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U.S. BASES IN JAPAN:
DO WE STILL NEED THEM ?

by



James L. Mitchell
LCDR, SC, USN

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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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While U.S. bases in Japan remain vital to the security of America's Pacific interests, Soviet peace initiatives and domestic budget deficits have forced a reexamination of U.S. security policy with its reliance on overseas basing. The American force structure in Japan, the unique Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, the Japanese "comprehensive security" strategy, and threats to U.S. interests in the Pacific are described. The importance of the bases to the National Security Strategy, and their role in executing the Maritime Strategy in a global war against the Soviet Union are analyzed. Prospects for retention of the bases are positive, but are threatened by the divisive trade issue, a perceived Japanese "free ride" on defense, charges of one-way technology transfer, a changing political balance in Japan, a diminished threat perception in both countries, and Soviet disarmament initiatives. Recommendations to perpetuate basing rights include severing trade-defense linkage; encouraging Japan to assume a greater role in international affairs, expand its defense forces, increase its overseas development assistance, and pay more U.S. basing costs; and promoting joint U.S.-Japanese weapons development.

US BASES IN JAPAN: DO WE STILL NEED THEM ?

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. military bases established in Japan after World War II provided the security which enabled that devastated country to rebuild and flourish. Those bases were just one link in a chain of bases encircling the Soviet Union after the war, a strong symbol of American commitment to containment, deterrence, and forward defense. By 1990, Germany was reunited, the Warsaw Pact had dissolved, intermediate range ballistic missiles had been destroyed under treaty, and hundreds of thousands of Soviet troops were returning home to be demobilized. Unquestionably the level of tension and risk of war between the super-powers had lessened appreciably, and many claimed victory in the Cold War. However, just as Americans were planning how to spend the resultant "peace dividend," events in the Baltics, Tiananmen Square, and Kuwait tempered their euphoria just as a new national strategy and force structure were being planned.

The number of U.S. bases abroad continues to decrease as a result of budgetary and political pressures. The imminent loss of bases in the Philippines has focused attention on the cost and vulnerability of such bases, and called into question their continued necessity. Are the bases in Japan still required? I contend that they remain vital to U.S. national security interests in the Pacific, and will support that conclusion by discussing the unique U.S.-Japan security alliance, the current threats in the Pacific, and the role that U.S. bases in Japan play in the U.S. Pacific strategy. I will examine the prospects

for retaining the bases, and recommend actions to ensure their continued availability.

BACKGROUND

US Bases in Japan. U.S. facilities in Japan, which totalled more than 3800 when the occupation ended in 1952, today number 118.¹ The reduction was mutually beneficial with the U.S. abandoning excess, redundant, and dilapidated facilities which were quickly converted to commercial use. The bases which remain are the very best from an operational perspective, occupying 325 square kilometers (70% on the island of Okinawa) and manned by 50,600 U.S. military personnel.²

The Navy operates three major bases in Japan. Yokosuka is homeport for Commander Seventh Fleet and the ten-ship *USS Midway* battle group, and offers by far the best ship repair capability west of California along with extensive supply, fuel, and ammunition storage.³ Nearby NAF Atsugi serves as base for *Midway's* air wing and P-3C maritime patrol aircraft. Sasebo is homeport for a three-ship amphibious squadron, soon to be joined by an LHA, and is strategically located across the Tsushima Strait from Korea.

Yokota Air Base outside Tokyo serves as headquarters for the Fifth Air Force and as the hub for U.S. military airlift in Japan. Two squadrons of F-16s and Navy P-3s are stationed at Misawa AB in Northern Japan, and more than 70 F-15s along with AWACs, tankers, and reconnaissance aircraft are based at Kadena AB on Okinawa.⁴

The Marines comprise half of all U.S. forces stationed in

Japan, with their operations concentrated on Okinawa. In addition to the III MEF Headquarters, the entire Third Division and 1st Air Wing are stationed on that island, while the Wing's F/A-18s and AV-8s are stationed at Iwakuni.

The Army maintains no combat troops in Japan, but does retain the IX Corps Headquarters at Camp Zama in Yokohama along with 2,100 support personnel.

