

## **Chapter 8**

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# **Japan: Expanding Strategic Horizons**

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One of the distinctive characteristics of Japan's national security policy in recent years is the strengthening of its security relationships with Asia-Pacific countries and organizations such as the Republic of Korea, Australia, India, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in addition to its traditional alliance relationship with the United States. The Shinzo Abe administration has stressed that Japan's national interests lie in particular in "the maintenance and protection of international order based on rules and universal values, such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law" (*National Security Strategy*). Accordingly, the Abe government has strengthened Japan's engagement in the regions from the Western Pacific to Southeast Asia, and beyond the Indian Ocean as far as Africa. Japan has broadened its sphere of geopolitical engagement from mainly Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region to an area referred to as the "Indo-Pacific" region.

Underlying this broadening of Japan's strategic horizons is the ongoing power shift in the Asia-Pacific region. The rise of the emerging nations of China and India, while it has brought Japan economic benefits, has posed the challenges of infringements of international rules and norms, such as the freedom of navigation and air transit, and the undermining of their restraining power. While maintaining its strong military presence in the region as the world's only superpower, the United States—in response to necessary reductions in military spending and the worsening situation in the Middle East and Europe—is seeking an even more active role from its allies and countries in the Asia-Pacific region to ensure regional stability. Against this background, Japan is moving more strongly towards maintaining and strengthening a free and open regional order based on the rule of law together with the United States and regional partners that share the same values and interests.

Japan's security approach to countries in the Indo-Pacific region has three aspects: (1) the strengthening of Japan's presence and leadership in "maritime Asia" through participation by the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in training and exercises and through port calls and visits to other countries in the region; (2) the strengthening of the capabilities of partner countries through cooperation utilizing projects supporting capacity building; and (3) the sharing of norms and principles of freedom of navigation and peaceful solution of conflicts. In order to further promote these activities, Japan is required to strengthen its preparedness both domestically and overseas through the coordinated efforts of related

ministries and agencies, fostering of personnel, and exchange with all its partners, while taking into account the diversity of attitudes to China, relationships with the United States, and internal political situations of countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

## 1. The Broadening Strategic Space

### (1) The Power Shift and Upheaval of the Existing Order

The fundamental reason for the expansion of Japan's strategic horizons is the ongoing change in the international balance of power known as the "global power shift." In particular, China has achieved astounding economic growth over the past decade. According to one index, China's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2001 accounted for 4 percent of the global total, which was just one-eighth of the United States' GDP (32.1 percent of the total). By 2014, however, China's share had risen to 13.4 percent, while the share of the US GDP fell to 22.3 percent of the global total.<sup>1)</sup> If GDP is viewed in terms of purchasing power parity, the scale of the Chinese economy overtook that of the United States in 2014 and is already the largest in the world.<sup>2)</sup> Although China's economic growth has been slowing down in recent years, it is still maintaining a high level compared with Japan and the advanced countries of the West.

Against the backdrop of this high economic growth, China's military spending has continued to increase. In March 2016, China announced that it would raise the fiscal 2016 defense budget by 954.354 billion yuan (18,132.7 billion yen), an increase of 7.6 percent over the initial budget of the previous year. This is about 3.7 times Japan's military budget for fiscal 2016 (4,860.7 billion yen),<sup>3)</sup> and more than 40 percent of the total military budget of Asia, including Oceania. China is injecting this massive military spending into the modernization of its military strength, greatly enhancing its nuclear capability and its antiship ballistic and cruise missile capabilities in particular. In recent years China has also strengthened its capabilities in space, cyberspace and electronic warfare and is continuing to challenge the supremacy of the United States in these new fields of military technology as well.<sup>4)</sup>

Not only China but also India has rapidly developed its economy. India has maintained a strong economy, with an average economic growth rate of 7.2 percent from fiscal 2009 to 2014. In fiscal 2015, India's economic growth of 7.6 percent

was higher than China's.<sup>5)</sup> At about 2,367.2 billion dollars, India's GDP in 2015 was the seventh highest in the world. Its population of 1.21 billion was the second highest and is forecast to increase to the world's highest of 1.45 billion by 2028.<sup>6)</sup> Against the backdrop of this economic growth, India has promoted the rapid strengthening of its military capabilities. In addition to the development and deployment of various ballistic missiles, it has been modernizing its naval and air power, in particular by the procurement and joint development of equipment from overseas.

Although not to the extent of China and India, the ASEAN members have also achieved steady economic growth, posting an average GDP growth rate of 5.3 percent from 2006 to 2014.<sup>7)</sup> If ASEAN's economy continues to grow as the current potential growth rate predicts, the total nominal GDP of the ASEAN is forecast to overtake that of Japan by the mid-2020s.<sup>8)</sup> Furthermore, with its rich natural resources, rapid economic growth and increasing population in recent years, Africa is also attracting attention as a new center of growth, and investment in Africa by many countries including Japan has been increasing rapidly.

This ongoing global power shift, while providing economic opportunities for Japan, is also confronting it with security challenges arising from the destabilization of the international order. In particular China, which has grown in confidence through its rapid economic growth and expansion of its military strength, has been unilaterally changing the current status quo by flexing its muscles in the East China Sea and South China Sea. China's actions not only pose a threat to Japanese land, sea, and air territory and its exclusive economic zones, but also threaten the norms and rules underlying the post-war international order, including the profits that ought to be shared by the world through the utilization of marine resources, the rule of law and freedom of navigation, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. With the steady economic growth both of China and in Asia as a whole, almost all countries in the region have been building up their military strength, mainly by increasing their military budgets and enhancing naval capabilities. Furthermore, there is the risk that the rise of nationalism and disputes over territory will escalate into full-blown conflicts. Nontraditional security issues such as terrorism, natural disasters, global warming, epidemics, and crime across national borders also remain causes of concern for the countries of the region.

