Assessing Japan's Nuclear Allergy: Domestic Constraints and International Drivers

Martin Griffiths* and Ichie Asakura*

This paper examines the relative weight of domestic and international determinants of Japan's non-nuclear status in international relations. Japan is an anomaly. It is the only great power that does not possess nuclear weapons, and which has explicitly forsworn their possession for the foreseeable future. What is the best explanation for Japan's 'nuclear allergy'? We argue that notwithstanding the continuing unpopularity of nuclear weapons among the Japanese people, a close examination of the historical record suggests that domestic animosity toward nuclear weapons is less important than the international environment in determining Japan's non-nuclear status. In light of this argument, we assess how changes in that environment may impact on Japan's status over the coming years.

Introduction

How do we make sense of Japan's non-nuclear status? On the one hand, Japan's domestic nuclear allergy seems to explain why Japan does not arm itself with nuclear weapons.[1] On the other hand, Japan's non-nuclear status conflicts with the conventional (albeit realist) wisdom that nuclear proliferation is an action-reaction phenomenon that occurs among hostile and neighbouring states

* Martin Griffiths Email Martin.Griffiths@griffith.edu.au, Ichie Asakura Email asaichi_5_7_20@hotmail.com

[1] For this argument, see Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

because nuclear weapons enable them to attain a deterrent power that conventional weapons cannot provide.[2] For those who believe than states' behaviour is strongly shaped by domestic politics and culture, Japan's non-nuclear status is guaranteed by the existence of strong 'nuclear allergy' among the Japanese public and Japan's pacifist culture.[3] For those who believe state behaviour is primarily determined by the external environment, Japan's non-nuclear status is potentially a temporary one that could be overturned by strategic necessity in the future.[4] Why then has Japan, despite the existence of Chinese and Russian nuclear weapons in addition to the possible emergence of North Korea as a nuclear state, remained non-nuclear? The question is worth examining for two main reasons. First, while most observers recognize the domestic nuclear allergy and US extended deterrence as key factors, they have not explicitly evaluated their relative strength.[5] If Japan's nuclear allergy is the chief factor that keeps Japan non-nuclear, its persistence should maintain Japan's non-nuclear posture regardless of the country's external environment.[6] However, if

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[2] See Scott D. Sagan, 'Realist Perspectives on Ethical Norms and Weapons of Mass Destruction', in Sohail Hashmi and Steven Lee, eds., *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[3] Peter J.Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security* (Cornell University Press, 1996); Thomas U. Berger, 'From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism', *International Security*, 17 (Spring 1993), pp. 119-150.

[4] Kenneth Waltz, 'The Emerging Structure of International Politics', *International Security*, 18 (Autumn 1993), pp. 44-79.

[5] Llewelyn Hughes, 'Why Japan Will Not Go Nuclear (Yet)', *International Security*, 31 (Spring 2007), pp. 67-96; Hajime Izumi and Katsuhisa Furukawa, 'Not Going Nuclear: Japan's Response to North Korea's Nuclear Test', *Arms Control Today,* 37 (June 2007) <http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2007_06/CoverStory.asp> (accessed 8 March 2008); Christopher Hughes, 'North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: Implications for the Nuclear Ambitions of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan', *Asian Policy*, 3 (January 2007), pp.83-93; Yuri Kase, 'Japan's Non-nuclear Weapons Policy in the Changing Security Environment: Issues, Challenges, and Strategies', *World Affairs*, 165 (Winter 2003), pp. 123-131; Benjamin L.Self and Jeffery W. Thomson (eds.), *Japan's Nuclear Option: Security, Politics, and Policy in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003); Matake Kamiya, 'Nuclear Japan: Oxymoron or Coming Soon?', *The Washington Quarterly*, 26 (Winter 2002-3), pp. 63-75; Michael Green and Katsuhisa Furukawa, 'New Ambitions, Old Obstacles: Japan and Its Search for an Arms Control Strategy', *Arms Control Today*, (July/August 2000), pp. 17-24.