The US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty. Article IX of the 1947 Japanese Constitution renounces war and the threat or use of force to settle international disputes, and forbids the maintenance of armed forces. This clause accurately reflected both American and Japanese desires during the occupation, but as war raged in Korea and the occupation ended in 1952, the U.S. encourage the creation of a Japanese Defense Force. Government efforts to overturn Article IX in the early 1950's failed, but the Japanese Supreme Court did rule that the nation retained the inherent right of self-defense, and could legally maintain minimal self-defense forces.⁵ Such a force was created in 1952, but despite the court's ruling, it has long been viewed distrustfully as an illegal descendent of the Imperial Army and Navy responsible for the destruction of WWII. Faced with such strong sentiment, the Government imposed strict limits on these forces, including the prohibition of offensive weapons, overseas deployments, and collective security arrangements. In addition, the three non-nuclear principles were adopted in 1967, banning the production, possession, or introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan.⁶

Japan's near-total reliance on the U.S. for her security was

codified in the first Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States signed in 1951. It granted the U.S. basing rights for "the maintenance of peace and security in the Far East," but did not explicitly pledge the U.S. to defend Japan from aggression.⁷ A revised treaty signed in 1960 maintained American basing, but is unique as an asymmetrical treaty in that while it pledges the U.S. to defend Japan against attack, Japan is not similarly obligated to come to the aid of the U.S. unless the attack were to occur "in the territories under the administration of Japan."⁸ Such wording was necessary to comply with the prohibition against collective security arrangements. The treaty also stipulates that the U.S. would not use the bases for combat operations without prior consultation with the Japanese Government. While this provision in effect gives Japan veto power over U.S. operations, it has been interpreted to mean only that air strikes could not be launched directly from Japanese bases without approval, and the clause has never been exercised.⁹ Neither treaty was popular in Japan, with polls showing less than one-third of the population supporting the treaty in 1960. Ratification of the treaty precipitated wide-spread rioting, cancellation of a planned visit by President Eisenhower, and the fall of the Prime Minister.¹⁰

The combination of robust economic growth, increasing threat perception, and strong national leadership served to build public support for the treaty in the late 1970's and 1980's. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, shoot-down of KAL 007, and build-up of forces in the Far East, coupled with the Mideast oil crises and Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia clearly revealed the broad

dangers to Japanese prosperity. Prime Minister Nakasone seized the initiative to strongly assert Japan's role as a world leader, to declare the U.S.-Japanese relationship an alliance, and to foster a strong national consensus for that alliance.¹¹ He was also the first to embrace the concept of "comprehensive security," which consolidated political, economic, and military initiatives to enhance security. Increases in defense spending were balanced by similar increases in overseas development assistance (ODA) to strategically important countries. This policy gained wide support both at home and in the U.S. which helped direct the ODA payments in consonance with national policy.¹²

Japanese Self-Defense Forces. Created in 1954 from a police reserve, the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) has developed into a highly capable force 273,000 strong.¹³ The JSDF \$40 billion budget represents the world's third largest defense budget, and while a self-imposed defense spending cap of 1% of GNP has been only symbolically exceeded since 1987, unprecedented economic growth has permitted a constant 6.5% growth in the defense budget over the last decade.¹⁴ The primary JSDF missions are to defend Japan from invasion and air attack, and to protect selected sea lanes out to 1,000 miles. Under the terms of the treaty, the U.S. is responsible for nuclear deterrence, conventional defense of Japan beyond the capabilities of the JSDF, and offensive actions in the theater.¹⁵ The JSDF forces are exceptionally well-equipped with a combination of U.S. and Japanese weapons. They possess one of the world's most capable ASW forces built around a force of 55 destroyers, 14 diesel submarines, and 100 P-

30 aircraft, and their mine warfare fleet is the world's fourth largest.¹⁴ Air defense capability incorporates 120 F-15Js, updated F-4s, E-2s, and Patriot missiles. The ground forces are equipped with modern armor, helicopters, and missiles. And the near future will see the addition of Aegis destroyers, SH-60 helicopters, TAGOS ships, and over-the-horizon backscatter radar systems. Yet despite its impressive hardware and skill, the JSDF recognizes its inability to defend either its territory or its SLOCs against the Soviet Union, and maintains its continued security dependence on the U.S.

SECURITY THREATS IN THE PACIFIC

The Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is the only nation in the world that can threaten the existence of the United States, and it is therefore the primary focus of U.S. and Japanese forces in the Pacific. Soviet force levels in the Far East are enormous, and announced force reductions are will largely be offset by continuing qualitative improvements. Ground forces are expected to be cut from 45 divisions to 38, air regiments reduced from 27 to 16, and the Soviet Pacific Fleet, comprising some 100 major surface combatants and 140 submarines, will lose just five submarines. Most remaining units will be equipped with far more modern equipment, with the fleet increasing SSM capacity 100%, SAM capacity 50%, and amphibious lift capacity 60%. And no cuts are planned in the theater bomber force, which includes 85 Backfires.¹⁷ The majority of these forces are arrayed along the Chinese border, but since the recent rapprochement between those countries, troop levels and tension have been reduced on both

sides. There have been virtually no reductions in the forces facing Japan.

