Pros and cons for keeping United States Forces in Japan (USFJ)

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Abstract

This paper examines pros and cons for keeping United States Forces in Japan (USFJ) for both the United States and Japan. What are the disadvantages and advantages to keep USFJ for the United States? Why does the United States need her bases in Japan after the end of the Cold War? What are the disadvantages and advantages to keep USFJ for Japan? Why does Japan wish to maintain the United States-Japan Security Treaty (hereafter referred to as the Security Treaty) and allow the United States to keep USFJ? Many people point out that there is a growing concern about the Chinese economic and military power among the leaders of the United States and Japan. How should the two countries deal with the Chinese power? These are some questions that the paper tries to answer. In conclusion, the paper recommends that Japan negotiate with the United States to reduce the United States bases in Japan, to revise Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), and to abolish the Host Nation Support (HNS) or OMOIYARIYOSAN (a sympathy budget). Japan should eventually abolish the Security Treaty and establish a neutral Japan.

Key words: United States Forces in Japan (USFJ), the Security Treaty, and Japan's defense and security.

Introduction

In recent years, the Chinese government flexes its muscles over the territorial issues such as the Senkaku Islands, the Paracel Islands, and the Spratly Islands. China quarrels with not only Japan but also Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan. Under such circumstances, the Japanese government justifies raison d'etre of the Marine Corps in Okinawa using a word of "deterrence." From 2009 to 2010, then Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama tried in vain to find an alternative location for the Futenma Marine Corps Base. In the end, Hatoyama emphasized the importance of deterrence and gave up finding another place for Futenma. The Japanese government has never stated deterrence against "whom," but it is obvious that a potential enemy is China.

This paper examines pros and cons for keeping USFJ for both the United States and Japan. What are the disadvantages and advantages to keep USFJ for the United States? Why does the United States need her bases in Japan after the end of the Cold War? What are the disadvantages and advantages to keep USFJ for Japan? Why does Japan wish to maintain the Security Treaty and allow the United States to keep USFJ even though the Cold War is over? Many people point out that there is a growing concern about the Chinese economic and military power among the leaders of the United States and Japan. China might be an important factor for Japan to keep the Security Treaty and USFJ. How should the United States and Japan

deal with the growing Chinese power?

These are the major questions that the paper tries to answer. USFJ harm the Japanese people rather than protect them. Nevertheless, the Japanese government pays huge amount of HNS every year. Over the last several months, the United States government has tried to bring MV-22 Osprey transport aircraft to Futenma in spite of the opposition of the local people. The Japanese government justifies the deployment of the aircraft according to SOFA. Prime Minister Toshihiko Noda states that there is nothing that the Japanese government can do regarding the deployment because it is under the agreement of SOFA. However, this aircraft is notorious for having many records of accidents. Instead of protesting against the United States government on behalf of the Japanese people, Noda faithfully follows the United States. This is a typical behavior of the Japanese government. Therefore, Japan is called an American vassal or protectorate.

In conclusion, I argue that Japan should negotiate with the United States to reduce the United States troops and bases in Japan, to revise SOFA, and to abolish HNS. It is necessary for the Japanese government to carry out these policies to regain sovereignty. Then, Japan should eventually abolish the Security Treaty and establish a neutral Japan since USFJ particularly the Marine Corps in Okinawa are not needed for the defense of Japan.

Disadvantages from the United States viewpoint

There are some disadvantages for the Americans. First, some Americans argue that the United States government could not afford to pay the cost to defend Japan since United States economy declined in the 1980s. The government should focus on domestic problems instead. However, many Americans do not know about the HNS and think that Japan should defend her own country by herself. In fact, keeping the United States forces in Japan is less expensive than in the United States due to HNS that Japan pays up to 75% to keep USFJ.

