## CHAPTER 4

## CLASHING EXPECTATIONS

# STRATEGIC THINKING AND ALLIANCE MISMANAGEMENT IN JAPAN

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The US-Japan alliance has been buffeted by numerous frictions in recent years. Were it not for its considerable longevity, proven ability to withstand crises, and importance to the security architecture of the Asia Pacific, the alliance might well become terminal. A particularly turbulent period in alliance relations came in 2009–10, when there seemed to be a "widening rift between the two nations over security policy" or a "widening US-Japan security divide." At the time, analysts suggested that the alliance's problems might lead "one or the other partner to consider options or alternatives," while others considered the risk of the alliance sliding into an "even greater morass." Pessimism was not, however, restricted to the United States. In Japan, there was also much criticism of US administrators and debates about whether "fissures" had opened up in the relationship.<sup>2</sup>

Although the acute tensions of 2009–10 have dissipated, understanding this period can provide useful insights into the ongoing management

of the US-Japan alliance and alliances in general. Much of the gloom at the time reflected the two allies' inability to manage their own differing expectations of the alliance and what each partner should bring to it, particularly regarding the "grand bargain" at the alliance's core. This refers to Japan's ceding of considerable security autonomy in return for America's security guarantee during the Cold War. Even if it "was never explicitly agreed to," as Michael Finnegan notes, and is "rather a somewhat evolved perception," the bargain has nonetheless become an area of diverging national interests and expectations of the alliance. Like all bargains, its durability has depended upon the capacity of the two partners to understand their expectations of, and commitments to, each other. The 2009–10 episode raises a number of questions about such challenges in alliance management and the US-Japan alliance in particular. What do the United States and Japan expect of each other as alliance partners?

This is an important question because when governments struggle to resolve what it is they expect of their own security roles, they tend to find it much harder, if not impossible, to develop a coherent set of expectations of their alliance partners. The answer seems more straightforward with respect to the United States. As Richard Samuels notes, the United States has for decades been pressuring Japan to "play a more active military role" even as it sought to maintain its influence on Japanese policymaking. This pressure increased following the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States and has lingered under the Barack Obama administration's pivot or rebalancing strategy towards Asia. Japanese expectations are a puzzle: What does Japan expect of the United States? And what does it expect of its own security role in the context of the alliance?

This chapter attempts to illuminate Japan's expectations by looking more closely at how the country has envisaged its security role within the alliance framework. The chapter focuses on the experience of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in strategic policymaking, especially during the 2009–10 period when the party was led by Prime Minister

Hatoyama Yukio. The Hatoyama administration is a useful subject not because it was necessarily representative of the Japanese approach to its alliance expectations; rather, unlike many of the earlier (and subsequent) Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) administrations, it attempted to reorient Japan's strategic expectations with regard to the US-Japan alliance. The DPJ's approach helps reveal some of the long-term challenges Japan still faces today under the Abe Shinzō administration in developing a coherent set of expectations of both its own security role and that of the United States.

The chapter argues that the DPJ's difficulties in constructing new alliance policies were not only the result of changes in government or poor leadership. A legacy of multiple, often clashing expectations regarding the country's own strategic role-and notably the issue of autonomy-have limited the country's capacity to establish coherent expectations of the United States. The uneasy coexistence between two broad conceptions of grand strategy—comprehensive security (sogo anzen hoshō) and normalization (from the idea that Japan should become a "normal nation" or futsū no kuni)—have been particularly problematic. Although the two concepts were established to offset weaknesses in previous security strategies, their many contradictions now make strategic miscalculations, such as those of the DPJ during 2009-10, more likely. The continuing tensions between and within these two broad concepts make it harder for Japan to decide on its preferred role in the alliance as well as on the role it expects of the United States. These tensions remain beyond the DPJ government and have shaped the push by the Abe government to continue reforming Japan's national security strategies.