During the final days of WWII, the Soviets seized the four southernmost Kurile Islands, with Stalin stating "Henceforth, the Kurile Islands shall not serve as a means to cut off the Soviet Union from the ocean or as a base for a Japanese attack on our Far East..."¹⁹ All Japanese residents were expelled in 1947, and the dispute over the islands has kept the two nations from formally signing a WWII peace treaty. In 1978, the Soviets fortified three of the four islands with a full army division and 40 MIG-23s, posing a direct threat to Hokkaido and the Soya Strait.¹⁷ Strategically, the action was intended to intimidate Japan and weaken its alliance with the U.S. Instead, the provocation rallied support in Japan for the JSDF and the U.S. alliance. When in 1983 Prime Minister Nakasone forcefully declared his nation's intention to serve as an unsinkable aircraft carrier, the Soviets responded by moving 137 SS-20 missiles into the theater.²⁰ Although these missiles have since been destroyed under treaty, the Soviets have conducted regular military exercises in the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk, including simulated air attacks on Japanese radar sites and amphibious assaults in the Kuriles clearly seen as aimed against Hokkaido. This threat of invasion has been bolstered by the presence of the Soviets' only naval infantry division and the addition of LASH and RO/RO vessels to the Pacific merchant fleet.²¹

Gorbachev's Vladivostok initiative in 1986 was an attempt to reduce tension in the region and encourage Japanese investment to develop the resources of Siberia.²² But the Japanese remain

distrustful of the poised Soviet military force, and have made return of the Kuriles a precondition for any serious cooperation.²³ Strategically, it is unlikely that the Soviets will be willing to trade these islands for Japanese trade and development capital.

North and South Korea. A recent South Korean Defense White Paper states that the 1.2 million troops facing each other across the Korean demilitarized zone possess 80 times more military capability than the forces which clashed during the Korean War. Even more ominous, the paper predicts that the North Koreans are just five years away from producing nuclear weapons.²⁴ Despite South Korean peace initiatives, the war between the two nations could resume at any time, and as Kim il Sung ages, the temptation for him to complete what he started in 1950 may be increasing. Armed with nuclear weapons, he could intimidate the South and possibly deter a U.S. tactical nuclear response. Neither China nor the Soviet Union is likely to support North Korea in another war since both are seeking improved ties with the West, and without their support, North Korea could not win a protracted conventional war against the U.S.-South Korean alliance. This fact increases the attractiveness of a short nuclear war. Given the strength of the South and the looming nuclear threat posed by the North, the risk of preemptive attack by the South is also growing. Many believe that the presence of U.S. troops serves more to restrain the South than to deter the North, and initiatives to remove those troops could prove most destabilizing. Certainly the withdrawal of U.S. troops would encourage South Korea to develop their own nuclear capability,

further destabilizing the region.

China. Until the bloody events at Tiananmen Square, China was seen increasingly as a Western ally, with most of her forces deployed against Soviets along the northern border, with international trade booming, and with steady progress towards democracy and capitalism. The Sino-Soviet rapprochement initiated by Gorbachev had lessened tensions between those long-time adversaries, and the Chinese armed forces were being reduced from four to three million while modernizing with Western support.²⁵ Now all Pacific powers are reexamining their relations with China, and much of the trade and cooperation have ceased. The very legitimacy of the regime has been called into question, with destabilizing consequences for the entire region. Should the government choose to divert internal unrest by engaging in external conflict, a likely opponent is Vietnam, against whom China has maintained some 300,000 troops in a state of confrontation against an equal number of Vietnamese since their 1979 invasion. A recent clash between Chinese and Vietnamese warships near the Spratly Islands highlight the conflict over those islands which also involves the Philippines and Malaysia.²⁶ China might once more attempt to seize the island of Kinmen from Taiwan as it did in 1949 and 1958. Another possible opponent might be India with whom China has engaged in armed conflict and arms competition.²⁷

South East Asia. The Vietnamese ended their ten-year occupation of Cambodia in 1990 under heavy pressure from China and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), but fighting rages on between the various factions vying for control of that

nation. Vietnam's economy has virtually collapsed, and Soviet economic support and use of facilities at Cam Ranh Bay have decreased, probably in a Soviet ploy to encourage the Philippines to close U.S. bases.²⁹ This action is strongly opposed by the other members of ASEAN who credit the American presence at those bases with providing the regional stability which allowed their economies to prosper. Singapore's offer of limited basing support for U.S. ships and aircraft was intended to demonstrate that position. However it now appears that the Philippine bases will soon close, and the prospects for that country are bleak with the communist insurrection, continuing coup attempts, and a feeble economy combining to further weaken the country and destabilize the region.²⁹