Against this background, the United States' Obama administration comprehensively strengthened its involvement in the Asia-Pacific region in the

political, economic, and military spheres, placing emphasis on a new regional strategy referred as a “rebalancing” or “pivot.” In addition to Northeast Asia, where it has traditionally maintained a presence through its alliances with Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK), the Obama administration particularly enhanced its presence and partnerships in Southeast Asia, Oceania, and the Indian Ocean by the rotational deployment of its forces and strengthening of security cooperation with the countries of the region.

In addition to unilaterally strengthening its military commitment to the Indo-Pacific region, the United States has demanded that countries in the region respond to problems more autonomously and spontaneously by enhancing the capabilities of its allies and partners including Japan and by encouraging stronger relations among these partners. With the inauguration of President Donald Trump, who has called for a fairer share of the burden among US allies, this trend can be expected to become even stronger. Accordingly, Japan, as an ally of the United States, is now required to expand its security role towards regional stability by broadening its strategic concerns from Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia and the whole Indo-Pacific region.

## **(2) The Abe Government’s Indo-Pacific Focus**

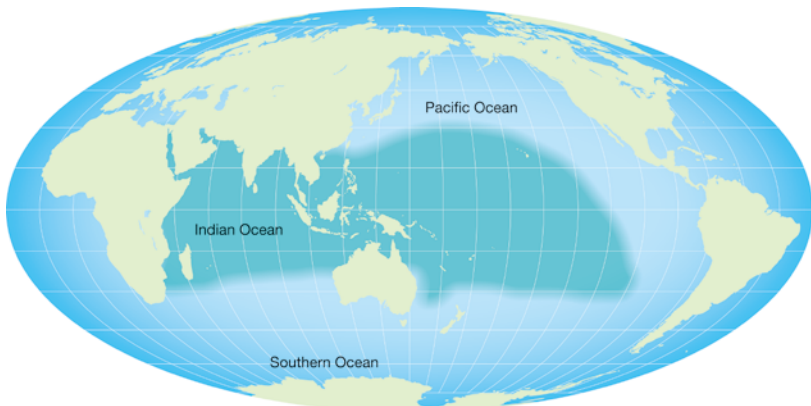
Based on the viewpoint outlined above, the Abe government has deepen and broaden the US-Japan alliance through such measures as revising the Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation, and has been extending its strategic concerns to the Indo-Pacific region in step with the United States. The contours of this policy had already been outlined to a certain extent by the first Abe administration (September 2006–August 2007). For instance, in a speech in the Indian parliament in August 2007, then Prime Minister Abe pointed out that a region that could be described as a “broader Asia” was emerging through the “dynamic coupling” brought about by the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. He pointed out that the strategic global partnership between Japan and India was a vital element of the concept of an “arc of freedom and prosperity” being promoted by Japan, and expressed the vision that this “broader Asia,” incorporating the United States and Australia, would grow into a wide network extending across the whole Pacific region.<sup>9)</sup> Indeed, during the first Abe administration, Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation was announced, and in May 2007 a quadrilateral sub-cabinet-level dialogue was implemented together with the

United States, Australia and India.

This policy was basically followed in the second Abe administration. For example, in an essay posted on an overseas website shortly after his inauguration, Prime Minister Abe stated that, as “one of the oldest seafaring democracies in Asia,” Japan ought to play a greater role in maintaining peace and stability and freedom of navigation in the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. To this end, Abe proposed that Australia, India, Japan and the US state of Hawaii form a “security diamond” to jointly safeguard the maritime commons stretching from these countries and the Indian Ocean region to the western Pacific. In the same essay Abe also proposed the more active involvement of the United Kingdom and France in the security of the region and the strengthening of defense relationships between Japan and the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA) consisting of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore.<sup>10)</sup>

A similar approach can be seen in a speech titled “The Bounty of the Open Seas: Five New Principles for Japanese Diplomacy,” which Prime Minister Abe planned to give in Indonesia in January 2013. In this speech, he argued that, considering that Japan’s national interest “lies eternally in keeping Asia’s seas unequivocally open, free, and peaceful” and “in maintaining them as the commons for all the people of the world, where the rule of law is fully realized” and that the United States was shifting its focus to “the confluence of the two oceans, the

**Figure 8.1. The Indo-Pacific Region**



Source: Created by the author.

Indian and the Pacific,” the ties between Japan and America’s other allies and partners will become more important than ever before for Japan. From this viewpoint, he further stressed that, together with the strengthening of links with the “maritime Asia” of Australia and India, the relationship with the ASEAN was the “supremely vital linchpin” of this strategy.<sup>11)</sup>

A more recent example of this approach is Prime Minister Abe’s keynote address at the opening session of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in August 2016. In this address, arguing that Japan “bears the responsibility of fostering the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion, and making it prosperous,” Abe laid out his vision of a Japan working together with Africa “in order to make the seas that connect the two continents into peaceful seas that are governed by the rule of law.”<sup>12)</sup> This address, titled “A Free and Open India and Pacific Strategy,” made it clear that Japan’s concept of the Indo-Pacific region extended beyond the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean to the African continent and that, by viewing this area as an integrated whole, Japan was aiming to further strengthen its efforts to maintain a free and open international order.

