

新時代、「積極的平和主義」の日本の海外国際平和活動戦略転向と平和・支援・救助のバランスング

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Japanese Overseas Missions in the Era of ‘Pro-active Pacifism’: Balancing Strategic Shift with Peace, Assistance, and Relief

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Abstract

この論文は日本国際安全保障活動と国内や海外の安倍政権の改革を調べる。「積極的平和主義」といわれている安倍政権のアプローチが戦略的な政策に、または日中、日朝関係、それで日米安保の要求にもどういった影響があるか。そして、日本の国際安全保障について、国連のPKOから通常戦力にどういった役割があるかを評価する。本論文はHA/DR「人道支援活動/災害救援」活動や能力が国内・外の安全保障活動のベースにして、新パートナーシップを日本の不安定な立場を強固にする。

This article evaluates Japanese International Security Activities particularly in the period of Abe-administration security reforms. It examines ‘Pro-active Pacifism’ within strategic policy, the challenges of China and North Korea, and US alliance demands. International security activities from peace to conventional military operations are evaluated. It suggests HA/DR operations and capacities as security activities to indicate how Japan is attempting to build new partnerships to buttress its seemingly insecure regional position.

Introduction

The government of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo has within three years seemingly fundamentally changed the Japanese security landscape and challenged post-war socio-political norms. It has created a new national security management mechanism, published a National Security Strategy, reinterpreted the constitution to allow collective self-defence, and passed laws that operationalize this redefinition allied to

newly strengthened Japan-US Security Guidelines. This was achieved despite deep public disquiet provoking nationwide demonstrations not seen since the Vietnam War.

Abe has repeatedly stated that the reforms reinforced Japan's security and its ability to act as a responsible actor in defence of international law, highlighting peacekeeping and maritime safety as areas of potential Japanese contribution. However, since his policies have generated such critical reactions, has Abe crafted a paradox of greater legal capability yet eroded legitimacy to dispatch Japanese forces on overseas missions? As of late 2017, Japan has no Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) personnel in peace operations due to the withdrawal from South Sudan, leading to speculation as to whether 'PKO' was an excuse for legal reforms, or if government international engagement policy has changed? This paper examines Japanese overseas mission options, implications for partners, and the potential for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions to become a core operational focus for Japan and its global partners.

Options

The options before Mr. Abe are clearly far from ideal. The government has attempted 'salami slicing tactics' to reduce the influence of pacifist norms, each reform seeming relatively innocuous, but collectively having significant effects, thus avoiding monolithic confrontations. These included replacement of the chairman of broadcaster NHK, ever greater restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology on social studies and history education, and placing key Abe allies in such positions as the head of the newly established National Security Council (NSC) and the Cabinet Legislative Bureau (CLB). This latter, "changed the nature of the legislation bureau that had maintained a certain degree of independence as a group of legal experts".¹⁾

The ground work for the security reforms was laid long before 2015, with Abe and his allies building support for such measures while in opposition, and also adopting reform measures proposed under the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) governments of Kan and Noda (2010-2012). Addressing functional issues within a framework of a strategic reform, Abe reconstituted the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, which he had established in 2007, and the report of which Prime Minister Fukuda politely shelved. The reconstituted panel recommended revision of the interpretation of the ban on the exercise of the right of collective self-defence (CSD), although not the extreme measure Communists claimed.²⁾ It became clear that the panel held the complex issues of 'grey zone' operations, such as territorial intrusion by non-military forces or para-military units, to be of paramount concern, exposing the gaps between existing legislation and capabilities.³⁾ However, the pathway from the report, through CSD reinterpretation, to the 2015 bills prompted some of panel members to scathingly remark upon how their recommendations and several of the attempts to operationalize them had been

