

## **Prospect for change in the maritime security situation in Asia and the role of Japan**

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### **1 Prospect for change in the maritime security situation in Asia**

In Asia there are several seas and oceans where a tremendous amount of ships run and these are the core lines of communication. Within this region there are nations with large populations and some of them are also archipelagic states. The countries in this region are recognized as being one of the most active economic bodies in the world. However, many kinds of maritime problems remain unresolved in this area. I would like to pick up on some of these issues, taking into consideration their relations to Japan, as I wish to discuss the role of Japan in maritime security issues.

#### **SLOC Issues**

For a long time Japan has been interested in securing sea line of communication (SLOC), realizing that it is strongly in its national interest. Japanese people sense very clearly that Japan can't maintain its economic development without keeping SLOC. At an early stage, Japan made public that the Japanese Self-Defense Force would defend the 1000 nautical mile sea line of communication from Japan, even though the Self-Defense Force was severely criticized internally and externally about its dispatch abroad. We are discussing now even the necessity of the self-defense of the sea line beyond 1000 miles.

The US and Russia are interested in SLOC from the military standpoint as well as an economic viewpoint. South Korea is also interested in SLOC, but mainly from an economic standpoint. Now there are also controversial

discussions in Korea on whether Korea should consider itself as a land-bound country or a maritime nation.

I believe that we have to consider the recent change of China's attitude on SLOC. China was thought to be not so interested in SLOC by 1980's. I would say that China was maybe one obstacle to the promotion of securing the SLOC. Maybe China took this attitude because it thought that the US, the former USSR and other economic powers were earnest in SLOC from their national interests, which often didn't meet its own. China, however, has recently changed its attitude on this issue because I think it has come to realize it has to import a lot of food and energy through sea lines. I believe it is important that Japan and other countries who are interested in SLOC discuss the SLOC agenda with China in a somewhat business minded way.

### **Pirating Threats**

Numerous pirating incidents occur in Asia. The number of cases has recently increased, while some of them have become terribly violent attacks. Japan has become concerned about these pirating incidents as some Japanese ships have recently been attacked. Former prime minister of Japan the late Honorable Obuchi took a strong initiative on this problem by hosting special international conferences to overcome pirating issues. The Japan Maritime Security Agency (Japanese Coast Guard) has already exercised joint training with some Asian countries, because of his efforts.

It is reported that there are concentrated pirating incidents in the Malacca Straits and the surrounding area. Three countries facing the strait, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore have cooperated to prevent and reduce these pirating cases through the operation of joint patrols through the strait.

China has recently been concerned about the problem too, although it has been somewhat doubted as a nation interested in earnestly putting pressure on pirating issues. In the US, another country that was thought not so earnest on the problem, the Congress has started discussions on the threats of pirating, while the US Navy has already played an important role in information exchange activities in regard to each individual pirating case in conjunction with the IMB (The International Maritime Bureau) in Malaysia.

### **UN Convention of the Law of the Sea**

There are many unresolved border conflicts related to EEZ's and continental shelves in Asia. Debates on territory and different concepts on continental shelves cause severe conflicts between countries. Japan has yet to find solutions on such kinds of border problems with Russia, Korea and China.

In the East China Sea and the South China Sea similar problems remain unresolved. In particular territorial conflict over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea is at a critical point, as China has developed more territorial interests in the area since the 1990's.

Archipelagic states like the Philippines and Indonesia request their rights of control over the sea surrounding their nations. However, their control over such archipelagic seas opposes the concept of freedom of navigation. Countries like the US who are interested in the freedom of navigation are concerned about the development of such controls. Requests of coastal nations to hold strong control over EEZ's has been a controversial issue as well.

Problems related to fishing resources, seabed resources and the maritime environment follow the discussion above. Out of them fishery and environmental problems have a complicated aspect in that they naturally move over these borders.

All of these problems could trigger state-to-state conflicts, which include military issues too. The world has tried to find solutions by developing international cooperation, but solutions are not easily found.

