The Dilemma of Japan’s Proactive Pacifism in Asia

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Introduction

Japan’s proactive pacifism philosophy, as formulated in the latest National Defense Program Guidelines for 2014 and Beyond, reflects how Japan’s security policy has evolved especially post Cold War. Specifically, proactive pacifism is defined as:

“Proactively Contributing to Peace” based on the principle of international cooperation. Furthermore, this entails, ‘building a comprehensive defense architecture and strengthening its system for the preventing and responding to various contingencies; strengthening the Japan-U.S Alliance; actively promoting security cooperation with other countries

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and building a highly effective and integrated defense capability based on an exclusively national defense oriented policy under the Constitution and not becoming a military power that poses a threat to other countries while observing the principle of civilian control of the military and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles.\(^2\)

While this philosophy continues Japan’s shift from a passive to “dynamic defense posture and from a just global civilian power\(^3\) towards a “normal nation,”\(^4\) the quandary is how should Japan effectively implement its proactive pacifism without engendering domestic and regional dilemmas. The meaning of dilemma in this paper is not only limited to the concept of security dilemmas\(^5\) but also to the broader meaning of a difficult situation or problem\(^6\) for Japan’s domestic and foreign policies.

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\(^2\) Ditto, p. 2-3.

\(^3\) “This concept” refers to Japan’s role expansion in the post-Cold War period through use of its own economy and technological strengths and increased participation in UNPKOs.” quoted in Bhubhindar Singh, Japan’s Security Identity: From a Peace State to an International State (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 177.

\(^4\) Although there are variations on the meaning of what is a normal state or country. In this paper, I use normal nation or state as ‘referred to by the conservatives in the 90s.’ “This school of thought contends that Japan’s international contributions should not be limited to financial assistance. Rather, as a global economic power, Japan should make military contributions in the form of peacekeeping operations a priority of its foreign policy.” (Nihon Kaizo Keikaku). Ultimately, from this ‘normal country’ perspective, for Japan’s international prestige to increase, it must participate in the activities of international society as other ‘normal’ countries do. Military contributions, therefore should not be taboo, particularly when directed toward international peacekeeping missions.” Cheol Hee Park, “Conservative Conceptions of Japanese ‘Normal Country”: Comparing Ozawa, Nakasone and Ishihara,” in Soeya, Yoshihide, Tadokoro, Masayuki and Welch, David A, eds., Japan as a ‘Normal Country’? (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto, 2012), 100.
At the helm of Japan’s proactive pacifism is Prime Minister Abe who is keen to finish his unfinished security agenda from his first administration which included either reinterpreting and or amending Article 9 of Japan’s Constitution. However, his brand of nationalism which embraces historical revisionism also colors his reframing of Japan’s security agenda. Specifically, he is representative of ‘the new conservative mainstream who are less apologetic about the past and more willing to pander to those who feel nostalgic about it. These kinds of normal nationalists or so called revisionists also stress the importance of the U.S. alliance and see China as a potential threat. They want Japan and the U.S. to build a more equal security relationship and do not lean towards Japan’s independence from the U.S. They are comfortable with the idea that a Japanese military might have to use force as a means of settling international disputes. They also support constitutional revision as well as incremental improvement of Japan’s military.’

In line with his proactive pacifism, Prime Minister Abe in his second term has already established an American style National Security Council. He also pushed the passage of the controversial Special Intelligence Protection Act as well as the change of the Three Principles of Arm Exports to Three Principles of Defense Equipment Transfer. At the same time, each

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5 “A central tenet of realism and the realist paradigm, the security dilemma arises for the situation of anarchy that states find themselves in. By striving to increase their own security by following policies that enhance their military capabilities – states inadvertently make others feel less secure. As a result of this behavior a vicious circle or spiral of security-insecurity arises to which there is no permanent and lasting solution.” Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, Dictionary of International Relations (London: Penguin Group, 1998), 494.

6 http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/dilemma

measure has created its own issues. How much further can PM Abe reframe Japan’s pacifist parameters without national consensus? Neither Japanese elites or the Japanese public is so ready, for example, to reinterpret Article 9 or redefine further Japan’s concept of self defense in the name of proactive pacifism. Also Japan will also need to balance its expanded security role with its economic recovery. All of these quandaries represent some of Japan’s domestic dilemmas for the implementation of proactive pacifism.

Japan, while addressing these domestic dilemmas, must also address bilateral and or regional challenges as well involving the U.S., China, South and North Korea and other actors related to the implementation of its proactive pacifism. These latter problems include balancing the needs of the U.S.-Japan alliance vs. a more autonomous Japanese foreign policy; historical and territorial disputes; avoiding security dilemmas; economic rivalry and the North Korean threat.

Given the above range of domestic and international dynamics, this paper analyzes 1) the domestic dilemmas of Japan’s proactive pacifism; 2) proactive pacifism’s relationship to the U.S.-Japan alliance and 3) some geopolitical dilemmas of Japan’s proactive pacifism. Finally, this paper concludes that Japan in order to ameliorate the dilemmas of its present proactive pacifism approach, must foster policies which engender regional trust and domestic support through deeper reconciliation with Asian neighbors; strengthen its multilayered security\(^8\) network including the U.S.-Japan alliance as well as build

\(^8\)“The most important issues related to multilayered security are the building of a security cooperation network, the support of capacity building and the maintenance of maritime order.” National Institute of Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2013, Executive Summary* (Tokyo: The Japan Times, 2013), 10.

a national consensus for the rebalancing of Japan’s identity and roles in the Asia.