## INITIAL EXPLANATIONS OF THE ALLIANCE'S PROBLEMS UNDER THE DPJ

Contemporaneous explanations for the deterioration in US-Japan alliance politics under the Hatoyama administration vary considerably. Analysts such as Michael Green, Tsuyoshi Sunohara, and Eric Heginbotham et

al., focused their attention largely on the changes that were taking place in Japanese politics, although they reached different conclusions on the importance of these developments. Green emphasized the temporary nature of the troubles, arguing that more influential underlying factors would eventually reassert themselves to stabilize the alliance. These underlying factors included historical precedent, structural features, and political leadership. The repetitive process of redefinition and reaffirmation in the alliance provided a durable foundation of habit that enabled the two nations to overcome temporary differences. Furthermore, the rise of China, Japan's growing interdependence in the Asian region, and its own economic and demographic challenges would provide structural incentives for resolving differences in the future. Changing political leadership in Japan would also allow it to restructure its security policies at the domestic level in a way that helps the alliance.

By contrast, Sunohara suggested that the problems in the alliance were deeply rooted and not merely a reflection of Japan's change in government in 2009 or other transitory factors. The troubles were the result of deeper problems relating to long-held frustrations in Japan's expectations of the United States. According to this analysis, Japanese policymakers had become increasingly suspicious of the reliability of the US security commitment to Japan since the end of the Cold War, and had therefore come to believe that Japan needed to be a more independent actor. Former LDP and DPJ powerbroker, Ozawa Ichirō, for example, became disillusioned with the alliance following the "checkbook diplomacy" fiasco of the Gulf War, the failure of the United States to provide notice of its invasion of Iraq, and other instances where the United States treated Japan as "merely a tool in its global strategy."

The negative effect of the alliance on Japanese security expectations formed a common theme amongst some Japanese commentators during this period. Terashima Jitsurō, for instance, was critical of the United States and its administrators, particularly the "Japan hands" associated with different US governments. He argued that, by lacking an independent

security policy or the capacity to develop one, Japan had become "slavefaced." The country was thus continually confronted by the possibility of being entrapped in the alliance and subject to defending American, rather than its own, security interests. Moreover, the threats to Japan in the region, such as a militarizing China or a rogue North Korea, were exaggerated. The alliance should therefore be downgraded through base realignments. Yanagisawa Kyōji, a former defense ministry official and head of the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), contended that, "because there are American bases [in Japan], Japan's contribution to Asian peace is left completely to America." Yanagisawa argued that for Japan to contribute to peace in Asia, it is "necessary" for it to establish its own approach. Japan's contribution to peacekeeping forces in Sudan was nonexistent because the United States had little interest in the country. By comparison, it made substantial commitments in response to the floods in Pakistan because of the strategic value the United States placed on that country.9

Mutual suspicions about the alliance, and by extension the United States, were also a part of Finnegan's critique of Japanese strategic thinking under the DPJ, although he saw the frustrated expectations coming from both sides. In particular, he argued that key assumptions behind previous alliance thinking were problematic in a changing international environment. "The United States and Japan," he suggested, were "failing to meet each other's expectations," with both nations having "grounds for dissatisfaction." $^{10}$  Japan expected extended deterrence from the United States but was beginning to doubt America's commitment, while the United States expected more from Japan at the operational level and was disappointed when this failed to eventuate. Contained in this assessment of America's expectations were two further implicit observations about Japanese expectations regarding the alliance under the DPJ: (1) that Japan did not expect to go significantly beyond its historical constraints on its security role in order to do more at the operational level; and (2) that it expected the United States to be satisfied with its efforts and so continue in its established security role. 11

## JAPAN'S EVOLVING STRATEGIC EXPECTATIONS

Of the two terms identified here as central to Japanese security debates and strategic expectations, comprehensive security is the more narrowly defined. Assuming that nontraditional (as well as traditional) security is important, its proponents advocate a soft-power role for Japan based on liberal internationalism. They raise expectations that Japanese strategy will employ diplomatic rather than military power as the central tool for the nation's grand strategy. 12 The normalization agenda, by comparison, is broader and more amorphous. While its various proponents generally emphasize the expectation that Japan will become a "normal nation" with a typical range of strategic tools, they also adopt a sizeable range of sometimes incongruous ideas as to what "normal" means and how it should be achieved. Some emphasize "globalist" and multilateral approaches to security, while others focus on the need for a greater scope to use force within the US-Japan bilateral framework. Sometimes, normalization proponents look toward a Gaullist interpretation of the country's security needs and advocate developing unilateral military capabilities. Others focus not on specific capabilities at all but simply highlight the need for greater independence from the United States to become normal.<sup>13</sup>

