

## **A Review of the Autonomy-Security Trade-off Model:**

### **The Case of Japan's Behavior in the Asymmetric Alliance with the United States<sup>1</sup>**

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#### Introduction

Although there are several theories of asymmetric relations,<sup>2</sup> it is worth reconsidering the autonomy-security trade-off model of alliance behavior, which James Morrow advocated in 1991,<sup>3</sup> for three reasons. First, the model is a typical mainstream theory concentrating on major powers like the United States and paying little attention to minor powers like Japan. Second, the model nicely captures the essence of the traditional Japan-U.S. Alliance, that is, what Sakamoto Kazuya calls an "asymmetric mutuality" between Japan's offer of bases and the U.S. offer of forces,<sup>4</sup> while it also contradicts Japan's recent behavior in the asymmetric alliance with the U.S. Third, although many scholars have examined the asymmetry of the Japan-U.S. Alliance,<sup>5</sup> most of them do not focus on the model.<sup>6</sup> Although there are a few exceptions, such as Mayumi Itayama's book and Jongsung Lee's doctoral dissertation, the former covers the period until 1978, and the latter concentrates on Japan's autonomy in a broader sense.<sup>7</sup>

This paper draws three theoretical implications regarding the autonomy-security trade-off model from the history of Japan's asymmetric alliance with the U.S. First, the concept of asymmetric alliances should include a symmetric dimension when applied to U.S. alliances after World War II. Second, a junior partner may strengthen its security contributions to its senior partner by increasing its military spending and expanding the scope of defense cooperation. Third, a junior partner may continuously make autonomy concessions, irrespective of changes in its security contributions to the senior ally. The following of this paper elaborates on these implications in turn.

## 1. The Concept of Asymmetric Alliances

Morrow advocates the autonomy-security trade-off model in his 1991 article. It is presented as an alternative to the capability aggregation model of symmetric alliances, based on a balance of power theory. Morrow compares asymmetric and symmetric alliances in terms of formation and duration (or dissolution). As an empirical test, he conducts a statistical analysis of 164 alliances formed between 1815 and 1965.

Morrow considers alliances asymmetric when "one ally gains security and the other autonomy."<sup>8</sup> It is noted here that although this definition is based on asymmetries in benefits that the parties receive from the alliance, Morrow also admits that "asymmetries in capabilities are generally found in asymmetric alliances." Thus, he writes that "the minor power will make autonomy concessions to the major power in return for the security the major power can provide."<sup>9</sup> According to Morrow, "[s]ecurity benefits arise primarily from the military capabilities of an ally,"<sup>10</sup> and autonomy benefits could include military bases for the projection of power and control over an ally's foreign and domestic policies.<sup>11</sup>

Morrow's concept of asymmetric alliances is too narrow for U.S. alliances after the Second World War. He assumes that what the minor power provides to the major power is autonomy only. In practice, however, the U.S. has expected its junior allies to contribute autonomy and security. The U.S. Senate's Vandenberg Resolution of 1948 has required the U.S. Government to make its military allies act on the principle of "continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the concept should be broadened to include a symmetric dimension, an exchange of security benefits, when applied to U.S. alliances after World War II.<sup>13</sup>

In Morrow's 1991 article, post-war Japan is categorized as a minor power. This categorization is appropriate for Japan from the 1940s to the 1960s. First, it was reborn with a constitution to limit its use of force. Article 9 of Japan's 1946 Constitution prescribes the

renunciation of war, the prohibition of war potential, and the denial of the state's belligerency right. Second, following this spirit of the peace constitution, the Japanese Government adopted the so-called "Yoshida Doctrine," which attached great importance to light armament and economic development by relying on the U.S. for the security of Japan.

Third, the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty of 1960 explicitly codified an asymmetric nature of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. Article 5 of the treaty stipulates the collective defense of Japan in time of its contingency: "Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes."<sup>14</sup> Article 6 stipulates the use by the U.S. forces of military bases in Japan: "For the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East, the United States of America is granted the use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan."

