

Japan's Emerging Security Partnerships

September 17, 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 17, Stimson hosted Dr. Tomohiko Satake and Dr. Michito Tsuruoka, both from the National Institute of Defense Studies, for a public seminar on Japan's emerging security partnerships. Yuki Tatsumi, Senior Associate at the Stimson Center, served as moderator.

Satake described Japan-Australia relations as having rapidly grown since the launch of the US-Japan-Australia trilateral security dialogue in 2006. Japan and Australia recently agreed to update the relationship to special strategic partnership, with an interest in regional and global issues of peace-keeping, institution-building and other non-traditional forms of security cooperation such as counter-piracy and counter-terrorism. Japan and Australia have increased the number of bilateral and trilateral military exercises, including those for high-intensity conflicts, and boosted information exchange, based on the information security agreement that recently came into effect. Japan and Australia have also undertaken defense equipment technology cooperation, particularly for next generation submarines, as well as cooperation in the cyber and outer space domains. These activities improve the interoperability between the ADF, SDF and US military, enhancing collective deterrence capabilities.

Satake cautioned of a perception gap concerning China between the two countries: while Japan increasingly views China as a direct, immediate threat to its security and sovereignty, Australia perceives China as an indirect, future security concern for its regional stability. Because of this, some Australian experts discourage a close relationship with Japan, in order to avoid being dragged into a Sino-Japanese conflict over territorial disputes. While this argument has little public support currently, it may gain more traction if tensions between Japan and China to escalate in the future.

Japan and Australia's contributions to regional order building are based in shared common values for democracy, human rights and rule of law. They have contributed to confidence-building, regional integration and rule-making by building and supporting institutions such as APEC, ARF and ADMM Plus. They have also together promoted non-proliferation and disarmament and collaborated in coping with non-traditional threats such as terrorism, piracy and natural disasters. Regional order-building has been a major part of the relationship, a key focus being the inclusiveness of regional security architecture.

With identities that drift between East and West, both countries have worked to establish an inclusive regional security architecture of Asian and European countries, developed and developing countries, democracies and non-democracies. Japan and Australia have strongly supported ASEAN's unity and centrality as a driving force. However, changes in balance of power relationships in the region have affected the liberal international order, and particularly the South China Sea disputes have expanded the gap between continental Asia and maritime Asia. The United States, while a dominant player in the region, has been increasingly challenged by threats around the world. As such, Japan and Australia need to assume greater burden sharing to preserve the regional order, by expanding bilateral cooperation and enhancing regional and global activities. The countries should work together on strategic aid

capacity-building and non-traditional security in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, as well as ASEAN's unity and centrality. Japan and Australia should also expand their network of cooperation to other regional players such as India and South Korea. There have been calls for a middle power coalition in the region, which could be positive as long as it does not target China, to focus on regional and global order, such as capacity-building, HA/DR and peace-keeping. The purpose is to establish an inclusive and liberal international order resilient enough to accommodate the rise of China.

Tsuruoka spoke on NATO-Japan relations, beginning with the evolution of NATO's partnerships. Because of NATO's current focus on Ukraine and collective self-defense, many people think it's a time to go back to basics, so expeditionary operations and partnerships outside the Europe/Atlantic area is not a fashionable topic. Also, NATO's operation in Afghanistan is now coming to an end, so ISAF will soon finish. However, the importance of NATO partnerships will remain. NATO's partnerships began in 1994, within the framework of Partnerships for Peace, an assistance program for countries in Central and Eastern Europe, to postpone enlargement of NATO while assisting countries in the former Eastern bloc prepare for NATO membership. In the mid-2000s, with the expansion of the ISAF operation in Afghanistan, NATO had to depend on troop contributions from non-NATO countries. Through this, partners became more and more important, changing the nature of NATO's partnerships. These partnerships were driven primarily by needs on the ground: as such, there is no solid consensus on what NATO wants to achieve in its developing partnerships. Yet ISAF has left an unprecedented security network around the world, and this network of partners can be a good basis for future coalition operations. The challenge will be to maintain the level of interoperability built between NATO and its partner countries. During the World Summit, a concurrent NATO Plus defense ministers' meeting was held, so interoperability beyond Afghanistan is still an important agenda item for NATO.

NATO-Japan relationship has expanded within this larger evolution of partnerships on both sides. NATO is an interesting new partner for Japan, as an alliance, framework and international organization. For Japan to conduct political dialogue with NATO, there are multiple levels of political dialogue mechanisms that Japan is keen to further develop. Operational cooperation has taken place in Afghanistan on the civilian side and so does not need to be limited to military cooperation. Moreover, NATO-Japan cooperation can take place in the context of the US-Japan alliance, and vice versa. Because the US is the most important member of NATO, Japan's cooperation with NATO is very much about cooperation with the US. Finally, NATO is an interesting venue to consider multilateral interoperability and standardization. Japan cannot ignore the multilateral aspect of international security and cooperation, so NATO standardization is very important for Japan.

There are two aspects to prospects for cooperation. The first is the importance of strengthening interoperability between NATO and Japan, because whenever Japan sends the SDF abroad, it is likely to be in a multilateral context, working with primarily European forces. The second is the possibility for NATO-Japan capacity-building assistance cooperation, as NATO has a lot of expertise to offer Japan.

