

## CHAPTER 11

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### Japan's Security Outlook in 2011: Toward a More “Dynamic” Defense Posture<sup>1</sup>

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#### **Introduction**

The year 2011 began with unprecedented disasters for most Japanese people. The so-called “triple disasters”—the 9.0 magnitude earthquake, 10-meter tsunami, and nuclear accident—that hit Japan in March not only caused physical damage to Japan, but also had a psychological impact on Japanese people, which could directly and indirectly affect Japanese security policies in the future. Like 2010, Chinese political, military and economic influence in the region continuously grew in 2011. Many Japanese are especially concerned with China's growing activities in the waters near Japan, including areas around Senkaku Islands. Meanwhile, the instability of the Korean Peninsula has continued since North Korea's torpedo attack on a South Korean frigate and its shelling of a South Korean island, both of which happened in 2010. The sudden death of Kim Jong-il in December further complicated the situation on the Peninsula, making the regional security outlook even more unpredictable.

By analyzing security challenges Japan faced in 2011, this paper will examine what kind of implications these challenges have on Japanese defense policy. In particular, it highlights three security challenges Japan faces—the triple disasters, growing influence of China, and the instability on the Korean Peninsula—and discusses that these security challenges increasingly call for Japan's more active defense and security policy both at the regional and global levels. From this context, the paper will argue that Japan's dynamic defense force concept—which was announced in December 2010 as a new defense doctrine—has become increasingly relevant to

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<sup>1</sup> The paper first appeared at the NIDS International Workshop on Asia Pacific Security on 17 and 18 January 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not represent the official viewpoint of NIDS or the Ministry of Defense, Japan. The author is grateful to his colleagues, Dr. Eiichi Katahara, Dr. Hiroyuki Akutsu, Mr. Yusuke Ishihara, and Mr. Nobushige Takamizawa for their valuable comments and suggestions for the earlier version of this paper.

meeting these challenges. It concludes that, in order to cope with emerging security challenges, Japan needs to promote its dynamic defense posture in conjunction with its ally and friends, rather than passively responding to these threats.

## Japan's Security Challenges in 2011

### *Triple Disasters*

On 11 March 2011, at 14:46 Japan Standard Time, a massive earthquake with a 9.0 magnitude occurred 81 miles to the east of Sendai, Japan. The earthquake, later named the "Great East Japan Earthquake" (*Higashi Nihon Daishinsai* or 3/11 earthquake), triggered extremely destructive tsunami waves that struck various parts of northeastern Japan. It was the biggest natural disaster that has hit Japan in the post-World War II period, and one of the five most powerful earthquakes in the world since modern record keeping began in 1900. It is estimated that, as of December 2011, over 16,000 people are dead, more than 3,000 people are missing, and hundreds of thousand people are still displaced. The 3/11 earthquake and following tsunami also knocked out the primary and backup power generators of the Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant's cooling system, which caused a meltdown (and possibly a "melt-through") and the explosion of building houses of some reactors. Although the Government has announced that all reactors were successfully cooled down, it remains unclear how long it will take to completely settle this worst-ever nuclear accident and restore the safety in the surrounding region.<sup>3</sup>

The damage caused by the triple disasters may have certain impacts on the further outlook of Japanese security. According to the Japanese government, the 3.11 earthquake and tsunami could cost between \$185 billion to \$309 billion, making it the most costly disaster in the country since the end of World War II (the 1995 Kobe earthquake cost approximately \$100 billion). Even worse, those estimates did not include the effect of the nuclear accident at the Fukushima power plant and

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<sup>3</sup> On 16 December 2011, almost nine months after 3.11, the Japanese Government announced that three reactors that suffered meltdowns had officially reached the state of "cold shutdown." Although this marked an important step toward resolving the crisis, the announcement itself never guarantees the safety of the plant and its surrounding region. According to a government official, it could take as long as 40 years to decommission the Plant and decontaminate an area of about 2,400 sq km surrounding the Plant.

subsequent power outages.<sup>4</sup> A huge financial loss caused by disasters made it even more difficult to increase Japan's defense budget, which had been already decreasing over the past nine years under the economic downturn.<sup>5</sup> Japan's Self Defense Forces (SDF) also suffered from actual damages, such as eighteen Mitsubishi F-2 fighters used by the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) that were hit by the two-meter tsunami flowing into the ASDF's Matsushima Air Base.<sup>6</sup> Not only these physical damages, but also psychological impacts of disasters are equally important. Before 3.11, it had been often argued that many Japanese have lost their confidence due to the long-term economic recession called "lost decades" during the 1990s and 2000s. This is sharply contrasted with emerging regional powers, such as China and South Korea, which have been increasingly confident in their economic growth during the same period. Japan's triple disasters could arguably accelerate this existing trend, making Japanese less and less confident and more and more "inward-looking" in terms of Japan's foreign relations.

