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Japanese Perspectives on the Legal, Political and Economic Aspects of the Japan-U.S. Alliance

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This collection of articles written by a group of established and younger Japanese scholars is, as the title indicates, primarily concerned with the complexities and challenges of the bilateral alliance framework between Japan and the United States. Since the subject matter *per se* is so vast, it needs no emphasis that despite the great diversity of the individual contributions, no volume of this size could ever exhaust the topic. Papers included here range from legal aspects of the New Guidelines, Taiwan-related policy issues, and post-unification security scenarios on the Korean Peninsula, to cooperation between Japan, the United States and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), bilateral policy coordination towards Myanmar, and the topic of arms proliferation control. Rather than providing an exhaustive survey of the bilateral alliance framework, this volume should be regarded as an informative handbook, which provides analysis of selected issues that are of relevance to the Japan-U.S. alliance and give insight into current thinking in Japan on the alliance.

First, the editor of this volume, Masashi Nishihara, who is president of the National Defense Academy and has been known as one of the *eminences grises* in Japanese academia on Japanese security issues, presents a brief introduction and provides what could be taken as "executive summaries" of each contribution to follow. In the first contribution, entitled "Do the New Guidelines Make the Japan-U.S. Alliance More Effective?" Koji Murata explores legal aspects of the 1997 U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines. Teaching political science at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Murata has established himself as one of the rare advocates of strategic transparence with regard to the definition of "collective security" and greater international cooperation in the Japanese security debate. Accordingly, after providing a brief survey of the historical development of the bilateral security framework since the early 1950s, Murata goes on to analyze benefits and problems of the 1997 guidelines. Although he points out as one of their benefits that the original unequal framework has been restructured more in favor of a true alliance between equal partners, Murata argues that some problems remain, such as Japan's continuing fear of entrapment in U.S. military actions and Japan's ambiguous approach to the concept of "self-defense." After weighing the pros and cons of the recent legal framework, Murata discusses how Japan could achieve national security effectively. He argues that:

"Each country must pursue its national security according to its own conditions. In the Pacific War Japan was the loser, buts its actions in the war have never been forgotten by its neighbors. Japan also happens to be a far greater economic power than its neighbors (a circumstance quite different from Germany, whose neighbors are more or less developed countries). Japan is a densely populated, geographically small island country, whose prosperity depends on international trade. Given these conditions, Japan need not, and should not, pursue an autonomous defense as what is referred to as a 'normal country'." (p. 32)

By pleading for some extent of asymmetry in the alliance to be inevitable due to the superpower status of the United States, Murata argues that it will nevertheless be necessary for Japan to gradually prepare to take on more of the burden in human (i.e., non-material) terms. He also expresses his doubt about excessive legalism concerning military contingencies and proposes to reinstate both prior and regular consultation provisions as well as to establish a standing consultative body between the two countries. To sum up, Murata's contribution constitutes a well-balanced analysis of the past, present and future issues of the bilateral alliance and its implications for Japan's national security.

The next contribution, entitled "Security Arrangements after Peace in Korea," was written by Michishita

Narushige, who is associated with the National Institute of Defense Studies of the Defense Agency of Japan. It explores future security scenarios on the Korean Peninsula after unification. Michishita's main argument is that even after unification, maintenance of the trilateral U.S.-South Korea-Japan alliance will be desirable for reasons of regional and global reassurance, in particular as a hedge against a rising China (pp. 50-2). Apart from the fact that recently, the prospects for an imminent reunification have become somewhat obscure; despite its considerable length, Michishita's contribution lacks concreteness with regard both to facts and figures as well as to argumentation. Although his basic claim is convincing enough, namely that the trilateral dynamics between the United States, South Korea and Japan make an effective maintenance of respective bilateral relations a prerequisite for a smooth management of regional and global security issues, the reader finds himself left in the dark about further implications and details. As regards the rearrangement of triangular relations between the above-mentioned countries, Michishita proposes the maintenance of respective bilateral relations by means of a complementary multilateral framework:

"Formally, the two alliances are two separate entities, with no security arrangement to tie Japan and South Korea. In reality, however, the two alliances frequently work together, with the United States as a hub. A trilateral framework is ideal for discussing how to redefine the two alliances and assign roles and missions. Such a framework would represent the interests of the three nations more fairly, and precedence does exist in a trilateral framework designed originally to discuss issues concerning North Korea. Not listening to other regional players runs the risk of offending them, however, and this would be particularly true regarding China." (pp. 56-7)