[6] On the role of 'nuclear allergy' as a metaphor in Japanese politics, see Glenn D. Hook, 'The

extended deterrence under the United States is the key, Japan's non-nuclear status may be altered regardless of a nuclear allergy among the Japanese public. Second, examining Japan's nuclear options provides important implications for the future of great power politics in Asia because Japan's non-nuclear status is deeply integrated into the United States' hegemonic role. A regional order dominated by US bilateral alliances has created an environment in which the security dilemma is allegedly dampened among Asian states.[7] However, that environment can be undermined if the credibility of US extended deterrence weakens. Arguably, Japan is the symbol of non-proliferation as the only victim of atomic bombs in the world as well as the symbol of the strength of US extended deterrence as a non-nuclear ally. Thus, whether or not, and if so how, Japan will become a nuclear power is critical in thinking about the future of nuclear proliferation in the Asia-Pacific.

This article is divided into three parts. First, we examine Japan's non-nuclear status from a strategic perspective. Simply put, it made sense for Japan to rely on the United States during the cold war, but such reliance is now challenged by the rise of China and the threat of a nuclear-armed North Korea. Second, we assess the impact of the nuclear allergy among the Japanese people on Japan's foreign policy.[8] We claim that the nuclear allergy has had a limited impact on successive Japanese governments' behaviour in the international arena, which indicates that public opinion

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Nuclearization of Language: Nuclear Allergy as Political Metaphor, *Journal of Peace Research*, 21 (1984), pp. 259-275.

[7] John Ikenberry, 'American Hegemony and East Asian Order', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 58 (2004), pp. 353-67.

[8] On the extent of the Japanese public's aversion to nuclear weapons, see Hughes, 'Why Japan Will Not Go Nuclear', p. 89.

may not be able to prevent Japan from going nuclear. Finally, we explore the compatibility of the US-Japan alliance and a nuclear armed Japan, examining under what circumstances Japan would be able to develop nuclear weapons without losing its alliance with the United States. The main argument here is that Japan's non-nuclear status results from its choice to rely on US extended deterrence, not from its domestic nuclear allergy. Although Japan's longstanding policy to rely on US extended deterrence may reach a turning point in the long term, a decision to 'go nuclear' is unlikely anytime soon because it is not compatible with the existing US-Japan alliance.

Japan's Search for Security: The Cold War and After

During the cold war, Japan faced the possibility of nuclear attack from both the Soviet Union and China, and there is evidence that its leaders were particularly concerned with the potential consequences of China's accession to nuclear status in 1964. However, Japan's choice not to become a nuclear state was based on its limited technological capability and the international political context. In order to remain under the US nuclear umbrella, Japan had to be non-nuclear. Although relying on an ally's nuclear deterrent brings with it the danger of abandonment, the distribution of power and the existence of nuclear weapons meant that extended deterrence was highly credible. As John L. Gaddis has pointed out, the outcome of the intense rivalry between two superpowers was 'the long peace' in which they respected each other's sphere of influence.[9] Moreover, since the introduction of nuclear weapons made military conflict between them extremely costly, the likelihood of war was low.

[9] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace* (Oxford University Press, 1987).

The nuclear threats that Japan faced during the cold war have now been supplemented by the growing rise of China and North Korea. Although Russia still possesses a much larger nuclear capability than China and North Korea, Japan sees China and North Korea as its chief security threats. Japan's 2004 *National Defence Program Guideline* explicitly named North Korea as a 'serious destabilizing factor of regional security' and highlighted China's military modernisation as well as the expansion of Chinese seapower, while it presented a fairly relaxed attitude toward Russia.[10] Similarly, Japan's 2007 *Defence White Paper* expressed concern for China's military modernisation, particularly its forces designed to enhance power projection.[11] It also pointed out the possible consequences of a powerful China, including a potential military confrontation with the United States and the possible seizure of disputed islands in the East and South China Sea.[12] Meanwhile, North Korea's brinkmanship and unpredictable behaviour (such as firing the Taepo Dong-1 missile over Japanese territory in 1998) poses a different kind of threat to Japan. While Japan regards China as a future great power that may challenge US hegemony in Asia, it regards North Korea as an unstable and unpredictable state.

Japan's response to these new security threats has been managed within the old framework of the cold war and the continuation of US extended deterrence. This reliance does not result from Japan's absolute confidence in US extended deterrence, but from its preference for a US-led regional order over any alternative. Japan's decision to deploy a Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) in

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[10] *Heisei juunana nen do ikou ni kakawaru bouei keikaku no taikou nit suite* [On National Defence Program Guideline Concerning After 2005] <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/defense/policy/17taikou/taikou.htm> (accessed 8 March 2008).

