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Session IV: The Future of NATO: Cooperation and its Limits

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NATO and Japan: A View from Tokyo

Introduction

The relationship between NATO and Japan has developed steadily in the past several years. While the speed of the development may not be as fast as expected by some enthusiastic advocates of this relationship, the current level of cooperation is remarkable when compared with that of as recent as five years ago. Up until the early to mid-2000s, the NATO-Japan relationship had been limited to infrequent and loosely focused dialogue between officials with little element of concrete cooperation. NATO's area of activities was limited to Europe and its surrounding regions and the level of the alliance's dependence on troop contributions from non-members for conducting its own missions and operations was still low. At the same time, Japan's role in international security also remained limited. Taken together, the reality was that there was not much overlap between NATO's and Japan's areas of activities.

The low level of importance to NATO of Japan and other countries beyond the Euro-Atlantic region seemed evident from the term used to describe those countries: they were called 'triple-nons', meaning non-member, non-PfP (Partnership for Peace) and non-Mediterranean Dialogue. The name was replaced by yet another uninspiring one, 'contact countries', by the Istanbul Summit in June 2004.¹ Japan and other countries cooperating with NATO in various ways are now officially called 'other partners across the globe'.² The evolution of the terms given to those countries shows their increasing importance to the Alliance.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks against the US demonstrated the hard way that international security threats and challenges are of global nature and that threats and challenges originating in thousands of miles away may come to anyone's doorstep. This new situation and the realisation of this have brought NATO and Japan closer than ever before. The relationship now is much more than just political dialogue. NATO and Japan are cooperating in Afghanistan and off the coast of Somalia and the scope of their dialogue has expanded considerably as a result.

The purpose of this paper is, first, to provide a brief overview of the current state of NATO-Japan relations. Despite the fact that the level of interest in NATO-

¹ 'Istanbul Summit Communiqué', Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Istanbul, 28 June 2004, para. 42.

² The term was first introduced at the Foreign Ministers' meeting in December 2007 in a limited sense. The Bucharest Summit in April the following year completely replaced the term 'contact countries'. See 'Final Communiqué', Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, NATO HQ, Brussels, 8 December 2007, para. 20; 'Bucharest Summit Declaration', Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Bucharest, 3 April 2008, paras. 30 and 35.

Japan relations seems rising, it remains hard to get an overall picture on what is actually taking place between NATO and Japan. This paper is intended to fill such a gap (though the items covered here should not be seen as exhaustive).³ Second, it will examine how NATO can be made sense of as a partner from a Japanese point of view. It will be made clear that cooperation with NATO is multi-faceted, much more than just cooperation in Afghanistan. Whilst it will explore four different aspects of NATO's value as a partner to Japan—namely, NATO as a political partner, as an operational partner, as another means of cooperation with the US and as a multilateral school—, it by no means indicates that Japan is taking full advantage of cooperation with NATO in these four fields. It is still at an initial phase. Japan needs to become more strategic in using NATO as a partner. At the same time, it is NATO's challenge to formulate a new partnership policy so as to exploit all the potentials it will offer to NATO beyond just getting troop contributions to ISAF and other NATO-led operations and missions around the world.

I. The Current State of Play

1. Political Dialogue

Political dialogue is the oldest pillar of NATO-Japan relations, which dates back at least to the early 1990s. The NATO-Japan security seminar (or high-level seminar) involving officials and experts was launched in 1990 and the first session of high-level consultations (staff talks) took place in 1993. The latter has proved to be the main venue for NATO-Japan political dialogue and the latest session, the tenth in a series, was held in Tokyo in July 2010. The high-level consultations framework is intended to complement less frequent contacts at the political level. After 2000, NATO Secretary General (Jaap de Hoop Scheffer) visited Tokyo in April 2005 and December 2007. From the Japanese side, Shinzo Abe visited NATO for the first time as a Japanese Prime Minister in January 2007, which was preceded by Foreign Minister Taro Aso's visit in May 2006 and followed by Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma's in May 2007. Abe and Aso addressed to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in addition to bilateral meetings with the NATO Secretary General at NATO Headquarters. On both occasions, Japan's willingness and desire to strengthen relations with NATO were articulated in a clear manner.⁴

³ Only a limited number of articles on NATO-Japan relations are available in English. See, for example, Masashi Nishihara, 'Can Japan Be a Global Partner for NATO?' in Ronald Asmus (ed.), *NATO and Global Partners: Views from the Outside*, Riga Papers (Washington, D.C.: German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2006); Masako Ikegami, 'NATO and Japan: Strengthening Asian Stability', *NATO Review* (Summer 2007).

