

A New Narrative for the U.S. – Japan Alliance

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President Barack Obama with Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda at the APEC summit in Honolulu, Hawaii, Saturday, Nov. 12, 2011

Source: White House

If the story of the 21st century is Asia's rise, then Tokyo and Washington should have a narrative. With no clear end to the global recession in sight, the White House in full campaign mode and Congress ostensibly happy to live up to its "do nothing" label, questions loom over the U.S. – Japan alliance's role as the reliable guarantor of peace and prosperity in the next century.

In Japan, a kind of malaise has set in—a national resignation of ‘good enough.’ It is a malaise that gripped most of the world’s democracies. In Europe, democracies bicker among each other, taking the continent and the world to the brink over their squabbles but eventually acquiescing to some uncomfortable accommodation—at least for a decade or two. Yet in Asia, a continent so vast with the world’s two largest populations and home of the only economies with any significant growth, it is unclear how Japan and the United States will fare in an Asia century. Regardless of the final outcome, the fates of Japan and the United States are inextricably linked—in the region and the world.

In the last century, America dominated the global stage with its economic might, political will, and stalwart support to defeat fascism and communism. America became the world’s greatest patron of freedom, democracy and prosperity. But nowhere has America’s investment of blood and treasure reaped more rewards than in Asia—none more embodied than in the U.S. – Japan alliance.

Born from the most tragic circumstances, the strength of the alliance remains a living testament to the unique characters of these two different and great nations. While most alliances are based on a shared culture, shared language, and shared past, the U.S. – Japan alliance was based on a commitment to a shared future.

From a shared tragedy grew an alliance that has served as a stabilizing force in the region for more than 50 years. Then as now, two nations came together and decided to trust and invest in one another to build a brighter future together. With billions of dollars of American investment in Japan’s defense, rule of law, and infrastructure, the Japanese people created a prosperous and dynamic Asian democracy and economy. Japan’s rise served not only as an example for other Asian nations, but a model for the world. For decades, even during Japan’s lost decade, it tops the lists as one of the most generous international donors to global humanitarian relief, natural disaster, and stabilization operations. This is not only a testament to the people of Japan, but to a tradition

that is now deeply woven into Japan's leadership culture.

For America's investment of some 53,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines based in some 89 facilities, the United States has gained its most important ally in the region. In the wake of September 11, despite domestic and international consternation, former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi deployed Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to Iraq and to an Indian Ocean refueling mission in support of operations in Afghanistan (a mission the Diet supported for nearly nine years.) Despite the economic and political stagnation that seems endemic among democracies, Japan has taken unprecedented steps to demonstrate greater regional and global leadership, and support the United States amid two difficult wars and an economic downturn.

And that's why it is disappointing that neither the Administration nor Capitol Hill took much notice of Tokyo's decision to purchase 42 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters and ease a 35 year-old ban on arms exports—a barrier to cooperative technology development. Given the Defense Department's leaner budget, which suffered \$489 billion dollars in cuts over the next decade, the Pentagon has cause to celebrate Tokyo's selection of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and welcome the revision of the Three Principles on Arms Exports. Loosening the restrictions will allow cooperative development on the F-35, and it will also benefit other joint development programs, platforms, and technologies.

For years, the Pentagon has lauded building relevant and credible partner capacity as an essential component in detecting, deterring and defeating the myriad of threats in the 21st century. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have taught successive Administrations and Congresses of both political parties that America can no longer afford to do it—mostly alone. But Congress could also do well to hasten its work with the Administration to

scrub the various proliferation regime lists and federal registries to mitigate unnecessary export license delays to protect 1980s technology.

However, our antiquated management of the export control regimes has not stifled all progress with respect to some international development. One of the

most successful example of joint development programs has been the SM-3 Cooperative Development Program of the 21-inch diameter variant of the SM-3 missile (designated SM-3 Block IIA) to counter long range ballistic missiles, scheduled for deployment in 2018. Given China's growing anti-access and area-denial capabilities and greater uncertainty over the machinations of Pyongyang's new leadership, the future of the U.S. – Japan alliance lies in cooperating more closely on developing a robust and comprehensive defense strategy relevant to the threats of the 21st century. The United States and Japan would do well to develop: sea- and ground-based missile defense architecture or a shield, a common cyber-security initiative and robust intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets. While much of the shortage in ISR assets has focused on the



Members of NY National Guard and Japan Ground Self-Defense Forces during scout training during exercise Orient Shield

Source: New York National Guard

CENTCOM area of responsibility, the vast and varied terrain of the Asia-Pacific region requires even greater attention and investment in these capabilities.

