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Abstract

The paper aims to seek the impacts of the Obama administration's ambiguity on Japan's security policy that guides the development of Japan Self-Defense Force. The significance of the study lies on the fact that most studies focused mainly only on the nature of the US ambiguity and rationales behind that, yet few of them touched on its impacts on broader regional security context. Also, Japan's security policy has been mostly linked to North Korean threat and China's assertiveness. Instead, this paper provides a groundbreaking linkage between the Obama administration's ambiguity and the change in security policy of Japan.

To reach the findings, the paper identifies the existence of Obama's ambiguity in the form of simultaneous "China Engagement" diplomacy" and "China Containment" diplomacy in the context of Japan's security. Based on the author's designed framework and study of official security policies of Japan, finally, the paper argues that Obama's ambiguity in the context of Japan's security did exist, and it affected Japan's security policy in two ways in the form of "dilemma of deterrence". On the one hand, "China Engagement" diplomacy" unintentionally pushed Japan to unilaterally restructure its self-defense policies, while on the other hand, "China Containment" diplomacy intentionally upgraded Japan's self-defense capacities through bilateral cooperation under the military aspect of the US Rebalance to Asia. Either way would have inevitable implications on regional security as Japan is one of the key players in the region.

Keywords: Ambiguity, Japan Self-Defense Force, Security Policy, "China Engagement" diplomacy, "China Containment" diplomacy, Dilemma of Deterrence.

1. Introduction

The end of the Cold War resulted in the rise of the US as the victor, who has maintained a strong leadership position in the world. In terms of economy, it shares the largest GDP and establishes many economic deals with various nations (Chang, 2017). Militarily, it possesses the most powerful army supported by the most military bases around the world (Project, 2015) (Vine, 2015). Thus, despite the rise of many super powers and the newly constructed multipolar world, the US remains a global hegemon critical to the world peace and stability (Webb & Krasner, 1989, pp. 183-198).

Guided by that notion, it is interesting to examine how the US engagement in particular region of the world could impact on the security of that region per se. One way the US engagement could be affecting the regional security would be its ambiguity in the commitment to the security of that particular region. One region that is of great relevance to this issue would be East Asia, where the US long-lived allies—South Korea and Japan—are located, and where the security issues are of worldly concern.

2. Problem Statement:

Most of the literature and theories have touched upon the rationales and nature of the US ambiguity and its historical context in East Asia. However, there have been scarcely any discussion on the impacts of the US ambiguity on the broader context of regional security.

In this context, Japan would be an interesting sample to investigate due to the fact that there remains loophole in the literature concerning the role of the US ambiguity behind the change in Japan's security policy, which is critically influential in shaping the tension and security environment in the region—most works attributed the restructure to China's assertiveness and North Korean threats. Moreover, Japan is chosen because the Obama administration appeared to be quite ambiguous in its diplomatic maneuver with China with respect to Japan's security, while it had been relatively resolute in dealing with the Korean peninsula issue.

Hence, the findings would yield both theoretical contribution to the existing "Hegemonic Stability Theory"—by adding the impacts of the ambiguous hegemon—and empirical significance to assess the influence of the US engagement in the security policy of Japan, who is one of the key players in the regional security affairs.

2.1 Research Objectives:

The objectives of this study, therefore, are to:

- 1) identify the existence of the US ambiguity in the Obama administration with regards to Japan's security, and how such ambiguity, if any, was constructed.
- 2) assess the impacts of such ambiguity on Japan's security policy, particularly the policy that shapes the development of Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF).

2.2 Research Questions:

a) Main Research Question:

- 1) How did the Obama administration's ambiguity impact on Japan's Security Policy?

b) Sub Research Questions:

- 1) What were the signals of the Obama administration's "China Engagement" diplomacy with regards to Japan's security?
- 2) What were the impacts of the Obama administration's "China Engagement" diplomacy on Japan's security policy?
- 3) What were the signals of the Obama administration's "China Containment" diplomacy with regards to Japan's security?
- 4) What were the impacts of the Obama administration's "China Containment" diplomacy on Japan's security policy?

