

US-China Great Power Competition and the PLA Military Modernization: Evaluation of Japan's Defense Policy and Its Impact

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Abstract

Japan's defense policy was long confined to the United Nations activities and the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, in connection with constitutional provisions imposed by the Allied forces after World War II. The modernization of China's military power along with its economic growth, its confrontation with the United States, and the strengthening of Sino-Russian relations after the war in Ukraine dramatically changed Japan's defense policy. Japan decided to maintain counterstrike capabilities and, in cooperation with the U.S. and like-minded countries, pursued a realistic defense policy to counter forces that unilaterally change the status quo by force.

Key words

Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, Japan's Self-Defense Forces, Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, National Security Strategy of Japan, Stand-off Defense Capability

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Introduction

After losing World War II, Japan accepted the surrender terms of the Potsdam Declaration² on August 14 of 1945 and accepted the occupation policy of the Allied forces. After the war, the Allied forces forced Japan to adopt a new constitution that renounced war potential and the right to belligerence. In other words, Article 9 of the Constitution³ stipulates that Japan does not possess land, navy, or air force, and has renounced the right to belligerency. Japan's defense policy, bound by the provisions of Article 9 of the Constitution, had no choice but to adopt a security policy based on the collective security of the United Nations and the security treaty with the United States for a long time.

On the other hand, China achieved reconciliation between the US and China through the 1992 US-China Joint Statement, advanced into the international community, strengthened its economic power, and strengthened the People's Liberation Army Navy. The Xi Jinping administration has promoted the 'One Belt, One Road' economic policy, and constructed a maritime network known as the Necklace of Pearls, and China expanded its influence into Europe. Afterwards, the United States has finally noticed that China's overseas expansion backed by its military power and Chinese values violated its vested interests, and the U.S. shifted from a policy of cooperation with China to a policy of confrontation. The third Xi Jinping administration, approved in the 2022 Communist Party Congress, has announced the unification of Taiwan by force, despite warnings from the United States.

Inspired by China's military modernization and Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, Japan has adopted a revised national security strategy to maintain a law-based international order and counter unilateral changes to the status quo by force. Based on this, Japan decided to adopt a pragmatic defense policy that cooperates with allies and like-minded countries. This short article examines the influence of China's military

² Clause 7 of the Potsdam Declaration, which set out the conditions for Japan's surrender, states, 'Until such a new order is established and until there is convincing proof that Japan's war-making power is destroyed, points in Japanese territory to be designated by the Allies shall be occupied to secure the achievement of the basic objectives we are here setting forth.', and Clause 9 states, 'The Japanese military forces, after being completely disarmed, shall be permitted to return to their homes with the opportunity to lead peaceful and productive lives.'

³ Article 9, Paragraph 1 of the Japanese Constitution stipulates 'Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.' And Article 9, Paragraph 2 stipulates 'In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.' (<https://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/ja/laws/view/174/je>) (as of August 27, 2023).

modernization and the US-China conflict on Japan's defense policy and deals with the issue of stand-off defense capability as the centerpiece of new defense policy.

1 The Constitution of Japan and the Legal Status of the Self-Defense Forces

It should be noted that Japan's defense legislation is different from the defense policy legislations of other countries. After World War II, Article 9 of Japan's constitution places fatal restrictions on Japan's military capabilities and posture. In other words, Japan's Self-Defense Forces are not, under domestic law, military forces like those of other countries in the normal sense of the word. And they are positioned as administrative organs, even though they are armed forces responsible for the defense of Japan.

Therefore, although the Self-Defense Forces is an armed organization responsible for the defense of the country, it is positioned as an administrative agency, and its missions and authority are subject to significant legal restrictions. This means the Self-Defense Forces are armed police forces. Therefore, Japan has neither military criminal law nor court martial. However, the Self-Defense Forces are treated as military forces under international law, but even when exercising the right of self-defense, they must commit exclusively to defense⁴, and find themselves in a difficult position between legal requirements and military rationality.

Japan, as a sovereign state, has the right of collective self-defense under international law, but for a long time, the right has been interpreted as a right that cannot be exercised under the Constitution by the government. Even when the Self-Defense Forces engage in United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations, the use of force has been prohibited but the use of weapon has been allowed.

