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The Tokyo Foundation is a public interest incorporated foundation established in accordance with the collective will of the Nippon Foundation and Japan's motorboat racing industry and whose activities are supported by grants provided from motorboat racing profits.

Publisher: Hideki Kato (President)
Editor-in-Chief: Akiko Imai (Director, Public Communications)
Senior Editors: Kaoru Matsushita, Mari Suzuki (Public Communications)
Production Manager: Asako Uemura (Public Communications)

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February 13, 2009

Japan's Middle-Power Diplomacy

Summary of Presentation Given by Soeya Yoshihide

Soeya Yoshihide, a respected Keio University professor specializing in Japanese and Asia-Pacific political and security issues, recently delivered a presentation at the Tokyo Foundation in which he argued that Japan should adopt an autonomous grand strategy as a “middle power.”

This thesis, which Soeya began to develop about ten years ago, was presented in 2005 in his book, *Japan's Middle-Power Diplomacy*. The professor defines middle powers as those nations that are influential economically or in terms of certain strategic aspects, but that do not aspire to rival the major nations such as the U.S. and China in terms of hard power capabilities.

In his presentation, Soeya noted that while the term “middle power” has provoked negative reactions from some quarters, his intention is not to inflame, but rather to objectively examine the post-Cold War issues facing Japan and suggest a strategy that is realistic and appropriate for the future. (In doing so, Soeya takes as given the continued existence of the U.S.-Japan security relationship.)

Post-War Strategy Lingers on

The professor said that Japan's current internal and external realities are quite different from those of the Cold War, let alone what was assumed immediately after World War II when the U.S. and the Soviet Union - as well as the U.S. and China and what would become North Korea - had not yet fallen out. Thus Soeya views the Japanese peace constitution, adopted in 1946, as somewhat inconsistent with realities almost from the get-go.

The professor said that Japan, following the Yoshida Doctrine, abdicated security to the U.S. and funneled its pent-up ambitions and nationalism into economic activity, with the result being the incredible growth seen during the 1960s. This phenomenon, said Soeya, covered up the “fundamental inconsistencies” between the peace constitution on one hand, and the U.S. alliance on the other.

Soeya noted that even during the Cold War, domestic uncertainty and opposition to Japanese strategy arose, driven primarily by nationalism. From the left came opposition to the alliance, and from the right, initial opposition to the alliance as well as constant challenges to Article 9 of the peace constitution, which renounced war as Japan's sovereign right.

The leftist challenge to Japan's constant strategy has all but disappeared, but calls from the right have grown relatively louder, according to Soeya. However, he noted that those factions have not succeeded in taking over Japanese diplomacy, and argued that they never will. Rightist agitation is a symptom of, not a solution to, the post-war structure, according to the professor. While such actors will be unable to dictate strategy, their continued agitation might serve to further confuse the policy process and make Japan irrelevant on the regional and world stages.

The professor said it would be difficult and unlikely for Japan to change its peace constitution and security treaty with the U.S. He noted that even if that were to happen, Japan would not be powerful enough to stand on its own militarily (if linear trends continue), and as such, the relationship would perhaps grow even closer. Revising the current security arrangement would also raise the question of when to fight on behalf of America - a point that Soeya said is not discussed by those pushing for a new constitution. Those parties have also egregiously failed to offer a concrete strategy for a new Japan, according to Soeya.

The professor said that attempting to compete with China would be self-defeating, as would be the development of nuclear weapons.

Choosing the Middle Path

Instead of attempting to become a major power, Japan must adopt a viable grand strategy for the future, one that makes sense not only for Japan but also for the countries it interacts with, according to Soeya. He said that it would be good to corral nationalistic energies toward constructive ends, and that the strategy should take global considerations into account.

Soeya offered the middle power concept as a blueprint, noting that Japan's longstanding strategy is essentially that of a middle power, but that today's policymakers should explicitly adopt the framework - or at least elements of it - in order for it to be executed more effectively. One of the problems with the nation's current strategy is that economic clout far outweighs military might (letting Japan weigh in as an overall middleweight), a gap that Soeya says should be narrowed.

The professor laid out a vision in which Japan would still rely on the U.S. for its ultimate security, but would simultaneously pursue a more autonomous strategy that would serve to rectify Japan's economic-security gap. He posited that the U.S. might even welcome a confident Japan that is not afraid to question American policy.

Soeya sees South Korea, Australia and ASEAN as Japan's natural regional partners - they "fall between the U.S. and China" - and said that they should be the focus of the new strategy, one that would build the infrastructure of an "East Asian order." Soeya observed that Japan has already moved closer toward ASEAN, and noted the significance of the Japan-Australia security pact that was signed in 2007.

The professor warned, however, that the vital Japan-South Korea relationship must be managed carefully in light of historical and territorial issues. He said that if the two countries were to sign a security agreement ("logical, but unlikely anytime soon") that it would amount to a sea change in the Northeast Asian security landscape.

He also noted that South Korea seems to view Japan as a great power akin to the U.S., China and Russia, but suggested that this line of thinking is detrimental to the Japan-South Korean relationship, and that Japan would be unable to on its own manage the fallout from a Korean peninsula war as a real great power might.

It should be noted that Soeya cautioned that Japan is unlikely to adopt an autonomous middle power strategy while the current constitution and alliance are still in place. Given this, the professor admitted that his thesis is somewhat academic, but said that discussing practical approaches (regional security cooperation, etc.) to current problems is wise - and that down the road, Japan might be in position to adopt the strategy more completely.

Questions from Tokyo Foundation Participants

When asked the likely associated effects of domestic political realignment and significant changes in the external order, the professor first noted that there could be a major reshuffling of the party landscape, with the DPJ quite possibly taking power. Soeya then said that conservative political forces attentive to overseas threats largely focus on China, but hinted that the Japanese people would be unlikely to get behind a major nationalistic program unless the external threat was severe.

Another participant wondered whether the cost of becoming a middle power would be prohibitively high, and posited that the Yoshida Doctrine is path dependent - meaning that it would be unlikely for Japan to break free of the framework where the U.S. provides security and Japan focuses on economic matters. Professor Soeya admitted that a fundamental shift in strategy is “not likely” given such considerations.

One participant suggested that the middle power approach be modified slightly, to that of a “selective power” strategy. For example, some nations might prefer to focus on being an economic power and forgo hegemonic aspirations. Soeya replied that this concept had merit, adding that Japan is remiss to call itself a great power given that it does not carry the requisite muscle.

As to the question of whether Japan had any desire to actually become a middle power, Soeya noted that there is no consensus within the Japanese bureaucracy. Along the same lines, another participant and Soeya agreed that the low enthusiasm among Japanese for permanent membership at the UN Security Council indicates that the country might be disinclined to launch a concerted effort to become a middle power.

One attendee questioned whether Japan could adopt an internationally focused middle power strategy given that the bureaucracy is low on people with overseas experience, and that Diet members are notoriously focused on their provincial constituencies. Soeya responded by agreeing that self-absorbed nationalism limits Japan to that meager destiny, and that his middle power strategy would require a paradigm shift among decision makers and the bureaucracy.

This article is based on a presentation on January 15, 2009, during the 14th session of the Japan-US future leaders policy dialogue (the Tokyo-Reischauer Group). The dialogue, co-organized by the Tokyo Foundation and the Edwin O. Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies (of The Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C.), aims to build relationships between young professionals who will maintain and strengthen the Japan-US alliance.

Andrew Duff, a member of the Tokyo-Reischauer Group and a researcher at Temple University's Institute of Contemporary Japanese Studies, contributed to this summary.

May 08, 2009

Long-term Outlook for Japan's Foreign and Security Policies

By Jimbo, Ken

Whatever diplomatic and security challenges the next two or three decades may bring, Japan will confront them as an economic power in decline. As such, it will need to craft a sophisticated and multifaceted policy to maintain its global relevance and national security in an increasingly complex and dangerous world.

