

Briefing Memorandum

Revising the Japan-US Security Treaty

(an English translation of the original manuscript written in Japanese)

Shingo Nakajima, Senior Fellow, 2nd Military History Research Office, Military History Department

Introduction

The Japan-US Security Treaty was concluded in September 1951 under the Shigeru Yoshida administration on the same day that the San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed. Later, in June 1960, the treaty was revised under the Nobusuke Kishi administration. This means that June 2010 marks half a century since the revision of the security treaty. This briefing memo will examine the background of the treaty's revision and its historical significance.

Establishment of the Old Security Treaty

First, let us look at the background of the establishment of the old Security Treaty. At the end of the allied occupation of Japan when Japan was transitioning to a demilitarized and independent nation, and while there was strong sentiment supporting a full-fledged rearmament by the United States as well as Japanese politicians and citizens, Prime Minister Yoshida chose a policy that allotted full emphasis to economic reconstruction. This policy restricted Japan's defense capabilities to a size and level so minimal that it would not constrict economic recovery. Therefore, according to Prime Minister Yoshida, it was vital that Japan involve the United States in its security following pacification, as it was natural for Japan to aim to free itself of occupation and return to the international community.

Meanwhile, the US stance on post-pacification Japanese security was that "the United States desired a right rather than an obligation." As can be seen in the Vandenberg Resolution, which was passed by the US Senate in 1948, the United States only formed collective security agreements with nations that offered it continuous and effective self-help, and mutual aid. As Japan was not equipped with that capacity at the time of pacification and independence, it put the country in a difficult position to sign a security treaty.

Kumao Nishimura, then Director-General of the Treaties Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was involved in the signing of the old Security Treaty, and it is widely known that Nishimura referred to the shape of Japan-US relations under the Security Treaty as "cooperation between goods and people." In other words, the key structure of the relationship was that Japan provided the United States with bases and the United States provided Japan with protection. However, the old treaty did

not specify the United States' obligation to protect Japan, which is a key point in any security treaty; it simply included the so-called "Far East Article," which noted that the United States would "contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East." In other words, from Japan's perspective, it had few rights, only a large amount of obligations. There was also a lot of criticism over the concern that Japan could be involved in international conflicts that take place outside of its territory. There was also a tremendously poor view of the "Internal Disturbances clause" that allowed the US military to mobilize itself in order to handle conflicts that arose within Japan. What is more, there was no clear time limit on the treaty. Thus, the treaty seemed unfair and one-sided to Japan, which would later push it to demand that the treaty be amended.

Japan-US Relations in the Late 1950s

Yoshida's many years in office eventually came to an end, giving power to a new prime minister, Ichiro Hatoyama. In August 1955, upon the start of the Hatoyama Administration, Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu visited the United States to request that the Security Treaty be revised. However, his request was brusquely rejected. As can be seen in the words of Secretary of State John F. Dulles in his assumption that Japan could not aid the United States if Guam were to come under attack, the issue of how to decide on the area that the Security Treaty applied to was deeply related to the reciprocity and equality in the treaty that Japan had sought. On the other hand, this was a problem that forced the Japanese Government to touch on the right of collective self-defense, which is in itself a tremendously difficult issue in Japan.

The United States' obstinate stance on revision of the treaty did not change until the start of the Nobusuke Kishi administration. It is common knowledge that the Kishi Administration made the treaty's revision its top political priority, but what made the United States, a country that had time and again rejected Japan's requests, change the direction of its policy? The answer to this question is not because the United States decided that Japan had achieved the capability to fulfill the United States' security demands, but rather the country's insight into Japan's domestic political situation of the time.

First of all, the United States highly praised and held lofty expectations of Prime Minister Kishi's political leadership. Conversely, during the Hatoyama and Ishibashi administrations, the United States viewed Japan as a "drifting nation," while, among Japan's leaders, the United States regarded Kishi not as the best bet, but as the *only* bet. The US Government decided to revise the Security Treaty and solidified the foundation of Japan-US relations while Kishi was in office.

Secondly, there was a sense of danger over Japan's discontent with the United States on a domestic level. From before the launch of the Kishi administration there were intermittent anti-US

base conflicts, such as over the Daigo Fukuryu Maru incident of 1954, the Uchinada Incident, and the Sunagawa Incident, as well as the so-called Girard Incident, where a Japanese woman that was picking up empty shell casings at a US military training grounds was killed by a US soldier in January 1957. The Girard Incident further intensified anti-US nationalism throughout Japan, causing concern for the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration.

It was the most desirable for the United States that Japan would become a strong and reliable ally, and if that did not happen, at the very least it needed Japan to become an independent, non-communist nation with a non-neutral diplomatic stance. However, Japan had now moved out of its pacification and independence stage. Now Japan's cooperative stance towards the United States was no longer so obvious, and the increasing discontent with the United States domestically in Japan was reaching a level that could no longer be overlooked. According to a US analysis, the chief causes were friction between Japan and the United States owing to 1) Japan-US trade, 2) Japan's trade with China, 3) the Okinawa and Ogasawara problem, and 4) the current Security Treaty. The United States was therefore forced to come up with a policy where they did their best to take heed of Japan's discontent with the United States and ease confrontation between the two nations. The first idea considered at the time was a partial return of Okinawa to Japan, but this proposal was withdrawn as considerations materialized more concretely. It would be a revision to the Security Treaty that became the pivot for amending policy to Japan.