It means that Japan's defense legislation is a legal system like police law, and its provisions are based on a 'positive list' method that only stipulates 'what is possible'. In other words, all actions of the Self-Defense Forces must have a legal basis, and they cannot do anything that is not stipulated by domestic law. Considering the nature of

⁴ 'Exclusive defense' refers to the use of defensive power only when an armed attack is received from the enemy, and the mode of defense is kept to the minimum necessary for self-defense, and the defense force maintained is also the minimum necessary for self-defense. This refers to the stance of a passive defense strategy that is in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution and is the basic policy of Japan's defense, *Reply to the question regarding the definition of exclusive defense*, (189th Diet Cabinet and House of Councilors Question No. 189, No. 79, March 24, 2015)

(<https://www.sangiin.go.jp/japanese/joho1/kousei/syuisyo/189/touh/t189079.htm>) (as of August 27, 2023).

national defense that the Self-Defense Forces are supposed to carry out, this poses a major obstacle to carrying out their missions.

There is currently a debate that Article 9 of the Constitution should be amended to make the Self-Defense Forces a military in the normal sense of the word, in line with the international situation. However, there are many obstacles to amending the constitution, and it has not been possible to amend it. Therefore, the basics of Japan's defense policy have not changed from the beginning, and the Self-Defense Forces remain an armed police force.

Japan's defense policy was therefore extremely limited, as seen in the Basic Policy on National Defense⁵ of 1957 and the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty⁶ of 1960. However, as discussions grow about Japan's response to the unstable international peace after the end of the Cold War, Japan aims to create an international security environment rather than a defense policy based on the traditional 'one-country pacifism'⁷. In other words, Japan decided to adopt a defense policy based on 'Proactive Contribution to Peace'⁸ until China's military power was modernized.

2 China's Naval Power Buildup and Japan's Response

In 1992, China, a communist dictatorship, signed a joint statement between the United States and China, allowing it to advance into the international community. The United States supported China's development, believing that if China became economically prosperous, it would be able to share values with capitalist countries. China achieved rapid economic growth through Deng Xiaoping's economic opening reforms and focused on becoming a maritime power to realize China's dream of 'rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation'.

⁵ Paragraph 1 of the Basic Policy on National Defense stipulates 'Supporting the activities of the United Nations, promoting international collaboration, and thereby, making a commitment to the realization of world peace'. Paragraph 4 stipulates 'Dealing with external aggression based on the security arrangements with the U.S. until the United Nations will be able to fulfill its function in stopping such aggression effectively in the future'.

⁶ Article 5 of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty stipulates ' Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes.' And article 6 stipulates ' For the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East, the United States of America is granted the use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan'.

⁷ One-country pacifism is the position of thinking that it is sufficient if only Japan is safe, without considering regional or international security.

⁸ Japan's Proactive Contribution to Peace is a policy position that proactively contributes to ensuring peace, based on the idea that it is necessary to ensure peace and stability in the region and the international community in order to protect Japan's peace and security.

In 2010, China achieved rapid economic growth, surpassing Japan to become the world's second-largest country in terms of nominal gross domestic product. Reflecting this economic growth, China increased its defense spending and modernized its military. In other words, it modernized and strengthened its nuclear forces, missile forces, and sea and air forces. As China becomes more active in securing maritime rights and interests in the East China Sea and South China Sea, the international community has become increasingly wary of such actions by China.

In Japan, tensions continued as China claimed the Senkaku Islands as its core interests, and the defense of the Nansei Islands of Japan, including the Senkaku Islands, was actively debated against Chinese encroaching into the East China Sea. As a result, in 2013, Japan's first national strategy, the National Security Strategy, was approved by the Cabinet, which clearly identified China as a maritime security threat. At this point, the target of Japan's threat was shifted from Russia to China.

Furthermore, Japan discussed what actions the Self-Defense Forces should take in the crisis that China militarily invaded Taiwan, and in 2021 enacted the Armed Attack Situation Act, which clarifies countermeasures for each type of Chinese military action. In other words, the situation was divided into an existential crisis situation⁹, which would mean a military invasion of Taiwan by China, and an armed attack situation¹⁰, which would mean a military invasion of Japan. Japan enacted the Peace and Security Legislation in 2015 to enable it to support the U.S. military activities with Taiwan in times of existential crisis. The Japanese government authorized the Self-Defense Forces to use force based on the right of collective self-defense.

