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Japan's National Defense Planning for the New Security Environment: The 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines

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Summary

The *National Defense Program Guidelines* (NDPG) is the primary document of Japan's defense policy, setting both guidelines for defense force planning and outlining the basic principles and policies of Japan's national security strategy. The most recent NDPG, completed in 2010, introduces several new concepts such as "dynamic deterrence" and based on recognition of a new security environment in the region. This brief highlights the new concepts and indicates two areas that must be addressed soon in order to make the NDPG fully executable.

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THE MAKING OF THE NDPG UNDER THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF JAPAN

The *National Defense Program Guidelines* (hereafter NDPG) is the primary document of Japan's defense policy. It sets the basic guidelines for Japan's defense force planning, roles and operations of the Self Defense Force (SDF), and the target levels of major defense equipment.¹ At the same time, the NDPG is a document outlining basic principles and policies of Japan's national security strategy. In comparison to the *National Security Strategy* and the *Quadrennial Defense Review* issued respectively by the U.S. White House and Department of Defense, Japan's NDPG is the document approved by the Security Council and the Cabinet that contains both security and defense strategy.

The new NDPG was released on December 17, 2010, as the first plan formulated under the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The DPJ attained a historical landslide victory in the August 2009 House of Representatives election, bringing to an end more than half a century of almost uninterrupted rule by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The results of the 2009 general election had the potential to bring into being a new regime that replaces the core patterns of public policy and policy-making process of the LDP *ancien regime*.²

The previous NDPG, released in December 2004, contained a clause indicating that it aimed five years later to "... revise the Guidelines in light of the security environment and technological trends and other relevant factors ...".³ On this basis, the LDP administration (during 2007–2009) began to reexamine the NDPG in various branches of the government. In August 2009, the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities, a

group of security experts commissioned by the Taro Aso administration, submitted the "Council on Defense Capability and Security Report" (Katsumata Report) that was expected to provide the basic tone of the defense review.⁴

However, after the DPJ became the ruling party in September 2009, the Hatoyama administration decided to postpone settling the new NDPG and Mid-Term Defense Program for an extra year in light of the DPJ victory. The DPJ has re-commissioned the experts' group as the "Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era," with new members who, at least by DPJ leaders' standards, represent Japan's liberal internationalists' views on defense and security policy.

The DPJ faced serious difficulties in diplomacy and national security policy soon after its taking power. Its foreign policy platform was founded upon the opportunistic agreement among DPJ members, then after by coalition partners, on criticism of the LDP's policy, especially since the time of PM Junichiro Koizumi. During the campaign, the DPJ declared it would "aim for reexamination of the status of the bases of the U.S. Forces in Japan." The focal point of the discussion was to deny the LDP's plan to relocate Futenma Marine Air base to Camp Schwab (in Henoko, the northern part of mainland Okinawa) and to seek an alternate location outside Okinawa Prefecture or, preferably, outside Japan. However, a series of alternative relocation plans proposed by the Hatoyama administration yielded no practical results. When the Hatoyama administration admitted the miscarriage of alternative plans and reaffirmed the LDP's basic agreement at the joint statement on the Japan–U.S. Security Consultative Committee (2+2) on May 28, 2010, its opportunistic coalition with the Social Democratic Party was broken away.

The new council report "Japan's Visions for Future Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era: Toward a Peace-Creating Nation" was submitted in August 27, 2010, to Prime Minister Naoto Kan, who had succeeded Hatoyama in

1. "National Defense Program Guidelines for JFY 2011 and Beyond," available at <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/guidelinesFY2011.pdf>.

2 T.J. Pempel, Between Pork and Productivity: The Collapse of the Liberal Democratic Party, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 36 (summer 2010): 227–54.

3 "National Defense Program Guidelines FY2005–" available at <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/national_guidelines.pdf>.

