

CHAPTER 11

Japan's National Security in 2013

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Introduction

The year 2013 was full of news about Japan's national security. One of the primary reasons is that the current coalition Government formed by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the new Komeito party, which inaugurated in December 2012, engaged in a remarkable number of new policy initiatives, some of which visit the long-standing principles of Japan's national security. Surely the limited volume of this paper is far from sufficient to discuss each and every one of the major policies.

By necessity, this paper chooses to be selective by focusing its analytical light upon the following three key policy moves that have already had or may potentially have a real impact upon Japan's defense policy in the short and long run. The first section of the paper analyzes how two security issues in Northeast Asia, one with North Korea and China as well as Japan's defense policy efforts on these two fronts, are discussed in Japan's latest capstone defense policy document or the National Defense Program Guidelines (the 2013 NDPG) released in December 2013. Japan is increasingly aware of North Korea becoming an existing clear and present danger while it maintains a more nuanced perception about rising China. With regard to the latter, the 2013 NDPG updates the existing two key concepts of the gray-zone as well as the dynamic defense in dealing with the China challenges against the backdrop of which Japan is now engaged in restructuring of the Self-Defense Force (SDF), as well as refurbishing the institutional infrastructure of the alliance defense cooperation.

The second section deals with the two key items in the current Government's long term efforts to strengthen the foundation of Japan's national security. One of them is a reform of the national security organization and some long-standing principles such as the Constitutional interpretation and three principles on arms export. The other set of the efforts is the widely known "Abenomics," which is a long term attempt to restore the strength of Japanese economic dynamism. Even though Abenomics is first and foremost an economic policy, it cannot be dismissed that it has important

political and strategic implications. In light of these long term policies, it is clear that the security challenges that the current Government is working on exist not just externally, but also within Japan itself.

Lastly, the third section looks at Japan's efforts to both expand the horizon of global diplomatic outreach as well as deepen more traditional ties with the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The Government's continuing priority upon enhancing relations with the Asia Pacific countries also directs the ways in which the defense diplomacy is conducted and prioritized.

1. Dynamic Joint Defense Force

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-Komeito coalition Government released the new National Defense Program Guidelines (the 2013 NDPG) on the 17th December 2013.¹ This is the fifth version of the NDPG, a capstone document which articulates Japan's strategic outlook and the long term direction of its Defense policy, as well as the roles, structure, and activities of the Self Defense Force. Quickly after coming back in power, the LDP-Komeito Government made a cabinet decision to freeze the previous version of NDPG, or the 2010 NDPG crafted under the former Government led by Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Comparison of these two documents helps highlight the key features of the 2013 NDPG.

(1) Continuing Developments of North Korea's Missile and Nuclear Capabilities

Although the observers' attention often focuses almost exclusively on how Japan is responding to China's growing assertiveness in East China Sea and the wider Western Pacific, the only country that is categorized as an existing threat in Japan's defense documents is North Korea. In fact, while the previous NDPG described the North Korea's missile and nuclear challenges only as grave concerns, the new 2013 NDPG characterizes North Korea, for the first time in the history of NDPGs, as a grave and present "threat" to the security of Japan itself. The 2013 NDPG points out that the increasing sophistication and range of North Korea's ballistic missile capability has now entered "a new stage," while noting that North Korea possibly has achieved the miniaturization of its nuclear capability.

¹ The summary in English of the 2013 NDPG is available at [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NDPG\(Summary\).pdf](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NDPG(Summary).pdf)

Such growing threat perceptions about North Korea are the reflection of recent developments. On the 12th of December 2012, North Korea conducted what it called a “satellite launch,” another de facto ballistic missile launch test demonstrating the significant development of North Korea’s missile technologies.² Apparently the test was “successfully” conducted as all the three components fell into the planned maritime zones with the first propulsion component dropping into the Yellow Sea, the second into the water to the west of Cheju Island (South Korea), and the third into the water to the east of Luzon Island (the Philippines), and some kind of object which has been actually brought into the orbit around the earth (unlike the claim by North Korea that this object does not dispatch any communication signal, hence does not appear to be functioning as a working satellite.) The Japanese Ministry of Defense assesses that if the technologies proven in this testing are applied to the ballistic missile development, the range of such capabilities may go beyond 10,000 km (on the assumption that the weight of the warhead is less than a ton) which can, if operable, reach San Francisco and Los Angeles. Also the same technological improvements can be used to further sophisticate the existing missiles of a shorter range missile such as the Nodong missiles, whose range covers a large part of Japanese territory. And with the third nuclear test conducted in February 2013, the Ministry of Defense goes as far as to claim now that it cannot be denied that there exists the possibility of North Korea successfully miniaturizing its nuclear explosion devices and turning them into warheads.

In light of the growing nuclear and missile threats from the Peninsula, the 2013 NDPG incorporates the decision of expanding the missile defense capable Aegis destroyer fleet from the current planned target of six to eight, while reaffirming the essentiality of the U.S. extended deterrence of which its nuclear deterrence is central.

(2) Towards a Dynamic Joint Defense Force

One of the central tenets of the 2010 NDPG was its focus on the risks arising from the so-called “gray-zone area,” a key concept to describe the challenges facing Japan in relations, particularly with a rising China.³ The concept reflected Japan’s judgment that, while China was not immediately intending to conduct arms attacks to change

² MOD’s understanding of the so-called satellite launch in December 2012 is available at <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/defense/bmd/20130125.html>

³ The Government of Japan, National Defense Program Guidelines for the period beyond FY2011, Ministry of Defense, http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/security/pdfs/h23_ndpg_en.pdf (accessed on 18 January 2014)

the international status quo in its favor, it was rather pursuing what is described in various terms such as salami-slicing tactics or an “opportunistic creeping expansion” strategy which uses coercive means short of arms attacks for the purpose of establishing a new fait accompli, and probing the threshold of opponents’ responses. Such gray-zone challenges had already been seen at the time of the 2010 NDPG as Chinese maritime enforcement ships were not just increasing their activities in the nearby waters around Japan, but also intruding into Japanese contiguous and territorial waters in 2008 while their aircraft and naval vessels were both increasing their activities as well as expanding the areas of operations.

