

Trilateral Maritime Security Partnership for Broad Maritime Security Coalition

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Rising Importance of Sea Lanes Today

Sea Lanes Vital for Asia-Pacific Regional Security

Under the current security situation, there are notable instability factors that threaten Asia-Pacific regional security. Such factors can be classified into two major categories: conventional and non-conventional.

The first conventional factor is the confrontational structures that remain from the Cold War era, such as those on the Korean Peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait, still casting the shadows of instability, uncertainty, and unpredictability in the region. The second factor is the rapid build-up of Chinese military power, primarily in their naval and air forces, which have the potential of disrupting the regional balance of military power. The third factor involves territorial, religious, and ethnic disputes founded on historical controversies. In particular, territorial disputes over islands have the potential to develop into armed clashes. The fourth factor is the confrontational structures built on marine interests, which are closely related to the territorial disputes over islands. All of these factors are likely to seriously affect the security and stability of the region as a whole, as they can obstruct the protection of sea lanes.

Non-conventional factors, on the other hand, are those new factors that became apparent after the end of the Cold War. The first non-conventional factor is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles from Northeast Asia to Pakistan and other regions through regional sea lanes. The second factor is an increase in terrorist activities such as bomb

attacks mainly targeting nations with weaker governance and ungoverned maritime areas, due to the fact that international terrorist groups strengthened ties with other relevant groups inside and outside of the region. This became especially apparent after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The third factor is the trend of globalization and coalescence of unlawful activities throughout the world's oceans, such as piracy, and narcotics and human trafficking. The fourth factor, from a long-term perspective, is China's ambition to secure maritime hegemony, as demonstrated in its efforts to build a "string of pearls" – a series of strategic and military bases along major sea lanes connecting the Middle East and Northeast Asia, to confront existing maritime powers, such as the United States, as well as India and Japan.

Upon examining these instability factors, we find some common key ideas; among them, the security of sea lanes is the most important issue for the stabilization of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

Importance of Multilateral Cooperation for the Security of Sea Lanes

Needless to say, the security of sea lanes is also important to the region's economy. The regional economy, including Japan, has developed with, and is largely dependent on, maritime transportation using secure sea lanes. Particularly, oil shipments, which are essential to Japan's economy, are largely dependent on safe transport from the Middle East by way of wide international sea lanes connecting the Indian Ocean, Malacca-Singapore Strait, South China Sea and East China Sea. These sea lanes are literally the lifelines of the region. The Malacca-Singapore Strait is in fact the lifeline of Northeast Asia, making it the Achilles' tendon in the world economy. Annually, about 50,000 ships, more than a quarter of the world's maritime

cargo shipments and about one half of the entire trade volumes of Japan, China, and South Korea navigate through this strait. Considering only the tanker shipments, about 50 percent of the world's tankers, and about 85 percent of oil tankers navigating from the Middle East to Northeast Asia pass through the Malacca-Singapore Strait.

Ensuring the security of sea lanes in the Asia-Pacific region is certainly important for regional economics and security, but the importance of sea lanes does not end in a single region. As India's economy rapidly grows, and as Australia increases its output of commodities such as uranium, coal, natural gas, iron ore, and meat to Northeast Asia, the Asia-Pacific region, the Indian Ocean region, and the Oceania South Pacific region increasingly recognize the importance of one "broad sea lane", which is the lifeline of the unified region extending far beyond the Asia-Pacific region.

Among major sea lanes adjacent to Japan, those in Oceania South Pacific and the East Pacific are relatively stable, with no significant threats. In these regions, the United States maintains overwhelming influence through its strongholds in Hawaii, Guam, and the West Coast of the United States. The presence of other major democratic maritime power allies, such as Australia and Canada, also ensures the stability of these sea lanes. If there is any potential threat in these regions, it is the possibility of an aggressive Chinese military advance toward the Pacific Ocean as it continues to rise as a major power. In this regard, the alliance among the major Pacific democratic maritime powers of Japan, Australia, and Canada, with the world's largest and strongest maritime power, the United States, at the center, will be instrumental in ensuring the security of sea lanes in this pan-Pacific region.