⁴ 'Japan and NATO: Toward Further Cooperation', statement by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the North Atlantic Council, NATO HQ, Brussels, 12 January 2007; 'Japan and NATO in a

While no ministerial contact has taken place since December 2007, the scope of the dialogue at the officials level has expanded, which now encompasses not only respective regional issues of Europe and Asia, but also non-proliferation, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), missile defence, counter-terrorism and counter-piracy. In the meantime, the format of the dialogue has also evolved over the past several years. In addition to bilateral meetings between NATO Secretary General and Japanese political leaders, special NAC sessions with Japanese guests, and officials level talks with NATO HQ (the International Staff and the International Military Staff), there have been an increasing number of talks with NATO allies in the context of the Political Committee (PC) and the Executive Working Group (EWG), attended by officials of national delegations to NATO. Missile defence and nuclear issues (US extended deterrence) seems to be promising new areas for further NATO-Japan dialogue. Although the strategic situation in Asia and that in the Euro-Atlantic region are significantly different, there are some generic issues to be examined regarding the role of nuclear weapons in respective deterrence postures and the relationship between missile defence and nuclear weapons, for instance.⁵ Missile defence may end up involving the operational and industrial elements as well in light of the Obama administration's new plan for missile defence in Europe in which a new version of SM-3 (Block II-A), currently under joint development by the US and Japan, is envisaged to be deployed to Europe.⁶

2. *Practical Cooperation*

Practical cooperation in NATO's context essentially means non-members' participation in the alliance's 'partnership tools' of exercises, seminars and courses. The Riga Summit in November 2006 for the first time officially approved the opening of selected partnership tools to 'interested Contact Countries' on a 'case-by-case basis'.⁷ Whilst a limited number of partnership tools had been made available to Japan prior to the Riga Summit, NATO began to make an annual individual Tailored Cooperation Package (TCP) with Japan (and other interested

New Security Environment', speech by Foreign Minister Taro Aso at the North Atlantic Council, NATO HQ, Brussels, 4 May 2006.

⁵ For the linkage of nuclear issues between NATO and Japan, see Michito Tsuruoka, 'Why the NATO Nuclear Debate Is Relevant to Japan and Vice Versa', *Policy Brief* (Washington, D.C.: German Marshall Fund of the United States, October 2010); David Yost, 'US Extended Deterrence in NATO and North-East Asia', in *Perspectives on Extended Deterrence*, Recherches et Documents, No. 03/2010 (Paris: Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, 2010).

⁶ The issue of possible transfer or export of the jointly-developed missile defence system to third countries involves an issue of domestic politics in Japan. It is reported that the government is now considering how to allow this in response to Washington's request. See, for example, 'Tokyo to Relax Export Ban, Send Missiles to Third Countries', *Japan Times*, 25 July 2010; 'U.S. Urges Japan to Export SM-3s', *Japan Times*, 25 October 2009.

⁷ 'Riga Summit Declaration', Issued by Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Riga, 29 November 2006, para. 13.

Contact Countries) following the Riga decision. The TCP is a list of partnership activities that are made open to Japan, from which Japan chooses activities it wants to participate.

The partnership tools have been developed as a means to help former communist countries fulfil NATO's accession criteria such as on the minimum level of interoperability and the establishment of the democratic control of armed forces. Because of this background, it is easy to imagine that not all of them are relevant to Japan (and other advanced countries like Australia for that matter). Nevertheless, Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) officers and officials from the Foreign and Defense Ministries have participated in a number of NATO's activities in the framework of the partnership tools. The areas that Japan has shown interest include peace operations, civil-military cooperation, counter-terrorism and civil emergency planning. In addition to participating in seminars and sending observers to exercises, Japan now regularly sends officers to the Senior Course at the NATO Defence College (NDC) in Rome.⁸ As the highest education body of the Alliance where senior officers not only from NATO nations, but also from partners and other countries, are brought together, the NDC provides an invaluable occasion for Japanese officers to get familiarised with how NATO as a multilateral alliance works.

