

Briefing Memo

The purpose of this column is to respond to reader interests in security issues and at the same time to promote a greater understanding of NIDS.

A "briefing" provides background information, among others. We hope these columns will help everyone to better understand the complex of issues involved in security affairs. Please note that the views in this column do not represent the official opinion of NIDS.

The New Armitage Report:

Building a Desirable Regional Order in Asia in Response to a Rising China

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Introduction

The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020 (the new Armitage report) was released on February 16, 2007. This report, published six years after the previous Armitage report, *The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership*, was put together by a group of non-partisan Japan specialists chaired by Richard Armitage, former Deputy Secretary of State, and Joseph Nye, Harvard University professor and former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. International affairs and conditions in Asia have changed dramatically during the six years between these two reports.

The terrorist attacks in the US in September 2001, approximately one year after the previous Armitage report was released, made the response to international terrorism a key issue for international security in the twenty-first century. Suspicions that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction were used to justify the use of military power against Iraq, but the US is now bogged down in Iraq and is struggling to find a way out. During this same period in Asia, China emerged as a world power much sooner than expected, and India also rapidly rose up to take its place as a great power. Both of these reports, bookending these sharp changes, advocate a stronger alliance between the US and Japan, but the context is different.

Objective of the Two Armitage Reports

Although the 1996 Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security was redefined as necessary for peace and stability in the region even after the Cold War, subsequent developments were not

as clearly defined, giving rise to the expression “adrift” to describe the alliance. In this context, the previous Armitage report was intended to impress upon the next US president, to be elected in the November 2000 elections the month after the report was released, the strategic importance of Japan-US relations and to advocate a stronger alliance.

After the Bush administration came into office, Armitage, who was one of the leaders of the group of 16 Japan specialists that prepared this report, was appointed to a key post in the administration, as were Paul Wolfowitz, James Kelly, Torkel Patterson and Michael Green. As a result, the previous Armitage report, which lays out an action agenda in the six areas of politics, security, Okinawa, intelligence, economic relations, and diplomacy as the cornerstones for an enduring alliance for the twenty-first century, became the blueprint for the Bush administration’s Japan policy.

However, six years on Asia’s security environment has changed significantly. Not only have the legacy issues over the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan become more serious, but the rapid rise of China and India has led to a search for a new order in the region. It is important to note here that the new Armitage report recognizes that the US’s interest in Asia has been minimal in recent years, and also gives voice to a sense of crisis that, unless the US is fully involved with Asia’s problems, the US could lose its influence over Asia, which this report sees as the key to the twenty-first century’s new world order, as I discuss below. Moreover, Asia’s eruption onto the world stage, led by China, has been sudden and dramatic. Accordingly, the new report states that Japan shares the vision of building a regional order in which the US will be actively involved, and recommends that this bilateral alliance be strengthened further to realize this vision.

The previous Armitage report was published just prior to the 2000 presidential election, but the political significance of the timing of the new report’s release is not clear because, although Shinzo Abe’s cabinet recently took office in Japan, there is still more than a year and a half before the US presidential election. However, evoking the strategic importance of Asia to the US at a time when the US is preoccupied with the Middle East is certainly meaningful, and if the study group members participate in the next administration, the new report could serve as the blueprint for Asia policy, just as the previous report did.

Impact of previous Armitage report

The two sentences from the previous Armitage report quoted below gave a sharp jolt to Japan’s security debate, and the aftereffects are still being felt.

- “Japan’s prohibition against collective self-defense is a constraint on alliance cooperation.”
- “We see the special relationship between the United States and Great Britain as a model for the alliance.”

The first statement refers to a problem involving the Constitution, while the latter gave

some readers the image of the Self-Defense Forces fighting side-by-side with US and UK troops in international conflicts.

The new Armitage report states that the ongoing debate in Japan on the problems with collective self-defense is encouraging, and that the US continues to expect that the constraints on alliance cooperation that limit Japan's cooperation will be resolved in the near future. This report also affirms the US's support for Japan's induction as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, but emphasizes that, as a permanent member, it would have to be prepared to exercise military force.

