

The U.S.-Japan Alliance: President Obama's First 100 Days

Randy Schriver
President and CEO
Project 2049 Institute

Mark Stokes
Executive Director
Project 2049 Institute

Introduction

Befitting for a prominent ally, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton waited only a day to establish communication with her counterpart in Japan. On day two of her tenure at Foggy Bottom, Secretary Clinton held a phone conversation with Foreign Minister Nakasone to underscore the importance of the US-Japan alliance to the incoming Administration in Washington. While the gesture is surely appreciated in Tokyo, and the symbolism was not lost in Washington, the reporting on their conversation suggests that the messages conveyed were careful and correct – and revealed little about the Administration's intentions (if any) to take concrete steps to enhance the alliance.

It is abundantly clear that President Obama will have a very full foreign policy agenda having inherited two unfinished wars, a global economic meltdown, and significant pockets of instability. However, demonstrating early intent to enhance the U.S.-Japan alliance, accompanied by immediate implementation of concrete measures to strengthen the alliance, should find a place on his administration's agenda. Early action is necessary for a number of reasons: (1) the growing importance of Asia to securing a broad array of national interests and objectives to the United States; (2) the evolving and increasing challenges facing the United States in pursuit of objectives in Asia; (3) the centrality of Japan and the alliance to successful U.S. orientation and approach in Asia as well as globally; (4) an inheritance of uncertainty and anxiety towards the direction of the alliance shared in both Washington and Tokyo; and (5) an inheritance that fundamentally calls into question U.S. wherewithal to meet regional and global challenges.

There have been a number of excellent reports in the last two years from the think tank and academic communities on how to move the U.S.-Japan alliance forward. Several efforts were generated specifically as a result of a widely perceived drift in the U.S.-Japan alliance, as well as from the recognition that a new U.S. Administration represents an opportunity to reset and recalibrate policies in accordance with the evolving strategic landscape. The Armitage-Nye report of 2007, the Auslin/AEI report of 2008, and the Wakabayashi/CSIS report of 2008 are all examples of comprehensive and somewhat bold reports that look out fifteen to twenty years.

This brief memo seeks to support much of what was recommended in previous reports, but with different objective – in short, identifying how to jump start the process of alliance enhancement. While we embrace and share the strategic vision outlined in recent efforts, our outlook will remain true to our core mission of exploring long-term security trends. Therefore,

our recommendations are near term – more precisely, for the first one hundred days of the Obama Administration.

This memo offers practical advice for initial steps the new U.S. Administration may embark upon to set the proper tone, and more importantly, to begin improving the alliance’s capabilities to meet security objectives in tangible ways. In that spirit, we offer recommendations that are practical (within the purview of the Administration to decide in the first one hundred days), consequential (symbolism is important, but even symbolic gestures can have direct, substantive implications), and connected to an appropriate strategic framework for an evolving and strengthening alliance.

This memo does not, therefore, address things that should be done but are not feasible (we endorse an FTA for the U.S. and Japan, but do not see this as likely on President Obama’s watch), are largely on track (relocation and realignment should certainly be reaffirmed, but conveying such is not very consequential), and/or embrace a status quo vision of the alliance (Secretary Clinton’s affirmation that Japan is the “cornerstone” of the U.S. policy in Asia was a reiteration of a line oft used in Bill Clinton’s Administration and is not suggestive of sophisticated evolution in an of itself). At the risk of sounding glib, our recommendations should read as “top ten list” for alliance managers in the first one hundred days of the Obama Administration.

The inheritance

Put quite simply, the center of gravity in the world is shifting toward Asia. By almost any objective measure – size of populations, dynamism of economies, consumption of energy, amount of greenhouse gases emitted, and strength of militaries – the Asia-Pacific increasingly represents the center of human activity. In terms of security and military issues more specifically, the arguments for Asia’s centrality are equally compelling. Asia is home to seven out of ten of the world’s largest militaries; the place where one of the most aggressive military modernization programs the world has ever experienced is afoot (China); a region where half of the world’s known and demonstrated nuclear weapons programs resides (all with associated delivery systems); and a location where many “hot spots” carrying the potential for conflict simmer along (e.g. Korean Peninsula; Taiwan Strait; Spratley Islands, etc). Asia is also the region where so-called “new security challenges” may manifest more quickly toward sources of conflict (e.g. arctic ice melt potentially prompting major power contestation over resources).

The magnitude and multitude of security challenges in Asia are accompanied by tremendous dynamism within the region itself. While some of the region’s evolution is undoubtedly positive (e.g. the growth of democracies), there also exist emerging strategic challenges that could complicate the ability of the United States and its allies to achieve security objectives. The rise of China, the re-emergence of Russia, and the continuing instability of the North Korean regimes represent just three such potential challenges.

While sorting through the various lists of current challenges, Chinese leaders in Beijing also keep an eye on strategic goals. A clear strategic objective for China is developing its comprehensive national power, and further promoting its position in the world to be a more influential and more powerful country. The aggressive nature of China's military modernization program extends well-beyond a Taiwan contingency, and they seek to acquire capabilities to account for U.S. involvement in conflict (e.g. China's recent anti-satellite missile test). Moreover, the seemingly lack of attention to Asia in the final three years of the Bush Administration has raised the possibility that other emerging powers such as China may step in to fill the power vacuum left by the United States.