4. "The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities Report," August 2009, available at <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/ampoboue/090928houkoku_e.pdf>.

early June. The report propounded that Japan be a “peace-creating” nation and emphasized the need to support the liberal international order. Although this view of security is based on liberal internationalism, if Japan wants to be actively involved in conflict prevention and peacekeeping, it must overcome domestic legal and institutional constraints. In this context, the report called for departing from the “Exclusively Defense-Oriented Defense Policy” (*Senshu Boei*), establishing the basic law for international peace cooperation, amending the “Three Principles on Arms Exports,” and authorizing the exercise of collective self-defense. The report surprised domestic audiences in that, although it was based on a background of liberal internationalism, the practical agendas for defense policy review had much in common with the previous review under the LDP.

The initial response from Prime Minister Kan to the report was non-enthusiastic at best. He only responded that the report was “one of the references” and was cautious about directly linking the report to the NDPG draft. This response from Kan stemmed from the view that if new council’s recommendations were even beyond those in the report under the LDP, it might be difficult to reach consensus among the liberal faction of DPJ Diet members and also to gain additional support from the Social Democratic Party in the Upper House.

Prime Minister Kan then asked the Security Council to accelerate the review process of the NDPG to be completed by the end of 2010. Accordingly, the administration launched the Four Minister’s Meeting among the Chief Cabinet Secretary and the Ministers of Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Finance for policy coordination on the defense policy review. As a parallel process, the DPJ’s Committee on Foreign Affairs and Security (chaired by Masaharu Nakagawa) initiated discussions on the NDPG to gather a consensus among DPJ Diet members. The administration gathered the results of these two processes into nine rounds of discussion at the Security Council, and the NDPG was finally released on December 17, 2010. The NDPG formulation process was one of a few successful cases of “politician-led politics” (*Seijisyudo*) with which DPJ’s prescribed leadership model was associated.

NEW CONCEPTS IN THE 2010 NDPG

Assessment of the Security Environment

The new NDPG has incorporated new concepts which reflect changes in the security situation since the previous guidelines. First, the new NDPG pointed out that although the probability of large-scale war between major countries is decreasing, “there are a growing number of so-called ‘gray-zone’ disputes—confrontations over territory, sovereignty, and economic interests that are not to escalate into wars.” This recognition of the “gray zone” is more complicated than simply estimating from structures of military strength or threat and risk, which were based on changing distributions of power. For example, the burden of cost and time for peacekeeping continues to increase to be more than the burden of military interventions like Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and the Iraq war. The NDPG grasps the situation that the “high-end” area of war and “low-end” area that works on peacekeeping, peace-building, and other functional cooperation should be considered equally in security policies. The NDPG conceptualized “complex contingencies”—various contingencies that could happen at the same time in Japan’s security environment, especially issues around North Korea and its relationship with China. This “gray-zone” view is the basis for directions like preparations to integrate the Self-Defense Forces and “seamless response.”

Second, the NDPG recognizes growing instability in the Asia-Pacific region. It mentions the explicit threat in North Korea’s nuclear and missile development and provocative military actions that “constitute an immediate and grave destabilizing factor to regional security.” As for China, although the NDPG mentioned that it “is beginning to play an important role for regional and global security,” it also states concerns over China’s increasing military expenditures, modernizing capability for extended ranges of power projection, and maritime activities in the waters surrounding Japan.

The Guidelines also noted “a global shift in the balance of power” along “the relative change of influence of the United States,” and the rise of emerging nations such as China, India, and Rus-

sia, which increase the region's power and influence in the international security domain. These kinds of recognition are logics that will bring fruition to cooperation with partner countries like South Korea, Australia, India, and ASEAN while perhaps providing a new basis for the alliance with the United States.

Security Principles and Objectives

Against recognition of the new security environment, the new NDPG has formulated Japan's security objectives as follows: "1) prevent any threat from directly reaching Japan and to eliminate external threats ... thereby secur[ing the] peace and stability of Japan, 2) prevent threats from emerging by further stabilizing the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region and by improving the global security environment, and 3) contribute to creating global peace, stability, and to secure human security."

