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**Japan's New  
Security Legislation:**  
Implications for Japanese security  
strategies and the US-Japan Alliance

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# **Japan's New Security Legislation:**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to contextualize the latest developments in Japan's Normalization Process, mainly the New Security Legislation and the revision of the Japan-US guidelines, and to explain how they impacted on Japan's security strategies and on the country's relations with both the US and its neighbouring countries.

In order to do so, I provide an overview of how Japan's approach to security and its alliance with the US evolved over the time, by referring to the past literature and official documents made available by the US State Department, Japan's MOFA and MOD. I then examine the content of the new guidelines and legislation and discuss the complexity of Japan's security identity, arguing that changes in Japan's approach cannot be considered the mere result of pressure from abroad, specifically that of the US. On the contrary, I stress the role internal players, mainly the conservative leadership, had in making such pressure effective. In this context, I also discuss how Abe's revisionism risks to challenge the liberal values Japan is trying to convey through its Proactive Contribution to Peace Policy. The picture which emerges is that deterrence through the enactment of the new legislation and guidelines is not enough to provide a comprehensive framework for security and to positively advance Japan's contribution to the international community, if not combined with other socio-cultural strategies addressing for example Japan's history issues.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADIZ	Air Defense Identification Zone	NPR	National Police Reserve
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation	NSC	National Security Council
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum	NSF	National Safety Forces
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations	NSS	National Security Strategy
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting	ODA	Official Development Assistance
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defense	PKO	Peace-keeping Operations
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan	PMC	Post Ministerial Conference
FIP	Facility Improvement Program	ROE	Rules Of Engagement
HNS	Host Nation Support	ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
IHI	Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries	SCAP	Supreme Commander of Allied Powers
JSDF	Japanese Self-Defense Forces	SDF	Self-Defense Forces
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party	SEALDs	Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy
MOD	Ministry Of Defense	SOFA	Status of US Forces Agreement
MOFA	Ministry Of Foreign Affairs	TPP	Trans Pacific Partnership
NDPG	National Defense Program Guidelines	UN	United Nations
NDPO	National Defense Program Outline	USFJ	United States Forces Japan



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## 日本国の正常化と新たな安全保障関連法

1990年代から日本国では正常化というプロセスが行われている。つまり、政府は日本が「普通の国」に変わる政策をだんだんと採択している。このような傾向は安倍内閣と共に加速しており、その結果が2015年の日米防衛協力のための指針の改正と2016年3月に施行された安全保障関連法である。

両方の措置は日米同盟だけではなく、全体の国家安全保障と防衛戦略に大きな影響を与える可能性があり、国際的均衡も左右する恐れがあるので、最近国内でも海外でもよく論争されるようになったテーマである。

特に、議論されているのは次の点である：新たなガイドラインと安全保障関連法によって日本のイメージと国際情勢に関する役割はどのように変わったのだろうか。また、日米同盟にどのような影響を与えるのだろうか。その改正は外圧の結果だけであったのだろうか。それとも、自衛隊の役割が広がることによって、安倍首相はアメリカの圧力から離れる戦略で、アメリカの対等パートナーとして承認される方法なのではないだろうか。最後に、新たな安全保障関連法は地域安全保障にどのような危険をもたらすのだろうか。

本稿の目的は日本国の正常化や安全保障関連法の原因とこれからの影響を明らかにすることである。

新たなガイドラインと安全保障関連法の内容は具体的にどのように変わったのだろうか。集団的自衛権と抑止力の大切さを認めることによって、新たなガイドラインと法律は日米関係をより強固なものにし、日本の自衛隊の活動と役割を以下の様に変更した。

変更点として挙げられる要件は次の三つである：日米軍事協力の規模、集団的自衛権、PKO 協力。

1. 日米軍事協力の規模が拡大された。<sup>1</sup>今まで、日本の「自衛隊が米軍を後方から支える地域を、日本周辺であり、戦場から離れた『後方地域』（非戦闘地域）に限定している」<sup>2</sup>という法律があった。しかし、新たな法律では地域の限定を取り払い、自衛隊が世界中で米軍に協力できるようになった。つまり、日本周辺に限定していた地理的な制約をなくすことになった。また、支援の内容も変わった。戦闘が行われている現場でな

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<sup>1</sup> 防衛省、旧「日米防衛協力のための指針」、<http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/anpo/shishin/sisin78.html>

<sup>2</sup> 今野忍、「自衛隊、米軍へ弾薬提供可能に 日米防衛協力で政府方針」、2015年3月18日、<http://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASH3K4RQBH3KUTFK009.html?rm=340>

ければ、自衛隊による米軍への弾薬提供や、発進準備中の米軍の戦闘機など離陸直前の米戦闘機や航空機への給油をできるようになった。<sup>3</sup>

2. 米国だけではなく、他の国にも支援できるようになった。今までは、日本は日本への攻撃の場合だけこれに反撃（個別的自衛権の行使）することができた。しかし、新たな法律では日本への攻撃がなくとも、同盟国への攻撃に対して、反撃ができるようになった<sup>4</sup>。つまり、政府は集団的自衛権を認め、日本周辺だけでなく、地球上のどこであつても、アメリカ軍や、その他の外国軍に対する後方支援活動（補給、輸送など）ができるようになった。なぜなら、他国への攻撃だがそのまま放っておけば日本にも危険の恐れがあるからである<sup>5</sup>。自衛隊の後方支援が世界規模に広がる布石になるように、米国だけではなく他の国とも様々な訓練が可能になった。<sup>6</sup>つまり、日本の自衛隊は第二次世界大戦が終わってはじめて海外へ派遣できるようになった。
3. PKO の活動は、これまでは活動内容を給水・給油やけが人への医療提供などにとどめていた。また、国連が統括する PKO 活動に自衛隊員の武器使用は、正当防衛などの場合に限られた。しかし、現在では「武器使用基準も緩和され、離れた場所で襲われた人を助けにいく『駆けつけ警護』も可能となった」<sup>7</sup>。

以上の改正の目的は日本の安全保障と防衛力を強め、国際環境に伴った変化に対応することである。例えば、これから日本の自衛隊も国際社会の平和と安全のためにより積極的に活動し、貢献できる。このような概念は積極的平和主義と呼ばれており、安倍内閣のモットーとして受け入れられている。

それでは、そのような変更はどのように解釈されているのだろうか。

国際関係理論のネオリアリズムによると、今まで日本は国際情勢には消極的な態度を持ち（消極的平和という）、アメリカ同盟国が立てた政策を意見しないで、受け入れた。その結果、日本国の正常化は米国の外圧によるものだと考えられる。確かに、アメリカは軍事的に強い日本が欲しい。なぜなら、自衛隊の活動が広がったら、日本国は米国にとってより確実な同盟国になるからである。そのため、昔からよく米国は日本の便宜供与と支援を広げる方向に圧力をかけてきた。

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<sup>3</sup> 今野忍、「自衛隊、米軍へ弾薬提供可能に...」

<sup>4</sup> ジュウダイニュース、「新たな安全保障法制（2015年5月14日に閣議決定）の概要」、2015年11月25日、<https://judainews.jp/2015/11/25/401/>

<sup>5</sup> 今野忍、「自衛隊、米軍へ弾薬提供可能に...」

<sup>6</sup> 東京新聞、「日米訓練、初の安保法対応 重要影響事態を想定 月末から」、2016年10月22日、<http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/national/list/201610/CK2016102202000135.html>

<sup>7</sup> ジュウダイニュース、「新たな安全保障法制（2015年5月14日に閣議決定）...」

しかし、日本の正常化の原因を明らかにするには、外圧だけの影響を考慮に入れるのは不十分である。確かに海外からの圧力は存在しているが、日本だけでなく、全ての国がそのような圧力を受けている。問題は、外圧というより、一番大事なのはどのように政府は外圧に向き合っていくかということである。更に、正常化を理解できるように、国内の要素を考慮することも必要である。その要素の中に、右翼の影響と安倍首相の歴史修正主義が挙げられる。安倍首相は祖父岸信介のように、右派に属している。昔から右翼の目標は国家の正常化を完成することであるとされてきた。なぜなら、日本は国際情勢により深い役割を持つようになり、国際社会に日本国のイメージも上げることができるからである。確かに、中国が台頭してから、日本はアジアや国際情勢においてもまだ大事な役割を担う国として認められるよう努力している。それに成功するように、政府は日本の国際的な活動の規模を拡大し、集団的自衛権を認めることにした。

しかし、韓国、中国など、様々な国では集団的自衛権を認めることが日本軍国主義の復活を行うための口実として解釈されており、抗議している人が多い。なぜなら、第二次世界大戦が終わって以来、日本国憲法は第 9 条を通じて国際平和を希求しているにもかかわらず、新たな安全保障関連法で日本国が平和主義から離れているように思われるからである。

前述の要素は右翼に思想だけでなく、安倍首相の歴史修正主義によって持たされている。例えば、安倍首相は日本が第二次世界大戦に犯した戦争犯罪をよく否定し、戦争犯罪人を祭る靖国神社に参拝した。そのような行動が新たな法律とガイドラインの真の目的を誤解させている。特に、日本の植民地化を体験した国からよく批判されており、アジアの均衡に大きな影響を与えると懸念されている。

確かに、現在は国際環境や国際平和に対する脅威が大きく変わった。昔より本格的な侵略の事態が起きる可能性が低くなったが、新しい脅威の可能性が出てきた。その中に、テロや弾道ミサイル、サイバーセキュリティや大量破壊兵器の拡散などが挙げられる。<sup>8</sup>さらに、公文書にはロシア、北朝鮮と中国は日本に対する脅威としてよく挙げられている。なぜなら、北朝鮮による核・ミサイル開発の継続や挑発行為、ロシアによる軍事活動の活発化と中国との協力、中国による透明性を欠いた軍事力の強化や海空域における活動の活発化<sup>9</sup>（特に南シナ海及び尖閣諸島の問題）は日本の安全保障環境を危険にさらす恐れがある。

このような不安定なアジア太平洋地域に囲まれている日本では日本の政府が不安な気持ちを持って、当然なのではないだろうか。

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<sup>8</sup> 防衛省、「日本を取り巻く安全保障環境が 大きく変わりました。新たな脅威や多様な事態に実効的に対処」、<http://www.mod.go.jp/j/publication/kohoshiryo/pamphlet/tyuu/taikou.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> 外務省、「日本の安全保障政策」、[http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/nsp/page1w\\_000092.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/nsp/page1w_000092.html)

確かに、新たなガイドラインと安全保障関連法は集団的自衛権を認めたが、実はそれだけではなく、新たな脅威に効果的に直面できるまたはそれを防ぐ仕組みも作り出した。

また、新たな法律が制定されたが、これからの日本国は侵略的な国になるわけではない。日本軍国主義の復活も行っているわけではない。日本にとって平和主義はまだ大切な役割を担っているからである。確かに、その法律によって自衛隊の活動は広がるが、他の国の軍と比べると、自衛隊にはまだ様々な厳しい制限がある。それだけではなく、集団的自衛権が認められることによって日本国はより国際的な規模で平和を積極的に保護し、平和構築活動に効果的に貢献できるのではないだろうか。また、その法律によって日本は将来の危機情勢により効果的に対処できるのではないだろうか。

私は安全保障関連法の改正は国際環境の変化に対応するために必要であると思うが、気を付ける点もある。まず、今の日本の不景気が安全保障関連法を実現する上で、障害になる可能性がある。もう一つの障害は安倍首相の歴史修正主義だと思う。なぜなら、歴史修正主義によって、前述にあるように、日本の植民地化を体験した国にとっては新たな法律は脅威として悲観的に解釈されており、それは日本とそのような国の関係を悪化する恐れもあるからである。日米関係の場合にも同様の問題が出てくる可能性が高くなるかもしれない。そうなれば、日本は「積極的平和主義」によって、社会的地位を上げることはできないかもしれない。また、完全な安全保障の枠組みを作るためには、安全保障と防衛に関する政策だけで足りない。そのような政策は社会的な政策に捕捉される必要がある。特に、日本の政府は日本の歴史と戦争犯罪を直視して、明確に認めるべきである。また、政府は歴史修正主義と関係がある論評を控えるべきである。次に、安全保障関連法に関する改正は必要であるが、そのような改正は漸進的に行うべきである。最後に、日米同盟なら、アメリカとの協力を強めるのは大事であるが、他の国との協力を深めることも大切である。なぜなら、多国間協力は国の国際イメージが効果的に上がる方法だからである。それは、米国との同盟から離れるというわけではない。日米同盟はまだ日本にとって必要であるが、その同盟以外、多国間活動の規模が広がったら、日本は米国との対等パートナーとしての承認により近づけるのではないだろうか。

つまり、日本の政府が前述の点に主眼を置くことができれば、日本の正常化はもちろん日本の国際安全保障環境と国際平和に対する積極的な貢献も国際社会に認められ、好意的に受け取られるのではないだろうか。

## INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Japan has been undergoing major changes in its security approach, gradually moving away from its constitutional constraints towards a more assertive and proactive stance. This process, which is known as "normalization", became apparent right after the 1991 Gulf Crisis, during which Japan was heavily criticized by the international community for failing at providing adequate support to the coalition led by the US. This criticism struck the Japanese government, which realized Japan's cooperation and efforts had not been appreciated internationally and that its recognition as a country positively involved in dealing with international affairs had been diminished. The "Gulf Shock", thus, represented for the Japanese policy makers the turning point in the promotion of a more "normal Japan".

The process of normalization pursued by the Japanese policy-makers has been deeply changing Japan's security and foreign policies and, in this respect, it has affected the relationship with the United States, Japan's main ally since the end of the Pacific War in 1945. The alliance between the two countries started with the signing of the Security Treaty in 1952, which was then replaced in 1960 by a revised agreement, the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. As often stated by both countries, after more than 50 years, the alliance still represents the most important pillar of security and political order in the Asia-Pacific and the cornerstone of US interests in the area.<sup>10</sup>

The Security alliance has been evolving over the time, adjusting to the changes that occurred in the international environment. With the breakout of the Korean War in 1950 and later on with the progression of the Cold War, for example, the US started pushing towards a more normal Japan, which could be committed to a more active role in the fight against Communism.<sup>11</sup> Clearly, a more active Japan would mean for the US the possibility to count on a more reliable ally in East Asia. With the end of the Cold War, however, the US interests in Asia changed and both the two governments felt some adjustments to the alliance were required. Indeed, in the Post Cold War era, the alliance had to adjust to Japan's emerging quest for normalcy and the changes that occurred in Japan's security policies had to be incorporated in the relations between the two allies as well. Despite the criticism of many scholars, such as Chalmers Johnson, who was heavily skeptical about

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<sup>10</sup> US Department of State Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, *Fact sheet: US Relations with Japan*, March 11<sup>th</sup> 2016, online at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4142.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Glenn D.HOOK, Julie GILSON, Christopher W.HUGHES, Hugo DOBSON, *Japan's International Relations: Politics, Economics and Security*, London and New York, Routledge, 2001, p.86

the US forward presence and the maintenance of the US-Japan alliance in a post Cold War world<sup>12</sup>, the perceived need for an increased cooperation between the two countries thus led to the development of new defense guidelines first in 1997 and more recently in 2015.

While Japan has been gradually weakening its constitutional constraints since the beginning of the 1990s, it is under the Abe administration that the normalization process has accelerated, as the Cabinet has been much more willing to expand the role of Japan in global security. This is proved, for example, by the recognition of deterrence and collective self-defense as important elements of the country's security discourse.

Therefore, the 2015 US-Japan defense guidelines have marked the beginning of a new approach to security for Japan. As a matter of fact, by officially recognizing in 2014 the right for Japan to resort to collective self-defense, the Japanese leadership has opened the way for Japan's greater involvement in international affairs. Indeed, by including such right within the new guidelines, Japan's role in supporting US activities has been broadened both on a functional level and on a geographical scale, despite the constraints imposed by Article 9. In order to be able to implement the newly agreed guidelines and to formalize the recognition of collective self-defense, a New Security Policy framework was required on a national level and consequently, the "Legislation for Peace and Security" was approved by the Diet on the 19th of September 2015.

Such legislation has, however, been at the centre of debate and has been widely criticized both by law experts, the Japanese public opinion as well as many neighboring countries, which fear Japan's increased military role in the area, based on their own historical experience with Japanese militarism.<sup>13</sup> The main claims argue that such legislation openly violates Article 9, thus being unconstitutional and that it marks the end of pacifism, which has characterized Japan since the end of World War II, thus risking destabilizing the Asia-Pacific regional balance.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, many Japanese feel such legislation might endanger the status quo and the country's relations with its neighbors, and drag the country into overseas conflicts. Since the end of the Pacific War, Japan has always had a peculiar foreign policy, based on pacifism and the refusal of military force, principles embodied in Article 9. With the new legislation and the revision of the US-Japan guidelines, however, the Japanese SDF will be able to fight overseas. As pointed out by scholars such as

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<sup>12</sup> Chalmers JOHNSON, "Policy Paper 03: Japan in Search of a Normal Role", *Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation*, San Diego, University of California Press, July 1992, online at: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/47z7h4n1>

<sup>13</sup> MORI Satoru, *The New Security Legislation and Japanese Public Reaction*, The Tokyo Foundation, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015, online at: <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2015/security-legislation-and-public-reaction>

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence REPETA, "Japan's Proposed National Security Legislation - Will this be the End of Article 9?", *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol.13, Issue 24, No.3, June 21<sup>st</sup> 2015, p.4

Repeta and Mori, those who are skeptical about the new legislation, among whom there are politicians of the opposition ranks, political commentators as well as the majority of the public opinion, have interpreted such changes as part of Japan's attempt to respond to the international pressure, which demands a more actively involved Japan.<sup>15</sup> It is, certainly, true that such pressure exerted some influence on the Japanese leadership. However, foreign pressure alone cannot be the only factor taken into consideration when analyzing Japan's security identity. As suggested by several scholars, such as Cooney and Hughes, it is important to recognize the role played by internal players as well, mainly the conservative leadership, without whose support such foreign pressure could not have been successful.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the recognition of collective self-defense and its integration within the new guidelines and the new legislation reflect Abe and his right wing faction's desire to "normalize" Japan's post-war regime. As a matter of fact, it seems their main goal is to allow Japan to play a more prominent role in international and regional affairs. In order to promote a more assertive Japan, the Cabinet has also adopted the concept of "proactive contribution to peace" as its own political motto, advancing the idea that such notion is the foundation of the new security framework. However, by supporting such changes to Japan's approach to security, could Abe be aiming at achieving a more autonomous status for Japan in the international community? How could Japan's role in the international community change with this new security law and what does this legislation mean with regard to Japan's alliance with the USA? Is Japan's greater involvement in international affairs an attempt to distance the country from its image of being simply a follower of the US, always giving in to the ally's pressure and demands? Or is Japan trying to gain a greater recognition of its role as a regional/global power and to become an equal partner of the US in the Asia-Pacific? Finally, could this new legislation really be a cause of insecurity in East-Asia?

The chapters that follow attempt to answer these questions by offering an overview of how Japan's approach to security and Japan's security relations with the US evolved over the time and by analyzing how the content of the new guidelines and new legislation differ from the past ones. Many extensive studies have already been conducted on the relevance of the US-Japan alliance and on the "normalization" process that the country is undergoing. Such topics, however, continue to remain relevant issues that are still currently highly debated both on the political and the academic level. This is mainly due to the fact that these issues are deeply entangled with changes both in the

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<sup>15</sup> MORI Satoru, *The New Security Legislation....*, cit.

<sup>16</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation: a Quest for Normalcy*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, p.144 ; Christopher W.HUGHES, "Why Japan could revise its Constitution and what it would mean for Japanese Security Policy", *Orbis: a Journal of World Affairs*, Vol.50, No.4, Fall 2006, p.744

domestic and international environment. The new guidelines and legislation are not only the result of the transformations of today's more complex surroundings but they also represent a source of change for the international environment as well. It is undeniable that today we live in a globalized world, where any event, crisis or transformation taking place in one country may have an impact not only on the economic, political and social stability of neighboring countries but on that of the entire globe too. Whether such changes affect the international community positively or negatively, it is in any case essential to keep a progressively more assertive Japan under constant scrutiny and to provide a comprehensive understanding of the roots and implications behind such trend in the country's security and defense policies.

### **Structure of the Thesis and Methodology**

The structure of this thesis aims at providing a clear understanding of the correlation between Japan's past approach to security and the recent trends, and at discussing how such changes in the security discourse could be beneficial but risky at the same time for Japan, if not dealt carefully. This paper is also structured to provide a comprehensible insight of the content of the new security policies, and to offer a critical perspective on the strengths and flaws of the Abe Cabinet approach to security and defense issues. In order to do so, I will refer to and analyze the past literature discussing the US-Japan Alliance and the "normalization process" of Japan. I will also investigate the content of the new guidelines and security legislation, by referring to the official documents, statements and evidence made available by both the US State Department and Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Ministry of Defense (MOD). I will finally take into consideration previous studies explaining Japan's security identity in terms of international relations theories and I will try to apply such theories in discussing the current stance adopted by the Japanese government towards security and defense matters.

This work will be structured as follows:

In the first chapter, I will present the historical background behind the US-Japan relations after the end of World War II and discuss the main turning points in the evolution of the US-Japan alliance and Japan's security approach.

In the second chapter, I will refer to the current Cabinet's strong pro-American posture and then discuss the content of the 2015 defense guidelines and how Japan's role has been broadened, compared to the previous guidelines. I will then analyze the content of the new legislation and I will discuss how the idea of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" emerged and what such concept implies for Japan with regard to its efforts to create and maintain peace in the international community.

In the third chapter, I will discuss the complexity of Japan's security identity by referring to the classical realist and neorealist international relation theories. I will argue how the recent changes in Japan's approach to security cannot be considered the mere result of pressure from abroad. In contrast, I will argue that the role of internal players, mainly the conservative leadership, is important in making such pressure effective. I will also take into consideration what Hughes defines as the Abe Doctrine<sup>17</sup> and, in this respect, I will discuss whether, based on such approach, Japan is trying to undertake a path which will eventually lead to a more autonomous status. I will also provide a critical interpretation of the risks Abe's revisionism is posing to his security strategy. I will finally discuss whether the new legislation and the new guidelines could be preparing the ground for Japan to become a more equal partner of the US in the Asia-Pacific, whether these changes aim at allowing Japan to be recognized as a regional/global power and whether and how Japan could effectively achieve such recognition.

