

AJISS-Commentary

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No. 227

6 April 2016

JAPAN-AUSTRALIA RELATIONS (WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF THE SUBMARINE DEAL)

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- Japan's proposal is not simply a sales pitch for *Soryu*-class submarines but also encompasses joint Japan-Australia development and production of hulls and engines for Australia's future submarine fleet, which could be expected to deepen Japan-Australia defense cooperation and serve as a catalyst for innovation in both Japanese and Australian industry.

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- Combined Japan-Australia-US efforts will put Australia's future submarines (equipped with US-made fire-control systems) in the top class worldwide.
- Geopolitically as well, strong political, economic, diplomatic and military collaboration among the US, Australia and Japan, all three maritime nations, will contribute to the prosperity and stability of the Pacific region and indeed of the entire world.

Thanks to the efforts made by our predecessors, Japan and Australia enjoy closer economic and defense cooperation. This project would go beyond simply supplying submarines, and would drive technological innovation to make the ties between the two countries even stronger. For example, batteries are an important technology in conventional submarines, and battery technology is vital not only for electric cars and smartphones, but also robots, medical devices, and energy management. This deal would thus work as a catalyst for wide-scale technological innovation in Japan and Australia.

Australia's submarine fleet currently consists of six *Collins*-class submarines. Australia's recently released Defence White Paper announced plans to build twelve submarines to replace these *Collins*-class vessels, and Japan, France and Germany have all submitted proposals. Japan's proposal is based on its latest *Soryu*-class design.


Submarines comprise three technical components: (1) hulls capable of running silently and deeply, (2) engines that recharge quickly and enable high speeds and prolonged submerged operation (inclusive of batteries, this is the most important technical component in conventional submarines), and (3) fire-control systems that process information quickly and control weapon systems. Proposals on the construction of hulls and engines for Australia's future submarines have been submitted by Japan, Germany and France. Highlighting its track record of building and operating first-rate *Soryu*-class submarines, Japan has suggested joint Japan-Australia development and production of hulls and engines tailored to Australia's operational requirements. If maintenance is

included, this project could extend for more than 30 years and would most certainly deepen Japan-Australia defense cooperation.

Thanks to our predecessors, Japan and Australia enjoy closer economic and defense cooperation, and this project would go beyond simply supplying submarines, driving technological innovation that would make the ties between the two countries even stronger. For example, batteries are an important technology in conventional submarines, and battery technology is vital not only for electric cars and smartphones but also robots, medical devices and energy management. This deal would thus work as a catalyst for technological innovation in Japan and Australia.

Australia's future submarines will reportedly employ US-manufactured fire-control systems. Naturally these fire-control systems must fit into the confined space of a submarine hull and must be compatible with the limited power consumption available on conventionally (battery) powered submarines. If Japan and Australia join together to develop and produce the hulls and engines, the entire submarine would inevitably become the product of combined development/production among Japan, Australia, and the US. Featuring an amalgamation of world-class cutting-edge technology in their hulls, engines and fire-control systems, Australian submarines would undoubtedly become the envy of the world.

The end of the Cold War ushered in an era in which the US unilaterally formed the global order, but the early years of the 21st century have seen a diversity of players complicate international affairs through the rise of emerging states, ethnic and religious conflicts, energy problems, terrorism, and transnational cyber-attacks. Given these circumstances, it is necessary to adopt a global perspective in an old but new geopolitical approach. I am convinced that the bonds among Japan, the US and Australia, a grouping of three Pacific maritime nations that share universal values and strategic interests, will contribute to prosperity and stability in the Pacific region and indeed around the world as they deal with rapidly changing global circumstances. This joint submarine development would be an extremely long-term project stretching from

construction to maintenance and upgrades, and as such would serve as a symbol of enduring Japan-Australia defense cooperation. 

Takashi Saitoh was the 27th Chief of Staff, Maritime Self-Defense Force (January 2005-August 2006), and the 2nd Chief of Staff, Joint Staff (August 2006-March 2009). He is currently serving as an advisor to the Ministry of Defense.