In June 2005, James Przystup, who was involved in writing both Armitage reports, released a paper that could be seen as an interim assessment of the extent to which the recommendations made in the previous report had been realized. Przystup noted that the previous report's reference to the "special relationship" between the US and UK as a model for the alliance between the US and Japan was interpreted by editorialists and opinion leaders in Japan "as a call for Japan to become, like the United Kingdom, a nuclear power with substantial power-projection capabilities." However, this was not the report's intended meaning. Rather, it was intended to convey a "sense of confidence" that "the shared values and many common interests that marked the US-UK relationship" would serve as a firm foundation for cooperation. The report's authors were not demanding anything more than that.

As with the previous report, readers did not find any bombshells in the new Armitage report. Nevertheless, the new report does emphasize the need to think seriously about how Japan will deal with Asia and the international community in the twenty-first century, and in this sense the report raises more serious issues.

Perceptions of Conditions in Asia through 2020 and Issues to Address

The introduction to the new Armitage report asserts that, in this period of "global uncertainty and transition," rapidly rising Asia is key to shaping the optimum world order. The US defines this world order as "a balance of power that favors freedom," as cited in 2002's *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*.

According to the new report, "freedom" is the keyword for this vision, and cooperative relations among the major powers—the US, Japan, China, Russia, India and Europe—will be central to realizing this vision. However, the major powers do not necessarily share a consensus on a world order based on freedom. China is a major presence in Asia. The new report states that the US will not push its values onto others, but this raises the issue of how freedom can be fostered in Asia. This is where the concept of guiding Asia appropriately comes in.

The new Armitage report analyzes trends in Asia through 2020, when the authors believe that a new order will begin to take shape out of the current chaos, and outlines the roles that

the US and Japan should play in guiding Asia in the right direction, as well as the shape of the US-Japan alliance.

The report also analyzes trends in China, India, the Korean Peninsula (problems with North Korea), South Korea (managing differences between the US and South Korea), Southeast Asia, Australia, and regional integration, in that order. However, the analysis concludes that the response to China and the response to regional integration will be key to realizing the US's vision in Asia.

(1) Addressing China

The new Armitage report affirms that modernization and economic growth will make China even stronger and more prosperous, but refers to complications that the country faces such as economic disparities, corruption, and an aging society. As a result, China seeks a stable and peaceful international environment, but at the same time is building up its naval military power. At the same time, China's nationalism and its efforts to maintain the legitimacy of Communist dominance stand in the way of better interaction between China, the US and Japan.

In conclusion, the new Armitage report states that the future direction China will take is not clear. In 2020, China could become a responsible "stakeholder" with political freedom and economic openness, or it could become a mercantile nation lacking respect for international norms, intolerant of freedom, and rife with corruption.

Accordingly, the new Armitage report points out that, given the uncertain outlook for China, it is important that China have incentives to make choices that will lead it toward peaceful integration with the international community.

(2) Addressing Regional Integration

According to the new Armitage report, pan-Asian trade accounts for 51% of global trade, and trade in Asia is already more cohesive than that of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Transpacific trade and investment is also growing, but at a slower pace than that of the expansion of economic relationships in Asia. As this report points out, this means that the continuing expansion in intra-Asian economic relationships will give rise to a stronger Asian identity.

The US was indifferent to the concept of an East Asian Community and to the East Asia Summit, but growing integration in Asia poses a dilemma for the US. The new Armitage report recognizes that integration in Asia leads to the question of how the US can find the "proper nexus" between pan-Asian and trans-pacific economic and institutional integration.

The US does not want to be left out of Asian integration. However, China's policy of noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries engaged in multilateral cooperation

stands in the way of resolving this problem. The new report states that removing this obstacle will require that the US work harder with Japan and other like-minded countries to encourage them to address the issue of advancing democracy and the rule of law.