2.3 Hypothesis:

The author would hypothesize that the Obama administration's ambiguity might have existed in the form of simultaneous "China Engagement" and "China Containment" diplomacy in the context of Japan's security. Such ambiguity would inevitably have impacted on Japan's revised security policy that would guide JSDF capacity to move in increasing manner both unilaterally and bilaterally with the US.

3. Literature Review:

The author has reviewed a great number of literature concerning this topic and categorized the ideas into 5 themes, namely the brief historical evolvement of JSDF, the role of recent different Japanese domestic administrations in the security policies, the US hegemony in Asia, the US ambiguity in general, and the US ambiguity in East Asia, in particular on Japan.

Firstly, it should be noted that Japan's security has been the main responsibility of JSDF, which is the unified military force of Japan established in 1954 in charge of defending the nation. In light of the 1960 Mutual Security Treaty that obliges the US to assist Japan in case of military attack, the role of JSDF has been largely defensive in nature (M. o. F. A. o. Japan, 1996).

Historically, the development and evolvement of JSDF had been closely intertwined with the US assistance as guided by the 1960 Mutual Security Treaty per se, its 1997 amendment, and the 2005 redefined version (M. o. F. A. o. Japan, 1996) (Rice, Rumsfield, Machimura, & Ohno, 2005). By then, however, JSDF still adhered closely to the principle of non-existence of collective self-defense (Cossa & Glosserman, 2005, p. 14).

Secondly, it is worth examining the role that the recent different Japanese administrations played in the security policies of Japan. There has been a mainstream view that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by Shinzo Abe from 2012, was relatively more military transformative or revolutionary than the previous Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) (2009-2012). However, (Liff, 2015) made a thought provoking observation that the Abe administration did not really transform but instead only continue the long term trend of Japan's defense policy measures by the previous administrations, either LDP or DPJ. That implies that the change in domestic administrations does not play a decisive role in the change in Japan's security policy at all. That would pave the way for the study of external factors that could play complimentary role with the domestic factor in shaping security policy of Japan, one of which is the impact of the US ambiguity.

Thirdly, with regards to the US hegemony in Asia, there are two distinct academic views as to whether the US hegemony is indispensable for the regional security. Mearsheimer (2014, p. 03), pointed towards the existence of the US regional hegemony and off-shore balancer in Asia. Then, a group of scholars including Ikenberry (2004, pp. 353-367), Goh (2005), (Wang, 2013, pp. 01-34), Mearsheimer (2014, p. 01), and Chiang (2015, pp. 01-13), among others,

acknowledged the indispensability of the US hegemony or intervention in the region to insure peace and stability as well as to counter-balance China's rise.

Meanwhile, there are also few scholars who insisted on going against that view, by instead, arguing against the need of the US hegemony in the region. For example, Cartalucci (2016) accused the US as the opportunist, who had tried to benefit strategically from regional instability, while Beeson (2006, pp. 541-560) even moved further to assert that the region would even be more peaceful without the US intervention, as Asian nations would have found it more compelling to cooperate collectively.

Fourthly, the US ambiguity in general should not be deemed as a new phenomenon as it existed since the Cold War, which could partly be responsible for the rise of China. The ambiguity then lingered across the turn of the century (O'Donnell, 2013, p. iii). Particularly, Kausikan (2016, p. 09) claimed that the ambiguity continued till the Obama administration, which was quite fluctuating in its two terms—the second term was less focusing in Asia, by instead shifting to the Middle East.

Christensen (2006, pp. 81-126) explained the existence of the US ambiguity since its inception as the policy to benefit from regional intervention in Asia. On the one hand, the US tries to counter China to reassure its allies, while on the other hand, it also needs to appease China to avoid unnecessary turbulent confrontation, which could affect mutual interest cooperation. Therefore, maintaining hedging strategy—countering and cooperative in nature—with China would be the optimum option. However, according to Rachman (2014), such US ambiguity “had only been sufficient to antagonize China but not sufficient to reassure its allies.”