### **Maritime Military Policies**

When we discuss the maritime security we have to consider maritime security forces (navy and coast guard) because they engage in the maintenance of the maritime security as a deterrence power and an enforcement body.

Since the end of the Cold War Japan and the US have strengthened their alliance, while their security alliance has thought to have contributed to the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region. The joint maritime military power of Japan and the US is seen as being the strongest military force in this region.

Japan's Maritime Security Agency (the Japanese Coast Guard) has developed its international activities particularly in pirating issues, which

seemed quite different from the activities of the Agency in the past.. The US Coast Guard is located together with each of the Navy Fleet's regional headquarters, like in that of Honolulu.

China changed its maritime military policy in the early 1990's, transforming its Navy from a "coastal defense" one to a "blue water" navy. I believe this is because China took into consideration both the necessity of military actions beyond the coastal sea zone to defend itself from countries that could possibly confront it with modernized and sophisticated military systems, particularly like that of the US, and also the necessity to secure the sea line of communication for itself. Taiwan is also building up its maritime military force to defend itself from similar confrontations. It is doing so by accepting US help and is currently urging the strain on the Taiwan Strait as being one of very important international agenda, because of its position as one of the busiest international straits in the world.

Russia is thought to keep substantially the same maritime military functions, as the military super power it was under the former Soviet Union. South Korea seems to have become interested in building up a modernized navy, which is maybe to take into account for the future reunification of the North and South Korea.

Many countries in South East Asia have maritime security forces in the shape of a navy. These navies are responsible for defense of their countries and maritime security order as enforcement bodies. After the end of the Cold War, such countries have endeavored to build their forces into modernized and more powerful maritime security units. The financial crisis in 1997, however, forced them to interrupt these endeavors. Navies of these countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines are weak as military powers. I think Singapore's Navy is the only exception.

India is thought to be a super power of maritime force in South Asia and shows much interest also in the SLOC and pirating issues.

### **The Impact of the September 11<sup>th</sup> Terrorist Activity on Maritime Security**

The September 11th terrorist incident had a huge impact on maritime security in Asia. I believe that the possibility of maritime terrorism has increased since the incident. The power to counter against maritime violence is not great, which is reflected in the number of pirating incidents that occur in international waters and there now a higher possibility of

maritime terrorism taking place. Moreover, Asia could be thought of as an area where exercising of terrorist activities might be easier than in other regions, or in particular developed countries, because such countries have strengthened their surveillance on terrorist activities in many ways since September 11th. We have to take into consideration that there are several large nations in Asia who have a large population of Muslim people. We have to watch carefully the feelings of Muslims against the American government. Poverty in the area might well spur more terrorist activity.

On the contrary, the fight against terrorists in Afghanistan is feeding much power to the governments presently fighting against anti-government groups, which in many cases are the same as a political terrorists. Hopefully in this way maritime terrorist activity, as well as pirating, will be slowly eradicated.

Anyhow the possibility of maritime terrorism occurring should be considered carefully and we must find and introduce some countermeasures against it.

## **2 Japan's Status on Maritime Security Issues**

Japan is thought of as one of the original maritime countries of the Asia Pacific region. The history of Japan shows this to be true, and now Japan prospers much from the sea. I believe Japan is the largest user of the Asian seas and of the Pacific Ocean Without access to its surrounding Asian seas, the Japanese economy cannot survive. This is because, almost all of trade cargo to and from Japan passes through these seas.

Japan is still regarded as the biggest economic power in Asia, and furthermore Japan has become a strong political power too. Japan's largest trading partners are Asian countries, while Japan provides the largest amount of aid to Asian countries through ODA. Almost all of these recipient countries strongly have relations with the sea and its resources.

With regard to maritime force, Japan has built up its maritime self defense capabilities in conjunction with the joint power of the US Navy, to enable it to defend its coastlines and SLOC, and maintain the peace and stability of the region surrounding it. I believe the joint power of Japan and the US as a regional power is one of the strongest in the world, even though Japan's military power is aimed exclusively at defending only its own coastlines and SLOC.

