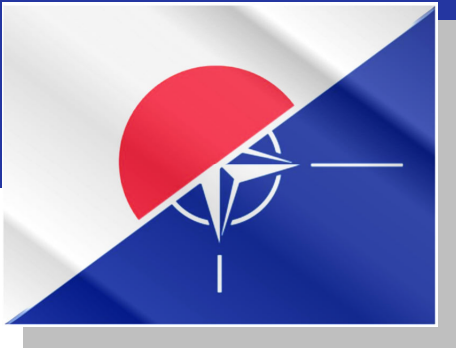


# The Next Steps in Japan – NATO Cooperation

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## About This Project:

International alliances and cooperation have often been forged through catalytic events that lead countries to re-examine the meaning of their own security. Japan's relationship with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been no different, as the collapse of the Soviet Union, the dramatic September 11 attack on the United States, and devastating natural disasters across the world stretched parochial definitions of security. Furthermore, non-traditional challenges, such as terrorism and piracy, have been amplified by the increasingly globalised nature of the international economy and media as well as the growing webs of political and security alliances.

The converging path of Japan and NATO's security interests has paved the way for increasing political engagement as well as humanitarian and post-conflict cooperation. While recent developments are positive for Japan, the U.S. - Japan alliance and NATO, there is undoubtedly potential for considering a more ambitious, more formal and more active program for Japan's involvement with NATO.

In view of this, the Project 2049 Institute has collaborated with the German Marshall Fund to explore the possible next steps in this critical relationship between Japan and NATO. This report brings together the spectrum of opinions from current and former high level government and NATO officials and visionary experts in Washington D.C., Tokyo, and Brussels to offer perspectives and recommendations for looking ahead to the next steps in Japan - NATO cooperation.

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## About the Project 2049 Institute

The Project 2049 Institute seeks to guide decision makers toward a more secure Asia by the century's mid-point. The organization fills a gap in the public policy realm through forward-looking, region-specific research on alternative security and policy solutions. Its interdisciplinary approach draws on rigorous analysis of socioeconomic, governance, military, environmental, technological and political trends, and input from key players in the region, with an eye toward educating the public and informing policy debate.

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## Introduction

“Japan and NATO are partners.” This seemingly simple statement to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in 2007 from Japan’s then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was meant to be more than a mere acknowledgement of status. Embedded in his words to the highest decision making body in NATO was an expression of shared values, shared interests, and most importantly, aspirations for enhanced collaboration. Yet many observers note today that Prime Minister Abe’s visit to NATO – the first ever Japanese Prime Minister to address the NAC – marked the high point in the Japan - NATO relationship. Although there have been incremental enhancements in Japan - NATO ties, the relationship lacks an overarching vision, a strategy to get there, and a sensible agenda for cooperation beyond current engagement and joint operations.



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

*Source: NATO*

Perhaps there are structural factors that inhibit thoughtful strategizing about the future of Japan - NATO relations. Domestic political conditions in Japan may be evolving in unprecedented ways, but certain aspects of Japan’s world view and its ability to engage globally on security matters remain tied to unique historical and constitutional constraints. NATO’s own recent evolution involving membership expansion and new mission areas may be all that the traffic that Alliance managers can bear for the time being. The United States – at first glance the natural bridge between Japan and NATO – may actually be viewed with some skepticism in both Brussels and Tokyo by those wary of Washington’s proclivity to drag ‘junior alliance partners’ to places that suit her own interests. Yet these reasoning are inherently myopic, and could leave all parties vulnerable to bearing substantial opportunity cost.

NATO regularly cooperates with a range of countries that do not hold official membership in the organization. In Asia, NATO maintains relationships with several countries referred to as Contact Countries which include Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. Each Contact Country, however, is clearly different in terms of capabilities, constraints, and political will to engage NATO. With respect to the Contact Countries, it would be appropriate for NATO to reserve its highest expectations for Japan. Despite Japan’s constitutional constraints, Japan is the Contact Country with the greatest potential. By all measures, it has the largest population, the largest economy, the largest military budget, and the most active overseas development programs. Unsurprisingly, former NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer declared Japan to be “the country in Asia

with which NATO has the longest-standing relationship – a truly unique partner for the Alliance in contributing to global security.”<sup>1</sup>

To date, cooperation between Japan and NATO has indeed been positive. A strategic dialogue is ongoing, an information security agreement is close to conclusion and military student exchanges have expanded. Bilateral political discussion has also been broadened to include emerging transnational threats such as terrorism, proliferation, and piracy. Most notably, Japan has played an active role in critical NATO operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan. Yet despite these developments, questions remain as to whether the Japan - NATO relationship is reaching its full potential, and whether it is on the optimal trajectory.

This report seeks to explore these topics in greater depth. The report begins by tracing the evolution of Japan - NATO ties to set the stage for examining the range of perspectives toward future Japan - NATO cooperation from the major interested parties – Japan, NATO, and the United States (though the U.S. shares overlapping interests with other NATO members, it is also Japan’s key alliance partner). The report then addresses challenges and obstacles, and explores potential next steps and recommendations toward an enhanced Japan - NATO partnership.

The analysis in this report is guided by the hypothesis that the Japan - NATO relationship does hold greater potential for the future. Although there are real constraints and even hard barriers to achieving that greater potential, an objective of this report is to identify the challenges facing all parties involved, and investigate how the parties can individually and collectively navigate through these obstacles. The report provides the conceptual framework to assist policymakers in envisioning different futures for Japan - NATO relations. These scenarios can range from a continuation of the status quo to something more enhanced or even to something truly accelerated and robust.

We are aware that serious thinking is already underway about the strategic direction for all parties. NATO has been involved in an extended process to develop a new Strategic Concept and Japan’s political leadership has been overcoming challenges in managing alliance matters and global security affairs. And in our own way, the United States is also giving new consideration to our role in the world and the manner in which we carry ourselves. Although strategic directions are awaiting further clarification, this period of ongoing discussion is an opportune time for examining the future potential of the Japan - NATO relationship.

## History of Japan - NATO Relations

The measured path of Japan and NATO cooperation has been paved by converging interests that were unlikely envisioned by the creators of Japan's 1947 Constitution and the founders of NATO in 1949. At the end of World War II, Japan and Allied occupiers were focused on the domestic agenda, namely post-war reconstruction under a new political era. Japan's transition into a liberal democracy was decreed by the Potsdam Declaration and subsequently enshrined in the Japanese Constitution. Despite unconditional surrender, concerns of resurgent militarism led drafters to include a pacifist clause in the founding legal document. This became known as Article 9, which renounced war and the use of force in resolving international conflicts and prohibited possession of forces with "war potential."<sup>2</sup> Despite Japan's transition, its Western counterparts did not automatically embrace it as a fellow liberal democracy. At the time, Europe's eastern horizon extended only as far as to Russia and, despite Japan's historically tenuous relationship with Russia, cooperation did not come naturally.

Instead, European states sought to counter Soviet expansion by formally entering into a military alliance based upon the North Atlantic Treaty. The 12 signatory nations founded a collective defense organization with the implicit goal: "keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down." The text of the North Atlantic Treaty reflected these limited geographical interests and membership was not considered beyond Europe and North America. As a product of the security threats faced by Europe at the time, NATO was not created with the necessary latitude for addressing a future of globalized strategic challenges or global cooperation.