I. Domestic Dilemmas of Japan’s Proactive Pacifism

After the Cold War ended, Japan has increasingly evolved as a global civilian power. It became the U.N.’s second largest donor in the 90s as well as the largest ODA provider from 1991-2000. Moreover, Japan’s Self Defense Forces (SDF) joined various peacekeeping and peace building missions in non-conflict areas. Japan also continued to serve as a UNSC non-permanent member and promote the non-proliferation of non-nuclear weapons. At the same time, Article 9 of Japan’s Constitution, which was promulgated on November 3, 1946 but came into effect on May 3, 1947, remains a great source of Japan’s global civilian power. This renowned article states:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

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While committing itself to this philosophy for over sixty years, Japan has also struggled, especially since the end of the Cold War, with its evolution towards a so called “normal nation.” Representative of this movement is Japan’s expansion of the Self Defense Forces (SDF) roles from the 1990s to the present. The SDF, which evolved originally from the National Police Reserve created in 1950, was established in 1954 to first “repel limited and small scale aggression without external assistance.” Presently, the SDF emphasizes “the building of a dynamic joint defense force” to not only protect the Japanese homeland but also contribute to the global community as this latter goal as well is connected to its own security and core national interests. Moreover, the SDF, through ‘enhancing its integrated flexible defense capability,’

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11 In order to meet the new ‘changing security environment, Japan is emphasizing the building of a dynamic joint defense force.’ “To this aim, Japan needs to allocate limited resources in a focused and flexible way to prioritize the functions and capabilities from a comprehensive perspective identified through joint operation based capability assessment of the Self Defense Force’s (SDF’s) total function and capabilities against various situations. This concept of a dynamic joint defense force also includes strengthening bilateral multilateral cooperative relationships in order to ensure the stability of the Asia Pacific region. Also, it entails cooperation with PKOs non-traditional security initiatives and other internationally collaborative activities to improve the international security environment. Finally, it emphasizes both soft and hard aspects of readiness, sustainability, resiliency and connectivity reinforced by advanced technology, capability for C3I with a consideration to establish a wide range of infrastructure to support the SDF operation.” Ministry of Defense, National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and beyond (Tokyo: MOD, 2013), 3-4, http://kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/_2013/icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NDPG(Summary).pdf

is also addressing non-traditional security threats like fighting cyber attacks, piracy, WMD and the disruption of the global commons.

While incrementally redefining its concept of self defense, Japan has not amended its Constitution. At the same time, however, it has created legislation or policies that in effect allowed it to further expand the parameters of its self defense regionally and globally; such as, the PKO Act (Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations 1992); The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation (1997); engagement in joint missile defense research (1998–present) and capability buildup (2004–present)\textsuperscript{13}; The Anti Terrorism Special Measures Law (2001) and the establishment of an SDF base (2011), the first since World War II, in Djibouti to fight piracy.

And now under the second PM Shinzo Abe administration (12/26/12-present), the Prime Minister is moving ahead on his unfinished normal nationalist security agenda from his first administration. Specifically, this includes enlarging Japan’s security self defense identity and roles through proactive pacifism. During his first administration, however, the Self Defense Agency became the Self Defense Ministry. And PM Abe established in 2007 The Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis of Security, which examined the changing regional environment and Japan’s responses including the concept of “limited collective self defense.”

While Japan’s positive pacifism hits the right notes about being a “defensive defense” policy, how it is carried out in the region to engender domestic support and regional trust is also important. Prime Minister Abe’s brand of

\textsuperscript{13} Ministry of Defense, Japan, Japan’s BMD (Tokyo: MOD), 7.9, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d/_act/bmd/bmd.pdf
normal nationalism, which includes historical revisionism, colors his proactive pacifism. This kind of nationalism ‘which is comfortable with the idea of Japan possibly using force as a means of settling international disputes, constitutional revision as well as incremental improvement of Japan’s military’\textsuperscript{14} does not represent the majority of public nor political opinion. This creates a dilemma because the administration is moving ahead without public consensus and or without a sufficient system of checks and balances inside of new legislation or policies related to the implementation of proactive pacifism.

In line with PM Abe’s approach to proactive pacifism, he has already aggressively pushed for the establishment of a U.S. style National Security Council, passage of the Special Intelligence Protection Act, the change of the Three Principles of Arm Exports to Three Principles of Defense Equipment Transfer as well as “limited collective self defense”\textsuperscript{15} through reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. In the first three cases, establishment took place in 2013. And on July 1, 2014, the Japanese cabinet under PM Abe decided to recognize Japan’s right to exercise collective self-defense with limitations. However, legislation is still needed to implement this landmark decision. Moreover, it now remains to be seen whether the Abe administration will be able to successfully move ahead on proposals for this legislation as well as other dynamics related to the prime minister’s implementation of proactive pacifism in spite of public and private dissenting voices.

Concerning these above policies or legislation, let us examine some of


\textsuperscript{15} On May 15, 2014, The Advisory Security Panel under Ambassador Yanai recommended that the Japanese government lift its self-imposed ban on collective security with certain limitations.
their related dilemmas. First, the U.S. style National Security Council, for example, established on December 4, 2013, strengthens the roles of the Prime Minister regarding national security issues. However, ‘questions still remain regarding the balanced operation of the NSC, the influence of the U.S. as well as the participation of 12 uniformed SDF officers.” And although the change of the Three Principles of Arm Exports to Three Principles of Defense Equipment Transfer in March of 2014 is to ‘further facilitate security cooperation and strengthen Japan’s defense industrial base’17, the government must take care that this defense capability build up is perceived only as a “defensive defense” policy in line with its proactive pacifism to avoid any security dilemma. Furthermore, it must see how to enforce its guidelines effectively so that the transfer of its defense equipment does not fall into the wrong third party hands.18 At the same time, while the passage of the Special Intelligence Protection Law will help Japan assure the protection of intelligence shared with its allies, there are still issues related to the violation of civil liberties, ‘the definition of special intelligence, the security clearance system and the range of punishments.’

