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A New Phase of the Japan–United States Alliance

The transformation of U.S. forces overseas and the concurrent reshaping of the Japan–United States alliance were the two most important developments in the strategic environment of the Asia-Pacific region during 2005 and 2006.

After close consultation between high-ranking U.S. defense and foreign policy officials and their Japanese counterparts in Washington, D.C., between February 2005 and May 2006, they issued a document entitled "The Japan–U.S. Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future" on October 29, 2005, followed by "The Japan–U.S. Road Map for Realignment Implementation" on May 1, 2006. These documents, coming at the start of the twenty-first century, will greatly influence the region for many years to come. These developments also represent a milestone in the nearly half century of the Japan–United States alliance.

These consultations were part of the overall review of the United States' global posture—to which President George W. Bush referred in his November 2003 speech and also in his August 2004 statement—to bring home between 60,000 and 70,000 U.S.

* This is an English rendition of the lead article of the 2006/2007 issue of *Ajia no anzenhosho* (*Asian Security*), an annual survey by the Research Institute for Peace and Security(RIPS) of the security environment of the Asia-Pacific region from 2005 through 2006. The writer is an emeritus professor of the University of Tokyo and Aoyama Gakuin University, vice-chairman of the institute, and its president for the last six years. The English version was edited by Margaret B. Yamashita.

soldiers over the next ten years. Whereas substantial force *reductions* are planned for Korea and Germany, most of the U.S. forces in Japan will be *realigned*, so as to ensure their more effective and swift deployment and also to transform the mission of Japan's Self-Defense Forces.

The agreements reached in Washington on May 1, 2006, included the transfer of U.S. facilities at Futenma (near Naha) to Nago, Okinawa, and of several thousand U.S. Marines to Guam (with some of the transfer costs to be borne by the Japanese government). Although this will mean some reductions of U.S. forces and their facilities in Japan (including Okinawa), the changes at Zama, Iwakuni, Yokota, and other U.S. bases should strengthen the joint response time of both the U.S. forces in Japan and Japan's Self-Defense Forces, which is the basis of the realignment plan.

The Asia-Pacific Region's Greater Strategic Importance

The emphasis of American and Japanese policymakers is on enabling their forces to respond more quickly and effectively, as they believe that the Asia-Pacific region is becoming increasingly important to U.S. global strategy.

The document of the Security Consultative Committee meeting (SCC, also known as the 2+2 meeting [of the Japanese foreign and defense ministers and the U.S. secretaries of state and defense]), on which the two governments agreed in February 2005, underscored the two nations' common strategic objectives. In addition to Japan's security, which was obvious, they encompassed such regional affairs as the peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula, various other issues pertaining to North Korea, a nonviolent solution to the Taiwan problem, and the greater transparency of China's military policy. This document also stated that both nations sought cooperative relations

with China and would welcome the responsible and constructive role of China as well as Russia. Other shared strategic goals were global matters like the promotion of democracy and other fundamental values, greater cooperation for international peace, the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the prevention and eradication of transnational terrorism, and a more efficient United Nations Security Council.

References to the issues of the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait were not new, as the Japanese government had repeatedly mentioned them, but it is remarkable that these regional and global issues were singled out as Japan's main security goals.

The increased attention to Asia and the Pacific by defense officials of the two nations reflects the policy shift eastward from Europe at the start of the twenty-first century. Although the so-called arc of instability is defined somewhat differently around the world, it is commonly understood as the belt-shaped land and adjacent sea area stretching from the Middle East to the Indian subcontinent and Indian Ocean through Central Asia to the Strait of Malacca into Southeast Asia and farther north to the areas adjacent to the Japanese archipelago.

This area is characterized by rich deposits of oil (Middle East and Central Asia), unstable and fragile political systems, and a tendency toward Islamic extremism. Accordingly, it requires a watchful eye in post–cold war, and especially post–September 11, international relations. Furthermore, these characteristics make this region difficult for the Western powers in general, and the United States in particular, to penetrate, and so the region also requires serious strategic attention. A strategic environment is generally defined by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, which certainly apply to the arc of instability. In the past few years, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Indian

Ocean have become the main tests for Japan's Self- Defense Forces, providing sufficient evidence of the region's precarious security environment.