In any discussion of long-term foreign policy trends, one is inevitably handicapped by a limited ability to predict the sort of international environment that will exist 20 or 30 years from now. We cannot forecast with any confidence the status of the world economy, the distribution of power among major players, the role of international institutions and regimes, or the international norms that will prevail in 2030 or 2040. Yet these are all structural elements that could profoundly affect the future course of Japanese foreign and security policy.

Nor can we say with any assurance how relations will unfold between such major powers as the United States, Russia, China, India, and Japan. The development and management of these bilateral relationships could follow a number of different patterns. We might hope that they will evolve toward a “concert of power,” but we can also imagine any number of balance-of-power scenarios. This, too, will have profound implications for Japan's future.

Relevant Long-term Trends

Nonetheless, there are some trends we can predict with relative confidence, especially as regards Japan itself. The first and foremost of these trends pertains to demographics. Japanese society is rapidly approaching what we call a super-aging society, with 40 percent of the population expected to be over 65 years old by 2050 or so. As there is no

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reason to suppose that this trend will reverse itself, we can be certain that these demographic pressures will constrain our public-policy options.

In respect to the economy, the long-term outlook is for slow growth. (Although a rate as high as 2–3 percent is possible, many predict around 1 percent or even less.) This makes it inevitable that Japan will lose some of its economic influence and prominence. Where the economy is concerned, Japan is a declining power.

For this reason among others, Japan will have to adjust to new rules of the game. As argued in a number of high-level reports, such as the Atlantic Council's Global Trends 2025 and the National Intelligence Council's Mapping the Global Future, the United States is likely to remain the dominant player in the international system, but the emerging powers—Russia, China, India, and Brazil—will have important seats at the international table. As Japan's capability and economic strength decline, Tokyo will need to pursue a more complex and sophisticated foreign policy than in the past.

A final trend relates to changes in domestic norms and perceptions regarding Japan's international role. My first-year students at Keio University were born in 1991, the year of the Persian Gulf War. They have no direct experience of the Cold War, and they were only 10 years old when the 9/11 attacks occurred. They are much less constrained than my generation by the pacifist norms that dominated Japanese society in the wake of World War II, and this gives them far greater freedom in their strategic thinking. As a result, we can be fairly certain that many of the taboos that have been embedded in Japanese security policy until now will be disregarded or at least given much lower priority. To some degree this has already occurred over the last decade, but as the new generation takes charge of Japanese security policy, we can expect a more dramatic shift that will throw off the constraints of the postwar era.

These, then, are the broader trends that can be expected to impact Japanese security policy. How might Japan's policy makers respond to these changes in the coming decades?

Maneuvering to Stay Relevant

Recognizing the general trend toward marginalization, Japan can logically be expected to take steps to maintain its status in the international community, although the

resources that it will be able to allocate will be relatively small. In fact, I believe that under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan was already maneuvering to maintain its status and relevance by adopting a new ideological framework, as seen in the “arc of freedom and prosperity” and the “values-driven diplomacy” advanced by Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Aso in 2006 and 2007.

In my interviews with drafters of the “values-driven diplomacy” concept, I uncovered an assortment of interesting rationales for the policy. The first related to Japan’s role in global affairs. Given the growing constraints on its foreign aid budget, Japan needed a new conceptual framework to guide and justify the strategic allocation of its dwindling ODA budget. After World War II, the main rationale used to legitimize foreign aid was the notion of restitution or compensation to Asian nations. Now, more than 60 years after the end of the war, a new conceptual framework is needed to explain why Japan needs to help rebuild Iraq or Afghanistan, and more generally to justify our engagement in Eastern Europe and in Central, South, and Southeast Asia.

Another, more interesting rationale was competition with China. It seems that an important purpose of the values concept was to support an international system in which a coalition of democratic countries would play the leading role, and relations with those outside the coalition would be circumscribed by the goal of spreading democracy. The Abe administration proceeded to act on this concept with moves to develop a hub-and-spokes diplomatic network focusing on Australia and India, and by strengthening relations with NATO.

In a short time, however, this emphasis all but vanished from Japanese foreign policy. The most obvious reason was that Aso lost the 2007 Liberal Democratic Party election to Yasuo Fukuda, who had opposed Aso’s concept from the start. Soon after Fukuda came into office, the “arc” disappeared from government websites and the Diplomatic Blue Book. Nor has the concept reappeared as a guiding principle of Japanese foreign policy under the Aso cabinet, even though the prime minister has paid lip service to it from time to time.

The most fundamental reason values-driven diplomacy has fallen out of favor in Japan is that it was an approach that other major powers had already abandoned as impractical, particularly in relation to China.

In 2005, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick made a speech on US-China relations in which he introduced the notion of China as a “responsible stakeholder” in the international community, an inside player in international institutions and systems. He made it clear that Washington’s policy vis-à-vis China had gone beyond the idea of engagement. The concept of engagement emphasized by the Clinton administration in the 1990s, in the wake of the Tiananmen incident, implicitly viewed China as an outsider that should be encouraged to participate in international systems designed and controlled by the United States. However, Zoellick made it clear that China was already on the inside, influencing existing frameworks and creating its own to compete or collaborate. To some extent, even the 2007 Armitage-Nye Report echoed this inclusive approach. Although it emphasized first of all collaboration among traditional allies and friends, it also stressed a “triangle of US-Japan-China relations” as the key to regional stability.

The impact of this shift was evident. When Abe made a bid to include India in the Japan-Australia-US Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, he elicited a negative reaction, especially from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Indian business community, who were clearly concerned about the impact on rapidly expanding economic relations with China.

Over the past few years, two camps within the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs have struggled for control of Tokyo’s China policy, one that views China as an outsider and the other committed to treating it as an insider. As foreign minister, Aso embraced a policy that was more or less predicated on the view of China as an outsider. As prime minister, Fukuda reversed Aso’s policy, and today there is no going back.

An interesting example of how this shift has played out in Japanese diplomacy can be seen in negotiations over the UN Security Council’s response to North Korean missile and nuclear tests. In 2006, many senior Japanese foreign policy officials assumed that Tokyo and Washington between them would draft the Security Council resolutions relating to North Korea’s July missile launch and October nuclear test. But China took a tough position, and Washington had no choice but to heed China’s opinion to achieve a consensus among the permanent members of the Security Council. Japan learned from this experience, and after the rocket launch in April this year, Aso met with Wen Jiabao in Pattaya, Thailand, and the leaders worked out a compromise whereby Japan gave up its insistence on a binding resolution condemning Pyongyang, and China agreed to

signed on to a strong president's statement. As a result, Japan was able to play an active role in facilitating a P5 consensus. We can see from this example how China's growing influence and the changing distribution of power has influenced Japanese diplomacy.

Historic Turning Point in Defense Policy

Let us now look briefly at the long-term outlook for Japanese defense policy. In terms of constraints, I believe that legal issues and norms, as well as budgetary limitations, will be the biggest factors over the next 20 years.

The 2004 National Defense Program Guidelines, with their concept of "multifunctional and flexible defense," marked a turning point in Japanese defense policy. These guidelines embraced not only the traditional objective of territorial defense but also the broader goal of international security, acknowledging for the first time that conflicts in areas outside Japan's immediate environs were relevant to the nation's defense. Of course, Japan had been participating in peacekeeping operations in remote parts of the world for some time, but until then the justification had been its responsibility to contribute to the international community. In 2004, against a background of heightened awareness of international terrorism and other global threats that cross political and geographical boundaries, Japan evinced a willingness to build its own defense agenda around such overarching threats.

This breakthrough concept became the basis for Japan's mission in Iraq, the first deployment of SDF forces to an area where combat was ongoing, and the situation was expected to deteriorate. At the 2004 press conference announcing the mission, Prime Minister Jun'ichiro Koizumi articulated the traditional position that Japan would not use force unless attacked. At the same time, his justification for sending forces and risking the lives of SDF personnel—that Japan's own security would be threatened if reconstruction failed in Iraq and the country became a hotbed of terrorism—represented a dramatic departure.