## The Cold War Period

How did these clashing expectations evolve? In the early Cold War period, Japan had to adopt a new security role in the face of a fundamentally transformed strategic context. Understandably, the country's new conception of its security role was heavily shaped by US interests, with the country's initial expectations often summed up under the heading of the Yoshida Doctrine (named after Japan's then Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru). Japan undertook to provide bases for US forces in Japan in return for US security guarantees, particularly the guarantee of extended nuclear deterrence. Taking a pragmatic position between revisionists and pacifists, Yoshida created a grand strategy that allowed the country to

avoid confronting the task of rebuilding its own hard power capabilities and instead focus on economic development.  $^{14}$ 

The Doctrine quickly became entrenched in Japanese security thinking, with attempts to revise Japan's security expectations having little impact. 15 The Yoshida Doctrine was not without its problems, however, especially in terms of its vulnerability to accusations of "free riding." Indeed, Takashi Inoguchi describes the period from 1960 until 1975 as the "free rider" period. The concept of comprehensive security was intended as a response, in part, to these criticisms. An important aspect of the concept was to bring the Yoshida Doctrine under "a single intellectual banner" and make it less transparently "duplicitous" than previous policy slogans, such as "multidirectional diplomacy." <sup>16</sup> Developed initially under the prime ministership of Ōhira Masayoshi, the idea was drawn from liberal internationalism. It assumed that, while military security was important, economic and other types of security were equally vital. 17 Japan should therefore seek to utilize not only military resources but also economic and other "soft power" resources, such as educational and cultural power, in order to protect its national interests and contribute to global security.

Comprehensive security proved useful in addressing some of the challenges of global interdependence. It provided for some autonomy in Japanese security policy, at least in terms of resisting US pressure to be more active in global military security affairs. It also allowed Japan to maintain a strong alliance relationship through greater operational cooperation with the United States, even as it allowed the government to maintain the public facade that the alliance was not of a military nature. Decisions to extend sea lane patrols and exempt the United States from weapons export bans in the 1980s are two examples of closer cooperation. The perception of the alliance as a nonmilitary relationship was reflected in the defense debates of the 1980s, which often focused on budgetary concerns above all else. In the end, these benefits fostered a domestic political consensus that accepted the assumptions supporting Japanese strategy.

## The post-Cold War Period

After the Cold War, however, the consensus established around comprehensive security began to fray. Japan's response to the 1991 Gulf War led to what has been described as the "Gulf War trauma" in Japanese diplomacy.<sup>19</sup> This resulted from Japan's inability to contribute to the alliance led by the United States in ejecting Iraq from Kuwait, other than through "checkbook diplomacy." Despite providing US\$14 billion to the war effort, Japan was still heavily faulted as a free rider and criticized for wanting recognition as a great power while lacking the determination to assume the associated "risks and responsibilities." The affair prompted a wider debate in Japan over not only what the country should expect of the alliance but also of its own role within it.

Most importantly, it prompted the emergence of the normalization agenda and the "normal nation" concept in the Japanese strategic debate. 21 The idea of Japan becoming a normal nation was outlined especially by Ozawa, then a key LDP figure, who argued that "Japan must become a 'normal nation'." In order to be such a nation, he asserted, it would be necessary for Japan: (1) to take up those responsibilities "regarded as natural in the international community"; and (2) to "cooperate with other nations in their efforts to build prosperous and stable lives for their people."22 This led to some loosening of the self-imposed restrictions on the country's security role, such as with the decision to allow for overseas dispatches of the Self Defense Force (SDF), notably to Cambodia. Yet the arrival of this normalization agenda created its own problems. A notable complication was the sheer multiplicity of its interpretations. Although they shared a similar overall ambition that Japan should become a normal nation, opinion leaders often diverged quite profoundly in terms of how they defined this vision, as well as how they thought it should be achieved and balanced against other strategic considerations. What was a normal nation? What rights did such a nation have in terms of using its military? How would Japan's neighbors respond if the country suddenly possessed greater security capabilities? And how might a normal nation manage its relations with the United States?<sup>23</sup>