Secondly, some Americans think that defending Japan is a waste of American taxpayers' money because Japan is rich enough to defend herself. By the middle of the 1980s, Japan's economy looked invincible and it looked that Japan might have taken over the United States as the world's largest economic power. As described above, many Americans do not realize that Japan bears a large amount of money to host USFJ. Actually, the United States saves huge money since the United States government pays only 25% of the cost to keep USFJ

There was a free-ride argument in the 1980s in the United States. The main point of this argument was that while the Japanese firms were expanding their market share in the United States, resulting in the job loss of millions of Americans, the Japanese people did not pay much attention to their own defense relying on the Security Treaty and spending only one percent of Japan's GNP on her defense. Therefore, the Security Treaty was an unfair treaty and some Americans argue that the United States should abolish it. Fourthly, many Americans feel that the Security Treaty is a one-sided treaty, not a mutual defense treaty at least from the Americans' viewpoint. It is because Japan has no obligation to defend the United States except for the areas under the Japanese jurisdiction. For example, if Hawaii were attacked, Japan would not have to help the United States since Hawaii is not under the Japanese jurisdiction. However, the Security Treaty is a give and take treaty. While the United States provides Japan with security and defense, Japan allows the United States to keep her military forces and bases in Japan.

Fifthly, keeping USFJ for a long time might create anti-American feelings among the Japanese people.

In fact, Gen. Douglas MacArthur was afraid of long-time occupation of Japan. Many people in Okinawa think that USFJ are not needed and they want American troops and bases to leave Okinawa. As MacArthur predicted, many Japanese do not welcome American troops and bases. From 2009 to 2010, the Hatoyama Administration tried to find a new location for the Futenma Marine Corps Base, but none of the municipal governments accepted the Marine Corps Base. This rejection is very indicative that USFJ are not welcomed in Japan.

These are the main disadvantages from the United States viewpoint. USFJ and their bases in Japan are indispensable to United States global strategy. Without USFJ and their bases, the United States might lose a super power status. Therefore, even after the Soviet Union is gone, the United States needs Japan more than Japan needs the United States. However, the people of Japan and the Japanese government still think that the Security Treaty and USFJ protect Japan.

Advantages from the United States viewpoint

There are many advantages for the Americans. First, Japan can provide the United States forces with excellent maintenance services and facilities for the United States Navy such as Yokosuka in Kanagawa Prefecture and Sasebo in Nagasaki Prefecture. In particular, the Yokosuka naval base is indispensable to the United States Seventh Fleet. In fact, the United States Navy highly appraises the capability of repairing vessels in Japan. For example, ship repair capability at Sasebo is better than that of the United States mainland and Yokosuka provides the best ship repair facility in the Western Pacific. (Ogawa, 2005)

Secondly, USFJ have large facilities of munitions and fuel depots in Japan. For example, United States Navy in Japan reserves 110.7 million barrels of fuel which can keep the United States Seventh Fleet operating for six months. Yokosuka has 5.7 million barrels which ranks the second largest among the United States fuel storage facilities. Sasebo which has 5.3 million barrels ranks the third. The United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines in Japan also have the largest reserves of ammunition among the United States armed forces. (Ogawa, 2005)

Thirdly, the United States has the top level of intelligence gathering facilities in Japan. So-called "Elephant cage" for electronic intelligence bases are located at Misawa in Aomori Prefecture and Sobe in Okinawa Prefecture. Even though many intelligence satellites are working these days, these land-based intelligence gathering facilities are still important. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that these intelligence gathering facilities in Japan support the United States global strategy.

Fourthly, the United States can put Japan under United States control or influence to get the Japanese support in foreign policy or to put pressure on Japan in a trade area. The Japanese government has almost never challenged the United States in this respect. Japan has always followed United States foreign policy over the last sixty years even though Japan's national interests were harmed. Some argue that Japan is a protectorate or vassal of the United States.

Fifthly, Japan could provide the United States forces with forward deployment bases containing the Soviet Union or China during the Cold War. Even after the Cold War is over, the United States military argue that USFJ are of vital importance to carrying out military operations in the Asia-Pacific region and places beyond the region such as the Middle East. However, many contend that the Marine Corps can be dispatched from the United States mainland by air these days. In fact, in the wars in Afghanistan of 2001 and Iraq of 2003, the Marine Corps troops were directly sent to the combat zones from the United States

mainland by air. In this respect, one can argue that the Marine Corps in Okinawa are not needed.