Nevertheless, the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty also contained the seeds of a symmetric aspect of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. Article 3 writes, "The Parties, individually and in cooperation with each other, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop, subject to their constitutional provisions, their capacities to resist armed attack." This article reflects the principle of "continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid" in the Vandenberg Resolution of 1948.

Defense cooperation of the current Japan-U.S. Alliance consists of two layers (see Table 1-1). In an asymmetric layer at the alliance's substructure, Japan offers military bases, while the U.S. provides strike capabilities and nuclear deterrence. In a symmetric layer, Japan and the U.S. offer defense and logistics capabilities, depending on a contingency situation. In total, Japan gains security, while the U.S. gains autonomy and security. Article 9 of Japan's Constitution helps maintain the asymmetric layer. Still, it is worth noting that many other junior

partners also rely on the strike capabilities and nuclear deterrence the U.S. offers.

**Table 1-1: Symmetric and asymmetric exchanges of different benefits**

	Japan	The U.S.
Symmetric layer	S: Defense capabilities S: Logistics capabilities	S: Defense capabilities S: Logistics capabilities
Asymmetric layer	A: Military bases	S: Strike capabilities S: Nuclear deterrence

Note: "S" and "A" respectively stand for security and autonomy benefits offered by Japan or the U.S.

2. Changes in Security Benefits from a Junior Partner

Although Morrow discusses and analyzes the impact of changes in capabilities on the break-up of alliances,<sup>15</sup> he ignores changes in minor power capabilities.<sup>16</sup> He implies this when he explains one of the two reasons why asymmetric alliances are likely to last longer than symmetric alliances.

[C]hanges in the weaker power's capabilities will not greatly alter the nature of the trade. Because it provides autonomy to the major power, its contribution to the alliance is unaffected by changes in its capabilities. Its security is primarily provided by its major power ally, so its benefits from the alliance will not change greatly with changes in its capabilities. Consequently, these shifts in capabilities are unlikely to break the alliance. In a symmetric alliance, a change in either ally's capabilities forces a reallocation of the benefits of the alliance, making the alliance less likely to persist.<sup>17</sup>

Morrow underestimates the impact of changes in minor power capabilities on alliances. A junior partner may strengthen its security contributions to its senior partner by increasing its military spending and expanding the scope of defense cooperation. Post-war Japan is a case in point, although it has been restricted by its Peace Constitution.

First, there has been an increasing trend in Japan's military expenditure over the past six decades. Japan's military spending has been rising since the 1960s except for the 2000s (see

Figure 2-1).

