

Japan pays high price for US presence

Tokyo treats the alliance as the cornerstone of its security and foreign policy even at the expense of nation's sovereignty

There is no such thing as a free lunch in this world. The security treaty signed in 1951 and revised in 1960 grants the United States the right to military bases in Japan in exchange for a US pledge to defend the East Asian nation in the event of an attack on the country.

Tokyo pays dearly for the US military presence. Around 54,000 US



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military personnel are on Japanese soil — the largest force stationed overseas of the entire US military. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wants to increase the number of tourists to the country to 40 million by 2020. To reach the goal, Japan mulls having more international flights from Tokyo's Haneda Airport. The planned route passes through an area where the US Yokota Air Base handles air traffic control.

The Abe administration has been negotiating with the US for Washington's permission for Japanese planes to fly in the area and for Japanese controllers to navigate aircraft. But the US has said no to the idea.

This has people in the country debating again whether the US-Japan Security Treaty violates Japan's sovereignty.

The US forces are spread out across a number of Japan's islands, with a heavy concentration on the island of Okinawa, and Headquarters US Forces Japan at Yokota Air Base outside western Tokyo serves as the primary hub. Large areas of skies over and waters around the Japanese territories, as well as huge land spaces, are reserved for training by US Forces Japan.

Skies over Japan's airports such as Narita, Haneda, Kansai and Fukuoka are under the control of US Forces Japan. As a result, many commercial airplanes coming in and out of Japan have to fly low or take a detour, costing extra time and fuel.

The Yokota airspace, which expands over the west of Haneda Airport, came under the US-led Allied Powers' control after the end of World War II. After that, its traffic control was transferred to the US military. Since then, the US Air Force, based on the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement, has controlled the air traffic of US military and Japan Self-Defense Forces aircraft to and from the Yokota, Atsugi and Iruma bases.

In May 2006, Japan and the US agreed on the Yokota airspace's

partial reversion as a step in the process of realigning US forces in Japan. In October 2008, the US returned 20 percent of the airspace's area and 50 percent of its volume. In the past, civilian aircraft were allowed to pass through the airspace with permission from the US military.

For safety and other reasons, however, the greater part of civilian airplanes from Haneda Airport to such destinations as Kyushu, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and China turned and made a steep climb over Tokyo Bay to fly over the Yokota airspace.

The extraterritoriality that US service members enjoy in Japan has also been a source of contention. US military personnel are exempted from local Japanese laws. Due to limited sovereignty, the Japanese government has difficulty dealing with the cases of crimes, accidents and environmental destruction caused by US military personnel.

Cases involving rape, vehicular homicide and other violent crimes perpetrated by US service members against Japanese civilians have caused increasing resentment.

US military personnel are granted other privileges, such as use of any Japanese facilities without cleaning or restoring them, access to any port without paying tolls, priority over Japanese citi-

zens in using public services, and exemption from passport and visa requirements.

US President Donald Trump addressed US troops at Yokota Air Base just after landing in Japan on Nov 5, 2017, to kick off his Asia tour. "We dominate the sky. We dominate the sea. We dominate the land and space," he said. "Not merely because we have the best equipment, which we do, and by the way, a lot of it's coming in."

US Forces Japan deployed five CV-22 Osprey transport aircraft at Yokota Air Base this month. It is the first time for the CV-22 model — which is specially fitted for US Air Force operations, mainly for its special forces — to be deployed in Japan. US Air Station Futenma in Ginowan in Okinawa prefecture has 24 MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft with Marines specifications.

Up to a total of 10 Ospreys are scheduled to be deployed at Yokota Air Base in the next few years. That means about 450 extra personnel will be eventually required to man the 10 aircraft.

Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft have been plagued by a series of accidents and engine troubles.

Residents near Yokota Air Base protested against the CV-22 Osprey deployment, worrying about noise and the increased risk of accidents. Trump said in March 2016 that

the US would not maintain military bases abroad unless allies like Japan and the ROK coughed up more money to retain them.