Lastly, the existence of the US ambiguity could also be perceived in East Asia, in particular, where some of the key US allies—South Korea and Japan—are situated. In Japan context, Klare (2014) asserted that the US had not been sufficiently absolute in its commitment to protect Japan's sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute with China since it still opted for neutrality and refrained from taking side over the question of ultimate sovereignty. Moreover, in other issues between Japan and China such as the Yasukuni issue, the US did not support Japan's position to visit the shrine at all, as it could draw dissenting reactions from China (Nishiyama, 2013).

Singh (2014) viewed such moves as the US ambiguity in its foreign policy towards Japan, which is based on carefully calculated intention to maintain good relations with both Japan and

China. Rachman (2014) also added that the Obama administration was not only ambiguous in its rhetoric against China with regards to Japan's security, but also in terms of action, as in the case of its unsubstantial action against China's ADIZ on the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands between Japan and China.

4. Methodology

This study is qualitative and retrospective in nature by accumulating primary data from the government documents and publications of the US and Japan as well as international news; and secondary data from academic journals and articles. The author would assess the impacts of the US ambiguity on Japan's security policy by comparing the tones and wordings of the official defense policy documents or guidelines of Japan in different versions plus interpretation and discourse-analyses of the data.

The study will be guided by certain concepts and their conceptual meanings as well as theoretical framework as following. With regards to the concepts, firstly, "ambiguity" is defined as the fluctuating foreign policies of the Obama administration towards Japan security through "China Engagement" diplomacy" and "China Containment" diplomacy, simultaneously.

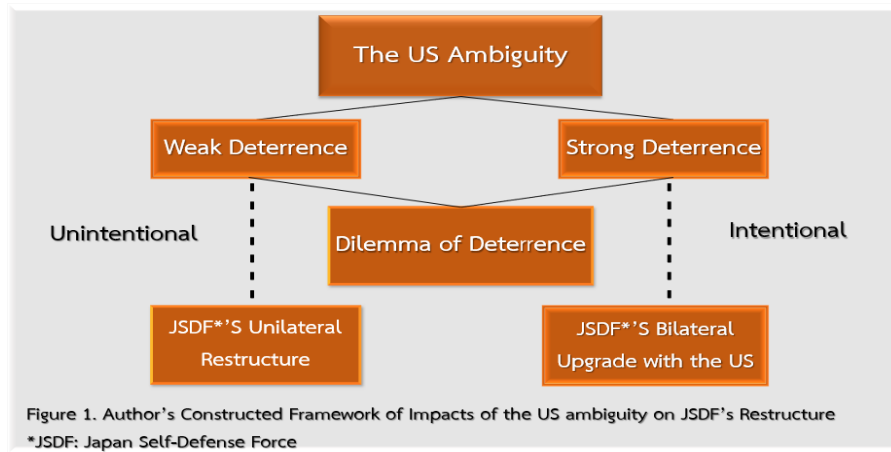
"China Engagement" diplomacy" refers to any moves of the US towards China, including weak reactions towards China 's assertiveness and proactive friendly moves towards China, that could have deliberately compromised Japan's security. "China Containment" diplomacy refers to the move of the US to upgrade US-Japan alliance that could enhance Japan's security interest against China—in this case, the US Rebalance or Pivot to Asia.

Secondly, the impact on "security policy" is indicated by the change in Japan's self-defense force posture as guided or initiated by official policies. In this regard, JSDF would be examined as the key sample variable.

Regarding the theoretical framework (see Figure 1, below), the author adopts the notion of "dilemma of deterrence" under the lens of "defensive realism" of "neo-realism" theory. In that sense, the author hypothesizes that the US ambiguity, under the form of simultaneous "China Engagement" diplomacy" and "China Containment" diplomacy could be equated with "weak deterrence" and "strong deterrence" against China. That, according to "dilemma of deterrence", would end up in producing inevitable impacts on Japan's security policy, both

unintentionally unilaterally, and intentionally bilaterally, which would have inevitable implications on regional security.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



5. Obama Administration's Ambiguity on Japan's Security

The Obama administration's ambiguity, as mentioned, is constituted by both "China Engagement" diplomacy and "China Containment" diplomacy in the context of Japan's security. The author has identified and categorized the instances of "China Engagement" diplomacy into two themes.

