Wishnu Mahendra Wiswayana
Dinamika Permasalahan Laut Timur Selatan & Tantangan Serius terhadap Ide Poros Maritim Dunia

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Isu Bencana dan Prinsip-Prinsip Humanitarian Dalam Studi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional

Ni Luh Bayu Purwa Eka Payani
Pengaruh Serangan 9/11 terhadap Perkembangan Dinamika Keamanan Internasional

Gema Ramadhan Bastari
Regionalisme Isu Lingkungan Asia Tenggara (1997-2000)

Noraini bt Zulkifli & Vivian Louise Forbes
Japan and The South China Sea

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Abstract

This article examines and analyses Japan’s current interest in the South China Sea, by first alluding to the historical context of that country’s involvement from the mid-1930s to the end of the Pacific War, 1945. It then outlines Japan’s energy security needs and that country’s national policy relating to securing safety for its flagged ships and those vessels assisting in promoting Japan’s export and import and the diplomatic role that Japan plays towards regional stability. Japan in their Diplomatic Bluebook stated that the priority for Japan is to guarantee the security and prosperity of the country and its people. Here, it is clear that the Japanese Government will try to do everything to give the best to ensure their survival. Japan’s interest in South China Sea is because it is deemed critical for the Japanese security.

Keywords: Japan, Energy, Maritime Security, Military, South China Sea
INTRODUCTION

The genuine concerns for and interest of Japan in the activities of the South China Sea is evident from a published document by that country’s Ministry of Defence in 2013 in which it stated that; “The independent state of a nation must be protected in order for it to maintain the determining of its own direction in politics, economy, and society, as well as its culture, tradition, and sense of values. However, peace, safety and independence cannot be secured by simply wishing for them.”

Geopolitical tensions continued to simmer in the South China Sea throughout 2013 as evident in the national and international electronic and print media and the attention given to this regional semi-enclosed sea in the numerous international and regional for held annually. After the US President Obama administration’s declaration in 2009 of a US ‘return to Asia’ stirred up regional dynamics non-claimant states, India and Japan, entered into the fray. There are various reasons for these activities: oil and gas exploration and exploitation and ensuring security of important sea routes.

First, the South China Sea is home to some of the world’s busiest sea lines of communication (SLOCs), which would be disrupted, should an armed conflict erupt. Second, there is the potential for non-claimant states to get involved in the exploration and exploitation of marine hydrocarbon reserves in the region through joint ventures with claimant states in their perceived exclusive economic zones. Third, having a voice in a major regional security issue confers prestige commensurate with regional power status. Finally, involvement in the South China Sea issue could have implications on other territorial disputes.

This present study will allude to Japan’s energy dependence and then analyse national policy of self-sufficiency, energy and maritime security, maritime self-defence and its involvement in the affairs of its southern neighbours, especially the littoral states of the South China Sea.

Japan and Its Energy Dependence

During 2010, energy needs requirements by Japan were 42 per cent oil, 22 per cent coal, 18 per cent gas, 13 per cent nuclear, and four percent of...
resources are other sources (EIA Online, 2010). From these, Japan relied on oil imports to meet about 42 percent. It also relied on LNG imports for virtually all of its natural gas demand and is the world's largest LNG importer. Actually, Japan has 32 of its owned operating terminals where majority terminals are located in Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya but the terminals are not able to accommodate the need of LNG. Indonesia became the world largest LNG exporter in the world. Japan has a large volume of imported LNG passes through the Indonesian archipelagic waters. The Japanese government ordered its Maritime Self-Defence Force (MSDF) to consider how it might protect Japanese vessels using these sea-lanes of communications.

The country was the world's third largest producer of nuclear power after the US and France before the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident in March 2011. Japan's nuclear regulator stated on Thursday, 4 July 2013, that elevating safety culture to international standards will "take a long time", days before new rules come into effect to avoid a repeat of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011.3

Japan's nuclear regulator expressed growing alarm on Wednesday, 10 July 2013, at increased contamination at the adjacent seafront of the stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station and urged the plan's operators to take protective measures.4 Fukushima's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Co., has acknowledged problems are mounting at the plant north of Tokyo, the site of the world's worst atomic disaster since Chernobyl in 1986. The company observed that the day earlier radiation levels in groundwater had soared, suggesting highly toxic materials from the plant were getting closer to the Pacific more than two years after three meltdowns triggered by a massive earthquake and tsunami. The NRA strongly suspected radiation was contaminating the Pacific, Kyodo news agency said in an earlier report from a weekly NRA commission meeting.