misinterpreted or misunderstood.⁴⁾

The long and bitter campaign to pass security legislation in 2015 was characterised by the Abe administration attempting to declare a major necessity through the depiction of two security crisis scenarios. The first was the need to rescue Japanese nationals in a distant state due to the outbreak of conflict, the second the potential requirement to join an international coalition for minesweeping in the Straits of Hormuz. The major problem for the staff working in the Cabinet Office and ministries to justify the legal changes was that the more obvious crisis scenarios were prohibited from official discourse, and only slipped out in minor ministerial gaffes. These were primarily related to Chinese aggression or territorial-resource demands in the East China Sea (ECS) or South China Sea (SCS) either directly challenging Japanese sovereignty, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) rights, or restricting free passage of Japanese maritime trade, or the potential for North Korean attacks upon Japan or the Republic of Korea (ROK). The minor problem that the rescue and Hormuz scenarios posed was that Japan had already conducted such operations (on a limited scale) under existing legislation, and neither appeared then or later to pose an existential threat to Japan, the supposed basis for the new security laws.

Government options have not been greatly broadened since 2015. JSDF Overseas Dispatch Operations (ODO) can be generally classified as being of four types:

- 1 UN Peace Operations, most commonly Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKO) although JSDF actually conduct Peace Support Operations (PSO)
- 2 Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Relief (HA/DR) Operations
- 3 Allied Support Operations (ASO), of various purposes and configurations
- 4 Counter-Terrorism Operations (CTO), generally subsumed within ASO.

Restrictions remain on all of these operations, yet ASO appears the obvious area for Japanese activities to expand. Of the range of measures included within the 2015 legislation there was only one new instrument, the International Peace Support Law (IPSL: *Kokusaiheiwā Shienhō*), the other articles being revisions to existing laws. The IPSL is an umbrella instrument that provides for passage of enabling dispatch legislation within seven days in each House of the Diet, and for such legislation to require renewal within two years of passage to maintain an overseas mission.⁵⁾ In this respect it is in some ways more restrictive than the preceding 1992 International Peace Cooperation Law (IPCL).

The envisaged scope of these laws is less ambitious than Abe critics often assume. JSDF 'new security law' (NSL) operations could include logistical support for US forces engaged in counter-terrorism operations or assisting a third nation, but enabling legislation has provided for such contingencies since 2001, albeit not as standing instruments but as limited, *ad hoc* laws, under the IPCL umbrella. The NSL justification emphasised countering ballistic missile attacks, North Korea (DPRK) remaining anonymous.

The supposed requirement for new legislation was that previous prohibition of CSD had limited JSDF legal rights to intercept missiles targeting the US mainland or territories (such as Guam) rather than Japanese territory, although the scale of deployments of ballistic missile defence (BMD) systems around the time of every possible DPRK launch that this legal and constitutional interpretation actually seemed irrelevant to policy, and the actual effects upon missile interceptions unclear.⁶⁾

Other NSL operations are envisaged to include similar support roles to US forces engaged in countering an attack by the DPRK upon the ROK, a contingency explored in the controversial 1963 *Mitsuya Kenkyū* (Three Arrows) JSDF staff study.⁷⁾ While it is easily imaginable that escalation could broaden and deepen Japanese involvement in a Korean conflict there appears little likelihood that the JSDF would be permitted to fight on Korean soil due to ROK objections, Japanese involvement more likely resembling that in 1950-1953. This is far from ideal, based upon Korean anti-Japanese colonial prejudice and nationalism, but also as up to several hundred Japanese civilians are believed to have died during the Korean War under US military command.⁸⁾

Implications for partners

United Nations Peace Operations (UNPO) partners would probably be reassured by the review of the interpretation on CSD, for in the past the prohibition had resulted in JSDF refusals to cooperate, including to help construct a camp for an African infantry battalion, or to help search for missing infantry personnel, both based upon the danger that participation could taint the JSDF as 'belligerents', in breach of Article 9.⁹⁾ However, the JSDF practiced almost constant *de facto* collective self-defence in UNPO, from JSDF camp locations beside French infantry (Cambodia, Zaire), to other contingent escorting JSDF units (Mozambique), and embedding within the main mission and integrated in the mission security structure (Golan Heights). This CSD practice without principle reached its peak in Iraq, with the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) contingent strongly backed by Australian, British, and Dutch troops, Japanese troops operating within a GSDF security bubble, within an allied-security-bubble.