Finally, concerning collective self-defense, although each sovereign na-

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18 Ditto.
tion has the right under the U.N. to exercise this kind of defense, Japan has not technically exercised this right in the past due to its previous interpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.\textsuperscript{20} Alternatively, Japan has strongly pursued its self defense through its alliance with the U.S. and the upgrading of SDF’s technical capacity and interoperability with U.S. forces. Moreover, SDF forces have been limited to participation in UN missions carried out in non-conflict zones.

At the same time, if Japan, however, were to exercise “limited collective self defense” through reinterpretation of Article 9, it could strengthen Japan’s role not only in the U.S.-Japan alliance but also its participation in U.N. missions. Moreover, in the event of a contingency, Japan would be further prepared to give non-military logistical support. Specifically, the kind of “limited collective self defense” that the PM Abe is aiming for would reinterpret Article 9 to allow, for example, the following kinds of scenarios: 1) defending U.S. naval vessels on the high seas; 2) intercepting a ballistic missile that might be on its way to the United States; 3) expanding Japan’s right to use weapons in international peace operations as well as 4) providing logistical support for the operations of other countries participating in the same UN PKO and other ac-

\textsuperscript{20} “With regard to the right of collective self-defense as outlined in the Government written answer dated May 29, 1981 and which closely followed the Government’s view on October 14, 1972, the Government position has been expressed as follows: “It is obvious that Japan as a sovereign state inherently possesses the right of collective self defense under international law, but the exercise of the right of self defense as allowed under article 9 of the Constitution is limited to what is minimum and necessary to defend the country and exercise of the right of collective self defense exceeds that range and therefore is not permitted under the Constitution.” The Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis Security, \textit{Report} (Tokyo: The Cabinet Office, 2008), 6, http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/sangi/anzenhosyou/report.pdf

tivities.” Presently, these and other scenarios are under discussion by the Cabinet for consideration by the Diet later this year or the beginning of 2015.

Although PM Abe has pursued the reinterpretation of Article 9 to facilitate “limited collective self defense” as one of the means to implement proactive pacifism, he has yet to garner his own LDP party’s, his coalition partner –New Komeito (New Clean Party)’s, the DPJ-the largest opposition party’s or general public’s full support for this reinterpretation. For example, although DPJ Deputy Security General Akihisa Nagashima is supportive of this position, this is not the consensus of his party. Also, a 2012 Poll carried out by the Japanese Cabinet Office/Public Relations Office regarding the SDF and Defense Issues showed that 60% of 1,893 people with eligible replies out of 3,000 people polled wanted the capabilities of the SDF to stay at its current strength. This was slightly down from the 2009 result of 65.1% who said so. At the same time, 24.8% said the SDF defense capabilities should increase vs. 14.1% who said so in 2009. And an Asahi poll conducted in February and March of 2014 showed that 63% of 2045 eligible replies out of 3,000 respondents stated that “the government should not lift the ban on the right to collective self defense.” The same poll showed that 64% “did not want to change Article 9” and “50% stated “should not revise the pacifist Constitution.”

Alternatively, a Fuji Sankei survey held in May of 2014 found “69% of respondents suggesting that the government should exercise the right of collective defense.”


23 Ditto.
self defense either completely or to the minimum extent necessary.”

At the same time, PM Abe has appointed a new head of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau favorable to the reinterpretation of Article 9 regarding “limited collective self defense.” And the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, originally established in 2007 and whose members were handpicked by Abe, recommended on May 15, 2014 that the Japanese government lift its self-imposed ban on collective self defense with certain limitations.” How successfully the PM is able to negotiate inside and outside the government regarding his normal nationalism informed security agenda including proposed legislation to implement the reinterpretation of Article 9 for “limited collective self defense” will help drive the pace of Japan’s investment in proactive pacifism.

Although the idea of “limited collective self defense,” can be viewed as a “pragmatic response” to the new security normal in the Asia Pacific, there are still many concerns about the implementation of this idea. For example, how far can this kind of “limited collective self defense” be expanded? What are the checks and balances? Does Japan even need to go this far in expanding its self defense in the name of proactive pacifism? Or “could Japan be forced into many of the conflicts that the U.S. is party to, if the right of collective self defense is admitted?”

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In spite of these questions and dissenting voices within the ruling coalition as well as protests by local governments and citizens, the Japanese cabinet under PM Abe has reinterpreted Article 9 to further enhance Japan’s “defensive defense” policy. Moreover, according to the Japanese Cabinet resolution on July 1, 2014 regarding this, “Japan could exercise force to the minimum degree necessary in cases where a country with which it has close ties is attacked and the following conditions are met: there is a threat to the existence of the Japanese state; there is a clear danger that the people’s right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness could be subverted and there is no appropriate alternative.”

Meanwhile, PM Abe needs to close the gap between his vision for “limited collective self defense” as one of the pillars of Japan’s proactive pacifism and the Japanese citizens and policymakers’ fears about Japan moving into uncharted dangerous waters in violation of its true spirit of pacifism. PM Abe also needs to ‘maximize Japan’s diplomacy while minimizing any use of violence’ for limited collective self defense’. In this way, the Prime Minister can also work towards diminishing the fallout with neighboring countries over this shift in Japanese security policy.

Beyond the issue of reinterpretation of Article 9, PM Abe’s normal nationalism which includes historical revisionism is also a source of irritation to both China and South Korea. For example, even though the prime minister refrained from doing so during his first administration, during his second term, he visited in December of 2013 the Yasukuni Shrine where the war
dead including the A class war criminals from World War II are enshrined. In addition, his suggestion that his administration would reexamine both PM Murayama’s apology (1995) for Japanese actions during World War II and Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono’s apology (1993) for the Japanese military forces’ abuse of “comfort women” also angered both South Korea and China. Although PM Abe in the end officially upheld both apologies, this kind of vacillation hurts Japan’s reframing of its identity and roles in the region. This kind of situation as well as historical revisionist statements by other cabinet members or leading politicians will continue to make it difficult to foster regional understanding of Japan’s proactive pacifism. Delinking historical revisionism from the present push for proactive pacifism is another challenge for the present administration.

