

## Chapter 5

# Japan's Perspective on the Security Environment in the Asia Pacific and Its Approach toward Multilateral Cooperation: Contradictory or Consistent?

*Tomotaka Shoji*

### Introduction

The international community is currently undergoing an incremental but definite shift of the economic and strategic centers of gravity to Asia. The fundamental change has been brought about mainly by newly emerging powers like China and India. In the Asia-Pacific region, this geo-strategic reconfiguration has led to a changing balance of power and influence between the United States and China in the sense that the latter could challenge the leading position of the former because of China's growing economic, political, and military power. Against the backdrop of this potential competition between the two great powers, other regional countries like Japan are urged to cope with such a new strategic environment in terms of dealing with maritime and other strategic issues. How Japan responds and accommodates itself to this regional and global change in the security landscape is critical.<sup>1</sup>

Since its launch in December 2012, the Abe administration has been restructuring Japan's security policy, typically exemplified in his decision to review the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), which was issued in December 2010 under the previous administration of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Based upon the cabinet's decision, the Ministry of Defense (MOD) established a commission to review the defense posture in order to set a general direction of new defense guidelines. In July 2013, the commission issued an interim report, which re-emphasizes the salience of reinforcing Japan's defense capabilities and the US-Japan alliance, mainly for effectively dealing with emerging and potential

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<sup>1</sup> Purnendra Jain and Lam Peng Er, "Japan's 21st Century Strategic Challenges: Introduction," Purnendra Jain and Lam Peng Er, eds., *Japan's Strategic Challenges in a Changing Regional Environment*, Singapore: World Scientific, 2013, p. xvi.

security challenges in maritime and territorial domains.<sup>2</sup> This shows Tokyo's firmer stance toward these acute issues. In this regard, the current security policy of Japan seems to be concerned more about traditional issues rather than nontraditional challenges.

On the other hand, however, Japan's engagement in multilateral cooperation in nontraditional security is continuous and still very proactive. For example, within the framework of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Plus, Japan co-chaired with Singapore the experts' working group (EWG) on military medicine in 2010-2013, and in June 2013, it actively participated in a successful joint exercise on military medicine and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) conducted in Brunei. Moreover, the country continues to demonstrate its willingness to take initiative to develop the ADMM Plus, by co-chairing a new EWG (HA/DR) with Laos in the following term of 2014-2015.

Therefore, Japan's security policy will be focusing more on traditional challenges and countermeasures against them, whereas it also includes active engagement in multilateral cooperation in nontraditional security. Although these two vectors can be compatible with each other in a country's security policy, it is necessary to understand how they are compatible and prioritized within a defense strategy. In order to try to figure out this puzzle of dichotomy between traditional and nontraditional security, this paper examines Japan's current security policy from various aspects.

This paper is composed of four sections. The first section explores Japan's perspective on the strategic environment in the Asia Pacific, focusing on the security challenges of the country, to consider whether the strategic environment of the region is cooperative or competitive (confrontational) to Japan; the second and third sections examine Japan's approach toward multilateral cooperation, its "multilayered security cooperation" approach in particular, and its strategic objectives; and the fourth section considers the prospect of the relevance of existing frameworks for creating a better strategic environment to Japan.

I argue that although Japan is facing serious challenges of traditional security, it apprehends the ongoing concerns about nontraditional security as well. As for multilateral cooperation, Tokyo is taking a "multilayered security cooperation"

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Defense (MOD), "Boeryoku no Arikata-kento nikansuru Chukan-hokoku" [Defense Posture Review Interim Report], July 26, 2013, pp. 1-4, [http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2013\\_chukan/20130726.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2013_chukan/20130726.pdf).

approach, which tries to combine bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral security arrangements to effectively address both traditional and nontraditional issues. The Japanese government is actively participating in various multilateral gatherings for attaining the three strategic objectives of promoting confidence building, deepening understanding on Japan's security policy, and forging security ties with ASEAN, while it should be expected that the existing multilateral frameworks will evolve so as to tackle newly emerging challenges like issues pertaining to cyberspace and space.