Such were the risks encountered in each mission that in the post-Iraq deployment period the GSDF staff robustly declined government ODO plans without a fundamental review of laws and operational limitations. The exception to this resistance was the 2012 dispatch to South Sudan, Noda forcing through dispatch after two failed attempts by previous governments, but with Japanese forces remaining in the safest areas, for limited engineering tasks.

The US

The most important partner Japanese ODO has been the United States, as it is the dominant partner in

the bilateral security alliance and provided Japan's primary defence from 1945.¹⁰⁾ "The Security Treaty has probably been the single most discussed issue of postwar Japanese foreign policy", and Japan has "always regarded its relations with the U.S. as the kingpin of its foreign policy, even while trying to make the relationship less irksome".¹¹⁾ It remains the kingpin of Japanese security and strategy and why successive governments have sought to align Japan policies with those of the US, and to reduce the US perception of burden and frustration often felt with Japan. The guideline revisions (1978, 1996) were motivated to make Japan appear a more reliable security partner.

The problems encountered have become familiar: warm rhetoric, raised expectations, deflated hopes, a period of cooling and stasis, followed by a renewed revision and hope. The common perception is that the frustration and deflation have been felt by the US side, but Japanese frustrations have also been palpable. Ever greater US demands with little consideration for domestic political costs, or Japanese requirements. During the negotiation of the 1996 Guidelines revision, the Japanese side fought hard for a concession to include US assistance for JSDF ODO, eventually conceded, but the envisaged support was noticeably absent. The only JSDF ODO which received significant US logistical support was the post-Hurricane Mitch disaster relief (DR) mission in 1998, which involved half the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) C-130s flying via US bases. In UNPO there has been no significant US support for the JSDF, despite UNPO being initiated to meet US demands for Japanese international burden sharing, the 1992 Cambodia dispatch being directly related to the multinational critical invective directed at Japan during and after the Gulf War.

Japan took two years to pass the 1992 IPCL, the Forces being waved off to Cambodia by families and yelled at by peace protestors. The JSDF conducted themselves with more decorum than most Cambodia UNPO contingents, worked effectively, and even expanded its duties from those of timid to expansive engineers and providers of broader security, and were warmly welcomed home by some of their former critics. By 1996, Japan had participated in four ODO but Washington had apparently lost interest in UNPO and HA/DR. Changing US expectations and an emerging consensus concerning the tangible threats from China and DPRK provoked various political parties to consider security reforms. While less radical and much less the creation of Abe and his cohorts than often characterised, the reforms of 2014-2016 require deeper examination.

Abe Security Programmes: a man with a mission

Many have been surprised by the Abe security reforms. Conservative-realists have been somewhat oddly satisfied with Japanese security policies, possibly for the first time, as Japan finally has apparently devised a cogent strategy uniting economic, diplomatic, and military elements and mechanisms by which to ensure this strategy remains focused and in accord with US strategy. Liberal-pacifists have found

themselves generally appalled by this programme of security reforms, but not entirely in the ways predicted. The expected onslaught against Article 9 of the constitution, did not immediately materialise, but the rapid series of innovations overpowered the considerable opposition that they engendered, 'the left' being both shaken and yet stirred. Their defeat was clear, and yet the reforms had empowered and united a previous and a new generation of dissenters. Certainly, there can have been few in the US prior to 2012 imagining that security reforms would come so thick and fast and in the face of such determined opposition in Japan, where reforms proceeded glacially, painfully navigated to avoid turbulent waters of dissent. There have been plenty of keen observers in Asia who have been astonished by developments in Japan, from the welcoming embrace of Vietnam and the Philippines, cautious acknowledgement of Korea, and disdainful warnings of China. None have failed to notice the change, nor the pace, but few agree on the direction and significance.