India. Continued growth of the Indian armed forces has raised fears among the ASEAN nations. In particular, the Indian Navy has expanded its operations to the Malacca Straits in an announced effort to control the sea approaches to the Indian Ocean. And with nuclear weapons, a functional ICBM, and international political ambitions, the potential for renewed military confrontation with Pakistan and China remain high.³⁰

The Middle East. The current war in the Persian Gulf demonstrates both the extreme volatility and strategic importance of the region. The entire world economy relies on the flow of oil from the Gulf, interruptions to which have proven to have devastating effects on the economies of industrialized and developing nations alike. Although the U.S. and its coalition partners have demonstrated continuing resolve to protect that oil, its value will continue to invite acts of aggression from

countries within and outside the region.

Japan. To many countries in the Pacific, Japan represents a serious threat. Its huge economy and increasingly capable JSDF are seen as a new attempt to establish the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Although it has come to be accepted that the U.S. and Japan will jointly ensure the security of northeastern Asia, warships flying the rising sun are unwelcome in the southeast. A major reason for the small size of the JSDF is "...the negative perceptions of Japan's rearmament ...[which] seem universal in Asia."³¹ Although China has expressed support for the U.S.-Japan alliance, it sharply criticized the Japanese decision to exceed the 1% GNP defense spending cap.³²

The United States. Although the United States is widely credited with providing the secure environment under which so many Pacific Rim nations built their economies, it is also seen by many as a destabilizing influence in the region. Opponents of U.S. bases contend that the U.S. presence only provokes the Soviet Union and would involve the host nation super-power conflict.

THE ROLE OF JAPANESE BASES IN THE US PACIFIC STRATEGY

"The presence in Japan of U.S. bases and armed forces provides a military and political link understood by both friend and foe. Maintaining some U.S. forces in Japan serves the interests of both nations. It is a disincentive to nuclear proliferation and a deterrent to nuclear threats."³³

US National Security Policy. The American post-war security strategy of containment not only succeeded in its purpose of restraining the spread of communism, but also proved flexible in

response to regional contingencies. That strategy remains in force today, built on four basic elements: Deterrence, Alliance, Forward Defense, and Force Projection.

Deterrence. Deterring nuclear attack must be the highest priority of the U.S. armed forces. Rather straightforward when the U.S. enjoyed overwhelming nuclear superiority, it has become far more difficult in an age of nuclear parity and proliferation. Since there is currently no defense against nuclear attack, the U.S. employs the doctrine of flexible response to deter such an attack. This "nuclear umbrella" is easily extended to an ally, and coverage is assumed by many countries not formally aligned with the U.S., but is far more credible when accompanied by the stationing of U.S. forces in that country. Thus the presence of U.S. forces serves as a guarantee of U.S. strategic defense of Japan. But with their organic tactical nuclear capabilities, those forces also contribute directly to the U.S. flexible response capability. The ability to escalate to the nuclear level is expected to become increasingly important as nuclear proliferation increases the threat of regional conflict.

The presence of U.S. bases in Japan makes the prospect of attack on that nation almost inconceivable except under the scenario of global war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. However, its citizens, ships, and commercial interests around the world are highly vulnerable to attack. This then is the form conventional deterrence takes today, with the global forces of the U.S. deterring aggression against Japanese global interests.

Alliance. Strong alliances enable the U.S. to combine military and economic resources with its allies to best meet any

threat to shared interests worldwide. President Bush has written that "Our alliance with Japan remains a centerpiece of our security policy and an important anchor of stability."³⁴ As the relative economic power of the U.S. to its major allies declines, it has become policy to increasingly shift the responsibility and cost of defense to those allies. Japan, with world's second largest economy, has recognized the new policy, increasing defense spending, burden-sharing support for U.S. forces in Japan, and strategic ODA under the aegis of comprehensive security. Within political constraints, the JSDF has been structured to compliment the capabilities of U.S. forces with the JSDF serving as the shield for the U.S. spear.