[11] *Bouei hakusho* [Defense White Paper] 2007 <http://www.clearing.mod.go.jp/hakusho_data/2007/w2007_00.html> (accessed 2 February 2008).

[12] Ibid.

2003 suggest that simply being an ally of the United States is not adequate enough to ensure its security in the new security environment. However, Japan's deployment of BMD does not mean that Japan's security policy has fundamentally shifted. Rather, it confirms Japan's dependence on the United States because the deployment of BMD is achievable only through close alliance relations with the United States.[13]

An interesting aspect of the nuclear debate in Japan (to the extent that it exists) is that the merits of Japan's nuclear options are rarely debated outside of the US-Japan alliance framework – most strategists in favour of an independent nuclear capability argue that Japan should maintain the US-Japan alliance, while opponents believe that Japan's decision to develop nuclear weapons will damage the US-Japan alliance. There are a number of reasons why any decision to become a nuclear power would have to be with the permission of the United States. These include the threat of sanctions following any Japanese withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and Japan's limited technological capability to develop counter-force capabilities based on submarine-launched ballistic missiles and an independent C4ISR (Command, Control, Communication, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) capability.

On the questionable assumption that the United States would permit Japan to remain an ally as well as a nuclear power, to what extent would animosity toward nuclear weapons among the Japanese public constrain Japan? On the evidence of history, one could not be confident in the impact of this domestic constraint. For although Japan's declared Non-Nuclear Principles of not

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[13] See Christopher Hughes, 'Forging a Strengthened US-Japan Alliance', *Adelphi Paper* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2004), pp.108-114.

possessing, producing or allowing the introduction of nuclear weapons on Japanese territory reflect a strong anti-nuclear sentiment among the Japanese (for example, Peter Katzenstein claims that the principles constitute 'an integral part of Japan's national security'[14]), it is inaccurate to conclude that the principles have guided Japan's strategic choices. Rather, a closer look at the context in which the principles emerged shows that they were a by-product of Japan's reliance on the United States. The principles have become an integral part of Japan's domestic politics, but they do not constitute an integral part of Japan's national security policy. Although successive Japanese governments have been cautious not to stimulate the nuclear allergy, they have also been conscious that Japan's security is dependent on the United States, and have never subordinated the security imperative of US extended deterrence to domestic politics. This does not mean that the nuclear allergy is insignificant in thinking about Japan's nuclear options because even though the principles were originally intended to be a temporary policy choice, most Japanese people believe that they are the absolute national course *(kokuze)* that Japan will follow regardless of its external environment.

The nuclear allergy is a remarkable phenomenon that the Japanese government cannot ignore. It will certainly be difficult for any Japanese government to abandon the principles. However, past actions suggest the existence of nuclear allergy alone may not necessarily guarantee Japan's permanent non-nuclear status. Since Prime Minister Eisaku Sato proposed the principles in December 1967, few Japanese people have doubted that it is the permanent and supreme nuclear policy that Japan should and will continue to follow as the only victim of nuclear weapons in the

[14] Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 128.

world, no matter how Japan's external environment may change. While it is not taboo for strategists and specialists to express their view on nuclear weapons in Japan, it is still hard for politicians to discuss nuclear policy other than repeating their adherence to the principles. For many Japanese, even discussing the nuclear option is an unnecessary and even dangerous act. Under such circumstances, politicians are reluctant to express a contrary opinion. In this context, the likelihood of a serious public discussion about nuclear weapons is low. The fact that North Korea's 2006 missile launch did not trigger a major debate on the issue in Japan suggests that the long term rise of China may not do so either. While North Korea's missile tests posed a clear threat that the Japanese public could easily understand, the threat posed by the rise of China involves a long term shift in the balance of power between the United States and China, which is hard to perceive for the public unless China somehow behaves aggressively toward Japan.[15]

The emergence of the principles is closely linked to a particular political issue that Japan faced in the late 1960s – the reversion of the Ogasawara islands and Okinawa, which were governed by the United States since the end of the Pacific War. Because these islands, particularly Okinawa, were central to US nuclear strategy in Asia (along with Guam, South Korea and Philippines), public attention was exclusively concentrated on whether these islands would be returned to Japan with the removal of US nuclear weapons from US bases on the islands. [16] The return of Okinawa and Ogasawara had to be 'nuclear-free (*kaku nuki*)' and the status of these islands after the reversion had

[15] Richard Samuels makes a similar point in *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), p.171.