### **Japan's View on the Security Environment: Very Cautious about Potential Challenges**

Generally, Japan is very cautious about the current and potential security challenges facing the country. The *Boei Hakusho (Defense of Japan)*, a defense white paper, in its preface by the defense minister, takes a very harsh view of security. He describes the strategic environment surrounding Japan as including various challenges and instabilities, some of which are becoming more apparent and serious.<sup>3</sup> This concern, as the white paper identifies, stems mainly from two factors, or specific countries, which are North Korea and China. North Korea has repeatedly provoked concern among the regional countries by firing missiles and conducting nuclear experiments, while China's navy and maritime law-enforcement agencies have grown far more active in sea areas surrounding Japan, including repeated violations of Japan's territorial waters as well as its airspace in the East China Sea, and the January 2013 incident in which a Chinese navy frigate targeted its fire control radar on a Japanese destroyer. Furthermore, the Japanese government continues to pay attention to the growing activities of the Russian military in the Far East.<sup>4</sup>

Countermeasures that Japan takes to deal with these challenges are mainly unilateral and bilateral. First of all, Japan's own effort to reinforce its defense capabilities is highlighted. It focuses on defense of the southwestern part of the country by means of strengthening its ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) capacity to be able to "seamlessly" respond to contingencies.<sup>5</sup> In

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<sup>3</sup> *Boei Hakusho (Defense of Japan) 2013*, p. ii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

bilateral terms, the country is seeking to strengthen security cooperation with the US based on the US-Japan Alliance. In fact, the 2+2 joint statement issued in October 2013 declared that the US-Japan Alliance should “remain well positioned” to tackle current and potential security challenges including the North Korea issue and “coercive and destabilizing behaviors in the maritime domain.”<sup>6</sup> Within this context, Japan and the US agreed, according to the joint statement, to revise the Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation and establish a bilateral working group on joint ISR activities.<sup>7</sup> In this regard, Japan’s view on its security environment and measures to deal with it seem to be defined from the perspective of power balance rather than cooperative security.

Compared to the previous Noda administration of the DPJ, the incumbent administration more explicitly articulates concern about Japan’s security challenges, from China in particular. This is probably because of the administration’s impetus to differentiate its security policy from the previous one by emphasizing priorities in the defense policy. Likewise, Japan is facing a growing necessity to effectively respond to the current situation in which China has become more active and assertive in the East China Sea since the Senkaku “nationalization” in September 2012.

Meanwhile, Japan is continuing to tackle the global security challenges, because it recognizes that globalization and interdependence developing among nations has enhanced the risk of a security issue that emerges in one country promptly and easily impacting other countries or regions. From this perspective, Tokyo demonstrates a deep concern about newly emerging issues, such as risks to using the global commons, including sea, space, and cyberspace, in a stable condition. Moreover, the Japanese government expresses its continuing interest in long-held security challenges like WMD proliferation, international terrorism, and other nontraditional issues in the fields of energy security, climate change, natural disasters, and pandemics.<sup>8</sup> In particular, the threat of international terrorism, radical Islamists in particular, has once again attracted the attention of the Japanese government because of the killing of ten Japanese businessmen and technicians in a natural gas plant in Algeria in January 2013. This incident reminded Japanese people of the fact that they are not immune to threats of international terrorism due to the expanding activities

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), “Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee: Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities,” <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000016028.pdf>, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Boei Hakusho 2013*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 5.

of Japanese companies and business people around the globe, including those in volatile areas remote from Japan.<sup>9</sup>

From this perspective, the defense white paper argues that in order to deal with these global and nontraditional issues the role of the military should be diversified, spanning from prevention, deterrence, and responding to conflicts to supporting reconstruction in conflict areas.<sup>10</sup> Since 2009, the Maritime Self-defense Force has dispatched two escort ships to the Gulf of Aden off Somalia to guard all commercial ships passing through the gulf. The Japanese escorts have been conducting operations in coordination with other countries' escort ships to share information about pirate activities in the sea area. As for peacekeeping, the Japanese government is actively participating in PKO operations, aimed at eradicating the root causes of internal conflicts and terrorist activities.<sup>11</sup>

