

Japan's Global Diplomacy: Views from the Next Generation

Tuesday, March 10, 2015

Summary

Tomohiko Satake, Ph.D., Fellow, National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS)

Michitor Tsuruoka, Ph.D., Senior Research Fellow, NIDS

Takaaki Asano, Research Fellow, Tokyo Foundation

Yoko Hirose, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Keio University

Discussant: Ben Self, Adjunct Fellow, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

Moderator: Yuki Tatsumi, Senior Associate, The Stimson Center

Tatsumi introduced the event in the context of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's speech envisioning a diplomacy that spans the globe, or "*chikyuugi wo fukan suru gaiko.*"

Satake spoke on Japan-Australia cooperation through three areas of analysis: the international systemic, domestic, and individual factors. Systemically, the rise of newly emerging states in the region relative to the decline of US power has led to a shift in the balance of power. This undermines the US-led liberal and inclusive regional order, so the US has pursued a "rebalance" policy to the region while calling for greater "burden-sharing" from its regional allies and partners. Japan and Australia will assume greater security roles by further enhancing their long-standing security partnership. Domestically, Australia's perception of Japan has been changing since the Cold War, especially as Japan gains experience in regional security cooperation through peace-keeping operations or HA/DR missions. Today, Australia encourages Japan's "normalization." Individually, the personal dynamics between Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Abbott are very positive. Abe has continued to stress joint security cooperation since his first term in office, including the idea of quadrilateral security cooperation between Japan, Australia, India, and the United States. Abbott has called Japan Australia's best friend in Asia, and further described Japan as "an exemplary international citizen."

Satake identified the most immediate challenge as the possibility of leadership change in Australia, as Abbott is not popular. But cooperation is well institutionalized, through both regular meetings and established agreements, and the relationship has enjoyed bipartisan support since 2007, so the Japan-Australia security partnership will likely continue for the foreseeable future. Perhaps the more important problem is the so-called "China gap," the difference in perception with regards to the rise of China in the region. This is very strong at the public level; many in Australia argue that the closer security cooperation with Japan may trap Australia in the Sino-Japanese conflict. Satake identified the most important area for cooperation as maritime capacity building, especially in terms of maritime law enforcement and surveillance capabilities. Australia has much more experience than Japan, and further people-

to-people can engage the two countries together more. Satake also noted the possibility of middle-power cooperation between Japan, Australia, India, and South Korea. Such cooperation could focus on capacity building, non-traditional security threats, and promoting values such as democracy, human rights and rule of law.

Tsuruoka spoke on Japan-Europe relations, emphasizing that not many people are aware of the depth of cooperation already taking place. He gave some examples of NATO-Japan and EU-Japan cooperation in the context of counter-piracy operations. There is also bilateral activity, with two-plus-two meetings happening with the UK and France. One of the newest pillars is defense equipment cooperation, which started with the UK and France, and may extend to Italy. For Tokyo, Europe is a natural partner for Japan because of shared values; yet we need clear expectations for Europe's engagement in Asia, with regards to trade and economy as well as foreign and security policy. Europe too needs to assess what it is willing to do in Asia. Yet focusing on Asia alone is too narrow. There are various opportunities for Japan-Europe cooperation in Africa and the Middle East. It is very good for Japan to cooperate with the Europeans in Africa, especially in intelligence. Two recent incidents – the ISIS hostage crisis and Amenas incident – demonstrated that Japan has a very weak intelligence base in those areas.

Tsuruoka noted that while Japan's overture to Europe began before the first Abe administration, under the second Abe administration, Japan's approach and cooperation with Europe has been the most active it's ever been. Japan is expanding the network of security partnerships with other countries such as Poland and Italy. There is some concern on the Japanese side about the future of Europe-Japan political, security and defense cooperation. It seems that Europe is too busy to think about Asia. Yet Tsuruoka emphasized, cooperation elsewhere is still possible.

