



**U.S.-Japan Relations:
Tokyo's Trials**

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Two issues dominated U.S.-Japan relations this quarter. The first, Tokyo's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), is a high-profile diplomatic contest that could strain the alliance even though it is not about the alliance. The second is the continuing effort to transform the U.S. military presence in Asia and how the resulting deployments in Japan will look. There was no resolution to either issue, nor will there be one in the immediate future: the interests and constituencies involved are so large that it will take considerable time to work out a solution acceptable to both countries. Smaller trade issues – beef and apples – were also back on the bilateral agenda. Dealing with all these items will test the alliance management skills of the new team in the State Department, one that is increasingly depleted of senior Japan hands.

The 60th anniversary of the end of World War II poses challenges of its own. Many people, in Japan and elsewhere, see the 60th anniversary as especially significant, signaling the end of an era. Optimists see this as the moment that Japan emerges from its postwar slumber to assume a new role in Asia and the world; pessimists worry that part of the reckoning could focus on the U.S.-Japan alliance, and that the accounting of history that has so roiled Tokyo's neighbors, will soon engulf the bilateral relationship.

The G4 vs. the P5

Japan's campaign to win a permanent seat on the UNSC has jumped into high gear. The UN has long been a pillar of Japan's national security strategy – along with self defense and alliance with the U.S. – but the accelerating debate over UN reform, triggered by the contretemps over the invasion of Iraq, provided Tokyo with the opening to push for a permanent seat. Every official Japanese visitor to the U.S. raised the topic and solicited – and got – U.S. support.

On May 16, Japan, along with Germany, India, and Brazil, unveiled a proposal that would expand the UNSC by six permanent members and four non-permanent seats. The G4 (as they are now known) wanted to claim four of the new permanent seats, with the other two going to African nations. On June 9, the four countries modified their plan and agreed to drop their demand for a veto for 15 years, a move that Japanese officials called

“a minor adjustment.” (Originally, Japan had complained that a permanent seat without a veto was “second-class citizenship.”)

Tokyo apparently felt that nestling its bid within a group of deserving governments would garner additional support and help fend off some of its critics, such as China. That strategy seems to have backfired. China still opposed Japan’s claim, arguing that Tokyo has not properly dealt with history and therefore does not have the moral authority to have a permanent UNSC seat, its contribution of 20 percent of the UN budget notwithstanding.

More troubling was the U.S. response. Washington responded to the G4 draft by saying that it was ready to back Japan and one other member of the G4 for permanent membership and would also agree to two or three new nonpermanent members. (The U.S. has long supported a permanent seat for Tokyo.) Japan apparently did not anticipate U.S. resistance to other members of the G4, however. Reportedly, Washington opposes Germany’s claim to a seat, a legacy of Berlin’s opposition to the Iraq war and the anti-Americanism that animated Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder’s re-election campaign in 2002.

Whether the problem is antipathy toward Mr. Schroeder or skepticism about the UN in general, the bottom line is the U.S. is less than enthusiastic about UNSC expansion. Nicholas Burns, undersecretary of state, said enlargement of the UNSC should not overshadow more broad-based reform of the UN. “We see this debate as only one of the issues that has to be put forward. And we’d like to see progress on all the other issues before we turn our full attention to the UN Security Council debate itself.” This is pragmatic. Congress has to eventually back any reform – it signs the U.S. check to the UN – and Acting U.S. Ambassador Anne Patterson explained it is doubtful “whether we would accept Security Council reform before we had a package of reforms that was acceptable to the United States and to our Congress.” That may well be a way of letting nature take its course: knowing that every country has a grievance against some UNSC claimant, the U.S. can remain noncommittal and above the fray, and let some other government take the blame for blocking reform. In fact, U.S. officials several times called on China to reconsider its opposition to Tokyo’s seat.

Yet Tokyo found itself on the horns of a dilemma. It could take the U.S. endorsement and give up the G4 package or stick with the group, knowing that the U.S. would not back the proposal. Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro chose the latter option, saying after the U.S. declared itself, that “We have to focus on our cooperation with Germany, Brazil, and India [and] seek the understanding of the U.S. on that point.” On June 22, the G4 foreign ministers released a statement reiterating their resolve to introduce their proposal for consideration by the General Assembly (GA). On June 27, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Foreign Minister Machimura Nobutaka discussed the subject – among others – in a phone call, but the U.S. position remains unchanged.

Experts believe the proposal can win a majority in the GA, but not the two-thirds vote required to change the charter. Moreover, the P5 national legislatures have final say over any changes, and it is unlikely that China would currently agree to any proposal that gives Tokyo a permanent seat. The joint statement from the July G8 meeting that will be held in Gleneagles, Scotland will likely mention UN reform, but the fundamental obstacles to UNSC membership – the deep and bitter antagonism between P5 members and G4 aspirants – will remain.