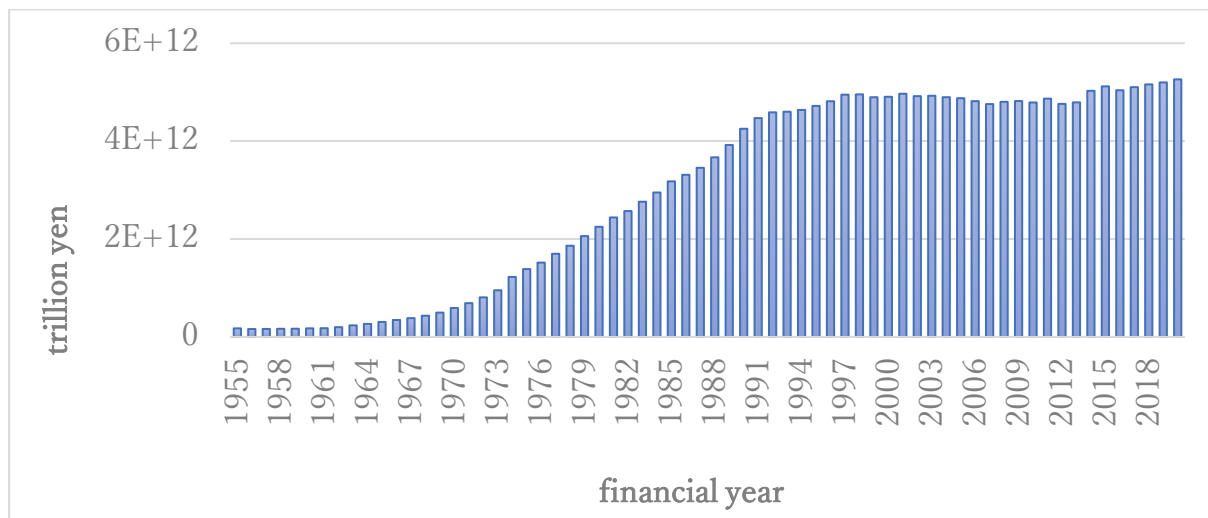


Figure 2-1: Change in Japan's military expenditure in local currency

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Data for all countries 1949–2020," SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex> (accessed February 18, 2022).

Second, Japan has expanded the geographical and legal scope of defense cooperation with the U.S. in the past four decades, mainly by revising the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation (hereafter referred to as "Guidelines") and by enacting legislation for implementing the Guidelines.

- The 1978 Guidelines focused on "actions in response to an armed attack against Japan."<sup>18</sup> From the late 1970s to the 1980s, Japan contributed to the security of the U.S. by strengthening its defense capabilities for the defense of Japan, which was critical to preventing Soviet troops from advancing into the Pacific Ocean.
- The 1997 Guidelines introduced "cooperation in situations in areas surrounding Japan that will have an important influence on Japan's peace and security."<sup>19</sup> In 1999, Japan's Diet passed the Law Concerning Measures to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan, which authorizes the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) to engage in logistical support and search and rescue

operations in adjacent conflict situations.

- The 2003 Koizumi-Bush Talks used the expression "the Japan-U.S. Alliance in the global context." In the Global War on Terror led by the U.S. in the 2000s, Japan dispatched the JSDF to the Indian Ocean and Iraq for logistical support to foreign forces and humanitarian and reconstruction assistance.
- In July 2014, the Cabinet partially accepted the exercise of the right of collective self-defense.<sup>20</sup> The 2015 Guidelines added a new section titled "Actions in Response to an Armed Attack against a Country other than Japan" and expanded their cooperation to the new domains of space and cyberspace.<sup>21</sup>

In short, Japan has strengthened its security contributions to the U.S. by increasing its military spending and by expanding the scope of defense cooperation.

### 3. Changes in Autonomy Benefits from a Junior Partner

Examining the long-term relationship between security and autonomy provided by a junior partner is necessary. In the case of the Republic of Korea, there is an argument that "the growing national power of a weaker state might encourage the state to reclaim some of the autonomy it had ceded to a stronger state for the sake of the alliance."<sup>22</sup> In contrast, the case of post-war Japan indicates that a junior partner may continuously make autonomy concessions, irrespective of changes in its security contributions to the major power.

First, although the total area of the military bases for U.S. Forces in Japan (or USFJ) sharply declined in the 1950s, the area did not significantly change between the mid-1970s and the mid-2010s (see Figure 3-1). Although Okinawa was reverted to Japan in 1972, most of the vast U.S. military bases in the prefecture have remained since then. A recent slight drop is due to the return of a significant portion of the Northern Training Area in Okinawa in 2016.

