

Briefing Memo

The purpose of this column is to respond to reader interests in security issues and at the same time to promote a greater understanding of NIDS.

A “briefing” provides background information, among others. We hope these columns will help everyone to better understand the complex of issues involved in security affairs. Please note that the views in this column do not represent the official opinion of NIDS.

Thoughts about the Japan-US Alliance after the Transformation With a Focus on International Peace Cooperation Activities

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In October 2005, the Security Consultative (“2+2”) Committee (SCC) completed a joint document titled the “US-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future.” The document clarifies roles, missions, and capabilities required of both Japan and the United States in order to pursue the common strategic objectives jointly announced by the “2+2” Committee on February 19, 2005, and shows the direction for US forces in Japan, as well as related Self-Defense Forces dispositions required for the future maintenance of deterrence, while reducing the burden on local communities in Okinawa and elsewhere. In particular, attention is focused on the realignment of US troops in Japan, where major changes are proposed, including the redeployment of 7,000 US troops from Okinawa to Guam and Hawaii, relocation of the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) at Futenma, and an accompanying return of significant amounts of land in the densely populated areas south of Kadena Air Base, and relocation of a carrier air wing from Atsugi Air Facility to Iwakuni Air Station.

Meanwhile, the description of roles, missions, and capabilities in this joint document is ambitious. It clarifies that Japan will defend itself and respond to situations in areas surrounding Japan, including addressing new threats and diverse contingencies such as ballistic missile attacks, attacks by guerilla and special forces, and invasion of remote islands, while the US will maintain forward-deployed forces and augment them as needed for the defense of Japan, as well as to deter and respond to situations in areas surrounding Japan. The US will provide all necessary support for the defense of Japan. Moreover, in addition to the defense of Japan and response to situations in surrounding areas, the document extols the need for Japan

and the United States to strengthen cooperation in efforts for improvement of the international security environment, including participation in international peace cooperation activities. The document emphasizes 15 specific areas (see table) as important for cooperative activities, beginning with air defense and ballistic missile defense, and extending to humanitarian relief operations and reconstruction assistance operations.

In the current Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation that were revised in 1997 (the 1997 Guidelines), cooperation between Japan and the United States was defined in three general categories: (1) cooperation under normal circumstances; (2) action in response to an armed attack against Japan; and (3) cooperation in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan (SIASJ) that will have an important influence on Japan's peace and security. Furthermore, an Annex to the Guidelines showed examples of functions, fields, and items of cooperation for SIASJ. Fields of cooperation included transport of personnel and supplies to disaster-affected areas, and other "relief activities and measures to deal with refugees," provision by Japan of supplies, transport, and maintenance for US military activities, and other "rear area support," "surveillance," and "minesweeping." While these activities were originally intended to target SIASJ, many of them were folded into the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law and the Iraq Humanitarian Reconstruction Support Special Measures Law (Iraq Reconstruction Law) following the events of September 11, 2001. In other words, many of the activities postulated in the 1997 Guidelines as responses to SIASJ were incorporated in a broader sense into international peace cooperation activities. Self-Defense Force (SDF) units dispatched into the Indian Ocean or to Iraq acted in close cooperation with US forces as part of an international framework. In addition, SDF units dispatched in response to the Sumatra Offshore Earthquake at the end of 2004, or the Pakistan Earthquake in 2005, performed relief operations in cooperation with the military forces of the affected countries, and with governmental and non-governmental organizations, and always in close consultation with US forces.

The "2+2" joint document of October 2005 positions as important fields for cooperation between Japan and the United States the "defense of Japan and responses to situations in areas surrounding Japan, including responses to new threats and diverse contingencies," and "efforts to improve the international security environment, such as participation in international peace cooperation activities." Moreover, as noted above, the document details 15 specific items in which cooperation should be strengthened, and lists ballistic missile attacks, attacks by guerilla and special forces, and invasion of remote islands, as possible new threats or situations.

Experiences in Iraq, the Indian Ocean, Sumatra, Pakistan, and elsewhere, have served to demonstrate specific ways for showing cooperation in international peace cooperation activities, and to clarify the content of specific activities for cooperation in response to potential new threats.

Displaying where these situations or fields of activity may come into play is useful for consideration of specific cooperation in the future. The attached table is arranged by the author to show what kind of significance that cooperation in the specific fields described in the “2+2” joint declaration has for: (1) the defense of Japan; (2) SIASJ; and (3) international peace cooperation and other specific situations. The vertical axis shows the 15 cooperation activities mentioned above, as well as actions for handling such new threats to Japan as invasion of remote islands or attacks by guerilla and special forces, while the horizontal axis shows the type of situations in which specific activities can be expected. Moreover, the columns are shaded to show the degree of military coloration, while circle “ ” and triangle “ ” symbols, or a blank column, are used to show the scale of cooperation activities.

