

EDITORIALS

Op-head (Editorial)

Subhead

Callouts

Op-head (Editorial)

Subhead

U.S., Japan need new dimension in bilateral ties

By YOICHI KATO

Asahi Shimbun Senior Writer



Daniel I. Okimoto

Tokyo and Washington should move to broaden their concept of security and focus their attention on such issues as global warming and aid to Africa, Daniel I. Okimoto, a professor emeritus at Stanford University, said in a recent interview. Such a bilateral approach would help stabilize a world now polarized by poverty, disease and natural disasters, he believes.

A close friend who advises new U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos, Okimoto expressed hope that U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to Tokyo in November will broaden the scope of bilateral cooperation to include areas such as clean technology.

Following are excerpts:

**Question:** How do you feel about the current economic situation and its implications for the U. S. security policy?

**Answer:** We probably have hit bottom and are beginning gradually to climb out of the deep financial and economic hole into which we had fallen. We're no longer facing the threat of a collapse of our global financial system.

But, the financial sector in Europe and the United States remains fragile and the economy still requires massive government spending in order to generate and maintain stable economic expansion. American households have had to overcome deeply ingrained patterns of heavy borrowing and profligate spending. Savings have risen from zero to 4 percent. Corporations have reduced capital investments because consumers are buying less. This has forced the government to step in to the demand vacuum and prime the pump.

Even after the United States begins to recover, the recovery will be weak. It will be a "sawtooth recovery," not a V-shaped turnaround. It may take two or three years before America returns to robust rates of steady growth—similar to, say, 1993-2000.

Defense budgets will have to be pared back. In 2008, depending on how you define it, the defense budget was around \$540 billion or \$550 billion. However, if you include supplemental and discretionary budgets, which cover the full costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the actual defense budget probably amounted to around \$1 trillion. That's huge.

President Obama scored a small but noteworthy victory when he and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates defeated the increase of spending for F-22 fighter planes in the budget. But they are going to have to do much more paring. There is plenty of room for a spending cuts, but the process will take time. Most weapons systems are multi-year projects, and most of the big ticket items can only be pared down gradually. That said, I do think that it is possible to prune defense spending back down to, say, 5 percent of GDP over time. It's about 7 percent now (if you include supplemental and discretionary budgets).

If the Obama administration can do that—a big "if"—the fiscal impact would be exceedingly positive, because precious, finite resources can be freed up and ploughed back into productive infrastructure investments—like smart power grids, a rapid transit system and the upgrading our energy infrastructure. If we reallocate resources to, say, clean technology and renewable energies, the U.S. economy could get back on to a robust growth trajectory, which will contribute to both global growth and the protection of the global environment.

**Q:** What are your views on the threats facing the world today?

**A:** No international system can be stable if the world economy is not growing and if the gap between the rich and the poor is wide. Unfortunately, global growth has been slowing down and economic inequality within and between nations has been widening.

Consider Africa. The continent is adrift. Much of sub-Saharan Africa is caught in a quagmire of grinding poverty, disease and tribal conflict.

The dire problems in Africa cannot be ignored. We simply cannot allow the disproportionate number of failed states in Africa to plunge the continent into anarchy, poverty and warfare.

Take Somalia. It is the prototype of a "failed state," where anarchy reigns, where ordinary people are forced to live with poverty, malnutrition, disease and constant fear of death, and where terrorists and jihadists have emerged. The advanced industrial world cannot stand by idly and allow Somalia to become a refuge for terrorist training and terrorist organization.

We need to pay more attention to the developmental needs of the African sub-Saharan continent as well as to other parts of the developing world, including South Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, East Europe and Central Asia. We cannot afford to allow whole continents to fall into abject poverty and anarchy. That would be a formula for disaster.