With regard to HA/DR, the Japanese government has been aware of the salience of enhancing the capabilities of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to effectively respond to natural disasters from the experience of the mega-earthquake that hit the northern part of Japan in March 2011. Also, this experience has reminded Japan of the importance of reinforcing bilateral cooperation with the US or other partners like Australia, as well as forging ties with other regional countries within the framework of multilateral security cooperation in terms of disaster prevention including information sharing, joint disaster relief operations, and sharing experiences.<sup>12</sup> From the perspective of contribution to international security, the SDF is proactive in conducting international disaster relief operations for the purpose of humanitarian assistance and contributing to improving the global security environment.<sup>13</sup>

Overall, Japan discerns that the security environment surrounding the country is more confrontational than cooperative due to the traditional challenges facing the country. However, Tokyo is greatly interested in nontraditional issues as well with regard to improving regional security and the country's status in the international community. In this vein, multilateral cooperation and contribution to international security still shed light on Japan's defense policy.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 244-245, 248.

<sup>12</sup> *Boei Hakusho (Defense of Japan) 2011*, pp. 19-22.

<sup>13</sup> *Boei Hakusho 2013*, p. 259.

## Multilateralism in Japan's Security Policy: "Multilayered" Security Cooperation

As diplomatic instruments pertaining to regional security, the Japanese government has actively participated in multilateral gatherings in the Asia Pacific including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus), and IISS Asia Security Summit (Shangri-La Dialogue). The primary objective for active participation in these multilateral settings is to establish a network of "multilayered" security cooperation.<sup>14</sup> As a general concept, multilayered security cooperation functionally consists of bilateral/trilateral security alliances/partnerships as well as multilateral frameworks, aimed at establishing a "liberal and open" order in the international community.<sup>15</sup>

Japan regards its alliance with the US to be the pillar of its security strategy, positioning bilateral/trilateral partnerships and other cooperative mechanisms around the US-Japan alliance. In order to effectively deal with security issues, it is a priority to forge security ties with other US allies like Australia and South Korea, and emerging powers such as India in bilateral and trilateral terms. Moreover, Tokyo considers it salient to promote confidence building processes with its important neighbors like China and Russia. In this concentric circle of multilayered security cooperation, multilateral frameworks are considered as complementing and fortifying the bilateral/trilateral partnerships, mainly in terms of promoting defense dialogue and confidence building through specific activities like joint exercises. In this sense, for Japan, multilateralism should function as contributing to addressing both traditional and nontraditional security issues.

From a broader perspective, it is vital for Japan to seek to form an "open and multilayered" network in the Asia Pacific for establishing a prosperous and stable order, based on democratic values. This network is expected to be formed by accumulating experiences of multilateral cooperation in various forms. With regard to regional security, the importance of forming the network stems from the recognition that tensions heightening in politics and security enhance the risk of possibly inhibiting the commercial and political activities of regional actors. Thus

<sup>14</sup> MOFA, "Nihon no Anzen-hosho Seisaku Tasouteki na Anzen-hosho Kyoryoku-kankei no Suishin Kochiku" [Japan's Security Policy: Promoting and Establishing a Network of Multilayered Security Cooperation], <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/anpo/tasouteki.html>.

<sup>15</sup> National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), *East Asian Strategic Review 2013*, Tokyo: The Japan Times, 2013, p. 121.

Tokyo envisions cooperation in nontraditional domains like maritime security, creating an atmosphere in which regional countries are encouraged to settle security issues by means of multilateral cooperation and coordination. Finally regional cooperation and coordination will enhance the predictability of regional actors' behaviors and establish a more stable strategic environment. In this regard, Japan fully acknowledges the importance of China's active participation in multilateral cooperation for constructing such a network. Therefore Tokyo vitally needs an environment in which regional actors, including the two great powers of the US and China, are jointly willing to form a network of multilateral cooperation.<sup>16</sup>