The latest development with respect to practical cooperation between NATO and Japan includes the signing of a security agreement in June 2010.⁹ The agreement will allow the parties to exchange classified information when necessary. Needless to say, the agreement does not oblige the parties to share information with another party. The agreement is necessary for operational cooperation in which the sharing of security-related information is critical, political dialogue involving classified information and dialogue and cooperation in the field of military research and development. Some activities (exercises, seminars etc.) of the partnership tools are also classified, which requires a security agreement for participation.

3. Cooperation in Afghanistan

Cooperation in Afghanistan has been at the centre of NATO-Japan cooperation in the past few years. While it does not represent the whole story, it is nonetheless

⁸ The NDC runs a five-month Senior Course twice a year. Japan has been sending one officer a year since 2006. Those who studied at the NDC are usually posted to NATO countries (or countries closely related to NATO) as a defence attaché afterwards. In addition to the Senior Course, Japanese officers have attended shorter courses as well including the Generals, Flag Officers and Ambassadors' Course (GFOAC) and the Integrated Partner Orientation Course (IPOC).

⁹ The official title of the agreement is the 'Agreement between the Government of Japan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on the Security of Information and Material', which was signed by the Japanese Ambassador to Belgium and the NATO Secretary General in Brussels on 25 June 2010.

undeniable that the development of NATO-Japan cooperation would have been much slower or lacked concrete cooperation without Afghanistan. In short, challenges in Afghanistan played as a catalyst for NATO and Japan to work together. In light of the fact that Japan does not have troops in Afghanistan—therefore the country is not a troop contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)—the nature of NATO-Japan cooperation in Afghanistan is rather different from that between NATO and non-NATO troop contributors (Non-NATO Troop Contributing Nations: NNTCNs).¹⁰ NATO-Japan cooperation has focused on civilian aspects instead.

It is understood that Prime Minister Abe sought to send SDF troops to Afghanistan, but the idea did not materialise because of domestic reluctance and Abe's lack of leadership to pursue it through. Partly as a substitute to it, Japan proposed a new scheme through which Japanese aid money would go to small-scale humanitarian and reconstruction projects in cooperation with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) operating around the country under ISAF.¹¹ Japanese aid would not go to PRTs themselves, but directly to local NGOs and other executing bodies at the local level. The new NATO-Japan scheme was finalised in March 2007 in Tokyo, two months after Prime Minister Abe's visit to NATO, and started disbursing funds later that year.¹² NATO's office of the Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) functions as a clearinghouse for helping the PRTs get familiarised with the new scheme and collecting project proposals through the PRTs. Given that the SCR office did not have its own fund for humanitarian or reconstruction aid and that some PRTs, not least those led by smaller countries like the one in Ghor Province led by Lithuania, were facing a serious lack of development budget, Japan's new offer of assistance suited NATO's needs.

For the purpose of facilitating the scheme, Tokyo appointed in December 2007 a liaison officer to the NATO SCR in Kabul.¹³ Also as an extension of this scheme in mid-2009, the Foreign Ministry began to deploy a few civilian development

¹⁰ For a comprehensive review of troop contributions of non-NATO countries to NATO-led operations, see Sverre Myrli (Rapporteur), 'Contributions of Non-NATO Members to NATO Operations', Report, Sub-Committee on Future Defence and Security Capabilities, Defence and Security Committee, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Brussels, 15 November 2008.

¹¹ Within the Japanese government, it is part of the framework of the Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security Projects (GAGP) that the Foreign Ministry runs around the world including Afghanistan.

¹² 'NATO and Japan Finalize Framework for Cooperation in Afghanistan', NATO News, 8 March 2007. For more background on this scheme and early achievements, see 'Factsheet: NATO/Japan Cooperation in Afghanistan', Media Operations Centre (MOC), NATO HQ, December 2007.