The other area where we confront serious security problems, broadly defined, is environmental degradation. Look at the nature of global warming. What you see already looming ahead on the horizon are slowly rising temperatures, leading to changes in rainfall and soil, volatility in weather patterns, floods, drought, famine, infectious diseases and pandemics. These are huge security problems. They are immediate and real, not hypothetical or statistically improbable. The probability of an outbreak of Avian flu, for example, may be as high as, say, a North Korean nuclear attack. Chinese citizens are more apt to suffer from the debilitating, cumulative toll of severe air and water pollution than they are from a sudden war with Taiwan. And it is not just the desperately impoverished regions of Africa which are vulnerable to the problem of natural disasters, compounded by environmental degradation. Even the fastest growing states, such as the BRICs—Brazil, Russia, India and China—are highly susceptible. The BRICs are sprawling land masses, with teaming populations, crammed together in densely-packed megacities, crowded cities and surrounding urban areas.

**Q:** How is the Obama administration faring on the domestic front?

**A:** The Republicans are seeking to avoid political marginalization. They're losing their national base of support. Increasingly, the Republican Party is turning into a shrinking base of conservative, older, white voters and the religious right, concentrated in the South. The Republicans are falling behind in the fastest growing segments of the U.S. electorate, especially young voters between the ages of 18-40, women and minority groups, particularly Hispanics and African Americans. So, what are the Republicans doing? They're embarked on a negative campaign. Republicans in Congress are voting against almost every piece of legislation that the Democrats sponsor, such as the stimulus package, health care reform, climate change and an regulatory reform. It's clear that the Republicans want the Obama administration to fail. For if the Obama administration succeeds in nursing the economy back to health and in pushing through historic reforms, such as the passage of universal health care, the Democratic Party may ensconce itself securely in power for years to come just as they did under President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression.

On the health care issue, we have witnessed a surge of partisan politicking. A great deal of misinformation, exaggerations, distortions and even some outright lies are being spread. For Obama, health care reform is the defining issue of his administration. Success or failure here will go far in defining Obama's legacy, to say nothing about his chances of re-election for a second term.

If America fails to reform health care, the runaway costs of health care

will threaten to bankrupt the country. It's critical, particularly in the wake of the financial implosion, that we find ways to control our fiscal expenditures. If we don't, American power will be severely impaired.

**Q:** What are your views on the status of the North Korean nuclear problem?

**A:** We've been trying to deal with the problem of nuclear proliferation in North Korea since the early years of the first Clinton administration in 1993-94. Unfortunately, we have not gotten very far. Since 2001, in fact, we have backslid. Since 2002 North Korea has developed we don't know how many nuclear weapons, but maybe six to eight. They've further refined their missile delivery capability, the Nodong and Taepodong missiles, and no doubt they have sold nuclear or missile technology—first to Syria, then to Iraq, and now, apparently, to Myanmar (Burma), and maybe to Iran as well.

The nuclear genie has been let out of the bottle. Israel, China, India, Pakistan and now North Korea have entered the ever-expanding circle of nuclear weapons states. Iran is trying to break in too.

**Q:** You mean the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Regime is collapsing?

**A:** Yes. It's awfully hard to denuclearize a country, or even to cap the number of nuclear weapons of a country, once it has crossed the threshold. The question is: Can the Obama administration find ways of persuading North Korea to give up the nuclear capability that it now possesses? I doubt it. From North Korea's perspective, this is the one weapon of last resort that is indispensable. It is true that with nearly a million soldiers and with hardened heavy artillery capable of inflicting considerable damage, North Korea possesses a formidable conventional force. Yet, with limited supplies and reserves of energy, and with scant financial resources, North Korea would not be able to carry on a conventional war for any extended period of time, nor unless China provides substantial energy supplies. Nuclear weapons also represent a visible symbol of power, perhaps North Korea's sole symbol of "accomplishment," and it is an instrumental means of exercising diplomatic leverage. North Korea's powerful and entrenched military would not be inclined to give up what has taken decades to develop.

**Q:** What would you suggest the United States should do?

**A:** First of all, America has to maintain the credibility of its extended deterrence.

If North Korea were to attack, say, South Korea or Japan, we would have to retaliate. We'd have to maintain our credibility in Northeast Asia. Otherwise, our credibility around the world, particularly in the Middle East, would be called into question.