Riding the strength of the petro-dollar, and the cult-of-personality of Vladimir Putin, Russia has sought to exert increasing influence on her periphery and in her neighborhood. It may still be the case that Russia remains a declining power, on a downward trajectory from the heyday of Soviet Power (e.g. decreasing life expectancy, growing corruption and criminal activity, atrophy of military capabilities etc), but in the near term Russia's leaders seem intent on bullying and intimidating their neighbors. This tendency has been most acute in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus where Moscow has issued veiled (and some not-so-veiled) threats to Ukraine, Georgia and other former dominions of the Soviet Union who seek closer security ties with NATO and the United States. Of recent, Russia has not demonstrated such egregious behavior in the Pacific region. However, given the increasingly autocratic nature of its leadership, as well as outstanding questions related to disputed territories (e.g. Kuril Islands/Northern Territories) and access to energy resources, we cannot discount the possibility that Russia will adopt a more aggressive posture in the Pacific. In the near-term, Russian arms sales to China are also highly problematic.

With respect to North Korea, the Bush Administration failed in its efforts to remove nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula. We are worse off now than eight years ago and have drifted far away from the core principles of "Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Disarmament." In addition, the pursuit of a narrow Peninsula policy focused exclusively on nuclear weapons has left unaddressed several festering problems such as proliferation, illegal and illicit activities, human rights atrocities, and a growing conventional capability that directly threatens Japan.

It is commonplace and almost cliché to note that Japan is America's most important ally in Asia. But it should be remembered and openly articulated as to why that remains the case in today's world, and will remain the case for the knowable future. Given the range and magnitude of challenges in the world and in Asia, and the very fact that the United States itself is burdened with an overwhelming number of foreign policy issues – America's allies become all the more important. It is questionable whether the United States can effectively promote its security interests without active allied support in the best of times, but given the various challenges present at this time, Washington is especially unlikely to enjoy success without robust engagement by and with its allies. It is quite reasonable to suggest that a strong set of alliance relationships is the key to protecting virtually every priority objective for the United States in the Asia-Pacific region.

Why does this aforementioned set of realities compel us to regard Japan as our most important relationship and ally in Asia? It is not simply because Japan is the second largest economy in the world after that of our own (though it is); it is not because Japan is the second most generous contributor to foreign aid programs in the world after the United States (though true); it is not because the United States and Japan are both liberal democracies with market economies with shared values and common interests (though also true); and it is not because the combination of these factors alone would be sufficient to promote the U.S.-Japan relationship to a position of pre-eminence in the calculations of Washington's leaders.

The real reason Japan remains our most important relationship and alliance in Asia stems from agreements reached nearly fifty years ago in the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. Under Article VI of the original treaty, Japan and the United States agreed that, "For the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East, the United States of America is granted the use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan." Without Japan's accession to the principle of hosting U.S. forward deployed forces with a broad mandate of promoting regional security, the "time-distance tyranny" would be too great for the United States to affect the security environment in Asia for the benefit of ourselves and our allies.

Understanding the importance of the region, as well as the importance of alliances to U.S. interests in Asia, should strongly suggest to the new Obama Administration the need to ensure that our alliances have modernized and are appropriately oriented toward 21st century challenges. However, the inheritance raises real questions as to whether or not we're on this track. Japan has held ground in terms of U.S. rhetoric, but despite major progress during the first term of the Bush Administration, the Obama Administration inherits an alliance that is once again in danger of setting adrift. Japanese leaders feel as though we have ignored their core interests as we pursued diplomacy through the six party talks. We have denied their requests for advanced military platforms such as the F-22 Raptor and we have elevated interactions with China to unprecedented levels thus raising concerns of the dawn of a new "Japan passing" era.

Even during the campaign, the Obama team acknowledged the need to repair the alliance and invest further in strengthening capabilities. As stated before, this pledge is welcomed, but leaves unanswered questions regarding what the ultimate vision shared in the U.S. Administration may be for the future direction of the U.S.-Japan alliance, and what concrete steps are planned to move the relationship in this direction. The first one hundred days of the Obama Administration offers a tremendous opportunity for positive action. But an opportunity is only that, and initiative and action is still required for new ideas to come to fruition.

The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Toward a Normal Alliance, a Regional & Global Alliance, and a Modern Alliance

Lewis Carroll wrote "if you don't know where you are going, then any road will get you there." This was not only clever advice from the Cheshire Cat, it is also a good reminder to those in the foreign policy field, and in particular, for alliance managers. If leaders in

Washington are to seek an enhanced alliance, at the risk of stating the obvious, they should have some notion of where they want to go. But the fact is, all too often actions are taken to simply improve atmospherics, programs are pursued that do not reflect true priorities, and opportunities are missed because risk-averse bureaucracies tend to favor affirmation of a status quo rather than genuine advancement.