Iraq and Afghanistan have taught Japan that a swift and decisive military response is mandatory when dealing with such a strategic environment. But the complexity of the situation also shows that a direct military approach is not sufficient by itself. For example, the successful military campaign to overthrow Iraq's Saddam Hussein has been followed by the as yet unsuccessful "stability operations," which have reminded Japan of the intractable nature of "postconflict peace building and stabilization." Based on these observations, this article will try to elucidate the current situation in Asia and the Pacific.

Southeast and South Asia as Areas Vulnerable to Terrorism and Earthquakes

Southeast Asia is sometimes referred to as the second front in the global war on terrorism, with the first front being the Middle East. Terrorists certainly have made their presence known here. Since February 2002 in the Philippines, conflict between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the national army has remained intense, and the recent bombing and frequent attacks on public buildings in Mindanao, presumably by the MILF, have halted the nascent peace negotiations yet again. And since early 2004, Thailand's three southernmost provinces (Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala) have been the scene of a series of bombings, arson, and other attacks on the facilities of the armed forces and police and the general public. Although the government stepped up security measures and economic assistance, from 2005 through mid-2006 the provinces still were unstable.

It is extremely difficult to connect disparate acts of terrorism. But it is clear that people living in Southeast Asia must constantly be prepared for incidents like the bombings in Bali, because this area is prone to earthquakes both metaphorical and literal. Indeed, not long ago, real earthquakes in Java and Pakistan and the tsunami off Sumatra struck one after another. But just as the term *disaster diplomacy* suggests, such natural disasters can and did offer the countries in this region an opportunity to organize relief measures on an international scale, because in these cases, unlike man-made disasters such as terrorism, there is little room for blame and internal fighting.

U.S. forces in Japan (including marines in Okinawa) and Japanese disaster relief troops were quickly dispatched to the affected areas and joined with Australia and other nations to provide emergency help, a good example of "turning a misfortune into a blessing."

Natural disasters of a different sort—SARS, bird flu, extreme weather events, environmental catastrophes, and the like—also have emerged as a new type of security issue. Unfortunately, however, artificial barriers have sometimes prevented international cooperation. For instance, even though SARS and bird flu require multilateral solutions, Beijing made an issue of Taiwan's international status and objected to World Health Organization (WHO) experts entering Taiwan. These and similar cases will be a test of Chinese leaders' favorite phrase, the "win-win game," to see whether their deeds correspond to their words.

Have Human Rights and Democracy Progressed?

Among the common goals in the 2+2 agreement between Japan and the United States was the promotion of fundamental values like democracy. Have Asia and the Pacific

progressed in this regard?

Although the region has not failed the test for democratization, it also has not excelled. With the exceptions of China, North Korea, and the remaining Communist regimes in Indochina, many countries—including Iraq and others in the Middle East as well as Uzbekistan and other former Soviet republics—are, on the whole, moving away from authoritarianism. Nonetheless, it is premature for countries like Cambodia to declare that they have achieved democratic stability. In addition, the recent political instability in the Philippines, Thailand, Nepal, Bougainville, the Solomon Islands, and East Timor suggest that here, democracy has not yet made an inroad into the indigenous political culture.

Accordingly, imposing democracy under the guise of a global war on terror probably would be resisted by many of these countries. Indeed, "democracy, yes, but not the made-in-America version" is a common reaction from quite a few of them. Some Asian countries often express their concern about the West's demands for democratization and human rights by citing basic principles of international law, such as not intervening in domestic affairs and maintaining equality among sovereign states. Thus these countries call for "democracy in international society" at such gatherings as the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Former republics of the Soviet Union, like Belarus, have moved toward democracy. Russia, however, recently began to intervene in order to retard the progress toward what it regards as "excessive democratization." In Asia, Myanmar presents a dilemma for the democratic cause because its military regime leans toward China to ward off pressure from the United States and Europe to democratize, thereby further strengthening China's influence there. In addition, the relative decline in influence of a democratic India, a traditional rival of China in Myanmar, should concern those

countries interested in promoting democratic values. Even though the concept of an East Asian community is not yet a realistic one, Japan and the United States must approach these issues with care so that an eventual East Asian community will not be designed as a dam to contain the global trend toward democracy.

