

Report of the symposium “Japanese-German Dialogue on Security: Perspectives of East Asian Regional Security”

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By Kai Schulze

In cooperation with the Center for the Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (CPDNP) at the Japan Institute for International Affairs (JIIA) the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB) organized an inspiring and fruitful Expert Conference and Public Panel Discussion on the “Japanese-German Dialogue on Security: Perspectives of East-Asian Regional Security”. The intention of the symposium was to generate a stimulating dialogue between academics, government officials, politicians and representatives of the military/self-defense forces from Japan and Germany. The conference was the second of its kind after a conference held in Tokyo 2010 and intends to strengthen the dialogue between Germany and Japan on security affairs. For this purpose it brought together the expertise of almost 40 theorists and practitioners from the respective countries, including His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Shinyo Takahiro from the Embassy of Japan in Germany, His Excellency Dr. Widhya Chem, Ambassador and Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia, His Excellency Ambassador Jacky Foo from the Embassy of Singapore in Germany, Radzi Jamaludin, Minister Counsellor of the Embassy of Malaysia in Germany and representatives of the Embassies of Ireland, the United States and the British Embassy. It created a constructive and cooperative dialogue on security related issues in East Asia and Germany’s potentials to become a supportive partner in the region.

After the opening remarks by the representatives of the three organizing institutions, Gregor Enste from the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Friederike Bosse, Secretary General of the JDZB and Abe Nobuyasu, Director of the CPDNP, the conference was opened by a keynote speech of His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Shinyo Takahiro from the Embassy of Japan in Germany. In his speech Ambassador Shinyo pointed at the significant differences in Japan and Europe regarding security affairs. In a very elaborate manner he emphasized, that in Europe after the end of the Cold War, important political developments, such as the democratizations of Central and East European states and the further deepened integration of multilateral institutions, most notably the European Union, created a very secure environment. As a consequence, the significance of traditional security matters is decreasing in the perception of European political decision-makers. It is substituted by the emergence of non-traditional security threats, such as global terrorism, illegal migration and economic crises and threats. In contrast to Europe, however, the situation in Asia is still dominated by traditional security threats, including threats by nuclear weapons, conflicts about territorial issues and unresolved controversies about lines of state borders. According to Ambassador Shinyo this divergence in the perceptions of security leads to a lack of understanding of the situation in East Asia for European decision-makers. To illustrate the “eurocentric” view of European actors vis-à-vis the security situation in East Asia he highlighted two examples: Firstly, the so-called “rise of China” does not only mean more economic influence but also more international political influence and power of China. The more influence China gains, the more will it formulate political demands, such as a lift of the weapons embargo and the complete acceptance of China as a market economy. While European decision-makers tend to solely focus on the economic opportunities of China’s rise, Japanese political actors also consider the negative security related aspects of this development. As a second example Ambassador Shinyo mentioned the negotiations between the NATO and Russia regarding nuclear disarmament. Instead of aiming at a global solution of the problem, the NATO member-states aim for a withdrawal of Russian nuclear weapons only from their borders in Europe. While Ambassador Shinyo welcomes the idea of a reduction of nuclear weaponry, he wonders where the Russian weapons will move to after they left European territory. They will probably be moved to Russia’s Asian borders and thus destabilize the security situation there. Unfortunately the consequences of the NATO-Russian negotiations for Asia do not seem to be of interest for European governments. Therefore, Ambassador Shinyo insistently asks for a closer and more intensive dialogue between Europe and Japan on security affairs to overcome differences regarding

security related preferences and to deepen the mutual cooperation on these issues. He furthermore emphasized the common values of Europe and Japan, especially regarding the economic crisis of extreme capitalism that endangers prosperity and democracy in both regions. Europe and Japan need to work together on gathering new ideas and a new thinking to overcome these serious problems.

After the very thought-provoking keynote speech of Ambassador Shinyo the first session highlighted “the Security Situation in North-East Asia, North Korea and China”. It was initially set up for the purpose of deepening the knowledge on the security situation in North East Asia and how it might affect Germany and Europe.

As the first speaker Professor Axel Berkofsky (University of Pavia/Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI)) offered a very detailed description of the so-called ‘National Defense Program Guidelines’ that were released in December 2010 by the Japanese Ministry of Defense to outline Japan’s ten-year defense strategy. The new guideline replaced the country’s ‘Basic Defense Forces Concept’ first formulated in 1976 with the new concept as a ‘Dynamic Defense Force’. This includes a changed focus of attention from Japan’s northern to its southwestern borders. Nonetheless, Professor Berkofsky concludes that although there occur minor changes, Japan’s defense and security policy principle does not alter fundamentally. It is still based on the main pillar of a ‘defensive defense policy’.

The subsequent presentation by Abe Nobuyasu, Director of the Center for Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (CPDNP), extracted three main concerns with reference to Japan’s security: Firstly Professor Abe demands a stronger cooperation between the US, South Korea and Japan in defending against the North Korean threat. He also invited the EU members to enter a constructive dialogue to find solutions for the critical situation on the Korean Peninsular. The second concern is related to the enormous emergence of China as a new political, economic and military heavyweight. According to Professor Abe, especially the military build-up of the Chinese army threatens Japanese security. Thirdly, the enduring crisis of the economic and financial structure in Japan might lead to significant cuts in the Japanese defense budget, which as a consequence weakens the Japanese position in East Asia. Again, a stronger cooperation between Japan and Europe in general and Germany in particular were judged as crucial for solving these issues.

