

Alliance Diplomacy at Home and Abroad

Addressing the Main Questions in U.S.-Japan Security Relations
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In ten years, the U.S.-Japan alliance should be the kernel for a regional security architecture that maintains stability in Northeast Asia and makes significant contributions to human security on a global scale. To realize this vital purpose, the alliance must evolve from its traditional "elite managed deterrence" to a new posture of "public supported regional engagement."

The success of the U.S.-Japan alliance during the Cold War derived from deterring threats to Japanese and American interests. Upgrading the alliance over the past ten years focused on post-Cold War contingency planning and coordination. Both processes were managed by an elite group of policymakers in Tokyo and Washington who saw and realized the importance of the alliance. But the alliance must now transform itself in a process that requires broader support and involvement among the Japanese and American populations. Today's security challenges require that the alliance do more than deter threats and prepare for contingencies. The alliance must actually transform the security environment by engaging new partners.¹

I have written elsewhere on the rationale of bridging regional divides in East Asia while expanding U.S.-Japan security cooperation.² In this paper for the 13th Japan-U.S. Security Seminar, I outline the ten most important unanswered questions for alliance transformation. The paper foresees policy solutions falling under three headings: upgrading the hardware and software of the alliance; building broader domestic support for the alliance; and increasing outward engagement by the alliance.

Questions for the Alliance

Below is a tentative list of the ten most important sets of questions for the U.S.-Japan security alliance. The numerical ordering is simply for organizational purposes and does not suggest any chronology or priority ranking.

¹ The importance of this objective is outlined in Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, "The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020," *CSIS Report*, February 2007.

² Leif-Eric Easley, "Avoiding Cold War II: Upgrading the U.S.-Japan Alliance and Bridging Regional Divides," *Issues and Insights*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (March 2006), pp. 63-68.

1. How to maintain political momentum to implement the "2+2" agreed alliance upgrades at the operational level? These issues notably include command and control reform, increased interoperability and information sharing, and the procurement of necessary capabilities to fulfill allocated roles and missions. The level of coordination envisioned in recent agreements also calls for political and legal endorsement of new operational plans, for example, regarding the interception of threatening missiles.³

2. How to manage the domestic politics of base relocation and host nation financial support? While U.S.-Japan force posture realignment should increase the alliance's ability to deal with post-Cold War contingencies while making the alliance more efficient and reducing the U.S. military footprint in populated areas, serious NIMBY (not in my backyard) politics can be expected.

3. What will a "normal" Japan look like? Japan is clearly on a trajectory of greater international security contributions, but the endpoint of this trajectory remains unclear. What will be the boundaries of U.S.-Japan operations? (UN peace and humanitarian missions? Defense of offshore islands? Coalition of the willing operations?) In transitioning from the traditional Japanese "shield" and U.S. "spear" architecture for the alliance, how much power projection capability will a normal Japan wield? Answers to these questions relate to Japan's new assertive diplomacy, constitutional reinterpretation and revision, and the policymaking responsibilities of the new Defense Ministry.

4. How to promote Japan's effective leadership role regionally and internationally? How to pursue United Nations reform and a permanent seat for Japan on the UN Security Council? What does Tokyo plan to do with this leadership role and Security Council seat?

5. How to sustain a nonproliferation coalition in Northeast Asia that incentivizes North Korea's nuclear dismantlement and credibly exercises coercive diplomacy if necessary? If Six-Party Talks make real progress, how to support Seoul's agenda for Korean reconciliation and ensure that such process complements U.S.-Japan security and economic interests?

6. How to improve U.S. trust and credibility in East Asia? Specifically, how to avoid the perception that the U.S. is distracted (in the Middle East and with the War on Terrorism), disengaging from the region (because of force redeployments) or playing countries in East Asia off each other (by remaining detached from regional rivalries and efforts at regional integration)?

7. How will Japan maintain its economic competitiveness and increase productivity (economic resources being necessary for defense contributions) given its projected decline in population, aging society and significant government debt, all in the face of increasingly competitive economic neighbors?

³ During and since the conference, it became clear that Prime Minister Abe would push for a serious government study of collective defense issues.

8. How to engage China as an important and responsible international player and dissuade it from destabilizing military preparations or shows of force, while at the same time supporting the security and freedom of Taiwan's democracy?

9. How to enlarge the sphere of U.S.-Japan cooperation? Specifically, how to strengthen trilateral mechanisms with Australia and South Korea, effectively engage ASEAN countries and regional forums such as ARF, EAS and APEC, and build a strategic partnership with India?

10. How to alleviate historical animosities in East Asia? Memories of wartime atrocities and colonial repression easily resurface when historical details are factually debated by leaders, manipulated by groups with political agendas, and sensationalized by the media.⁴ Such patterns reinforce suspicions and must be dealt with so that other nations do not respond to U.S.-Japan security efforts negatively out of distrust.