¹³ 'Japanese Liaison Officer to the NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Kabul, Afghanistan', Press Release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo, 13 December 2007. See also 'Joint Press Statement by the Prime Minister of Japan and the Secretary General of NATO', Tokyo, 13 December 2007.

experts as a civilian assistance team to the Lithuanian-led PRT in Ghor Province.¹⁴ Japan has been cooperating with this particular PRT extensively through the above-mentioned aid scheme. From Tokyo's point of view, the overall scheme including the appointment of a liaison officer to the NATO SCR and the deployment of a civilian assistance team to the Lithuania-led PRT has allowed Japan to extend its reach of development assistance. It is almost impossible, not least in light of the security situation in Afghanistan, to formulate and implement projects in the areas where the Japanese authorities do not have access. ISAF's extensive network of the PRTs that covers much of the country has helped Japan in this regard.

Other concrete examples of NATO-Japan cooperation in Afghanistan include Japan's financial contribution to a PfP Trust Fund project on munitions safety and stockpile management. Japan provided EUR 3 million to the project in 2008, which represented the first Japanese participation in a NATO PfP Trust Fund project. Since then, Japan also participated in the Helicopter Trust Fund and recently in the NATO-ANA (Afghan National Army) Trust Fund. Japan's involvement in NATO trust funds has been expanding.

In addition, there are other areas where indirect NATO-Japan cooperation can be observed. First, Japan's demobilisation, disarmament and re-integration (DDR) and disarmament of illegal armed groups (DIAG) activities in the framework of G8 division of labour have had close contacts with ISAF as an organisation in charge of security. Japan's participation in the PfP Trust Fund project on munitions safety and stockpile management can be regarded as an extension of the country's DIAG efforts. Second, Japan's refuelling operation in the Indian Ocean from 2001 to 2010 in the context of the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) (Maritime Interdiction Operations: OEF-MIO) also contributed (if indirectly) to the stabilisation of Afghanistan, and therefore to NATO's operations in the country. Last but not least, Japan's substantial amount of development assistance to Afghanistan—the second largest only after the US—is also helping NATO's operations in the country by contributing to lay a basic economic and development condition on which security can be built.

¹⁴ 'Dispatch of Japan's Civilian Assistance Team to the Chaghcharan PRT in Afghanistan', Press Release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo, 17 April 2009.

II. NATO as a Partner¹⁵

1. NATO as a Political Partner

When Japan made an overture to NATO in 2005-2007, it was primarily a political and diplomatic move led by the Foreign Ministry. This is probably the biggest difference between Japan on the one hand and Australia and New Zealand on the other. The latter countries were, from the beginning, more focused on operational cooperation, not least in Afghanistan.¹⁶

At the strategic level, NATO was placed in the context of the idea of an ‘arc of freedom and prosperity (AFP)’ that then Foreign Minister Taro Aso proposed in late 2006 as a new grand strategy of Japan’s foreign policy. The main aim of the strategy was to expand Japan’s ‘diplomatic horizons’ beyond traditional relationships with the US and Asian neighbours, in which Europe was conceived as a new partner sharing fundamental values.¹⁷ Aso called for more cooperation with democracies and more assistance for emerging democracies that stretch from Japan to Europe through South-East Asia, India, Central Asia and Caucasus so as to form the arc of freedom and prosperity around the Eurasian continent. Arguably for the first time in the post-war era, political and security relations with Europe—particularly NATO (and the EU)—were firmly located in Japan’s overall foreign policy strategy.

A more immediate motivation at that time for Japan in seeking to develop political and strategic dialogue with Europe had to do with the issue of lifting the EU arms embargo on China. In the period from 2003-2005, the EU sought to lift the embargo that it imposed in 1989 as a protest to the Tiananmen Square incident. Japan, along with other countries in the region including the US, vehemently opposed to the EU’s move and has since felt the need to raise Europeans’ awareness of the security situation in East Asia, where the rise of China is seen as a serious concern not least because of the lack of transparency in the country’s military build-up.

Tokyo has believed that the lack of understanding in Europe of the East Asian security environment led the EU to move toward lifting the arms embargo in the first place. In the wake of the controversy over the issue, the EU and Japan (in

¹⁵ An earlier version of this categorisation in the NATO-Asia context can be found in Michito Tsuruoka, ‘Asia, NATO and Its Partners: Complicated Relationships?’ *NATO Review* (March 2010).

¹⁶ On this, see Michito Tsuruoka, ‘NATO’s Evolving Relationships with Asia-Pacific: Cooperation in Afghanistan and Beyond’, paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA), New York, 15-18 February 2009.