Table: Fields and locations for Japan-US security cooperation (Situations)

	Type of Japan-U.S. cooperation	Defense of Japan, surrounding situations		International peace cooperation, etc.	
		Defense of Japan	Surrounding situation	Humanitarian, Reconstruction assistance	Counter-terrorism, PSI
0	Remote island defense, attacks by guerilla and special forces, etc.				
1	Air defense				
2	Ballistic missile defense				
3	Counter-proliferation operations, PSI, etc.				
4	Counter-terrorism				
5	Minesweeping, ship inspections				
6	Search and rescue operations				
7	Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations				
8	Humanitarian relief operations				
9	Reconstruction assistance operations				
10	PKO and capability building for other nations' peacekeeping efforts				
11	Protection of critical infrastructure, including US facilities				
12	Response to attacks by WMD				
13	Mutual logistics support activities (supply, maintenance, and transportation)				
14	Provision of facilities, etc.				
15	NEO (facilities and medical support)				

Key		Military activity		: Large-scale, serious cooperation
		Quasi-military activity		: Limited, indirect cooperation
		Non-military activity	Blank column	: Assumed to be non-applicable

In line with the Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation announced in 1978, Japan and the United States engaged in research on joint operations plans in response to potential attacks on Japan. In the 1997 Guidelines, these studies on defensive joint operations plans for Japan were expanded in scope to also include studies on mutual cooperation plans in response to SIASJ. Furthermore, since the framework was not limited to the SDF and the US military, but also included other related institutions in the two governments, it was decided to develop a comprehensive mechanism for planning studies, and to construct from the ground up a coordination mechanism between Japan and the United States that included all related institutions to coordinate the two nations' activities in crisis situations. This coordination was targeted mainly in the fields of military cooperation for the defense of Japan, and for SIASJ (the two columns in the center of the table). In the future, studies for specific plans enabling close cooperation between Japan and the United States in response to such new threats or situations as ballistic missile attacks, attacks by guerilla and special forces, and invasions of remote islands, need to be encouraged still more, and the efficiency of the two mechanisms described in the 1997 Guidelines needs to be improved.

In participation in international peace cooperation activities to date, meanwhile, efforts to improve the security environment appeared to be moved ahead through actual operations with impromptu planning rather than deliberate prior planning. As discussed above, the SDF unit dispatched to Iraq cooperated closely with US forces to fulfill its mission. And the SDF unit dispatched for relief activities in response to the Sumatra Offshore Earthquake coordinated closely with the US Third Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF) dispatched from Okinawa. These successes could be considered the result of joint exercises between Japan and the United States in the past, and of repeated Japan-US consultations at all levels. However, if the same type of situation were to again arise in Sumatra or Pakistan, for example, it is instructive to ask ourselves whether the activity could be implemented more quickly and effectively. Many of the activities in these kinds of cases are either quasi-military or non-military, and fall into the section of the table circled by the dotted line. These activities correspond to participation in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, search and rescue for counter-proliferation operations, counter-terrorism activities, aid activities, the PSI (Proliferation Security Initiative), PKOs, and building up for other nations' peacekeeping efforts. It would be useful to study the significance and potential in each of these situations, and to prepare a kind of manual that offers the SDF a wider range of choices in fields in which mutual cooperation with the United

States is attainable, and in fields in which cooperation with other related institutions within Japan is attainable. In addition, these activities should not be performed by Japan and the United States so much in the context of an alliance relationship as within a framework of international or regional cooperation. In such international cooperation activities, some mental gymnastics may be needed regarding what kind of position Japan-US cooperation should occupy, and what types of roles should be played.

After many years of requests from others to move away from a deterrence-only posture to one that more actively utilizes military force, the SDF are moving at the end of the current fiscal year to a joint operations posture system. A new Chief of the Joint Staff Office will replace the current Chairman of the Joint Staff Council, while a reorganized and further augmented Joint Staff Office will be in charge of all operations of the Ground, Maritime, and Air SDFs. This new staff organization will need to promote further studies with US forces into plans for the defense of Japan and for situations in surrounding areas, and to make preparations for a smooth joint response during crisis periods. In addition, wide-ranging discussions regarding international peace cooperation activities are needed in order for Japan and the United States to make effective use of the SDF and US forces as a type of international asset. The idea of drawing up joint plans and manuals as needed has become more significant than ever.

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