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**RIGHT, POWER, AND POLITICS?
US-JAPAN DIPLOMATIC ENCOUNTERS
IN THE POSTWAR ERA**

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Abstract: This paper examines three key moments in the United States-Japan relationship in the postwar period: the US Occupation, between 1945-52; the reversion of Okinawa, in 1972; and the transformation of the alliance in the mid-1990s. It identifies a power-justice nexus that explains Japan's greater or lesser diplomatic ability to shape its foreign policy vis-à-vis America. This nexus is highlighted in Thucydides' Melian Dialogue, stressing the underlying tension between right and might in state behaviour. The three case studies take into consideration not only the asymmetric distribution of power but also Japan's domestic politics, insofar as the latter impacts Tokyo's diplomatic leverage. By resorting to the founding documents that defined the relationship in these three moments, this study concludes Japan bargained for increasingly more satisfactory arrangements. Japan thus shifted from a position of client state to junior partner in a global alliance. These case studies further demonstrate the impact of the relative power distribution in Japan's diplomatic efforts, emphasizing external constraints on its foreign policy decision-making.

Key-words: Japan; United States; US-Japan Alliance; Foreign Policy; Melian Dialogue.

Resumo: Este trabalho analisa três momentos -chave na relação entre os Estados Unidos e o Japão no pós-II Guerra Mundial: a Ocupação norte-americana, entre 1945-52; a reversão de Okinawa, em 1972; e a transformação da aliança em meados dos anos 1990. O trabalho identifica um nexo entre poder e justiça que explica a maior ou menor habilidade do Japão elaborar a sua política externa vis-à-vis os Estados Unidos. Este nexo é realçado no Diálogo Meliano na obra de Tucídides, enfatizando a tensão prevalente entre direito e poder na acção dos estados. Os três casos de estudo tomam em consideração não só a assimetria na distribuição de poder mas também a política interna japonesa, particularmente no que concerne o seu impacto na posição negocial de Tóquio. Ao recorrer aos documentos basilares que definiram a relação nestes três momentos históricos, este estudo conclui que o Japão negociou acordos gradualmente mais satisfatórios. Consequentemente, o Japão transformou-se de um estado cliente para um parceiro júnior numa aliança global. Ademais, estes casos de estudo demonstram o impacto da distribuição relativa de poder nos esforços diplomáticos japoneses, realçando condicionalismos externos no seu poder de decisão em política externa.

Palavras-chave: Japão; Estados Unidos; Aliança Nipo-Americana; Política Externa; Diálogo Meliano

“[...] since you [Melians] know as well as we [Athenians] do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.”

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Chapter XVII, The Melian Dialogue

Power and justice

International relations is the realm where different political actors vie for power, cooperating when they can, and conflicting when they must. Faced against the harsh realities of power politics, the structural effects of Social Darwinism cannot be completely eradicated; they can only be ameliorated, at best. As a result, the freedom of action of any actor is greatly conditioned - albeit not determined - by the relative distribution of power within the international system, as Morgenthau (2006: 539-568) pointed out, and Waltz explored. Consequently, the *raison d'être* of diplomacy is to address power asymmetries, advancing states' interests in peace (Robinson 1969: 188-9). In this sense, diplomacy is opposed to international violence, which can advance states' interests in war.

Diplomacy is one of the oldest international institutions, as understood in the English School of International Relations (Buzan 2004; Dunne 1998). In other words, it is an international social practice by which autonomous political actors interact, although Neumann (2003: 341-69) argues that this framework has seldom been applied in academic studies on diplomacy. At its core lies the quintessential tension illustrated by the famous Melian Dialogue of Thucydides' work on the Peloponnesian wars. The whole discussion between Melian and Greek diplomatic envoys revolved around power and justice, or the right of power as opposed to the power of right. In this celebrated exchange, the Athenians argued for their entitlement to occupy Melos due to their overwhelming power and need to protect its maritime empire. Thus, Athens' right of power should prevail. On the other hand, Melos highlighted its right to remain neutral in the coming war between Athens and Lacedaemon, hence preserving its autonomy. Ergo, the power of right should prevail over power politics. As I demonstrate below, this since between power and justice would play out well beyond Ancient Greek diplomatic encounters.

A second, important reference from antiquity further illustrates this underlying tension at the heart of diplomacy. The Romans revered a god named Janus; often portrayed as a two-faced representation, Janus symbolised transience. Overseeing the beginning and ending of all things, he was quite naturally associated with decisions between peace and war, cooperation and conflict. Concordantly, the image of Janus has often been featured in studies of world politics as a metaphor for interstate relations, inexorably addressing their asymmetries of power and interest.