In light of these emerging gray-zone challenges, the 2010 NDPG envisioned the Dynamic Defense Force with an aim to increase the Self Defense Force (SDF)’s activities, particularly the ISR operations in the area around the Southwest Island chains so that there was no window of opportunity for China’s attempt to gradually erode the status quo. Also with the undeniable risks of escalation in mind, the Dynamic Defense Force concept intended to develop a defense force which could respond in swift, seamless, and sustainable manners in accordance to escalatory developments of the situation. It is in this context that the 2010 NDPG also highlighted the importance of the island defense as an increasingly important mission for the Self Defense Force. Against this backdrop, the 2010 NDPG incorporated various policy initiatives including a new installation of a Ground Self Defense Force’s base where previously there was no SDF presence in the island chain, relocating one additional air squadron to the Okinawa area, and expanding the submarine force from 16 to 22 in number.

Straight to the conclusion, the newly released 2013 NDPG is not a fundamental departure from the 2010 NDPG. Rather it is important to note that the current NDPG builds on the conceptual as well as programmatic groundwork done by its predecessor document by introducing the following two elements. The first of them was updates of the gray-zone concept reflecting upon the recent development of Chinese maritime and air activities. The 2013 NDPG asserts that the challenges of the gray-zone are becoming more persistent, while risks of escalating into more serious situations are clearly stressed in the new document. Such descriptions about the gray-zone challenges reflect what Japan and the region have actually experienced for recent months and years. In February 2013, Japanese Minister of Defense,

Itsunori Onodera, stated at a press conference that a Chinese frigate cruising in East China Sea directed a Fire Control Radar on a Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (MSDF) helicopter on January 19th and again on a Japanese MSDF ship on the 30th.⁴ Minister Onodera stressed that this sort of act could risk inviting a dangerous situation. Later in November, Chinese Defense Ministry suddenly announced a plan to establish an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) widely covering East China Sea including Japanese territorial air space.⁵ Along with allies and other international partners, the Japanese Government criticized the ADIZ announcements as (1) the coverage of the ADIZ appears as if parts of Japanese territorial air space were owned by China, (2) sudden and unilateral announcements without full prior consultations risk raising tensions, (3) Chinese demands for airline companies to submit flight plans even when they do not take a course to enter the Chinese air space undermines the freedom of overflight, and (4) it constitutes unilateral actions to change the status quo, against Japan and its allies and friends are categorically opposed.⁶

On top of these highly escalatory moves, the period from January to October of 2013 saw the intrusion by, in total, 166 Chinese maritime law enforcement vessels into Japanese territorial waters around the Senkakus. Furthermore, Chinese navy fleets frequently pass by the Okinawa islands into the Western Pacific.⁷ In particular, 2013 witnessed a major exercise participated by all three of the North, East, and South Sea Fleets of People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) between the First and Second island chains. In addition, the Fiscal Year 2012 record of Japanese Air Self Defense Force (ASDF)'s scrambles vis-à-vis Chinese aircraft reached 306 times, elevating China onto the top of the scramble list for the first time since the scramble record began to be disclosed annually in 2001.⁸ This trend continued into the first half of Fiscal Year 2013 in which there were 149 scrambles against Chinese aircraft slightly beyond 136 against Russians. These Chinese activities have precipitated Japan to

⁴ Ministry of Defense Japan, "Press Briefing by Minister of Defense Itsunori Onodera," Press Release (Japanese), 5 February 2013, <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/kisha/2013/02/05a.html>

⁵ "Announcement of the Aircraft Identification Rules for the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone for the P.R.C.," Press Briefings, Ministry of National Defense The People's Republic of China, 23 November 2013, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2013-11/23/content_4476143.htm

⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, "Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the announcement on the "East China Sea Air Defense Identification zone" by the Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China," Press Release, 24 November 2013, http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000098.html

⁷ The figures are available on the website of Japan Coast Guard (Japanese), <http://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/senkaku/index.html>

⁸ Joint Staff of Self Defense Force, situations of the scrambling in the first half of FY2013, Joint Staff Press Release, 9 October 2013, http://www.mod.go.jp/js/Press/press2013/press_pdf/p20131009_01.pdf

update its situational appraisal. Japan now not just perceives the gray zone challenges but stresses the persistence of the gray zone challenges and risks of escalation in clearer manners in the 2013 NDPG than in the previous document.

The second new element that the 2013 NDPG introduced was the joint capability assessment. The 2013 NDPG process conducted an extensive assessment of the SDF's capabilities on the basis of the joint operations for the first time in NDPG history, as in the previous review processes the capability assessment was basically conducted separately by individual services, and not necessarily on the basis of joint operations. Reflecting on this, the 2013 NDPG's central policy concept is now the Dynamic *Joint* Defense Force, in contrast to the Dynamic Defense Force in the previous NDPG. Accordingly the section on the capability priorities is now more extensive and in depth, detailing the necessity of transforming the Ground Self Defense Force by establishing a central operational command and restructuring some units into highly mobile forces so that they can be readily deployable in time of an island defense operation, expanding the surface fleet from 47 to 54 by introducing multi-role compact vessels, adding new reconnaissance and early warning squadrons, and introducing UAVs while continuing to downsize decreasingly relevant capabilities such as tanks and heavy artillery.

One of the remaining questions that the 2013 NDPG leaves for both the Government itself and the Japanese scholarly community at large is how to configure deterrence in the context of the gray zone challenges. One key element that needs to be incorporated into the concept of deterrence in the gray-zone is the fact that China's gray-zone activities are not of and in itself arms attacks or an outright military invasion.⁹ But they are rather acts of gradual expansion employing various low intensity activities such as intrusion by coast guard ships into the territorial waters, aircraft, and naval activities around Japanese territory. The fact is that none of the existing efforts, whether it is the repeated joint exercises of the Japan-U.S. alliance, the U.S. consistent commitment to the defense of the Senkaku Islands, the SDF's continuing activities including the regular and extensive ISR operations or the expanded Japan Coast Guard's patrolling, turned out to be sufficient for deterring Chinese gray-

⁹ One explanation about the deterrence concept in the context of the gray-zone challenges is provided by NIDS Senior Fellow Sugio Takahashi. See Sugio Takahashi, "Nihon no Boeiseisaku to Nichibei Domei no Kongo," Tokushu, Nippon.com, at <http://www.nippon.com/ja/in-depth/a00503/>

zone activities. How to deter, and if possible, reverse Chinese challenges remains a homework question to be answered.

Perhaps one clear lesson that can be drawn from the experiences of the past several years is that the scope of China's challenge is beyond the military domain. Given that China employed a range of coercive methods on top of military means such as coast guard ships as well as slowing exports of the rare earth material, the policy planning as well as intellectual work in this regard should not be confined to the narrow defense community. If so, the scope of Japan's policy thinking as to China's gray zone challenges needs to go beyond the military realm.