In particular, the U.S.-Australia alliance will have a special significance, since Australia is located in such a strategic position in the Asia-Pacific region, and is the country required to

maintain strong relationships with Asian nations, including Japan, not only to secure sea lanes, but also for overall regional security. Considering recent developments in international economics and security, Australia is one of the most important and irreplaceable allies in “expanded Asia” extending from north to south.

In terms of the context described above, India is one of the most important countries in “expanded Asia” extending from East to West. Therefore, trilateral maritime security cooperation among Japan, India, and the United States may be as important as cooperation among Japan, Australia, and United States for securing vital sea lanes.

The Indian Ocean region used to receive relatively little attention from Asia-Pacific countries both in terms of economics and security. Recently, however, there is a growing recognition of the importance of the Northern Indian Ocean region in light of the growing relationships between East Asian and South Asian countries.

The country with the most influence in the Northern Indian Ocean region is India. India has a population over one billion people, which is the world’s second largest after China. With a variety of ethnic groups with different religions, languages, and cultures, it is the world’s biggest democratic country with free multi-party elections. Moreover, India shares many basic values and systems with Japan and other major developed countries, such as freedom, democracy, and a market economy.

Promoting economic liberalization and reform since the 1990s, India has had a strong growth rate driven by the development of its IT technologies and industries. Supported by its robust economic growth, India is exercising an active and multi-faceted diplomacy, which is enhancing their presence in the international community.

However, the land route connecting the Northern Indian Ocean region and the Asia-Pacific region is not fully developed yet, inevitably increasing the dependence on the vast sea lanes connecting the two regions. Moreover, in both the Northern Indian Ocean and the Asia-Pacific regions, maritime activities related to marine resources such as fisheries and ocean bottom resource extraction is a key for their future development. Because of these factors, any disturbances or disruptions of these sea lanes will likely have severe adverse effects on the economy and security of these regions.

U.S.-Japan Alliance and Japan-India-U.S. Trilateral Relations

The U.S.-Japan alliance is fundamentally a maritime alliance in the past, present, and foreseeable future. However, it is not possible for either the United States alone, or the U.S.-Japan alliance alone to secure entire sea lanes. It is evident then that both Japan and the United States needs to cooperate with other democratic maritime powers to pursue a new framework to secure sea lanes. For this, India is expected to take a more important role, while the security relationship among Japan, India, and the United States is expected to strengthen further, formulating the foundation for the three countries to jointly cooperate and share the burden for a new framework.

Japan-US Alliance as a Pillar

Since World War II, the United States has taken the vital role as the “keystone” in regional and global security.

Since the end of the Cold War, and especially after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the United States exhausted great energy responding to new dangers such as international confrontations on religious and ethnic grounds, unrelenting activities by international terrorist groups, and the links between Islamic radical groups and their sponsors. Especially important are the actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the massive dispatch of armed forces have not made any visible progress, and their response against Iran and North Korea, where the leaders half openly pursue the development of nuclear weapons. Another vital issue for the United States is how to build a constructive relationship with China, which has the potential to develop into a powerful rival in the future.

In order to properly address these complicated and serious issues, the United States can no longer resort to the simple response of “the prestige of only one superpower.” It needs to build a multilateral coalition more than ever. Thus, the United States is trying to resolve the issues discussed above using the United Nations and other regional frameworks such as the Six Party Talks. In reality, however, it is not so easy to solve such issues and the United States needs to prepare purely military and semi-military options. Therefore, the United States is seeking to develop multilateral coalitions even during peacetime (phase zero) in many areas in order to respond against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. At the same time, the United States is promoting the transformation of its military forces in order to enable proper execution of these measures. In particular, the United States strongly not only wants to strengthen existing alliances, but also seeks to build nation-to-nation coalitions with friendly nations or multilateral forces in order to improve its global responsiveness and mobility.