Taking this into consideration, I will now examine three case studies of Japanese diplomacy in the postwar era. Applying this basic dichotomy between the right of power and power of right, I will demonstrate how Japan coped with the asymmetry of power and interest in its relations with the United States during the Occupation years, the process leading to Okinawa's reversion, and the transformation of the alliance in the 1990s.

Japanese postwar encounters with America

After these general considerations about diplomacy, it is now appropriate to discuss the particular situation of Japan. Looking at the distribution of power alone (e.g. military balance, aggregated GDP, demographics, territory, etc.), Japan would stand out as a client state to the United States during most of the Cold War, a position which has significantly improved since the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a typical client state, Japan depended in part or wholly on a more powerful state for its security and survival. In this case, the United States military provided the assurances to Japan that its security was protected against possible Soviet external aggression and internal subversion, as per the provisions of Article V of the US-Japan Security Treaty (1960).

Given this power asymmetry between the two countries, Japan's freedom of action is inexorably limited by the predicament of its dependence on America's security commitment. This reality in turn reduced the scope of diplomatic activities, insofar as they did not interfere with the basic tenets of the security relation. Consequently, we can adapt the Clausewitzian (I: 1) maxim by stating that diplomacy is the continuation of power by peaceful means. This understanding runs against what Sharp (2009: 1-72) called the revolutionary intent, an idea that builds on Carr's distinction between utopians and realists to declare that diplomats often strive to pursue ephemeral hopes of changing the structuring pillars of the international system. That history proves time and again is that power and interests prevail in a situation of security dependence, precisely the one Japan found itself in during most of the postwar period.

To further elaborate on this, three case studies will illustrate how Japan dealt with the tension between power and justice in its relationship with the United States.

The US Occupation

Japan had come out of the Second World War as a nation utterly defeated. After bombing Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Japanese expansion in the Asia-Pacific region had far extended its territory and power beyond the main islands into the central Pacific and Indian oceans, eventually culminating in the Battle of Midway of June 1942. In this fateful clash between the Imperial Japanese Navy and United States Navy, the former lost its victorious momentum as the latter took on the offensive. Battle after battle, the United States pressed Japan back from its imperial possessions, cutting off its commercial and trade lifelines upon which the country depended for survival. The war culminated in the first and only mass landing of US troops in the Japanese mainland of Okinawa, where a bloody and gruesome battle unfolded to Japan's disadvantage, leading to an outright defeat. From there, large-scale bombings flattened virtually all urban centres, including industrial and military infrastructures.

Total defeat was a matter of time, and the race was on between the United States and the Soviet Union for the shaping of postwar Japan. As Hasegawa (2005) demonstrated, the dropping of the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, forced the terms of the Potsdam Declaration (1945) calling for unconditional surrender. At the same time, it ensured a near-monopoly by the United States in dictating the terms of surrender and occupation to Japan whilst reducing to a minimum the leverage of other Allied governments, namely the Soviet Union (Hasegawa 2005: 252-89). Thus began America's intimate alliance relationship with Japan.

The early stages of the Occupation were largely influenced by two overriding objectives: democratisation and demilitarisation. The latter corresponded to a simple expedient of eliminating Japan's war fighting capability in order to prevent it from posing any future threats to the United States or the region (Harries and Harries 1987). In the words consecrated in the Potsdam Declaration (1945: 6):

"There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest, for we insist that a new order of peace, security and justice will be impossible until irresponsible militarism is driven from the world."

The former, democratisation, amounted to a fully-fledged social engineering program to alter the human and political fabric of Japanese society. Culture and education would obviously play a key role in the efforts towards democratisation, as Takemae (2002: 348-404) demonstrated, as much represented a dramatic departure from previous Japanese practices. In this regard, part of the reason why the Supreme Command Allied Powers (SCAP) was so adamant to pursue democratisation is found in America's own domestic politics, including

its identity and sense of mission in the world (Kissinger 1969). As Mintz and DeRouen (2010: 121-46) pointed out, factors such as public opinion, economic organisation, and political discourse can greatly impact the pursuit of foreign policy, thereby taking hold of the diplomatic orientation. That was certainly at play in the US vis-à-vis postwar Japan. This phenomenon was further compounded by the very historical formation of the United States, allied with a sense of manifest destiny and missionary crusade, embodying a drive to shape the environment after itself, as Smith (1994) argued. It is in light of these internal factors, whose more immediate origins arguably date back to President Wilson (1917)'s "War Message" and subsequent (1918) "Fourteen Points" that America's goal of democratising Japan needs to be examined.