This short memo is not striving for a full and comprehensive articulation of the optimal end state for the U.S.-Japan alliance after some period of investment. Rather, we do choose to focus on near term steps the Obama Administration can take to jump start a process of alliance enhancement. Our narrower objective notwithstanding, we still feel the need to convey a sense that our recommendations are tied to some vision of forward progress for the alliance (lest we be accused of thinking “any road will get us there.”)

Our fundamental assumption is that the ability of the United States to “get Asia right,” and increasingly, our ability to “get global issues right,” is tied to the strength and the capabilities of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Although the alliance has been a “cornerstone” for the promotion of peace and stability in Asia for three generations, the evolving challenges are such that our alliance must improve and progress to positively influence Asia’s future direction, and that of the world.

The United States should have high expectations for the alliance, and continue to ask Japan to move toward full partnership on all matters. While it is a given that one must remain sensitive to Japanese domestic politics and their need to move at a deliberate pace, U.S. leaders should embrace the position that we welcome an alliance partner with greater latitude to engage in areas of converging security interests.

We believe Japan is also deserving of our very best military platforms. Tokyo’s growing security challenges are real and current. Japan must have a strong deterrent capability, but we must also understand the importance of ensuring that Japan can operate alongside the United States in the future when the legal circumstances permit and the security considerations demand it.

We strongly endorse the view that Japan is poised, and thus the alliance is ready, for a true regional and global orientation (as opposed to case-by-case consideration of specific operations). This entails developing a shared set of regional and global interests, conceptualizing cooperative approaches to advance those interests, and acquiring real capabilities to enable the alliance to act in the manner envisioned.

We also believe that no alliance in the world is better positioned to address so-called “new security challenges” than the U.S.-Japan alliance. As the two most technologically advanced economies and militaries, the United States and Japan should employ the wherewithal that status brings to advance cutting edge solutions to emerging security challenges. As scholars and strategists look at issues such as the linkage of climate change to national and international security, the U.S.-Japan alliance should be at the forefront of developing creative approaches and capabilities to address the potential contingencies.

Finally, we offer a note about symbolism versus substance in alliance management. We understand the importance of symbolism in the conduct of international affairs, and how symbolism can be particularly powerful in Asia. In the context of Japan, Washington's alliance partners in Tokyo will surely watch closely where the Prime Minister of Japan falls into the queue, in relation to other Asia leaders, for his first call on the new U.S. President (in our humble opinion, PM Aso should be the first Asian leader to enjoy a summit with President Obama). But there is a danger that symbolism can become a substitute for substance, and our efforts can strike only a tone of reassurance and re-affirmation rather than true progress. Symbolism can be important and can have policy implications (e.g. PM Abe's decision to delay a visit to Washington so that his first foreign visits as Prime Minister were to China and South Korea carried important policy implications that followed), or it can be a cheap substitute for the hard work of alliance management.

Thus to summarize, our recommendations that follow should be viewed as the initial steps an Obama Administration should take to move the U.S.-Japan alliance in the direction of: (1) an appropriate place of pre-eminence among Washington's allies for the purposes of securing a broad array of interests; (2) full partnership vice a legally determined division of labor; (3) greater regional and global orientation; (4) enhanced military capabilities for deterrence, as well as regional and global contingencies; and (5) enhanced capabilities for emerging and new security challenges.

The U.S.-Japan Agenda: The Top Ten Actions of the First One Hundred Days

1. Appoint a Senior Envoy and Policy Coordinator for 50th Anniversary of the U.S.-Japan Alliance. The Obama Administration has raised some eyebrows with the decision to appoint a number of senior envoys/policy czars at the outset of the administration. Rather than survey the lay of the land for some period of time, then determine where a special representative might be most helpful, the Administration has already announced an envoy for the Middle East Peace Process (George Mitchell), and for Afghanistan/Pakistan (Richard Holbrooke). There are rumors suggesting more announcements may be forthcoming. These areas to which envoys are assigned (and may still be assigned) could all fit the description of "problem areas." Why not appoint an envoy for an issue much more positive in connotation, and potentially much more fruitful if employed properly?

2010 will mark the 50th Anniversary of the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Trust. The anniversary carries the potential to be much more than a ceremonial acknowledgement of past accomplishments. Rather, it can be the action-forcing event for significant policy initiatives championed by our respective heads-of-government.

A Senior Envoy and Policy Coordinator should have responsibilities that extend well-beyond event planning – he or she should be someone of significant political stature, who enjoys respect in Washington and Tokyo, and who knows the workings of the U.S. interagency system. He or she should be empowered to compel agencies to produce creative, forward looking,

initiatives that can be enshrined at the time we celebrate 50 years of partnership, but in fact would have long-lasting impact.

While we may be accused of leading our recommendations with an idea that is heavy in symbolism, and is process oriented as opposed to substance oriented, we see the Special Envoy and Policy Coordinator in a different light. He or she could help elevate the stature and place of the alliance in the Washington policy community to greater heights. He or she could also play the role of an enforcer, to ensure agencies actively prepare initiatives for the anniversary, and that those initiatives support an appropriate strategic vision for the alliance. Additionally, he or she could serve to insulate the alliance from any policy difficulties that could emerge en route to the anniversary celebration (could differences emerge over Afghanistan given the DPJ's reluctance to extend support beyond current levels? Could there be trade differences given the state of the global economy and the potential for an international blame game?). Lastly, he or she could keep the President engaged and on track for the right kind of event in 2010.