Japan has limited domestic energy resources and is only about 16 per cent self-sufficient and is the third largest oil

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2Raj, A. Japan's Initiatives in Security Cooperation in the Straits of Malacca on maritime security and in Southeast Asia: Piracy and Maritime Terrorism. The Japan Institute for International Affairs (JIIA), (2009)


4 Aaron Sheldrick and Kentaro Hamada ‘Japan says building nuclear safety culture will take a long time’ (05-Jul-13)
consumer in the world after the United States of America (USA) and the Peoples’ Republic of China (PRC). It is also the largest importer of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and the second largest importer of coal. The LNG and coal commodities are imported from sources in Southeast Asia and Australia, but are not limited to these geographical areas. The oil is sourced from reserves in the Persian Gulf equating to nearly 75 per cent as depicted in Figure 2.

Japan has very limited domestic oil reserves, amounting to 44 million barrels as of January 2012, according to the Oil and Gas Journal (OGJ), down from the 58 million barrels reported by OGJ in 2007. Japan’s domestic oil reserves are concentrated primarily along the country’s western coastline. Offshore areas surrounding Japan, such as the East China Sea, also contain oil and gas deposits; however, development of these zones is held up by competing territorial claims with China. While a preliminary accord was reached between the two governments in May 2008 over two fields - Chunxiao/Shirakaba and Longjing/Asunaro - in September 2010, Japan urged China to implement the agreement as tensions rose over the contested area.

Consequently, Japan relies heavily on imports to meet its consumption needs. Japan maintains government-controlled oil stocks to ensure against a supply interruption. Total strategic oil stocks in Japan were 589 million barrels at the end of December 2011, with 55 per cent being government stocks and 45 per cent commercial stocks.5

Japanese oil companies have sought participation in exploration and production projects overseas with government backing because of the country’s lack of domestic oil resources. The government’s 2006 energy strategy plan encouraged Japanese companies to increase energy exploration and development projects around the world to secure a stable supply of oil and natural gas. The Japan Bank for International Cooperation supports upstream companies by offering loans at

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favourable rates, thereby allowing Japanese companies to bid effectively for projects in key producing countries. Such financial support helps Japanese companies to purchase stakes in oil and gas fields around the world, reinforcing national supply security while guaranteeing their own financial stability. The government's goal is to import 40 per cent of the country's total crude oil imports from Japanese-owned concessions by 2030, up from the current estimated 19 per cent.

Japan's overseas oil projects are primarily located in the Middle East and Southeast Asia; however, their geographic scope is much wider. Japanese oil companies involved in exploration and production projects overseas include: Inpex, Cosmo Oil, Idemitsu Kosan Co., Japan Energy Development Corporation, Japex, Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Nippon Oil, and others. Many of these companies are involved in small-scale projects that were originally set up by JNOC. However, many are involved in high-profile upstream projects involving major investments in overseas ventures in recent years.

Most of Japan's LNG imports originate from regional suppliers in Southeast Asia, although the country has a fairly balanced portfolio with no one supplier having a market share greater than roughly 20 per cent. Japan's top five gas suppliers make up 73 per cent of the market share. After the March 2011 disaster, several suppliers from Qatar, Russia, Malaysia and Indonesia exported cargoes to Japan through swaps and diverted cargoes. Qatar, the world's largest supplier of flexible LNG, overtook Indonesia as the third largest supplier to Japan in 2011 and provided most of the additional imports needed after the earthquake under short-term agreements. Japanese utility companies signed agreements with Qatar Gas at the end of 2011 to secure longer term LNG supply.