What direction the 2009 guidelines take will depend in part on the results of the upcoming national elections. However, regardless of which party controls the government, Japanese defense policy will need to address the following issues.

One is the balance of power in East Asia. The most pressing concern in this regard is North Korea's nuclear weapons program and how best to deter, dissuade, and respond to Pyongyang, both militarily and diplomatically.

Another major regional issue is the rise of Chinese military power, particularly its fourth-generation fighters and submarine capability. By 2005–6, China's fourth-generation fighters outnumbered Taiwan's, and this year or next year they will surpass those of Japan's Air Self-Defense Force. Japan must decide what level of capability it needs to maintain in the years ahead, taking into account the balance of power between China and Japan on the one hand, and between China and the United States on the other.

Another priority should be boosting Japan's independent capability for dealing with lesser matters, such as defense of the disputed Senkaku Islands and Takeshima. Japan must consider above all how best to protect these territories during times of crisis, but also how to prevent politicization of these disputes from compromising peacetime defense.

A final issue relates to the strategy of US-Japan extended deterrence, nuclear and otherwise. Not long ago, President Barack Obama gave a major speech in Prague about nonproliferation policy, in which he officially committed the United States to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons completely. However, Obama has also stressed that the United States will continue to maintain a strong nuclear deterrent until that goal is reached. Accordingly, Washington plans to work with Russia to reduce the number of strategic nuclear weapons on both sides by December this year, even while maintaining a prominent place for nuclear weapons in its strategic planning. It is still unclear how the United States will manage to maintain a strong nuclear and conventional deterrent for Japan with fewer nuclear forces, and it will doubtless involve a complex formula. In any case, it seems clear that Japan and the United States will need to coordinate doctrine and adjust their roles within the bilateral alliance to ensure that deterrence continues to function for Japan, particularly with regard to North Korea and China.

This article is based on a presentation delivered by the author on April 15, 2009, during the 17th session of the Japan-US future leaders policy dialogue (the Tokyo-Reischauer Group). The dialogue, co-organized by the Tokyo Foundation and the Edwin O. Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies (of The Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C.), aims to build relationships between young professionals who will maintain and strengthen the Japan-US alliance.

June 12, 2009

Rejecting High-Risk Coexistence with North Korea

By Jimbo, Ken

On May 25 this year, North Korea conducted its second nuclear test. It is now clear that Pyongyang has taken further steps to weaponize its nuclear devices, which seem to be approaching ever closer to the operational level. The emergence of North Korea as a de facto nuclear weapon state has tremendous implications for the security of Japan. The author proposes that the current scheme of “high-risk coexistence” be replaced by “coordinated pressure” to reverse North Korea’s nuclear development.

Much remains murky regarding the technical details of the two nuclear tests conducted by North Korea in October 2006 and May 2009. What is clear, however, is that the second test was considerably bigger and far more sophisticated than the previous one, allowing the North Koreans to take another step toward operational deployment. Indeed, if North Korea has succeeded in improving the reliability of its implosion technology and miniaturizing nuclear devices for missile delivery, it will be well on its way to becoming a nuclear weapon state.

The emergence of North Korea as a state armed with fully operational nuclear weapons would have a profound impact on the deterrence structure in Northeast Asia. Meanwhile, Japanese foreign and security policy will need to be adjusted to the newly “reloaded” status of North Korea.

On the Brink of Full Nuclear Deployment

In order to become a nuclear weapon state with fully operational deployment of nuclear warheads, a country has to meet four basic prerequisites: (1) sufficient quantities of weapons-grade plutonium, (2) precision implosion technology (weaponization), (3)

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miniaturization technology (to enable the weapon to be mounted on a missile warhead), and (4) accurate missile guidance and reentry technology.

We have known for some time that North Korea had amassed weapons-grade plutonium by reprocessing spent nuclear fuel rods removed from the 5-megawatt experimental reactor at its Yongbyon complex. (Pyongyang reported having 26 kilograms in 2008, while US think tanks estimate that it has accumulated somewhere between 28 kilograms and 50 kilograms, enough for 5 to 12 nuclear weapons.) However, until now few believed that North Korea had sufficient technological expertise to reliably detonate a nuclear device with a precision implosion or to miniaturize it and mount it on such a missile.

But the much-increased yield of the North Korea’s recent nuclear detonation (10–20 kilotons) compared with the 2006 test has convinced many observers that the North Koreans have not only improved the precision of their implosion technology but have overcome a major technical hurdle to miniaturizing a nuclear device. In fact, analyses by the US Institute for Science and International Security and the International Crisis Group have concluded that North Korea is already capable of mounting a nuclear warhead on a Nodong missile.¹

North Korea and the Steps to Nuclear Armament

	Before tests	As of test no. 1	As of test no. 2
Removal of nuclear fuel rods	⊙	⊙	⊙
Preprocessing of spent nuclear fuel	⊙	⊙	⊙
Accumulation of weapons-grade plutonium	⊙	⊙	⊙
High-precision implosion technology	×	△	◦
Miniaturization technology	×	△	△→◦ (?)
Missile guidance/reentry technology	△→◦ (7/2006)	◦	◦

⊙ Certain ◦ Almost certain △ Unknown

¹ David Albright and Paul Brannan, “North Korean Plutonium Stock: February 2007,” in Country Assessments: North Korea (February 20, 2007) <http://www.isis-online.org/publications/dprk/DPRKplutoniumFEB.pdf>; International Crisis Group, “North Korea’s Missile Launch: The Risk of Overreaction” (March 31, 2009) <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6030>.

Taken together, such analyses suggest that North Korea's nuclear capability is on the brink of the operational deployment stage, if not indeed there already. Tokyo needs to avoid prolonged ambiguity in its assessment of North Korea's nuclear capability. It needs a clear estimate in order to formulate a new set of policies.

Rejecting “Déjà Vu” Fatigue

Since the beginning of 2009, North Korea has moved rapidly through successive phases in the development of missile and nuclear weapons technology, by launching a modified Taepodong-2 missile on April 4 and conducting its second nuclear test on May 25.

Yet the overall reaction, including that of the general public and the media, has been relatively muted in Japan and elsewhere. It would seem that the world has grown accustomed to and weary of Pyongyang's pattern of generating a crisis in order to gain leverage in its negotiations, and sees this as no more than a continuation of the same old diplomatic game. What kind of “game” have we played?

North Korea's behavior is understandably regarded as a game because there is every reason to believe that Pyongyang's basic goal is to maintain its regime. We can assume, as long as Kim's decision making is rational, that the probability of any adventurism on the part of Pyongyang is low. The track record of Pyongyang's negotiating behavior also suggests that the North Koreans have carefully avoided escalation into a full-scale military confrontation.

But the United States has been dragged into the game as well. North Korea's conventional capability to attack Seoul and US forces in Korea cannot be ignored, and this has constrained Washington's willingness to conduct either surgical air strikes or full military intervention, despite the fact that Pyongyang has long since stepped over the “red line” (former Defense Secretary William Perry). With this capability, North Korea has succeeded in raising the cost of any US military operation on the Korean Peninsula, and the United States has pursued multilateral negotiation instead.

The part played by China in this game has become the pivotal one. For its part, Beijing has not only consistently opposed tough sanctions, lest they push the North Korean regime to some rash action or bring about its collapse, but has continued to supply its

neighbor with food and energy assistance, thus helping the government to keep social chaos at bay.

These positions by key players have created a fundamental structure in which no effort is made to pursue a solution through intense diplomatic and military pressure, despite Pyongyang's repeated failure to honor its commitments. Now North Korea seems to have gained confidence in its ability to maintain such a "tacit balance of power" with China and the United States. China in particular seems to prefer "high-risk coexistence" with North Korea's nuclear capability over any pressure tactics that could back Pyongyang into a corner.