It should be noted, however, that this strengthening of security relationships with other maritime Asian countries advocated by Prime Minister Abe is not a unique characteristic of the Abe administrations. For instance, a policy of promoting “multi-layered security cooperation” with Australia, India, and ASEAN members was stressed in the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) formulated in December 2010 under the government of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ; in power 2009–2012).<sup>13)</sup> Indeed, the DPJ government steadily strengthened security cooperation with these countries, implementing the first-ever bilateral military exercises with India and concluding the Japan-Australia Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement (ACSA) and the Japan-Australia Information Security Agreement (ISA). In November 2011, the Joint Declaration for Enhancing ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership for Prospering Together (Bali Declaration) was adopted.<sup>14)</sup>

Going back even further, the Japan-India Global Partnership was established under the signature of Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori in August 2000, and an agreement was made in 2005 under the Junichiro Koizumi administration to give this partnership with India a strategic orientation.<sup>15)</sup> Through the Australia-Japan



Creative Partnership announced in May 2002 and the Australia-Japan Joint Statement on Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism adopted in July of the same year, relations between Japan and Australia were steadily strengthened mainly in nontraditional security fields, resulting in the announcement of the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in March 2007. Throughout the 2000s, Japan also steadily implemented defense exchanges and cooperation with ASEAN countries in the nontraditional security fields of counterterrorism, response to natural disasters, and response to piracy.

One distinctive feature of the Abe government's policy is its promotion of networking with other countries in the region toward the enhancement of maritime security and the rule of law. This is being implemented through the strengthening of coordination with these countries in the sphere of security, which has been progressively cultivated since the 2000s based on broader strategic involvement in the Indo-Pacific region. In other words, the Abe government has sought to strengthen organic coordination with countries and organizations in the region not along specific lines but across the whole plane. Japan's defense cooperation with each country through the Ministry of Defense and SDF is positioned as an important means of achieving these strategic objectives.<sup>16)</sup>

Another important issue is that Northeast Asia continues to occupy a vital position for Japan's security policy. In addition to China's increasing activities in the regions surrounding Japan, North Korea has engaged in provocative actions such as its fourth and fifth nuclear missile tests in January and September 2016. These actions constitute a serious threat to Japan. In order to respond to this situation, Japan has confirmed that it will further strengthen its coordination with the United States in areas such as missile defense (MD) and in June 2016, the first joint missile warning exercise by Japan, the United States and the ROK was conducted off Hawaii. Considering Japan's response to this particularly urgent threat, it must place the highest priority on strengthening coordination with the ROK, with which it shares strategic interests in Northeast Asia. It is necessary for Japan not only to promote MD, but also to further cooperation with the United States and the ROK based on the various contingencies that might arise on the Korean Peninsula.

Although it may seem paradoxical, the fact that tensions are rising in Northeast Asia is one reason why Japan must broaden its concerns to encompass Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. In particular, with the increasing risk of conflict in

Northeast Asia, the existence of the sea lanes from the Middle East through the Malacca Strait and the South China to the East China Sea is becoming even more strategically important for Japan, which is said to depend on maritime trade for more than 99 percent of its total trade volume. Until now Japan has relied mainly on the United States for the defense of the sea lanes extending more than 1,000 nautical miles from Japan. In recent years, however, the United States has indicated its expectations of cooperation from its allies and partners in these spheres, and it is unavoidable that Japan takes on this kind of role to some extent.<sup>17)</sup> Japan's cooperation with the United States and other countries in the region toward promoting the rule of law and peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea will also have an important meaning for peace and stability in the East China Sea, where similar problems exist.

Above all, over the next ten or twenty years, the security of Japan and Northeast Asia will be greatly influenced by the international order over the entire Indo-Pacific region. Through the ongoing "return of geopolitics," this region will have a critically important significance, particularly for a country like Japan that is limited in the physical power it can exercise, regarding the issue of whether a crude power game will be played out by the various countries, or whether a constitutional order based not only on power but also on laws and systems can be strengthened. If Japan plays an appropriate role in the region together with the United States and other partner countries, this will also lead to the enhancement of US involvement in the region through the strengthening of the US-Japan alliance. In view of the ongoing global power shift, Japan's broadening of its strategic horizons can be described as both a rational and a necessary choice.

## **2. Approach to the Indo-Pacific Region**

### **(1) Strengthening of Maritime Presence and Partnerships**

The most important aspect of the Abe government's approach to the Indo-Pacific region is the strengthening of Japan's presence and partnerships in the area of maritime security through bilateral and multilateral coordination. The National Security Strategy announced in December 2013 states that one objective is for Japan to "play a leading role" as a maritime state through close coordination with other countries, in maintaining and developing "open and stable seas" based on the rule of law.<sup>18)</sup> From a similar viewpoint, the subsequently published National

Defense Program Guidelines stated that Japan “will promote various efforts including...enhancement of joint training and exercises by taking various opportunities in waters other than those surrounding our country.”<sup>19)</sup>

In recent years in particular, the Ministry of Defense has promoted the strengthening of coordination in maritime spheres through port calls by the SDF and joint exercises with the coastal nations of Southeast Asia and the maritime Asian nations of Australia and India. In February 2016, following a visit to Vietnam in May of the previous year, P-3C patrol aircraft of the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) were dispatched to Danang in central Vietnam, where they conducted their first-ever search and rescue joint table-top exercise based on a scenario requiring coordinated action between the P-3C aircraft and the Vietnamese navy. In March 2016, the MSDF minesweeper tender *Uraga* and minesweeper *Takashima* docked at Port Klang in Malaysia for the first time in three years, and in April the destroyers *Ariake* and *Setogiri* made their first-ever port call at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. The *Uraga* and *Takashima* also docked at Cam Ranh Bay in May. In October, US warships made a port call at Cam Ranh Bay for the first time since the Vietnam War.

In April 2016, an MSDF Overseas Training Cruise Unit including the *Ariake*, the *Setogiri*, and the submarine *Oyashio*, docked at Subic Bay on the Philippine island of Luzon for the first time in fifteen years, and subsequently MSDF destroyers and other vessels made several calls at the same port. The MSDF has also pursued active operations in the Southeast Asian seas region, conducting goodwill exercises with the Malaysian navy in April 2016, the Indonesian navy in August, and the Philippine navy in September. Together with these port calls and exercises, the number of bilateral meetings and conferences with the defensive authorities of countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam has also been increasing year by year.

