US-Japan Alliance on the Recovery Path

By Matake Kamiya

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A presentation at the "4th US-Japan Strategic Dialogue"
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Compared to April last year, when we met to discuss issues surrounding our alliance, the state of the US-Japan alliance is much improved. In the first half of 2010, our alliance was at rock bottom. In January, in Washington, D.C., the 16th Japan-US Security Seminar, which was supposed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty, was held.[1] The mood at the conference was, however, rather low-key and gloomy. I started my presentation on "The Future Visions of the Alliance" with the following words:

> As all of you would probably agree, this is the worst time, particularly from a Japanese point of view, to talk about the future of our alliance… Since around 2003, thanks to efforts made by some people in this room, it once seemed that the era in which the US-Japan alliance would deal mainly with housekeeping matters was finally ending, and a new era in which the two allies can conduct talks and policy coordination on substantive strategic and security issues was finally beginning. Since last fall, however, the alliance has seemed to return to the era of housekeeping. The future of the alliance seems quite unpredictable.[2]

Last April, participants at the Third US-Japan Strategic Dialogue were even more pessimistic.[3] I started my presentation on "Views of the US-Japan Defense Relationship," by stating:

> During most of the 2000s, and particularly since the mid-2000s, the security alliance between Japan and the United States seemed to be heading for a near-equal, deeper partnership in which the two allies would actually do variety of things to promote security of themselves, of the Asia-Pacific region, and globally. From 2005 to 2006, at the 2+2 meetings, the two countries set common strategic objectives and agreed about concrete ways to achieve such objectives, including how the Futenma issue should be solved. But since December 2009, the situation surrounding the US-Japan alliance became so messy, due mainly to the poor handling of the Futenma relocation issue by Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama. The once seemingly remarkable developments of the US-Japan alliance in the mid- to late-2000s have given way to a new era, which our colleague Misha Auslin calls "Japan dissing.[4,,5]

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[1] For a report of the conference, see Brad Glosserman, rapporteur, *Celebrate or Separate?: The Japan-US Security Treaty at 50, A Conference Report*, Issues and Insights, Vol. 10, No. 15 (Honolulu: Pacific Forum CSIS, 2010). [http://csis.org/files/publication/issuesinsights_v10n15.pdf]

[2] Matake Kamiya, "The Future Visions of the Alliance," in *Celebrate or Separate?* p. 41.

[3] For a report of the conference, see *Anchors for an Alliance Adrift: The Third US-Japan Strategic Dialogue*, Issues and Insights, Vol. 10, No. 18 (Honolulu: Pacific Forum CSIS, 2010). [http://csis.org/files/publication/issuesinsights_vol10n18english.pdf]

[4] Michael Auslin, "Japan Dissing," *Wall Street Journal*, April 22, 2010.

[5] Matake Kamiya, "Views of the US-Japan Defense Relationship," paper presented at the Third US-Japan Strategic Dialogue, Maui, Hawaii, April 26-27, 2010.

Since last summer, however, remarkable developments have brought our alliance back to its recovery path. First, a series of events since last summer with regard to China and North Korea have made both Japan and the United States, together with other East Asian countries, rediscover the importance of this alliance for the peace and security in East Asia.

At the 17th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting in Hanoi in July last year, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton tried to push back against Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea by maintaining that freedom of navigation represents a vital interest for the United States, and that the United States opposes the use of force to resolve territorial disputes there. When she did that, 11 other East Asian countries, including core ASEAN members such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, and Japan, joined her to express concern about Chinese behavior in the South China Sea.

Then in September, the Senkaku incident took place. The people of Japan were stunned by the confrontational posturing and actions of the Chinese government, including the unilateral postponement of negotiations on a treaty over joint gas field development in the East China Sea, unilateral suspension of ministerial and higher-level exchanges, cancellations of several private sector exchanges including a scheduled visit by a group of 1,000 university students to the Shanghai Expo, a de facto ban on exports to Japan of rare earth minerals, and detention of four employees of a major Japanese construction contractor, Fujita.

The Senkaku incident shocked not only Japanese but Southeast Asians and South Koreans, too. For example, on Sept. 29, in an article in *China Daily*, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak described China as "more assertive than ever before.[6]" In the case of South Korea, wariness about China had been growing in response to Chinese reactions to the *Cheonan* incident that took place in March. Such concern was reinforced by the Senkaku incident and the Chinese reactions to the North Korean shelling of the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong in November.

