

Report on the 'experts round-table'

New Security Challenges – New Responsibilities.

German-Japanese Security Dialog

4 April 2014, at the Japanese-German Center Berlin

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On 4 April 2014, Japanese and German officials and experts convened in the Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB) for a round-table discussion on changes in Japan's and Germany's respective security policy, new security challenges and responsibilities. Possible areas for security cooperation between the two countries were also discussed. The round-table took place against the backdrop of both the Japanese and German government having recently announced significant changes in their respective security policy. Furthermore, current and alarming developments in Eastern Europe and a deteriorating security environment in East Asia, due respectively to the Ukraine crisis and China's increasingly assertive behavior in the region, provided the topical background. Thus, the round-table discussion could hardly have been timelier.

As a prelude to the round-table discussion, a public panel discussion took place in the Academy of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation on the evening of 3 April 2014. Security experts from Japan and Germany discussed a wide range of issues, such as German and Japanese respective new security policy, changes in the East Asian and European security environment and the global security strategy of the US. Participants agreed that the rise of China as well as Russia's behavior in the Ukraine constituted great security challenges. Therefore, they required new policy approaches and strengthened cooperation between all stakeholders. Interestingly, while Japanese participants pointed out that Tokyo's room for maneuver for security policy remains very constraint, German counterparts argued that Berlin still lags behind its possibilities due to a lack of strategic vision, especially towards Asia. The

participants further agreed that the crisis in Ukraine will most likely affect NATO's and the United States' strategy. However, the Japanese panelists were more pessimistic about the continued security commitment of the US in East Asia than German participants were. All contributors agreed on the need for strengthened consultation and cooperation between Germany and Japan.

Experts Round-table on 4 April 2014

I. Panel

1) The first panel dealt with the regional security situation in East Asia. The first panelist outlined what, from Japan's perspective, currently constitute the greatest risks for regional and Japanese security. While East Asia remains a region full of security risks, the Japanese government considers North Korea's and China's behavior the most threatening. For more than a decade by now, Pyongyang has posed a security threat due to its repeated ballistic missile tests and its sustained nuclear weapons program. However, in the Japanese government's view, the graver security challenge is currently posed by China, which not only continues its opaque military build-up, but has in recent years also acted increasingly assertive towards its neighbors. Especially China's behavior in the dispute around a group of islands in the East China Sea, which Japan calls Senkaku and China Diaoyu, as well as in other territorial disputes in the South China Sea with neighboring states, is cause for great concern. The panelist believed that China was, in the long run, trying to alter the current status quo of Japan controlling the islets by employing means such as frequently allowing Chinese vessels and aircrafts to enter the contested territory surrounding the islands or by including the contested territory into its recently proclaimed Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). To counter China's new assertiveness, the Japanese government relies predominantly on cooperation with other states in the region, such as Australia, India, and the ASEAN states. Furthermore, the Japanese government also wishes for deeper security cooperation with the EU. However, the presenter pointed out that Tokyo has at times perceived the EU's policies for East Asia as not being very helpful. The most important task and current aim of the Japanese government, he finally explained, is to strengthen high-level dialogue with Chinese decision-makers and to develop security mechanisms, such as a hotline between the coast guards of both countries.

2) In his comment, the second panelist gave an outline of the relevance of East Asian security problems and developments from a German perspective and suggested ways of reducing tensions in the region. He emphasized that Germany, as a major manufacturing and exporting nation, was very much dependent on a stable and peaceful East Asia and was thus a concerned stakeholder in the region. Therefore, he argued, maintaining dialogue on as many levels as possible was of the utmost importance to prevent a deterioration of the East Asian security situation and especially a worsening of Japanese-Chinese relations. The commentator further argued that unfortunately East Asia lacked an institutionalized security architecture, such as for example the OSCE in Europe. Asian nations should invest more efforts in developing multilateral security institutions and mechanisms, preferably under the ASEAN framework. The commentator further explained that from Germany's perspective North Korea, due to its irrational and belligerent behavior, continued to pose a far greater threat than rising China. Therefore, it should be in the common interest of Japan, China and South Korea to work together to defuse the North Korea security threat. Finally, he explained that from a German perspective, Japan and South Korea seemed to be natural allies since they have common political and economic interests and goals. Therefore, it would be advisable for both countries to try harder to solve the historical issues that are causes of conflict and regularly lead to diplomatic tensions.