Asano spoke on Japan-India relations, noting that Abe has described it as having the most potential in the world. Yet the bilateral relations have remained simply potential for quite a while, making it a test case for Abe's global diplomacy. Abe has been trying to diversify Japan's foreign policy tools through a comprehensive approach: drafting the first National Security Strategy, establishing the Japanese National Security Council, relaxing the weapons export ban, and passing decisions on the right of collective self-defense and a new charter on overseas development aid. For Japan-India relations, Japan must cultivate ties by integrating political, economic, and military policy options.

Asano identified expectation gaps as a major challenge, questioning, How could Japan overcome its differences and be creative, especially when dealing with issues like defense procurement or civil nuclear cooperation? Asano answered that good personal chemistry between Modi and Abe has encouraged the relationship. The long history of friendly relations has also been helpful. Gaps, however, remain in defense trade relations and civil nuclear cooperation. Some recent decisions have made it easier to conduct defense and technology

development between the two countries, and the two countries have engaged in negotiating the purchase of Japan's amphibious aircraft, the ShinMaywa US-2. Promoting bilateral cooperation in defense procurement relates to strengthening the manufacturing base in India, and engaging in co-production and co-development. Civil nuclear cooperation is also a focal point for the relationship, which relates to US-India developments. If Japan and India can agree to a similar liability scheme, similar to the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage, a civil nuclear cooperation agreement may be possible. In fact, a Japan-India agreement is necessary for US-India civil nuclear cooperation to succeed, because US companies like Westinghouse Electric and GE have partnerships with Japanese firms, making it difficult for American companies to expand their business presence in India.

Hirose spoke on Japan-Russia relations, immediately laying out the four foreign policy objectives. First, the resolution of the Northern Territories problem and a peace treaty with Russia is the foremost objective. Second, Japan wants a positive relationship with Russia as regional partners. Third, Japan must hedge against China-Russia relations, especially given worsening relations between China and Japan. Finally, Japan seeks to develop relations with Russia through political, economic, and cultural cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Hirose explained how Japan-Russia relations have largely been affected by outside factors, such as the US-China influence. Russia has criticized Japan as a puppet of the US. Bilaterally, there are many opposing opinions about historical understandings, between Japan and Russia. To resolve this, mutual confidence is necessary. To this end, Abe has been cultivating a relationship with Putin, though this effort was harmed when the Ukraine crisis began. While Abe's objective is the resolution of the Northern Territories dispute, there are many players within the Japanese government with various conflicting objectives.

Hirose's recommendations for the Japanese government included: first, create a flexible policy for Russia; second, encourage Russia to keep international norms such as democracy, rule of law, human rights, etc.; develop Japan-Russia relations across many dimensions; seek regional cooperation with Russia. Because of the Ukraine crisis, Russia shifted its diplomatic focus from the West to Asia. This is an opportunity for Japan. By positively engaging with Russia during this time, Japan can encourage peace and resolution of the Northern Territory issue.

Self praised the authors for the accessibility of their work, while encouraging them to more explicitly link the bilateral relationship to Japan's forthcoming foreign policy in its totality. He questioned how long these directions in Japan's foreign policy may continue, based on the length of Abe's administration. Satake answered that while Abe has actively passed significant security reforms, many are a continuation of the previous administration's policy direction. The reality is that the SDF has been expanding their roles within the framework of US-Japan alliance already, so the government is providing a framework more accurate to the reality of Japanese

policy. In this sense, the basic strategy of Japan's security policy will remain in tact even when Abe leaves. Tsuruoka answered that relations with the UK, France, NATO, and EU will remain stable, while less dominant countries may not be regarded as high priorities by Abe's successor. Yet while strong leadership is needed for jumpstarting security partnerships, it isn't needed for sustaining and developing relationships, which is a cause for optimism. Moreover, whenever SDF troops go abroad, they work with European forces. The more Japan cooperates globally in an operational context, it is likely to work with the Europeans. Asano also conveyed his optimism, since bilateral relations have been being upgraded since before Abe. At the government-to-government level, there has been a consistent intention to strengthen the relationship. However, the focus could change with a new administration, which is perhaps why Abe is so focused on institutionalizing and formalizing all these new dialogues. Hirose answered that the DPJ was regarded as weak by Russia, so Abe has been a strong leader for Japan-Russia relations – making him key to the improvement of bilateral ties.