Even though the Korean War was a catalyst for NATO's transformation into a formidable collective defense coalition, Asia failed to become a sphere of concern for the organization. As characterized by a former U.S. official, "[f]or most of its existence, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has viewed Asia at best as an afterthought in its policies or action."<sup>3</sup> As NATO's strategic outlook remained constant throughout the Cold War, Japan's rise as an economic power led to a revived interest in international affairs. In the 1970s, facing a newly open China and fluctuations in its relationship with the Soviet Union, Japan sought to leverage its economic power into a more strategically advantageous position. Looking to broaden engagement with the transatlantic community, Japanese defense ministers made formal visits to Brussels in 1979, 1981, and 1984. However, they found little support in Belgium as NATO leaders – aside from the U.S. – were preoccupied with securing Europe and countering Soviet influence across the world and thus were generally reluctant to invest heavily in East Asia.<sup>4</sup>

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO began to re-examine its role in the international community. In doing so, it embraced unlikely new partners, such as former Soviet republics through the Partnership for Peace program. There were significant motivations for these

partnerships beyond justifying the organization's existence – an emerging boom in information technology, greatly improved transportation, and rapidly integrating world markets meant that NATO's interests were becoming increasingly tied to previously distant areas of the globe. With some of the fastest growing economies in the world and rising political forces, East Asia seemed a glaring hole in NATO involvement, and a growing security concern. As a result, NATO began to explore opportunities it had previously overlooked with Japan and other Asian nations.<sup>5</sup>

The 1990s saw a new phase in Japan - NATO engagement. The inaugural Japan – NATO Security Conference was convened in Belgium in July 1990<sup>6</sup> and in 1991, NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner visited to Tokyo, marking the first visit of a NATO Secretary General to Japan.<sup>7</sup> These breakthroughs were part of a general trend toward broadening ties between Japan and Europe. Japanese leaders looked to expand their cooperation with Europe by signing a joint declaration with the European Community (EC) in 1991, commencing a partnership with of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1992, and becoming an observer in the Council of Europe in 1996.<sup>8</sup>

Japanese leaders also began to redefine the nation's capacity to not only engage in self defense but also to participate in promoting international peace and security. This move was also endorsed by the Diet which has passed over 20 pieces of significant security-related legislation since 1992. Notably, it provided revolutionary legal mandates for Japanese forces to engage in United Nations peacekeeping and disaster relief operations overseas, enhanced cooperation between Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and U.S. forces, a greater role in regional security and expansion of geostrategic interests.<sup>9</sup> These amendments allowed Japan to actively support NATO operations in the Balkans. Since the 1990s, Japan has provided education and medical assistance in the Western Balkans, with projects ranging from supplying safe water to assisting the social integration of returned soldiers. It has also provided democratization assistance for elections as well as infrastructure and reconstruction projects.<sup>10</sup>

Despite expanding engagements, the primary barriers to a formal security alliance between Japan and NATO remained. Japan's constitutional restraints precluded the possibilities of full membership in a collective defense organization, while NATO's focus on expanding European membership made it impractical to stretch and deepen collective defense obligations across continental distances.<sup>11</sup>

NATO resolved this dilemma by designating a category of "Contact Countries" to reflect the desire for increasing cooperation while circumventing the challenges of formal membership. The term was first introduced in 2004 and the grouping includes Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. The new category provided avenues for joint protection of shipping lanes and assistance on peacekeeping and counter-terrorism missions without formal membership.<sup>12</sup> For Japan, it opened up greater potential for cooperation with the trans-Atlantic community; and for NATO, it



allowed a window into Asia. This form of engagement brought mutual benefits and laid the groundwork for future cooperation.

The September 11, 2001 attack on the U.S. was a catalyst for greater Japan - NATO cooperation. The relationship was aided by an increasing awareness of the need for global cooperation against emerging transnational threats such as terrorism as well as proliferation and piracy. Former Prime Minister Taro Aso, then Foreign Minister, remarked that “with this common awareness, I believe Japan has rediscovered NATO’s importance and, I hope, vice versa.” This rediscovery, based upon mutual interests, led to significant contributions to the subsequent NATO operation in Afghanistan. The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been tasked with improving the security situation as well as overseeing development projects in Afghanistan since 2001. In many ways, ISAF was a milestone for both NATO and Japan. For NATO, it was the first time that the collective defense article of the Treaty has been invoked. For Japan, its extensive commitment and active participation in supporting operations signaled a new phase of engagement in the international security environment. Over an eight year period, Japan’s Maritime Self-Defense Force’s (MSDF) refueling mission in the Indian Ocean supplied over half a million kiloliters of fuel to warships from 12 countries, primarily to U.S. vessels.<sup>13</sup>



From left: MSDF crew observing the refueling process in the Indian Ocean, training of Afghan National Police and police vehicles provided by Japan.

Source: Japan Focus, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to Afghanistan, Japan has also worked alongside NATO member countries in a variety of operations across the world since 2001, reflecting the globalized nature of converging security concerns. In the Middle East, Japanese troops have been serving alongside Canada and Poland in a UN peacekeeping operation in the Golan Heights since 1996. Members of the SDF have also participated in humanitarian and reconstruction projects alongside Dutch and British troops in Iraq. In Asia, SDF personnel were involved in election monitoring in East Timor in 2002. During this time, there was a significant international force present in the country including the United Kingdom, U.S., Canada, Spain, Norway, and Portugal. In South Asia, the SDF participated in rescue operations, working alongside NATO Response Force troops, in Pakistan in the aftermath of the devastating 2005 earthquake. Most recently, the SDF carried out disaster relief operations under the auspices

of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, which has included a number of NATO member countries. As NATO increasingly participates in out of area operations and Japan views security through a widening geographic lens, they are frequently crossing paths in non-NATO operations across the world (see Table 1).

*Table 1: Japan's participation in non-NATO operations that involved NATO members since 1991*

Country/Operation	Japan's Responsibilities	Year Deployed	NATO Members Involved During Operation
Cambodia (UN Mission)	Election Observing	1991	Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Poland, United Kingdom, United States
Mozambique (UN Mission)	Staff Assistance and Election Monitoring	1993	Canada, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, United States
Golan Heights (UN Mission)	Staff/Transportation Support	1996	Canada, Croatia, Poland
Turkey (Non-UN Mission)	Earthquake Relief	1999	All NATO nations
East Timor (U.N. Mission)	Infrastructure/ Reconstruction	2001	Canada, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Slovakia, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States
Iraq (Non-UN Mission)	Humanitarian Reconstruction Assistance	2004	Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Poland, Romania, United Kingdom
Countries Affected By Indian Ocean Tsunami (Non-UN Mission)	Tsunami Relief and Aid	2005	United States, Italy, France, Greece, Denmark, Turkey, United Kingdom
Pakistan (Non-UN Mission)	Earthquake Relief	2005	NATO Response Force which included 17 NATO countries
Indonesia (Non-UN Mission)	Earthquake Relief	2006	United States
Nepal (UN Mission)	Observing Ongoing Peace Process	2007	Canada, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Turkey, United Kingdom
Sudan (UN Mission)	Logistics/Information	2008	Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Turkey, United Kingdom
Somalia (UN Mission)	Counter-piracy Operations	2009	Germany, Greece, Italy, Turkey, United States, United Kingdom, Portugal, Denmark, Canada
Haiti (Non-UN Mission)	Engineering/Logistics	2010	Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Germany, United States
Vietnam/Cambodia (Non-UN Mission)	Medical/Disaster Relief Planning	2010	United States

In 2007, NATO stepped up its security network in Asia by establishing individual “Tailored Cooperation Packages” (TCP) with the Contact Countries. Under the TCP framework, NATO offers capacity and skills building opportunities to further interoperability and help integrate partner nations into NATO-led operations. Japan's TCP provides the framework for practical cooperation and facilitates coordination and planning on an annual basis. In addition to supporting ISAF

operations in Afghanistan, recent collaboration between Japan and NATO has focused on civil emergency planning, terrorism, non-proliferation, and crisis management.<sup>17</sup>

## Japan and NATO Today:

Today, Japan and NATO cooperation spans across numerous initiatives and exchanges. Currently, Japan - NATO programs include the ongoing high-level dialogue, which meets alternatively in Japan or at NATO headquarters in Brussels. Other people-to-people interactions include opportunities for Japanese military officers to study at the NATO Defense College in Rome, Italy. Japan has also broadened its support for NATO programs, including contributing to a second NATO/PfP Trust Fund project. In April 2009, Japan formally signed an agreement to contribute to unexploded ordinance-clearing operations in Azerbaijan that are scheduled for completion in 2011.