(3) Communication Efforts between Japan and China

While the Government of Japan consistently stresses its resolve of defending its sovereign territories, it also continues to note that the doors for dialogues are absolutely open. Since the inauguration of both Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Xi Jinping, however, there were few summit meetings between the two Governments. The notable exception was their brief chats and hand-shaking on the sidelines of the G20 in September 2013.¹⁰ Nevertheless, such de-facto stoppage of the summitry and the foreign or defense ministerial meeting does not however mean that there is no contact whatsoever between the two countries. In fact some important communications through their Embassies, the occasional senior official visits, and the track 1.5 levels do take place.

One of the key agendas for bilateral communications is an establishment of a maritime communication mechanism. Since the first meeting of the working group in April 2008, two countries have been engaging in a negotiation to create such a system in the hope of avoiding inadvertent/accidental escalations, and building trust between the two defense organizations. In fact, Director-General of Defense Policy Hideshi Tokuchi visited his counterparts in Beijing in April 2013 only to find that China remained reluctant of implementing it.¹¹ Again in June, Director General Tokuchi held another meeting with his counterparts on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue, which did not lead to any announcement of concrete results.

¹⁰ "Japan PM Abe shakes hands with China's Xi at G20," *The Reuters*, 5 September 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/05/us-g20-japan-china-idUSBRE9840TP20130905>

¹¹ Ministry of Defense, Press Conference by Minister, 14 June 2013, <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/kisha/2013/06/14.html>

The diplomatic efforts to install a mechanism to avoid unanticipated conflicts have also been pursued in the wider multilateral gatherings, particularly the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, which has been working on a code of unalerted encounters at sea, or CUES. If agreed and implemented, the CUES may contribute to providing a common understanding about how the coast guard and naval vessels should behave when encountering the ships of other countries in proximity.

(4) Japan-U.S. Allied Efforts in Dealing with China's Gray-Zone Challenges

The alliance with the U.S., which remains central in Japan's security and defense policies, pursue a wide range of policy initiatives in dealing with China's gray-zone challenges on various fronts including, in particular, the following four areas. First is the U.S. declaratory commitment to the defense of Japan, which serves as both sources of assurance to its ally and deterrence vis-à-vis China so as to prevent any escalatory scenarios. At the Japan-U.S. foreign ministerial meeting in January 2013, the first such occasion after the inauguration of the current Government saw a strong public statement from the then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that the U.S. oppose any coercive and unilateral actions to challenge Japan's control of the Senkaku Islands. Likewise, the current Secretary of State John Kerry and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel both reiterated the same position on various occasions. In the wake of China's ADIZ announcements, the U.S. Government made it clear that it did not recognize such a zone while reiterating their opposition against unilateral and coercive actions to change the status quo, as well as their commitment to the application of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty to the Senkaku Islands.¹²

The second area of the allied cooperation in dealing with China is the broader signaling efforts intended to message to the regional audiences that the U.S. stays in the Western Pacific and the alliance remains strong and active. On top of the existing policy dialogue as well as military coordination mechanisms, and the U.S. forward-deployed presence, what the two allies have been increasingly focused upon over the past several years are the visible and strategic conducts of the joint activities in the Asia Pacific including particularly the Western Pacific. In the face of China's growing gray-zone activities in the Western Pacific, Japan and U.S. have

¹² Department of Defense, "Statement by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone," News Release, 23 November 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=16392>

also been strengthening their presence through the three means of joint exercises, joint Intelligence, Surveillance Reconnaissance (ISR) activities, and the joint use of bases and facilities. This tripartite cooperation, formerly called the dynamic defense cooperation in the era of the DPJ Government, continues to be an important item under the current LDP-Komeito Government as reconfirmed in both the October two-plus-two statement, as well as the 2013 NDPG.¹³ In consistence with this idea, Japan and U.S. conducted a range of activities in 2013 such as MSDF-U.S. Navy joint exercise in the waters near the Okinawa islands in November, which demonstrated the strong Japan-U.S. ties at a time of high tensions created by the ADIZ announcements. These activities underscore the continuing presence and engagement of the U.S., as well as the strategic solidarity of the U.S.-Japan alliance, precisely at a time when China is increasing and expanding its activities in the Western Pacific.

The third area of the alliance activities that the U.S. supports is Japan's capability building. As this paper already analyzed, Japan is now planning to expand its amphibious operational capability with which the U.S. is actively assisting. Japan joined the U.S. amphibious exercise Dawn Blitz at Sacramento, California in June 2013 with a 1,000 strength joint participation by all three SDF services including DDH Huga, LCACs, Japan's only amphibious unit, or Western Army Infantry Regiment and command elements of the Air Defense Command.¹⁴ Such a large bilateral joint exercise sends a strong political message of the Japan-U.S. ties, while offering Japan practical training for amphibious operations with the U.S., a country which has maintained and operated such capabilities for more than seventy years across the world.

Last but not least, the fourth area of cooperation is an operational planning for the gray-zone challenges including escalatory risks. The current Japan-U.S. defense cooperation guidelines was created in 1997 to articulate the ways in which the two allies operationally cooperate in a contingency in which military aggressions are waged directly against Japan and a situation in the area surrounding Japan

¹³ Minister for Foreign Affairs Kishida, Minister of Defense Onodera, Secretary of State Kerry and Secretary of Defense Hagel, Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee: Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities, 3 October 2013, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000016028.pdf>

¹⁴ Joint Staff, Self Defense Force, "Dawn Blitz 2013 in the United State," Press Release, 23 April 2013, http://www.mod.go.jp/js/Press/press2013/press_pdf/p20130423.pdf

(SIASJ).¹⁵ The SIASJ is a contingency in which direct invasion of Japan has not yet materialized but which may risk developing into such eventuality or have a serious impact on Japan's own security unless the situation is effectively dealt with. At the time of the signing of the current Guidelines in 1997, there was a serious concern on both sides of the Pacific about the lack of operational planning for Japan-U.S. cooperation in case of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula. The risk was that if Japan could not effectively respond to the U.S. demands in such a situation, the political foundation of the alliance, especially the support within the U.S., might be seriously damaged. In order to avoid serious expectation gaps and prepare for effective allied cooperation, the 1997 Guidelines articulate in what situation the two allies cooperate, what they expect of each other, and in what way the cooperation is prepared and pursued.