So as the Defense Department prepares to build a “leaner, more flexible and agile force” with a focus on Asia and the Middle East, it is imperative that Washington work with Tokyo soon and often to develop a comprehensive roadmap to fund capabilities to detect, deter, defend and defeat threats in the Asia-Pacific, where the Taiwan Straits, the South China Sea, the Yellow Sea, the Sea of Japan and the Indian Ocean, are areas of growing concern for free navigation and exploration.



U.S. Navy and Japan MSDF ships practice coordination and interoperability in the Asia-Pacific during Annual Exercise 2011

Source: U.S. Navy

The U.S. - Japan alliance must evolve to proactively deter, defend, and defeat the myriad threats—missile attack, nuclear proliferation, cyber and conventional attacks—that could emanate from the region. To counter these 21st century threats, Washington and Tokyo together must plan, fund and execute a coordinated strategy to ensure security in the region.

The Asia-Pacific region is full of converging and diverging interests that if misappropriated will have global repercussions. A rising China and a new

leader in North Korea present unique challenges for Tokyo—culturally and historically. The U.S. – Japan alliance must be composed of more than a military-to-military relationship. The alliance must be more strategic and the foundation from which each manages its other relationships in the region. Neither Washington nor Tokyo can allow tactical, temporal or political decisions such as the length of runways in Okinawa or the numbers of Marines on the island erode each nation’s goodwill. Washington and Tokyo cannot ignore each other’s political realities and leaders must take greater steps to include, explain and work together to manage their constituencies’ expectations and sacrifice. Over the next century, the U.S. - Japan alliance may prove fundamental to managing the growth and uncertainty of a region that boasts more than 2 billion people. Therefore, neither Tokyo nor Washington has the luxury of allowing domestic politics alone dictate the aperture of this critical relationship.

But the U.S. – Japan alliance cannot revolve solely around defense. While maintaining security in the region is paramount, maintaining that security requires the participation of government agencies other than the Department of Defense. The region is too important economically and politically to limit our shared vision to defense alone. Tokyo and Washington must take a whole of government approach. The State Department, USAID, the Department of Commerce, Agriculture, Energy and the intelligence community must all play a substantive role in the evolution of the alliance. And while the Executive Branch is often in the lead with respect to foreign relations, the Japanese and American people would be well-served by a closer relationship between the Japanese Diet and the U.S. Congress.

For nearly 30 years, much of the friction between Tokyo and Washington has been over

trade, agricultural subsidies, and the value of the yen. Much of the tension that was created by these circumstances manifested itself in our military-to-military relationship, as it was the most visible and convenient to demonize.

Presidents and Prime Ministers often find more common ground with one another than they do with their legislatures. While Diet members have significantly less staff than the average U.S. congressman or senator, this should not be a barrier to greater access to one another. In these tough fiscal times, lawmakers of allied nations must know and understand the fiscal realities of their respective nations and work together to fill the gaps to complement one another's investments. With a better common understanding of each other's challenges, perhaps, lawmakers and Administrations can responsibly allocate limited resources to advance our shared priorities for the region and the world.

Given the intimacy of the alliance and the accompanying billions of dollars that support it, Members of key authorizing and appropriating committees: Defense, Commerce, Budget, Foreign

Relations, Agriculture should meet biannually to discuss the year ahead and the year in review. By bringing legislators together to discuss a comprehensive agenda, both delegations can gain a greater appreciation for the totality of Members' concerns and appropriate funds, with the advice of the Executive, to complement a common way forward. In this way, the U.S. - Japan alliance could become more than a defense pact, but a strong and comprehensive political, security and economic partnership.

The U.S.-Japan alliance has guaranteed the peace, prosperity and security of the

Asia-Pacific region for more than 60 years. With the commitment of both nations' political leaders—legislative and executive—the U.S. – Japan alliance can ensure a century of peace and prosperity for another generation.

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Left: U.S. Capitol Building; Right: National Diet of Japan Building