[16] Although the United States never revealed where US nuclear weapons were located during the Cold War, US official documents unclassified after the Cold War reveal that there were 800-1200 nuclear weapons deployed in Okinawa in the 1960s. See Robert S.Norris, William M.Akin and William Burr, 'Where They Were', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 55 (Nov/Dec, 1999), p.30.

to be ‘mainland-level (*hondo nami*)’. In other words, the US-Japan Security Treaty would apply to Okinawa and Ogasawara in the same way as it applied in the Japanese mainland. Thus it was expected that US nuclear-equipped ships would be prohibited from Japanese territorial waters or Japanese ports unless the Japanese government gave permission through prior consultation in line with Article 4 of the US-Japan Security Treaty. And it was expected that the Japanese government would refuse permission if it was asked. Following the rise of anti-nuclear sentiment in the mid 1960s, and even though past administrations had pledged that Japan would not possess or permit the introduction of nuclear weapons, the Sato government was confronted with a pressing necessity to reassure the public that it would maintain the policy. At the Budget Committee in the House of Representative on 11th of December in 1967, the three principles were formally announced as official policy. As Sato stated, ‘my responsibility is to achieve and maintain safety in Japan under the Three Non-Nuclear Principles of not possessing, not producing and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons, in line with Japan's Peace Constitution’.[17] The principles were a response to the rise of domestic anti-nuclear sentiment rather than a response to external threats and they were invented as a political tool to manage domestic politics. They were never intended to constitute a security policy for Japan in the nuclear age.

While the reversion of Ogasawara was achieved smoothly in 1968 due to its lower strategic importance for the US military, the reversion of Okinawa was accomplished in 1972 after tough negotiations between the US government and the Japanese government. Okinawa was strategically

[17] Statement by Prime Minister Eisaku Sato in 1967. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/nnp/announce.html> (accessed 8 December 2007).

important and, once again, it was not the intention of the Japanese government to undermine the effectiveness of US extended deterrence as a result of the reversion. Satisfying the public demand for 'nuclear-free' and 'mainland-level' Okinawa without undermining US nuclear strategy was a difficult task. On the one hand, undermining US nuclear strategy by removing US nuclear weapons from Okinawa seemed to conflict with Japan's reliance on the United States; on the other hand, the reversion of Okinawa with US nuclear weapons would risk not only the existence of the Sato government, but also the LDP's dominant power in Japan. It was not until March 1969 that Sato officially announced his decision to recover Okinawa 'nuclear-free and mainland-level'. And the Japanese government only achieved the reversion of Okinawa in 1972 – with a secret agreement that enabled the United States to return nuclear weapons to Okinawa in an emergency after prior consultation with the Japanese.[18] Moreover, in addition to the secret agreement that assured the emergent re-entry of US nuclear weapons to Okinawa, US declassified documents also disclosed a tacit agreement between the United States and Japanese governments that the introduction of nuclear weapons in an emergency would not necessarily require prior consultation.[19]

In short, the historical record suggests that the Sato government never intended the non-nuclear principles to restrict Japan's nuclear policy regardless of its external environment. On

[18] Although Japanese governments never admitted the existence of the secret agreement, considerable evidence suggests that Sato made a secret agreement with the United States that assures the US right to re-enter or transit US nuclear weapons in Okinawa in an emergency. See, in particular, Kei Wakaizumi, John Swenton-Wight, eds., *The Best Course Available: A Personal Account of the Secret U.S.-Japan Okinawa Reversion Negotiations* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

[19] Articles on the US-Japan secret agreement that permits transit and calling of US nuclear ships are numerous. For a comprehensive research on the introduction of US nuclear weapons in Japan, see Hans M. Kristensen, 'Japan Under the Nuclear Umbrella: U.S. Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War Planning in Japan During the Cold War', a working paper of the Nautilus Institute, (July 1999) <http://www.nukestrat.com/pubs/JapanUmbrella.pdf> (accessed 12 November 2007).

the contrary, the origin and practice of the principles suggest that their durability depends on the strength of US extended deterrence. This should not be surprising, since Sato stated soon after he introduced the principles that their sustainability depended on other conditions. In January 1968, Sato introduced the four pillars of nuclear policy – the preservation of the US-Japan security arrangement; promotion of nuclear disarmament; the non-nuclear principles; and the peaceful use of nuclear power – in order to persuade the Japanese public that the principles should not be understood independent of Japan's broader foreign policy. The four pillars of nuclear policy are perfectly congruent with Japan's choice to rely on US extended deterrence during the cold war. The non-nuclear principles *per se* do not constitute a security policy; they can be sustainable only when Japan is protected by US extended deterrence.