It should be also pointed out, however, that the triple disasters had some positive impacts on Japanese security. First of all, the SDF demonstrated its high adaptability and mobility after the earthquake. As soon as the earthquake occurred, a number of aircraft and helicopters of local SDF units were dispatched for gathering information from the sky. These units began to engage in search and rescue activities as early as the night of 11 March. Within a week after the announcement of the increase in number of the SDF on 13 March, moreover, approximately 106,900 SDF personnel (including the 506 ready reserve personnel)—more than one third of the total number of the SDF—were mobilized, along with 541 aircraft and 50 ships. These forces significantly contributed to saving people, providing relief supplies, removing debris, and rehabilitating infrastructure critical to the overall relief effort. In addition,

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<sup>4</sup> "Japan earthquake could cost \$309 billion," *CNNMoney*, 23 March 2011, [http://money.cnn.com/2011/03/23/news/international/japan\\_earthquake\\_cost/index.htm?iid=EL](http://money.cnn.com/2011/03/23/news/international/japan_earthquake_cost/index.htm?iid=EL), accessed 30 December 2011.

<sup>5</sup> On 23 December 2011, Japan's government approved a 90.3 trillion yen (US\$1.16 trillion) draft budget, including 3.3 trillion yen for the reconstruction effort, for FY2012. According to the draft defense budget, Japan's defense spending for the 12 months from 1 April would decrease by 0.4 percent, or JPY17.2 billion (US\$221 million), to JPY4.64 trillion, compared with the 2011 budget. This will mark a decrease in defense spending for the 10 consecutive years since 2002, in which Japan's defense budget was JPY4.94 trillion.

<sup>6</sup> According to the defense ministry, twelve of them were to be scrapped, and six others will be repaired at an estimated cost of 80 billion yen (US\$1 billion), more than the original purchase price of the six aircraft.

the Central Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) Weapon Unit and the 1st NBC Unit—both of which belong to the SDF's Central Readiness Force—played an important role in cooling nuclear plants in Fukushima. These activities by the SDF were highly appreciated by people inside and outside Japan, enormously improving its prestige that had been not necessarily high compared with other countries' military organizations since its establishment in 1954.

Second, the 3/11 earthquake, along with increasing tension in regional security, resulted in the re-strengthening of the US-Japan alliance, which had been under strain from the base relocation issue in Okinawa. Immediately after the earthquake, the US military launched the Joint Support Forces headed by the commander of the US forces in Japan, and began the combined US-Japan military relief effort entitled *Operation Tomodachi* (Japanese for “friend”). Within a week after the earthquake, several US military units and ships, including the USS *Blue Ridge*, the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit stationed in Okinawa, and the USS *Ronald Reagan* carrier strike group, gathered around the disaster areas for transportation, search and rescue, and debris-removal activities. At its peak, the United States had provided over 16,000 personnel, 24 ships, and 190 aircraft for the humanitarian relief operation. During the operation, both American and Japanese commanders closely communicated with each other through bilateral coordination mechanisms, enabling a close collaboration between the US military and the SDF. For instance, it was the first time that SDF helicopters used US aircraft carriers to respond to a crisis. Accordingly, it was evaluated that the US military and the SDF further strengthened the ability to respond to any contingencies with necessary arrangements.<sup>7</sup>

Third, Japanese people's response to the disasters demonstrated high unity and resiliency of Japan's civil society to the world. Sheila Smith, one of the most famous American experts on Japanese politics, wrote as follows:

A third impression I had was how effectively Japan's civil society coped with the trauma. Corporations and households alike jumped in to conserve energy at much higher rates than anticipated. The nascent disaster relief

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<sup>7</sup> A remark by Raymond F. Greene, Consulate General of the United States Okinawa, Japan, *Asahi Shinbun*, 26 April 2011.

community was buoyed by an incredible wave of support, so much so that the NGO community found their capacities sorely tested. Volunteers streamed into the devastated areas, rolled up their sleeves, cleared debris, and dug out the remnants of homes from the tsunami's mud. Anonymous donors left schoolbags, much needed personal goods, and in many instances, large envelopes full of cash for the hundreds of thousands of Tohoku residents stranded in evacuation centers.<sup>8</sup>

Japanese people's behavior during the crisis was praised by foreign media and people, arguably increasing Japan's "soft power" worldwide. It could be also argued that, Japanese people's strong unity—along with the SDF's great performance and the enhanced US-Japan alliance—increased Japan's deterrence capabilities by demonstrating its ability to effectively and quickly respond to various kinds of emergencies to its potential enemies.