The first theme, which is "the US weak reaction towards China's assertiveness" contains the US weakness in "gray zone disputes" (disputes below conventional military scale) between China and Japan in Senkaku/Diaoyu issue and the US unsubstantial reaction towards China's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

The second theme, which is "the US proactive friendly moves towards China", is composed of the US respect of China's "Core Interests" in 2009 and the US respect of China's "New Model of Great Power Relations" in 2013. Meanwhile, the author has regarded the US "Rebalance or Pivot to Asia" as the instance of "China Containment" diplomacy.

Regarding the Obama administration's "China Containment" diplomacy in the context of Japan's security, the author employed the "US Rebalance/Pivot" to Asia in 2011 as the indicator. Even though the US had been constraining Japan's military capacity since the end of World War II, part of the US pivot was to update its allies, including Japan, militarily. There

are two main reasons that the US needed to upgrade Japan's military capacity in the pivot. The first reason was to elevate Japan's decreased geo-strategic importance for the US due to the emerging strategic importance of other US allies and the development of China's Anti Access/ Anti Denial (A2AD) strategy (Daniel Katz, 2010) (Dian, 2013, p. 06). The second reason was the fact that Japan could not solely upgrade its own military capacity without the US assistance due to the restricted defense expenditure and limited defense production.

The evidence of the occurrence of both "China Engagement" diplomacy" and "China Containment" diplomacy of the Obama administration with regards to Japan's security could serve as, according to the author's framework, the proof of the existence of the Obama administration's "ambiguity" on Japan's security.

Accordingly, the next section will assess the impacts of the "China Engagement" and "China Containment" diplomacy of the US on Japan's Security Policy.

6. Impacts of Obama's "China Engagement" Diplomacy

6.1. The Cases of the US Weak Reactions towards China's Assertiveness

6.1.1. The US Weakness in 'Gray-Zone' Disputes and Impact on Japan's 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG)

This section explains how the US weak reactions towards China's assertiveness in the Senkaku/Diaoyu disputes between China and Japan could impact on Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF)'s restructure. The first instance of the weak reaction towards China's assertiveness is the US weakness in the "gray zone" disputes between China and Japan. "Gray-zone disputes" are disputes in the form of confrontations over territory, sovereignty and economic interests that were not potential to escalate to wars (Berkofsky, 2010, p. 36). The author argues that such weakness had a strong impact on the formulation of the 2010 NDPG of Japan. Below are the analysis that explains the link between that weakness and its impacts.

The main rationale behind the adoption of the 2010 NDPG was to enhance the defense capability of JSDF in responses to the growing threats towards Japan's security, particularly the assertiveness of China in the maritime disputes with Japan. In particular, the guidelines did point out to the need to strengthen deterrence in the regional security environment around Japan by upgrading from "Basic Defense Force Posture"

to “Dynamic Defense Force Posture” (t. S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2010, pp. 06-07). Instead of altering basic values Japan adheres to, the NDPG’s main aim is to upgrade its ability to protect itself amidst China’s assertiveness in the islands in the “gray-zone” disputes (Berkofsky, 2010, p. 36). Meanwhile, the US was weak in areas of the disputes, because the disputes are not covered by the US-Japan security treaty, which covers only the military attack against Japan (Xu, 2014).

Regarding China’s assertiveness, the 2010 NDPG mentioned “China” repeatedly and highlighted China’s assertiveness, including its aggression in the Senkaku/Diaoyu disputes and military modernization (Berkofsky, 2010, p. 33) (t. S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2010, pp. 03-04). Interestingly, compared to the preceding NDPGs in 1976, 1995, and 2004, which had been designed based on the Cold War, Post-Cold War, and fight of terrorism theme, respectively, the 2010 NDPG was formulated by considering the increasing intensity of security environment surrounding Japan, principally, the threats from China (Ministry of Defense, 2014, pp. 139-140). Moreover, comparatively, the 2010 NDPG was the first of its kind to upgrade JSDF from “basic defense” to “dynamic defense” force posture (Ministry of Defense, 2014, p. 141).

