

Japan's Foreign Policy Choices

by
Mr. Kono Taro

Kono Taro: Good afternoon. Thank you very much for your time and your attention. I came to Washington on Monday, I've been here for about four days. My impression is that Japan is disappearing in Washington, D.C. The prime minister's trip to North Korea keeps Japan alive.

North Korea's Admission of Guilt

I was very surprised that Mr. Kim actually admitted, and apologized for what he had done. No one expected that, I was very surprised. I regret that six of those eleven have died, but we still need to look into what really happened, and we need to bring those five survivors back to Japan before we start any kinds of talks about normalization. But I think that was really a bold step for the prime minister, he took such a big risk and it paid off. His support rating shot up about ten percent in Japan now enjoys 61 percent, 60 percent, that's a good start. We will try to push North Korea, with the United States and South Korea, we still have to solve their issues of missiles and nuclear weapons.

We have time, time is on our side, it's good to have normalization if we can, but we shouldn't hurry up, we need to take issues one by one. But what really matters for the prime minister now is the economy. If he could use this time of his support rating going up, to counter the faction leaders in the LDP so that he could take really bold steps in Japan for the economy, I think that would be even better.

U.S.-Japan Alliance

Today I would like to talk about the alliance between Japan and the United States. I went to see Dr. Green in his office this morning, he talked about SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement), because I've been talking about

SOFA for the last month or two. But SOFA is just a piece to strengthen the alliance between the United States and Japan.

I think the alliance is a very good thing. Because of that, North Korea is now opening up the door and it has kept stability in East Asia, it has kept lines of communication open for Japan for a half century. And I think we should keep it until China is a fully democratic country, I don't know how many years it's going to take, but I think we can only strengthen the alliance in the future. And the rise of China, and Japan's more dependency on oil from the Middle East only calls for a stronger alliance.

Ideas to Reform the U.N.

We don't really have any alternative to this. I'm a good friend of the United Nations, I wanted to see the U.N. have more power. I even tried to reduce Japan's voluntary contribution to the United Nations until it has reformed its Security Council, but it's not really forthcoming. Some people suggested that Japan should join NATO with Russia, NATO with Russia plus one, or plus two, Japan and Korea. I think that's interesting. I don't know if it's feasible, but we might create sort of a northern alliance so that we could push reform in the United Nations if it's so slow.

What we really have to do in Japan is, we need to have politicians taking more control. So far, I was elected to the parliament six years ago. In these six years, we had six foreign ministers; the first one was Ikeda, then Obuchi, Komura, Kono, Tanaka, now Kawaguchi. We have more changes at the vice minister's level, we cannot do anything serious with this kind of thing going on.

I think we need to keep the foreign minister in

her position for some more years so that she could actually develop her own policy, not taking orders from the bureaucrats, but instead she should be giving orders to foreign service officers in foreign offices.

Japan Should Move on Collective Defense

We really need to move on in the field of collective defense. We should have closer ties with our partners, and we have to be much more realistic about rear support, the definition of it, that's not realistic, or logical. We will supply the United States but no ammunition? That's kind of bogus. If Japan is going into PKO (peacekeeping operations), but we cannot protect our allies, we're going to be endangering our friends. So we really need to change our thoughts on collective defense. Plus, we need to have some changes in Article 6 of our security treaty. It says, "Far East."

Security for Japan is not about security in our homeland. Homeland defense is not enough. We still have to keep sea lines of communication, it goes all the way to the Middle East, we have to import oil from the Middle East, and we need to have security for that. After September 11th, the enemy remains elusive, we don't know where they are. They could be in Afghanistan, they could be in Iraq, they could be anywhere. And we cannot limit our security within the Far East, we have to go beyond that.

Change Definition of Security

So, we have to change the definition of security. It's not homeland security, it's not Far Eastern security. Japan's security goes global, and we have to change the definition of it, and possibly, security treaty Article 6 must be rewritten. Well, we don't have to rewrite it, we can do a side agreement, or whatever, a more practical way, but we have to do that.

In order to change issues on collective defense or the Far Eastern definition, I think bureaucrats cannot do it, bureaucrats shouldn't do it.

It has to be done by elected politicians. And to the politicians right now in Japan, the foreign affairs issue is something to toy with, it's like their hobby. They are not really serious about it, because there are no votes, there's no money coming from international relationships. So, we need to grow some more politicians who are really serious about this field, and we have to put them in the driver's seat, and let them make decisions, and let the bureaucrats take orders from politicians.

Cultivate More Public Support for Alliance

In order to do that, we need to cultivate a lot more support for the alliance among the general public. If the bureaucrats want to do things, they don't have to care about general support from the public, from the people. But if the politicians want to do things, we have to make sure the general public supports it. And the alliance has some problem in this.

The first problem is the value, the value sharing. We have been talking about the burden sharing between the United States and Japan, or some people start talking about power sharing. I would say we have to do the value sharing before that.