In the view of many, such normalcy should be constrained in some way. Any normalization, thus defined, would have to be conducted in the context of legitimate international activities and so be restricted to those actions approved by the United Nations (UN) (not merely the United States). The deployment of troops, Ozawa argued, could not be undertaken "on any basis other than internationally recognized principles." This brand of normalization did not therefore replace comprehensive security; rather, it was an incremental step that amended and augmented the earlier concept. Ozawa's conception of the idea has subsequently been defined as globalist in character, as illustrated by Inoguchi's description of Japan's transition during this period from system supporter to "global civilian power."

The ensuing decade, however, demonstrated the challenge of balancing these different approaches. With the United States beginning to rethink its troop presence in Asia, Japan continued to reappraise its own security role. Its response, reflected in the report submitted to the government by the Advisory Group on Defense Issues, known as the Higuchi committee, was to recommend policy that reflected a mixture of these differing security expectations. The Higuchi committee recommended that Japan should "extricate itself from its security policy of the past that was, if anything, passive, and henceforth play an active role in shaping a new order."26 But there was little sense of prioritization in the report; multilateralism, the US-Japan alliance, and military modernization were all given attention despite the tensions that would inevitably emerge between such goals. Multilateralism reflected the country's emphasis on the UN and the use of nonmilitary means in providing security, such as through dialogue and diplomacy. Yet the objective of being "resolved not to tread the path to a major military power" rested uneasily with those who believed that normalization inevitably entailed military modernization or increasing operational cooperation with the United States, or both.

Wider problems in the alliance during this period also challenged Japan's strategic thinkers. Japan's response to the North Korean crisis of

1994—when the country was unable, due to its domestic constraints, to promise active support to the United States were a conflict to occur on the peninsula—caused the United States to lose further confidence in the alliance. Trade relations were also troubled, with battles being fought over US access to Japanese markets. In 1995, events in Okinawa—the rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl by US military personnel—also highlighted the alliance's many problems at the domestic Japanese level. The Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security of 1996 was intended to resolve at least some of these tensions. It committed both sides to greater defense cooperation, preserved the size of US forces, and extended the scope of the alliance further into the region. It also laid out a path for restructuring the US military presence in Japan, and thus seemed to provide a solution to the problems over Okinawa. However, by maintaining the status quo in terms of the basic alliance bargain, it provided little immediate impetus for Japan to reconcile its clashing security expectations.

Subsequent world events, particularly the attacks of September 11, pushed Japan to strengthen the country's alliance commitments and so rely more on elements of the normalization agenda. However, the agenda was now much less globalist in character. With a greater emphasis on hard-power, this new normalization came to be a major policy objective of the LDP-led governments of Koizumi Jun'ichirō (2001–06) and Abe (2006-07). Involvement in Iraqi reconstruction was a key part of the new approach, while modernizing the SDF and reforming Japan's security-related institutions were also important goals. Under Koizumi, the government developed the objective of a more flexible defense force. To advance and protect this agenda, Japan's leaders sought to concentrate decision-making in the prime minister's office while reducing the influence of other bodies.<sup>31</sup> The trend continued, at least briefly, under Abe: the Japanese Defense Agency was finally transformed into the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and constitutional revision became an ever more prominent policy objective. However, the importance of comprehensive security norms never disappeared, with economic, peacekeeping, and other nontraditional roles continuing as crucial parts of the country's national security strategy. Moreover, this new era of normalization began to lose steam by 2005–2010. Key proponents began to depart from around 2007 and then the LDP lost power to the DPI in 2009.<sup>32</sup>

