

Postwar US Hegemony and the U.S.-Japan Alliance

Misato Matsuoka
University of Warwick

Introduction

Within the current political discourses in Japan, it has been discussed whether Japan has departed from the postwar era or not. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has called for “departure (or escape) from the postwar regime” since his first administration (2006-2007), remarking that it is crucial to depart from the postwar regimes by rebuilding the education system and restructuring the national security system (Kantei 2007).¹ In this regard, it is questionable whether Japan has already entered the new phases of period including the post-Cold War or the post-9.11 era, or whether it still remains in the postwar era. In order to seek this question, this paper explores the U.S.-Japan alliance by underscoring the features of postwar US hegemony, or *Pax Americana*, in order to illustrate the power relationship between US and Japan, based upon the assumption that the U.S.-Japan alliance is a part of *Pax Americana*. Using the neo-Gramscian concepts, the paper aims to demonstrate how postwar US hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region has been harnessed with the presence of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Firstly, *Pax Americana* is exemplified and the neo-Gramscian idea on hegemony is taken into account to highlight the characteristics of US postwar hegemony. Secondly, with the hypothesis that the U.S.-Japan alliance is a part of US hegemony in the postwar era, the features of the U.S.-Japan alliance is closely scrutinised. Thirdly, the neo-Gramscian concepts, “common sense” and “organic intellectuals”, are

¹ In the security terms, the postwar Japan can be characterised with the so-called Peace Constitution, the “Yoshida Doctrine”, and the U.S.-Japan alliance system that have identified the Japanese foreign policy orientations in the postwar era. Also, it is important to note that “departure from the postwar regime” is less focused in the second Abe administration while the significance of the U.S.-Japan alliance remains prominent.

adopted in the case of the U.S.-Japan alliance in order to show how the U.S.-Japan alliance remains to be relevant. This section is attempted to exhibit the way the asymmetrical nature of the alliance has become more acceptable for Japan. Fourthly, the paper further investigates Japanese foreign policymaking with a close examination of the “Yoshida doctrine” which has been a pillar of postwar Japan foreign policymaking. Lastly, this paper concludes whether Japan has shifted away from the postwar regime or not, which is an important question to be revisited.

Postwar US Hegemony (*Pax Americana*)

It has been widely known that US presence has been dominant in the postwar period, but it has also been argued whether postwar US hegemony, or *Pax Americana*, should be regarded as hegemonic or imperialist. According to Agnew (2003), one of the differences between hegemony and empire is “its reliance...on persuading or rewarding subordinates rather than immediately coercing them” (Agnew 2003, p.876). Beeson (2006) maintains that US power has been more hegemonic rather than imperial “through the more diffuse mechanisms of the international political economy and a system of strategic alliances and security relations that vest formal authority and autonomy in sovereign states” (Beeson 2006, p.6). While it may not be easy to differentiate hegemony from empire, it seems that US as empire will not adequately explain the role of non-hegemonic states in formulating hegemony.

From the neo-Gramscian perspective, *Pax Americana* is acknowledged as “a system which involved the construction of the Bretton Woods economic institutions, American-led military alliances, and the politico-economic reconstruction of liberal democratic capitalism in North America, Japan and Western Europe” (Gill 1990, p.305).² The most important

² Neo-Gramscianism has been developed by such prominent scholars as Robert W. Cox, Stephen R. Gill and Mark Rupert on the foundation of the ideas of an Italian Marxist linguist, Antonio Gramsci.

element of neo-Gramscianism is two facets of hegemony: “coercion and consensus”. According to Cunningham (2004), “One of the key aspects of the neo-Gramscian theory of hegemony is the idea that leading groups engender consent by a combination of some level of incorporation of subordinate interests and the promotion of particular or sectional interests as universal or general” (Cunningham 2004, p.559). The language of consensus is a language of common interest, which is expressed in universalistic terms, although the structure of power underlying it is skewed in favour of the dominant groups (Cox 1977; Beyer 2009).

The U.S.-Japan Alliance

The U.S.-Japan alliance is based upon the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty which was signed in 1951 and amended in 1960 to aim at a more balanced and mature relationship of shared responsibility. This alliance relationship is understood as “the cooperation between people and things”, which means “Japan provides the facilities, while US provides the armed forces to defend Japan” (Nishimura 1997; Sakamoto 2000). More precisely, the United States gives the nuclear umbrella of strategic deterrence, offensive power projection, and global intelligence, surveillance and command and control while Japan offers host nation support, complementary forces for its own defence, and bases for American forces (Giarra & Nagashima 1999). In regard to the relationship between the U.S.-Japan alliance and *Pax Americana*, Calder (2004) contends that the alliance is a part of “the San Francisco System” which has clearly reinforced American political-military preeminence in Northeast Asia in the postwar era (Calder 2004). Concerning these features of the U.S.-Japan alliance, it is worth examining the nature of the alliance in consideration of *Pax Americana* which still persists and has been evolving in the post-Cold War era.