Unfortunately, this tacit balance has come at a high price. Over the past seven years North Korea has steadily piled up weapons-grade plutonium, building its stockpile at the rate of 1.2 weapons worth of material each year, and continued nuclear testing has allowed it to make substantial technological progress toward weaponization. The North Koreans have also systematically developed their delivery capability by carrying out testing on a variety of missiles, including the Taepodong-1, Taepodong-2, Nodong, Scud-C, and short-range missiles.

If effective nuclear armament becomes the reality for North Korea, Pyongyang will have dramatically augmented its attack capability vis-à-vis South Korea, Japan, and US forces in the region. For Japan, which lies within range of North Korea's 200–320 (estimates vary) fully deployed Nodong missiles, this will require a drastically elevated threat assessment. The policy of high-risk coexistence with North Korea is exposing Japan to an unprecedented security risk. A sense of *déjà vu* regarding this "same old game" seems to have created a strange complacency among us. However, we can neither ignore nor trivialize the fact that in the process of playing this game, North Korea has boosted its military capability to unacceptable levels.

Strategic Convergence for Denuclearization

The time has come for Japan to seriously reconsider the policy of high-risk coexistence that has brought us to such a pass. In the joint statement of the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks (September 2005), all parties agreed to the goal of North Korea's denuclearization, defined as "abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs." The diplomatic vicissitudes of the last three years and nine months

demonstrate how difficult it is to achieve this goal in a timely fashion. In the aftermath of the declaration, the initial aim of “complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization” was gradually downgraded until, by the final years of the George W. Bush administration, all that remained was the tentative goal of freezing and disabling North Korea’s nuclear facilities. Now, in the wake of a second nuclear test, even such modest hopes have been dashed. It is time we recognized that we cannot reach the goal of a denuclearized North Korea by following the path of high-risk coexistence.

Is there a viable policy alternative to high-risk coexistence? Since any acceptable alternative must address the major concerns of Japan, the United States, and China in relation to North Korea’s nuclear program, let us begin by reviewing those concerns individually to identify the strategic objectives we need to achieve while pursuing the overarching goal of denuclearization.

In terms of Japan’s defense and security policy, the immediate objective is to prevent the effective nuclear armament of North Korea; as noted previously, fully deployed North Korean nuclear weapons within striking range of Japan would have a profound significance for this country’s defense policy. Washington’s priorities, we can be fairly certain, are to prevent North Korea from transferring nuclear-related material to third parties and to ensure that Pyongyang does not develop the capability to launch a missile attack on the US mainland. China’s primary policy objective is to avoid triggering either a violent response from Pyongyang or an internal collapse (opening the door to a massive influx of refugees into China and possible deployment of US forces along the Chinese-Korean border).

No alternative to high-risk coexistence is likely to find acceptance unless it achieves the convergence of all these strategic objectives.

Intensified Pressure on Multiple Fronts

If we want Pyongyang to make the strategic decision to abandon nuclear arms, we must create a situation in which it has no other viable option. And the only way of creating such a situation, as I see it, is to bring four types of pressure to bear: (1) military pressure from the United States, (2) economic pressure from China, (3) rewards/compensation (security assurances, normalized relations, energy assistance, etc.) agreed on in the six-party talks, and (4) economic and financial sanctions adopted

through UN Security Council resolutions. Because we have seen that (3) alone does nothing but sustain high-risk coexistence, it is essential to combine all four forms of pressure and to ratchet up this pressure on several fronts if we hope to achieve denuclearization.

To achieve the optimum mix of sticks and carrots, a three-stage process is required. The first stage consists of using the sanctions under a UNSC resolution, the matter on which concerned parties are currently focused, to impose penalties and costs commensurate with North Korea's violations.

Given that the freezing of North Korean assets in the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) in Macao is widely considered the most effective of the sanctions imposed to date, it follows that stronger financial sanctions will have an effect. The new resolution should contain rigorous measures that freeze an even wider spectrum of North Korean financial assets and further restrict Pyongyang's access to international financial institutions.

The second stage is China's full participation in strict economic sanctions. As indicated above, China has maintained a circumspect posture on the imposition of sanctions on the grounds that driving Pyongyang into a corner could have the effect of eliciting an even stronger reaction or bringing down the regime. To persuade Beijing to take an active role, Japan, the United States, and South Korea will have to offer convincing reassurances to address these concerns. This means creating a framework for reassurance designed to minimize the specific risks that China wishes to avoid: (1) that an extreme reaction from Pyongyang will lead to a military confrontation, (2) that North Korean refugees will pour over the border into China, and (3) that the collapse of the current regime could have US forces occupying the entire Korean Peninsula and confronting China along its border with Korea.

The key components of such a framework would include (1) agreement by top defense officials of Japan, the United States, China, and South Korea and on joint planning to prevent escalation of any military clash with North Korea, (2) adoption of a trilateral plan by Japan, China, and South Korea for controlling borders and dealing with refugees if a mass exodus were to occur, and (3) independent, parallel efforts by Washington, Beijing, and Seoul to devise plans and systems for maintaining order, securing nuclear weapons, and restoring government in the event that the current regime were to collapse. If these plans and systems can succeed in reassuring China,

then we will have laid the groundwork for a more resolute application of sanctions by Beijing.

The third phase is military pressure by the United States. It is true that with numerous ground troops stationed near the demilitarized zone and long-range artillery deployed within striking range of Seoul, a preemptive strike (surgical air strikes or an all-out offensive) against North Korea remains a difficult option. However, in the event that North Korea were to threaten belligerent action, it is of the utmost importance that the US-South Korean and Japan-US alliances demonstrate that they have the capability to neutralize that action instantly. One can easily imagine hostile action from North Korea in the form of efforts to prevent ship inspections, skirmishes at the line of demarcation, or attacks on US reconnaissance aircraft. A degree of military preparedness sufficient to control such situations is needed to ensure that they do not escalate into full-fledged armed conflict. To this end, it is important not only that the United States clearly demonstrate its security commitment to South Korea and Japan as a deterrence against escalation, but also that the US-South Korean and Japan-US military alliances enhance their readiness.

It will still be necessary to maintain a framework for compensating and rewarding Pyongyang. In the event that Pyongyang makes the strategic decision to abandon its nuclear weapons and begins taking steps in that direction, we must reward it in a manner commensurate with its actions while incrementally relaxing the abovementioned sanctions. For this reason, we should leave the door open for an unconditional revival of the six-party talks and continue to honor the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration. It is vital to have at hand the means for rewarding a flexible approach whenever Pyongyang realizes that its hard-line policies have brought it to a domestic impasse.

A fundamental resolution to the problem of North Korea's nuclear weapons program will require progressive intensification of pressure on multiple fronts as described above. Since each of these options entails risks, it is only natural that political decision makers would prefer to avoid them if possible. However, if we can agree that living with a nuclear-armed North Korea is unacceptable, then we must also agree to adopt a new policy framework capable of pressuring Pyongyang into making the appropriate judgment. For the Japanese government, too, the time has come for a strategic decision.

February 05, 2010

The Japan-U.S. Alliance at Fifty: The Challenges Facing the New DPJ Government

By Kato, Hideki

The Tokyo Foundation hosted a public seminar entitled “The Challenges Facing the New DPJ Government” in Washington, DC, in mid-January in conjunction with the 16th Annual Japan-US Security Seminar, held to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Japan-US alliance. The event attracted great interest, being attended by over 170 government officials, other experts, and media personnel. The annual security seminar was sponsored by the Embassy of Japan, the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) and Pacific Forum CSIS. The following is the text of the keynote speech delivered by Tokyo Foundation Chairman Hideki Kato.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, and thank you for attending the Tokyo Foundation Seminar. It is a great honor for me to be given the opportunity to speak to you today about the current political situation in Japan.