#### STRATEGIC EXPECTATIONS UNDER THE DPI

When the DPJ arrived in power, the immediate effect on Japan's security expectations was to shift them away from the hard-power focus of normalization and back to the nontraditional concerns of comprehensive security. Yet the DPJ maintained Japan's emphasis on achieving greater autonomy in foreign policy, which had also been a major goal for the Koizumi and first Abe administrations. Koizumi and Abe had sought, paradoxically perhaps, to increase the country's autonomy by working more closely with the United States. <sup>33</sup> Under Hatoyama, these objectives were interpreted differently. Whereas Koizumi and Abe had attempted a build-up of hard-power capabilities to increase autonomy, the DPJ sought to achieve autonomy in nontraditional security areas. Autonomy was now also defined, in part, as achieving a greater distance from the United States and becoming more independent within Asia—a balance between normalization and comprehensive security. <sup>34</sup>

In its electoral manifesto, the DPJ had stated that, "having developed an autonomous foreign policy strategy for Japan," it would "determine the assignment of functions and roles between Japan and the United States." The DPJ also committed itself to regional multilateralism via Hatoyama's favored idea of an East Asian Community (EAC). The EAC would fulfill the DPJ's electoral pledge to make "the greatest possible effort to develop relations of mutual trust with China, South Korea, and other Asian countries." Although vague, these ideas constituted a new hedging strategy. As Christopher Hughes notes, a central idea was that of enmeshing China, as a way of both restraining it and also sustaining Japan's central position in the region's international security frameworks. Hatoyama's EAC vision was based on the concept of  $y\bar{u}ai$  (fraternity). Hatoyama argued that Japan's foreign policy should

rest on this principle and move away from "US-led globalism" towards a more multipolar world. The key challenge for Japan would be to maintain its independence while balancing between the great powers of the region. Japan "aspired to be within Asia," with the key to its diplomacy being "open regional cooperation." The UN would provide a natural framework for such a role. 38

A process of distancing Japan from the United States, although not universal, occurred in some major areas. The DPJ continued the antipiracy program established under the previous government.<sup>39</sup> However, as it had long promised, the party pulled the Maritime SDF out of its refueling mission supporting US forces in the Indian Ocean. Japan would instead adopt a comprehensive security approach using financial contributions.<sup>40</sup> The new government also sought to renegotiate a 2006 agreement with the United States over the relocation of the latter's Futenma airbase in Okinawa. Even though it created tension with the Obama administration, this decision allowed the government to exploit Okinawa as a domestic political issue. Yet by mid-2010 the alliance tensions over Okinawa had grown so big that Hatoyama was forced to renege on his promises to relocate Futenma outside Okinawa and instead abide by the 2006 agreement. He subsequently resigned as prime minister.<sup>41</sup>

A similar pattern of retreat also appeared with the EAC. China and Japan disagreed over EAC membership, with the Chinese preferring an "East Asian" model based on the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN), and bringing in China, Japan, and South Korea. Japan appeared to be seeking membership for a broader set of nations. Minister of Foreign Affairs Okada Katsuya stated in October 2009 that, as he envisaged it, the EAC "would be a community that includes Japan, China, South Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand and the ASEAN countries." The government was initially ambiguous in its view on a prospective US role in the EAC, with Hatoyama making the case that Japan had been "too dependent on the U.S." and Okada also implying that the United States would not be involved. This approach, after some confusion and criticism

from the United States, was soon replaced—the United States would be involved. But with this change, China came to interpret the EAC idea as an ambitious plan on the part of Tokyo to develop a "Japan-led order in Asia." Regional fraternity had quickly descended into recrimination. 43