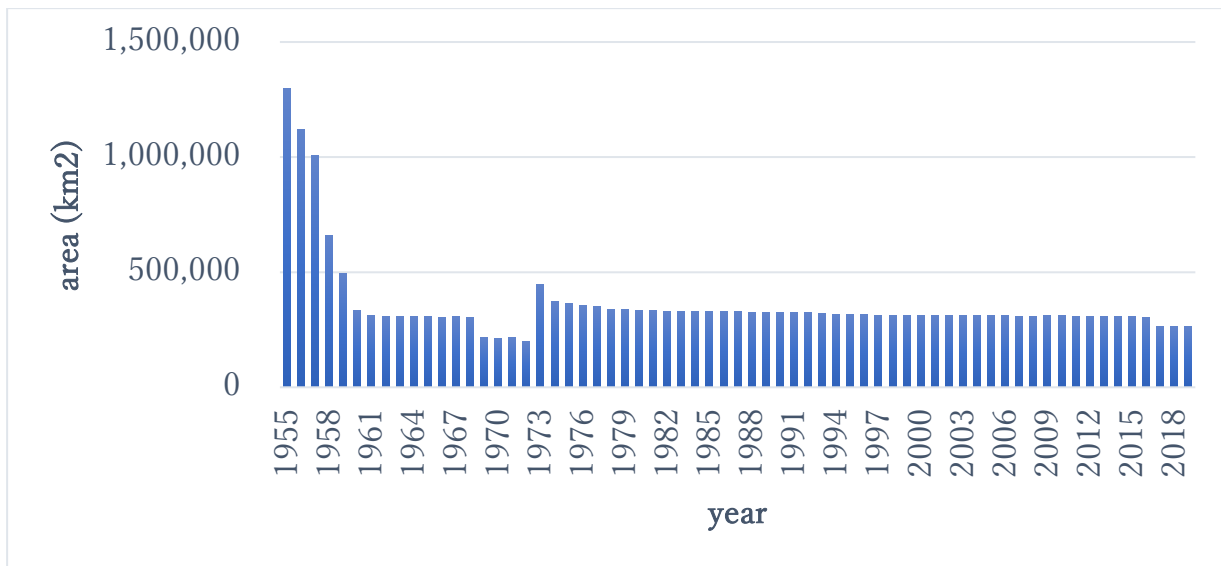


Figure 3-1: Changes in the area of the USFJ bases in Japan  
 Source: Asagumo shinbunsha, ed. *Bōei handobukku* [Handbook for defense] (Tōkyō: Asagumo shinbunsha, 1989, 2020).

Second, there is an increasing trend of the USFJ-related costs paid by the Japanese Government except in the 2000s (see Figure 3-2). Host Nation Support (HNS) is the cost-sharing for the stationing of USFJ, which started in 1978. In 1997, the Japanese Government also began to pay for the costs related to the 1996 Final Report compiled by the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO). HNS peaked in 1999 and has been on the decline since then. Nevertheless, U.S. Forces realignment-related expenses have been on the rise since 2007. The USFJ-related costs shown here don't include those stipulated in the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement of 1960, such as rent for facilities.