The pie-graph in Figure 3 amply illustrates the geographical scope from which Japan sources its import of LNG to supply its domestic energy needs. Nearly 85 per cent of this importation is transported by specially designed ships navigating along the sea lanes of the South China Sea many using the geographic restrictions of straits and channels within the semi-enclosed seas of South East Asia,

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and in particular, the Indonesian and Philippine archipelagos.\footnote{UNCTAD, \textit{Review of Maritime Transport}, (2011)}

![Figure 3: Japan’s LNG imports by source (geographic region) 2011](image)

Japan installed hydroelectric generating capacity of 48 GW in 2009, accounting for about 16 per cent of total electricity capacity. About half of this capacity is pumped storage with another 5 GW scheduled to come online by 2020. Like nuclear power, hydropower is a source for base load generation in Japan because of the low generation costs and stable supply. Hydroelectric generation was 73 TWh in 2010, making up about 7 per cent of total net generation. The Japanese government has been promoting small hydropower projects to serve local communities through subsidies and by simplifying procedures.

Wind, solar, and tidal powers are being actively pursued in the country and installed capacity from these sources has increased in recent years to about 4.6 GW in 2009, up from 0.8 GW in 2004. However, they continue to account for a relatively small share of generation at this time.

As part of the revised energy policy plan, Japan is trying to encourage a greater use of renewable energy, from sources such as sea water, solar, wind, geothermal, hydropower, and biomass, for power generation. Non-nuclear renewable energy made up about 4 per cent of Japan's total energy consumption and about 2 per cent of the country's electricity generation in 2010. The Japanese legislature approved an act, which was enacted in July 2012, compelling electric utilities to purchase electricity generated by renewable fuel sources, except for nuclear, at fixed feed-in tariff prices. The costs are to be shared by government subsidies and the end users, though details of the act, particularly the tariff price, are not entirely defined.

We have just alluded to the energy supply and needs of Japan and hence that country’s interest in ensuring that the sea lanes of communication in the South China Sea are always free and safe for navigation at the present and in the future. However, it is interesting to discuss briefly, the historical interest from an historical perspective.
Maritime Security

Southeast Asia is home to important sea-lanes and straits including Straits of Malacca Singapore, Sunda, and Lombok. The security of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore became an international concern and the straits have been the core reasons of maritime security cooperation between countries from within and outside Southeast Asia. In Southeast Asia, the multilateral and bilateral agreements or other cooperative efforts to enhance maritime security have been implemented and discussed since 1992 and resulting in the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea in the same year. More than half of the world’s annual merchant fleet tonnage passes through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, Sunda, and Lombok, with the majority continuing on into the South China Sea.

Oil tanker traffic through the Strait of Malacca leading into the South China Sea is more than three times greater than Suez Canal traffic, and well over five times more than the Panama Canal. According to Malaysia Vessel Traffic System (VTS) in 2001, the ships transiting through Strait of Malacca was 59,314 and that increased to 70,718 ships in 2007. In 2012, the number of ships traversing the Strait of Malacca was 75,477.

Virtually all shipping that passes through the Malacca and Sunda Straits must pass near the Spratly Islands – the Dangerous Grounds as delineated on nautical charts as indicated in Figure 3, above. From about the mid-1990s, the threat at the sea to merchant navy ships was mostly by non-traditional security elements such as piracy, terrorism, smuggling of all types of commodities and especially military armament. According to the Japan Coast Guard (JCG), the number of piracy and armed robbery incidents in South China Sea consists of 242 cases in 2000 and decrease to 83 cases in 2007. In 2012, the cases up to 104.

By mid-2013, this semi-enclosed sea and adjacent waters was relatively free from the scourge of piracy; however, the underlying concern is that of freedom of navigation. Japan continues its concern about anti-piracy efforts by actively canvassing support for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) so as to obtain a permanent membership within UNSC.
Multilayered and Cooperative Security Strategy will be introduced as a new security framework for Japan. This will also allow the Japanese Self-Defence Forces to address the overall security issues pertaining to Japan as well as elements in the issues to piracy and maritime terrorism.