The government’s drive for proactive pacifism also brings Japan further along the road towards becoming a normal nation. At the same time, without deeper reconciliation over historical matters, for example, this progression could still be seen as a threatening dynamic. The image of Japan in Asia as a not so benevolent colonizer, a historical revisionist and or as a possible threat as a normal nation still exist in the region. In one poll carried out by Genron NPO and East Asia Institute of South Koreans and Japanese in 2013, 43.9% of the South Koreans polled, for example, saw Japan as the third military threat after North Korea and China in that order. In addition, a China Daily article

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stressed that “the advocate of “proactive pacifism” is a historical revisionist who minimizes Japanese wartime atrocities.” Periodically, tensions do continue to flare between Japan and its N.E. Asian neighbors over the so-called “comfort women” issue: Japanese text book depiction of Japan’s role in World War II and territorial claims. Thus, the push for proactive pacifism without sufficient reconciliation efforts with Japan’s neighbors to move beyond the past represents another dilemma.

Ameliorating dilemmas associated with Japan’s proactive pacifism domestically and regionally should inform Prime Minister Abe’s top priorities. Included in measures to address those dilemmas should be the delinking of historical revisionism from his “normal nationalism” as the former impedes the positive promotion of proactive pacifism regionally and globally. Efforts towards deeper reconciliation with Asian neighbors is also needed. Moreover, the Abe administration for the effective implementation of proactive pacifism needs to not only garner more political but also public support for his policies to implement proactive pacifism effectively.

II. The U.S.-Japan Alliance for Proactive Pacifism

As in the National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and Beyond, the Japan’s National Security Strategy also stresses the importance of

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strenthening the U.S.-Japan alliance. This policy, as part of Japan’s proactive pacifism, builds on over 60 years of security cooperation. Moreover, Japan, the U.S. top strategic ally in Asia, continues to be the largest financial supporter of U.S. bases. The close alliance, for example, in spite of some ongoing domestic opposition to the presence of U.S. bases on Japanese soil; base relocation and reduction, incidents involving U.S. military personnel and or equipment in local communities and environmental issues, remains a key part of the U.S.’ security network in the Asia Pacific. And although frictions between the allies also arise from time to time over various foreign policy issues related to North Korea; present geopolitical tensions among Japan, Korea and China as well as trade matters, the alliance is seen on both sides as an essential component of their regional and global security strategies. A key dilemma in the future, however, is how to reduce the U.S. base footprint while maintaining a strong Japanese defense against traditional and non-traditional threats. At the same time as the alliance is strengthened, this creates another dilemma for those who wish to see a more autonomous Japan.

Previously, a bipartisan report published during the George W. Bush administration, hoped that Japan would become a U.S. ally like England.33 However, the U.S. has continued to recognize and respect the limitations imposed by Article 9 of Japan’s constitution and Japan’s political will to maintain those restrictions. And post Cold War, both countries have worked towards a more equal partnership. Japan, for example, has continued to strengthen its

role in the alliance through various legislation without reinterpreting or amending Article 9 of its Constitution. 9/11, too, brought an important upgrade of the alliance with the Japanese Self Defense Forces’ contribution to the “war on terrorism” and increased efforts to ameliorate non-traditional threats beyond Japan’s borders. 3.11 then allowed the alliance to further deepen its capacity for interoperability and joint action in the face of that year’s triple threat on Japanese soil.

While the alliance is still asymmetrical, the division of responsibilities within the alliance have grown more complementary, crossed into gray zone areas as well as expanded the parameters of bilateral cooperation to handle regional and global challenges. Along with these kind of transformations, the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee, last year, importantly laid out a roadmap for a more “robust alliance” including the revision of the 1997 Guidelines for U.S. Japan Defense Cooperation as well as increased cooperation in various areas including BMD, cyberspace, space, joint intelligence, bilateral planning, maritime security and trilateral cooperation. And this year, President Obama on his third visit to Japan (April 23-25, 2014) underscored again U.S. commitment to the alliance; supported Japan’s efforts to consider “limited collective self defense” and reiterated U.S. obligation towards Japan under the alliance regarding the protection of Japan including the Senkakus. Recently, U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel emphasized U.S. support of Japan’s new security direction. At this year’s Shangri-la Dialogue, an annual IISS Asia Security Summit, he stated “We support Japan’s new efforts...to re-

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orient its collective self defense posture toward actively helping build a peaceful and resilient regional order.\textsuperscript{35}

While Japan is working towards a more “robust alliance” with its long term ally, it worries about depending too much on the U.S. to protect Japan’s core interests. This dilemma is exacerbated by Japan’s worries about potential diminished U.S. action in times of crisis due to the latter’s domestic political and economic difficulties; the Obama administration’s foreign policy troubles, for example, concerning the Middle East as well as Russia and Ukraine; a possible U.S. lean toward China over Japan and the increasing geopolitical tensions in the South and East China Seas.