There are, of course, several lessons to be learned from triple disasters, especially in terms of future crisis management by the Japanese government as well as the SDF. First, the Japanese government found it difficult to cope with "complex disasters" that are mixes of various kinds of incidents. The government recognized that, in responding to such disasters, the SDF should not only improve its joint operation among three SDFs, but also enhance its cooperation with private sectors, such as local governments, private companies, and NGOs. Second, the SDF's response to triple disasters also revealed the limitation of its transportation ability. Although SDF's transportation aircraft, such as C-130H, enormously contributed to the transportation of manpower as well as relief materials, some of them (such as MSDF's YS-11) appeared inadequate to operate under severe environments like natural disasters.<sup>9</sup> Because of the destruction of some ports and facilities, moreover, some GSDF units were not able to enter damaged places from sea.

Third, although a number of countries such as the United States and Australia provided support for Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) activities,

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<sup>8</sup> Sheila Smith, "Impressions of Japan, 2011," *Asia Unbound*, 22 December 2011, <http://blogs.cfr.org/asia/2011/12/22/impressions-of-japan-2011/>, accessed 30 December 2011.

<sup>9</sup> For this reason, the MOD announced that the MSDF would purchase six C-130 aircraft from the US military as alternative transport aircraft to YS-11 in September 2011.

the Japanese government could not always accept this support in an effective manner, especially in terms of communications, information-sharing, and legal frameworks for the acceptance of foreign units on Japanese soil. Since all of these lessons may apply to other crisis-management scenarios than natural disasters, the government of Japan is required to improve these points and prepare for a future crisis by taking advantage of these lessons given by catastrophic disasters.

### *China*

In 2011, China's defense budget returned to double-digit increases (\$91.5 billion, a 12.7 percent increase over 2010) from 2010, in which China's defense budget experienced a single-digit increase (7.5 percent) for the first time in 22 years. This suggests that, recovering from the impact of the global financial crisis, the Chinese government once again increases its defense spending in parallel with its high economic growth. The Japanese government has continuously expressed its concerns with the transparency of China's rising military expenditures, calling for Beijing's explanation for the reason and the purpose of the increase in its military budget. Such concerns notwithstanding, China's economy is expected to grow in the coming decade, and if China continues its double-digit increase in defense spending, it is estimated that its military budget becomes twice that of Japanese defense spending in 2014, and three times it in 2018.

As the Chinese economy and its defense budget grow, so did its military equipment and strategies. Major developments of Chinese military forces in 2011 included: the first flight test of the 5th generation fighter prototype, the J-20; the renovation of the ex-VARYAG, the first aircraft carrier, and its two sea trials in August and November (the second test was potentially associated with J-15, China's first indigenous carrier-based aircraft); the continuous development of anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities, including the development of the DF-21D and continuous investment in cyber and space capabilities; and improving power-projection capabilities as demonstrated by the PLA's first overseas evacuation activity in Libya in early 2011.

Although these might be long-term concerns for Japanese security, Tokyo's more immediate concerns are Chinese maritime activities in the waters near Japan, which have been increasingly prominent since the beginning of the 2000s. Like the previous year, the Chinese Navy conducted two large-scale military exercises in the Pacific

Ocean in June and November 2011.<sup>10</sup> In June's exercise, the SDF for the first time identified unmanned aircraft carried by Chinese Naval ships, shipborne helicopter flight trainings, and replenishments of these ships on the water. Similarly to 2010, there have been multiple instances of Chinese helicopters that belong to the State Oceanic Administration flying close to the Japanese destroyers engaged in vigilance monitoring in the East China Sea in March and April 2011. All of these incidents consolidated the view that Chinese Navy's blue-water activities have already become a regular occurrence in the region.

The tension in the disputed waters near the Senkaku islands—in which a Chinese fishing boat collided with two Japan Coast Guard (JCG) ships in September 2010—continued in 2011. In December 2010, just after the Senkaku incident, the Chinese Government decided to expand activities of large-scale fishery inspection ships deployed to waters near Senkaku Islands. Subsequently, in June of this year, the Chinese State Oceanic Administration (SOA) decided to increase the number of its inspection ships from the previous 260 to 520 by 2020 in order to protect Chinese maritime interests. Meanwhile, Chinese inspection ships, as well as oceanic research vessels, have frequently appeared in this disputed area. From November 2010 to November 2011, Chinese fishery inspection ships entered Japan's contiguous zones 14 times, and oceanic research vessels conducted seven researches in waters that were different from their prior notifications, or even without prior notifications. In 24 April 2011, moreover, two Chinese fishery inspection ships violated Japan's territorial waters near Kuba Island, one of the Senkaku Islands, for 30 minutes.