Figure 4: Major crude oil flows in the South China Sea (2011) Source: USA EIA <accessed 25 July 2013>

The large volume of shipping in the South China Sea/Strait of Malacca littoral has created opportunities for attacks on merchant shipping; in 1995, almost half of the world's reported cases of piracy occurred in this area. In 2000, the number of piracy and armed robbery incidents in Straits of Malacca and Singapore amounted to 242 cases, and decreased to 16 cases in 2006. Fortunately, for the international community and the shipping industry in general the number of cases reported in 2012 was a mere eight. (IMB 2013) For this sole reason, the Government of Japan through the Japan Foundation contributed financially by offering training and navigation facilities to the littoral States of Malacca and Singapore Straits under the auspices of the Malacca Straits Council to facilitate and regulate the activities of ships. In 2009, the Japan Foundation donated USD 2.5 million to the Malacca Straits Council.¹²

Shipping (by tonnage) in the South China Sea is dominated by raw materials en route to the East Asian countries. Tonnage via Malacca and the Spratly Islands is dominated by liquid bulk such as crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG), with dry bulk (mostly coal and iron ore) in second place. Nearly 66 per cent of the tonnage passing through the Strait of Malacca, and half of the volume passing the Spratly Islands, is crude oil from the Persian Gulf. The oil tanker traffic through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore rose to 13.8 million barrels per day (bbl/d) during 2007 and the amount increased to

¹¹ Evers, H.D. & Gerke, S. *The Strategic Importance of the Straits of Malacca for World Trade and Regional Development*, Jerman: University of Bonn (2005)

15.2 million bbl/d in 2011. The rising Asian oil demand could result in a doubling of these flows over the next two decades.

LNG shipments through the South China Sea constitute two-thirds of the world’s overall LNG trade. Japan is the recipient of the bulk of these shipments; in 1996 Japan was dependent upon LNG for over 11% of its total energy supplies. (Dzurek, 1985) South Korea (over seven per cent of energy consumption) and Taiwan (over four per cent of energy consumption) also import large amounts of LNG via the South China Sea. During 2010, Japan import 3.4 Trillion Cubic Feet (Tcf) LNG and in rose up to 3.8 Tcf in 2011 (EIA).

The other major shipping lane in the region uses the Lombok and Makassar Straits, and continues into the Philippine Sea. Except for north-south traffic from Australia, it is not used as extensively as the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea, since for most voyages it represents a longer voyage by several hundred miles. By using the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, Japanese shipping companies could potentially save more yen per kilometre and travel time would be shortened (Ever & Gerke 2005). If, however, the shipping companies choose to use the Lombok and Makassar Straits, they would at least add 30 yen for each kilometre or expend USD 1.2 billion annually with additional times to two weeks using tanker.\footnote{Wan Siti Adibah, Zinatul Ashiqin, Noor Inayah &Noridayu, “Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from Shipping Companies in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore,”International Journal of Business and Society 13(2), (2012)}

Thus the maritime security within the semi-enclosed seas of South East Asia is of prime importance to ensure commercial, economic and social security stability for the region and in particular for Japan. Maritime terrorism is another problem that every maritime nation has to devote attention to. In the early-2000s, terrorist organizations executed a number of serious attacks on targets in maritime Southeast Asia. In 2000 and 2001, the Abu Sayyaff Group (ASG), operating by boat, kidnapped local citizens and international holiday makers from resorts on Sipadan and Palawan Islands. The Southeast Asian states that had taken collective positive action towards these activities succeeded in decreasing the number of attacks at sea.\footnote{Hoadley,S. & Ruland, J, Asian Security Reassessed. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (2006)} In March 2010, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore announced increase security measures in response to a
warning that terrorists were planning to attack oil tankers in the Malacca Strait.

**Economic and Military Rise of China: Concern for Japan**

The economic and military rise of China is not a minor issue to Japan. China became one of the biggest competitors in East Asia and currently in South Sea. China joined World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. This was an opportunity for China to open its economy to the world and become fully integrated with the international trading system. A free market policy has enhanced China’s economy and made that country more productive and promote enhanced industrial practices. Competition in trading has compelled Chinese companies to improve their technology and management to reach international standards.

