

IV. Japanese Defense Capability and the Japan-U.S. Alliance

A. Expanded Role of the Military

Current areas of concern for Japan in regard to defense capability lie with the national level vision, or lack thereof, of how Japan's defense forces should be put to use, not only in the protection of Japan's peace and independence, but also in the sphere of global security. Presuming there is such a vision in Japan, the question turns to whether Japan has developed the system and measures needed to support the use of its defense capability.² It is in this context that the Japan-U.S. alliance must be reviewed.

Over the past ten years, Japan's defense capability roles have undergone lateral expansion and also achieved greater depth. A salient characteristic observed in the recent uses of Japan's defense capability and the development of a contingent legal framework, when considered in view of the above-described model of concentric circles comprising Japan, the areas surrounding it, and the regions lying beyond it, is that the practical application of Japan's defense capability and the development of its legal framework have advanced, starting with the regions lying beyond the areas surrounding Japan. United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) are the prototype for Japanese activities outside the areas surrounding Japan. Japanese PKO activities began in 1992 with international peace cooperation in Cambodia, and have continued with international peace cooperation in Mozambique, UN peace cooperation in the Golan Heights, and international peace cooperation in East Timor.

The International Peace Cooperation Law was enacted as a legislative measure to sanction these activities. Though limited to international peacekeeping operations and international humanitarian relief activities, the law provides a legal framework under which Japan's defense capability can be put to use in efforts to ensure global security. This legislation was followed by the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law in October 2001, and the dispatch of maritime SDF vessels to the Indian Ocean to

² System refers to the set of legal frameworks on which the implementation of national policy is contingent. Measures refers to the set of methods needed to execute national policy in practical terms. (In terms of defense capability, measures implies a set comprising the equipment, personnel, and organizations that are employable in the field.)

supply U.S. naval vessels and otherwise provide logistical support. Moreover, the Law Concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq enacted this year paved the way for SDF forces to be sent to Iraq to provide rear area support to U.S. forces and troops from other countries in maintaining security, a move scheduled for the near future.

The expansion of defense capability has not been limited to these lateral moves; a deepening of the capability is also evident. The freeze imposed on the Peacekeeping Forces (PKF), a longstanding issue, was lifted in December 2001. The lifting of the freeze was also accompanied by an increase in the number of situations in which weapons can be used for defense.

Though the SDF cooperation and support activities as conceived in the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law were those involved in the operation of floating supply stations in non-combat environments, they supported U.S. and other forces in the military action unfolding against the Taliban in Afghanistan, which was different from PKO activities conducted in regions with an established ceasefire between the parties of dispute. In order to avoid a conflict with the provision in the Japanese constitution prohibiting “the threat or use of force,” SDF activities in Afghanistan were conducted under the authority of a Security Council resolution (Resolution No. 1368).

SDF activities in Iraq fall under the authority of Security Council Resolution 1483. The fact is, however, that this resolution lifts the economic sanctions against Iraq. The Iraq war was launched despite a lack of unanimity in the Security Council, which creates a situation under which SDF troops are being dispatched to Iraq as a part of the activities of the coalition of the willing. The requisite conditions for SDF activities – consent from the parties in the armed conflict and host countries to both the operation and Japan’s participation, and a ceasefire between the parties involved – have not materialized. Although major combat has ended, security has yet to be completely restored to Iraq. The fact that ground SDF troops are to be dispatched despite these conditions also attests to the contrasting nature of this operation to conventional PKO activities.

“Activities in the areas surrounding Japan” refers to regional rear area support for U.S. military forces based on the Law Concerning Measures to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan enacted in 1999. (The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation do not necessarily limit

cooperation to situations in areas surrounding Japan, though in reality areas surrounding Japan are most relevant.)