Sixthly, the United States could save a lot of money. Keeping USFJ is much cheaper than keeping the armed forces in the United States. The Japanese government pays a huge amount of money for HNS every year to keep USFJ including utilities cost not just for soldiers and civilian employees but for their family members as well. (Sebata, 2011) If the United States military have to go back to the United States, they would have to pay 100% of maintenance cost including utilities. The major reason why USFJ have not been reduced while many United States overseas bases are shut down is because Japan pays HNS.

Seventhly, the Security Treaty and USFJ prevent resurgence of the Japanese militarism or Japan's power projection capability, which is so called "cork in the bottle argument." This argument goes like this: if there were no cork (USFJ) in the bottle, the contents of the bottle (wine: the Japanese militarism or Japan's power projection) would come out of the bottle and spread into Asia again. Therefore, USFJ are the cork in the bottle to check Japan's military power.

In this way, USFJ are indispensable to the maintenance of United States global power. Without the United States bases in Japan, the United States would have difficulty maintaining her super power status. The "cork in the bottle argument" indicates that the United States, Japan's only friend and ally, does not trust Japan. However, it is the Article 9 of the Constitution and the Japanese people that have prevented the resurgence of the Japanese militarism and Japan's power projection from coming out of the bottle. The Constitution prohibits Japan from using military forces as a means of settling international disputes. For the United States, an enemy is needed. If there is tension between North Korea and Japan or China and Japan, the United States can justify keeping USFJ and sell weapons to Japan.

Disadvantages from the Japanese viewpoint

There are many disadvantages for the Japanese. First, the cost to keep USFJ is increasing. HNS, which the Japanese government pays up to 75% of the maintenance cost of USFJ, is now a heavy burden on the Japanese people since the Japanese government needs as much money as possible to reconstruct the Tohoku region after the Great East Japan Earthquake and subsequent tsunami on 11 March 2011. The United States government should voluntarily give up HNS at least over the next five years if the United States is really a friend of Japan's. However, the Japanese government promised that the United States would receive HNS of 188.1 billion yen every year for five years from 2011. This amount is certainly not enough to cover the reconstruction cost, but given the fact that the Japanese government needs all the help, the government should trim unnecessary expenditure including HNS before the hike of consumption tax. Nevertheless, the Japanese government is planning to increase consumption tax by 3% in 2014 and by 5% in 2015.

Secondly, the Security Treaty violates Japan's sovereignty. Large areas of skies over and water around the Japanese territories as well as huge land spaces are reserved for training purposes of USFJ. There are many restricted air, sea, or land areas because of USFJ. Skies over Narita, Haneda, Kansai, Fukuoka, and other major airports throughout Japan are under the control of USFJ. As a result, many commercial airplanes coming in and out of Japan have to fly low or take a detour causing extra time and fuel. Besides, it is dangerous, too, since large aircraft must fly low for a certain period of time. Japan is only about a size of California. Japan's residential, agricultural, and industrial areas are only about 15% of the land. The rest is mountains and rivers. Therefore, Japan cannot afford to provide USFJ with huge training areas.

USFJ also enjoy extraterritoriality. Unlike the case of Germany, the Japanese authorities have no right to inspect a United States base in Japan without United States base commander's permission. The Japanese police cannot touch an American soldier who might have committed a crime or detain a suspect until the suspect is indicted. Again unlike the case of Germany, USFJ have no obligation to clean up and restore a base to its original state when they return it to Japan. In other words, USFJ enjoy de facto extraterritoriality. The United States bases in Japan are today's concessions.

In the area of foreign policy, too, Japan is limited by the United States. For example, the United States intervened in Japan's normalization process with the Soviet Union, China, or North Korea. The United States threatened Japan not to return Okinawa to Japan forever if Japan concluded a peace treaty with the Soviet Union in 1956 over the Northern Territories. Japan's normalization with China was delayed because of the United States antagonistic policy toward China. Japan is one of the few major countries that have not recognized North Korea since the United States has not normalized her relations with North Korea.

