



THE MAUREEN AND MIKE MANSFIELD FOUNDATION

Testimony of

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May 24, 2011

**Before the
House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asia and the
Pacific**

Hearing on

“The Future of Japan”

Now that over two months have passed since the tragic events of March 11, 2011 in Japan, attention is understandably turning from rescue and relief operations to the challenge of recovery. While the most immediate tasks involve continuing efforts to secure the troubled nuclear power plant in Fukushima and the process of rebuilding many devastated communities, this hearing provides a much-needed opportunity to explore the broader implications of the tragedy for Japan's role in the region and in the world.

Given the very real fiscal constraints which the Japanese government was facing even prior to the events of March 11, a common presumption is that Japan may now be forced to focus its already scarce resources on domestic concerns and will thus be unable to play an active role in the region. This presumption is particularly concerning in that even prior to the earthquake and tsunami there was significant evidence of trends suggesting that Japan was increasingly looking inward. In early 2010, the Mansfield Foundation published a report by Visiting Fellow Mizuki Yamanaka which documented in some detail the relative decline in the number of Japanese students studying in the U.S. and Japanese business representatives traveling to the U.S. and in the general level of Japan's engagement with the United States, the region, and the world.¹ Whether the events of this spring accelerate or reverse these trends in the coming months and years will be a key indicator of Japan's trajectory and its role in the region.

In the context of the international community's response to Japan's challenges, however, there are already some indications of possible positive trends. To begin with, it is worth noting that in regards to international offers of support, the response of the Japanese government to the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and tsunami in 2011 was fundamentally different to the then Japanese government's response to the Kobe Earthquake in 1995. In 1995 Japan initially refused international offers of assistance, citing language differences and the lack of Japanese medical certifications for foreign doctors, etc. This time, however, Japan willingly and gratefully accepted offers of assistance from across the globe and by all accounts the Japanese media and the Japanese people were truly impressed by the

¹ Mizuki Yamanaka, "Change in Human Flows between the United States and Japan: Report and Policy Implications," Mansfield Foundation, March 2010.
http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/pubs/pub_pdfs/usjapanexchanges.pdf

tremendous outpouring of concern and support. Surveys such as the Chicago Council on Global Affairs' 2008 report on *Soft Power in Asia*² and the Center for Strategic and International Studies' 2009 report on *Strategic Views on Asian Regionalism*³ have long made it clear that, with the exception of Korea and China where historical legacies linger, Japan is one of the most widely respected and positively viewed countries in the world. Hopefully the events of the past few months have driven that message home to the Japanese public. While it is again too early to tell, yet another important indicator in the coming months and years will be whether this generous international response will inspire a resurgence of interest in international affairs among the rising generation in Japan.

While seemingly a minor matter, praise in the Japanese media for Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto's decision to travel to the U.S., Europe and Africa in early May to express Japan's gratitude for international support— despite the fact that the Diet was in the middle of drafting a supplementary budget and parliamentary conventions in Japan which would normally require all Cabinet members to attend Diet sessions—is a potentially meaningful development. Similarly, while there may be no direct correlation, the announcement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano this past Friday May 20 that the government of Japan has decided to prepare to ratify the 1980 Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction is a potentially significant development on a difficult and sensitive issue that must in part be viewed in the context of how Japan views the broader international community.

The particular challenge of this hearing is that in the scant two months since March 11, there has been little opportunity to Japanese officials to do anything but crisis management at home and thus few opportunities to assess the likely trajectory of Japan in the mid- to long-term. However, on May 1, Foreign Minister Matsumoto authored an oped in the *International Herald Tribune* declaring that Japan was open for business, but also promising that “Japan will reshape itself into a more dynamic country, harnessing the support and solidarity offered to us from all over the world.”⁴ Similar sentiments were expressed on May 22 following this

² http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/Files/Studies_Publications/POS/POS2008/Soft_Power_in_Asia.aspx

³ http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/090217_gill_stratviews_web.pdf

⁴ <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/iken/11/0430en.html>

past weekend's two-day summit in Tokyo between Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and South Korean President Lee Myung Bak, and one might expect further expression from Prime Minister Naoto Kan when he attends the G-8 Summit in France this week. While such proclamations must ultimately be followed by actions, they do help frame the context of a post-3/11 Japan and give cause for hope that Japan will be more rather than less engaged internationally.