In response to China's growing maritime activities, Japan has prepared for several measures to enhance its inspection abilities, such as newly deploying coast guard ships in the disputed region. The government of Japan has also proposed to create a "crisis management mechanism" with China to avoid potential disputes in the event of maritime incidents in the East China Sea.<sup>11</sup> These measures notwithstanding,

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<sup>10</sup> In June, 11 vessels including Sovremenny-class destroyers and a Jiangkai II-class frigate passed between Okinawa Island and Miyako Island and advanced to the Pacific Ocean. On 22 November, an MSDF P-3C aircraft identified a Chinese Navy intelligence gathering ship advancing from the East China Sea to the Pacific. Later on, an MSDF frigate found five Chinese Navy vessels, including a missile-frigate, advancing in the same direction.

<sup>11</sup> The creation of a crisis management mechanism was agreed upon at the Japan-China summit meeting in May 2011.

it is expected that the risk of conflicts between Japan and China will continue to grow, considering that China has deliberately and systematically enhanced its “law-enforcement” activities for preserving its maritime interests due to its growing demand for maritime energy resources.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Korean Peninsula***

Since the end of the Cold War, the situation on the Korean Peninsula has been one of the chief security concerns for Japanese people. Japan has been particularly concerned with North Korea’s development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) including plutonium and uranium-type nuclear weapons, the deployment of ballistic missiles like *Taepodong* and *Nodong*, and North Korea’s abduction of 17 Japanese people as an unresolved humanitarian problem. Japan has been also closely watching the North-South relations, especially since North Korea’s provocative actions in 2010, in which North Korea conducted a torpedo attack on a South Korean frigate and shelled a South Korean island. Once a large-scale crisis occurs between the North and the South, Japan would inevitably be drawn into the crisis of the Peninsula through the framework of the US-Japan alliance.

Compared with 2010, tensions between the two Koreas have seemed to be cooled down. Since January 2011, the North has offered the resumption of dialogue with the South, and the South accepted that offer, given both internal and external pressures to reengage in talks or make any progress in terms of inter-Korean relations.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, a high-level meeting between the South and the North was realized in September. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how long it will take to restore the situation to the original state of the Peninsula before North Korea’s deadly provocations in 2010. While South Korea demands that the North apologizes and admits its responsibility for provocations in 2010, as well as pledging not to repeat

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<sup>12</sup> According to the 2010 version of “China’s Ocean Development Report,” the decade from 2010 to 2020 is positioned by the SOA as “the key historic stage” for realizing China’s historic task for building maritime power. Cited in Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China*, 2011 (Washington: US Department of Defense), p. 57. See also *NIDS China Security Report 2011* (National Institute for Defense Studies, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> According to a public opinion poll conducted in Korea early this year, 74.8 percent of those polled believed efforts should be made for an inter-Korea summit to reduce tensions on the peninsula. International Crisis Group, “South Korea: The Shifting Sands of Security Policy,” *Update Briefing*, December 2011, p. 3.

those provocations, it seems unlikely that North Korea will accept those demands. In the meantime, Seoul and Washington have enhanced their joint response measures against North Korea's provocative actions through such measures as a number of joint military exercises (conducted both in Korea and the Yellow Sea) and cooperation in developing a future BMD program against the North. Seoul has also approved its new defense doctrine (called "Proactive Deterrence") that aims at making prompt, focused and proportional retaliation against North Korea's attacks, which could likely increase risks of escalation between the two Koreas by further stimulating North Korea's provocative behavior.<sup>14</sup>

There has been also little progress in terms of the denuclearization of North Korea. Since North Korea disclosed the existence of a new uranium enrichment program and a light-water reactor in November 2010, the United States has moved to re-start the Six-Party Talks negotiations more actively than before. Accordingly, high-level talks between Washington and Pyongyang were held in July and October. During these talks, the United States laid out a series of "pre-steps" the North should take before returning to the Six-Party Talks. These steps include a freeze on all activities at the Yongbyon nuclear complex, a freeze and international inspection of the uranium enrichment facility, and a pledge not to attack South Korea again. By mid-December, it was reported that the North agreed to suspend its uranium enrichment program in exchange for food aid by the United States.<sup>15</sup>

The negotiation has been postponed, however, because of the sudden death of Kim Jong-il on 17 December 2011 (in Japanese time). In response to the death of Kim Jong-il, Japan took several crisis management measures. At an emergency national security meeting that was held within an hour after the report of Kim Jong-il's death (at noon on 19 December), Prime Minister Noda gave instructions including: (1) to step up efforts to gather information on future developments in North Korea; (2) to closely share information with related countries such as the United States,

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, South Korea's revised defense plan potentially involves its first-strike against North Korea in self-defense to prevent further provocations by the North, which may easily trigger the escalation of the crisis once it happens.