Any dream of greater autonomy would also be buried by several security "shocks" that occurred during 2010. In March, North Korea sank a South Korean naval corvette (the *Cheonan*). Later, in November, it shelled a South Korean island (Yeonpyeong). Although these two events were not directly aimed at Japan, their impact on the country's defense politics was significant, for they highlighted Japan's lack of independent hardpower capabilities, thereby providing a strong reminder of the alliance's importance.<sup>44</sup> The biggest nail in the coffin for the DPJ's new strategy took place in September, after Hatoyama's resignation. It involved a collision between a Chinese fishing trawler and the Japan Coast Guard, which led to a diplomatic dispute with China and an unofficial Chinese embargo on rare earth mineral exports to Japan. The crisis caught the government at a time of internal distraction, revealing in the process splits within the DPJ. Unable to respond effectively, the DPJ found itself subject to a popular backlash by the public and had its approval ratings fall by nearly 20 points. 45

## EXPECTATIONS AND ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT

Two initial observations can be drawn from this brief summary of Japan's evolving strategic expectations. First, the alliance has undergone intermittent periods of instability requiring a renewal of commitments. Second, Japan has found balancing its multiple strategic expectations particularly difficult since the end of the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, it became clear that the concepts of security developed during the Cold War, such as comprehensive security, were insufficient for guiding Japan's response to shifting international circumstances. The normalization agenda was initially intended to bridge the gap between Japan's expectation of playing only a nontraditional security role and

increasing pressure to be more active in hard-power politics. After September 11, policymakers further defined the concept to focus more on resolving capability weaknesses (material and institutional) in the country's defense arrangements. However, the normalization agenda has been a compromise of sorts. On the one side, there have been those hoping that Japan would eventually develop a more active international role and more hard-power capabilities. On the other side, there have been those who, worried about domestic attitudes and hoping to "reassure" the region, aspire for Japan to become a more multilateralist, globalist nation. Encumbered by such contradictions, Japan has made the task of managing its security expectations more difficult.

## THE PROBLEM WITH AUTONOMY AND EQUALITY

It was into this environment that the new DPJ government led by Hatoyama brought its ambitious plans for increasing Japan's autonomy in foreign policy. The DPJ's basic political aim was to do the opposite of the LDP, a goal which extended into foreign affairs and alliance policy. The boldness of these plans combined with ineffective leadership undoubtedly contributed to the mismanagement of the alliance under Hatoyama. Yet the party's diplomatic losses were also notable for the intractability of the issues involved and the extent to which the government found itself balancing these irreconcilable objectives. Indeed, the DPJ experience highlights how difficult it is for states to develop coherent expectations of alliance partners if they are struggling to define their own strategic goals.

The DPJ's drive for autonomy and equality was apparent in the "Asianism" that inspired the EAC and the DPJ's pronouncements over determining the "functions and roles" of the US-Japan relationship. It was also apparent in the push for reduced burden-sharing in response to the problems in Okinawa. The challenge in reconciling these strategic principles with other objectives and international circumstances was apparent in the first major failure of the Hatoyama government—that is, to address the alliance "trade-off," or bargain, at the heart of the alliance.

From the US perspective, it appeared that the expectation of "equality" held by some on the Japanese side was one-sided. It seemed that Japan expected the United States to fulfill its commitments (but to do so in a less burdensome way), while Japan would continue to say "no" to US expectations and do little to "provide for its own defense."

Such an assessment arguably understates Japan's financial contribution to the alliance and the sacrifices made by Okinawans. It also overlooks the contribution Japan makes to America's strategic position in the western Pacific. Still, to many American eyes, the DPJ's emphasis on both autonomy from the alliance, and equality within it, effectively returned Japan to the height of its free rider strategy during the Cold War. In emphasizing autonomy and equality in terms of soft power, the DPJ had failed to address important hard-power questions. The implication—and what perhaps triggered such skeptical US responses—is that lying beneath these policies was the Japanese expectation that the United States should continue to accommodate its free riding. Just as the DPJ was leaving this impression with the Obama administration, however, the events of 2010 made Japan more vulnerable to changing regional circumstances and thus more reliant on the United States <sup>48</sup>

