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**Security Partnerships  
in Japan's Asia Strategy  
Creating Order, Building Capacity  
and Sharing Burden**

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*In collaboration with the Atomic Energy Commission (CEA)*

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# Summary

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During the last decade, Japan has sought partnership with many Asian nations – the drive remaining strong regardless of ruling parties. Newly elected Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan is to continue this trend under the name of ‘value diplomacy’.

Partnership is being sought to sustain regional order at a time of geopolitical shifts in a rapidly developing Asia, through coalition-building among like-minded countries. Also, partnership between major and smaller powers is aimed at enhancing the capability to cope with both traditional and non-traditional security threats. America’s regional partners, particularly Japan and Australia, understand well this role of partnership and regard it as an important tool of diplomatic statecraft and burden sharing.

On the other hand, security partnership is limited in so far as there are varied perceptions of and policy priority concerning China, a crucial trade partner for most nations in Asia. Also, such partnership will not sufficiently meet the challenge from the new spectrum of warfare, such as anti-access measures. Finally, without having China in the web of security cooperation, the predictability of the security environment would not be improved and the possibility of power competition would not be mitigated.

This paper analyses Japanese security partnership with Asian nations. First it introduces the concept of partnership in the context of Asian security and Japanese strategic thinking. Then, it looks at and develops the case of Japanese partnership with Australia, India, South Korea and Southeast Asian nations. Finally, it highlights the limitations of partnership and provides a vision for the future.

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# Introduction

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The Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP), led by Shinzo Abe, won a landslide victory in the general election for the Lower House in December 2012. Three years ago, the LDP suffered a dramatic loss of seats and yielded the house majority to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). However, the DPJ lost voters' support because of the mismanagement of foreign policies on the United States Forces Japan (USFJ) base relocation in Okinawa and the challenges over the Senkaku<sup>1</sup> Islands.

Foreign media, including *the New York Times* and *The Economist*, warned that Prime Minister Abe has very nationalistic views on Japan's history of colonization and war in Asia, and that his foreign policy would shortly turn right.<sup>2</sup> The prime minister and his staff, however, have not indicated that they will take such a path. Rather, they emphasize that pragmatism is the main motive of their foreign policy. First, the alliance with the United States is still considered as the cornerstone for peace in Asia-Pacific, amid growing security challenges resulting from geopolitical change in Asia. Secondly, Japan is to enhance its national security efforts through revising its defense guidelines, increasing the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) budget, and eventually applying a different interpretation of the Japanese Constitution regarding collective security rights.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the emphasis has been put on strengthening relationships with East Asian countries, with Prime Minister Abe, his Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera traveling to major Asian capitals (notably excluding Beijing) on their first overseas trip.

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<sup>1</sup> The Senkaku Islands are located in the East China Sea. Japanese sovereignty over the islands has been disputed by mainland China (where they are referred to as the Diaoyu Islands) and Taiwan (where they are called the Taioyutai Islands). The Japanese name will be used throughout this paper.

<sup>2</sup> "Editorial: Another Attempt to Deny Japan's History," *The New York Times*, January 2, 2013. "Leader: Down-turn Abe," *The Economist*, January 5, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> In the fiscal year 2013, the administration increased the SDF budget by 40 billion JPY, meaning a rise of about 0.8% in the annual SDF budget.

This high-level visit to Asian capitals has also to be interpreted within the context of Abe's 'value diplomacy'.<sup>4</sup> During his first tenure (September 2006 to August 2007), Japan promoted partnership with democracies, especially Australia and India, and with NATO. The concept of "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" was suggested by then Foreign Minister (currently Vice Prime Minister and Finance Minister) Taro Aso.<sup>5</sup> 'Value diplomacy' implies the establishment of another pillar of Japanese diplomatic principles, and generally assumes that enhancing the relationship with democratic countries would create a better environment for Japan to develop relationships with non-democracies, including China. A recent article published by Mr Abe insists: "[T]o improve Sino-Japanese relations, Japan must first anchor its ties on the other side of the Pacific; for, at the end of the day, Japan's diplomacy must always be rooted in democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights."<sup>6</sup>

To seek better relations and forge partnerships with Asian nations is not new for the LDP. It has followed this line for at least the past decade, and, interestingly, Tokyo's strong desire to widen the partnerships never lost momentum during three years of DPJ government. Mr Abe would take over this trend under the name of 'value diplomacy'.