In search of other security options, along with the U.S.-Japan alliance, Japan is concurrently building up its own multi-layered security network. Concretely, Japan is not only strengthening its alliance with Australia but also its Strategic and Global Partnership with India. Moreover, it is also reaching out to NATO concerning security in Asia. In addition, Japan is involved, for example, in ASEAN +1, ASEAN+3, the East Asia Summit and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Moreover, Japan is creating various FTAs, and carrying out regional capacity building.\textsuperscript{36} In terms of recent capacity building efforts, Japan has conducted, for example, coast guard training for maritime re-


\textsuperscript{36} ‘This refers to developed countries’ efforts to support developing countries build their own coping capacity to handle non-traditional security issues such as humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) and anti-piracy activities through continued human resource development, technical and other support. In turn this kind of initiative promotes actively and proactively regional stability. Japan is primarily carrying this out in Southeast Asia.’ Ministry of Defense. About “Capacity Building Support” (Tokyo: MOD), 1, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/about/answers/cb/
lated officials from different ASEAN countries. Japan also plans to provide patrol vessels to the Philippines and Vietnam, both of whom have been involved in recent maritime conflicts with China.37

As Japan expands its role inside the U.S.-Japan alliance as part of its proactive pacifism, Japan will have to deal with various dilemmas, such as, de-linking historical revision from proactive pacifism; balancing the U.S. bases’ footprint in Japan vs. an increasing need for an expanded SDF profile under proactive pacifism as well as balancing the demands of the alliance vs. some domestic demands for a more autonomous Japan. And finally, the Abe administration will need to address the dilemma of pushing his proactive pacifism quickly to meet geopolitical needs vs. the need to build a national consensus for the reframing of Japan’s security identity and roles.

Geopolitical Dilemmas of Japan’s Proactive Pacifism

In the previous sections of this paper, I examined the domestic dilemmas of Japan’s proactive pacifism policies as well as analyzed the meaning of this policy for the U.S.-Japan alliance. Now, I would like to go beyond the U.S.-Japan alliance to discuss the significance of some key geopolitical dynamics in Asia for Japan’s proactive pacifism.

First, President’s Obama’s Rebalance to the Asia Pacific is an important dynamic. Although the U.S. remains tangled in conflicts in the Middle East, the Obama administration has resolved to rebalance its influence on many

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levels in the region. Specifically, this entails:

“shaping regional institutions and architecture; advancing economic integration across the region; strengthening and modernizing U.S. alliances forging deeper partnerships with emerging powers; pursuing a stable and constructive relationship with China and promoting universal and democratic values.”

At the same time, the rebalancing is somewhat impeded by U.S. domestic economic and political woes. The U.S. Congressional Elections in November of this year will determine whether the Obama administration will be able to break the impasse between the White House and Congress to achieve further economic and social progress. Presently, the ruling Democratic party holds the minority position in the House of Representatives and has a simple majority in the Senate which has led to gridlock over various administration policies. Moreover, although the U.S. economy continues its comeback after the Lehman Brothers shock, America still faces high unemployment rates, large trade deficits as well as high national debt.

Due to political opposition in the Congress towards the administration’s fiscal and social policies, it has been difficult for the administration to proceed smoothly on several fronts including foreign policy. Precisely due to a temporary shutdown of Congress over a budgetary conflict, President Obama cancelled his visit to Asia in the fall of 2013. However, in April of 2014, President Obama travelled to Japan, Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines to reconfirm

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that the U.S. rebalancing of Asia policy is still on track. President Obama also signed a new defense agreement with the Philippines; underlined U.S. commitment to the region’s friends and allies; and continued to push TPP negotiations.

In the future, however, not only U.S. Congress but U.S. citizens’ public sentiment may have a negative impact on the U.S. Rebalance to Asia policy. For example, the American public hopes the U.S. would focus more on domestic issues rather than international engagement. In a Pew Poll, “52% of Republicans and 46% of Democrats say the U.S. does too much to solve world problems.” And concerning global engagement “since 1964 more than half (52%) agreed that the U.S. should “mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own.” 80% agreed “We should not think so much in international terms but concentrate more on our own national problems and building up our strength and prosperity here at home.”39

The U.S. Rebalance to Asia not only includes strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance, as discussed in the previous section of this paper, but also includes “forging a constructive relationship” with China. Prior to the announcement of this pivot to Asia, the first Obama administration expanded the bilateral mechanism between U.S. and China set up under President George W. Bush from The China-U.S. Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED) to The U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S& ED) during his first administration. The ongoing S & ED not only underscores China as one of the

U.S.’ most important partnerships but also complements the objectives of the U.S. Rebalance Policy to Asia. Specifically, the S & ED covers a wide range of economic and “common and regional global challenges including proliferation concerns in Iran and North Korea, tensions between Sudan and South Sudan, climate change, environmental protection and energy security.”

How important are both U.S.- China relations as well as U.S.-Japan relations to the U.S. was underscored in a 2013 Japanese Foreign Ministry poll of Americans. However, ‘39% of elites polled, for example, ranked China vs. 35% for Japan as the U.S.’ most important partner in Asia. And, ‘80% of elites who selected China indicated that it was for economic reasons. Alternatively 48% and 39% of those selecting Japan indicated it was for political/general ties and trade/economic relations with the U.S. respectively’.  

Without a doubt, the economic interdependence between the U.S. and China has increased. Specifically, the U.S., the number one economy, is now the top trading partner to China, the number two economy since 2010. Moreover, China, along with Japan, is a top foreign buyer of U.S. foreign debt. At the same time, while the U.S. “seeks to build a positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship with China,” trade friction, geopolitical tensions, human rights violations and competing influences in the region often cause turbulence in Sino-American relations.

In the past, under President Hu Jintao, China rejected the idea of a G2 structure with the U.S. President Hu Jintao’s successor President Xi Jinping

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42 Same as footnote #38.
stated, however, the following at a U.S.-China Summit last year June - “the two sides must work together to build a new model of major country relationship based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation for the benefit of the Chinese and American peoples, and people elsewhere in the world.”