Despite the positive trajectory of cooperation, forces in Japan's domestic politics have injected uncertainties over the future of Japan – NATO relations. The historic victory of the Democratic Party of Japan in the 2009 elections ushered in a new policy agenda that emphasized domestic concerns and a return to a more literal interpretation of Japan's pacifist constitution. Upholding their campaign pledge, the DPJ terminated MSDF's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean in January 2010. Yet, the DPJ did not abolish support for NATO's ISAF mission altogether. Instead, the DPJ chose to continue their contributions in the form of civilian aid. At the end of 2009, the government of Japan pledged \$5 billion in aid to fund reintegration programs for former Taliban fighters, human needs projects such as education, as well as agriculture and infrastructure development over the next five years.<sup>18</sup> It is estimated that Japan will have contributed approximately \$1.1 billion by the end of 2010.<sup>19</sup> The government has also established a new division in the prime minister's office to oversee the aid plan.<sup>20</sup>

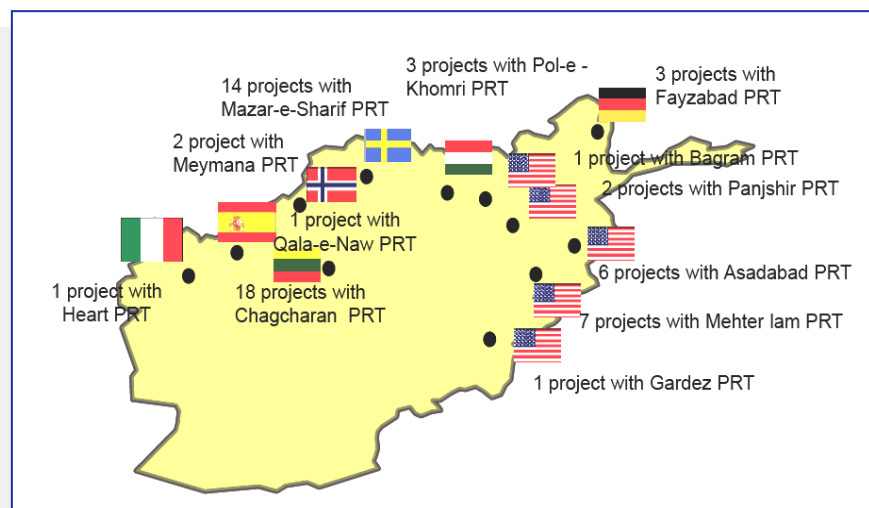


U.S. President Barack Obama and  
Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan

*Source: Associated Press*

Despite leadership changes in the DPJ, Japan's commitment to Afghanistan has remained steadfast. In June, former Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada reaffirmed that the new administration under Prime Minister Naoto Kan will continue the Hatoyama administration's assistance to Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup> This has been supported by high level exchanges between Prime Minister Kan and President Karzai as well as the agreement to establish a cabinet level "Japan – Afghanistan Policy Consultation."<sup>22</sup>

Today, Japan maintains a significant presence in Afghanistan, with over 130 civilians working in the embassy and for non-government and private organizations. Japan has also enhanced its coordinated efforts with NATO, conducting 59 grassroots projects in cooperation with 12 PRTs in the areas of education, vocational training, medicine and healthcare. There is four MOFA staff working in the town of Chaghcharan in Central Afghanistan under a Lithuanian-led PRT, alongside Croatian, Danish, U.S., Ukrainian, and Icelandic troops. Most recently, Japan agreed to enter into an information security pact with NATO, a significant move that promises to enhance future cooperation in Afghanistan. The pact will facilitate information-sharing to ensure the safety of the increasing contingent of Japanese aid workers on the ground.<sup>23</sup>



Japan's cooperation with NATO PRTs in Afghanistan

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Officially, the DPJ has said little about what its vision is for Japan - NATO cooperation going forward. Its party manifesto, released in 2009, stated that the DPJ sought to continue “a proactive role in UN peacekeeping operations...and...take the lead...to remove the threat of terrorism,”<sup>24</sup> but action may speak louder than words in reflecting the calculations of the DPJ leadership. While it ended non-combat naval support in the Indian Ocean, the MSDF has assisted in anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia, as part of a multinational effort that includes NATO vessels. Since 2009, Japan has deployed two destroyers and two P-3C patrol aircraft to the area. The government of Japan also signed a Status of Forces Agreement with Djibouti to establish a base for SDF operations at the distant location. These developments are likely a sign that the DPJ government remains open to security commitments abroad as new challenges arise. The fact that Tokyo continues to operate in areas of current NATO activity signals a continuation of common strategic interests between Japan and NATO.

As Japan and NATO both undergo a period of self-reflection, it is a critical time to foster discussion on opportunities for future engagement. An examination of common security interests and

potential benefits of collaboration may generate momentum towards enhanced security cooperation.

## What is at Stake?

While it may be self-evident that Japan, NATO, and the United States all have a vested interest in the future of Japan - NATO relations, what requires further examination is the degree to which interests are shared, where some interests may be unique to one of the parties involved, and where interests may actually diverge.

### Common Challenges and Shared Interests

In reviewing comments by political leaders and academics on the subject of Japan - NATO relations, many choose as a starting point the observation that Japan and NATO member countries ‘share values.’ Indeed, Japan and NATO both embrace democracy, freedom, and human rights. Sharing values may not be a necessary element for cooperation on an *ad hoc* basis, but it is essential for long term cooperation. Values help to shape a world view and, perhaps most importantly, help to inform security policy decision making, for example determining when and where to take action. Former Prime Minister Abe observed in 2007 that shared values engender a common sense of responsibility toward global challenges between Japan and NATO. Thus while sharing values may be a necessary condition for sustained partnership and collaboration, it alone is not a sufficient condition for doing so.

Beyond shared values, Japan and NATO countries (including the United States) face a common set of challenges and strategic interests. The most compelling and immediate rationale for enhanced Japan - NATO relations will surely be interest-based rather than values-based arguments.

The first set of common challenges relates to the changing nature of the security environment itself. While traditional security matters are still on the agenda of all parties concerned in this study (more below), it is also true that so-called non-traditional issues increasingly demand the attention of policymakers in every capital. These challenges are essentially the by-product of economic modernization, technological advance, and the related phenomena of globalization. They tend to be ‘collective action’ challenges that by definition require the active participation of multiple countries for effective problem solving. They also tend to be challenges that belie traditional geographic considerations. Though Japan may seem geographically remote from the trans-Atlantic nations, and vice versa, distance can become moot if the common threat is a network attack delivered through cyberspace or a pandemic virus spread by commercial air travelers.

This category of security challenges relate to issues such as counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, anti-piracy, energy security, human trafficking, natural security, humanitarian relief, and peacekeeping. They also include challenges that are the by-product of climate change such as forced migration and even food and water security. As these examples illustrate, non-traditional security matters have consequential impacts on Japan, NATO, and the United States. As countries that largely share values, but also as countries with modern economies and global interests, Japan and NATO members share an interest in the development of cooperative approaches to emerging security challenges. It is even conceivable that the exploration of cooperative approaches could lead to shared acquisition strategies and common considerations regarding force structure to appropriately meet 21<sup>st</sup> century security challenges.

The next type of common challenges is much more rooted in concepts associated with traditional security. While the potential threats to Japan and NATO are not identical, it is the case that democracies in the Pacific and democracies on the European continent all must deal the two behemoths - namely China and Russia - that lie between them. Granted, Japan and NATO have different perspectives on China and Russia, but both must in some way prudently account for each in security planning. The goal of cooperation should not be to contain China or Russia, but rather there should be a strong emphasis on sharing information and building coordinated approaches.

No matter the precise trajectory of China's rise, it is likely that no single country will have a greater impact, for better or for worse, on the international security environment than China. In the recent past, Europeans have mostly viewed China from a trade perspective, while Japan and the United States see both the opportunities of commerce as well as a rapidly evolving security challenge. With respect to Russia, it may still be the case that she is still a power in decline. But with its considerable clout in energy politics and resurging profile in Central Asia, Russia seems intent on exerting influence in ways that could challenge the collective interests of both Japan and NATO. At a minimum, Japan and NATO could benefit from more robust information and intelligence exchanges. Through such exchanges, Japan and NATO should seek to share unique geographic, political, military, and even cultural vantage points on China and Russia. It may even be the case that a regular program of seminars and table top exercises could shed light on the optimal contingency planning for a range of scenarios including, but not limited to, the above concerns.