Thirdly, Japan would be under United States pressure to open her domestic market in trade negotiations. From the 1960s on, the United States government often put pressure on the Japanese government to concede in the negotiations of textiles, steel, automobiles, computers, color television sets, and other home electrical appliances. Since many Japanese people think that the United States defends Japan, Japan must give in to the United States demand in a trade area. The Japanese Ministry of Finance has faithfully followed United States economic and fiscal policies investing huge amount of the Japanese money in the United States and supporting the value of the American dollar.

Fourthly, there are many problems which stem from USFJ such as crimes, accidents, and environmental destruction. Homicides, rape, arson, traffic accidents, plane crashes, air, water, noise, and soil pollution. The Japanese government has difficulty dealing with these issues due to limited sovereignty. USFJ cause about ten cases of crimes and accidents on average per day every year throughout Japan between 1952 and 2008. (Akahata Seijibu Anpo Gaiko Han. 2010) Therefore, it is extremely difficult to say that USFJ protect the Japanese people's lives and property. On the contrary, USFJ hurt local people. This is the violation of the Security Treaty. Nevertheless, the Japanese government pays a huge amount of money as HNS to USFJ that hurt the Japanese people. This policy is beyond comprehension.

Fifthly, there is still a possibility that Japan might be involved in a conflict between the United States and a third party such as China or North Korea. If a war broke out in the Taiwan Strait or the Korean Peninsula, Japan would be asked to help the United States. In other words, there was and still is a possibility that Japan might be attacked when the United States wages a war against the third party such as China or North Korea because of the United States bases in Japan. In case of an emergency, an entire Japan would become a supply base for the United States forces. Japan has no choice but to support the United States under the Security Treaty. Choosing a neural policy is almost impossible for Japan.

If the United States decided to help Taiwan, Japan would be put into a very difficult situation. Japan would not be able to stand in a neutral position under the Security Treaty, so she has to support the United States. Then, China would attack USFJ even though Japan has no intention to fight a war against China. In this way, because of USFJ, Japan would be dragged into a war between the United States and China over Taiwan.

The same can be said of a war in the Korean Peninsula. If a war broke out between North Korea and South Korea, the United States would certainly support South Korea. Japan would be also asked to help South Korea and the United States. North Korea would attack USFJ, and Japan would be automatically put

in a war condition. Japan would have no choice this time, too. In either case, the Japanese people would be put in a danger because of USFJ. In particular, people in Okinawa would be attacked in the first place. They might be safe if there were no USFJ in Okinawa because China or North Korea would first attack major cities such as Tokyo or Osaka. Okinawa would be the last on the list of attack. Unlike the case in World War II when the United States forces landed in Okinawa, neither North Korea nor China has strong navy to transfer a large number of troops to Japan. Therefore, landing in Okinawa is not a choice of the strategy of either China or North Korea.

Sixthly, the United States forces create a threat to China or North Korea. Many Japanese and Americans do not realize that USFJ pose a threat to the Chinese and the North Koreans. From their viewpoints, they are surrounded by the armed forces of South Korea, Japan, and the United States. In other words, USFJ create tension in North East Asia. In fact, North Korea protests against the United States for landing exercises called "Team Sprit" every year. Therefore, decreasing USFJ would lead to reduction of tension in North East Asia.

Seventhly, the United States can have an access to the Japanese technologies developed in a private sector and could use these technologies for American firms' commercial purposes as well as military purposes. The United States could count on so-called "spin-on," which means that technologies developed in a private sector would be used in a military sector, rather than "spin-off." In fact, technologies developed by Kyosera or TDK are used in a stealth aircraft or cruise missiles. Nowadays, these Japanese technologies are of vital importance to the United States military.

Points mentioned above are disadvantages for the Japanese people. In the eyes of many Japanese, the Security Treaty is not a good bargain particularly after the Cold War ended. There are many advantages for those who support the Security Treaty as described below. However, it seems to me that cons well exceed pros. Crimes, accidents, and environmental destruction caused by USFJ reach the limit of the Japanese people's patience, particularly Okinawans'.