Forward Defense. Forward defense of U.S. interests abroad requires forward deployed forces. This in turn requires either overseas bases in the vicinity of those interests, or logistically sustainable naval units and large strategic lift capability in order to remain on station and rapidly reinforce in time of crisis. Overseas bases are the preferred option, but rely on the shared interests of the host government to be viable. U.S. bases in Japan are arguably the country's best overseas bases. They are geostrategically located, provided without cost and heavily subsidized by Japan, are exceptionally well-equipped, and enjoy wide public support. Their proximity to Korea, the Soviet Union, China, and Southeast Asia permit a rapid and powerful U.S. response to any emergent crisis, thereby serving as a strong deterrent to action inimical to U.S. interests.

Force Projection. Force projection is essential to the forward defense of U.S. interests overseas. The U.S. forces

stationed permanently in Japan possess tremendously large, flexible, and responsive power projection capabilities. Together, the carrier battle group and Marine MEF can project offensive power at any level on the scale of conflict, and do so quickly anywhere in the theater. The logistics infrastructure of the bases not only make these forces sustainable, but also permit rapid and efficient reinforcement through their established transportation network.

Executing the Maritime Strategy. The U.S. Maritime Strategy is based on the same principles of deterrence, alliance, forward defense, and force projection as the National Security Strategy. In application, it comprises a three-phase sequential concept of operations for the employment of naval forces. Phase I attempts to deter conflict through presence and forward deployment. Phase II seizes the initiative once conflict has erupted in order to gain sea control and put the enemy on the defensive. Phase III takes the fight to the enemy by striking his homeland in support of the land battle. The importance of the U.S. bases in Japan to the successful application of the Maritime Strategy in the Pacific can best be demonstrated by examining the worst-case scenario of global war against the Soviet Union.

Phase I. Most strategists believe that the Soviets have little to gain by starting a war in the Far East, and that any super-power conflict there would result from an initial Soviet thrust into Western Europe.³⁵ In this scenario, the Soviets would likely issue an ultimatum to Japan that U.S. use of Japanese bases in the war would be considered a hostile act by Japan. Such a threat would likely strengthen Japanese resolve.

With the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, indication and warning time for a European invasion would likely now be measured in months vice days. During this period, U.S. and JSDF forces in Japan would go on heightened alert, increase surveillance of Soviet forces, and closely monitor fleet movements. Should the Soviet surface fleet and submarine force surge from Vladivostok, the U.S. and JSDF would immediately mine the Tsushima, Tsugaru, and Soya Straits to trap the Soviet fleet in the Sea of Japan. This would be considered a provocative act which the Japanese would permit under only the most threatening circumstances. Well before the mining, the Seventh Fleet and JMSDF would sortie, and additional U.S. battle groups and aircraft would deploy to the theater to improve readiness and demonstrate resolve. A show of strength at this point would be especially important to preclude Chinese accommodation with the Soviet Union, and thus to ensure that Soviet forces could not be redeployed against NATO or Japan.

Phase II. Once hostilities had begun in Europe, the U.S. Navy would engage Soviet forces world-wide in order to gain sea control and seize the initiative. U.S. and JSDF air forces would defend bases in Japan from Soviet air attack, while also attempting to interdict Backfire raids against the combined fleets. Those fleets would be engaging those Soviet submarines and surface units that had reached the Pacific before the straits were mined. If a large number of submarines had escaped, U.S. submarines would be employed in countering that threat. Otherwise, the U.S. submarine force would enter the Sea of Okhotsk to attack the Soviet ballistic missile submarines in their bastion. This tactic, intended primarily to reduce the

Soviet second-strike strategic reserve and provide the U.S. a source of leverage, would also serve as an incentive for the Soviets to restrict their naval forces to the bastion defense effort. If the Soviets refrained from attacking Japan directly, then Japan might restrict the U.S. from launching air strikes from Japanese bases against Soviet bases. Attacks against operating Soviet air and naval units would likely be permitted under these circumstances, which would eventually stimulate the Soviets to strike the bases in Japan. Until the Soviets crossed that line and so removed any remaining Japanese restraint, all attacks on Soviet bases, even those in the Kuriles and southern Sakhalin Island, would have to be performed with naval aviation. Since all available carrier battle groups would be employed against the Soviet aircraft and submarines menacing the SLOCs throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans, attacks on Soviet bases would likely be deferred until the third phase of the campaign.

Phase III. Once the Soviet air and submarine forces had been sufficiently attrited to constitute allied sea control, and presuming the land war in Europe continued without resort to nuclear weapons, the U.S. could take the war to the Soviets in the Far East. The submarine war in the bastions would be joined by U.S. and JSDF air forces in an effort to destroy all Soviet naval units trapped in the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk. The air forces would also attack the Soviet air defense system with the goal of exposing the ground forces and industrial targets to strategic bombing. Meanwhile, U.S. and JSDF naval and amphibious units would seize the disputed Kurile Islands, and possibly even Sakhalin Island to serve as a post-war bargaining chip.

