

Conference Report

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Expert Round Table

4th Japanese-German Dialogue on Security: Outlining future cooperation in light of the political declaration between Japan and NATO

Berlin, September 6, 2013

On Friday, September 6, 2013 the Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB), the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Center for the Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (CPDNP) invited to the 4th Japanese-German Dialogue on Security. It broached the issue of Japan-NATO cooperation, which gained momentum after both sides signed the first joint political declaration in April this year. The ultimate aim of the conference was to identify areas of German-Japanese security relations within the framework of the newly established Japan-NATO cooperation. As in the previous years, the conference again brought together the expertise of academics and practitioners, such as diplomats, government officials and NGO-representatives, from Japan and Germany to discuss this highly significant issue in a cooperative and constructive manner.

The conference started with opening remarks by Dr. Friederike Bosse, Secretary General of the Japanese-German Center Berlin and by His Excellency Nakane Takeshi, Japan's Ambassador to Germany. Both speakers emphasized the need of a deeper cooperation between Japan and the NATO based on shared values. Ambassador Nakane particularly pointed out that democracy is the basis for cooperation of the NATO members and Japan and he especially emphasized that democratic values are major issues for Japan's identity. Together with NATO, Japan now seeks to promote these values internationally and aims at creating a more peaceful and therefore more secure world. In this context Ambassador Nakane also countered apprehensions that Japan's foreign policy could become more

nationalistic under the leadership of Prime Minister Abe Shinzō. Although there are severe problems between Japan and China that eventually escalated in the years 2010 to 2012, for Japan and his Prime Minister the relations to China remain one of the most significant relations that should not be violated by the upcoming conflicts.

After these opening remarks the conference continued with two keynote speeches by Michael Gaul from the Emerging Security Challenges Division of NATO in Brussels and His Excellency Ambassador Sakaba Mitsuo, Representative of the Government of Japan to NATO in Brussels.

First, Michael Gaul formulated the ultimate aim of the close cooperation between Japan and NATO to establish a broad network that cooperates on security-related issues. Both regions - the Transatlantic as well as the Asia-Pacific region - are essential for global security. Therefore, it is an outstanding matter to establish cooperative security relations between the important political actors in both regions. As Ambassador Nakane did in his opening remarks, Mr. Gaul also underlined the significance of shared political values between Japan and NATO member states. Furthermore, both sides also face the same challenges, so the cooperation between Japan and the NATO could be defined as a natural partnership. This enhanced security cooperation does, however, not mean that NATO aims at military presence in the Asia-Pacific region or in East Asia, respectively. It is rather important to establish a trustful partnership between NATO and Japan, which is NATO's longest standing global partner. Shared operations on the Balkan, the Gulf of Aden and first and foremost Afghanistan could stand as examples for the kind of cooperation Japan and NATO could strengthen in the future. Especially new security threats that do not primarily have a military solution, such as terrorism, cyber-attacks and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) can provide a basis for deepened cooperation and joint future projects.

After Mr. Gaul's speech, Ambassador Sakaba Mitsuo also put focus on the interlinked security challenges both sides are facing, such as for example WMD in North Korea, which although located in East Asia reach beyond the East Asian region's borders. He emphasized Japan's willingness to increasingly contribute to global security, which is so far almost solely provided by NATO. As an example for Japanese engagement in global security related operations, Ambassador Sakaba pointed at successful missions, such as in Afghanistan and the anti-piracy mission in Somalia. Other security concerns include the situation on the Korean Peninsula as well as the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. As a next step to deepen the cooperation, NATO and Japan will organise a symposium in Tokyo, in which they will establish a joint study group on humanitarian assistance.

After these keynote speeches the first of three sessions started. Session I dealt with the important topic of 'Nuclear deterrence in the 21st century and next steps in nuclear arms control'. The session was chaired by Gregor Enste, Heinrich Böll Foundation. The speakers of this panel were Professor Abe Nobuyasu from the Center for the Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Tokyo and Dr. Oliver Meier from the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin. Professor Abe started with a short introduction to the broader global security environment with a special focus on

the East Asian region. He reminded the audience that US President Barack Obama addressed a global nuclear disarmament initiative, but that Russia rebuffed the offer. Furthermore, in East Asia the threats of North Korea and China are imminent, especially against the background of budgetary difficulties in most NATO member states as well as in Japan. These difficulties do have severe consequences for the security of the regions, since they lead to austerity measures that also include the defence budgets. Nonetheless, Professor Abe also stated that most security-related concerns in East Asia are slightly overrated. Although China might catch up with the US economically by 2030, the military superiority of the US will remain also beyond this point. By showing very enlightening figures of global defence and military spending he also put fears about an arms competition in the East Asian region into perspective and emphasized that especially China is not necessarily a military threat to Japan or any of the NATO members. Nevertheless, it is a good decision to keep the Ballistic Missile Defence programme just in case of unforeseen escalations of the numerous political conflicts in the region.

