Japan-EU Non-combat Military Cooperation:

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

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Introduction

Few things are more certain in international politics than the impossibility of a Japan-EU military alliance. Ironically, however, the very impracticality of such an alliance makes the European Union and Japan potentially promising partners in non-combat and non-traditional security cooperation. While Japan and the EU lack the globe-spanning military capabilities of their common superpower ally, the United States, they nonetheless combine highly professional and mobile militaries with relatively compatible strategic cultures, common values of liberal democracy and a shared commitment to contributing to global peace and stability through multilaterally based peace-building.

Together, the EU and Japan are especially well-suited partners to lead the globe in peace-building for several reasons. First, they share a liberal belief that non-combat focused post-conflict reconstruction and long-term socio-economic development are the best ways to address the underlying sources of conflict and insecurity: building human security also builds long-term military security. As Japan's "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and Beyond" (its most basic defense policy document) argues, development assistance helps "to resolve root causes of conflicts and terrorism."

Second, both Japan and the EU share a commitment to promoting multilateral security cooperation as an important means for enhancing global security based on shared liberal values. Brussels and Tokyo also perceive their own international role and influence as insufficient and seek to use multilateral security cooperation as a way to correct this. Third, the EU and Japan have relatively similar strategic cultures, especially regarding the use of force, as both emphasize the role of non-combat approaches to peace-building and have very conservative Rules of Engagement (ROEs) for their militaries.

Finally, both the EU and Japan have concerns about direct military cooperation with their superpower ally due to very different strategic cultures regarding the use of force and peace-building, and because of

Photo: Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force

An MSDF destroyer escorts a ship in the Gulf of Aden.

the fear that their more powerful ally can entrap them in foreign military conflicts in which it could become hard to control their level of commitment or to extricate themselves. On the other hand, precisely because of less power inequality and low security interdependence, neither the EU nor Japan poses much danger of entrapment *vis-à-vis* the other.

Globalization Necessitates Japan-EU Security Cooperation

There is a great and growing need for security cooperation between Japan and the EU due to the differential impact of globalization. The drivers of globalization, including the ubiquitous spread of the Internet, relatively inexpensive air travel and networks of air express and sea-borne freight are inadvertently creating links between micro conflicts that degrade human security in local areas and the macro security of the developed great powers. Even while giving foreign aid for humanitarian, economic, or trade-promotion reasons, policymakers and observers have tended to dismiss the significance of micro security and instability in underdeveloped countries and regions for the global balance of power or the well-being of developed rich nations. Micro security means the absence of threats to basic human economic and physical well-being within a single country or region, while macro security means the absence of global threats, or at least the absence of threats to the developed world and the great powers. Micro conflicts are society-centric rather than state-centric, endanger human security ("Rethinking Human Security" by Gary King and Christopher J. L. Murray in *Political Science Quarterly* 116, No. 4, 2001), and are likely to generate non-state combatants. Thus until recently micro conflicts have been seen as innocuous for the national self-interest of developed countries, if nonetheless tragic in themselves.

Despite remaining in a state of impoverished underdevelopment, the very ubiquity and falling costs of the key drivers of globalization have allowed for their penetration into even the most unstable regions, and in so doing have unintentionally created pathways for micro conflicts to spread globally. Globally ubiquitous Internet access provides a cheap global command, control and intelligence network, and a global broadcast network for recruiting followers, spreading ideas and propaganda. The rise of numerous Jihadi websites is but one well-known example. Indeed, the recent and tragic Boston bombing attack apparently illustrates how extremists

operating in underdeveloped and conflict-laden places such as Yemen are able to recruit and even train militants thousands of miles away in the US. Globally ubiquitous and reasonably cheap air travel also provides combatants from micro conflicts with the potential to deploy and act globally, as the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 demonstrated.

Afghanistan is arguably the poster child for the emerging linkage of micro and macro security. Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 a micro conflict raged there that attracted little interest from the international community. The conflict in Afghanistan was driven not only by ideological and cultural divisions, but by state failure that resulted in anarchy. As Afghanistan slipped into anarchy human security was comprehensively degraded, not only economically but especially in terms of physical integrity rights. Nothing degrades human security like anarchy.