The October 2013 Japan-U.S. two-plus-two meeting gave a political endorsement to the working level process for the revision of the Guideline.¹⁶ Even though the details of the review and revision are not publicly disclosed, the underlying thinking behind the current Guideline review process can be partly inferred. Unlike the year 1997, the current focus of the operational coordination and cooperation has to do with the gray zone challenges posed by China. The gray zone challenges are not similar to the SIASJ as they are directly related to Japan's sovereign interests. Nor do they resemble any Cold-war type risk of a massive landing operation against the main islands of Japan. In light of such challenges and risks, the rationale of the current Guidelines review may be about avoiding any potential expectation gaps and create allied planning suited for the current strategic environment. (In addition, for readers' information, the October 2013 two plus two statement also lists other items such as trilateral mechanism and cooperation on the cyber and space domains as important elements for the Guidelines review process.)

Why is such active alliance cooperation possible at all? One key reason is such that the implications of China's gray-zone challenges go beyond the defense of Japan. Given that China is engaging the gradual changes of the status-quo in defiance of the repeated statement by the U.S. Government of criticism and the alliance

¹⁵ U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee, "Joint Statement: Completion of the Review of the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation," 23 September 1997, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/us/dp04.html

¹⁶ U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee, "Joint Statement: Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities," 3 October 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/10/215070.htm>

commitment, Chinese moves do constitute challenges against the U.S. position in Asia as well. The U.S. commitment to the defense of Japanese sovereign interests is also a strategic test case in the eyes of the regional audience including the other U.S. allies and China as to whether or not and to what extent the U.S. continues to play a leading role in underlining the regional security as well as its position in Asia. The fact that China is challenging the status quo by force demands that the U.S. clearly oppose such attempts in order to avoid giving the rising dragon a wrong message. Furthermore, Chinese maritime and airspace activities are not limited to the direct vicinity of the Senkaku Islands, but are also now taking place in the area between the first and second island chains. It is noteworthy that, while these activities take place regularly, President Xi stated to President Obama that the Pacific Ocean is wide enough for the two great powers.¹⁷ Arguably, China's gray-zone activities can also be considered to be against the U.S. dominance in the Western Pacific. More basically, China's ADIZ announcement, which imposes rules in the international airspace, is inconsistent with existing international rules, including the freedom of navigation.

A challenge for Japan is to keep the U.S. convinced about two things simultaneously. On the one hand, Japan needs to emphasize its strong resolve in making every effort for defending its own territories. Richard Armitage famously stated that Japan's own efforts in the defense of the Senkaku Islands are essential for continuing alliance commitment. On the other hand, Japan also needs to stress to the U.S. that it continues to exercise self-restraint in dealing with the gray-zone challenges. Some scholars in the U.S. occasionally express concern about potential entrapment in which a confrontation between China and an ally may drag the U.S. into an unanticipated conflict. In this context, one thing that the U.S. needs to keep in mind is, should they continue, there is a necessity to avoid taking steps to embolden the U.S. allies. The Japanese Government appears to understand both of the aforementioned potential or existing concerns on the part of the U.S., when Government officials including Prime Minister Abe himself noted in his meeting with President Obama that while the Senkaku Islands are an integral part of Japan's territory, Japan also continues to face China with "a level-headed manner."¹⁸ The Japanese Government's efforts to stress its self-restraint make sense given that such worries might make the

¹⁷ George Gao, "Pacific pivot sparks US-China arms race," *Asia Times*, 22 August 2013.

¹⁸ "Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting Summary," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 22 February 2013, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/kaidan/s_abe2/vti_1302/us.html

U.S. less willing to keep reaffirming its alliance commitment.

2. Strengthening the Foundation of Japan's Defense Policy

On top of the immediate defense steps to counter and deter the challenges existing in Northeast Asia, another set of security challenges that Japan worked on in 2013 were perhaps ones existing not externally, but within Japan itself. The current Government was engaged in some long term efforts to reform and strengthen the foundation of Japan's national security. In this context, the following two areas are noteworthy.

(1) Strengthening Japan's National Security System

The year 2013 saw a wide range of Government efforts to change Japan's national security system. As one of the early moves by the current LDP-Komeito Government which was inaugurated in December 2012, National Security Council (NSC) and the National Security Secretariat (Secretariat) were established as a statutory mechanism in December 2013 and January 2014 respectively.¹⁹ NSC is an inner-cabinet gathering (four minister and nine minister meetings depending on the subject) with the purpose of discussing important issues for Japan's national security. The Secretariat which is led by Secretary General of National Security Shotaro Yachi and supported by about 67 staff, currently serves as a secretariat supporting the roles of NSC. The NSC and the Secretariat are expected to contribute to swift decision making at a time of crises, long-term strategy making, and strategic environment analyses, as well as coordination of different ministries and agencies relevant to national security.

Another early policy product of the LDP-Komeito Government was the release of Japan's first National Security Strategy (NSS) on the 17th December, 2013.²⁰ The NSS aims to articulate the country's long term direction, goals, and ways and means, as well as orchestrating different elements of the national security, particularly diplomacy and defense, into a coherent system.

The central concept of the NSS is called "Proactive Contribution to Peace based on the principle of international cooperation," or PCP, which is an amalgam of two

¹⁹ The Law of Establishing National Security Council, Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 4 December 2013, <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/anzenhosyoukaigi/konkyo.html>

²⁰ Government of Japan, *National Security Strategy*, 17 December 2013, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/18/NSS.pdf

different elements. First, PCP reflects the strong continuities in the goals and vision of the Abe Government's security strategy. "Proactive Contribution to Peace based on the principle of international cooperation" is written in Japanese as Principle of International Cooperation 国際協調主義 Proactive Contribution To Peace 積極的平和主義. The two parts of this phrase, Principle of International Cooperation 国際協調主義 and Contribution To Peace 平和主義 (or Pacifism as translated by some news media) are the words widely used for a long time to symbolize the spirit of the Constitution. It is believed that both Principle of International Cooperation 国際協調主義 and Contribution To Peace 平和主義 are best represented in the Constitution's preamble noting:

We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world. We desire to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth. We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want.

We believe that no nation is responsible to itself alone, but that laws of political morality are universal; and that obedience to such laws is incumbent upon all nations who would sustain their own sovereignty and justify their sovereign relationship with other nations.²¹

By using these terminologies closely related to the Constitution, the PCP aims to emphasize the important continuities, highlighting that the goals and visions that Japan has been pursuing ever since the creation of the current Constitution in 1946 do remain unchanged in the Abe Government's security strategy.

Second, as the word "proactive" suggests, the PCP also illuminates the changes in the way that Japan pursues the continuing goals. There are at least three items currently under review by the LDP-Komeito Government. The first and perhaps best example is the government's current efforts to revisit the Constitutional interpretation about the right of self-defense. The current Constitutional interpretation notes that

²¹ TheConstitutionofJapan, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

Japan cannot hold capabilities or take actions beyond the minimum necessary scope for self-defense, which is in many quarters considered as significantly limiting to Japan's national security on the following two fronts in particular.

