

An Emerging Security Triangle? A Japanese View (Part 2)

By Inoguchi Takashi

THE virtual alliance between Tokyo and Canberra focuses on security. It has four major components:

(1) Both are increasingly clearly defined as an emerging major spoke in the US-led hub and spokes relationship in the transformation of its armed forces. The United States is reassembling some of its forces in Japan's neighboring countries to Japan and the United States mainland in the increasingly vulnerable and possibly weakening era of the United States while Japan-headquartered forces have the responsibilities of covering the entire Pacific and Indian Oceans. Australia is constructing a large United States military spoke in northern Australia, a policy Australia avoided in the past except for a base for intelligence-gathering satellites in central Australia.

(2) Both increasingly find part of their peace mission support operations in conflict-torn societies of their choice. Japan started to become involved in PKO under United Nations auspices when it first sent troops to Cambodia in 1992. Japan has also dispatched missions to such places as Angola, Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Palestinian territories and East Timor, although the number of troops tends to be small. Its deployment of troops to Iraq in 2004 registers a major breakthrough in that troops were sent to places where pacification is incomplete. Constitutionally, sending troops to areas where hostilities still exist was regarded as widely incorrect until very recently. Australia has been sending troops on PKOs in its vicinities in the south Pacific. Its peace support and police missions have been in ascendance in its vicinities in the recent past (White, 2004, July 7).

(3) Both visibly join forces in such regional components of proliferation and maritime security initiatives. The US-led call for anti-terrorist campaigns

include the initiatives to apply those Homeland Security-style measures taken in the United States to all regions including broader East Asia. Such initiatives need steadfast participation in compliance with the initiative's action guidelines. Being interested in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and in maritime safety from piracy and illicit trade, Japan and Australia are two of the strong participants in the initiatives in the region.

(4) Both governments are led by strongly pro-US leaders, Koizumi and Howard. Koizumi and Bush have built a strong friendship. Immediately after the United States declared victory in the Iraq War, Koizumi met Bush in Texas. He said the words "High Noon", which were reciprocated by Bush's wholehearted welcome. The special relationship between the two countries has become an almost normal feature of late. Japan has recently reached an accord with two of "the axis of evil" countries, North Korea and Iran, without receiving much criticism let alone opposition from the United States. Koizumi has visited North Korea twice since 2002, and succeeded in bringing back abductees and their families even though he has made repeated calls for the North's complete, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. Japan concluded an agreement on petroleum exploitation in southern Iran in the spring of 2004. The somewhat contradictory tones of the US government responses to the accord were immediately replaced by the unified modified positive response soon afterward. Two reasons were cited. Japan vigorously opposed Iran's possible nuclear weapons development in Vienna. Japan has sent its Self-Defense Forces troops to southwestern Iraq.

Howard's ideology and policy tenets are conservative. His anti-multiculturalism is not a philosophy. Howard has

been a forerunner in defining Australia as the deputy sheriff in the Bush-led global anti-terrorist wars. The failure of an extreme racist party movement has coincided with the partial accommodation of such a policy tenet within the conservative governing coalition. His anti-terrorism is based on his shock and anger at the Bali bombings in which many Australians were killed and New York, where he was traveling on Sept. 11, 2001. He was a harsh critic of Labor's policy of integrating Australia with East and Southeast Asia (Mainichi Shimbun, July 13, 2004). He sensed Australia's isolation very strongly, which in return propelled him to lean to one side, the United States. The most recent manifestation of this policy tenet is the abolition of lessons in Asian languages such as Indonesian, Chinese, Japanese and Korean in school. He also stresses the need to build up defense. He is keen to invite the United States to build a big military base at Darwin. He has completed railway construction linking the northern territories with the center of national gravity in southeast Australia to prepare the country for possible emergencies originating in Asia. He has been busy sending peacekeeping troops to the South Pacific. He has been so strong-willed in so doing that one of Australia's most important neighbors, Papua New Guinea, has been linking itself far more strongly with East and Southeast Asia than before (Shioda, 2004, pp.45-46; BBC News, July 7, 2004).