Since the end of the Cold War public awareness in Japan on the function of the military has changed dramatically, as Japanese people have been exposed to several critical situations related to the Japan's security and its surrounding area. The dispatch of Japan's Self-Defense personnel abroad was first aimed at conducting PKO, HRO, DRO and NEO. In these fields military power has become necessary through initiatives taken by the UN and international communities. Japanese people have become to think that Japan should contribute in these fields. These operations are thought as activities not involving the use of military forces that are prohibited by the Japan's constitution if the personnel are dispatched abroad.

In discussion on Japan's position in the maritime security issue, I would like to refer to Japan's engagement in the maintenance of navigation security in Malacca Strait. In regard to navigation security, The Malacca Board, one of Japanese NGOs, based on the financial support of the Nippon Foundation, continues to help the activities of countries facing the strait by providing navigation signal facilities that are set up through the strait.

As you are aware, Japan maintains strong relations with the US. At the same time China and Japan are pursuing furthered development in the two nations' relations. It is noticeable that many countries in Asia hope that both the maintenance of the Japan-US security alliance and the friendly development of the Sino-Japan tie help strengthen the navigational security in the strait.

### **3 Japan's Role**

Taking into account the prospect for change in the maritime security situation in Asia and Japan's status I mentioned above, I believe Japan is a country that should take the initiative in maritime security in the region. Maritime security requires both internal and external cooperation to be maintained effectively. Such international cooperation should be pursued in the form of a regional cooperation, as Agenda 21 indicates.

There are a number of issues related to maritime security in the areas both surrounding Japan and in Japan's sea line of communication. In the East China Sea, the South China Sea, the Indian Sea, the Arabian Sea and

international straits such as the Malacca Strait, we have problems of pirating, SLOC, maritime accidents and maritime terrorism. Furthermore, there is a possibility that environmental problems and resource related issues might trigger international conflicts not only over maritime related borders, but also beyond the realms of border related issues.

We already have the UN convention of the Law of the Sea and other treaties and agreements related to maritime issues. We have to endeavor to further make the international legislative system more appropriate by making clear the interpretations and introducing new and revised treaties if necessary.

I think, however, the most important thing at the present time is that we launch a system to implement these international legal frameworks. Japan has advocated the necessity of introducing “ocean governance” for such purposes. Ocean governance is aimed at securing maritime order by internationally cooperating and comprehensively tackling maritime security issues.

With regard to ocean governance I would like to point out several important principles as follows.

- 1 Related countries need to agree to launch such ocean governance policies together
- 2 Regional cooperation is essential.
- 3 Situation study and information sharing are important.
- 4 The cooperation of the private sector is necessary in addition to the cooperation between the governments of each relevant country.
- 5 Maritime enforcement agencies and maritime forces should cooperate both internally and externally. The cooperation of the other governmental agencies related to maritime issues is also necessary.
- 6 The activities of NGOs are essential, as present governmental organizations and international organizations can be influenced by sectionalism.
- 7 It is not necessarily important to establish a new international body to find the most effective framework for the ocean governance.

With regard to regional cooperation in Asia, Japan is one of countries that take the initiative to formulate ocean governance policy. In the case Japan

takes initiative the following items must be focused on.

- 1 Japan needs to have the US and China involved in the process, while also continuing dialogue with the relevant Asian countries. In fact, Japan and the US have actually pursued the involvement of China into international activities to some extent already.
- 2 Japan needs to host a central meeting to discuss ocean governance, similar to when Japan took initiatives against pirating in 1999..
- 3 The Japan-US security alliance needs to support activities to maintain the maritime security in the region.
- 4 Japan and the US need to be able to help the modernization of maritime enforcement and maritime forces in Asian countries that are currently very weak.
- 5 Maritime security management needs to be strengthened through joint activities like joint patrols and joint exercise in which Japan and US cooperation is also essential.
- 6 With regard to 3-5 above Australia and other developed countries interested in the maritime security in the region are expected to join these activities.