Advantages from the Japanese viewpoint

There are some advantages for the Japanese. First, according to those who support the Security Treaty, the United States provides Japan with security protection including nuclear umbrella since there is uncertainty in East Asia. There might be still potential threats from Russia, China, and North Korea. Some people, however, doubt if the nuclear umbrella really works. Suppose that when China attacked Japan with nuclear weapons, but has not attacked the United States, there is a doubt if the United States would use nuclear weapons against China on behalf of Japan. If the United States did use nuclear weapons against China, China would certainly retaliate against the United States with nuclear weapons. As a result, both would be destroyed. Therefore, the United States President would not take such a risk since the United States would lose millions of Americans on the continent and her important trading partner. Instead, the United States President would compromise with China. Because of this logic, the nuclear umbrella is a myth, some say. Moreover, there is not much difference for the Japanese people even though the United States retaliated with nuclear weapons against China because by that time, most Japanese people would have died as a result of the first nuclear attack by China.

Secondly, some Japanese think that the Security Treaty and USFJ provide countermeasure against emergence of China. In recent years, China is increasing her naval and air power including the construction

of aircraft carriers. In response to such military increase of China, Japan would further rely on the Security Treaty and USFJ would be of vital importance to Japan's security. In other words, in order to counter a growing Chinese naval and air power, Japan has no choice but to keep the Security Treaty and rely on USFJ. This argument relies on deterrence. However, Japan must consider if there would be a war between the United States and China. For both countries, a trade is more important than a war. For Japan as well, China is the largest trading partner and its importance is increasing. It is almost impossible to imagine that there would be a war between Japan and China. Then, why does Japan need the Marine Corps in Okinawa?

Thirdly, Japan was able to quickly carry out economic growth with minimum defense budget: so-called Yoshida Doctrine named after postwar Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida. It is a well-known fact that Japan spent only a fractional percentage of her GNP (about one percent or less than one percent of her GNP) on defense for many decades. As a result, Japan was able to allocate her natural and human resources on economic development. However, the amount of Japan's defense budget is huge placing Japan's defense budget among one of the top in the world. As Japan's economy grew, so did her defense budget.

Fourthly, the United States widely opened her domestic market to exports from Japan. Therefore, many Japanese highly evaluate the Security Treaty not because the United States protected Japan, but because the United States purchased products made in Japan. Those who support the Security Treaty think that Japan owes a lot to the United States for the postwar economic success. In fact, without the United States help, Japan would not have been able to develop her economy so quickly. However, it is also true that helping Japan economically stems from United States national interests.

Fifthly, the Security Treaty prevented resurgence of the Japanese militarism against ultra-rightists. Until the early 1980s, the Japanese ultra-rightists argued that Japan should have autonomous defense capability including nuclear weapons. They contended that Japan should convert the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) into National Army. However, the conservatives in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) argued that the United States would defend Japan under the Security Treaty and therefore Japan did not need autonomous defense capability.

Sixthly, the Security Treaty eased apprehension of the Japanese militarism among the Asian countries. In the past, China and South East Asian countries evaluated the Security Treaty saying that the United States needed to keep USFJ to check Japan's military power and to prevent resurgence of the Japanese militarism. The "cork in the bottle" argument is still accepted in Asian countries. However, it is also true that SDF grow the best armed forces in Asia in terms of conventional weapons under the Security Treaty.

Seventhly, the Security Treaty kept good relations with the United States, which was often called "social expenses" for Japan. Many conservative politicians including former Secretary General Koichi Kato of the LDP think that Japan must ally with the United States to avoid isolation from the international community and pay HNS to keep good relations with the United States. Therefore, for those conservative politicians and bureaucrats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense, HNS and sacrifices of the people in Okinawa are indeed "social expenses" that Japan must pay in order to keep good relations with the United States.

These points are advantages for the Japanese people to keep the Security Treaty and USFJ. Since many Japanese still believe that USFJ protect their lives and properties, which is not true, they prefer the status quo keeping the Security Treaty. However, many people in Okinawa have a different view. They do not want USFJ to stay in Okinawa. In fact, no municipal government welcomed USFJ when the Hatoyama

Administration looked for an alternative base for the Futenma Marine Corps.