This multilayered security cooperation, a combination of security partnerships at bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral levels, has long been a key concept for Japan's approach toward multilateralism. In fact, at the launch of the ARF in the 1990s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs developed a concept of a "multifaceted approach" to regional security. Against the backdrop of the fluctuating security environment in the Asia Pacific caused by the end of the Cold War and an emerging China, this approach was intended to accomplish the following four objectives: first, the development of economic cooperation in the region; second, the pursuit of the settlement of ongoing disputes and conflicts; third, maintaining existing security arrangements including the US-Japan alliance; and fourth, confidence building among the regional countries. Within this context, from the outset, the ARF was aimed at accomplishing the fourth objective of contributing to the promotion of confidence building. The forum was thus expected to improve the security environment in the region through deepening mutual understanding among regional countries. Furthermore, this multilateral security framework first launched in the Asia Pacific was anticipated to promote, to a certain degree, security cooperation even in potentially sensitive security issues like territorial disputes.<sup>17</sup>

## **Strategic Objectives of Japan's Approach toward Multilateralism**

Since the 1990s, Japan has enthusiastically participated in multilateral frameworks of security cooperation, ASEAN-centered mechanisms in particular, in coordination

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<sup>16</sup> *Gaiko Sesho (Diplomatic Bluebook) 2012*, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/2012/html/chapter1/chapter1\\_01.html#h03](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/2012/html/chapter1/chapter1_01.html#h03).

<sup>17</sup> Takeshi Yuzawa, "Japan and the ASEAN Regional Forum: From Enthusiasm to Disappointment," Jürgen Haacke and Noel M. Morada eds., *Cooperative Security in the Asia-Pacific: The ASEAN Regional Forum*, London and New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 73-75.

with the whole region's endeavor to pursue a more comprehensive mechanism for securing the Asia Pacific. The Japanese government has made a great effort to establish the ARF in collaboration with ASEAN and Australia, actively engaged in making a decision about membership to the EAS, dispatched the defense minister to the Shangri-La Dialogue each year, and co-chaired an EWG at the ADMM Plus since its foundation in 2010. How is multilateralism considered as contributing to addressing Japan's security issues in multilayered cooperation? Japan's approach to multilateral mechanisms is actually aimed at accomplishing three strategic objectives: promoting confidence building; seeking effective dialogues on defense and security; and forging strategic ties with ASEAN. Japan's specific approach toward multilateral cooperation is categorized into two types of activities, defense dialogues and practical cooperation including joint exercises.<sup>18</sup>

Confidence building as the first objective is related to Tokyo's intention to improve the overall security environment surrounding Japan, including relations with its neighbors. Dialogue is certainly an effective measure to attain this objective. However, in the latest version of the defense white paper, the Ministry of Defense expresses the view that in the Asia Pacific the defense dialogue for the purpose of confidence building is gradually evolving into more practical cooperation, which enables the region to form a regional order or establish a common norm in addressing some specific nontraditional issues like HA/DR and maritime security.<sup>19</sup> Today, Japan fully recognizes that it is extremely challenging for a single country to tackle globally prevailing security issues, nontraditional ones in particular, and that it is a common interest for all nations to secure stability and prosperity in the international community by establishing a more stable security environment.<sup>20</sup> In this regard, multilateral cooperation in nontraditional security is instrumental not only for nurturing confidence and trust among regional countries but also providing them with effective measures to jointly tackle shared security concerns.

Since its foundation in the 1990s, the Japanese government has consistently been keen to participate in the ARF. In order to promote confidence building measures, the country was an active mediator between willing participants and those countries that were reluctant to take part.<sup>21</sup> Although the expectation and enthusiasm

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<sup>18</sup> *Boei Hakusho 2013*, p. 222.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Yuzawa, "Japan and the ASEAN Regional Forum," pp. 76-80.

that Tokyo had at the outset of launching the forum has waned because of the slow progress of the forum in terms of institutional evolution from confidence building to preventive diplomacy, Tokyo still considers the ARF to be effective with regard to promoting practical cooperation, particularly joint exercises in nontraditional security. Japan co-hosted the second disaster relief exercise (ARF-DiREx) with Indonesia in March 2011, and it actively participated in the third DiREx held in Thailand in 2013 by dispatching sixty people from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).<sup>22</sup> Japan's current efforts to revitalize the ARF have been more focused on practical cooperation aimed at materializing confidence and trust among participants than on realizing the ARF's initial vision to develop the forum from confidence building measures to preventive diplomacy.