<sup>15</sup> "APNewsBreak: US food aid for NKorea would bring nuclear talks a step closer," *Washington Post*, 19 December 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/expected-us-food-aid-for-nkorea-brings-them-a-step-closer-to-nuclear-negotiating-table/2011/12/18/gIQAHyfB2O\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/expected-us-food-aid-for-nkorea-brings-them-a-step-closer-to-nuclear-negotiating-table/2011/12/18/gIQAHyfB2O_story.html), accessed 30 December 2011.

South Korea, and China; and (3) to take any necessary measures to prepare for sudden crisis. On these instructions, Japan's Ministry of Defense (MOD) increased the level of the SDF's information-gathering activities, by increasing the number of personnel, aircraft (including EP-3), and ships for collecting information about situations in the Korean Peninsula. During the same day, Prime Minister Noda called South Korean President Lee—who was visiting Japan at that time—and confirmed that Japan, South Korea, and the United States would closely work toward the peace and stability of the region.<sup>16</sup> When Prime Minister Noda met Chinese President Hu Jintao on his first visit to Beijing on 26 December, moreover, Noda called for Beijing to shoulder a greater role in ensuring North Korea avoids volatility after the death of Kim Jong-il, as well as sharing information about developments in North Korea.

It remains to be seen what kind of implications Kim Jong-il's death will have on regional security environments. Yet existing analyses and reports have indicated at least the following points. First, the death of Kim Jong-il revealed the lack of intelligence abilities of Western countries, which could cause a crucial delay of their response to a future crisis. Except for China, no country (even South Korea) was able to know of Kim Jong-il's death until an official announcement by Pyongyang on 19 December. Second, weakened leadership in Pyongyang may cause the destabilization of the country, which may lead to further provocative actions (potentially including a third nuclear test) by the North.<sup>17</sup> This may be particularly likely in 2012, by which the North is supposed to open a gate for a "strong and prosperous nation" to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-sung. North Korea's weakened leadership will also increase its dependency on China, which has already deepened under Kim Jong-il's leadership. While China's greater influence on North Korea may temporarily contribute to the stability of the Kims' regime, it also suggests that China would take greater diplomatic leverage over the Korean Peninsula and other issues against Western countries. Considering all, it cannot be expected that the situation of the Peninsula will immediately improve after the death of Kim Jong-il, and Japan is required to continuously prepare for any undesirable scenario through

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<sup>16</sup> The importance of the trilateral cooperation was also appreciated by Japan's Foreign Minister Koichiro Genba and US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton at their meeting in Washington on 20 December 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Unlike Kim Jong-il who came to power in his 50s, Kim Jong-un is only in his late 20s, and became an official successor of Kim Jong-il only a year ago (Kim Jong-il was successor-in-waiting for two decades).

close cooperation with regional countries.

## **Implications for the Defense of Japan**

Given the rapidly changing regional security environment, as well as massive damages caused by the 3/11 earthquake, one may argue that Japan needs to revise its "dynamic defense force" concept, which was approved in December 2010, so that Japan can respond to newly emerging situations. Contrary to such a viewpoint, however, it will be discussed that current security challenges inside and outside Japan have increased, rather than decreased, the relevancy as well as the importance of the dynamic defense force concept. In particular, various security challenges identified above require the smooth implementation of Japan's dynamic defense in four dimensions—defense of Japan, the US-Japan alliance, cooperation with regional countries, and contribution to the global security.

### ***Defense of Japan***

Defending Japanese territory and its surrounding region is the central element of Japan's dynamic defense concept. The basic direction of Japan's dynamic defense can be described as four "Ss"—*swift and seamless, sustainable, and smart*.<sup>18</sup> First, Japan is aiming at establishing a swift and seamless response to potential challenges for its national defense. In the case of crises occurring in Japan's offshore islands, for instance, the "warning time" between the first appearance of signs and the occurrence of an emergency is extremely short. This is the case not only for a military conflict, but also for a natural disaster as the 3/11 earthquake sharply demonstrated. In responding to such a sudden incident, the SDF needs to be able to respond swiftly and seamlessly to an emergency in accordance with the escalation of the crisis.