Given such a situation, U.S. forces consider Japan to be at the core of its new military strategy in Asia and plan to strengthen the position of the U.S. forces in Japan as by literally designating their bases as “core military bases.” Needless to say, Japan is a sovereign nation, and although the alliance with the United States is to be maintained regardless, it will be the subjective decision of Japan whether the positioning of U.S. bases and U.S. forces in Japan is appropriate for the situation and interests of Japan. There is a growing recognition in both Japan and United States that the U.S.-Japan alliance should be deepened, extended, and converted to raise more mutuality in the alliance to conform to a new international environment.

In this regard, Japan and the United States need to strengthen the combined operation of the alliance from both the global and regional perspective. Even today, Japan has cooperated in regional and global operations, including: the development of a framework for cooperation with U.S. forces under the “Law Concerning Measures to Ensure Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan,” international cooperative activities under the “Special Measures Law for Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq,” the “New Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law,” and Proliferation Security Initiative activities. These kinds of activities will likely increase in importance in the future.

The fight against international terrorism, on the other hand, requires more comprehensive measures for much longer periods of time. As international terrorist groups will likely develop more complex and sophisticated tactics, there will be greater opportunity to use international cooperation to prevent terrorist attacks. An analysis of terrorist activities indicates greater association and linkage between international terrorist groups and existing terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia. This means that there will be a greater need to develop regional maritime

security cooperation with the aim to defend sea lanes in order to respond against terrorist attacks and other unlawful activities in the Malacca-Singapore Strait and Southeast Asian seas.

Furthermore, if the situation calls for it, there will be increased opportunities to engage in global joint actions in the form of multilateral, coalition based forces on missions mandated by UN resolutions or regional agreements, as in the case of OEF-MIO, in which Japan resumes support for the maritime interdiction operation conducted by the multilateral naval coalition in the Northwest Indian Ocean. In such a situation, Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force is expected to take a more responsible and substantial role in cooperative international actions with the U.S. Navy. As seen here, the defense of sea lanes will have greater weight in the future of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Japan-India-U.S. Trilateral Maritime Security Partnership

The Indian Ocean region is a strategically important location with geo-political importance as a corridor connecting the Asia-Pacific region with the Middle East and Europe, while forming the majority of the "Arc of Instability," an expression that appeared first in the U.S. Quadrennial Defense Review published immediately following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. It is a region full of security concerns where bases are provided for international terrorist groups' activities, as well as being the stage for state-to-state and domestic confrontations.

Considering these factors, the vast sea lanes connecting the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean should be recognized as a major artery for economics and security, which lies in the "Arc of Inseparability," rather than the "Arc of Instability." In other words, they create an

inseparable and integrated region where coordination and cooperation efforts connect the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.

India is actively striving to strengthen its bilateral relations with the United States, while the United States is also promoting the expansion of its involvement in India in step with the economic growth of India, thus leading to an increasingly stronger, more interactive relationship in various fields.

The U.S.-India joint declaration, which was made when then-Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee visited the United States in November 2001, articulated a strong desire for improvement in future bilateral relations. In January 2004, the two countries announced that they had agreed to expand cooperation in three areas – civil nuclear activities, space programs, and high-technology trade – with the aim to form a strategic partnership between the two countries. In July 2005, Indian Prime Minister Singh visited the United States and made a joint statement with U.S. President Bush that the relationship between the two countries would transform into a global partnership, through which they will cooperate in the field of space exploration, nuclear energy for civilian applications, and military and non-military technologies. Subsequently in March 2006, President Bush, in turn, made the first visit to India by a U.S. president in six years and agreed with Prime Minister Singh to strategically strengthen bilateral relations.

As for the U.S.-India relationship in the security field, in July 2005, Indian Defense Minister Mukherjee and then-U.S. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld signed a 10-year military agreement – the New Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship – based on the recognition that the U.S.-India defense relationship is an important pillar in the mutually beneficial yet dynamic relations between the two countries. Furthermore, in March 2006, the

U.S. Department of Defense announced its intention to enhance cooperation with India in security issues, including maritime security. India and the United States have since increased military exchanges, including joint military exercises.