Growing concern among the East Asian countries about the increasing assertiveness of China led these countries to rediscover the importance of the United States in the maintenance of regional stability. For example, on Sept. 24, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong described Secretary Clinton's statement at Hanoi as a "useful reminder" of the US role in Asia, "which China cannot replace… because of America's security contributions in maintaining the peace in the region….[7]"

In Japan, the significance of the alliance with the United States for its security was also rediscovered, particularly by top DPJ leaders. For example, on Sept. 27, Minister of National Strategy Genba Koichiro told a public audience: "This incident has given the Japanese people the opportunity to understand again the importance of the US-Japan alliance as well as the necessity of the defense of the offshore islands.[8]" Since then, leading politicians in both the ruling and opposition parties, including Prime Minister Kan Naoto and then Foreign Minister Maehara Seiji, have frequently repeated the centrality of the US-Japan alliance to the security of Japan.

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[6] Chen Weihua, "Malaysian PM Able to Work with 'Assertive' China," *China Daily*, Sept. 29, 2010.
[7] Jeremy Page, Patrick Barta, and Jay Solomon, "US, Asean to Push Back Against China," *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 22, 2010; and "Why US must be a part of the Asian story," *Straits Times*, Sept. 24, 2010.
[8] "'Hi-Minshu-Kokka Akarasama ni," *Sankei Shimbun*, Sept. 25, 2010.

In Korea, security cooperation with Japan had been a politically sensitive issue until recently, due mainly to the history issue between the two countries. Since the Senkaku incident and particularly after the Yeonpyeong incident in November, South Korean foreign and security policy elites have started to seek seriously the possibility of US-Japan-ROK trilateral security cooperation. On Jan. 10, 2011, Japanese Defense Minister Kitazawa Toshimi visited Seoul and agreed with South Korean Defense Minister Kim Kwan Jin to strengthen security cooperation between the two countries including the launch of negotiations to conclude an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). On Jan. 14, Defense Minister Kitazawa said in a press interview that he thinks that "the cooperative posture among Japan, the United States, and South Korea has become increasingly strengthened.[9]"

On the other side of the Pacific, the United States has also rediscovered the importance of its alliance with Japan in the maintenance of peace and security in East Asia, and for its East Asian strategy. Since the middle of the 2000s, there was a gradually spreading view in the United States that China had started to become what the Bush administration called a "responsible stakeholder." However, after the Senkaku incident, the Americans have realized that they have to face reality about China. During and after the Senkaku incident, the Chinese government took outrageous measures such as stopping rare earth exports to Japan. Such a bold and unrestrained way of exercising power has been, except for some extreme cases, generally refrained by leading liberal democracies, which have supported the existing international order. However, China is still a country that exercises its power in such a way. China is still not like the US, Japan, or Europe. China is still China, and the Chinese are still the Chinese. That is what the Americans have realized, together with the Japanese and many others in East Asia and globally, after the September Senkaku incident. So, in the immediate aftermath of that incident, when China escalated tensions, the US arrived to add diplomatic muscle to Japan. On Sept. 23, Secretary Clinton told Japanese Foreign Minister Maehara in New York that the Senkaku Islands are covered by the Japan-US security treaty.[10] On Oct. 27, in a joint press conference with Maehara in Honolulu, Hawaii, Clinton reiterated that "the Senkakus fall within the scope of Article 5 of the 1960 US-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. This is part of the larger commitment that the United States has made to Japan's security.[11]"

In addition to the issue of a rising, more assertive China, North Korea's "harassment" of the ROK – that is, the sinking the *Cheonan* and shelling of Yeongpyong – triggered the awareness of both Japan and the United States of the importance of the US-Japan alliance for the stability in East Asia.

Thus, a series of events since last summer have made both of us rediscover the importance of our alliance for our security goals in East Asia. This is the first factor that has brought our alliance back to its recovery path.

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[9] "Daijin Kaiken Gaiyou,Heisei 23-nen 1-gatsu 14-ka," in the official website of Japan Ministry of Defense. [http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/kisha/2011/01/14.html]

[10] "Clinton: Senkakus subject to security pact," *The Japan Times*, Sept. 25, 2010.

[11] "Joint Press Availability with Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara," Press Availability, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State, Kahala Hotel and Resort, Honolulu, HI, Oct. 27, 2010. [http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/10/150110.htm]

The second factor that has reinvigorated our alliance was the tragedy of 3/11, and *Operation Tomodachi* that followed.

