

March 1, 2011

On "Japan-U.S. Relations in the Era of Smart Power"

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On February 14, 2011, I attended a conference in Tokyo called "the Japan-U.S. Dialogue: Japan-U.S. Relations in the Era of Smart Power" (conference papers of the "Dialogue" can be referred to at the following link: <http://www.gfj.jp/eng/dialogue/38/cp.pdf>). The conference was co-sponsored by the Global Forum of Japan (GFJ) and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). So long as the conference dealt with "the Era of Smart Power," Japan-U.S. cooperation in this context was supposed to embody both the soft and hard aspects of power, but I could not help getting the impression that the discussions in the conference were disproportionately focused on Japan-U.S. cooperation in hard power aspect centering on military might. Therefore, with a view to making up for the imbalance of the discussions, I made a remark laying emphasis on the importance of Japan-U.S. soft power cooperation, especially in the economic realm. Following is the gist of my remark.

As regards the global economic management, Japan and the U.S. have cooperated closely in Group of Seven and Eight over thirty years. Within the current G20 framework with enlarged membership, the two countries have continued their cooperation in financial stability and macro-economic policies, and now tackling the issue of increasing food prices. G20 will be expanded to combat energy, environment, and other global challenges. They should work hard to conclude the prolonged DDA negotiation of WTO within this year. The U.S. and Japan should lead its discussions together with EU and encourage new members, especially BRICs to behave as responsible stakeholders in combating these issues.

Japan and the U.S. should also discuss to strengthen their cooperation in maintaining the peace and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region. Asia Pacific is now most dynamic and plays a locomotive role of the world economy and the two countries have to cooperate in maintaining it. Unlike in Europe, the institutionalization of regional economic cooperation has been delayed and the region still faces big challenges in diplomacy and security, as numerous people point out.

Here we witness two moves in the regional economic cooperation, which tend to conflict with each other. One is ASEAN + 3, while the other is Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). ASEAN + 3, pushed by China, excludes the U.S., while the TPP negotiated under the U.S. leadership does not include China. The U.S.-China joint leaders' statement in last month does welcome China as a responsible stakeholder but Chinese feel that she is excluded. Japanese PM Kan has taken a strong initiative in joining TPP but the current TPP composition (excluding China) does not promise us with a big scale merit.

At APEC Yokohama last November, Leaders set as the long term goal FTAAP (FTA of the Asia-Pacific), including both the U.S. and China. Leaders suggested both ASEAN + 3 and TPP as two roadmaps to be promoted in parallel. In order to mitigate the conflict between the two moves, we need to strengthen the APEC's continued TILF process itself as an effective incubator for the FTAAP. The U.S. host APEC this year and start its leadership in the first SOM next week and Japan, as the immediate preceding host, should help the US in clarifying their strong commitment to FTAAP. I believe this aspect need to be addressed in the Japan-U.S. smart power cooperation.

(This is an original contribution by Prof. YAMAZAWA Ippei, Professor Emeritus of Hitotsubashi University, to "GFJ Commentary" on 1 March 2011. Prof. YAMAZAWA is a Opinion Leader Member of GFJ.)