The active maritime operations of the SDF also extend to the Indian Ocean. From January to March 2016, the MSDF destroyer *Matsuyuki* participated in the International Fleet Review held by

the Indian navy in the Bay of Bengal. In August and December 2016, the MSDF conducted goodwill exercises with the Indian navy in waters west of Mumbai and Goa, respectively. Its defense exchange with Sri Lanka has also been rapidly expanding, including goodwill exercises with the Sri Lankan navy in March, April, May, July and December of the same year. Most of these goodwill exercises have been implemented by destroyer flotillas dispatched to take part in antipiracy operations off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden. In November 2016, in view of the reduced need for destroyer escorts to protect private vessels from piracy, Japan decided to cut the number of destroyers taking part from two to one, while extending the operation for one more year. At the Japan-India Defense Ministerial Meeting held in July, it was decided that the Malabar joint naval exercise, originally a bilateral exercise between the navies of India and the United States, would henceforth be held as a trilateral exercise with the participation of Japan. Japan also took part in this exercise when it was conducted in the Bay of Bengal in October 2015, reflecting the progressive enhancement of the SDF's presence in the Indian Ocean. At the above-mentioned Japan-India Defense Ministerial Meeting, an agreement was reached to explore the setting up of a Maritime Strategic Dialogue between the two defense ministries.<sup>20)</sup>

Japan has also been promoting deeper maritime security cooperation with Australia, including the joint exercises conducted by the two countries in April 2016, which marked the first for Japan to dispatch a submarine to Australia. In the same month, the Australian government announced that it had chosen the French shipbuilding company DCNS for its Future Submarine Program, electing not to adopt Japan's proposal for joint development and production based on the *Soryu*-class. Nevertheless, Japan and Australia still maintain a strong security relationship, as reflected in visit to Japan by Australian navy vessels and joint exercises with the MSDF in May and the subsequent holding of various exercises together with Australia and the United States as in previous years. Following the holding of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) for the first time in three years in July, talks were held in August between Japanese Defense Minister Tomomi Inada and Australian Defense Minister Marise Payne, when the two ministers confirmed that they would promote even stronger defense cooperation between Japan and Australia. At the Japan-Australia Summit Meeting in September, the prime ministers agreed to further promote the strengthening of both bilateral security and defense cooperation and trilateral cooperation including the United

States.<sup>21)</sup> At the Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in the same month, it was agreed to review the ACSA on the exchange of logistic support, supplies and services between the SDF and Australian Army and that both countries would continue to hold close discussions toward the speedy conclusion of an agreement to facilitate joint military operations and training.<sup>22)</sup>

In addition to this enhancement of bilateral coordination, there has been increasing use of a "minilateral" approach by, for example, three countries such as Japan, Australia and the United States. For instance, while participating in the above-mentioned International Fleet Review held in India, fleets from Japan, Australia and the United States conducted cruise training in the sea area from Singapore to India, as well as joint training in sea and air spaces near Indonesia in April of the same year.<sup>23)</sup> In August, joint naval exercises were held by Japan, Australia and the United States together with Canada and the ROK. With the participation of the Japanese destroyer *Hyuga*, communications training, tactical operations, and search and rescue training were conducted.<sup>24)</sup> In September, Japan, Australia, and Canada implemented joint cruise exercises including antisubmarine warfare, air defense, gunnery, and tactical operations in the sea area from Guam to Darwin in Australia.<sup>25)</sup>

Furthermore, the MSDF has taken an active part in multilateral maritime security efforts, including the Komodo 2016 exercise organized by the Indonesian navy in April and Indonesia's international fleet review.<sup>26)</sup> In May 2016, the MSDF dispatched one destroyer and 360 personnel, the third largest number among the participating countries, to take part in the Maritime Security Field Training Exercise of the expanded ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM-Plus), participating in on-site inspection, fleet escort, and search and rescue exercises in the sea area from Brunei to Singapore. The MSDF has also dispatched transport ships and destroyers to take part in regularly held multilateral maritime exercises, such as Pacific Partnership 2016 held from June to August by the US Armed Forces, the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) 2016 held by the US Armed Forces in coordination with its allies during the same period, and Kakadu 16 held by the Australian Army in September.<sup>27)</sup> During Pacific Partnership 2016, a joint cruise in the South China Sea by a US navy hospital ship and an MSDF transport ship was conducted, and during RIMPAC 2016, cruise training was conducted in a voyage from Japan to Hawaii by Japan, the United States, India, Indonesia, and Singapore.<sup>28)</sup>

In these ways, with the growing importance of maritime security, the MSDF has rapidly increased its security activities in recent years. To ensure this increase in maritime security operations, the Ministry of Defense is aiming for the early achievement of the destroyer and transport ship deployment targets determined by the Medium Term Defense Program of December 2013 and steadily raising the maritime security budget and number of personnel. In Japan's defense spending in fiscal 2016, the budget allocated to the MSDF was 1,195.4 billion yen, an increase of 5.3 percent over the previous year.<sup>29)</sup> In the fiscal 2017 budget proposal announced in December 2016, due partly to the fact that there were no bulk purchases as in the previous fiscal year, the MSDF budget fell by 3.4 percent, but it was decided to construct a new 3,000-ton class submarine and implement age extension measures for nine destroyers and nine submarines.<sup>30)</sup>

In recent years not only the MSDF but also the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) has been promoting cooperation with other countries in the Indo-Pacific region. During the high-level meeting held in principle every year between the JCG and the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in Delhi in January 2016, joint exercises by vessels and aircraft of the JCG and ICG were conducted in the Bay of Bengal off the Chennai coast.<sup>31)</sup> In July, a JCG patrol boat made a port call in Danang in Vietnam and the annual antipiracy joint drill by the JCG and the Philippine Coast Guard was held in Manila Bay. In October, the JCG also conducted joint drills with the ICG and the Indonesian Coast Guard. Through these kinds of multilayered cooperation, Japan is aiming to strengthen its partnerships with the other countries of maritime Asia and to enhance its presence in the region.