One of the more startling things has been the degree of continuity with preceding policies. This may seem contradictory, but preceding cabinets, possibly since those of Yoshida Shigeru, provided indications of the directions that Japanese policy was taking. The real innovation under Abe has been the coalescence of a range of innovations into one seemingly coordinated whole, forming a (relatively) cogent strategy, and sense of imperative purpose that was quite startling. One element of continuity is JSDF ODO. Commencing from 1991, these expanded in size, range, and scope under socialist, liberal, and conservative administrations, for they were truly the 'one size fits all' utility policy device. They demonstrated international solidarity, burden sharing valuable for a permanent seat on the UNSC, Japanese-US solidarity (in ASO/CTO), and affirmed Japan's international pacific liberalist credentials. The JSDF became renowned as niche providers of unglamorous 'civilian' HA/DR tasks such as rescue and water purification. Their proficiency is almost completely due to the demands placed on their skills by the nature and frequency of domestic disasters. There have been assertions that JSDF ODO constituted a remilitarisation of Japanese policy.¹²⁾ These assertions might appear ridiculous when less than 40 JSDF personnel loaded freight in Mozambique. Yet when viewed as elements within a stream of operational development which appears to have reached some point of preliminary realisation under the Abe government, this stance is more understandable. Japanese foreign and security policies can be seen to have become partly militarised, although not to the extent of the UK under Tony Blair.

JSDF ODO

Kent Calder in 1988 drew attention to the seemingly abnormal nature not only of Japanese defence spending but also decision making processes. There was seemingly little public imperative to maintain defence spending nor benchmark levels of defensive power as there were always political and social forces prioritising civilian, non-defence issues, with little pro-defence lobby in politics or society.¹³⁾ He

identified JSDF development was usually driven by external rather than internal factors, with strong US involvement, until the early 1990s when Japan's defence budget was probably the third largest and its navy one of the most capable, and yet the enduring image was of a civilian, pacific state. It seemed that Japan had crossed the Rubicon in heavy disguise.

JSDF UNPO were initially avoided for fear of contravening the spirit of the constitution, as defined by the CLB and SDF Law, which forbade non-training overseas dispatch.¹⁴⁾ A UN peacekeeping bill had been drafted in 1966, but shelved for political sensitivities, the first UNPO dispatch being two diplomats in 1988.¹⁵⁾ The eventual passage of the IPCL in June 1992, appointed the JSDF as primary state representatives, amidst great protest.¹⁶⁾ 'Piggybacking' the IPCL with the Disaster Relief Reform Bill and the ODA Charter framed IPC/ODO within a palatably liberal-internationalist context.¹⁷⁾ ODO conditions were restrictive, based upon political acceptability rather than operational utility. Five conditions, the 'Peacekeeping Principles', required an operating ceasefire, consent of all parties, mission neutrality, minimal use of force, and withdrawal if the previous four conditions were voided. Three 'frozen activities' concerning disarmament, weapon disposal, and patrolling and monitoring in buffer zones were permitted from November 2001 in the wake of the 9.11 terror attacks. The Five Peacekeeping Principles remain, although increasingly loosely interpreted (as in Iraq), and the Japanese case is scarcely unique, as Italy and Germany ban military crowd-control duties, British troops cannot protect property with lethal force, and Finland shares Japan's ODO 2000 troop limit. Japan's limitations are widely considered to be highly restrictive, although with little understanding of the flexibility in implementation, but they lack cogent doctrine, and most ODO require *ad hoc* legislation under the IPCL 'umbrella' thus greatly hindering rapid-reaction missions. Up to 1992, 40 Japanese civilians participated in five UN missions, and since then JSDF personnel have participated in nine UNPO, totalling approximately 10,000 personnel.

Although administered by the Cabinet Office International Peace Cooperation Headquarters (IPCH), up to 2007 MOFA primarily shaped and directed JSDF ODO, with the MOD consequently largely displacing that influence. No interviewee has suggested that JSDF capability has been a substantial determinant of mission selection, but since 1994 Mission Investigation Team (MIT) assessments have assumed greater significance in dispatch approvals.¹⁸⁾ Operations from Somalia to Sudan were considered but consistently failed to meet the short-safe-significant mission profile, and as previously stated the UN repeatedly requested a JSDF contingent for Sudan-South Sudan supported by Japan's huge helicopter force, but the two proposals by government were effectively snuffed out by the GSDF staff, and the eventual UNMISS deployment was of the Cambodia-pattern without aviation assets.¹⁹⁾ Japan's risk-aversion prompted the withdrawal from the Golan Heights despite the small JSDF contingent earning respect by their performance out of proportion to their numbers. Their manner of leaving was disappointing, withdrawn by the government at the end of 2012 due to Syrian civil war safety fears.²⁰⁾ The mission had become a statement that Japan was committed to UNPO, including *de facto* CSD, and its status as a *de facto* JSDF