Security partnerships are sought in order to sustain regional order at a time of geopolitical shifts in Asia, through building coalition between like-minded countries. Also, partnerships between major and smaller powers are intended to enhance the capability to cope with both traditional and non-traditional security threats. America's regional partners, particularly Japan and Australia, well understand this role of partnership and regard it as an important tool of diplomatic statecraft and burden-sharing acts.

This paper analyzes Japanese partnership with Asian nations. Firstly, it introduces the concept of partnership in the context of Asian security and Japanese strategic objectives. Then, it looks at Japanese partnership with Australia, India, South Korea and

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<sup>4</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 29 December 2012 (in Japanese).

<sup>5</sup> Under this concept, the democracies in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Indochina were widely included. Speech by Mr Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs on the Occasion of the Japan Institute of International Affairs Seminar, "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons", 30 November 2006. See also Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Japanese Diplomatic Bluebook*, 2007. This concept was regarded as the fourth pillar for Japanese three diplomatic principles.

<sup>6</sup> Shinzo Abe, "Security 'diamond' central to peace and prosperity in Asia", *Project Syndicate*, 27 December 2012. Mr Abe, in his interview, does not deny the need for strong partnership with non-democracies (Vietnam, for example), regarding them as strategically important states. Mr Abe was scheduled to deliver the address in Jakarta on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2013, but could not do so due to the itinerary change. His address proposes five principles, including the value diplomacy aspects. "The Bounty of the Open Seas: Five New Principles for Japanese Diplomacy," undelivered speech by Prime Minister of Japan, Mr Shinzo Abe. Available at <[http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96\\_abe/statement/201301/18speech\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/statement/201301/18speech_e.html)>

Southeast Asian nations. Finally, it highlights the limitations of partnership and envisions the future.

# The New Context for Security Partnerships in Asia

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During the last decade, Japan has enhanced security partnerships with its neighbors in East Asia. Australia, a loyal and significant American ally, has been the most successful partner for Japan in collaborating for regional and global security. India, an emerging democratic power located in the geopolitically crucial Indian Ocean, is another country with which Japan is seeking to develop its multi-dimensional global partnership. South Korea, a close neighbor in Northeast Asia, is slightly behind in the development of a security partnership with Japan, but the need to cope with contingencies in the Korean peninsula has been widely recognized by both countries. In addition, Japan has enhanced its bilateral, sub-regional, and inter-regional political and security collaborations with Southeast and South Asian nations.<sup>7</sup>

The above developments are part of a larger movement in which members of the US 'hub and spokes' alliance system and friendly countries in Asia have formed and deepened partnerships in many dyads. These sometimes include the US as the third leg, taking the form of a web or network of cooperation. They are not intended to become alliances or to function as an exclusive political network. However, the US and its Asian allies and friends have started to build stronger security relationships through, for example, official declarations of security cooperation, implementation of joint exercises and military exchanges, and aids for security capacity-building. This paper argues that security partnerships in Asia have three general objectives: order-creation, capacity building, and burden sharing.

## Order-creation

Partnership is sought to sustain the principles of the current regional order through coalition-building between like-minded countries. The balance of power in Asia is shifting due to the development of rising economies in China, India and Southeast Asia, and the postwar order and principles are under challenge. However, Asia does not have a definite regional institution like the European Union, while region wide mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit have not achieved

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<sup>7</sup> Sugio Takahashi, "Japan", *East Asia Strategic Review*, Tokyo: National Institute of Defense Studies, 2008 and 2012.

substantial progress in policy coordination, let alone creation of order. To preserve peace and stability and the essential principles such as rule-based and peaceful resolution, human rights and freedom of navigation, nations in Asia and the US – as a coalition of like-minded states – partners are forming building blocks in the regional architecture, or even in global norm building. They regard bilateral and mini-lateral partnerships as supplementing the alliance with the US in political context.<sup>8</sup>

### Capacity-building

Partnership between major and smaller powers aims to enhance the latter's capability to cope with both traditional and non-traditional security threats. The US military presence is still regarded as the most significant stabilizer. While during the Cold War the US could provide security mostly through its own assets, today the spectrum of security is expanded and autonomous capability is crucial. Asian nations have come to realize that military assets have an important role in combating terrorism and piracy, in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), especially in the case of natural disasters, and in containing pandemic diseases, all of which are non-traditional security issues. Also, military and paramilitary naval capabilities are required to enforce law over territorial waters and defend sovereignty-related rights. Hence, major powers want to enhance its bilateral security cooperation and multilateral exercises with many Southeast Asian nations through building their capacity.