Afterwards, China proposed the 'Strong Military Ideology'¹¹ that aims to create a 'world-class military', and further enshrined 'Xi Jinping's Strong Military Ideology' in

⁹ An existential crisis situation is when an armed attack occurs against another country with which Japan has a close relationship, and there is a clear danger that this threatens the very existence of Japan and fundamentally overturns the people's rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. refers to a situation (Article 2 of the law).

¹⁰ An armed attack situation refers to a situation in which an armed attack has occurred or a situation in which there is a clear and imminent danger of an armed attack (article 2 of the law).

¹¹ Xi Jinping's strong military ideology explains how the Chinese Communist Party will promote a strong military to the critical stage of China's development from "great" to "strong" in the new era, and realize the Chinese dream and the dream of a strong military. (Eiichi Shinozawa, 'Xi Jinping's Thinking on Strengthening the Military and Reinforcement of Party Security'), *Asian Studies Series 104'* (Asia University, 2019), PP.125-

126. (<https://www.asia.ac.jp/albums/abm.php?d=448&f=abm00001169.pdf&n=%E7%BF%92%E8%BF%91%E5%B9%B3%E3%81%AE%E5%BC%B7%E8%BB%8D%E6%80%9D%E6%83%B3%E3%81%A8>

the party constitution at the 19th Party Congress in 2017, and this ideology led to the establishment of the People's Liberation Army.

This position of President Xi Jinping was confirmed at the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Communist Party of China held in July 2021 and at the 6th Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held in November of the same year. It was once again emphasized 'Strong Military Ideology' as the 'core'¹².

As will be discussed later, the reason behind the revision of Japan's National Security Strategy in 2022 was due to concerns that the ideology of strengthening military power would increase the possibility of China's invasion of the Nansei Islands of Japan.

3 Strategic Competition and Growing Mutual Distrust between the U.S. and China

As mentioned above, Japan's defense policy is to guarantee Japan's security through joint defense with the United States, and Japan also has three non-nuclear principles¹³ as its national policy, which is the principle that Japan will not possess nuclear weapons. Therefore, Japan, which is adjacent to the nuclear powers China, Russia and North Korea, had no choice but to rely on the US strategy and extended nuclear deterrence policy for defense against nuclear attacks from neighboring countries.

The United States' strategy is to ①prevent hostile forces from dominating important regions such as Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East, ②form an economic order based on freedom of goods, finance and information, and ③achieve these goals. This

[E5%BC%B7%E5%8C%96%E3%81%95%E3%82%8C%E3%82%8B%E5%85%9A%E3%81%AE%E5%AE%89%E5%85%A8%E4%BF%9D%E9%9A%9C.pdf](#) (as of August 30, 2023)

¹² Ministry of Defense, *DEFENSE of JAPAN 2022*, pp.30-40.

¹³ The Diet resolutions regarding the three non-nuclear principles are as follows. (<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/kaku/gensoku/ketsugi.html>)(as of August 31, 2023).

'The government will abide by the Three Non-Nuclear Principles of not owning, not creating, and not importing nuclear weapons, and will also ensure that, upon the return of Okinawa, there are no nuclear weapons in Okinawa, and that nuclear weapons will not be brought into Okinawa even after the return.' (House of Representatives resolution on non-nuclear weapons and reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa (November 24, 1971)). And 'Considering that the three non-nuclear principles of not having, not producing, and not introducing nuclear weapons have been established as national policy, the government will faithfully implement them under all circumstances.' (After the vote on Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Resolutions adopted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives after the vote (April 27, 1976), and resolutions adopted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Councilors after the vote on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (May 21, 1976). And 'As the only country to have suffered from atomic bombings, Japan's national policy is to adhere to the three non-nuclear principles of not possessing, not producing, and not importing nuclear weapons. (Resolution of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee on Nuclear Disarmament (June 5, 1981).

should be realized through an international system. Such a US strategy was, of course, directly related to the security and prosperity of the United States.