## **(2) Enhancing the Capabilities of Partner Countries**

The second approach of the Abe government to the broadening of strategic horizons consists of efforts to enhance the capabilities of partner countries through the support for capacity building by the Ministry of Defense. Following the replacement in April 2014 of the Three Principles on Arms Exports by the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, Japan concluded an agreement with the Philippines for the transfer of defense equipment and technology in February 2016, Japan's first agreement of this kind with an ASEAN member. According to this agreement, Japan will transfer to the Philippine navy up to five naval TC-90 training aircraft, assist in the education and training of Philippine navy personnel, and provide support in the field of

maintenance.<sup>32)</sup> Compared to the small planes of similar type currently used by the Philippine navy, the TC-90 can fly longer distances, so it is expected that they can be used for humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HA/DR) and for monitoring the situation in the seas around the Philippines.

As part of its capacity building technical assistance project, the Ministry of Defense held a seminar on HA/DR together with the United Kingdom in January 2016 for participants from the ASEAN, and in July it provided its first capacity building support for the maintenance of ship diesel engines. Likewise, in response to the first “2+2” meetings of foreign and defense ministers of Japan and Indonesia held in December 2015, capacity building support for the creation of nautical charts was provided to the Indonesian navy in March 2016.

This sort of approach toward the ASEAN littoral countries is partly a response to the situation in the South China Sea, where tensions have been rising in recent years. In particular, China has been aiming to change the current situation using fishing boats and China Coast Guard vessels. The number of these vessels not only far exceeds those owned by the coast guards of the other countries in the region, but has also been increasing year by year.<sup>33)</sup> If this asymmetry of capacity between maritime law enforcement agencies continues to grow, there will be a greater incitement to exert naval power in the event of a contingency between countries in the region, which could easily lead to an escalation of the situation. For this reason it has become necessary for Japan and neighboring countries to correct this asymmetry of capacity of law enforcement agencies between China and other countries in the region by helping to enhance the coastal defense capabilities of disputing countries in the South China Sea by such means as providing patrol boats. However, even if such actions are taken, since the asymmetry in power between China and other countries in the region may continue to widen in the future, the provision of support for the enhancement of defense capabilities has certain limits.

In this sense, in addition to providing support for these countries on the coast facing the South China Sea, it will be important to promote the enhancement of the capabilities of the ASEAN as a whole, through stronger approaches to continental ASEAN countries such as Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar. Originally an association of small countries, ASEAN has since its establishment ensured its negotiating power with countries outside the region amid pressure from the great powers by maintaining its unity and centrality. In recent years, however, it has

been pointed out that there is a gap between the responses of disputing countries and non-disputing countries to problems in the South China Sea, and that the unity and centrality of the ASEAN are becoming more difficult to achieve.<sup>34)</sup> Accordingly, from the viewpoint of maintaining the unity and centrality of the ASEAN as well, it is very important that Japan strengthens relationships in the field of security through capacity building support not only for disputing countries in the South China Sea but also for non-disputing countries.

In addition to support for individual ASEAN members, a policy of promoting cooperation to enhance the capabilities of the ASEAN as a whole was emphasized in the Vientiane Vision proposed by Defense Minister Inada at the Second ADMM in Laos November 2016.<sup>35)</sup> According to this vision, cooperation would be oriented toward support for enhancing the capabilities of the ASEAN across many fields, including promotion of awareness of international law in both the maritime and air spheres and the enhancement of information gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance, and search and rescue. To these ends, the Vientiane Vision advocated practical cooperation combining diverse means such as capacity building support, defense equipment and technology cooperation, and training and exercises.

In recent years, the Ministry of Defense has also been strengthening its approach not only to the maritime ASEAN countries, but also to the continental ASEAN countries. In February 2016, the Ministry of Defense held a disaster response seminar as its first capacity building support project for the Lao People's Armed Forces (LPAF), and from July to August 2016 it provided on-site instruction on search, rescue and relief in the HA/DR field. In recent years defense exchange with Laos has been progressing rapidly. In November, Tomomi Inada became the first Japanese Minister of Defense to visit Laos and, in addition to capacity building support, proposals have been made for meetings between defense chiefs and the strengthening of exchange between military branches of the two countries. In April and May 2016, the Ministry of Defense



provided capacity building support for Thai Ministry of Defense personnel regarding international aviation law and aviation safety, respectively. At the Japan-Thailand Defense Ministers' Meeting held in June, two countries confirmed that they would further strengthen bilateral defense cooperation through initiatives such as participation in exercises and the establishment of staff talks between the Royal Thai Army and Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF).<sup>36)</sup> In Myanmar, the SDF held the second seminar on HA/DR in March and in June a meeting was held between the Japanese Minister of Defense, Gen Nakatani, and Myanmar State Counsellor and Foreign Minister, Aung San Suu Kyi, who reached an agreement on capacity building support by the SDF in the HA/DR field and continuing educational exchange. According to the Ministry of Defense, this was the first time that State Counsellor Suu Kyi had held a meeting with a minister of defense from overseas.<sup>37)</sup>

One initiative toward the enhancement of the capabilities of the ASEAN as a bloc is Japan's cooperation for the formulation of a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for disaster relief operations at the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on HA/DR (HA/DR-EWG). Prior to this, SOP stipulating response guidelines and liaison methods at times of disasters already existed in the ASEAN, but there were no SOP between different nations' defense authorities. Accordingly, since Japan became co-chair with Laos of the HA/DR-EWG in April 2014, it has promoted the formulation of SOP through discussions in the EWG. As a result, the first ADMM SOP were completed in May 2016 and these SOP were verified in the ADMM-Plus HA/DR Military Medicine Field Training Exercise held in Thailand with the Experts' Working Group on Military Medicine (EWG-MM) in September. These SOP were completed at the HA/DR-EWG meeting held in December and are planned to be included as an Annex to the Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP) from 2017 onwards. Although many challenges remain concerning the SOP, such as the improvement of their effectiveness and their thorough dissemination in all the ASEAN states, the continuation of efforts such as these will lead to the improvement of disaster response capabilities of the whole ASEAN bloc including Laos, thereby contributing to the enhancement of the unity and resilience of the ASEAN.

