

Book Reviews

***The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Past, Present and Future.* Edited by Michael J. Green and Patrick M. Cronin.** New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999. 403pp.

During the Cold War, the U.S.-Japan alliance was a touchstone of America's commitment to the security of Japan, in particular, and non-communist Asia-Pacific in general. The alliance was a mutually advantageous arrangement. The Korean and Vietnam wars bore out the vital importance of Japan's military bases to America's global containment of the communist threat. The United States for its part provided the nuclear umbrella under which Japan was able to concentrate on economic development, and to later emerge as an economic powerhouse and rival to the former.

With the disappearance of the Soviet threat, the utility of the U.S. forward-deployed presence in the Asia-Pacific has come under increased debate. Faced with a perennial trade deficit, many Americans are once again accusing Japan of taking a free ride on the American security guarantee. Strains on the alliance prompted the Nye Initiative (October 1994 to April 1996), a review of the bilateral security relationship in the light of new strategic realities in the Asia-Pacific. In their Joint Security Declaration in 1996, President Clinton and the then Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto reaffirmed their commitment to the U.S.-Japan security relationship, the culmination of a series of efforts to shore up the embattled alliance. The following September, the New Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defence Co-operation were issued, providing for an expanded Japanese role in regional security.

U.S.-Japan Alliance is a compilation of essays presenting an American perspective on the history, evolution, and prospects of the

security partnership. In view of new regional security challenges and outstanding problems in U.S.–Japan co-operation, the authors argue that a reaffirmation of the alliance is not enough — a redefinition of alliance roles and missions (specifically, an enhanced role for Japan and a wider East Asian focus) is crucial to the continued viability and relevance of the alliance.

While (or because) *U.S.–Japan Alliance* argues for the preservation and strengthening of the alliance, the editors, Michael Green and Patrick Cronin, feel that solutions to the problems of the alliance should be approached from an essentially realist perspective, based upon a premise that “the U.S.–Japan security alliance is critical to the maintenance of US interests and stability in the Asia-Pacific” (p. xiii). Defending the alliance on ideological grounds, the authors feel, is impractical as it is unlikely to win long-term support from either the U.S. Congress or the American and Japanese public, and would continue to subject the alliance to continued periodic ups and downs.

Both before and after the Cold War, American interests in the Asia-Pacific are largely economic. James Przystup discusses in detail how American economic interest in the region has involved the country in Asia-Pacific affairs since the promulgation of the “open door” doctrine. Evaluating America’s post-Cold War foreign policy options, Richard Samuels and Christopher Twoney conclude that the alliance remains the most cost-effective way of safe-guarding U.S. interests in the region, although the “imbalance” needs to be addressed with Japan taking on more responsibilities, not merely in its financial contributions, but also in the Self-Defense Force (SDF) playing a more active and larger role in Japan’s own defence as well as regional security.

The book begins with an overview of the strategic environment in Northeast Asia. The emphasis here is on the fluidity of international dynamics. Territorial and sovereignty disputes — involving the major powers over Taiwan, the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands (China and Japan), the Spratlys (China and some Southeast Asian states), a divided Korea — are identified as some of the potential flashpoints in the region. Apart from the obvious issue of security, the Asia-Pacific is also one of the fastest growing economic regions in the world, and major international shipping lanes run through the South China Sea. This gives the United States and Japan strong reasons to ensure regional stability.

In separate chapters by Samuels, Twoney and Robert Manning, the contributors contend that big power brokers are vital to Asia-Pacific security because, unlike the case in Europe, multilateralism as a mechanism for forging consensus and ameliorating disputes is weak in the Asia-Pacific. Despite fledgling multilateral institutions, such as the

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), security issues are still dominated by the major powers — the United States, Japan, and China. A legacy of mistrust among the Asia-Pacific countries hampers efforts towards constructing effective multilateralism. This alone does not necessitate U.S. engagement and military commitment to the region, but no East Asian power has yet emerged that is both able and willing to take up the mantle of regional leadership. Unlike Germany, Japan has yet to fully come to terms with its militarist past, rendering it both incapable of and reluctant to exercise political leadership commensurate with its economic power. While China is not viewed by most Asia-Pacific countries as an immediate security threat, its growing assertiveness and propensity to resort to force — as demonstrated by its test-firing of missiles and other military exercises near Taiwan in March 1996 and scuffles with the Philippines over the Spratlys — have caused unease in the region.

By far the greatest concern of the authors is the threat posed by a hostile, nuclear-capable North Korea teetering on the edge of implosion after years of economic devastation. North Korea's test firing of the Taepo-dong missile over Japan in 1998 has sent alarm bells ringing in Tokyo and underscored the continued relevance of the U.S.–Japan alliance. The security partnership is also seen as the nucleus of an ongoing effort for the peaceful integration of China into the international order and resolution of the Korean problem.