Some of the policy initiatives the United States and Japan may wish to undertake to strengthen the alliance may require some "heavy lifting" at home given the various domestic factors at play in both countries. A Senior Envoy and Policy Coordinator (and presumably, a Japanese counterpart) could help in securing domestic political support for the hard work.

2. Announce Intent to Make Available F-22 Raptor. Of all the possible steps an Obama Administration may take in the first one hundred days, a decision to announce intent to make F-22 Raptors available for export to Japan could be the most significant and consequential of all. In addition, the decision to release the F-22 touches upon all aspects of the criteria for our recommended initiatives.

The announcement of the intent to make F-22 available to Japan would confer high status to our Japanese allies from Washington as Tokyo would be the first foreign military recipient of the platform. Our best platforms should be available to our best allies, particularly if they make military sense.

More importantly, the F-22 represents a real requirement for the Japanese Air Self Defense Forces. Japan needs a new air superiority platform to replace an aging fleet of older fighters, to keep pace with capabilities being acquired by potential competitors in the region, and to be prepared for possible contingencies that directly affect the security of Japan.

As we noted in a previous report, in a defensive suppression campaign against PLA offensive forces, targets would include air defenses, critical nodes within the PLA's theater command system that control offensive air and missile operations, airbases, staging areas, and logistics centers. Fighter aircrafts that provide stealth, speed, agility, and the fusion of sensors and avionics are optimal to counter PLA air defenses and conduct the range of interdiction missions to force a cessation of hostilities on terms favorable to the United States, its allies, and *ad hoc* coalition partners. It would not be an overstatement to say that this capability is a critical enabler for air superiority in the Taiwan Strait, and other possible conflict areas.

The F-22 Raptor, fielded in sufficient numbers and in the inventory of the air forces of forward-based allies, could dissuade a PRC coercive campaign. In the event of an actual conflict, rapid and stealthy penetration, along with air-to-ground munitions capable of destroying air defense systems, may allow the F-22 to disrupt or destroy an enemy air defense network in support of follow-on friendly forces entering enemy airspace on strike missions.

There are other considerations for the U.S.-Japan alliance regarding an F-22 sale to Japan. If the United States forward deploys F-22s to Japan, but does not make those platforms available to the Japanese themselves, at least two negative results could be expected. First, we'd maintain an alliance characterized by division of labor vice full partnership. In the event of conflict, certain missions would clearly fall on the shoulders of the United States if our ally was unable to keep pace through their own platforms. Secondly, the United States would surely be forced to fight in the Pacific with less than optimal capabilities at our disposal. The F-22 buy for the United States Air Forces has already slipped to 180 planes – and not all of those units would be available for a contingency in Asia. There are real questions about the U.S. ability to maintain air dominance in Asia with a lower number of planes available. A Japanese purchase would immediately represent a force-multiplier for the U.S. military. It is difficult to imagine a major contingency in Asia where we would not fight alongside Japan – thus our war-planners could take into account the contributions of the JASDF in our own operational planning.

The potential benefit of an F-22 release could extend beyond the bilateral alliance. Release to Japan opens the door to release to a handful of other top U.S. allies. Some of these allies reside in Asia. Although it is an expensive aircraft, and may exceed what some countries view as their immediate security needs, “buying into” an exclusive club could promote positive regional relations, and advanced capabilities *among* multiple U.S. allies. For example, if the release of F-22s is made to Japan, and a true export variant of the platform becomes available, it is conceivable countries such as Australia and South Korea may be interested in the capability in the not too distant future. Military programs – particularly advanced military programs – serve to bind countries together in meaningful ways. One could imagine the U.S., Japan and Australia set apart from all others through a capability to train and exercise in space unavailable to all others. Such an outcome would give greater meaning to the recently concluded Japan-Australia bilateral security declaration, and would immediately broaden the possibilities and latitude for maneuver in the U.S.-Japan-Australia trilateral cooperation (more below).

Obviously, there are even further reasons to support the release of the F-22 to Japan that may be slightly beyond the scope of this paper. A Japanese purchase keeps the unit price down for the U.S. Air Force, and it also keeps the production lines open in the United States, thus keeping tens of thousands of Americans employed at a critical time for our economy.

3. Announce Intent to Seek Enhanced Defense Industrial Cooperation. During the Bush Administration, Japan made an exception on its so-called Three Principles on Arms Exports in order to pursue joint development of missile defense programs. Within this one time exception, there are likely more programs that could be pursued. However, The United States should push for a more ambitious program of defense industrial cooperation. While it would seem that the ball lies mostly in Japan's court in terms of removing obstacles to greater cooperation, the

Obama Administration could take the simple step of requesting a joint forum to explore greater defense industrial cooperation, and be explicit of our intent to move in that direction.