In 2011, China boosted its economy and was second after USA. This situation really gave tension to Japan to re-maintain its economy because China offered a vast market and a multitude of workers. Besides, the cheaper goods from China re-aligned the balance of trade between the countries to China rather than Japan. In economic terms, the increase in the value of merchandise gave huge opportunities to China. In a report from United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2008, China’s trade value exceeded Japan’s in 2005. This situation continued until 2007. Japan had only a modest economy in 2001; however, after that country experienced three economic recessions since 2008, a downturn in trade investment and global demand for Japan’s exports in late 2008 pushed the country into recession.

China’s rapid economic rose threatened Japan. China imported 80 per cent of its energy through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore into South China Sea. Japan’s economy is not growing at good rates since 2001. Government stimulus spending helped the economy recover in late-2009 and 2010, but the economy showed contraction again in 2011 as the massive 9.0 magnitude earthquake. Not only that, the tsunami in March once again disrupted manufacturing.

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Japan does not want China to be its competitor because it recognises the power of the Chinese nation in a big market, blessed with abundant resources and cheap labour which could potentially threaten its position in the region. In 2009, China’s trade increased to USD 5 trillion and the nation’s purchasing power approached the stage of USD 8.7 trillion. China imports vast quantities of energy resources makes it reliant on energy resource-rich countries. China has positioned into a new world economic power where China's economic slowdown will present an adverse impact on the global economy.

The market power transition from Japan to China indirectly brought about a reduction of dependency on the other states toward Japan. The rise of China’s image in the South East Asia destabilised Japan's geopolitical stance. Not only that, more multinational companies set up their businesses and factories in China. Vast quantities of manufactured goods are exported to South East Asia countries, for example, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand.

Increased political influence of China in Southeast Asia actually serves a bitter blow to the Japanese because they realize a small country with fewer natural resources. If this situation continues, there is a potential to cause a threat to the national security of the country both economically and socially. Japan has realised even though sometimes China is quite aggressive in acting on the issue of securing its territories, it is also tolerant in certain circumstances such as economic cooperation. For example, China donated USD 1.7 million to ASEAN to fund collaborative projects that will benefit the region and

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20 L. Kyung, Move over Japan: China is now No. 2 world economy.


also gave 300,000 tons of rice for emergency.\(^{23}\)

In the security context, China’s rise leads to the existence of the security dilemma between the two countries. China’s military modernisation assets convince many that the country is preparing itself for war. In addition, the aggressiveness of China in South China Sea portrays an impression that China will never compromise about their claimed territory and anything owned by themselves. China is viewed as a threat to Japan in South China Sea.\(^{24}\) The increase in the government budget allocated for defence spending in China has made Japan feel threatened.\(^{25}\)

In 2001, China announced an increase in its defence expenditure as being 17.7 per cent higher and larger than the previous over two decades (Hoesslin 2004). By 2004, China once again announced that it would increase the defence budget to USD 25 billion.\(^{26}\) China has been modernising and added new facilities for its navy and the air force. China’s actions are perceived by the Government of Japan as encroaching on its market territory and hence have an impact on stability in the South China Sea. If this situation continues, it is possible that China will continue its action until it reaches the Straits of Malacca.

China also has not clarified the status of its military modernisation programme and the transparency of its policies. Does it have to make them public? By not elaborating on these policies it could be argued that there is a possibility that this could lead to a sense of distrust and misunderstandings by other countries. Furthermore, China has been expanding and intensifying its activities in the East China Sea – waters close to Japan. Together with the lack of transparency in its military and security affairs has become a concern for Japan as a neighbour. The countries have a war history. These are why China is asked to further improve transparency regarding its military and try


to strengthening mutual understanding by promoting dialogues in an important issue. China basically only announced the total amount for the three categories consist of personnel, training and maintenance and equipment.

The report for the United Nations Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures submitted by China in 2009 was not filled out in accordance with the standard format used by other nations, including Japan, which required a detailed breakdown of military expenditure. The information disclosed in the report submitted by China was almost as simple as that provided in China’s defence white papers. In the report China only provided details of personnel expenses, operation maintenance costs and equipment costs by naval, air force and armies.

