loosen its own domestic constitutional and legal shackles to live up to them. This process has gained impetus under the leadership of Prime Minister Koizumi – a leader who does not seem to be averse to breaking taboos that have long defined Japan's strategic culture. Also, the Bush and Koizumi relationship has often been compared to that of Ronald Reagan and Yasuhiro Nakasone (Ron-Yasu relationship). A sign of this rapport was the Koizumi-Bush Summit of 2003, during which the US President invited Koizumi for an informal visit to his ranch in Texas – a privilege offered to only a few. This was perceived as a sign of Bush's gratitude towards the Japanese Prime Minister for his support during the Iraq war. The two sides seemed to vibe well on the issue of abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea, even as Bush went on to say that the US "will stand squarely with Japan until all Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korea are fully accounted for."⁶¹

The US is also realising the need to have a partner in the region that will help when required, instead of being a dependent ally. The net result of these factors certainly means a change in the future complexion of the alliance. Interestingly, the 2004 Image of Japan Study in the US also indexes a positive feedback on the security partnership.⁶²

Table 4: **The Image of Japan Study in the US, 2004**

| | General Public | Opinion Leaders |
|---|---|------------------------|
| Maintenance of Japan-US Security Treaty | 85% (Rating of positive responses, either “great deal” or “moderate amount”) | 83% |
| Contribution of Japan-US Security Treaty to Peace and Stability of Japan and the Far East | 72% (Rating of positive responses, either “very important” or “somewhat important”) | 80% |
| Importance of US-Japan Security Treaty for US Security Interests | 86% | 83% |

Note: Survey conducted between February-March 2004. Surveyed population of about 1,504 people 18 years or over. In opinion leaders group, 254 people in leading positions interviewed. Degree of reliability for both groups – 95 per cent.

However, this is not to say that the relationship has not had its share of lows. Since its inception, the alliance has often come under strain – the Nixon shocks, the Gulf War and former US President Clinton’s bypassing of Japan. However, what is to be noted is that the alliance has remained resilient. The relationship thus presents a picture of a stable and mutually beneficial and reciprocal arrangement, which is expected to endure in the foreseeable future. There is, however, one thread that runs through the fabric of the alliance since its inception and underscores the alliance – that is, the US has had and will certainly have more leverage in the partnership as compared to Japan. For Japan, there has been a change in role though - that from being a protégé under US patronage, to that of a prominent supportive ally. Both the partners are enmeshed in a network of interdependence. For the US, Japan provides a base to maintain its stronghold on a strategic location in the world from which (in purely security terms) it can deal with China, the Korean peninsula and any situation in the Taiwan Straits. For Japan, on the contrary, the US is both a guarantor of security, especially its nuclear umbrella, as well as deterrent against powerful neighbours. As Koizumi said: “America has said clearly that any attack on Japan is an attack on the US...The Japanese people must not forget that this provides a strong deterrent against an attack on Japan.”⁶³

Prominent factors that have propped up and spurred both Japan’s growing role as well as the alliance in recent times include tension in the Taiwan Straits, the North Korean instability, a positive domestic climate in favour of the changes, a change in the nature of political leadership under Koizumi, coupled with Japan’s enhanced military capability. Another significant factor is the present American preoccupation with the Middle East, which has led Washington to encourage Tokyo’s growing role in the partnership.

To sum up, it can be said that the alliance is certainly not the same (asymmetrical) as it was at the time of its inception. The same is true for Japan – which is now an ‘actively pacifist’ state.⁶⁴ The possible impact of the emerging multilateral institutions in Asia on the future of the alliance is yet to be seen. Much will depend on the ability of these institutions to resolve any crisis for Japan, particularly at two levels – ensuring the security of Japan and the resolution of regional conflicts, like the

Taiwan Straits issue and the Korean peninsula. The alliance will remain relevant and robust in the coming years, as is indicated by the series of new structures being put in place under the Bush and Koizumi administrations. A window to the future of the alliance as well as Japan's role in it can be fathomed from the visions put forth by the recent Araki Report, which calls for the maintenance and strengthening of the alliance – termed as a “vital buttress in Japan's defence system.” The report also recommends the laying out of a new *Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security and Guidelines for Japan-US Defence Cooperation* “that are in touch with the current strategic environment...”⁶⁵

Appendix 1:

Public Opinion Survey on the SDF and Defence Issues (FY 2002)

Table A: What do you think about the Japan-US Security Treaty?

| Year (FY) | Useful (%) (Useful + Sort of Useful) | Not Useful (%) (Not Useful+ Not Very Useful) | Don't Know (%) |
|-----------|---|---|----------------|
| 1981 | 65.8 | 12.7 | 21.5 |
| 1984 | 71.4 | 10.4 | 18.2 |
| 1987 | 68.8 | 12.5 | 18.7 |
| 1990 | 63.5 | 18.2 | 18.3 |
| 1993 | 68.3 | 14.6 | 17.1 |
| 1996 | 69.4 | 15.2 | 15.4 |
| 1999 | 71.6 | 14.8 | 13.7 |
| 2002 | 73.4 | 13.2 | 13.4 |

Table B: How to protect the security of Japan?

| Year | Abrogate Japan-US Security Treaty and Expand the SDF (%) | Present State (Japan-US Security Treaty and the SDF) (%) | Abrogate Japan-US Security Treaty and Reduce the SDF (%) | Other (%) | Don't Know (%) |
|------|--|--|--|-----------|----------------|
| 1981 | 6.1 | 64.6 | 7.6 | 0.9 | 20.8 |
| 1984 | 5.0 | 69.2 | 6.8 | 1.1 | 17.9 |
| 1987 | 5.9 | 67.4 | 7.2 | 1.3 | 18.3 |
| 1990 | 7.3 | 62.4 | 10.5 | 1.0 | 18.7 |
| 1993 | 4.3 | 68.8 | 7.0 | 0.7 | 19.2 |
| 1996 | 7.1 | 68.1 | 7.9 | 0.6 | 16.3 |
| 1999 | 8.0 | 71.2 | 5.8 | 1.2 | 13.8 |
| 2002 | 8.3 | 72.1 | 4.7 | 1.1 | 13.8 |

Note: Survey conducted between January 16, 2003 and January 26, 2003, Surveyed population of about 3,000 people of age 20 and older throughout Japan, Valid no. of respondents (%) - 2,128 people (70.9%), Individual interview by survey personnel. Figures in % rounded up
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Source: Defense of Japan, 2003, p. 496.

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Arpita Mathur is an Associate Fellow with IDSA. She has a PhD in Japanese Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her areas of research interests include Japan's politics, security and foreign policy.

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