The benefits of enhanced defense industrial cooperation are potentially quite profound. The United States and Japan represent the two countries in the world with the greatest capacity for technological innovation imbedded in each economy and in each industrial sector respectively. The potential synergies for greater joint research and development on military programs cannot be overstated.

Programs under way in missile defense should be augmented with programs in other areas where cutting edge technologies might be just the remedy for emerging threats. The next generation of air defenses, submarine operations and anti-submarine capabilities, and exploitation of space should certainly all be on the table.

Further joint research and development, and eventually more enhanced joint production, will produce political and military benefits. On the political front, greater efficiencies in development, maintenance and production costs would be warmly welcomed in both capitals which are trying to justify increasingly costly defense systems. If an alliance relationship contributes to bottom-line savings on national budgets, one can be sure that support for greater investment in the alliance will be forthcoming.

On the military front, enhanced defense industrial cooperation can be oriented towards enhanced interoperability between our forces. Co-development and production of major combat systems, sub-systems, and maintenance packages can engender a much closer military-to-military relationship, and imbue both countries military leaders with the confidence of seamless operations together.

4. Announce the Intent to Develop a Joint Asia Strategy, and Associated Enhanced Contingency Planning. On some notable occasions in the past, the United States and Japan have come together to declare shared strategic interests in Asia, while on other occasions attempted to delineate “roles and missions” with respect to potential operations in areas surrounding Japan. Further, it has been past practice for the United States to develop and release an East Asia Strategy Report. What has been lacking, however, is an attempt to develop a joint strategy for Asia. Agreement to do so would set the alliance in motion toward a more regional orientation, and of equal importance, would lay the foundation for more ambitious regional contingency planning.

The leap to a joint regional strategy is so great in the literal sense. As stated, previous joint security declarations and previous efforts to define roles and missions provide a foundation. But these respective efforts do not articulate a comprehensive shared view of regional challenges and opportunities, nor do they discuss cooperative approaches for addressing the region. A real joint strategy for the region would do both.

An effort to develop a joint strategy would serve at least four useful and consequential purposes. First, it would prompt the United States and Japan to consider its own respective Asia

strategies (it should be noted that the United States has not released an East Strategy Report publicly since 1998). Second, a joint regional strategy would help orient alliance planning to a broadened regional outlook. Third, a joint regional strategy would provide transparency for others in the region to note the planned future direction of the U.S.-Japan alliance. And fourth, as mentioned, a joint regional strategy could be the first step in a program of enhanced contingency planning.

Enhanced contingency planning would be scenario-based, and would speak directly to operational planning and acquisition strategies. Scenario-based planning can be private and discreet so even politically sensitive contingencies such as the Taiwan Strait should be discussed. Hard power is important in Asia, and our traditional military and security challenges are growing, not receding. A sophisticated joint approach to evolving our capabilities would pay great dividends.

5. Mini-lateralism in Asia: Intent to Pursue a U.S.-Japan-ROK Security Declaration. Many observers of the Asia Pacific region and of Asian security issues are spending time and energy thinking about regional architecture. The basic narrative suggests that the current architecture based on a system of U.S. bilateral alliances is a cold war relic, and should be replaced by something more durable and appropriate for 21st century security challenges. Further, while the United States has been reluctant to aggressively pursue the creation of new multi-lateral organizations in Asia, China and others are in the driver's seat and may successfully achieve outcomes that will ultimately make it more difficult for the United States to secure our interests.

This has led some in the United States to think more seriously about regional architecture. There may very well be a wide variety of possible formulations that will ultimately serve to promote U.S. interests. The United States could hold discussions among the United States and all its treaty allies in Asia, plus Singapore. We could endeavor to strengthen existing organizations such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation group where we have a seat at the table. Others have suggested a forum of like-minded democracies in Asia. Although China may rhetorically complain such gatherings are designed to plan against them, we would almost certainly have a broad agenda to discuss with our friends that would touch only tangentially on China (issues like counter-terrorism, maritime security, counter narco-trafficking, etc).

The Obama Administration would be wise to be pro-active and engaged in the consideration of regional architecture. Remaining passive and in response mode only heightens the possibility that organizations will be formed and agendas inimical to our long term interests may be adopted. In the near term, the Obama team should pursue what may be described as an interim step toward multi-lateralism and regionalism. Some have observed that so-called "mini-lateralism" could be the most prudent step in the near term for the United States to consider. We agree with this suggestion, and believe the U.S.-Japan alliance (as well as other U.S. allies) would be well-served by pursuing this course at the outset of the Administration.

The Bush Administration deserves some credit for attempts to reinvigorate trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and South Korea. But these discussions have been

limited to coordinating efforts on the single issue of North Korea. The Obama Administration should be more ambitious, and should seek trilateral cooperation under a broader mandate. By setting the goal of strategic trilateral consultations as a prelude to a formal “U.S.-Japan-South Korea Security Declaration”, the Obama Administration is in the position to launch meaningful mini-lateralism in the Asia-Pacific region.

