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Japan's Defense Policy and the Asia-Pacific Region

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It is my great honor to be invited to speak this evening. Thank you for coming to this program. Before speaking about today's subject, please allow me to say a few words on the triple tragedies which have happened to us and which are raising insurmountable challenges to us the Japanese. As a Japanese citizen, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for Canadian people's overwhelming warm gesture in sending donations and letters of encouragement for Japan and the displaced people in the devastated areas.

The Earthquake Disaster

The combination of the 9.0 magnitude earthquake with over 15-meter-high tsunami that attacked the 300-kilometer-long seashores in the Northeastern Region on March 11 caused the largest natural disaster in Japan's recent history. We will probably have nearly 30,000 victims. About 350,000 suddenly have become homeless and are staying at over 1,200 evacuation centers.

The third part of the disaster is that four nuclear reactors in the Fukushima Daiichi plant located on seashores stopped functioning and released radiation with hydrogen explosion and cooling water leakages. The government announced that the severity of conditions at the reactors was Level 5 on a 7-level international scale. Level 5 was rated for the Three Mile Island disaster in 1979, whereas the Chernobyl fiasco in 1986 was rated Level 7. The situation in Fukushima Daiichi seems improving with brave firefighters and SDF members going closely to the damaged reactors and pouring tons of water into the reactors and spent fuel pools. In fact, the nuclear crisis is becoming an international concern, although I must say that there are exaggerated reports in some foreign media.

This whole tragedy raises several important questions for national security. First, natural calamity, especially large-scale earthquake and tsunami, are indeed a national security issue for Japan. Japan should prepare stronger safeguards against big earthquakes. Second, the role of the armed forces is indispensable to cope with natural disaster. Our armed forces rescued over 10,000 stranded people in the first ten days after the earthquake. Third, for countries like Japan, it may not be a wise policy to rely upon nuclear energy. At the same time, our dependence on nuclear energy contributes to the reduction of CO₂. We are in dilemma. Japan's policy should be to diversify energy resources, while improving the technology to strengthen the safety of our reactors and those reactors of other countries.

The crisis at the nuclear power plant has inflicted the fear of health hazard upon the neighboring residents, and it is a human security issue. However, the nuclear crisis also has reminded us of its impact upon national security. The incident demonstrates that adversary nations can attack any nuclear power plant with missiles and accomplish the same impact as using nuclear bombs. They do not have to possess nuclear bombs for themselves. This is a serious issue. How can Japan protect its 54 nuclear reactors?

The new National Defense Program Guidelines, which was adopted in December last year, is the first defense policy document that the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government has produced. The recent earthquake will compel the government to review the document, because it has not given sufficient attention to the large-scale disaster. The Kan government has ordered the Ministry of Defense to mobilize 100,000 soldiers to the devastated areas to rescue displaced people, remove demolished houses, clear roads, and provide daily needs. This number amounts to about 42 percent of the entire armed forces or 60 percent of the Ground Self-Defense Force. This also raises the question of whether such huge concentration of forces in one area is really appropriate for defense of the nation, when Japan is concerned about North Korea, China, and increasingly Russia again. For the last two years, the security environment of East Asia has undergone big change, with North Korea becoming more volatile and China becoming more assertive. Russia has resumed its surveillance flights around Japan.

The New Defense Policy under the Kan Government

The defense policy formulated by the Naoto Kan government is basically a continuation of the LDP policy. For instance, the Kan government upholds constitutional limits on the use of force and the defense doctrine, which is of defensive nature, and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, the Three Principles on Arms Exports, and the alliance with the United States, and so forth.

However, surprisingly, the Kan government's defense policy takes a tough approach to China. For the first time the NDPG refers to China's military activities as "a matter of concern." In the past the LDP governments were careful not to finger-point China. This strong reference to China is in part a reflection on Japanese-Chinese tensions over Senkaku Island that happened in September last year when a Chinese fishing boat that crossed into Japanese territorial waters was arrested by the Japanese Coast Guard patrol ships.

