



Ministry of Defense

**National Institute for
Defense Studies**

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Roles of the National Institute for Defense Studies

The National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) is a think tank of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and Japan's only national academic research institute dedicated to security. In addition to conducting research on security and military history, NIDS is responsible for preserving military history documents and making them publicly accessible. As an educational institution equivalent to national defense universities in other countries, NIDS also provides education to senior officials of the MOD and Self-Defense Forces (SDF), as well as personnel from other ministries.

The National Defense Strategy, approved by the National Security Council and the Cabinet in December 2022, states: "The Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces will review and enhance their research capabilities and functions as intellectual infrastructure, with the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) playing a central role." Similarly, the Defense Force Development Plan notes, "The Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces will expand their networks and organizational collaboration with research and education institutions, universities, and think tanks in Japan and overseas in order to further enhance their research and educational functions, with the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) playing a central role." It also states, "NIDS will enhance the content and structure of education and research, including in the cyber domain, in order to secure and develop excellent human resources capable of serving as the core of Japan's forces."

More recently, in August 2021, NIDS was designated by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as a research institute under the Guidelines for Handling Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research, enabling research fellows at NIDS to apply for grants. This designation is expected to improve the institute's research capabilities and further contribute to the scientific community.

NIDS continues to promote initiatives to stimulate discussion on security and defense and to provide policy support for national security.