Chapter 3 is entitled "Policy Coordination on Taiwan" and deals with one of the major hotspots in the region. Nakai Yoshifumi sets out by describing the different reactions of the U.S. and Japanese governments to the 1996 Taiwan crisis; while in the United States the crisis elicited a united response with emerging consciousness of the graveness of the situation, in Japanese government circles inertia prevailed with awareness of the seriousness of the crisis evolving only at a later stage. Nakai proposes three scenarios for future U.S. and Japanese policies regarding Taiwan: the divergence scenario, in which the two nations take uncoordinated approaches, which would without any doubt have a negative impact on the alliance; the convergence scenario, in which Japan would adopt a policy in line with the U.S. stance, which would be beneficial for the alliance but would meet with opposition in the domestic context; and finally the coordination scenario, which presumes differences between the allies but at the same time emphasizes the importance of policy coordination. While this third approach has the greatest chances of succeeding in the near and mid-term, it would require Japan to make some legal adjustments in order to expand its contribution in defense and security matters. The author concludes with a very pragmatic agenda for closer coordination between the allies over the short, medium and long term. Nakai calls for greater transparency in Japanese defense institutions, above all the Japanese Defense Agency, as a short-term duty, and for greater clarification in how Japan and the United States handle the "China threat argument" as part of the long-term agenda: "Both sides need to give a cautious reception to the argument that China presents a threat to regional security. The idealpolitik policy orientation of the United States is particularly susceptible to such simplistic statements.[1] Japan, on the other hand, should avoid justifying behavior as being in accordance with the Asian way, since this approach tends to emphasize conformity and racism" (p. 98). It is particularly refreshing to hear such open and healthy self-criticism and constructive criticism of the United States from the mouth of a Japanese scholar. Furthermore, Nakai urges that flexible security cooperation be considered in the future (p. 98).[2] In sum, this contribution offers a well-structured and insightful account of the complex Taiwan issue in the bilateral relations between the United States and Japan.

Chapter 4 deals with the U.S.-Japanese alliance in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Entitled "Toward a Japan-U.S.-ASEAN Nexus," it was authored by one of the most eminent specialists of ASEAN in Japan, Sudo Sueo. He starts out with a description of the major sources of instability in Southeast Asia, mentioning the declining U.S. position in the region, China's recent emergence as a great power, and economic turmoil and political crisis as the main factors. Distinguishing economic, political and security issues, Sudo refers to the controversy about the proposal to establish an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF) to illustrate the changing roles of Japan and the United States in economic coordination in the Southeast Asian region. As regards coordination between the two allies in political issues, the author mentions "Asian values" as one of the most contentious issues; while nobody would doubt the huge gap that exists between the U.S. and the Japanese approaches to democratization in Asia, Sudo argues that "The question here is whether or not Japan and the United States can overcome these differences and

coordinate their policies in order to bring about meaningful changes in the matter of democratization in Asia" (p. 110). As the third pillar for Japan-U.S. cooperation Sudo mentions security cooperation, the main concern being the strategic stabilization of Southeast Asia. Sudo suggests the establishment of a Northeast Asian security forum so that the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) could carry out its tasks more efficiently (p. 114). In the context of growing regional instability, the author also argues that Japan and the United States can effectively consolidate security networks in the region if they coordinate their policies (p. 114). This article appropriately ends on a suggestive note that "prospects for Southeast Asian security hinge on how swiftly Japan and the United States can incorporate ASEAN into their common alliance agenda" (p. 118).

Chapter 5 is an examination of the controversial issue of economic sanctions against Myanmar and the link of foreign aid and human rights more generally. Hoshino Eiichi, professor of international relations in Tokyo Woman's Christian University, starts his article by providing numerous examples of the huge differences that exist between Japan's preference for positive sanctions and the U.S. tendency towards negative sanctions. The author also refers to the terms "oxygen strategy" and "asphyxiation strategy" that were coined by Franklin L. Lavin to describe different sanction policies. Hoshino then argues for the necessity for the U.S. and Japanese governments to synchronize their policies so that negative direct effects on the alliance can be prevented (p. 150). As regards the controversial question of what may be the strategically most sagacious approach to Myanmar, Hoshino concludes on a rather resigned note tinged with opportunism:

