



A Win-Win Alliance for Asia by James E. Auer

In his article "Keeping the alliance alive" (*The Japan Times*; 7/27/98), former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa takes exception, both to my July 11 critique of his July 6 article in *The Japan Times* and to my review of his piece in the July-August edition of *Foreign Affairs*, which appeared in the *Sankei Shimbun* July 10. I welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues further. But rather than try to refute Mr. Hosokawa point by point, I would like to explain my own views on bilateral security ties.

Unlikely strategic alliances have sometimes resulted from a common threat, e.g., the United States and Britain allied with the Soviet Union to deal with Hitler's Germany, and the U.S. and China cooperated for part of the Cold War vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. But prospects for a genuine and long-lasting strategic relationship are poor if countries do not share something even more important -- namely, a common or similar national interest. This has been the case between the U.S. and Britain for over a century and between the U.S. and Japan now for almost half a century.

Increasingly since the 1950s, Washington and Tokyo have built and strengthened a true strategic partnership based on a common interest in Pacific stability, which is critical to the continued prosperity of the world's two largest democratic free-market economies. Of course, the U.S. and Japan have diplomatic relations with China, which the U.S. administration currently calls "constructive engagement."

But, as Robert Manning and James Przystup pointed out recently in the *Wall Street Journal*, China is currently engaged in an economic and social evolution. China has been moving in some generally positive directions, but the outcome of its transformation remains far from clear. It could end up as a market democracy or as a statist, nationalistic country. The U.S., Japan and other Asian countries have a legitimate concern about China's future, particularly since it refuses to renounce the use of military force against Taiwan, an impressive free-market democracy which the U.S. has supported for more than half a century.

The Pacific Forum's Ralph Cossa, another *Japan Times* contributor, has succinctly described the U.S. vision for Asia's future as foreseeing a prosperous region in which the U.S. is a major political, economic and military source of stability, ensured to a large extent by the U.S.-Japan security relationship and other U.S. bilateral alliances. This U.S. vision sees Japan as a political and economic leader and increasingly equal security partner, but it still prefers complementary rather than stand-alone military forces. Japan plays an increasingly positive role in regional security but one within clearly defined boundaries which are transparent and reassuring to its neighbors. This vision sees a peaceful and prosperous unified Korean Peninsula in the future with close

ties to the U.S. and a politically liberalizing and economically prospering China becoming increasingly involved with the West and the rest of Asia.

Cossa contrasts this view with that of Chinese officials and security analysts. They see an Asia in which China, rather than the U.S., is the regional "balancer" and a unified Korea is aligned with Beijing. U.S. military forces, which to the Chinese are vestiges of the Cold War, are out of Asia and Japan's political and economic roles in regional stability are minimized. Cossa points out that these different visions do not inevitably mean conflict, and the Chinese view is not necessarily threatening unless China tries to force this role on the region rather than let it evolve.

Neither the U.S. nor Japan have any intention to "contain" China. Unlike the former Soviet Union, China is not a landlocked nation and its containment is a complete misnomer. Also, China is not presently a threat comparable to the former Soviet Union, and there is no reason to try to provoke Chinese aggressiveness. The U.S. and Japanese hope is that China's tyranny will be lessened as it prospers, but only time will tell. The U.S. needs allies and bases if force proves necessary to maintain stability. Force is not being emphasized at present, and carrots are fine as long as the U.S. maintains its commitment to stand by Korea through unification and to defend Taiwan from military subjugation.

Without the U.S., Japan cannot act as a balance against China. Japanese efforts to do that would cause panic throughout Asia. Many Japanese understand that, and thus the alliance with U.S. forces based in Japan is still widely supported. Although heinous crimes have taken place in Okinawa and elsewhere, overall the conduct of U.S. forces in Japan is exemplary and many unreported acts of goodwill occur daily. Even in Okinawa, while on a visit last month, I was deeply impressed by the patriotism and pride of many local people as a result of their communities' role in supporting peace and stability by hosting U.S. forces. Both Japanese and Americans favor "reasonable" reductions in the U.S. forces in Japan as has been happening since the 1950s, but not at the expense of undermining regional stability.

As Australian scholar Robyn Lim notes, if one looks at a map, the U.S. is separated from Asia by vast reaches of ocean. China does not need to develop maritime power commensurate with that of the U.S. to dominate the South China Sea and threaten Japan's sealanes. China has nuclear weapons and, as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, can block any action against it under the U.N. charter. Without U.S. maritime protection, Japan has two domestically unpopular choices: 1) to go it alone and acquire long-range maritime capability and possibly nuclear weapons, or 2) to submit to China.

It is hard for me to see why any Japanese would think either of these two alternatives is better than the current alliance with the U.S. Certainly a number of Japanese fear entanglement with China owing to U.S.-Japan security ties, and many Japanese probably do have a deep instinct to be left alone. But if Japan begins to wind down its alliance with the U.S., it might succeed *to be on its own* but will unlikely *be left alone*. Japan is a wealthy but resource-poor archipelago just off the eastern edge of Eurasia. Without the protection afforded by alliance with the dominant maritime power, Japan would be vulnerable to assertions of hegemony by any country of the Asian mainland that develops maritime capability for this purpose.

To be sure, U.S. citizens are not paying taxes primarily to benefit Japan's security. The U.S. shouldn't be in Japan if U.S. interests in Pacific stability critical to U.S. prosperity are not at stake. And Japan would not and should not host and subsidize a U.S. force presence if this did not benefit Japan's well being. As Joseph Nye reminds us, security is like oxygen which is critical for survival but is frequently unrecognized until the instant it is cut off. For 46 years, the U.S.-Japan security relationship has provided oxygen to the U.S. to Japan and to the Pacific Basin, center of the global economy, at an affordable and cost effective rate. To me it makes very much sense for the U.S. and Japan to keep that oxygen flowing as they enter the 21st century.

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