But the Abe administration wants the US to keep its troops in East Asia. The Japanese government is determined to commit itself to firm security collaboration with the US as the only viable and clearly ideal security policy for Japan.

Slightly less than 30,000 US troops are stationed in the ROK. In an interview with the *Financial Times*, Abe said Japan opposes any withdrawal of US forces from the Korean Peninsula in exchange for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) denuclearization.

Washington and Pyongyang are considering a second summit between Trump and the DPRK's top leader Kim Jong-un, following their historic meeting in June.

Japan takes its alliance with the US as the cornerstone of its security and foreign policy even at the expense of its sovereignty. However, the US refusal of new international flights from Haneda Airport through Yokota airspace may scupper Abe's goal of attracting 40 million foreign tourists to Japan by 2020.

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Reciprocity key to denuclearization

The US must change its tough stance to make progress toward peace on the Korean Peninsula

After his meeting with Kim Jong-un, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), in Pyongyang on Oct 8, United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed the two countries can make "real progress" on denuclearization at a second summit.

Two experts shared their views with *China Daily's* PAN YIXUAN on how to achieve further development. Excerpts follow:

Narrow the gap in expectations

Wang Sheng, a researcher at the Co-Innovation Center for Korean Peninsula Studies and professor of International Politics at Jilin University

Meeting Kim, confirming the DPRK's willingness to continue denuclearizing, and reaching some

agreements on Kim's next meeting with US President Donald Trump, Pompeo's trip was another step forward for the two countries.

However, there were no breakthroughs announced on the denuclearization stalemate. Pyongyang did not make a declaration as urged by Washington and Washington did not promise the reciprocity required by Pyongyang.

Though the convocation of another summit between the US and DPRK leaders appears to be on the cards, they may still quite differ in their agendas.

When Pompeo visited the Republic of Korea (ROK) before he met Kim, the ROK put up a proposal that the US could sign a declaration to end the Korean War, which would be easier to reach in the short term, in exchange for the US inspecting the DPRK's dismantling of its nuclear weapons sites. But

the US prefers a peace treaty, which will take more time.

Pompeo acknowledged China's contributions to the peninsula's denuclearization and China's potential role in a peace treaty, which may be an intention to increase pressure on the DPRK to take bolder steps in denuclearization.

But when Pompeo visited East Asia, DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui held trilateral talks with Russia and China in Moscow on Oct 9, which could be the DPRK's attempt to gain more support for its expectations of the denuclearization negotiations.

There will be no substantial development at a second US-DPRK summit, if one takes place, unless the US and the DPRK narrow their differences. In the current period, Washington's views on the ROK's end-of-war proposal is important.

US must be more flexible

Jin Qiangyi, a researcher at the Center for North and South Korea Studies of Yanbian University

The DPRK dismantling its nuclear test sites and missile facilities is only freezing its nuclear program. For complete denuclearization, the DPRK will have to accept inspections of the dismantling process and declare all the details of its nuclear weapons.

Therefore it is hard to expect the US to act in line with Pyongyang's series of "denuclearizing efforts".

However, the US should change its tough stance and ease the pressure on the DPRK. Pyongyang will not do more substantial denuclearization without reciprocation.

In fact, the stalemate between Washington and Pyongyang has not changed much.

It is difficult for the United

Nations to lift sanctions and for the US to reduce its military threat. But action-for-action reciprocity should be brokered by other countries, such as a promise of not worsening sanctions in the current phase, easing sanctions if Pyongyang makes tangible progress toward denuclearization, a schedule of economic aid and cooperation in line with further advancements.

It is time to draft plans to support the DPRK's economic recovery and opening-up as economic development should be the DPRK's priority.

For example, if the US, China, the ROK, Russia, and Japan, which have interests in Northeast Asia, all want to take a lead in the denuclearization process, the process cannot move steadily unless they move in the same direction. There needs to be joint economic support for a denuclearized Pyongyang.