

# Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements in a New Era

By Shikata Toshiyuki

## Joint declaration

At a press conference held in Tokyo on April 17, 1996, following their summit talks, Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro and U.S. President Bill Clinton announced the Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security. As its subtitle "Alliance for the 21st Century" shows, the declaration defined the bilateral relationship for years to come. The declaration involved no amendment to the existing Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. But it is no exaggeration to say the document amounted to a new bilateral security treaty.

The declaration referred to regional situations, the modality of the security treaty and bilateral defense cooperation, which will be dealt with in detail below.

In the foreword, the declaration redefined the bilateral relationship in two points.

First, it reaffirmed that the Japan-U.S. alliance not only contributes to the security and prosperity of the two countries but also continues to support peace and stability, as well as economic growth, in the Asia-Pacific region.

During the Cold War, Japan defined the main role of its alliance with the U.S. as the defense of a narrow area around Japan. In contrast, the new declaration means, particularly for Japan, a geographical widening of the region to be covered by the alliance. This puts the Japanese government in an awkward position politically, because it will face the issue of reexamining the current interpretation of the constitution in regard to defense. It is generally interpreted that collective defense conflicts with the constitution, but such an interpretation is being seriously challenged in the new environment.

## Deeper commitment and wider application of security arrangements

Secondly, the declaration reaffirmed the two countries' commitment to the profound common values that guide their national policies: the maintenance of free-

dom, the pursuit of democracy and respect for human rights. As Russian military strength in the Far East has ceased to be the immediate common interest of the two countries after the Cold War, common value, rather than common national interest, serves as the more convincing binding force of the two nations.

The declaration, in this sense, signifies a deeper commitment for the Japan-U.S. alliance. But, here again, Japan, as an Asian nation, will find itself in the difficult position of adjusting Western values to Asian ones, since some Asian nations assert Asian values which are not identical with Western values in regard to human rights and democracy.

## Situation on Korean Peninsula

The declaration pointed to five factors which cause instability and uncertainty in the Asia-Pacific region: tensions on the Korean peninsula, heavy concentrations of military forces, including nuclear arsenals, unresolved territorial disputes, potential regional conflicts, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In case of

eventuality on the Korean Peninsula, Japan will inevitably get involved more directly than at the time of the Gulf War, when Japan only made financial contributions and engaged in postwar minesweeping operations. Here again the Japanese government will face the issue of constitutional interpretation of the exercise of collective defense.

## Security Treaty

In regard to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, the declaration reaffirmed three points: 1) the most effective framework for the defense of Japan in the new era remains the combination of appropriate defense capabilities of the Self-Defense Forces and Japan-U.S. Security arrangements; 2) the maintenance of the current U.S. force structure of about 100,000 forward-deployed military personnel in the Asia-Pacific region for peace and stability there; and 3) Japan's continued appropriate contributions for the maintenance of U.S. forces through provision of facilities and land and through host-nation support in accordance with the Security Treaty. It will be the most challenging task for



Prime Minister Hashimoto and Okinawa Governor Ota discuss reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa.

Photo: Kyodo News Service

Japan to adjust its efforts to offer military bases to the U.S. forces smoothly and on a stable basis at a time when local demand to scale down the military bases is growing.

## Defense cooperation

Referring to defense cooperation, the declaration spelled out the two governments' agreement to further promote the exchange of information and views on the international situation, initiate a review of the 1978 Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, enhance reciprocal provision of logistic support, supplies and services between the Self-Defense Forces and U.S. forces and advance cooperation in the ongoing study on ballistic missile defense. The accord thus reaffirmed both countries' commitment to streamlining the stationing of U.S. forces in Japan, which constitutes the key element of the Japan-U.S. security arrangements.

The Guideline for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation detailed concrete measures for joint operations by U.S. forces and the Self-Defense Forces in case of aggression against Japanese territory and in the defense of Japanese sea lanes, under which regular joint training has been held. Yet, the current Japanese government interpretation of the exercise of collective self-defense has hindered study on how the Self-Defense Forces should support U.S. forces if a dispute affecting Japan's security occurs in areas surrounding Japan, but outside Japanese territory. The declaration, which called for a review of this issue, placed a new heavy burden on the Japanese government.

Reciprocal provision of supplies and services took a step forward with the signing of a formal agreement just before President Clinton's Japan visit.