One question asked about limits imposed by each country's relationship with China. Asano answered that there is an expectation gap in Japan-India relations – India's priority is the economy, not foreign policy. Deepening political or military ties will not target any specific country. Tatsumi added to the question, asking Tsuruoka about Japan's fear of technology transfer to China via defense exports to Europe. Tsuruoka replied that this varies and remains a worry. In response to the original question, he clarified the importance of remembering that the relationship is mutual – Europe is dependent on China, just as China is dependent on Europe. There is a growing awareness in Europe that it must expand beyond China, too. Satake added that while Australia is an economic partner of China, so is Japan – and the US and South Korea too. All Asian countries have a similar problem in this regard; the difference is geographic distance from China. Japan is close while Australia is far, and this is the cause of the perception gap.

One question asked about the risks of Japan's demographic trend, and declining budgets in both Japan and the US. Self responded that straight-line extrapolations are always risky. There are plenty of ways for Japan to continue to develop its defense capabilities, even if spending decreases. Tsuruoka added that security partnerships are an effective way to increase cost-efficiency. Also, decreasing ODA while increasing political and security engagement has been a more cost-saving way for Japan to maintain a profile in Asia. Satake also noted that the Japanese government is well aware, and is thus pursuing security partnerships with many countries, as Tsuruoka described. With regards to US defense budgets, Self answered that the decisions will likely be dependent on the party affiliations of Congress and the President. Yet both parties are definitely in agreement that Asia must remain a priority of US foreign policy.

One question asked for more policy direction on Ukraine. Tsuruoka answered first that this represents a change in the status quo, so it is a global problem rather than just regional. Second, NATO has a commitment to defend other European countries, and so it must actively seek to reassure these countries and regain credibility in external deterrence. Third, Tsuruoka explained that the hybrid warfare Russia utilizes is very similar to gray-zone/low-intensity conflict that Japan is preparing to encounter, so Japan is very interested in watching NATO deal with this kind of contingency. Hirose answered that Japan does not wish to increase the level of sanctions on Russia, as it would harm the bilateral relationship and personal leadership relationship – yet it must also act as a responsible G-7 member and US ally. Hirose recommended that Japan maintain a strong attitude towards Crimea and its own territorial dispute with Russia.

Another question touched on the possibility of Japan-India cooperation in a military conflict with China, and the role of the US in Japan-India relations. Asano answered with a definite no – such would be unrealistic and is not even being considered. To the US, Asano answered that sometimes, US presence makes Japan-India cooperation more difficult, because of India's preference towards strategic autonomy.

Another question asked about the talks in motion between LDP and Komeito about limits to partners for collective self-defense. Satake answered that the question is less about *with whom* but *in what conditions*. Tatsumi added that the debate is on the general conditions needed to utilize collective self-defense, and contention lies in drawing limits. Moreover, the debate really lies in the legislative changes necessary.

Another question asked about changes in Japan's foreign policy since the National Security Council was established. Asano responded that the NSC can only be effective when the Prime Minister is committed to security issues – otherwise, a structure unused cannot be effective.

A final question asked the speakers about Abe's upcoming speech to Congress. Tatsumi hoped for a balance between reflection of the past or remorse of past behavior, while inviting people to focus on Japan's activities since 1945, in a way modeled off his speech to Australia's Parliament. Asano added that Abe should explain recent defense policy developments in the wider perspective, as well as how Japan will utilize limited resources against this backdrop. Self noted his hope that Abe is not too apologetic, as it could cost his domestic audience. As the leader of Japan, he has certain interests that the American viewers should be aware of – Abe is under plenty of pressure from Washington and Japan. Tsuruoka reminded the audience of Merkel's words in Tokyo recently, that Germany apologized, and France accepted, hinting to the need for China and South Korea to positively respond to Japanese apologies.

Tatsumi concluded the event.