Role of the JSDF. The majority of U.S. bases in Japan are joint-use facilities with the JSDF which serve to promote close operational relations between the two forces. Both sides are well aware of their mutual dependence in a war with the Soviet Union, and the necessity for maximum inter-operability and cooperation. To that end, combined planning, training, and exercises have been steadily increased over the last decade. Both governments have agreed to roles and missions for their forces which maximize capability while minimizing redundancy. The JSDF has developed impressive ASW, air defense, and mine warfare capabilities while the U.S. forces based in Japan are primarily offensive in orientation and structure. Increasingly, the JSDF is capable of defending its territory and its vital SLOCs, thus freeing U.S. forces to respond to threats throughout an enormous theater. In fact, the U.S. deployments to the Persian Gulf during the Iranian Crisis demonstrated to the Japanese Government just how over-extended U.S. Pacific forces were, prompting the Japanese to expand their own forces to assume the 1,000 mile SLOC defense mission.

Regional Security. While the Soviet Union presents by far the most dangerous threat to U.S. interests in the Pacific, that threat is perhaps the most improbable. The conflicts most likely to involve U.S. forces are regional, the result of hegemonic ambitions, border disputes, revolutions, and insurgencies. While the U.S. proudly takes credit for providing post-war regional stability, that there has been nearly continuous conflict during this period, including the Chinese revolution, and wars in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, India-Pakistan, and Iran-Iraq. Such conflicts

will continue in the future, and the Seventh Fleet in Japan will remain the primary U.S. response to limit such crises.

Even while the Seventh Fleet is growing, the U.S. Navy has begun a major force reduction motivated by the decline of the Soviet threat and the American economy. In this environment, the U.S. has encouraged the JSDF to play a larger role in Pacific regional security. Japan has so far resisted this effort, citing its neighbors' oft-pronounced fears of Japanese rearmament and military domination. Though a valid concern, it is not sufficient reason to avoid international responsibilities. Those nations which today welcome the stabilizing U.S. presence could soon learn to appreciate a combined U.S.-JSDF presence, especially when the alternative might be a power vacuum in the region. Japan is completely dependent on the SLOCs to the Middle East, and as an economic super-power and emerging leader in the free world, has a responsibility to defend those routes.

PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUED US BASING IN JAPAN

The U.S. bases in Japan currently enjoy wide popular support in that country. Under the Facilities Improvement Program, the Government of Japan is investing over \$500 million annually to upgrade and modernize those bases, building new housing, piers, hangers, warehouses, fuel tanks, and maintenance facilities. This effort has been matched by the continuous upgrading of U.S. equipment deployed to those bases, most notably the replacement of seven older surface combatants with Aegis cruisers, Spruance destroyers, and Perry frigates, and the scheduled relief of USS *Midway* by USS *Independence* later this year. While the prospects

for these bases are bright, there are issues which could threaten them. As both the U.S. and Japan review their security strategies in light of rapidly changing world events, these issues will require careful consideration.

Trade-Defense Linkage. The greatest threat to the U.S.-Japanese alliance is the trade issue. As the Japanese economy booms and the trade imbalance continues to favor that country, Americans have begun to decry Japan's "free ride" at U.S. expense. Few on either side of the Pacific would dispute that American willingness to bear the defense burden and open its markets were instrumental to Japan's economic success. Fewer still would deny that the Japanese continue to protect their markets while taking full advantage of open markets abroad. These are legitimate issues which must be resolved between the two governments. But they are trade issues, and efforts to link them to mutual security could undermine the alliance.

As U.S. economic strength declined relative to Japan, it was recognized in both countries that Japan must contribute "to a peaceful world on a scope commensurate with its enormous economic and technological strength."³⁴ Japan responded with large, sustained increases in defense spending, burden-sharing, and strategic ODA under its comprehensive security policy. It now boasts the world's third largest defense budget, is the world's largest ODA donor, and contributes more to the cost of maintaining U.S. forces overseas than any other ally, paying the equivalent of \$56,000 per year for each U.S. serviceman serving in Japan.³⁷ These facts are seldom mentioned by Congressional "Japan-bashers" who continue to charge that "Japan evades global

responsibilities in favor of self-centered economic expansion."³⁸

U.S. administration officials appreciate this expanding Japanese commitment to mutual security, and while quietly continuing to press Japan for even greater efforts, have worked hard to sever the linkage between trade and defense in Congress. The very real fear in both capitals is that continued U.S. vitriol will sour popular Japanese support for the sustained comprehensive security build-up, with highly disruptive political results.³⁹