3) In the ensuing Q&A session, the discussion focused on issues such as the benefits of better relations between Japan and South Korea, the development of regional security institutions, the role of China and the question of the US' security commitment in East Asia. Concerning a rapprochement between Tokyo and Seoul, Japanese participants pointed out that the South Korean government currently pursued a clearly anti-Japanese foreign policy and could therefore not be regarded as a trustworthy partner. Furthermore, skepticism on the notion of both China and South Korea playing a constructive role in solving the North Korean security problem was voiced. Japanese counterparts were also skeptical on the issue of developing an organization in East Asia like the OSCE. A prerequisite for such an endeavor would be that all involved parties respected and upheld existing borders, something that

Beijing, from Japan's perspective, does not do. In general, Japanese participants repeatedly voiced skepticism of transferring European concepts to East Asia, which was shaped by very different historical experiences and thus possessed a differing security environment. Therefore, they asked their German counterparts to be cautious not to view East Asia's security situation from a Eurocentric perspective. German participants, on the other hand, stressed that attempts should be made to integrate China more strongly in regional strategies and institutions. China, they argued, was bound to act more responsibly in the future, simply because it was in its economic and political interest to ensure worldwide stability. Japanese counterparts, however, upheld their position that at the moment China did not constitute a trustworthy partner. Furthermore, Japanese participants expressed doubts concerning the US security commitment to Asia, especially in the face of new tensions erupting in Eastern Europe.

II. Panel

1) The second panel focused on German security policy (GSP) and its recent changes. The first panelist outlined the old and particularly the new aspects of Germany's security strategy and explained how the latter have already shaped recent German foreign policy decisions. He stressed that the fundamentals of GSP had not changed; policy aims continued to be the deepening of European integration and Germany's commitment to transatlantic partnerships with the US and within the NATO framework. The guiding normative principles shaping GSP were still protecting and upholding human rights as well as supporting democratic values and the rule of law. Furthermore, Germany would continue to prioritize multilateral efforts and institutions in its foreign and security policy implementation. An important novelty, however, was the intent to pursue these aims earlier, more decisively and more substantially – in short: more proactively. The speaker gave four examples of recent German foreign policy measures that were marked by such a stronger proactive stance. First, the German government from the outset pursued a very active diplomacy in order to quickly resolve the crisis in the Ukraine, e.g. spearheading a joint diplomatic mission with France and Poland that was aimed at quickly ending the crisis. Second, Germany recently pursued a very active diplomacy in Syria; for instance, the government offered in January to help to destroy stocks of

chemical weapons. Further examples were an enhanced engagement in Africa, for example in Mali and, finally, the seeking of strengthened bilateral security relations with France and Poland, the latter becoming increasingly a close partner to Germany. Concluding, the panelist remarked that cooperation with Japan remained very important for Germany since both countries have common goals and pursue foreign policies based on the same values.

2) In his comment, the second panelist elaborated on Japan's perspective on Germany's and especially on Europe's security policy as well as recent developments in Eastern Europe. First, he outlined important steps that had been taken to deepen Japan-EU cooperation and argued that this cooperation should be developed further. Second, while he emphasized that Japan strongly welcomed a deepening of Japan-EU cooperation, he also pointed out that from Tokyo's perspective there often remained a lack of mutual understanding. For instance, Japanese often had the impression that European counterparts lack understanding about the differences between their respective security environments. Europeans, in the panelist's view, should pay more attention to the plethora of open and underlying conflicts that persist in East Asia, many of them remnants from the period of the Cold War. Furthermore, in the past, Japanese participants in EU-Japan meetings often felt that they were being 'lectured' on how to correctly develop and pursue security policy. Furthermore, the commentator explained the Japanese government's stance towards the Ukraine crisis. The current administration viewed the crisis in Eastern Europe as a major threat to global security and thus to its own security, not least because it would possibly jeopardize or decrease the US' security commitment to Asia. In reference to Japan's recent and often stated aims to change its security policy, as for instance in the recently – and first ever – published national security strategy and the announcement from early April to lift the ban on arms exports, the speaker explained that they were not really as new as proclaimed. Rather, these issues had been part of political discussions for quite some time and were to some extent already initiated by the previous government under DPJ rule. In comparison to German security policy changes, he finally remarked that he had the impression that the German public accepted these changes more easily than the Japanese public, which is much warier