Conclusion

This paper examines pros and cons for keeping USFJ from the viewpoints of both the United States and Japan. Since there are more advantages than disadvantages for the United States, the United States enjoys a lot of benefits under the Security Treaty. As for Japan, it seems that advantages and disadvantages are almost the same. However, if one carefully examines the contents of the disadvantages, the Security Treaty is not a good bargain for Japan. One can argue that the United States takes a free-ride on the Security Treaty because USFJ hurt the Japanese people, but receive money as HNS.

Why does the United States need her bases in Japan after the end of the Cold War? It is because USFJ and bases in Japan are indispensable to the United States global strategy and the United States can treat Japan as her vassal. The United States is concerned about growing power of China. Japan can help the United States check growing Chinese economic and military power. Moreover, Japan pays up to 75% of the maintenance cost for USFJ. Therefore, there is no reason why USFJ leave Japan when a landlord pays 75% of the rent. The United States faces fiscal deficit and has difficulty maintaining her military forces and budget at the current level. Japan is a great help.

Why does Japan wish to hold the Security Treaty and allow the United States to keep USFJ? There is a growing concern about the Chinese economic and military power in Japan among the Japanese elites. For many Japanese, in order to counter the Chinese power, Japan needs the United States military capability and diplomatic power. In this respect, the Japanese public and elites are still bound by the Cold War mentality. It is because they look at China through the eyes of the United States that needs an enemy all the time. Many Japanese cannot see the importance of China for both Japan's economy and security. Many conservative politicians and bureaucrats in Japan have been relying on the United States for more than half a century so that they do not have to decide on difficult diplomatic and security problems. As a result, they simply want to maintain the status quo.

In order to ease burdens of the people in Okinawa, the paper recommends that the Japanese government negotiate with the United States government to reduce the United States bases in Japan since there is little potential enemy for Japan. Japan does not face an imminent threat either. It is almost impossible to imagine that there would be a war between the United States and China when the United States heavily relies on the Chinese investment in the United States and China needs the United States market and technology. Then, why does Japan need the Marine Corps in Okinawa? USFJ are in Japan because they are comfortable living here. They are beyond the Japanese law and receive generous HNS. They have no reason to give up this comfortable life in Japan.

Japan also has to ask the United States government to revise SOFA because the Japanese people suffer from many accidents, crimes, and environmental destruction over more than sixty years. Those who hurt the Japanese people are not punished because of SOFA. Japan's sovereignty is restricted by SOFA that provides United States soldiers, civilian employees, and their family members in Japan with extraterritoriality. SOFA protects them, not the Japanese people. However, in order to keep good relations with the United States, the Japanese bureaucrats and conservative politicians do not try to revise SOFA. For them, Japan must not disturb a comfortable life of the members of USFJ and their families even at the expense of the people in Okinawa. The Japanese conservative politicians and bureaucrats give priority

to USFJ over the people in Okinawa. It is now a time for the Japanese government to change this kind of policy.

The Japanese government should tell the United States government to abolish HNS because the United States does not reduce USFJ and bases due to generous HNS. Particularly, Japan cannot afford to pay HNS because the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami hit the Tohoku region and the Japanese government needs all the money including HNS it needs. Since Japan does not face an urgent threat, HNS is a waste of the Japanese taxpayers' money and therefore should be saved. If the Japanese government abolishes HNS, the United States government has to reduce USFJ because of high appreciation of yen against a dollar. Without HNS, the United States cannot keep current level of USFJ. Therefore, eliminating HNS is a first step toward the reduction of USFJ.

Finally, Japan should eventually abolish the Security Treaty and establish a neutral Japan to regain her sovereignty. The Security Treaty is a legacy of the Cold War. It is now a time for Japan to abolish the Security Treaty and carry out a neutral policy. Many Japanese immediately think that Japan must increase her military capability and defense budget if she abrogates the Security Treaty. However, there is no need to do so. Japan must improve her relations with China, establish diplomatic relations with North Korea, and conclude a peace treaty with Russia even though Japan gives up the Northern Territory. These policies would certainly bring about economic benefits, security, and peace to Japan in place of the Security Treaty. China is now the most important trading partner for Japan. Therefore, Japan and China must cooperate with each other putting the territorial issue aside.

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