

**SESSION 1:5 CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY INTERDEPENDENCE, AND THE
AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE SECURITY AFTER FUKUSHIMA**

**Australia-Japan: Towards a Sustainable Security Community
Challenges Facing Japan-Australia Security**

Australia and Japan face one overriding security challenge as the regional security order undergoes dramatic transformation: how to maintain, a credible military posture, and at the same time convince China that this is not part of an anti-China alliance bent on its containment.

Australia-Japan Security Cooperation and Interests

Australia and Japan have over the past decade developed a substantive security relationship, highlighted by the Australia-Japan Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (JDSC) in March 2007. These changes are a response to the emerging security environment in Asia, the key elements of which are a rapidly growing and influential China and, linked to this, the growing realization that the United States, while remaining the strongest global military power for a considerable time, will be unable to maintain the strategic primacy in the Asian region it has had since 1945. Both Australia and Japan share two opposing concerns: – that the US would diminish, or even withdraw, its security presence in the region; or, alternatively, it would seek to maintain its dominant role leading to an eventual military clash with China. Preventing either of these outcomes has driven Australian and Japanese foreign and security policies in the past decade.

While Japan and Australia have very similar security interests and concerns in the Asian region, particularly in respect of China, they are not identical - Japan's relations with China are far more complex and sensitive than Australia's.

Both countries have been accustomed since 1945 to the US underwriting their security, in part through its military bases in Japan and Korea, as well as facilities in other parts of the region including Australia. With the realization that the US will gradually see its pre-eminent military role in the region erode over time, both Australia and Japan will have to develop their security policies in a very different framework.

Australia-Japan Security Challenges

Importantly, in this environment, the US, too, is looking to allies in the region to do more to bolster their own and regional security. In responding to the changed security environment, Australia and Japan face a number of challenges: some of them can be met jointly by the two countries; others will require broader regional and international action.

One immediate challenge is that of political will and economic resources. If regional countries are to do more to bolster their own security and defence posture, there are questions over their economic and political capacity to do so. Both Japan and Australia have crucial decisions to make in this regard.

Even more important are the political and strategic challenges. Foremost among these for Japan and Australia is avoiding actions which assume that certain outcomes, particularly in response to China's rise, are pre-ordained. This will require changes of mindset,

moving away from the tendency to view China with dated politicized concepts. Chinese leaders and elites have differing views on where the country will be in 10-20 years, although most, if not all, see domestic economic, social and political issues as the highest priorities. Undoubtedly they also see a China wielding greater power and influence in the region but this does not imply inevitable expansionist or militaristic ambitions as some fear. Many in the West view this prospect with alarm.

At the same time, Chinese leaders often find it difficult to understand the thinking behind the security policies of other countries in the region, including Australia, Japan and the US. The potential for misunderstandings and miscalculations goes both ways.

Regional security policies, therefore, while accepting the inevitable uncertainties associated with China growth in power and influence, should be carefully crafted to avoid setting in train the very outcomes we wish to avoid.

Meeting the Security Challenges

What can and should Japan and Australia do to meet these challenges? The answer lies in a combination of bilateral and regional cooperative effort.

On the positive side there is already a highly developed regional institutional structure and a high level of economic inter-dependence among the key countries of the region. Historically, these elements have never before accompanied the rise of great new powers and the emergence of a new international order.

The combination of economic inter-dependence and an existing regional infrastructure, while not a guarantee of regional order and stability, provides a strong framework in which to mitigate the risks of military confrontation. Both work in a mutually reinforcing way: economic inter-dependence highlights the unthinkably high price of regional instability and military conflict; regional cooperative arrangements, (e.g. through the newly expanded East Asia Summit) contribute to a habit of dialogue and serve to broaden the dialogue, therefore diluting the stress placed on the security aspects of regional relationships, and in particular to mollify perceptions that the US and its friends are solely focused on forming anti-China alliances. And where a new regional security grouping has emerged recently - the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus group – its membership has been inclusive (i.e. ASEAN, US, China, Russia, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand).

While at the official level, regional organizations will be predictably cautious, even timid, about dealing with sensitive issues, the current architecture provides a promising framework for less formal 1.5 and 2 track regional dialogues to begin discussing more ambitious and far-reaching issues such as regional nuclear free zones, North Korea, the security implications of climate change, etc. There is much scope for Japan and Australia to work together creatively to ensure that regional bodies work more effectively. The International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament set up as a joint Japan/Australia initiative in 2008, is an example of ways the two countries can collaborate on regional/global issues.

Post-Fukushima?

In the context of “de-stressing” the security aspects of regional dialogue and cooperation, it is timely to look at possible regional security implications of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011.

Responses to natural disasters are not something new in the consideration of national security. Japan itself has, since the early 1980s, adopted a doctrine of comprehensive security, an important element of which was to give priority to non-military threats rather than just the traditional military threats. Australia has also embraced this approach with non-military threats such as natural disaster responses now included in its defence white paper as an element in national security.

There are three areas where the aftermath of Fukushima may have an impact on regional security.

First, at a practical level, from the outset of the disaster, Japan received regional support and assistance, including from the US, Australia and China. There have been renewed moves to enhance existing regional response and nuclear safety mechanisms. Australia proposed at the recent East Asia Summit that the EAS should enhance regional response mechanisms. This activity is helpful in broadening regional security thinking beyond an overly military focus.

Second, we may see a renewed focus in Japan on civil-military diplomacy. The earthquake disaster may in time lead to a further evolving role for the SDF into non-military operations in concert with other regional countries.

Third, the disaster has provided a platform for substantive cooperation between China and Japan. Both have substantial nuclear energy programs, both are prone to natural disasters, and they are near neighbours. Moreover, as Japan discovered when its supply chains were disrupted by the disaster, many firms had little alternative but to expand their business and export bases to China. The disaster has the potential for Japanese-Chinese business relations to deepen.

At the political level, the disaster also provided an opportunity for the Japanese and Chinese governments to rebuild relations after tensions in the previous year. At the Trilateral Summit in May this year, the two countries, together with South Korea, agreed to cooperate more on disaster management and nuclear safety as well as to accelerate other trilateral initiatives. It would be premature to say that this “disaster diplomacy” will produce lasting results but with a recent background of negative issues in the Japan-China relationship, it has been a step forward.