Possible Policy Solutions

Upgrading the Hardware and Software of the Alliance

- Increase bilateral training, mutual use of facilities, effective joint operational command, control, communications, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C3ISR) capabilities, and combined planning all the way down to U.S.-Japan field manuals where applicable.
- Make cutting-edge U.S. weapons systems available to Japan and search out more opportunities for bilateral development and production of defense equipment. Consider adjustments to regulatory laws and R&D allocations that may assist these efforts.
- Invite Japanese representatives to residence positions at PACOM and increase consultations with Japan about global realignment of U.S. forces.
- Increase jointness among Ground, Air and Maritime Self-Defense Forces and increase deployability of SDF without hollowing out home island defense (may include increasing size of active military, reorganizing troop rotations, etc.)
- Legalize collective defense interpretation for shooting down threatening missiles (whether aimed at Japan or U.S.) and coming to the defense of fellow peacekeepers from other nations (includes revision of SDF rules of engagement). Japan may also consider a permanent SDF deployment law allowing overseas deployment without the need to pass a new law in the Diet on a case-by-case basis. Japan is already developing a National

⁴ See Leif-Eric Easley, "Devils in the Details: Effective Policy, not Disputed History, should be Focus of National Leaders," *JoongAng Daily* (with *International Herald Tribune*), April 9, 2007, page 7.

Security Council for quickly coordinating security policy while safeguarding sensitive intelligence.

Domestic Diplomacy for the Alliance

- Raise Japanese public awareness of solid U.S. security guarantee and nuclear umbrella. Raise U.S. public awareness of Japan's contributions to security and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- Build support for a more comprehensive U.S.-Japan partnership by exploring how a bilateral FTA may help Japan deal with its demographic shift, help the U.S. deal with its trade deficit, and help both countries advance the Doha free trade agenda.
- Tokyo can do more to advocate the alliance domestically by consistently offering public explanations for why the alliance and U.S. bases are in Japan's national interest. Washington can increase the "good neighbor" programs of USFJ.
- Work to increase bipartisan support for the alliance by involving ranking opposition leaders and policymakers in alliance consultations.
- Broaden the scope of U.S. officials in strategic dialogue with Japan; ensure that U.S.-Japan high level and working level consultations do not fall behind those between Washington and Beijing.
- Reduce burden on local communities, especially in Okinawa, by expediting implementation of U.S.-Japan basing agreements. Ensure that any unfortunate incident involving U.S. soldiers is quickly and unequivocally resolved under the Status of Forces Agreement and related understandings between Tokyo and Washington.
- Increase educational, professional and cultural exchanges. Possibilities include increasing the number of Fulbright Scholars, Mansfield Fellows, and establishing an annual U.S.-Japan film festival, including amateur entries focused on Japan-U.S. relations.

International Diplomacy for the Alliance

- Expand regional cooperation on non-traditional security issues. Explore the establishment of a regional natural disasters rapid reaction force and infectious diseases task force. Pursue better container security and joint patrol of sea lines of communication. Push for multilateral crackdowns on transnational crime including terrorist financing, counterfeiting, and trafficking of persons, illegal drugs and counterfeit goods. Increase

cooperation on market-based energy solutions, proliferation-safe nuclear power, and the development and application of environmental technologies.

- Tokyo should be conscious that official constitutional revision debate does not get ahead of historical reconciliation in the region. Japan should continue to be a prime positive example to other countries of how economic liberalization, political reform and diplomatic engagement stay ahead of military modernization. Tokyo might also reiterate that the development of nuclear weapons is not in Japan's national interest.

- Increase U.S.-Japan coordination of Overseas Development Assistance, health and humanitarian aid. Increase coordinated calls for changes in government behavior (in Burma for example), which if met, could open the door to greater investment by Japanese and American companies and joint ventures.

- Increase mil-mil contacts and exchanges in Northeast Asia. Japan could invite South Korea and the U.S. to participate in disaster relief (tsunami and major earthquake) training in Japan. Tokyo and Washington could invite China to participate in search and rescue exercises and could offer security assistance for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

- Japan could assume a greater leadership role on nonproliferation concerns, providing technical assistance to other countries on export controls, demonstrating model participation in PSI, advancing joint and coordinated explorations of energy sources, hosting a dialogue on codes of conduct in East Asian waters, and establishing an anti-terrorism regional coordination center in Japan. The U.S. and Japan could make partnered presentations on these issues at regional fora such as ARF and APEC and possibly at the East Asia Summit and UN bodies.

Conclusion

In the coming years, the U.S.-Japan alliance will transform to meet global needs and nest itself in a network of regional security cooperation. The alliance not only needs to upgrade its own hardware and software, but also broaden public support and involvement in both countries. Most significantly, the alliance needs to take up the task of expanding the sphere of U.S.-Japan security cooperation and promote a greater sense of common destiny among the nations of East Asia. This will require reassuring other countries and making the U.S.-Japan alliance a leader in multilateral cooperation. Washington and Tokyo should look to add active subscribers to U.S.-Japan common strategic objectives and make clear what the alliance is for rather than letting others assume what it is against. The future alliance will build on shared values and interests rather than shared threats, and will attract rather than deter other countries. The transformation of the U.S.-Japan alliance should ultimately mean the transformation of East Asian security. The resulting Asia Pacific cooperation can offer unprecedented contributions to international peace and development.