A lot more people are asking, do we share the same goal, the United States and Japan? We're talking about things like CTBT, nuclear issues are very important for Japan, because of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The United States seems to be pulling out of CTBT. What about the Kyoto Protocol? The environment is very vital to our existence, our survival, and the Japanese take pride in the Kyoto Protocol, because it was signed in Kyoto. The United States is pulling out of the Kyoto Protocol and trying to go its own way.

Disagreement Between Japan and U.S. on Global Issues

What about the U.N. resolution on nuclear disarmament? Japan has been very proud to be

the sponsor of this resolution. The United States, with India, voted against this. And it has been damaging, because people start questioning, why do we want an alliance with the United States if the United States doesn't share our values? So, we have to do serious talks with the United States about the issues of the Kyoto Protocol and issues about nuclear weapons.

I personally think, if a country doesn't sign and ratify CTBT, we shouldn't give any government assistance. I think it's wrong that we re-started our assistance to Pakistan. Pakistan should sign and ratify before we give them any kind of ODA (Overseas Direct Assistance). Well, the Pakistanis need our assistance, but the United States could provide it, and we could not touch Pakistan, and that's fine with me.

There is, as I said, a lack of support for the alliance-well, I shouldn't say lack of support. If you ask the Japanese, they would say yes to the alliance, yes they would support the American base in Japan. But the support is very shallow; it's very superficial. If something happens, we will lose the support very easily. One drunken marine doing something stupid in Okinawa or Yokosuka could have a serious impact on this alliance, and we have to take care of it.

And we need to do probably five or six things. First, we have to start explaining to people why we need this alliance, what is the alliance doing to the Japanese, to Japan, to us? We have to start explaining to the people why we need American bases in Japan, why we need a carrier at Yokosuka, or marines in Kadena.

Japanese Public Interest in Foreign Affairs Increasing

Six years ago, when I was first elected to the parliament, nobody cared about foreign affairs. When I had a meeting with the people in my constituency, nobody cared, nobody asked any questions about foreign affairs. It's

been changing. After my second election, people started asking, why do we have to give so much money to China when the economy at home is so bad?

After September 11th, more and more questions about the alliance. Why do we have this alliance, when the Cold War is over? During the Cold War it was obvious, because of the Soviet threat. But, now the Cold War is over-well, North Korea has a Taepodong, but it's very unlikely they would randomly shoot a missile towards Japan, and it's very unlikely for China to start invading Japan. So, people start asking, why do we have to pay this cost?

What I usually do is, I have a big map of the Spratly Islands, and I show this island, or this rock, is occupied by China, this by Vietnamese, this by Malaysian, and so forth. And I show the sea lines of communication going just by it. And 99 percent of oil that comes from the Middle East goes through these sea lines of communication. And the Seventh Fleet and the carrier in Yokosuka would provide security in this region.

When I explain that, people say, oh, okay, and they understand the need for the alliance. They understand the need for the aircraft carrier in Yokosuka. And I think it's been the politicians' fault that we have not really been forthcoming in explaining things to the people, so they are just wondering why we need this. But if you really explain, they understand, and they will support it, and we have to increase this.

Small Questions Have Not Been Answered

There are a lot of questions that have not been answered, especially in Okinawa, or in Kanagawa. Just very small, minor questions, but they have a lot of meaning to the local people. Questions like why this accused soldier, who's supposed to come before the trial, suddenly disappeared, was sent home? According to the document obtained through the Freedom of Information Act in the United

States, they show that you have purple route, brown route, orange route, whatever, for fighter pilots, for low-altitude flight training. If you ask that question to our foreign ministry, they would deny that, but there is a huge discrepancy between what we see on the document, by the American government, and what our government would tell you. And people start asking, who's lying?

What about this land reclaimed nearby Yokosuka? Who gave the okay to whom and who did it? What about those secret agreements they've been talking about, nuclear weapons. Is it real? People start asking these questions, and we have not been able to give them answers, so they start wondering, they're wondering who they can actually trust? And that's not really good for the alliance.

I think we have to give them answers. If we've got the questions, we have to answer them, and there must be, if there were mistakes or misjudgments in the past, we just have to admit it, we just have to apologize, just like Mr. Kim did, and tell them that it's not going to happen.

The nuclear power industry in Japan was just caught telling lies for the last how many years? The ham and sausage industry is in trouble, because they've been telling lies. Snowbrand is going down because they've been telling lies. We cannot do this for this alliance. We have to be more accountable, we have to be more transparent about this alliance, and that's part of our job.

We also, when the government is seen as not serving the Japanese people. A lot of people in Yokosuka, or Okinawa, they would see the foreign ministry as the Tokyo Bureau of the State Department. They think they are working for the American government, not serving the Japanese people. We have to solve the problems, like night landing practice. My district is just south of Atsugi base and people call me, "I cannot hear the television!" And they have been suffering.