In addition to sharing common challenges in the areas of non-traditional security as well as traditional security, Japan, and NATO also share the same set of challenges related to new security domains, notably space and the Arctic. Japan and NATO member countries are not only democracies with modern economies, they are also leaders of advanced technologies commonly responsible for producing cutting-edge technology with military and security applications. As observed in a previous report by the Project 2049 Institute, the opening salvos of future warfare may not be bombs exploding on the ground, but rather flashing laser lights in the silence of outer space.<sup>25</sup> Though Japan and NATO currently maintain a competitive advantage in space against



imaginable potential threats, that advantage could be impermanent. For instance, China is arguably altering the space status quo with space exploration and advanced weapon programs. For Japan and NATO, the answer to sustaining advantage in this new domain may lie in technology sharing and research and development cooperation – but it may also entail creative operational linkages.

In a similar vein, melting ice in the once inhospitable Arctic is fast bringing to the fore a new set of security challenges (see *Closer than We Think?*). Poorly defined maritime boundaries, potential competition for resources, and new demands for maritime security associated with new commercial routes are all emerging on the agenda. One should also note the military implications of a navigable Arctic for both Japan and NATO as the circumpolar maritime routes above Russia and Canada shorten the distance between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.

### ***Closer than We Think?***

Globalization is not the only phenomenon that is rapidly breaking down the geographic distance between Japan and Europe. Climate change, already a common concern for the international community, is leading to the rapid melting of ice in the Arctic region connecting Asia and Europe. Japan's interest in the Arctic has been longstanding. It boasts successful Arctic research programs and Tokyo has sought greater multilateral engagement by applying for observer status in the Arctic Council.

A navigable Arctic can considerably reduce shipping time between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans for commercial shipping. The successful passage of two German ships from South Korea to the Netherlands in 2009 shows the promise of the Arctic passage as a “summer competitor with the Suez Canal.”<sup>26</sup> These hopes have been augmented in recent months by shipments of metals, oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Norway and north-western Russia to Asia.<sup>27</sup>



Japan's icebreaker Shirase

Source: Japonia.org

In addition to opening up a new maritime frontier, receding Arctic ice will also uncover significant energy reserves.<sup>28</sup> Japan has already expressed interests in the energy resources of the Arctic with initial explorations for natural gas hydrates in a bid to bolster its energy security outlook.<sup>29</sup>

On the other side of the Atlantic, NATO has deemed the Arctic to be a region of enduring strategic importance and former Secretary General Scheffer predicted a “military presence”<sup>30</sup> might

eventually be required to address any tensions that may arise from competing claims of sovereignty or over resources among littoral states. The Supreme Allied Commander for Europe Admiral James G. Stavridis recently warned that global warming and race for resources could spur conflict in the Arctic.

The overlap between Arctic Council and NATO membership raises the organization's stake in the stability of the High North. With projections that the Arctic may be ice-free in the summer by as early as 2013,<sup>31</sup> Japan and NATO may be geographically closer sooner than we think as international shipping lanes become connected in an unbroken global network.

Finally, without needing to be scenario or contingency-specific, Japan, NATO, and the United States theoretically all benefit from having more capabilities, more latitude for maneuver, and more options available in the event that political leaders see the need for a multilateral response. Thus efforts aimed at gaining mutual understanding (such as military student exchanges and observing exercises), deriving thoughtful lessons learned from real world operations and moving toward interoperability (and all that may entail) could be of considerable value to political leaders if faced with new contingencies where Japan - NATO cooperation is desired. In other words, placing another item in the toolkit for political leaders is a worthy goal in and of itself.

Some may raise concerns that creating new capabilities can actually alter political strategies and intent (to carry the tool analogy further, once you hold a hammer in your hands, everything starts looking like a nail). Consistent with that logic, some in Brussels and/or Tokyo could posit that the simple act of creating these capabilities could ultimately result in a drift towards objectionable situations. But for political leaders it is desirable to have more options rather than fewer in most situations.

### **Additional Considerations for Japan, NATO, and the United States**

In addition to the aforementioned common challenges and shared interests, there are further considerations unique to each party that may inform an interest in potentially enhancing Japan - NATO ties.

Japan's security strategy and posture is unique. Beyond preparing and equipping for self-defense, Japan maintains its sole military alliance with the United States. By historical measure, the U.S. - Japan alliance has been a great success and currently remains strong. Yet there are inherent uncertainties associated with reliance on a single outside party for one's own security. While theoretical discussions of the potential U.S. abandonment of Japan seem farfetched, Japan may



nonetheless benefit from a ‘diversification’ of security partners. Analogous to financial investments where diversification spreads risk and broadens the hedge, Japan’s security could reap dividends by diversifying. Even with the knowledge that any status short of full-membership would not guarantee NATO coming to the defense of Japan in the event of an armed attack, Japan might nevertheless benefit in security terms from the perceived closeness of Japan - NATO ties.

A diversification strategy can also help draw NATO and European member countries into a deeper understanding of security issues in Asia. From a European perspective, Asia is mostly viewed through the lens of commerce and trade. Yet Asia is a region where hard power still matters a great deal. Japan only stands to benefit if NATO’s European members understand that more fully and explore ways to constructively contribute to regional peace and stability. At a minimum, Japan has an interest in NATO understanding the security dynamics in the region. Many in Tokyo believe the European Union (EU) came close to lifting the arms embargo against China several years ago because EU members only considered the economic impact of such a move.<sup>32</sup> More active interest and involvement on the part of NATO would naturally draw member countries in the direction of appreciating the global security issues at stake.

Reciprocally, there are likely many technical matters related to Alliance management where Japan could benefit from having a greater understanding of how business is conducted at NATO. A specific matter that has come to the fore recently is the mechanics of extended deterrence. On this issue, Japan and the United States might both welcome detailed information exchanges between Japan and NATO countries to raise understanding in Tokyo, and thus infuse greater confidence in the U.S. - Japan alliance.

Japanese political leaders and defense planners have expressed concern about extended deterrence in the recent past. Concerns range from the very practical considerations associated with how such a political guarantee can be operationalized in the context of the alliance to more theoretical questions about the efficacy and credibility of extended deterrence (in the bluntest of terms, will the United States really trade one of its great cities in exchange for the protection of Japanese citizens).

In this sense, Japan and non-nuclear NATO member countries have been in the same boat for close to 50 years. Yet, due to Japan’s understandable ambivalence toward nuclear weapons and the fact that for most of the Cold War the nuclear strategy game centered on the European continent, Japan’s defense planners have accepted a ‘faith-based’ approach to strategic deterrence. Yet, as it faces nuclear armed neighbors North Korea and China and the threat of proliferation, Japan appears to be less comfortable with the aforementioned approach. Looking forward, Japan and NATO have the potential for excellent exchanges on the issue of extended deterrence, and may even find it mutually beneficial to consider a truly global approach to strategic deterrence. Indeed,

this becomes only more urgent in light of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the means to deploy it on a global, vice regional, scale.

Japan may also benefit from deepened ties with NATO in another, more subtle, way. To the extent that Japanese political leaders are seeking to enhance their engagement on global security affairs, and desire greater latitude for maneuver on security matters despite constitutional constraints (more on Article 9 below), Japan - NATO activities may provide attractive modalities for achieving those aims. Whereas actions taken in the context of the U.S. - Japan alliance will always present Japanese leaders with a 'junior alliance partner' dilemma, Japan - NATO relations may be seen more as a partnership between like-minded democracies of varying capabilities. Therefore, action taken as an outcome of Japan - NATO consultation would not likely come with the same baggage. At the same time, the value placed upon the U.S. - Japan relationship must not be underestimated. A U.S. request invokes the bilateral security alliance as well as the goodwill between the two countries, which may compel politicians and the public to respond more positively to a request. In this context, the U.S. may be able to foster deeper Japan - NATO cooperation by supporting Japan's participation in NATO activities, particularly those where U.S. takes a prominent leadership role, to build confidence and amity between the two parties for future collaboration.