Technology Transfer. Another aspect of the trade-defense linkage centers on the transfer of U.S. defense technology which could be exploited by Japanese industry to further erode American commercial advantages. The FS-X project was assailed as a technology give-away that would enable Japanese industry to undermine the U.S. commercial aviation industry. In fact, the Japanese Government had intended to design their own aircraft, but instead bowed to U.S. pressure to co-produce an F-16 derivative in order to help balance the trade deficit.⁴⁰ Under a U.S.-Japan military technology agreement signed in 1983, the U.S. became the only authorized recipient of Japanese military-industrial technology. And the FS-X deal was resisted in Japan for the same reason it was opposed in the U.S. since the Japanese had to agree to share the plane's phased array radar and composite wing designs.⁴¹ Many of Japan's high-tech weapons are U.S. systems built under license in Japan. These include the F-15, F-3C, SH-60, Patriot missile, and Aegis destroyer. Such arrangements greatly enhance inter-operability and decrease weapons cost for both nations. The 1986 Japanese decision to

participate in the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program bodes very well for the future of two-way technology transfer, and very ominously for future of hostile forces. Given the enormous cost of modern weapons development, a U.S.-Japanese coalition can be expected to out-invest and out-produce the Soviet Union, and favorably shifting the military balance.⁴²

Japanese Political Support. While the current U.S.-Japan alliance now enjoys the support of 70% of the Japanese public, and the JSDF is broadly perceived to have established its legitimacy and value, both conditions date only to the last decade. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), in power since 1955, has walked a very treacherous path to build a consensus for the current strategy of comprehensive security. Prime Minister Nakasone was the first Japanese leader to assert Japan's new role as a world leader and as an equal partner in the alliance with the U.S. Pacifist sentiment remains strong in Japan, and the Constitution's renunciation of war is widely supported. The Government's sensitivity to public perception was graphically demonstrated in 1988 when a JSDF submarine collided with a sport fishing boat. Upon completion of the investigation, every flag officer in the chain of command up to and including the Minister of Defense resigned. Still, some contend that the depth of antipathy towards the military is overstated, citing the revelation in 1974 that U.S. warships based in Japan were armed with nuclear weapons. The resulting outcry was in fact muted and short-lived.⁴³ In fact, most recent public opposition to the bases has focused on land use, safety, and noise.

Campaigning on opposition to a national consumption tax and

a major political scandal which tainted most of the LDP leadership, the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) achieved large electoral success in 1989 which enabled them to form a majority coalition in the Upper House of the Diet.⁴⁴ While security was not an issue in this campaign, the election held ominous implications for the U.S.-Japan alliance since the JSP has long held that both the JSDF and the security alliance with the U.S. are unconstitutional. Although the Party has recently softened its stand on these issues in an effort to broaden its support, members of the JSDF were relieved by the outcome of subsequent elections in 1990 in which the LDP retained its strong majority in the more powerful Lower House. Still, the Socialists now have the ability to block LDP defense initiatives.⁴⁵

Soviet Diplomacy. Soviet post-war strategy towards Japan has consisted of intimidation and blandishment. When Japan renewed its treaty with the U.S. in 1960, the Soviet Union declared the Kurile Islands would not be returned until all U.S. forces had been removed from Japan. In 1978, those islands were fortified as part of the massive Soviet military build-up in the Far East. When Prime Minister Nakasone declared Japan an unsinkable aircraft carrier, TASS declared there was no such thing in the nuclear age, and SS-20 missiles were positioned in the Far East.⁴⁶ This strong-arm Soviet approach has been highly counter-productive, serving to strengthen Japanese resolve and cement the alliance with the U.S.

Today, with their economy nearing collapse, Soviet national objectives have shifted from achieving military superiority to attracting capital investment. After forty years of threats, and

dealing now from a position of economic strength, Japan has assumed a hard line towards the Soviets. While recovery of the Kurile Islands remains a high national priority, it is inconceivable that Japan would trade off its alliance with the U.S. for the return of that territory, even if accompanied by non-aggression pacts and Siberian development deals. Gorbachev could more plausibly use the return of the islands as part of a regional demilitarization plan, along the lines of the Conventional Forces in Europe formula, or the offer to vacate Cam Ranh Bay if the U.S. left the Philippines. Such an offer might stimulate public pressure for good-faith negotiations which could well conclude with a limited reduction of U.S. basing in Japan.