In the long-term, trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan and South Korea carries great potential for all concerned. South Korea has a complicated relationship with Japan, with remaining historical and territorial issues to overcome, and Washington cannot solve the differences between Tokyo and Seoul from a distance. But the United States can lead efforts to restart a meaningful trilateral coordination process between the U.S., South Korea and Japan to address a number of pressing regional issues. The most obvious issue-set to focus on initially relates to North Korea, including North Korean missile and proliferation programs, conventional military threat reduction, inter-Korean dialogue, illegal and illicit activities, political and economic reform, and human rights considerations. Over time, however, the three parties may become more ambitious in their agenda by adopting a more regional and far-thinking orientation. A trilateral security declaration may ultimately serve a similar purpose as the aforementioned proposal for a joint regional strategy, but for three parties vice two. A trilateral security declaration may lead the three militaries to think more seriously about contingency planning and acquisition strategies.

6. Mini-lateralism in Asia: U.S.-Japan-Australia Security Declaration. For all the same reasons that need not be repeated, mini-lateralism in Asia could also be led through the formation of more structured and meaningful cooperation between the United States, Japan, and Australia. The United States has no better friend in the world than Australia. During the first term of the Bush Administration, relations with Canberra reached a new pinnacle. The success was buttressed by the close relations between our respective heads of government, but even more importantly, by initiatives that strengthened our military interoperability, and our intelligence sharing. The U.S.-Australia alliance can boast that our militaries are achieving even greater interoperability, supported by more intensive bilateral and multi-lateral training.

Japan and Australia also can note important developments in bilateral ties. In March 2007, the first Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation was issued. Though the security declaration limited the potential areas of cooperation to mostly non-traditional security issues, the Declaration nonetheless marked a high point in Japan-Australian defense relations. However, some observers have suggested the Declaration was only possible during the tenures of two unique leaders on each side – Prime Ministers Abe and Howard. Thus, the argument continues, further advancements between Japan and Australia are less likely given the change of governments.

The Bush Administration also deserves credit for the creation of the US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD). This was a step in the direction of mini-lateralism, but as is the case with the previously cited U.S.-Japan-ROK forum, the TSD primarily served the purpose of consultation and information sharing, and lacked the fundamental guidance necessary to be a full-blown mechanism for coordination and active security cooperation.

The Obama Administration could very usefully set the tone for enhanced cooperation among like-minded countries by announcing the intent to pursue a U.S.-Japan-Australia Security Declaration. Again, the benefit of such a declaration (if achieved) could extend well beyond the symbolic gesture. A trilateral security declaration would speak directly to a U.S.-Japan cooperative relationship that has a regional outlook, and may ultimately convey for all three parties some modification to operational planning, acquisition, and training. As previously suggested, equipping Japan and Australia with the most advanced systems (such as the F-22 Raptor) will exponentially increase the likelihood that U.S. interests in Asia can be fully secured.

7. Announce Intent to Re-Start Quadrilateral Dialogue with Security Component. While South Korea and Australia are both well poised to engage with the United States and Japan in the direction of mini-lateralism, it would be premature to think the same of India. However, the Obama Administration should make an early commitment to re-start a fledging quadrilateral dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia, and India.

It is clear India is pursuing greater involvement in East Asia. While this has mostly manifested through enhanced bilateral ties in the region, it would be imminently sensible for Delhi to explore how this enhanced level of activity can be shaped (even if on the margins) in a direction to support the interests of the U.S.-Japan alliance and our shared interests. Given India's emergence as an economic, military and diplomatic heavy weight, as well as New Delhi's own stated "Look East Policy," it is very likely that India will be even more active in the Asia-Pacific region on the watch of the Obama Team, and will exert increasing influence. Recognizing India as a like-minded democracy, the United States and Japan should encourage this trend of engagement on New Delhi's part.

However, deftness is required by policy-makers and alliance managers in Washington and Tokyo respectively. While India may be open to enhanced bilateral relations with the United States, Japan, Australia, and others in the region respectively, and may even remain open to certain cooperative activities of Asia's like-minded countries (e.g. the Malabar Exercise of 2006 involved naval vessels from the United States, India, Japan, Australia, and Singapore), New Delhi will studiously avoid entrapment in a de facto cooperative effort aimed against China. Nonetheless, the U.S.-Japan alliance can encourage India's participation in Asia, support her having a seat and a voice in regional fora, and continue to think creatively about a sensible agenda and constructive agenda on which India can join the United States and the region's other democracies. Good work has been initiated in the area of training for disaster relief, but this agenda should be expanded.

The most logical place for the Obama Administration to start would be a most simple expression of intent to resume the Quadrilateral Dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia and India. Since the original proposal, and since the inaugural gathering, the initiative has been plagued by uncertainty. At various points in time, one capital or another expressed concern about proceeding further with quadrilateral discussions – mostly citing concerns about the perceptions of China emanating from the four party sessions. The United States was reticent

according to former Secretary of State Rice, and more recently, Prime Minister Rudd expressed hesitation.