Entrance lobby of NIDS Building F1



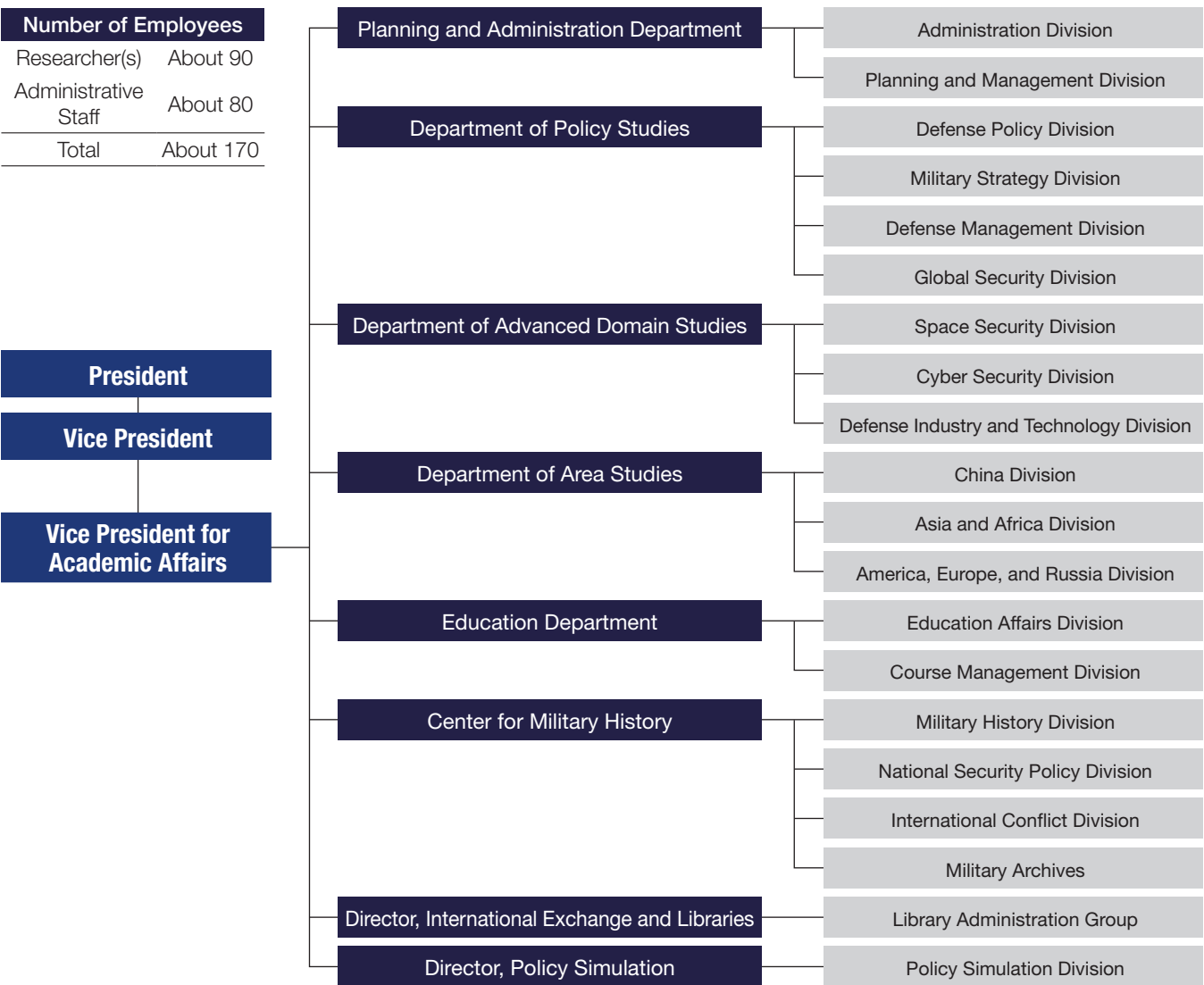
Main Entrance of NIDS Building F1

History

●	1952	Aug. 1952	Founded as the National Safety College of the National Safety Agency
●	1954	Jul. 1954	Renamed the National Defense College of the Defense Agency
●	1956	May 1956	Office of War History transferred from the Ground Staff College to the National Defense College
●	1985	Apr. 1985	Renamed the National Institute for Defense Studies
●	2007	Jan. 2007	Renamed the National Institute for Defense Studies of the Ministry of Defense
●	2011	Sep. 2011	The Research Department was reorganized into the Policy Studies Department, Security Studies Department, and Regional Studies Department; Military History Department and the Library (Military Archives only) were reorganized into the Center for Military History; and the Planning and Administration Department was created.
●	2016	Aug. 2016	Moved from Meguro to a new facility in Ichigaya
●	2026	Apr. 2026	The Security Studies Department was reorganized into the Department of Advanced Domain Studies



Organization (As of April 2026)



Planning and Administration Department	Responsible for general affairs, human resources, accounting, and planning and coordination of research and education/training.
Department of Policy Studies	Conducts research on Japan's defense policies, the national defense policies of other countries, strategy theory, global security, defense management, and other traditional security matters.
Department of Advanced Domain Studies	Conducts research on security in the domains of space, cyber, and the electromagnetic spectrum, as well as economic security and the military use of advanced technologies.
Department of Area Studies	Conducts research on international relations and security situations in diverse regions of the world.
Education Department	Provides education on national security affairs to high-ranking officers of the SDF and equivalent civilian officials of the MOD and other government agencies.
Center for Military History	Conducts research on military history, compiles military history, and preserves, publicly releases, and studies military history documents.
Director, International Exchange and Libraries	Oversees international exchanges and library management pertaining to the basic research and study of the SDF management and operations.
Director, Policy Simulation	Conducts policy simulations on the management and operation of the SDF.

Research on National Security Issues

The global balance of power has changed dramatically, and competition is emerging between nations in the political, economic, military, and other spheres. As challenges to international order based on the rule of law, such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine continue, it is critical for Japan to enhance its cooperation and partnerships with its allies and other like-minded countries with which Japan shares a universal sense of values and strategic interests. Against this backdrop, the role of NIDS is taking on increasing importance.

At NIDS, civil service researchers with various academic backgrounds and SDF officer-researchers with military expertise and practical experience work together to conduct research on various issues concerning Japan's security.



Policy-Oriented Research



Briefing

Research Themes

Research activities at NIDS are intended to address, with due consideration for, the fluid strategic environment that currently surrounds Japan. The following are examples of themes closely related to Japan's national security on which researchers at NIDS focus their efforts.

Research on the Development, Operation, and Institutions of Defense Capability

NIDS conducts research and studies on defense strategy, deterrence, alliance cooperation, military strategy, and defense management (a field that examines the efficient and effective operations of defense organizations).

Security Challenges in Advanced Domains

As seen in recent cases such as the war in Ukraine, the so-called new domains of outer space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum, as well as the use of advanced technologies such as drones and AI, have become critical factors that significantly affect the nature of modern warfare. NIDS conducts research on the impact that issues in these advanced domains have on security.