The Government of Japan has felt uneasy with China as that country is allegedly modernising its nuclear and weapons of mass destruction.\textsuperscript{27} Eventhe reliability of China also questionable because of an increase in additions of military hardware only demonstrates that this country is preparing to face a war situation. Although China has repeatedly stated the modernisation of its weapons and its nuclear capability is for the use in the country, but it still does not change the Japan's perceptions.

The development of military assets can cause other neighbouring countries to feel uneasy with this situation. Whilst several neighbouring countries had to slash their budget expenditure others had moderate increases.\textsuperscript{28} In the future, this situation can cause the competition of defence modernisation. Because of the rise in military power of China, the USA delivered more naval ships to some Asia-Pacific countries. The Government of Japan believes that in the next ten years, China's dominance in the military field will be well advanced. The military cooperation with USA will no longer be able to prevent China's action.

For this precise the reason the Government of Japan believed that if they brought USA in this regional equation, it would be balancing China military might.\textsuperscript{29} Not only that, Japan also believed


a very good co-operation with USA will make the country stable and safe because geographically Japan is only a tiny country compared to China. China’s increasing nuclear deterrence capabilities base in South China Sea would affect Japan’s core interest now and in the future.30

Japan’s Contemporary Involvement

In responding to the rise of economic and military rise of China in the South China Sea, Japan has commenced its basic international policy through engagement with ASEAN countries to gain mutual reassurance. Japan is using the three pillars of engagement which are Official Development Assistance (ODA), capacity building and dialogue.31

Japan has to have a close relationship with USA so as to balance the rise of China in the East and South China Seas. This is will fine-tune the good influence for Japan in terms of strengthening and support when it is faced with a security crisis. The USA and Japan have shared common strategic interests in maritime Southeast Asia. Both allies rely upon the safe and secure sea lines of communication that pass through the region. Therefore, it is natural for the USA and Japan to look for opportunities to increase their cooperation in maritime Southeast Asia. Japan’s strategic outlook creates opportunities for such co-operation so long as it is implemented in concert with host nation priorities.

In 2008, the Japanese government announced Japan Maritime Self Defence’s (JMSDF) new maritime era (MoD 2012) The objectives of the JMSDF are to prevent any threat from reaching crisis point; to repel it and minimize any damage; to improve the international security environment; and, to reduce the chances that any threat will reach Japan in the first place.32 The role of the defence force in these initiatives are to be an effective response to the new threats and diverse situations, as preparations to deal with full-scale invasion and lastly as a proactive efforts to improve the international security environment.


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To achieve these objectives, JMSDF needs to constantly conduct patrol and surveillance in their surrounding waters in peace time, and to prevent the emergence of situations, while maintaining a system that enables immediate response once the situation arises. Generally naval forces (including JMSDF) are granted various privileges under the international laws during peace time, enabling them to act freely as the embodiment of nation sovereign, to navigate necessary waters without impairing the rights and interests of surrounding countries, and to demonstrate national wills when the situation calls for.

JMSDF needs to utilize these characteristics to secure the safety and stability of overseas maritime trade and cargo transportation. For this purpose, it needs to promote international cooperation with the US as an ally and other reliable partners for maintaining relevant major international systems and the security of sea lines of communication. For Japan, to secure the safe and stable maritime navigation is the very foundation of its maritime security concern.

Japan treasures its cooperative ventures with ASEAN countries because it realises that if the littoral States of the South China Sea do not cooperate each other, all its efforts are wasted. In 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport and the Japan Coast Guard organized a regional conference on combating piracy and armed robbery supported by the Nippon Foundation. Coast guard agencies, maritime policy makers, ship-owners associations the IMO and ten ASEAN members were represented the conference.

As a result of the conference a “Model Action Plan” was drawn up in indicating specific guidelines to be followed by maritime policy makers and private-sector parties in maritime issues pertaining to piracy and armed robbery from the coast guard efforts to tackle the problem.