How should one make sense of the triangle?

The emerging triangle has multifaceted features (Jain & Bruni, forthcoming). They are placed more directly in three structural contexts. First, American dominance is a key feature which makes the triangle salient. In the 1990s Japan and Australia started playing a supporting role as the anchor in the Pacific. They consolidated their alliance in the 1980s and 1990s when other countries did not place themselves

in a position to help sustain the US-led world system. New Zealand opted out of the alliance with the United States in the 1980s. South Korea focused the alliance on the local theater. Only Japan and Australia were able to enhance the scope and mission of the alliance in harmony with the United States.

Second, deepening global integration has led to closer cooperation among the countries of East and Southeast Asia, a region which was not known for its strong institutional ties and regional identities. The strident momentum for China's development has made Japan and Australia feel somewhat isolated in the region. Japan has been historically ambivalent about its regional identity. A friendly and stable relationship with China, a geographically dominant presence, can only be maintained when it keeps some distance from the power politics of the Asian countries. China's accession to the WTO and its free trade accord with ASEAN have made Japan mildly apprehensive about the prospect of Chinese dominance in the region. Australia's regional credentials are not very high either. The legacy of its past policy and its recent manifestation have made it difficult for Australia to fit in with Asia despite all its economic, financial and energy-related ties with Asian countries. Neither Japan nor Australia is an odd man out. But their own regional identity will be enhanced if they proceed to embed themselves much more closely with Asia. As a matter of fact, Japan has been striking back by accelerating free trade ties with Asia and beyond. Australia has been suggesting that the ASEAN+3 (Japan, South Korea and China) should be enlarged to the ASEAN+4 (including Australia).

Third, sub-national, transnational and supranational forces had not been of primordial importance during most of the Cold War. But the end of the Cold War has encouraged them to assert themselves. Globalization has somewhat reduced the state's authority over citizens who used to be more acquiescent. Democratization has enhanced people's voices, especially those of minorities.

And Sept. 11 has made Islamic and other types of radicalism became more extreme and more globally diffused. To cope with them has become a duty beyond borders. How to contain and coopt those forces has become a mission of the coalition of the willing. Take the example of the Maritime Security Initiative. Japan and Australia are two of the few countries in the region that go with the United States by pledging that their sailors will undertake the operations of anti-piracy, anti-drug trafficking and anti-weapons transfers.

All these give a semblance of Japan and Australia allied together. Their positions assigned in Pax Americana seem to reshape them as the far enhanced two anchors of the Pacific, more directly embedded in the globally reconfigured military power of the United States. Their mission is far more closely enmeshed with that of the United States, while their inter-operability is being elevated even higher. Their scope is global, literally covering both the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. Underlying the whole reconfiguration of Pax Americana is the change in the nature of war and of weapons technology. Both strategic nuclear wars and conventional wars among major states have seemingly become things of the past at least in terms of occurrence probabilities. What is increasingly annoying and difficult to deal with is the state of affairs associated with the trio of a failed state, a bankrupt economy and an anarchic society in the relentless tide of globalization or permeation of global forces and the emergence of the vast array of helpless societies riddled by extreme poverty, governed by sheer naked brutal force, and filled with despair and calls for fundamental solutions. In other words, Pax Americana riding high on the tide of globalization finds itself increasingly vulnerable to new threats. Whether it is imperial a la Niall Ferguson or liberal a la John Ikenberry, Pax Americana must deal with it. Japan and Australia are increasingly becoming part of it. As a matter of fact, the reconfigured Pax

Americana is increasingly bringing every and each corner of the world, not just Japan and Australia, under the scope of its version of global governance, as Anne-Marie Slaughter eloquently argues. Thus seen, the virtual alliance between Japan and Australia is slightly more than part of the whole story of the reconfigured Pax Americana. **J.S**

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