Some of you may remember that when the US-Japan alliance celebrated the 50th anniversary on Sept. 8, 2001, a huge commemorative conference took place in San Francisco, where the US-Japan Security Treaty was originally signed 50 years before. While most participants from the two countries almost unanimously praised the half century of close cooperation and friendship that has been established between the two former enemies after World War II, some US participants pointed out that the alliance "has not been tested" in any crisis, and expressed concern that it is unclear what Japan would be able to do in a crisis due to domestic constraints: Japan's postwar pacifism and the consequent official interpretation of the Constitution regarding Japan's right of collective self-defense.

For Japan, 9/11, which occurred only three days after the 50th anniversary of the alliance, represented the first serious "test" whether Japan could effectively help the United States in a crisis. With the strong leadership of Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro, Japan passed that test.

For the United States, however, the test was yet to come. Although the presence of the US military in Japan provided Japan with a consistent deterrent since the end of World War II, and had continually made a major contribution to the security of Japan, the success of the deterrent could not be proved as nothing had actually happened. Because of this, before 3/11, a considerable number of Japanese people questioned the contribution of the US military presence to Japan's security. Some said that the United States was simply using Japan as part of its global strategy. Some people questioned whether the US military would come to Japan's need in an emergency. However, with Japan facing its biggest national crisis since the war, the US military has done its utmost to hold out a helping hand. Even when some relief teams dispatched to Japan from other nations after the disaster fled owing to fears over radioactivity from the damaged nuclear power plant in Fukushima, the US military, in contrast, bolstered its support. US military personnel have proven to the fullest degree that they are acting for the benefit of the Japanese people, and that the United States is really a trustworthy ally for Japan.

Operation Tomodachi has also proven that the Japan-US alliance can function in an emergency in a well-coordinated manner. In fact, until now the JSDF and the US military had never jointly carried out a large-scale campaign. That said, the success of *Operation Tomodachi* has clearly shown to Japan and the world there were no problems with interoperability or communication between the two organizations and that they can take effective joint action. This could also increase the credibility of the Japan-US alliance deterrent for Japan and the region, particularly against China and North Korea.

The third factor that has reinvigorated our alliance was efforts made by the two governments to advance the bilateral alliance review process that took place in the mid-2000s, at a series of US-Japan Security Consultative Committee (2+2) meetings.

In December last year, the Japanese government adopted the new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) that stress the importance of Japan's alliance and cooperation with the United States, arguing first that the Japan-US alliance is indispensable to Japan's security;

second that the presence of US military forces brings reassurance to Asia-Pacific nations; and third that the alliance is vital to Japan's effective action in multilateral security cooperation and addressing global security issues.[12] According to the Guidelines, Japan "will further deepen and develop the Alliance to adapt to the evolving security environment." The Guidelines maintain that Japan will continue to strive to realize a world without nuclear weapons. At the same time, however, they point out that "the extended deterrence provided by the United States, with nuclear deterrent" remains "a vital element" for Japan's security," as long as nuclear weapons exist." The Guidelines also state that cooperation between the two countries should be stepped up, "in order to strengthen the US forces' deterrent and response capability to regional contingencies."

Then came the first 2+2 meeting under the DPJ government 10 days ago (on June 21, 2011). The Joint Statement titled "Toward a Deeper and Broader Japan-US Alliance: Building on 50 Years of Partnership" starts by stating that both countries "affirmed that our Alliance remains indispensable to the security of Japan and the United States, and to the peace, stability, and economic prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region in the twenty-first century.[13]"

The Joint Statement praises the US relief efforts in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake, *Operation Tomodachi*. At the same time, the four ministers "recognized the need to continue to address challenges posed by the increasingly uncertain security environment," pointing out the real issues of "the expanding military capabilities and activities in the region; North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and its provocative behavior; the emergence of non-traditional security concerns; and other evolving threats, such as to outer space, to the high seas, and to cyberspace." The Joint Statement goes on to state that "increasing global challenges, including the ongoing struggle against extremism in Afghanistan and the Middle East" have been "noted" by Japan and the United States.

Based on awareness of these issues, Tokyo and Washington both reaffirmed their alliance commitments. The United States "reaffirmed its commitment to the defense of Japan and the peace and security of the region, including through the full range of US military capabilities, both nuclear and conventional," while Japan "reaffirmed its commitment to provide for the stable use of facilities and areas by US forces and to support the smooth operation of those forces through the provision of Host Nation Support," in return.