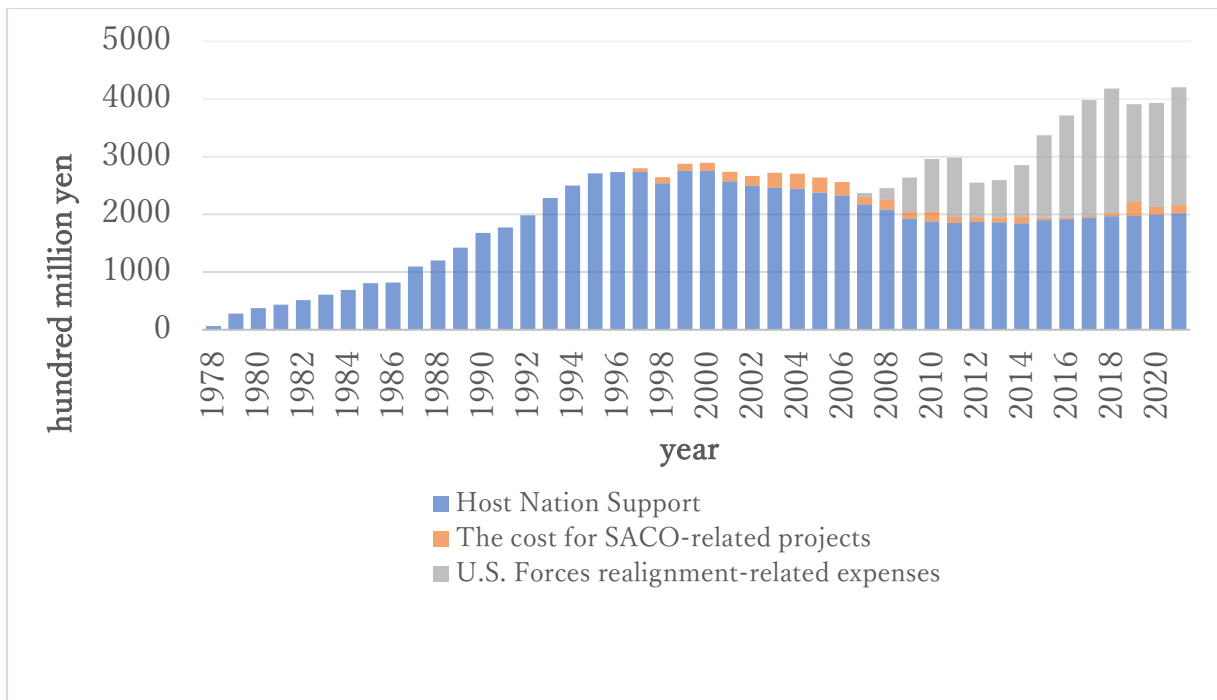


Figure 3-2: USFJ-related costs

Source: Japan Ministry of Defense, "Zainichi beigun chūryū keihi huta no suii" [Changes in cost sharing for the stationing of USFJ," [https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/zaibeigun/us\\_keihi/suii\\_img\\_r03.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/zaibeigun/us_keihi/suii_img_r03.pdf) (accessed February 20, 2022).

### Conclusion

This paper draws three theoretical implications regarding the autonomy-security trade-off model from the history of Japan's external relations with the U.S. First, the concept of asymmetric alliances should include a symmetric dimension when applied to U.S. alliances after World War II. Second, a junior partner may strengthen its security contributions to its senior partner by increasing its military spending and by expanding the scope of defense cooperation. Third, a junior partner may continuously make autonomy concessions, irrespective of changes in its security contributions to the major power.

Japan's increasing security contributions have not led to its lower autonomy concessions. It is possible to think of three reasons for this long-term trend: 1) the increasing overall missions of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, 2) the U.S. anxiety that once a military base in a foreign country is relinquished, it will be difficult to re-acquire it, and 3) the bifunctionality of military bases.



The last possible reason needs a supplementary explanation. The bifunctionality of military bases means that USFJ increases not only the U.S.'s autonomy but also Japan's security.<sup>23</sup> Japan's Defense White Paper 2021 writes: "Under the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements, the presence of USFJ functions as deterrence, while on the other hand, given the impacts of the stationing of the USFJ on the living environment of the local residents, it is necessary to make efforts appropriate for the actual situation of each area in order to mitigate the impacts."<sup>24</sup> The Japanese Government regards USFJ as a "tripwire"<sup>25</sup> for the automatic U.S. involvement in the war. Military bases offer security benefits to a host country as well.

Further research is needed to develop these implications and speculation into new hypotheses and to test them against the U.S. security relations with Japan and its other allies, such as the Republic of Korea.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on the author's presentation titled "Japan's Alliance Behavior as a Junior Partner: An Analysis from the Perspective of Asymmetry" at the virtual partner organization roundtable "What Theoretical Implications Can Be Drawn from Japan's External Relations?" held at the 2022 Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA) on March 29th, 2022. The author expresses his gratitude to the Japan Association of International Relations (JAIR) for inviting me to join the roundtable and financially supporting me to participate in the ISA convention. He is also grateful to Professor Paul Midford for his valuable comments on my presentation.

<sup>2</sup> For example, David Lake discusses five types of security relationships along an anarchy-hierarchy continuum. Alliance is one of them. In his discussion, alliance lies at the anarchic end of the continuum. Alliance partners are considered to retain full decision-making authority. Lake says that the U.S. opted for anarchic alliance-based relations. On the other hand, his "residual control" concept may help analyze the Japan-U.S. Alliance. David A. Lake, "Anarchy, Hierarchy, and the Variety of International Relations," *International Organization* 50, no. 1

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(Winter 1996): 1-33; and David A. Lake, *Entangling Relations American Foreign Policy in Its Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> James D. Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (November 1991): 904-933.

<sup>4</sup> Sakamoto Kazuya, *The Bonds of the Japan-U.S. Alliance: The Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and the Search for Mutuality*, trans. The Japan Institute of International Affairs (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture, 2022), 9.

