

Japan-Australia Security Cooperation Cannot Do without Japan-U.S. Cooperation

By TAKAMINE Koushu

Since the adoption of "Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation" in 2007 and the "Japan-Australia Joint Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultations," a 2+2 ministerial meeting between Japan and Australia, which started in the same year, the Japan-Australia security cooperation has deepened drastically. Australia is the first country, except the U.S., Japan's treaty-allied partner, that Japan has ever had 2 + 2 ministerial meetings with. Now Australia could be regarded as a "semi allied" or "de facto allied" country for Japan. In fact, when the first 2 + 2 meeting was held, some foreign editorials described it as "the beginning of Japan-Australia alliance with an eye towards burgeoning China."

At the 2 + 2 meeting held in Tokyo on May 19, 2010, Japan and Australia signed the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan (SDF) and the Australian Defense Force, which had been a long-pending issue for the two countries. An ACSA aims at facilitating reciprocal provision of supplies and services between Japan and a partner country through simple and common procedures in carrying out certain activities such as joint military exercise. The provision of supplies and services include logistic support, military goods such as foods, water and fuels. Australia is the second country with which Japan signed the ACSA after the United States. The conclusion of the ASCA should be evaluated as a corner stone in further deepening the Japan-Australia security cooperation.

While the ACSA between Japan and the U.S. covers (1) bilateral joint exercises and training, (2) The United Nations Peace Keeping Operation, (3) international humanitarian relief operation, (4) responses to situations in areas surrounding Japan, (5) operations to counter situations like military attacks, (6) operations to contribute to international peace and security, and response to large-scale disasters and various other situations, the ACSA between Japan and Australia will not cover situations (4) and (5) above, since Australia is

not a treaty-allied country. The two countries, for the time being, will utilize the ACSA under operations of the contribution to international safety and security, and disaster-relief. In other words, they should first begin by strengthening the Japan-Australia alliance in the global context. In the long run, however, Japan and Australia should conclude a bilateral security treaty, and become a treaty-allied partner for each other. On that occasion, Japan will have to face the issue of its constitutional interpretation on the exercise of right of collective self-defense. This issue would be more complicated in the context of the Japan-Australia relationship than the United States. Japan and Australia will never be allies in a true sense, without overcoming this hurdle. In this regard, we should bear in mind that to recognize the right of collective self-defense will expand the range of Japan's security policies.

Meanwhile, there are two features of note regarding the Japan-Australia security cooperation. The first is the fact that the conclusion of the ACSA came after the changes of administrations in both countries. Namely, in Australia, the Rudd's Labour administration considered pro-China was formed, and in Japan, the Hatoyama's DPJ-led administration was formed. The Hatoyama administration does not care to maintain continuity in Japan's foreign policy, especially towards the United States. Rather, the Hatoyama administration seems to intentionally make an effort to discontinue diplomatic relationship with the U.S. By contrast, it is totally possible for the DPJ administration to maintain continuity in its policy toward Australia along with those of the previous administrations. The administration might prefer to show off its difference from the previous government in its policy toward U.S. Nevertheless, the Hatoyama administration should take an appropriate response to the U.S. just as it takes to Australia, instead of merely maintaining its own petty pride.

The second is the fact that the Japan-Australia cooperation cannot do without the U.S. involvement, as the deepening of the security cooperation between Japan and Australia is consistently dependent on the Japan-U.S. alliance and the U.S.-Australia alliance. Australia's grand strategy is to make the U.S. more involved in maintaining the stability and the peace in Asia-Pacific region in a framework of Japan-U.S.-Australia security cooperation. This strategy holds true for Japan as well. It follows that the significance of the Japan-Australia security cooperation is notably discredited under the circumstance in which the Japan-U.S. relationship is not as good as it used to be. The framework of the Japan-U.S.-Australia security cooperation, without doubt, intended to conduct defensive activities against menace from China which is a major seafaring country in the western

Pacific. This framework should function as “international public goods.” In order to make it effective, it is imperative to normalize the Japan-U.S. relationship urgently.

(This is the English Translation of an article written by TAKAMINE Koushu, Fellow, The Okazaki Institute, which originally appeared on the BBS "Hyakka-Seiho" of JFIR on May 25, 2010.)