

## **Briefing Memo**

### **The Background to and Outlook for Japan-Australia Security Cooperation**

(an English translation of the original manuscript written in Japanese)

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#### **Progress in Japan-Australia Security Cooperation**

In recent years, Japan and Australia have increasingly strengthened their security cooperation. Exactly one year after the launch of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) between Australia, Japan and the United States in March 2006, the heads of Japan and Australia announced the “Japan-Australia Joint Declaration On Security Cooperation,” and agreed to establish close cooperation between the two nations in areas such as counter-terrorism, cross-border crime, and peacekeeping activities. Based on that statement, a Defense Ministerial Meeting was held in Tokyo between Minister of Defense Fumio Kyuma and Australian Minister for Defence Brendan Nelson in June 2007. The first Japan-Australia Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultation (a “two-plus-two meeting”) was also held simultaneously. In December of the following year, the two nations’ defense ministers signed a revised Memorandum on Japan-Australia Defense Exchanges, central to which was cooperation on peacekeeping activities and a strengthening of strategic dialogue. Moreover, Japan and Australia held the second two-plus-two meeting, in which both countries reached agreement on issues including full cooperation on sharing information relating to disaster relief and the threat of terrorism.

After the administrations in both Japan and Australia changed, however, some observers argued that Japan-Australia security cooperation had “lost momentum.” The confrontation between the two nations over the whaling issue also endorsed such a view point. Nevertheless, at a meeting between newly elected Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd that was held in Tokyo in December 2009, it was confirmed that Japan and Australia would further advance their cooperation in areas such as disaster relief, humanitarian aid, and nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. Subsequently, the two countries have been demonstrating proactive collaboration in the area of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, including the activities of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND), which was launched as a joint initiative of the Japanese and Australian governments. Subsequently, both governments announced their joint proposals toward the NPT Review Conference that was held in May this year.

Furthermore, an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) was concluded between the Self-Defense Forces and the Australian military in May 2010, and links between the two nations are being strengthened even in the area of bilateral defense cooperation. With respect to trilateral cooperation between Japan, the United States and Australia, active moves remain visible, including the largest-ever trilateral joint military maneuvers, which took place in the vicinity of Okinawa in June 2010.

### **Why has Japan-Australia security cooperation progressed?**

Several contributing factors are conceivable as to why security cooperation between Japan and Australia has rapidly strengthened in recent years. Firstly, in some respects progress in security cooperation between Japan and Australia (or Japan, the United States and Australia) has been advancing as a response to China, which has rapidly come to the forefront in recent years on both military and economic fronts. For example, an inherent purpose of the launch of the TSD was to collectively check the rise of China by banding together the United States and its allies, and to encourage it to act as “a responsible power.” In addition, for the United States, it appears the TSD was in some ways also a means of “detaining” Australia on the Japan-US side so that it would not grow too close to China. Also, where Japan-Australia security cooperation is concerned, it is possible to interpret it as a kind of “hedging” (or “soft balancing”) strategy in preparation for the future rise of China. Some regional specialists (particularly Chinese researchers) are voicing concern that as a result of deepening Japan-Australia and Japan-US-Australia security cooperation, an “Asian version of NATO” is beginning to emerge. This could be described as an argument that is focused on the competitive aspects of Japan-(US)-Australia cooperation.

Secondly, progress in security cooperation between Japan and Australia is in some respects also a response to changes in the security environment in the region overall that are not limited to the rise of China. Although the possibility of a nuclear war between two major powers has declined after the end of the Cold War, many unstable factors remain present in the Asia-Pacific. These factors include: North Korea’s missile development; the Taiwan Strait crises; and conflicts over national borders. In addition to these problems, “non-traditional security problems” have also surfaced, such as cross-border crime, infectious diseases, natural disasters, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. As can be seen in the cooperation between the Self-Defense Forces and the Australian military in the United Nations peacekeeping operations (PKO) in Cambodia, East Timor and Iraq, the relationship between Japan and Australia has developed as they have engaged in international security activities in this wider context. In fact, it is worth noting that the cooperation of Japan and Australia in areas

such as PKOs, combating terrorism, and disarmament and nonproliferation possesses a “public goods” quality, in that it generates benefits for the international community overall, including China. From the Australian point of view, in order to provide such public goods, it would like to see the Japan side take on a larger number of roles.