For NATO, there are some additional considerations that go beyond common challenges and shared interests as well. The most obvious consideration comes in the form of its resources at a time of growing demand. This problem could grow worse for a variety of reasons including demographic trends which will be increasingly taxing to member countries' respective domestic budgets and manpower (see *Aging Japan, Aging Europe*).

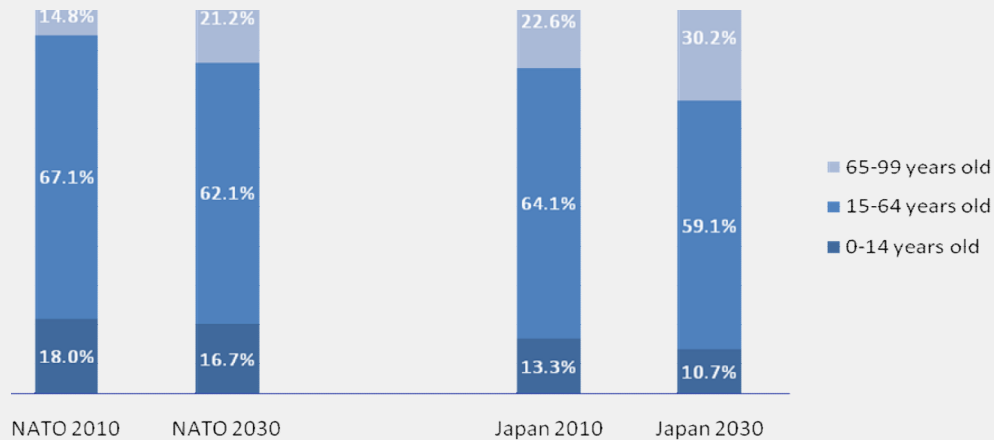
#### ***Aging Japan, Aging Europe:***

Demographic trends present a common strategic challenge for NATO and Japan. The latter has one of the fastest aging populations in the world and many European members of NATO are not far behind. Projections show that age distributions in Japan and NATO countries will shift toward older ages while the younger cohort accounts for a smaller percentage of total population.

Aging populations will likely strain the economies of both parties and hamper their ability to respond to security challenges. This demographic shift, driven by low birthrates and high life expectancies is likely to strain government services and pension programs, as well as lead to labor shortages.

Low birthrates in Europe are tempered by younger and more fertile immigrant populations. In Japan, which has a far more restrictive immigration regime, some hope that use of robotics and other labor saving technologies may make a smaller workforce more productive. Whether technology can keep

up with the demands of an aging Japan remains to be seen.



The percentage of age groups in Japan and NATO's populations in 2010 and 2030 *Source: US Census Bureau, International Data Base*

Aging populations are also likely to strain European and the Japanese militaries. The cost of pensions and government services in the budget will put downward pressure on defense spending. Aging populations and a shrinking labor force will also lead to smaller pools of potential soldiers to draw upon. While advanced weapons systems will keep these militaries highly capable of defending their core interests, other security missions are more manpower intensive. Technology can only play a limited role in missions such as peacekeeping, post-conflict stabilization and counterinsurgency that demand the deployment of large numbers of troops.



Destroyer Sazanami and Samidare preparing to leave their base in Kure, Hiroshima prefecture, Japan

*Source: Ministry of National Defense*

While Japan is already a significant financial contributor to NATO operations, it has the potential to commit other forms of resources, even if restraints on troop deployments remain. Japan has significant technical expertise in both military and security areas that are highly valued in the types of contingencies in which NATO could become involved. The list of areas where Japan could make technical and expert contributions to the work of NATO is lengthy.

For illustrative purposes we can consider integration

of anti-piracy efforts off the Horn of Africa. As an island, maritime nation, Japan has understandably oriented its defense forces toward the protection of sea lanes. Japan has also been a leader in anti-piracy and maritime security in Asia. For example, the Association for Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) Anti-Piracy Pact was originally initiated by Japan – although it is not an ASEAN member country. As many NATO member countries are land-force dominated, partnership with Japan could bring complementary technical expertise to the benefit of NATO maritime forces.

Areas in which Japan may have the impact where NATO is concerned are the issues on which the two aforementioned qualities – available resources and technical know-how – can be combined to support NATO initiatives such as the NATO Response Force (NRF). Envisioned as a ready and technologically advanced force made up of land, air, sea and special forces components that the Alliance can deploy quickly wherever needed, the NRF has had some difficulties acquiring the capabilities to meet its vision. To truly become capable of performing missions worldwide across the whole spectrum of operations, the NRF could potentially benefit from Japan's combination of resources and expertise. Japan's participation alongside the NRF in the aftermath of the Pakistan earthquake in 2005 stands testimony to the potential of this collaboration.

For the United States, the potential benefits of an enhanced relationship between Japan and NATO could be quite significant. The U.S. is a global power with international interests, and thus requires global reach to impact those interests. And therefore, it is understandable that political leaders in Washington and academics in the United States have been the driving force behind the "global NATO" concept. The Obama Administration's current Ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder, advocated a global vision and global capabilities for NATO prior to his current post.<sup>33</sup> Even if the term "global NATO" carries connotations that may be uncomfortable for some European member countries, the United States will likely remain the driving force for NATO performing out of area missions and thus has a strong interest in knitting up East and West to maximize operational flexibility.

This notion of 'stretching' the vision of the NATO Alliance also supports objectives related to the U.S. - Japan alliance. The 2007 bipartisan Armitage - Nye report on the U.S. - Japan alliance stated that "the United States and Japan will remain the two of the most significant democracies, with the economic and military wherewithal to affect life literally on every square foot on the globe... with increased capabilities and clear political commitment, the alliance stands to be a positive force on a wide range of global issues."<sup>34</sup> Hence, it is quite conceivable that the Japan - NATO relationship can potentially help stretch the vision of the U.S. - Japan alliance in a global direction.<sup>35</sup>

From Washington's perspective, the U.S. enjoys strong alliance relationships in Europe and East Asia (where the U.S. - Japan alliance is the first among equals) that includes the stationing of U.S. forces. But in between the two are critical regions to U.S. interests – namely South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the maritime commons – where the United States needs to project

power and advance presence to have influence. Thus, one can almost visualize on a map a strong interest on the part of the United States to pull NATO to the East and to pull the U.S. - Japan alliance to the West. Where the two would conceptually meet in the visual exercise is precisely where the United States must endeavor to project influence to secure strategic interests.

## Potential Challenges to Enhanced Cooperation

Despite common challenges, shared interests, and a range of positive considerations for each party concerned, the trajectory of Japan - NATO relations is far from certain. Indeed, there are challenges and even hard barriers that may stand in the way of enhanced Japan - NATO cooperation.

The first obstacle for all parties to contemplate may be more abstract and theoretical. Despite all the common challenges and shared interests described above, Japan and NATO currently lack a common adversary. Though possibilities come to mind, including the trajectory of Russia's development, uncertainty of China's rise and potentially even religious extremists who may find as much to dislike about Japan as they do the United States and Europe, none rise to the level of common enemy. Thus, in the absence of a coalescing imperative, who clamors for expanded Japan - NATO cooperation with any sense of urgency? Who states aloud if the Japan - NATO partnership did not exist, we would have to invent it? With limited resources and many demands, how do political leaders make the case for investing in a geographically distant partner?

Advocacy for a stronger Japan - NATO relationship may be rewarded in the long term. However, injecting a great deal of momentum behind the relationship at present may prove to be difficult. Yet, it should be recognized that Japan - NATO ties are not only valuable now, but will be of increasing value going forward given the changing security environment for Japan, NATO, and the United States.

Looking at more concrete obstacles beginning with Japan, there are significant constraints for any attempt to pursue more robust security relations with any outside parties, including NATO. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution renounces not only the sovereign right of the nation to conduct war, but also renounces "the threat or use of force" as well as maintaining "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential" for the purpose of "settling international disputes." This has direct relevance to the potential enhancement of Japan - NATO cooperation. Historically, Article 9 has been interpreted to mean that Japan is prohibited from engaging in 'collective self-defense.' It has also been interpreted to mean that Japan's Self-Defense Forces are limited in how they can deploy and act – whether for the defense of Japan, or in other non-combat roles. Some political leaders in Japan have long called for either a "reinterpretation" of Article 9, or an outright revision. But in the

near term, neither option seems probable so the constraints on the SDF are likely to remain in place.