In retrospect, the DPJ's difficulties over autonomy and equality under Hatoyama are remarkable for the degree to which the party stands apart from earlier and later Japanese governments. Finding a new role in Asia and improving relations with China were not in themselves ground-breaking. Similarly, there are parallels between the party's emphasis on multilateralism and some of the goals elaborated by the Higuchi committee in the 1990s. The Higuchi committee, after all, also operated in response to a non–LDP government and one from which many subsequent DPJ members emerged. However, in comparison to earlier administrations, such as Ōhira's, the Hatoyama administration seemed willing to push the autonomy and equality line to the point that Japan's hard-power weaknesses were exposed. The Hatoyama administration also differed significantly from subsequent governments, including the

two DPJ-led administrations of Kan Naoto (2010–11) and Noda Yoshihiko (2011–12). These administrations faced less pressure to deal with major alliance challenges, at least initially. They were instead beset by the political and social problems stemming from the tragedies of Japan's earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster of March 2011 (known as 3/11). Later, they were faced with a new diplomatic dispute with China over the nationalization of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. With the release of the new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) in December 2010, however, the Kan administration largely reversed the Hatoyama approach and focused instead on greater military cooperation with the United States and others in the region, such as Australia and South Korea. Indeed, the NDPG was not inconsistent with what might have emerged from an orthodox LDP-led government. To

#### THE NEW ABE APPROACH

The approach adopted by Abe's government since 2012 has been to balance concerns over Japan's security autonomy and equality more clearly within the context of developing the alliance. Abe has sought, in particular, to sideline comprehensive security thinking within Japan's security expectations and instead return to the hard-power normalization agenda of the mid-2000 period (2004-2006). This shift has been spurred on by the worsening of relations in Northeast Asia since 2010, especially in terms of maritime disputes such as that over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. In late January 2013, these tensions reached a near crisis-point when the Japanese government alleged that a Chinese warship had targeted "fire control" radar on a Japanese destroyer near the Senkaku area, prompting Japan to lodge a diplomatic protest with China.<sup>51</sup> The result has been that Japanese strategic thinking under Abe's LDP is now more threatcentric and China-focused, although to some extent this trend was already underway under the Kan and Noda administrations. This is illustrated by the DPJ's development of the "dynamic defense force" concept, whereby Japan's defense forces would have greater "readiness, mobility, flexibility, sustainability, and versatility."<sup>52</sup> The "dynamic defense" approach, or something similar, has persisted under the Abe administration.

A central aim of the Abe government, however, has been to make what it describes as a more "proactive contribution to peace," in other words addressing the free rider accusations that became such a prominent part of the alliance debate in 2010. While aiming to reduce the US military base burden on Okinawa, the government has also sought to ensure that alliance priorities, such as the relocation of the Futenma airbase within Okinawa, proceed. A revised NDPG and new National Security Strategy similarly move Japan along a hard-power path of greater alliance burden sharing. So far Japan's more proactive approach has included a more engaged regional diplomacy, increased defense spending, a new National Security Council (NSC), and constitutional reinterpretation. The formation of the NSC is aimed at underpinning the central place of the prime minister and Cabinet in the decision-making process as well as providing a location for managing crises and engaging in intelligence activities. On constitutional reform, in July 2014 the Abe government announced it was reinterpreting the Constitution to give Japan the right to carry out collective self-defense, albeit under certain conditions.<sup>54</sup>

Despite its great efforts at reorienting Japan's strategic posture, the Abe government's struggles with the Constitution highlight the continuing tensions between comprehensive security and normalization. Although Abe has got much closer to his goal of constitutional change, the final outcome was not the amendment for which he argued in 2006–07 or again in 2012 (i.e., one backed by votes in the Diet and at a national referendum), but a more modest reinterpretation accompanied by several limitations. Abe's agenda quickly proved controversial amongst the Japanese public and was watered down by the LDP's coalition partner, New Komeito, to include constraints on how this new right might be exercised. The right to collective self-defense that emerged from these negotiations is one that can only be exercised if Japan's survival is under threat, where there are no alternatives, and when only a minimum level

of force is used. A further watering-down of the eventual legislation needed to enact these principles may also occur in 2015. Clearly, Japan remains strongly attached to soft-power security norms embedded in the comprehensive security idea and Yoshida's eschewing of hard-power ambitions. Meanwhile, Abe has damaged Japan's ability to "reassure" the region of its peaceful intentions, a key idea within globalist and comprehensive security thinking and an important underpinning of the regional order during the Cold War. Abe has created this problem in particular by linking in the region's minds his stance on collective self-defense with his denial over historical issues and provocative visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. 55