The “Bill Concerning Measures to Ensure National Independence and Security in a Situation of Armed Attack” was finally passed in June 2003 to address the issues involved in the defense of Japan. This legislation, which sets forth the fundamental principles and procedures involved in responding to an armed attack on Japan, also calls attention to issues to be addressed in future legislation – specifically laws regarding the protection of Japanese nationals, laws to ensure the conscientious implementation of international humanitarian law, and laws for providing support to U.S. forces. As such, this legislation represents the first comprehensive effort to develop a legal framework for Japanese defense.

As is evident from the preceding overview of the trends over the past ten years, steps to bolster the role of Japan’s defense capability began with the outermost of the surrounding areas, moving gradually inward. The legal groundwork for defense activities was also initially laid for regions lying beyond the areas immediately surrounding Japan, with these regions also taking precedence in terms of the actual use of defense capability. These initial moves were followed by activities in the areas surrounding Japan, before the focus finally shifted to activities concerning the defense of Japan, the centermost point in the concentric circle model. This chronology of events indicates just how strong the demand is in the international community today for defense activities in regions lying beyond the areas surrounding Japan.

Directly confronted with the issue of North Korea, a state which has abducted Japanese nationals and is pursuing nuclear development, the capability to respond to situations in its immediate surroundings and in defense of its own land are issues of the greatest importance to Japan. On the other hand, the need for a coordinated approach to issues of global security is growing as the world becomes fraught with omnipresent risks on a global scale. Japan has, in fact, used its defense capability in dealing with these issues, dispatching SDF troops to such distant places as East Timor, the Indian Ocean, and Iraq. These activities have contributed significantly to the Japan-U.S. alliance.

B. National Interest and the Japan-U.S. Alliance

The Japan-U.S. ties of the past were based on reciprocity through “material and

personnel cooperation,” with the U.S. committing its own soldiers to the defense of Japan in exchange for the provision by Japan of military bases in that country. Today, however, Japan’s interest is not limited to its own national security. It is also keenly interested in peace and security in its immediate surroundings, and global security involving the regions beyond. Japan’s interests therefore increasingly coincide with those of the U.S.

Japan-U.S. ties have developed beyond the bounds of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. The relationship has undergone a qualitative change, evolving into a Japan-U.S. alliance rooted in global security interests, with the ties between the two countries transcending mere “material and personnel cooperation.” In a relationship based solely on this type of cooperation, Japan would be nothing more to the U.S. than a member of its asset alliance. The Japanese contribution, however, to the military action taken in Afghanistan and the Iraq war belies this notion. Though Japan did not, of course, participate in direct combat, the country did provide rear area support and cooperation to a degree that would not constitute the “threat or use of force.” In the case of the Iraq war, Japan reached the decision of its own accord to share the political and diplomatic risks and costs with the U.S.

Immediately after World War II, Japan was preoccupied with its own domestic affairs and therefore had no choice but to act as a minor player in the international community. This stance on the part of Japan was acceptable to the international community and, in fact, desired. In the widely held view of the time, Japan, as with Germany, was considered part of an “axis of evil,” and as such, the view with regard to Japan was “the more passive, the better.” Boasting the world’s second largest economy, one indicator of national power, and preceded in this respect only by the U.S., Japan has achieved the major international status befitting its economic power. Japanese interests now extend to the entire world, and the formation and preservation of a stable world order is becoming more and more a part of Japan’s own national interest.

Population trends in Japan and around the world are useful in charting Japan’s future national interests. In the years ahead, the population of Japan will decline, and at the same time age rapidly. The nation’s current total population of 127.44 million (as of October 2002) should peak in 2006, and then fall into decline. According to future population estimates from the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, Japan’s population should stand at roughly 120

million in 2025, falling to 100 million in 2050. Although the margin of error widens for figures beyond this point, continued population decline is projected, with the most conservative estimate for 2100 at 50 million, and more moderate estimates hovering at 67 million. The population at around the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868) stood at approximately 34 million, and at the time Japan was defeated in World War II, at 72 million. In this context, Japan's total population will have fallen back to World War II levels at some stage before 2100.

