

Historical Transition of the Security Organs Subordinate to the Cabinet and the Japanese Version of National Security Council

Yasuaki Chijiwa (Research Fellow, Center for Military History)

Introduction

The 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG, *bōei taikō*) formulated in December 2010 stated, “After examining the current organization, functions, and structure of the Cabinet related to security issues, including the Security Council, the Government will establish a body in the Prime Minister’s Office (*shushō kantei*) which will be responsible for national security policy coordination among relevant ministers and for providing advice to the Prime Minister.” Regarding the strengthening of the functions of the Cabinet related to national security issues, the Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe considered the idea of establishing an organization in the track of the National Security Council (NSC) of the United States, or the “Japanese version of NSC,” but it never materialized. However, based on the new NDPG, the “Conference of the Team to Consider the Strengthening of the Functions of the Cabinet Related to National Security Issues” (*kokka anzen hoshō ni kansuru naikaku kinō kyōka no tamenō kentō chiimu kaigō*) was set up in February 2011, with the Chief Cabinet Secretary and three Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretaries as its members. The Conference is now examining past case examples of policy decisions concerning national security and the handling of emergency situations and studying national security-related organizations of various other countries.

This article studies the historical transition of the security organ subordinate to the Cabinet in postwar Japan and considers what suggestions it provides for the concept of Japanese version of NSC.

The Era of the National Defense Council

The national security organization of the Cabinet originated in the establishment of the “National Defense Council” (NDC, *kokubō kaigi*) proposed by the Kaishinto Party in October 1953 in the “Outline of the Basic Law for the Self-Defense Military” (*jiei gun kihon hō yōkō*), which stated that the “Prime Minister shall take the reins of the Self-Defense Military with the assistance of the NDC.” Though the ruling Liberal Party agreed to the establishment of the NDC in December 1953, the Kaishinto Party, rejecting the so-called “(Prime Minister) Yoshida line” and seeking the revision of the Constitution and self-reliance defense, demanded the participation of former military personnel in the NDC as “private-sector members” and the establishment of the Secretariat of the NDC outside the Internal Bureau of National Safety Agency controlled by former Interior Ministry bureaucrats. As the Liberal Party rejected these demands, the Defense Agency Establishment Act, enacted in June 1954, only provided for the establishment of the NDC and matters under its control. Subsequently, under the Act for the Formation of the NDC (*kokubō kaigi kōsei hō*) and the revised Act for the Establishment of the Prime Minister’s Office (*sōri fu*) enacted in July 1956, the Secretariat of the NDC was established within the Prime Minister’s Office, with private sector personnel excluded from members of the Council (See Shigeru Aso, “Kokubō Kaigi Secchi no Kei” [developments leading up to the establishment of the NDC], *Bōei Hō Kenkyū* [defense law studies] No.9, October 1985).

Under the Defense Agency Establishment Act and the Act for the Formation of the NDC, the NDC was described as “an organization to consider important matters related to national defense,” consisting of the five Cabinet Ministers: Prime Minister (chairman), Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance, Director-General of the Defense Agency and Director-General of the Economic Planning Agency. The Prime Minister was to refer to the Council (1) basic policy for national defense (*kokubō no kihon hōshin*); (2) national defense program outlines; (3) outline of a plan to coordinate industries related to defense programs; (4) advisability of defensive mobilization; and (5) other important matters related to national defense regarded as necessary by the Prime Minister. As the Chief Cabinet Secretary was separated from administrative matters of the Prime Minister’s Office following the revision of the Cabinet Act in August 1957, the Act for the Formation of the NDC and the Act for the Establishment of the Prime Minister’s Office were also revised, resulting in the transfer of the Secretariat from the Prime Minister’s Office to the NDC.