The new policy stresses the need to defend the Southwestern Islands or Ryukyu archipelago with enhanced inter-service coordination. This is not the first review that refers to the need to reinforce the defense of the southern islands. Yet China's growing assertive diplomacy and military activities, noticeable for the last couple of years, have raised Japanese concern.

As a result, there will be greater emphasis on the Maritime Self-Defense Force than the Ground Self-Defense Force. The Ground SDF will lose about 200 tanks in order to shift financial resources to the Maritime SDF to build six more submarines. At the same time, the Ground SDF is also shifting its activities to Japan's western regions and is developing its capability to conduct landing operations for the defense of the Southwestern Islands.

Kan's new defense policy also has a new defense concept, "dynamic defense." The dynamic defense means to deploy forces to prioritized areas in Japan and prepare for multifunctional and asymmetrical missions. In other

words, the Ministry of Defense wants to deploy forces flexibly, effectively, and efficiently, since future security threats are not likely to be clear-cut. The current decision to deploy 100,000 SDF forces to the Northeastern Region is a good demonstration of the new defense concept. However, the new concept basically should be applied to China, North Korea and Russia.

Coping with China's Growing Military Power

China's defense budget has increased by the annual rate of over 10% for the last 20 years. In early March, China announced that its defense budget for the next year would be 13.7% increase over the previous year. This means that the defense budget has increased by almost eight times in the last 20 years. PLA has purchased and built new destroyers and submarines, and it has announced a plan to build as many as six aircraft carriers by 2020.

What is even more serious is that since mid-2009 Chinese leaders have begun to take assertive stand in pursuing its national interests, now that they have caught up in economic power. Chinese media also have become very patriotic. China's diplomacy and PLA naval activities have become more assertive than before. China persistently protected its interests in COP15, which was held in Denmark in late 2009. China refuses to cooperate with the U.S. call for revaluation of Yuan. Its naval harassment toward Vietnamese fishing boats in the South China Sea caused tensions between China and ASEAN countries last year. In April last year China sent a fleet of naval ships into the Pacific and let a naval helicopter fly so close to a Japanese naval ship. There are a few other examples of this kind.

When the Japanese Coast Guard arrested Chinese fishing crew in September last year, China took tough, intimidating measures: It instructed 10,000 Chinese people to cancel their planned sightseeing trips to Japan, arrested four Japanese company men for taking pictures of allegedly prohibited military sites, summoned the Japanese ambassador to the Foreign Ministry office in midnight, and abruptly suspended exports of rare earth materials to Japan. The Kan government finally released all of Chinese crew, including the captain. These intimidating measures taken by

China damaged Japanese-Chinese relations.

As I mentioned before, the current Defense Review places emphasis on the defense of Japan's southern archipelago. It plans to increase the number of submarines from 16 to 22. It also wants to deploy more fighters to the area for a stronger air defense. On March 2 this year Chinese fighters approached the Japanese airspace over the southwest islands. On March 7 a Chinese helicopter, which belonged to the State Oceanic Administration, flew as close as about 200 yards (70 meters) and as low as 120 feet (40 meters) above the water around a Japanese destroyer near Okinawa. A Chinese helicopter flew again on March 25.

Coping with the Korean Peninsula

North Korea is another area of security concern, to which the new concept of "dynamic defense" should be applied. Its political process and its foreign and security policies lack in transparency. And its erratic behavior such as Cheonan blasting and Yongpyeong shooting as well as missile and nuclear tests and frequent hostile references to Japan concern Tokyo seriously. Japan carefully watches signs of political disruption in Pyongyang, if not the collapse of the regime, which may destabilize north-south relations.

On February 14, two days before the Dear Leader Kim Jong-Il's birthday, there were groups of residents in a few cities demonstrated on streets, demanding "light (electricity) and rice." On March 18, two days after Kim Jong-Il's birthday, at a border town, Sinuiju, several hundreds of people clashed with the police, protesting a policeman's brutal treatment of a merchant selling goods on the street. The merchant's family became angry, and they were joined by the people on the street. They were apparently severely crushed by the authorities. These demonstrations in North Korea were affected by the demonstrations in the Middle East. The North Korean authorities are apparently really concerned about the people's grievances, which may develop to be wide disruptive activities against the regime.

