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## Japan-US relations: Issues for congress.

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**Abstract :** Japan is a significant partner of the United States in a number of foreign policy areas, particularly in terms of security priorities. The post-World War II U.S.-Japan alliance has long been an anchor of the U.S. security role in East Asia. The alliance facilitates the forward deployment of about 49,000 U.S. troops and other U.S. military assets based in Japan

in the Asia-Pacific. If Japan decides to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement, it will become an even more critical element in the Obama Administration's rebalancing to Asia strategy. Japan has struggled to find political stability in the past 7 years. Since 2007, six men have been Prime Minister, including the current premier Shinzo Abe, who also held the post in 2006-2007. His Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) returned to power in a landslide election in December 2012. The current opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) had ruled for three tumultuous years since their own watershed election victory in 2009. Japan's leaders face daunting tasks: an increasingly assertive China, a weak economy, and rebuilding from the devastating March 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster. In recent years, opposition control of one chamber of parliament has paralyzed policymaking in Tokyo and made U.S.-Japan relations difficult to manage despite overall shared national interests. Abe is unlikely to pursue controversial initiatives before the next national elections for the Upper House of parliament in July 2013. Perhaps most significantly, the United States could become directly involved in a military conflict between Japan and China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islets in the East China Sea. The massive and immediate humanitarian relief provided by the United States following the March 2011 triple disaster bolstered the bilateral alliance, but difficult issues remain, particularly those related to the stationing of marines on Okinawa and the relocation of the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station.

**Descriptors :** \*FOREIGN POLICY , \*GOVERNMENT (FOREIGN) , \*INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS , \*JAPAN , \*POLITICAL ALLIANCES , \*UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT , CHINA , EAST CHINA SEA , ELECTIONS , INTERNATIONAL TRADE , MARINE CORPS FACILITIES , MARINE CORPS PERSONNEL , NATURAL DISASTERS , NORTH KOREA , OKINAWA , POLITICAL PARTIES , SOUTH KOREA

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