#### Conclusion

David Arase contends that Japan has been "so preoccupied" with the challenges of developing hard power that it "does not yet coordinate soft and hard power within an overall foreign policy strategy."56 Under the Hatoyama administration, this characterization of Japanese power coordination was in fact upended. The country had failed to coordinate hard and soft power, but not because of a preoccupation with the former. Under Hatoyama, Japan became fixated more with soft power. The DPI experience suggested, moreover, that Japan was struggling to find a new "Goldilocks consensus" or a grand strategy "not too hard but not too soft, not too Asian and not too Western," as suggested by Samuels.<sup>57</sup> Japan under the DPJ did not "strike a balance between national strength and national autonomy to create new security options for Japan." Instead, Gilbert Rozman's assessment of Japanese strategic thinking provides a better characterization of the Hatoyama experience: Japan exhibited "neither realist thinking about maximizing power in an uncertain world nor idealist thinking about achieving some principles of regional and global order."58 In developing a grand strategy with bilateral, multilateral, UN-centered, autonomous and Asia-oriented dimensions, Japan effectively chased "too many hares." 59

This chapter's argument has been that a key challenge to finding a strategic balance is the difficulty involved in combining the two strategic concepts of comprehensive security and normalization. The incremental addition of such concepts to the US-Japan alliance since its inception has progressively exposed their contradictions. Policymakers have at different stages been overly preoccupied with competing objectives: with balancing hard and soft power, with widening autonomy and increasing equality while minimizing obligations, or with providing reassurance to the region while avoiding dependence on the alliance. Such messiness in security policy is not necessarily unusual; after all, many modern democracies struggle with the task of developing coherent national security strategies. Moreover, Japan is faced with a complex regional environment, a difficult history, and a convoluted web of domestic security norms.

Even with the passing of the DPJ, however, some of these contradictions remain. As Hughes points out, Japan is still sandwiched between the United States and China, 60 and it has no easy way of harmonizing its various security interests. The contradictions in the expectations of Japan's own security role continue to make it more difficult for the country to set coherent expectations of the United States, which in turn undermines mutual confidence. US arguments that a more limited bargain centered on "core expectations" might be preferable to a complicated globalist agreement in part reflect ambitions to simplify the alliance. Some Japanese likewise argue that, "even while bearing in mind the 'global' significance of the US-Japan alliance," there is also a need to "focus efforts on deepening the 'regional' side." The problems of the Senkaku islands that have emerged since the Hatoyama administration, and continue to plague the Abe administration, reinforce such views.

The Hatoyama administration's travails, however, may well signal the last major attempt at reconciling ideas of comprehensive security and normalization. The response of the administrations led by Kan and Noda to these failures was to drop Hatoyama's ambitious strategic agenda and instead pursue a low-key approach. Since 2012, the Abe administration

has pursued a more ambitious reform program. Where there have been attempts to balance comprehensive security and normalization, they have come from the LDP's coalition partner, New Komeito, rather than Abe and the LDP. Instead, Abe has sought to shift Japan's strategic vision further away from the DPJ's globalist ambitions and back to the hardpower orientation established in the mid-2000 period (2004–2006).<sup>62</sup> Abe's successors in the LDP may move even further away from comprehensive security and globalist thinking. But this trend also presents challenges. Equality within the alliance may be improved by the Abe administration's attempts to boost Japan's security capabilities, but so far this has occurred at the expense of reassuring the region. A Japan less able to reassure East Asia may become even more dependent on the alliance, more vulnerable to entrapment and, in the end, less autonomous. Japan's clashing security expectations, of its own security role and that of the United States, remain unresolved.

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## **Notes**

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