The NDC was established for the purpose of “careful consideration in order to ensure civilian control.” In this regard, the Japanese government explained that “the purpose of the establishment of the NDC is to make the political influence

dominant in order to avoid the formation of military cliques as seen in the past” (remarks in the Diet by Prime Minister Ichirō Hatoyama on June 27, 1955) and that “the purport of the establishment of the NDC is to ensure extremely careful consideration because national defense is an extremely important matter that concerns the fate of the state and Japanese people” (remarks in the Diet by Defense Agency Director-General Arata Sugihara on June 8, 1955).

Later in October 1972, the Cabinet made a decision on “About Measures for the Strengthening of Civilian Control” (*bunmin tōsei kyōka no tameno sochi ni tsuite*), which added the Minister of International Trade and Industry, Director-General of the Science and Technology Agency, Chief Cabinet Secretary and Commissioner of the National Public Safety Commission as members of the NDC. This also led to changes in the organization, composition and constant number of the Self-Defense Forces, as well as the types and quantities of newest major equipment matters that had to be referred to the NDC as “other important matters related to national defense regarded as necessary by the Prime Minister” (but the addition of the Council’s members did not materialize due to the objection of opposition parties). These measures represented a review of the NDC for the strengthening of civilian control following the controversy over the “frontloading of the Fourth Defense Buildup Plan” (*yojibō sakidori*) in the same year. The measures for the strengthening of civilian control were replaced by “Concerning the Handling of Major Matters of the Buildup of Defense Capabilities” (*bōei ryoku no seibi naityō no uchi shuyōna jikō no toriatsukai ni tsuite*), decided by the Cabinet in November 1976.

In December 1980, the “Ministerial Meeting on Comprehensive Security” (*sōgō anzen hoshō kankei kakuryō kaigi*) was established under the Cabinet decision separately from the NDC. In August 1980, the “Study Group on Comprehensive Security” (*sōgō anzen hoshō kenkyū gurūpu*), a private advisory panel to then Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira, proposed the establishment of the “National Comprehensive Security Council” (*kokka sōgō anzen hoshō kaigi*) to replace the NDC. Following the sudden death of Ohira however, his successor, Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki, opted for the creation of another organization while maintaining the NDC. The Ministerial Meeting on Comprehensive Security was an organization “to consult on economic, diplomatic and various other policy measures that require coordination among relevant administrative organizations in order to ensure the integration and consistency from the viewpoint of security.” Chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary, the Ministerial Meeting had nine Cabinet Ministers as its members (the four Cabinet Ministers comprising the NDC other than the Prime Minister, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Minister of Transport, Chief Cabinet Secretary, and Director-General of the Science and Technology Agency), and existed until September 2004 (but it was not convened since September 1990).

Nakasone Administrative Reform and the Establishment of the Security Council of Japan/the Cabinet Security Affairs Office

Since the late 1970s, greater attention came to be paid to responses to emergencies other than important matters related to national defense for consideration by the NDC such as the Soviet Mig-25 jet fighter’s invasion of Japanese air space and landing in Hakodate in 1976, the Japanese Red Army’s hijacking of a Japan Airlines plane in Dacca, Bangladesh, in 1977, and the downing of a Korean Air Lines plane over the Soviet Union in 1983. This prompted a review of the Cabinet security organization from the standpoint of emergency responses other than national defense matters in the course of administrative reform promoted under the Cabinet of Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in the 1980s. The “Second Ad Hoc Commission on Administrative Reform” (*dai niji rinji gyōsei chōsa kai*), during the years of the Suzuki Cabinet, in its recommendations resented in July 1982 proposed the revitalization of the NDC and the strengthening of the functions of its Secretariat. But then Chief Cabinet Secretary Masaharu Gotōda asked the “Ad Hoc Administrative Reform Promotion Council” (*rinji gyōsei kaikaku suishin shingikai*), to make further consideration. Based on the recommendation presented by the Council in July 1985, the Act for the Establishment of the Security Council of Japan was enacted in July 1986, with the NDC reorganized into the “Security Council of Japan” (SCJ, *anzen hoshō kaigi*).