### **(3) Sharing of Norms and Principles**

The third initiative of the Abe government toward the countries of the Indo-Pacific region is sharing the norms and principles of the freedom of navigation, peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for the rule of law. In his keynote address at the Thirteenth International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Asian Security Summit (Shangri-La Dialogue) in May 2014, Prime Minister Abe advocated three principles of the “rule of law at sea”: (1) States shall make and clarify their claims based on international law; (2) states shall not use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims; and (3) states shall seek to settle disputes by peaceful means.<sup>38)</sup> In accordance with this policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been holding international symposiums on maritime law since 2015, inviting experts in this field as speakers. After the award on July 12, 2016, of an arbitral tribunal in The Hague in the Netherlands between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced its view that this award was final and legally binding on the disputing countries and urged China and the Philippines to abide by the Court’s award.<sup>39)</sup>

These efforts by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in recent years by the Ministry of Defense have played a positive role in promoting the sharing of norms and principles with other countries in the region. In his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue in May 2015, after outlining Prime Minister Abe’s three principles of the “rule of law at sea,” Defense Minister Nakatani proposed the Shangri-La Dialogue Initiative (SDI), which included the “wider promotion of common rules and laws at sea and in the air in the region.”<sup>40)</sup> Defense Minister Nakatani again emphasized the SDI at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2016. In addition to stating his hope for the early conclusion of the Declaration of the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), he expressed support for the United States’ freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea and the peaceful resolution of problems based on international law, including arbitration.<sup>41)</sup>

One example of these efforts is holding seminars on international aviation law being promoted by the Ministry of Defense as one of its capacity building support projects. In addition to the seminars in Thailand mentioned above, the Ministry of Defense has already implemented such seminars in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam. The seminars held at the Royal Thai Air Force Academy and National Defense College of Thailand in April 2016 were respectively attended by 100 and 180 Thai military personnel and overseas students from

ASEAN countries, who were given briefings by SDF staff, including an overview and history of aviation law, the principle of freedom of flight over international waters, and an outline of the Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ). According to Ministry of Defense staff who took part in the seminars, the Thai military personnel showed great interest in the contents and



**Seminar on international aviation law at the National Defense College of Thailand (Japan Ministry of Defense)**

seminars were followed by lively Q&A sessions.<sup>42)</sup> The above-mentioned Vientiane Vision clearly stated that the Ministry of Defense would promote shared understanding toward the implementation of international law, including both international aviation law and maritime law.<sup>43)</sup>

Another important initiative is the promotion of the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) adopted at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS). The MSDF has made efforts to in this direction, for example by adopting the CUES in the training and exercises it conducted with the Philippine navy in May and June 2015 and with the Malaysian navy in August 2015 and April 2016. After the conclusion of the above-mentioned Komodo 2016 exercise organized by the Indonesian navy, lieutenants or equivalent navy personnel from nineteen WPNS member and observer countries boarded an MSDF destroyer, on which the WPNS 2016 Ship Rider Program was conducted on a voyage from Indonesia to the Philippines. In this program, seminars were held at sea and the participants discussed topics such as the rule of law and maritime security.<sup>44)</sup>

Use of the CUES as an international maritime standard has gradually been expanding. It was applied in the ADMM-Plus Maritime Security Field Training Exercise held in May 2016 and its application was discussed at the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) held by India.<sup>45)</sup> In September 2016, China and the ASEAN reached an agreement to apply the CUES in the South China Sea. Furthermore, China and the United States have conducted exercises using the CUES in order to avoid a crisis at sea, and it is possible that similar training by the MSDF and Chinese navy may be implemented in the future. Countries such as Malaysia and Singapore have proposed that the scope of application of the CUES

be extended beyond navy vessels to vessels such as those of maritime law enforcement agencies.<sup>46)</sup>

In these ways, the promotion of international norms and principles has become one of the important tasks in the defense exchange and cooperation with other countries being undertaken by both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense. This indicates that “defense diplomacy,” the use in diplomacy of defense assets in peacetime, has become rapidly more important in recent international relations, and that the objective of this defense diplomacy may extend beyond the promotion of exchange and building of trust with other countries to the higher level diplomatic objective of sharing norms and principles. Considering that promotion of the rule of law, human rights and democracy is already becoming a common norm or objective in many Indo-Pacific countries including the ASEAN states, not only aviation law and maritime law but also, for instance, support for democratization of the military may well arise as themes of capacity building support projects undertaken by the Ministry of Defense. In promoting such initiatives, cooperation with countries that share the same values, such as the United States and Australia, both of which have long experience in capacity building support, will become increasingly important.