Demilitarisation was a relatively smooth process. Conversely, several setbacks hindered America's push toward complete Japanese democratisation. As the global postwar settlement began to take the form of an East-West confrontation, headed by the United States and Soviet Union, Japan's vulnerability against Soviet military aggression and internal subversion prompted SCAP to revert some of its policies and favour a more realist approach on both fronts (demilitarisation and democratisation). This change of course was immediately endorsed by the Far Eastern Commission (1950: 26/2/1946-10/7/1947), the multinational UN-body responsible for managing Japan's recovery and socialisation into the new world order. As a FEC report stated: "By the time the Far Eastern Commission began its operation, [...] a considerable number of exclusively United States policies had already been transmitted to the Supreme Commander, and the occupation of Japan based upon these policies was already under way."

During this period, Japan's role was confined to that of a client state. Deprived of formal sovereignty due to the US occupation, diplomacy – if diplomacy it was – was restricted to direct negotiations with SCAP and Washington. Togo (2010: 31-51) convincingly argued that Japanese diplomacy between the landing of General MacArthur in Japan on August 30 1945, and the treaty of San Francisco on September 8 1951, was exclusively concentrated on regaining legal sovereignty. This was the explicit requirement for Japan to resume its rightful place amongst nations. Only then would Tokyo restore its ability to deal diplomatically with other countries besides the United States.

Until that objective was achieved, American power and interests impinged on Japan's own. All Tokyo could do was to ameliorate the realities of power and seek windows of opportunity to affirm its interests in the highly restrained environment set up by the occupation authorities. The narratives developed around this inescapable paradigm, as indicated by Hein (2011: 579-599), reflected this asymmetry, despite occasional contestations. They spoke of suspended sovereignty, rule-by-proxy, MacArthur as the new shogun.

The draft and adoption of the cultural and education reforms is particularly illuminating of this degree of subordination and of Japanese attempts to gain more space under Occupation authorities. As Takemae (2002: 352) observed,

“The Education Ministry’s plans feel short of the sweeping changes MacArthur’s headquarters demanded, but **Japanese anticipation of American intentions** enabled [Civil Information and Education Section] to accomplish its mission without further recourse to formal SCAP instructions, **ending the initial period of reform by decree.**”¹ A further and more glaring example pertains to the drafting and implementation of the Constitution (Moor and Robinson 2002: 93-110), first submitted and then highly constrained by the United States in a clear example of “neo-colonialism,” in the words of Dower (1999). Under the Occupation, Japan was in a situation in which MacArthur, but the SCAP at large, “ensconced himself in his headquarters, never associated with *hoi polloi*, granted audiences only to high officials and reverential distinguished visitors, issued edicts with imperious panache, and brooked no criticism,” much like the emperor and feudal shoguns of old (Dower 1999: 203-4).

In these exceptional conditions, therefore, diplomacy obeyed the right of power and any measure of success has to be employed in these terms. Regaining sovereignty was the primary objective. The San Francisco Treaty was only signed six years after the end of hostilities because power asymmetries were overwhelmingly in America’s favour. In the case of the Okinawa reversion, as I shall demonstrate next, the conditions of client statehood had been mitigated by the provisions of the San Francisco Peace Treaty and US-Japan Security Alliance of 1951.

Okinawa Reversion

Negotiations over the reversion of Okinawa once again demonstrated the interplay between power and justice in diplomacy and world politics. As the Cold War developed and Soviet militarism became an existential threat to Japan, its security alliance with the United States was of vital importance. In return for security guarantees, Japan helped advance America’s interests in East Asia vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. Concordantly, Japan had acquired relative power with respect to the United States, although the asymmetry of power and interests was still significantly to Japan’s disadvantage.

This strategic assessment was at the basis of a report by the US National Security Council (1960: 1), released in 1960:

“The chief task of US policy is to assure that Japan continues to exercise its international role predominantly in concert with Free World interests. The decision on Japan’s international orientation will be made by its own leaders on the basis of their assessment of its vital national interests and domestic political factors, **but US policy will have a crucial bearing on this determination because**

¹ My emphasis.

of Japan's critical dependence upon the United States for defence and trade."²

Japan's relatively stronger stance in the balance of power made the reversion of Okinawa not only possible but also a determining factor in the bilateral agenda.