The reorganization into the SCJ added “important matters related to responses to grave emergency situations” as matters for consideration on top of important matters related to national defense. Grave emergency situations (*jyūdai kinkyū jitai*) mean “situations other than national defense and emergency situations that may seriously affect the safety of Japan to which adequate responses are difficult under the normal system of emergency situation responses.” However, natural disasters and economic crises are excluded from grave emergency situations as they can be handled under the existing system. With the

addition of members under the reorganization, the SCJ became a collegial body comprising of seven Cabinet Ministers: the five Cabinet Ministers that made up the NDC plus the Chief Cabinet Secretary and the Commissioner of the NPSC.

The reorganization into the SCJ also resulted in the abolition of the Secretariat of the NDC. At the same time, under the revision of the Cabinet Secretariat Organization Order, the “Cabinet Security Affairs Office” (*naikaku anzen hoshō shitsu*) was established within the Cabinet Secretariat to undertake the general coordination of matters concerning national safety and to take over the functions of the Secretariat of the previous NDC.

In the course of the reorganization from the NDC to the SCJ, there was a plan to name the new body the “National Security Council.” However the naming of the “National Security Council” was not adopted because of the opposition by Chief Cabinet Secretary Gotōda. Gotōda explained that he opposed the idea because he wanted to respect the naming used in the recommendation by the Ad Hoc Administrative Reform Promotion Council and also because the wording “national security” gives the image of keeping only external relations in mind (remarks in the Diet by State Minister Masaharu Gotōda on May 15, 1986). Despite Gotōda’s explanations, however, the name of the “Security Council of Japan” itself can be described as misleading, as the SCJ did not expand the scope of important matters related to national defense as matters of consideration by the NDC to include important matters related to national security, but simply added grave emergency situations to the existing matters of consideration. Furthermore, the purpose of the establishment of the SCJ, that is, careful consideration in order to secure civilian control, has not changed either, as shown in the government’s explanation that “regarding the reorganization of the NDC, it is intended to further improve and enhance the NDC as an organization to more intensely secure civilian control at the Cabinet level...” (remarks in the Diet by Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone on January 30, 1986).

Hashimoto Administrative Reform and Establishment of the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary for Crisis Management/the Cabinet Office for National Security Affairs and Crisis Management/the Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary for National Security and Crisis Management

In the 1990s, under administrative reform promoted by the Cabinet of Prime Minister Ryūtarō Hashimoto, efforts went into full gear to strengthen the Cabinet’s crisis management function, following such incidents as the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, the spraying of sarin nerve gas on Tokyo subways by Aum Shinrikyo in 1995 and the occupation of the Japanese Embassy in Lima, Peru, by terrorists in 1996. Following reports presented in May 1997 and December 1997, respectively, by the “Administrative Reform Council” (*gyōsei kaikaku kaigi*), the Cabinet Act was revised in April 1998 to establish the “Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary for Crisis Management” (DCCS-CM, *naikaku kiki kanri kan*) within the Cabinet Secretariat.

The establishment of the DCCS-CM was designed to have an official equivalent to a Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, apart from Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretaries who are very busy with other matters, make first judgments on necessary measures to be taken by the Cabinet in response to emergency situations and promptly make overall coordination with relevant government ministries and agencies about initial actions. The term “crisis management” here is defined as “responses to emergency situations that caused or may cause material damage to the lives, bodies or property of the people as well as the prevention of occurrence of such situations.” The “crises” subject to such crisis management are also regarded as the broader concept than grave emergency situations in that they include natural disasters. On the other hand, “matters related to the defense of the nation” were excluded from matters for crisis management to be supervised by the DCCS-CM, because matters related to the defense of the nation should be decided under comprehensive and political judgments at a higher level.

In association with the establishment of the DCCS-CM, the Cabinet Secretariat Organization Order was revised and the Cabinet Security Affairs Office was reorganized into the Cabinet Office for National Security Affairs and Crisis Management (*naikaku anzen hoshō/kiki kanri shitsu*) by newly adding “responses to emergency situations that caused or may cause material damage to the lives, bodies or property of the people” and “matters concerning the administrative work of the DCCS-CM” as matters under its control while taking over the functions of the predecessor.