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<sup>17</sup> Christopher W. HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy under the 'Abe Doctrine': New Dynamism or New Dead End?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015



# 1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE US-JAPAN ALLIANCE AND THE EVOLUTION OF JAPAN'S SECURITY POLICY

The development of Japan's security policy is strongly intertwined with and connected to the US-Japan security alliance, which represents the most important pillar of security and political order in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, it is not possible to take into account these two factors independently, as the development of security discourse in Japan seems to have coincided with the evolution of the relations between the two allies.

The foundations of the alliance can be traced back to the Japanese defeat during World War II and the subsequent Occupation by the Allied Powers. On July 26<sup>th</sup> 1945, the Allied leaders issued the Potsdam Declaration, where they defined the terms for the Japanese unconditional surrender and the goals of the occupation, which formally began on August 28<sup>th</sup>. The task to fulfill these goals was entrusted to the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (known as SCAP), who had to respond to the Far Eastern Commission. While Japan was formally put under the joint authority of the entire Allied forces, the actual control was in the hands of the United States, as proved by American General Douglas MacArthur's appointment to the SCAP position.<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 1: MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito, Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> 1945 (Source: US Army)**

The US opted for the indirect rule of the country, thus formally leaving the existing bureaucracy and government intact but subordinated to the Occupation authorities.<sup>20</sup> Under the SCAP rule, the United States agenda towards Japan consisted of three main pillars: first military and political reforms and then, once the two previous goals had been achieved, an economic reform.

The primary goal of the Occupation was ensuring Japan would not again become a menace to the United States or to the peace and security of the world.<sup>21</sup> In order to do so, the Allies pursued the

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<sup>18</sup> US Department of State Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, *Fact sheet...*, cit.

<sup>19</sup> FUKAI Shigeko, FUKUI Haruhiro, "Japan (Chapter 5)", in Mark KESSELMAN, Joel KRIEGER, William A. JOSEPH (edited by), *Introduction to Comparative Politics. Political Challenges and Changes Agenda*, Boston, Cengage Learning, 2013, p.198

<sup>20</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

complete demilitarization of the country and the eradication of any militaristic tendency. For example, the Japanese Armed Forces were dismantled, the military industry was halted and wartime leaders were arrested or purged from their government positions. It is estimated that up to 210'000 business executives, journalists, right-wing leaders and military personnel connected with the conservative forces were banned from public offices.<sup>22</sup>

As for the Political Reform, its aim was promoting and fostering the democratization of Japanese political institutions and society. This was accomplished by introducing a series of policies which aimed at broadening political participation and strengthening democratic institutions. Such policies included, among others, the revocation of limits on speech and assembly (October 4<sup>th</sup>), the introduction of universal suffrage, thus recognizing women the right to vote (October 11<sup>th</sup>), the release of Political Prisoners and the legalization of the Communist Party.

The most important step in the demilitarization and democratization of Japan was, however, the introduction of a new democratic Constitution, which replaced the one in effect since 1889 (the Meiji Constitution). The decision of revising the Meiji Constitution was justified by the strong belief that its provisions had actually legitimated the military to exercise its control over the Cabinet<sup>23</sup>, something which was considered unacceptable in a democratic society. Thus, a new constitution, in which power and sovereignty were placed in the hands of people, rather than in the Emperor or the military elite, was adopted. By doing so, Japan would no longer represent a threat.<sup>24</sup>

A first draft of the new constitution was submitted to the SCAP by the Japanese government but it was rejected, as it did not meet the requirements of the Potsdam declaration. As a matter of fact, the old order of elite control had been maintained. A second draft was then presented, but it consisted only of minor changes to the first one. Therefore, General MacArthur ordered his staff to prepare a new draft, which was eventually submitted to the Diet and, after being ratified, it came into effect on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1947.<sup>25</sup> The new constitution had three basic principles: popular sovereignty, pacifism and the guarantee of fundamental human rights. In line with the goal of democratizing Japan, Article 62 was included, in order to strengthen the power of the House to investigate governmental

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<sup>21</sup> Kevin COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Since 1945*, Armonk New York, M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2007, p.27

<sup>22</sup> Franziska SERAPHIM, "Negotiating War Legacies and Postwar Democracy in Japan", in Anatoly M. Khazanov and Stanley Payne (edited by), *Perpetrators, Accomplices and Victims in Twentieth-Century Politics: Reckoning with the Past*, New York, Routledge, 2009, p.49

<sup>23</sup> James E. AUER, "Article Nine of Japan's Constitution: From Renunciation of Armed Force 'Forever' to the Third Largest Defense Budget in the World," in *Law and Contemporary Problem*, Vol.53 : No.2, 1990, p.173, online at: <http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/lcp/vol53/iss2/12>

<sup>24</sup> Kevin COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy ...*, cit., p.27

<sup>25</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

affairs.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the Emperor status was reduced to mere symbol of the state, thus devoid of any power.

The demilitarization purposes were instead pursued with the introduction of Articles 41 and 66, respectively asserting the Diet supremacy as the sole law-making body of the State and the possibility to choose the Prime Minister and other Ministers of State only among Civilians, thus removing the risk of any influence by the military establishment. However, the fundamental provision included to restrict Japan remilitarization is, undoubtedly, Article 9, known as the "peace clause". Interestingly, despite being suggested and pushed forward by the Americans themselves, Article 9 has, since then, been at the centre of debate and a cause of friction in the US-Japan alliance, thus affecting the cooperation between Washington and Tokyo, over security and defense issues.

With regard to the economic reform, instead, it aimed at decentralizing the economic power by dissolving the vertically-integrated conglomerates, known as zaibatsu, and at promoting a more equitable wealth distribution. This goal was particularly achieved through Land and Labor reform and by purging old zaibatsu families from all positions of economic leadership.<sup>27</sup>

Only a few years after the beginning of the occupation, however, the US interests in the Asia Pacific changed as a consequence of the drastic transformation in the international environment and the outbreak of the Cold War. In 1949 the Chinese Nationalists were defeated by the forces loyal to the Communist Party, while in 1950 the Korean War broke out. These events had a great impact on the US-Japan relations as well as on the policies supported by the SCAP. Such period is usually recognized as the "Reverse Course" and lasted until the end of the occupation period. First, now fearing the expansion of communism in the entire Asian area, the US decided to turn Japan in its stalwart against the red threat. Such fear was also justified by the increasing support that the Socialist and Communist parties were gradually gaining in Japan as well. As a matter of fact, these two parties had won 1/3 of the seats during the 1947 elections and they were successfully promoting "industrial action" and "class consciousness".<sup>28</sup> As a consequence, the SCAP attempted at strengthening the conservative political power, which represented a reliable ally in the fight against

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<sup>26</sup> MATSUI Shigenori, *The Constitution of Japan: A Contextual Analysis*, Oxford, Hart Publishing Ltd, 2011, p.83

<sup>27</sup> Conrad SCHIROKAUER, Miranda BROWN, David LURIE, Suzanne GAY, *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, p.574

<sup>28</sup> Frances MCCALL ROSENBLUTH, Michael F.THIES, *Japan Transformed: Political Change and Economic Restructuring*, New Jersey & Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2010, p.44

communism. This resulted, for example, in the decision to de-purge several politicians, including many Class A war criminals.

Since the beginning of the Cold War in the late 1940's, the US had already recognized the geopolitical importance of Japan. However, as noted above, it is the outbreak of the Korean War



**Figure 2:** National Police Reserve Japan in Camp Etchūjima, Tokyo (Source: Japan MOD)

that played a major impact in the evolution of the US-Japan relations. When the conflict broke out in 1950, Japan's strategic position in East Asia as well as its role as main hub and rear-area support base for the transit of soldiers and materials revealed to be vital for the US-led campaign. This is especially relevant as it laid the foundations for the so called "hub-and-spokes" alliance structure which characterizes the US presence in Asia today. Moreover, the US priorities in the

area changed as a result of the need to converge forces and efforts towards the Korean front. As a consequence, the United States started demanding Japan to provide for its own self-defense and to ally itself against the Communist bloc. This meant that the US started pushing towards Japan's integration into the Western Camp, politically, economically and militarily.<sup>29</sup> Thus, despite the unique military ban included in Article 9, in 1950 the SCAP ordered the Japanese government to establish a 75000-man National Police Reserve (警察予備隊 -keisatsuyobitai-), later called National Safety Agency (保安隊 -hoantai-) and then Self-Defense Forces (自衛隊 -jieitai-). As highlighted by Cooney, *"the NPR was justified as being essential to internal security following the transfer of SCAP forces to Korea"*.<sup>30</sup>

As pointed out by Sakamoto, such events *"created a favorable environment where Japan could realize a peace treaty and its independence"*, as Americans feared a prolonged occupation might bring about anti-American and pro-Communist feelings.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Glenn D.HOOK, Julie GILSON, Christopher W.HUGHES, Hugo DOBSON, *Japan's International Relations...*, cit., p.85

<sup>30</sup> Kevin COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy ...*, cit., p.32

<sup>31</sup> SAKAMOTO Kazuya, "Conditions of an Independent State: Japanese Diplomacy in the 1950s", in IOKIBE Makoto (edited by), *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*, translated and annotated by Robert D. ELDRIGE, London and New York, Routledge, 2011, p.51

When the negotiations for an early peace began, two main issues were identified as problematic: Japanese rearmament and the stationing of US forces in the country. With regard to the first issue, the American pressure to rearm Japan clashed with Prime Minister Yoshida's opposition. Yoshida highly valued the cooperation with the United States. However, he strongly believed the cost of rearmament on the still weak Japanese economy would be an unbearable burden. For this reason, he claimed Japan would be able to handle its internal security but had to rely on the US for the external one. In contrast, for the American counterpart, *"rearmament was important in that it would show that Japan was contributing to the strengthening of the Western camp"*.<sup>32</sup> A compromise was found when Japan accepted to expand the National Police Reserve (whose name was changed into National Safety Forces - 保安隊 - hoantai), up to 110'000 men.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the Japanese government further agreed to create a "Security Planning Headquarters" under a "Ministry of National Security".<sup>34</sup>

As for the second issue, the Japanese were willing to allow the stationing of US forces on a limited and rational basis but they requested an agreement on such matter to be signed separately from the peace treaty. This ultimately resulted in the Japan-US Security Treaty, signed in 1951, along with the San Francisco Peace Treaty. On April 28<sup>th</sup> 1952, both the peace and security treaty officially came into effect and Japan regained sovereignty in all its territories, with the exception of Okinawa, which continued to remain under American administration as ruled in Article 3 of the San Francisco



**Figure 3:** Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru signs San Francisco Peace Treaty (Source: AP Images)

Peace Treaty: *"the United States will have the right to exercise all and any powers of administration, legislation and jurisdiction over the territory and inhabitants of these islands, including their territorial waters."*<sup>35</sup> The fact that the US primary goal was to maintain military bases on Japanese

<sup>32</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.53

<sup>33</sup> Frank KOWALSKI, *An Inoffensive Rearmament: The Making of the Postwar Japanese Army*, Annapolis US, Naval Institute Press, 2014, p.72

<sup>34</sup> SAKAMOTO Kazuya, "Conditions of an Independent State...", cit., p.53

<sup>35</sup> Treaty of Peace with Japan, San Francisco, 1951, online at: <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/docs/19510908.T1E.html>

ground further proves how the US administration considered Japan's strategic position essential to contain the Soviet Union.

As already mentioned above, a key figure in the shaping of Japan's security posture and the US-Japan relations during this early period is represented by Prime Minister Yoshida, whose strategy became known as the "Yoshida Doctrine". According to Yoshida, the country had to focus on economic reconstruction, without wasting resources in the military sector and security, which was instead provided by the US, in line with the bilateral agreement between the two countries.

Thanks to the presence of US forces and nuclear umbrella and by strictly adhering to the



**Figure 4:** Yoshida signs the US-Japan Security Treaty (Source: Bettman-Corbis)

constitutional ban on military forces, Japan was *"free to pursue rapid economic development without the added economic weight of having to maintain a standing military that would drain resources badly needed to rebuild the economy. [...] Japan had only to maintain a minimum level of self-defense capability in order to please the United States."*<sup>36</sup>

Despite this idea of minimum level of self-defense capability, however, starting from the early 1950's the National Safety Forces were progressively expanded, both as a consequence of the US pressure and the perceived threat of the Korean War. Eventually, in 1954, the NSF evolved into the Self-Defense Forces, with the approval of the "Self-Defense Forces Law". As suggested by Arase, it is, however, important to recognize the US role in this process. As a matter of fact, he claims that the new law *"only passed the Diet because the Korean War had created a situation that the US and conservative elements in Japan could use as leverage. Under heavy US pressure, the government argued that the Constitution permitted a force that was exclusively for self-defense and pledged many guarantees to this effect."*<sup>37</sup> Thus, the SDF were established under 4 main constraints:

- SDF could be only involved in the defense of Japanese territory
- collective defense was not recognized

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<sup>36</sup> Kevin COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy ...*, cit., p.36

<sup>37</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy: from soft to hard power", in David ARASE and Tsuneo AKAHA (edited by), *The US-Japan Alliance: Balancing soft and hard power in East Asia*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2010, p.38

- SDF could not possess offensive weaponry
- SDF troops could not be dispatched overseas

Furthermore, they were placed under civilian control by making the Self Defense Agency subordinate to the civilian Cabinet ministries.

The next step in the evolution of the Japan-US alliance was undertaken by the Hatoyama administration, that came into power in 1955. In August 1955, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu requested a revision of the Security Treaty. This demand was justified by the Japanese government as a strategy to counteract the attempt by the opposition and Left parties to exploit the inequalities under the Security Treaty to spread anti-American feelings.<sup>38</sup> Thus, claims for a more equal treaty aroused. Under the 1951 Treaty, despite the deployment in and around Japan, US forces did not have any openly stated obligation to defend the country. In the Preamble of the Treaty it is clearly stated that the "*United States of America should maintain armed forces of its own in and about Japan so as to deter armed attack upon Japan*", while Article 1 stipulated that "*Such forces **may** be utilized to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East and to the security of Japan against armed attack from without, including assistance given at the express request of the Japanese Government to put **down large-scale internal riots and disturbances in Japan***".<sup>39</sup> As suggested by Sakamoto, the use of the term "**may**" proved that the treaty did not constitute a clear guarantee that the US forces would defend Japan.<sup>40</sup> Another problem related to Article 1 was that it legitimized American intervention in repressing domestic disturbances, upon request by the Japanese government. This was, however, perceived by many Japanese as a violation of the country's sovereignty. Finally, the lack of a definite time limit was interpreted as reflecting the US "*determination to maintain its influence over Japan*"<sup>41</sup>, criticism which was added to the idea that the US were not even giving Japan any say in the stationing of nuclear weapons within the country.<sup>42</sup> Such critics to the security treaty came not only from the left and the opposition ranks. Indeed, many of those who generally supported the US-Japan alliance were not completely satisfied by the content of the treaty and Shigemitsu was among them. Nevertheless, Shigemitsu's proposal, which demanded for a complete withdrawal of US forces within twelve years, was rejected.

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<sup>38</sup> SAKAMOTO Kazuya, "Conditions of an Independent State...", cit., p.63

<sup>39</sup> Security Treaty between Japan and the United States of America, San Francisco, 1951, online at: <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/docs/19510908.T2E.html>

<sup>40</sup> SAKAMOTO Kazuya, "Conditions of an Independent State...", cit., p.54

<sup>41</sup> SAKURADA Daizo, *The Japan-US Security Treaty: from a Japanese Perspective*, Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 1997, p.2, online at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/hppi/centres/strategic-studies/publications/working-papers/WP07.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance: the Eagle and the Chrysanthemum*, Oxford, Chandos Publishing, 2014, p.39

While the revision of the Treaty failed in 1955, it was later achieved in 1960 under the Kishi administration. At this time, the revision process was accompanied by a major political crisis and massive demonstrations, which eventually led to calling off President Eisenhower's visit to Japan and to Kishi's resignation. Indeed, the public opinion anti-war sentiments were still strong and people's suspicion was also enhanced by the fact that Kishi had been one of those Class A war criminals who had benefited from the Reverse Course in the Occupation policies. As soon as he became Prime Minister, Kishi's political agenda mainly focused on creating "a domestic political system appropriate for a



Figure 5: Anpo Protests, May 1960 (Source: Hamaya Hiroshi)

*sovereign state and strengthening Japan's international position*".<sup>43</sup> Compared to the 1955 revision failure, this time the US felt some adjustments to the partnership were required to reduce Japanese neutralism and the possible influence of the socialist and communist parties on society. Thus, the US agreed to support the Kishi faction, which in addition to having a strong pro-US, anticommunist line, also appeared more open in promoting an active military role for Japan. US interests centered mainly on the priority of maintaining bases on Japanese soil. Kishi's main goal was, instead, of reaching an agreement for a more equal and mutual security treaty which could increase Japan's military strength. Kishi was, however, clearly aware of the strong opposition by the Japanese public opinion towards any kind of overseas commitment. For this reason, Japanese policy makers tried to negotiate a treaty which would leave Japan some kind of autonomy and flexibility, thus not compelling it to take part into US military initiatives in the context of the Cold War. In order to do so, Tokyo wanted the treaty to recognize the constitutional constraints to Japanese foreign and security policy, recognition which reduced the risk of entrapment in any kind of activity that might conflict with Article 9. This also enabled Japan to keep its SDF separate from US forces, avoiding any integration of command structures and joint operations.<sup>44</sup> After two years of negotiations, the

<sup>43</sup> SAKAMOTO Kazuya, "Conditions of an Independent State...", cit., p.65

<sup>44</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., pp.40-41

new treaty was finally signed in January 1960, and its ratification at the Japanese Diet was forced without the participation of the leftist opposition parties.<sup>45</sup>

The signing of the treaty, known as Anpo (安保), represented a critical moment for Japan and had a major political impact, in that the new treaty amended all the unfavorable elements which were included in the 1951 agreement. First, the provision allowing American intervention in suppressing domestic uprising was abolished. Secondly, a more explicit defense clause was included in the form of Article V, in which America's defense commitment toward Japan was explicitly stated: "*Each party recognizes that an armed attack against either party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and security and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes*".<sup>46</sup> As noted by Dian, however, this provision does not make any reference to reciprocal collective security. According to it, the US was obliged to defend Japan in case of external aggression but, on the contrary, Japan was not committed to defend the US.<sup>47</sup> Dian further notices that, not only was Japan careful not to enter any kind of multilateral defense pact or collective security arrangement but it also kept at the minimum level both interoperability of forces and the institutional prescriptions defining the possible role of Japan in the area.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, consultations between the two governments were introduced: "*consultations regarding the implementation of this Treaty, and, at the request of either Party, whenever the security of Japan or international peace and security in the Far East is threatened*" (Article IV)<sup>49</sup>, as well as before deployment of nuclear weapons on Japanese soil. Article X established, instead, a time limit for the treaty, allowing either party to terminate the agreement after a period of ten years. As neither party has opted to do so, the treaty is still in force today. No amendment has been made, even though its role in Japanese security policy has been subject to different interpretations. Some argues that the Treaty has been working as a means to keep Japan down, while others denounce it as a "*conduit for beiatrics (US pressure) to be exerted on the government to build up its military forces*".<sup>50</sup> As a matter of fact, Article II openly states that Japan is required to keep and develop its own capacity to respond to external attacks. This provision concerning the necessity for Japan to exercise defensive defense

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<sup>45</sup> SAKAMOTO Kazuya, "Conditions of an Independent State...", cit., p.74

<sup>46</sup> Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America, Washington, 1960, Article V, online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>

<sup>47</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., p.41

<sup>48</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.42

<sup>49</sup> Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan ..., cit., Article IV

<sup>50</sup> Glenn D.HOOK, Julie GILSON, Christopher W.HUGHES, Hugo DOBSON, *Japan's International Relations...*, cit., p.125

represented a turning point in the shift from Japan's complete military dependence from the US, to a more formal division of military roles.

During the second half of the 1960's the US-Japan relations were affected by the escalation of the Vietnam War. Dian identifies four different phases in Japan's reaction to the Vietnam war:<sup>51</sup>

- 1964-67 Japan acted as a mediator between the parties involved in the conflict.
- 1967-69 it cooperated with the US by providing financial support to Saigon and the other Asian countries which fought alongside with the US. Moreover, the Sato administration allowed the US forces stationed in Japan unlimited use of the bases in the region.
- 1969-72 economic, logistic and diplomatic cooperation intensifies after the emergence of the Nixon Doctrine
- 1972-75 Japan attempted to establish economic and political relationships with Hanoi

It is clear that during this period, the government found itself trapped between its cooperative relations with the US on the one hand and a strong anti-Vietnam war movement, which also grew into a new antibase movement when it became clear US naval vessels and aircrafts left for Vietnam from American bases in Japan. This strengthened the perception among the public that Japan as a country was in effect taking part into the war.<sup>52</sup> In such complex circumstances, the Japanese government undertook a more cooperative strategy in the name of the pursuing of its national interests, especially starting from the second phase identified by Dian. For example, by cooperating with the US and by presenting itself as a reliable alliance partner, Japan aimed at gaining some bargaining power in the negotiations for the return of Okinawa. At the same time, it attempted to limit its possible involvement by stressing the need to respect its peaceful, anti-nuclear policies. In line with this trend, in 1968 the Sato administration announced the three non-nuclear principles through which Japan pledged not to produce, possess or introduce nuclear weapons into the country, and it institutionalized the principle of defensive defense, according to which the SDF were allowed to use force just to respond to a "*sudden and unprovoked attack and in case there [were] no other means available to protect the lives and safety of the people*".<sup>53</sup> Moreover, exports of weapons to communist countries, countries involved in the conflict and countries bordering Vietnam were prohibited.