¹⁷ ‘Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan’s Expanding Diplomatic Horizons’, speech by Foreign Minister Taro Aso at the Japan Institute of International Affairs, Tokyo, 30 November 2006; ‘On the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity”’, speech by Foreign Minister Taro Aso at the Japan Forum on International Relations, Tokyo, 12 March 2007.

parallel with EU-US) launched a strategic dialogue on East Asian security environment in 2005. The main purpose of this new dialogue was to generate common perceptions between Japan and the EU on the security environment of the region. Bluntly put, Japan wanted to educate the European counterparts on Asian security. Dialogue with NATO, from a Japanese perspective, can therefore be located in this context: NATO is seen as another channel through which to convey Japan's message to Europe. Furthermore, NATO can be said to be a more effective venue to discuss security issues because of the alliance's high awareness of security and strategic issues and of the fact that US is also present.

The agenda that Tokyo wishes to discuss with NATO include the issue of the abduction of Japanese citizens by the North Korean authorities, the danger of nuclear and ballistic missile development by the same country and broader implications of China's military build-up. In this context, Japanese politicians including Foreign Minister Aso (May 2006) and Prime Minister Abe (January 2007) spent much time talking about those issues of Asia in their respective addresses to the NAC. In Abe's case, he directly 'requested' the Allies to 'urge North Korea to take sincere steps towards the resolutions' of the issue of North Korean abduction.¹⁸ It is in this context Japan appreciates NATO's political actions regarding North Korea's nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches.¹⁹

The extent to which NATO regards itself as a political actor in international relations in its own right may not necessarily be high because it is a collective defence alliance, which, unlike the EU, has no ambition of forging a common foreign policy. However, as the world's strongest military alliance, whether it likes it or not, NATO inevitably carries a certain political, as well as military, weight in international relations. This is ironically evidenced by sceptical or negative reactions to the strengthening of NATO-Japan relations from certain countries that do not share fundamental values with NATO and Japan. China and Russia are obviously cases in point.²⁰

2. *NATO as an Operational Partner*

NATO has consistently focused on operational cooperation when it comes to relationships with non-members. The Alliance's renewed attention to its partnership policy is to a large extent a result of the increasing volume and

¹⁸ Abe, 'Japan and NATO'.

¹⁹ 'NATO Spokesman Statement on Sinking of Republic of Korea's Cheonan', 20 May 2010; 'North Atlantic Council Statement on North Korea', 25 May 2009; 'North Atlantic Council Statement on North Korea', 8 April 2009; 'Statement on North Korea by the NATO Secretary General', 5 April 2009; 'North Atlantic Council Statement on North Korea Nuclear Test', 9 October 2006; 'Statement by NATO Secretary General on North Korea', 3 October 2006; 'Statement on North Korea by the North Atlantic Council', 5 July 2006.

²⁰ These countries seem to be concerned about NATO's expanding partnerships beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. For typical Chinese views, see, for example, Xinghui Zhang, 'NATO Needs to Think Twice about Its Future', *NATO Review* (October-November 2008).

significance of troop contributions to NATO-led operations, most notably ISAF, from non-NATO nations.²¹ The value of partnership policy has predominantly been conceived of in the context of Afghanistan. It is to a large measure about ‘import of support’ to NATO.²² A report by the Group of Experts on a new strategic concept released in May 2010 uses the term ‘operational partners’.²³ While the report also talks about ‘partners of values’ in addition to ‘partners of need’, it is clear that the current focus of NATO’s partnerships is on operational cooperation, or more precisely, troop contributions to ISAF.

Japan is not a troop contributor to any of NATO-led operations or missions. Operational cooperation—at least *de facto* or indirect operational cooperation—between NATO and Japan has already been taking place in many ways nonetheless. First, counter-piracy cooperation off the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden is a case in point. While NATO and Japan are conducting their operations independently one another, there was an instance in August 2010 in which a Dutch helicopter and a vessel under the NATO mission and a Japanese SDF helicopter jointly disrupted a single skiff pirate attack on a merchant ship in the Gulf of Aden.²⁴ Similar instances will be likely to happen again even without a formal framework for cooperation between NATO and Japan.

