



The Japan-Australia-India-U.S. multilateral exercise Malabar 2020 (MSDF official website)

## Chapter 7

# Japan

### Toward a Post-COVID-19 Security Posture

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## Summary

On January 29, after the emerging pandemic situation in China had become apparent, the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) began the dispatch of personnel to support the quarantine of Japanese nationals repatriated on charter flights from China. Since then, various support operations under the name of disaster relief have been carried out in each prefecture, employing the SDF's own unique infrastructure for these operations. The SDF personnel involved in such support operations have not experienced secondary infections, and accordingly, the preventive measures they have taken have received strong praise. Based on lessons in preventing secondary infection learned through their operations, the SDF is now providing support for education and training, primarily relaying this knowledge to local governments. Going forward, as long as the prevention of the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) remains a critical challenge, the MOD/SDF are expected to make further contributions utilizing their unique capabilities.

The year 2020 marked the 60th anniversary of the revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, which forms the cornerstone of Japan's security. Although there are no changes in the actual clauses of the revised treaty, bilateral defense cooperation has been substantially deepened through the establishment of the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation and successive revisions. Against this backdrop, the administration of newly inaugurated Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide is expected to continue emphasizing the role of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. At the same time, in order to further enhance response and deterrence under the Alliance, bilateral defense cooperation with the United States could expand into multi-layered security cooperation—including cooperation with other U.S. allies. In particular, trilateral Japan-U.S.-Australia cooperation, Japan-U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) cooperation, and Japan-U.S.-India cooperation have been prominently promoted since the 2000s. The expanding bilateral and trilateral security cooperation could be further developed into quadrilateral cooperation among Japan, the United States, Australia, and India.

In building a Multi-Domain Defense Force as outlined in the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) issued in December 2018, various measures are being implemented to respond to the increasingly severe security environment under the concept of cross-domain operations, leveraging the new domains of space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum as force multipliers. In these new domains, the SDF is enhancing its capacity, particularly by forming new units. While cross-domain operations differ considerably from traditional ways of warfare, farsighted policies would be indispensable to the development of operational capabilities that is sustainable.

## 1. Roles of the MOD/SDF in COVID-19 Countermeasures

### (1) Support by the SDF

National defense authorities of various countries play a variety of roles in responding to COVID-19 infections. The reasons for this have been nationwide command and control systems and their ability to dispatch highly trained human resources in a short period of time.<sup>1</sup> So far, the defense authorities' main roles have been centered on providing transport support, medical staff, and infrastructure, to which Japan is no exception.

In response to the spread of COVID-19 infections in China, the MOD/SDF began by dispatching personnel to provide quarantine support for Japanese nationals returning to Japan by chartered aircraft on January 29, 2020. This was followed by disaster relief operations to tackle the spread of COVID-19 from January 31, including such missions as transporting Japanese nationals and others returning to Japan and providing support for their daily lives. Likewise, in response to the outbreak of infections aboard the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship docked at Yokohama Port, the MOD/SDF provided medical care, transport, and emergency support to the passengers and crew on board.

Furthermore, from March 28, the SDF implemented the following measures to strengthen border enforcement measures against COVID-19: (i) quarantine support at airports by SDF medical officers and others; (ii) transport support from airports to accommodation facilities for people returning to or entering Japan who stayed at accommodation facilities until the results of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests were obtained; and (iii) support for people returning to and entering Japan who stayed at accommodation facilities.<sup>2</sup> When the number of infection cases due to community spread in Japan increased after April, the SDF conducted disaster relief operations and other missions in response to requests from prefectural governors and others. This support can mainly be divided into the following categories: (i) medical support; (ii) life support assistance to patients with mild or no symptoms at accommodation facilities; (iii) transport

support; and (iv) support for training and education.

First, medical support includes cooperation in collecting samples necessary for PCR tests and dispatching nurses and other personnel to local medical institutions. In terms of sample collection, in April 2020, about 70 medical staff members including



SDF personnel providing training and education to local government officials (Joint Staff Office/10th Division, GSDF)

SDF Sendai Hospital provided support for PCR sample collection in Sendai City. SDF medical staff also provided sample collection support to the crew members of a cruise ship stopping in Nagasaki Prefecture.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the SDF dispatched nurses in support of medical institutions in Okinawa Prefecture from August 18 to 31 due to the community spread of infections in the prefecture and the resulting pressure on the medical system. This medical support was carried out in response to a request from the Okinawa Prefectural Government. The SDF dispatched a total of 31 staff members, including 15 nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses from the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) Western Army, the 15th Brigade, and the SDF Naha Hospital, as well as 16 logistical support personnel.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the SDF also provided support with their own unique equipment, such as erecting tents to enable open-air PCR tests and providing diagnoses with CT diagnosis vehicles.

