Standing at a Crossroads—Japan-U.S. Security Arrangement

By Sakanaka Tomohisa

Since the beginning of 1995, the Japanese and United States governments have been engaged in a reappraisal of the meaning of the Japan-U.S. security arrangement in the post-Cold War period. Taking the opportunity provided by the meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Osaka in the middle of November 1995, Japanese Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi and U.S. Vice President Al Gore met for Japan-U.S. summit talks, at which they reaffirmed the importance of the Japan-U.S. security arrangement. But behind these official positions of the two governments, a current of criticism is bubbling up in both countries. In the U.S., a growing number of people is arguing that Japan and the U.S. benefit unequally from the security arrangement. And in Japan, an incident in which three U.S. servicemen on the main island of Okinawa, which has a concentration of U.S. military bases, allegedly raped a Japanese elementary school girl, sparked a wave of protests and calls for a revision of the policy keeping U.S. military bases in Japan.

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Support for Japan-U.S. security arrangement takes root

Since the end of World War II, the Japan-U.S. security arrangement has been the linchpin of Japan's security. Indeed, if the expression "arrangement" is taken in a broad sense, then it refers not simply to cooperative military relations between Japan and the U.S. but to friendly and cooperative ties in a wide range of fields, from politics, diplomacy and the economy to culture and thought, based on the common values of freedom and democracy. As the cornerstone of cooperative relations in the field of security, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty prescribes the promotion of wide-ranging cooperative ties in politics, economics and culture.

The central points in the field of security according to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty are Article Five, which stipulates U.S. obligation to defend Japan, and Article Six, which stipulates Japan's obligation to supply bases for the U.S. military stationed in Japan, thereby balancing the interests of both nations. During the Cold War period, it was this military aspect of the Japan-U.S. security arrangement that was considered important.

After the end of the Cold War, both the Japanese and U.S. governments set about reviewing the Japan-U.S. security arrangement. In April 1990, the U.S. Department of Defense issued a report entitled "East Asia Strategic Initiative," or "EAS1," in which it announced a three-stage reduction plan for the 135,000 U.S. military personnel deployed in East Asia. Then in September 1992, the Department of Defense issued a second report, in which it emphasized the importance of the deployment of the U.S. military for the stability of East Asia. Following the outbreak of suspicion concerning North Korea's nuclear development program, this second report announced a freeze on the planned second-stage reduction for the U.S. military in South Korea.

In January 1993, after defeating the Republican Party in the U.S. presidential election for the first time in 12 years, the Democrats' new President, Bill Clinton, took office. This new administration placed importance on its East Asian policy. When he visited Tokyo in July 1993 for the G-7 summit, President Clinton stated that the time had come for the U.S. to join hands with Japan and other Asian countries in building a new Pacific community. In February 1995, the Department of Defense, for the first time under the administration of President Clinton, issued a report on East Asia entitled "United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region." This report also emphasized the importance of the U.S. role in the peace and stability of the East Asia-Pacific region and reaffirmed the need to maintain 100,000 U.S. troops in the region in the future.

In response to this report, the Japanese government also emphasized that the Japan-U.S. security arrangement was important not only for the security of Japan but also for the stability of Asia. The opinions of the Japanese and U.S. governments can be condensed into the following four points:

(1) The Japan-U.S. security arrangement plays an important role in the security of Japan.

(2) The stationing of U.S. military personnel in Japan is a manifestation of deep U.S. interest in East Asia and has an important significance in maintaining peace and security in East Asia and ensuring world peace and security.

(3) The Japan-U.S. security arrangement is the core of Japan-U.S. relations and the foundation of wide-ranging cooperative relations, including not only defense but also political, economic and social fields.

(4) The allied relationship between Japan and the U.S., based on the Japan-U.S. security arrangement, is the cornerstone of Japanese diplomacy.

In Japan, a coalition government was formed in August 1993 by forces opposed to the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), but this new coalition promised that it would continue the foreign policy of the LDP and stated that the Japan-U.S. security arrangement would be maintained. Then in June 1994, another three-party coalition government was formed by the LDP, the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), and New Party Sakigake (Harbinger), with SDPJ Chairman Murayama Tomiichi as prime minister. The new prime minister turned the long-standing policies of the Socialists on their head by declaring that the Japan-U.S. security arrangement would be maintained and that Japan's Self-Defense Forces were, in fact, constitutional.