Compared to the former guidelines, noteworthy additions include "stabilizing the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region" and "improving the global security environment" in the second objective, which puts more of an emphasis on the region, and a "freshwater international contribution" in the addition of "contribute to creating global peace, stability, and to secure human security" in the third objective. The NDPG also indicates that it will promote a multi-layered approach to integrate 1) Japan's own efforts; 2) cooperation with its allies; 3) cooperation with countries in the Asia-Pacific region; and 4) cooperation with the international community as options for stabilizing security. Moreover on this part, the guidelines specify cooperation in "the Asia-Pacific region."

The phrase "Asia-Pacific region" emphasizes the significance of networking bilateral and multilateral security cooperation in a multi-layered manner by fostering various security cooperation efforts in the region. The regional cooperation mentioned is to a) strengthen cooperation between U.S. allies and partner countries (especially South Korea and Australia); b) enhance security cooperation with ASEAN countries especially in the non-traditional security field; c) enhance cooperation with India and other countries in ensuring security of maritime navigation; d) promote confi-

dence with China and Russia through security dialogues and exchanges, and establish and develop a cooperative relationship with them in areas including non-traditional security fields; and e) establish practical cooperative relationships through the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Defense Minister's Meeting Plus. This kind of regional security architectures that organically ties together regional cooperation on many different levels is intended.

There is also significance to including the phrase "creating global peace, stability, and to secure human security." The number of troops Japan sends to international peace cooperation activities is about 266 at present, and this number will drop to about 40 after the Haiti earthquake rescue missions are terminated. Although various PKO missions are deployed across the world, Japan's human contribution is lowest among the developed countries. Japan has not been able to send Self-Defense Forces to support the peace-building process in Afghanistan, mainly because of legal constraints. The NDPG puts forth an ambitious goal that Japan become more actively involved in international peace cooperation activities and peace-building processes in the international community.

Dynamic Deterrence and Dynamic Defense Forces

The new concept "Dynamic Defense" appears in the 2010 NDPG. It aims to break away from the traditional "basic defense force concept" formulated in the 1970s to secure minimum requirements for defense to keep Japan from becoming void of power and thereby a destabilizing factor in the surrounding region. In the era in which a confrontational East and West were the basic structure of international relations, Japanese principles included building a "static" defense that aimed to assume not deploying Self-Defense Forces overseas, and to deal with a small scale and limited invasion.

However, in the present security environment, crossing geographic boundaries and cooperation with various countries is the norm. The Self-Defense Forces must be able to respond flexibly to "various contingencies" against Japan, cooperate

with allies against situations in areas surrounding Japan, and join overseas activities on the occasion of international peace cooperation activities and large-scale disaster relief. Against this backdrop, it is important, according to the Defense Minister, to develop “not only so-called static deterrence that ensures deterrence through the existence of defense forces per se, but also so-called dynamic deterrence that ensures deterrence by showing Japan’s will and high-performance defense capabilities through timely and appropriate conduct of various activities.”⁵

“Dynamic defense,” however, is not purely a new concept. The 2004 Guidelines advocated a defense ready with quick responses and high mobility to “be capable of effectively responding to new threats and diverse situations” and “voluntarily and actively participate in international peace cooperation activities.” The direction of dynamic defense thus follows as an extension of the 2004 Guidelines. However, dynamic defense in the new NDPG underscored its importance especially to the Self-Defense Forces’ operations and activities, particularly 1) to strengthen preparation against military activities of neighboring countries through reinforcing regular intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance activities (ISR); 2) to quickly and seamlessly respond to various contingencies; and 3) multi-layered promotion of cooperative activities with foreign countries.

To undertake these activities dynamically, Japan needs to “drastically rationalize and streamline the Self-Defense Forces overall through fundamentally reviewing the equipment, personnel, organization, and force disposition, including the equipment and personnel that have been maintained as preparation to defend against a full-scale invasion.” In other words, Japan must reduce the numbers of SDF ground personnel, cut the number of tanks, howitzers, and rockets, increase the number of destroyers and submarines, acquire new patrol aircraft, and renovate major units that are shown in the new NDPG’s attached tables and the Mid-Term Defense Program.