The subsequent intervention by the US, NATO, and allied countries in Afghanistan is based on this realization, and the fear that if a strong, stable, and popularly supported government is not developed in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda or a similar group could again use the country as a launching pad for globe-spanning attacks. It is apparent that the 9.11 attacks created a "never again" obsession about Afghanistan in the US that borders on superstition, in view of the fact that there are many countries that offer equal if not better platforms for launching attacks, such as Somalia, Yemen, and parts of Pakistan. Nonetheless this concern is, in its more general manifestation, well founded. Resolving the micro conflict in Afghanistan, and promoting human security and development there, is indeed important for ensuring macro security.

The fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991 also produced anarchy in Somalia, and micro conflicts that consequently led to a comprehensive degradation of human security. As in Afghanistan, anarchy encouraged (albeit more slowly) the emergence of radical politics to fill the anarchic vacuum, the rise of the al-Shabaab group being a clear indicator of this. At the same time Somali anarchy also encouraged a worldwide exploitation of Somali waters, specifically for illegal fishing and toxic-waste dumping. This, along with the permissive condition of anarchy itself, triggered the emergence of sea militias, perhaps initially motivated to stop the global exploitation of Somali waters but later increasingly motivated by the profits to be had by preying on cargo and other ships. In other words, despite the ostensibly defensive character of these sea militias initially, they quickly transformed into for-profit pirates that preyed on peaceful shipping.

As Somali pirate attacks became increasingly brazen and successful, bringing in millions of dollars in ransom, spread far from the Somali coast, and came to afflict vital global Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), they became a magnet for foreign navies reacting to this new threat. Arguably, the range of foreign naval forces deployed to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean to respond to pirate attacks represents the broadest naval coalition (however informal and loose) in modern history. Participating navies came to include not only the EU and Japan, but also NATO, a separate flotilla of US allies, South Korea, India, Russia, China, and even Iran. Beyond naval vessels deployed in waters near Somalia, the EU and Japan have deployed P-3C maritime surveillance planes to Djibouti to gather information on pirate activities. The EU also runs an information sharing center and both the EU and Japan are together investing in local counter-piracy capacity building in Yemen, Kenya and Tanzania.

Japanese Vice Defense Minister Daizo Kusuda visited EU NAVFOR headquarters in September 2010 to discuss cooperation in counter-piracy off Somalia.

Despite this large investment of resources the results have been mixed. The pirates have simply expanded their operations to more distant waters, and successful hijackings that result in the payment of ransom are still far from rare. If the international community had acted earlier to help build micro security in Somalia, curtailing anarchy and promoting human security and development, it might have been able to more cheaply and effectively prevent the emergence of the Somali pirate menace to global SLOCs in the first place. Like Afghanistan, therefore, Somalia is a concrete example of the new link between micro and macro security, showing how micro conflicts metastasize into global threats and conflicts.

Nexus of Security & Development

What this all means is that there is an emerging nexus between security and development that stems from the increasing global inter-connectedness of the most underdeveloped and conflict-ridden regions with the most powerful developed nations, allowing micro conflicts to spread and expand into macro conflicts threatening global security. How should the international community respond? Resolving these sources of micro insecurity by promoting comprehensive human security, including physical security rights and comprehensive economic and social development in these regions, is the best way to prevent micro conflicts growing into threats to global security. It is also far more cost-effective and successful to address micro conflicts early, rather than responding with military force after they morph into global threats.

EU-Japan Cooperation for Addressing the Nexus

Often, though not always, the application of non-combat and aid-focused assistance to micro conflicts, along with conflict-resolution diplomacy, is the best way to resolve them. Although we cannot say

a priori that non-combat aid and diplomacy-centered approaches will always prove to be more effective than more combat-focused approaches, we can certainly identify cases where this has been the case.