Talks began due to the existence of what Reischauer (1960: 11-26) called "a broken dialogue" between the two allies. Driven by the imperatives of power politics in the aftermath of WWII, the United States had established full political and military authority over Okinawa. As the Soviet threat grew larger, the island was used as the cornerstone of US military presence in East Asia while contributing to the defence of Japan proper. However, the domestic situation in Japan had fundamentally changed since then. Beginning in the 1950s, there were repeated public calls for the full reversion of Okinawa to Japanese control, as the status of overt subordination became politically untenable.

Faced with the dilemma of power (agreeing with US calls for maintaining the *status quo*) and justice (agreeing with popular calls for reversion), the Japanese central government was hard pressed to make a decision in a classic case of external-domestic bargaining. As Putnam (1988: 434) noted, the "political complexities for the players in this two-level game are staggering. Any key player at the international table who is dissatisfied with the outcome may upset the game board, and conversely any leader who fails to satisfy his fellow players at the domestic table risks being evicted from his seat." The mass demonstrations of the 1960s made this all too clear.

At the domestic level, these divisions ran deep. The people of Okinawa had long resented discrimination suffered at the hands of the central government. Indeed, a distinction between Okinawans and mainlanders was a factor pervading the identity and politics of the prefecture, since the Meiji government annexed it by eliminating the former kingdom of the Ryukyu. That Okinawa had also been the only Japanese territory to ever experience a direct military invasion by the United States during WWII also contributed to a sense of distance from Tokyo, particularly bearing in mind the ultimate sacrifice Okinawans were demanded to pay for the protection of the Emperor and the empire (Cook and Cook 1993: 354-72).

To aggravate the situation, there was a political acquiescence in Tokyo that relegated Okinawa to a state of inferiority. Not only had the Emperor (1947; Despatch 1293) himself privately demonstrated his interest in support of a medium- to long-term lease of the islands to accommodate America's military presence, but local and central authorities turned a blind eye to the various demands made by local residents (Klein 1972: 1-20). These demands included, but were not restricted to, the application of justice, land reform, economic policy, travel permits to the mainland, infrastructure development, among many others.

This contempt was fuelled by a more general dissatisfaction by Japanese intellectuals and left-wing supporters who decried the unreasonable burdens

² My emphasis.

and asymmetries encompassed in the US-Japan alliance and overall US military presence in Japan. Being the first truly postwar generation, as Reischauer (1960: 26) remarked, the demonstrators were angered as much about the historical legacies of discrimination against Okinawans as the future of Japan's democracy. Aldous (2003: 148-66) drew a clear connection between the two when approaching the significance of the Koza riots of 1970 with the complex dynamics of Okinawan and mainland political identity and citizenship. Suddenly, local politics in islands far from Tokyo became an issue of national policy with strong implications to US-Japan bilateral relations.

In the end, Japanese diplomacy succeeded in pushing for the reversion of Okinawa, although not until sufficient provisions were made that guaranteed unimpeded access to US military operations in the islands. Despite the 1971 Okinawa Reversion Agreement, the bases would remain in place. After all, justice could only be promoted within the limited constraints of power politics, and albeit empowered, Japan remained a client state of the United States due to its security dependence vis-a-vis the Soviet threat. This predicament was made clear in the negotiations leading to the US-Japan Joint Statement (1969), particularly in points 5, 6, and 7, as well in private meetings with Assistant to National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger, as demonstrated by Wakaizumi (2002: 230-52). These negotiations restated the fundamental importance of Japan remaining a loyal ally for the US and a stern supporter for its East Asian regional strategy whilst emphasizing Tokyo's reliance on American support to its security.

Lastly, it is worthwhile noting that this diplomatic success also benefited from changing domestic preferences within the United States. At home, Americans they had, over time, grown more sympathetic toward the Okinawan case, especially Reischauer as ambassador to Japan between 1961-6 (1960; O'Brien 1969), but also in major media outlets such as the New York Times (Trumbull 1965). These changes notwithstanding, Mendel (1975: 406-12) showed that there remained a great deal of public resentment in Okinawa after the reversion, something that would later impact the bilateral alliance.

The third and final case study is altogether different. The transformations of the US-Japan alliance in the 1990s took place in the absence of an existential Soviet threat, while Japan, too, had become more powerful. At the same time, the United States was rethinking its global security strategy, and it depended largely on the Japanese commitment to become the lynchpin in its search for a new grand strategy.

