

Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (RIETI)

BBL Seminar Reference

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**“Developing an Alliance Agenda
for an Era of Geostrategic Change”**

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***As per the author's request, this handout is not for quotation.**

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Remarks for the RIETI Seminar
An Alliance for an Era of Geostrategic Change
Sheila A. Smith, Council on Foreign Relations
September 10, 2014

My conclusions first:

- A. No doubt about it. We are in an era of significant geostrategic change, and the events of the past year should alert us to the fact that our institutions of the past half-century may not be fully adequate in coping with the volatility we see today.
- B. The U.S.-Japan Alliance is one of the most important institutional arrangements in Asia in the past half-century. But it is not the same alliance today as it was in 1952, or as it was when the treaty was revised in 1960.
- C. In hindsight, it weathered past moments of significant geostrategic change well, although there were serious jolts along the way. Moments like the opening to China (one of many “Nixon shocks”) and the end of the Cold War (North Korea’s nuclear proliferation and serious Taiwan Straits showdown) shook the staid day-to-day practices of alliance management.
- D. Today, we are at another moment to consider if our alliance is suited to the changes ahead. Are we ready? How must we adapt? Can the U.S. and Japan adjust not only in their own relationship, but also in the way we work together in the Asia-Pacific? We cannot see this alliance as simply a military arrangement but must marshal all of our resources.

Issues for Discussion:

- I. **What is new? And what pressures does it put on the alliance to adapt?**
 - A. The rise of China and the growing maritime competition
 - B. The rising anxiety about geostrategic change in China’s neighbors
 - C. The military dimension: new arms races, new domains
 - D. U.S. policy preferences? The “rebalance to Asia” and crises in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq
 - E. Japan on the frontline rather than in a supporting role

II. Crisis management and risk reduction: The South and East China Seas

- A. Maritime boundaries
- B. Sovereignty claims
- C. The maritime and air domains
- D. Engaging the Chinese military: US-PRC mil-to-mil talks
- E. Historical precedent in Asia for slowing rising powers?
- F. Mechanisms to prevent escalation
- G. Risk aversion and risk tolerance?

III. New challenges for collective action

- A. Our alliance mechanics: 1978, 1997 and today's Guidelines
- B. Japan-China rivalry in Asia? ASEAN's fears
- C. The regional impact of unresolved historical legacies
 - a. Japan-South Korea and the setback for U.S. led alliance trilateral security cooperation
 - b. China's abandonment of Japan-PRC-ROK trilateral effort at regional cooperation
 - c. The East Asia Summit
 - d. New alignments for Japan? Australia, India, Russia
- D. Economic interdependence and TPP: where are the vulnerabilities/opportunities?
- E. What has become of the Obama Administration's "rebalance to Asia"?

IV. Factoring in the domestic pressures

- A. *Japan's New Politics and the U.S.-Japan Alliance*
- B. Growing nationalisms in NE Asia and the postwar settlements
- C. Historical reconciliation as a strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance
- D. Political leaders and their responsibilities