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<sup>51</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., p.51

<sup>52</sup> TADOKORO Masayuki, "The model of an economic power: Japanese Diplomacy in the 1960s", in IOKIBE Makoto (edited by), *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*, translated and annotated by Robert D. ELDRIGE, London and New York, Routledge, 2011, p.94

<sup>53</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., p.53

As a result of Japan's cooperation, in November 1969, a joint statement by the Sato and Nixon administrations announced that an agreement on the return of Okinawa had been reached. The agreement was put into effect only in 1972 when the American occupation of Okinawa formally ended. The choice of the US to return Okinawa can be explained in the context of the Nixon Doctrine, which marked a general change in the US regional and global strategy. In July 1969, the Nixon administration announced its decision to reduce its military presence and commitment in Asia and move the defense burden to its allies, by requiring them to be more self-sufficient in their defense. This sudden change in the US approach to East Asia had a big impact on Japan and its security policies. While up until then, as suggested by Dian, the US high commitment in Asia had allowed Japan to have a sort of bargaining power vis-à-vis the US administration, providing it with the ability to avoid a too direct involvement, starting from the 1970's fear of a possible US abandonment began to influence the perception of Japanese policy-makers.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, from the beginning of the 1970's onwards, the Nixon administration started to consider China as a possible strategic partner, approach which eventually led to the opening up to the Maoist regime. These two Nixon Shocks altered the military and economic relationship between Japan and the US, instilling a sense of vulnerability in the Japanese leadership. In such a context, as argued by Dian, the reduced US commitment, which reflected the limits of American power, induced Japan to seek autonomy within various spheres of its relationship with the American ally. For example, the first half of the 1970s was characterized by the attempt to achieve more autonomy in the military field, while during the second half of the decade, Japan aimed at achieving such autonomy in the diplomatic field.<sup>55</sup>

During the first half of the 1970's, which started with the automatic extension with no amendment of the 1960 Security Treaty, autonomy meant obtaining room for manoeuvre in the alliance as well as in the international scene. The revisionist faction of the LDP also promoted the idea of *kokusanka* (国産化 - indigenous production of weapons), which meant acquiring an independent national-industrial and military strength. However, this perception was completely abandoned by the Miki administration, in favor of a more independent diplomatic posture.

1972 represented a crucial year in the Japan-US security relations. Indeed, a few days after the resignation of the Sato cabinet, the legal interpretation of the prohibition of collective defense was announced. This meant that from the Japanese government perspective, Japan had to contribute to

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<sup>54</sup> *ibidem*, cit., pp.51-60

<sup>55</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.70

the world peace through economic and financial means and not through military ones. The principle of no dispatch of the SDF was also formalized. Such stance affected the perception of the US-Japan Security Treaty as well, which, despite the reduced threat from the Soviet Union and China, needed to be maintained, as it was perceived it contributed to regional stability, thus helping maintaining the status-quo.<sup>56</sup>

The revision of defense policies continued under the Miki administration, during which the first "National Defense Program Outline" (NDPO) was elaborated. This document was based on the idea of "basic defense capability" and it stressed the importance for Japan to maintain a level of capability allowing it to "*resist on its own a limited and small-scale attack*".<sup>57</sup> The adoption of such kind of policy can be explained as the consequence not just of the US pressure to take a more active role in the alliance but of the growing fear of a possible US abandonment, which became apparent since the American withdrawal from Saigon in 1975.<sup>58</sup> As a matter of fact, these changes prove how the unsettled international environment had weakened Japan's bargaining power with the US. In 1976 the Miki cabinet also established a defense limit on military spending, which should not go beyond 1% of the GNP. Such limit served as a "compensation" to the Social Democratic Party for the acceptance of the new NDPO.<sup>59</sup>

However, during the late 1970's the USSR once again embarked in a military build-up in the region, thus leading to the end of détente. These events required the Japan-US alliance to adjust to the new threat. This adjustment took the form of a closer military cooperation. One form of cooperation was, for example, the introduction of the so called "Sympathy Budget"(思いやり予算- omoiyari yosan-), formally named Host-Nation Support. The HNS, which started from the 1978 fiscal year, consisted in an additional financial expenditure to support the stationing of US troops in Japan.

The strengthening of the alliance with regards to defense cooperation is, however, represented by the "Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation", approved in 1978, at the end of the Fukuda administration. As argued by Dian, these guidelines represented "*a significant development, adding*

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<sup>56</sup> NAKANISHI Hiroshi "Overcoming the crisis: Japanese Diplomacy in the 1970s", in IOKIBE Makoto (edited by), *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*, translated and annotated by Robert D. ELDRIGE, London and New York, Routledge, 2011, p.120

<sup>57</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.121

<sup>58</sup> Glenn D.HOOK, Julie GILSON, Christopher W.HUGHES, Hugo DOBSON, *Japan's International Relations...*, cit., p.133

<sup>59</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy...", cit., p.39

*further substance to the treaty and establishing a mechanism for implementation of the treaty that was previously absent".<sup>60</sup>*

The content of these guidelines focused on three main points :<sup>61</sup>

- Posture for Deterring Aggression: "*Japan, [...], will possess defense capability on an appropriate scale within the scope necessary for self-defense, and consolidate and maintain a posture to ensure the most efficient operations[...]*The United States will maintain a nuclear deterrent capability and the forward deployments of combat-ready forces and other forces capable of reinforcing them."
- Actions in Response to an Armed Attack against Japan: "*The JSDF will primarily conduct defensive operations in Japanese territory and its surrounding waters and airspace. U.S. Forces will support (and) [...] conduct operations to supplement functional areas which exceed the capacity of the JSDF.*"
- Japan-US cooperation in the case of situations in the Far East outside of Japan which will have an important influence on the security of Japan: "*The scope and modalities of facilitative assistance to be extended by Japan to the U.S. Forces in the case of situations in the Far East outside of Japan which will have an important influence on the security of Japan will be governed by the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, its related arrangements, other relevant agreements between Japan and the United States, and the relevant laws and regulations of Japan.*"

The new Guidelines thus emphasized Japan's commitment to achieve effective capabilities for its own self-defense and to repel any direct attack on its soil. The US would support the SDF in case Japan would not be able to counter the aggression and in areas outside SDF remit (which included only Japanese soil and surrounding waters and airspace). Moreover, mutual coordination and cooperation between the US forces and the SDF was improved. Finally, with these guidelines, the SDF and US military expanded their joint exercises, thus strengthening their interoperability.

1979 soon proved to be a critical time for the new Guidelines, when, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Prime Minister Suzuki "*committed Japan to patrol sea lanes in international waters as far as 1000 nautical miles from Japan*".<sup>62</sup> Though the Prime Minister assured Japan's

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<sup>60</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., p.88

<sup>61</sup> The Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation, November 1978, online at: [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/anpo/19781127.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/19781127.html)

<sup>62</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy...", cit., p.39

commitment was just aimed at assisting the US forces for the defense of Japan, many criticized this decision, as the SDF were assuming a role beyond the territorial limits agreed in the guidelines.

Japan's military cooperation with the US further deepened with the advent of the Nakasone administration. Nakasone Yasuhiro, who had already been Director of the Defense Agency, was part of the nationalist faction of the LDP, which favored a stronger military and aimed at weakening the anti-militarist constraints of Japanese defense and security policies. As soon as he was appointed Prime Minister, he pursued a more proactive security policy agenda. When his term of appointment started, Nakasone weakened the ban on exports of defense-related technology by signing, in 1983, the "Exchange of Technology Agreement" with the US, which thus allowed the transfer of weapons technology to American companies. Moreover, he decided to increase Japan's defense spending beyond 1% in the 1987 budget.<sup>63</sup> Although defense spending was kept near 1.004% of the GNP, such decision was intended to break many of the taboos that had influenced Japanese post-war politics, as Nakasone's primary goal was to turn Japan into an "International State" that played a global security role. As suggested by Murata, his was *"an attempt to define Japan's position not in terms of quantity but instead in quality, and to politically reflect Japan's economic power"*.<sup>64</sup> Despite such measures, however, Japan's contribution continued to be mainly based on a financial support, the so-called "checkbook diplomacy", and even though during the Nakasone-Reagan administrations the US-Japan alliance started to take a more solid form, Japan still managed to avoid a greater contribution in defense policy. The 1980's approach to defense and security policy can be said, however, to have opened the road for Japan to become a more "global state".<sup>65</sup>

The following important step in the structuring of the US-Japan alliance and in the evolution of Japan's security policies is represented by the end of the Cold War regime. The end of a bipolar system, symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, led to an increase in the degree of military cooperation between Japan and the United States.

The 1960's Mutual Security Treaty had been structured in response to the Cold War system. Thus, when such system came to an end, many started questioning the very existence of the alliance. In a new unipolar world, an alliance aimed at geographical containment of a common enemy was no

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<sup>63</sup> MURATA Koji "The mission and trials of an emerging international state: Japanese Diplomacy in the 1980s", in IOKIBE Makoto (edited by), *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*, translated and annotated by Robert D. ELDRIGE, London and New York, Routledge, 2011, p.154

<sup>64</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.153

<sup>65</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.70

longer necessary. Therefore, the risk the US might abandon Japan started to appear more real, especially considering it no longer needed to maintain bases and troops in the area. As argued by Arase, however, "*without US protection, Japan would lack guaranteed access to Persian Gulf oil, western markets, and protection against a wider and more unpredictable range of threats*".<sup>66</sup> As a consequence, following the consolidation of the new international system, Japanese policy makers felt the need to change their approach to security and defense policies. This is especially true considering the end of the Cold War was soon followed by the outbreak of the 1990-91 Gulf War. The Gulf Crisis had a strong impact on Japanese diplomacy, in that it renewed a heated debate over defense and security matters. Once again, Japan exploited its "checkbook diplomacy" by contributing to the war with \$13 billion. Such move, however, rather than generating international approval, led to strong criticism, particularly by the US that started demanding future Japanese participation in operations involving collective defense.<sup>67</sup> In the US perspective, the Gulf War proved that the dispatch of troops did not necessarily mean posing a threat to the international peace. It could rather be an attempt to restore the international balance. Therefore, by choosing not to take active part, Japan was perceived as failing to fulfill its duties as a member of the international society. The reasons behind Japan's failure to provide an adequate response to the Gulf crisis can be interpreted as the result of a polarized understanding of security. As Iokibe claims, "*in the minds of people in postwar Japan, war had only two meanings - self-defense or aggression by Japan*."<sup>68</sup> Under the constraints imposed by Article 9, Japan was not able to provide even rear support, transport or medical assistance. This meant that if Japan was willing to meet international expectations in the future, a different interpretation of the Peace clause was required.

Japan's response to this problem resulted in the 1992 "International Peace Cooperation Law", which was implemented in order to allow the SDF participation in overseas missions for UN peacekeeping. A first attempt to legalize the dispatch of troops abroad for UN purposes only had already occurred at the end of 1990, when Prime Minister Kaifu submitted to the Diet a bill allowing Japan to send a "United Nations Peace Cooperation Team" to Saudi Arabia. Because of the strong protests, however, the bill had to be withdrawn from the Diet.<sup>69</sup> A new successful attempt was made in 1992 by Prime Minister Miyazawa.

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<sup>66</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy...", cit., p.40

<sup>67</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>68</sup> IOKIBE Makoto "Japanese Diplomacy after the Cold War", in IOKIBE Makoto (edited by), *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*, translated and annotated by Robert D. ELDRIGE, London and New York, Routledge, 2011, p.175

<sup>69</sup> Kevin COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy ...*, cit., pp.40-41

The new legislation was warmly welcome by the US and other Western Countries, while it became the centre of political debate within Japan. This is because the new law opened the way to direct involvement in international security matters.



**Figure 6:** SDF personnel reconstructing a road during UN PKO (Source: Government of Japan)

As Cooney points out, despite the strong opposition, the conservative LDP policy makers, driven by the desire to make human contribution and to normalize Japanese foreign policy, had to find a way to justify the Japanese participation in peacekeeping operations without openly violating the constitution.<sup>70</sup> In order to do so, five conditions were established to reduce the risk of SDF's involvement in circumstances that required the use of force (Five Principles for Participation in UN PKO):<sup>71</sup>

- Agreement on a ceasefire must have been reached among the parties to the armed conflict.
- The parties to the conflict must have given their consent to UN peacekeeping operations as well as Japan's participation in such operations.
- The operations must strictly maintain impartiality, not favoring any of the parties to the armed conflict.
- Should any of the above requirements cease to be satisfied, the Government of Japan may terminate the dispatch of the personnel engaged in International Peace Cooperation Assignments.
- The use of weapons must be limited to the minimum necessary to protect personnel's life.

New demands by the US for greater Japanese involvement once again emerged during the 1993 North Korea crisis, when the threat that Pyongyang might have developed nuclear weapons materialized. At that time, the relations with the US were also tensed by the fragile domestic political environment. As a matter of fact, the conservative LDP, which had always favored strong ties with the American ally, lost in the 1993 elections, leaving room for the opposition to form the cabinet. The fear that the new government, led by the Socialist Party leader Murayama, might destabilize Japanese foreign policy, bringing about a more anti-American stance, was, however, proved unfounded, when the new Prime Minister announced the constitutionality of SDF as well as

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<sup>70</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.41

<sup>71</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.42

his support to the Japan-US Security Treaty, thus giving priority to the stability and continuity of the government.<sup>72</sup>

By the mid-1990s new threats to the international balance in the Asia-Pacific emerged, mainly embodied by North Korea and China, which from the beginning of the 1990s has been pursuing a military build-up. These new emerging threats were perceived as jeopardizing both American and Japanese interests, and eventually led to a new step towards a closer military cooperation between the two countries. The 1995 Nye Report confirmed the US commitment to the Mutual Security Treaty and assured Japan that the US would maintain around 100'000 troops in East Asia.<sup>73</sup> In the same year, the Japanese government announced the new NDPO, which emphasized the need for multilateral efforts to promote security, thus supporting SDF's participation in UN PKO, while, with regards to the US relations, priority had to be given to the improvement of information-gathering capabilities and the ability to coordinate responses to future crisis.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, in the 1996 joint declaration "An Alliance for the Twenty-first century"<sup>75</sup>, an agreement was reached over the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station



**Figure 7: US President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto shake hands after signing the Japan-US Joint Declaration, 1996 (Source: Sankei Shinbun)**

Futenma in Okinawa. The need to reduce the US military presence in the most southern island of Japan, which still nowadays hosts 25% of the US facilities, was recognized following the strong protests that arose after the brutal rape of an Okinawan girl by US servicemen, incident which put at risk the stability of the entire alliance.

Finally, the two governments agreed to conduct a review of the 1978 Guidelines. The new US-Japan Defense Guidelines were signed in September 1997 and their content suggests a more proactive contribution of the SDF on a wider regional scale. The new measures were announced following the 1995 Taiwan Strait missile crisis, when China fired some missiles around Taiwan to discourage pro-independence movements during the Taiwanese presidential elections, and the 1998 North Korean missile tests. Arase explains that these events "*gave the US and domestic right*

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<sup>72</sup> IOKIBE Makoto "Japanese Diplomacy...", cit., p.184

<sup>73</sup> Glenn D.HOOK, Julie GILSON, Christopher W.HUGHES, Hugo DOBSON, *Japan's International Relations...*, cit., p.138

<sup>74</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.139

<sup>75</sup> Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security, *An Alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, April 17th 1996, online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/security.html>

wingers even more leverage to push remilitarization."<sup>76</sup> Dian, instead, further argues that it is in this context that Japan definitively turned towards the idea of normalization (普通の国-futsū no kuni-), thus abandoning its identity as a pacifist country (平和国家-heiwakokka-).<sup>77</sup> This concept of normalizing Japan had already been stated by Prime Minister Ozawa in 1993, after Japan had failed to offer concrete support to the Gulf War operations. Indeed, Ozawa supported the idea that Japan had to overcome its self-imposed constraints if it was willing to become a normal country. The redefinition of the Security Treaty, through the revision of the guidelines at the end of the 1990s, thus, represented one of the steps in this direction.

The revised guidelines once again fostered an increased Japanese regional role. Defense cooperation was divided according to three general cases:

1. cooperation under normal circumstances
2. actions in response to an armed attack against Japan
3. cooperation in situations in areas surrounding Japan

While the 1978 Guidelines implied joint military activities and cooperation only in case of a major international crisis or in case of a direct attack against Japan, the new guidelines included also peacetime cooperation, which especially focused on issues related to humanitarian relief and peacekeeping. More specifically, Japan was called to respond to *situations in areas surrounding Japan* in the following non-combat areas (Article V) :<sup>78</sup>

- Relief activities and measures to deal with refugees
- Search and rescue
- Non-combatant evacuation operations
- Activities for ensuring the effectiveness of economic sanctions
- Use of Facilities by US forces
- Rear area support in terms of supply and transportation
- Security of US military installations and communications
- Intelligence gathering, surveillance and minesweeping

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<sup>76</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy...", cit., p.41

<sup>77</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., p.108

<sup>78</sup> The Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation, September 1997, online at: [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/anpo/19970923.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/19970923.html)

In order to allow SDF to support US troops in areas surrounding Japan and carry out the tasks agreed under the new guidelines, a new interpretation of Article 9 was required. Therefore, in August 1999 the Diet passed the "Act on Measures to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Perilous Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan", which allowed the deployment of SDF in US operations not mandated by the UN. This is just one of the measures which gradually eroded the eight self-binding restrictions behind the Yoshida Doctrine. Despite the deepening of the SDF role, however, Japan still maintained the principle of non-exercising collective self-defense, in order to minimize the risk of entrapment. Moreover, as debate arose around the meaning of "surrounding areas", the Japanese government stated its interpretation was built on a situational rather than geographical basis. By doing so, Japan managed to avoid the risk of getting involved in a risky clash over Taiwan, while at the same time being able to leave room for a potential future expansion of the geographical scope of the alliance.<sup>79</sup>

Japan's approach to security further broadened under the Koizumi administration. This time, the breaking point was the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which represented the opportunity for the conservative



**Figure 8:** President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, 2005 (Source: White House)

elite to further strengthen the alliance and justify changes to improve Japan's security. Despite the strong objection of the Opposition parties, which included both the Socialist and Communist parties as well as the DPJ, and regardless of the negative reaction of the public opinion, Prime Minister Koizumi, who belonged to the right wing of the LDP, quickly answered to the US call for assistance to fight terrorism, thus

trying to avoid the uncertainty that had followed the first Persian Gulf War. In order to do so, just a few weeks after the attacks, a new "Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law" passed the Diet.<sup>80</sup> This new legislation defined the ways in which the government should respond to a possible armed attack or imminent threat of attack on Japanese soil. Furthermore, it allowed the SDF to provide logistical support to the US coalition during the Afghanistan invasion. As claimed by Dian, *"these emergency laws represented a very relevant step in breaking down the institutional self-restraint inherited from the post-war era. They established, for the first time, a legal framework within which*

<sup>79</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., pp.123-124

<sup>80</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy...", cit., p.42

*the SDF could effectively respond to a threat in the area surrounding Japan, beyond the limits of the defensive defence approach".*<sup>81</sup>

The SDF role was further expanded after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, through the "Special Measures Law on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance of Iraq". These measures authorized the SDF to take part in humanitarian reconstruction operations in "non-combat zones", after a certain level of peace had been restored.<sup>82</sup> What is revolutionary about this new legislation is the fact that it authorized the dispatch of the SDF neither under any request by the host country nor by the UN, as it was instead required by the 1992 PKO Law. The geographical limit established in 1999 was also not abided by and for the first time the SDF, even though under non-combat duties, were dispatched overseas during an ongoing conflict. This new trend in Japan's defense posture was followed by the "War Contingencies Laws" of 2003 and 2004 and the new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) of 2005. All these measures aimed at achieving a multi-functional role for the SDF, which were expected to perform defense missions, disaster relief and recovery as well as UN collective security missions.<sup>83</sup> The 2005 NDPG are particularly important in that they explicitly identified for the first time the two regional threats which could jeopardize Japanese security: China and North Korea. Moreover, with regards to the relationship with the US, they clearly noted that *"Japan would proactively engage in strategic dialogue with the United States on wide-ranging security issues such as role-sharing between the two countries [...]intelligence exchange, operational cooperation, including in situations in areas surrounding Japan, cooperation on ballistic missile defence, equipment and technology exchange"*.<sup>84</sup> Again a strong emphasis was put on global security interests. Such emphasis was also clarified by Defense Minister Yoshinori's statement concerning the changes in the US-Japan alliance: *"We are now talking about joint activities in various areas between Japan and the United States in order to improve the peace and security around the world."*<sup>85</sup>

In 2006 Abe Shinzo succeeded Koizumi as Prime Minister. As noted by Arase, he was the first Prime Minister who was born after WWII, thus ideally representing a generational change in the leadership of the country.<sup>86</sup> During his first mandate, which lasted only one year, Abe's agenda

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<sup>81</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.119

<sup>82</sup> IOKIBE Makoto "Japanese Diplomacy...", cit., p.209

<sup>83</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy...", cit., p.43

<sup>84</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., p.127

<sup>85</sup> US Department of State, *Remarks with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Japanese Minister of State for Defense Yoshinori Ono and Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura*, October 29th 2005, online at: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/55775.htm>

<sup>86</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy...", cit., p.51

focused on collective defense, the revision of the Constitution, greater defense capabilities and a more assertive diplomacy. During this time, for example, the Defense Agency was successfully upgraded to the rank of Ministry, measure which clearly stresses the central role defense and security issues have progressively come to play over the time.

The next step affecting the US-Japan relations is, clearly, the advent of the Obama administration in 2009. The new democratic administration promoted the so-called "pivot" to Asia. Indeed, by recognizing the centrality of East Asia, the US pursued a foreign policy which aimed at increasing military presence and diplomatic activism in the Asia-Pacific area, while at the same time reducing its commitment in other areas, mainly the Middle East. From a diplomatic perspective, for example, the Obama administration has been trying to enhance pre-existing alliances (not just the US-Japan one, which still remains the cornerstone of the US engagement in Asia, but also US-Republic of Korea, US-Australia, US-Indonesia), and establish new diplomatic relations with former US adversaries. From an economic perspective, the US has been promoting economic, commercial and financial integration through the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Finally, from a military perspective, the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific area was increased, whereas forces deployed in Europe and the Middle East were reduced.<sup>87</sup> It must be noted, however, that, in the case of a conflict with China, US bases in Japan could not be efficiently used as main hubs. For this reason, in order to preserve power projection capabilities beyond the reach of China, America's presence in Japan and Okinawa was slightly reduced, and many key strategic assets were moved to Guam or other newly enlarged facilities such as in Australia, Singapore and the Philippines.<sup>88</sup> As part of this process, Tokyo and Washington newly agreed in 2006 to the relocation of the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station to Henoko Bay. Such agreement has been, however strongly, criticized, especially by Okinawans, and, following the strong protests, the plan has been stalled and a solution has not yet been found. Tensions over a similar issue have been perceived as putting at risk the stability of the alliance and, as accidents involving US servicemen regularly occur, such matters continue to be a delicate issue the two governments are trying to solve.