### Burden-Sharing

America's regional partners, particularly Japan and Australia, also provide more aids and supports, as a burden-sharing strategy. An increase in the capacity of minor powers would in the long run lessen the burden of the major powers. In this context, partnership does not deny the centrality in Asian security of the US and its alliances.

In addition, intra-alliance-network military cooperation is cost-effective and relatively easy to increase, due to the low transaction costs at the operational level among the US allies and friends. Therefore, they have begun to cooperate more in regional and global security policies, including counter-terrorism and proliferation, peace-keeping and post-conflict nation-building, and cyber security. The US, unlike most of time during the Cold War, seems to support such actions by allies too.

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<sup>8</sup> Such partnership in most cases does not aim to preserve order by increasing deterrence and response capability, but if Japan and South Korea form a bilateral and trilateral (with the US) security partnership, for example, it would contribute to deterrence and response against North Korean challenges.

## Japanese Security Thinking

Japanese security thinking has three basic strategic objectives:

- Preserve Japan's sovereignty and protect its homeland and vital interests in the areas surrounding Japan, and sea lines of communication (SLOC)<sup>9</sup>
- Achieve economic growth amid growing pressures due to an unprecedented demographic crisis prompted by an ageing society and population decline – in this perspective, socio-economic integration with demographically younger and dynamic Asia as an engine of global economic growth is crucial
- Maintain the liberal international order based on a set of rules and principles, including freedom of navigation and peaceful settlement of disputes, which has particularly supported global development since World War II<sup>10</sup>

The rise of China and the shifting balance of power in Asia Pacific is the most fundamental challenge for Japan. From the viewpoint of Tokyo, China has two faces. On the one hand, as Asian intra-regional trade continues to increase, Japan's main export market is China (around 20% of total exports), while China is also its main source of imports (also around 20%). If the gravity model applies, Japanese trade will be more than 40% dependent on China by 2030.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, China's economic rise is welcome and Japan has a keen interest in its political and social stability, and gradual development. On the other hand, China is increasing its military capability, using its growing budget and technology, while its economic and political influence keep expanding in Southeast Asia and beyond. Management of US-China relations has not resulted in stable cooperation so far. This provokes Japanese uneasiness, since the post-war regional and global order in which Japan has managed to grow must now be transformed in order to face the new balance of power.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Basic Ocean Law was passed by the Japanese Diet in 2007. The former director of defense policy of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), Tomohisa Takei, as the individual opinion argued that the role of the JMSDF is to secure the SLOC. Tomohisa Takei, "JMSDF in the New Maritime Era", *Hatou*, vol. 199, 2008 (In Japanese).

<sup>10</sup> The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era, *Japan's Visions for Future Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era: Toward a Peace-Creating Nation*, August 2010. This organization of "wise men" was formed to reshape Japan's defense guidelines.

<sup>11</sup> Satoru Mori, Ryo Sahashi, Shoichi Itoh, Tetsuo Kotani and Yoshihito Yasaki, *Rule Promoting Power*, Tokyo: Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Ryo Sahashi, "Japanese Strategy in the Transforming Asia Pacific Security Order", *China International Strategy Review* (Peking University Center for International and Strategic Studies), 2012. Japan, of course, faces the complicating, multifaceted

Japan, being less powerful than the United States or China, cannot meet these goals through its own efforts. In this sense, the American 'pivot to Asia', intensifying bilateral cooperation and multilateralism, is welcomed. Japan seeks to make the most of the US pivot, enhancing Japan-US dynamic cooperation through joint basing, exercises and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), while it is also considering new negotiations to revise the guidelines for defense cooperation. Strategically, there is support for increasing the rotation of US naval/ Marine presence southwards. Considering the instability in the Middle East, some voices in Japan worry about the sustainability of interests and capability of the US pivot in the long run. Nevertheless, many think that it is crucial to reinforce the US commitment in this time of power shifts.

To satisfy Japan's three objectives, the continued presence of the US is a necessary but not sufficient condition. To secure its strategic interests in the sea lines of communication, to integrate itself into rapidly developing Asia, and to maintain the liberal international order in Asia Pacific and the world, Japan needs a larger strategy.