Japan’s concerns within the seas and straits and Southeast Asia has resulted in closer cooperation and capacity-building programs with the Straits of Malacca’s littoral states as well as its newer initiatives towards Thailand and the other Asian nations in terms of maritime security cooperation. Japan has long cooperated

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with Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia in the area of navigational safety and seabed mapping on joint research. Although issues pertaining to the divergence of interest in institutional settings, Japan is still moving ahead with its initiatives in responding to the needs of the ASEAN nation in term to the threats of piracy and maritime terrorism in the Straits and Southeast Asia.

The potential for acts of piracy and maritime terrorism in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore has resulted in increased Japanese funding through the “Official Development Assistance” program in anti-piracy as well as in maritime threats from terrorism. The Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) has been patrolling through the Southeast Asian waters. JCG also has carried out numerous joint exercise training with maritime counterparts from the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been given the task to assist the capacity building programs together with the Japanese Coast Guard. Japan has focused primarily on civilian cooperation rather than military cooperation and has refrained from utilizing its Maritime Self-Defence Force in the region other than disaster relief missions and such as the Tsunami relief efforts in the Straits of Malacca in 2004.

JCG is playing a major role in addressing the threat of piracy and armed robbery, smuggling and terrorism. They have engaged in many capacity-building programmes around the world as well as to provide trainings for major governments. One of the initiative taken for the Straits of Malacca and Singapore in assisting the new-formed Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) in capacity building and training programs of MMEA personnel. JCG is helping MMEA in giving training, offering facilities and joint exercises. The other initiative is the “New Maritime Training Program” that had been introduced by the JCG in April 2009. The program was launched in 2008. Based on this initiative, the first thirty personnel from Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines had classified as a Maritime Agency organization. This joint training will free from the military jurisdiction.

The relationship between Japan and India existed more than 50 years ago. For India and Japan, the South China Sea dispute provides additional indicators to gauge the assertiveness of China’s foreign policy. India has unresolved borders with China in the Himalayas region and with Japan a territorial dispute in the East China
Sea. India also has territorial disputes with Pakistan, who in turn is supported by China. The actual and perceived economic and military rise of China is also bringing India and Japan closer together.

India-Japan Partnership

The Governments of India and Japan signed the ‘Joint Statement Vision for Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership in the Next Decade’ and a ‘Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement’ in October 2010. No doubt India’s naval presence in the Indian Ocean, from the Strait of Hormuz to the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, provides an important component for Indo-Japanese maritime cooperation. Security interests that are opposing of the Government of China are also aligning the two countries to more strategic engagement with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which there are ten nation States.

India and Japan see the emergence of China as a challenger to the South East Asia region. They believe that China will rise up and generate their economy, modernise their defence facilities and try to politically re-align the region using their economic capabilities. For this reason, India believes it needs to be involved in this region so as to balance the rise of China together with USA and Japan as a host. India as one of the emergence economic powerhouse in Asia is recognised as such by Japan. A survey of Japanese companies noted that they chose India as the third important countries for future world economy after China and United States.

China and India are both robust economic powers and have nuclear capabilities. At the same time, Japan has a presence as the world’s third largest economy. As a world watches the rise of India and China, there are growing suspicious over what China’s military modernisation and economic buoyancy would translate into. Even though India is also an emerging new power but in comparison, the rise of India does not seem to be as worrisome for most countries in the world. This is because

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India does not wish to challenge the existing international order.

Japan and the Philippines

The Government of Japan held talks in September 2011 with diplomats of the Philippines on resolving the territorial and sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea peacefully in accordance with international law. It proposed that the two countries set up a ‘permanent working group’ to regularly tackle disputes and other Asian maritime issues. Even more importantly, military and security ties were tightened with the elevation of the relationship to a ‘strategic partnership’.39 Japan also displayed its willingness to play a greater role in regional security issues when the Japanese Vice-Minister of Defence met with senior military officials from the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand in late-September 2011.