It must be noted that the first three years of the Obama administration coincided with the short parenthesis of the three Democratic Cabinets (2009-2011), during which the Japanese administration attempted to pursue the path of normalization of the country by trying to distance its foreign policy from the US influence. According to the DPJ, previous governments had led Japan

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<sup>87</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., pp.165-166

<sup>88</sup> *ibidem*, cit., pp.167-168

into a condition of over-dependency on the US and, therefore, its leaders, who were critical of the Obama's Pivot to Asia, proposed a more independent foreign policy and a more autonomous proactive strategy. This stance is proved by Hatoyama's strong opposition to the Futenma agreement and by the conclusion of the "Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement" with Australia in 2010, which allowed Japan to provide logistical support for non-combat missions to countries other than the United States.<sup>89</sup>

The renewed US activism in the Asia-Pacific area has been, instead, welcome by the LDP, which once again led by Shinzo Abe, regained power in 2012. As already apparent during his first mandate, Abe is a strong supporter of deepening the US-Japan alliance and normalizing Japanese foreign policy.



**Figure 9:** Prime Minister Abe and President Obama shake hands during 2015 Abe's State Visit (Source: AP Images)

As soon as he got back to power, Abe proceeded with an increase of the defense budget, contrary to the declining trend of the previous decade and suggested changing the SDF name into "National Defense Forces". With regards to the Constitution, he has strongly advocated changes in the interpretation of Article 9, mainly

aiming at reversing the self-binding prohibition to take part in collective self-defense operations. Moreover, a new revision of the alliance guidelines was announced. Compared to the previous cabinets, the Abe administration has been much more willing to expand the role of Japan in global security. It has also began to consider deterrence as an important element of security discourse.

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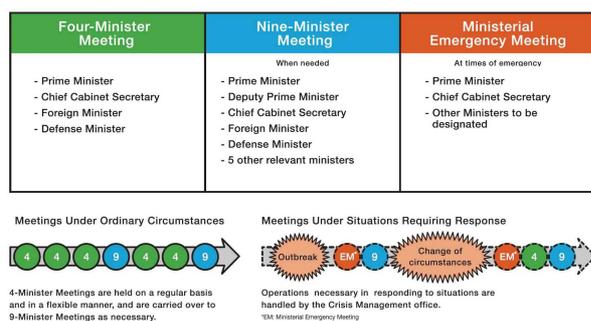
<sup>89</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., pp.171-174

## 2. NEW GUIDELINES FOR JAPAN-US DEFENSE COOPERATION AND SECURITY LEGISLATION

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the Abe administration has been much more active and willing to focus on security issues and on the reform of defense policies. Indeed, Japan's National Security Policy under Abe has been moving towards a gradual abolition of the military constraints, a result of the Post-War regime. As suggested by Hughes, Abe's ideology, which he defines as "Abe Doctrine" to stress its open contrast with the Yoshida Doctrine, longs for Japan to achieve the status of a first-rank nation and leader within Asia, and for the country's recognition as an autonomous state, US equal partner and liberal-capitalist power.<sup>90</sup>

Abe's radical policies to pursue a militarily stronger Japan, which already began during his first mandate when the Defense Agency was upgraded to the rank of Ministry, also included the

Organization of the National Security Council  
(Japanese NSC)



**Figure 10: Organization of National Security Council (Source: Government of Japan)**

establishment of a National Security Council (NSC), modelled after the US and UK ones. The NSC was introduced in order to achieve better integration and coordination among key security agencies, thus improving security crisis management.<sup>91</sup> Simultaneously, a Prime Minister's Advisory Panel on National Security and Defense Capabilities was created in 2013. The panel issued Japan's first National Security Strategy (NSS), which is based on the concept of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" (積極的平和主義 –sekkyokuteki heiwashugi) and outlines the strategic approaches Japan should take for its national security. Moreover, the NSS lists a number of emerging threats which might undermine Japanese security, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, maritime and cyber security and the stability of the global economy.<sup>92</sup> This document was released along with the new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), whose content reflects the strategy and goals of the NSS. Furthermore, under Abe's strong leadership, a controversial "State Secrecy Law", which imposes severe controls over sensitive information for the purpose of national security, was promulgated in

<sup>90</sup> Christopher W. HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., p.8

<sup>91</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.29

<sup>92</sup> *ibidem*, cit., pp.29-30

2013.<sup>93</sup> At the same time, the "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology", enabling Japan to export all forms of weaponry with only a few restrictions, have been implemented starting from April 2014.<sup>94</sup> This coincided with the formal abolition of the ban on weapons exports, that had been maintained for nearly 50 years.

All these measures were adopted in preparation for the revision of the US-Japan Defense Guidelines, the first revision since 1997. As suggested by Hughes, indeed, the New Secrecy Law was "*designed to provide the US and other partners with the confidence that intelligence passed to Japan will be secure, thus paving the way for Japan's enhanced access to US intelligence networks and wider participation in international security operations*".<sup>95</sup>

However, the main step towards deepening Japan's involvement both in the alliance and in the international security is represented by the July 2014 Cabinet decision for a new interpretation of Article 9, through which the government recognized the right of collective self-defense. By doing so, for the first time, the Abe administration has made the defense of an ally consistent with the longstanding government interpretation of the Constitution.<sup>96</sup> Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution states that:

*"Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized".<sup>97</sup>*

Based on this peace clause, up until 2014, the government official interpretation rejected the possibility of exercising collective self-defense. Indeed, despite the fact that collective self-defense is an inherent right granted to all UN member nations by Article 51 of the UN Charter, the Japanese government claimed that it exceeded the level of force recognized for self-defense, thus it had to be considered unconstitutional. By adopting the new "Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless

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<sup>93</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.36

<sup>94</sup> MOFA, *The Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology*, April 1st 2014, online at: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press22e\\_000010.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press22e_000010.html)

<sup>95</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.36

<sup>96</sup> AKIYAMA Masahiro, *Redefining Self-Defense: The Abe Cabinet's Interpretation of Article 9*, The Tokyo Foundation, September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014, online at: <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2014/redefining-self-defense>

<sup>97</sup> The Constitution of Japan, 1947, online at: [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html)

Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect Its People", however, the government established some specific scenarios where collective self-defense can be considered acceptable and placed them under three main categories:<sup>98</sup>

1. Response to an infringement that does not amount to an armed attack, the so called "Grey Zone" scenarios: responses to illegal activities around Japan's far-flung islands; responses to illegal activities that impact on the SDF, when engaged in exercises and operations in international waters; protection of US naval vessels when attacked while engaged in activities related to the defense of Japan.
2. Further contributions to the peace and stability of the international community (facilitating SDF support to UN PKO): support for international cooperation to respond to aggression; defense of a geographically distant unit or personnel of other states; evacuation of Japanese citizens from another state's territory with its consent.
3. Measures for self-defense permitted under Article 9 of the Constitution, i.e. in the case of "imminent unlawful situations" that fundamentally violate "the people's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness": defense of US vessels transporting Japanese citizens; defense of US warship under armed attack; interception of ballistic missiles crossing Japanese airspace and targeted at the US; participation in international minesweeping activities, participation in international efforts to protect civilian shipping.



**Figure 11:** The Japan Maritime SDF destroyer JS Kurama (DDH 144) leads a formation with the Arleigh-Burke- class guided-missile destroyers USS Gridley (DDG 101) and USS Stockdale (DDG 106). (Source: US Navy)

By taking into consideration all these scenarios, the Cabinet thus finalized the possibility to resort to collective self-defense in case:<sup>99</sup>

- of an attack on another state threatens to overturn the people's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness
- there is no other appropriate means to repel the attack
- the use of force is restricted to the minimum amount necessary to repel the attack

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<sup>98</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., p.50

<sup>99</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.52

The new stance taken by the Japanese government has been warmly welcome by the US authorities, as it would allow a greater burden-sharing within the alliance, with the SDF now being able to supplement the US capacity across a wider spectrum of operations, and as it enhances cooperation and interoperability between the two allies.<sup>100</sup> By recognizing Japan's right to collective self-defense, Abe has, thus, been promoting and supporting the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific.

The Prime Minister's strong pro-American posture also led to the revision of the US-Japan Defense



**Figure 12:** U.S. Defense Secretary Carter and Secretary of State Kerry shake hands with Japanese Defense Minister Nakatani Foreign Minister Kishida, New York City, April 27<sup>th</sup> 2015 (Source: US Department of Defense)

Guidelines, which were released on April 27<sup>th</sup> 2015. Several reasons can be identified behind such move. As noted in the "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee", Japan and the US are now facing an increasingly complex security environment<sup>101</sup>, especially considering China's recent military build-up and territorial claims, North Korea's nuclear and missile development and Russia's increased military aircraft activities.

Moreover, the alliance bilateral cooperation system needed to be adjusted to the new security framework deriving from Abe's radical reforms. For example, the recognition of collective self-defense approved in 2014 had to be included among the alliance mechanisms. Finally, as noted by Sakoda, the bilateral coordination system provided by the 1997 guidelines had proved several times insufficient, thus requiring some updates. This problem became especially apparent during the so called "Operation Tomodachi", a combined disaster relief operation to face the challenges posed by 3/11 catastrophe in Fukushima. Indeed, the several coordination problems that emerged during these difficult circumstances "*demonstrated that the two governments required broader connection across the whole of governments, smoother execution for crisis planning and crisis management, and greater familiarity.*"<sup>102</sup>

The new Guidelines update the general framework for bilateral cooperation and aim at building a more robust Alliance based on greater shared responsibilities in all phases, from peacetime to

<sup>100</sup> US Department of Defense, *Hagel welcomes Japan's new Collective Self-Defense Policy*, Washington, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, online at: <http://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/602808/hagel-welcomes-japans-new-collective-self-defense-policy>

<sup>101</sup> Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee, *A Stronger Alliance for a Dynamic Security Environment: The New Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation*, April 2015, p.5, online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000078186.pdf>

<sup>102</sup> Robin SAK SAKODA, *The 2015 US-Japan Guidelines: End of a New Beginning*, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, April 30th 2015, online at: <http://amti.csis.org/the-2015-u-s-japan-defense-guidelines-end-of-a-new-beginning/>

contingencies. They thus strongly emphasize "*seamless, robust, flexible and effective bilateral responses*" and the cooperation required for such responses.<sup>103</sup>

The document can be divided into three main areas:<sup>104</sup>

- **Strengthened Alliance Coordination:** here the two governments stress the need to establish a strengthened Alliance Coordination Mechanism which enhances operational coordination, information sharing, bilateral and whole-of-government planning. This goal is pursued by involving all the relevant agencies of the two countries. As a matter of fact, ensuring a smooth and effective execution of coordinated operations lies in the ability to knit both countries not only from the military level but also from the civil one. A more balanced relationship between the two governments, defining the overall responsibilities not only of the military forces but also of the administrative authorities themselves, was thus needed. In order to achieve such result, the co-location of service headquarters took place, as well as an increase in joint training activities and shared use of facilities. This greater interoperability is not only required for military prospects but, as it emerged during "Operation Tomodachi", it is also necessary to address crisis management of nuclear accidents and natural disasters.
- **Seamlessly Ensuring Japan's Peace and Security:** this section mainly focuses on how the two countries will respond to security threats directly affecting Japan. Japan is expected to assume primary responsibility for its own defense, with the US having a supporting and supplementary role, especially in case offensive actions, activities that the SDF cannot conduct under the still existing Constitutional constraints, were to be required to terminate hostilities. With regards to the situations that will have an influence on Japan's peace and security, it must be noted that the guidelines clearly state "*such situations cannot be defined geographically*".<sup>105</sup> This is connected to the recent recognition of collective self-defense. Indeed, the new geographical scope of the alliance has been broadened and Japan can now take action in response to an armed attack against the US or any third country with which it is in a close relationship, however respecting the three conditions established by the July 2014 Cabinet Decision. This means that in case cooperation in the so-called grey zones were to be required, Japanese SDF could, therefore, be now despatched to support its allies (most likely the US) in any part of the globe. Not only does this prove that the out-of-area

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<sup>103</sup> The Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation, April 2015, p.1, online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000078188.pdf>

<sup>104</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>105</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.7

cooperation and rear support have been expanded but it also means that some forms of mutual assistance have been included too, as well as the ability for Japan to defend the US.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, as it is clearly stated in the new guidelines, "*the Self-Defense Forces and the United States Armed Forces will provide mutual protection of each other's assets, as appropriate, if engaged in activities that contribute to the defense of Japan in a cooperative manner*".<sup>107</sup>

- Cooperation for Regional and Global Peace and Security: This section opens with the assertion that "in an increasingly interconnected world, Japan and the United States will take a leading role in cooperation with partners to provide a foundation for peace, security, stability, and economic prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond."<sup>108</sup> The two governments agreed both on cooperation in international activities, such as PKO, international humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, maritime security, non-combatant evacuation operations, logistic support, intelligence, joint training and exercises, as well on the development of trilateral and multilateral security and defense cooperation with other parties, mainly with Australia, Republic of Korea (ROK), the Philippines and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>109</sup> The main goal of such close cooperation is to advance human security, economic prosperity and political stability, not only in the Asia-Pacific but throughout the entire world. This aim is also reiterated in the April 2015 "Fact Sheet: U.S.-Japan Cooperation for a More Prosperous and Stable World"<sup>110</sup>, in which Japan and the US recognize the importance of a secure and stable environment to achieve development.

A wide range of other issues is also addressed in the last part of the newly revised Guidelines. For example, as pointed out by Hughes, cooperation will also involve the outer space, cyber-space and space-based surveillance.<sup>111</sup> With regards to maritime security, the guidelines openly refer to the two countries' efforts to protect freedom of navigation, element which is likely to represent an indirect reference to China's activities and claims in the South China Sea.

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<sup>106</sup> KONNO Shinobu, "Jieitai, beigun he danyakuteikyō kanō ni nichibeibōeikyōryoku de seifu hōsin" (SDF, the government policy towards Japan-US defense cooperation, Amunition support to US forces to become possible) Asahi Shinbun, 18th March 2015, 今野忍、「自衛隊、米軍へ弾薬提供可能に 日米防衛協力で政府方針」、朝日新聞、2015年3月18日

<sup>107</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.6

<sup>108</sup> *ibidem*, p.18

<sup>109</sup> Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee, *A Stronger Alliance...*, cit., p.6

<sup>110</sup> MOFA, *Fact Sheet: US-Japan Cooperation for a more Prosperous and Stable World*, April 28th 2015, online at: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page3e\\_000334.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page3e_000334.html)

<sup>111</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., p.67

Finally, great attention is also given to defense equipment and technology cooperation, especially



**Figure 13:** US Navy Sailor presents a gift to Capt. Masahito Inoue, commanding officer of JMSDF Sub Area Activity, Okinawa 2013. (Source: US Navy)

concerning Ballistic Missile Development. Indeed, joint research projects on BMD, which Japan and the US have been conducting since the 1980's, have been recognized as *"a key driver of improvements to alliance interoperability"*.<sup>112</sup>

From an American perspective, the new Guidelines represent a huge step forward in that they provided the US with a more capable alliance partner, whereas on the Japanese side, such agreement represents one of the main achievements in Abe's agenda to normalize Japan.

More generally, the Abe administration has promoted several other measures to strengthen its close relations with the US. For example, it has taken a strong pro-American stance in the Futenma issue, promising to find a solution to the relocation of the US Marine Air Station to Henoko Bay. Moreover, Abe has agreed to a new five-year Host Nation Support Program (HNS). According to HNS, in order to ensure the *"smooth and effective operation of the Japan-US security arrangements, Japan bears the expenditures including the land rent for the USFJ's facilities and areas and the Facility Improvement Program (FIP) funding within the scope of the Status of U.S. Forces Agreement (SOFA). Under special measures agreements, Japan also bears labor costs, utility costs, and training relocation costs for U.S. forces in Japan"*.<sup>113</sup> Thus, under the new cost-sharing agreement, the HNS has been slightly increased with respect to the previous one and, in fiscal year 2016, Japan spent about 190 billion yen to help sustain the US military presence inland.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Emma CHANLETT-AVERY, Ian E.RINEHART, *The US-Japan Alliance*, Congressional Research Service, February 9<sup>th</sup> 2016, p.19, online at: <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33740.pdf>

<sup>113</sup> MOFA, *Host Nation Support*, online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/hns.html>

<sup>114</sup> Terri MOON CRONK, *US, Japan agrees to Host-Nation Support for US Troops*, US Department of Defense, Washington, December 16<sup>th</sup> 2015, online at: <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/637009/us-japan-agree-to-host-nation-support-for-us-troops>

Finally, following the revision of the guidelines in April, the Diet passed on September 19<sup>th</sup> 2015 a new set of security legislation, aiming at strengthening the legal framework of Japanese defense. The legislation, which was required in order to implement the newly agreed US-Japan guidelines, consists of two laws: "The Legislation for Peace and Security" and "The International Peace Support Law".<sup>115</sup>

The Legislation for Peace and Security amended 10 existing laws, including the SDF Law, the Law Concerning Measures to Ensure Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan and the Armed Attack Situation Response Act, whereas the "International Peace Support Law", which was originally adopted in a cabinet decision on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2015, governs the dispatch of SDF troops abroad to provide the logistical support to other forces engaged in activities aimed at protecting the peace and security of the international community.

Altogether these two laws will enable:<sup>116</sup>

- seamless responses to any situations to secure the lives and peaceful livelihood of the Japanese people
- Japan's more proactive contribution to the peace and stability of the international community under the policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace"

The legislation allows the SDF to provide the necessary rear-area logistics support in situations having an impact over Japan's peace and security or, more generally, threatening the international peace and security, and in case the international community is collectively operating in order to remove a threat, in accordance with the UN Charter. Such support can be provided not only to the US Armed Forces but also to Armed Forces of Foreign Countries. In such cases, the role of the SDF includes various support activities, such as search and rescue operations, ship inspection operations

**日米指針改定は安保法制に連動している**

目的	状況	主な日米協力	裏付けとなる安保法制
日本の安全の確保	平時	ともに警戒監視や訓練している米軍を防護	自衛隊法改正案
	重要影響事態 日本に重要な影響を及ぼす事態	日本周辺以外の地域でも米軍に給油や弾薬を提供	周辺事態法改正案
	存立危機事態 他国への武力攻撃が発生し、日本の存立が脅かされる事態	日本への攻撃がなくとも、集団的自衛権に基づいて米軍とともに反撃	武力攻撃事態法改正案など
	有事 日本への攻撃やそれが予測される事態	島しょ防衛や陸海空の統合作戦で連携	法整備は不要
国際社会の安全の確保	国際的な平和協力	P KOや災害救援で連携	P KO協力法改正案
	他国軍の後方支援が必要な事態	国際紛争にあたる他国軍に共同で後方支援	国際平和支援法案(新法)

**Figure 14:** Revision of the US-Japan guidelines as a move to endorse the new Security Legislation (Source: Nikkei Shinbun)

<sup>115</sup> NASU Hitoshi, "Japan's 2015 Security Legislation: Challenges to its Implementation under International Law", in *International Law Studies*, vol.92, Stockton Center for the Study of International Law, US Naval War College, 2016, pp.253-255

<sup>116</sup> Government of Japan, *Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security: Seamless Responses for Peace and Security of Japan and the International Community*, March 2016, p. 1, online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000143304.pdf>

(under UN request or consent of the flag state). Among non-combat activities, in which the use of weapons is allowed just for the purpose of self-preservation, there are, for instance, cooperation in the areas of supplies, provision of goods and services to armed forces of foreign countries,

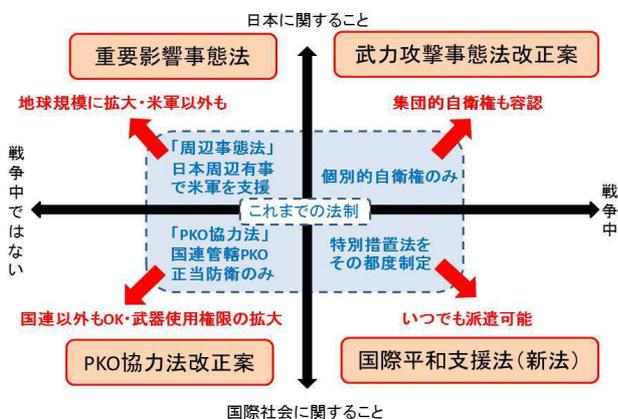


Figure 15: Outline of the changes to the Security Legislation (Source: Judai News)

transportation, repair and maintenance, medical activities, communications, airport and seaport services, base services and support, use of facilities, lodging, storage, training services and construction. Provision of weapons is not, however, contemplated.<sup>117</sup>

Such support is considered necessary to protect international peace and security but it cannot, however, be carried out inside combat zones

(avoidance of Ittaika - 一体化: ensuring Japan is not evaluated as being an "integral part" of the use of force, in other words carrying out the use of force, which is still unconstitutional under Article 9<sup>118</sup>) and, in case the fighting should break out in the proximity of the SDF operations, the Minister of Defense still may decide to terminate the operation. Moreover, before the deployment of SDF forces in cases of "collective international response", the Diet authorization is required without any exception, in respect with the principle of democratic control over the military, included in the Japanese Constitution.<sup>119</sup>

With regard to the revision of the "Armed Attack Situation Response Act", up until now the government had only considered the use of force legal in case of a direct "armed attack" against Japan. However, the government has come to agree that, given the changes in the international environment, even an armed attack to a foreign country could represent a threat to Japan. Thus, the government, reiterating the content of the July 2014 Cabinet Decision, has concluded that the use of force will be now permitted under "three conditions":<sup>120</sup>

1. When an armed attack against Japan occurs or when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and, as a result, threatens Japan's

<sup>117</sup> MOD, "Development of Legislation for Peace and Security", in *Defense of Japan Annual White Paper*, p.147, online at: [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/2015.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2015.html)

<sup>118</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.140

<sup>119</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.143

<sup>120</sup> Government of Japan, *Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security...*, cit., p.6

survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness

2. When there is no other appropriate means available to repel the attack and ensure Japan's survival and to protect its people
3. Use of force should be limited to the minimum extent necessary

Use of force and the right of collective self-defense must, anyway, be carried out in respect of international law.