On the one hand, the Japanese government proclaims the role of rule-making and compliance with international law. In October 2012, then-Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba emphasized this point: "We are at an extremely important moment now that will define the international order for coming decades, namely, the order that will enable the Asia-Pacific region and the entire international community to enjoy peace and prosperity. In that regard, I have been making efforts to create open, multilayered networks and rules consistent with international law. [...] Japan-US cooperation to promote the observance and strengthening of international laws and common rules related to maritime issues in the Asia-Pacific region provides a model for the future."<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Japan regards 'security partnerships' as a strategic tool to satisfy three objectives mentioned above. Multiplying such partnerships also helps to position Japan at the center of the Asian security network. Building partnerships will create leverage over newly emerging powers in relation to rule promotion; this is a type of soft-balancing, preserving the principles of the order again the

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security challenges. North Korea is experiencing the historical leadership transition to its new young leader but is still not cooperative as regards dismantling its nuclear program, suspending missile launches, and investigating abductions of Japanese citizens. Violent transnational actors, including global terrorist networks and pirates, still persist and pose great threats to the Japanese and areas where Japan has interests. Instability in failed and failing states endangers human rights. Competition over energy, mineral resources and food is clearly intensifying. Global rule and compliance has yet to be achieved in the global commons, including space and cyberspace. Finally, but not least, global governance, regionalism and democracy currently show little promise of being able to solve the tasks ahead.

<sup>13</sup> Speech by Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan Koichiro Gamba, at the 9th CSIS/Nikkei Symposium, "Building Order and Making Rules in the Asia-Pacific Age", 26 October, 2012.

power-balancing through diplomatic statecraft (including military diplomacy). Partnerships also help smaller regional powers to enhance their security assets, serving regional maritime security and enabling them to maintain their autonomy in the context of geopolitical shifts in Asia. Of course, this kind of partnership is not based on a mutual security treaty and thus is not expected to enhance deterrence and response capability (in most cases); since most of the non-allied Asian nations do not want to be seen as taking sides among the great powers, the options on the partnership 'menu' seem modest, while between the US allies and friends more explicit security cooperation is declared and implemented.

# Japan's Main Security Partnerships

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## *Japanese Partnership with Australia*

The relationship with Australia is the best example to demonstrate the Japanese strategy in security partnerships.

On 14<sup>th</sup> September 2012, Australia and Japan convened the so-called '2+2' meeting between their foreign and defense ministers in Sydney, and agreed on common objectives. The resulting document, with 51 clauses, confirms the still-growing momentum for partnership between two important powers in Asia Pacific. It begins by describing the partnership as "natural", because of common values: "Australia and Japan are natural strategic partners sharing common values and interests, including a commitment to democracy, the rule of law, protection of human rights and open markets."<sup>14</sup> The document then confirms the two countries' bilateral cooperation in building Asia Pacific security architecture and international security. They agree on supporting "China's responsible and constructive participation in the international rules-based order" and "[p]romoting regional adherence to norms of maritime security and safety, including freedom of navigation, unimpeded lawful commerce, and the rules-based peaceful resolution of disputes in the South China Sea and beyond in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)."

An important inclusion is agreement on cooperation in building norm and an international framework for cyberspace and space security, which was also emphasized in the 2+2 agreement between Japan and the US in April 2012. Japan and Australia also agreed on bilateral and trilateral (with the US) defense cooperation through, for example, joint operations, information exchanges and scientific and technological cooperation. In another section, it refers to the examination of "opportunities for defense capacity building cooperation in South East Asia and the Pacific".

Historically, the Japan-Australian security partnership gained momentum under the first Shinzo Abe administration. In March 2007, Prime Minister Abe and Australian Prime Minister John Howard issued a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, whereby

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<sup>14</sup> 4th Australia-Japan Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultations, "Australia and Japan – Cooperating for peace and stability", 14 September 2012.

Australia became Japan's first main security partner. Until then, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the Australian Defense Force (ADF) had collaborated in UN peacekeeping operations in Cambodia (1992-93) and Timor-Leste (2002-05), and worked jointly in disaster relief operations after the large-scale earthquake off Sumatra and the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004). In post-war Iraq, the ADF helped to secure the area where lightly armed ground SDF forces were engaged in humanitarian operations. The 2007 security declaration specifies: "Japan and Australia will strengthen their cooperation and consultation on issues of common strategic interest in the Asia Pacific region and beyond", and lists nine areas of security cooperation and three areas of practical measures between the SDF and ADF, as well as an action plan. In 2009, the two governments agreed to revise the action plan, enhancing their bilateral and multilateral agenda. Canberra and Tokyo started the 2+2 meetings and agreed to prepare the legal framework for logistical cooperation.<sup>15</sup>