From this standpoint, the MOD has recently enhanced its defense capabilities of the southwestern islands, such as reorganization of the GSDF units in charge of initial response operations (such as protecting major facilities) in those offshore islands. Learning from its experience during the HA/DR activities after 3.11, moreover, the MOD has attempted to improve its transportation capabilities, by enhancing its joint

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<sup>18</sup> Regarding these four points, the author is grateful to useful comments and suggestions of Mr. Nobushige Takamizawa, President of NIDS.

transportation control functions, as well as utilizing civilian transportation assets. Such measures could allow the SDF to be deployed immediately after the occurrence of unpredicted incidents, as well as jointly responding to those incidents under a unified command system.

Second, Japan's dynamic defense force concept advocates the SDF's sustainable operations in the region surrounding Japan. Under circumstances in which the armed forces and related organizations frequently operate on the periphery of Japan, it is vital to carry out activities on a daily basis in order to ascertain the movements of other countries' forces and detect any warning signs of potential contingency. This calls for the SDF's effective use of its defense capabilities on a routine and sustainable basis in the course of conducting such activities as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). For this reason, the DPJ government has already decided to increase the number of MSDF submarines in its fleet from 16 to 22, as well as boosting the Aegis-equipped destroyer fleet from four to six. Furthermore, the 2010 NDPG made clear that a new SDF unit (named "offshore surveillance unit") is to be deployed to the southwest islands during the term of the mid-term defense program.

Third, the current security and economic situation of Japan calls for Japan's "smart defense." Unlike the previous static concept of a Basic Defense Force, which focuses on possessing a certain level of capabilities in defending Japan, the Dynamic Defense Force Concept focuses on "how to use those capabilities" at the operational level. This requires a prioritization of Japanese defense policies and "selection and concentration" of its resources and capabilities on truly important functions and areas, rather than proportionately distributing them. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the MOD has recently announced that it would fundamentally review its cross-sectional resource allocation, which would inevitably change its previous proportionate budget allocation to each SDF.<sup>19</sup> The recent announcement by the Noda government to review the three principles on arms exports (and their related measures) should be also understood from this context. Japanese companies' entry to the global arms market, as well as to joint development/production programs of weapons, is expected to contribute to the saving of defense procurement costs and to revitalize

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<sup>19</sup> [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/d\\_policy/pdf/structural\\_reform.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/structural_reform.pdf)

the domestic defense industry. Such a "smart" approach is particularly important in an era in which Japan is not able to increase its defense expenditures under the current severe economic situations especially after 3/11.

### *The US-Japan Alliance*

Japan's dynamic defense concept also relates to its alliance relations with the United States. Although the US-Japan alliance was temporally "adrift" because of the relocation problem of the Futenma Air Station, emerging security challenges including the rise of China and escalating tension on the Korean Peninsula have brought about a momentum toward the revitalization of the alliance. At the 2 plus 2 meeting in June 2011, both countries revalidated and updated their common strategic objectives for the first time in four years. In the statement released after the meeting, both parties stressed to expand information sharing and joint ISR activities "in order to deter and respond proactively, rapidly and seamlessly to various situation in the region."<sup>20</sup> As mentioned earlier, the US-led operation *Tomodachi* dramatically improved the Japanese image toward US forces. According to the latest survey conducted by the Japanese Cabinet Office, Japanese people who have a favorable emotion toward the US exceeded 80 percent, the highest ever since the beginning of the research in 1978.<sup>21</sup>

From this context, it is noteworthy that, when US Defense Secretary Panetta visited Japan in December 2011, both Defense Minister Ichikawa and Defense Secretary Panetta agreed to promote "dynamic" US-Japan defense cooperation—intensifying the activity of the units by conducting timely joint exercises for maximum effectiveness and cooperation in warning and surveillance and promoting the shared use of facilities of both nations that will lead to an increase in options on outposts for such activities. Such an approach is particularly important in an era in which the United States seeks to "develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches" in the region.<sup>22</sup> The DPJ's recent announcement to choose F-35s as

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<sup>20</sup> "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee Toward a Deeper and Broader U.S.-Japan Alliance: Building on 50 Years of Partnership," [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/pdfs/joint1106\\_01.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/pdfs/joint1106_01.pdf), accessed 19 December 2011.