Second, operational cooperation between the Japanese forces and the forces of NATO members has already materialised in a number of occasions such as in the Indian Ocean and Iraq. The new reality that Japan is now discovering around the world is that whenever and wherever the SDF troops go abroad, it is very much likely that they see European counterparts working side by side pursuing common goals. In other words, as long as Japan remains engaged in international peace operations including peacekeeping and post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction and provided that Japan cannot make a difference alone in those situations, coordination and cooperation with Europeans—be in bilateral terms or in the context of NATO or the EU—(in addition to bilateral cooperation with the US) are of necessity rather than of choice. In this regard, operational cooperation with NATO can be seen as a tool for Japan to use in engaging in international peace operations. Former NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer succinctly pointed out that ‘NATO is a framework that they [partner nations] can

²¹ See Rebecca Moore, ‘NATO’s Partners in Afghanistan: Impact and Purpose’, *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, No. 22 (Madrid: Complutense University of Madrid, January 2010).

²² Karl-Heinz Kamp, ‘Waiting for Another Day’, *World Today*, Vol. 62, No. 11 (November 2006).

²³ *NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement*, Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO (Brussels: 17 May 2010), pp. 22-23 and 29.

²⁴ ‘NATO/Japan Cooperation in Gulf of Aden Disrupts Pirate Attack’, News Release, Allied Maritime Command Headquarters, Northwood, 16 August 2010. A press release from the Japanese MOD on the same day on that incident did not mention NATO.

use to make their own efforts more effective'.²⁵ Japan needs to formulate a clearer idea on how it can use NATO in this regard. One of the things that needs to be considered is whether the current practice of *de facto* or indirect cooperation with NATO as opposed to formal arrangements or direct participation in NATO-led missions or operations is sufficient in terms of maximising the effectiveness of Japan's effort and safeguarding its interest.

Last but not least, it should be added that operational cooperation needs not be limited to the military domain. As seen in the previous section, civilian cooperation in Afghanistan has operational elements and the benefit of using NATO as a framework has already been demonstrated. There is also a possibility for Japan to conduct civilian missions (e.g. on police and rule of law assistance) independently or more probably in cooperation with other countries or with international organisations in a country where NATO conducts military operations. In such a case, Japan would need to seek NATO's help not least for the sharing of security information, security of personnel and extremist support.²⁶

3. NATO as a Means of Cooperation with the US

In terms of both political and operational aspects, NATO's value as a partner to Japan is more or less increased by the fact that NATO is a framework which includes the United States, the only formal ally of Japan. From a viewpoint of the US as well, it is only natural to think about linking its most important alliances across the Atlantic and the Pacific.²⁷ In a statement of the 2+2 meeting (Security Consultative Committee) in May 2007, 'achieving broader Japan-NATO cooperation' was listed in the context of 'common strategic objectives' between Japan and the US.²⁸

Tokyo has yet to articulate a conscious strategy of using NATO as a new channel of cooperation with Washington. Under the Koizumi government (2001-2006) when the idea of 'the Japan-US alliance in the world' was proclaimed, the Japan-NATO relationship was often seen as a 'European front' of that big

²⁵ 'Meeting the Security Challenges of Globalisation', speech by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer at the Japan Institute of International Affairs, Tokyo, 13 December 2007.

²⁶ This is a situation that the EU (CSDP) operations are facing in Afghanistan and Kosovo. The EU has a highly complicated relationship with NATO mainly due to the problems of Turkey. In the military domain, there is a cooperation framework called the 'Berlin Plus', but a similar framework for civilian cooperation is still lacking. One could even argue that Japan's civilian operational cooperation with NATO is easier than NATO-EU cooperation.

²⁷ See, for example, Bruce Weinrod, 'NATO and Asia's Changing Relationship', *Global Asia*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Fall 2008); Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier, 'Global NATO', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 5 (September/October, 2006).

²⁸ 'Alliance Transformation: Advancing United States-Japan Security and Defense Cooperation', Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Aso and Minister of Defense Fumio Kyuma, Washington, D.C., 1 May 2007.

picture.²⁹ Ideas of sending Japanese troops to Afghanistan that were raised intermittently during and after the Koizumi era were all situated in the context of Japan-US relations, though no such idea has materialised so far. However, it has been demonstrated that NATO has a potential to be used as a new venue for Japan-US cooperation. While in a small scale, Japan's financial contribution to the NATO Trust Fund for sustaining and equipping the Afghan National Army, which the US takes the lead, can be seen as an initial example of Japan-US cooperation through NATO.