As for the ADMM Plus, Japan has been an enthusiastic supporter of the gathering since its foundation in 2010. The Ministry of Defense, responsible for the ADMM Plus within the government, clarifies that the regular meeting of defense ministers from ASEAN member countries and its dialogue partners has great significance in terms of deepening security cooperation and jointly dealing with a wide range of common security challenges.<sup>23</sup> The ADMM Plus founding document stipulated the establishment of EWGs to address specific security issues, nontraditional ones in particular, like terrorism, maritime security, and HA/DR.<sup>24</sup> This showed the firm will of ASEAN and its dialogue partners including Japan to institutionalize the framework for promoting practical cooperation.

Clearly, Japan regards the ADMM Plus as important and helpful because it is the only official meeting among defense ministers in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>25</sup> Its activeness was demonstrated by its co-chairmanship of the military-medicine EWG with Singapore. Also, Japan will again co-chair the EWG on HA/DR with Laos in the next term of 2014-2015. The devastating impact of a giant earthquake,

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<sup>22</sup> MOFA, "ARF Saigai-kyuen Jitsudo-enshu (ARF-DiREx 2011) no Kaisai nitsuite" [Holding of the ARF-DiREx 2011], April 2011, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/asean/arf/arf-direx2011/gaiyo.html>, "Dai-3-kai ARF Saigai-kyuen Jitsudo-enshu (ARF-DiREx 2013) eno Wagakuni karano Sanka" [Japan's Participation in the ARF-DiREx 2013], April 25, 2013, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/press6\\_000142.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/press6_000142.html).

<sup>23</sup> MOD, "Kakudai ASEAN Kokubosho Kaigi (ADMM Plus) no Motodeno Torikumi" [Stance toward the ADMM Plus], <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/exchange/dialogue/admm/index.html>.

<sup>24</sup> ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), "ADMM Plus: Modalities and Procedures," <http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/6.%20ADMM-Plus%20Configuration%20and%20Composition.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> MOD, "ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus): Multilateral Security Dialogues," [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/exc/multilateral.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/exc/multilateral.html).

ensuing tsunami, and repeated aftershocks in March 2011 has made Japan more conscious of the necessity of strengthening multilateral security cooperation in HA/DR. Regarding expected collaboration in addressing nontraditional security issues, Japan will be far more active in participating in the ADMM Plus and subordinated working groups, as well as taking initiative in pursuing practical cooperation.

Thus it is clear that Japan has shown a very positive attitude toward the ADMM Plus by actively participating in various related meetings as well as joint exercises. However, it is not so evident for the country to be able to expect a “spill-over” effect that enables confidence-building activities in multilateral cooperation to ameliorate the overall atmosphere including sensitive maritime and territorial issues. It should be noted that Japan takes the rise of China as an opportunity to promote international security cooperation, and at the same time considers China’s growing national and military power as a potential challenge not only for Japan but also the entire region.<sup>26</sup> So far, Japan has not found any indication that deepening multilateral cooperation in nontraditional security would have a positive impact on traditional security in terms of seeking solutions or alleviating tension. Rather, multilateral cooperation seems to be functioning separately from the ongoing tension in the maritime domain.

As the second strategic objective, the Japanese government considers multilateral gatherings as venues that are instrumental for conveying Japan’s stance on various security issues to regional countries and promoting security talks with them, including sensitive issues such as maritime and territorial matters. Tokyo is keen to conduct defense exchanges to eradicate concerns about not only Japan’s defense policy but also security issues pertaining to the entire region or specific countries. In April 2007, the Ministry of Defense issued an official notice in the Vice Minister’s name titled “Basic Policy for Defense Exchanges (BPDE).” The document aimed to outline a basic approach to promoting active defense exchanges by the ministry and set general guidelines for the MOD’s policy on defense dialogues and other types of defense cooperation.<sup>27</sup> The BPDE stipulated that defense exchanges should be conducted for promoting understanding about Japan’s defense policy and posture and conveying Japan’s concerns about other countries’ defense policy or military activities to encourage them to review their attitudes.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Boei Hakusho 2011*, p. 24.