Regional Security Relations

NIDS conducts unique analyses of the strategic environment surrounding the Indo-Pacific countries that are Japan's key security partners, and the situations in countries and regions that have significant influence on Japan's security. We undertake analyses from comprehensive perspectives encompassing military, foreign relations, domestic politics, and the economy. Our research covers the United States, China, the Korean Peninsula, Russia, Southeast Asia, Australia, South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa.

Policy Simulation

Policy simulation is a means of examining actual policy issues by creating hypothetical scenarios and discussing how the country in question should act and how other concerned countries would react in the scenario. Policy simulation (wargaming) has developed significantly, particularly in the United States, and is widely incorporated into strategy and policy formulation by national defense and diplomatic authorities.

NIDS appointed the Director, Policy Simulation and established the Policy Simulation Division to make use of NIDS' advanced expert knowledge and research capabilities to plan and implement policy simulations, which involve creating scenarios, facilitating debates among participants, and authoring reports. In addition, NIDS works with overseas research institutions to conduct joint research, and to acquire and study state-of-the-art techniques.

Policy simulation scenes



Utilization of simulations in policy support



Simulation exhibition at the Connections Japan conference

Research on Military History

The Center for Military History at NIDS is Japan's largest research institution specializing in military history. It conducts research on military history of Japan and other countries in order to meet the needs of defense policymakers and support SDF education and training.

The study of military history provides an essential foundation for examining the nation's current and future security challenges. Exchanges of views on historical perceptions among countries with intertwined histories play an important role in maintaining and further developing their future relationships. For this reason, the historical perceptions of other countries regarding past wars are also an important subject of research. Accordingly, NIDS is working to broaden the scope of its historical research by adopting an international comparative approach, going beyond the narrow categories of "Japanese military history" and "foreign military history."



Presentations at research meetings



Research exchanges with International research institutions

Research Themes

Drawing on the latest research trends and historical materials, NIDS continues to verify historical facts related to military history and addresses the following research themes in order to contribute to Japan's current national security policy from a historical perspective:

Further Research on Military History of World War II

NIDS conducts further research on military history of World War II by drawing on newly released archival materials and recent research findings, while also incorporating perspectives from other countries.

Research on the History of Japan's Post-World War II National Security Policy

NIDS conducts research on national security policy in post-war Japan, including the establishment and growth of the SDF, which has now entered the realm of history. NIDS also compiles oral histories of the postwar period.

Research on the History of International Conflicts

NIDS studies international conflicts that have occurred throughout history to provide historical lessons that can contribute to national security policymaking and SDF education and training.

Compilation of Military History and Military Historical Materials

Publication of Senshi Soshō (War History Series)

Senshi Soshō, a compilation of Japan's military history related to World War II, encompasses a total of 102 volumes published between 1966 and 1980 by the Office of War Study, the predecessor of the Center for Military History. Its purpose was to aid education and research in the SDF. The series is available on the NIDS website.



Applying the Lessons Learned from the Past to the Present



War History Series

Compilation of Oral Histories

NIDS is actively engaged in compiling and publishing oral histories on Japan's postwar security policies by interviewing individuals involved in past events and preserving their accounts as historical records.



Oral Histories

Compilation of the History of International Conflicts

NIDS has published "History of the Falklands War" and "History of the Gulf War," each of which draws on the results of its research on international conflicts.



History of the Gulf War

Project for the Research and Collection of Military History-Related Archival Materials Located Overseas

In addition to verifying already known historical facts, it is necessary to continuously search for new or previously unknown historical facts. In particular, NIDS constantly strives to unearth new historical information by studying and collecting documents archived overseas which were not previously accessible and which are often released to the public after a certain number of years.

Education for Senior Self-Defense Forces Officers and Executive Personnel

Educational Programs at the National Institute for Defense Studies

NIDS offers two educational programs — the Strategic Studies Course and the Strategic Studies Executive Course — which are conducted annually for senior Self-Defense Forces officers and senior administrative officers of the Ministry of Defense (MOD). These programs emphasize key abilities to organize, analyze, and structure strategic issues; to formulate and test theories and creatively present strategies; and to communicate and implement persuasive strategies. Over the years, these programs have produced many security strategists.

Note: Starting with the programs in FY 2024, NIDS has renamed and restructured the previous Regular Course as the Strategic Studies Course, and the Special Course as the Strategic Studies Executive Course.