In addition, Japan and the United States "revalidated and updated the Alliance's Common Strategic Objectives of 2005 and 2007." The 24 new objectives include:

- "Deter provocations by North Korea."
- "Strengthen trilateral security and defense cooperation with both Australia and the Republic of Korea."
- "Promote trilateral dialogue among the United States, Japan, and India."

[12] "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and beyond," Approved by the Security Council and the Cabinet on Dec. 17, 2010. [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/kakugikettei/2010/ndpg_e.pdf]
[13] Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee, "Toward a Deeper and Broader US-Japan Alliance: Building on 50 Years of Partnership," June 21, 2011. [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/pdfs/joint1106_01.pdf]

- Encourage China's "cooperation on global issues" and its "adherence to international norms of behavior." "Improve openness and transparency with respect to China's military modernization and activities."
- Regarding the Taiwan issue, "encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues through dialogue."
- "Discourage the pursuit and acquisition of military capabilities that could destabilize the regional security environment." (No countries are named, but it is clear that this was included with the expansion of Chinese military power in mind.)
- "Maintain safety and security of the maritime domain by defending the principle of freedom of navigation." (Clearly included with Chinese maritime advances in mind.)
- "Maintain our cooperation with respect to protection of and access to space, and cyberspace where we share interests." (This was clearly included with China in mind.)
- "Realize full normalization of Japan and Russia relations through the resolution of the Northern Territories issue."

As can be seen, wariness of the strengthening Chinese military and its maritime advances in recent years is noticeable in the Joint Statement. To respond to the rise of China, Japan and the United States must strengthen and deepen their bilateral alliance first, and based upon that, need to keep encouraging China through continuous talks to take responsible actions. The United States and Japan are in agreement on this point. This confirms that, for Japan, its foreign and security policy remains centered on the Japan-US alliance even after the change in the ruling party, and that for the United States this alliance is still the cornerstone of its East Asian strategy even after China's GDP surpassed Japan's.

So far, so good, but at least three serious problems remain. First, there is the Futenma issue. Although this 2+2 meeting took a large step toward resolving confusion surrounding the alliance since the change in the ruling party in Japan, it is still too early to be optimistic that the situation will be resolved. An editorial in the *Asahi Shimbun* June 23 stated that the Joint Statement's "subtitle is 'Toward a Deeper and Broader Japan-US Alliance,' but in reality it has so far only 'Halted the Deterioration of the Alliance.[14]'" Without a doubt this meeting did end the deterioration in the alliance that started during the Hatoyama administration. Whether the alliance will really become "deeper" and "broader" depends on whether the Japanese government can adequately settle one very large issue: the relocation of Futenma Air Station.

Second, there is the problem of implementation. The words in Japan's new NDPG and in the new Joint Strategic Objectives sound marvelous. It is also significant that these two documents were issued under the DPJ, not the LDP, administration. Finally the DPJ has come to share the same basic security perspectives with the LDP. However, it is not clear whether Japan will be able to implement these two documents. When the Japanese government adopted the new NDPG in last December, in an interview with *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, Michael Green said that he would give the strategic aspect of the NDPG an "A," but only a "B-" to the financial aspect of the guidelines.[15] In the aftermath of 3/11, fiscal constraints on Japan's defense expenditures will be much tighter than they were last December.

[14] "Nichi-Bei Anpo Goui: Doumei Shuufuku niha Natta ga," *Asahi Shimbun*, June 23, 2011.
[15] "Shin Bouei Taikou, Michael Green Shi ni Kiku," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Dec. 19, 2010.

Third and finally, public acceptance in Japan is the indispensable prerequisite to successful reform of the Japan-US alliance. It is questionable whether the two governments and the Japanese government in particular, have paid sufficient attention to this fact. By and large, the Japanese people, including the majority, or possibly the vast majority, of politicians, were quite indifferent to the 2+2 that took place 10 days ago, and most of them do not know what was agreed between the two governments for the future of the alliance.

Those of you who were in this room in April of last year may remember the following statement of mine: "On the nature of the bilateral reviews of the alliance that took place in the mid-2000s, there was a kind of excessive self-congratulation, or self-complacence, among the alliance handlers both in Japan and in the United States."[16] I am afraid both sides are repeating the same mistake.