<sup>27</sup> NIDS, *East Asian Strategic Review 2013*, pp. 120-121.

<sup>28</sup> MOD, “Boei Koryu no Kihon Hoshin nitsuite (Tsutatsu)” [Basic Policy for Defense Exchanges], p. 5.

In this regard, Japan successfully used the ARF as an instrument to address the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. In 2002, China's agreement with ASEAN to sign the "Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea," a political declaration to resolve the disputes in a peaceful manner, could prove that the forum had some political leverage to change China's position on the South China Sea.<sup>29</sup> More recently, at the ARF meeting held in July 2010, the US "internationalized" or "multilateralized" the South China Sea in coordination with Japan and some ASEAN members, although China insisted that the issue should be dealt with on a bilateral basis. Furthermore, bilateral/trilateral meetings held on the sidelines of multilateral gatherings are equally important with regard to seizing a chance to talk about sensitive security issues. In fact, at the inaugural ADMM Plus meeting held in October 2010, the defense ministers of Japan and China held talks for the first time since the Senkaku incident in the East China Sea in September of the same year, and this informal bilateral meeting actually created an atmosphere conducive to improving their strained relations since the incident.

Japan uses multilateral meetings to introduce specific aspects and intentions of its security policy. For example, at the 2013 Shangri-La Dialogue, Defense Minister Onodera gave a speech about Japan's security policy, emphasizing the importance of making an active contribution to regional stability, forging strategic ties with ASEAN, and preventing unexpected tensions from escalating at sea.<sup>30</sup> Also, at the Japan-ASEAN Summit held one day before the EAS on October 10, 2013, Prime Minister Abe tried to seek ASEAN's understanding about a new direction of Japan's security policy described as "proactive contribution to peace."<sup>31</sup> In his speech, Abe argued that Japan will further contribute to peace and stability in the region as well as the entire international community, strongly denying the resurgence of Japan's militarism during the Pacific War.

The third goal is to forge security ties with ASEAN. Undoubtedly ASEAN has long been an important partner for Japan both in bilateral and multilateral terms. At the rudimentary phase of the partnership between Japan and Southeast Asian countries, the relations were exclusively centered on economic cooperation. Thereafter, as economic relations deepened, the Japan-ASEAN relations expanded to include

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<sup>29</sup> Yuzawa, "Japan and the ASEAN Regional Forum," p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> MOD, "Shangri-La Dialogue 2013 Second Plenary Session, Itsunori Onodera, Minister of Defense, Japan," June 1, 2013, <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/youjin/2013/06/05b-en.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> MOFA, "The Sixteenth Japan-ASEAN Summit 2013," October 9, 2013, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page3e\\_000108.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page3e_000108.html).

political cooperation. Today, against the backdrop of China's growing influence over Southeast Asia, Japan is striving to seek a more comprehensive relationship of cooperation including security, particularly non-traditional issues, in order to keep itself relevant to ASEAN.<sup>32</sup> The incumbent Abe administration is more explicitly demonstrating Japan's attitude of regarding relations with ASEAN as important, exemplified in his overseas trips; his first overseas trip following his inauguration as Prime Minister in December 2012 was to ASEAN countries (Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia); and he visited Laos and Cambodia in mid-November 2013, thereby completing his mission of visiting all the ten member countries of ASEAN within a year.

First of all, Japan's strong support for and active participation in ASEAN-centered frameworks of security cooperation like the ARF, EAS, and ADMM Plus are related to its strategy of supporting and reinforcing ASEAN's centrality. It is likely that Tokyo is seeking to increase ASEAN's support to Japan by its support for ASEAN's centrality, because ASEAN regards the maintenance of centrality as vital for its survival as a collective political and diplomatic power in the international arena and perceives that this centrality keeps ASEAN-related multilateral frameworks relevant to outside major powers. In this sense, Japan and ASEAN can mutually benefit from ASEAN's centrality.