The US-Japan alliance in the 1990s

The end of the Cold War opened up a stream of difficult questions to the US-Japan relations. Policymakers in Washington and Tokyo raised doubts as to whether the security alliance could survive in the absence of the common fear

of the Soviet enemy. Two episodes cast a shadow not only over the alliance, but even over the bilateral relationship as a whole.

The first came as a result of the Gulf War of 1990-91. Due to domestic constitutional constraints, Japan failed to commit troops to the massive coalition effort set up by the United States to remove Iraq from Kuwait. For the United States, Ambrosius (2006: 520) explained that in "the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War the ideal of collective security, rooted in a century of bitter experience and an integrated world economy, had finally become capable of realisation." Japan failed to follow suit. Instead, it committed only to support the war effort through financial means, namely around US\$ 13b. Furthermore, Kuwait omitted Japan from the list of nations that helped regain its independence, in a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times*. The experience was traumatic to Japan's diplomacy, and the ordeal became known as the "Gulf Shock" (Nakanishi 2011).

The resulting perceptions in Japan amounted to a fear that can be encapsulated as abandonment by the United States. As the international system rapidly changed and Washington redesigned its global strategy accordingly, the importance and ability of Japanese diplomacy to cope with such transformations appeared questionable at best.

The second episode took place in Okinawa in September 1995. The tensions between local residents and both the central government in Tokyo and US military presence in the island reached new heights as three US servicemen beat and raped a 12-year old school-girl. Once again, the most fundamental issues concerning Okinawan identity and citizenship were raised, inflaming public anger against the constant injustices of a burden many thought was of questionable utility to Japan. Building on deep-rooted feelings associated with the value of peace and culture - the concept of an "Okinawan Heart" captures this essence (Basic Concept of the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum 1975) -, the outburst brought to the fore the unique features of the Okinawan people as distinct from the mainlanders. Protesters thus began questioning, as emphasised by Masamichi (2007: 31-69), the role of the central government in the socio-economic development of the island.

It is worth noting that like in the 1960s, these protests were based on longstanding dissatisfactions, involving the provisions contained in the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that provided US servicemen the clout of impunity when committing crimes against the local residents, the role of the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR), land claims, and suchlike. Returning to Masamichi (2007: 68-9), in the case of the rape incident, "when the broader sector of diverse (and often fragmented) citizens critically appropriated the affluence of Okinawa, Okinawan culture turned into the common weapon of the weak, constructively providing them with an impetus for a new logic of social protest. This oppositional appropriation was made possible because the money from Tokyo - in spite of its goal of conciliating Okinawa's anti-base sentiment - ironically became a constant reminder of the prolonged violence of power (the

US military presence), thereby helping Okinawa to renew cultural sensibilities enmeshed with the pain of local historical experiences - the war, the bases, the servicemen, and the rape - that had together constituted two 'modalities/layers' of old Okinawan identity centering on the people's sense of 'We are Okinawans.'"

Moreover, the very legitimacy of Japan's interests in preserving the US-Japan alliance became the focus of contention. The anti-base movement gained traction when it turned its attention to the massive host nation support program. Aside from the bases, host national support was the second major pillar in Japan's commitment toward the alliance, and it amounted to approximately 80% of the total financial burden of US military activities in Japan. Paying for facilities, labour, and utilities, this program exceeded in absolute terms the total combined financial support provided by other US allies. The "politicisation" of host nation support, in the expression of Yoda (2006: 954-8), was thus not only inevitable but liable to invite criticism to government policy, particularly by anti-base and anti-military movements in Japan. Such contestation resonated even within some in the senior leadership in Tokyo, including former Prime Minister Hosokawa (1992-93), who in 1998 penned a controversial article calling for the withdrawal of US troops in Japan (1998: 2-5). Others, such as Gabe (2002/3: 25-50), took aim specifically at the presence of US Marines, who had a track of becoming involved in more transgressions, and also of being deployed to war zones, more than other servicemen, thus entrapping Japan in America's military contingencies and undermining its ideals of pacifism enshrined in the Constitution's Article 9.

The diplomatic agenda of the main political forces in Tokyo and Washington, however, were on an entirely different track. Alerted by the growing schism resulting from the changes in the international system and the trauma of the Gulf War, many elite opinions claimed the alliance was "adrift" (Funabashi 1999). In response to this state of affairs, the United States set in a motion a number of initiatives with a view to mend ties, the most successful of which was the Nye Initiative. Consequently, in 1995, saw the publication of various documents that would reshape the bilateral alliance for the twenty-first century.