Moreover, the U.S.-Japan alliance can be viewed as asymmetric (Sakaguchi 2009). Regarding an asymmetric nature of the U.S.-Japan alliance, adopting the neo-Gramscian

perspective of hegemony to the U.S.-Japan alliance relationship is able to elucidate the continuity of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the postwar US hegemony. Especially, in terms of the idea of “consensus”, on Yeo (2011)’s account, the postwar consensus takes into account Japan’s approach to security which reflects Japan’s firm support of the U.S.-Japan alliance in its national defence strategy (Yeo 2011). This may imply how consensual aspect of hegemony has played a role of formulating US hegemony with an increasing acceptance of the U.S.-Japan alliance unlike the time when the term “the U.S.-Japan alliance” was used during the meeting with then US President Ronald Reagan in 1981.³ Additionally, the Japanese Cabinet Office opinion poll which has asked whether the U.S.-Japan Security System is contributing to Japan’s safety is increasingly positive and shows a general consensus on the importance of bilateral security arrangement for Japan’s national security (Ministry of Defence 2012).⁴

As “Asymmetrical and Reciprocal”

In this section, using the neo-Gramscian concepts of “common sense” and “organic intellectual”, this paper demonstrates how the U.S.-Japan alliance may have become more acceptable in Japan with a particular focus on “asymmetrical and reciprocal” nature of the alliance. In the neo-Gramscian terms, “common sense”, which is differentiated from “good sense”, is produced in the limited intellectual community. It is understood that common sense is generated by “everyday thinking through which the majority of any population live the greater part of their lives” (Dodge 2009, p.258). Furthermore, “organic intellectuals”, who are not simply producers of ideology but also the “organisers of hegemony” (Gill 1990), play

³ This ultimately led to the resignation of the foreign minister under the Suzuki administration, Masayoshi Ito to use of the explosive “alliance” to describe the US-Japan relationship (New York Times, May 17, 1981). However, it is notable that then Japanese Prime Minister Ohira used “the U.S.-Japan alliance” in 1979 before Suzuki’s usage.

⁴ Besides, according to Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), the 2011 poll showed that 72 per cent had answered that the U.S.-Japan alliance should be strengthened or maintained (NHK 2011).

important roles in creating common sense. In the context of the U.S.-Japan alliance, the efforts to strengthen or deepen the U.S.-Japan alliance are mainly made by both US and Japanese governments, particularly by Japanese politicians or concerned policymakers, policy intellectuals and scholars.

Interestingly, the U.S.-Japan alliance has increasingly been viewed as “asymmetrical and reciprocal” alliance especially by Japanese politicians unlike a negative perception on the asymmetric alliance relationship that have been often used by political parties which oppose to remilitarisation of Japan. Particularly, the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) has persistently been critical of Japan to become “a dependent country” of the US.⁵ However, with the emphasis on the re-feature of the “asymmetrical and reciprocal” has been more prevalent in political discourses. The feature of the alliance as “asymmetrical and reciprocal” has been used by Japanese politicians when explaining about the alliance relationship. Such politicians as Seiji Maehara and Shigeru Ishiba have been emphasising the reciprocal nature of the U.S.-Japan alliance while embracing its asymmetrical feature. At the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) meeting in 2008, as Minister of Defence, Ishiba described the U.S.-Japan alliance as “asymmetric and reciprocal” relationship (Ministry of Defence 2008). In addition, Maehara explained at the Japanese National Diet, saying that “the U.S.-Japan alliance relationship is asymmetric and reciprocal” while confidence-building at military-to-military and governmental level is vital (21st October 2010, Japanese National Diet).

It is noticeable that organic intellectuals that consist of not only politicians but also those who are involved in the discussions on the U.S.-Japan alliance have established the common sense for the U.S.-Japan alliance as “asymmetric and reciprocal” which seem to

⁵ According to the JCP, “Breaking away from the Japan-U.S. military alliance (Japan-U.S. Security Treaty), to fully restore our national sovereignty, and aim to establish the non-aligned and neutral path” is one of the aims the party is pursuing for through “democratic change within the framework of capitalism” (Japanese Communist Party 2013).

become more pervasive by capturing the nature of the U.S.-Japan alliance. The U.S.-Japan alliance has gradually accepted as “the balanced asymmetry” (Giarra & Nagashima 1999) or “inherent asymmetry” (Yamaguchi 2010). According to Mathur (2004), the U.S.-Japan alliance went through from “being asymmetrical to a mutually beneficial and reciprocal”. As it is noted that the U.S.-Japan alliance can be seen asymmetrical, it is also observable that there is shifting interpretations on the nature of this alliance.