Perhaps the best example is the resolution of conflict in Aceh, a province of Indonesia. The Aceh conflict threatened to become both a source of piracy in waters west of the Straits of Malacca and possibly an incubator for Islamic extremism on land. During a visit to the Information Sharing Center (ISC) of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP, an organization Japan played a large role in establishing and funding) in Singapore in November 2011, I was told that the Aceh conflict corresponded to heightened piracy and armed robbery against ships in waters near Aceh. However, the Aceh dispute was resolved before these attacks spread toward the globally important Malacca Straits SLOCs. After the conflict was resolved the waters off Aceh became much more peaceful.

Both Japan and the EU were active in helping to broker a peace agreement in Aceh, and subsequently in implementing the agreement and reintegrating former fighters into society. Nonetheless, the level of cooperation, and what could have been achieved there, could have been far greater. The EU dispatched military personnel as part of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) called for under the August 2005 peace agreement, and they served as unarmed implementation monitors. However, the cabinet of Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro decided against dispatching SDF members to join EU military personnel implementing the Aceh agreement, due to a lack of focus on the issue and a decision that it would be too politically costly to enact a law in the Diet authorizing the dispatch.

Cambodia and East Timor are also examples where Japan and EU nations, along with others, applied non-combat focused conflict resolution and assistance policies to help resolve micro conflicts and promote human security and development. Although there was little direct EU-Japan cooperation in either case, a modicum of success was achieved, although instability and significant human insecurity persist in both countries, with socio-economic development remaining a major challenge. Japan and EU countries currently have ongoing deployments of military units and aid agencies in South Sudan, where they are implementing reconstruction and development projects with the intention of thereby stabilizing this new nation. Time will tell whether joint aid agency military projects and EU-Japan cooperation will help achieve this result.

Afghanistan since 2001 can also be regarded as a mixed example. In the eastern and southern parts of the country the US has pursued a combat-focused strategy for resolving the conflict there, although one that also includes attempts at building human security and promoting development through assistance. In other parts of Afghanistan, the EU and Japan parties have pursued non-combat focused human security and development strategies, with Japan emphasizing infrastructural and agricultural development while the EU emphasizes governance, human rights and gender issues. Neither the US strategy nor the EU and Japan approach has demonstrated manifest success to date. It is possible that these two different strategies tend to undermine each other.

Looking forward, Mindanao and perhaps on-land Somalia are two potentially promising candidates for EU-Japan cooperation in the form of non-combat focused conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction and development operations. In the case of Mindanao, this conflict, which has claimed around 120,000 lives since the early 1970s, is claimed to be a significant incubator for extremist Islamic terrorists (including Abu Sayyaf). Both the EU and Japan have already been attempting to mediate an agreement between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

In the case of Somalia, given the presence of radical groups such as al-Shabaab, and the continuation of armed hostilities in parts of the country, an EU-Japan non-combat and development aid-focused approach would face real challenges. Nonetheless, given that the micro conflict in Somalia has already become a threat to macro security, and that it still has unfulfilled potential to become an even greater threat, a joint EU-Japan operation would be arguably worth the risk, especially in light of recent progress stabilizing the country. At the very least, Japan and the EU can deepen their cooperation in helping regional states to build up their counter-piracy capacities. Ultimately, the EU and Japan should help establish a regional multilateral organization for combating piracy and other threats to shipping that is based on the ReCAAP model Japan successfully promoted in East Asia.

Great Need, Yet Untapped Potential

Yet, to date this great need and potential for EU-Japan security cooperation has remained largely untapped despite great ambitions on both sides. These ambitions were proclaimed at the December 2001 EU-Japan Summit in Brussels, where the two sides adopted a 10-year "Action Plan for EU-Japan Cooperation" entitled "Shaping Our Common Future". The Action Plan highlighted "promoting peace and security" along with "strengthening the economic and trade partnership", "coping with global and societal challenges" and "bringing together peoples and cultures" as one of the four core areas for cooperation between Tokyo and Brussels, with wide-ranging cooperation called for in various areas of global and regional security.