As final speaker of the session Viola von Cramon, Member of the German Parliament (Green Party), enriched the discussion with the perspective of a political practitioner. She acknowledged the Japanese claim for a

stronger engagement of European governments in security affairs of the East Asian region. Simultaneously she also emphasized that Japan by itself should mark its foreign and security policy concerns more offensively in multilateral forums. In conclusion, she strongly agreed to the necessity of a deeper, more intensive and more multi-faceted political dialogue between Japanese and German decision-makers.

In the following discussion Dr. Tidten (SWP) underlined the significance of Russia in the security agendas of Germany and Japan and emphasized that especially dealing with Russian nuclear potentials is a link between German and Japanese security interests, especially since Russia is one of the closest neighbors to both countries.

The second session focused on "Strengthening Regional Security in Asia-Pacific", which gave attention to security efforts based on multilateral agreements in East Asia. As first presenter Vice Admiral (ret) Kaneda Hideaki (Director of the Okazaki Institute) gave a talk about the serious tensions that have arisen in the South China Sea. In this area territorial issues and border conflicts among numerous actors, including especially China, many South East Asian states, Japan and the US, destabilize the security of the whole region. In Vice Admiral Kaneda's interpretation of the situation these tensions gave momentum to start a "cool war" between the US and China that eventually will also involve member states of ASEAN. To avoid serious escalations, such as military clashes, according to Kaneda, multilaterally negotiated common guidelines for military activities are needed to stabilize the situation.

Dr. Gudrun Wacker (Asia Division of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)) illuminated the development of a new security architecture in Asia, which is currently based on the 'hub and spoke'-system centered on the US as the hub and its most important partners (Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and Taiwan as a quasi-ally) as the spokes. Anyway, there are other regional organizations that are mainly based on the most integrated regional institution ASEAN, such as ASEAN+3, the East Asian Summit (EAS) or the ASEAN Regional Forum. There is some dynamism towards new connections observable, though, on the bilateral (Japan-Australia, Japan-South Korea, Japan-Vietnam, Japan-India, Australia-India) as well as on the trilateral (US-Japan-South Korea, US-Japan-Australia) and quadrilateral level (US-Japan-Australia-India). These new connections are seen as reactions to China's rise and include hedging strategies of China's neighbors. However, according to Dr. Wacker, these organizations are not capable to work on traditional (territorial issues, nuclearization, arms race) and non-traditional (natural disasters,

transnational crime, piracy, terrorism, pandemics) security issues effectively and thus need to be modernized. This includes, for example, a stronger engagement of the EU in the EAS as an external partner or in the Regional Forum.

Finally Professor Ikegami Masako (Stockholm University) offered her view on “Searching for Peace in the Asia-Pacific at the Era of New Imperialism”. In her view on the security situation in East Asia, rising China follows the path of ‘stealth imperialism’ by adopting pre-war Japan’s Manchukuo policy. This policy includes a huge economic investment, potential military intervention to defend its economic interests, and virtual absorption/annexation by staging a puppet state. Although Professor Ikegami sees a lack of shared security interests among East Asian states, she judges the recent ASEAN Defense Minister’s Meeting as a useful platform for a regional security dialogue in reaction to China’s rise, in which Japan can play a significant role. Especially adopting Germany’s role throughout the Cold War provides inspiration to Japan’s potential contribution for conflict prevention. Thus, a closer interchange and cooperation between Germany and Japan is seen as beneficial for the security environment in East Asia.

The last session highlighted the “European-Japanese Dialogue on Security Affairs”. Klaus Vietze from the German Foreign Office offered an interesting view from the practitioner’s side. He emphasized the various forums, in which the EU and Japan already work together very closely, such as the EU-Japan Security Dialogue. Additionally there are strong connections between both countries on other stages of cooperation, for example regarding the joint effort to reform the UNSC or Germany’s support for Japan’s initiative on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Vietze also accentuated that Japan and Germany are in a very similar situation regarding China’s rise since both countries have strong economic ties with China. He made a very clear statement that although there occur serious tensions with China, especially regarding territorial issues, China is far from being interested in confrontation. On the contrary, the Chinese leadership offers an indeed very pragmatic and non-confrontational approach in its foreign relations. Thus, Vietze clarified that there is in no way anything close to a “cold war situation”.

As the last speaker of the multi-faceted conference Professor Ueta Takako (International Christian University, Tokyo) thanked the EU-members for their strong support for Japan after the triple disaster of March 11. She saw it as symbolic for the very close relations between the EU and Japan. She saw various potentials to work together productively for example on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, regarding the negotiations

about the EU lifting of the arms embargo on China, or the Japan-EU cooperation in the field of disaster recovery and preparedness.

In conclusion, the conference offered a widespread view on various options of Japan-EU and Japan-Germany cooperation in the security arena. Nonetheless, it also became obvious that there are still a lot of misunderstandings and differences of interpretations regarding the security situation in Asia between the EU and Japan. Therefore, a regular and intensive exchange of ideas about security affairs is desired and needed, for example by exchanging representatives to the respective regional security conferences and forums.