Practical cooperation in nontraditional security within the ADMM Plus is closely connected to Japan's policy to foster security ties with ASEAN. In addition to Japan's policy to pursue a more comprehensive relationship with ASEAN, the importance of ASEAN to Japan is increasing in light of the changing power balance in the Asia Pacific. From this viewpoint, supporting ASEAN-centered frameworks is compatible with capacity-building support to individual ASEAN nations.<sup>33</sup> As an effective measure to forge security cooperation with ASEAN, the Japanese MOD has conducted capacity-building support. Generally this policy aims to enhance the capacity and capability of developing nations to tackle nontraditional security issues including HA/DR, demining, and military medicine, for the purpose of improving the regional and international security environment. The Japanese MOD has so far conducted projects in Timor Leste, Cambodia, Mongolia, Vietnam, and

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<sup>32</sup> Tomotaka Shoji, "Pursuing a Multi-dimensional Relationship: Rising China and Japan's Southeast Asia Policy," Jun Tsunekawa ed., *The Rise of China: Responses from Southeast Asia and Japan*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2009, p. 157.

<sup>33</sup> MOD, "Defense Posture Interim Report," p. 5.

Indonesia. It is clear that the focus of Japan's capacity-building support is mainly on ASEAN countries. Interestingly, the Japanese MOD regards the support as being part of Japan's endeavor to promote "multilateral" security cooperation, although all the activities have so far been conducted on a "bilateral" basis.<sup>34</sup> This suggests that ASEAN is the nexus to link multilateralism with bilateral security cooperation in Japan's security policy, indicating that a strategic goal for Japan's security multilateralism is to reinforce cooperation with ASEAN.

Japan's security policy toward ASEAN is significant with regard to the US strategy of rebalancing toward the Asia Pacific. The Japanese government expects to conduct activities of capacity-building support in cooperation with the US and Australia, Japan's important security partners, both of which intend to strengthen security partnerships with ASEAN.<sup>35</sup> Coordination with allies and critical security partners for Japan will very likely contribute to forming a network for multilayered security cooperation. The US rebalancing toward the Asia Pacific facilitates Japan's pursuit of a dual track security policy, consisting of reinforcing the alliance with the US and promoting multilateral security cooperation in ASEAN-centered settings. In this regard, reinforcing bilateral and multilateral security partnerships between Japan and ASEAN helps fortify the US-Japan alliance.<sup>36</sup>

## **Prospects for Further Cooperation in Multilateral Settings**

What are Japan's prospects for multilateral cooperation within the context of its security perception in facing actual and potential tensions? The government issued a new NDPG in December 2013. The interim report issued by the MOD's review commission in July 2013, a useful clue to understanding Japan's future vision of security strategy, reiterates that the security environment surrounding the country is becoming unstable and unfavorable to its strategic interests. Therefore the strengthening of Japan's defense capability and review of its defense posture are emphasized so that it can accommodate itself to this changing security situation.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, however, the report refers to a trend of deepening interdependence as well as cooperation and coordination in nontraditional security

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<sup>34</sup> *Boei Hakusho 2013*, pp. 227-230.

<sup>35</sup> MOD, "Defense Posture Interim Report," p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> NIDS, *East Asian Strategic Review 2013*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>37</sup> MOD, "Defense Posture Interim Report," p. 1.

among regional countries. Also, in terms of formulating norms and rules about relatively new security issues related to global commons like cyberspace and space, Japan recognizes the necessity of addressing these new challenges in cooperation with other countries.<sup>38</sup> In particular, the Japanese government is keen to promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation in cyber security.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, Japan can/should seek the possibility of forming a cooperative mechanism in the Asia Pacific, although the country is currently inclined to fostering cooperation with NATO or EU in cyber issues. Tokyo should enlarge its scope as far as to cover the Asia Pacific. In this case, the existing ASEAN-centered frameworks will be able to contribute to addressing these issues, since the ARF dealt with cyber security in relation to international terrorism.<sup>40</sup>

However, the current phase of cooperation in the Asia Pacific is just sharing a common concern about these newly emerging challenges, and issuing a political declaration to recognize the importance of cooperation. More substantial and practical cooperation is needed by gathering knowledge and insights from experiences of cooperation in the existing frameworks like the ADMM Plus. At the multilateral meetings, participants should put cyberspace and space on the agenda to seek a means of cooperation. The ADMM Plus in particular can utilize its institutionalized EWGs in nontraditional security. Japan will be able to contribute to addressing cyber and space security in various ways including taking the initiative within the existing frameworks.