The first of them are the international peace cooperation activities such as UNPKOs. Under the current Constitutional interpretation, Japan is not allowed to help defend PKO units of other participating countries even when they are under attack, and the PKO mission is threatened exactly because Japan's activities need to stay within the minimum necessary scope for its own self-defense.

The second area of limits has to do with the right of collective self-defense, which is, under the current Constitutional interpretation, considered beyond the minimum necessary scope for self-defense. With the right of collective self-defense frozen, Japanese activities in support for the alliance cooperation with the U.S., for example, are limited in such various ways as Japan cannot dispatch its ships and aircrafts into the so-called "combat areas" to provide supplies for the U.S. combat operations unless the U.S. forces are operating for the direct defense of Japan. Nor can Japan shoot down ballistic missiles flying above her if they are targeted at the U.S. and not Japan.

If some way of reinterpretation does occur, Japan may be able to exercise the right of collective self-defense and conduct the aforementioned operations currently banned. This would be a perfect example of the PCP as the Constitutional reinterpretation allows Japan to employ previously prohibited methods in order to pursue the continuing causes of the alliance cooperation and the peacekeeping operation that Japan has been consistently committed to for past decades. In other words, the PCP is a combination of changes in means and continuities in ends.

Second, on top of the review about the constitutional reinterpretation, another policy item which was reviewed by the Government was Japan's long-standing and unique arms exports policy, or a de facto embargo of arms exports.²² It was well-known that Japan maintained severely tight control over arms export for a long time since the

²² The author wrote the beginning and changing of the de facto arms export embargo policy in the following paper in more details. Yusuke Ishihara, "Japan-Australia Security Relations and the Rise of China," *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, May 2013, pp. 81-98.

1960s and the 1970s.²³ Japan's longest serving Prime Minister Eisaku Sato made the explicit statement in the Diet deliberation in 1967, that the Government would not approve arms exports if the destination of the items fell in any of the following three categories: (1) communist countries, (2) states sanctioned under the UN resolutions and (3) countries engaged (or with a future potential to be engaged) in international conflicts. The 1967 policy stated by Prime Minister Sato was widely known as "the three principles on the arms exports," which was developed into an even tighter control policy in February 1976 during the term of Prime Minister Takeo Miki.²⁴ Basically the Miki Government took one step further by adding another principle that Japan must "refrain" from exporting arms even to the countries that did not fall in any of the aforementioned three categories.²⁵ This was the final formation of Japan's decades-long de facto embargo upon arms exports (except when the Chief Cabinet Secretary made an announcement to exempt a specific item such as most particularly development and production cooperation with the U.S., on a case by case basis).

At the time of writing this paper, the LDP-Komeito Government was fundamentally reviewing Japan's long standing de facto embargo of arms exports with an eye on the possibility of replacing the long-standing three principles on arms exports with brand-new policy guidance so that Japanese defense industries can be more actively engaged with international markets and partners. According to the *Asahi Shimbun*, one idea about a new policy is to replace the first of the three principles with a new guidance that arms can be exported if it serves Japan's national interests, a wording broad enough to allow a wide range of arms trade.²⁶ In some quarters of Japan, the review of the arms export is considered an urgent matter, as Japanese defense industries have been on a steady decline (according to the *Agent France*, the total contracts for principal defense equipment fell from 1.727 trillion yen to 683.7 billion yen during the period of 1990-2010) while the international development and production cooperation has been increasingly a trend.

Last but not least, the third policy item reportedly being reviewed by the Government

²³ The points of the two statements discussed in this paragraph can be found in "BukiyushutsuSangensokuto (Japanese)," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/arms/mine/sanngen.html>

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ "Bukiyushutsu, Kinshikarakanrihe, Seifu, shingensokugenanandehoshintengan, *Asahi Shimbun (Japanese)* 5 December 2013, http://digital.asahi.com/articles/TKY201312050329.html?ref=comkiji_redirect

is the issue of whether and in what way Japan should acquire strike capabilities which can be used to take out the sources of aggression against Japan, such as an opponent's air base. Although even the current Constitutional interpretation does not necessarily prohibit the Government from possessing such capabilities, it has been the long-time Government policy since the 1950s that the Self-Defense Force refrain from doing so. One of the reasons for reviewing such a long-standing policy is the growing threat of ballistic missiles against Japan. Defense Minister Onodera argued that if there was a situation in which an opponent kept continuously launching ballistic missiles against Japan, one could judge that Japan should have a capability for removing the launching sites.²⁷ In this sense, it should be noted that unlike some media reports, none of the Government officials indicates that Japan is considering any preemptive attacks against land targets.

At the time of writing this paper, the review of the aforementioned policy changes is still at a stage of discussions and considerations. The Government appears to intend to spend time for securing both an understanding by the coalition member new Komeito party, as well as wider public awareness and support. On the second front, some public polling suggests that the Government's policy review does not necessarily enjoy wide understanding and support among Japanese citizens. According to the survey done by the NHK, Japan's major public broadcast organization, for example, 27% of the respondents said that Japan should be able to exercise the right of collective self-defense while 21% did not support this idea, and the rest of the respondents neither supported nor disagreed.²⁸ This suggests, as some key members of the LDP-Komeito coalition note, that it takes some time and effort to build a wider support among the Japanese public. Another factor is the consensus building within the ruling coalition. The Komeito's leader Natsuo Yamaguchi repeatedly stresses that a careful approach should be taken in dealing with the reviewing of the long standing policy lines. Such a domestic political situation is perhaps another reason why the PCP concept carefully incorporates both elements of continuity as well as changes in such a way that the changes under the review are all supposed to contribute to Japan's long-standing ideal and interests.