Solutions to Alleviate Burden on Japanese Population

It is important to have NLP (night landing practice) in Japan, because your aircraft cannot operate without it, but we have to find solutions. There are many airports in Japan that are not used, maybe two flights a day, two flights to Tokyo a day, and they run a deficit. Maybe if we could use those airfields, once in five years for NLP, for those aircraft, then they don't have to suffer that much. We just have to find a solution to it.

We give host nation support to American forces in Japan. Some people suggested that some forces don't have to be in Japan, don't have to be in Okinawa, but because of the host nation support, they are stationed in Okinawa. If that's the case, we just have to make it as host regional support. We give the same financial assistance; they could relocate those forces out of Okinawa, out of Japan. We will continue to support them for a transitional period, that's fine with us.

We probably need-well, the American armed forces probably need to renovate a lot of old facilities very soon. Right now we give host nation support for new buildings, but not for renovating the old buildings. Well, if we support you in renovating old buildings, and we don't have to build the new ones, both of us save a lot of money. Why don't we do that?

And now comes SOFA. Well, our foreign ministry just said no to a revision of SOFA, they wouldn't listen to the people. A lot of the senior LDP members say, "Oh, Americans aren't going to accept it," so they just aren't going to look at the revision. I don't think that's the right attitude. If there is a problem, we have to address that and we have to change SOFA if we really have to do it. It doesn't matter if we're going to rewrite the document, or do the site letter, or whatever, but if there is a problem, we have to change it.

Expand Definition of Security

Another thing we could do is, we can expand the definition of security as well as the definition of the alliance. We could have Japan and the United States jointly working to solve their old Soviet Union nuclear stockpile issues, their nuclear weapons, or nuclear material left from the Soviet Union era, if the alliance could start working to dissolve that problem, that's good, and it will look good in Japan.

Or the United States and Japan, in the name of the alliance, we could start de-mining in Afghanistan or in Cambodia, and we could maybe ask Japanese NGOs who are doing that, maybe we could provide the funding for those NGOs. And it's important, I think, to have NGOs, some stakeholders, in this alliance, so that there's some reason for them to support the alliance, and I think it may be a good idea.

Discussion of Difficult Issues

We should also start talking about difficult issues that we have avoided, like the issue of Taiwan. What would happen, or how would we react if China invaded Taiwan? What would be the possible alternative? What would be the possible consequences? China, some people have suggested, is too hot to touch, so we just try not to look at it, but we cannot do that. And it is good if we could bring up that issue, start talking about it, and get more people to think about it.

Or what about the nuclear policy, not nuclear weapons, but nuclear deterrence of Japan? Do we really need a nuclear umbrella of the United States to deter nuclear weapons from other countries, or can we do it without the nuclear umbrella? There are a lot of Japanese people who care about nuclear issues, and we have not really debated our nuclear policy. If you ask questions in the parliament, the foreign minister would answer, "Well, we trust the American government." And that's the end of the argument. And it's not going to take us anywhere.

I think we have to open up the question, and we have to start looking at it, and we have to just have a debate, or maybe if it's necessary, we could set up a track two with the United States and Japan, with more politicians involved. We just have to talk about it in public, in front of people, so that people would see what's really happening and what the politicians are really trying to do.

Japan Could Pursue More Independent Foreign Policy

So if we could strengthen the alliance between Japan and the United States, I think Japan could pursue a more independent foreign policy. In the next five years, I think the important region for Japan is the Middle East. I think we really should go into the Middle East with concrete policies, independent of the United States. I think the Japanese government should try to do everything it can do to convince, persuade, or invite Japanese corporations to do more direct investing in the Middle East. And if the plants are operating, we could start inviting students, or start inviting engineers for training in Japan. We have to establish better ties with the Middle East, we have to assist Middle Eastern development. We don't have to do it with the United States, we can do it alone. If the alliance is more secure, no one should feel threatened if we go into the Middle East alone.

So I think the key for Japan's foreign policy is how we could strengthen the alliance quickly. We don't have much time, anything could happen, and if we're still talking about real support or definition of when we could use the firearms, or the definition of PKO, nobody's going to pay attention to Japan, it's going to be even worse than today. So as soon as possible, I think we need to move in. We, meaning the politicians, have to take the driver's seat, and we have to change Japan.

The last thing I would like to add is Iraq. It's not fair to say no to the United States without taking a look at any evidence. I think what we

have to do is, we have to look at the hard evidence that the United States can show us, and then we can make decisions. We probably need a strong United Nations resolution to take action, but we have to keep our options open, and we have to start talking to the United States to see what we are going to do in Iraq. But our policy towards the Middle East should be different from the United States’.

Well, I spent half an hour, so I better stop here. Thank you very much for your attention.

Andrew Sidel: Well, I just wanted to first of all second everything that Mike said about Kono-san and his really impressive presentation, in my view. It’s a treat for me, because it’s the first time I’ve heard Kono sensei speak, and I’m going to make it a point to have it not be the last.