On the other hand, China, which had significantly increased its national power, was developing a policy of asserting itself externally to the world, which could easily be expected to conflict with the grand strategy of the United States. In other words, for the United States, China's tough foreign stance was incompatible with the basic elements of its own grand strategy: an open economic order toward the world and the defense of the international system. For example, China's construction of a large economic zone through 'One Belt One Road' Initiative was against the economic interests that the United States had developed over many years.

It will probably be difficult for China to build a 'new type of great power relationship' with the United States. The U.S. strategy in the Far East has shaped the postwar order around China, so if China were to attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force, that would be incompatible with the U.S. strategy. Therefore, strategic competition will inevitably arise between the United States and China. However, there is a possibility that China, which has grown more confident in its national power, and the Xi Jinping administration, which has entered its third term, will directly challenge the leadership of the international order by the United States. Therefore, in the strategic competition between the United States and China, it can be said that mutual strategic distrust and caution are increasing on both sides.

The Biden administration of the United States has positioned China as the 'most serious competitor' that challenges the prosperity and security of the United States and has made clear its policy to stop China's encroachment through cooperation with allies, like-minded countries, and partner countries. Furthermore, the United States regards economic security as national security and is further strengthening its efforts to prevent important and sensitive technologies from being diverted to strengthen China's military power. China has enacted a series of laws and regulations to counter this, and the influence of the strategic competition between the United States and China is spreading internationally.

Furthermore, the United States and China are increasingly at odds over Taiwan. In April 2021, the United States issued 'new guidelines' to promote exchanges with the Taiwanese authorities, demonstrating a stance of promoting engagement with Taiwan, allowing naval vessels to pass through the Taiwan Strait and selling weapons to Taiwan. On the other hand, since 2021, China has further increased the number of Chinese military aircraft entering the airspace southwest of Taiwan and has been conducting

military training in the sea and airspace surrounding Taiwan. This situation is said to be the new normal and has resulted in further escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

Against this background, not only the United States but also European countries have successively expressed their interest and concern for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan is an extremely important partner for Japan, sharing fundamental values such as freedom and democracy, and the stability of the situation surrounding the Taiwan Strait is also important for Japan's security. Therefore, since the stability of the Taiwan Strait is a common issue throughout the world, Japan, in cooperation with the international community, is watching with a sense of nervousness as China attempts to change the status quo by force¹⁴.

Thus, it can be said that Japan revised its national security strategy of 2013 in December 2022 in response to the deteriorating security environment in the Taiwan Strait.

4 Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on Japan's Defense Policy

As the risk of military strategic conflict between the United States and China increases in East Asia, totalitarian Putin Russian President has used force to change the status quo in Ukraine. President Putin's argument for militarily invading Ukraine was that Ukraine was Russia's brother country and that it was part of Russia's territory. In addition to this, Russia cited Ukraine's violation of the Minsk Agreement¹⁵ as a reason for its military invasion, but the international community showed little interest in this reason.

The fact that Russia, a nuclear power, invaded Ukraine, a militarily small country, made it seem like China would invade Taiwan. At this point, it can be said that the need

¹⁴ Ministry of Defense, *DEFENSE of JAPAN 2022 (Digest Version)*, p.64.

¹⁵ The Minsk Agreement consists of Minsk 1 and Minsk 2. Minsk 1 is a document signed by Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the Donetsk People's Republic, and the Lugansk People's Republic on September 5, 2014, in which the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) agreed to ceasefire in the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine. They agreed temporary special status to areas controlled by separatists, the holding of local elections, and amnesty for the parties concerned, but the ceasefire agreement was completely broken in January 2015. Afterwards, because of peace negotiations among the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France, an agreement of Minsk2 was reached on the withdrawal of heavy weapons, the establishment of a buffer zone, the withdrawal of foreign forces and weapons, and the expansion of autonomy to Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts. and a ceasefire was announced to come into effect from midnight on February 15th of 2015.

for cooperation among democratic countries, centered on the United States, has become clear in preparation for changes in the status quo caused by the force of totalitarian states such as Russia and China.

The general lessons that could be drawn from the Russo-Ukrainian war were: In other words, ①It was confirmed that wars between states occur not only for political reasons but also for geopolitical reasons; ②That Russia's deep-rooted expansionist tendencies have remained consistent to this day; ③The battle in the realm of society and human cognition has an important meaning; ④The actions of the Russian military, which are suspected of serious violations of international law, have extremely worsened Russia's position in the international community; and ⑤The idea was that even small and medium-sized countries could compete to a certain degree with large powers if they were legitimate and had the support of international public opinion.