"Unfortunately, the world is not a perfect place where individual human rights, and collective rights such as sovereignty, are respected without conflict. And no one policy can right wrongs in the face of widespread abuses of human rights and collective rights, as is the case in Myanmar. Each policy alternative comes with drawbacks. Under such circumstances, it may be that conditional engagement is the most effective choice for the Japan-U.S. alliance to pursue. It may also be the least dangerous." (p. 150)

Chapter 6 presents an analysis of the respective responses by the United States and Japan to arms proliferation by non-state actors. In the post-9-11 world nobody would seriously doubt the increase of transnational threats to national security; when it comes to tackling the issue of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), however, states' overall stance and threat perception continue to differ considerably. While even before 9-11 there was a great amount of alertness in the United States about WMD proliferation, Japan's official attitude towards WMD proliferation has so far been characterized by a lack of strategy. According to the author:

"The Japanese government is yet to devote much public discussion to its concerns about WMD terrorism. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs states in its blue paper that, due to the danger of WMD proliferation, the international community needs to promote disarmament and arms control, and strengthen nonproliferation agreements. While Japan has ratified the four key nonproliferation conventions–the CWC, BWC, NPT, and CTBT–the ministry's statement seems to betray a lack of strategic thinking on the part of Japan with regard to its national interests and the specific problems it faces." (pp. 167-8)

In this chapter Miyasaka Naofumi explores the question of alliance-based cooperation by focusing on the changing nature of arms proliferation in the post-Cold war world, by investigating the policies and perceptions of the United States and Japan with regard to WMD proliferation, by considering their policies concerning the proliferation of small arms by non-state actors, and by dealing with current bilateral treaties between the United States and its allies. As regards responses to small-arms proliferation, the United States has had its specific culture of strong emotional attachment to small arms. It is common knowledge that Japan finds itself on the other end of the scale in this respect: the possession of firearms being strictly prohibited by law, the number of fatalities resulting from gun-related injuries is ludicrously low compared to the United States (p. 170). As regards strategic cooperation between the two allies, it has to be conceded that steps have been made towards a closer bilateral framework for coping with transnational issues of various sorts, but concrete measures to realize a common anti-proliferation strategy have yet to be taken. It is true, however, that awareness of the urgency of implementing bilateral mechanisms has increased in the wake of September 11. Miyasaka proposes a number of systematized bilateral forms of cooperation, both in government as well as in the military. In his conclusion the author suggests that the Japanese government set its priorities in foreign policy more clearly and efficiently (particularly in the context of distribution of funds) and appeals for the linking of the elimination of transnational threats to the Japan-U.S. alliance in the future.

A point of particular interest in this contribution

is Miyasaka's poignant comment on the reluctance of Japanese academia to analyze terrorism-related issues for seemingly obscure reasons:

"In its recent responses to terrorism, the Japanese government has seemingly displayed a tough stance, yet the country lacks an official definition of terrorism, and the National Police Agency (NPA) does not distinguish terrorism from guerilla activities. Consequently, there is a lack of consensus regarding whether Aum is a terrorist organization. Bizarrely, Japanese academics, a majority of whom are leftist in orientation, disdain the study of terrorism because it is government-oriented. Thus it is that international relations researchers, who focus on nonstate actors, be they armed or not, are often viewed as nonrealists, while realists, to whom the state is the most important unit, consider Aum a public safety concern rather than a national security issue. This helps explain why most Japanese international politics scholars failed to regard the Aum incidents in the context of WMD proliferation. In fact, one can find few academic books or articles written by Japanese experts on modern terrorism." (p. 168)

It is such striking insights into the obscurities of contemporary Japanese academia that make this volume worth reading, rather than merely the subject matter of the above-mentioned contributions. In sum, this collection of articles written by established and younger Japanese scholars on a variety of issues related to the Japan-U.S. alliance can be recommended to everyone who has an interest in recent Japanese perspectives about the alliance framework since it reveals both strengths and weaknesses of Japanese academia.

Notes

[1]. Huntington, Samuel. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* 72 (3): 22-49; and Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro. 1997. *The Coming Conflict with China*. New York: Knopf.

[2]. An abridged version of this chapter was published as "Turbulence Threatens" in the Chatham House monthly *The World Today* 55 (January-December 1999): 16.

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