My address is motivated by the fact that the Japanese system of governance is not well understood by those outside Japan.

Today, I would like to focus on two things. The first is governance and the political system in Japan. And the second is the Hatoyama administration: what it’s trying to do, what is happening at the moment, and future prospects.

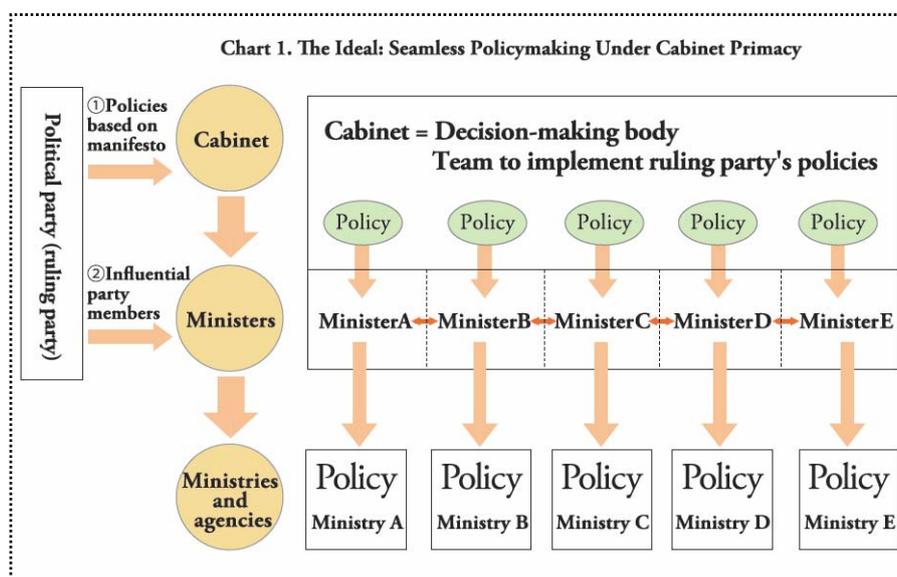
Kato, Hideki President of the Tokyo Foundation. Joined the Ministry of Finance in 1973. Served in several positions, including in the Securities Bureau, the Tax Bureau, the International Finance Bureau, and the Institute of Fiscal and Monetary Policy; resigned in September 1996. Founded Japan Initiative, a not-for-profit, independent think tank, in April 1997, serving as its president since then. Served as professor of policy management at Keio University, 1997-2008. Assumed the chairmanship of the Tokyo Foundation in April 2006. In October 2009 became secretary general of Japan's Council on Administrative Reform within the Cabinet Office, and in April 2010 became president of the Tokyo Foundation when the foundation became a public interest incorporated foundation.

Governance and the Political System in Japan

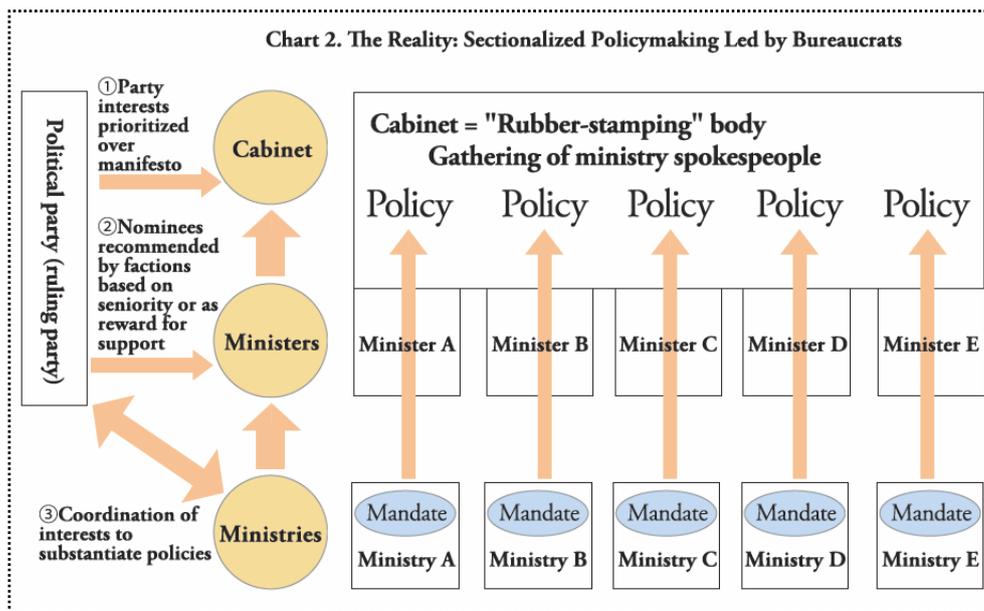
A parliamentary cabinet system is generally understood to consist of a process whereby political parties publish manifestos—or policy platforms—the party or coalition of parties that wins an election and has a majority in the parliament assembles a cabinet, and ministers appointed to take charge of the policies advocated in the ruling party’s manifesto implement those policies, using bureaucrats as staff. This is the true meaning of “political leadership.” But in Japan, both parties and voters have tended to pay little heed to manifestos, even though they are essential to the first step of the process, and little effort has been put into producing them. The subsequent steps in the process of “political leadership” have not been established.

The factors behind this situation include the multimember constituency system that Japan employed until the 1990s and the fact that for many years the public did not need to make major political choices. At the root, however, are problems arising from the manner in which the parliamentary cabinet system has been employed in Japan.

As shown in Chart 1, in an ideal parliamentary cabinet system, the ruling party formulates policies based on its manifesto, and a cabinet comprising influential members of the ruling party is formed to implement those policies. Based on cabinet discussions of basic principles for managing state affairs, cabinet ministers implement the policies utilizing the bureaucrats in their respective ministries. As the cabinet considers policies from the perspective of the overall management of state affairs, this mechanism holds the interests of individual ministries in check and enables bureaucratic sectionalism and regulatory redundancy to be eliminated.



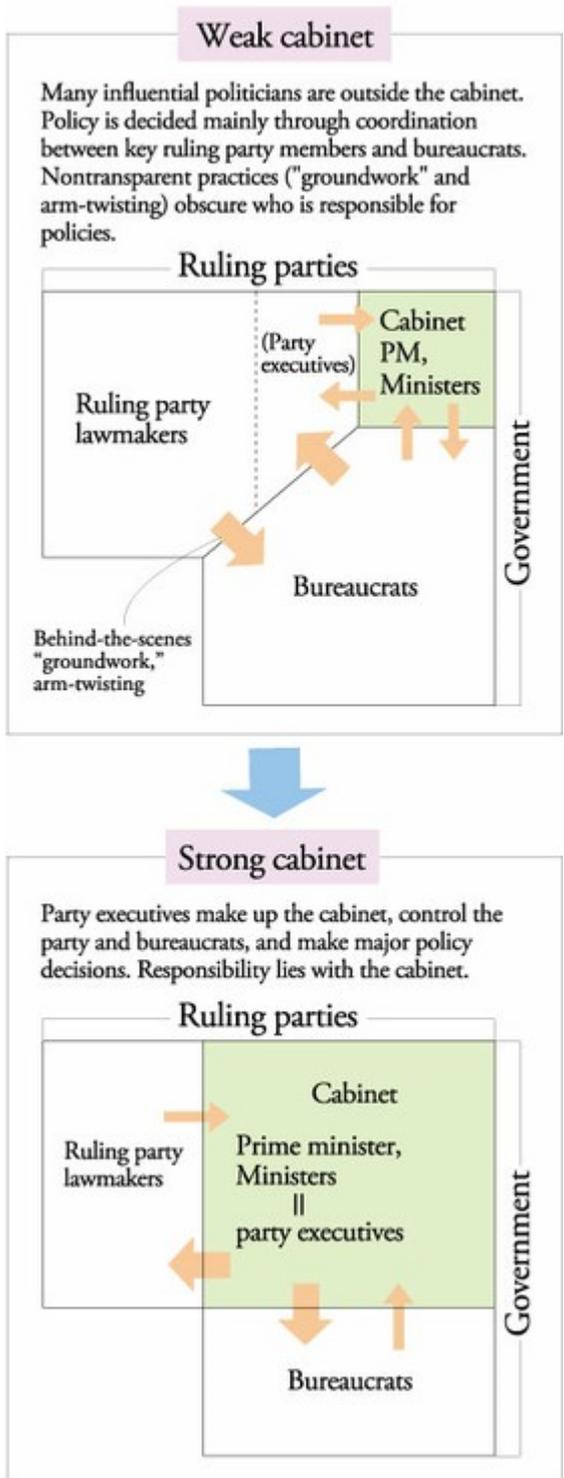
The reality of the system as it has been practiced so far in Japan, however, greatly differs from the ideal, as shown in Chart 2. In this setup, the ministries come first, and bureaucrats take charge of everything from policy formulation to implementation in areas that are within the mandates of their respective ministries. Ministers are effectively figureheads who simply “sit” on top of that structure, as shown by the fact that, at their inaugural press conferences, the vast majority of ministers read out texts prepared by bureaucrats. Most ministers, moreover, have taken to promoting the existing policies of their ministries and speaking for the ministries’ interests and positions as soon as they are appointed, no matter what views they may have espoused earlier. As a result, the ministerial coordination and cabinet leadership expected in a true parliamentary cabinet system take a backseat. The priority given to precedent and bureaucratic sectionalism makes it difficult for the government to effect drastic policy shifts or to respond swiftly to changing social conditions.