Yes, in the 2+2 meetings in February and October 2005, and in May 2006, the two countries agreed to set common strategic objectives and outlined a variety of initiatives to upgrade the alliance, including promotion of bilateral contingency planning, promotion of interoperability, promotion of intelligence and information sharing, enhancement of coordination between the Japanese and US command elements, coordinated improvements of their respective missile defense capabilities, and the realignment of US Forces in Japan, including relocation of Futenma Air Station. Japan made its willingness to work with the United States in the Asia-Pacific and globally in such areas as the handling of China and North Korea, prevention and eradication of terrorism, the Proliferation Security Initiative, and consolidation of the bilateral partnership in international peace operations. It was a remarkable joint effort by the two sides, except for one serious flaw: throughout the process, insufficient explanations were made by the Japanese government to the Japanese public about what was going on and what would happen to the security relationship with the United States and to their roles in the alliance as a result of the planned adjustments and transformations.

Consequently, the vast majority of Japanese were poorly informed about the process that took place in the mid-2000s. They simply did not know that their alliance with the United States was being deepened, and the partnership was becoming more equal. We all remember that the popularity of former Prime Minister Hatoyama dropped very quickly and sharply, due mainly to his disastrous handling of the Futenma relocation issue. But not many in the United States noticed that his assertion that Japan needs more equal, deeper alliance relations with the United States seemed to win a considerable level of sympathy among the Japanese public. This was because many Japanese people had not been informed that the alliance had become increasingly equal, with much deeper cooperation than before.

The two governments should not repeat the same mistake. They, and particularly the DOD and the MOFA in Tokyo, together with nongovernmental opinion leaders, have to find a way to educate, or enlighten, the Japanese public about the nature of the ongoing reform of the Japan-US alliance.

Japanese citizens are likely to be ready to listen to such explanations. Since last year, they have been forced to notice the nature of the security environment surrounding Japan, thanks to

[16] Kamiya, "Views of the US-Japan Defense Relationship."

China and North Korea. *Operation Tomodachi* has made them realize the utility for their country of the alliance with the US. And finally but probably most importantly, 3/11 may bring about a change of mindset among Japanese people regarding the military. The Japan Self-Defense Forces, or JSDF, has about 230,000 personnel; at its peak, more than 100,000 troops were involved in disaster relief efforts across afflicted areas.

Many of you should remember that in these conferences I often point out how postwar Japanese continue to be extremely cautious about anything related to the military. Having experienced reckless acts by military authorities that led to sovereign soil being turned into ashes, the Japanese people have become deeply suspicious of the validity and legitimacy of military power as a tool of state policy. As a result, the Japanese people's postwar pacifism has come to resemble antimilitarism.

Even before 3/11, the JSDF frequently took part in relief efforts in areas afflicted by typhoons, earthquakes, and other disasters. In addition, since the 1990s, the JSDF has participated in international peacekeeping efforts and has been positively praised by Japanese citizens. However, the JSDF, fortunately, is a military organization that has never been in combat, but this also means that many citizens are not clear about the benefits the JSDF brings to our daily lives.

Until 3/11, the JSDF had never worked for the Japanese people on a scale as large as its current relief efforts, and had never been able to demonstrate how necessary the organization is in helping all Japanese. Nearly 60 years have passed since the foundation of the JSDF, but this disaster may finally clear up residual allergies among the public to the JSDF. This may also bring about an overdue move for Japanese pacifism away from antimilitarism.

I would like to conclude by repeating that our alliance is on a recovery path from the rock-bottom situation in the first half of last year. However, challenges remain and public opinion is the biggest problem. Last April, I mentioned Professor Joseph Nye's remark at the 15th Japan-US Security Seminar in San Francisco in March 2009. Nye said, "the major problem we have is public opinion… But we have an opportunity in 2010 to educate the public both in the United States and in Japan about the enormous progress we've made over the last 15 years and extraordinary challenges we face in the next 15 years.[17]" In 2011, we all now realize how correct Professor Nye was two years ago. *We need to educate the public*, particularly in Japan, about where we have come from and where we are standing and where we are heading for. We have to let the public in Japan know what the recent 2+2 meeting means for Japan, for the United States, and for the region. Public understanding and public acceptance of such facts represent the most basic precondition for the realization of the Futenma relocation. Without such understanding among the Japanese public, it will is very unlikely that sufficient funds will be allocated to the Ministry of Defense to implement the 24 common strategic objectives under the extremely tight financial conditions following 3/11.

[17] Joseph Nye, "A Glass Half Full," in Brad Glosserman, rapporteur, *Japan-US Security Relations: A Testing Time for the Alliance, A Conference Report*, Issues and Insights, Vol. 9, No. 14 (Honolulu: Pacific Forum CSIS, 2009), p. 56.

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