As we can see, use of force will be possible not just in case Japan is under attack, consistently with the previous legislation (individual self-defense), but also in case of an attack against a third party, which has close ties with Japan, attack which could thus result in a threat to Japan's survival itself (limited collective self-defense).

Peacetime activities also underwent major changes. As a matter of fact, Japan will be able to play additional roles in UN PKO and will be able to take part in other international peace cooperation activities outside the UN PKO framework. For example, from now on SDF will be involved not only in assisting observation of cease-fire agreements but also in protecting the local population and individuals related to such operations. This type of involvement in internationally coordinated operations, not under UN control, can occur when, in addition to the Five Principles for Participation established under the 1992 PKO Law, any of the following three conditions is met:<sup>121</sup>

1. resolution of the UN General Assembly, Security Council or Economic and Social Council
2. request by the UN, Organizations established by the UN General Assembly or UN Specialized Agencies, Regional Organizations recognized in Article 52 of the UN Charter
3. request by countries of the affected area

Therefore, while up until now Japan could take part just in UN PKO, from now on the SDF will be granted a wider participation in internationally coordinated operations aiming at protecting international peace and security.

The new legislation also made it possible for the SDF to rescue Japanese nationals abroad, prior the consent of the territorial state, and to use weapons to carry out such duty. Moreover, under certain circumstances, SDF will also be able to rescue non-Japanese along with the Japanese nationals who

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<sup>121</sup> MOD, "Development of Legislation for Peace and Security...", cit., p.144

are to be rescued.<sup>122</sup> The role played by the SDF was expanded thanks to the revision of the rules of engagement (ROE) and of the SDF Law. Changes to such policies have enabled the SDF to use weapons during the execution of UN PKO missions and in defense of the mandate, but still under specific limited circumstances. Asset protection missions have also been recognized, thus, now, Japan will be able to protect the weapons and other equipment belonging to the U.S. Forces, armed forces of other countries or similar organizations that are cooperating with the SDF in activities contributing to the defense of the country (Article 95-2).<sup>123</sup> As stressed by the Ministry of Defense, such use of force is authorized *"when there are adequate grounds to recognize the need to use weapons to protect people or weapons, etc.(and) the use of weapons is permitted to the extent judged to be reasonably necessary depending on the situation"* .<sup>124</sup>

As it has often been stated by several government officials, the new legislation is based on the policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace", that the Prime Minister has been promoting since going back to power in 2012. This policy, which has become the very core and basic principle of Japan's national security strategy, is based on the assumption that *"no country can secure its own peace and security only by itself"*.<sup>125</sup>

As a matter of fact, challenges to the international security environment have become more complex and hard to address. These challenges, which include, for example, the shift in the balance of power in the international community, rapid technological innovation, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, risks to global commons or risks to the global economy and to human security, go beyond the border of single states and impact the world community as a whole.<sup>126</sup> In a similar entangled environment, thus, international cooperation and partnership acquire a very important strategic role. Based on this concept, the Japanese government has declared its will to contribute more proactively in the pursuing of the



**Figure 16: Japan Disaster Relief Team in Nepal (Source: Jack Board - Channel News)**

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<sup>122</sup> *ibidem* , cit., p.142

<sup>123</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>124</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>125</sup> Government of Japan, *Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security...*, cit., p.1

<sup>126</sup> MOFA, *National Security Strategy*, December 2013, p.6-10, online at: [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/documents/2013/\\_\\_\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/___icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf)

peace, stability and prosperity of the international community, as it considers this approach as a mean to achieve peace and stability not only on a regional scale but also on a national level.

As it emerges from the content of the new legislation, a "Proactive Contribution to Peace" strategy is pursued by strengthening Japan's role internationally, its contribution to UN efforts toward the maintenance and restoration of international peace and security, and by reinforcing the Rule of Law. With respect to this last principle, Japan *"will actively support international judicial organs in terms of both human capital and finance [...] (and) will involve itself in realizing and strengthening the rule of law relating to the sea, outer space and cyberspace"*.<sup>127</sup> Japan is also making efforts to support international counter-terrorism activities and to promote a world free of nuclear weapons, as the sole country that has experienced the terrible consequences of nuclear destruction.

In order to better set this concept of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" within the framework of the new legislation, it is important to make a distinction between the so-called reactive/passive pacifism, which has characterized most of Japan's post-war diplomacy, and proactive pacifism.<sup>128</sup> "Reactive Pacifism" can be interpreted in line with Galtung's definition of "negative peace", which is the absence of direct violence.<sup>129</sup> As suggested by Akimoto, the renunciation of war and disarmament included in Article 9, which has always represented the core of Japan's National Security, can be interpreted as promoting negative peace.<sup>130</sup> Thus, this means that, by depicting itself as a peace-loving nation focusing only on its constitutional constraints and by avoiding a direct involvement in international affairs, Japan has just been supporting this limited type of peace. As a consequence, despite its great financial contributions to the UN and internationally coordinated operations, *"Japan has been criticized for not doing enough for the international peace and security; even being accused of free riding"*.<sup>131</sup>

In contrast, Proactive Pacifism can be associated with Galtung's "positive peace", which is defined as the absence of structural violence such as poverty, economic inequality, economical exploitation, social repression and social discrimination.<sup>132</sup> Again, according to Akimoto, the aspiration to this kind of peace can be identified in the Preamble of the Japanese constitution, which calls for

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<sup>127</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.29

<sup>128</sup> AKIMOTO Daisuke, "'Positive Pacifism' and the Development of Japan's PKO Policy", in *Soka University Peace Research*, Vol.26, Soka University Peace Research Institute, 2012, p.32, online at: <http://libir.soka.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10911/3803/1/shk26-027.pdf>

<sup>129</sup> Johan GALTUNG, *Theories of Peace: a Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking*, Oslo, International Peace Research Institute, 1967, p.12

<sup>130</sup> AKIMOTO Daisuke, "'Positive Pacifism'....", cit., p.32

<sup>131</sup> FUKUSHIMA Akiko, *Japan's "Proactive Contribution to Peace": A Mere Political Label?*, The Tokyo Foundation, June 19<sup>th</sup> 2014, p.2 online at: <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2014/japans-proactive-contribution-to-peace>

<sup>132</sup> David P.BARASH, Charles P.WEBER, *Peace and Conflict Studies*, Sage Publication, US, 2002, p.6

international pacifism and a peaceful coexistence. However, based on the criticism of the international community, the conditions to achieve positive peace cannot be fulfilled by simply making monetary contributions.

Consequently, the Japanese Cabinet began considering peacekeeping policies as a necessary obligation of UN member nations and started viewing a more active role of the SDF in PKO and



**Figure 17: Prime Minister Abe meets UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, September 2013 (Source: UN)**

other international peace operation missions as an essential support to the promotion of international stability, which is generally perceived as the foundation to build positive peace. Such viewpoint in favour of the need for a more proactive contribution is well summarized by Fukushima, who claims that: *"Looking toward the 21st century, we Japanese need to make efforts to establish our identities as Japan living in the global village, based on the*

*recognition that the existence of Japan is inevitably linked with other parts of the world. Undeniably, Japan's traditional peace and security strategies after the end of World War II [...] have contributed to world peace in no small measures. However, in the future, it is desirable to develop proactive peace and security strategies where Japan will proactively do something for world peace, rather than reactive peace."*<sup>133</sup> Indeed, following the strong criticism of the early 1990s, Japan has set the plan to pursue its proactive role in motion, starting with the adoption of the "International Peace Cooperation Law" in 1992. Since then, Japan has been increasing its contribution to international peace, security and prosperity by taking part in peace-keeping and peace-building activities supported by the UN, as well as by resorting to other means, such as expanding its development assistance program and promoting capacity building assistance and disaster relief. Moreover, the Japanese government has been an active supporter of the UN broad interpretation of Human Security<sup>134</sup>, which is interpreted as the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from want and free from fear.<sup>135</sup> Finally, from an economic perspective, Japan has been expanding its ODA policy (Official Development Assistance) worldwide, on the basis of the idea that, because many of today's challenges to security arise from underdevelopment and poor

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<sup>133</sup> FUKUSHIMA Akiko, Japan's "Proactive Contribution to Peace"...., cit., p.3

<sup>134</sup> *ibidem*, cit., pp.4-5

<sup>135</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *UN Resolution 66/290*, September 10<sup>th</sup> 2012 online at: <http://www.un.org/humansecurity/sites/www.un.org.humansecurity/files/hsu%20documents/GA%20Resolutions.pdf>

economic conditions, "*addressing development issues contributes to the enhancement of the global security environment*".<sup>136</sup>

When taking into account the concept of "Proactive Contribution to Peace", it is thus clear that such notion has not just been adopted as the guiding core of Japan's security and defense strategy but that it encompasses Japan's overall approach towards diplomacy and foreign relations. Moreover, despite being recently exploited as a political motto by the current Abe administration, the idea to promote a "Proactive Contribution to Peace" has been representing the general trend of Japan's Post Cold War security discourse and it seems it will continue to characterize Japan's foreign policy even in the years to come.

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<sup>136</sup> MOFA, *National Security Strategy...*, cit., pp.31-32

### 3. JAPAN'S NORMALIZATION PROCESS AND FUTURE ROLE IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

The revision of the US-Japan Security Guidelines and the consequent development of the security legislation can be considered as part of Abe's quest to "normalize" the country. This concept, as we have seen in the historical overview, emerged under the leadership of Prime Minister Ozawa in the early 1990s and has become a recurrent element in Japan's security discourse since the introduction of the Peace Cooperation Law in 1992.

But what does it mean for a country to be "normal"? Akimoto argues that making Japan a "normal" country means making the country able to defend its interests wherever they are threatened, by means of normal military capability commensurate with its economic power.<sup>137</sup> In other words, as pointed out by Hagström "*a normal country is most frequently taken to be one that is constitutionally able and prepared to deploy military force for national and international security ends, i.e., one having a proactive and global defense posture*".<sup>138</sup> Therefore, according to this definition, the idea of Japan being normal implies its participation in collective security and its willingness to accept the risks such participation involves. This view is strongly supported by current Prime Minister Abe, who, in his work "Determination to Protect This Country" (この国を守る決意 - kono kuni wo mamoru ketsui), emphasized this perspective by arguing that, if Japanese are not willing to shed blood, Japan will never be able to achieve the status of equal partner of the US.<sup>139</sup> Indeed, in Abe's view, Japan needs to be recognized as having an equal partnership with the US, if it wanted to see its role and contribution to the international community strengthened. This idea is consistent with the government's perception that a solid legal framework for the new constitutional interpretation, allowing Japan to exercise collective self-defense, was required. With regards to the recognition of collective self-defense, Komura, vice president of the LDP, pointed out, in his speech at the 2015 US-Japan Security Seminar, that being the Constitution a contract with the people in order to ensure their survival, a constitutional interpretation which constraints the government's ability to defend the very survival of its people is not acceptable. Thus, in light of the present security challenges, Komura argues that, since no nation can provide its own security alone,

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<sup>137</sup> AKIMOTO Daisuke, "A Theoretical Analysis of Japan's Changing Security Identity: Through the Application of Analytical Eclecticism", in *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*, Vol.13, Issue 1, 2013, p.2, online at: <http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcs/vol13/iss1/akimoto.html>

<sup>138</sup> LINUS HAGSTRÖM, "Normalizing Japan: Supporter, Nuisance, or Wielder of Power in the North Korean Nuclear Talks?", in *Asian Survey*, Vol.49, No.5, Berkeley, University of California Press, September/October 2009, p.850

<sup>139</sup> ABE Shinzo, OKAZAKI Hisahiko, *Kono Kuni wo Mamori Ketsui (Determination to Protect this Country)*, Fusosha, Tokyo, 2004, 安倍晋三、岡崎久彦、「この国を守る決意」、扶桑社、東京、2004年

it needs to rely on the right of collective self-defense, otherwise it would be sacrificing its people's safety:

*"I do not believe that the Constitution which intends to protect the people requires pacifism at the expense of the people. That is against the main point of constitutionalism. What the constitution requires is to protect peace. It is not requiring pacifism at the expense of the people. Isn't it a natural conclusion that a nation can exercise the right of collective self-defense in order to protect its people and ensure its survival? If a nation needs partners to ensure its security, it is quite natural that such nation should join others to protect each other."<sup>140</sup>*

Komura's speech clearly reflects Abe's view of the need to "normalize" Japan.

In the pursuit of such normalization, as we have seen, Japan has progressively adopted a new approach to defense and security issues; approach which resulted in the new guidelines and legislation of 2015. Such resolution has been justified by the Abe administration as the appropriate

response to the drastic changes in the security environment surrounding Japan, such as the shift in the global power balance, rapid technological progress, international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and so forth.<sup>141</sup> The shift towards a more assertive security strategy can be, thus, seen as the consequence of an increasingly uncertain East Asia. Among the perceived security threats that are said to jeopardize the regional security, North Korea, China and, to some extent, Russia seem to be recurrent in Japan's security discourse.



**Figure 18: Map of Japan and Surrounding Countries**  
(Source: Congressional Research Service)

North Korea's repeated ballistic missile and nuclear devices tests are often perceived as destabilizing

<sup>140</sup> KOMURA Masahiko, "Opening Address Speech", 2015 US-Japan Security Seminar, March 27<sup>th</sup> 2015, online at: [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/attachments/150327\\_%20Komura\\_Security\\_Seminar.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/attachments/150327_%20Komura_Security_Seminar.pdf)

<sup>141</sup> MOFA, *National Security Strategy*..., cit., pp.6-10

regional security and, given the US military presence in Japan, they have been posing a serious, imminent threat to Japan itself.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, considering the tense relationship between Washington and Pyongyang, the presence of US military bases in Japan could turn the country into a possible target. Perception of such threat has especially grown after the Taeopdong-1 Missile test in 1998 and the long-range rocket launch which flew over Okinawa in February 2012 and once again in February 2016. New tests were also conducted in August and September 2016 when 3 ROK ballistic missiles entered Japan's air defense identification zone, then landing in the Sea of Japan 125 to 155 miles west of Hokkaido.<sup>143</sup> These tests, which appear to alarm and anger the other regional players, still continue despite the strong international criticism and the most recent launch (February 2017) occurred right during Japan Prime Minister's visit to new US President Trump.

Russia has been modernizing its military forces and increasing its activities, as well as joint military exercises with the Chinese, particularly after Japan supported the US-EU led regime of sanctions over Russia's actions in Ukraine in 2014.<sup>144</sup> It must not be forgotten that Japan still has a territorial dispute over the Kurile Islands with Russia. Moreover, such issue is further complicated by the fact that the two countries have never officially signed a peace agreement after the end of WWII. Despite the recent rapprochement between the two countries, which resulted in Abe's meeting with Putin in December 2016, a solution has yet to be found.

But the main threat remains China. China's military build-up lacking transparency has heightened Japan's sense of vulnerability, especially after the escalation of the Senkaku Islands dispute in 2010. As reported by the US, since 2012, China has been deploying military naval vessels in the East China Sea, while several Chinese military surveillance planes have entered Japan's airspace. In the last months of 2013, China even announced a new Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) including also



**Figure 19:** Chinese warships conducting naval exercises in South China Sea, May 2016 (Source: AFP Photo)

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<sup>142</sup> MOD, *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and beyond*, December 17<sup>th</sup> 2013, pp.2-3, online at: [http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217\\_e2.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf)

<sup>143</sup> LEE Su-Hyun, *North Korea Test-fires 3 Missiles towards Japan, Seoul Says*, The New York Times, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, online at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/06/world/asia/north-korea-japan-missile-test.html>

<sup>144</sup> MOD, *National Defense Program...*, cit., p.4

the airspace over the disputed islets, which represent for both countries an important source of energy resources.<sup>145</sup> Such move has been condemned by both Japan and the US and has contributed to further unsettling Japanese policymakers.<sup>146</sup> The modernization of the Chinese naval power has also increased tensions concerning the Taiwan Straits and the South China Sea, where China has attempted to change the status quo by coercion.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, recently, the centre of the attention has moved from the East to the South China Sea, where China has started building some artificial islands. This move has been heavily criticized by the whole international community as threatening the freedom of navigation in an area whose access is vital to several countries.<sup>148</sup> While China's rapidly advancing military capabilities are not openly denounced and China's containment is not formally expressed in the new US-Japan Guidelines and in the new Security Legislation, the Japanese government has been paying careful attention to China's actions and has recognized the need for a domestic legislation which could enable seamless responses even in the so-called "Gray Zones", situations that are neither peacetime nor contingencies over territorial sovereignty and interests.<sup>149</sup> Similarly, the government has often stated that the growing number of SDF training exercises and joint drills with the US is not meant to be directed against any specific country but that it is instead required as part of Japan's strengthening of its security mechanisms.<sup>150</sup> China does not represent, however, just a military rival for Japan. As a matter of fact, China is also perceived as a great rival both from an economic and political perspective, as its rise has coincided with Japan's gradual decline, since the burst of the Bubble economy in the early 1990s. Therefore, as Green suggests, Japan seems to have embarked in a "*self-conscious competition with China for strategic influence in the region.*"<sup>151</sup>

The growing tensions with the above countries reflect the increasing uncertainty of the Asia-Pacific area in a post Cold War world. As recognized by Ikenberry and Inoguchi, the instability of the area could be related to the fact that "*the Asia-Pacific is one of the most dynamic and potentially unstable regions in the world*", which "*encompasses a diverse mixture of rival Great Powers, thorny territorial disputes, unresolved historical memories, competing political ideologies, painful*

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<sup>145</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.3

<sup>146</sup> Emma CHANLETT-AVERY, Ian E.RINEHART, *The US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., pp.6-10

<sup>147</sup> MOD, National Defense Program Guidelines..., cit., p.3

<sup>148</sup> Jeffrey BADER, Kenneth LIEBERTHAL, Michael MCDEVITT, "Keeping the South China Sea in Perspective", in *The Foreign Policy Brief*, The Brookings Institute, August 2014, online at: <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/south-china-sea-perspective-bader-lieberthal-mcdevitt.pdf>

<sup>149</sup> MOFA, *National Security Strategy...*, cit., p.11

<sup>150</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.13

<sup>151</sup> Michael J.GREEN, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, New York, Palgrave, 2001, p.6

*economic transitions and shifting military balances.*"<sup>152</sup> This idea is also confirmed in Japan's National Security Strategy: "*Northeast Asia is home to a host of actors, such as countries with large-scale military forces, or those possessing nuclear weapons or continuing with nuclear weapons, (...) (which) have contrasting political, economic and social systems*".<sup>153</sup>

The intensification of such regional tensions in the past years has caused growing concerns about the Japanese capability to quickly and effectively respond to possible future crisis. As it is often remarked by several studies on Japanese politics, the Japanese system is much more efficient in tackling past crises rather than in managing possible future ones. In other words, with regards to Japan's approach to international affairs, Cooney argues that "*Japan is better at reacting than acting*".<sup>154</sup> This is the consequence of the fact that, by relying heavily on the US for its external security, Japanese politicians have never really paid too much attention to the security of the international environment. Indeed, apart from its strongly emphasized pacifist tendencies, that still make Japan a unique country in the world, the Japanese leadership has never perceived foreign international crisis as its own and, therefore, a philosophy or ideology to guide foreign strategic planning has never really emerged until recently. Cooney further supports this idea by stressing that "*Japan has been very slow to react to an international security event in a timely and appropriate manner*".<sup>155</sup> Indeed, from the interviews he conducted, it emerges that there is no "*firm principle guiding [...] foreign policy*" and some of the interviewees, who belong to MOFA, even stated that there is no need for foreign policy to be goal-oriented.<sup>156</sup>

The absence of a clear official posture towards foreign affairs clearly demonstrate that Japan has an extremely complex security identity. Oros identifies the concept of 'security identity' as "*a set of collectively held principles that have attracted broad political support regarding the appropriate role of state action in the security arena and are institutionalized into the policy making process*".<sup>157</sup> In this sense, Japan's legal framework concerning defense and security has always been based on several temporary laws, aimed at tackling specific concrete situations, not a more general and hypothetical set of circumstances. Thus, the past lack of clear directives concerning the nation's priorities in foreign affairs, except for its stress on the pacifist Constitution and UN activities, has

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<sup>152</sup> G. John IKENBERRY, INOGUCHI Takashi, *Reinventing the Alliance: US-Japan Security Partnership in an Era of Change*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.4

<sup>153</sup> MOFA, *National Security Strategy...*, cit., p.11

<sup>154</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.152

<sup>155</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.176

<sup>156</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.136

<sup>157</sup> Andrew L. OROS, *Normalizing Japan: Politics, Identity and the Evolution of Security Practice*, Singapore, National University of Singapore Press, 2008, p.9

made the identification of Japan's security identity highly problematic.<sup>158</sup> This is also due to the fact that, from a theoretical perspective, based on international relations theories, the self-imposed constraints, embodied by Article 9, also contribute to make Japan a unique case in the world. It is, therefore, clear that the idea of a normal country, pursued by the Abe Administration, gets entangled with such a unique background and the more the country is caught between this normalization process and its image as a pacifist country, the more fragmented its security identity becomes, thus making it more complex to interpret the normalization process.

The complexity of such issue is addressed, for instance, by Akimoto, who suggests that "*each theory of international relations is incomplete and each provide only a partial explanation of Japan's security identity*".<sup>159</sup> He advances four main models to analyze Japan's security identity, which can ultimately be grouped in two main categories: Liberalism (including Classical Liberalism, which sees Japan as a pacifist State reluctant to become a major military power, and Neo-Liberalism, which instead views Japan as a UN Peacekeeper, that is contributing to international cooperation activities in line with its pacifist constitution and its focus on human security) and Realism (which is further divided into Classical Realism, seeing Japan as a normal state, and Neo-Realism, explaining Japan's normalization process as part of it being a US Ally). While all these theories must be taken into consideration in providing a comprehensive theoretical explanation of the evolution of Japan's security identity, the recent changes in Japan's foreign policy and security discourse can be mainly analyzed from a Classical Realist and Neo-Realist perspective.

Neo-realist scholars, such as Waltz, focus on the importance of a balance of power and argue that, in an international structure of anarchy, such as that of a post Cold-War East Asia, the presence of the US as an hegemonic power determines other countries' behavior and strategic choices.<sup>160</sup> This is especially true in the case of Japan, that has been a relevant US ally since the end of the Occupation period.