In January 2013, newly appointed Foreign Minister Kishida met with Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr in Sydney, and both affirmed their intention to maintain dialogue on North Korea (Australia is a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, 2013-14) and to further develop security cooperation. Since the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) would be in effect from 2013, logistical collaboration, including supply and transportation of water, food and energy in South Sudan peacekeeping operations (UNMISS), will be implemented.<sup>16</sup>

There are many reasons to believe that Japanese-Australian security relations will expand further. One reason lies in the similar vision of the regional and global order shared by Tokyo and Canberra. As US allies, they both regard the American presence in the region as crucial for their national interests. Secondly, Australia is active in global security and is using its partnership with Japan to help it 'go global' (as suggested in a report by the Sydney-based Lowy Institute).<sup>17</sup> Thirdly, the rise in Australian geopolitical importance, crucial for US power projection in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, is well appreciated in Tokyo. Australian maritime activities and diplomacy open up the potential for Japan to collaborate to underpin stability in the Indo-Pacific area. Fourthly, the Japanese are aware that the Australian government and ADF maintain deep cooperation

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<sup>15</sup> On the historical background and for analysis of the Japan-Australian partnership, see also William T. Tow and Rikki Kersten (eds.), *Bilateral Perspectives on Regional Security: Australia, Japan and the Asia-Pacific Region*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Two ADF military officers have been stationed in the JGSDM liaison office in Juba, South Sudan since summer 2012. *Asagumo News*, 13 December 2012 (in Japanese).

<sup>17</sup> Malcolm Cook and Andrew Shearer, *Going Global: A New Australia-Japan Agenda for Multilateral Cooperation*, Sydney: Lowy Institute, 2009.

with their US counterparts in the security field. In addition to the low transaction costs for both defense forces, as US allies, such links between Australia and the US motivate Japan to promote bilateral and trilateral cooperation as the role model.

## ***Japanese Partnership with India***

India and Japan recently enhanced their global and regional partnership. In 2000, their prime ministers agreed to build a global partnership. The visit to Japan of the Indian defense minister in January 2001 represented the first official dialogue between the countries' defense ministers. In December 2006, Prime Ministers Abe and Manmohan Singh confirmed their intention to hold "annual summit-level meetings" in the respective capitals and to intensify their ministerial dialogue. In December 2009, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama visited New Delhi. Two summits reconfirmed the partnership, and the Action Plan for Security Cooperation was signed. A 2+2 dialogue (ministry of defense and ministry of foreign affairs) was introduced at the sub-cabinet/senior officials level, in addition to maritime joint exercises and non-traditional security cooperation. Mr Singh met Mr Hatoyama's successors, Naoto Kan and Yoshihiko Noda, annually in Tokyo, New York and Phnom Penh, and reconfirmed their intention to cooperate.<sup>18</sup>

Considering its geopolitical position, India is a potential best partner of Japan to preserve peaceful and rule-based order in the Indian Ocean, a crucial part of Japanese sea lines of communication. India, long preoccupied with its immediate neighbors, is only starting to build up seriously its naval forces. India, Japan and the US have repeated their trilateral drills, and the Indian and Japanese navies implemented their first bilateral drill in June 2012 in Sagami Bay, off Tokyo.<sup>19</sup>

US interests concerning India inevitably have an effect on decision-making in Tokyo. Michael Green, former senior director in the US National Security Council, and Andrew Shearer, a former senior Australian diplomat and foreign policy adviser, recently argued that the Indian Ocean, with important commercial and military highways, and chokepoints, is of strategic importance. In this context, the importance of Diego Garcia, the West Australian base HMAS Stirling and the Cocos Islands will increase.<sup>20</sup> Even though, according to Green and Shearer, the US "does not yet need to plan for

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<sup>18</sup> India is also the major recipient of Japanese official developmental aids, including two key projects, the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and Dedicated Freight Corridor.

<sup>19</sup> *Asakumo News*, 14 June 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Michael J. Green and Andrew Shearer, "Defining U.S. Indian Ocean Strategy", *The Washington Quarterly*, vol.35, n°.2 (2012), p.175-189.

significant increases in its permanent military presence in the Indian Ocean”, the pre-eminence of India in the region should be sustained and the US, Australia and Japan could contribute to this.

The experience of forming the ‘core group’ for disaster relief following the Sumatra earthquake and the subsequent tsunami in December 2004 motivated some policy planners to seek a quadrilateral cooperation mechanism between Australia, India, Japan and the US. This idea did not bear fruit and was seen by some Chinese commentators as an attempt to contain ‘against Beijing’. Some proponents of the quadrilateral mechanism may regard it as hard-balancing against rising China, but the main driver was to enhance the US alliance and network of friends at lower cost and to stimulate the regional mechanism. Considering past experience and depiction of such a framework as containment of China, it is unlikely to be revived.

