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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Time: November 9, 1978 1:10-3:05 p.m.

Participants:

United States

Honorable Harold Brown, Secretary of Defense
Honorable Michael Mansfield, U.S. Ambassador to Japan
Honorable David E. McGiffert, Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA)
John G. Kester, The Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense
Michael H. Armacost, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, East Asia/Inter-American Affairs (ISA)
William C. Sherman, Deputy Chief of Mission, American Embassy, Tokyo
Nicholas Platt, Senior Staff Member, National Security Council
Albert Seligmann, Political Counselor, Japanese Embassy, Tokyo

Japanese

Honorable Sonoda, Sunao, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Honorable Arita, Keisuke, Vice-Minister Foreign Affairs
Honorable Nakajima, Toshijiro, Director General, American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Honorable Takashima, Masuo, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
Honorable Okazaki, Hisahiko, Foreign Ministry
Honorable Tamba, Minora, Chief of Security Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Sato, Yukio, Private Secretary to the Foreign Minister

Foreign Minister Sonoda suggested that in view of the short amount of time available he and the Secretary skip elaborate introductions. Sonoda undertook to lead off, commenting that in Japan the weaker player at the game of go always started off. He said that, speaking frankly, several years ago he was inclined to think in terms of a State Department view and a Defense Department view, but that today Secretaries Vance and Brown were in accord, which made it easier to deal with one view in regard to both thinking and actions. Sonoda said that one year ago Asian countries were concerned that the U.S. was withdrawing from Asia. This concern had been conveyed by Japan to the President and Secretary Vance. The situation was serious in that Asian countries in so many words said the U.S. could not be relied upon.

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Now this state of affairs had completely changed and Asian countries pursued their nation building with their U.S. relationship as the key element. Two major factors were responsible for this change: major speeches by Secretary Brown, Secretary Vance, and others, and actions by the United States such as those demonstrating its staying power in Korea.

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Sonoda said maintenance of the US-Japan security treaty was his first concern as Foreign Minister, while the first concern for the Defense Minister was how to implement the treaty. Sonoda had been telling the leaders of other countries, including the Soviet Union, that Japan's relations with the U.S. were the cornerstone of Japanese foreign policy. What Secretary Brown had accomplished in the past year had contributed to strengthening Japan's position. With the security treaty as the cornerstone of Japanese foreign policy, the U.S. and Japan united could avoid conflict. Japan needed to stabilize the use of U.S. bases in Japan to produce confidence among the Japanese people that the government could deal with an emergency. Sonoda said he was aware of U.S. budgetary constraints and the effect of yen appreciation. The government was exploring ways in which the Japanese side could cooperate.

It was important to get the understanding of the Japanese people and neighboring countries, including the Soviet Union, that the U.S. and Japan were in accord. Recently voices were heard in Japan calling for the strengthening of the Japanese defense forces, but he could not welcome these unconditionally. There were two arguments: (1) Japan must act within a framework consistent with the U.S.-Japan security relationship; (2) U.S. forces were insufficient and unreliable in an emergency so that Japan must strengthen its own forces. Sonoda said the second argument was dangerous and he would do his best to see that the first argument prevailed. His personal view was that it was not in order to enter into a diet debate on the need for emergency legislation. He was no expert, but it seemed to him the self-defense forces could do much within the context of present legislation by reorganizing their structure, e.g., by strengthening naval forces as opposed to emphasis on ground forces.

Elsewhere in Asia Sonoda took note of the tensions on the Indo-China peninsula, but said he did not believe it would lead to war. Similarly, he thought the interaction among the interests of the Soviet Union, China and the United States should prevent major conflict from taking place on the Korean peninsula.

Sonoda said he was sure labor-cost sharing had been discussed in detail with the Defense Minister. He would only point out that while he fully appreciated the problem, whatever Japan did had to be worked out within the framework of the SOFA. In regard to actual figures, if the ratio of support were compared, Japan was well on a par with West Germany.

Recalling his remarks with regard to cabinet-level discussion of security matters, Sonoda said he was avoiding at this stage reorganization of the US-Japan security system lest it be related mistakenly to signing of the PFT or some other development. Japan's role was to prevent conflict in Asia and to cooperate to avoid U.S. involvement in conflict. Accordingly, there was need to inject political views into frequent exchanges at a cabinet level, in which Japan could present its thoughts on the security system and its political judgments as it pursued its foreign policy.

Finally, Sonoda said he was convinced from his frank exchanges with Chinese leaders that there was a change in the PRC attitude toward Taiwan and the possibility of conflict with the United States had declined appreciably.

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Secretary Brown said the Chinese had chosen to make Taiwan the central question in regard to normalization.

The U.S. in turn was committed to normalization, but maintained the strong view that it hoped to resolve the Taiwan question peacefully. We wished to retain economic and cultural ties with Taiwan and preserve its access to necessary military equipment. Fortunately, the Chinese, without abandoning their principles, have indicated they are a patient people.

Sonoda said Japan hoped to pursue its relations with the Soviet Union and not just lean toward China -- Japan strived for "expanded equilibrium." When Teng came to Japan, Sonoda told him that opposition to normalization in the U.S. was rooted in pro-Taiwan sentiment rather than in anti-PRC sentiment. There had been substantial economic growth in Korea and Taiwan, and many countries were investing in Taiwan. He suggested that the PRC concern itself about the prosperity of Taiwan, citing the example of Hong Kong. Asked by the Chinese how he thought the PRC should proceed in establishing closer relations with the U.S., Sonoda had told them they should "take the box and leave the contents up to the U.S. side." It was necessary to respect the status quo of Taiwan in the light of the economic background of the situation. Sonoda said he saw no sudden change in PRC attitudes, although Taiwan might turn to the Soviet Union. Teng, however, had said he did not think this would happen.

Secretary Brown said the key question was whether the PRC would refrain from military force, a theoretical question for the next few years, inasmuch as it lacked the capability of taking Taiwan by force. This was partly a psychological question, partly a question of the future. It was too much to expect an explicit renunciation of the use of force, but we needed some reassurance. The dilemma was to be sure, without occasioning damaging public statements by those concerned. Sonoda said that when he asked about renunciation of the use of force he had received an interesting answer, which he asked the Secretary to hold closely. Teng said that if a statement were to be made that force would not be used, it would not be possible to have a peaceful settlement. It was in this context that Sonoda had responded that it was better to leave implementation up to the U.S., i.e., the PRC should not worry about the contents of the box. He added that Taiwanese anti-communist sentiment would also probably keep them from turning toward the Soviet Union. Secretary Brown agreed that, barring some major catastrophe such as invasion, that it was very unlikely that Taiwan would turn to the USSR.

Asked for his impressions about Korea, Sonoda said that he agreed with the Secretary that the atmosphere had improved. The Secretary described the ROK's confidence as manifested in its economic plans for major expansion, and described a visit to the Chiangwon industrial complex. Sonoda said he too was impressed by Korea's economic growth, but the problem was how long it would continue in view of such problems as a labor shortage and inflation. As he had indicated to President Carter, he was also concerned about the attitude of Koreans toward money and patriotism, particularly when they left their country. Secretary Brown pointed out that Korea continued to sustain an annual growth of 10 percent and that increasing numbers of young people were receiving education in technical skills to enhance the skilled labor force. While there

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was concern about human rights, the effects of prosperity were well felt throughout the country.

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