Indeed, the role that the United States played in shaping Japan's foreign policy and multiple security identities cannot be denied. As several studies advocate, US pressure has been often identified as the driving force in the formation of Japanese foreign policy. Such pressure is referred to as 'gaiatsu' (外圧), which literary means 'pressure from the outside' (or more specifically as 'beiatsu'- 米圧 - 'pressure from the United States') and has been constantly influencing Japanese policymakers,

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<sup>158</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.136

<sup>159</sup> AKIMOTO Daisuke, "A Theoretical Analysis of Japan's Changing Security Identity...", cit., p.2

<sup>160</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.8

mainly starting from the breakout of the Korean War in the early 1950's.<sup>161</sup> During the whole Cold War period, the US constantly pushed towards Japan's remilitarization and the expansion of Japan's role within the alliance, as it would greatly benefit from a more actively involved Japan, committed to take on some of the burdens of the alliance. This is especially true starting from the 1970's, when the Cold War tensions, particularly the conflict in Vietnam, intensified, and, at the same time, Japan emerged as the second world economic power, thus challenging the US economic supremacy. During this time, as Japan was heavily relying on the US for its security, Japanese policymakers, who were strictly adhering to the Yoshida Doctrine, were thus given the arduous task to balance such US pressure with the Japanese constitutional constraints.<sup>162</sup> However, over the time they eventually started to gradually give in to the US demands. As for the post Cold War period, changes in the international structure, brought about by the fall of the Soviet Union, called into question the very need for the US-Japan Alliance and US forward presence in Asia. Many scholars and political scientists expressed skeptical views over the need to maintain an alliance, which had been planned as a geographical containment of a common Communist enemy. Such criticism was, for example, supported by Chalmers Johnson.<sup>163</sup> In this context, however, Japanese policymakers began to fear a possible US abandonment, concern that pushed them to start considering the possibility of coming to terms with the US requests for a more actively involved Japan.<sup>164</sup>

This strong emphasis on US pressure, however, had some negative effects on Japan's image. First, because of the long reliance on the US for its security needs, Japan has often been perceived by other nations as blindly following US stances in international affairs, and it has often not been considered by the rest of the world as being a real independent political entity. Kamiya points out that *"it is generally believed that Japan has little choice but to give maximum consideration to the US stance on important international issues and seldom acts on its own accord"*.<sup>165</sup> This means that Japan is believed to take action only if agreed by its ally and often simply conforming its posture to that of the US. Secondly, he further argues that, because of its constitutional limits, Japan has often been pressured to adopt more assertive stances by being criticized to be a "free rider", i.e. *"a player who acts too late and contributes too little"*<sup>166</sup>, a player which only contributes to international efforts by means of financial support, the so-called "checkbook diplomacy". This perception has

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<sup>161</sup> Kevin COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy ...*, cit., p.134

<sup>162</sup> TADOKORO Masayuki, "The model of an economic power: Japanese Diplomacy in the 1960s...", cit., p.94

<sup>163</sup> Chalmers JOHNSON, "Policy Paper 03: Japan in Search...", cit., pp.2-3

<sup>164</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy...", cit., p.40

<sup>165</sup> KAMIYA Mataka, "Reforming the US-Japan Alliance: What Should Be Done?", in G. John IKENBERRY, INOBUCHI Takashi (edited by), *Reinventing the Alliance: US-Japan Security Partnership in an Era of Change*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.109

<sup>166</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.71

often been interpreted by Japanese policymakers as frustrating Japan's contribution and efforts internationally, thus pushing them towards the idea of a more actively engaged Japan.

Therefore, according to the neorealist view, the idea of normalizing Japan can be considered as the mere consequence of these two types of external pressure: pressure to come out of the US shadow and pressure to get more actively involved. Such demands became especially manifested after the country failed at providing an adequately fast response to the Gulf Crisis in 1991, failure which has indeed resulted in heavy critics by the whole international community, led by the US. In line with this idea, Japan's normalization process has been therefore driven by the country's attempt to get rid of this label of "free rider" ever since, and to respond to international demands for a more involved Japan.<sup>167</sup> To achieve this goal, the country has been smoothing its constitutional constraints one by one, while at the same time embracing a greater share of strategic burdens with the US. As a result, Japan's willingness to provide a more active contribution to the stability of the international environment cannot be just interpreted as the consequence of *"the egotistic and altruistic nature of the state but also (of) the [...] considerable external pressure"*, mainly by the US, which seems to have been the driving force of the recent trends in Japan's security policies.<sup>168</sup> Indeed, the US has praised and warmly welcome Japan's new legal framework, as a 'normal' Japan would represent for the United States a more reliable ally, with which to share the burden of protecting the regional stability of the Asia-Pacific.<sup>169</sup>

While it is undeniable that the US has probably had a big influence in the advancement of this normalization process, it is, however, important to recognize the existence of other influential players within this process. Clearly, the US pressure alone cannot be considered the sole element pushing towards Japan's normalization, nor can this process be explained just in terms of Japan being a US ally.

As pointed out by Cooney, from the very beginning of the normalization process, and even before, many newspaper reports and politicians' statements referred to the government decisions, concerning defense and security policies, in terms of 'gaiatsu', thus claiming that those policies had been adopted only because 'the Americans wanted so'.<sup>170</sup> However, as Cooney stresses, of course the US might have had somehow a big influence over similar choices but, in the end, the ultimate decisions were adopted by a *"popular elected government on (the basis of) what was believed to be*

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<sup>167</sup> AKIMOTO Daisuke, "A Theoretical Analysis of Japan's Changing Security Identity...., cit., p.8

<sup>168</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.8

<sup>169</sup> US Department of Defense, *Hagel welcomes Japan's new Collective Self-Defense ...*, cit.

<sup>170</sup> Kevin COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy ...*, cit., p.134

*the best for Japan*".<sup>171</sup> While discussing the concept of 'gaiatsu', therefore, Cooney criticizes how such word has been often misused by the past political leaders to justify the promotion of what was, instead, already part of their own interests and political agenda. According to him, this idea of 'gaiatsu' "*denies personal responsibility and choice for one's actions when in reality one is making a choice in a given set of circumstances or situation*".<sup>172</sup> Not only does this concept deny personal responsibility, but it also undermines Japan's sovereignty, suggesting that Japan, since its WWII defeat has been incapable of making its own decisions, and that it has always acted to please the US demands. National Sovereignty is, according to Cooney's definition, "*a nation's ability to make its own choices or decisions in the absence of controlling foreign interests*".<sup>173</sup> Thus, by claiming Japan's security choices are the result of Japan's policymakers' inability to decline US demands, it would be the same as suggesting Japan is not an independent nation. It further implies that the country's policy making apparatus is still under the control of foreign powers, specifically the US, and that such powers could be even free to exercise a sort of veto right over security matters.<sup>174</sup> This is obviously not true as proved by the fact that, despite the great influence by the US, Japan has more than once publicly defied the ally's stance over certain issues concerning foreign diplomacy and has shown itself as capable of taking unilateral action, even in those cases when the US remained passive and avoided to get involved.<sup>175</sup> Proof of this is Japan's divergence from US postures over Burma and Cambodia in the 1990s and the country's autonomous response to the 1997 financial crisis.<sup>176</sup> Another example occurred, instead in 2009, when the Hatoyama Cabinet, that was also opposing the agreement over the Futenma Air Base in Okinawa, promoted an alternative China policy.<sup>177</sup> Finally, the latest case is represented by Abe's attempt to strengthen Japan's diplomatic ties with Russia. Despite the Obama administration's clear criticism due to Russia's involvement in the Syrian conflict, the Prime Minister's recent meeting with Putin in December 2016 proves that Japan is open to pursue cooperation with one of its ally's rivals, as a strategy to counter China's rise.<sup>178</sup>

Moreover, when taking into account foreign pressure, it is important not to forget that this is not a unique feature of Japanese politics. All nations have to deal with pressure from abroad, especially

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<sup>171</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.32

<sup>172</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.139

<sup>173</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.142-143

<sup>174</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.144

<sup>175</sup> Michael J.GREEN, *Japan's Reluctant...*, cit., p.7

<sup>176</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>177</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit. p.158

<sup>178</sup> Motoko RICH, *Meeting Between Japan and Russia Ends with Stalemate on Disputed Islands*, The New York Times, December 16<sup>th</sup> 2016, online at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/16/world/asia/japan-russia-abe-putin.html>

when it comes to foreign and international affairs. The ability to deal with such pressure is, instead, linked to what the government considers a matter of national interest.<sup>179</sup> Despite the many references to American pressure, Japanese foreign policy choices were clearly made taking into account what the government perceived as being the best for the country. As already mentioned above, Japanese policy makers have often exploited the concept of 'gaiatsu' to justify unpopular decisions, which were perceived as violating the Japanese constitution and which were, thus, not likely to be supported by the public as well as by other political parties. Cooney supports this idea by arguing that *"often foreign pressure does exist, but it is pressure to do something that the internal leadership already has decided to do"*.<sup>180</sup> He sets as an example the 1992 PKO Law (International Peace Cooperation Law), which could be considered as the starting point of Japan's path towards normalization, explaining how the first draft of such bill had already been written in the early 1980s. This means that the Japanese leadership in power had already made a decision about the need for the SDF involvement in PKO and was just waiting for the right chance to present such law to the Diet.<sup>181</sup> The latest case proving this trend is represented by the new security legislation, as the need to recognize collective self-defense had already been part of the conservative leadership agenda for a while.<sup>182</sup> Both these examples demonstrate that without any kind of internal support, foreign pressure can do very little to persuade political leaders to take action which is viewed as against their own political interests. External pressure just acts as a stimulus for the government in response to internal needs. This does not mean that foreign pressure does not exist at all. It does actually exist in Japan, as it exists in other nations but, as Cooney stresses, it can be perceived more as a "myth" in the sense that it is often interestingly exploited as *"an excuse or cover for a national need [...] a politically easy out for Japanese leaders [...] to sell publicly unpopular choices"*.<sup>183</sup> It is, indeed, the desire and goal of the Japanese conservative elites to turn Japan into a normal nation. It can, thus, be said that foreign pressure, mainly the US one, influenced Japan's path towards normalization but it must be kept in mind that such pressure was eventually successful just because the leadership in power shared the same interests with the source of such pressure, which is mainly the US.

This brings us to the importance of recognizing the role of domestic political actors, namely conservative leaders, in the quest for normalcy. The idea that the normalization of Japan has been

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<sup>179</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.139

<sup>180</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.142

<sup>181</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>182</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., p.11

<sup>183</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.144

part of the political agenda of right-wing conservative leaders, since the very moment Japan regained sovereignty in the 1950's, can be explained by referring to the international relation theory of Classical Realism.

Instead of just focusing on Japan as a US ally, Classical Realist scholars attempt to explain Japan's quest for normalization as part of the aspiration of the Japanese ruling elite to maximize not only the country's economic status but also its political and military one. This is because, as Akimoto suggests, in Classical Realism, "*each state egoistically pursues its own national interests such as economic and military power*".<sup>184</sup> Therefore, according to this perspective, recent trends characterizing Japanese foreign policies must be interpreted in the context of what the Japanese ruling party considers as being Japan's 'national interests'. The use of such term within Japanese security discourse is, however, pretty recent. Kliman points out that Diet members just began to openly refer to such concept after the 1998 Taepodong ballistic missile test by North Korea, and they used it in contrast to *taibei tsuizui gaikou* (対米追随外交 - diplomacy following the US), which is instead used to refer to a type of diplomatic policy which blindly followed the US influence.<sup>185</sup> He further argues that "*the concept of national interest connotes a policy of pursuing Japan's self-interest even if, at times, (it) should deviate from that of the United States*".<sup>186</sup> The appearance of such term in the lexicon of Japan's security proves that Japan has been undertaking a gradual change in its approach to security and defense, gradually adopting a realist perspective towards its own foreign policy options.

Japan has long depended on the US and the UN for its own security interests, especially those beyond its own territory, as its Constitutional bindings do not allow it to have power projection capabilities. However, Japan is a resource-poor country which has to rely on resources and energy from abroad to survive and prosper. Maritime transportation routes are, thus, vital areas and any possible interruption of the Sea Lines of Communication represents the country's primary vulnerability. Protecting the Sea Routes and Freedom of Navigation is, therefore, one of the priorities and main interests that the country shares with its ally. Consequently, Japan has strongly relied on the US to protect maritime routes beyond 1000 miles.<sup>187</sup> Nonetheless, it must be noted that, as a consequence of the economic recession that Japan has been facing since the beginning of

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<sup>184</sup> AKIMOTO Daisuke, "A Theoretical Analysis of Japan's Changing Security Identity....", cit., p.7

<sup>185</sup> Daniel M.KLIMAN, *Japan's Security Strategy in the Post-9/11 World: Embracing a New Realpolitik*, US, Praeger Publishers, 2006, p.43

<sup>186</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.44

<sup>187</sup> SHINODA Tomohito, "Costs and Benefits: US-Japan Alliance", in John IKENBERRY, INOBUCHI Takashi, SATO Yoichiro (edited by), *The US-Japan Security Alliance: Regional Multilateralism*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp.24-25

the 90's, as well as because of the fast aging rate of the population, which drastically reduced the labor force within the country, Japan has recently begun to further expand its industrial base abroad in order to contain costs.<sup>188</sup> Because of this expansion of trade and investments beyond its own borders, Japan has, therefore, become more sensitive to the stability and priorities of the region, especially South-East Asia. Under these circumstances, based on a realist interpretation, the Japanese policy-makers started to feel that Japan is required to take up an active and more independent foreign policy, which still relies on the US support but that is also able to protect more dynamically its own interests abroad.<sup>189</sup> As explained by Cooney, traditionally nations have been able to protect their industrial and economic presence abroad by means of deterrence, in other words the threat of military intervention. But, Japan is not allowed to do so because of its constitutional constraints.<sup>190</sup> Therefore, Japanese conservatives have started questioning Japan's permanent and complete dependence on the US, arguing that only by equipping Japan with power projection capabilities and by pursuing a more active and independent foreign policy, would the country be able to act as a normal nation.<sup>191</sup> Such argument has been particularly stressed since China's expansion of its maritime capabilities and its growing ambition to take stronger control over the South China Sea.

Moreover, based on this realist perspective, Japan is striving to remain a relevant player in the field of international politics and security, due to the emergence of China on a global level. Economically, up until 2010 Japan had been the second largest economy in the world. However, at that time, the country, which is still today struggling to recover from a long period of recession, was overtaken by China. Such decline has alarmed the Japanese political leadership, as it would be especially problematic in case the US decided to decrease its future commitment in the area.<sup>192</sup> Indeed, a sudden US abandonment not only would leave Japan vulnerable but it would also require for it to take quick drastic measures concerning its security and defense policies. While the US complete abandonment is not likely to occur in the near future, the conservative leadership still felt the need to gradually expand Japan's span of action, as a preventive measure. Indeed, in their view, while for now the US-Japan alliance is still necessary, reliance exclusively on the US is at the same time insufficient<sup>193</sup> and Japan should start considering other options, which could eventually lead to a wider range of action and greater autonomy in the military field as well. This view has been

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<sup>188</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.58

<sup>189</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.60

<sup>190</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>191</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., p.145

<sup>192</sup> *ibidem*, cit., pp.108-109

<sup>193</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.145

suggested by Bix, who points out that "*Japanese ruling elites are creating the political and material conditions that someday could lead Japan to act independently of Washington's instructions*".<sup>194</sup> This choice is justified by the fact that, even though Obama's Pivot to Asia has renewed America's commitment to the area, unpredictable events, such as sudden economic contractions or radical changes in the US leadership, might lead to drastic alterations in the US foreign policy. A similar uncertain scenario is not unlikely, especially considering Trump's presidency and his "America first" rhetoric have recently brought into question US commitment to the Asia-Pacific, as well as the very pillars of the US foreign policy.<sup>195</sup> Thus, it might be better for Japan to start rethinking its current security strategy in a time when urgent changes are not required.<sup>196</sup> This is not only true with respect to the US-Japan relations but it is also valid for its security legislation and defense mechanisms. As mentioned above, the previous security and defense policies had been set to tackle past concrete crisis but seemed inadequate to manage future, intangible ones. Therefore, Takahashi stresses that it might be better for Japan to decide the adequate framework to respond to a possible crisis before a specific emergency occurs.<sup>197</sup> In this respect, Cooney points out that some of the laws to deal with the SDF needed to be modernized, as they did not allow to tackle emergency situations effectively. He cites, as an example of this, the fact that Japanese tanks were required by law to respect road signs and, thus, stop at traffic lights even in situations of conflict, rule which could potentially endanger the lives of SDF members.<sup>198</sup>

Japan's attempt to enhance and improve its status and prestige internationally has not only been pursued by weakening its military constraints, but also by aiming at obtaining a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. In order to succeed in this goal, Japan has been trying, for example, to be actively involved in UN activities, promote UN principles and support the UN and its agencies. Moreover, up until now, despite not being a permanent member, Japan has been the second largest financial contributor to the organization.<sup>199</sup> Consequently, a further expansion of the range of activities that the SDF can carry out during UN PKO, as well as the SDF possible participation in other international collective operations can be interpreted as a move in this direction and as a way to gain international prestige. This view is explained by Akimoto, who claims that "*Japan's*

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<sup>194</sup> Herbert P.BIX, "Abe Shinzo and the US-Japan Relationship in a Global Context", in *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol.12, Issue 17, No.1, April 28<sup>th</sup> 2014, p.11, online at: <http://apjjf.org/2014/12/17/Herbert-P.-Bix/4110/article.html>

<sup>195</sup> TANAKA Hitoshi, "Shoring up The US-Japan Alliance under the Trump Administration, in *East Asia Insights*, Vol.11, No.3, Japan Center for International Exchange, December 2016, p.1, online at: <http://www.jcie.or.jp/insights/11-3.pdf>

<sup>196</sup> TAKAHASHI Sugio, "Japan: Revising Security Legislation and the Japan-US Defense Cooperation Guidelines", in *East Asian Strategic Review 2015*, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Tokyo, The Japan Times Ltd., 2015, p.50

<sup>197</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>198</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.163

<sup>199</sup> MOFA, *Japan and the United Nations*, December 2014, p.1-2, online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000075164.pdf>

*participation in UNPKOs is based on a realistic motivation, namely the pursuit of national interest, rather than (mere) altruism".*<sup>200</sup>

In contrast to the neo-realist perspective, which stresses the dependence of Japan from its ally, realist views, thus, emphasize how the conservative policy-makers' idea of national interest and their goal to strengthen Japan's role internationally influenced the process of "normalization". Indeed, when considering the factors affecting Japan's quest for normalcy, the role of the current right-wing leadership and its nationalist stances must be taken into account as well. With the exception of the years between 2009-2012, during which the LDP was out of power, four of the five last LDP Prime Ministers, including Abe, belonged to the old Kishi faction, well-known for its conservative and revisionist stances.<sup>201</sup>

Several scholars have pointed out that Abe and his faction aspire to achieve recognition for Japan as one of the international players among the capitalist powers, a nation fully devoted to the peace and stability of the Asia Pacific region, distancing itself from the authoritarian regimes which still persist in Asia.<sup>202</sup> This means the Japanese leadership is trying to build a more independent diplomatic identity, that could allow the country to raise its international political profile. As Hughes points out, however, *"Abe argues that this project for the restoration of Japan as a great power can be achieved only by overturning the constraints of the past imposed on Japanese freedom of international action".*<sup>203</sup> In his view, Abe's revisionism, which is at the basis of what he defines as the "Abe's Doctrine", has the ultimate goal of re-establishing Japan's broader regional leadership and encircle Japan's main regional rival, China.<sup>204</sup> In line with the Kishi faction perspective, Abe has overtly criticized the post-war regime, often referring to the need for Japan to develop a new sense of national patriotism, as well as its need to revise the Constitution, which is seen as imposed by the foreign Occupation.<sup>205</sup> So far he has not been able to achieve the 2/3 support required both in the Lower and Upper House to advance a constitutional revision, but, as mentioned above, Abe has managed to pass a new official constitutional interpretation in 2014. According to the media, though, he has still not abandoned his ultimate goal, especially considering the 2016 results of the Upper House elections, in which the LDP led coalition managed to secure the 70 seats

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<sup>200</sup> AKIMOTO Daisuke, "A Theoretical Analysis of Japan's Changing Security Identity...., cit., p.7

<sup>201</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., pp-10-11

<sup>202</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.8

<sup>203</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.11

<sup>204</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.81

<sup>205</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.8

needed to obtain, for the first time in Japanese history, a solid 2/3 majority in both houses of the Diet.<sup>206</sup>

Since being in power, Abe has also launched a series of measures aimed at changing the post-world system into one where Japan could be identified as a more autonomous regional power, capable of international initiatives and, thus, deserving to be equally considered by the US. For example, he has suggested renaming the JSDF into National Defense Forces as a way to restore Japan's ability to determine its own security policy, without having to rely on foreign interference. He has also challenged previous Japanese government statements and internationally recognized views



**Figure 20:** Abe's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, December 2013 (Source: AFP Photo)

concerning WWII several times. For example, he has often stated that the Pacific War was fought in the name of self-defense rather than of aggression, and denied the reliability of data proving the Nanjing Massacre and the 'comfort women' issue. Such challenges even include the adoption of new standards for school textbook approval, as well as the 2014 revision of the board education system for local school, changes

which have once again left room for political influence over the system.<sup>207</sup>

These issues, added to the frequent visits of the Prime Minister to the Yasukuni Shrine, where soldiers who died during WWII, including some Class A war criminals, are commemorated, have contributed to increase tensions between Japan and its neighboring countries, mainly China and Korea, which have not forgotten the crimes Japan committed during its colonial time.<sup>208</sup> Abe also founded the so-called "Sosei Nihon" (創生日本 - Japan Rebirth), a group of Diet members who are in charge of discussing the post-war order and rethinking it in terms of "*Japan's national interests*

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<sup>206</sup> YAKUSHIJI Katsuyuki, *Rage in the West, Apathy in Japan: Reflections on the Upper House Elections*, The Tokyo Foundation, July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016, online at: <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2016/upper-house-election>

<sup>207</sup> Christopher W. HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., pp.12-21

<sup>208</sup> Emma CHANLETT-AVERY, Ian E. RINEHART, Mark E. MANYIN, Rebecca M. NELSON, Brock R. WILLIAMS, *Japan-US Relations: Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, September 29<sup>th</sup> 2015, pp. 6-8, online at: <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33436.pdf>

and (how to) make Japan a country respected by international society".<sup>209</sup> This is consistent with the realist view of Japan's security identity as the country's attempt to maximize its national interest and also reflects the conservative leaders' goal to provide Japan with military capabilities and political recognition commensurate to its economic status. Furthermore, not only is the loosening of the constitutional constraints a way to achieve autonomy and prestige in the sphere of international diplomacy, but it is also perceived by the conservatives as a move to push the revitalization of the Japanese economy. This is especially true for the introduction of the "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology", which meant the lift of the ban on weapons exports. By removing such ban, Japanese companies will now have access to the lucrative sector of weapons development. As pointed out by the Financial Times, up until now Japan was able to produce its weapons under license from US defense companies, but thanks to the lift of the ban on weaponry exports, now many companies, which already have a good reputation as premier exporters of highly advanced technological goods, such as Kawasaki Heavy, Mitsubishi Heavy and IHI, could have the opportunity to operate as joint developers and component suppliers.<sup>210</sup> Moreover, as the price of weapons and weapons-related products is quite high, the value of exports is expected to increase. Finally, since the defense industry is covered by the newly enacted "State Secrecy Law", it is believed that the entire production process will be conducted within the borders of the country, factor which is expected to have a large and positive effect on the Japanese economy.<sup>211</sup>

Several flaws and contradictions can be, however, identified in the so-called "Abe's Doctrine".