For the Japan-India- bilateral security relationship, in August 2007, Japan's former Prime Minister Abe and India's Prime Minister Singh held the Japan-India Summit and agreed to recognize that "a strong India benefits Japan, and a strong Japan is benefits India." The Japanese side welcomed the emergence of India as a major power, and emphasized that it wishes provide support for India's further economic development, and to promote more mutual exchange efforts at every level.

Moreover, former Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan and India should address, in cooperation with other countries, measures to ensure the security of sea lanes as two major maritime powers and democratic countries that share basic values and interests. In his speech of "the exchange between two oceans" delivered at the Indian parliament, he reflected upon the long history of ties between Japan and India, and stated that the newly emerging "expanded Asia," which connects East Asia and South Asia through the exchange between the "two great oceans" can grow into an open and transparent network that covers the entire Pacific Ocean region including the United States and Australia.

Current Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda must entirely and actively continue this basic Asian diplomacy policy launched by former-Prime Minister Abe. As stated here, the trilateral relationship among Japan, India and the United States is gradually and steadily developing. In the security field, the three countries have attempted to nurture trust by steadily increasing the number of bilateral military exercises between Japan and India, and India and the United States.

In September 2007, the three countries undertook a multilateral naval exercise in the Bay of Bengal, with other major like-minded regional maritime powers Australia and Singapore.

In the end, we can predict that the Japan-India-U.S. relationship is likely to become a “Trilateral Maritime Security Partnership.”

Maritime Security Coalition

A Japan-India-U.S. Trilateral Maritime Security Partnership should take responsibilities appropriate to their national power as the major responsible stakeholders of a maritime security coalition in “Expanded Asia.” Alongside other democratic maritime powers, the security partnership must protect the security of sea lanes in “East-West Expanded Asia,” while unifying the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, all as a major part of the “broad sea lane” initiative. Furthermore, it is necessary for this trilateral partnership to collaborate with the Japan-U.S.-Australia maritime “semi-alliance” in order to realize the “Broad Maritime Security Coalition,” embracing Oceania and South Pacific region in the future.

Democratic Maritime Powers Group

The democratic maritime powers group should strengthen their relationship as a “Maritime Security Coalition” based on three common features – democracy, maritime power, and possession of modernized militaries.

In terms of the first feature – democracy – their universal interest and benefit would be to attempt the dissemination and solidification of the concepts and values common to the group.

Since the entire region inevitably involves countries with different traditions and governance systems, to ask everybody's cooperation in maintaining security will be a big challenge. In addition, the region itself has fundamental differences in their geopolitical, environmental, historical, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, although they share democratic values. Most national concepts are not entirely the same and there are some differences in their political system.

However, the democratic maritime powers group undoubtedly shares basic values as democratic nations, and their shared ideological fight for democracy over the last 60 years after the end of the World War II clearly demonstrates the presence of such common concepts.

The second feature of – maritime power – indicates the need to maintain a properly managed maritime freedom for the countries' existence and prosperity. The group needs to recognize that the security of the "broad sea lane" is something directly related to China's strategic and militarily aggressive advancement through its "string of pearls" in the Indian Ocean, disputed areas in the South and East China Seas, and the vast Western Pacific Ocean. Considering these factors, ensuring maritime security and the management of marine interests will become important for the group as a way to effectively deter the aggressive and unlawful advancement of China in the "Broad Sea Lane."

On the other hand, finding common interests with countries in the region, including China, in terms of maintaining a regional maritime order is possible. This is because maintaining regional maritime order, such as preventing indiscriminate terrorist attacks including maritime terrorism or piracy, or drug/human trafficking, is in the interests of all the countries and people in the region. There is therefore no reason that they ought to refuse to cooperate in such cases.

Finally, in terms of the third feature – modernized militaries – the region has some countries with many islands and broad areas that need to be patrolled, yet they don't have adequate maritime military and police forces to accomplish the task. Therefore, providing capacity building and other support activities acceptable to these countries will be the common responsibility of the group. In this sense, it is noteworthy that Japan, India and the United States swiftly sent troops for relief, recovery, and support activities at the time of 2005 tsunami and that their efforts were welcomed by local governments and people.