<sup>5</sup> The English-language literature on the asymmetry of the Japan-U.S. Alliance in English includes Misato Matsuoka, *Hegemony and the U.S.-Japan Alliance* (London: Routledge, 2018); and Matteo Dian, *The Evolution of the U.S.-Japan Alliance: The Eagle and the Chrysanthemum* (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2014). On the literature on this topic in Japanese, see Hiroyuki Fukushima, "Nichibei dōmei no rekishiteki suii to rironteki kōzu: Pawā to kyōi no kinkō to Nihon no dōmei seisaku" [Historical transition and theoretical frameworks of the U.S.-Japan Alliance: Balance of power and threat theory and Japan's alliance policy] *Kokusai Seiji (International Relations)*, no. 206 (March 2022): 67-83; Mayumi Itayama, *Nichibei dōmei ni okeru kyōdō bōei taisei no keisei: Jōyaku teiketsu kara "Nichibei bōei kyōryoku no tame no shishin" sakutei made* [Formation of the bilateral defense system in the Japan-U.S. Alliance: From the conclusion of the treaty to the formulation of the "Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation"] (Kyōto: Mineruva shobō, 2020); Yoshihisa Hara, *Sengo Nihon o toinaosu: Nichibei hitaishō no dinamizumu* [Re-questioning postwar Japan: The dynamism of Japan-U.S. asymmetry] (Tōkyō: Chikuma shobō, 2020); Jongsung Lee, "Nichibei dōmei ni okeru Nihon no jiritsusei ni kansuru kenkyū: Hitaishō dōmeiron o chushin ni" [Research on Japan's autonomy in the Japan-U.S. Alliance: Focusing on asymmetrical alliance theory], Ph.D. dissertation, Kyushu University, 2018; Fumiaki Kubo,

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"Nichibei anzen hoshō jōyaku no kenri to gimu ni okeru hitaishōsei no kōsatsu" [Study of asymmetry in the rights and obligations of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty], in *Kibō no nichibei dōmei: Ajia taiheiyō no kaiyō anzen hoshō* [Japan-U.S. Alliance of hope: Maritime security in the Asia-Pacific], ed. Sekai heiwa kenkyūjo (Tōkyō: Chūō kōron shinsha, 2016); Nobuhiko Tamaki, "Dōmei gainen saikō: Yure ugoku kokusai jōsei to nichibei dōmei" [Reconsideration of the concept of alliance: Fluctuating international situation and the Japan-U.S. Alliance], *Kanagawa University Asian Reviews* 3 (March 2016): 82-97; Sehee Hwang, "Okinawa henkan to nichibei anzen hoshō kyōgi: Dōmei no hitaishōsei no seijiteki shūsei" [The Okinawa reversion and the U.S.-Japan security dialogue: Revision of the political aspects of alliance asymmetry], *Kokusai Seiji (International Relations)*, no. 177 (October 2014): 113-126; Sehee Hwang, "1970 nendai no nichibei anzen hoshō kankei: Hitaishōsei no teichaku to nichibei kyōryoku no shinka" [Japan-U.S. security relations in the 1970s: Establishment of asymmetry and deepening of Japan-U.S. cooperation], Ph.D. dissertation, Keio University, 2012; and Kazuya Sakamoto, "Nichibei dōmei ni okeru 'mono to hito tonō kyōryoku' 'hito to hito tonō kyōryoku'" ["Cooperation between goods and people" and "cooperation between people" in the Japan-U.S. Alliance], *Gaikō fōramu* 18, no. 8 (August 2005): 15-21.

<sup>6</sup> The following works introduce a conditional factor into the autonomy-security trade-off model: Jaewook Chung, "Capability Distribution between Allies, Geographical Proximity and Alliance Duration," *Korean Journal of International Studies* 18, no. 1 (Apr 2020): 1-31; and Glenn Palmer and J. Sky. David, "Multiple Goals or Deterrence: A Test of Two Models in Nuclear and Nonnuclear Alliances," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, no. 6 (December 1999): 748-70. These works, however, do not explain recent developments in the Japan-U.S. Alliance.