Cooperating with the US through NATO is certainly not a new idea for non-US NATO allies. NATO membership is in the first place a means to have an alliance relationship with, or more precisely, security guarantee by the US. As for partners, New Zealand's experience in Afghanistan seems relevant here. When the country first sent its troops to Afghanistan, it was under the framework of the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). It was predominantly an action to support the US in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, which had nothing to do with NZ-NATO cooperation at that time. However, as a result of successive geographical expansions of ISAF in late 2006, the NZ-led PRT in Bamyán Province had to move from the OEF Command to that of NATO/ISAF, thus the country became a troop contributor to NATO.³⁰ From New Zealand's point of view, the resultant cooperation with NATO was largely an unintended by-product of what it had been doing regardless of the ISAF. But what this case shows is the fact that cooperation with the US can take place in NATO's context as well. This is an added advantage of NATO as a partner for non-NATO countries that are simultaneously US allies.

4. NATO as a Multilateral School

It is important to remember that NATO's business is much broader than conducting operations in Afghanistan and in other places around the world. To begin with, conducting operations is relatively a new business for NATO that started only in the mid-1990s in the Balkans. For more than half a century, the Alliance has been working instead on such areas as interoperability, standardisation, joint procurement, research and development, multilateral defence and force planning. These are the areas where NATO has by far the strongest expertise and experience. Partners including Japan can learn a lot from those core, if rather traditional, areas of expertise of the Alliance.

What makes NATO unique is its multilateral nature. Outside the Euro-Atlantic region, there are very few multilateral military alliances and multilateral

²⁹ However, it is hard to argue that this conception of Japan-NATO relations was widely shared by officials and experts in Japan.

³⁰ For a brief overview of NATO-NZ cooperation, see Jose Luis Arnaut (Rapporteur), 'NATO and Contact Countries', Draft Report, Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships, Political Committee, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Brussels, 15 September 2010, paras. 24-27.

experience in security and defence is generally lacking. In the Asia-Pacific region where Japan is situated, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the region's sole framework for security cooperation, held the first-ever real joint exercise (ARF-VDR: ARF-Voluntary Demonstration of Response) on civil emergency planning (disaster relief) as late as in May 2009.³¹ There is no doubt that bilateral cooperation with the US will remain crucial for Japan not least in defending its territory and responding to major military crises around the country. On the other hand, however, multilateral planning and multilateral conduct of operations have become more and more common elsewhere in the world.

Sending observers to NATO exercises, officers to the NDC, other seminars and workshops in the context of the partnership tools might be just a small step. However, there is no short-cut. Getting familiarised with a NATO way of doing business in a multilateral setting at each officer's level is probably the surest course to take for the purpose of accumulating expertise at the national level on how multilateral planning and multilateral operations work.

Conclusions

NATO-Japan cooperation is still a new phenomenon. Neither Japan nor NATO is fully prepared to take full advantage of the potentials of this relationship. This paper has demonstrated that there are various values that NATO possesses as a partner to Japan. Japan is still at an early stage of formulating a coherent strategy of using NATO in achieving its overall security and defence objectives.

The same can be said of NATO as well. It can be argued that the Alliance has almost exclusively focused on operational cooperation—i.e. troop contribution from non-NATO countries to NATO-led operations—when it comes to relationships with partners so far without making full efforts to formulate a political strategy of using those new partnerships outside the Euro-Atlantic region including Japan in shaping a new world order.³² This is a huge waste of opportunities. The adoption of a new strategic concept at a NATO Summit in Lisbon in November 2010 will be a good occasion for the Alliance to chart a new direction of its partnership policy across the globe.

³¹ It is true that there have been a number of US-led exercises in the Asia-Pacific region like Cobra Gold in which other countries from the region participate. However, US-led exercises are different in nature from truly multilateral exercises of NATO.

³² See Ronald Asmus, 'Rethinking NATO's Partnerships for the 21st Century', *NATO Review* (March 2008); Stephan Frühling and Benjamin Schreer, 'NATO's New Strategic Concept and US Commitments in the Asia-Pacific', *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 154, No. 5 (October 2009).