According to public opinion surveys conducted by the Public Relations Office of the prime minister's secretariat, the ratio of respondents agreeing that the Japan-U.S. security arrangement contributes to Japan's security was 69% in 1988, 64% in 1991, and 68% in 1995, which shows that support for the security arrangement has taken root in Japanese national public opinion.

Are the benefits of the Japan-U.S. security arrangement asymmetrical?

In the background of these moves by the Japanese and U.S. governments toward a reappraisal of the security arrangement, a growing number of voices has been heard recently in the U.S. expressing doubt about the future of the security arrangement. At the root of these opinions lies dissatisfaction with the fact that the benefits generated by the security arrangement are asymmetrical between Japan and the U.S.

Representative of this stream of opinion is an article in the July-August 1995 issue of *Foreign Affairs* by Chalmers Johnson, a former professor at the University of California, and E.B. Keehn entitled *The Pentagon's Ossified Strategy*. They argue that the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is far too one-sided and calls for its revision. He writes, while the U.S. stations 45,000 U.S. military personnel in Japan and shoulders responsibility for Japan's defense, Japan would not support the U.S. military even if it came under attack in a conflict that had a direct influence on Japan, such as a crisis on

the Korean Peninsula. If a revision of the Security Treaty cannot be realized, he states, it should be scrapped.

Johnson avers that to make the Security Treaty two-sided, Japan must accept the right of collective defense, and for this purpose Japan must revise Article Nine of the constitution. Furthermore, Johnson asserts that America's objective in enforcing the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is to contain Japan, based on its distrust of Japan, and that the one-sidedness of the security treaty stems from this U.S. distrust of Japan. For this reason, he writes, Japan will always remain a protectorate state of the U.S., unable to carry out any balanced security debate.

The same sentiment is found in a proposal made to the U.S. Congress by the Cato Institute, a leading think tank in Washington, entitled *The Cato Handbook for Congress*. This proposal points out that, although the Cold War has come to an end, only a minimal reduction of the U.S. military presence in East Asia has been undertaken. Arguing that Japan and South Korea have both the military and economic strength to maintain their troops and hardware necessary for their own defense, it urges that U.S. troops in Japan and South Korea be completely withdrawn within three to four years.

Behind this dissatisfaction lies the feeling that, since the military threat posed by the former Soviet Union disappeared with the end of the Cold War, there is no longer any need for the U.S. to make an economic sacrifice and maintain its military presence for the sake of stability in East Asia. Incensed also by the huge trade imbalance between Japan and the U.S., many Americans have become critical of the Japan-U.S. security arrangement which unequally benefits the two countries.

The main points of their argument are: (a) under the Japan-U.S. security arrangement, the U.S. guarantees Japanese access to the U.S. market, but U.S. access to the Japanese market is not achieving effective results; (b) Japan is receiving economic benefits as a result of the stationing of the U.S. military, but the U.S. is not obtaining comparable economic benefits; and (c) the stationing of the U.S. military guarantees the stability of East Asia, as a result of which East Asian countries have been able to continue their economic development, from which Japan derives an enormous economic benefit, but U.S. benefit is limited.

Even if the Americans who criticize Japan in this way are a minority, their call for reform focusing on the future role of the security arrangement, while the Japanese and U.S. governments are urging maintenance of the status quo, should not be treated lightly.

Okinawa bases become political issue

While the disproportionate nature of the Japan-U.S. security arrangement has become an issue in the U.S., in Japan the security arrangement has been shaken in the wake of an incident in Okinawa, where there is a concentration of U.S. military bases, in which three U.S. servicemen allegedly raped a Japanese elementary school girl.

The incident, which has escalated into a political issue, occurred on September 4, when three U.S. soldiers allegedly forced a girl into a car and then raped her, causing her bodily harm. Because of the extraordinary nature of the crime, the people of Okinawa were infuriated. The authorities in Okinawa requested that the U.S. military take steps to prevent any recurrence of such an incident, and U.S. Ambassador to Japan Walter Mondale, acting on behalf of the U.S. government, expressed his apology to Okinawa Prefectural Governor Ota Masahide when the latter visited Tokyo.