In the early ‘90s, I worked for 21 members of the LDP for three years, and this is definitely not your father’s LDP as they say in the U.S. I sense a new look and a very dynamic approach in the way you look at issues, and as you’ve articulated them for us today.

I also think it’s a very unique opportunity, I know if I was sitting in the audience, I would really want to get to the Q&A very fast, because to have Mike and Kono sensei here at one time. So I’m just going to take several minutes to zoom through a couple of things that occurred to me as I was listening to Kono sensei, and then just open the floor as soon as possible for your comments, and thoughts, and questions.

Foreign policy and Japan’s foreign policy outlook is not my field. I’ve been running a business for seven years, dealing in regulatory and legislative policy in Japan, working with U.S. and European businesses there. I have made a lot of trips to Japan. I remember hearing Glen Fukushima say he made 45 trips to Japan when he was working with USTR. And I thought he was insane, and I’m about to break through 50 over seven years, so there’s something severely wrong with our business plan.

But it has afforded me the opportunity to speak with a lot of Japanese politicians and ministry officials, and several things that Kono sensei said, or that I felt were embedded in what he said, were extremely significant in my view, and I just wanted to highlight them.

Japan’s Overwhelming Domestic Focus

One is Japan’s overwhelming domestic focus right now. I sense, in Japan, a tremendous inward focus nationally, both at the public and the policy level. And that is definitely a concern for those of us who want to see a robust and growing U.S.-Japan security relationship moving forward.

Political paralysis. Again, Kono sensei, I sensed a lack of a political center any more in Japan, on almost any issue it’s very difficult to find a core group of politicians who really have a core or critical mass of power. That makes alliance management much more challenging.

Foreign Ministry Should Be Constructive Part of U.S.-Japan Relationship

A weakness in the foreign ministry. The foreign ministry has essentially been turned into a crater on many issues as a result of scandal. And that’s what the foreign ministry now has to face, and it’s not a good thing, ultimately for the U.S.-Japan relationship to have the foreign ministry on the defensive all the time. We need the foreign ministry to be a constructive part of that process, in my view. Not to take away anything from your comment on the role of politicians, because I think the role of politicians in Japanese policy making is one of the most critical challenges that Japan faces on many aspects of domestic and foreign policy.

But one of the key hurdles to work through that challenge is the structural reform and decision-making in Japan, there has to be a way for politicians to engage in policy making with ministry officials and move the ball forward. Right now, due to the lack of a political center, and a lot of supercharged factionalism

inside the ministry, it is becoming increasingly difficult to move any policy forward in Japan, as you may have noticed on the economic front. And I think that can only also have an impact on alliance politics as well.

One of the most intriguing aspects to me of Kono sensei's comments was the need to have a connection, domestically, between politicians in Japan and the Japanese public, finding a grammar for the alliance to move forward, in terms of the domestic dialogue in Japan. This cannot be underestimated, because it's not the U.S. position, or role, or capability to go into Japan or any other country and tell their citizens how to think about the alliance. There's a big role for Japan to step forward with us, and that linkage needs to be built up in Japan, we can certainly contribute to it, and I think that's a vital challenge moving forward.

The need to ask fundamental questions about the alliance, I could not agree more with. It's a very healthy and cathartic thing, and it needs to take place, and it's not taking place in Japan. I view that as a very constructive part of moving forward, just as it is in many aspects of domestic policy in Japan, and certainly in other countries, including our own.

Also, there's a link back to U.S. politicians. I think it's absolutely true that the U.S. is completely focused on a set of issues that don't involve—at least at the popular political level—Japan to a great degree, that's completely different from the governments working together. I think that is something we need to work on, because I view the Japan alliance with the U.S. as a quote, unquote, “now” alliance.

Mature Relationship with Japan

Our relationship with China, for example, is evolving and will be very important, but our relationship with Japan is very mature in a lot of ways, and it's an alliance we can do a lot with right now. We have a lot of immediate needs around the world, particularly after 9/11, and Japan is a country that we can do a

tremendous amount with. So linking it back to U.S. politicians and having them re-engage is very important.

The Japan creep that has set in over the last 12 years of economic, quote, unquote “decline” in Japan, at least at one level that is a perception that exists, has damaging implications for many organizations that follow U.S.-Japan relations and want to see a robust partnership moving forward. There has to be a renewed focus on both sides of the Pacific, at the NGO and non-profit level, in terms of the importance of this relationship, or we will lose some very valuable assets in that regard.

Tremendous Opportunity to Work With Japanese Leaders

And I would just close by saying again, Kono sensei, that the deepest impression that I got from your talk is the tremendous opportunity that we have to work with Japanese leaders of your generation—and also forward-looking leaders who have been around for longer—to think in some new and dynamic ways about the U.S.-Japan relationship. There's always a tendency to kind of move on to the next thing and the next big thing.

