

FY2011 US Study Group, Japan Institute of International Affairs
“The Place of Alliances in US Foreign Policy”

[Background and objectives]

Despite the turbulence that has characterized the international community since the end of World War II, Japan as a nation has enjoyed more than a half-century of peace and prosperity. This is, of course, attributable in overwhelming part to the efforts of the Japanese people. Another key factor underlying Japan's prosperity is its pursuit of amicable and cooperative relations with other democratic countries. The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America or, more informally, the Japan-US Security Treaty, as well as the security regime arising therefrom occupies an important place in Japanese foreign policy. The US shares the basic values and philosophies of freedom and democracy and possesses tremendous military might. By continuing the Japan-US alliance and effectively leveraging the alliance's deterrence capability for the sake of national security as well as by maintaining suitable defensive capabilities of its own, Japan has developed a seamless posture that has ensured its security and prosperity. Based on the common values and interests of both countries, the Japan-US alliance retains its significance in the face of the numerous global issues – among them the financial crisis, terrorism, the spread of infectious diseases, large-scale natural disasters, and climate change – now confronting the international community. In particular, the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 has given a renewed sense of importance to Japan-US cooperation.

Against this background, this Study Group will primarily conduct an exhaustive comparative study of the history and present status of alliances between the US and other countries (the UK, Israel, NATO, Germany, France, South Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines, etc.), with a particular emphasis on the Japan-US alliance. We believe that we can further clarify the relative role and significance of the Japan-US alliance through such an endeavour. The coordination of interests when forming alliances and the historical environment from which alliances stem also constitute critical parts of our research, as the natures of alliances are always in flux as a consequence of global circumstances and domestic political conditions. Giving these changes due consideration, we will elucidate the alliances that the US has currently formed and the political structures supporting these alliances, and will highlight the particular characteristics of the Japan-US alliance.

Above all, this Study Group will focus its research on the following questions:

- What US national interests are served by the Japan-US alliance?
- What compromises has the US made with Japan in the Japan-US alliance to ensure its own national interests?
- What form does “alliance asymmetry” take in the Japan-US alliance and in alliances between the US and other countries?
- In what ways is the Japan-US alliance similar to, and in what ways is it different from, alliances between the US and other countries with regard to national interests and compromises?
- In view of the above, what position can the Japan-US alliance be assigned within the US’ multi-tiered alliance structure?

Similar research conducted in Japan includes “Comparative Research on Alliances: In Search of a Post-Cold War Order” (Nippon Hyoronsha, 2001) written and edited by Funabashi Yoichi and “Comparative Foreign Policy” (Akashi Shoten, 2004) edited by Sakurada Daizo and Ito Go, but all of this research on alliances has been very general in nature. By contrast, this Study Group has expressly adopted a perspective of “alliances from an American standpoint,” making this research unique in its particular concern with the policy implications for the Japan-US alliance. This project will naturally be conducted at an extremely high academic level, and should produce substantial guidelines for working-level officials directly involved in Japan-US relations.

[Overview of activities]

The Study Group’s research on the “The Place of Alliances in US Foreign Policy” will be conducted over a two-year period, FY2010 to FY2011. At the end of last fiscal year, the project’s first year, we submitted a report, and this fiscal year, the project’s second year, we will carry out more in-depth study and research based on this report, seeking to publish our research findings in book form once this research project has concluded.

The Study Group holds periodic meetings at which members present reports on their respective topics. The Study Group plans to hold about one meeting per month for a total of eight or so meetings by the end of the current fiscal year. The Study Group will request participation from relevant departments within Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will endeavour to collaborate with the Embassy of Japan in the US.

The project findings will also be referenced at JIIA Forums and on the JIIA website to make them more broadly available.

[Study Group Participants]

- Leader: KUBO Fumiaki (Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Tokyo;
Adjunct Fellow, Japan Institute of International Affairs)
- Members: ABE Junichi (Senior Fellow, Kazankai Foundation)
IKEUCHI Satoshi (Associate Professor, Research Center for Advanced
Science and Technology, University of Tokyo)
ISHIKAWA Taku (Associate Professor, Department of International
Relations, National Defense Academy of Japan)
IWAMA Yoko (Professor, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies)
KAMIYA Matake (Professor, Department of International Relations, National
Defense Academy of Japan)
KURATA Hideya (Professor, Department of International Relations, National
Defense Academy of Japan; Adjunct Fellow, Japan Institute of International
Affairs)
SASAKI Takuya (Professor, Faculty of Law and Politics, Rikkyo University)
NAKAYAMA Toshihiro, Professor, School of International Politics &
Economics, Aoyama Gakuin University; Adjunct Fellow, Japan Institute of
International Relations)
HOSOYA Juichi (Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, Keio University)
- Members & Secretaries: SAIKI Naoko (Deputy Director General and Senior Research Fellow,
Japan Institute of International Affairs)
FUKUDA Tamotsu (Research Fellow, Japan Institute of International Affairs)
MATSUMOTO Asuka (Research Fellow, Japan Institute of International
Affairs)
- Assistant: TAKAZAWA Hiroshi (Research Assistant, Japan Institute of International
Affairs)