<sup>7</sup> Itayama, *Nichibei dōmei ni okeru kyōdō bōei taisei no keisei*; and Lee, "Nichibei dōmei ni

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okeru Nihon no jiritsusei ni kansuru kenkyū."

<sup>8</sup> Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry," 905.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 914. Nations are categorized into three groups: minor, major, and superpowers.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 911.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 905, 912, 914. Morrow defines a nation's security as "its ability to maintain the current resolution of the issues that it wishes to preserve" and a nation's autonomy as "the degree to which it pursues desired changes in the status quo" or "the freedom to pursue desired changes in the status quo." Ibid., 908-909, 912.

<sup>12</sup> The third objective of the U.S. Government listed in the Vandenberg Resolution of 1948 is: "Association of the United States, by constitutional process, with such regional and other collective arrangements as are based on continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, and as affect its national security." "The Vandenberg Resolution (Senate Resolution 239)," "The World and Japan" Database, <https://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/docs/19480611.O1E.html> (accessed March 25, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> Mayumi Itayama refers to the Japan-U.S. Alliance as a "symmetric/asymmetric hybrid alliance." Itayama, *Nichibei dōmei ni okeru kyōdō bōei taisei no keisei*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> On the text of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty of 1960, see "Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America," "The World and Japan" Database, <https://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/docs/19600119.T1E.html> (accessed March 25, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> Morrow predicts that an ally with growing military capabilities will demand additional autonomy from its alliance partner and that an alliance partner will demand further autonomy from an ally with declining military capabilities. Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry," 917.

<sup>16</sup> Lee, "Nichibei dōmei ni okeru Nihon no jiritsusei ni kansuru kenkyū," 13.

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<sup>17</sup> Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry," 918.

<sup>18</sup> "Report by the Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation, Submitted to and Approved by the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee," "The World and Japan" Database, <https://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/docs/19781127.O1E.html> (accessed March 25, 2022).

<sup>19</sup> "The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation," "The World and Japan" Database, <https://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/docs/19970923.O1E.html> (accessed March 25, 2022).

<sup>20</sup> "Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People," "The World and Japan" Database, <https://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/JPSC/20140701.O2E.html> (accessed March 25, 2022). The cabinet decision states that "Under such recognition and as a result of careful examination in light of the current security environment, the Government has concluded that not only when an armed attack against Japan occurs but also when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, and when there is [sic] no other appropriate means available to repel the attack and ensure Japan's survival and protect its people, use of force to the minimum extent necessary should be interpreted to be permitted under the Constitution as measures for self-defense in accordance with the basic logic of the Government's view to date."

<sup>21</sup> "The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation," "The World and Japan" Database, <https://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/JPUS/20150427.O1E.html> (accessed March 25, 2022).

<sup>22</sup> Dohee Kim, "Case Analysis of the R.O.K.-U.S. Alliance Burden-Sharing through

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Theoretical Approaches to the Evolution of an Asymmetric Alliance," *Korea Observer* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 31.

<sup>23</sup> On the merits of USFJ for Japan, see Kubo, "Nichibei anzen hoshō jōyaku no kenri to gimu ni okeru hitaishōsei no kōsatsu," 6-8.

<sup>24</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense ed., *Defense of Japan 2021*, 322,  
[https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w\\_paper/wp2021/DOJ2021\\_EN\\_Full.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2021/DOJ2021_EN_Full.pdf)  
(accessed January 20, 2022).

<sup>25</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Harvard University Press. 1960).

<sup>26</sup> On the application of the autonomy security trade-off model to the ROK-U.S. Alliance, see Kim, "Case Analysis of the R.O.K.-U.S. Alliance Burden-Sharing"; Hwee-rhak Park, "The South Korea-US Alliance under the North Korean Nuclear Threat: A Reluctant Return to the 'Autonomy Security Trade-Off,'" *Pacific Focus* 34, no. 3 (Dec 2019): 447-472; and Minhyoung Park and Kwang Ho Chun, "An Alternative to the Autonomy-Security Trade-off Model: The Case of the ROK-U.S. Alliance," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 41-56.