The current interpretations of Article 9 raise legitimate questions in the minds of NATO officials about whether or not security commitments on their part could be reciprocated by Tokyo. Even deployments of defense forces in peacetime require approval by the Diet and debate surrounding such deployments can be acrimonious. For the Japanese public, even the contemplation of a stronger security commitment to an alliance primarily concerned with the security of Europe and the Atlantic would spark debate about how such an arrangement could directly contribute to Japan's self-defense.

Japan maintains other self-imposed constraints that could inhibit the future of Japan - NATO relations, depending on the direction political leaders might seek to go. For example, Japan's Three Principles on Arms Exports has severely constrained the degree to which Japan's defense industrial base can cooperate with other countries. In the future, Japan could leverage its advanced industrial base to make certain types of cooperation more appealing to Brussels and this potential has been bolstered by recent moves to relax the arms export ban which open possibilities for joint development and production of weapons.

With respect to NATO, a deepening of Japan - NATO ties would undoubtedly raise a number of concerns. The core purpose of NATO has historically been the collective defense of its members – whom to date are all, geographically speaking, Euro-Atlantic countries. Though there is little question that potential threats to NATO may lie beyond the traditional boundaries of Europe and the near abroad, whether or not member countries could ever reach a consensus that events in East Asia impact their security in consequential ways is an open question. This is not merely a philosophical reservation – many believe that Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty identified with great specificity the geographic scope of its membership base (and Article 10 is even more explicit regarding membership, though few envision Japan as an aspiring member).

An effort to enhance Japan - NATO relations may also lead NATO member countries to wonder about the trajectory of the relationship and the ultimate objectives associated with deepening ties. Extending full Alliance membership to Japan is probably unthinkable to most NATO member countries. Full membership would entail consensus among members that Article 5 would apply to Japan. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty states that “the Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them... shall be considered an attack against them all” and “each of them... will assist the party or parties so attacked.” Hypothetically setting aside the serious concerns that Article 9 in Japan's constitution raises about Tokyo's ability to honor Article 5 in the North Atlantic Treaty, one has to ask if NATO member countries (other than the United States) are ready to accept that an attack against Japan would be serious enough to consider it an attack against themselves. Judging by the controversies stirred by NATO expansion into Central Europe, it is

almost unthinkable that European members of NATO would unanimously agree to extend membership to Japan.

NATO may have another concern regarding the potential for an expanded Japan - NATO relationship which at first glance may appear trivial, but may in fact be quite consequential. NATO officials reluctantly acknowledge that they are nearly over-extended (or perhaps already over-extended) when it comes to dialogues, exchanges, seminars and even partnerships. Currently, NATO sustains the Partnership for Peace, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Mediterranean Dialogue, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, three bilateral commissions (with Russia, Georgia and Ukraine), and of course its relations with Contact Countries. At some point, as a function of personnel and man hours that can be devoted to such endeavors, NATO reaches a hard limit. This is not to suggest that NATO would not willingly invest in developing meaningful relations, however, appetite may be low for an 'enhanced relationship' solely in the form of expanding symbolic dialogues and exchanges. Against the backdrop of economic disputes and disarray, and ongoing commitments to Iraq and Afghanistan, Europe is unlikely to be easily cajoled by the U.S. into greater security commitments.

Despite these substantive and tangible concerns, NATO's new Strategic Concept signals a move towards more active engagement with both Euro-Atlantic states as well as global partners. In particular, the document emphasizes the importance of a "wide network of partner relationships with countries and organizations around the globe" and expresses a willingness to "further develop existing partnerships" through flexible formats.<sup>36</sup> The stated strategic vision indicates greater latitude for NATO's international engagement and stands apart from the 1999 Strategic Concept's emphasis on partnerships in the Euro-Atlantic region. Overall, this vision is positive for enhancing Japan – NATO cooperation.



Dr. Madeleine Albright, Chair of the NATO Group of Experts that oversaw the development of the new Strategic Concept

Source: NATO

## Next Steps: Enhanced Japan - NATO Partnership

Japan - NATO relations have made progress over the course of the last decade. Given the significant obstacles noted in the previous section, defense and security officials in Brussels, Tokyo, and Washington are to be commended for the successes enjoyed to date. At the same time, there is undoubtedly room for growth, and enhanced ties can be achieved in a manner that benefits all parties concerned. While the pace and scope of progress may continue to be measured, the following considerations outline possible areas for enhanced cooperation and potential next steps



for Japan - NATO ties. As stated in the introduction, this section does not offer a roadmap, but rather seeks to serve as the starting point for more serious discussions about the future of the Japan - NATO partnership.

### ***Establishing the Vision***

Author Lewis Carroll wrote “if you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.” Ultimately, whether an enhanced Japan - NATO partnership is successful will be determined based on the activities and actions of the relationship. Determining the right agenda, particularly beyond the scope of current operations, is likely contingent upon adopting a shared vision for the relationship, defining the appropriate structure and organizing principles to support that vision, and attaining the highest level of political support as practicable in each capital. In brief, vision matters, and organization matters.

### **Japan as a Potential Partner for Peace?**

Among NATO’s partnerships, the PfP is the largest and perhaps the most integrated grouping. Setting aside the technicalities involved in the membership process, there is certainly a case to be considered for Japan taking part in the PfP program as a means for closer cooperation with NATO.

Under the scope of the PfP program, opportunities for political and diplomatic dialogue are frequent. PfP members participate alongside NATO members in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), a multilateral security forum to support NATO’s ongoing activities. Council members meet monthly at the ambassador level and annually at the foreign or defense minister level in addition to the occasional summit level meetings.

Forums afforded by PfP membership could also broaden Japan’s opportunities for diplomatic engagement, especially with Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Central Asia. The latter has become a rising sphere of interest for Tokyo with the resurgence of its Silk Road Diplomacy. However, there already exist avenues for Japan – Central Asia engagement, notably the Central Asia plus Japan dialogue that has been ongoing since 2004. While Japan and PfP members could utilize the PfP as an opportunity for greater engagement, it is not to say that such ties could not be fostered otherwise. Nevertheless, structured cooperation on non-traditional issues establishes common interests that can lay a solid foundation for future relations.

In terms of practical engagement Japan is already an active supporter of PfP initiatives, particularly the PfP Trust Fund, and has reportedly considered stepping up to a lead nation role Trust Fund projects.<sup>37</sup> Membership in the program can further cooperation on other issues of converging interest such as arms control, defense policy, disaster relief, nuclear safety, scientific cooperation



and peace operations under the auspices of the PfP and EAPC framework. The Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism (PAP-T) is an example where existing collaboration can be expanded to include intelligence sharing, consultations and seminars, and exercises. Japan's position as an organizer of regional counter-terrorism information sharing and dialogue could synergize with NATO's global agenda against terrorism.

Under the PfP program, partner countries are able to send permanent delegates to the Partnership Coordination Cell, located in close proximity to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, and the Allied Command Transformation, in Norfolk, Virginia (currently, NATO representatives communicate with the Japanese liaison personnel at the Joint Forces Command, located in close proximity to the Allied Command Transformation headquarters). With the Joint Forces Command slated for disestablishment, permanent representation at the Allied Command Transformation could offer opportunities of sustaining, and deepening, engagement.

Yet, Japan's entry into the PfP would raise a host of concerns. To date, 12 Eastern European and Baltic PfP partners have ascended to full member status and there may be unease that participation in the PfP commits Japan to the same path. However, the increasing number of PfP countries that do not aspire to full membership, such as Russia, should assuage this concern. Such expectations should be further tempered by the increasing emphasis on Membership Action Plans, rather than ascension through the PfP program, to induct formal membership.

Another concern pertains to the intensity of cooperation. It is unclear as to whether the biannual reviewed Partnership Work Plan and Partnership Action Plan mechanisms of the PfP would allow an upgrade of Japan – NATO cooperation, as compared to the current TCP arrangement. Furthermore, one could question placing Japan alongside PfP countries if Japan is already matching, if not surpassing, the contribution of most PfP countries to NATO. For example, Japan has been a significant supporter of NATO operations in Afghanistan. Financially, their contribution dwarfs that of the highest PfP donors - Sweden and Switzerland.