Firstly, by taking up a revisionist stance, Abe is challenging the very liberal values he is trying to promote through his "proactive contribution to peace" policy.<sup>212</sup> Secondly, by constantly minimizing Japan's colonial past and Occupation period, Abe risks to further isolate Japan regionally, thus obstructing his very goal of achieving regional leadership. Indeed, as Hughes points out, such foreign policy based on the concept of "proactive contribution to peace" may be interpreted as a dangerous form of "assertive/battling diplomacy", which threatens the status quo of the Asia-Pacific.<sup>213</sup> This is due to the fact that any attempt by Japan to expand its international role is regarded suspiciously by those countries that had to endure the Japanese occupation. The most

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<sup>209</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy*..., cit., pp.12-13

<sup>210</sup> Jonathan SOBLE, *Japan to end self-imposed ban on weapons exports: Abe seeks to bolster its domestic defence industry*, Financial Times, March 13<sup>th</sup> 2014, online at: <https://next.ft.com/content/2e60d27c-aa8d-11e3-9fd6-00144feab7de>

<sup>211</sup> SAKAI Yoshihiro, *Abenomics on the Ropes: are Military Exports Japan's last Hope?*, The International Economy, Washington D.C., Spring 2015, p.65, online at: [http://www.international-economy.com/TIE\\_Sp15\\_Sakai.pdf](http://www.international-economy.com/TIE_Sp15_Sakai.pdf)

<sup>212</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy*..., cit., p.93

<sup>213</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.23

pessimistic views, which are supported especially by China and South Korea, claim that by promoting the normalization of the country, Abe is dragging Japan in the direction of a renewed dangerous militarization. A more militarily assertive Japan is feared to exert military pressure outside its borders, as it might once again fall in the same mistakes of the past.<sup>214</sup> Clearly, inconsistent apologies from the Japanese government with regards to Japan's war crimes are perceived as a lack of internalized remorse, thereby representing a hindrance to regional cooperation, even in those cases where strategic and political interests are similar.<sup>215</sup> This is the consequence of the fact that neighboring countries still do not trust Japan and doubt its commitment to a peaceful coexistence. Such flaw is, for instance, recognized by Arase, who claims that Japan's move to strengthen its hard power capabilities, not only destabilizes its soft power but it also undermines its positive image in the Asian region.<sup>216</sup> In this perspective, many also claim that the Japanese leadership is exploiting the US-Japan alliance as a convenient cover to achieve its remilitarization goals.<sup>217</sup>

Another apparent inconsistency, that has been pointed out by many scholars, is that, by recognizing and legalizing the right to resort to collective self-defense as part of this normalization process, Japan has undermined its bargaining power within the alliance, thus facilitating the progressive integration with the US military and enhancing the risk of being dragged in US led conflicts, the so-called "risk of entrapment".<sup>218</sup> As pointed out by Hughes, by revising the US-Japan Guidelines and broadening the SDF span of action, Abe seems to have actually increased Japan's dependence on the US. In other words, Abe's attempt to achieve more equal ties with the US through a deeper military integration can just result in greater dependency and reduced autonomy in international affairs.<sup>219</sup> As a matter of fact, according to this perspective, such drive for independence collide with the current need for a close alliance with the US. In this sense, thus, Hughes defines Abe's posture as a form of "Resentful Realism", based on "*fear of China, lack of trust in the US and a continuing desire for the reassertion of national pride and autonomy*"<sup>220</sup>, a doctrine that is just going to increase regional tensions and which is actually doing the very opposite of what it promised: putting at risk Japan's security.

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<sup>214</sup> KAN Hideki, "US Global Strategy and Japan's Right to exercise Collective Self-Defense: a Historical Perspective", in *Nanzan Review of American Studies*, Vol.37, Centre for American Studies, Nagoya, Nanzan University, 2015, p.91

<sup>215</sup> Matteo DIAN, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance...*, cit. p.173

<sup>216</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy...", cit., p.54

<sup>217</sup> YUAN Jing-Dong, "Chinese Perspective on the US-Japan Alliance", in David ARASE and Tsuneo AKAHA (edited by), *The US - Japan Alliance: Balancing soft and hard power in East Asia*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2010, p.83

<sup>218</sup> Matteo DIAN, "Japan and the US Pivot to the Asia Pacific", *Strategic Update 13.1*, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, LSE Ideas, January 2013, p.14

<sup>219</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., p.94

<sup>220</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.95

Other critics are related to the constitutionality of the new bills. As suggested by Repeta, there is a strong opposition to the new legislation, mainly because it is perceived as overtly violating the pacifist nature of Article 9.<sup>221</sup> As it emerged from several opinion polls conducted by newspapers, such as Asahi Shinbun, the public opinion has strongly criticized and opposed the new legislation. Among other reasons, people's opposition is based on the perception that the government has not provided enough information and a clear explanation about the content, the implications of the legislation and the lengths to which it is willing to intervene in support of the US.<sup>222</sup> Indeed, some of the terminology used both in the revised guidelines and in the security legislation seems to be ambiguous and leaves room for a vague and uncertain interpretation.<sup>223</sup> Government explanations in the Diet debates seem to have been misleading as well. As pointed out by Tanaka, the legislation allows resorting to collective self-defense only in case of defensive objectives. However, he claims that some of the government statements were confusing, in that they seemed to point at economic triggers, such as an oil price increase, as possible factors to invoke collective self-defense, factors which are, however, not considered permissible under the new legislation.<sup>224</sup>

All these critics have mainly focused on a more theoretical level. Nonetheless, it is also worth taking into consideration some more practical problems, which may affect negatively the perceived impact of Japan's normalization process. First, Abe's strategy aimed at increasing the defense budget by exploiting the economic growth that was expected to occur under the Abenomics policy. However, this goal appears to be unfeasible, especially considering Abenomics is not showing the hoped results.<sup>225</sup> Thus, the improvement of the current military capabilities, which is necessary to meet the requirements of the new security policy, appears to be more costly than expected. Several commentators, such as Le, have, thus, pointed out that, if the goal of the new legislation is to balance Chinese military build-up, Japan will not be able to afford it.<sup>226</sup> Le further claims that Japan's ability to increase its military spending is also constrained by structural problems within the Japanese society, namely low birth-rate and aging population. These demographic problems may impact on the security legislation in two ways. First, they are likely to affect the ability of the

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<sup>221</sup> Lawrence REPETA, "Japan's Proposed National Security Legislation...", cit., p.1

<sup>222</sup> Herbert P.BIX, "Abe Shinzo and the US-Japan Relationship...", cit., p.9

<sup>223</sup> Lawrence REPETA, "Japan's Proposed National Security Legislation...", cit., p.4

<sup>224</sup> TANAKA Hitoshi, "Proactive Diplomacy for Peace under Japan's New Security Legislation", in *East Asia Insights*, Vol.10, No.3, Japan Center for International Exchange, October 2015, p.2, online at: <http://www.jcie.or.jp/insights/10-3.pdf>

<sup>225</sup> LE Tom, *Security Legislation promises more than it can deliver*, The Japan Times, October 15th 2015, p.2 online at: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/10/16/commentary/japan-commentary/security-legislation-promises-can-deliver/#.V4TCnbiLTIU>

<sup>226</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.2

government to provide social welfare, thus undermining the country's economic stability.<sup>227</sup> This is, however, a crucial factor, as economy is obviously an area that cannot be separated from defense, security and foreign policy. Clearly, as Osaka University Professor Toshiya Hoshino pointed out when interviewed by Cooney, *"without a healthy economy it is hard to pursue an international role"*.<sup>228</sup> Secondly, the above problems are likely to reduce the pool of potential SDF recruits. If we add this second issue to the fact that SDF are a volunteer force, whose members can resign anytime and that the legislation is strongly opposed by the public opinion, the chance that the number of willing, able-bodied volunteers will drop, is quite high.<sup>229</sup> These social and fiscal constraints heavily limit Japan's ability not only to increase but even to maintain its defense budget, and they have also been recognized as a factor affecting the alliance with the US too. As reported by the Congressional Research Center, *"with gross public debt at roughly 250% of GDP and rising costs of the social safety net, some analysts believe that it will be politically impossible for Japan to significantly increase defense spending"*.<sup>230</sup>

While all these inconsistencies can be recognized as true, it is, however, important not to confuse Japan's attempt to strengthen its regional role with hegemonic leanings. Indeed, Japan would like to be perceived internationally as an independent political entity, able to frame its own foreign policy, without constantly being placed under the US shadow, but this goal does not imply the rise of Japan as a militaristic superpower. Nor does Japan's attempt to achieve more autonomy mean a complete break with the US or a total departure from its close cooperation with the American Ally.

With regards to Japan's unlikely hegemonic trends, one of the main reasons is, as already mentioned above, due to the fact that Japan is a poor-resources country that has to rely on trade for its survival. As Cooney points out, *"Japan is realistic about its political power, [...] (it) simply does not have the resources or the population to be a true hegemon. That is they do not have the ability or resources to both seize power and maintain it"*.<sup>231</sup> This does not mean Japan cannot be a relevant player internationally. It just means Japan cannot become a world superpower in the traditional sense. Indeed, "normal" is not synonymous of "hegemonic". On the contrary, these two words belong to completely different semantic areas. Japan is not trying to become a global militaristic superpower,

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<sup>227</sup> *ibidem*, cit., pp.2-3

<sup>228</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation....*, cit., p.167

<sup>229</sup> LE Tom, *Security Legislation promises more....*, cit., p.2

<sup>230</sup> Emma CHANLETT-AVERY, Ian E.RINEHART, *The US-Japan Alliance....*, cit., p.5

<sup>231</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation....*, cit., p.58

as it is instead feared by several critics, mainly its neighboring countries.<sup>232</sup> It is just attempting at asserting its own identity in the international society, based on the idea that the country could offer more than a mere financial contribution to promote the world's peace and stability. Moreover, Japan is simply trying to keep up with the changes and challenges of a more globalized world. Such purpose had already been pointed out in 2000 by the "Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century", whose report stated that *"this is not an age that permits isolationism."* As mentioned above, the country's *"survival and prosperity depend on international peace and a free international economic order"*, therefore Japan must not lose *"its enthusiasm for international involvement and (become) inward looking (...) Japan must rebuild itself while knowing the world, associating with the world, and engaging with the world."*<sup>233</sup> This view is also supported by Fukushima, according to whom the previous security framework had also grown inadequate to tackle threats of the current world order. He claims that *"given the diversification of security threats today, Japan must develop additional strategies and concrete plans to clearly map out what it intends to do regarding issues such as cyber attacks, maritime security, poverty, pandemics and health, and natural disasters."*<sup>234</sup> It is, undoubtedly, true that the new guidelines and security legislation give great attention to the right of collective self-defense, but they also focus on several other important issues, that must be regulated in order to strengthen the defense mechanisms of a country. Such issues are very complicated and delicate matters and, as already pointed out above, they, thus, should be debated in times of no need. In other words, they should be discussed when a specific imminent crisis has not yet occurred and not *"hastily in an urgent situation after (their) necessity has become evident."*<sup>235</sup>

Another important element to take into account, when considering the possible risks Abe's doctrine is posing to regional stability, is the highly consolidated level of democracy of the country. Despite the introduction of a controversial State Secrecy Law, Japan is still one of the strongest democratic states in Asia.

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<sup>232</sup> Thomas BERGER, "Abe's Perilous Patriotism: Why Japan's New Nationalism Still Creates Problems for the Region and the US-Japanese Alliance", *Japan Chair Platform*, Center For Strategic & International Studies, October 2014, p.1, online at: [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/141003\\_Berger\\_AbePerilousPatriotism\\_Web\\_0.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/141003_Berger_AbePerilousPatriotism_Web_0.pdf)

<sup>233</sup> The Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, "Chapter 6: Japan's Place in the World", *Japan's Goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century-the Frontier Within: Individual Empowerment and Better Governance in the New Millennium*, January 2000, Online at: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/21century/report/htmls/7chap6.html>

<sup>234</sup> FUKUSHIMA Akiko, Japan's "Proactive Contribution to Peace" ..., cit., p.6

<sup>235</sup> TAKAHASHI Sugio, "Japan: revising Security Legislation ...", cit., p.50

The Japanese constitution is a solid guarantor of all fundamental human rights and the government itself has been widely engaged in the promotion of human security, for example, by strongly supporting the UN broad interpretation of Human Security and by promoting its ODA activities (Official Development Activities) worldwide.<sup>236</sup> Moreover,



**Figure 21:** People protest against Security Bills outside the parliament, August 2015 (Source: Thomas Peter - Reuters)

pacifism and anti-war feelings continue to be very strong within the Japanese society and the anti-constitutional revision movement is gaining way, as new groups, including student associations such as Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy (SEALDs) group, joined the protests.<sup>237</sup> Although SEALDs was disbanded in August 2016, Japanese students are now showing a revived interest and involvement in politics and democratic debate.

As for Japan's goal to be recognized as a US equal ally, this does not mean Japan aims at exerting a leadership role comparable to that of the US. It would be, clearly, unrealistic for Japan to long for such a position. As argued by Green, Japan is not challenging the US primacy in international organizations and in the region either. The country still remains in a close relationship with the US, and it is still somehow dependent on its ally for its security, mainly because the two countries share the same values, international needs and interests.<sup>238</sup> Such view is also supported by Kohno, who recognized that *"Japan, as an ally of the United States, shares fundamental values and ideas with the United States, and as such, its foreign policy naturally moves in a direction similar to that of the United States."*<sup>239</sup> In other words, Japan still benefits from the alliance more than it could benefit from assuming a more distant position. This is the reason why the two apparently contrasting pillars of Abe's foreign policy, strengthening the relations with the US and advancing greater autonomy through the normalization process, are not mutually exclusive, as they might instead appear, but actually go in the same direction.

<sup>236</sup> FUKUSHIMA Akiko, Japan's "Proactive Contribution to Peace" ..., cit., pp.4-5

<sup>237</sup> Linda SIEG, KASAI Teppei, *SEALDs Student Group reinvigorates Japan's Anti-War Protest Movement*, The Japan Times, August 29<sup>th</sup> 2015, online at: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/29/national/politics-diplomacy/sealds-student-group-reinvigorates-japans-anti-war-protest-movement/#.V6l1AbiLTIU>

<sup>238</sup> Michael J.GREEN, *Japan's Reluctant...*, cit., p.273

<sup>239</sup> KOHNO Masaharu, "In Search of a Proactive Diplomacy: Increasing Japan's International Role in the 1990s", *Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies*, Washington, The Brookings Institution, September 1<sup>st</sup> 1999, p.1

Indeed, in my personal understanding, "equal ally" means a country cooperating with its counterpart on the same level by means of full consultations and coordination mechanisms<sup>240</sup>, a country that is granted what Mastanduno defines as a "meaningful sharing of decision-making authority"<sup>241</sup>, a country whose support is not justified just in terms of 'gaiatsu' or as a mere attempt to please US demands, a country that does not need the ally's recognition to act as a promoter of multilateral political initiatives. Thus, a country that, while still strongly cooperating with the US, is also aware of its individual diplomatic role beside that within the alliance. A strong alliance does not necessarily mean that Japan cannot also pursue recognition as a relevant individual player in the political and diplomatic field. In order to achieve such recognition, Japan, other than strengthening its international contribution and participation to UN activities, has also been insisting on obtaining a greater level of consultations and policy coordination with its alliance partner.<sup>242</sup> By doing so, Japan has been trying to get rid of its image as mere "US follower", devoid of its own independent political identity, and build its new image of US respected partner, that has something more than a mere financial contribution to offer to the international community.<sup>243</sup>

Moreover, Japan has been complementing its role as US ally with its aspiration to be recognized as



**Figure 22:** Defense Minister Gen Nakatani and Australian Defense Minister Kevin Andrews meet in Tokyo, June 2015 (Source: AFP Photo)

a player able to take individual initiative by paying greater attention to multilateral cooperation with several other countries. Indeed, despite strengthening its bilateral relations with the US and recognizing the country's right to intervene in defense of its partner, Japan, under the Abe administration, has also been trying to tighten its relationship with other parties and pursuing a variety of multilateral diplomatic efforts, as proved by Japan's

increased involvement in, to name a few, G7 (G8) meetings, the G8-Summit, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), APEC, the ASEAN-Post Ministerial Conference (PMC), the ASEAN Regional

<sup>240</sup> Michael J.GREEN, *Japan's Reluctant...*, cit., p.283

<sup>241</sup> Michael MASTANDUNO,"The US-Japan Alliance and Models of Regional Security Order", in G. John IKENBERRY, INOBUCHI Takashi (edited by), *Reinventing the Alliance: US-Japan Security Partnership in an Era of Change*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003, p.38

<sup>242</sup> Michael J.GREEN, *Japan's Reluctant...*, cit., p.273

<sup>243</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.39

Forum (ARF) and the Quadrilateral Trade Ministers' Talks (US, EU, Japan and Canada).<sup>244</sup> Such multilateralism has been promoted also through the new security legislation, which has recognized the possibility for Japan to cooperate with and support countries other than the US. It is important to note that such multilateral initiatives do not in any way represent an alternative to the US-Japan alliance. They are, instead, an integration to it, as they contribute to support and reinforce the very scope of the alliance itself.<sup>245</sup> Indeed, cooperation with other nations contributes to sustain regional stability and order, which is the primary goal of the US-Japan alliance.<sup>246</sup>

As Cooney points out, multilateralism is a good strategy to achieve autonomy and recognition in terms of goodwill and influence.<sup>247</sup> However, one of the main obstacles for Japan to achieve recognition in this way is represented by the already mentioned above lack of trust towards Japan's intentions, due to its inability to deal with its history. Clearly, Japan's revisionism reduces the country's chances to gain the trust needed for multilateralism to be effective.<sup>248</sup> This is what Cha defines as a "Legitimacy Deficit"<sup>249</sup> in the region. Indeed, despite their mutual economic interdependence, the relations between Japan and many East Asian countries have always been inhibited by mutual distrust over security issues.



**Figure 23:** Demonstration for former "comfort women" near the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, November 2015 (Source: AFP Photo)

Given Japan colonial past and war crimes, it is not surprising its neighboring countries feel unease at the expansion of Japan's active involvement in international issues. Let alone an expansion of Japan's military involvement in security matters. Any inclination towards the right by the Japanese leadership has, thus, always led to strong criticism from Japan's neighbors.<sup>250</sup> As claimed above, the

<sup>244</sup> KOHNO Masaharu, "In Search of a Proactive Diplomacy...", cit., p.13

<sup>245</sup> Victor D.CHA, "Multilateral Security in Asia and the US-Japan Alliance", in G. John IKENBERRY, INOGUCHI Takashi (edited by), *Reinventing the Alliance: US-Japan Security Partnership in an Era of Change*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003, p.148

<sup>246</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.147

<sup>247</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.174

<sup>248</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>249</sup> Victor D.CHA, "Multilateral Security in Asia and the US-Japan Alliance...", cit., p.149

<sup>250</sup> HUI Tan Ming, "Japan's New Security Laws: Pragmatic or Revisionist Move?", *RSIS Commentary*, No.164, RSIS Publications, August 4<sup>th</sup> 2015, p.2, online at: <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/CO15164.pdf>

perceived revisionism of the Prime Minister only has the result of undermining Japan's credibility to act as a proactive contributor to peace and its attempt to see its regional role recognized, thus raising strong negative reactions.