Approach to Building World Order and US-Japan Alliance

Ultimately, the problem in building a regional order favorable to the US lies in China, which has different values than the US. The new Armitage report recommends that three approaches be adopted simultaneously to overcome this problem. First, the US should work to build a strong relationship among Japan, the US, and China, given that stability in East Asia depends on this relationship. Second, the US should remain involved in Asia on a sustained basis to maintain its influence over Asia. Third, Asian countries such as India and Australia that have succeeded in perpetuating democratic values should not only serve as models for other countries, but should also be actively involved in resolving regional problems to better establish democratic values and institutions in Asia. In sum, China will not be isolated, but rather democratic values such as political freedom, the rule of law and liberal markets will become entrenched in Asia, while maintaining a strong relationship with China to the extent possible.

The US's strategy for Asia as depicted in these three approaches paints a picture in which the unilateralism for which the first Bush administration was criticized is absent, and in which the importance of cooperation among the major powers is emphasized. These approaches are based on the recognition that the US must be involved in Asia on a sustained basis, rather than its previous temporary or casual involvement, in order to maintain its influence over Asia. While the US was caught up in the war on terror, China began wielding greater influence over Asia as it extended its national strengths, and the awareness that the US must rebuild its strategy in Asia is at the core of the new Armitage report.

The report emphasizes that the global war on terror is actually a misnomer, and that this "war" is actually "a fight against extremism only a small portion of which can be addressed by military means." This means that, over the long term, cooperation among the major powers is essential to any security strategy. The second Bush administration's foreign policy has also begun to show a tendency toward international coordination, but the report presses this tendency even further. However, there is no change to the US's goal of playing a leading role in spreading democratic values throughout the international community. The difference in this report is that it emphasizes the importance of forming partnerships with countries that share the US's values.

A close alliance with Japan, which has the world's second largest economy and shares democratic values, remains at the core of the US's strategy in Asia. The previous Armitage report proposes the US-UK relationship as the model for the Japan-US alliance, but the new

report takes it for granted that the US and Japan hold the same values, and in this sense perceives progress in the US-Japan relationship. The new report expects the Japan-US alliance to strengthen even further, and divides both countries' action agendas aimed at strengthening their alliance and ensuring influence over Asia into four categories: recommendations for Japan, recommendations for the US-Japan alliance, recommendations for regional policies, and recommendations for global policies. Of these, we were particularly struck by two recommendations.

First, the report asserts that the two countries' economic relationship should be expanded and deepened, and thus proposes a bilateral free-trade agreement which would play a central role not only in advancing the interests of the US and Japan, but also in encouraging free trade and economic integration globally and regionally. Second, the report claims that Japan has a global influence, and it is important not only that cooperation between the US and Japan should be expanded in security areas, but also that Japan reassess its role and identity in security matters.

Overcoming the Gap

As in the new Armitage report, the US government's official documents always claim that Japan is the cornerstone of its strategy in Asia, but there seems to be a significant gap between this image of Japan and Japan's actual presence in Washington. At a symposium recently held in Tokyo, a former US administration official pointed out that, although Japan is the US's most faithful ally, the US government does not express its confidence in Japan on a daily level, nor does it provide a forum for discussion on a continuous basis. Furthermore, the official claimed that, although US-Japan relations are extremely important and multi-faceted, they tend to be dependent on the human element, i.e., whether Japan experts have positions within the US government.

One way of bridging this gap between Japan's importance and its limited presence would be for Japan to have a clear national security strategy. The US will tend to see Japan as a follower if it remains merely a faithful ally lacking a national strategy. There are issues with Japan's right to collective self-defense, as the US points out, but a true partnership starts with a national security strategy based on each country's shared values. Providentially, Japan will set up a "national security council" in the Cabinet in spring 2008 that will work to clarify Japan's national security strategy. We can expect that a more active role for Japan in foreign affairs would go a long way toward bridging the gap between Japan and the US.

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