Maritime Security Coalition

Here the “Maritime Security Coalition” is defined as the “broader regional nation-to-nation coalition with the objective to maintain and secure safe and free use of oceans during peace time.” This kind of coalition does not necessarily require an international agreement or convention, but can simply be a multinational network based on mutual confidence with common values.

Therefore, it is basically possible to enter into a coalition relationship with any coastal country as long as they share common objectives. In building such a global or broader regional maritime coalition, each member nation would be required to take a responsible role proportionate to its ability. How to take responsibility may differ from a country to a country, and each country can decide on what they can contribute within their intention and capabilities.

One precondition for accession to such a maritime security coalition will be whether a nation can share three basic marine interests with other countries: 1) to cooperate in maintaining the security of the region during peace time as well as in an emergency or crisis (Existence); 2)

to cooperate and prosper together through commerce and trade as well as marine resource development (Prosperity); and 3) to sincerely pursue the conservation and development of the various benefits the seas can provide in terms of environmental protection and resource control (Value).

In short, the basic requirement to join the coalition is that a nation has no severe dispute over marine interests or territories, economic conflicts, or objections toward environmental conservation or the development of marine resources. Even if there is a seed of dispute, to build a coalition among nations that allows for a fair and democratic way of solving disputes is essential for maintaining the coalition. More importantly, the coalition needs to be action-oriented, meaning that each participant must be in service to the others, which is a democratic value.

Japan, India, and the United States each hold a very positive and eager will to be a responsible stakeholder in a “Maritime Security Coalition” in the “East-West Expanded Asia.” In Japan, the National Defense Program Guideline revised in December 2004 defined the role of defense power as one who “actively and subjectively addresses the improvement of the international security environment,” and who is able to provide a “effective response toward new threats and a variety of situations,” and is “prepared against serious invasion situations.” Based on these guidelines, the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) is currently striding toward establishing advanced integration, cooperation, and association with other regional democratic maritime powers such as the United States and India, taking into account the security of sea lanes, while developing strategies promoting the defense buildup for of the MSDF.

As for the United States, Admiral Roughhead, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) announced in October 2007, a “Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower”, which is the

first unified maritime strategy developed integrally among the three maritime forces of the United States – its Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. In his announcement, he stressed the need to promote international integration, cooperation, and association as well as the unification of the three maritime forces of the United States, leading to the “Global Maritime Partnership” initiative that would result in the “1000 Ship Navy” initiative proposed by former CNO, Admiral Mullen.

It should be noted that the Indian Naval Commander Mehta stated in January 2008 that India should take a leading role in building a cooperative framework in the region. He further indicated that there would be an increasing need to coordinate and cooperate with relevant countries in the maritime military domain for the security of sea lanes in the Indian Ocean, while expressing strong concerns about the “string of pearls” that China has been developing, including its activities at the Gwadar Port in Pakistan.

Broad Maritime Security Coalition

Taking the arguments above into consideration, it will be best to create a coalition among U.S. allies and friends (in other words, among democratic maritime countries that share the same three characteristics of existence, prosperity, and values), then add regional democratic maritime powers that can fulfill these three indicator conditions and the action principle of “service to others,” and eventually expand to include other nations.

For the moment, a “Maritime Security Coalition” led by the Japan-India-United States trilateral maritime security partnership can build a core for such “Broad Maritime Security Coalition” for the security of sea lanes in the Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific region, a major part

of the “Broad Sea Lane.” On the other hand, cooperation with other parts of the “broad sea lane”, i.e. Oceania and South Pacific region, will be undertaken by the Japan-United States-Australia “Maritime Semi-Alliance.” It is quite likely that other democratic maritime powers such as Singapore will be expected to collaborate with this “Maritime Semi-Alliance.”

Although security collaboration between India and Australia is said to be unlikely for the moment, it will not be difficult for such stakeholder countries to make efforts for the security of sea lanes in each relevant region. This can be achieved through the “Maritime Security Coalition” such as the one between Japan-India-United States and Japan-United States-Australia, with the goal to unify and develop a wider regional coalition in the “broad sea lane” sometime in the future.