Russia is conspicuously absent from the discussion on the regional strategic environment. This may be due to the fact that Russia is presently too distracted by a myriad of internal problems to play a significant role in Asia-Pacific geopolitics in the immediate future. Yet it should not be forgotten that Russia was a major regional player and will certainly affect the strategic balance in the future. The essays allude to the territorial disputes between Russia and China (along their 4,000-mile border) and Japan (the Kuriles) but leaves out a discussion of their implications for regional security in favour of the more immediate North Korean threat and an emerging China. The authors are right in urging the abandonment of a Cold War world-view, but a discussion of Northeast Asian security without including Russia is incomplete. After all, Russia, China, and Japan were all embroiled in bitter imperial struggles for regional dominance in the not too distant past. In decades past, a perceived Soviet threat was the *raison d'être* of the U.S.–Japan alliance.

Given the traditional lack of strategic co-operation among Asia-Pacific countries and the fluid regional situation, a strong U.S. military presence is certainly tolerated if not actually welcomed by the region. As Manning observes, “the region's economic and political dynamism

has been underpinned by an informal security system comprised principally of the US [and its] network of bilateral alliances”, the most important of which is the U.S.–Japan alliance.

Yet, as Paul Giarra and Akihisa Nagashima point out, the U.S.–Japan security relationship has historically been “a political arrangement and not a military pact by any traditional measure” (p. 98). In its second section, the book devotes five chapters to the historical development of the U.S.–Japan alliance and the changes taking place in the wake of the Cold War. All the authors bemoan the absence of an integrated command structure for the SDF and U.S. forces in Japan. This lack of effective co-ordination between the two national forces has become increasingly problematic as both partners seek to meet new challenges arising from the end of the Cold War, and to take advantage of rapid technological changes. The 1994 North Korean nuclear crisis, and the March 1998 test-firing of Taepo-dong missiles underline the continued strategic relevance of the alliance. The Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) has been proposed to counter threats such as a (potentially) nuclear-capable North Korea since “diplomacy and deterrence are essential yet insufficient instruments” for maintaining peace and stability in the region. The effective implementation of the TMD, however, is premised on a close collaboration between the Japanese and American militaries.

The 1995 rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl by U.S. servicemen threatened to cast a pall over the prospect of closer bilateral military co-operation and, more specifically, the future of U.S. military bases in Japan. The high visibility and concentration of U.S. bases in Okinawa have become a growing source of contention in Japanese politics. Moreover, it does not help that the prefecture is also Japan’s poorest, and maintains historical grievances against the central government in Tokyo. Garria asserts that Japanese bases and facilities are an integral part of America’s Asia-Pacific strategy — the U.S. military’s global operations will be seriously affected if it is denied the use of the bases. Contributions to local economic developments from the outstationed U.S. military, consolidation and integration of U.S. and SDF military bases, and the dual use of air and port facilities for both military and civilian purposes are suggested as ways to alleviate the Japanese public’s opposition to the presence of U.S. military bases. Garria’s recommendations are rather tentative — the difficulties of implementation are conveniently left out — but deserve serious consideration by policy-makers.

In advocating a more balanced alliance relationship, the authors shrewdly recognize the political, technological, and military realities of the alliance in their implicit acceptance of a junior role for Japan. The

United States assesses its strategy in global terms, whereas Japan is concerned primarily with its own defence and (in recent years) in maintaining peace and stability in areas surrounding Japan. Although not an entirely accurate observation, considering Japan's reliance on Middle East oil and shipping lanes through the South China Sea, this is certainly true where power projection capabilities and the political will to act internationally are concerned.

United Nations peacekeeping operations, humanitarian missions, joint exercises, and other "low intensity" operations are identified as prospective areas for co-operation between the U.S. and Japanese militaries. The SDF's overseas operations, such as its peacekeeping role as part of the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), reflect Japan's desire to unshackle itself from its militarist past to become a "normal" nation and to play a larger international role. Looking back from the early post-war years, when the opposition decried the very existence of the SDF as a violation of Japan's pacifist post-war constitution, to the SDF's overseas mission in Cambodia, Japan has certainly come a long way in this respect. Yet, Thomas Berger contends that a "postwar culture of antimilitarism" persists in Japan. This was responsible for Tokyo's reluctance to be anything more than a "cheque book" ally during the Gulf War.

Despite the preponderance of non-Japanese authors, *U.S.-Japan Alliance* gives a good insight into Japanese political decision-making on defence, particularly its historical development. The authors demonstrate keen awareness of the weakness and malaise afflicting more recent Japanese coalition governments, the sensitivity of Tokyo-Okinawa relations, and the public's aversion to military action. Taking into account the fact that the book is written by American scholars evaluating the U.S.-Japan alliance from a predominantly American point of view, and primarily for the consumption of American policy-makers, the authors may be forgiven for their relative neglect of the impact of American domestic politics on U.S.-Japan security relations, with the notable exception of trade and technology transfers.