The recommendations by the Administrative Reform Council led to the reorganization of central government ministries and agencies in January 2001. The Headquarters of the Administrative Reform of the Central Government (*chūō shōchō tō kaikaku suishin honbu*) stated in part that the Cabinet Secretariat should have a “structure that makes the pliant and flexible deployment of personnel possible.” In line with the basic policy, the Cabinet Act and the Cabinet Secretariat Organization

Order were revised to abolish the Cabinet Office for National Security Affairs and Crisis Management, with the Office's functions taken over by the newly established "Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary for National Security and Crisis Management" (*anzen hoshō/kiki kanri tantō naikaku kanbō fuku chōkan ho*) and its staff group.

Administrative reform by the Hashimoto Cabinet resulted in the strengthening of the crisis management function of the Cabinet and brought more plianthood and flexibility into the management of the Cabinet's staff and organization. But these measures were designed to "more flexibly manage the existing SCJ by bolstering the Cabinet Secretariat as a whole" ("Gyōsei Kaikaku Kaigi Dai 37 Kai Giji Gaiyō" [minutes of the 37th meeting of the administrative reform council], November 17, 1997). The strengthening of the function of the SCJ, which was not addressed in the administrative reform by the Hashimoto Cabinet, was sought only after the reorganization of the central government's ministries and agencies. Under the revision of the Act for the Establishment of the SCJ in June 2003, the basic policy concerning responses to armed attack situations, etc., was added to matters of discussion, and the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, and Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism were added as members of the SCJ (State Minister for Economic and Fiscal Policy was excluded). The consideration by the six Cabinet Ministers (Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of LIT, Minister of Defense, Chief Cabinet Secretary and Commissioner of the NPSC) was introduced for intensive consideration of the analysis and assessment of emergency situations, and the "Expert Committee on Responses to Emergency Situations" (*jitai taisho senmon iinkai*) was established to contribute to the consideration of responses to emergency situations by the SCJ. In the legal revision in December 2006, important matters concerning responses to emergency situations in areas surrounding Japan deemed necessary by the Prime Minister as well as important matters concerning international peace cooperation activities by the SDF deemed necessary by the Prime Minister were further added to matters of consideration by the SCJ. In accordance with these developments, the operations and personnel of staff group for the Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary for National Security and Crisis Management also increased.

Conclusion

As seen above, what we can learn from the historical transition of the Cabinet's security function is that the purpose of the establishment of the Ministerial-level collegial body for careful consideration to secure civilian control has not changed since the establishment of the NDC. The NDC was not established by necessity for developing strategies or responding to emergency situations, and most subsequent strings of various reforms were directed toward maintaining the function of careful consideration for securing civilian control, strengthening this function and/or adding new functions. The same can be said of the idea of the Japanese version of NSC under the Abe Cabinet. Under a bill for the Establishment of the National Security Council in 2007 (scrapped later), the Japanese version of NSC was devised as an organization with a dual structure consisting of the meeting of four Cabinet Ministers (Prime Minister, Chief Cabinet Secretary, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense) to consider a wide range of matters concerning national security and the meeting of nine Cabinet Ministers (members of the SCJ) that inherits the function of the SCJ, or the function of careful consideration for securing civilian control. Furthermore, the relationships among the collegial bodies and staff organizations did not necessarily lay emphasis on the hierarchical harmonization of matters under control or conjunction of functions, given the incremental addition and strengthening of their respective functions.

In discussions of the Japanese version of NSC, we should acknowledge before going into details of its institutional design that the Cabinet security organization in Japan is different in nature from organizations usually referred to as the NSC.

(Completed on November 5, 2012)

The views expressed in the above article are of the author's own, not necessarily those of the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), or of the Ministry of Defense, Japan.
All rights reserved.
Contact information is available at the Planning & Management Division, Planning & Administration Department, NIDS.
(URL) <http://www.nids.go.jp>