Yet, China is aggressively testing the wills of not only the U.S. but also other nations in the region like Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines over territorial disputes and maritime boundaries. U.S. Defense Secretary Hagel at the Shangri-la Dialogue was critical of these Chinese actions. He stated importantly,

“In recent months, China has undertaken destabilizing unilateral actions asserting its claims in the South China Sea. We firmly oppose any nation’s use of intimidation, coercion or the threat of force to assert those claims. We also oppose any effort by any nation to restrict overflight or freedom of navigation whether from military or civilian vessels, from countries big or small.

In any event, China’s efforts to extend its sovereignty in different areas of the East and South China Seas further raises the bar for Japan’s proactive pacifism and the U.S. security network in the Asia Pacific.

U.S. rebalancing to the Asia not only includes the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance but also, for example, the fostering of trilaterals like U.S., Japan and Korea and U.S., China and Japan. This latter trend puts pressure on Japan to resolve its regional differences with key Asian countries such as

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South Korea and China.

Although U.S.-Japan alliance clearly remains one of the most important relationships for the U.S., in Asia, there is Japanese concern about the growing closeness of U.S. China relations or ‘failure, in Japanese eyes, to stand up to China.’ President Obama, however, during his trip to Asia this past April stated that ‘while Washington welcomed China’s peaceful rise, “our engagement with China does not and will not come at the expense of Japan or any other ally.”’\textsuperscript{44} U.S. Defense Secretary Hagel has also reassured U.S. allies and friends in the region that the rebalance is real; that the U.S. is working with China for regional peace and that “any reduction in the U.S. defense spending do not come... at the expense of America’s commitment to the Asia Pacific.”\textsuperscript{45}

This statement as well as the President’ reassurance that the protection of the Senkaku islands also falls under the U.S.-Japan security treaty directly address Japan’s fear of the U.S. passing up or abandoning Japan for China at the time of a key contingency. On the other hand, the U.S. Rebalance to Asia “is perceived by some” in China “as an attempt to create a strategic deterrence system specifically targeted at China.”\textsuperscript{46} And as Japan is so closely aligned to the U.S., this kind of perception also leads to another dilemma for Japan.

While allies like Japan wonder if the U.S. will be able to take action during possible contingencies, the U.S. worries about Japan’s fallouts with Korea


and China over historical and territorial disputes. President Obama has also spoken out on revisionist comments made in Japan regarding the comfort women. Moreover, the U.S. is also concerned about possible involvement in a conflict related to the Senkakus. In short, these kinds of geopolitical tensions involving Japan are not only a concern for the U.S. Rebalance to Asia but also impact negatively on Japan’s push for proactive pacifism in the region. For example, they create obstacles for stronger trilaterals among the U.S.-Japan and Korea or the U.S.-Japan and China.

Adding to Japan, China and Korea’s geopolitical disputes is their economic rivalry and or interdependence. After World War II, Japan’s economic miracle transformed the country into the world’s number two economic power and the world’s banker. Made in Japan became synonymous with a product of high quality and the style of Japanese management was a top business model for Asia. However, Japan now has an outstanding national debt and became the 3rd largest economic power in 2010, falling behind China’s GDP. Japan’s latest strategy for economic recovery, however, is Abenomics which aims through “an aggressive set of monetary, fiscal and structural reforms” to ‘spur inflation and pull Japan out of its decades-long deflationary slump.’ While Abenomics has helped the economy with 6.7% growth in the first quarter of this year, the gap between the upper and lower economic classes in Japan continues to grow. Concurrently, the Abe administration plans to increase the defense budget by 2.6% over the next five years to meet

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the new geopolitical challenges in Asia. However, Japan will also need to balance its economic recovery and demands for enhanced defensive security capabilities.

Although the U.S. and Japan share a very interdependent relationship on many levels, Japan’s number two trading partner is China. China’s economy is also a key engine for Japan’s economic recovery. At the same time, Japan is China’s number three trading partner. And while both sides are adept at separating economics from politics, sometimes geopolitics do interfere with Japan-China economic relations and or further exacerbate bilateral tensions. In 2010, China, for example, temporarily stopped the export of rare earth minerals to Japan after Japan arrested the captain of a Chinese fishing boat which collided with two Japanese Coast Guard ships near the Senkakus. Moreover, in 2012, the Japanese government, under Prime Minister Noda, purchased three Senkaku islands from a private Japanese owner\(^{30}\) and refused to recognize that there is any dispute over the islands. Subsequently, China arbitrarily set up an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ)(2013) over some of the East China Sea including the Senkaku islands, further escalating bilateral tensions. Also related to these tensions last year, ‘were anti-Japan-

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\(^{30}\) After “the Tokyo Metropolitan Government planned to purchase the Senkaku Islands and develop a variety of facilities on them, the Government of Japan decided to purchase the three islands (Uotsuri Island, Kita Kojima Island, and Minami Kojima Island) of the Senkaku Islands and transferred the ownership of the islands from a private citizen to itself under domestic civil law in September 2012.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Fact Sheet on the Senkaku Islands (Tokyo: MOFA, 2012), 1.

nese demonstrations in China, dramatic temporary decline in sales of Toyota and Honda cars and a widespread call to boycott Japanese goods.\textsuperscript{51} These frictions as well have helped impede a summit meeting between PM Abe and President Xi Jinping.

Outside of these kinds of territorial issues with China, Japan’s sovereignty has also been challenged by South Korea and Russia. Specifically, in 2011, then Korean President Lee Myung Bak set foot on the disputed Takeshima island (called Dokdo by the Koreans). And in 2010, then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev visited the Northern Territories’ island closest to Japan. All of these actions were a bold affront to Japan, taking geopolitical dynamics in the region to another level.