²⁷ Ministry of Defense of Japan, "Press Conference by Defense Minister," 26 July 2013, <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/kisha/2013/07/26.html>

²⁸ "Jijikoron: Shudantekijieikenwokangaeru," News Commentators Bureau, NHK, 18 September 2013, <http://www.nhk.or.jp/kaisetsu-blog/100/167899.html>

The same can be said about international public relations as well. In fact, there are two different perceptions existing among international audiences regarding the current Government efforts to reform the national security foundation. On the one hand, there are voices particularly in U.S., Australia, and the Philippines that the Abe Government should expand the security roles that Japan can play. On the other, there are those concerned about the future trajectory of Japan's security strategy. Aware of these two differing views about the Abe Government, Prime Minister Abe attempted to reassure the audience in a prominent speech discussing the PCP at the Hudson Institute in Washington DC that he was not a "rightwing militarist" whereas in the same speech he also emphasized Japan's aspiration to contribute more effectively to international security.²⁹

(2) Political and Strategic Implications of "Abenomics"

The Government's highest priority agenda item that Prime Minister Abe repeatedly emphasizes since his second inauguration is the revitalization of the Japanese economy. His economic policy has been widely called "Abenomics," or a combination of the "three arrows" of (1) bold monetary policy, (2) fiscal stimulus and (3) economic growth strategy. On the first front, the Government and the Bank of Japan (BoJ) issued the joint statement on January 22nd which noted the agreed goal of achieving two percent annual inflation. Later on, the newly appointed BoJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda declared quantitative and qualitative monetary easing and, in order to combat deflation and achieve a stable commodity price, the BoJ targeted to flow as much as 270 trillion yen into the market in 2013, a significant jump from the 140 trillion yen the previous year. On the second front of fiscal stimulus, the Government formed additional appropriations of the 13 trillion yen size in January and the 5.5 trillion yen size in December. On the third front of economic growth strategy, the Government has revealed a range of measures of deregulation and encouragements for business and investments, and is now working on some more ideas such as establishment of special economic zones. In this context, it must be noted that Japan has joined the TPP process and once it comes to a final agreement, TPP can be a powerful driver for the new opening and restructuring of the Japanese economy.

The Abenomics of these three arrows have already cultivated some early fruits.

²⁹ Shinzo Abe, "Remarks by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the occasion of accepting Hudson Institute's 2013 Herman Kahn Award," 25 September 2013, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201309/25hudson_e.html

The continuing depreciation of the currency from about 87 yen a dollar in January to 102 yen in December helped the export companies improve their business performance. The major car company Toyota, for example, revealed its estimate that its business profit is expected to reach more than two trillion yen, meaning that it has returned to the record high profit level seen before the so called Lehman Shock in 2008. The expanding revenue of the major companies may in the long run result in the increase of wages for their employees, which helps in turn expand the consumptions and improve the economy. In fact the overall performance of the Japanese economy appears to be on a positive track, achieving the 3.6 percent growth in the January-March quarter, 2.6 in the April-June quarter, and 1.9 in the July-September quarter. The Tokyo Stock Exchange Stock Price index jumped from about 10,000 Yen to about 16,000 Yen during the period of the current Government. Although it may still be premature to judge whether or not Abenomics can finally dig Japan out of its “Lost Decade” or “Lost Two Decades,” there is a wide and real hope that this time may be different.

Abenomics has political as well as strategic implications. Politically, the upward economic trends underlie the current steady and strong public supports for the LDP-Komeito coalition Government. With the high approval rate, the ruling coalition won 76 out of the 121 seats-for-reelection at the upper House election on July 21st, and now enjoys a clear majority in both houses of the Diet.³⁰ The Government’s victory in this election mark a politically important turn in the recent history of Japanese domestic politics as it effectively ended the so-called “Twisted Diet,” in which the ruling Government did not enjoy a majority in the upper house and as a result the parliamentary process of forming budgets and passing laws became frustratingly bumpy, slow, and unpredictable. Against this backdrop, it would not be an overstatement that one of the key highlights on the Japanese domestic political scene in 2013 was the end of the “Twisted Diet.” As no major national election is planned for the next three years, the LDP-Komeito Government has a real chance to enjoy sustainable political stability at least until 2016 and work on policy agendas requiring time and energy including the national security agendas the previous section of this paper examined.

³⁰ Sangiinsen 2013, Yomiuri Online, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/election/sangiin/2013/>

Abenomics also has some strategic implications as well. The positive economic indicators precipitated by Abenomics may gradually help improve the fiscal situation of the Japanese Government. The tax revenue of FY2013 is now expected to exceed the initial estimate by 1.3 trillion Yen, which Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga attributed to the effects of Abenomics. The increasingly positive economic trends encouraged Prime Minister Abe to decide to raise the consumption tax from the current 5% to 8% in April 2014. This is expected to increase the tax revenue by 5.1 to even 8 trillion Yen. It would go without saying that these positive trends for bettering the fiscal health of the Japanese Government are welcome factors for the defense Budget too.

Despite the early signs of a positive economic momentum, however, it must be pointed out that the current budgetary situation remains persistently severe, clearly limiting the increase of the Japanese defense budget. Even though the tax revenue is expanding, the urgent priority areas such as the social welfare cost which is rapidly increasing with the aging population, the necessity of providing for economic stimulus as well as the continuing reliance on the national debt issuing, require that the increased tax revenue be spent for those budgetary needs, and not just for the defense spending.

Indeed in the two budget planning processes under the current Government, Japanese defense spending was increased by 40 billion Yen in FY2013 and 130 billion Yen in FY2014.³¹ Although this is a noteworthy turning of the long time downward trend that continued in the past decade, however, the following constraints must be also taken into account. The depreciation of Yen raises the price of fuels and other import items purchased by MOD/SDF. The consumption tax raise also applies to the purchasing by the Ministry of Defense. About 100 out of 130 billion Yen of the budget increase in FY2014 purposed to cover the restoration of the original salary level for national public servants, which was kept lower after the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake. In addition, there are other priority areas such as social welfare, economic stimulus, and reconstruction of the affected areas. In this sense, Abenomics may have a potential long-term positive impact upon Japan's defense spending, but not immediately.

³¹ Ministry of Defense of Japan, "Defense Programs and Budget of Japan FY2014(Japanese)," <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/yosan/2014/yosan.pdf>

3. Expanding and Deepening Japan's Diplomatic and Defense Outreach

The LDP-Komeito Government has been engaging what the Prime Minister calls “a diplomacy that bird-views the world map.” This term illuminates the Prime Minister’s personal commitment to strengthening Japan’s summit and other ministerial diplomacies. In reflection of this, Prime Minister Abe visited 25 countries across the globe (compared to 12 by former Prime Minister Noda in his more-than-a-year term). Prime Minister Abe’s foreign policy which he himself nicknames as “diplomacy that takes apanoramic perspective of the world map” is driven by many factors including particularly Japanese economic interests. The fact that the year 2013 saw the Prime Minister visit all the Gulf countries demonstrates the Government’s serious efforts to strengthen ties with the energy-rich countries which are also a promising customer for Japanese social and economic infrastructure industries. Prime Minister Abe also aims to take advantage of the summit meeting to directly promote Japanese commercial interests. When visiting Turkey twice in 2013, Prime Minister Abe concluded an agreement with the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan which provides for sales opportunities of infrastructure items including the nuclear power plants.