Will the United States Tolerate Japan as a Nuclear Power?

Today, the alliance with Japan enables the United States to enhance its power projection capability by providing military bases on Japanese soil to respond to a variety of contingencies in Northeast Asia. As Kurt Campbell, former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence, explains, 'it's often thought that the U.S.-Japan security relationship gives Japan a greater flexibility to act in Asia, and I think that's well understood. What's not as well understood is that it also anchors the United States in Asia and the Pacific. It improves American ability to operate and to act as an Asian nation'.[20] Joseph Nye, known for his role in constructing US security strategy in the Asia-Pacific as Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs in the Clinton Administration, defines the

[20] Quoted from Funabashi Yoichi, *Alliance Adrift* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999), p. 276.

US-Japan alliance, along with the alliance with South Korea, as 'the basis for regional stability'[21] and explains its role as follows: 'I think we have a policy of engagement towards China, but it's much better if the United States and Japan work together to engage China rather than letting China play off Japan against the United States. In other words, if Chinese power is growing, which it will, and the Chinese then play off the United States against Japan, it will make friction in US-Japan relations, but it also will mean that China will not have to be as responsible a power as it would be'.[22] The desire to maintain the alliance with Japan is not only to balance against China, but also to make Japan strategically dependent on the United States, and thereby to contain Japan.[23] US grand strategy requires a Japan whose freedom of action is restricted under the US-Japan alliance and a China that is not powerful enough to challenge the US-Japan alliance. In turn, the US-Japan alliance remains important for Japan because the US presence in the region ensures the stability of the entire Asia-Pacific region.[24] Alliance relations between the United States and Japan have strengthened under the Bush Administration. Despite the essential continuity of US security strategy in Asia between the Clinton Administration and the Bush Administration, one difference is the Bush Administration's preference for a more active and stronger Japan as an ally of the United States.[25] In this context it is highly unlikely that Japan will become a new nuclear power in the foreseeable

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[21] Joseph Nye, 'The Case for Deep Engagement', *Foreign Affairs*, 74 (1995), p. 102.
[22] Quoted from Funabashi*, Alliance Adrift*, p. 255.
[23] Ibid., p.269.
[24] See Tsuneo Akaha, 'Beyond Self-Defence: Japan's Elusive Security Role Under the New Guidelines For US-Japan Defense Cooperation', *The Pacific Review*, Vol.11 No.4 (1998); Michael Green, 'The US-Japan Alliance and the Future of East Asian Security', in Chihiro Hosoya and Tomohito Shinoda (eds.), *Redefining the Partnership: The United States and Japan in East Asia* (New York: University Press of America, 1998).
[25] See for example, the references to Japan in *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (September 2002),

future. As part of its grand strategy to sustain its global position as leader of a unipolar system, the United States will be opposed to any forms of nuclear proliferation that threaten to limit its freedom of action.[26] In turn, the United States will continue to offer extended deterrence to its allies and try to assure them that they do not need to develop nuclear weapons. The United States offers its allies security along with strategic dependence on the United States, which in turn strengthens US hegemony. In isolation, an overwhelming US nuclear capability does not provide the United States with regional hegemony, but US extended deterrence though alliance relations is intimately linked to its hegemonic status.

The US interest in maintaining the stability of the Asia-pacific on the basis of US hegemony conflicts with the emergence of a nuclear-armed Japan because Japan's status as a non-nuclear state is a reflection of US hegemony and the symbol of US extended deterrence. The emergence of India and Pakistan as nuclear powers has certainly violated the principle of non-proliferation, but these nuclear powers do not undermine US hegemony because their nuclear status is irrelevant to the credibility of US extended deterrence. In contrast, the emergence of Japan as a nuclear power would severely weaken the credibility of US extended deterrence, which could in turn encourage other states in the region (South Korea and possibly Taiwan) to develop nuclear weapons because they would share the Japanese government's perception that US extended deterrence is no longer reliable. While the United States expects Japan to be an increasingly active