In this context, it is, however, important to note that what is often defined as the renewed rise of nationalism in Japan should not be confused as a proof Japan will become a militaristic superpower, aiming at invading the rest of Asia once more.<sup>251</sup> This chance is unlikely to happen. Such distorted perception is obviously the result of Japan's failure to deal with its past and history, but the lack of an acceptable and honest apology for its past mistakes does not necessarily mean Japan will become a threat to Asia again. As Berger claims, "*Abe is more of a civic than an ethnic nationalist, one who believes that people's nationality is not and should not be a matter of their ethnicity, but rather whether they voluntarily adhere to the norms and values of society. Abe's primary goal is to foster a healthy sense of patriotism in Japan, one that encourages the Japanese people to be proud of their country while at the same time respectful of contemporary Japan's democratic political system and supportive of peaceful East Asian regional order*".<sup>252</sup> Promoting national pride in itself is not wrong, and constitutional revisionism per se is not an unhealthy practice in the context of political restructuring processes. This is not meant to say Abe's nationalism and revisionism are not problematic. On the contrary, they are, and if the government continues to stubbornly support revisionist stances, it could further tense its relations both with other East Asian countries and with its Ally, as this revisionist views could confuse the real motivations and reasons behind the new security framework.<sup>253</sup> The problem with Abe's attempt to advance changes in the security field is, clearly, the fact that his emphasis over the need for a proactive contribution to peace appears suspicious, since its core values are in contradiction with the Prime Minister's overtly stressed revisionist ideas.<sup>254</sup> This is problematic in that it has resulted in a misinterpretation of Japan's intentions, causing also retaliatory actions and widespread anti-Japanese sentiments in many neighboring countries.<sup>255</sup> Revisionist stances could also tense the relations with the US, in that, by risking to challenge the status-quo, they could lead to the US entrapment, in case an escalation of hostilities, mainly with China, should occur.<sup>256</sup> Japanese nationalism is also a source of instability

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<sup>251</sup> Thomas BERGER, *Abe's Perilous Patriotism...*, cit., p.1

<sup>252</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.2

<sup>253</sup> John NILSSON-WRIGHT, FUJIWARA Kiichi, "Japan's Abe Administration: Steering a Course between Pragmatism and Extremism", *Asia Programme Publications*, Chatham House, September 2015, pp.17-18, online at: [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field\\_document/20150914JapanAbeAdministrationNilssonWrightFujiwara.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150914JapanAbeAdministrationNilssonWrightFujiwara.pdf)

<sup>254</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., p.93

<sup>255</sup> Thomas BERGER, *Abe's Perilous Patriotism...*, cit., p.1

<sup>256</sup> John NILSSON-WRIGHT, FUJIWARA Kiichi, "Japan's Abe Administration...", cit., pp.15-16

for the relationship with Washington not only from a military perspective, but also from an economic and diplomatic one. Indeed, as pointed out by Hughes, Abe's revisionism appeared to be a critical issue for the overall US rebalance to Asia<sup>257</sup> and in the context of the TPP negotiations, whose future, however, seems uncertain due to the recent US withdrawal from the free trade deal endorsed by newly elected President Trump.

Therefore, as pointed out by Hui, if Japan wishes to reinvent itself as a proactive contributor to peace and to succeed in enhancing its own image internationally, the government needs to *"be more persuasive that the new legislation is a pragmatic, rather than a revisionist, move"*.<sup>258</sup> In order to reduce the negative impact with which the new security framework has been perceived abroad, Abe should put aside his personal convictions and engage more in diplomatic efforts towards China and South Korea, starting from a sincere apology for Japan's past crimes. Hui stresses, however, that in order for a reconciliation to be successful, all the parties involved should be willing to cooperate, which means that apologies should be genuinely given as well as genuinely accepted and cooperation of all the parties involved is required.<sup>259</sup>

Considering the unpredictability of North Korea and the assertiveness of China, it is not surprising Japanese leaders feel vulnerable and aim at strengthening the country's own reliable deterrence. However, as Berger stresses, *"security has not only military and economic dimensions but a critically important social cultural component as well"*.<sup>260</sup> It is thus necessary for the Japanese leadership not to forget this socio-cultural aspect of security, too. The new security legislation has undoubtedly widened and deepened Japan's role both within the alliance and more generally in international affairs, thus representing an important step forward in the normalization process, but the relevance of such broader role is obviously undermined by the Cabinet revisionist stances. Certainly, the above mentioned unresolved issues represent a problematic hindrance for Japan to achieve international recognition, both as a US equal partner as well as an independent player, since most of Japan's neighboring countries would rather see a dependent restricted Japan than a more actively engaged one, with a wider operating range.<sup>261</sup> Therefore, it must be recognized that the revision of the US-Japan guidelines and the enactment of a new security legislation are not enough

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<sup>257</sup> Christopher W. HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., p.75

<sup>258</sup> HUI Tan Ming, "Japan's New Security Laws...", cit., p.2

<sup>259</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>260</sup> Thomas BERGER, "The Construction of Antagonism: the History Problem in Japan's Foreign Relations", in in G. John IKENBERRY, INOUCHI Takashi (edited by), *Reinventing the Alliance: US-Japan Security Partnership in an Era of Change*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003, p.109

<sup>261</sup> Ted G. CARPENTER, "Paternalism and Dependence: The US-Japanese Security Relationship", in *CATO Institute Policy Analysis*, No.244, The CATO Institute, November 1<sup>st</sup> 1995, p.8, online at: <https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa244.pdf>

to provide a comprehensive framework for security and defense policies, and to advance Japan's role internationally. They are clearly an important move in this direction but a move that must be complemented with other strategies directly addressing this important socio-cultural element of security mentioned above. Indeed, unless the government decides to deal with Japan's past once and for all, Japan's proactive contribution to international issues is not likely to be recognized as positive and beneficial by the other relevant regional players, as instead its aim is.

## CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, the revision of the US-Japan Security Guidelines and the introduction of the new Security Legislation are consistent with the recent trends of Japan's normalization process. Indeed, both the new documents officially recognize the country's possibility to be more actively involved in international issues, for example allowing Japan to exert the right of collective self-defense. This is especially relevant, since, for the first time, the SDF could be sent abroad and could be allowed to take part in foreign operations, which are not directly connected with Japan's own security. Such possibility, thus, has been interpreted by many as a departure from the pacifist posture, that has characterized Japan since its defeat in WWII.<sup>262</sup> Japan's interest in reinforcing its hard-power seems also to reflect the country's insecurity and perceived vulnerability towards the new complex challenges and threats that have permeated the international environment in the recent years.<sup>263</sup>

The new security framework has several implications for the country.

With regards to the US-Japan relations, the new guidelines and legislation should not in any case be considered as the mere result of the US pressure. The fact that such pressure runs throughout the entire Japanese diplomatic history cannot be denied. It is certainly true that the US has always pushed towards a more engaged Japan and, consequently, that it has warmly welcome the recent changes in Japan's security posture. However, such foreign pressure cannot be seen as the only factor that explains why the new legislation was successfully implemented.<sup>264</sup> First, it must be noted that all countries are subject to foreign pressure. What matters is instead the way the leadership in power decides to deal with such pressure, according to what it perceives to be its 'national interest'.<sup>265</sup> This brings us to the recognition of a second important factor, which is the current conservative leaders' aspiration to enhance Japan's active role internationally and achieve the recognition of relevant player, besides being a US ally. Indeed, the development of a new security framework can be also said to be the consequence of the Japanese conservative policymakers'

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<sup>262</sup> YOSHIDA Reiji, AOKI Mizuho, *Diet enacts Security Laws, marking Japan's Departure from Pacifism*, The Japan Times, September 19<sup>th</sup> 2015, online at: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/19/national/politics-diplomacy/diet-enacts-security-laws-marking-japans-departure-from-pacifism-2/#.V6fckbiLTIU>

<sup>263</sup> David ARASE, "Introduction: Soft Power, Hard Power, Japan and the US-Japan Alliance", in David ARASE and Tsuneko AKAHA (edited by), *The US - Japan Alliance: Balancing soft and hard power in East Asia*, Abindgdon and New York, Routledge, 2010, p.4

<sup>264</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.139

<sup>265</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.144

attempt to normalize the country, goal which seems to have always been in their political agenda and that has often been pursued by justifying publicly unpopular choices just in terms of 'gaiatsu'.<sup>266</sup>

It is in any case important to note that this normalization process has allowed Japan to deepen and strengthen its relations with the US. Clearly, by lifting the ban on weapons exports and by revising the guidelines, Japan has been promoting a strong interoperability with its ally. For example, boosting cooperation in next-generation weapons development projects "*would allow the United States and Japan to enhance interoperability and economic efficiency between the two militaries, both of which serve to strengthen the alliance*".<sup>267</sup> The improvement of the cooperation and coordination mechanisms has also contributed to enhance Japan's role within the alliance, opening the way for Japan to achieve the long yearned recognition of being a US equal partner. As pointed out by Mastanduno, "*a more symmetrical US-Japan partnership would in many ways be more attractive, for both parties, than (...) (an) unequal one.*" Indeed, not only does a greater mutual dependence result in a more equitable burden-sharing, but "*the effective combination of US and Japanese resources and instruments would increase the options for addressing regional economic, security and diplomatic problems.*"<sup>268</sup>

The fact that Japan has also managed to increase its span of action could also be seen as a first move in the direction of achieving a slightly greater independence and autonomy. Aiming for a more autonomous role within the alliance does not, however, mean Japan is moving towards a sudden complete break with the US. For now, the two countries still share common strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific area, such as balancing China, deterring North Korea, protecting freedom of navigation and open sea lanes, promoting and supporting regional economic integration.<sup>269</sup> Because of these shared objectives, Japan cannot afford to completely cut its ties with the US. It would be unrealistic and against its national interest. It is also worth noting that the two processes of strengthening the US-Japan alliance and normalizing the country are not mutually exclusive, as a more independent, assertive and proactive Japan also fits the interests of the US, for the reasons mentioned above.<sup>270</sup> Indeed, a more autonomous Japan, would more equally share the burdens of the alliance while supporting the US "Pivot to Asia".<sup>271</sup> The alliance continues also to be relevant, as it still works as a

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<sup>266</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>267</sup> HIROSE Taisuke, "Japan's new Arms Exports Principles: Strengthening US-Japan Relations", *Japan Chair Platform*, Center For Strategic & International Studies, October 2014, p.2, online at: [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/141014\\_Hirose\\_NewArmsExportPrinciples\\_JapanPlatform.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/141014_Hirose_NewArmsExportPrinciples_JapanPlatform.pdf)

<sup>268</sup> Michael MASTANDUNO, "The US-Japan Alliance and Models...", cit., p.38

<sup>269</sup> Michael J.GREEN, *Japan's Reluctant...*, cit., p.277-278

<sup>270</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.5

<sup>271</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation...*, cit., p.70

regional stabilizer in the area and as an insurance against the possible failure of preventive diplomacy.<sup>272</sup>

With respect to deterrence mechanisms, compared to the old system, the new security framework, allowing Japan to get more actively involved, is expected to enable the country to provide a quick and effective response to unpredictable crisis and drastic changes in the surrounding environment. For example, from now on Japan will be also able to take part in joint contingency planning and preparations for a crisis scenario.<sup>273</sup> This is especially important as changes of security policies are a delicate matter that needs to be dealt in time of no need. This idea is supported, for example, by Takahashi, who points out that a country should discuss how to tackle any possible hypothetical scenario in advance, so that, in time needed, responses to unexpected events could be provided smoothly and effectively.<sup>274</sup>

The normalization process of the country has, however, been often interpreted negatively as Japan's attempt to be recognized as a regional/global leader and superpower. It is certainly true that the Japanese leadership would like to see Japan's international role strengthened. The policy of "proactive contribution to peace", which implies a more involved Japan in the resolution of international issues, is clearly used by the Japanese policymakers as a strategy to make the country respected internationally and to achieve the recognition of a relevant player in the world. However, in my understanding, Japan is indeed strengthening its hard-power capabilities but this process is not pursued in order for Japan to raise as an hegemonic militaristic power once again. Nor is the country trying to be recognized as a superpower challenging the US hegemony. Japan is, in my perspective, simply responding and adjusting to the changes of the international environment, changes which required the recognition of a greater role for deterrence within its security policies. Because of the growing regional tensions, especially with an unpredictable North Korea and a more assertive China, it is not surprising that the Japanese leaders have felt vulnerable and unprepared to deal with future crisis. It is, therefore, comprehensible that Japan aims at strengthening the country's own reliable deterrence, by broadening its span of action both within and outside the alliance system. Such move is expected to provide the country with a set of mechanisms, which will allow Japan to offer a quick and prompt response and effectively tackle security threats. Japan will also be able to actively intervene in coordinated operations to protect the international security and

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<sup>272</sup> KAMIYA Mataka, "Reforming the US-Japan Alliance...", cit., p.107

<sup>273</sup> TANAKA Hitoshi, "Proactive Diplomacy for Peace...", cit., p.2

<sup>274</sup> TAKAHASHI Sugio, "Japan: revising Security Legislation ...", cit., p.50

stability.<sup>275</sup> This ambition does not necessarily mean, though, that Japan is abandoning its pacifist posture to pursue a militaristic path, as many critics suggested.<sup>276</sup> Nor does it mean that from now on Japan will provide unlimited support to its ally and get involved unlimitedly in international affairs.<sup>277</sup> This is unlikely to happen, as the new legislation still restrains Japan from exercising fully developed collective self-defense. Indeed, even though this is a right recognized to all sovereign states under the UN Charter, Japan will still be allowed to resort to collective self-defense only for defensive purposes.<sup>278</sup> In this sense, in line with Article 9 of its Constitution, Japan is still strictly prohibited to declare war.<sup>279</sup>

Moreover, it is important to note that there are two main hindrances to Japan's goal to advance its role internationally.

First, a practical constraint is obviously represented by the current economic and financial situation of the country, which heavily limits Japan's ability to broaden its role in international issues. As a matter of fact, without solid economic foundations, there is little a country can do to support the international community. Japan is one of the countries with the world's largest public debt (250% of GDP in 2015)<sup>280</sup> and the Cabinet's strategy to address the long recession and economic crisis, the so-called Abenomics, has not showed the expected results so far. Such issues seem to undermine Japan's effective capability to engage more actively in supporting the world peace and stability, especially if such support focuses only on increasing defense capabilities.<sup>281</sup>

Secondly, Japan's proactive contribution to peace clashes with the way the country appears in the eyes of several other Asian nations. Since the Japanese conservative elite, that is promoting this political motto, is well known for its revisionist stances, the new security framework has been heavily criticized and perceived as suspicious by many neighboring countries, which fear Japan's remilitarization, on the basis of its past and its colonial crimes. Such fear is linked to Japan's lack of an official apology and to the overtly emphasized revisionism of the current leadership in power, that has often publicly denied that some of the WWII atrocities were ever committed.<sup>282</sup> Therefore, those countries, that especially had to endure the sufferings of Japanese colonialism, look at Japan's

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<sup>275</sup> TANAKA Hitoshi, "Proactive Diplomacy for Peace...", cit., pp.2-3

<sup>276</sup> Jennifer LIND, "Japan's Security Evolution", in *CATO Institute Policy Analysis*, No.788, The CATO Insititute, February 26<sup>th</sup> 2016, p.6, online at: <http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa-788.pdf>

<sup>277</sup> TANAKA Hitoshi, "Proactive Diplomacy for Peace...", cit., p.3

<sup>278</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.2

<sup>279</sup> John NILSSON-WRIGHT, FUJIWARA Kiichi, "Japan's Abe Administration...", cit., p.12

<sup>280</sup> Emma CHANLETT-AVERY, Ian E.RINEHART, *The US-Japan Alliance...*, cit., p.5

<sup>281</sup> LE Tom, Security Legislation promises more than..., cit.

<sup>282</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy...*, cit., pp.15-23

increasing role in international affairs with suspicion and would rather favor a constrained Japan under the influence of the US.<sup>283</sup> Indeed, they are very much against a more autonomous Japan within the Alliance as they perceive this move as a convenient cover for the Japanese nationalists to pursue and achieve their remilitarization goals.<sup>284</sup> As a consequence, they also fear the possibility of a US future abandonment and they strongly oppose Japan's expanded role in cooperating for the regional and international security. These negative views of Japan's normalization prove that Abe's revisionism is highly problematic, in that it is leading to a misinterpretation of the new legal security framework. Such unresolved issues not only create tensions with other Asian countries but they contribute to tense the relations with the US as well. Abe's extremely radical stances are viewed with great concern in Washington too, as they could lead to the American entrapment in the case of an escalation of tensions with Japan's neighbors.<sup>285</sup> Consequently, Japan's inability to deal with its past represents a problematic hindrance for Japan to achieve the yearned international recognition both as a US equal partner and as a relevant regional player. As argued by Berger, by continuing to stress revisionist stances, the current Abe administration is forgetting to take into account the socio-cultural aspect of security<sup>286</sup> and it is involuntarily diminishing the real value and meaning of the changes to Japan's security discourse. As a consequence, Japan's proactive contribution to international issues is not likely to be recognized as positive and beneficial by the other relevant regional players, as instead its primary goal is.

Because of these two inconsistencies, Cooney points out that Japan is not ready to become a global leader nor "*to take on primary responsibility for the maintenance of the world*".<sup>287</sup> If Japan wanted to succeed in positively advancing its role internationally and in gaining a positive recognition for its more proactive contribution to the peace and stability of the world, thus, the new security framework provided by the new guidelines and legislation should be complemented with simultaneous strategies addressing fields beside that of security and defense. In particular, as suggested by Tanaka, Japanese policymakers should adhere to some basic principles.<sup>288</sup>

First, as mentioned above Japan should face up its history and deal with its historical responsibilities, without denying or downplaying Japan's colonial crimes, as such move could only cast doubts on the country's future intentions. Indeed, as Tanaka stresses, "*history issues must not be*

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<sup>283</sup> Ted G. CARPENTER, "Paternalism and Dependence...., cit., p.8

<sup>284</sup> YUAN Jing-Dong, "Chinese Perspective on the US-Japan Alliance...., cit., p.83

<sup>285</sup> Christopher W.HUGHES, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy*...., cit., pp.72-76

<sup>286</sup> Thomas BERGER, "The Construction of Antagonism...., cit., p.109

<sup>287</sup> Kevin J.COONEY, *Japan's Foreign Policy Maturation*...., cit., p.151

<sup>288</sup> TANAKA Hitoshi, "Proactive Diplomacy for Peace...., cit., p.3

*allowed to impede the deepening of mutual trust between Japan and its neighbors, nor disrupt the regional order amidst the shifting balance of power".*<sup>289</sup> Moreover, since Japan's past still represents a problem for its neighboring countries, any change to the Japanese security framework should not be hurried but carried out gradually. The risk, is otherwise, that such normalization process, which means for Japan *"to resume responsibility for its own foreign policy and to begin to shape the world in which it lives rather than simply adjusting to it"*<sup>290</sup>, might, instead, be misinterpreted and evaluated only in light of a revisionist move.

Secondly, despite having broadened its span of action with the new security framework, Japan should try to present such changes as part of a pragmatic rather than a revisionist agenda and should keep maintaining its traditional peaceful posture.<sup>291</sup> Although Japan is now allowed to engage more actively in international security cooperation, its basic security policies are still rooted in a defensive approach and any attempt to recur to military means to pursue economic or political agendas must be avoided.<sup>292</sup> Moreover, in order to reduce suspicion over its intentions, the government should for example be more open and willing to encourage critical debates over such issues, and it should also try to engage in a productive dialogue with its citizens, as well as with its neighbors to openly explain how important expanding Japan's cooperation with other nation is and how it is planning to deal with such cooperation.

Thirdly, Japan should continue to maintain its close ties with the US, while at the same time showing it is capable of assuming autonomous initiatives as well. On the one hand, Japan still needs to rely on its Ally's support and nuclear umbrella to ensure its own security, especially considering the country still has tense relations with China and Russia, two longstanding nuclear powers, and North Korea, a country that is desperately looking for recognition. Moreover, the US-Japan alliance still works as a reassurance against doubts over Japan's remilitarization.<sup>293</sup> On the other hand, it is, however, necessary for Japan to strengthen its capability of carrying out autonomous and independent actions. This is required both to enhance its own deterrence and to provide an adequate security framework for crisis management, as well as to adjust its policies to the new trends of Asia-Pacific security cooperation. Indeed, while the US-Japan alliance still seems to remain the core of Japan's security approach in the near future, the establishment of wider multilateral networks

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<sup>289</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.3

<sup>290</sup> Chalmers JOHNSON, " Policy Paper 03: Japan in Search..., cit., p.14

<sup>291</sup> HUI Tan Ming, "Japan's New Security Laws..., cit., p.2

<sup>292</sup> TANAKA Hitoshi, "Proactive Diplomacy for Peace..., cit., pp.3-4

<sup>293</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.3

appears to be an important strategy to complement and integrate the alliance.<sup>294</sup> Therefore, not only assuming greater responsibility for its own defense, but also increasing cooperation with countries other than the US, such as Australia, India, South Korea, and regional organizations, such as ASEAN, and playing a more active role in the peaceful enhancement of international security through UN PKOs as well as other operations, represent a move in this direction.

Fourth, Japan should continue pursuing a more active and strategic diplomacy, not only focused on security and military support. As stressed by Tanaka, maintaining regional peace and order requires more than security measures alone.<sup>295</sup> This means that Japan's attempt to increase its hard power should be coordinated with the promotion of its soft power as well.<sup>296</sup> A proactive contribution on the security and defense level must be therefore complemented with a deeper diplomatic cooperation on matters other than security, for example, through Japan's participation in the East Asia Summit, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and in the expected renegotiations for the TPP, following the US withdrawal from the free trade deal.<sup>297</sup>

Finally, Japan should also continue to advance democratic values, for example by providing assistance to developing countries in the region through its ODA program. Despite the long recession it is still facing, *"Japan is one of the world's leading providers of official development assistance"*<sup>298</sup>, whose main goal, as stressed in the ODA Charter, is that of *"contributing to the peace and development of the international community, and thereby help ensure Japan's own security and prosperity"*.<sup>299</sup> By offering such support to countries in need, Japan has been already actively contributing to the stability of the international community. In this respect, however, it is important to recognize the fact that such type of soft power is unlikely to be effective unless the country can rely on considerable economic resources.<sup>300</sup> For this reason, Japan should give priority to the revitalization of its economy since, as stated above, without solid economic foundations, the country's support and contribution to the international community will remain limited. Therefore,

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<sup>294</sup> *ibidem*, cit.

<sup>295</sup> *ibidem*, cit., p.4

<sup>296</sup> David ARASE, "Japanese Security Policy...", cit., p.54

<sup>297</sup> TANAKA Hitoshi, "Proactive Diplomacy for Peace...", cit., p.3

<sup>298</sup> AKAHA Tsuneo, "Japan's Soft Power-Hard Power Balancing Act", in David ARASE and Tsuneo AKAHA (edited by), *The US - Japan Alliance: Balancing soft and hard power in East Asia*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2010, p.60

<sup>299</sup> MOFA, *Japan's Official Development Assistance Charter*, 2003, online at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/reform/revision0307.html>

<sup>300</sup> Philip MEEKS, "Soft Power, Interests and Identity: the Future of the US-Japan Alliance", in in David ARASE and Tsuneo AKAHA (edited by), *The US - Japan Alliance: Balancing soft and hard power in East Asia*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2010, p.19

while it is undoubtedly important for Japan to gradually start rethinking its security and defense policies when such changes are not urgent, the focus should still center on economic recovery first.

Only by adhering to these principles, could Japan be successful in positively enhancing its image both within the alliance and with neighboring countries, and effectively contribute to the creation of a more stable and peaceful regional order.

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