Despite common interests, such as Afghanistan, Japan, and PfP countries, owing to their size, geography, history, and strategic environment, also have dissimilarities in their security outlooks. Japan is inarguably a major power with significant capabilities that sets it apart from much of the PfP cohort. In a cursory overview of some key metrics, Japan is almost twice the size of Russia (largest PfP economy) in terms of GDP based on purchasing power parity and also ranks above it in terms of total military spending (and, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research



Japanese Ambassador Azusa Hayashi signs official documents of Japan's support for a NATO/PfP Trust Fund project in Azerbaijan.

*Source: Ministry of National Defense*

Institute, ranks almost 20 places above the next largest PfP military spender, Sweden).<sup>38</sup> As an Asian power, Japan is far more attuned to developments in the Asia-Pacific than European states who are also concerned with their own parochial challenges. Such fundamental differences produce varying opinions and capacity for action. For example, Japan may find commonalities with Central Asia on China, or with Eastern Europe on Russia, but the specifics of their threat perception as well as their response threshold are not likely to be equal.

To maximize Japan – NATO cooperation, what is required is a mode of collaboration with latitude and flexibility that is tailored to even closer cooperation than what is currently available. This may provide possibilities for other aspirant countries who seek to upgrade their current cooperation with NATO. In the long term, as NATO’s global interests test its geographical limitations and capacity, enhanced partnerships may be the best solution for upholding its mandate as a collective defense organization in an era of global challenges.

### **Contact “Plus”**

As discussed, NATO maintains a number of partnership categories. An examination of the collection of partnership reveals there is a rationale behind each grouping, but it is less clear to the outside observer how the partnership network all link together (or does not link together, as the case may be). However, partnership groupings are determined by geography rather than capabilities, and whether or not individual cooperation packages fully account for the disparities within the geographic groupings is an open question. Furthermore, there is little guidance as to levels or hierarchy among partnership categories (i.e. could Japan ‘graduate’ from Contact Country to something else?), or if greater aspirations are held for the individual members of the partnerships at all. If a country is currently cooperating with NATO under the guise of a partnership grouping, but is not aspiring to full NATO membership, then where does this lead?

It is very unlikely Japan would seek full NATO membership in the foreseeable future. Even if Japan did choose to pursue full membership, it seems unlikely that NATO could achieve consensus to place them on an action plan toward full membership. Thus, there remain essential questions relating to the categorization in which Japan is currently placed. As the term Contact Country sounds the most benign of all partnership categories (as Ron Asmus pointed out, the name itself is “indicative of ambivalence”<sup>39</sup> on NATO’s part), is there sufficient room for growth for the Japan - NATO relationship within the Contact Country category? Is there an opportunity cost for all parties if an enhanced category is not made available to Japan or even others? Is there a chance to send positive signals to all interested parties that there will be levels of enhanced status available even if a particular country is not aspiring to become a full member of the Alliance?

An approach to these challenges that has been previously suggested would have NATO creating a “Global Partner” category, expanding upon the existing term “other partners around the globe” that has been used in reference to Contact Countries. Such a partnership group would be available to any non-Euro-Atlantic country if certain criteria were met, and consensus could be reached by all relevant parties. But there is an interim step for the near term that Japan and NATO could consider – the creation of a ‘break-out’ category for Japan that would allow the relationship to emerge from the Contact Country grouping into something of enhanced quality.

A Contact “Plus” category (the specific name to be determined) might have multiple advantages. A Contact “Plus” category would create a status with appropriately higher expectations that Japan can aspire to “graduate” into. It would send a signal to the broader community (particularly to Russia and China) that there is a political commitment in both Tokyo and Brussels to seek an enhanced security relationship. Finally, there is no reason that the Contact “Plus” category would be limited to Japan – if other Contact Countries wish to enhance the relationship with NATO and vice versa, general criteria could be established so that all parties concerned would understand the necessary steps to achieving a more robust relationship.

### **Joint Security Declaration**

Despite the notable progress in Japan - NATO ties to date, there appears to be little consensus on where the two parties want the relationship to go in the future. This can be problematic. The path Japan and NATO have taken appears to be the result of an event driven, ad hoc process where incremental adjustments are made on the margins along the way. This is not to criticize officials who have been involved in the structuring of the Japan - NATO relationship thus far. To the contrary, those who participate in the annual bilateral dialogue, officials on the ground who engage in the problem-solving necessitated by current operations, and those who created the TCP for Japan - NATO activities are all to be commended for the skill and creativity brought to the effort. But the underlying challenge remains – how to ensure Japan and NATO are on the optimal trajectory if the desired destination is so uncertain.

Japan and NATO should consider developing and ultimately releasing a Joint Security Declaration (JSD). A JSD that follows form of other similar endeavors by Japan would address several areas. First, a Japan - NATO JSD could add specific definition to the nature of the partnership including the aspirations associated with the relationship. Second, a JSD might explicitly state a common regional and global outlook, to include the identification of current and emerging challenges. Third, the JSD could outline specific shared objectives which would be naturally rooted in their common outlook. And fourth, a Japan - NATO JSD could address specific areas of partnership for the bilateral security relationship that are oriented toward securing those common objectives.

The value of a Joint Security Declaration is twofold. One clear purpose relates to the benefits derived from the final product itself. More than any speech and/or joint statement could possibly hope to achieve, a JSD offers the best chance at providing the overarching vision for the future of the Japan - NATO relationship. Once established, from a shared vision flows the development of a coherent strategy and associated activities for the relationship. Moreover, a JSD could also serve as an invaluable guidepost for all future activities.



President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto sign the Joint Security Declaration in 1996

*Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan*

The second benefit of a Japan - NATO JSD emerges from the actual process of drafting, negotiating, and even signing the JSD itself. Alliance managers involved in the U.S. - Japan alliance universally acknowledge the value of the entire exercise experienced in the 1995-96 timeframe. The 1996 Joint Security Declaration was a process that covered at least a year and half, and involved intense discussions about one another's vision, objectives, force structure plans, and expectations of the other. The process itself provides the vehicle to develop mutual understanding and confidence to foster a more meaningful relationship.

Even the act of signing a JSD can be a significant boost to the bilateral relationship. As has been the case in the U.S. - Japan alliance, as well as other joint security declarations Japan has concluded (such as a 2007 JSD with Australia and a 2008 JSD with India), a Japan - NATO JSD would likely be signed by the highest political authorities on both sides. Placing the signature of the Japanese Prime Minister alongside that of the NATO Secretary General on a comprehensive document addressing the future of the relationship makes a profound statement about the commitment each is making to ensure faithful implementation of the principles stated in the declaration.

## Japan - NATO Activities

Perhaps even more important than developing a shared vision and establishing a break-out category of partnership for Japan will be the actual activities associated with the partnership. Success or failure will likely be judged on the basis of the activities themselves, and whether or not they are consequential as well as mutually beneficial. In a January 2010 speech in Vilnius, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Daalder stated that any NATO partnership should satisfy two principles – first, that any partnership should be a “reciprocal, two-way street with mutual responsibilities.” And second, that the partnership should have “mutual benefits.”<sup>40</sup> With respect to both principles, actions will always speak louder than words. The following list of suggested activities is far from

exhaustive but provides a starting point for exploring areas of cooperation beyond current operations. The ideas expressed below are pragmatic, attainable, and certainly meet the criteria of mutual responsibility and mutual benefit.

### **Enhanced Intelligence and Information Sharing**

Japan and NATO could begin more robust information and intelligence exchanges at an early juncture. Recently, Japan and NATO conducted negotiations for an information security pact. From both Japan and NATO's perspective, the agreement sought to enhance future cooperation in Afghanistan, and ensure the safety of the increasing contingent of Japanese aid workers on the ground. But an agreement designed to protect sensitive information and ensure appropriate safeguards are in place by both parties also opens the door to broader information and intelligence exchanges.

