

Summary of JIIA Forum Presentation

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“Foreign Policy of the European Union: Establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and Relations with Major Foreign Countries”

The rapporteur has served in Brussels since 2008 as the deputy chief of mission in charge of political and security matters, and today she will speak primarily on the changes resulting from the Treaty of Lisbon that went into force last December.

1. 60th anniversary of European integration

The Lisbon Treaty is the partially revised version of the European Constitution Treaty that failed to receive ratification, and many long years have been needed to bring about its implementation. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration that led to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community. Since then, the membership of the European Union (EU) has grown from six countries to 27 and the areas of policy in which sovereignty has been entrusted to the EU have also expanded. Although not all member states are participating, much of the EU has come to use a common currency. There is no EU army and the member states retain 100% of their sovereignty with regard to foreign affairs and security, but those areas that can be standardized within the EU will be. Nevertheless, even major countries such as the UK, France and Germany seeing their influence as individual states diminish within the international community will find it necessary to take action through the auspices of the EU. Areas in which the EU has adopted and taken action on common positions and strategies for its 27 member states includes the NPT Review Conference and reconstruction assistance for Afghanistan, efforts that would be difficult to undertake even through bilateral cooperation.

The extremely broad range of matters falling under the EU's responsibility has led to member states sending extremely large delegations to Brussels staffed by highly-skilled personnel serving as their standing representatives.

2. Changes in foreign relations stemming from the Lisbon Treaty

New organizational posts have been created now that the Lisbon Treaty is in effect. One is

the post of President of the European Council, assumed by former Belgian Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy. Although called the Presidency of the EU, the post more strongly resembles that of a coordinator. Another such office is that of High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission held by Mrs. Ashton. This post represents the consolidation of two positions: the High Representative responsible for military and police affairs and the director of development assistance at the European Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations. Mrs. Ashton is also charged with overseeing the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Council that brings together the foreign ministers of the member states, and thus she bears tremendous responsibility as an individual official.

The External Action Service, essentially the EU's "Foreign Ministry," is being created in order to support High Representative Ashton. The staff members of the External Action Service are seconded from three sources: the European Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations, the foreign affairs section of the Council Secretariat, and the foreign ministries of member states. Mrs. Ashton plans to launch this organization within her five-year term, and progress is being slowly made. The senior bureaucratic posts have become the focus of power struggles among member states. The chiefs of foreign missions have been primarily political appointments, but a scheme for recruiting candidates from member states has been added. The legislative authority of the European Parliament, chosen by the citizens of member states in direct elections, has been strengthened in the formation of this "Foreign Ministry." Diplomatic and security affairs overall are undergoing a transition. The relationship between Mr. Van Rompuy and Mrs. Ashton is not clearly stipulated in the Lisbon Treaty, but the two are fundamentally independent and not in a superior-subordinate relationship.

The permanent structural cooperation/solidarity clauses and the mutual assistance clauses in the Lisbon Treaty were included to strengthen the EU's military capabilities, but the EU has yet to address the issue of regional defense. At the same time, though, there are about 20 EU crisis management operations (PKO) underway, including both military and non-military operations. Among these are Operation Atlanta to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia, the dispatch of an EU observer group to Georgia, and assistance to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is possible that the EU can play a role in cases in which it is difficult to reach a UN Security Council resolution or impossible for NATO to intervene.

3. The EU's foreign relations

The EU's view on the world situation is that there is a power shift underway on a global scale from north to south and from west to east. As China, India and other emerging countries are being lifted by economic globalization, the EU is seeing a relative decline in its power and political influence. To maintain its influence in such circumstances, it will need to speak with a single voice and bolster both its economic diplomacy and relations with major countries.

The US holds a special status among these major countries. There was strong opposition in the EU to the foreign policies of the Bush administration, but the Obama administration met with an even warmer welcome in Europe than in the US. Discussions on US-Europe relations had often been exclusively devoted to NATO, but the Obama administration has been seeking to utilize the EU as an actor.

The EU has also been emphasizing relations with neighboring countries, with special focus placed on the stability of the crescent stretching from the east (Belarus, Russia, etc.) to the countries of the Middle East and the Magreb. Relations with the EU's specified strategic partners of Russia, China, Japan, Canada and Brazil are also being given priority. The EU has concentrated a great deal of effort on its Russia policy and has voiced its support for the Medvedev administration, but has adopted a policy of partnership and engagement with China, with which the EU has no particular affinity. Last year's COP15 made it clear that the EU's policy toward China was not having the desired results, however, and has generated disappointment. The EU is extremely displeased about being marginalized by the G2 (US and China).

In its relations with NATO, the incomplete overlap of EU and NATO membership makes it impossible to achieve smooth cooperation between the two organizations. The EU has attached importance to "effective multilateralism" through effective functioning by the UN, and has adopted a common position to present a unified front in its relations with the OSCE.

4. Japan-EU relations

The trade frictions lasting from the 1980s to the early 1990s no longer trouble Japan-EU relations, and the two engage in regular summit meetings, foreign minister-level meetings, and working groups at the political director, director-general and vice ministerial levels. These working groups cover a broad range of topics and have become the foundations for EU policymaking. President Von Rompuy very much hopes that Japan-EU discussions will

not be limited to bureaucrats but will instead carry political weight. Japan-EU relations have heretofore been skewed towards economic ties but, with the EU being forced to adopt a defensive posture in view of the global power shift and the emergence of China, Japan has been rediscovered on the other side of China; President Von Rompuy would like to build more solid political relations with Japan and discuss China. Engaging in specific cooperation with the EU would be in Japan's interest as well, and the time has come for the importance of political cooperation between Japan and Europe to be acknowledged by both sides.