[26] See Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, 'Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy' *International Security*, 21 (Winter 1996-7), pp. 32-42; Christopher Layne, 'Less is More (Realistic Foreign Policy for East Asia)', *The National Interest*, No.43 (Spring 1996). On the benign consequences of unipolarity, see William C.Wohlforth, 'The Stability of A Unipolar World', *International Security*, Vol.24, No.1 (Summer 1999)

partner in the alliance, it does not want Japan to be a nuclear state because it may encourage not only Japan's strategic independence from the United States, but also the strategic autonomy of other states in the region. For the United States, a Japan that is well-equipped with conventional weapons is ideal because it strengthens US hegemony rather than undermines it.

Of course, the logic of this argument is that at some point in the future the United States may have no choice but to accept Japan as a nuclear power, because whether it likes or not, US hegemony may not last. Given the historical cycle of the rise and fall of great powers, the United States may well find it difficult to balance the cost of providing extended deterrence with the benefits of keeping its allies dependent on the United States. When other great powers emerge, the United States will increasingly be concerned about the costs of maintaining the credibility of extended deterrence. As Patrick Morgan points out, this requires more than a vague threat to retaliate against a direct attack on one's allies. As he explains, because 'there are no intrinsic interests of sufficient value to make that commitment inherently credible'[27], credibility requires nuclear states to become involved in the least important event. Earl Ravenal explains the problem as follows: 'The paradox of credibility arises from a nation's need for exemplary exercises of force to enhance its reputation for using force. In theory, in order to buttress its credibility, a nation should intervene in the least significant, the least compelling, and the least rewarding cases, and its reaction should be disproportionate to the immediate provocation or the particular interest at stake'.[28]

[27] Patrick Morgan, 'Saving Face for the Sake of Deterrence', in Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, eds., *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p.131.

[28] Earl C. Ravenal, 'Counterforce and Alliance: The Ultimate Connection', *International Security,* 6 (Spring 1982), p.4.

However, the problem the United States may face is that as Chinese power grows, it will be increasingly difficult and risky for the United States to intervene in potential regional flashpoints. The question may then arise, should the security of the United States continue to rest on an alliance with Japan that requires constant efforts to uphold the credibility of extended deterrence, which in turn damages Sino-US relations?

Living With Uncertainty

The inherent difficulties of ensuring the credibility of extended deterrence in the face of a rising China are compounded by the absence of a common strategy between the United States and Japan to respond to China's rise. This has been an ongoing issue, as Michael Green concludes from his analysis of the alliance in the late cold war period. 'North Korea provided a convenient and politically acceptable planning case for U.S.-Japan defence cooperation, but the China problem has led to no clear consensus on military roles and missions. Washington and Tokyo each have distinct strategies for engaging China, while depending on the bilateral alliance as an insurance policy against the possibility that China becomes a military threat.'[29] For example, although the United States and Japan have both urged a peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait there is no clear agreement how both states should act if and when a crisis over Taiwan occurs. While Japan seeks to strengthen the US-Japan alliance, it is not in Japan's interest to damage relations with China. Japan's preferable situation is somewhat vague; it does not want the United States to have closer relations with China that may undermine the US-Japan relationship, while it does not want a

[29] Michael Green, 'the Search for an Active Security Partnership: Lessons from the 1980s', in Akira Iriye and Robert A.Wampler, eds., *Partnership: The United States and Japan 1951-2001* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2001), p.153.

rupture between China and the United States that may lead to a military confrontation. For China, while the US-Japan alliance is beneficial insofar as it has prevented Japan from becoming a military giant, the current strengthened US-Japan alliance, as well as Japan's larger military role within the alliance, are unacceptable.[30] For the Chinese, 'the bright side of the US-Japan alliance seems to be gone' because it is 'driving rather than constraining Japan's rearmament'.[31]

As for the United States, it remains unclear whether it is containing China or not. US foreign policy toward China remains somewhere between containment and engagement. While there is a general consensus that the rise of China poses the greatest challenge to the US-led world order, there is no consensus on whether China is a military threat or how the United States should (or indeed if it can) manage the rise of China.