Actually, the 2010 NDPG also stressed the importance of the US-Japan alliance; however, given the US irrelevance in the “Gray Zone” disputes, which occurred frequently between China and Japan in the Senkaku/Diaoyu area, the 2010 NDPG’s focus was more on Japan’s aim of self-restructure of its own defense capacity. Indeed, Japan’s adoption of the 2010 NDPG presented a strong signal that the Obama administration’s deterrence against China in the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue was not sufficient, and that Japan needed to restructure its self-defense. The impact, as a consequence, is the Guidelines that historically shifted JSDF from the “basic defense force” to “dynamic defense force”.

6.1.2. The US Unsubstantial Reaction towards China’s ADIZ and Impact on Japan’s 2013 National Security Strategy

The US unsubstantial reaction towards China’s unilateral establishment of ADIZ was indicated by the inconsistent expressions between the US Defense Department, who expressed denial against the ADIZ and the US State Department, who advised all the US airlines and aircrafts to comply with the ADIZ (Drifte, 2014) (Aoki, 2013; Drifte, 2014)

. Such incomplete or unassured reaction had a strong link with the formulation of Japan's 2013 National Security Strategy. The policy document has cited one of the main threats explicitly from China by claiming that China has been rapidly advancing its military capabilities by increasing its military budget and has taken coercive actions including in the East China Sea (t. S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2013, pp. 12-13).

The Most important intrusion, according to the document, was the China's unilateral establishment of ADIZ in 2013 over the disputed area that, according to Japan, appears to unduly infringe the freedom of overflight above the high seas (t. S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2013, pp. 12-13). The document also emphasized the urge for Japan to elevate the US-Japan security arrangements, which is vital for the security of Japan (t. S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2013, pp. 21-22). That could be implied as Japan's move in response to the assertiveness of China over the dispute and the US unsubstantial reaction.

The impacts of the National Security Strategy on JSDF restructure are also prominent. First, it laid down the initiatives to increase the dynamism of the alliance including "Further Strengthening of Japan-U.S. Security and Defense Cooperation in a Wide Range of Areas" and "Ensuring a Stable Presence of the U.S. Forces in Japan" (t. S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2013, pp. 21-22). Moreover, the document also highlights the objective to strengthen JSDF's internal capabilities as well as including the "Renewal of Arms Export Ban", which was important in developing the military industry and production (t. S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2013, pp. 12-13) (Council, 2014).

6.2. The Cases of the US Proactive Friendly Moves towards China

6.2.1. Japan's Reinterpretation of Its Constitution (2014)

The US proactive friendly moves towards China, particularly Obama's respect of China's "Core Interests" and China's "New Model of Great Power Relations", couple with the inactive moves towards China's assertiveness, to some extent, could have impacted on Japan's attempt to reinterpret its pacific constitution in 2014, which was enacted in 2015.

Firstly, the reinterpretation presented clearly the aim of increasing the dynamism and proactivity of JSDF (Smith, 2014). Secondly, among the six changes or threats pushing Japan to reinterpret the constitution, two changes are remarkably relevant to the US “China Engagement” diplomacy. First, the panel highlighted the China’s military modernization, and coercive territorial expansion in East China Sea, including Senkaku/Diaoyu islands (Security, 2014, p. 13). Second, the panel expressed the concern for the alliance with the US. The report of the panel acknowledged Japan’s need of the US for the sake of Japan’s security. However, the report also mentioned that Japan could no longer unilaterally depend solely on the US. Instead, the panel had the urge to allow Japan to undertake a more active role and capability of its SDF (Security, 2014, p. 14).