Although, Japan, China and Korea have established their own trilateral framework outside of ASEAN+3, Japan’s frictions with both South Korea and China has caused an impasse in the trilateral, affecting efforts to move forward on a trilateral FTA. It has also impeded the conclusion of a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and an Acquisition and Cross Service Agreement (ACSA) between South Korea and Japan. Moreover, South Korea has concluded a FTA with China while negotiations on a South Korea and Japanese FTA have failed to move forward.

Adding to this mix of tensions are South Korea’s respective alliances with China and the U.S., while the ROK leans away from Japan.\textsuperscript{52} In one survey of both Japanese and South Koreans, it showed respectively that 36.2% and 13.5% of South Korean respondents felt relatively close to China or closer


\textsuperscript{52} Hideshi Takesada, 韓国ほどほど日本がきらいか（Tokyo: PHP 研究所，2013），141.
to China than Japan. And in the case of the Japanese polled, 5.9% and 45.5 respectively felt relatively close to China or closer to China than South Korea.⁵³

There is also a sense of economic rivalry among the three Asian powers. Korea, for example, has demonstrated its economic competitiveness in the areas of mobile phones, LCD TVs and automobiles. Moreover, Samsung has passed up Sony. Hyundai Motor and LG Electronics are also making their mark on the global market.⁵⁴ ‘China, Japan and Korea along with the U.S. are competing for markets in Asia, Latin America and Africa.’⁵⁵ However, Japanese investments have surpassed those of South Korea in China.⁵⁶ And China not Japan was the first to conclude a FTA with ASEAN. Although Japan is negotiating TPP, China and Korea are not parties to this process.

Among various issues of concern to key groupings of actors in the region, for example, the China-Japan-South Korea trilateral as well as the U.S., Japan and South Korea trilateral, is addressing the North Korean threat. Beyond these trilaterals as well as different bilateral relationships with North Korea, a larger multilateral framework – the Six Party Talks, hosted by China, ‘to

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address North Korea Nuclear program through negotiations involving China, Russia, the U.S., North and South Korea, has been stalled unfortunately since 2008 due to North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests as well as other provocations in violation of U.N. resolutions.

This ongoing dilemma continues to influence greatly the overall geopolitics of the region including the stability of the Korean peninsula. This dilemma continues now under Kim Jong-un who succeeded his father as North Korea’s supreme leader upon the latter’s death in December of 2011. In a short space of time, for example, Kim Jong-un has launched a “successful rocket mounted satellite,” a third nuclear test; tested four short-range missiles and two medium-range Nodong ballistic missiles; insulted both President Obama and President Park as well as stated that at one time the armistice was over with South Korea. Moreover, while President Obama was meeting with Prime Minister Abe and President Park during this year’s Nuclear Summit at The Hague, North Korea again fired ballistic missiles at South Korea and Japan.

North Korea’s threats including missile and nuclear weapon development as well as aggressive actions towards Japan, is another key reason for the Abe administration’s approach to proactive pacifism. In the event, a conflict were to break out on the Korean peninsula, the parameters of Japan’s proactive pacifism, however, would certainly be challenged. Maintaining a

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http://www.cfr.org/proliferation/six-party-talks-north-koreas-nuclear-program/p13593


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balance between U.S.-Japan alliance demands in such a contingency vs. staying within the parameters of Japan’s proactive pacifism represents another potential dilemma.

At the same time, Japan has its own channels of communication with North Korea to work towards normalization of bilateral relations. And in the past Japan has engaged in bold initiatives to step up North Korean-Japan engagement, for example, with PM Koizumi’s summits with Kim Jong-il in September of 2002 and May of 2004. Presently, both sides are engaged in talks about the status of the rest of Japanese abductees and their families who were not allowed to return to Japan after the Koizumi summits. All of these bilateral initiatives can be seen as ways for Japan to increase its own leverage on the peninsula. At the same time, they may also serve to eliminate one source of tension involving North Korea.

While the U.S. Rebalance to the Asia Pacific region includes the overall strengthening of its security network, China continues to increase its defense expenditures in the double digits and Japan plans to increase its defense expenditures over the next 5 years. Given these dynamics and other tensions in the Asia Pacific region, it is important that a build up of defenses, while an atmosphere of misunderstanding and geopolitical frictions still persist in the region, do not induce a security dilemma. Overall, the geopolitical tensions previously discussed create an unhealthy situation for regional stability as well as a dilemma for Japan’s proactive pacifism.

Fortunately, although China’s President Xi Jinping and South Korea’s President Park Geun-hye are not communicating directly with PM Abe, other channels of communication are still open and hopefully the present impasse at the top leadership levels will be broken in the near future.
ample, already ‘environmental ministers from China, Japan and South Korea, met in Daegu, South Korea April 28-29, 2014 for the 16th Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting.’ The three countries also importantly concluded an investment agreement in May of 2014, after they agreed on the deal in 2012. And Yoichi Mazuzoe, the Governor of Tokyo visited Beijing at the latter’s government request while President Obama was on a state visit to Japan. During that visit, Governor Mazuzoe met with the Mayor of Beijing and passed on as well a message from PM Abe which call for improved Japan-China relations. And in May of this year, Korean and Japanese officials met to discuss the resolution of the comfort women issue prior to the 40th anniversary of Japan-South Korean relations. And former PM Murayama met with three comfort women in Seoul in February of this year. In addition another round of U.S.-Japan-ROK Trilateral Defense Talks were held among the three nations’ working-level officials on April 17-18, 2014 to promote trilateral defense cooperation not only towards North Korea but also concerning non-

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60 Reuters, “China, Japan, South Korea investment deal to go into effect,” May 14, 2014, par: 2, http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/05/14/uk-china-trade-idUKKBN0DU12Q20130514

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traditional security matters.