But in terms of looking at what we have in our hands right now, we have an enormous thing in the alliance. And we shouldn't be afraid to open up the box and address all those issues in a very frank way. Because only in addressing them that way, domestically in Japan and bilaterally, will we find the courage and the vision to build an alliance that will answer Japan's needs, and also be an alliance that will truly have global benefits.

Thank you very, very much.

Q & A

John Ikenberry: Well, what I think we'll do now is we'll open it up, and rather than have Mr. Kono respond to those comments, we'll let him respond indirectly by weaving in his

responses in his responses to the floor. So we have a microphone here, introduce yourself, give us your name and affiliation, and then a short question, we have about 35 minutes, so we want to have fairly brief interactions, so please, in the back.

Questioner: Kono sensei, I have two quick questions, one on Japanese defense policy, and the other on domestic political dynamism.

First, on defense policy, I think one piece that you have not touched upon in your discussion of your future image of the alliance, is how to use the implementer of the alliance, the actual mission, self-defense forces. As you know, self-defense force participation and activities have expanded over the years, mainly in the area of PKO. But if the contingency happens, and if we need to actually implement the alliance functions, they will be the first-line, frontline implementers, and I think for so many years we have avoided the discussion of how we utilize the self-defense forces, in a non-violent way or what have you. So I just wanted to get your views of what is your sense, in the overall scheme of the Japanese security policy, what kind of role the self-defense forces will fit in. My first question.

And my second question, what is your image of the check and balance between the legislative branch and the executive branch? As you have rightly pointed out, the Japanese bureaucracy has a tremendous problem right now, but I think it also is not so healthy to bash the bureaucrats so much to the point that it completely demoralizes them. What is your sense of the more healthy check and balance between the executive branch and politicians with broader views, and the bureaucrats, who have more detailed knowledge, knowledge of technical details? Thank you.

Government Must Decide Role of Self-Defense Forces

Kono: First, your question about the self-defense force. I think the self-defense force

will become a little bit more like a normal armed force, I guess. I think we just have to push on this emergency bill defining the right of people in case of emergency for what the self-defense force can do. We failed pretty badly in the past parliament, I think we need to rewrite those bills, we need to enact those bills first.

And we need to probably create some kind of secretariat for the alliance, so that the self-defense force and the American armed forces in Japan could really work closer. We talk about the alliance, but it's actually two armies, or two armed forces. I don't think they would function well, in case of emergency. So maybe it would be best to have sort of joint command. I'm not really good at the armed forces structure or organization, so I really need to study in that field, but that's sort of my image of it.

Check and balance. We don't have the system of presidential system, our system is more like the British system. If we get majority in the parliament, we get pretty much freedom to do or to enact laws we need to execute our policy.

I think checks and balances would be between parliament and the people. Right now when we go into the general election, there's no party platform. There is for the LDP, but it's written by the bureaucrats, and nobody reads it. That's true. I ran twice, but I never read the party platform. It just doesn't exist. And we have to treat it differently, we have to treat it as a contract with the people. Prime Minister Koizumi, I think he would have to state what he's trying to do, and he would have to ask people if the people actually support it or not.

So I think the checks and balances have to come after the election, between the people and the parliament. And if we get the majority in the parliament, pretty much we could pass any bill that the government wanted to do, that's the parliamentary system. And we have to show that, we have to show what our intentions are through the parliamentary

debate. So the checks and balances between the legislative branch and the executive branch don't work like you have in Washington. But we have to just come up with a good party platform and treat it as a contract.

Questioner: Mr. Kono, you mentioned Japan's position on Taiwan and raised the question as to what the policy should be, but you didn't suggest an answer to it. Is, in fact, the China issue, as it relates to Taiwan, too hot to handle?

Reaction to Chinese Invasion of Taiwan

Kono: I think if China invaded, or tried to invade Taiwan, I think the United States would definitely try to step in and Japan would back up the United States for sure, I have no doubt about it. I think we need to actually talk about it in public in Japan. But if that happens, we don't know what's going to happen.

I was just talking to someone today-if we fend off, that doesn't stop there, we have to think about what's going to happen to our investment, or Taiwan's investment, or America's investment in China. The Japanese corporations have shifted their production sides to China, and we have to think of what's going to happen to them. So we are very much sure what we're going to do if an emergency happens, but we don't know what follows after that. That's one thing.

And China, I think the China threat, there is a pretty severe threat on the environment. I think they could kill Japanese through acid rain and other things, and we have to really think what we're going to do with the Chinese environment. Maybe the United States and Japan should go into China and start to work on environmental issues.

And energy is going to be a big issue, if the Chinese people start driving Toyotas, or Nissans, or General Motors, we're going to be facing an energy crisis again, very soon, and we don't know what we're going to do. I think

we need to come up with good energy strategies and energy security. I think China is hot, but it's not too hot to touch, and we really need to have a grip on it. The important thing is, we just have to communicate to the people. This is what we are trying to do with China. Thank you.