⁵ Defense Minister’s Statement on the Approval of the “National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2011 and Beyond” and the “Mid-Term Defense Program (FY2011–FY2015)” (December 17, 2010).

Preparing for Southwestern Defense

Another element of the 2010 NDPG is reinforcing defense preparations in the southwestern regions of Japan. The proliferation of instability in this region could be characterized as a structural shift brought about by China’s military rise, especially in terms of its sea and air power. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the new guidelines developed the policy from sixteen guidelines that put priority on “various contingencies” to put a priority on dynamic defense and “military balance in peace time.” In addition, defense of the southwestern region has composite meanings, including 1) securing Japan’s numerous islands’ defense and maritime interests [Japan]; 2) maintaining U.S. front line presence in Western Pacific Ocean [U.S.]; and 3) securing Western Pacific countries’ freedom of navigation [surrounding countries]. Reinforcing defense in the southwestern region not only defends Japan but also corresponds with U.S. and regional countries’ interests.

Threats in the southwestern region can be classified as 1) low intensity: Violation of maritime interest by intrusion of fishing boats and marine observation vessels; or 2) medium/high intensity: Destruction of bases (U.S. Forces and Self Defense Forces) and logistics infrastructure (ballistic/cruise missiles, special forces, and cyber attack), and attack and invasion of Japan’s numerous islands. The new NDPG’s design can be understood to manage threats in the first category with Japan’s own dynamic defense and deal with those in the second by maintaining and reinforcing joint action with the United States and U.S. extended deterrence.

AN AGENDA FOR JAPAN’S FUTURE DEFENSE PLANNING

The direction indicated in the new NDPG is comprehensive and strategic in terms of corresponding to “gray-zones” conflicts and “complex contingencies,” with an assumption that the global balance of power is shifting. However, all strategies in the new guidelines will require frequent review based on changes in international affairs. There are many checklists in place on executing the new Guidelines. These include whether “dynamic de-

fense” is able to respond to the dynamics of power shifts in neighboring countries, whether budgets, personnel, and organizations are well guaranteed, whether cross border and “seamless” cooperation with each organization is executable, and whether Japan–U.S. cooperation works effectively.

Japan needs to take action soon on two items that will affect how well the new strategies can be carried out. The first is to execute the document that assumed to “establish a body in the Prime Minister’s Official Residence which will be responsible for national security policy coordination among relevant ministers and for providing advice to the Prime Minister.” There had already been discussions about the creation of a Japanese National Security Council (NSC) in the Abe administration when the LDP was in power. This legislation needs to be addressed again, and it needs to execute comprehensive adjustment of security policy, reinforcing the requirement that the Prime Minister’s office responds promptly and accurately in crisis, and establishing organizations that take charge on settling mid-long term security strategies.

The second item is reviewing the “Three Principles on Arms Exports” which was shelved in the final step of settling the new guidelines.

DPJ’s Committee on Foreign Affairs and Security also proposed easing of the “Three Principles on Arms Exports,” however in the end there were no plans to change the arms export principles in the 2010 NDPG or comments from the Chief Cabinet Secretary. Participation of the Japanese defense industry in international joint development and production related to advanced equipment is decisively important in providing high-efficiency equipment, reducing costs, and smoothing procurement. Japan is also required to make explicit decisions on smoothing NATO’s security policy and Japan–NATO’s cooperation in the prospective adoption of SM-3 Block IIA, which has been under joint Japan–U.S. development and is to be deployed to NATO’s missile defense system. Furthermore, many developing countries are keen to procure equipment for maritime patrol, surveillance capacity, and peace-keeping operations. Japan needs to review its Three Principles on Arms Exports to assist these countries with capacity building.

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