Of most immediate concern to the United States, the events of March 11 also served to cast the U.S.-Japan alliance in a new light. Put simply, despite some declared preferences for issue-based “coalitions of the willing” over the past decade, in a very tangible way the U.S. response to the emergency in Japan demonstrated that “alliances matter.” Decades of close coordination and cooperation coupled with the proximity resources of U.S. forces stationed in Japan allowed United States to support Japanese rescue, relief and recovery efforts in an unprecedented manner. An editorial in the *Asahi Shimbun* in Japan described the U.S. forces' disaster relief mission, Operation Tomodachi, as “a powerful demonstration of the depth and strength of the relationship the two countries have built up since the end of World War II.”⁵

This is particularly meaningful in that, in contrast to the situation in the Republic of Korea where the role and benefit of U.S. forces stationed on the peninsula has always been clear, there has been far too little effort made to articulate to the Japanese public a core justification for the presence of U.S. forces in Japan. The combination of rising Japanese concerns about the role of China in the region stoked by last year's confrontation over the Senkaku Islands and the proactive and public role that U.S. forces have played in disaster relief both promise to deepen what were already record-high levels of public support in Japan for the U.S.-Japan alliance. This is not to dismiss the very real fiscal constraints which both Japan and the U.S. will face for the foreseeable future. However, there is reason to believe that the events of March 11 provide both Japan and the United States an

⁵ <http://www.asahi.com/english/TKY201105020148.html>

opportunity to explore areas of expanded cooperation and joint activity that could potentially result in greater efficiencies for both parties.

As the other witnesses at this hearing have tremendous expertise in Japan and in China. I will instead focus my remarks on Japan's relationship with another key ally in Northeast Asia, the Republic of Korea. While it is too early to draw any firm conclusions about the broader future of Japan or the trajectory of its role in the region, Japan's relationship with South Korea will be an important early indicator of this likely future trajectory.

Despite a troubled history of bilateral relations, in the past several years there have been some rather significant improvements in Korea-Japan relations. Changes of governments in both Seoul and Tokyo have led to a relative alignment in outlook, and other developments in the region have only served to emphasize the shared perspective, interests, and even values between Japan and Korea. Japan was an early and vocal supporter of South Korea after the tragic sinking of the South Korean Corvette the *Cheonan* in March of last year, as well as after the shelling of the Yeonpyeong Island by North Korea in November of last year. Likewise Japan shared in South Korea's frustration at the unwillingness on the part of China to respond to or even recognize North Korea's role in and responsibility for these actions. Furthermore, China's harsh reaction to incidents surrounding the Senkaku Islands and its strongly stated position on the South China Sea only served to further reinforce a sense of commonality between Korea and Japan.

Partially in response to these developments, last year officers from Japan's Self-Defense Forces observed U.S. South Korean military exercises and South Korean military officers likewise participated as observers in U.S.-Japan military exercises. In January 2011, Japanese Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa became the first Japanese defense minister to visit South Korea in six years and the Republic of Korea and Japan agreed to start discussions on an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) as well as a General Security of Military Information Agreement. Also of note, there was significant cooperation between Korean and Japanese forces in responding to the earlier earthquake in Haiti. While these may be small steps, in the Korea-Japan context they represent significant developments and help set the stage for Korea's response to the events of March 11.

Aided in part by proximity, the Korean government's decision to dispatch a rescue team to the disaster area within days of the earthquake was the earliest action by any government. Korea also very early on sent boric acid to help control the Fukushima nuclear facilities and the individual and collective response of Korean citizens and celebrities alike was remarkable. A poll by the Seoul-based East Asia Institute in March found that 76.4 percent of Koreans surveyed supported the collection of funds for dispatching rescuers to Japan.⁶

There are of course still strains in the Korea-Japan relationship. Even as Korea was providing emergency assistance to Japan the territorial dispute over the Dokdo/ Takeshima Islands threatened Korean goodwill as new Japanese textbooks were released repeating Japan's claims. However, if the Korea-Japan relationship is used to measure the likely trajectory of Japan in the coming months and years the early indicators are mostly positive. There is no sign of any change in Japanese cooperation with the U.S. and South Korea on coordinating a common trilateral position on North Korea, the prospects for Japan-Korea security cooperation look good, and judging from the agenda of the summit meeting between Prime Minister Kan and President Lee Myung Bak this past weekend, there are even brighter prospects for Japan-Korea information-sharing, cooperation on nuclear safety and development, and on ongoing recovery efforts, all developments that should be welcome in Washington.

⁶ http://www.eai.or.kr/type/panelView.asp?bytag=n&code=eng_eainmedia&idx=9972&page=1

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs

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1. Name: L. Gordon Flake	2. Organization or organizations you are representing: Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation
3. Date of Committee hearing: May 24, 2011	
4. Have you received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	5. Have any of the organizations you are representing received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6. If you answered yes to either item 4 or 5, please list the source and amount of each grant or contract, and indicate whether the recipient of such grant was you or the organization(s) you are representing. You may list additional grants or contracts on additional sheets. The Mansfield Foundation receives an annual grant through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the Department of State in support of the Mike Mansfield Fellowship Program. This program trains and sends U.S. Civil servants to Japan to serve in their counterpart agencies as part of an effort to build a cadre of U.S. Government employees with expertise in Japan. FY 2010 Grant: \$1.92 million	
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