On 28 June 2013, Japan’s Minister of Defence offered assistance to the Government of Philippines when the latter stated that it would seek greater cooperation with Japan and the United States by offering access to its military bases as it seeks to counter any military threats from China.40 (NST, 28 June 2013 p.1) The Government of the Philippines was drafting plans whereby the US forces could spend more time on military bases in the Philippines and the same terms could be offered to Japan.41

Japan was considered as a strategic partner in accordance with the Philippines’ existing diplomatic protocols. The two Governments agreed to further cooperate in terms of the defence of the remote islands, the territorial sea as well as protection of maritime interests.

The Philippines will also be putting forward a proposal for avoiding future conflicts in the Sea at the next ASEAN summit. This would see claimant countries determine which areas are in dispute and which are not so as to allow for the exploration and exploitation of resources, potentially in joint ventures.

But while outside involvement can guarantee some degree of protection for ASEAN states against China, this could be a dangerous game to play — one that risks

a strong reaction from PRC. Indeed, Chinese media are already calling for such a reaction following Philippine President Aquino’s recent talks with the US and Japan on the one hand and China on the other. These talks secured US$60 billion of infrastructure investment from China but also the purchase of two Hamilton class cutters from the US.

It would be easy for China to interpret the events during 2010/11 as tantamount to a strategic encirclement by the US, India and Japan. And this will only make the disputes more complicated than ever. Now that ASEAN claimant states have a more favourable strategic position vis-à-vis China, all the states involved should turn their attention to the negotiating table, adding substantive content to the agreement reached at the July 2011 ASEAN Regional Forum to resolve the dispute peacefully. The 12 October 2011 signing of a six-point agreement between China and Vietnam to contain the South China Sea dispute, including the opening of a hotline to deal with potential conflicts and the promise of holding border negotiations twice a year, is one welcome development toward this.

On 23 July 2013, the Third Japan-Singapore Maritime Security Dialogue was held at Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. The Dialogue covered a wide range of issues. Both countries discussed the safety of navigation in vital shipping lanes such as the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, counter-piracy measures, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), maritime security efforts in ASEAN and others.

In 2013, the new Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe introduced new policy. It was democratic security diamond. From this policy, Abe stated that the security of Japan as a national identity. Abe wants to curb China’s growing military and commercial clout in this region. He wants to develop Japan’s maritime competence and combine it with the country’s economic strengths. His main idea is to curtail China’s strived for hegemony. For that purpose, Japan has cooperation with Australia, India, Japan, and the US state of Hawaii to form a diamond to safeguard the maritime

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commons stretching from the Indian Ocean region to the Western Pacific.

**Conclusion**

The South China Sea basin is blessed with potential abundant marine biotic and mineral resources with numerous islets and reefs and extensive coastlines of the littoral States along which there are numerous fishing communities, cities and coastal resorts. It also the key sea routes for maritime shipping and naval mobility. Because of its important location as a strategic shipping and aeronautical route between east and west, it becomes a target of contention among the littoral States and other external actors.

In the Asia-Pacific region, as interdependence widens and deepens, countries are strengthening their cooperation with each other to resolve security challenges, for example, India and Japan and Japan and the Philippines. In particular, specific cooperative measures are being undertaken to resolve challenges in the non-traditional security field. The global shift in the balance of power is apparent in the Asia-Pacific region and the potential stage settings are the East China and South China Seas. Large-scale military forces, including nuclear forces, continue to be concentrated in the areas surrounding Japan, and many countries are modernising their military forces and increasing their military activities. In addition, there remain unclear and uncertain elements in the region, such as disputes over territories and the maritime domain.

The Government of Japan believes it must remain a leading promoter of rules for trade, investment, intellectual property, labor, environment and security as the Asia-Pacific or the Indo-Pacific regions become more and more prosperous. It must continue to be a guardian of the global commons, like the maritime commons, open enough to benefit everyone. It must work even more closely with the U.S., Korea, Australia and other like-minded democracies throughout the region.

Despite the concerns of Japan in the South China Sea the Government of Japan is investing more into people to people exchanges between Japan and China. Japan's relations with China stand out as among the most important. The doors are always open on my side for the Chinese leaders. That is the politicians view which does not necessarily translate to the day to day events that take place on the high seas and in particular in the South China Sea.
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