In this unstable context, the temporary strengthening of US-Japan relations suggests that both states are concerned about the increment of Chinese power, which also indicates the possibility of the transformation of the US-Japan alliance into a clear anti-China military alliance.[32] Although Japan does not wish to have poor relations with China, US extended deterrence is just as valuable for Japan as it has ever been. On the other hand, the rise of China can weaken the US-Japan alliance if the United States comes to believes that China should play a leading role in maintaining regional

[30] See Wu Xinbo, 'The End of the Silver Lining: A Chinese View of the US-Japan Alliance', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.29, No.1 (Winter 2005-6); Wu Xinbu 'The Security Dimension of Sino-Japanese Relations: Warily Watching One Another', *Asian Survey*, Vol.40, No.2 (March-April 2000); Thomas J. Christensen, 'Chinese Realpolitic', *Foreign Affairs*, 75 (September/October, 1996);

[31] Wu Xinbo, 'The End of the Silver Lining: A Chinese View of the US-Japan Alliance', p. 120.

[32] For a good analysis of the implications of the strengthened US-Japan alliance, see James J.Przystup and Phillip C,Saunders, 'Visions of Order: Japan and China in U.S. Strategy', *Strategic Forum*, No.220 (June 2006)

order in the Asia-Pacific.[33] While the rise of China tends to be seen as a potential military threat, some observers believe that the greatest threat to regional order stems from China's political and economic vulnerability rather than its growing military strength.[34] As Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman point out, 'while in recent times the United States has focused on China's growing strength, China's enduring weakness could also cause serious problems for America. Many Americans would welcome the collapse of the Communist regime in Beijing. They might welcome it a bit less if they understood what the resulting economic crisis would be likely to do to American living standards and the value of the dollar.'[35] This diagnosis of China as vulnerable and weak downplays China's military growth, but it still predicts problems arising from the determination of China's leaders to maintain the power of the communist state as it presides over an economy facing enormous structural problems (such as the continuing inefficiency of the state sector and the banks' growing non-performing loans).[36]

Conclusions

For the United States, the chief function of the US-Japan alliance is to maintain the stability of the Asia-Pacific region by preventing Japan from becoming a military threat as well as preventing China from challenging the US-led regional order. The alliance renders Japan strategically dependent on US extended deterrence. Consequently, a non-nuclear Japan dependent on US

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[33] Ibid.

[34] For a various view of the nature of threat from China, see Aaron L.Friedberg, 'The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?', *International Security*, Vol.30, No.2 (Fall 2005)

[35] Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman, *Ethical Realism: A Visions for America's Role in the World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), pp. 169-170.

[36] Robert S.Ross, 'The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century', *International Security,* 23 (Spring 1999), p.108.

extended deterrence has little choice but to align with the United States. The alliance also functions as an insurance against the ability of China to challenge US hegemony in the region. In this article we have argued that Japan's choice not to become a nuclear state is based on strategic calculus of costs and benefits that is unlikely to change in the near future. Despite the conventional understanding that nuclear proliferation is an action-reaction phenomenon that occurs among hostile and neighbouring states, remaining non-nuclear is a strategically wise choice for Japan. Alhough Japan's external environment generates some incentive for Japan to develop nuclear weapons, it still has an alternative to nuclear weapons that enables it to enjoy the benefits of nuclear deterrence without facing the costs of nuclear armament.[37] As long as Japan remains confident in the credibility of US extended deterrence, remaining non-nuclear is a rational option. Although there is no doubt that anti-nuclear sentiment is strongly rooted in the Japanese society, the explanation that Japan's non-nuclear status is a result of its nuclear allergy misses the critical fact that Japan had (and continues to have) an alternative to becoming a nuclear power. Of course, public hostility to nuclear weapons in Japan reinforces policy makers' strong preference for relying on US extended deterrence over an independent nuclear capability, but it is unlikely to prevail if Japan's confidence in the United States erodes in the coming decades. Sustaining US extended deterrence is not as easy today as it was during the cold war. Although the United States still enjoys overwhelming military strength, its relative decline in the years ahead may make it difficult for Japan to continue to rely on US extended deterrence. A significant reduction of the US military presence in the region

[37] On the costs, see in particular, Robert Jervis, 'The Nuclear Revolution and the Common Defense', *Political Science Quarterly,* 101 (1986), p. 690.

accompanied by a declining US commitment to Asia could lead Japan to conclude that US extended deterrence is no longer reliable. In that case, a pathway may emerge for Japan to become a nuclear power, which would provide the biggest test of its domestic aversion to nuclear weapons.