Population decline is not the only problem Japan faces. It is a well-known fact that Japanese society is aging at an unprecedented rate. As of 2002, the proportion of elderly aged 65 or older to the overall population was 18.4%. This figure is projected to climb to 35.7% by 2050. Moreover, the segment of the elderly population comprising senior citizens aged 75 or older is expected to outnumber those between 65 and 74 years of age by 2020. In line with this trend, forecasts call for a decline in the number of Japanese in their productive age (between 15 and 64 years of age) to some 74 million by 2020 and 54 million by 2050, roughly two-thirds of the 86 million in 2002.

On a global scale and over an ultra-long term period through 2100, developing countries with massive populations such as China and India will also undoubtedly experience population decline and aging societies. It is, however, the transition period preceding this shift that will bring with it serious issues. Of all developing regions, particularly close attention needs to be paid to trends in the Middle East, an area notable for both rapid population increases, and high ratios of young people to overall population.

United Nations statistics (moderate estimates) indicate that the total population in Iraq, for example, which stood at 23 million in 2000, will rise to roughly 41 million by 2025, and 55 million by 2050. The population in Saudi Arabia is also growing rapidly, with its 2000 population of 21 million expected to more than double to 54 million by 2050. The high ratios of youth to overall population are, however, more serious than overall population increases. United Nations statistics placed the ratio of children and youth less than 15 years of age to overall population at 44% in Iraq, and 40% in Saudi Arabia, in 2000.

The ratio of youth less than 18 years of age to total population is thought to readily account for more than half of the overall population in Iraq today. Iraq and Saudi Arabia may be extreme examples in this respect, but corresponding situations

are evident throughout the Middle East. What this situation suggests in strategic and/or geopolitical terms is the subject of much debate in the U.S. today, with some arguing that this unusual growth in the youth demographic could provide hotbeds for radical Islam fundamentalism.

Whether or not this proves to be the case, the convergence of the constitution of populations in developed regions and in the Middle East and other developing regions could easily create a fountainhead of instability within the world order, which could very well seriously impact Japan's global standing and national security.

Facing a simultaneous rapid aging of society and decrease in population, Japan has been unable to avoid a decline in its power within the international community, and the country must begin to prepare for its inevitable aging into maturity. In terms of domestic policy, review of this issue has moved beyond the social security sector to other political arenas as well. The recently published *White Paper on Land, Infrastructure and Transport in Japan 2003*, for example, focuses on population decline, the declining birth rate and the aging of society, and raises the question of how Japan is poised to deal with the administration of land, infrastructure and transport with regard to these issues in the future. Studies focused on addressing this question must also be undertaken in the areas of international relations and national security.

What is clear at this point, however, is that, against a backdrop of concern over instability brought about by a massive convergence in the constitution of the global population, Japan will face a serious issue in balancing the need to maintain a reputable international standing with efforts to form and preserve a stable world order, with an unavoidable decline in its relative international power. Reinforcing the Japan-U.S. alliance is of vital importance in achieving this balance.

The dispatch of PKO troops, as well as the dispatch of SDF troops to regions beyond Japan's immediate surroundings under the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law and the Law Concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq, have all been steps taken in response to the demands of Japanese national interests for the formation and preservation of a stable world order. The U.S., however, is integral to global efforts to reduce the grave risks facing today's international community and to create a stable world order. As such, Japan must actively support the U.S., while stressing multilateral

cooperation to elicit a collective willingness on the part of the international community. This is not meant to infer that Japanese cooperation should be based on blind obedience to the U.S. It refers to cooperation with the U.S. that is rooted in Japan's own self-interest.

The argument that "strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance is Japan's principal national interest" no longer seems odd to Japanese ears. The majority of the Japanese public has begun to sense the aging of its country into national maturity and the unavoidable decline in its national power. The public understands the need to judiciously utilize the power held by the U.S., as the world's most powerful state, in preserving world order to ensure the protection of Japan's national interests.