### **3. Toward the Further Broadening of Strategic Horizons**

#### **(1) Taking Diversity into Account**

What kind of challenges will Japan face in expanding its strategic horizons into the Indo-Pacific region? The first thing that springs to mind is the diversity of the countries in the region, that is, the differences in history, culture, stages of economic development, and domestic political systems. Although ASEAN is considered as a single bloc, for instance, there are great economic differences among its member states. These members include countries such as Indonesia, which accounts for 40 percent of the total ASEAN population and about 36 percent of its total GDP, and Singapore, which has a higher per capita GDP than both the United States and Japan. On the other hand, it also includes countries like Brunei, Cambodia, and Laos, which each accounts for less than one percent of the ASEAN’s total GDP. Furthermore, these countries are both religiously diverse, with Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian citizens, and ethnically diverse, including Malay, Chinese, and Indian residents. With regard to political systems, while

Vietnam and Laos maintain one-party socialist states, other countries are in the process of democratization, while Brunei has partially incorporated democratic systems under an absolute monarchy.

The countries of the region also have diverse policies toward the United States and China. Even among the ASEAN members, while Vietnam has territorial issues in the South China Sea and has been adopting a stronger stance against China in recent years by strengthening its relations with the United States and other countries, non-disputing countries such as Thailand and Cambodia have been moving closer to China militarily. Moreover, China is the most important trading partner not only for the ASEAN states but also for Australia and India, and China's direct investment in these countries has rapidly increased in recent years. As a result, rather than choosing between the United States and China, these countries have been trying to gain the benefits of economic growth by strengthening their political and economic ties with China, while hedging against its emergence through stronger relations with the United States and Japan.

In addition to these various types of diversity among the countries in the region, the risks of changes in the political situation must be taken into account. For instance, in view of its disputes with China in the South China Sea, the Philippines had strengthened its relationship with the United States in recent years through measures such as the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). However, after the election in June 2016 of Rodrigo Duterte as President of the Philippines, the new president announced the termination of military exercises with the US Armed Forces and called for the withdrawal of US troops, stating his intention to strengthen his country's relations with China and Russia. As a result of the referendum held in Thailand in August 2016, a new constitution under a military government was approved. While this constitution provided for an eventual return to civilian rule, it is seen as having strengthened the powers of the military. Of the 250 members of the Senate, who will serve five-year terms, six seats will be reserved for military and police chiefs such as the army, navy and air force chiefs of staff, and the remaining members will be appointed by the ruling military junta.<sup>47)</sup> While advances have been made toward democratization in Myanmar, the political situation remains uncertain in Cambodia, where the ruling party led by Prime Minister Hun Sen has stepped up repression of the opposition party and other antigovernment groups.

Although the political situation in democratic countries such as Australia and

India is relatively stable compared to the ASEAN countries, it is possible that their policies toward Japan and other countries may change slightly with changes in their democratically elected leaders. For instance, the plan for Japan to build submarines for Australia proceeded smoothly through the good relationship between Prime Minister Abe and Australia's Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, who was viewed as pro-Japanese. However, Abbott was ousted as prime minister following a political dispute in September 2015, and it was reported that this was one reason for the breakdown of the submarine cooperation program. Similarly, the good relationship between Japan and India in recent years is said to have been largely due to the personal initiatives of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who placed importance on India's relationships with the United States and Japan, but it is not clear whether that good relationship will continue after Modi leaves office. In order to build relations that transcend cooperation based on such individual relationships between leaders, it is essential to gradually systematize bilateral security relations through the holding of "2+2" meetings and the conclusion of various agreements.

On the other hand, it has been advocated in Japan that it should develop its strategic partnerships with other countries, built with China in mind, into official alliances through treaties or into associations among maritime nations. Although this way of proceeding cannot be completely rejected as a future possibility, in view of the diversity of the region, it is not only unrealistic at present but also has the danger of hardening the division between maritime Asia and continental Asia. To contend with the various problems in the region, it would be more realistic for Japan to steadily build functional cooperation in nontraditional security fields with other countries in the region, including China, while deepening coordination with countries with which it shares values. Although multilateral frameworks, such as the ADMM-Plus and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) already exist in the region, it will be beneficial to promote unilateral cooperation in the areas of maritime security and capacity building support to supplement this kind of multilateral cooperation. Furthermore, in the areas of counterterrorism and nation-building support, it will also be necessary for countries to promote not only cooperation within the region but also global cooperation.

## **(2) Enhancement of Preparedness in Japan and Overseas**

To achieve the above objectives, Japan must promote stronger organic coordination

with other countries by enhancing its preparedness both domestically and overseas. As outlined in the previous section, the MSDF has played the main role in strengthening security cooperation with other countries, and the enhancement of its personnel and equipment is an urgent task. In the current situation, the frank opinion has been expressed that the MSDF's infrastructure for long-term operations overseas may not be sufficient.<sup>48)</sup> Accordingly, regarding the best logistic support system for conducting overseas operations by the MSDF more effectively and efficiently, it will be necessary to examine various possibilities including the establishment of overseas bases, while giving sufficient consideration to the distinctive characteristics and political situation in each region.

It will also be necessary to strengthen coordination within Japan among the actors responsible for the formulation of overseas policies. For instance, the actors working to improve the capabilities of Japan's partners include not only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense and Japan Coast Guard, but also independent political organizations such as Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and private-sector organizations that develop human resources. The Ministry of Defense promotes wide-ranging capacity building support for the fostering of human resources, not only through capacity building assistance undertaken mainly by the International Policy Division, but also through the dispatch of instructors to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations training centers (PKO centers) in countries such as Africa and India and to the UN Project for African Rapid Deployment of Engineering Capabilities (ARDEC), which was launched in 2015 with the aim of eliminating shortages of equipment (heavy machinery) for PKO facilities units and staff capable of operating it. The promotion by these various actors of more organic coordination of capacity building support for developing countries can be expected to facilitate the strategic and efficient achievement of objectives.