Japan’s defense diplomacy also achieved a number of successes in 2013. In January 2014, Japan and France held a historic two plus two meeting and issued a joint statement in which the pledge for promoting defense technology-equipment cooperation and dialogue was noted. As Japan has keen interests in European countries arms exports policies, such a dialogue with a major arms exporter France is a valuable opportunity for Japan, while there may be a chance in the future for Japan to export defense materials and technologies as well. Another new two plus two meeting which the LDP-Komeito Government initiated was one with Russia, which took place in November 2013. Japan and Russia have agreed to regularize exchange of defense ministers as well as conduct naval exercises in places including the Gulf of Aden.

While expanding the horizon of Japanese diplomacy and defense engagement, the other pillar of Japan’s external engagements including the defense diplomacy, is its increasing focus upon deepening the relations with the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan’s traditional focus on Asia is becoming even more important as the NSS recognizes that the global balance of power shifts towards the Asia Pacific

region. For one, revival of Japanese economy requires vibrant ties with the dynamic economies in Asia. For another, the changing balance of power on both regional and global levels encourage Japan to pursue further cooperation with the regional countries in shaping the strategic environment as well as promoting the open and the rules-based international order.

Prime Minister Abe visited Mongolia in March whereas Prime Minister Norov Altankhuyag and President Tsakhia Elbegdorj also came to Japan in September and November respectively. In the September summit between both prime ministers, the two countries issued the new joint statement and the associated action plan for promoting the bilateral ties. Japan has keen economic interests in investing in Mongolian natural resource developments as well as concluding an EPA while building closer defense and security ties. The year 2013 also saw Japanese GSDF's participation in Khan Quest 13, an international exercise for peace keeping operations.

The outstanding highlight of Prime Ministerial diplomacy in 2013 was Southeast Asian countries. It is remarkable that Prime Minister Abe visited all ten ASEAN countries in 2013 including his historic visit to Myanmar, the first prime ministerial visit for 36 years, while President Thein Sein flew to Japan in December. Japan and Myanmar have agreed on a range of cooperation items including the 91 billion yen ODA as well as an effort to promote bilateral defense exchange. The year 2013 also saw a Japanese MSDF ship's friendly visit to Yangon in October.

Prime Minister Abe held a summit meeting with both Prime Minister Nguen Tan Dung and President Truong Tan Sang twice respectively, including on the occasion of Prime Minister Abe's visit to Vietnam in January. Japan has keen interests in promoting the bilateral trade and investment relations with the growing interests in Vietnamese market on the part of Japanese business community while the two countries pledge to cooperate for promoting maritime security and the related international rules. In this context, it is noteworthy that the December summit in Tokyo saw an agreement to start dialogues to consider a possibility of providing Vietnam with Japanese coast guard vessels. In the wake of China's ADIZ announcement, the two countries also agreed that the international rules about the freedom of flight embodied in the ICAO had to be respected.

Japan and ASEAN held a special summit meeting in December in Tokyo to commemorate the year of the 40th anniversary of Japan-ASEAN friendship while issuing the two documents envisioning the future cooperation.³² The eleven leaders discussed a range of issues including promotion of freedom of maritime and airspace navigation, continuing importance of the strength, coherence and centrality of ASEAN within the Asia-Pacific regional architecture, and further enhancement of the trade and investment relations between Japan and Southeast Asia. The two sides also agreed to have a special defense ministerial meeting on the subjects of nontraditional security in the near future.

The current Government's apparent focus on ASEAN did have a tangible impact upon the way in which the SDF's international activities were conducted and prioritized in 2013. In the wake of the typhoon disaster hitting the Philippines in November, Japan formed a 1,170 strength Joint Task Force in the operational period of the 12th November to the 13th December, the largest size ever for the overseas HA/DR mission in which seven C-130Hs, DDH Ise (a helicopter carrier ship) a transport ship and a support ship, two KC-767 tanker/transporter aircraft, and three CH-47 helicopters were deployed to provide for vital supplies including vaccines for about 12,000 people, transportation of about 2,200 affected people, and epidemic prevention work for the area as large as 95,600 square meters.³³ The size and extensiveness of the operation demonstrates the seriousness of Japan's commitment to strengthening ties with Southeast Asian countries.

The year 2013 also saw a rapid implementation of Japan's capacity building projects in the Asia Pacific region as the following table shows.

³² "40th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 6 December 2013, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/relation/ja40/kickoff_recep.html

³³ The details of SDF's disaster relief assistance operation can be found in the following webpage of MOD (Japanese), http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/kokusai_heiwa/philippines/index.html

Country	Period	Japanese participants, or invitees to Japan	Partner organization, or host organization for the invitee	Program
East Timor	December 2012 to March 2013	Two GSDF officers, a MOD civilian, private sector participants	East Timor military command and the support unit	Training for the vehicle maintenance for HADR and PKO
Cambodia	January to March 2013	Three GSDF officers, a MOD civilian and private sector participants	NPMEC	Infrastructure building skills for PKO
Mongolia	October 2012	Two GSDF officers, a MOD civilian	Military hospital	Seminar on the SDF medical unites
Vietnam	October 2012	Three MSDF officers and a MOD civilian	Navy	Submarine medicine
Indonesia	February 2013	Three MSDF officers, a MOD civilian	Navy-related institution (DHISHIDROS)	Maritime weather work
Vietnam	March 2013	Inviting six uniform officers planned to deploy for PKO	Central Readiness Force, Joint Staff School, MOD	Introduction of SDF's participation in PKO
Vietnam	May 2013	Three MSDF officers, two MOD civilians	Navy and defense ministry	Submarine medicine
Mongolia	June 2013	Five GSDF officers, three MOD civilians	Engineer units	Training of the engineer units for PKO
Indonesia	July 2013	A MSDF officer, a MOD civilian and a member of the Japan Coast Guard	Navy-related institution (DHISHIDROS)	Maritime weather work
Mongolia	July to August 2013	Six GSDF officers and a MOD civilian	Engineer units	On-the-spot research for the needs
Vietnam	September 2013	Five ASDF officers, two MOD civilians	Air force	Seminar on flight safety
Vietnam	September 2013	Inviting five naval officers	Underwater Medical Units, SDF Hospital, Maritime Staff Office	Study tour for submarine medicine
Mongolia	November 2013	Inviting six officers of the medical unit	MOD, SDF hospitals	Study tour for military medicine

These capacity building efforts serve Japanese interests as it helps build the capacity of the emerging countries so that they can actively participate in various international collaborations such as PKO and encourage them to become a supporter for the existing liberal international order based on a set of the long standing principles and public goods including the global maritime commons while promoting the ties between the defense organizations of Japan and the recipient countries.