operational training school.²¹⁾

Few initiatives were taken to prepare troops for local UNPO conditions, little effort made to utilize the experiences of others.²²⁾ Japan invested little in lessons-learned or PO training, the GSDF Research Staff (*kenkyūhonbu*) providing the only ‘knowledge repository’ until the small PKO Training Center was established in 2007 as a GSDF rather than joint JSDF venture. The Iraq mission was the first new mission to recycle PO experience, and the first to use a rehearsal training area (‘mini-Samawah’) prior to dispatch, despite being a common technique for decades, although Golan-specific training gradually developed into a *de facto* PKO school. The first (potential) extraction force was the Central Readiness Force (CRF) from March 2008, and even this faced the usual rapid-reaction ASDF logistic bottlenecks and legal restrictions.²³⁾

There has, unfortunately, been no equivalent dedicated HA/DR ODO training course or centre established, but the JSDF and JICA have huge experience relevant domestic experience.²⁴⁾ The problems remain largely of software (utilising HA/DR experience, language skills, developing doctrine etc.), and of hardware (particularly of long-range heavy air and sea-lift capacity), but thus far the Forces have managed to cope in their missions. Coping is not the optimum method of excelling and while JSDF HA/DR practice remains sound, if Japan is to become a leader in such missions it requires investment not only in the hardware of logistics but also in the software of education, training, doctrine, and civilian cooperation institutions. Initiatives are promising, such as utilising Japanese civilian sensor and IT capabilities for HA/DR, but these require mainstream utilisation, not as short-term ‘side projects’ of interest.²⁵⁾

JSDF HA/DR Operations:

Zaire/Rwanda	09 ~ 12/1994	First HA operation
Honduras	11 ~ 12/1998	First DR operation
Turkey	09 ~ 11/1999	MSDF transport supplies
Timor-Leste/West Timor	11/1999 ~ 02/2000	Refugee relief
Afghanistan	10/2001	ASDF transport supplies
Iraq	03 ~ 08/2003	ASDF/MSDF transport supplies
Iran	12/2003 ~ 01/2004	ASDF transport supplies
Thailand	12/2004 ~ 01/2005	MSDF destroyer tsunami relief
Indonesia	01 ~ 03/2005	Tsunami relief. First GSDF helicopter ODO, and first JSDF joint liaison/coordination centre
Russia	08/2005	Submarine rescue mission
Pakistan	10 ~ 12/2005	ASDF/GSDF transport supplies
Indonesia	06/2006	Medical-sanitation support,
Indonesia	10/2009	Medical support
Haiti	01 ~ 02/2010	Earthquake medical relief
New Zealand	02 ~ 03/2011	Earthquake medical relief
Philippines	11 ~ 12/2013	Post-typhoon relief and recovery
Ghana	12/2014	ASDF transport supplies (Ebola)
Nepal	04 ~ 05/2015	Earthquake medical relief
New Zealand	11/2016	Earthquake relief

The optimal pathway for Japanese HA/DR within a ‘Pro-active Pacifism’ approach would link ODA development, diplomatic and security partnership agreements, and mil-mil/civ-mil defence relationships creating a virtuous network of HA/DR Best Practice Development Partners and Hubs. Japan would be able to provide technical and financial assistance, and a uniquely qualified and seemingly palatable role of leadership unlike in any other policy arena.

The conduct of JSDF ODO has been technical proficient, despite logistical limitation bottlenecks, but has been criticised for risk-averse mission selection and operational conduct, not altogether explained by constitutional or legal limitations. In late 2017 JSDF personnel remain only in Djibouti, supporting MSDF anti-piracy patrols. The JSDF ODO profile has been transformed due to developments close to home, and only HA/DR remains an area of demonstrable expertise commanding (almost) universal international respect.

What has Changed and Why?