However, Australia, India, Japan and the US continued to implement trilateral forms of cooperation (Australia-Japan-US and India-Japan-US). Canberra-Tokyo-Washington initiated a Trilateral Strategic Dialogue at ministerial level in 2005, while India-Japan-US conducted joint naval exercises, making use of the Malabar series. Moreover, India, Japan and the US embarked on their first strategic dialogue at director-general level in December 2011. The trilateral mechanism between Australia, India and the US has yet to be developed, but if it does it would contribute to maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean. Participating governments expect as useful the political gravity created by such bilateral and trilateral partnerships, in addition to the increase of cooperation itself.

## ***Japanese Partnership with South Korea***

Japan and South Korea are weaker partners in the alliance network. Also, the scope of partnership is mostly limited to the peace and stability in Korean Peninsula.

Clearly, the United States, Japan, and South Korea have shared concerns over North Korea during the last two decades. After the 1994 Agreed Framework succeeded in cooling down the first North Korean nuclear crisis, the three nations began *ad hoc* high-level meetings to discuss collaboration on the North Korea issue, and, after the Taepodong missile launch in 1998, the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) was established. It had ceased to function by the beginning of the first Bush administration, and, in the second nuclear crisis, was unable to coordinate an

effective trilateral response to the North Korean actions.<sup>21</sup> During the Six-Party Talks, the three nations split over the question of national posture toward North Korea and priority in negotiations.<sup>22</sup> The *Cheonan* incident and the shelling at Yeonpyong Island in 2010 led to confirmation of each capital's willingness to engage in an enhanced partnership, notably through ministers meeting and exchanging observers for the bilateral drills of each nation, while the US tried to work as a catalyst. Then the US Pacific Command proposed a trilateral drill, and in June and August 2012 Japan, South Korea and the US engaged in a trilateral maritime exercise. Three military ground services also agreed on further cooperation in capacity-building, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

In their bilateral relationship, as 'low-key' security cooperation, Tokyo and Seoul continued to seek Acquisition & Cross-Servicing and General Security of Military Information agreements. However, in the spring of 2012, the South Korean government failed repeatedly to persuade its Congress to support such agreements. Then, in August, President Lee Myung-bak landed on the disputed island of Takeshima, in the Sea of Japan, over which South Korea effectively maintains control (calling the island Dokdo). Although this gesture was generally understood in Japan as being aimed at a domestic audience, it nevertheless contributed to growing Japanese mistrust of its neighbor. In addition to fundamental differences in policy toward North Korea, due in part to the ethnic bond between the two Koreas, the territorial dispute and historical baggage are hampering security cooperation between two countries, even though it has been long desired.

If the momentum is regained, what would be the security cooperation agenda? Information and intelligence cooperation would be one of the first priorities. In the case of North Korea's missile launch in July 2006, it seems that Seoul did not receive the information in good time, and its top-level crisis-management meeting was delayed. On the other hand in April 2012, South Korea failed to deliver its information on the North Korean 'satellite' missile launch to Japan (which was essential for missile defense and re-assuring the Japanese people), even though the South Korean Aegis ship reportedly detected the trajectory, which Japanese Aegis ships failed to do.

Additionally, Hitoshi Tanaka, former deputy minister of foreign affairs and a former leading negotiator with Pyongyang, proposes full-fledged contingency planning for the defense of South Korea in the event of North Korean aggression, as well as for non-military aspects

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<sup>21</sup> James L. Schoff, *Tools for Trilateralism: Improving US-Japan-Korea Cooperation to Manage Complex Contingencies*, Boston: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Yoichi Funabashi, *The Peninsula Question: A Chronicle of the Second Korean Nuclear Crisis*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007.

such as coping with refugee flows.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Scott Snyder insists, “Japan needs to be more effectively involved in military contingency plans developed primarily between US Forces Korea and the ROK [Republic of Korea] Ministry of National Defense.” As Snyder proposes, this bilateral and trilateral partnership should not, and would not, preclude Chinese cooperation in ensuring peace on the Korean peninsula.<sup>24</sup>

New conservative leaderships were elected both in Seoul and Tokyo in the winter of 2012. North Korea launched its missiles again in December 2012, and is predicted to detonate another nuclear test shortly. In this context, the exchange of special envoys of congressional leaders between the two capitals will be the trigger for renewed security cooperation.