Two problems were borne of the incident. The first concerns the revision of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement to allow the handing over of U.S. military personnel who are suspected of crimes before indictment. The Okinawan authorities demanded that the American suspects who, under the agreement, could be detained by the U.S. side until trial, should be handed over to the Japanese police for detention. Worried that any attempts to revise the agreement would only complicate the issue, the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed to settle the problem within the constraints of the agreement. On October 25, 1995, the two countries agreed in a meeting of the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee that the U.S. "will give sympathetic consideration to any Japanese request for the transfer of custody prior to indictment of the accused in specific cases of the heinous crimes of murder or rape."

The lease of land for U.S. bases is the

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Civilian homes run adjacent to Okinawa's Kadena Air Base, the largest U.S. base in the Far East.

second problem. Governor Ota demanded the adjustment and reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa and declared that, if this demand were not taken into consideration, he would refuse to sign documents ordering the compulsory use of some base land for which the lease expires at the end of March 1996. Regarding the use of land for U.S. military bases, if the owners of the land refuse to give their consent, the prefectural governor has the authority to sign in their place. What Governor Ota has done is to turn this authority round and put pressure on the national government to listen to his demand for the adjustment and reduction of U.S. military bases by refusing to sign. Since 66% of U.S. base land in Okinawa consists of privately owned land, it is feared that the use of this land for bases could be seriously obstructed by such a move.

Behind this hard-line Okinawan approach lies dissatisfaction that has built up in Okinawa Prefecture over the years as the national government has forced the prefecture to accept more than its share of U.S. military bases. Of the approximately 318 square kilometers of U.S. base land in the whole of Japan, 245 square kilometers, or 77%, is concentrated on the main island of Okinawa. The residents of Okinawa have become increasingly dissatisfied because, while the integration of bases on the Japanese mainland has gone ahead, there has been no major adjustment or reduction in Okinawa since its return to Japan in 1972. In addition, the number of crimes committed by the U.S. military in Okinawa has climbed to around 2,000 a year since 1972, with no sign of improvement. Following the alleged attack on the Japanese schoolgirl, their patience has reached the end of its tether.

Okinawa represents the largest strategic base for the U.S. military in East Asia. U.S. facilities there, which include Kadena Air Force Base, Futemma Naval Base, and Camp Zukeran, form a complex concentration of land, air, and sea functions. Moreover, while the bases on the main Japanese island of Honshu typically represent rear-guard support, highly adaptable strategic forces are deployed in Okinawa, including an F-15 fighter squadron and marine amphibious units. Therefore, the adjustment and integration of these bases would be no easy matter (see accompanying table).

TABLE
Classification of U.S. base functions in Okinawa (March, 1994)

FUNCTION	NO. of FACILITIES	AREA (1000m²)	% of TOTAL AREA
Barracks	5	9,541	3.9
Airfields	2	4,790	10.1
Ports	3	2,178	0.9
Maneuvering ground	17	168,538	68.7
Storage	3	32,801	13.4
Communications	7	4,466	1.8
Other	5	2,948	1.2
TOTAL	42	245,262	100.0

The escalation of the issue of Okinawa bases into a political issue shows that, even if the two countries agree at the governmental level on the importance of the Japan-U.S. security arrangement, it is not easy for them to gain the support of residents near the bases. Strong political leadership is required to win this support. In this sense, the problem of the bases in Okinawa is a kind of litmus test for forecasting the future of Japan-U.S. relations.

Three scenarios that could rock the Japan-U.S. security arrangement

Considering the international environment surrounding Japan, it is difficult to find a policy that could replace the Japan-U.S. security arrangement. In a post-Cold War international environment in which it is hard to pinpoint any clear threat to Japan, there is a possibility that, unless Japan and the U.S. engage in close policy coordination, twisted national feelings on both sides could rock the boat of the Japan-U.S. security arrangement. There are three possible scenarios for such an outcome.