It is common to ascribe the changes in Japanese policy under Abe to the rise of China. This is often regarded as an immutable law of international relations, embodied in IR theory by the tenets of realism by which change in an existing power balance results in counter-balancing by one or more parties. The obviousness of China’s phenomenal economic and military expansion for over 20 years seems to require no further calibration or confirmation, and yet the counter-balancing has not eventuated as imagined. Policies have changed, but resources have followed more familiar patterns than is widely appreciated.

The US has obviously attempted to counter-balance increasing Chinese military power and diplomatic assertiveness with its ‘rebalancing’ or ‘pivot’ towards Asia (or from West Asia to East and South-East Asia), and equivalent measures can be identified by India and various ASEAN states. Japan, though, has not responded as might be assumed under a realist view of the East Asian ‘balance of power’ by ever greater defence spending. From 1988, the defence budget increased 33.5% to ¥4.94-trillion by 1998, despite the GSDF spending the least on equipment as it struggled to recruit and retain personnel, while the MSDF had insufficient personnel for its vessels.²⁶⁾ Japanese defence spending peaked 1998-2001, when existential threats were at their lowest, and then declined until 2011, the years of greatest Chinese growth and defence investment increases. The defence budget increases since 2012 have been limited, and have not greatly contributed to a sense of strategic ‘rebalancing’. The JSDF remain capable, the MSDF particularly highly regarded, largely due being the only Force to have constantly and intimately cooperated with its US counterpart. But in this Realist view, where is Japanese counter-balancing of China? While Japanese alarm at DPRK nuclear and missile programmes have been tangible, particularly in 2017 the core strategic dilemma remains ‘what to do about China?’

The effects of this shift on ODO have been difficult to gauge. Since the late 1980s the Japanese

government has pushed for a UNSC permanent seat but failed to build broad support, particularly from China. The Gulf War criticism did not help Japan's cause, nor the collapse of the economic bubble and consequent Japanese introspection. From at least 2007, there was a Japanese effort to retain a 10:1 ratio in UNPO with China, reflecting population ratios, but for what purpose isn't clear, and this was abandoned in 2017. China has used UNPO participation to raise profile in Africa in particular, matching its resource investments. There remains the possibility that HA/DR missions could emerge as an arena for proxy strategic competition. Slowly, Japanese policy has moved towards Abe's forthright enunciation of Japan's strategic doctrine as upholding international law, with ODO as potential evidence of 'moral supremacy'.

What is changing now?

The main changes in Japanese strategic policy have been attempts to build non-alliance 'partnerships', developing a strategy coordination of foreign, defence, aid, and economic-industrial policies, and efforts to strengthen and increasingly operationalize the US-Japan security alliance that for much of its long existence provided little more than political reassurance and a US military shield. All three have implications for JSDF ODO. There has been a proliferation of military-military exchanges and joint training exercises, and of agreements on cross servicing, status of forces, and even contingency measures. The most significant have been with Australia, both countries realising that they share many security interests and also difficulties as middle-power allies of an increasingly demanding US ally. Pressure from within and without has resulted in not only more bilateral activities, but also raising respective military profiles in the South China Sea. The relationship with India has perhaps shown the greatest transformation, for in the late 1990s MOFA scarcely acknowledged the existence of India in terms other than ODA and nuclear proliferation. The shift has been rather rapid and significant, with the maritime relationships very much to the fore, as coastguard and naval forces have engaged in significant exercises, including those in the vicinity of Okinawa in June 2016 that attracted the attention of a Chinese flotilla of naval surveillance vessels.²⁷⁾ This sense of 'developing the trilaterals' has also been extended to ASEAN nations, with the US lead being followed, in an independent and low profile manner, by JSDF defence diplomacy efforts, training exercises, and donations of former military equipment to ASEAN states.²⁸⁾ This has resulted in the MSDF being to the fore of such efforts, with significant visits to Vietnam and the Philippines in 2016, and Japan donating naval old vessels and aircraft in coordination with similar efforts by the US and Australia.²⁹⁾ The ODO relationship was built with the Philippines due to the post-typhoon DR dispatches in 2013 and 2015 and UNPO cooperation, and with Indonesia by the major JSDF dispatch in the wake of the December 2004 tsunami in the Aceh area, and later medical emergencies. These were ODO seeds for partnerships with obviously strategic aims.