As a consequence, the reinterpretation would be potential in presenting the impacts on the reform of JSDF. The core of the reinterpretation of Japan’s postwar constitution is the aim to allow JSDF to be legally able to use force alongside other national militaries, a right that JSDF had always been refused for half a century. The reinterpretation called for comprehensive review of the limitations on the JSDF, argued to renounce the use of minimal necessary amount of force in its effort to defend Japan, and stressed the need for JSDF to be able to use its weapons when operating with others (Security, 2014).

7. Impacts of Obama’s “China Containment” Diplomacy: The US Rebalance to Asia (2011)

The author regards the US update of Japan’s military capacity per se, in the form of the US Rebalance or Pivot to Asia (2011), as the direct impacts on the restructure of Japan’s security policy, specifically on the implementation of the 2010 NDPG, the formulation of the 2013 NDPG, and the formulation of the 2015 Revised Defense Guidelines for Japan-US Cooperation.

7.1. Implementation of 2010 NDPG

The US pivot had strong impacts on the implementation of the 2010 NDPG to achieve the “dynamic defense force” through Dynamic Defense Cooperation (DDC); Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Planning (ISR), joint military exercise, and increased access

to the common use of each other's facilities (Ishihara, 2012). Interestingly, the 2010 NDPG was the first of its kind to have been assisted by the US, as part of the Pivot to Asia.

Mainly, the 2010 NDPG set forth a ground breaking direction from its predecessors—1976, 1995, and 2004 versions—from 'Basic Defense Force Concept' to 'Dynamic Defense Force' (t. S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2010). As a result, the US pivot had been proved to be very critically significant to the implementation of the dynamic defense posture direction of the 2010 NDPG, which was very relevant to the US strategic interests, such as in terms of Air-Sea battle tactics against A2/AD strategy of China (Yamaguchi, 2013) (Dian, 2013, p. 04).

7.2. Formulation of 2013 NDPG

The US pivot, to a great extent, also led to the revision of the 2010 NDPG, which is the formulation of the 2013 NDPG. The link between the pivot and the 2013 NDPG is that the only difference between the 2013 NDPG and its 1976, 1995, 2004, and 2010 predecessors is the explicit notion of the 'US Rebalance to Asia' as the main rationale of the 2013 NDPG (S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2013a, p. 04).

The impacts the US pivot had on the 2013 NDPG that could shape JSDF restructure are the plan to enhance the US-Japan alliance to strengthen JSDF capability, including in the 'gray zone' dispute; to expand cooperation in a broad range of fields; and to improve measures of stationing of US forces in Japan (S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2013b, pp. 08-10). Compared to the 2010 NDPG, the 2013 revised version was expanded in more depth and details, while the most significant difference in impacts between them is the addition of the Pivot contribution to the US-Japan alliance update or JSDF capabilities (S. C. a. t. Cabinet, 2010, pp. 07-08).

7.3. Formulation of 2015 Revised Defense Guidelines for Japan-US Cooperation:

Last but not least, the US pivot also impacted on the formulation of the 2015 Revised Defense Guidelines on Japan-US Cooperation. There are three evidences to suggest the link between the US pivot and the Guidelines. Firstly, the 2015 Guidelines is the first of its kind to include "seamless, robust, flexible, and effective" bilateral responses in the military cooperation between Japan and the US (Ministry of Defense, 2015, p. 01). Secondly, the 2015 Guidelines expanded the cooperation between the US and Japan to cover the domains of space and

cyber, which were not covered in the 1978 and 1997 Defense Guidelines (Ministry of Defense, 2015, pp. 21-22). Thirdly, the 2015 Guidelines is the only one among its predecessors to include the cooperation in defense equipment and technology between the US and Japan (M. o. D. o. Japan, 2015, pp. 22-23). These three aspects are essentially parts of the US Pivot's alliance update.

The impacts of the 2015 Guidelines on JSDF restructure are the fact that first, it allows the JSDF to operate through seamless, robust, flexible, and effective bilateral responses due to the bilateral security and defense cooperation between the US and JSDF. Alliance Coordination Mechanism, Enhanced Operational Coordination, and Bilateral Planning were all included (M. o. D. o. Japan, 2015, pp. 01-04). Second, the 2015 Guidelines also touches upon how the US and Japan should handle the gray zone incidents with China (M. o. D. o. Japan, 2015, p. 04). Third, the 2015 Guidelines lists down how the US and JSDF could improve their capability in Cooperative Measures from Peacetime (M. o. D. o. Japan, 2015, pp. 05-15).