The Dichotomy Concerning Weapons of Mass Destruction

In summarizing their common global strategic objectives, the Japanese–U.S. 2+2 documents state that their joint efforts to promote international peace have been encouraging, as exemplified by the multinational relief activities in the aftermath of the tsunami and the earthquakes. But the documents also admit that the two countries need a more farsighted and prudent strategy.

The issue of WMD (weapons of mass destruction) requires prompt attention, as the current relationship between Japan and the United States lacks a well-coordinated policy and, therefore, any signs of progress. Among the various reasons for the absence of such a policy, the most important is the U.S. government's indecisiveness in choosing between Iran and North Korea as its most immediate priority. For Japan, the obvious priority is North Korea, but the United States is leaning toward Iran. Another awkward problem pertains to India, which the Bush administration has decided to treat as a de facto nuclear power, thereby threatening the already fragile Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), by undercutting their legitimacy and efficiency. A pro-India stance may be understandable from the standpoint of American policy in South Asia, in the context of the war in Afghanistan and its aftermath, but it is hard to justify in regard to the long-term goal of WMD nonproliferation.

Two Nations at a Crossroads: Russia and China in the Thick Fog of Northeast Asia

The Japanese–U.S. 2+2 documents list as their common regional strategic concern the peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula and the peaceful solution of the long-standing issues related to North Korea and also those related to China, such as a nonviolent resolution of the cross-strait question and the greater transparency of its military policies. In the long term, as the documents observe, efforts to induce China to behave as a stakeholder in both the global and the regional community depend on its attitude toward the problems just cited. As shown by North Korea's most recent missile launch, the abduction of Japanese citizens, and intraregional affairs, the country's behavior has been quite irrational. Indeed, there has been no progress but, rather, setbacks from the position at the six-party talks in 2005.

Pyongyang bears most of the blame, but the other participants' lack of coordination, especially that among the United States, Japan, and South Korea, is responsible as well, since it has allowed North Korea to take advantage of their disorganization. Most unfortunately, the foreign policy of South Korea's current government is in disarray, as the country has distanced itself from both Tokyo and Washington, instead placing faith in its "smiling diplomacy" vis-à-vis North Korea while arguing with Japan over a tiny rock in the Sea of Japan. South Korea's diplomacy is directed not by prudence but by passion and resentment, thus wasting political energy that should be spent on confronting the North.

Russia, meanwhile, is preoccupied with Iran because there it can hope to be a major player, leaving the matter of North Korea to China. More broadly, Russia is eager

to regain its international influence by using the high prices of oil and natural gas to its advantage. Russia will continue to pursue a pro-Western policy to the extent that it preserves its standing in the peer group of advanced nations [G-8] that gathered in St. Petersburg, but Russia should not be expected to take a leading role on the Korean Peninsula. Today, China is a greater puzzle than Korea and Russia, in that it is extremely difficult to discern the direction in which that gigantic nation is moving.

China's Aggressive Diplomatic Offensives

It is important to emphasize repeatedly that the Japan–United States alliance is not motivated by designs against China. Nonetheless, Japan cannot afford not to have a well-prepared strategy with which it can meet the various challenges that China will present in the future. It is clear that China's foreign and security policies are directed by its own national security strategy, which is aimed at competing with the close alliance between Japan and the United States.

Therefore it is important not to speak of China as a threat but to create a strategy and policies to soften its impact. The first step toward that end is to interpret accurately what China is thinking and doing. It is widely known that China has been building up and modernizing its armed forces for more than ten years, with its military budget increasing more than 10 percent each year. The details of this military buildup are not so well known, however, causing anxiety and suspicion among concerned nations. And what China intends to do with its newfound military strength is even less well understood.