Questioner: Mr. Kono, I appreciate your views, I was especially interested in your comments regarding host regional support. And I concur with your view that we do need to begin taking action now in terms of how to reduce the impact of our presence on Okinawa. And one of those is the SACO process (Special Action Committee on Okinawa). I think one of the frustrating things for us as a military is, as we take action there and are working to be good neighbors there. We take a lot of fire on Okinawa to further reduce the impact of our presence there and to expand training off the island, which we do.

SACO Process Key to Sustaining U.S. Troops in Okinawa

But I think key to sustaining our presence there is the SACO process. And I think you raised a good point, and I agree with you. There needs to be more effort by the politicians to educate Okinawans and the Japanese people as to why we are there and why the alliance, and to push forward the SACO process, that is an internal government of Japan issue.

But I guess my question is, in your view, what are some other options, other than host regional support? Because frankly, I think the politics in the region, and in the other countries where we could possibly go to, won't support it, even if we had the funding.

So that may be a long-term solution that we can evaluate in the future. But in the near term, as you pointed out, we need to start taking action now, because the support is shallow. We may be one incident or accident away from being forced to have to look for options,

so in your opinion, what are some practical options we could pursue in the near future to reduce the impact?

Kono: I think there are very minor issues that get on people's nerves, like driving licenses, or taxes on private vehicles by the American dependents in Okinawa or Kanagawa or quarantine, there's talk about the general's wife's dog going through no quarantine, things like that.

And we just have to list all those items and give answers to them. There are many things that we can just change situations by trying to really change these things, and it's like a little fish bone that you swallow, you want to forget it, but the pain keeps reminding you that it's there. And if you could really pull it out, I think it would go down.

Some Local Support for U.S. Bases in Okinawa

And a lot of people in Okinawa actually want the American base to be there. There are some people really going against it, but there are, on the other hand, many Okinawans who want it to be there for many reasons, and we want them to start speaking up. And I think we definitely have to have politicians in Okinawa and on the mainland start talking to our own people. And we just have to convince them that you are not in Okinawa or in Kanagawa or anywhere for an American purpose, you are here because you are doing something good for Japan. And I think that's very important.

And the money probably is a secondary issue. We give a pretty nice amount for host nation support, but I don't think the money talks in these issues. I think we just have to have a heart so that we understand their problems. And we need to take up the issues. We know the issues have been there, but if we look at the annual pain they are taking, we recognize the issue, but we have not done much to alleviate it, and we just have to show them, what are our options, what are our alternatives in the future?

There are things we could do soon, or things we have to wait for, like building a mega float so that we could move the NLP to the mega float. That might take ten years, or five, or whatever. But we just have to show them options, and we have to convince them that it's going to happen, and then we just have to make it happen.

Questioner: The one question to Kono san is your view on the conciliation and history issue between the Japanese and especially the Chinese and Koreans. Because I'm sure that you're in communication with the young leaders in Korea and China, so what is your approach to the perception gap to resolve the conflict on the history issue?

And my second question is not only to Kono san, but also to the panelists, too, how is Japan's nationalism going to be after our tragic incident, not incident, tragic news from eight abductees who are, I think, dead, and very young. I think now the emotions of the Japanese are so high. And probably after that, they're going to think about what does sovereignty mean. I think Mike mentioned something about sovereignty, that Japan needs to go to more sovereignty. There are, I think, more sovereignty conscious people than there were before, and I think there is less reluctance for nationalism, so I'm very curious to know your opinion. Thanks.

Japan Should Teach History to Its Students

Kono: The history questions, I think we have to begin by teaching history to the students. If you go to the Japanese schools, the history stops at the *Meiji* restoration, it doesn't go after that, you have to take the final exam, and nobody really learns what happened in the *Meiji* government or after that. So I think we have to have a separate class teaching the modern history of Japan, let the Japanese know what really happened, and a lot of things stem from there. A lot of young people are talking about China or Korea being too

nationalistic without knowing our own history, so I think that has to come first.

And when we talk to the young Korean politicians, history is not really a big issue. I mean there are always things coming up, like a textbook issue or whatever, I mean it's not going to disappear, we probably need some time. But the important thing is, we just have to admit, and we have to see what happens. And some senior politician making different kinds of comments once in a while, that's the one killing us, and I think the politicians have to be more responsible. I mean, they can make comments if they want to, but they shouldn't be in the government.

And nationalistic sentiment after the news, I think it has less to do with nationalistic sentiment. People got abducted for no reason—well, there may be some reason, which we don't understand, and were not able to come back home. You really feel strong emotion for them, and that's what's happening in Japan. I, personally, would like to see what really happened to those people, how they were treated in North Korea, how they died, or things like that. So I don't think it's going to lead to nationalism of any kind.

Prospect of Normalizing Relations With North Korea

Questioner: I'd like to direct this question to Kono sensei. Prime Minister Koizumi stated yesterday that the sooner the normalization of relations with DPRK materializes the better, something to that effect. My question is, is it conceivable, at all, that Koizumi's government might proceed to establish diplomatic relations with DPRK, even if the issues related to development of nuclear weapons and missiles remain unresolved? Thank you.