Educational scene

Name of Educational Program	Period	Participants
Strategic Studies Course	10 months	[Internal personnel] Senior Self-Defense Forces officers (Colonel/Captain-level), Administrative officers (Assistant Director level in internal bureaus of the MOD), etc. [External personnel] Staff of national government agencies, local government employees, employees of private companies, and international students from foreign countries (including military officers of Colonel/Captain or Lieutenant Colonel/Commander rank), etc.
Strategic Studies Executive Course	About 3 weeks	[Internal personnel] Senior Self-Defense Forces Officers (Major-general/Rear-admiral or Colonel/Captain-level) and Administrative Officers (Director-level in internal bureaus of the MOD) [External personnel] Staff of national government agencies, local government employees, employees of private companies, etc.



Graduation ceremony for the 1st Strategic Studies Course



Lecture Scene (Australian Ambassador to Japan)

Officers and Executive Personnel

Strategic Studies Course

In the Strategic Studies Course, participants acquire comprehensive and extensive knowledge of security through approximately 20 academic courses (about 150 lectures) delivered by both internal and external experts, and further deepen this knowledge through about 30 seminars focused on specific themes.

Alongside these lectures and seminars, the program also includes policy simulations to enable participants to put the knowledge they have attained into practice. This helps reinforce the knowledge they have gained while enhancing their strategic planning and execution abilities. Furthermore, the program includes domestic and international onsite training, as well as opportunities to hear the views of Diet members from different political parties on security policies.

Additionally, the program offers the Strategic Studies Program (SSP), which grants a Master's degree in Policy Studies upon completion of the course and the fulfillment of certain credit requirements at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS). Each year, approximately 10 participants are awarded this degree.



Onsite Training Outside Japan (Australia)



GRIPS Graduation Ceremony

Strategic Studies Executive Course

In the Strategic Studies Executive Course, participants gain knowledge through approximately 10 academic courses (about 20 lectures) delivered by both internal and external experts under training themes based on the latest security policy issues.

In addition, the program also includes small- and full-group discussions, policy simulations, and other activities based on the knowledge acquired, aimed at reinforcing this knowledge and sharpening skills in strategy formulation and execution.



Lecture



Policy Simulation

International Exchanges

Exchanges in Research and Education

NIDS primarily dispatches junior and mid-career researchers to overseas research institutes and universities to enhance their research capabilities. It also hosts researchers from abroad as visiting research fellows under its fellowship program to improve the quality of NIDS' research and educational activities and to foster networks among researchers.

As a security think tank, NIDS actively promotes regular mutual visits among foreign security and defense research institutions. This includes a professor exchange program and sending and receiving delegations from other countries on educational field trips.



Exchange in Research and Education

Participation in Multilateral Meetings Attended by Heads of Defense Universities

NIDS participates in the NATO Conference of Commandants as well as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Heads of Defense Universities/Colleges/Institutions Meeting, facilitating leadership-level exchanges with the heads of defense universities of other nations.

Former Vice President Tomisaki gives a presentation at the ARF Heads of Defense Universities / Colleges / Institutions Meeting.



Organizing International Conferences and Events

NIDS hosts international conferences on security, war, and military history annually. These conferences cover a wide range of timely themes, including global and regional issues as well as policy-related challenges.

NIDS International Symposium on Security Affairs

The symposium began in 1985 as the International Roundtable Discussion and was renamed to its current title in 1999. NIDS brings together renowned intellectuals from Japan and abroad and opens the event to the public. The symposium is attended by a wide range of participants including government and military personnel, researchers and experts, journalists, and members of the general public.



International Symposium on Security Affairs (December 2025)

NIDS International Forum on War History

NIDS launched the forum in 2002 to revisit war history from multiple perspectives. Researchers from Japan and overseas give presentations on war history to share their expertise and enhance mutual trust among participating countries.



International Forum on War History (October 2025)

Connections Japan

As part of efforts to strengthen the MOD's intellectual foundation, NIDS has been holding the Connections Japan international conference since 2022. The event shares knowledge with policy simulation experts from around the world and aims to advance the latest policy simulation and strategic wargaming methods, thereby expanding NIDS' ability to support policy and education.