Moreover, Tokyo should deepen cooperation and coordination in maritime issues, like crisis management at sea. Although maritime issues can be sensitive, as they relate to vital strategic and sovereign interests, regional countries are becoming aware of the importance of managing unintended crises at sea to prevent them from escalating into more serious conflicts. In fact, the 2012 Shangri-La Dialogue saw Shu Watanabe, Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister of Defense, putting a “Good Seamanship” concept on the agenda for managing maritime crises. Further, the Japanese government has attempted to establish a sub-commission on maritime security under multilateral settings.

It is possible that the scope of cooperation in maritime issues may extend so far as to cover the Arctic. In light of the importance of the Arctic from economic,

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> MOFA, “Promoting and Establishing a Network of Multilayered Security Cooperation.”

<sup>40</sup> Yuzawa, “Japan and the ASEAN Regional Forum,” p. 81.

political, and security perspectives, regional countries may need to seek the possibility of cooperation. The central institution in the international community for discussing Arctic issues is currently the Arctic Council (AC). In fact, Russia and the US are members, and Japan, China, India, the Republic of Korea, and Singapore are observers at the council. There is clearly significant overlap between members of multilateral mechanisms in the region and those of the AC. However, in its current phase, cooperation is not yet sufficiently developed for dealing with security matters.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, in the Asia Pacific, the EAS may be an appropriate venue for discussing Arctic issues. It seems it is possible to include these issues in the agenda of the summit from the perspective of climate change and environmental protection as well.

## Conclusion

Japan acknowledges that its security environment is quite severe due to the traditional challenges facing the country, while regarding the development of multilateral mechanisms as being salient for improving the security environment in the Asia Pacific as well as addressing global and nontraditional security issues. As Japan endeavors to become a “global civilian power,” it is certainly important to actively participate in cooperation in nontraditional security like peacekeeping and antipiracy.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, the Japanese government is striving to combine different forms of security partnerships at various levels in line with the “multilayered security cooperation” approach.

By adopting this “multilayered security cooperation” approach, Tokyo is trying to combine bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral frameworks to effectively deal with both traditional and nontraditional issues. As for multilateral cooperation, the Japanese government is actively participating in various multilateral settings to attain the three strategic objectives of promoting confidence building, conveying Japan's stance toward security issues to regional countries, and fostering security partnerships with ASEAN.

With regard to the future prospects for Japan's engagement in multilateral

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<sup>41</sup> MOFA, “Wagakuni no Hokkyoku-hyogikai Obuzaba-shikaku Shonin” [Acceptance of Japan's Membership to the Arctic Council], May 15, 2013, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/press1\\_000004.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/press1_000004.html).

<sup>42</sup> Eiichi Katahara, “Japan's Strategic Options?” Purnendra Jain and Lam Peng Er eds., *Japan's Strategic Challenges in a Changing Regional Environment*, Singapore: World Scientific, 2013, p. 5.

cooperation, it should be expected that the existing multilateral frameworks will evolve so as to tackle newly emerging challenges like issues pertaining to cyberspace and space. In this regard, it is important for Japan to take the initiative in multilateral settings, just as it did when exercising leadership in launching the ARF in the 1990s. Moreover, the country should forge stronger security ties with ASEAN. It will be possible to realize this vision through various measures including the establishment of new dialogue channels such as a Japan-ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting, much like the China-ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting that China has proposed. Strengthening Japan-ASEAN security cooperation in both bilateral and multilateral terms will certainly help in forming a network of security cooperation that includes other major powers in the region, with the aim of establishing a more stable security order in the Asia Pacific.

(The views expressed herein are entirely the author's own and do not represent the official position of the National Institute for Defense Studies or the Ministry of Defense of Japan.)