For the purposes of strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance, and orienting our cooperation for the 21st century, increased interaction with India will be of mutual benefit. Again, there may be an appearance that such an initiative would be mostly symbolic at this juncture. For the U.S.-Japan alliance, however, such symbolism can also serve to broaden horizons in Tokyo, and initiate more active thinking about how to realize a true regional and global alliance.

8. Announce the Creation of a Program for Enhanced Alliance Engagement of China. While we strongly support an alliance that takes a sober mind regarding emerging threats, does not shy from enhanced contingency planning of even the most sensitive scenarios, and remains bold in conceptualizing a regional and global vision, it should not be the intent of alliance managers to invite greater tension with China. Quite to the contrary, a modern U.S.-Japan alliance can formulate a program to work more closely with China to build confidence, and to explore areas of practical cooperation.

Currently, the United States, China and Japan do not have a real “trilateral relationship.” There are no routine official trilateral interactions, and the prospects for initiating such activities seem remote. More accurately put, we have a “triangular relationship” defined by three, distinct and unique bilateral relationships, where bilateral discussions are often dominated by discussions about the “other country” not at the table. This distinction is more than semantic if one sustains the hope for strengthening trilateral cooperation. The pragmatic near term objective for leadership in all three capitals thus might be limited to the modest goal of seeking to strengthen the triangular relationship.

Throughout their long respective histories, there has virtually always been clarity regarding the power relationship between China and Japan. At times China was dominant, and on other occasions, Japan has been stronger. It is rare indeed that the two countries see one another as, and in fact are, equal powers. In terms of economic might, military capability, and diplomatic influence, China and Japan appear poised to share co-equal status in the near term, which may not be a recipe for long-term stability.

Despite the near hyperbolic rhetoric in recent years surrounding the rise of China, it remains unforeseeable at this point whether China will continue on a path of dramatic rise, experience catastrophic economic failure or social breakdown, or hover somewhere in between. But no matter the precise direction of China’s trajectory, outcomes in China will undeniably have a profound impact on U.S. interests and those of our allies. In fact, the defining strategic challenge of our age is likely to be how well we address the emergence of China.

The U.S., China, and Japan represent in the Asia-Pacific region: the three largest economies, the three largest importers of foreign oil, the three largest defense budgets, the three largest contributors to greenhouse emissions, and the three largest investors in Southeast Asia. The above list could be longer. But the operative point is that failure to consult and/or cooperate

among the three at best represents a loss of potential synergies in addressing a variety of challenges – and at worst, increases the potential for military tensions.

As China increases in importance, it might lead some to make sacrifices in our relationship with Japan in the hopes of accommodating China. That would be a mistake. The United States should welcome Japan's emergence as a more pro-active player in Asia, and we should grow more comfortable as an alliance in planning for future uncertainties in the security environment -- China's posture in Asia very much included. At the same time, we should be mindful of China's legitimate security concerns and provide as much transparency on our own force posture, and alliance planning as possibility.

The Obama Administration could announce its intent to develop, with Japan, an actual plan of engagement with the PRC. We currently have such a plan for bilateral military-to-military ties, and a modest program exists between Japan and China. A joint plan aimed at building trust with China, and exploring the possibility of real collaboration in areas such as disaster relief, energy security and anti-piracy (we note that the United States, Japan and China all have naval detachments of the coast of Somalia at the time of this writing) would serve the interests of all parties, and ultimately assists the U.S.-Japan bilateral alliance.

9. Announce Intent to Pursue Enhanced NATO-Japan Cooperation. NATO cooperates with a range of countries that are not part of the formal alliance. In Asia, NATO maintains relationships with several countries referred to as Contact Countries. The Contact Countries typically share similar strategic concerns and key Alliance values. Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand are all examples of Contact Countries.

It is increasingly clear that not all Contact Countries are created equal – among Contact Countries, NATO reserves its highest expectations for Japan. NATO has its longest-standing Asian relationship with Japan. A strategic dialogue is ongoing; it involves biannual, high level discussions held alternately in Japan or at NATO Headquarters in Brussels.

The political dialogue is increasingly complimented by practical cooperation. Japan's support for peace and security-orientated operations in Afghanistan are valued by NATO Allies, in particular, the Japanese efforts to disband illegally armed groups and in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former Afghan military combatants. Japan also supports a Law and Order Trust Fund in order to strengthen police activities, and to support capacity development at both the central and the community level. The Japanese government has also committed several million Yen in support of basic human needs projects in various regions of Afghanistan. The selection of projects is facilitated by NATO, with the identification of projects through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Since the mid-1990s, Japan has played a role in stabilizing the Balkans. Following the initial NATO intervention, Japan aided the Allies in winning the peace in the region. Japan's contribution as a major donor nation has played an important part in the successful recovery of the Balkans region, as well as its reintegration into the European mainstream.

These developments are positive for Japan, and are equally positive for the U.S.-Japan alliance. But the Obama Administration should consider a more ambitious, more formal, and more active program for Japan's involvement with NATO. NATO-Japanese cooperation has thus far been mainly focused on support to post-conflict recovery work such as reconstruction and peacekeeping in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Further, Contact Country Guidelines (established in 1998) do not allow for a formal institutionalization of relations, but only reflect the Allies' desire to increase cooperation.