The first concerns military and strategic aspects. The U.S. government repeatedly reaffirms its pledge to defend Japan, but there is a possibility that demands from some quarters, especially the U.S. Congress, for a reduction of military strength could accelerate. In this case, two problems could emerge. (1) If the withdrawal of the U.S. military from Japan picks up speed, there is a possibility that this could whip up nationalism in Japan and spur a further defense buildup. (2) The expense burden for stationing U.S. military personnel in Japan. Japan already shoulders the equivalent of about 40% of the cost. It is possible that moves will gather momentum in the U.S. Congress and elsewhere calling for Japan to accept a larger share of the cost of deploying the U.S. military in East Asia. There is a danger that Japan would react emotionally to this demand from the U.S., thereby rocking the Japan-U.S. security arrangement.

The second scenario concerns Japan-U.S. economic friction: As bilateral economic friction becomes more serious, an irrational response to criticism might escalate to the point of scrapping the bilateral security arrangement altogether. Economic friction between Japan and the U.S. is already growing serious. Both countries are continuing their efforts to remedy the trade imbalance, but so far there has been no

noticeable improvement. The total trade deficit of the U.S. reached a colossal $96.1 billion in 1992 and $132.5 billion in 1993, of which $48.8 billion in 1992 and $59.3 billion in 1993 owed to its trade deficit with Japan. If no improvement is realized, it is likely that adverse reactions in the U.S. will grow more intense.

Finally, the development of economic integration in East Asia and the consequent weakening of Japan-U.S. relations. In Europe, the European Union (EU) has taken shape, and moves are beginning toward monetary union and common foreign and security policies. In East Asia, APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum have been organized, and a regional security dialogue is beginning. It is difficult to imagine that the East Asian nations will start moving toward the formation of any exclusive economic bloc, but if regionalization makes progress in the EU and the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), moves toward the formation of an economic bloc could gain ground in reaction.

Rather than these three scenarios shaking the Japan-U.S. security arrangement separately, it is more likely that they would overlap, resulting in friction between Japan and the U.S. leading to confrontation and a proverbial rocking of the boat.

Regarding post-Cold War international relations, confusion continues to reign, and still no clear prospects in sight. While relations of interdependence and international cooperation are advancing in the world economy, on the political front territorial and ethnic issues are becoming serious. As seen in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the drive toward separatism and the formation of ethnic states is continuing. The Japan-U.S. alliance may not be able to avoid being drawn into relations of "cooperation and competition" that are much more complex than in the Cold War period. The management of Japan-U.S. allied relations is going to require much more detailed attention than ever before.

Political leadership required

Several destabilizing factors exist in East Asia, such as the prospects for unification on the Korean peninsula and questions about China's future. In addition, there could be a large outbreak of conflicts in the third world over ethnic disputes and territorial problems. In view of this uncertainty in the international environment, the Japan-U.S. security arrangement is likely to remain important in the future as the foundation of cooperative relations between these two countries. There can be little objection on this point. However, since the curtain has come down on the Cold War, Japan and the U.S. have lost their common enemy of communism. As a result, it is possible that the cooperative relations of the alliance will slacken.

The biggest problem facing both Japan and the U.S. is how to tackle the domestic issues that form the basis of their foreign policies. In the U.S., it is likely that interest in domestic issues will increase, and foreign policy will come to strongly reflect domestic economic and fiscal considerations. Furthermore, as shown by the escalation of the alleged rape incident in Okinawa into a political issue concerning the U.S. bases there, individual behavior is going to create wider ripples and could even rock the foundations of the Japan-U.S. alliance. Political leadership is going to be extremely important in determining how relations between Japan and the U.S. should be managed from now on.

Japan-U.S. relations do not end simply with bilateral affairs. In 2000 the two countries will account for an estimated 37% of the world's total gross national product. The emergence of a fissure in relations between two countries that account for such a large share of the world economy can be expected to exert a serious influence not only on the regional issues facing East Asia but also on the peace and stability of the entire world. From this perspective also, the Japan-U.S. security arrangement is likely to become even more crucial. JJTI

Photo: Kyodo News Service

Facing the U.S. bases issue for the first time since inauguaration, Hashimoto meets with Okinawa Prefectural Governor Ota.

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