Mutual exchange in the areas of technology and equipment has remained the sticking point due to Japan's three principles on arms exports and the difference in government-private sector relationships in Japan and the U.S. One exception is the ongoing joint development of the F2 support fighter for Japan's Air Self-Defense Force.

Although Japan is committed to cooperating in the study on ballistic missile defense, Japan's general budget frame-

work, which limits overall defense spending, will create difficulties for the Japanese government when it actually apportions funds for the project.

## Japan's response to two fundamental issues

As seen above, the declaration raised not a few difficult questions for Japan. In particular, two very fundamental, yet embarrassing, issues have emerged.

One is how to accommodate the national requirement for offering bases for the U.S. with the interests of the communities hosting them. Another is to determine in advance how Japan should, or whether Japan can, support the military forces of the U.S. and other countries which would respond to a conflict occurring in the region surrounding Japan and threatening Japan's security.

## Okinawa problem

The rape of a girl by U.S. servicemen in Okinawa in September 1995 has prompted a large-scale civic campaign, led by Okinawa Governor Ota Masahide, to demand curtailment of U.S. bases on the island. Behind the spread of the campaign

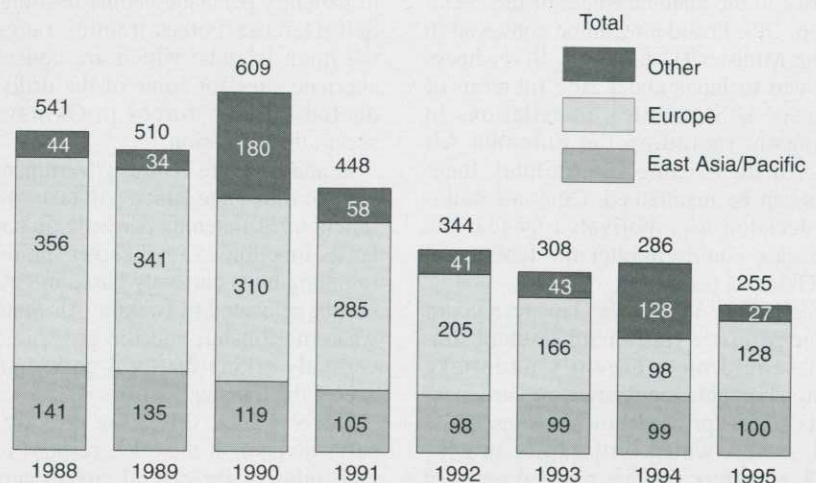
lie the following four factors.

1. Deep-rooted historical distrust of the nation. Okinawa, the only Japanese region involved in ground combat during World War II, was militarily isolated after the U.S. invasion in the closing days of the war and ended up being abandoned by mainland Japan. When Japan concluded a peace treaty with the allied nations in 1951 and regained sovereignty, Okinawa remained under U.S. occupation until 1972. The people of Okinawa bitterly felt they were abandoned once again by mainland Japan.

2. Distrust of people in the Japanese main islands who, to Okinawan people's minds, force on them most of the burden of maintaining U.S. bases. About 75% of the total bases Japan offers to the U.S. forces is concentrated on the small space of Okinawa island, 20% of which is used by U.S. forces. The central government plans to shift some U.S. military drills to five training grounds of the Self-Defense Forces outside Okinawa, but this scheme has faced objections from other local governments and people.

3. Distrust of political parties. This was prompted by a sudden turnabout of policies of the Social Democratic Party

U.S. Military Personnel in Foreign Areas, FY 1988-95 (in thousands)



Source: DOD

Note: Figures are as of the end of the Fiscal Year (September 30). Thus, totals for 1990 do not include maximum Desert Storm deployments, which peaked between the close of FY 1990 and FY 1991.

(SDP), which had long upheld the Okinawa people's campaign against military bases. During the Cold War, the SDP championed the cause of unarmed neutrality, branded the Self-Defense Forces a violation of the constitution, opposed the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and argued for removal of U.S. bases in Okinawa. As the Cold War ended and the party joined the coalition government, it suddenly came out, without any valid explanation, in favor of the Security Treaty and the constitutionality of the Self-Defense Forces, and began to play the role of appeaser.