Under the new administration led by the Democratic Party of Japan, the so-called council of three political-level appointees comprising the minister, senior vice-minister, and parliamentary secretary has been established within each ministry. This is intended to enable politicians to take the lead in determining government policy, rather than bureaucrats. Newly appointed cabinet ministers of previous Liberal Democratic Party administrations were first given a briefing by the bureaucrats. Soon after the senior vice-ministers and parliamentary secretaries were appointed by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, by contrast, meetings of the political-level council were held—on the

very day of the appointment at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology; the following day at the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare; and within several days at the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism. As a rule, the new administration also banned press

Chart 3. Power Structure Between Ruling Party and Cabinet



conferences by administrative vice-ministers—the highest-ranking bureaucrats—so as to revamp the decision-making mechanism that had hitherto been led by the bureaucracy.

Dual Power Structure

Another factor that weakens the power of the cabinet and prevents the parliamentary cabinet system from functioning properly in Japan is the dual power structure consisting of the ruling party and cabinet.

In an ideal parliamentary cabinet system, the cabinet is a team that executes the policies of the ruling party, like the “strong cabinet” in Chart 3. Power within the ruling party is concentrated in the cabinet because those who become ministers are the party’s prime movers, and ruling party lawmakers who are not in the cabinet ordinarily do not defy the cabinet’s policy decisions, much less revoke them.

Under the LDP administrations of the past few decades, however, it became the norm for ruling party members outside the cabinet to wield more power than the cabinet, as shown by the “weak cabinet” in the Chart. As a result, many policy decisions were effectively made through

repeated contact, behind-the-scenes “groundwork,” negotiations, and arm-twisting between top ruling party politicians—including “tribal” lawmakers with close ties to specific lobbies—and bureaucrats, in total disregard of the cabinet. This deviates greatly from the principles of the parliamentary cabinet system and obscures who is responsible for making government policy.

The decision-making process within the dual power structure, which has become almost institutionalized over the decades, can be summarized as follows. In the case of the LDP, the party has its own policy coordination section called the Policy Research Council, which checks the bills and other policy proposals put forward by the cabinet. Government bills cleared by the Policy Research Council are then approved by the party’s General Council before being submitted to the Diet. This is called “prior screening” by the ruling party, a practice that is virtually unheard of in other major countries. It is not unusual for government bills to be drastically modified or even rejected in this process. The rejection by politicians outside the cabinet of policy proposals that representatives of the same party drafted in order to implement the party’s manifesto, in effect, amounts to a rejection of the parliamentary cabinet system itself. At the same time, in the sense that it reinforced the impression that any proposal approved by the ruling party would be approved by the Diet, it was also one of the factors that reduced the Diet to a rubberstamping role.

While all political parties have a broadly similar structure, in the LDP’s case the chairman of the General Council, the chairman of the Policy Research Council, and the secretary-general constitute a troika of top party officials who wield tremendous power over party affairs. Under LDP administrations, this troika had more power and a louder voice in many respects than the cabinet ministers, who were the policy chiefs of the government. The three executives controlled policy decisions despite having no legal rights or responsibilities regarding government policymaking. As a result, when a government policy proposal conflicted with the ruling party’s position, instead of the minister rallying the party around the proposal by the government or a government committee, the party’s wishes were often given precedence.

In this regard, the DPJ has brought about many changes. However, the party’s secretary general, Ichiro Ozawa, is still in a position to control political funding and the selection of candidates. Although Ozawa is outside the cabinet, he is still at the center of power. Having control over funding and candidates essentially means being able to control policies.

This results in a weak cabinet, enabling politicians to become a minister even if incompetent. They are not able to grow and develop even after become minister, leading to an increasing number of hereditary politicians. A certain member of Parliament of the UK came to Japan and he said, jokingly, that the House of Representatives in Japan is more like the House of Lords.

The weak cabinet, bureaucracy-led politics, sectionalism, and non-transparent decision making are all deviations from the ideal parliamentary cabinet system.

These are not fundamental, institutional issues, so improvements can be made without overhauling existing political institutions. There is, rather, a need to deal with conflicting interests within political parties. The LDP did not have the capacity to do that. Whether or not the DPJ can do so is something that will be tested going forward.

In a nutshell, this is an issue of party governance. The DPJ is aware of this and has done several things. One, Ozawa has said that he will focus his energies on the management of party affairs as secretary general, not involving himself in policy matters. Another change has been the creation of the “political-level council” comprising the minister, senior vice-minister, and parliamentary secretary to make policy decisions.

Challenges for Hatoyama

Now I would like to refer to what is actually happening now and the future prospects for the Hatoyama cabinet.

Firstly, with regard to reforming the system of political governance, this is something that the DPJ called for in its manifesto and is very important. The issue here is the expectations of the general public and the challenges that are involved.

Reference was made earlier to the mood of the Japanese public. The DPJ's landslide victory in last year's general election and the high support rate that Hatoyama continues to enjoy is not necessarily due to the DPJ's policies but due to the expectations for change.

The Japanese people do not feel an imminent threat right now—security or otherwise. Rather, the public is frustrated by rigidity in society. I believe people are looking for change.

There are many factors behind this mood. Since the administration of Junichiro Koizumi, there has been a widening of income disparities and increases in the burden of an aging society.

I think that one major factor is the media factor.

The Japanese are not very active when it comes to participating in public debate and have low awareness of the need to participate. At the same time, there is pent up dissatisfaction in society. This is the result of media reports critical of the way government and politics are run. While not actively participating themselves, dissatisfaction has built up among the Japanese people over their political leaders.

Each morning, at eight, nine, and ten o'clock, Japanese television viewers tune into what are called "wide shows," which are essentially gossip shows dealing with celebrity scandals, sports, and to some extent, political news. These shows have stirred up considerable discontent.

Review of Governmental Programs

So, in that sense, the Japanese are looking for change. And the DPJ's answer to this public mood has been the creation of the Governmental Revitalization Unit within the Cabinet Office.

The Government Revitalization Unit was established in order to reform the overall national administration, including the budget and system of national administration, from the people's standpoint, and also to review the division of roles among the national government, local public authorities, and private companies.