While the ultimate decisions must be made with consensus among NATO allies, the Obama Administration should take the lead in promoting a break-out plan for Japan from the other Contact Countries. Such a plan would allow for a formal, institutionalized relationship with explicit agreements and obligations. In the near term, and as a step toward this goal, Japan should consider contributing direct support to the recently created NATO Response Force (NRF). Envisioned as a ready and technologically advanced force made up of land, air, sea and special forces components that the Alliance can deploy quickly wherever needed, the NRF has had some difficulties acquiring the capabilities to meet its vision. To truly become capable of performing missions worldwide across the whole spectrum of operations, the NRF could benefit from Japan's support. Japan has expertise in disaster management and counterterrorism, and can contribute to global logistics contingency planning.

For the U.S.-Japan alliance, the potential benefits of an enhanced relationship between NATO and Japan are many fold. The relationship can help stretch the vision of the alliance in the direction of a global vision (to be sure, this is well-underway given the significant contributions Japan has made to NATO's missions in Southwest Asia and the Balkans – but could nonetheless be cemented further). Enhanced cooperation could also lead to greater interoperability, and could potentially impact future military acquisition strategies. The United States will likely remain the driving force for NATO performing missions “out of area” and thus has a strong interest in knitting-up East and West for the greatest amount of flexibility.

10. Announce a New U.S.-Japan Initiative on the Arctic Region. The U.S.-Japan alliance should not only seek enhanced capabilities, should not only broaden its vision to be truly regional and global, it should also be a modern alliance in the truest sense. As such, the alliance should seek to be on the cutting edge of new and emerging security challenges. While few will argue with this as a conceptual matter, it is also a fact that very few have made concrete suggestions as to how the alliance can begin to actualize modernity with real missions, real planning, and real acquisitions.

There may be a variety of missions that could serve such a purpose, but we propose that the Obama Administration announce a new Arctic initiative designed to address the various challenges and opportunities associated with the increasingly rapid Arctic ice melt. The symbolism would be important – that pro-active measures are being taken on climate change – but as with our other proposals, there are policy and military implications to such an initiative as well.

As the Asia-Pacific is very much a maritime domain already, the United States and Japan share a natural affinity and partnership on issues related to maritime domain awareness. Countering a variety of challenges such as drug trafficking, weapons proliferation, piracy, human trafficking, and commercial counterfeiting, as well as promoting energy security, maritime safety & security, and environmental protection requires strong U.S. and Japanese involvement. Given new realities brought about by climate change, and more specifically, arctic ice melt, all of these challenges will soon be accentuated.

There will likely be extraordinary ramifications of a consistent opening to maritime traffic of the Northwest Passage above North America and around the entire Arctic region. This new shipping path between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans has important security implications for the Asia-Pacific region, and these concerns are understudied at this time. Countries with interests in the Arctic Ocean will have increased potential for competition over natural resources such as hydrocarbon reserves. Furthermore, an open Northwest Passage will drastically reduce transit times between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans for both commercial and military vessels. Use of the Northwest Passage will generate increased maritime domain awareness and maritime security requirements as nations strive to maintain their territorial integrity and sea lines of communication. The indeterminate or disputed national boundaries in the region further complicate these issues.

The United States and Japan are well-poised as an alliance to create an initiative that would articulate interests, develop doctrine and operational plans, and lead to acquisition strategies for capabilities to keep the Arctic region peaceful. Such an initiative would be a signal to the world that the U.S.-Japan alliance is forward looking, seeks to secure public good, and will be increasingly relevant (not less so, as critics argue) as the international community encounters new security challenges. For audiences in Washington and Tokyo, an Arctic Initiative would also reassure domestic constituencies that our respective interests can be secured as many nations grapple with the full extent of the ramifications of Arctic ice melt.

Conclusion

The Obama Administration would be correct to pursue measures to strengthen and enhance the U.S.-Japan alliance. But those measures need to extend beyond rhetoric, and beyond the traditional symbolism. It is possible that a realistic and pragmatic agenda can be pursued in the first 100 days of an Obama Administration that will set the alliance in motion toward appropriate strategic goals. We've offered our thoughts on such an agenda in this memo.

Our recommendations are oriented toward jump starting the alliance in a direction that promotes U.S. interests through a U.S.-Japan alliance that is normal, regional & global in focus, and modern in outlook. Some measures we suggest are completely under the purview of the Administration (such as the appointment of an Envoy and Coordinator); some to be realized would require work with the U.S. Congress (release of the F-22); and some still would require the consent of other countries (Australia, South Korea, India, China and NATO). Yet in each

case, we believe it is well within the reach of the Administration to announce its intent to pursue this course.

Given the inheritance that the Bush Administration leaves President Obama and his team, inaction to promote the U.S.-Japan alliance in concrete ways will invite further drift in the alliance, and will potentially lead to a diminished ability for the United States to secure our interests in an increasingly vital region. The Obama Administration has the opportunity to initiate trends that will serve to bolster our position in Asia, and position the U.S.-Japan alliance as the key partnership for the foreseeable future.