8. Conclusion

To sum up, there are two main findings reached with the guidance of the research question. The first finding is that the Obama administration's ambiguity in the context of Japan's security did exist, and it had been constructed in the form of simultaneous "China Engagement" diplomacy" and "China Containment" diplomacy in the context of Japan's security.

"China Engagement" diplomacy" is indicated by two main themes. The first theme, in the case study of Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, is the US's weak reactions towards China's assertiveness against Japan. The instances of such weak reactions are the US weakness in the "gray-zone" disputes between China and Japan in the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands (2008-2010), and the US unsubstantial reaction towards China's ADIZ over the Senkaku/Diaoyu disputed zone in 2013. The former instance impacted on the formulation of Japan's 2010 NDPG, while the latter impacted on the formulation of Japan's 2013 National Security Strategy, both of which could boost the internal capacity building of the JSDF.

The second theme is the US's proactive friendly moves towards China. The instances of such moves are the US respect of China's "Core Interest" in 2009 and of China's "New Model of Great Power Relations" in 2013. Both instances, coupled with the first theme, could have impacted on the subsequent reinterpretation of Japan's constitution in 2014.

Meanwhile, "China Containment" diplomacy is evident by the US Rebalance to Asia, or shortly the US pivot. Regarding Japan's security policy, the US pivot is found to be impactful on the implementation of Japan's 2010 NDPG, the formulation of the 2013 NDPG, and the formulation of the 2015 Revised Defense Guidelines for Japan-US cooperation. All of them are found to be critically significant in upgrading JSDF's capacity.

Those guidelines, security policy, and reinterpretation of constitution issued by the cabinet and advisory panel, then, had been well incorporated in concrete policy and framework of action by the 2015 New Security Bills, specifically Legislation for Peace and Security, that cover a broad range of areas including Peace Keeping Operation, gray zone scenarios and collective self-defense. The New Security Bills explicitly express Japan's policy to be more active in collective self-defense globally and to carry more responsibility in the US-Japan alliance (Borah, 2015) (Ministry of Defense, 2016). That would serve as a response to mend the ambiguous alliance to strengthen the deterrence against external threat, including China.

Superficially, it seems that "China Engagement" diplomacy was transformed to "China Containment" diplomacy, with the introduction of the "US Rebalance to Asia". However, it is not valid to claim that because "China Engagement" diplomacy still lingered even after the implementation of the pivot. Instead, it would be more justifiable to assert that the overall nature of the two types of diplomacy had been "simultaneous" rather than "transformative". That is what makes the diplomacy "ambiguous".

Moreover, it should be noted that the ambiguity existed, or in other words, the US employed both types of deterrence with clear intention, guided by the notion of "off-shore balancing" (Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 04). "China Containment" diplomacy was launched to mitigate the possibility of China becoming the regional hegemon and to maintain the alliance with Japan, while "China Engagement" diplomacy was constructed to ensure close collaboration with China in global issues of mutual interests. Meanwhile, the impacts of each type of deterrence are intentional and unintentional, respectively, as simply explained in the second finding below.

The second finding postulates that both “China Engagement” diplomacy and “China Containment” diplomacy had impacts on the restructure of Japan security policy by making it move in upgrading manner, in the form of “dilemma of deterrence”. In other words, on the one hand, Obama’s “China Engagement” diplomacy had rendered Japan less confident, thus “unintentionally” pushing it to “unilaterally” attempt to upgrade its defense policies. On the other hand, Obama’s “China Containment” diplomacy, launched in the form of the US Pivot to Asia, “intentionally” led to the direct upgrade of Japan’s self-defense policy through bilateral military assistance in various forms. Either way would have inevitable implications on regional security.

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