The lessons Japan learned from this war were as follows. In other words; ①What is most important when considering security is that the Japanese themselves have a strong will and ability to protect their own country; ②The United States has to show a clear stance of protecting Japan against threats from China and other countries; ③Close consultation with the United States is important in order to further ensure the reliability of extended deterrence¹⁶; and ④The ability to continuously obtain necessary weapons in times of war, whether produced domestically or imported, was extremely important.

As mentioned above, Japan was completely dependent on the military power of the United States for its defense policy but was shocked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and was forced to consider the reality of global security issues. Japan recognized that maintaining the status quo and an international order based on law were crucially important national interests.

In order to respond to rapid changes in the security environment of the international community, on February 16, 2022, Japan's Cabinet approved three security-related documents such as the Revised National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the Defense Force Development Plan to reflect it in Japan's security strategy and defense policy after the Russia-Ukraine War.

5 Japan's Defense Policy Based on the Revised National Security Strategy

¹⁶. Extended deterrence is ultimately about changing an adversary's cost calculations and expectations, and in the process deterring attacks against America's allies. It also convinces adversaries that attacks on U.S. allies will invite U.S. retaliation. Yagi Naoto, 'US Extended Deterrence and East Asia,' *Maritime Self-Defense Force Staff College Strategic Research*, November 2016 (Special edition) p. 46.

The National Security Strategy is positioned as the highest-level policy document regarding national security, and is a cross-cutting strategy for the government to cover not only the traditional fields of foreign affairs and defense, but also economic security, technology, information, etc. Strategies for response are provided¹⁷.

As mentioned above, Japan created its first national security strategy in 2013 and expressed its basic philosophy of national security. In other words, Japan must ① continue to maintain its path as a peace-loving nation in the future security environment, ② ensure the security of Japan and the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region from the standpoint of proactive contribution to peace based on the principle of international cooperation, and ③ contribute more actively than ever to ensuring the peace, stability, and prosperity of the international community¹⁸.

According to the 2013 National Security Strategy, Japan's national interests are to maintain its sovereignty and independence, preserve its territory, and ensure the safety of life, body, and property of the Japanese people, and to preserve its rich culture and traditions. The goal is to maintain the peace and security of Japan, which is based on freedom and democracy, and to fulfill the existence of the nation. Furthermore, it is also in Japan's national interest to maintain and defend an international order based on rules and universal values such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law¹⁹.

Japan revised its National Security Strategy on December 16, 2022, and at the root of this was the recognition of the following events in the international community. In other words, ① It has become clear that peace and development of the international community cannot be achieved through globalization and interdependence alone; ② Some countries that do not share universal values are showing signs of attempting to revise the existing international order based on their own historical views and values; ③ The fundamental principle of the international community, the general prohibition of the use of force, has been blatantly violated by the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council; ④ With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the foundations of the rules that shape the international order were easily broken; and ⑤ The scope of national security has expanded to areas that had previously been considered non-military, such

¹⁷. Ministry of Defense, *DEFENSE of JAPAN 2023*, p.199.

¹⁸ Japanese National Security Council and the Cabinet decision “*About the National Security Strategy*”, 17 of December 2013, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.4.

as the economy and technology. And the strategy points out that the boundaries between military and non-military fields are becoming blurred²⁰.

The strategy also aims to solidify preparations for the worst-case scenario, including fundamental strengthening of defense capabilities, for domestic reasons, and to ensure Japan's peace and prosperity, the security of its people, and coexistence with the international community. It points out that Japan's national interests, including mutual prosperity, must be protected. This strategy provides strategic guidelines for policies in fields related to Japan's security, such as diplomacy, defense, economic security, technology, cyber, maritime, space, information, Official Development Assistance, ODA, and energy²¹.

The strategy also focused in particular on Russia's actions, pointing out that Russia's external activities and military trends, such as the recent invasion of Ukraine, are shaking the foundations of the international order, and further noted that European countries view Russia's actions as the most serious and direct threat to their security. Furthermore, the strategy recognizes that Russia's external activities and military trends in the Indo-Pacific region, coupled with its strategic cooperation with China, are a strong security concern for Japan, and clearly expresses a sense of wariness toward China²². This shows that the strategy was greatly influenced by the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war.

