

The Development and Significance of the U.S. -Japan Enforced Security Alliance

Abstract

The US strategy in the Asia Pacific region in the post-Cold War era is secure its regional dominance by drawing support from its allied countries, with the U.S.-Japan security alliance as the core of its strategy in East Asia. The alliance between the United States and Japan has been greatly strengthened by a redefinition in the 21st century. Not only has their allied force become more consolidated, their bilateral relations have also transformed from unilateral attachment and dependence to cooperative and complementary partnership, developing toward the global U.S.-Japan security alliance.

The strengthening of U.S.-Japan alliance is aimed to contain China. The United States has become alert about the potential threat posed by a fast rising China and starts to provide support for Japan's military expansion, one of which is lifting the constitutional restrictions on the rights of collective self-defense and sending troops abroad, so that Japan can act as a "delegate" for the United States. Japan thinks that the strategy of "borrowing ships to sail out to the sea" attached to the U.S.-Japan security mechanism is beneficial to its national development. Apart from coordinating with the new U.S. security strategy to highlight its presence and power, Japan has also actively engaged in important Asia-Pacific and global security issues, in order to become a normal country.

The U.S.-Japan alliance is thought to be the most important factor in maintaining peace and security in East Asia. However, judging from the situations after the strengthening of this alliance, its peace-securing function has been left largely unnoticed since the region does not have countries with the intention and power to wage wars against the United States and Japan after the Cold War. Its other function, such as containing China and North Korea as well as countering terrorism, also yielded few results because of China's phenomenal rising, North Korea's aggressive development of nuclear weapons, and the lack of progress in counter-terrorist efforts. On the other hand, the strengthened alliance might instead spark confrontational feelings and arms race, not to mention the concern about Sino-Japan conflicts and a revival of militarism due to Japan's military expansion.

It is difficult to make a simple assessment about the advantages, disadvantages and development of the strengthened U.S.-Japan alliance. The United States tends to put too much emphasis on military superiority, which is proven to be ineffective in maintaining peace in some cases. Its recent attitude change toward China and North Korea seems to indicate that the bipolarized confrontations and power struggle between U.S.-Japan and China in the past will possibly be replaced by increased engagement and cooperation. The most important issue for regional countries, led by the United States, Japan and China, is to make concerted efforts to pursue balanced regional power and peaceful development by further conducting diplomatic negotiations instead of resorting to military force to resolve differences in the future.