Their first task was to reassess the budget requests for fiscal 2010. It held budget-screening hearings called *jigyo shiwake* to assess the need for around 450 publicly funded programs, out of the total of some 3,000 for which the ministries and agencies of the central bureaucracy had filed funding requests for fiscal 2010.

Jigyo shiwake is something that we proposed at Japan Initiative, a private think tank I founded in 1997 and still serve as president. We conceived of this idea seven years ago and have been working to have it implemented. We began a campaign of public budget-screening hearings at the municipal level and then moved forward to the national level. We conducted the first hearings for the national budget with the then

ruling LDP in August 2008 and also with the DPJ in June 2009 when the party was still in the opposition.

The original intent of this review was not to achieve spending cuts per se but to ring about changes in public administration, whether at the prefectural, municipal, or national level, and also to achieve structural changes to the system itself.

The DPJ promised many new programs in its manifesto, including a child allowance, and it needed to find revenue sources to finance them. Hatoyama became prime minister in September, and the fiscal 2010 budget needed to be put together very quickly. There was not much time. That is why the administration decided to prioritize budget cuts before embarking on the task of making institutional reforms.

The spending review process in full public view was held over nine working days from November 11 to 27, with three working groups handling the assessments.

One feature of the process was that people outside of government would be tapped as reviewers. Things would be seen from the eyes of an outsider. In this regard, the budget assessors (*shiwakenin*) included private-sector analysts, in addition to DPJ Diet members and the senior vice-ministers and parliamentary secretaries of each ministry.

The review took place in a school gymnasium, where the senior bureaucrats from each ministry were seated on one side, and the assessors seated on the other. The assessors asked questions, and the officials responded to those questions.

Another feature was that the process was completely open to the public. All the proceedings were broadcast live via the Internet. This process generated great public interest. Nearly 20,000 people came to watch these proceedings in person, and an additional 340,000 people viewed them online each day in real time.

Before this process began, I warned Prime Minister Hatoyama that once it starts, it will be like a sporting event where the results would be reported daily on television and the newspapers, much like a baseball game or sumo match. And this is exactly what happened.

It is a bit populist in its approach, but I believe that the discussions that took place were at a very high level. Nevertheless, we have only just exposed the issues that need to be tackled going forward.

Around 90 percent of the conclusions of the review process were reflected in the budget for fiscal 2010. Future tasks include reviewing those government programs that were not evaluated this time and deepening the scope of debate to the systems underlying each program.

According to a joint opinion poll conducted by the *Sankei Shimbun*, a conservative daily, and the Fuji News Network, a nationwide TV station, the Hatoyama cabinet's approval rating was 68.7 percent right after the inauguration, then dropped to 60.9 percent in October. Unlike his three LDP predecessors, whose approval rating continued to drop, however, Hatoyama's approval rebounded slightly to 62.5 percent in November. During the review of government programs, it came close to 90 percent at one point. It no doubt helped to boost Hatoyama's popularity.

There have been some media polls indicating that the approval rating for the Hatoyama cabinet has dipped below 50 percent. The lowest so far has been 48 percent in the survey conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun*. The aforementioned *Sankei Shimbun*, incidentally, reported a support rate of 51.0 percent.

One factor behind the decline has no doubt been the money scandals that have surfaced involving both Hatoyama and DPJ Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa. The administration is only three months old, however, and it still remains to be seen whether it can leverage the momentum gained during the budgetary review process to advance the political reforms that the public is seeking. The administration's ability to make good on its promises is being put to the test.

I would like to conclude my talk at this point with the observation that the success of the Hatoyama administration will probably hinge not just on the personal competence of Mr. Hatoyama but on the effectiveness with which each member of his cabinet and the Prime Minister's Office fulfill their functions.

Thank you very much.

February 05, 2010

Is Futenma Really the Litmus Test for Commitment to the Alliance?

By Watanabe, Tsuneo

The Hatoyama Administration's vacillation over the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma has given rise to the suspicion among concerned circles in Japan and the United States that, unlike the previous LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) governments, this administration is setting out to lessen its commitment to the Japan-U.S. alliance. This is reading far too much into the administration's intention. It seems unlikely that the Hatoyama Administration is contemplating such a serious and fundamental shift in foreign policy. Nor would it be in keeping with the wish of the people.

For over half a century, with short-lived exceptions, there has not been a real debate in Japan over fundamental foreign policy choices, due in part to the continuation of LDP governments. The last full-fledged debate was the nationally divisive one on "Overall Peace" versus "Separate Peace" regarding the peace settlement with the Allied Powers of the World War II, i.e., whether to seek peace with all the Allied Powers including the Communist Bloc led by the Soviet Union or to conclude a peace treaty with only the Free World led by the United States. At the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951, Japan chose to conclude a separate peace treaty with the Free World as well as to enter into an alliance with the United States. As the Right and Left wings of the Japan Socialist Party joined forces to oppose the peace treaty, the two conservatives parties of the time rallied together to form the Liberal Democratic Party in 1955.

In view of this history, one may well be tempted to think that the demise of the LDP rule may presage the demise of the commitment to the Japan-U.S. alliance. But is the

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Hatoyama Administration really engaged in such a fundamental rethinking of foreign policy priorities? Is it really bent on reducing its dependence on the United States, diluting the Japan-U.S. alliance and replacing it with some multilateral framework represented by the idea of an East Asian Community? In fact, such an option had not been presented at all in the course of the general election last summer, nor would it be likely to gain much sympathy given the high degree of support for the Japan-U.S. alliance in public opinion polls.

It is true that the first full-scale change of government in half a century has lowered the hurdle for changing the directions of Japan's foreign policy. However, it would be too one-sided to see this as a "crisis" for the Japan-U.S. alliance. Rather, if the people's support for the alliance can be reaffirmed, it may even make it easier to bring into reality some ideas that have so far been considered "taboo" politically, such as changing the interpretation of the Article 9 of the Constitution.

It is not easy to obtain consensus on foreign policy issues. For example, the Obama Administration finds itself in a quandary regarding Afghanistan. It is because the United States dispatched troops to this region where restoration of security and governance are hard to come by, and has involved itself in the difficult task of nation building, for which there is no short-term answer. President George W. Bush, who first dispatched troops to Afghanistan, was saying in the course of the presidential election debate in 2000 that the United States would not involve itself in nation building anywhere in the world, which could sap its own energy. However, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 drastically changed the mindset, and it has been believed since that it is vital, ultimately for the United States' own security, not to allow Afghanistan to become a hotbed for terrorists. By dispatching 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan this year, the Obama Administration is inevitably involving itself in the country's nation building. This question of involvement in nation building will probably continue to be a contentious foreign policy issue in future U.S. elections.

If there is an issue for continuing foreign policy debate in Japan, it is likely to be the future of the Japan-U.S. alliance, under which nearly 50,000 U.S. military personnel are stationed in Japan. There is no way that Japan, as an independent sovereign nation, can get around the subject. The key is whether Japan can find an optimal solution, which is based on a correct perception of the threats to Japan and to the region and takes account of the benefits and costs arising from the alliance with the United States. Already, Japan and the United States share the perception that, in order to maintain

the alliance on a sustainable basis, they need to work toward reducing the burden on Okinawa, where more than 70% of the U.S. bases in Japan are concentrated. Given this overall perspective, it would be wrong to focus solely on the current issue of Futenma relocation as "the" litmus test for the Hatoyama Administration's commitment to the alliance.

Reprinted from "Japan in Their Own Words," a column published by the English-Speaking Union of Japan.

March 17, 2010

Beware Resignation in Washington Toward the Japan-US Alliance

By Yamaguchi, Noboru

The 16th Annual Japan-US Security Seminar opened on January 15 in Washington, DC, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the revised Japan-US Security Treaty in January 1960. It struck me that perhaps never before had there been greater interest in the Japan-US alliance. At the same time, considerable perplexity was evident among the American participants.