on such policy shifts. The same applied to the general acceptance of respective defense budgets.

3) In the following Q&A session issues such as the seriousness of Germany's reactions to possibly continued destabilizing action by Russia, likely consequence of the Ukraine crisis for NATO and the question of public support for security policy measures were discussed. A Japanese participant expressed doubts that, due to its economic and energy dependence on Russia, Germany would stay the course of deciding on tough measures in case Russia should continue its destabilizing behavior. In his response, however, the first panelist emphasized that, even though economic interests – among many others – were important, economic repercussions would not keep the German government from pursuing far-reaching measures should these be deemed necessary. Regarding possible consequences from Russia's behavior in the Ukraine, German participants stressed that the current crisis has already affected discussions within NATO concerning its strategic purpose and future development; in particular, Moscow's behavior will affect strategies of ballistic missile defense, NATO's future stance towards Russia, and questions of NATO's tasks in general. German participants pointed out that while discussions about and acceptance of the necessity of a more proactive German security policy were quite common among experts and policy makers, the German public was far more wary on this. Especially the participation in military operations and the arms exports were issues of great contention. The Japanese panelist argued that this resembled the situation in Japan very much. However, he pointed out that Germany's security policy was already much more "normal" (i.e. concerning its scope for military action) than Japan's, which continued to be highly circumscribed by its constitutional and political provisions.

[Luncheon Speech]

[In a highly illuminating luncheon speech, an expert on Eastern Europe and relations between Europe and the US explained the origins of and possible consequences resulting from the current crisis in Ukraine. The speaker explained that the annexation of the Crimea by Russia as a reaction to the ousting of the pro-Russian government by pro-EU political actors could and should have been anticipated.

Russia had been feeling increasingly threatened by the growing influence of the EU in neighboring countries and NATO's enlargement over the last years. The current crisis, it was pointed out, was at heart not about Ukraine, but about very different geopolitical and systemic concepts and approaches by Russia on the one hand and the EU and the US on the other. The crisis would have lasting effects on the security within Europe, on EU-Russia relations as well as on relations between Western European and Eastern European states, with the latter feeling highly threatened by Russia's course of action and finding it very difficult to make themselves heard within the EU. Finally, another likely effect resulting from the crisis would be a reinvigoration of the US commitment in European security affairs.]

III. Panel

1) The last panel focused on Japan's new security policy. The panelist explained that, similar to the German case, the basic pillars of Japanese security policy had not changed: goals, means and values remained unaltered and Japan would continue to uphold the current regional status quo. The Japanese government, however, aimed to switch from a reactive to a proactive security policy. This was behind recent changes in policies and strategies and also behind Prime Minister Abe's plans to change the Japanese constitution. From a Japanese perspective, the ability to act more freely in security terms, especially with regard to the participation in collective security measures, is a prerequisite in view of China's growing and military assertiveness and the perceived intent to change the status quo, i.e. state borders, in East Asia. The panelist argued that should a conflict with China arise, the US would simply not be able to defend Japan or other parts of Asia from China on its own. Therefore, Japan and other Asian states ought to do as much as possible to develop capabilities to support the US militarily.