The 'Soft Years' are Behind Them

The Abe administration came to power and was sustained by public hope that finally an experienced leader could finally pull the economy out of more than two decades of shallow downward spiral. After the failure of a litany of bland and brief administrations, and even of the charismatic Koizumi, Abe in his second incarnation appeared to have a plan, the 'Three Arrows' of Abenomics, but it is clear that Japan is managing decline. The 2011 triple crisis ripped growth out of the economy and wiped out balance of payment surpluses for several years, and the JSDF were stretched to their maximum by the rescue and relief efforts. This is one of the reasons why the massive US HA/DR under *Operation Tomodachi* was so greatly appreciated, displacing years of discontent with US bases and personnel in Okinawa, and also masking the significant assistance and relief efforts of other nations. This sense of the US having shared the 3.11 tragedy proved a factor in changing public perceptions of the US and of the strategic contest with China. It was notable that during passage of the 2015 NSL it was the Japanese rather than US government at the butt of public criticism.

In security terms, the certainty of US support has provided the major consolation for a relatively declining Japan facing a myriad of uncertainties. This support, has not appeared unconditional, the Senkaku Isle dispute with China in 2010 being characterised by significant uncertainty over US commitment to defend Japanese sovereignty until President Obama's declaration of 2014.³⁰⁾ The challenge now, is that the US is demanding that Japan provide a greater contribution to its own and to broader international security. This can be achieved through aid and technology transfers, through the partnership building of the past decade, and by participation in international frameworks and institutions. However, the real litmus test for the US is how willing Japan will be to engage in ODO for strategic US-Japan interests.

This is not a completely new field for the JSDF, but the palpable apprehension is that there is little conception of the limits of US demands in terms of scope of operations or international law, thereby potentially placing US priorities in conflict with stated Japanese strategic principles, nor the end state being envisaged. Japan toyed with the idea of providing token forces to the US-led operations in Afghanistan from 2006, but always resisted the temptations and requests of their ally, based upon JSDF Iraq experiences and those of partners such as Australia and Britain.³¹⁾ Japan thought the Rubicon had been crossed in 1992, only to find that there were greater obstacles to be navigated. UNPO was no longer a sufficient demonstration of fealty, nor were ODA, civilian initiatives, technology projects, nor HA/DR missions. Force had become the primary gauge.

In 'policing missions' the JSDF have a narrower range of force options short of national defence.³²⁾ MSDF vessels dispatched for anti-piracy missions each carry eight Japan Coast Guard (JCG) boarding personnel,

as the SDF Law does not allow weapon use in pursuit of the mission unless there is a direct and immediate threat to JSDF lives, and no sailor is authorised to detain any piracy suspect. This is one area in which the 2015 NSL have altered little, despite the recommendations of the expert panel. If Japanese forces were embedded within allied operations there would be pressure to adopt uniform rules of engagement (ROE). This might become most pressing in the ECS/SCS, including aviation ROE if China moved to enforce its Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the ECS (from November 2013), or a similar zone across the SCS, or for Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS).

FONOPS have been a mainstay of naval powers for centuries, based upon the arrogance of power and advantageous interpretations of international law and norms. They pose a particular problem for the MSDF and JCG in that there could be US (or ASEAN) pressure upon Japan to conduct such operations, as opposed to its existing 'transiting', as a demonstration of faith in international maritime law and solidarity with its ally and partners, such as Australia. The problem for Japan stems from China having conducted highly controversial 'FONOPS' around the Senkaku Isles, and even in the vicinity of Okinawa, despite Japanese protestations of sovereignty. As China fundamentally rejects Japanese Senkaku sovereignty, and is equivocal about Okinawa, this places Japanese objections in a complex position if it were to conduct FONOPS in the SCS, as "assistant balancer" for the US.³³⁾ Such is the stake for the Japanese economy in maritime trade, freedom of navigation, and investments in SCS resources that it would appear obvious that FONOPS would be a 'bread and butter' issue of the MSDF but it is better suited in terms of training and doctrine to war-fighting than such nuanced diplomacy.³⁴⁾ The only UNPO proponent within the Japanese government is MOFA, MOD-JSDF having largely lost interest. Enthusiasms have wilted, to the extent that withdrawal from South Sudan (May 2017) was provoked by the possibility of a scandal embarrassing a defence minister of distinctly limited ability. Hardly a strategic gambit demonstrating 'Pro-active Pacifism' in action.³⁵⁾

