

January 26, 2010
Venue: Plaza Hall, Kasumigaseki Bldg.

Jack Crouch

Vice-President for Strategy Development, QNA

Former Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff to the US President

“Considering the Japan-US Alliance from the Perspective of US Defense Policy”

Major changes are now taking place in Japan and East Asia, and I sincerely consider it an honor to be able to come to Japan at such an important time. I hope that I will have the opportunity to engage in dialogue with you on the future direction of cooperation between Japan and the US as well as on ways of further strengthening the Japan-US alliance. I should also like to note at the outset that my specialty is not Asia but rather US security policy. That said, I would like first to present an overview of the context of US security policy. Next, I will speak on the threats facing US security and the impact these have on security policy. Finally, I will discuss the implications of these two issues for the Japan-US alliance.

First, let me describe the context of US security policy. Midterm elections will be held this year and, though these elections will likely focus on domestic issues, there is little doubt that the election results will have an effect on future US defense policy approaches. As made apparent in the outcome of the by-election in Massachusetts, there will be vigorous political debate on both domestic and foreign policy throughout the spring and summer leading up to the November elections themselves. The Obama administration has undertaken a Quarterly Defense Review (QDR) and a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), laying

the cornerstone for its defense policy, and attention should be paid to the connection between this defense policy and the defense budget.

This year marks the 50th year of the Japan-US alliance, and will therefore probably see efforts to reaffirm the significance of the Japan-US alliance and to convey its importance to the younger generations. There are certain to be major developments in Afghanistan as well, as President Obama has deployed an additional 30,000 troops there. The results of his policies toward Iran and North Korea may come under scrutiny, and the question remains open as to whether the Obama administration will embark on sanctions against Iran. Asia, too, will see major political changes, with elections scheduled to take place in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan by 2012.

Moving now to the topic of threats to US security, the first of these is the considerable threat of international terrorism. Just recently there was an attempted aircraft bombing by a terrorist. Connected with the problem of terrorism is the problem of nuclear non-proliferation, and Iran and North Korea are of particular importance in this connection. Third is the rise of China and the problems this poses for the security of East Asia. There are a number of other issues beyond these, including trade issues and climate change.

What balance should be struck among the aforementioned problems? The US is an introverted country. American diplomats and politicians may not be so, but the average American is, being primarily interested in domestic politics. The American public does not necessarily take a great interest in foreign affairs and security. On the correlation between terrorism and other security issues, it should be pointed out that the war against terror has been the primary focus of security policy since 9/11. Though attention is on terrorism at the moment, the emphasis could shift toward more traditional security threats in future. How will this point be addressed in the new QDR? How will extended deterrence be handled within the QDR and the NPR? Consideration should be given to the balance among these.

Finally, what are the implications of the above for Japan-US relations? The US is not a great Asian power but rather a great power with influence in Asia. Although the US is not an Asian country, it does have an important role to play here. The Japan-US alliance is nothing less than an important means of

making such US involvement in Asia possible. Were the Japan-US alliance no longer able to function, the reverberations would be felt not only in Japan and the US but throughout East Asia. The Japan-US alliance was established on the basis of the two countries' shared democratic values and security interests, and the Japan-US alliance will be the key to resolving numerous problems in the future as well. For that and other reasons, Japan and the US should face up to the problems presently confronting the Japan-US alliance. Nevertheless, I worry that excessive efforts spent on tackling current issues between Japan and the US will crowd out efforts to tackle truly important security issues for both Japan and the US such as Afghanistan and the war on terror.

I think the Japan-US alliance should get back to basics. It is crucial that the peoples of both countries be educated on just how significant and valuable the Japan-US alliance is for Japan's defense and East Asia's security and that this importance be reaffirmed. The Japan-US alliance should also seek further development even as it returns to basics, i.e., it should endeavor to expand into many other areas of cooperation such as climate change and humanitarian assistance, and greater efforts should be made in this direction. Accordingly, the issues confronting the Japan-US alliance at the moment must be tackled head-on so that constructive resolutions to the same can be found.