

Foreword

U.S.-JAPAN RELATIONS have been a central focus of the activities of the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) since its establishment in 1970. As Mike Mansfield, American ambassador to Japan, repeatedly proclaimed, the United States and Japan have “the most important bilateral relationship in the world, bar none!” This volume attempts to critically review this important bilateral relationship from both sides of the partnership and, where possible, provide guidelines for improving relations.

How relevant today is an alliance that was forged between a powerful United States and a weak Japan in the context of a cold war struggle with the Soviet Union? In what ways have the changes in the relative power positions of the two countries and the structural changes in the world economy created new challenges to the U.S.-Japan relationship, and how are the two countries responding to those changes?

These are some of the important questions addressed by the four Japanese and four American authors of the chapters in this volume. The authors discuss a range of issues related to the U.S.-Japan alliance, namely, military relations, trade and financial management, shifting security perspectives, and the role of the mass media in the bilateral relationship. It was our good fortune to have Gerald Curtis—indisputably one of the most outstanding observers of the U.S.-Japan relationship—of Columbia University’s East Asian Institute to lead and guide this bilateral team of the best-trained younger political scientists. The group met twice in the form of a workshop, once in April 1998 in Kisarazu, Japan, to discuss the division of labor among participants and again in July 1999 to discuss the drafts of each chapter.

This bilateral research project was undertaken by JCIE as a part of its Global

ThinkNet program, which is funded by various foundations and other philanthropic institutions, most notably the Nippon Foundation. I would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to these financial contributors. My thanks should also be directed to Gerald Curtis, who not only guided the team in their deliberations but also provided detailed comments on each draft chapter. Lastly, I would like to thank all the participants of the project; their truly bilingual interactions were an inspiration to all of us who were fortunate enough to observe the process.

Yamamoto Tadashi
President
Japan Center for International Exchange