The notions of a "peaceful rise" and "new diplomatic thinking" (the win-win game) are apparently inventions of Beijing's policy and opinion leaders, intended to

ease foreign observers' suspicions. Thus not the words but the actual implementation of China's foreign and international policies need to be considered. The country's diplomatic offensive is impressive. It is marked by a series of systematic, and global, efforts to cut into Japan's "sphere," to use that word in a diplomatic sense. A notable example is the aggressive attempt by Chinese leaders and the Chinese public to delay Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. When the leaders of Russia and China met in Moscow in May and then in Beijing in July 2005, their joint statements underscored their objections to Japan's bid. Moreover, China has adopted a policy of not making alliances except for occasional, and temporary, diplomatic coalitions. Instead, it depends on the United Nations to prevent any concerted actions led by the United States that might threaten the sovereign rights of it and its dependents, like North Korea. For precisely this reason, China objects to an enhanced role for Japan, which is interested in helping the UN deal more efficiently with the various issues pertaining to globalization.

For China, therefore, Japan's role in the UN is a serious matter. In this interpretation, the street demonstrations in Chinese cities aimed at "stopping Japan at the UN" can be better understood, and Chinese leaders can be seen as traveling around the world to pressure less-developed countries in Asia and Africa to vote against Japan, in return for generous economic assistance programs.

In this context, those countries belonging to the African Union (AU) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) do count, because despite their being small and weak individually, their collective voice speaks loudly in the multilateral diplomacy at the UN and other bodies. For this reason, during the past several decades these countries have been an important focus of Japan's UN diplomacy. And for the same reason, China has recently intensified its diplomatic offensive toward these countries. Since the first

meeting of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) (hosted by Japan in 1993), Japan has continued its programs of economic and social assistance to African nations, the most recent examples being its hosting of TICAD's third meeting in 2004 and the TICAD conference on peace stabilization in February 2006. To follow up these achievements, Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi visited Ethiopia in April 2006. In his speech at the AU's headquarters in Addis Ababa, he offered several official development assistance (ODA) packages, including US $8.7 million for immediate relief for Darfur, Sudan. The African countries then expressed their support for Japan's bid for a permanent seat at UN Security Council. The Chinese premier thereupon quickly visited Angola and seven other countries in Africa in mid-June as if to cancel out Koizumi's visit. It was the first time that a Chinese leader had made an official visit to Africa. China's African diplomacy also is motivated by its interest in that continent's oil reserves (Angola recently surpassed Saudi Arabia as the top supplier of oil to China). But the UN was undoubtedly on China's agenda as well.

China now is playing a similar diplomatic game in the Pacific. Until recently, China was only Taiwan's main contestant for influence, but it now has become a competitive player against Japan as well. The Japanese government was scheduled to host the conference of PIF leaders in May 2006 in Naha, Okinawa, the fourth meeting in the series initiated by the former prime minister, Keizō Obuchi, in 2000 (known as the Pacific Islands' Leaders Meeting, or PALM 2000, held in Miyazaki). Then China decided to hold a similar conference, the "China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum," in Fiji in April of this year, in which it pledged US $374 million over three years in special loans for the Pacific island nations, as well as preferential trading concessions. Such diplomatic behavior indicates that China is keeping a careful eye on Japan.

Asia and the Pacific in History

The year 2005 should have been an ideal time to look back at the past century's history of international relations in East Asia. The occasion could have been used to resolve differences over immediate issues and to renew efforts to achieve long-term goals. Unfortunately, the reverse was what actually happened. The customary fuss over the insignificant rock islets in the East China Sea dominated, permitting no escape from the prison of narrow-mindedness and shortsightedness. The name of the prison is "history perception," but it surely is a misnomer, since no forward-looking and creative vision of East Asian history could be expected to rise out of such inhospitable soil.

Thus East Asia missed an opportunity to learn from past leaders' received wisdom. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Okakura Tenshin wrote *Ideals of the East* (1903) and *Awakening of Japan* (1904), observing that Japan, which had defeated Russia, was the solitary spot of light in the midst of an Asia where darkness still prevailed. How different is today's Asia from Okakura's? However Japan's role in the history of international relations during the past hundred years might be interpreted, that history must include the undeniable impact of a modernizing Japan. Now a new phase of historical evolution is beginning, which is centered on a modernizing China. How various countries respond, both individually and/or collectively, will certainly be this phase's most important theme. Perhaps the real history of Asian international relations starts today. Who will pass the test of that history? Asians cannot afford to quarrel with one another on a shrinking globe—which could be compared to dogs fighting on a snail's horn.