4. Distrust of the central government. The government has taken the stand that the Japan-U.S. security arrangements are necessary for Japan's peace and stability and that Japan is diplomatically obliged to offer bases to U.S. forces stationed in Japan. The government explained the *raison d'être* of U.S. military bases in Japan only in abstract terms and avoided making out a case for the U.S. bases in clear-cut military terms for fear of touching off a political furor. The people of Okinawa were thus left unconvinced of the reason the military bases were forced on them.

The Japanese and U.S. governments must take drastic measures to dispel Okinawa's distrust so that U.S. forces stationed in Japan can use their Okinawa bases on a stable basis.

Prior to the announcement of the declaration, U.S. President Clinton conveyed to Prime Minister Hashimoto U.S. readiness to revert to Japan about 20% (in terms of area) of U.S. military installations in Okinawa, including the Futenma Air Base, if the existing U.S. military functions can be maintained. Clinton's political decision was motivated by fear the rape case could embitter the feelings of the Okinawa people.

The ball is now in the Japanese court. Prime Minister Hashimoto's administration should most urgently undertake efforts to enable the renewal of lease contracts for 50 privately owned sites inside U.S. bases, which will expire in May 1997. Governor Ota has rejected repeated central government requests for his cooperation in the appropriation of the land owned by landowners who refuse to agree to renewal of the contracts, and the central government brought the case to court. The

governor countered the government action by appealing to the Supreme Court on grounds that the central government's appropriation of land violates the constitution. The Supreme Court on August 28 rejected the appeal, but the governor still continued resistance and held a prefecture-wide plebiscite, the first of its kind in Japan, on his proposal to scale down U.S. military bases and to review the Status of Forces Agreement. Sending a strong message to Tokyo, a majority of Okinawa people voted in favor of the governor's stance. (The turnout was 59%, with 89% of them, or 53% of all voters, supporting reductions of the bases. The turnout was less than expected.) On the back of the Supreme Court decision and the plebiscite, Prime Minister Hashimoto invited Governor Ota to Tokyo and offered a package of measures to help development Okinawa's economy in return for his pledge to cooperate on the base issue. This olive branch prompted Ota to reverse his previous position and agree to take the legal steps needed to continue the forced leasing of land for use by the U.S. forces. Ota's backdown has effectively put an end to the controversial Okinawa base issue though legal procedures for appropriation of privately owned land are yet to be cleared.

The central government will now have to patiently persuade people residing near Self-Defense Forces training ranges on the main islands, which are considered alternate sites for some of the drills conducted by U.S. forces in Okinawa, to accept the relocation.

In addition, the central government will have to find a site which will take over the functions of Futenma Air Base, in particular its function as a helicopter station. Air refueling units currently based in Futenma will be relocated to Iwakuni Air Station in western Honshu, and the government is currently asking the local government to accept the transfer.

Nevertheless, this issue directly concerns division of the roles, responsibilities and rights of the central government and local governments and its early settlement is not easy.

## Support for U.S. forces

The Cabinet Legislation Bureau takes

the stand that military action taken by the Self-Defense Forces outside Japanese territory in conjunction with military forces of foreign countries, even the U.S., constitutes a violation of the constitution. The government has identified with this interpretation on the assumption that banning the Self-Defense Forces from taking military action outside national territory would never allow the SDF to get involved in aggression against any other country, a sort of "fail-safe safety valve" as some government officials put it.

But this interpretation is not fully accepted. Some contend that possessing, but not exercising, collective self-defense rights amounts to denial of possession of such rights and intrinsically interferes with national rights recognized under the United Nations Charter. Some others argue that this interpretation deprives Japan of opportunities to make global contributions. In fact, this interpretation had discouraged the government until 1993 from sending the Self-Defense Forces abroad on United Nations peace-keeping operations. Even after such restrictions were lifted, SDF personnel are allowed to engage only in transportation and road repairing work and are still prohibited from carrying out combat missions such as guarding and surveillance. If this interpretation is to be strictly followed, SDF participation in U.N. forces formed under Article 7 of the U.N., let alone multinational forces formed on the basis of a Security Council resolution, amounts to violation of the constitution.

This interpretation conflicts with Japan's expression of readiness to become a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council.