**Q:** Should the United States do something tangible to enhance the credibility of extended deterrence?

**A:** Japan and the United States are already taking steps to strengthen the extended deterrence in Northeast Asia, by joint development of ballistic missile defense. This is an expensive and long-term undertaking, but it is essential for Japan to have a system of defense in place against the possibility of a pre-emptive strike from North Korea.

The threat posed by North Korean nuclear capability is not just that of an attack on neighboring nations, it is also the great danger of North Korea's transfer of technology, and possibly nuclear materials, to non-state actors. To terrorist groups. Now that is deeply worrisome. It is exceedingly difficult to forestall or prevent the transfer of fissionable materials and missile technology. This is what gives the North Korean nuclear issue an added sense of urgency.

President Bill Clinton's humanitarian mission to secure the release of two American journalists was, in my mind, a very positive development. I believe that the criticism that his visit to Pyongyang represented a kowtowing to North Korea is misplaced. The successful release of the two American journalists doesn't mean that the United States has made a secret promise to repay North Korea in some

way. Nor does it mean that the United States has retreated from the imposition of strong U.N. sanctions. Even though the efficacy of sanctions is unclear, the United States is prepared to move forward with the fairly stringent sanctions that the U.N. has approved. The release of those hostages is welcome, but we shouldn't run to the table with North Korea. And we should do it within the six-party talks and not just on a simple bilateral basis.

**Q:** How should six-party talks function?

**A:** What we need in the six-party talks is to come up with concrete contingency plans for North Korea, should a major crisis unfold, say, a succession crisis. We need to have an understanding of what steps will be taken (as well as what actions to avoid), with South Korea, Japan, China and Russia. It also would be desirable for the five powers to sit down and discuss the basic framework for a new security architecture in Asia.

**Q:** How do you think Japan's political situation will affect Japan-U.S. relations if the Democratic Party of Japan takes power on Aug. 30?

**A:** It will take two elections for any new ruling party to establish an enduring base of power. If there is a change in the political party in power, there will be a period of several years of fluidity before a new structure of political party alignment takes hold.

**Q:** The DPJ says it would change policies vis-a-vis the United States, for example, re-examining the planned relocation of the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Ginowan to Henoko in Nago, Okinawa Prefecture.

**A:** What I've noticed over the past several weeks is that the DPJ statements have stepped back from commitments to make immediate and far-reaching changes.

They've been backtracking from the positions of ending the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean and of moving quickly out of Futenma. What the DPJ leaders appear to be seeking is a smooth, seamless transition, where the bilateral issues don't get entangled with domestic reform priorities.

They may be taking too much on, if they tried to renegotiate the Status of Forces Agreement, while at the same time trying to reduce the power of the bureaucracy or to remedy the problems of Japan's pension system. That would be a formula for over-extension.

I think they will probably come into office and assess the political and economic situation, engaging in a dialogue with the Obama administration, and, over time, develop a concrete plan of action.

**Q:** What are your views on the overall status of our bilateral relations?

**A:** I think that it's in satisfactory shape. Of course, there are areas where it could be upgraded. What I would like to see is a broader concept of security agreed upon by both states. It would be desirable for more attention and resources to be devoted jointly to environmental issues clean technology and the alleviation of international poverty, hunger, infectious disease, natural disasters, anarchy, piracy and genocide. Bilateral cooperation in these areas could be strongly stabilizing as well as good for the global political economy.

**Q:** What is the primary objective of Obama's visit to Japan in November?

**A:** He has only one day in Japan. I think that the main goal would be to introduce himself to the Japanese leadership—whomever is in power at the time, and to reach out and connect with the Japanese people.

President Obama is one of those once-in-a-lifetime political figures who possesses the rare gift of charisma. This enables him to galvanize public support, and indeed, widespread enthusiasm and passion everywhere he travels, whether it be to Europe, Africa, the Middle East, or in Asia. It would be great to see him weave his charismatic magic in Japan. If he does, it would expand the degrees of operating freedom. President Obama could propose a vision of bilateral cooperation in, say, clean technology, and this could open up multiple avenues of bilateral cooperation, both in the public and private sectors.