Kono: My answer to the question is a very strong no. We shouldn't, and I don't think we will, have a diplomatic relationship if the missile and nuclear weapon issue is not resolved, and we should not do that. We should start

normalization talks, but those two issues are very vital to our security, and the security of South Korea and the United States, even. So unless those issues areas solved, we shouldn't do it, we shouldn't go for it. And I don't think the prime minister thinks of it that way.

What he meant was having diplomatic ties sooner, meaning having all those issues solved, which is good. But we're not going to skip that process for this

Questioner: You said that the Japanese system is more like the British than the American. But I was wondering, today you have a coalition government, and if you are thinking in terms of programs, of policy, it seems to me that the advocates of reform, of changed policies in Japan, go across political party boundaries. You have opponents within political parties and advocates, and I was wondering, as the younger generation moves forward, how are you going to form these coalitions, some of which may be very ad hoc, in order to get certain policies passed? For instance, the one on increasing the role for the SDF in the post-terrorism crisis?

Kono: Yes, it's true, because our political parties, except maybe Communist, but the party right now is sort of an ad hoc party, people have different visions, people have different policies, but they stay in the party, because it's convenient for them in the election.

I think the LDP survived too long, I think we were like a dinosaur, we should disappear. Unfortunately, our alliance with the Socialists, which I think my father was responsible for, kept the LDP alive, and that was a big mistake, when you think of it.

Prime Minister Should Stick to Own Agenda

I think what should happen now is the prime minister would stage his agenda, and there are many agendas that the LDP cannot agree internally on, like privatizing the highway

organization, privatizing the postal service, or reducing the subsidies going to local governments. A lot of LDP members depend on those things, but the prime minister is going against it.

And I think the prime minister should push forward those issues. And if his bill is defeated in the parliament, then he just has to call a general election, and the people could choose which way they want to go. If they want to push for reform, they could support whoever, it doesn't matter if it's the LDP or any opposition, whoever supported the prime minister's bill, they could vote for it. If the candidate in your district is not voting for the prime minister, then he could support the other candidate, and we would have a totally different realignment of politicians according to the policy line.

LDP Cannot Agree on Party Platform

At this moment, it is very difficult for the LDP to come up with a party platform, because no one can agree on any issues, and that's not healthy. I think Prime Minister Koizumi should really push forward and break up the LDP, and the Democratic Party has to be broken up, I mean the left-wing Socialist Party staying with real right-wingers, that's not a healthy party, and both parties have to be broken up.

Saidel: I think it's fascinating how, when you look at individual issues in Japan, how many times you find more alliances across party lines than you do within one particular party, and that's a byproduct of the process that brought the DPJ together as it is now, and it's also a very natural byproduct of the economic pressures that are pulling the LDP apart. Almost every system in Japan is disaggregating as resources constrict and kind of cross-jurisdictional and cross-issue tensions increase. So I think it's going to be a natural phenomenon that when the LDP comes down, in whatever shape that it does, that it may well take all or part of the DPJ with it, and then things will start to get very, very interesting.

I just want to come back to one point about nationalism, on a broader level, because it was raised in a question a little bit earlier. We spend a lot of time in Washington thinking about Japanese nationalism and what role nationalism will play in Japan's kind of evolving national identity. And one of the fears that a lot of people have, I think, is that there may be some kind of a lurch in one direction because of a tendency, historically, for Japanese groups to kind of act together on certain issues when invoked in a certain way.

And I think that a lot of the process that Kono sensei was describing in terms of what's necessary to move forward will be extremely valuable to shed light on that massive middle section of Japan and what they really think about a lot of different issues. And it will help us, as interested observers and friends of Japan, to better understand how Japan is going to react moving forward on difficult questions, because there are a lot of question marks due to that lack of a center on so many issues.

Questioner: With regard to the U.S.-Japanese agreement treaty, Mr. Kono, you stated that Japan will need an alliance with the United States at least, as I remember you saying, until China turns into a democratic country. And the obvious implication of that statement is that you consider the current attitude and the policy of the People's Republic of China under Communist leadership as something that is perhaps inconsistent with, or in collision with, if not directly menacing, to the Japanese interest in Japanese policies. Is my understanding correct? I would appreciate if you could elaborate on the correlation between China and the need for the U.S.-Japanese alliance?

Alliance With U.S. Is Indispensable to Japan

Kono: Well, I said that our alliance is necessary until China becomes democratic, meaning if China becomes democratic, there will be much less tension between China and Taiwan, we don't have to worry about the Taiwan

Strait. According to the theory, two democratic countries are not going to go to war; I'm not sure whether that's true or not. But I think if the democratic China really happens, I think that would release a tension in Northeast Asia. And then maybe we could think of a different framework for security in Northeast Asia. But unless we see that happen, I think the alliance with the United States is indispensable to Japan and to the region.