Japan is also required to promote the enhancement of its partners' capabilities and sharing of norms and principles through coordination with overseas countries that have the same strategic interests and values. Apart from Japan, the United States and other Western countries have provided support for capacity building in Southeast Asia. However, since there are many overlaps in the contents of support and the fields and policies for support vary from country to country, it cannot be said that there is coordination among the countries providing support. In order to improve the framework so that multiple countries can provide more efficient

capacity building support according to their respective strengths and weaknesses, more detailed discussions are needed among the countries concerned. In addition to the discussions on capacity building support already held between Japan and the United States and Australia, Japan reached an agreement with the United Kingdom in January 2016 on the coordination of capacity building support for the armed forces of countries in Southeast Asia.<sup>49)</sup> Together with the steady development of these discussions and coordinating functions for improving the efficiency of the existing structure for cooperation, it will also be effective to promote the building of minilateral frameworks including countries such as India and the ROK in order to expand the cooperative structure itself.

Another important challenge is the fostering, exchange and dispatch of human resources who can form the basis of this kind of overseas cooperation. The Ministry of Defense has strengthened personnel exchange between the SDF and other countries' armed forces by accepting overseas students at educational institutions such as the SDF's staff colleges and the National Institute for Defense Studies and the dispatch of students to national defense colleges in other countries. In recent years, the Ministry of Defense has improved its system for dispatching defense attachés to countries overseas. In fiscal 2014, defense attachés were newly dispatched to seven countries (Algeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, Nigeria, South Africa, and Morocco).<sup>50)</sup> In fiscal 2015, a three-person system of army, navy and air force defense attachés was established in Australia and India. Considering that three or more defense attachés had been sent only to four countries—the United States, China, the ROK, and Russia—until that time, this change can be viewed as a reflection of the Abe government's emphasis on the Indo-Pacific region.

Exchange has been promoted not only between defense officials, but also between ministerial staff. In 2013, the Capacity Building Assistance Office in the Ministry of Defense's International Policy Division began the long-term acceptance of staff from the Australian Department of Defence, and in 2015 the first personnel from the Ministry of Defense were dispatched to the Department of Defence for a short period. Rather than simply promoting training, these exchange programs are designed to deepen understanding of the partner country's decision-making processes and lead to closer information exchange by having participants work as staff at the ministry or agency to which they are dispatched.

In these ways, human exchange with the defense authorities and organizations of other countries in the Indo-Pacific region has been steadily promoted, but there



still challenges that have to be overcome in order to further enhance this exchange. For example, about half of the students from overseas that the Ministry of Defense accepts for education and training organizations are from ASEAN countries, but very few students from the Ministry of Defense are dispatched to these countries, most of them going to study in the United States and Europe. With the exception of Brunei, Cambodia and Laos, only one defense attaché is dispatched to each ASEAN country. In view of the importance of the ASEAN states, this number can be expected to increase. The appropriate allocation and utilization of human resources from a strategic perspective is an important task for Japan in further broadening its strategic horizons.

### **The Expansion of Strategic Horizons and Defense Equipment and Technology Cooperation**

Since the establishment of the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology in April 2014, the Japanese government has proactively promoted it as one of its most important means of strengthening security cooperation by enhancing interoperability with partner countries in defense equipment and technology cooperation and enhancing partners' capabilities. After Japan signed the Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology in July 2014, it proceeded to conclude similar agreements with France (March 2015), India (December 2015) and the Philippines (February 2016). In addition, Japan has been presenting its equipment to ASEAN countries through various seminars and conferences, and is continuing separate discussions with countries that have expressed particular interest.

Japan has also been rapidly developing a domestic organizational structure for the purpose of strengthening this kind of cooperation. With the establishment of the Defense Equipment Agency in October 2015, the organizations and divisions responsible for handling defense equipment, which had been subdivided into various bureaus and divisions such as the Technical Research and Development Institute, were integrated. In order to realize the optimal acquisition of defense equipment in accordance with transportation needs, the Defense Equipment Agency is expected to manage costs and schedules throughout the whole equipment life cycle (concept, R&D, mass production and acquisition, maintenance, etc.), to function as a point of contact for negotiations, discussions and coordination with foreign countries, and to play the roles of examining and developing systems and conducting technological management regarding the transfer of equipment overseas.

However, Japan has only just embarked on defense equipment and technology cooperation. It is still far behind other countries, particularly in terms of level of recognition in the international defense equipment market, but also other areas such as its ability to gather data on other countries needs, etc., private-sector

companies' know-how concerning overseas transfer, systems for producing, transporting, maintaining and improving equipment overseas, and R&D budget. The transfer of defense equipment overseas also inevitably involves the risk of the leakage of technology.

In view of these considerations, the report of the Panel of Experts on Defense Equipment and Technology Policy published in August 2016 stated that Japan should place priority on following five objectives in the field of international defense equipment and technology cooperation: (1) improvement of Japan's dissemination of information on defense equipment and technology; (2) promotion of defense equipment and technology cooperation not merely through defense equipment transfer but also by integrating this with education on maintenance and support for operations, etc.; (3) promotion of international equipment cooperation with reference to the overseas transfer of equipment in other countries and Japan's infrastructure exports; (4) implementation of information gathering for realizing defense equipment and technology cooperation; and (5) enhancement of technology management systems and examination of intellectual property management systems. The report also advocated the creation of an all-Japan organizational structure and promotion of defense equipment and technology cooperation by both the public and private sectors through close coordination by the Defense Equipment Agency with the related ministries and agencies, private-sector companies, think tanks and the like.

As stated in the Three Principles, the aim of Japan's defense equipment and technology cooperation is not the promotion of exports for economic advantages, but rather the strategic objective of contributing to peace and international cooperation and promoting Japan's security. In view of this, it will be necessary to further improve government-led back-up systems, including financial support and provision of information to companies, while taking sufficient account of the risks and costs involved. In addition to exports of existing defense equipment, it will also be essential from the start to look into the development of production systems from the perspective of overseas deployment. As such, many challenges remain for defense equipment and technology cooperation to become a major tool in the broadening of Japan's strategic horizons.

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