

Revised Japan-U.S. Security Treaty Turns Fifty

*This year marks half a century since the current Japan-U.S. Security Treaty came into being in 1960. Talking to the Japan Journal's Hitoshi Chiba, **Hiroshi Nakanishi**, a scholar of international politics and a professor at Kyoto University, says the treaty is a mechanism which today serves as the basis for regional stability and development that extends beyond the two nations.*



Hiroshi Nakanishi

The current Japan-U.S. Security Treaty (hereinafter referred to as the “Treaty”) is of mutual benefit to both Japan and the United States, and has been so for half a century.

Because of the Treaty, it became possible for Japan to ensure its security without incurring significant economic strain, as well as allowing its smooth reintegration into the inter-

national community despite its position as a defeated nation. Moreover, Japan managed to acquire the foundations for development as a trading nation with support from the naval strength of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, which extended from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean.

Meanwhile, Washington also had much to gain from the Treaty, as it allowed it to deploy

U.S. military bases in Japan, which is positioned at a critical strategic location in the northwestern Pacific Ocean, and also led to the United States developing the foundations of its political influence in East Asia under the Cold War structure. In addition, the support provided by Japan’s industrial and technological strength for the U.S. military was of considerable significance.

The U.S. alliance with Japan, a non-Western country with which it had fought during the Second World War, also carried meaning in terms of its strategy to-



U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower (seated second left) and Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi (second right) confer at the White House during the signing of the revised Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, January 19, 1961.

AFLO

wards developing nations, drawing attention to its emphasis on non-Western nations in the context of its Cold War strategy. Japan soon achieved economic development and joined other developed nations, serving as the best actual example illustrating the political and economic advantages represented by the West.

Beyond the Two Nations

The security relationship between Japan and the United States, or in other words, the Japan-U.S. alliance, has gradually become accepted in other regions and around the world over the last fifty years.

One of the reasons behind this is that the presence of the U.S. military in Japan played a large part in averting war in East Asia during the Cold War. Another reason is the United

In addition, the presence of U.S. naval strength in Japan, and in the Philippines until the 1990s, helped ensure maritime security and regional stability in Southeast Asian countries. The United States provided order and infrastructure such as markets and Japan contributed with technology and investment. That is, Japan and the United States cooperated to support economic development in Southeast Asia. This flow emanating from the Japan-U.S. alliance, together with alliances formed by the United States with South Korea and the Philippines, served as the foundations that gave rise to frameworks for dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region, such as ASEAN, APEC, ASEAN+3 and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

A Mechanism for Regional Stability

The advance of globalization has also brought about changes to the Japan-U.S. alliance. This, after all, is because security is getting to be so complex and comprehensive that close cooperation among the various components of the forces is now indispensable. Hence, Japan and the United States have to increase the scope of information sharing, joint training, joint use of bases as well as other facilities and supplies, and joint activities for ballistic missile defense, which is a big challenge for both countries.

That said, however things turn out, in its sense as a mechanism for regional stability, the framework for close cooperation under which Japan and the United States have shared values and built up a relationship of trust over a period of half a century will no doubt continue to be an important factor.



Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force Chief of Staff General Ryoichi Okiri and U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen participate in a tree-planting ceremony at the Pentagon, June 24, 2010.

States and Japan seeking improved relations with China in the 1970s, which brought China closer to the West and led the way to the advance of policies of reform and openness.