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Strengthening Security Networks between Japan, the United States, Australia and India

By ISHIGAKI Yasuji

China's military build-up and maritime expansion are causing direct and indirect impacts on its neighboring countries and are leading those countries to change their approaches to the situations. As widely known, the relationships between China and some ASEAN countries are tensing up over the islands in disputed waters across the South China Sea. However, it is also worth noting that the United States, Japan, Australia and India are expanding and strengthening their collaboration on joint military drills in addition to developing close mutual security dialogues. Japan and Australia have long developed bilateral alliances with the United States. In recent years, the security dialogues between these three countries have been becoming closer and the fourth ministerial meeting of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue was held in September 2009. In addition, Japan and the United States had the first high-ranking working level meeting on common issues including national security with India in Washington in December 2011 and also had the second meeting in Tokyo in April 2012. The third meeting is expected to be held in India.

U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta visited India on June 6 this year to meet with Defense Minister A.K. Antony. After the meeting, Panetta delivered a speech on a new U.S. Asia-Pacific defense strategy in New Delhi, stating that "the U.S. will expand its military partnerships and its presence in the arc extending from East Asia into South Asia. Our defense cooperation with India is one of the linchpins in this strategy." He confirmed the U.S. policy of strengthening its defense ties with India and India also made clear the intention of further developing its military modernization based on its strengthening the relationship with the U.S.

In addition, on June 9, the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Forces conducted its first joint military exercise with the Indian Navy in the Sagami Bay, Japan. In this drill, four vessels including the Indian Navy's escort ship and the MSDF's two

destroyers and helicopters were deployed and formation drills and search and rescue exercises were carried out. These exercises were based on the agreement on conducting joint drills, which had been made in November 2011 at the bilateral defense ministers meeting, in line with the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India, which had been announced in 2008. Masahiko Sugimoto, MSDF Chief of Staff, stated in a press conference on June 5, “The drills are intended to develop tactical skills and also to promote our friendships with the Indian Navy. It will contribute to stabilizing the Asia-Pacific region.” Meanwhile, Rear Admiral Ajit Kumar, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet, reportedly said to the press, “Our collaboration through the exercise with the Japanese MSDF is significant with a view to defending maritime transportation routes and addressing piracy issues.”

The security cooperation between Japan, the United States and Australia has been robust on the basis of alliances. In the meantime, India’s commitment to the Japan-U.S. security dialogue and joint military exercise may seem to be linked with India’s intention to secure its own national interests. There is no doubt, however, that behind this move are in part India’s strategic intention to cope with the recent expanding Chinese Naval activities into broader areas including the Indian Ocean.

(This is an English translation of the article written by Mr. ISHIGAKI Yasuji, Delegate for Japan to AALCO, as his personal view which originally appeared on the BBS “Hyakka-Somei” of CEAC on June 10, 2012).