Back to bases

Questions surrounding the future of the U.S. military presence in Japan remain unanswered. As usual, there was ample speculation even though facts were few. News media in Japan and the U.S. provided weekly fodder as various parties leaked proposals, floated balloons, or tried to maintain pressure on the two governments.

What is known is that the two governments have held councilor-level talks since March, including two days of senior-level talks in May, that have focused on key issues identified in the February Security Consultative Committee (SCC or “2+2”) meeting: interoperability, roles and missions, and the joint use of bases. Japan’s logistical support in the event of contingencies has been a priority.

At a June 4 meeting on the sidelines of the Singapore Shangri-La Dialogue, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Japan Defense Agency (JDA) Director General Ohno Yoshinori agreed to reach a deal on the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan by the end of this year. They also agreed to release an interim report on the two countries’ security roles “as soon as possible.” According to Ohno, the report could be issued in a month or two.

As always, the Japanese continue to push the U.S. to lighten the burden of the U.S. presence in Okinawa. Ohno asked Rumsfeld for action, and Prime Minister Koizumi was later reported to have instructed the JDA chief to “clearly convey” the need to reduce the stress caused by the U.S. presence. In his speech commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of the war in Okinawa, Koizumi highlighted the need to reduce the U.S. burden on the island.

And as always, the U.S. responded by saying that arrangements need to be the product of a consultative process. The U.S. will not commit to relocation plans in general, but Japan cannot commit to specifics because, as Ohno told Rumsfeld, more time is needed to gain understanding and support from affected communities. Time will soon tell whether this is a vicious circle or a downward spiral. Either way it poses another dilemma for Tokyo: which constituency should it appease first?

The quarter closed with another senior-level defense and foreign secretaries meeting. Another SCC meeting is anticipated to be held in the next quarter. Publication of the interim report by then would be a sign of tangible progress as well as some indication of how the revamped alliance just might look.

The BIG picture

Transformation of the U.S. military presence is part of a broader agenda for the alliance. In congressional testimony in May, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia and Pacific Affairs Richard Lawless explained that “Our relationship is in the process of being transformed, and it is transforming itself from its traditional regional focus to a focus that reflects more closely the global interests that we share with Japan.” The result, said Lawless, “will be an updated and truly transformed security relationship with Japan that both countries will see as clearly encompassing their respective visions of their national interests in the 21st century.”

His views were echoed by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher Hill, who also testified that the Bush team wants “a fuller, more global partnership with Japan.” “With each passing year we are finding more ways to have a positive impact on the world by acting in concert with Japan,” Hill said. “Whether it is helping the victims of disasters, like the Indian Ocean tsunami, rebuilding Afghanistan and Iraq, or countering terrorism and proliferation, we find common interests taking us toward common goals.”

Unfortunately, this transformation may not be constitutional. While Prime Minister Koizumi has said he sees the bilateral alliance as global in nature, and the SCC joint declaration outlines the two countries’ global interests, it is unclear what action the Japanese constitution, Article 9 in particular, permits in pursuit of those interests. The danger is that constitutional questions foreclose serious discussion of this issue between the two governments or within Japan.

Food fights

As the quarter began, it looked like the U.S. and Japan had found a way to lift the ban on U.S. beef imports, which was costing U.S. exporters more than \$3.8 billion annually and was becoming an ever-larger issue on the bilateral agenda. (Japan banned imports of U.S. beef and beef products after a case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, BSE or “mad-cow” disease, was detected in the U.S. in December 2003.)

As detailed last quarter, an experts panel of the Food Safety Commission (FSC) came up with recommendations to ease inspection standards for all domestic beef, which would also apply to imported beef and permit resumption of imports from the U.S. The new standard would exempt cattle 20 months and younger from blanket testing. The decision was officially reported to the FSC on March 31 and the FSC sought public opinion about the new regulations for a month. During that time, numerous U.S. officials, including Ambassador Thomas Schieffer and new U.S. Trade Representative Robert Portman, kept the pressure on Japan to lift the ban.

On May 6, the FSC approved the new testing system. Then, at the end of June, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that a second U.S. cow had BSE. The animal, a 12-year-old beef cow from Texas, originally tested positive in rapid

screening tests last November, but investigation was called off after a later test came back negative. The USDA inspector general subsequently ordered additional tests that proved the animal had BSE. It is unclear why it took seven months to get the proper results.