If Japan maintains this interpretation even after being elected a permanent member of the Security Council, it will have to veto, or at least abstain from voting on, a resolution for armed sanction against a certain country. Voting for such a resolution and still choosing not to participate in armed sanction will be contradictory and will not be internationally accepted. During the Gulf War, Japan failed to have the Self-Defense Forces participate in U.N. multinational forces, though the country relies on the Gulf region for most of its oil supplies. All

**Summary of Estimated Defense Cost-Sharing/Host Nation Support to the United States for 1994 (unit: US\$ millions)**

Host Nations	Direct Support <sup>a</sup>		Indirect Support		Total Support (other than forgone revenue)	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Germany	\$242	\$249	\$1176	\$1300	\$1418	\$1549
Japan	3403	3857	766	766	4169	4623
ROK	265	266	1368	1368	1633	1634
Other European and Pacific <sup>b</sup>	18	35	796	823	814	858
Europe and Pacific Subtotal	3928	4407	4106	4257	8034	8664
Kuwait	186	186	4	4	190	190
<b>Total</b>	<b>4114</b>	<b>4593</b>	<b>4110</b>	<b>4216</b>	<b>8224</b>	<b>8854</b>

Source: Secretary of Defense, Report on Allied Contributions to the Common Defense 1995.

Notes: Exclusive some Middle East contributions. Excludes foregone revenues.

a. Direct cost-sharing estimates (low range) reflect pledged contributions.

b. Other Host Nations include: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and United Kingdom.

Japan did was to contribute \$13 billion and send Maritime Self-Defense Force minesweeping units on postwar minesweeping operations in the Gulf. This represented the current Japanese policy of supporting multinational action but doing its bit only through monetary contributions on the pretext that its constitution does not allow it to take the risk of sending personnel for military action. Such an attitude has only made Japan the object of international disdain.

Should the Japanese government stick to this interpretation even when an armed conflict occurs on the Korean Peninsula, Japan will not be able to support United Nations forces sent for any kind of operation.

Would the international community accept such a Japanese stance? Would the international community elect such a country to a permanent seat on the Security Council?

If the Japanese government takes the stand that exercise of collective self-defense rights does not violate the constitution, it will be able to decide on its action on a case-by-case basis through political discussion.

If the Liberal Democratic Party fails to

win a majority in the next general election and is forced to continue in coalition with the Social Democratic Party and other political groupings, it will likely avoid discussions on the matter and refrain from changing the current interpretation. There is little likelihood of the constitution being revised in the near future because there must be enough convincing reasons to obtain national consensus on constitutional changes and such an initiative requires vast political energy. If the conservative forces regain strong political leadership, they could change the current government interpretation that the exercise of collective self-defense rights violates the constitution. Even so, it will not be easy to obtain national consensus, and the government will be required to patiently strive to obtain national consensus on a case-by-case basis, not on an all-or-nothing basis; that is, the government should ask the nation, whenever Self-Defense Forces participation in joint action with foreign military forces becomes necessary, whether the joint action falls within the exercise of collective self-defense rights.

### Efforts to continue alliance

During the Cold War days the Japan-U.S. security arrangements were likened to two large ships sailing in tandem through rough seas in an approaching storm. The bilateral security arrangements in the new era redefined in the Joint Declaration on Security issued in April can be likened to two lighthouses on different points across the ocean, which sound warning whistles for ships of different model, size and speed which sail through seas not so rough, but shrouded by a dense fog. The Asia-Pacific region in the 21st century will be similar to fog-shrouded seas where various ships like large nuclear-powered ships, midsize conventional ships, small high-speed boats, and slow sailboats, some of which may be skippered by adventurist or nationalistic captains, sailing in different directions. These ships must be safely guided to reach their destinations, sailing slowly without colliding with each other. Each ship should post a watchman on its stern who would listen to the warning from the lighthouses and help steer it cautiously to its destination.

In ensuring peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region in the new era, it is essential for the U.S. to maintain a certain level of forward deployment as an honest broker with Japan's support, with the two countries firmly tied by bilateral security arrangements based on the spirit of the United Nations Charter.

Japan and the U.S. differ in ethnicity, religion, history, culture, outlook and geographical size. It is not easy for these two different countries to cooperate with each other over a long period of time. But, almost miraculously, they have maintained partnership in the field of security for as long as half a century.

The Japan-U.S. security arrangements will cease to exist if they are left as they are. People of the two countries must always appreciate the significance of the bilateral security arrangements and strive to develop and enhance the credibility of their partnership and adjust it to the needs of the times.

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