## ***Japanese Partnership with Southeast Asia***

Japan has made progress in bilateral security partnerships with Southeast Asian nations, which mostly do not have formal alliances with the US. Three characteristics of partnership, namely creating order, building capacity, and sharing burden, are well observed.

The realization of Chinese influence and the relative decline of Japanese influence (partly due to a lack of leadership and stability in Japanese politics over the last decade) prompted the US and its allies, including Japan, to reinforce their efforts to establish both traditional and non-traditional security cooperation with Southeast Asian nations, which also want to make the most of such interests for their own sakes.

Japan and Indonesia, under President Yudhoyono, signed a “Strategic Partnership for Peaceful and Prosperous Future” in November 2006. In recent summit meetings, on the occasions of multilateral forums, both leaders have reconfirmed the necessity of this partnership. Japan and the Philippines, under Prime Minister Aquino, also signed a strategic partnership in June 2009, which includes maritime security cooperation.

The Japan/US 2+2 meeting in April 2012 highlighted Japan’s strategic use of official developmental aids for governance and capacity building in Southeast Asia. “The Ministers confirmed the great importance of working together to promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region, and enhancing effective, efficient and creative cooperation. In this context, the US Government plans to continue to help allies and partners in the region to build their

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<sup>23</sup> Hitoshi Tanaka, “Rethinking Our Approach to the Korean Crisis”, *East Asia Insights*, vol.6, n°.1 (2011).

<sup>24</sup> Scott Snyder, “North Korea: A Catalyst for Policy Coordination Between the United States and Japan”, in Yuki Tatsumi (ed.), *North Korea Challenge for the US–Japan Alliance*, Washington DC: Stimson Center, 2011.

capacity with training and exercises. The Government of Japan, for its part, plans to take various measures to promote safety in the region, including strategic use of official development assistance, for example through providing coastal states with patrol boats.”<sup>25</sup>

The relaxation of the Three Principles on Arms Exports at the end of 2011 allowed defense equipment to be transferred overseas to contribute to peace and international cooperation. As a result, reportedly Japan is requested to provide 10 used patrol vessels to the Philippines. The rising interests in territorial waters are resulting in capacity building of law-enforcement agencies.<sup>26</sup>

However, it is unlikely that Japan will seek high-level military cooperation or trilateral cooperation with the US and one of the Southeast Asian nations (Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore or Vietnam). Bilateral political and security dialogue, including capacity building and promotion of rules and international laws, would be less costly considering the Chinese response. In his Policy Speech, the address which a new prime minister deliver in both houses of the Diet, Mr Abe fails to mention on China and South Korea but emphasizes the importance of Japan-ASEAN relations: “This year marks the 40th year of friendship and cooperation between Japan and ASEAN... I will continue to develop strategic diplomacy that looks at the global situation from a broad perspective.”<sup>27</sup>

## ***Limitation of Partnerships***

The limit of such security partnerships lies, first, in the different perceptions of and policy priorities concerning China. It is assumed that some countries want to be in a better position when political tensions increase between other countries and China. It would not be rational for Japan to be entrapped in bilateral political problems between China and Southeast Asian nations, even though they might be Japanese security partners. Conversely, some of the Southeast Asian nations, including Indonesia, do not conceal their anxiety that

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<sup>25</sup> “Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee”, 27 April 2012. See also: Ken Jimbo, “Japan Should Build ASEAN’s Security Capacity”, *AJISS Commentary*, no. 150 (May 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Japan has made efforts to reinforce the coastguard capabilities especially of the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. On functional cooperation in Asia and the role of Japan, see Ryo Sahashi, “Security Arrangements in the Asia-Pacific: a Three-Tier Approach” in William T. Tow and Rikki Kersten (eds.), *Bilateral Perspectives on Regional Security: Australia, Japan and the Asia-Pacific Region*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> “Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 183rd Session of the Diet,” 28 January, 2013.

America's security over-commitment may deepen the great power rivalry with China.<sup>28</sup>

Also, the partnerships will not be fully adequate to the new spectrum of warfare. As is suggested in "Global Trends 2030" from the US National Intelligence Council, the spectrum of instruments of war is changing. The report outlines five "ongoing competitions": "anti-access vs. access", "nuclear disfavor vs. nuclear renaissance", "missile defense vs. missile offense", "information superiority vs. information denial", and "regular vs. irregular form of combat". In particular, "the US ability to project air and maritime forces is in competition with China's burgeoning capabilities to deter and deny such force projection. The outcome of this competition will impact [on] the ability of either side to control the maritime and air approaches to East Asia and the US ability to assure allies in the region."<sup>29</sup>

The discussion of US operational concept against Chinese anti-access area-denial capability and the US military budget will have crucial effects on the regional perceptions of the strategic environment. While the strengthening of security partnerships enhances the ties between the US and its partners in the Indo-Pacific area, and lessens the US burden, US military power is the primary force that can influence the future geostrategic landscape. The US partners would plan to increase their military budgets, but this will not have a game-changer effect, except in the case of India, if it continues to build up its armed forces at the current speed.