Prime Minister Koizumi opined on June 30 that the discovery would not change Japanese policy. The *Asahi Shimbun* countered in a July 1 editorial that “recent events have shaken our faith in the reliability of U.S. anti-BSE measures.” With Taiwan closing the door to U.S. imports in the wake of the second BSE finding, Tokyo may find itself under growing pressure from consumer lobbies to rethink the new testing protocols while U.S. beef interests step up their demand for renewed imports.

U.S. apple growers had better luck this quarter. Officially, Japanese markets have been open to U.S. apple exports for more than two decades. In fact, however, Japanese agriculture officials had demanded restrictions on the way the fruit was grown, arguing that a bacterial infection known as fire blight could infect domestic crops. The restrictions required U.S. apples headed for Japan to be grown in special orchards surrounded by buffer zones, that the orchards be inspected, and that U.S. apples be treated with chlorine. Not surprisingly, the restrictions were especially burdensome and effectively closed the market to U.S. exports.

The U.S. filed suit with the World Trade Organization (WTO), arguing that the restrictions were an illegal restraint of trade. A WTO dispute resolution panel agreed with the U.S. position in December 2003, but then gave Tokyo time to amend its procedures. On June 23, the WTO ruled the revised regulations were still in violation of international law because there was insufficient scientific evidence to justify the restrictions. The U.S. has asked for the right to impose \$143 million in sanctions. Japan has the right to appeal the ruling again, but Tokyo has not yet decided what it will do next.

The ‘real’ history issue?

Officials in both countries will be absorbed with all these issues throughout the summer. Another question could overwhelm them, however. This August marks the 60th anniversary of the end of the Pacific War and the attention given to celebrations elsewhere in the world – especially in Moscow – could be the prelude to a similar spotlight on V-J day. Japanese officials have suggested that the 60th anniversary is an especially meaningful one, marking the beginning of a new era.

While this is usually cast in positive terms – Japan casting off the self-imposed burdens of World War II and contributing more to international society – this could have a damaging impact on the alliance. For example, thus far controversies about history have focused on Japan’s relations with its Asian neighbors. But part of this new historical perspective – plainly visible at the Yasukuni Museum – reassesses how Japan entered into war with the U.S., arguing that Washington forced Tokyo to launch an attack. To date, the U.S. has largely stayed out of the fray as Tokyo’s relations with Seoul and Beijing have deteriorated. It is unclear what will happen if revisionists take aim at the U.S. – as appears to be happening as some Japanese officials challenge the validity of the

Tokyo Trials – and the basis of much of the postwar order in Japan and East Asia. The disputes of this quarter could nurture those grievances more widely throughout Japan

Chronology of U.S.-Japan Relations April-June 2005¹

April 1, 2005: Japan-U.S. Joint Committee on the Status of Forces Agreement agrees to new guidelines allowing Japanese police to maintain control near civilian sites when U.S. military aircraft crash in Japan.

April 2, 2005: Japan's Food Safety Commission makes public proposal to partially lift domestic requirement on cattle testing for mad-cow disease; public feedback will be available until April 27, 2005.

April 8, 2005: *Yomiuri Shimbun* cites government officials as saying that Japan and U.S. agree to name commercial airports and harbors for U.S. military operations in the event of emergencies in areas surrounding Japan. (The agreement complements laws governing operations to assist crises in East Asia.)

April 9, 2005: Thomas Schieffer takes up post as new U.S. ambassador to Japan.

April 14, 2005: *Asahi Shimbun* reports that Japan plans to accept U.S. military plan to relocate to Camp Zama; U.S. tells Japan operations will be limited to the Far East.

April 15, 2005: *Asahi Shimbun* reports that U.S. Air Force will retain command functions at Yokota rather than move them to Guam.

April 19, 2005: Ambassador Schieffer expresses concern over relations between Japan and China, says Washington is willing to help resolve dispute.

April 22, 2005: Japan extends Self Defense Forces (SDF) deployment by six months (until Nov. 1, 2005) in support of "Operation Enduring Freedom."

April 28-May 2, 2005: FM Machimura visits New York for UNSC reform meeting and meets Secretary Rice in Washington D.C. to exchange views on Japan-U.S. relations. They agree that crisis over North Korea's nuclear programs should be taken up by the UNSC if the threat cannot be resolved through the Six-Party Talks.

April 29, 2005: Robert Portman appointed new U.S. trade representative and sees beef trade issues as top priority.

May 1, 2005: Japan extends Maritime Self-Defense Force refueling mission in the Indian Ocean for another half year.

¹ Compiled by Lena Kay, 2004 Pacific Forum CSIS Vasey Fellow and Claire Bai, 2005 Vasey Fellow.