Following the earlier release of the United States National Security Strategy in 1994, in February of 1995, the unclassified United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region was released, subscribed by Secretary of Defence William Perry and generally drafted by Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs Joseph Nye, in collaboration with former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, among other high ranking officials - the Nye Initiative (US DoD 1995a). It was further presented by SecDef Perry in a shorter, more condensed version that same month (US DoD 1995b). The document devised a new framework for US engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, and contemplated the role of Japan within this broader strategy. It likened the importance of US presence in the region via the US-Japan alliance to "oxygen," whose vital existence goes unnoticed until it is lacking (*Ibid*: 1). In this sense, the alliance would become "the lynchpin of US security policy in Asia" (*Ibid*: 10),

integrating elements of security, economics and trade, and soft power that could best advance the liberal agenda of US diplomacy in the new century.

For Japan, this represented a new opportunity. The years of client statehood, in which the security of country depended on the US military umbrella, leading to a fettered sovereignty based on domestically costly *quid pro quos*, were replaced by a wholly new role as the enabler of US strategy in the Asia-Pacific. Without US bases in Okinawa and the generous host nation support, the United States could not have the same leverage over the region as that enabled by Japan. The collapse of the Soviet Union had shifted the balance of power and called for more cooperation; the scales had further tipped to Japan's advantage. The result was a stronger bargaining position for Tokyo in shaping the future of the US-Japan alliance, as the National Defence Program Guidelines, and the US-Japan joint statement, both of 1997, would later testify.

In demonstrating how a confluence of interests on both sides was a key to such a resounding diplomatic success, Funabashi (1999: 76) quoted SecDef Perry as saying: "we believe in the centrality, the critical importance, of the Asia-Pacific to the United States; the centrality of the US-Japan security alliance to that relationship... This was a strong foundation... it is the foundation on which all else is built." And quoting Kurt Campbell (*Ibidem*), then deputy assistant secretary of defence, "It's often thought that the US-Japan security relationship gives Japan a greater flexibility to act in Asia, and I think that's well understood. What's not as well understood is that it also anchors the United States in Asia and the Pacific... It improves American ability to operate and to act as an Asian nation, having this relationship with Japan."

Surely not all contentious issues had been addressed to the satisfaction of all concerned parties. Despite the innovative solutions presented by Giarra (1999: 114-38) to the base issue in Okinawa, including pre-position troops and integrating civilian and military airports to scale down the military presence in the island, both governments have yet to act in the fast and comprehensive way outline in policy statements and official memoranda (e.g. relocation of Futenma air base). As the same author concluded, the existing ideological barriers and practical obstacles require bold action in order to strengthen the alliance relationship (Giarra 1999: 137). The end result, nevertheless, has reflected the greater power of Japan in determining a future that can best (or more justly) safeguard its interests vis-à-vis the United States.

For these reasons, and again in a logic of power politics, the transformation of the US-Japan alliance in the 1990s constituted a success to Japanese diplomacy. No more a client state, Japan attained a mature relationship with the United States, despite the necessary commitments it must endure in order to preserve the good functioning of the alliance. Power and justice are thus better in line with the relative positions both countries occupy in Asia-Pacific, and that is translated into an alliance that remains crucial to regional stability whilst adapting to new threats and opportunities.

Conclusions

The relative power distribution within the international system raises important limitations for the pursuit of diplomacy. More often than not, diplomacy is largely concerned with the realities of power instead of the aspirations for justice. Concordantly, diplomacy addresses power asymmetries during peacetime in an attempt to transform the right of power into the power of right.

This underlying tension between the two forces of international relations, best encapsulated in the Melian Dialogue, was the crucial component of the diplomatic negotiations between Japan and the United States in all three cases aforementioned. In every case, the asymmetry of power was different, and the resulting assessment of the success of Japanese diplomacy reflected it. Shifting from a position of pure client statehood to one of emancipated leveraging, Japan saw its ability to shape the future of the bilateral alliance increase due to an able diplomacy that followed the realities of power. With time, it could ameliorate the negative impact of its security dependence in order to accommodate to domestic demands for a more just alliance.

The future remains undetermined. The post-Cold War trend points toward greater integration and cooperation with the United States, thus limiting the sources of conflict and friction. Diplomacy should thus be smoother. It is the business of politicians on both sides of the Pacific to determine which paths they want their respective nations to follow, but so long as their diplomacy (and diplomats) addresses the fundamental logic of the asymmetry of power and interests, there are promising signs that US-Japan relations will contribute to peace and stability not only among themselves but also in the whole region.

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