These kinds of interactions are important to rebuild key Japanese relations in Asia. At the same time, Japan’s efforts to strength the U.S.-Japan alliance as well as expand its own multilayered security network to foster security cooperation in the region are also essential. This way Japan still cooperates with the U.S. while expanding the parameters of its security framework to go beyond the current impasses in Japan-South Korean as well as Japan-China relations.

While Japan’s proactive pacifism is a sign of how far it has come in the reshaping of its regional and global roles, ongoing geopolitical and historical conflicts as well as negative images regarding Japan’s possible security intentions could create another dilemma for the smooth operation of Japan’s proactive pacifism. Thus, Japan must also be careful to avoid any misunderstandings with Asian neighbors about the intentions of its positive pacifism. For example, concerning Japan’s possible ‘lifting of the ban on the use of military force to aid allies, South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that “defense and security-related discussion in Japan must take place in a way that upholds the spirit of Japan’s pacifist Constitution’s stability and peace in the region.” At the same time, one Chinese newspaper stated “The catchy but vague expression of “proactive pacifism” is Abe’s camouflage to woo international understanding of Japan’s move to become a military power.”

Japan’s efforts towards the amelioration of these security dilemmas and

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or other potential dilemmas revolving around the geopolitics in East Asia could be further achieved through 1) delinking of historical revisionism from Japanese proactive pacifism; 2) the strengthening of Japan’s multilayered security network including the U.S.-Japan alliance and 3) further development of bilateral partnerships, trilaterals as well as other multilateral mechanisms to promote peace and prosperity in the region. However, not only Japan’s domestic dilemmas over proactive pacifism but also the changing geopolitical situation in the region will impact greatly on how Japan can expand its security parameters through proactive pacifism to achieve regional peace and prosperity.

Conclusion

As discussed in this paper, Japan faces some dilemmas regarding its proactive pacifism in Asia. Questions still remain about how PM Abe is implementing and or supporting to policies to carry out proactive pacifism including the recent Japanese Cabinet decision to reinterpret Article 9 to recognize the right to exercise “collective self defense” with certain limitations. Post Second World War, Japan has emphasized its pacifism and then its power as a global civilian nation. The present proactive pacifism goes beyond those past parameters to bring Japan’s movement towards normal national status even further. It could also be perceived as a pragmatic approach to address traditional and non-traditional threats to Japan’s sovereignty and national interests.

What kinds of dilemmas, however, are caused by PM Abe’s implementation of proactive pacifism? Specifically, they include as previously discussed in this paper:

1) promotion of proactive pacifism without further reconciliation about the past with Asian neighbors

2) speedy enactment of legislation, such as, the Special Intelligence Protection Law without sufficient checks and balances and or protection of citizens’ rights to implement proactive pacifism.

3) Japanese Cabinet approval of the reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow the exercise of “collective self defense” with certain limitations but without sufficient public support or internal political support.

4) strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance versus the formation of a more autonomous foreign policy

5) building up national defense including the strengthening of a multilayered security system while trying to avoid the creation of a security dilemma

6) increasing security expenditures while balancing the recovery of the Japanese economy

7) overcoming doubts about U.S. defense of Japan given U.S. geopolitical, economic and or domestic political difficulties

8) quelling geopolitical disputes with Asian neighbors in the midst of economic rivalry and interdependence

These dilemmas are not insurmountable, albeit some are more difficult than others to resolve. Amelioration of these dilemmas in part ‘relies on the political will of not only Japan but the actors in the region.’ For example, al-
though the U.S. is rebalancing to Asia, its own geopolitical, economic and political troubles could constrain the range of actions during a contingency in the Asia Pacific region. While neither power wishes to be entrapped in unnecessary conflicts in the region, both the U.S. and Japan needs to work towards the amelioration of tensions. The U.S. contributes to this amelioration, for example, through diplomacy and strengthening its own security network in the Asia Pacific.

Besides strengthening the alliance with the U.S., Japan should also continue to work on building up its multi-layered security network which already includes a defense agreement with Australia, capacity building activities in Southeast Asia, a partnership with India as well as involvement in different multilateral mechanisms which include discussion on security matters. Japan’s exercise of its soft power including diplomacy as well as confidence building measures to allay misperceptions about Japan’s build up of defensive capabilities including joint missile defense and maritime defense is also essential.

Japan, in addition to these policies, needs to address the issue of historical revisionism. Officially delinking historical revisionism from its proactive pacifism and reassuring other actors in the region that Japan is invested in “future oriented relationships” in the region will help to foster deeper reconciliation between Japan and its neighbors. Although there are various ways to view history not only in Japan but in its neighboring countries, there is need for further exchanges between Japan and its Asian neighbors about the past and future official actions to address lingering resentment and anger.

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http://csis.org/files/publication/Pac 1337.pdf
over historical matters and territorial disputes. When each side reaches a point of ignoring the other; refusing to meet at top levels and or creating policy impasses, as is occurring between Japan and South Korea as well as Japan and China, this is an unhealthy situation for the stability of the region. At the same time this friction impedes Japan’s efforts towards effective proactive pacifism.

Finally, proactive pacifism in itself is not unrealistic policy orientation or of itself a negative dynamic. It can be considered to be the next evolution in Japan’s gradual transformation towards a normal nation. While PM Abe re-framing of Japan’s security identity is partly a continuation of his unfinished normal nationalist agenda from his first administration, expansion of Japan’s present proactive pacifism parameters and its implementation are still a work in progress. Whether Prime Minister Abe’s brand of normal nationalism will continue to inform Japan’s evolution towards a normal nation, depends on this administration’s ability to successfully build support for his implementation of proactive pacifism. At the same time, questions remain about the urgency and formulation of Japan’s national response to the new regional and global security normal without national consensus and amelioration of geopolitical tensions.
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