Revision of the Security Treaty

Negotiations on the revision of the treaty commenced in October 1958, and after a long process of negotiations the new treaty was finally signed in January 1960. The issue over the treaty area, which was the focal point of the revision, was expressed as “an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan.” For Japan, this meant that attacks on US military bases in Japan were attacks on Japanese soil, and could thus be responded to within the scope of the right to individual self-defense. Another major focus was in regard to the introduction of a prior consultation system. Today, as has become clear through an investigation on the so-called “secret agreements,” there remain some grey areas from when the system was implemented. Put differently, a tacit agreement was formed between Japan and the United States when the treaty was revised to leave matters concerning the bringing of nuclear weapons into Japan ambiguous. This specifically referred to the temporary docking of vessels carrying nuclear weapons. Also, the *Expert Committee on the Issue of the So-called “Secret Agreements”* compiled a report that revealed that an agreement was formed where, in the event of an emergency on the Korean Peninsula, the US military (United Nations forces) would not need to engage in prior consultation.

Moreover, coupled with the fact that Kishi's personal history before WWII and his high-handed

political methods after becoming prime minister caused the social unrest referred to as the “post-war democratic crisis,” chaos ensued upon the visit of President Eisenhower’s Press Secretary James C. Hagerty to Japan, President Eisenhower’s visit to Japan was cancelled, and there was an incident where a female university student was killed amidst the confusion of a public demonstration. In this way, commotion surrounding the treaty revision began to swell at a rapid pace. Japan’s domestic political circles were in uproar and Prime Minister Kishi submitted his resignation in exchange for the revision. The complications over the Security Treaty not only scarred the political circles of Japan, but also Japanese society to a significant degree, leaving the task of reconciling Japanese society to the next administration.

Conclusion

Although the Kishi administration left big challenges for their successors, there is no question that, compared to Japan-US security relations under the old Security Treaty, the revised Security Treaty produced marked steps forward for Japan, including the pursuit of reciprocity and the dissolution of inequality. Most importantly, the treaty spelled out the United States’ defense commitment to Japan while deleting the “Internal Disturbances clause.” The treaty also included a date of termination. Also, while the treaty retained some ambiguous areas, it did include the introduction of a prior consultation system. The treaty also delivered more clarity to the relationship between the United Nations and the Security Treaty and included a clause on economic cooperation. This served to distend the cooperation between the United States and Japan from a relationship based solely on security to something more broadly focused.

Japan’s objective for the revisions was to pursue reciprocity and resolve inequality in the treaty. On the other hand, the United States’ objective was to prevent the neutralization of Japan, which was a potential destabilizing factor in Japan-US relations. However, for both countries, from a long-term perspective, the main focus of the revisions was to secure relations between the United States and Japan in a broader sense, from emotional and political standpoints, without limiting the scope of the relationship to security alone. With all of the uproar about security issues domestically and abroad, it took a great deal of time to be able to examine the significance of the revisions themselves in a levelheaded manner, however, it is safe to say that the historical achievement of the revisions within the context of Japan-US relations has formed a long-term foundation for the alliance, which is about to celebrate its sixth decade in existence.

References

Kazuya Sakamoto, *Nichibei Domei no Kizuna: Anpo Joyaku to Sogosei no Mosaku* (Yuhikaku Publishing, 2000).

Shingo Nakajima, *Sengo Nihon no Boei Seisaku Yoshida Rosen o Meguru Seiji, Gaiko, Gunji* (Keio University Press, 2006).

“Expert Committee Report on the Issue of the So-called ‘Secret Agreements’” (March 2010),

http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/mitsuyaku/taisho_bunsho.html (Japanese only).

About the author

Field of specialty: Japanese political and diplomatic history, Japanese security policy history

Current position: Senior Fellow in the 2nd Military History Research Office, Military History Department, National Institute for Defense Studies

Biography: Graduated from Waseda University, completed his masters and doctorate at Keio University, served as a Research Fellow at the National Institute for Defense Studies, and transferred to his current position in 2009.

Published works: *Sengo Nihon no Boei Seisaku: Yoshida Rosen o Meguru Seiji, Gaiko, Gunji* (Keio University Press, 2006); “Boeicho, Jieitaishi to Oral History: Kaihara Osamu Oral History o Chushin ni,” *Nenpo Seijigaku* (Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 2005); “Domeikoku Nihon Zo no Tenkan: Johnson Seiken no Tainichi Seisaku,” in Sumio Hatano eds., *Ikeda, Sato Seikenki no Nihon Gaiko* (Minerva Shobo, 2004); others.

The purpose of this column is to respond to readers' interest in security issues and at the same time to promote a greater understanding of NIDS. As you know, a "briefing" means a background explanation, and we hope these columns will help everyone to better understand the complex issues involved in security affairs.

Please note that the views in this column do not represent the official opinion of NIDS. Please contact us regarding any questions, comments or requests you may have.

Please note that no part of this document may be reproduced in any form without the prior consent of NIDS.

Planning and Coordination Office, The National Institute for Defense Studies
Dedicated lines: 8-67-6522, 6588
Telephone: 03-3713-5912
Fax: 03-3713-6149
NIDS' website: <http://www.nids.go.jp>