2) In his comment, the second panelist pointed out that the global security situation had changed tremendously compared to the 19th and most parts of the 20th century. While the international order was shifting, mainly due to the rise of new powers such as China and India, the underlying systemic conditions of international relations had also changed greatly. For instance, obtaining territory was no longer a way to increase a state's power; states were not the only important international actors;

non-state economic actors and economic interests played an ever more important role; and domestic and foreign policies were increasingly entangled. All states had to consider these changes to transform the remnants of the old world order into a new, functioning and stable world order that also accommodated the interests of China and India. The panelist further explained what this meant for Japan. Simplified, Japan could choose between three essential strategies: 1) acting increasingly as an independent country; 2) a re-strengthening of the US-Japan alliance; 3) establishing a structure of strongly institutionalized regional security cooperation. The third approach, he argued, would be the most useful one to achieve the goal of constructing a new, stable regional order.

3) In the ensuing Q&A round, feasibility and significance of a “European solution”, i.e. the development of a system of collective security institutions, such as the OSCE in Europe, were hotly debated. One Japanese participant explained that Japanese decision makers in favor of multilateral security were rare, since politicians on the left usually supported strict neutrality/pacifism while politicians on the right preferred a bilateral alliance with the US. Regarding multilateral security options, Japanese participants remained skeptical. They argued that there was a different security situation and a lack of reliable partner states (such as Germany has found in France) in East Asia. In response to this, German counterparts argued that, nevertheless, the concept of developing multilateral security institutions was transferable, but that it took much time and trust to develop dependable relationships between states; this had also been the case between Germany and France.

IV. Final Discussion

In the final discussion, all participants debated the possibilities for further strengthening the security dialogue and cooperation between Japan, Germany and the EU. Additionally, findings and impressions about the round-table were summarized and discussed. Everybody emphasized that they had no doubt that due to common aims, interests and values, a strengthening of security cooperation between Japan and Germany / the EU was highly desirable. They argued that further regular meetings to exchange views on security issues and to deliberate on possible common strategies like that today were needed. Differing views, especially on the

East Asian security environment and possible measures for its improvement, became once more obvious when Japanese participants voiced their impression that German counterparts at times did not understand the Japanese perspective on East Asia's security problems very well. Shared political and security challenges for both Japan and Germany that make a strengthened cooperation desirable were China, the Middle East, failed states in Africa (e.g. Sudan) and new challenges such as cyber security. As for concrete shapes and modes of security cooperation, German participants suggested closer collaboration in multilateral forums such as G7 or G20. Some participants found the notion of a military cooperation in the form of UN mandated Peace Keeping Operations attractive, although doubts on both German and Japanese governments' specific vision about aims and shape of such an endeavor were expressed. In this regard, Japanese counterparts voiced general doubts on the multilateral option, explaining that Japan preferred bilateral modes of cooperation. Further suggestions for areas of possible cooperation were the joint development of defense technology, security in outer space, anti-piracy missions and state-building measures in failed and crisis-ridden states such as South Sudan. Concerning the briefly discussed fact that Tokyo tends to usually consult first with London and Paris, and then with Berlin, doubts were voiced from the Japanese side whether that would change in the near future.

V. Concluding remarks

The round-table discussion made clear that security remains one of the most important and challenging political topics today. Developments in East Asia, especially the continuous rise of China, as well as recent events in Eastern Europe have demonstrated that states' behavior that is perceived as threatening or destabilizing the international order has a huge impact on national, regional and global politics. Global crises, it was pointed out, are more and more interconnected and therefore need comprehensive solutions. The maintenance of regional and international security thus remains a vital task for national governments and international institutions. The recent announcements by the Japanese and German governments to act more proactively in foreign and security affairs further underlined this notion. Furthermore, discussions during the round-table highlighted the importance of the US in maintaining regional and international security. This became

especially clear through worries expressed by Japanese participants, whether the US would maintain their presence in East Asia, which is considered reassuring. Finally, discussions showed that Japan and Germany shared many aims and strategies in their respective security policy and that there was generally a high willingness for security cooperation. However, the round-table also revealed that there remained differing views on what actually constituted security challenges and what could be done to meet them. These different views concerned mainly the questions of how to deal with rising China and the most fitting and feasible approaches to defuse or even prevent security problems in East Asia.