<sup>21</sup> The results of the survey can be accessed from: <http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h23/h23-gaiko/index.html>.

<sup>22</sup> The United States Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, January 2012, p. 3.

the ASDF's next generation fighter aircraft, as well as decoupling the relocation of Futenma from the transfer of US Marines to Guam by revising 2006 roadmap, may also boost the more dynamic US-Japan cooperation in the longer term.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, several issues remain to be addressed in order for the enhancement of the US-Japan alliance. Due to Japan's political turmoil (including the third change of leadership of the DPJ government), both governments gave up the announcement of a new joint declaration, which was agreed at the Summit meeting in November 2011. The prospects for a solution of the relocation of Futenma Air Station have not been seen yet, while the United States has announced to rotationally deploy some of its Okinawa-based Marines to other places in the Pacific, as well as transferring 4,700 Marines to Guam. Some Japanese are also concerned with the impact of a significant cut in US defense budget on the US-Japan alliance or extended deterrence provided by US forces. In particular, the DOD's large-scale defense budget cut may cause another "burden-sharing" debate between Washington and Tokyo like that during the 1980s.

Despite these remaining problems, given the rapidly changing strategic environment in the region, it is expected that the strong US-Japan alliance will be increasingly important not only for Japan and the United States, but also for the regional stability as a whole. Indeed, the US Obama administration has already announced to enhance commitment to regional allies including Japan under the slogan of America's "pivot" to the Asia-Pacific. The next task for Japan would be, therefore, how to firmly implement several decisions and steps already agreed with the United States. Failure to do so would represent a serious setback for Japanese credibility, which may lead to another discord within the US-Japan alliance.

### ***Cooperation with Regional Countries***

As a part of its multidimensional security strategy, Japan has enhanced not only the alliance with the United States, but also security relations with other US allies and regional friends. Bilaterally, Japan has enhanced security and strategic cooperation with US allies such as Australia and South Korea—although cooperation with

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<sup>23</sup> "U.S., Japan decouple Marines' Guam move from Okinawa," *Reuters*, 8 February 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/08/us-japan-us-marines-idUSTRE8171R020120208>

Korea has faced some difficulties over history issues throughout 2011. Japan has also strengthened its relations with other regional countries including India, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia. In particular, Japan has strengthened its effort for the capacity-building of these Southeast Asian countries.<sup>24</sup> Some of these bilateral relations are complemented by the trilateral cooperation including the United States. On 19 December 2011, for instance, Japan, the United States and India for the first time held a strategic dialogue to discuss regional security issues at the director-general level.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to these bilateral and trilateral approaches, Japan has enhanced its cooperation within multilateral security frameworks such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defense Minister's Meeting (ADMM) plus, and East Asia Summit (EAS). The MOD also hosts multilateral meetings, such as the Tokyo Defense Forum and Japan-ASEAN Vice-Defense Minister's Meeting. For Japan, these multilateral frameworks are particularly useful in discussing maritime crisis-management and rule-making with countries that share similar concerns. Furthermore, these bilateral, trilateral and multilateral frameworks can help to keep US strategic engagement in the region, stabilize the regional and global security environment by jointly coping with non-traditional security threats such as terrorism and natural disasters, contribute to "global commons" including maritime, space, and cyber security, and maintain or create international rules and norms that reflect the legitimate international order.

On the other hand, the Japanese Government is cautious not to give an impression that these bilateral and multilateral frameworks are utilized for "containment" of China. Indeed, major areas of cooperation in these security frameworks are peacekeeping and non-traditional security issues such as HA/DR, which can be deemed as a "public good" that can inclusively benefit all regional countries, rather than a "collective good" that exclusively profits the US and its allies. It should be therefore welcomed that China joins multilateral frameworks for regional security

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<sup>24</sup> In April 2011, the MOD's International Policy Division established the "Capacity Building Assistance Office," a new office for supporting South East Asian and Pacific countries' efforts for HA/DR, peacekeeping, maritime security and others in conjunction with other developed countries like the United States and Australia.

<sup>25</sup> A good analysis of this trilateral meeting can be accessed at: <http://www.cnas.org/node/7459>, accessed 10 January 2012.

cooperation in such areas as peacekeeping, non-proliferation and HA/DR. Indeed, Japan's political leaders have often requested Chinese greater involvement to these trilateral or multilateral frameworks to collaborate in non-traditional security issues.<sup>26</sup> Such an approach could help to reduce the tension with China, increase transparency of the Chinese military, and promote trust-building among regional countries, thereby preventing the rise of a "security dilemma" in the region.

