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**“Prospects for the Japan-US Alliance in the 21st
Century”**

Introduction

I am greatly honored to be able to lecture on the Japan-US alliance at this important juncture, the 50th anniversary of the Japan-US Security Treaty. The continuation of the Japan-US alliance to this day is due not only to the fact that the alliance serves the national interests of both countries but also to the mutual friendship and partnership between the two countries and ties between individuals in both.

The Japan-US Security Treaty survived the Cold War to reach its 50th year, and we should celebrate its success in bringing peace and prosperity to East Asia. Today, however, the Japan-US alliance faces new challenges, requiring a close examination of the alliance itself. East Asia continues to undergo major changes for a variety of reasons, among which is the emergence of a new global security threat with China's rise. Accordingly, the nature of security itself is vastly different from that at the time the Japan-US Security Treaty was concluded.

It is extremely regrettable that Japan and the US have not apparently been able to convey to each other their respective visions on the form that the Japan-US alliance should take in future, but this does not mean a crisis for the alliance. A great many people in both countries desire a strong alliance relationship, and the

leaders of the two countries agree that the Japan-US alliance is a cornerstone of their mutual security. We are quickly approaching a point at which we must consider the most suitable approach to the alliance for the 21st century.

Below I will speak first on how successful the Japan-US alliance has proven thus far, then I will analyze the threats confronting the Japan-US alliance today, and finally I will offer some proposals.

Successes of the Japan-US alliance

First, Japan's remarkable economic and social reconstruction after World War II and its development into a major power without parallel elsewhere can be attributed in great part to the blessings of the Japan-US alliance.

Second, the Japan-US alliance has been beneficial as the mainstay for stability in East Asia. It has been said that regional integration has been successful in bringing stability to Europe, but that there is not necessarily a regional order present in East Asia. There is an order in East Asia, however, and the critical bilateral relations of the Japan-US alliance have created it.

Third, the Japan-US alliance has now even become a part of the political architecture. It is the Japan-US alliance that has enabled Japan and the US to maintain their relations and to convey their views to each other. It is also the Japan-US alliance that makes it possible to bolster the US' commitment in Asia.

Fourth, the Japan-US alliance has been successful for the very fact that it provides a framework for economic growth and prosperity in East Asia and promotes the transition to democratization in the countries of the region.

When the benefits of the Japan-US alliance are seen in this light, it is clear that there is no option that could replace the Japan-US alliance. That said, however, the positive gains produced by the Japan-US alliance should not be taken for granted, and in future we will need to look back over the history of the Japan-US alliance to reaffirm its significance as we work to maintain it.

Issues facing the Japan-US alliance

Let me list now some of the threats currently facing the Japan-US alliance.

First, there is the rise of China. China is destined to become the world's largest economic superpower. No one knows how the global order will change when that happens but, if the Chinese economy comes to dominate the world, more countries will become dependent on China. China may seek to expand its military; the presence of the Chinese navy could be perceived as a threat by the US, sparking a conflict. Cooperation between Japan and the US would help build better relations with China as well as prevent China from harming their core interests. Should a power transition take place from a declining US to a rising China, however, China could become more aggressive and pose a threat to the US and its allies. To avoid such a scenario, we will need to return to the basic premise of the Japan-US alliance as a public good and maintain and strengthen the alliance. Contrarily, should the Japan-US alliance become a topic of debate, opening a gap between Japan and the US, China might itself seek to fill that gap. In addition, regional security architecture in which the countries of Northeast Asia participate should be established. China's economic rise is certainly a threat – at some point China's GDP will likely outstrip the US' – but China's economic strength is relatively weak vis-à-vis that of the OECD countries combined. The OECD countries have formed liberal international systems such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, and the G20 that have been operating successfully. Integrating China into these liberal international systems is well within the realm of possibility, and the more China is incorporated into the system, the more likely it is that China will cease to be an enemy to the existing international order.

Secondly, there is the emergence of non-traditional security threats. Confronting Japan and the US in the 21st century is not a single threat but a multitude of new threats, including global warming, terrorism, WMD proliferation, energy issues, communicable diseases, and transnational crime, in addition to traditional threats. Japan and the US must simultaneously address these issues. The Obama administration regards these as threats in line with this thinking and is seeking to tackle them. Even more will be required in future of the Japan-US alliance in addressing these composite threats.

Recommendations

Japan and the US need a new vision of the Japan-US alliance in order to build a new strategic partnership. I propose that the relevant officials from Japan and the US agree at the next “2+2 Meeting” to establish a task force on the Japan-US alliance. This task force on the Japan-US alliance will comprise government officials and influential figures from the private sector from both Japan and the US, and will prepare a vision statement for the alliance’s next fifty years. Together with providing a forum for a wide spectrum of people from the two countries to discuss the Japan-US alliance from a diversity of perspectives, the task force will address matters of concern to both Japan and the US.