Nonetheless, after the 10 years of the action plan it became evident that little had been accomplished in EU-Japan security cooperation. A 2010 EU Commission document frankly described the results of the Action Plan regarding security as "disappointing". A joint EU-Japan high-level group responded with a call to move beyond dialogue to embrace "joint actions" on the ground.

Why did the result of the 2001 Action Plan prove to be so disappointing? One major reason is the lack of focus on specific and

concrete objectives. Rather, the Action Plan was more like a laundry list of security issues where the two sides supported a common position. For security cooperation between the EU and Japan to move forward the two sides will need to come up with a more limited list of issues where complementary capabilities as well as interests can produce meaningful on-the-ground cooperation.

Another reason why cooperation has proven to be so disappointing is because despite the promises of cooperation in the Action Plan, a paucity of meaningful exchanges between politicians, officials, academics, and other leaders has made it hard for the two sides to recognize their large common interests and potential for cooperation. In the case of Japan it has often focused too much on domestic politics and the US-Japan alliance. Of course, it is natural that Japan focuses much of its foreign policy attention on the US, given the centrality of the Japan-US alliance for Japan's security. Nonetheless, Washington is far less enthusiastic about what is called (often derisively) "nation building" in the US than is Japan or the EU; the US is also too preoccupied with macro conflicts to focus on micro conflicts and human security. This is another reason why EU and Japanese leadership is needed. The EU for its part has also been too focused on its internal problems, and when it looks East Brussels has recently tended to focus on China. While China's rise is of great importance for the EU, and indeed for the global community, this should not cause Brussels to overlook the importance of Japan, the world's third-largest national economy and a democratic partner with whom the EU shares common values.

A Proposal for a Way Forward

How can the EU and Japan move from dialogue to joint action? The first step is to identify more targeted goals for concrete cooperation, because a more focused agenda is more likely to produce concrete on-the-ground cooperation.

The European Japan Advanced Research Network (EJARN), a network of European-based academics focusing on policy issues related to Japan's international political and economic role, recently published specific policy recommendations for the European Commission and the Japanese government, summarizing more than three years of work in its advisory role (*A Proposal for a Way Forward on EU-Japan Cooperation at the Nexus of Security and Development*, EJARN and the Konrad Adenuer Stiftung, Tokyo: KAS, 2012). In their recommendations EJARN identified post-conflict reconstruction and counter-piracy as the two most promising areas for promoting concrete on-the-ground cooperation between Japan and the EU. These two areas should be at the center of the envisaged EU-Japan binding political and security agreement that is currently under negotiation. Although the recently launched negotiations between the EU and Japan over a free trade agreement are obviously of great importance for both sides, this agreement may take years to conclude. The envisaged bilateral political agreement is too

Photo: Joint Staff

SDF crew pose in front of their P-3C maritime patrol planes in Djibouti, East Africa.

important to be held up as a result.

At the same time other barriers to realizing greater cooperation need to be addressed. Efforts need to be made to help EU and Japanese leaders and officials to become better acquainted with each other and have a sustained dialogue on the nexus of security and development. To this end EJARN recommends the prompt establishment of a bilateral track-two dialogue that includes politicians, uniformed military and law enforcement personnel, and bureaucrats participating in their private capacities, plus academics, journalists and representatives from NGOs. Once the bilateral binding political and security agreement is adopted an official track-one security dialogue should be established to regularly review progress in, and propose new ideas for implementing political and security cooperation. This track-one dialogue should solicit input from the track-two dialogue. Finally, in view of existing programs between the US and Japan, and Japan and several Asian countries, a program should be established between Brussels and Tokyo to enable the short-term exchange of officials and uniformed officers among bureaucracies dealing with aid and defense polices so as to facilitate greater understanding of each other's policies, perspectives, and operating procedures.

There remains a huge untapped potential for far deeper cooperation between Japan and the EU at the nexus of security and development, cooperation that is sorely needed across a range of micro conflicts, from Mindanao to Mali. With the US tied down elsewhere, and the EU and Japan having complementary abilities and a common will, their potential for global leadership at the nexus of security and development is indeed great. **JS**

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