The social response to the security bills was predictable with a long tradition of Japanese peace-pacifist activism. Identifiable sectors of society coalesced around banners of loose coalition groups with considerable mobilisation skills and impressive discipline for such short-term collectives independent of political parties or trade unions.³⁶⁾ Participants tended to be those at the political periphery including not only the newly emergent 'SEALDs' (Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy), but also key social sector groups as OLDs (representing retirees), MIDDLEs (representing '40s ~ 50s'), and Mothers Against WAR.³⁷⁾ Given the nature of Japanese demographics, with people aged 65 or older reaching 26.7% of the population, and the far greater voter turnout among retirees, Japanese politicians became concerned.³⁸⁾ Coalition partner Komeito President Yamaguchi Natsuo received particular ire for seeming to betray the liberal-pacifist roots of its Soka Gakkai base, and for perpetrating the image of Komeito as 'the brake' within the cabinet on the revisionist Abe.³⁹⁾ SEALDS, OLDs, and others failed to block the NSL, commentator, and Buddhist nun Setouchi Jakucho being particularly critical of a 'pliant media'

media, but their impact upon society is something that could not be easily dismissed.⁴⁰⁾

Conclusion

If Japan wished to launch an initiative in international relations, emphasizing its strengths, demonstrating leadership and proficiency, and able to utilise this to demonstrate value to the US and a challenge to increasing Chinese diplomatic dominance, one area that remains a possibility is HA/DR. This is at the very softest end of ‘hard power’, but is the only military realm in which Japan can claim unique international expertise and operationalize the 2015 NSL without raising concerns of dragging the country into war, infringing international law, or provoking China or the DPRK into harsh or rash reactions. Japan has the potential to be the depository of HA/DR lessons-learned, the leader among partners in doctrine and best practice development, ensuring extant norms and international law remain central to multinational operations. It would require investment in hardware, software, and institutions, but far less than for imperfect missile defence plans, and would be popular with the Japanese public in the wake of JSDF HA/DR ODO and 2011 3.11 Triple Disaster and *Tomodachi*.

It would not solve Japan’s economic problems, the rise of China dilemma, DPRK’s threats, nor how to manage an erratic Trump-era US, but the other policy options involve choices the Japanese government appears unlikely or unwilling to make. Greatly increased defence spending would satisfy the US, for some time, but would antagonise the DPRK and China, and the Ministry of Finance, while adopting “less masculine, and civilianized identities” for the JSDF through HA/DR would scarcely antagonise Japan’s neighbours, even if the White House might be less enamoured.⁴¹⁾ Japan would not be required to disarm, but simply place more emphasis upon complimentary JSDF HA/DR niche skills while retaining ‘hard core’ capabilities. Partnerships could be provided a functional core, for in the era of climate change and (non-Japanese) population rises, more people are likely to be endangered by extreme natural phenomena, particularly in the Asia-Pacific, and with key partners already undertaking related exercises with Japan.⁴²⁾

Even such presently lukewarm partners, such as Korea and Thailand, would find it far easier to engage with the JSDF through international HA/DR cooperation than ‘hard’ military exercises. HA/DR could provide a force enhancement opportunity for the JSDF, as it would emphasise logistics, amphibiousity, and joint training and doctrine development, issues the US has urged the government and JSDF to address for conventional military operations, HA/DR enabling functional capability enhancement.

HA/DR is not the panacea for Japanese strategy. It is merely an option, relatively low-cost and low risk, socially and internationally acceptable, to burnish the reputation of the JSDF and of Japan as an international pacific-liberal pro-active actor. It could become the embodiment of ‘Pro-active Pacifism’.

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