In the final section of the book, four chapters discuss the impact of security relations and bilateral trade on each other, as well as the increasingly salient issue of technology transfer. There is a consensus that both the United States and especially Japan, in the immediate post-war years, have profited economically from their defence relations, in terms of positive spillovers from the alliance. Production of U.S. war *matériel* during the Korean and Vietnam wars reinvigorated Japanese industry while an open U.S. market absorbed Japanese exports. The Yoshida Doctrine has been a conscious Japanese policy as much as a statement of reality, with Japan relying on the United States for its

defence and concentrating on economic growth. America's defence industry also benefited from Japanese defence procurement but the overall trade and economic benefits to the United States from its alliance with Japan have been much more modest.

Since the 1970s, the massive trade imbalance in favour of Japan has become a source of acrimonious haggling between the two alliance partners and threatens to deplete the goodwill underlying bilateral defence relations. In her historical analysis, Laura Stone describes the divergent trends of U.S.–Japan trade and security relations and explains the apparent contradiction of warming defence relations amid worsening trade disputes. Fears of Japan “going it alone”, and the desire to maintain strategic co-operation, have prodded defence officials from both sides to insulate defence relations from trade issues, with mixed results. However, separating trade from security issues, as defence officials have been doing, is not a viable long-term option. Whenever American perceptions of a security threat diminishes, such as during the high *détente* of the Nixon-Kissinger years and the present post-Cold War era, the demand for Japan to open its markets and to assume greater responsibility for its own defence grows more truculent. Stone argues that the importance of the defence relations needs to be impressed upon the American and Japanese public in order to generate greater political support for it.

Moreover, with the shifting focus on technology in both defence and trade, trade and security have become more intertwined, especially in the area of defence procurement and co-development. This is the theme in Michael Chinworth's chapter entitled “The Technological Factor in U.S.–Japan Security Relations”. Although the United States still has a growing overall technological lead, unequal technological advances mean that the United States is becoming dependent on other countries, such as Japan, for technology and components vital to its own security. This dependence is sufficiently disconcerting to make technology transfer a major issue in U.S.–Japan defence relations. American concerns are further compounded by Japan's three principles on arms exports. Since the principles bar Japan from exporting arms to “countries which are actually involved in or likely to become international conflicts” (cited in this volume from the Japan Defense Agency, “The Three Principles on Arms Export”, *Defense of Japan*, 1997) vital components might be denied to the U.S. military in times of war. Although Japan has relaxed its stance on arms exports, Japanese firms are still not obliged to accede to American requests, as was the case during the Gulf War. Hence, the American emphasis on work-share and co-development of new defence systems, even as the latter seeks to develop indigenous defence technology. The conflicting aims and ambitions, as well as mutual suspicions, in U.S.–Japan defence

technology co-operation are well illustrated in the confrontation over the Fighter Support Experimental (FSX) programme. The significance of the FSX debacle can be inferred from the attention given to it in the final section of the book.

U.S.–Japan Alliance: Past, Present and Future provides a good insight into the inner workings of the U.S.–Japan alliance and its future prospects. The book's discussion of the alliance in a wider strategic context is lucid but unoriginal, with the usual points about North Korean missiles and an increasingly assertive China. The general reader, and certainly someone unfamiliar with the “nuts and bolts” of alliance management (which forms the core of the book) might find the plethora of acronyms for international organizations, defence systems, treaties and committees mind-boggling, and the often detailed narrative comes across as rather tedious.

Nevertheless, the book is recommended as a “user's guide” for students, scholars and policy-makers interested in the internal dynamics of the U.S.–Japan alliance.

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Rethinking Geopolitics. Edited by Gearoid O. Tuathail and Simon Dalby. Routledge: London and New York, 1998.

This book begins with a fundamental question: “Is geopolitics dead?” The authors seem to say “yes”, but the average reader will probably surmise that the answer is “yes and no”. In one sense, geopolitics was never alive because its fundamental unit of analysis, the nation state, is a contested concept, a “forging” of heterogeneous histories and struggles. “Critical geopolitics”, on the other hand, is supposed to offer a necessary “counter-narrative”. It seeks to move beyond conventional inter-state relations to a discussion of the boundaries of the state. Critical geopolitics is all about “maps of meaning”, whereas traditional geopolitics is supposed to be about “maps of states”.

Yet, in another sense, one cannot say that what is constructed is somehow not true (or true enough), for durability has a power of its own. Nor can one say that geopolitics ignore the boundaries of the state, whether we discuss the revolutions of 1848, or Kosovo. It is therefore difficult to accept the straw-man conception of traditional geopolitics