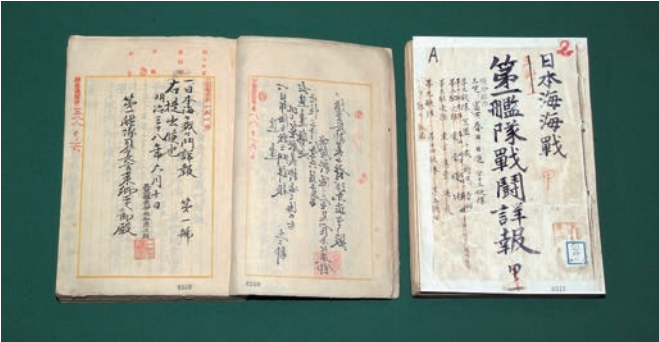


Connections Japan (January 2026)

Public Disclosure of Military History Documents

Military Archives, Center for Military History

The Military Archives of the Center for Military History is Japan's largest archive on the Japanese Army and Navy. It primarily preserves a large number of official documents of the Army and Navy and related material, which are widely made available to the public. The archival materials can be viewed in the Military Archives Reading Room, and some are also available on the websites of the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, the National Archives of Japan and the National Institute for Defense Studies.



Detailed After Action Report of the Battle of Tsushima



Orders of the Army Section, Imperial General Headquarters

Military Archives Reading Room

Opening hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
(Last entry: 4:00 p.m.)

Closed on: Saturdays (except for one Saturday per month), Sundays, and the first Monday following an open Saturday

Location: 5-1 Ichigayahonmuracho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162-8808

Contact: +81-3-3260-7102 (direct number)



- **Access**
- 9-minute walk from Ushigome-yanagicho Station on the Toei Oedo Line
- 13-minute walk from Ichigaya Station on JR or subway lines.
- 3-minute walk from the Yakuojimachi stop on Toei Bus Route 61.

(Entry is restricted to the Kaga Gate located on the northern side of the Ministry of Defense compound.)

Initiatives by the Archives

- **Information Dissemination**
- The NIDS website introduces the activities of the Archives and the historical materials it holds, including the War History Series and other historical materials
- **Digitization of Documents Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
- Digitized images of archival documents are converted into text data using AI-OCR (Optical Character Recognition), with the goal of enabling a variety of further applications.

Dissemination of Research Findings

NIDS strives to disseminate its research findings through publications and various public seminars. Recent publications and reports of these seminars can be found on the NIDS website. You can also learn more about the activities of NIDS through its official X (formerly Twitter) account and official YouTube channel.

Publications

NIDS China Security Report

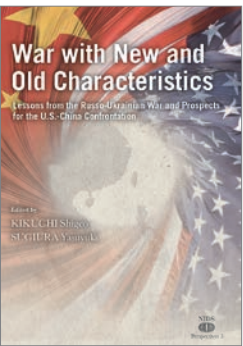
In this annual report, NIDS researchers provide analysis of China's military and security trends from their own perspectives. The report is published once a year in Japanese, English, and Chinese versions.



NIDS China Security Report 2026

NIDS Perspectives

This research book series analyzes global strategic trends from a perspective that transcends regions and policy areas, intersecting the dimensions of time and space. The Japanese and English editions are published annually.



NIDS Perspectives (2025)

Security & Strategy

This peer-reviewed academic journal began publication in 2020 with the aim of contributing to the development of academic research on, and public understanding of, security issues. It is published twice a year in Japanese and once a year in English.



Security & Strategy (2026)

NIDS Military History Studies Annual

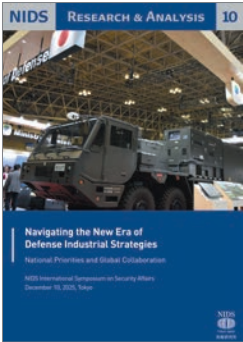
This publication presents research papers on military history, reports on the activities of the Center for Military History, and information on military history documents.



NIDS Military History Studies Annual (2026)

NIDS Research & Analysis

This is a new web-based report series that provides diverse content to aid understanding of contemporary security challenges, ranging from the organization and explanation of complex factual contexts to the results of in-depth analysis. It is published online on an ongoing basis.



NIDS Commentary

NIDS Commentary is a series of short columns offering experts' timely analysis of current security issues.





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