Threat Perception. Some among the Japanese population see little threat from the Soviet Union under the enlightened leadership of Gorbachev, and therefore advocate a national policy of armed neutrality and the removal of U.S. forces from Japan. Even some who acknowledge the Soviet threat believe that the alliance with the U.S. presents an even greater risk, with one critic writing:

"...the Soviet threat exists for Japan only so far as Japan cooperates militarily with the United States. By strengthening its defenses and stepping up military cooperation with the United States, Japan is in fact steadily undermining its own security and inviting Soviet nuclear attack."⁴⁷

Although such neutralist sentiments are not currently shared by the majority, most Japanese recognize that the Soviet Union is not so threatening as in years past. Not surprisingly, there are now calls for a "peace dividend" in Japan too. Given the cooling Japanese economy and the budgetary problems that led to the imposition of a highly unpopular consumption tax, it can be

forecast that the rates of growth in all phases of comprehensive security will slow if not decline.⁴⁶ However, such fiscal constraints are unlikely to slow burden-sharing payments for U.S. forces in Japan given the tremendous value of the current defense arrangements. In the words of Prime Minister Nakasone, "Japan will defend itself by its own efforts, but also will use U.S. forces one hundred percent in an emergency. This will make the defense cost cheaper."⁴⁷

CONCLUSIONS

The U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty is, in the words of President Bush, "one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world and it is in our strategic interest to preserve it."⁵⁰ The vast post-war network of U.S. overseas bases has now shrunk to a "taut and precarious structure."⁵¹ Given the preponderance of Pacific commerce and the anticipated loss of bases in the Philippines, the Japanese bases have arguably become the most geostrategically important of all U.S. bases abroad. Certainly they are essential to the execution of the U.S. Maritime Strategy in the Western Pacific. They are equally vital to Japan, serving to guarantee not only the direct defense of the Japanese homeland, but also U.S. protection of Japan's worldwide commercial interests. The bases serve vital national interests, enjoy wide public support, are highly cost-effective, and would appear in no jeopardy. But threats to the bases do exist, and must be addressed to ensure the bases continue to protect shared interests in the Pacific.

First and most importantly, the divisive trade dispute

between the U.S. and Japan must be resolved without linkage to the security relationship. The myth of the "free ride" must be dispelled, and the American public informed regarding the large contributions the Japanese are making to their own defense.

Second, the alliance must continue to evolve with Japan assuming full and equal partnership. Along these same lines, the U.S. should encourage Japan to play a larger role in the international community commensurate with its economic status. In particular, Japan should seek a chair on the U.N. Security Council, a leadership role in economic institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and a Constitutional amendment to permit JSDF participation in U.N.-sponsored peacekeeping forces.

Third, the JSDF should continue its careful expansion and operational integration with U.S. forces. The policy of national specialization has produced an increasingly potent combined force widely accepted as stabilizing in a volatile region of the world. Along with expanded capability must come expanded authority to protect Japanese interests farther than 1,000 miles from the home islands to maintain stability when U.S. forces are over-extended.

Fourth, Japan must continue to increase its strategic ODA in cooperation with the U.S. In a world increasingly characterized by economic vice military competition, such financial assistance is often not only more persuasive than military pressure, but far more stabilizing and domestically acceptable. And the Japanese policy of comprehensive security should be touted in America to inform the public that Japan is the world's largest ODA donor, and that such assistance is a carefully planned element of their

national defense strategy.

Fifth, continue to increase burden-sharing payments for the cost of maintaining U.S. troops in Japan, to include the full labor cost of all 20,000 Japanese employees at the U.S. bases and continued modernization of base facilities. Such burden-sharing would be popular both in Japan and the U.S. In an economy noted for full employment and a one job for life ethic, assuming the labor costs would shield Japanese employees from U.S. cost-cutting initiatives and reinforce the perception that they serve the Japanese defense effort. The facilities improvement program is also popular in that it stimulates local construction firms while improving the operational capabilities of joint-use bases which defend the nation. Just as important, all such payments help to dispel the "free ride" perception in the U.S., and will moderate pressure to reduce forward-deployed forces.

Finally, high-tech weapons development cooperation must be encouraged by both governments along the lines of the current SDI project. The establishment of U.S.-Japanese defense consortia will diffuse the technology transfer issue, optimize research and development investment, and lead to the production of weapons systems sure to preserve and extend the U.S. and Japanese qualitative advantage in combat.

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