One audience member asked by Japan would be so interested in working with NATO on international security roles, when its regional security situation has deteriorated so rapidly and would seem to generate more interest in regional security partnerships. Tsuruoka agreed with the premise but

proposed that Japan may have increased interest in NATO as a result of that security situation, as a time to involve partners outside the region in issues in the Asia-Pacific. However, Japan's interest in cooperation with Europe or NATO is not solely about China, though it is of course a factor. Japan does not expect Europe to play a direct military role in Asia if conflict develops, but Europe's political influence matters, especially as the UK and France are members of the Security Council. Japan is trying to share perceptions with Europe on security and political issues in Asia.

On a question regarding perceptions of China's role in an inclusive regional order, Satake affirmed a perception gap and described Australia as more advanced in its engagement with China. However, both countries welcome China's peaceful rise as a constructive player within an integrated regional order and will continue to engage with China. One participant argued that there is less of a China gap than described – Hugh White, the critic cited, does not represent mainstream thinking – Japan and Australia share views of China in many ways, especially with regards to the importance of economic relations. Satake responded that “Senkaku gap” may have been a more accurate description. Australia would question involving itself in a territorial conflict, but a Sino-Japanese conflict based on rule of law or freedom of navigation would quickly involve Australia as a US ally with common interests.

Tatsumi asked about how security partner expectations between Japan and Australia be managed moving forward. Satake responded that Japan tends to focus on traditional security issues such as state-to-state conflict, while Australia is more interested in nontraditional security issues such as terrorism and HA/DR. If Japan broadens its scope to regional cooperation, there is more potential for cooperation. With regards to the US, Japan and Australia can play a bridging role between the US and Asian countries, by establishing inclusive regional frameworks such as APEC, ARF, ADMM Plus, and also hosting multilateral military exercises.

One participant asked about the interagency process within the Japanese government in setting the agenda and goals for these emerging partnerships. For Europe, Tsuruoka answered that MOFA has primarily taken the lead. Since NATO is a military alliance, MOD has of course been involved, but Japan-NATO cooperation in Afghanistan was civilian-side and ODA goes through MOFA. However, now looking at interoperability and standardization, there is a larger role for the MOD, especially with the possibility of a joint exercise in the context of counter-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia. The NSS' involvement grows alongside this. Satake responded that cooperation and information-sharing between MOFA and MOD is positive, with many common issues such as defense-technology cooperation and capacity-building that require frequent dialogue between the two institutions. The establishment of the NSC is significant for facilitating director-level discussion among different agencies and ministries.

To a question on ASEAN's role for Asia-Pacific security, Satake responded that Japan and Australia have long-encouraged ASEAN's unity and security. ASEAN is growing increasingly important, becoming the regional center of development with a huge combined economy. From a security perspective, ASEAN is located in an important area for the sea lanes of communications, and institutions such as ADMM Plus, ARF and East Asia Summit are important arenas to engage with Southeast Asia, China and other regional powers. Because ASEAN is increasingly criticized for not adequately discussing important issues such as South China Sea, Japan and Australia should revitalize the institution to be more effective in this area.

Further on interoperability with NATO, Tsuruoka noted the political and planning side difficulties – NATO is unique in its way of planning and conducting multilateral operations, and Japan is not yet familiar with it, having only been used to adapting to the US' way of planning and conducting operations. However, Japan is likely to be involved in future multilateral operations, which are conducted according to the NATO model. NATO can also teach Japan about global multilateral defense cooperation, having taken the lead in standardizing how multilateral operations are planned and conducted.

One participant noted Abe's concept of an arc of democracy to engage with India and Australia during his first administration, questioning whether Abe has been more successful in military cooperation with India during his second term. Satake noted the recent establishment of an India-Japan special strategic global partnership, but described a quadrilateral security cooperation effort as unlikely. Abe's concept is now framed as a "security diamond" and "value-based diplomacy," to reflect Japan's effort to expand cooperation with regional democracies including India, Australia, South Korea and beyond-the-region NATO countries. Japan is also working to spread norms and values of democracy, human rights and rule of law to the region, though there has been less progress on this front. A follow-up question asked why India is so important to Japan, to which Satake responded that India has not had the same history of regional engagement in order-building. Now, India is looking East and has a huge capacity both militarily and economically to contribute toward a stable and prosperous regional order. Tsuruoka added that there is not a solid consensus in Japan as to *why* India is important, though there is solid consensus that it *is* important. Interestingly, the effort to strengthen security and defense cooperation is across both the LDP and DPJ, so both the leading and opposition parties.

Tatsumi asked the short and long-term challenges regarding defense technology cooperation with Australia and Europe. For Australia, Satake responded that there are many obstacles to this kind of cooperation, even in the hyped submarines sale, both for Australia's domestic military industry and Japan's side– it's too early to assume that the governments have reached a conclusion. On Europe, Tsuruoka responded that equipment cooperation is new for Japan, an opportunity that developed through the relaxation of the arms export principles. The approach has been to start small and gradually move on to bigger projects, because Japan doesn't have a lot of experience in international and multilateral defense equipment cooperation. One challenge will be to manage expectations. Long-term, it is important to ensure synergies between Europe-Japan and US-Japan defense equipment cooperation.