What kind of role can the Self-Defense Forces play for the peace and security in the Korean peninsula? Since it will basically retain the posture of

strictly defensive defense, it cannot send its troops to the Korean peninsula. However, it can provide logistical support to the U.S. forces in a non-combat area, in non-military areas such as food, medical aid, etc. It can also give logistical support to the U.S. operations to evacuate American nationals in South Korea. SDF can also provide goods and services for the South Korean forces, if the two forces sign ACSA (acquisition and cross-servicing agreement).

Although Japanese troops cannot go to the Korean peninsula, the Japanese Maritime SDF and the Coast Guard can conduct inspection on suspicious ships in the Sea of Japan or the East China Sea, if they are authorized by the UN.

The United States may like to see SDF fighting shoulder to shoulder with the U.S. forces, since the peace and security of the Korean peninsula is directly linked to Japanese security. But due to constitutional limits and South Koreans' reserved attitude toward Japanese forces, Japan finds it impossible to join the American operations today.

In the future Japan may develop a pre-emptive strike capability against North Korean missile sites, by justifying such capability as part of self-defense. Some of the Japanese jet fighters are now equipped with in-flight refueling devices, so they can fly to North Korean targets and come back. Longer-range cruise missiles may also be necessary.

The Alliance with the United States

To cope with the growing security concerns that North Korea and China present, it is in Japan's interest to develop a stronger alliance with the United States. The Marine Corp air station in Futenma, Okinawa is supposed to be relocated, but Prime Minister Hatoyama mishandled the issue, and it will be some time before it can find solution. While the Futenma issue remains unresolved, the two governments are working to identify "common strategic objectives" in coping with North Korea and the rise of China.

A closer alliance should benefit both Japan and the United States. But what do we mean by “a closer alliance”? The U.S. expects Japan to become a normal ally and let its forces fight together in armed conflicts, whereas Japan is restrained in using force due to the domestic pacifist resistance. Here’s an important source of latent tensions between the two governments.

However, there are some cases where Japan’s constitutional constraints are virtually being relaxed. The Anti-Piracy Law, which was adopted in 2009, allows for the Maritime Self-Defense Force ships to help defend non-Japanese commercial ships being threatened by pirates off Somalia. This is “a combat area,” in which the past laws prohibited Japanese naval ships to be involved. This law may open a possibility to allow for Japanese naval ships to help non-Japanese naval ships in a combat area in the future.

Japanese-Canadian Cooperation for Peace and Security

It is in Japan’s interest to go beyond the alliance with the United States. Japan today seeks to connect the Japan-US bilateral security relationships to India, Australia, and South Korea. Japan has ACSA with Australia and is negotiating one with South Korea. There are talks about Japanese and Australian forces conducting joint exercises at the US base in Guam. Where does Canada fit in the Asia-Pacific security architecture?

Canada has strong alliance ties with the United States. NORAD is a good example, in which Canada and the US share command. On September 11, 2001 a Canadian officer had his turn and commanded NORAD to defend the North American airspace. Canada is an active member of NATO. It sends 2,800 troops to Afghanistan as part of ISAF.

In November 2010, Prime Ministers Naoto Kan and Stephen Harper signed the Joint Declaration on Political, Peace and Security Cooperation, which listed 12 items for joint work. Japan and Canada are on the same side of most international security issues. Through increased consultations such as high-level foreign ministry talks, Pol-Mil and Mil-Mil talks, the two

countries can enhance the level of cooperation and coordination. The two governments can begin to see implications of a new Bering Sea route which may be opened by the ice-free Arctic Sea for the Northern Pacific. The two governments can also explore how they can cooperate in helping Mongolia develop mining industries.

Concluding Remarks

The future of the Asia-Pacific security will be determined by the trilateral relationship among Japan, the US and China. Japan and the US as allies should not confront China, but they should hedge against China if the latter moves to be hegemonic. Japan should strengthen relations with other like-minded nations such as Canada, India, Australia, South Korea, and ASEAN countries and work for regional multilateral security arrangements. However, the base for such arrangements should be supported by the alliance between Japan and the United States.