May 2, 2005: Former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage opposes creation of East Asian Community that excludes U.S. in *Asahi Shimbun* interview.

May 2, 2005: FM Machimura and Secretary Rice meet in Washington to discuss the alliance and regional problems in Northeast Asia.

May 5, 2005: U.S. firm Liberty Square Asset Management acquires 8.2 percent stake in Asahi Broadcasting Corp., and becomes second-largest shareholder after *Asahi Shimbun*.

May 5, 2005: Liberal Democratic Party Acting Secretary General Abe Shinzo meets Vice President Cheney in Washington and discusses North Korea's nuclear ambitions, anti-Japan moves in China, and Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the UNSC. Abe meets Secretary Rumsfeld. They agree to strengthen security alliance for "East Asian peace and prosperity" and discuss realignment of U.S. forces in Japan.

May 6, 2005: Japan's Food Safety Commission okays easing of testing for BSE.

May 8, 2005: Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns reaffirms U.S. backing for Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the UNSC, while Japanese UN delegation chief Nukaga Fukushima says U.S. urges China not to block Japan's bid.

May 9, 2005: *Kyodo News* reports U.S. panel proposed relocating Futemma base to Kadena or Iwakuni.

May 15, 2005: U.S. warns four nations, including Japan, that it would not support their UNSC bid unless they agree not to ask for vetoes. Japan's ambassador to U.S. Kato Ryozo says the "Security Council is not like an aircraft, with first class, business, and economy seats."

May 24-26, 2005: Senior Japanese and U.S. officials meet in Washington for talks on base realignments, defense cooperation, and cost sharing.

May 30, 2005: DASD Richard Lawless tells Congress that the U.S.-Japan relationship is "being transformed, and it is transforming itself from its traditional regional focus to a focus that reflects more closely the global interests that we share with Japan." At the same hearing, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill echoes that message.

June 4, 2005: At a side meeting during the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, Japan Defense Agency head Ohno Yoshinori and Rumsfeld agree to have a realignment agreement by the end of the year as well as a contingency plan for a Korean Peninsula emergency.

June 5, 2005: Defense Agency chief Ohno says sea-based missile defense system jointly developed with the U.S. will be entering the production phase.

June 7, 2005: Secretary Rice requests in phone conversation with FM Machimura that Japan not submit a resolution to expand the UNSC.

June 7, 2005: *Washington Post* reports the Bush administration has approved \$104 million sale of 40 naval surface-to-air missiles to Japan.

June 16, 2005: U.S. State Department announces UN reform package, which calls for addition of two permanent seats instead of G4 proposed six seats to the Security Council.

June 17, 2005: Japan rejects U.S. proposal over G4 plan for UN reform.

June 19, 2005: PM Koizumi attends memorial service at Iwo Jima, where more than 28,000 soldiers on both sides died during WWII.

June 20, 2005: Senior officials of Japanese and U.S. financial regulatory bodies hold first regular talks in Tokyo and discuss corporate governance of listed companies.

June 21, 2005: U.S. International Trade Commission decides to extend import duties on Japanese stainless steel.

June 23, 2005: FM Machimura and Secretary Rice hold 15-minute side conference at G8 foreign ministers' meeting in London, but fail to bridge gap over UNSC reform.

June 23, 2005: World Trade Organization compliance panel announces Japan's quarantine restrictions on U.S. apple imports are scientifically unfounded.

June 23, 2005: PM Koizumi says during ceremony for the 60th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Okinawa the need to reduce the burden posed by U.S. forces in Okinawa.

June 24, 2005: *Asahi Shimbun* reports that during working-level talks, the State Department asks Japan's Foreign Ministry to extend the deployment of Ground Self-Defense Forces in Iraq beyond the current December deadline.

June 27, 2005: Vice Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Ishihara Mamoru notes in press conference that he will ask the U.S. to provide data on the second BSE case; PM Koizumi says the case is unrelated to resuming imports of U.S. beef.

June 28, 2005: Senior Japanese and U.S. officials begin two-day meeting in Washington to discuss the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan and the sharing of defense roles.

June 29, 2005: *Kyodo News* reports PM Koizumi expresses willingness to consider keeping Japanese troops in Iraq beyond the mission's current deadline of December.

June 29, 2005: *Kyodo News* reports that envisioned meeting between PM Koizumi and Bush on the sidelines of the G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, is unlikely to take place.

June 30, 2005: PM Koizumi says the recent discovery in the U.S. of a U.S.-born cow with mad-cow disease will not change Japanese policy over U.S. beef imports.

June 30, 2005: Nicholas Burns, undersecretary of state for political affairs, says the U.S. believes that China ought to be open-minded about Japan's candidacy for UNSC.