The development of Japan-Australia security cooperation can also be interpreted as the product of an amicable relationship that has built up historically between the two nations. From the conclusion of the Australia-Japan Agreement on Commerce in 1957, the Japan-Australia relationship steadily developed around the axis of their economic relations, and in 1976 the pair concluded the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Australia and Japan. The two countries have also engaged consistently in promoting trade and economic liberalization in the region, as represented by Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Even on the security front, in the 1970s, exchanges between the two countries’ information institutions were already underway at an unofficial level. In addition, in the 1990s Japan and Australia also began reciprocal visits of their defense ministers, conferences between government and defense authorities (political-military (PM) talks) and conferences between defense officials (military-to-military (MM) talks). In light of these initiatives, it is not as if Japan-Australia security cooperation is something that emerged suddenly in recent years; it can also be viewed as the result of a trusting relationship based on economic and security cooperation that has built up between the two countries over many years.

### **The “U.S. factor” in Japan-Australia defense cooperation**

In addition to the three points raised above, the “US factor” in Japan-Australia cooperation should be also considered. Needless to say, for both Japan and Australia the relationship with the United States is their most important bilateral relationship since World War II. Accordingly, it is hard to ignore that, even when it comes to the Japan-Australia security relationship, in some respects it has evolved as an extension of the two countries strengthening their alliances with the United States. For instance, security cooperation between Japan and Australia developed rapidly, particularly from the mid-1990s. At the same time, the process of the “redefinition” of the two countries’ alliances with the United States, which took place via the Sydney Declaration and the Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security, was also occurring almost in parallel. In both declarations it was stated that the Japan-US and US-Australia alliances would contribute at a regional and global level without being limited to bilateral defense cooperation. Indeed, many of the cooperative sectors specified in each declaration were also addressed in the Japan-Australia Partnership Agenda. Furthermore, based on the two countries’

“redefined” alliances with the United States, that agenda placed an emphasis on “supporting” the United States’ role in security in the region in order to maintain that involvement. In fact, this construct of “Japan and Australia cooperating in order to maintain the United States’ involvement in guaranteeing security in the region” is a point that comes up frequently even in the two countries’ subsequent joint statements.

The importance of the “US factor” in the Japan-Australia security relationship became all the more clear as a result of the simultaneous terrorist attacks in the United States that occurred on September 11, 2001. Both Japan and Australia have actively contributed to the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, but at the same time they have also strengthened cooperation on the “War on Terror” at a bilateral level through the announcement of the creation of the “Creative Partnership” (2002) and the Australia-Japan Joint Statement on Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism (2003). Additionally, Australia took part in the war against Iraq by the United States, and Japan too contributed to the Iraq reconstruction assistance that followed. Indeed, the fact that the Australian military escorted the Self-Defense Forces that were dispatched to Samawah, Iraq became a definitive event in institutionalizing the Japan-Australia security relationship. Furthermore, following 9/11 both Japan and Australia began to take an active part in multilateral exercises for humanitarian and disaster relief activities, the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) on proliferation, and so on. In particular, when the Sumatra-Andaman earthquake occurred in December 2004, Japan and Australia actively contributed to tsunami victim support under the international cooperative framework led by the United States. The US side highly appreciated those efforts, and strongly encouraged the Japan side to strengthen its ties with Australia.

For the United States, it is welcomed that Japan and Australia, which share the same values with the United States, play a more substantial role in security at a global and regional level since it could shoulder the responsibility for managing stability in the international community with its allies. Furthermore, from Japan and Australia’s standpoints, contributing to the US-initiated international order together is aimed at anchoring that regional involvement. In this way, Japan-Australia security cooperation is more than simply bilateral security cooperation – it performs a role in indirectly supporting the US-led international order at a regional and global level.

## **The outlook going forward**

As we have seen above, Japan-Australia security cooperation is more than an “ad hoc coalition” that sprang up suddenly and out of nowhere following 9/11. It has a structural and longer term backdrop. Based on this point, it is to be expected that Japan-Australia security cooperation will continue to move forward in various sectors in the future as well. In particular, with the United States facing an increasingly difficult task steering security policy from here on as a result of its domestic fiscal situation, the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and so on, its expectations are likely to increase with regard to burden-sharing with its allies at the regional and global levels. Within that, Japan and Australia will be asked to play more substantial roles than they have thus far in sectors such as peacekeeping activities, humanitarian and reconstruction support, and maritime security. [Completed August 23, 2010]

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