One may recall that concern about reaffirming the alliance rose to a peak in the mid-1990s, when a number of “track-two” (nongovernmental-level) meetings took place. Probably the recent seminar was the first time since then that so many people interested in the Japan-US relationship had gathered together in the United States. In conjunction with the seminar, the Tokyo Foundation hosted a public panel discussion on the morning of January 15, which drew an audience of almost 200. All were plainly very curious about Japan’s domestic situation, which was elucidated by Tokyo Foundation Chairman Hideki Kato and the other panelists.

The panelists for the seminar’s January 15 afternoon session, the public portion of the two-day affair, were Richard Armitage, former US deputy secretary of state, Shinichi Kitaoka, professor at the University of Tokyo, and Yukio Okamoto, special advisor to Prime Ministers Ryutaro Hashimoto (1996–98) and Junichiro Koizumi (2001–6). Despite it being a Friday afternoon, 270 people attendance, nearly all of them remaining until the session ended after 5pm.

With regard to the management of the alliance, many of the American participants were naturally mystified by the ongoing confusion in Tokyo over relocation of the US

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Marine Corps Futenma Air Station in Okinawa. I was surprised, however, that nobody expressed irritation in the direct American fashion at what seems to be a lack of enthusiasm for the alliance on the Tokyo side. Most of the remarks were instead extremely restrained expressions of concern for the future of the alliance.

During this open session, Armitage commented that perhaps it was time for the United States to come up with a Plan B. By this, he meant a damage-control plan to deal with a possible failure to find an appropriate replacement to which to move the air station. In other circumstances, this might have been taken as an optimistic exhortation to look on the bright side. After all, quarrels often end up making a relationship stronger. In that case, he could have played up the possibility that efforts to break through the Futenma deadlock would ultimately result in a stronger alliance. But in fact what could be gleaned from his remarks was closer to a sense of resignation. He seemed to be saying that if this is the best Japan can do, Americans will simply have to lower their expectations. I can only hope that I have read too much into his remarks under the influence of the sense of helplessness currently gripping Tokyo.

Three Types of Japan Experts

The Japan specialists I came across at this event can be divided into three groups. The first includes those who are perplexed by and unable to understand the approach to the Japan-US alliance adopted by the administration of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama. In this group, there were neither pessimists nor optimists. The second group consists of those who have gone beyond feelings of bafflement and reached the conclusion that for the time being, they must simply wait calmly until the debate within Japan settles down. They have not given up the faint hope that the day will come when Tokyo rouses itself from its present muddle. At a stretch, the members of this group might be described as “cautiously optimistic.” Although their optimism is of the wariest kind, it remains one step short of pessimism. In the third group are those who have emerged from a period of puzzlement and are now attempting to reach their own conclusions on where the alliance is headed.

The majority seemed to fall into the second group. Or perhaps it would be closer to the truth to say that they had arrived at a consensus on the merits of appearing to have adopted such a stance. Although a number of participants expressed plain puzzlement regarding what was happening in Tokyo over the relocation question during the open session, for instance, on the second day, when the participants were limited to invited

specialists, most of the Americans were very restrained in their remarks, and almost nobody said anything calculated to bring pressure to bear on Japan. I exchanged e-mail messages with one of the American participants several days before the event, and gathered that a discussion was underway among those planning to attend regarding the best attitude to adopt toward Japan at present. Probably the wait-and-see posture resulted from that exchange.

The problem lies with the third group. These are people who are intimately familiar with Japan, but they seem to be taking a pessimistic view on the Futenma commotion. In sense that they are not inclined to wait for Japan to come up with a response. Instead, they want to arrive at a conclusion on how the United States, for its part, should deal with Japan from now on. Evidently they share the feeling of resignation also evident in Armitage's remarks.

If they really have lowered their expectations, the situation is serious. An alliance is inherently a give-and-take relationship. If the Americans reach a consensus that not much is to be expected of Japan, then what the United States is prepared to offer Japan will naturally be scaled down as a result. The upshot would be a trend toward a "contracting equilibrium."

Asymmetry in the Bilateral Alliance

In this context, we must not forget the asymmetry in the Japan-US alliance. From the start, this has been a relationship in which Japan maintains only light military power and holds its military commitments abroad to the minimum. At the same time it provides bases for American troops, in exchange for which the United States guarantees its security. Because of this asymmetry, dissatisfaction with the other partner can easily mount on either side.

The US military stands prepared to shed the blood of young Americans in the event of an emergency in Japan. Because it does not ask Japan to do the same, a sense of extreme imbalance exists on the American side with respect to the burdens to be borne in an emergency. On our side of the Pacific, Japan provides bases in exchange for the use of US military power as a deterrent. From the perspective of the Japanese people, however, what tends to stand out more prominently than the life-or-death benefits they would receive from American cooperation in an emergency that may or may not even

occur is the peacetime cost of maintaining of the US bases, which are additionally a source of noise pollution, accidents, and scandals involving American soldiers.

The problem of Futenma's relocation is linked to this unbalanced nature of the bilateral alliance. The initial relocation plan offers a representative example of attempts to provide greater stability to the stationing of US forces in Japan by lightening the excessive burdens imposed on Okinawa, and hence to sustain the deterrent provided by the presence of the US military. If the Futenma issue cannot be resolved smoothly, a vicious circle working in the opposite direction could take hold. Not only would residents in the vicinity of the base fail to see a lightening of their load, but the deterrence provided by the United States could also be impaired.

There is another major problem. This is that damage could be done to the efforts by both sides to lessen the alliance's asymmetry, even if only to a limited extent. Over the past 20 years Tokyo and Washington have both worked hard to get Japan to shoulder greater responsibility for regional and global security and thereby move the alliance beyond one in which Japan merely makes bases available in exchange for help with its defense. As a result of this endeavor, Japan's participation in international security cooperation has increased. Shortly after the 1990–91 Persian Gulf War, Japan dispatched minesweepers to the Gulf, and in recent years it has sent other units of the Self-Defense Forces to the Indian Ocean and Iraq and participated in international anti-piracy patrols off the coast of Somalia.

One element of these efforts involved was the “reaffirmation of the Japan-US alliance” initiative led by Joseph Nye during his term as US assistant secretary of defense in the mid-1990s. Then, from 2004 to 2006, attention focused on the work to “transform the Japan-US alliance,” especially on plans to relocate the Futenma base and realign the US forces stationed in Japan. Among other key issues addressed were executing peacekeeping operations, extending humanitarian reconstruction assistance, and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Aiming for an Expanding Equilibrium

It is fair to say that the aim of these efforts was to correct the alliance's distinctive asymmetry as far as possible and bring about an “expanding equilibrium.” In this light, we have now arrived at a new juncture with the birth of the Obama administration in the United States and the Hatoyama administration in Japan just as the revised

security treaty has marked its fiftieth anniversary. This provides a fitting occasion for making the alliance deeper yet.

When Jack Crouch, a former assistant to the US president, came to Japan in late January, he spoke of the opportunities that Japan and the United States were losing by wasting time on the Futenma issue. He said that the relocation needed to be guided to a soft landing so that discussions on improving the alliance for the future could be resumed as quickly as possible.

Earlier I referred to the sense of resignation among some Americans concerned about the alliance. If their attitude prevails, there is the danger that people will opt in favor of the contracting-equilibrium option. That is, both sides could lower their expectations and scale back their responsibilities and obligations. In the background is the sense of disappointment felt by those Americans who over a period of many years devoted themselves to piloting the alliance toward an expanding equilibrium. If they have become dispirited, we Japanese must strive to regain their trust so that they resume their expanding-equilibrium activities.

At the same time, we must make sure that there is no wavering on a fundamental but low-profile element of the Japan-US alliance. This involves securing deterrent power by placing the US forces stationed in Japan on a stable footing. If this is not done, Japan's very existence as a state may be altered fundamentally.

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