FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

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REASSESSING U.S.-JAPAN RELATIONS

A reassessment of the relationship the United States and Japan is long overdue. The military and economic dynamics of the two countries have changed dramatically since the U.S.-Japan Treaty was signed, but we are handicapped by the treaty terms and the psychology of an obsolete document. Forward-looking Japanese realize this, but so long as the U.S. government accepts the status quo, Japanese politicians choose the easy way and drift along in the pattern set after World War II.

The U.S.-Japan Treaty is unrealistic in military and economic terms, unfair to the United States, and demeaning to the Japanese. Put bluntly, it is not a treaty between equals, or peers, or allies, but one that makes Japan a perpetual protectorate of Big Brother America.

The U.S.-Japan Treaty was fashioned in the World War II climate in which China and Russia were our friends and Japan was our enemy. Our leaders believed that Japan should remain indefinitely as a small, neutral nation, a sort of Switzerland of the Orient.

So the victorious Americans gave the defeated Japanese a national constitution that decreed that "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized." This was followed by the U.S-Japan Treaty under which the United States assumed the ironclad, unilateral obligation for Japan's national defense.

Thirty-five years later, the military balance has shifted drastically. The Soviet Union is the Number One power in the world and a strategic threat to the United States, Japan, and China. Japan and China are both strategic military zeroes.

The economic picture has changed just as dramatically. At the end of World War II, Japan was in ruins. Even after it had "recovered," by 1950, its Gross National Product was less than 5 percent of ours. By 1960, Japan's GNP was still only 8 percent of ours. But toward the end of the 1960s, Japan started to catch up fast.

Today, Japan has a GNP more than 50 percent of the United States'. Japan's GNP is

about equal to the U.S.S.R.'s, or of England and France combined, or of all other Asian countries (including India) combined. Furthermore, Japan is far more advanced than the Soviet Union in most technological areas other than military.

Japan, therefore, is the richest prize (after the United States) that any greedy aggressor (such as the Soviet Union) could covet. Of all countries, Japan desperately needs the cover of a credible strategic umbrella. Japan's prosperity, indeed its survival, absolutely depend on the protection of a nuclear deterrent <u>that works</u>.

For the first 30 years of the atomic age (1945 to 1975), the U.S. nuclear umbrella served Japan perfectly. It enabled the Japanese to enjoy the best of two worlds: to expend zero percent of their GNP on strategic defense, and yet to enjoy the security provided by the greatest strategic nuclear force in the world.

Japan has even been spending less than one percent of its GNP on defense on conventional weapons. This is far lower than the peacetime NATO average, far lower than America's defense spending at 5 to 6 percent of GNP, and tremendously lower than the Soviet Union's at 15 percent of GNP.

Japan's constitution does not pose any legal or moral problem. The defense provision has already been re-interpreted to allow the purchase of American F4 Phantom and F15 Eagle fighter planes. There can be no moral problem, since all nations (like all individuals) have the moral right of self-defense which may not be contracted away.

The present situation is expensive from the American point of view: Japan has been getting a free ride in defense at our expense, and it's time that Japan share the burden of defense against the Soviet Union in the Pacific theater. The situation is embarrassing from the Japanese point of view: a sovereign state and economic superpower has accepted total dependency for its national security on another nation.

Fortunately, some Japanese scholars and opinion leaders have formed a Committee for Establishing an Equitable Alliance Between Japan and the United States. They have signed a joint statement affirming that "national dignity and destiny require all sovereign nations to accept primary responsibility for providing for their own defense; ... (and) that a truly equal treaty relationship will require additional sacrifices by the Japanese people but we will willingly accept this as reasonable and necessary."