The other key focus of Japan's regional defense diplomacy is to strengthen the ties between Japan and the other U.S. allies such as South Korea and Australia, whose

importance is explicitly mentioned in the 2013 NDPG. At the time of writing this paper, although a year has already passed since the inauguration of Korean President Park Geun Hye in January 2013, no bilateral summit meeting between the two countries has been realized so far. The Korean Government demands for Japan's concrete actions on the history issues, particularly the so-called comfort women issues, while the Japanese Government position remains that all the issues were solved with the conclusion of Japan-Korea Basic Treaty in 1965 and the Settlement of Problem in Regard to Property and Claims, which notes that all the issues in regard to property and claims were solved on the complete and final basis whether it was involved with the states or individuals (including corporate bodies).³⁴ Although some argue that there is a growing "Korean fatigue" on the part of the Japanese Government or the society as a whole, it must be noted that Japan continues to value the relations with South Korea including cooperation in the security and defense areas. The tangible reflection of this is the fact that South Korea is still listed on the front of the section on international partners in both NSS and NDPG.

In light of this continuing challenge and lack of momentum in Japan-Korea bilateral relations, the U.S. played important roles in 2013. In fact, while the bilateral defense ministerial meeting could not be held, the trilateral defense ministerial meeting did take place on the sidelines of the Shangri-La dialogue in June 2013. Also the trilateral maritime exercise was conducted in the water to the south of the Korean Peninsula in October and again in the Gulf of Aden in December. In those ways, the facilitation of the U.S. helped promote Japan-Korea ties through the trilateral mechanism. A similar effect was also detected about the Korean Government's stance towards the issue of the right of collective self-defense. Although the Korean Government appeared to be opposed against the review of the Constitutional reinterpretation, it changed its initial attitude, and now reluctantly stopped conflicting against the Japanese government's reviewing work. One widely believed theory is that the U.S. factor is at play. The U.S. government's explicit support for Japan's reviewing on the right of collective self-defense on many occasions including the Japan-U.S. two-plus-two meeting in October encouraged South Korea to more align its position with that of the U.S. ally.

³⁴ Although the paper is supposed to cover the developments during the period from January to December of 2013, the author recognizes the fact that Prime Minister Abe and President Park met each other in the trilateral summit meeting along with U.S. President Barack Obama. But then again, the fact remains that there has been no formal bilateral summit between the two leaders yet.

In a sharp contrast with the current status of Japan-Korea relations, Japan-Australia security and defense ties have been on a steady track of developments. In 2013, Japan and Australia brought into effect the already agreed Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and Information Security Agreement (ISA), the first of which was utilized in 2013 when Japan provided HMAS Tobruk with the refueling on the occasion of the disaster relief activities for the Philippines.³⁵ A number of bilateral and trilateral activities were also pursued including Exercise Southern Jackaroo, the first ground training involved with GSDF, Australian Army, and the U.S. army in an urban environment and jungle, Japan-Australia-U.S. naval exercises in June and October, and the Cope North Guam air exercise in January.³⁶ Two countries were also jointly engaged with a capacity building assistance seminar on PKO in East Timor.

The advent of the new Coalition Government led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott in September offered a new opportunity to further strengthen the bilateral and trilateral ties among the three allies and partners. In fact, the fact that the Abbott Government has repeatedly committed itself to the U.S. policy line that it is opposed to any coercive and unilateral actions to change the status quo in East China Sea suggests that despite the geographical distance and different historical background, the strategic outlook of the two countries are closely aligned at the fundamental levels.³⁷ Such bilateral and trilateral cooperation in both rhetorical terms as well as more tangible manners of exercises, operational collaborations, and peacetime strategic talks, do serve the common strategic interests including particularly the Japan-Australia joint objective of cooperating and assisting with the U.S., and continuing their regional presence and rebalancing towards the Asia-Pacific.

Last but not least, it must be noted that despite the ongoing challenges, Japan does remain committed to enhancing a Mutually Beneficial Relationship based on Common Strategic Interests with China; the importance of this policy is once

³⁵ Natalie Staples, "Tobruk's underway replenishment," Navy Daily, 23 December 2013, http://news.navy.gov.au/en/Dec2013/Fleet/748/Tobruk's-underway-replenishment.htm#.U0kP2IV_s8U

³⁶ For the details of the recent bilateral activities, see Yusuke Ishihara, "Japan-Australia Defense Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific," William Tow and Tomonori Yoshizaki (eds.) *Beyond the Hub-and-Spokes*, Tokyo: Urban Connections, March 2014, pp. 93-122.

³⁷ Julie Bishop, "China's announcement of an air-defence identification zone over the East China Sea," Media release, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, 26 November 2013, http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2013/jb_mr_131126a.aspx?ministerid=4

again reiterated in the December 2013 NSS. China has been consistently Japan's number one trade partner for more than a decade since 2002 and Japan needs China's assistance in addressing a number of important issues including the abduction issues, the yellow sands problem, and various trade partnership negotiations including a Japan-China-Korea trilateral FTA as well as RCEP. Prime Minister Abe stresses that Japan keeps the doors for dialogue open for China.

Conclusion

This paper looks at three policy items that the current Government of Japan is working on, namely challenges existing in Northeast Asia, the necessity of reforming Japan's own security foundation, and the attempt to expand and deepen Japan's external security outreach. Perhaps one observation can be drawn from the finding of this paper.

The current Government's security strategy called Proactive Contribution to Peace does not constitute an all-out revolutionary departure from the past Japanese security strategy. For one, as the first section analyzed, the 2013 NDPG updates rather than throws away the important conceptual as well as programmatic work done by the previous 2010 NDPG crafted under the former DPJ government. This may suggest the existence of a broad consensus upon Japan's defense policy among the statesmen in Japanese central politics. For another, even though the Government was successful in turning the Japanese economy back on a positive track, the severe fiscal situation has not yet been far from fully addressed. This still limits the amount of resources that the Japanese Government can spend including for the defense policy. Furthermore, as Japan did not live in some kind of international vacuum, the international structural factors such as the rising assertiveness of China and the endurance of U.S. power continue to condition Japan's security outlook regardless of who is in the government. Only when these important continuities and constraints are taken into account can one fully understand the reality of Japan's security outlook and draw its deeper implications.