In the subsequent speech Dr. Meier took a slightly more critical position on the agreed NATO-Japan cooperation. He firstly pointed at the prospects of nuclear disarmament. Dr. Meier emphasized that these prospects have worsened in the last three years, especially due to the negative developments in the Middle East Region. Particularly the situation in Iran and the rather uncontrolled WMD in Syria should be regarded as severe threats to the global security. Against this backdrop, Dr. Meier argues, there is little space for practical cooperation between Japan and NATO regarding global arms control. He pointed out two major problems for joint actions of NATO and Japan: First, NATO cannot be considered an independent actor, but is rather fragmented into its individual member states; second, according to Dr. Meier there appears to be a significant lack of common interests, since NATO is primarily aiming at Russia and Iran as the main security threats, while Japan is rather concentrating on China and North Korea. Nonetheless the cooperation could be improved, especially by emphasizing the cooperation between Japan and Germany in particular. Both countries could work together effectively as so-called middle powers. Both countries should continue on following the path of pushing forward multilateral institutions on arms control.

The second session on 'How can we ensure that missile defence plans do not contravene nuclear arms control efforts?' was led by Professor Abe Nobuyasu as the chair. In this session Professor Götz Neuneck from the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, Hamburg and Dr. Tsuruoka Michito from the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), Ministry of Defense and from the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) in London tried to answer this question. Professor Neuneck made the start with a detailed presentation. He offered many technical details on the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) programmes in Europe and East Asia, which led him to the conviction that severe technical problems exist, especially regarding radar systems. He concluded, taking all aspects into consideration, all the programmes must be considered to be highly ambivalent. On the one hand, the BMD could at least limit the damage in case of missile attacks and thus ensure stability. However, even in this rather positive appraisal of the BMD programmes it must be considered that such programmes always have a regional focus. A missile shield with global anti-ballistic aims is for technical reasons not feasible. On the other hand the development of BMD could also trigger an arms

race and thus block global disarmament measures. It is therefore important to handle the question of an enlarged BMD programme in Europe and East Asia carefully. It is much more important to establish enhanced cooperation as well as confidence building measures and to put threat assessments into perspective. According to Professor Neuneck, most of those threat assessments are actually not as serious as they may seem, since they are very often used by political actors to negotiate a higher budget for defence organisations.

In the following presentation Dr. Tsuruoka Michito compared the situations of BMD programmes in Asia and Europe. Dr. Tsuruoka first pointed at similarities and differences between Asia and Europe, such as the central significance of the US in both regions as well as at BMD programmes as a central part of a regional deterrence architecture; and at the existence of large regional opponents, namely Russia in Europe and China in Asia. There, however, also occur very considerable differences between both regions that need to be taken into consideration. While in East Asia exists a consensus among the US and its allies that North Korea poses a severe threat to the region, in Europe exist differing views on whether or not Iran does pose an imminent threat to Europe's security. Paradoxically, the second main difference is that despite the consensus on the threat perception East Asia is strongly fragmented by bilateral BMD cooperation, while despite the disagreement on the threat perception Europe is dominated by multilateralism. Nonetheless Dr. Tsuruoka concludes his speech with the assessment that there are important links between the BMD programmes in Europe and Asia that enable both regions to effectively cooperate on that matter.

The third and last session of this conference saw presentations by Vice-Admiral (ret.) Kaneda Hideaki, Director of the Okazaki Institute in Tokyo, Dr. Michael Paul from the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin and Professor Ueta Takako from the International Christian University in Tokyo on the topic: 'Maritime security by calming the eastern seas'. The session started with Vice-Admiral Kaneda's presentation. He offered a detailed chronology of the two most significant territorial disputes in East Asia, namely the disputes in the South China Sea and in the East China Sea and their respective strategic importance. While acknowledging the importance of the conflicts, Vice-Admiral Kaneda also presented possible measures to ease these conflicts. He emphasized that China currently has no intention to escalate any of the two conflicts into actual military confrontation, but rather uses a push-pull tactic against Japan in the East China Sea. This, however, enables Japan to take measures for easing the conflict, such as making efforts to build confidence between the conflicting parties. This could be done, for example, by establishing effective communication mechanisms.

In the second presentation Dr. Paul talked about NATO's involvement in the territorial disputes. He highlighted that Europe should follow the Obama administration's strategic 'pivot to Asia', for example by an enhanced NATO-Japan partnership. Yet, this might carry risks for NATO, since it could be involved in political and military crises in East Asia, especially in the territorial dispute between Japan and China regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islets. In this context Dr. Paul stressed the point that the cooperation between NATO and Japan should therefore be a partnership of shared perceptions and approaches rather than the establishment of a real practical cooperation. However, based on this

political partnership NATO could help to reduce distrust in the Asia Pacific region and in doing so, reducing the likelihood of severe conflicts in the region. Since China's success is according to Dr. Paul based on a stable world order and stable trade relations, there is hope that a mixture of counterbalance measures against China together with increasing dialogue could significantly ease the occurring conflicts in the region.

In the last presentation of the day Professor Ueta deepened this aspect. She underlined that while the respective approaches of China and Russia regarding the acceptance of global governance institutions are turned upside-down – China accepts economic approaches and Russia accepts security measures – international conflict avoidance measures are important in the East Asian region. The integration of China in security related organizations and mechanisms would be one of those measures. Germany and NATO could for example play a decisive role in internationalizing the Chinese People's Liberation Army and in establishing permanent security dialogues in East Asia that could be inspired by existing European institutions like the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). By establishing those institutions and communication networks, NATO and Japan could jointly contribute to a more stable and more secure political environment in the East Asian region.

The conference offered very distinguished views on constraints and opportunities of future NATO-Japan and Japan-German relations and their future impacts on the global and regional security environment. However, while most presenters offered very optimistic views on the future of the cooperation, the limits and constraints also became obvious in this conference.