Questioner: I'd like to ask a question regarding the SACO agreement on September issues. As I understand that agreement was finalized, however there are some problems. One, environmental assessment issues, and Ishimoto, mayor of Nago, and Mr. Inamine, the governor of Okinawa, insisting on a 15-year limitation on the use of these.

I wonder if you can comment on Tokyo's position, what's going to really happen? By the time it will be established, it will take about ten years, as I understand, for the construction of it. So 15 years will pass with the difficulties going forward.

Strive to Ease Burden on Okinawa

Kono: I'm not sure how this is going to be resolved, but a 15-year limit is, I don't think, that's acceptable, because we don't know what's going to happen when. But I think we need to answer Okinawan calls for less burden on them, and that's why we need to really work hard to solve all the problems, and this issue is just one of them. And if we cannot give a 15-year guarantee, then we should really have to work hard for other issues, so they can be satisfied.

Ikenberry: One last question.

Questioner: Over the past few years, we've seen Japanese ODA change quite a bit. Last year it was cut about ten percent, and this year I understand we're looking at about a two percent cut. I was wondering if you have any thoughts or could share with us what you think

might happen with ODA this year and in the future?

Foreign Office Depends Too Much on ODA

Kono: Yes, ODA is a big problem for us. I think the foreign office depends too much on ODA, and they forgot about the foreign policy or diplomacy. I think we could cut it even further, because our ODA is not that efficient, and we could do a lot better.

We definitely need to create independent agencies outside of the foreign office to deal with it. I mean our ODA is dispersed to 13 different ministries and 10 ministries are doing the same thing, you often see that, and we need to really combine that to one effort. And we just have to put something outside of the foreign ministry, that's one thing.

Japan Should Increase Use of NGOs

We have a very small amount of ODA going through the NGOs, it's really minimum. We need to use a lot more NGOs, there are a lot of things that a government cannot do that an NGO may be able to do. And we really need to cultivate the NGO culture in Japan, but it's not only giving ODA to NGOs, we need to give a lot of NGOs tax-exempt status, that's very important, and that's our failure to do so. So I don't mind cutting a little bit more from the ODA and making it more efficient, so that it will be at the same level. Thank you.

Ikenberry: Well, with that I'm going to call this seminar to an end, and afterwards, I would invite you to join us for a reception in the back, but if you would join me in thanking our distinguished panel for their insightful comments tonight. (End)

Editor's note: Due to Dr. Michael Green's status as a staff member of the National Security Council, his comments have not been included in this transcript.

About the Panelists

Main Speaker **Mr. Kono Taro** was elected to the House of Representatives as a member of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in October 1996 and was re-elected in June 2000. In 2002, Mr. Kono was appointed parliamentary secretary for Public Management, and in 2001 he was director of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Within the LDP he was acting chairman of the Party Committee on the Environment, the deputy director of the International Bureau and the deputy director of the LDP Youth Organization. Before his election to the Japanese Parliament, Mr. Kono worked for Fuji Xerox in Japan, Fuji Xerox Asia Pacific in Singapore and Nippon Tanshi, an electronic and automobile components manufacturer. Mr. Kono earned a B.S. in Foreign Service from Georgetown University and also attended the Central School of Planning and Statistics (SGPiS) in Warsaw.

Discussants **Dr. Michael Green** is Director of Asian Affairs at the National Security Council with responsibility for Japan and regional security issues. Before joining the NSC he was senior fellow for Asian Security at the Council on Foreign Relations. He has been a senior advisor to the Office of Asia Pacific Affairs at the Department of Defense, a research staff member at the Institute for Defense Analyses and a special advisor to the Office of Asia Pacific Affairs in the Pentagon. In Japan he worked as a special assistant to a member of the Japanese Diet. Dr. Green received a Ph.D. and M.A. from the John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and a B.A. from Kenyon College. Dr. Green's published works include *Japan's Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy in an Era of Uncertain Power* (2001), and *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Past, Present, and Future* (co-editor, 1999).

Mr. Andrew Sidel is President and Chief Operating Officer at Dynamic Strategies Asia, LC, (DSA) a consultancy that assists corporations and associations to analyze and influence regulatory, policy and business issues in Japan. Mr. Sidel has worked with many organizations on legislative and regulatory policy. Before his work at DSA, Mr. Sidel served as an analyst with the CIA, briefing many Cabinet-level policy makers on political, economic, and security developments in East Asia. He also has worked as a policy assistant for a group of Liberal Democratic Party members in Japan. Mr. Sidel holds an M.A. in East Asian Studies from Stanford and a B.A. from Colgate.

Moderator **Dr. G. John Ikenberry** is the Peter F. Krogh Professor of Geopolitics and Global Justice at Georgetown University. In addition, he was a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. Dr. Ikenberry is the author of numerous publications, including, *State Power and World Markets: The International Political Economy* (2002), *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (2000), and *Reasons of State: Oil Politics and the Capacities of American Government* (1988).