While it is the case that regional perspectives are shared and discussed during the annual bilateral dialogue, it is also true that more sensitive information has not been available for exchange to date. With appropriate agreements in place, Japan and NATO could identify areas of intelligence exchange where each side would benefit from knowing the informed perspective of the other.

Initially, Japan and NATO could explore intelligence exchanges on three subjects – proliferation, Russian influence in strategic regions, and Chinese military modernization. Each of these subjects is of interest to both parties and requires a more comprehensive examination than either can likely develop in isolation of the other. Proliferation networks often span continents and involve complex relationships between states, rogue actors within states, commercial entities, and complicated logistics networks. The A.Q. Khan network, for example, proved that putting all the pieces together would require a multi-regional, if not global, understanding of the entities involved. Russia maintains a military presence on its east coast and conducts activities in the Pacific. Even if Moscow still primarily looks west, sharing information about posture, presence, and activities in the Pacific can inform NATO about Russia's overall intentions, and vice versa for Japan's interests in understanding Russia's activities on her western periphery. Likewise, both parties may benefit from sharing information on China's military modernization, which could be a destabilizing factor in global security in the future. As China seeks to develop a blue-water navy, expand asymmetrical capabilities, and build political-military relationships around the world, Japan and NATO could each benefit from an exchange of notes on these largely opaque developments.

## Planning and Exercising

To date, Japan has been a relatively frequent observer of NATO exercises. However, there is no annual schedule of Japan - NATO bilateral military exercises. Thus in a sense, real world operations have well-exceeded bilateral military planning and preparations for possible future contingencies. A status quo approach virtually guarantees that future contingencies will be met with ad hoc planning once a crisis has unfolded. While that may be good enough, it is probably sub-optimal. There are other costs associated with a failure to partake in planning and exercises – namely the opportunities to ensure interoperability and a sensible division of labor prior to a call by political leaders to take action.

Even with Japan’s self-imposed constraints on troop deployments, and NATO’s aversion to explicit commitment to future out of area operations, there is still a subset in the spectrum of imaginable future contingencies for NATO where policymakers could reasonably assume that Japan - NATO cooperation would be sought. These include, but are not limited to, humanitarian and disaster relief scenarios, maritime security and anti-piracy, and expanded peacekeeping operations. Japan and NATO could identify such areas in advance, develop exercises for both command elements (“table top” exercises) and troops in the field, and could rigorously mine lessons learned to help inform future cooperation.

One potential near-term opportunity may be for Japan to explore how she can plan and prepare for direct support to the NATO Response Force. As previously noted, the NRF is envisioned as a ready and technologically advanced force that the Alliance can quickly deploy wherever needed. However, the NRF has experienced some difficulties acquiring the capabilities to meet its vision. To truly become capable of performing missions on continental Europe, or even out of area, the NRF could leverage Japan’s technical expertise and know-how across the whole spectrum of possible operations.



Top and bottom: members of the NRF take part in a demonstration exercise in Turkey.

Middle: Lithuanian special operations unit gets ready for standby in the NRF.

Source: *Life.com, Lithuanian Ministry of National Defense*



## Limited Defense and Technical Cooperation Programs

Although, Japan maintains self-imposed constraints on arms exports, the current leadership is considering a relaxation of the export ban which opens prospects for multinational defense technology projects. Yet, even with the stringent prohibitions, Japan has successfully sought and attained exceptions in the past. These exceptions have related to U.S. - Japan co-development programs associated with missile defense.

If the ban remains in place, political leaders in Tokyo could seek further exceptions for special, limited programs with NATO, particularly in niche areas of emerging warfare where Japan and Europe's technical capabilities could create powerful synergies. For example, in the area of military and defense cybersecurity, the potential solutions to the emerging challenges will likely be found in either the commercial sector, or in government backed research centers. With common interests, and a shared sense of where potential threats will emanate, Japan and NATO could launch a limited defense technical cooperation initiative that would be of mutual benefit.

The primary goal of a defense technical cooperation agreement in a specific area is, of course, to better the chances of both parties of finding technological solutions to the challenge. However, it may also be an embedded objective that success on a limited and focused area of joint development could open the door to broader defense industrial relations and more robust research and development efforts. Such an outcome would surely heighten the interest of Brussels in closer cooperation with Japan, and could also benefit the U.S. - Japan alliance if exceptions made in the context of Japan - NATO create even more opportunities for U.S. - Japan cooperation. The range of opportunities could be further expanded if the Three Principles were to be revised as part of the new National Defense Program Guidelines at the end of 2010. In the long term, bolstering Japan's defense-industrial capacity could sharpen the SDF's technological edge and enhance adoption of advanced platforms.

## Strategic Deterrence

Japan and NATO share concerns regarding the proliferation of nuclear weapons, other WMDs, and their means of delivery. Further, Japan and NATO's non-nuclear members also share interest in surviving and thriving in a world where the potential for a WMD attack is increasing, not shrinking, and their own deterrent capability is based on alliance relationships with nuclear armed allies.

Japan and NATO could launch an initiative aimed at strengthening strategic deterrence through the means of strengthening extended deterrence. Such an initiative may become all the more salient as the United States completes its own Nuclear Posture Review, as well as pursues strategic arms reductions with Moscow. Steps the United States takes with respect to these efforts are contingent

upon a nuclear umbrella that remains intact. This is further contingent upon Japan and NATO's non-nuclear states having faith and confidence in that very umbrella.

At its initial stage, an initiative aimed at strengthening strategic deterrence might narrowly focus on the modalities and technical issues associated with how extended deterrence moves from the theoretical to the operational. Such a focus would help to directly address concerns that came to the fore in Tokyo recently. Over time, however, an initiative to strengthen strategic deterrence could lead the parties concerned to other forms of collaboration and even practical cooperation. With the number of nuclear states growing, the range of delivery systems expanding, and the global network of proliferators adding non-state entities to the mix, it may be the case that innovative approaches to strategic deterrence will be needed. Facing these concerns, Japan, NATO, and the United States could endeavor to create faithful and reliable global strategic deterrence strategies.

### **A New Arctic Security Initiative**

A potential antidote to a general lack of enthusiasm in capitals over expanded Japan - NATO ties, absent a clear and present common threat, may come in the form of a creative, unique, and forward-looking flagship security initiative. We believe that Japan and NATO could undertake a fairly bold initiative related to the Arctic. A Joint Arctic Security Initiative would be a strong statement that the Japan - NATO partnership is looking to future, and is orienting collaboration to address the unique emerging security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Such an initiative could involve joint study of the national security ramifications of Arctic ice melt. Climate change promises to melt perennial ice cover in the Arctic to sufficiently allow regular shipping transit through the waters north of Canada, creating a new path between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. These developments have important security implications for all countries with interests in the Arctic Ocean, including Japan, NATO countries, and the United States.

At first glance, unencumbered use of the Northwest Passage will generate increased maritime security requirements for Japan and NATO. Arctic and near-Arctic nations will have increased potential for competition over natural resources, such as hydrocarbon reserves and fisheries, which become accessible as the ice cover shrinks. Use of the Northwest Passage will potentially generate tension as nations strive to maintain their territorial integrity (the indeterminate or disputed national boundaries in the region will further complicate these issues).



## Conclusion

The Japan - NATO relationship holds greater potential than has been realized to date. However, this study reveals that enhanced cooperation can be achieved in a manner that ensures both mutual responsibility and mutual benefit. But enhanced cooperation will not necessarily emerge through a laissez-faire approach. There are indeed opportunities to strengthen Japan - NATO ties, but opportunities are just that – and do not fully materialize into concrete cooperation unless they are seized and acted upon. Political leaders in Tokyo, Brussels, and Washington can choose to take the initiative to seek enhanced ties, and to guide the progress of the developing relations with a thoughtful strategic vision.

Obstacles to closer Japan - NATO ties are real. As this study articulates, Japan, NATO, and the United States could each balk at the various challenges ranging from Japan's constitutional limitations to NATO's ambivalence toward more out of area operations. But this study also suggests the obstacles can be navigated, and a pragmatic approach to enhanced cooperation remains within reach. We are convinced that the benefits for all parties concerned far outweigh the costs in seeking the path toward a stronger, closer Japan - NATO relationship.

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