Finally, without having China in the web of security cooperation, the sense of power competition will not be mitigated. According to T. J. Pempel, discussing Northeast Asia, "the underlying question for the region's future is the extent to which [the] mix of institutions is likely to generate a sufficiently consistent sense of underlying order and predictability as to reduce the chances of major military confrontations".<sup>30</sup> Alliances could help to lessen unpredictability through the deterrence effect. But it seems that institutions other than alliances will not help to decrease the unpredictability of East Asian conflicts unless they attain the critical function of crisis management and confidence building.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, security partnerships should not prevent an inclusive regionalism.

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<sup>28</sup> Rizal Sukma, "Indonesia and the Emerging Sino-US Rivalry in Southeast Asia," *The New Geopolitics of Southeast Asia*, London: LSE IDEAS, November 2012. On the rise of China and its impacts on the region, see Ryo Sahashi, "The rise of China and the transformation of Asia-Pacific security architecture," William T. Tow and Brendan Taylor (eds.), *Contending Cooperation: Bilateralism, Multilateralism, and Asia-Pacific Security*, London: Routledge, forthcoming in April 2013, pp.135-156.

<sup>29</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030*, December 2012.

<sup>30</sup> T. J. Pempel, 2012, "Security Architecture in Northeast Asia: projections from the rearview mirror", in T.J. Pempel and Chung-Min Lee (eds.), *Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia: Architecture and Beyond*, London: Routledge, p.214.

<sup>31</sup> See also Rory Medcalf, "Can Military Diplomacy Keep the Peace in 2013?" *The Diplomat*, January 5, 2013.

## Conclusion: Looking ahead

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The 'hub and spokes' alliance system is going to be supplemented by a network of security partners. In this context, Japan seeks to be at the core of this architectural development, preserving the Asian liberal order and supporting the presence of the US.

Japan understands that interdependence in Asia makes it difficult and undesirable to expect a collective balancing against the rise of China. Partnerships are to create leverage to guide China within an inclusive, rather than excluding, regional order. Nevertheless, Chinese criticism of security partnerships that are considered as 'encirclement' is increasing.

Careful design is thus necessary: security partnerships should be paralleled with inclusive mechanisms, and should not lead to clear divisions in the Asian order. A bilateral and trilateral mechanism between China, Japan and the US would be essential in this context, and China should play a critical role in the regional security architecture. A China-Korea-Japan trilateral mechanism is also expected to establish routine cooperation among the three governments and bureaucrats.

It is clear that China has the potential to behave aggressively, breaking rules and norms, due to its unique values and political regime. Nevertheless, China and other autocracies could be transformed if proper guidance is provided and pressure maintained. For that purpose, it would be useful to create leverage through a coalition-building process with partners.

Without this leverage functioning well and setting standards for others to follow, China and other rising economies could be let off the hook and continue to refuse to take responsibility for regional and global governance, on issues such as climate change, economic liberalization, human rights, and maritime security.

Soft power, with diplomatic statecraft and the power of visionary imagination, is the biggest asset for maintaining soft pressure on China to meet basic international norms. It is still uncertain which bodies of governance would take central roles under such an arrangement, but bilateral and mini-lateral forms of

partnerships are important in the coalition-building process to establish an inclusive regional order.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> As discussed in introduction of this paper, the second Abe administration's value diplomacy shares the essential objectives of security partnership with previous administration, but its linkage with Japanese policy toward China is rather weak. Surely, the direction of Sino-Japan relations will be up to the development of further top level dialogues between both capitals, but if Japanese partnership strategy over-emphasizes the value diplomacy and exclusive regional architecture building vis-à-vis China, it would potentially prevent Japanese partnerships in Asia from developing further since as shown political attitude to take risks on China differs among them. As this paper repeatedly claims, originally partnership strategy aimed to build coalition to balance the influence under the same regional architecture. However, Mr Abe and his advisors still have the potential to pursue more exclusive diplomacy.