The strategy refers to the prioritized strategic approach and the main measures that constitute it, and defines the main elements of Japan's overall national power related to security as ①diplomatic power, ②defense power, and ③economic power, ④technical ability, and ⑤information ability. It also indicates that Japan and the United States will develop efforts centered on diplomacy to prevent crises, actively create a peaceful and stable international environment, and strengthen a free and open international order. It is important to ①strengthen Japan-US. alliances, ②maintain and develop a free and open international order, and strengthen cooperation with allies and like-minded countries²³.

Furthermore, the strategy calls for deepening security cooperation with the United States by coordinating operations between Japan and the United States, improving interoperability, deepening cooperation in areas such as cyber and space, and

²⁰ *National Security Strategy of 2022*, pp.12-13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

²² *Ibid.*, p20

²³ *Ibid.*, pp22-23.

cooperating in equipment and technology²⁴. Japan has loudly advocated in its national strategy to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. alliance in order to deter attempts to unilaterally change the status quo through force.

Based on the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, FOIP, the Self-Defense Forces are actively promoting multilateral and multilayered defense cooperation and exchanges to strengthen cooperation with as many countries as possible. In recent years, Japan has been promoting defense cooperation and exchanges, including high-level exchanges, joint training, and capacity-building support, not only with allies but also with a variety of countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe²⁵.

The most appreciated aspect of the National Security Strategy of 2023 is that Japan has clarified its relationship with Taiwan. In other words, Taiwan is an extremely important partner and dear friend of Japan, with whom Japan share fundamental values including democracy, and with whom Japan has close economic ties and people-to-people exchanges. Peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait are essential elements for the stability and prosperity of the international community, and Japan has made it clear that it will take various initiatives based on its position of supporting the peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues²⁶. Japan sent a strong message to China not to make an armed invasion of Taiwan.

6. The Issue of Strengthening Stand-off Capabilities in the Japan's Defense Policy

The National Defense Strategy of 2022, which was approved by the Cabinet at the same time as the National Security Strategy of 2022, replaces the National Defense Program Guidelines, which have been formulated six times since 1976²⁷. In addition, the Defense Buildup Program of 2022 aims to strengthen its defense capabilities so that in the event of an invasion of Japan by fiscal 2027, Japan will take primary responsibility for dealing with it, and will be able to deter and eliminate it while receiving support from allies and others²⁸.

It has been highly evaluated that the three security-related documents all recognized the enhancement of the Self-Defense Forces' stand-off defense capabilities as an important capability for fundamentally strengthening defense capabilities. Stand-off

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p29.

²⁵ Ministry of Defense, *DEFENSE of JAPAN 2023*, p.360.

²⁶ *National Security Strategy of 2022*, p24.

²⁷ National Defense Strategy of 2022, p.3.

²⁸ Defense Buildup Program of 2022, p.4.

defense capability is the ability to deal with invading Chinese ships and landing forces from outside the threat zone to protect Japan's territory, which extends approximately 3,000 km from north to south and east to west²⁹. In other words, as China has significantly improved the performance of its radars and various missiles, Japan will be able to deal with Chinese warships from a position outside the threat zone to effectively deter attacks against Japan. Therefore, Japan decided to work on strengthening its stand-off defense capabilities.

Specifically, Japan will conduct and continue research and development of Type12 surface-to-ship guided missiles with improved capabilities (ground-launched, ship-launched, and aircraft-launched types), high-speed glide missiles for island defense, and hypersonic 3 guided missiles. Japan will implement longer-range firing of various guided missiles³⁰.

In addition, Japan will mass-produce standoff missiles domestically and introduce standoff missiles such as the U.S.-made Tomahawk. Furthermore, Japan will proceed with development to diversify its launch platforms and will develop a vertical missile launch system (VSL) that can be mounted on submarines and a system that can be mounted on transport aircraft, in order to improve the operational capabilities of standoff missiles³¹.