VOX POPULI, VOX DEI

Op-head 36 1 deck (VOX)

As I will be working on Aug. 30, I exercised my right to vote by casting an early ballot. People kept coming in a steady stream to the just-opened polling station at the ward branch office, and it felt as if election day had been moved up one week. A senryu poem I'd seen in the Aug. 23 issue of the vernacular Asahi Shimbun popped up in my head: "I'm an early voter/Unable to sit still (until election day)."

Election forecasts by various newspapers all point to a landslide victory by the opposition Democratic Party of Japan. The Asahi Shimbun predicts that the DPJ "could capture 300 seats." The Yomiuri Shimbun says the tally "could top 300," while the Mainichi Shimbun boldly predicts "more than

320." And the later the publication date, the bigger the DPJ's expected size of victory. For the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, on the other hand, the nightmare is looming of losing half its seats.

It appears that non-affiliated voters, who accounted for the "Jun-chan boom" that enabled then-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to lead the ruling coalition to a historic victory in 2005 with his postal privatization policy, have decided this time to go along with the surging momentum for a change of government. While many voters are uneasy about the opposition party's campaign promises that sound too good to be true, they have apparently decided to at least give the

DPJ a try.

The single-seat constituency system, under which shifts in voters' moods have decisive consequences, is now a curse for the LDP and a blessing for the DPJ. The LDP has had four prime ministers in as many years. If the voters have finally reached their limit of tolerance with "same old same old" and decided to boot out the LDP, the party is in no position to disparage the "suggestible masses." In fact, the LDP has no right to lament its fate now, since it owed its 300 seats in the last Lower House election to the suggestible masses, too.

Could the public's mood change in the final week before election day? "It could change completely overnight or

in a couple of days," Prime Minister Taro Aso insisted on a TV program on Sunday, vowing an LDP's comeback. DPJ President Yukio Hatoyama, who is afraid of his party becoming smug, concurred with Aso on the same program, "There is too much media hype."

Time will prove if the media have reported correctly or incorrectly. For people in the media, too, the Aug. 30 election will be a historic moment of truth. For the first time in many years, maybe for the first time in my life, I myself feel this strong sense of being a part of history in the making—not as a newspaper columnist, but as a voting citizen.

—The Asahi Shimbun, Aug. 24

The Asahi Shimbun

Japan's Leading National Newspaper  
ESTABLISHED 1879

Kotaro Akiyama  
President and Chief Executive Officer

ENGLISH EDITION  
Nobuo Watari, Director and Executive Editor  
Masao Hirai, Managing Editor  
Toshio Jo, Deputy Managing Editor  
Susumu Maejima, Mayo Isobe and  
Makoto Sekimoto, Deputy Editors  
Koichi Nakagawa, Deputy Director (Editorial)  
Katsuyuki Yasui, Manager (Circulation)

3-2, Tsukiji 5-chome, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-8011  
http://www.asahi.com/ht-asahi/  
Newsroom Tel.: (03) 5540-7641  
Fax: (03) 5542-6172  
E-mail: iht-asahi@asahi.com

Advertising Dept. Tel.: (03) 5541-8149  
Fax: (03) 5565-9502

E-mail: hadv@asahi.com

Business Dept. Tel.: (03) 5541-8695  
Fax: (03) 5541-8696  
E-mail: H-A@asahi.com

Subscription & Delivery: ¥4,160 a month.  
Single copy price ¥160. All prices include tax.  
Toll-free 0120-456-371

Other contact points:  
Tokyo: Tel. (03) 5541-8695  
Tsukiji 5-chome, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-8011.  
Osaka: Tel. (06) 6231-0131  
Nakanoshima 3-chome, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-8211.  
Fukuoka: Tel. (092) 477-6016  
Hakata-eki mae 2-chome, Hakata-ku, Fukuoka 812-8511  
Nagoya: Tel. (052) 231-8131  
Sakae 1-chome, Naka-ku, Nagoya 460-8488.  
Sapporo: Tel. (011) 281-2131  
Kita 2-Nishi 1, Chuo-ku, Sapporo 060-8602.  
For overseas subscriptions, contact Overseas Courier Service (OCS): Tel. (03) 5476-8131.