For the “Broad Maritime Security Coalition”, it is important to build a global coalition with other global democratic maritime powers. It is certainly possible to build a “Global Maritime Security Coalition” that is founded on freedom and democracy, which shares the common interests of “pursuit of existence, prosperity, and values,” through a voluntary coalition centered around the United States in the regions adjacent to broadly unified sea lanes. Examples of such coalitions already exist with the United States with Canada in East Pacific region, Turkey, France and Italy in the Mediterranean region, the UK in the Northern Atlantic region, and with Germany and others in Europe.

In the case of Japan, the initiative of the “Broad Maritime Security Coalition” coincides with the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” proposed by former Foreign Minister Aso, and the “coalition of nations based on common values” stated by former Prime Minister Abe. Current Prime Minister Fukuda promised to continue Abe’s concept in his policy of “Synergy with Japan-U.S. Alliance and Diplomacy toward Asia.”

Challenge of Security Cooperation in the Coastal Sea Lanes

Finally, one important element of the “Global or Regional Maritime Security Coalition” is how to ensure the security of sea lanes particularly at the converging points of sea lanes on the coasts, even when a coalition can be formed as discussed above. As these regions are the stages of historic confrontations over territories and marine interests of coastal nations, as demonstrated in the relationships between Japan, China, Korea, and Russia, it will be a difficult task to form a cooperative system.

For example, it will not be easy to build a coalition system in Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, since their coastal sea lanes involve many seeds of confrontation. In the Arctic Ocean, Russia recently unilaterally declared its interest in the Arctic area motivated by the abundant ocean floor resources, as well as the increased possibility of year-round navigation due to global warming. In the East China Sea and South China Sea, China has coerced and aggressively advanced, which has led to the rise of confrontations over territories and marine interests. For Japan, India, and the United States, coordination with three coastal countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore at the coasts of the Malacca-Singapore Strait will be the most important one of all.

In addition, there are other areas that have similar and complicated problems, such as the Persian Gulf, East African coasts, Eastern Mediterranean areas, and the Arabian Peninsula and its coasts, where religious confrontations centered on Islam remain, conflicts over oil rights and concessions are rampant, and international terrorism and piracy are a major threat. However, it is possible to develop opportunities to resolve these issues in the future if we are to aim for the

Regional Maritime Security Coalition among relevant coastal countries. In this sense, it is essential to realize and form a Regional Maritime Security Coalition in the “oceans” first. During the process of developing such a coalition, there will be many opportunities to develop mutual confidence, even between countries with disputes, and to cooperate with each other to attain the common goal.

Conclusion

The Japan-India-United States Trilateral Maritime Security Partnership should be developed into a “Maritime Security Coalition”, in order to secure the stability of the Indian Ocean region and Asia Pacific region in terms of “East-West Expanded Asia.” In addition, it is necessary to develop collaboration with the “maritime semi-alliance” among Japan, the United States, and Australia in order to further strengthen security cooperation in the “broad sea lane” that embraces Oceania and the South Pacific. Furthermore, it is necessary to realize the “Broad Maritime Security Coalition”, in cooperation with other democratic maritime powers in the region, such as Singapore. Ultimately, there should be a “Global Maritime Security Coalition,” which involves a democratic maritime powers group of adjacent regions, such as Canada, Turkey, moderate Middle East countries, and European countries, with the United States as the center, gathering the democratic maritime powers of the world. Japan, India, and the United States can become the main actors of this global coalition and take responsibilities according to each nation’s power and national situation.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to take every opportunity and every channel of diplomacy and exchange to connect regional countries, including direct intergovernmental dialogues to

realize all of the above. Moreover, it is also important to continue existing regional security talks such as ARF (ASEAN Region Forum), existing naval dialogue frameworks such as ISS (International Sea Power Symposium) and WPNS (Western Pacific Naval Symposium), and the many joint dialogues between private and public sectors, such as those involving major maritime think tanks. Each government must actively use the outcome of these forums, and make efforts, at every possible opportunity, to develop mutual confidence between navies or other maritime forces of regional countries.