“Yoshida Doctrine” to be Replaced?

In the context of the U.S.-Japan alliance, it is relevant to consider the “Yoshida doctrine” since it is understood that it has characterised the postwar Japan and the U.S.-Japan alliance relationship. After the Second World War, with the Yoshida doctrine, Japan decided to remain dependent upon the US security guarantee while it continued to develop economically (Pyle 1992). In the neo-Gramscian terms, those who articulated the Japanese strategic posture based upon this doctrine can be seen as “organic intellectuals” prior to the end of the Cold War. For instance, Hayato Ikeda and Eisaku Sato were both closely associated with Yoshida while belonging to so-called the “Yoshida school”. Pyle observes that under these administrations that “the Yoshida Doctrine was institutionalized and consolidated into a national consensus” (Pyle 1992, p. 32). However, we may observe that those who support the “Yoshida doctrine” at present can be regarded as “traditional intellectuals”.⁶ The present organic intellectuals may not be equivalent with those who fully support “the Yoshida Doctrine” since there is a more diversifying notions on Japanese security policies with the emergence of “revisionists” including then Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and the current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (Samuels 2008). Those who support the U.S.-Japan alliance in an “asymmetrical and reciprocal” way can be currently viewed as “organic

⁶ The traditional intellectual has pre-existent structural ties to the dominant group; they are essentially the social glue, which holds together the ideological world view of the dominant class with the “common sense” of the subordinate class (Gramsci 1971).

intellectuals”. Regarding the U.S.-Japan alliance, as the previous section on the application of neo-Gramscian “common sense” demonstrated, the relevance of the U.S.-Japan alliance has been highlighted.

Yet, a remaining important question is whether the “Yoshida Doctrine” will be replaced by other doctrines or not? The Yoshida Doctrine is viewed as a “permanent strategy” of Japan in the post-Cold War era (Pyle 2007; Samuels 2008).⁷ Hughes and Krauss (2007) further argue that “No coherent new foreign policy doctrine has replaced Yoshida’s, only a new inclination to follow the demands of public opinion or the United States when expedient, or to stand up to China and the two Koreas over history, or to rail against perceived subordination to US strategy” (Hughes & Krauss 2007, pp.172-173). Under the current Abe second administration, the “departure (or escape) from the postwar regime” is one of the agendas and seeking to replace the Yoshida doctrine with the “Abe doctrine”. However, harnessing the U.S.-Japan alliance is one of the important pillars of the Abe doctrine. In this sense, like the Yoshida doctrine, the significance of the U.S.-Japan alliance as the pillar of Japanese foreign policymaking remains even under the Abe doctrine. On Watanabe’s (2011) account, it is said that postwar Japan is the period when the U.S.-Japan Security System is selected and as long as this system persists, the era of “postwar” has not ended. In other words, the U.S.-Japan Security System was established and managed as a part of the international system with the centre of US hegemony which has sustained since the mid-20th century (Watanabe 2011, p.16). In this regard, even if the Abe doctrine can be an alternative doctrine to underpin the Japanese foreign policymaking, it can be difficult to conclude that Japan has departed from the postwar regime if the U.S.-Japan alliance remains to be important with its “asymmetrical and reciprocal” nature.

⁷ Although it is said that Yoshida Doctrine was established inductively, which transformed into a “revealed strategy” later on, the doctrine has become a permanent strategy for the postwar Japan (Yamamoto, Noya, Inoue, Kamiya & Kaneko, pp.26-27).

Conclusion

This paper shed light on the nature of the U.S.-Japan alliance in relation to postwar US hegemony, on the basis of the assumption that the U.S.-Japan alliance is a part of *Pax Americana*. Within a neo-Gramscian framework, the paper presented how postwar US hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region can be strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance. A consensual aspect of postwar US hegemony can be bolstered as the U.S.-Japan alliance becoming as “common sense” in the neo-Gramscian terms. The U.S.-Japan alliance has been seen relevant even in the post-Cold War period as “organic intellectuals” influenced the ideas of the U.S.-Japan alliance in regard to the post-Cold War environment and Japan’s security posture. The current Abe administration has called for the “departure (or escape) from the postwar regime”. While Abe has supported the U.S.-Japan alliance, he is seeking to replace the Yoshida doctrine with the Abe doctrine. Nonetheless, considering that the U.S.-Japan alliance is a part of *Pax Americana* in the postwar era, it may not be easy to transform the postwar regime. With a growing acceptance of the U.S.-Japan alliance as “asymmetrical and reciprocal”, the period of “postwar” may not come to an end as long as the system based upon the U.S.-Japan alliance.

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