In order to prevent ballistic missile attacks, Japan will utilize stand-off defense capabilities as an unavoidable minimum self-defense measure and the ability to carry out effective counterstrikes in the enemy's territory. By possessing the ability to carry out such an effective counterattack, Japan will be able to restrict the enemy's missile launches, thereby deterring the enemy's missile attacks.³² Japan decided to have the ability to counterstrike against Command center or the missile launcher of the country that launched the missile

There are several arguments regarding strengthening this counterattack capability. For example, the possession of counterattack capability is highly praised for fundamentally changing the conventional basic defense force. However, the National Security Strategy states that while the traditional 'exclusive defense' concept of fighting in Japanese territory has not changed, the counterattack capability will attack missile launch bases and command centers in Chinese territory. The argument is that the relationship between 'exclusive defense' and 'counterattack capability' is unclear.

²⁹ National Defense Strategy of 2022, p.23.

³⁰ *Japan's Defense White Paper of 2023*, p.280.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p.283.

In addition, although missile defense is a simple means of defense in a sense by shooting down incoming missiles, the targets of the kill chain necessary to operate counterattack capabilities are not only China but also Russia and North Korea. And joint operations between Japan and the United States are necessary to effectively utilize counterattack capabilities, and there is a possibility that the United States will share necessary information from satellites, such as location information of attack targets and missile queuing. In other words, the question is whether it is possible for Japan and the United States to prepare for a joint response and to unify their minds.

Finally, looking at the roadmap for stand-off defense capabilities, Japan will initially purchase Tomahawk and other stand-off missiles from the United States, but will develop ground-launched missiles by 2025. The plan is to develop a ship-launched missile by 2026, an aircraft-launched stand-off missile by 2028, and complete development of a hypersonic guided missile by 2031³³. Questions have also been raised, such as whether Japan will be able to develop a stand-off missile that deters attacks by China within about 10 years.

Conclusion

Ever since Japan regained its sovereignty after World War II, Japan has maintained a vague concept of security. In other words, the targets of threat are traditional, such as military invasions, terrorism, crime, economic blockade, daily life, natural disasters, etc., and the targets of protection are life and property, political freedom, economic prosperity, cultural tradition, etc. According to the provisions of the Constitution, Japan's defense policy had no other options than contributing to the activities of the United Nations as a member and jointly defense with the United States in accordance with the Japan-U.S. Security treaty.

However, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Japan realized that the rule-based international order was weakening and to prepare for the modernization of China's military, Japan dramatically changed its security and defense policy. In other words, based on a sense of crisis regarding the collapse of the rule-based international order and China's possible military invasion, Japan divides its security policy into two concepts, external security and internal security, and aims to prevent and stable against unstable international security environment. In other words, the former security policy that strengthens defense capabilities to deal with threats to the survival of Japan, while the

³³ *Defense Buildup Program, op.cit.*, p.37.

latter security policy that implements cyber security, maritime security, space security, energy security, etc.

As for external security, which is security in its original meaning, targets military aggression from outside, destruction of the rule-based international order, and unilateral change of the status quo by force, and targets to be protected are traditional sovereignty and independence. In addition to respecting the lives and property of the people, freedom, democracy, and human rights, Japan added the rule of law and the maintenance and defense of the international order based on international law.

Japan will establish ways to deter Chinese invasion by strengthening Japan's defense capabilities and strengthening its national power and will strengthen deterrence by coordinating with like-minded countries and jointly imposing economic sanctions. In this way, Japan has implemented counterstrike capabilities that allow it to launch stand-off missiles and destroy them, and it is still within the framework of the traditional exclusive defense strategy of fighting within Japanese territory.

Although there is still debate over the possession of stand-off defense capabilities, Japan, under the constraints of Article 9 of the Constitution, adopts a pragmatic defense policy to deal with the uncertain international security environment. In other words, Japan revised its national security strategy to respond to the modernization of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and to stabilize the rule-based international order in cooperation with the nuclear-armed United States.

Japan's decisions on defense strategy will be irreversible based on a realistic change in the public's perception of the security environment and will also be an important step toward deepening the Japan-U.S. alliance³⁴. In other words, Japan started efforts to change its conventional passive defense policy to an active defense policy and make deterrence against China more effective.

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³⁴ Watanabe Tsuneo, 'What's New in Japan's Three Strategic Documents,' (<https://www.csis.org/analysis/whats-new-japans-three-strategic-documents>) (as of September 20, 2023).