### *Contributions to Global Security*

Lastly, it is important to remember that Japan's dynamic defense force concept covers global security issues, such as peacekeeping operations (PKOs). Since the end of Koizumi period (2001-2006), Japan's military and financial commitment to global security affairs has been gradually decreasing. It is argued that Japan's triple disasters after 3.11 also strengthen Japanese people's "inward-looking" posture. Contrary to such a view point, however, Japan's Prime Minister Noda emphasized that, at a speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2011, Japan would remain actively engaged in international security issues such as counter-piracy, the eradication of terrorism, contribution to peace-building, and non-proliferation and disarmament. At this speech, Prime Minister Noda announced the dispatch of an SDF engineering unit, as well as its staff officers, to the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).<sup>27</sup> This is the second major dispatch of an SDF unit to UN PKOs for the DPJ government, following its decision to commit to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in January 2010.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, despite its growing regional security concerns as well as internal security problems, the DPJ government has put special emphasis on Japan's continuous commitment to global security issues and the development of the world. By so doing, the DPJ Government has attempted to send a clear message worldwide that Japan never becomes "inward-looking" despite devastating damages caused by 3/11, diminishing its image as a "declining power." Japan's global activities may also contribute to "making friends" through joint activities, as the SDF and the Australian

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<sup>26</sup> In December 2011, for instance, Japan's Foreign Minister Koichiro Genba proposed the establishment of trilateral strategic dialogue between Japan, China, and the United States.

<sup>27</sup> A summary of this speech can be accessed at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/assembly2011/attendance1110.html>, accessed 30 December 2011.

<sup>28</sup> On 20 December 2011, the Noda cabinet officially approved the dispatch of the SDF to UNMISS. Furrowing this, the GSDF advance team left Japan on 14 January 2012.

Defense Forces (ADF) closely collaborated during the stabilizing mission in Iraq in 2005. Those friends made through Japanese international activities can become important assets not only tackling global security issues, but also coping with regional security challenges.

Furthermore, Japan's continuous commitment to global security issues are critical in terms of regional perspectives—the more Japan contributes to US-led global order based on freedom and democracy, the more it can expect continuous military and diplomatic engagement in regional issues from the United States. Contribution to global security issues, if it is widely done, can also improve the Japanese image as a "peace-creating nation," enhancing its "soft power" in the world. For these reasons, Japan is likely to continue, or even enhance, its commitment to global security issues, and this is another aspect of its "dynamic" defense posture.

## **Conclusion**

The basic defense force concept, a previous defense doctrine that was established in 1976, was based on the idea that Japan should possess a modest level of military capabilities so that it would not create a "power vacuum" in the region. Doing so was considered as Japan's important contribution to international security, as well as enhancing its national defense, because creating a power vacuum would invite a conflict among regional powers and cause instability in the region. At the same time, the concept did not assume Japan's significant defense build-up or the SDF's overseas operations since it would threaten countries that feared the resurgence of Japanese militarism. Thus, it was argued that Japan's "not too big, but not too small" military capabilities would lead to the stability of the region. In other words, the basic defense force concept was a very "passive" approach toward regional security issues—it was an "inactive Japan," rather than an "active Japan," that could contribute to the stability in the region.

Over 30 years has passed since the establishment of the basic defense force concept, and the security environment surrounding Japan has drastically changed during this period. Although the United States remains the richest and strongest country in the world, newly emerging powers have been rapidly catching up and the gap between these powers and the US has gradually narrowed. Meanwhile, North Korea

has been increasingly provocative as it gained greater confidence of its deterrence capabilities from its nuclear development. As the 3.11 earthquake and tsunami vividly illustrated, the so-called non-traditional security issues, such as terrorism and natural disasters, have been emerging as important security agenda items. It will be expected, moreover, that the regional security outlook becomes even more complex and unpredictable in 2012, in which domestic elections and leadership changes will take place in a number of regional countries.

It is from this context, therefore, that Japanese defense should be more active and more dynamic. This is not to recommend that Japan should become a great power in a traditional sense by significantly building up its defense forces and abandoning its defensive-defense doctrine under Article 9 of the Constitution. Rather, it is argued that Japan could do many things for its defense and regional and global security even under the current legal framework and economic situations. In fact, the increased unpredictability on the Korean Peninsula has already provided greater momentum for cooperation among regional countries, which share common stakes in the stability of the Peninsula despite their different national interests. By taking advantage of this opportunity, Japan could engage with regional and global security issues with other like-minded states more actively than before. Doing so would not only improve Japanese national security, but also contribute to the regional and global security environment.