In regard to life support assistance to patients with mild or no symptoms at accommodation facilities, the main focus has been providing meals and other support to such patients staying in private facilities rented by local governments. Specifically, about 60 members of the 1st Division provided support to a total of about 760 people in eight prefectures, including emergency support for patients staying at private hotels who tested positive without severe symptoms.<sup>5</sup>

As for transport support, in addition to transporting patients from hospitals to

private accommodation facilities, the SDF has mainly provided air transportation to patients infected on remote islands scattered across Japan. A total of about 80 patients have been transported by air from remote islands in five prefectures. On April 3, patients were transported from Iki City to the Omura Air Base of the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) in response to a disaster relief request from Nagasaki Prefecture, marking the beginning of the SDF's air transport support during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, support for training and education has focused on infection prevention mainly for local government staff. Since the SDF's infection control and preventive measures have been acknowledged as highly effective, they are sharing their knowledge with local governments and other organizations. For example, based on the experience they gained by responding to the mass outbreak of infections aboard *Diamond Princess*, strengthening border enforcement measures, and working to prevent community spread of infections, they have made knowledge of infection prevention measures such as facility zoning and the formulation of waste disposal standards available on the MOD website and provided support for training and education on infection control measures to local government staff and others. As early as April 8, five members of the GSDF Middle Army Headquarters provided training on infection prevention and other matters to about 20 staff members of the Osaka Detention House. On April 13, the same training was provided to about 70 Osaka Prefectural Government staff and employees of private accommodation facilities. Such support activities have been conducted in 35 prefectures, through which about 2,300 personnel in total received the training (as of January 22, 2021).

One of the reasons why the SDF's infection preventive measures have been highly praised is that there have been no secondary infections among SDF personnel who have been involved in disaster relief operations related to COVID-19, including the approximately 2,700 personnel who participated in the operation for *Diamond Princess* (as of May 31, 2020).<sup>7</sup> This is a result of the SDF's regular exercises and training on countermeasures against biological weapons and infectious diseases, and it shows their high level of protection capabilities.

## (2) Role of the SDF in Infection Control Measures

Infection control measures have much in common with countermeasures against biological weapons, and the MOD/SDF have built up specialized response capabilities that include dealing with unknown viruses. There have been strong concerns in the international community about the possibility that terrorists and countries of proliferation concern may acquire weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons, and use them for terrorism. Biological weapons, especially, are called the "poor man's atomic bomb," and it has been pointed out that the probability and danger of their use exceeds that of nuclear weapons and chemical weapons.<sup>8</sup> For example, Aum Shinrikyo, which conducted the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system in March 1995, developed and actually used biological weapons. From September to October 2001 in the United States, terrorist attacks occurred in which powdered anthrax spores were put into letters addressed to television stations, news media, and senators. All of these incidents demonstrate that biological weapons pose a present threat to Japan.

Furthermore, in addition to terrorist attacks that intentionally cause infectious disease outbreaks, naturally occurring pandemics have become a serious threat, notable examples of which include the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in southern China in 2002 and the novel influenza (H1N1) pandemic in 2009. It was necessary for the government to adopt a unified response to these infectious disease outbreaks.

One of the capabilities that the MOD/SDF have been developing in response to these threats is the NBC Countermeasure Medical Unit, which was established within the GSDF in March 2008. This unit is capable of providing temporary quarantine and emergency treatment for infected people in the event of a biological weapon attack, as well as identifying the weapon used. The unit is composed mainly of medical doctors, nurses, and medics, and is accordingly equipped with the Mobile Laboratory Unit and the Negative Pressure Air Dome Unit. When the MOD provided quarantine support for the novel influenza (H1N1) at Haneda Airport and Narita Airport from April to June 2009, the NBC Countermeasure



Medical Unit was also dispatched to take part in this mission.

The SDF has also been working to enhance its medical functions so as to execute a variety of missions in various situations in Japan and abroad. For example, two SDF medical facilities, the SDF Central Hospital and the National Defense Medical College Hospital, are designated medical institutions for Category 1 infectious diseases and are always ready to receive patients with infectious diseases.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the SDF Central Hospital has conducted exercises to admit patients with Category 1 infectious disease in order to strengthen coordination with related institutions. In July 2019, as part of the training on admitting infectious disease patients, the SDF Central Hospital conducted its first joint exercise with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and other relevant institutions. The experience gained from these exercises was utilized in their response to the spread of COVID-19.<sup>10</sup> These capabilities therefore would be leveraged in the event of coronavirus resurgence, or in response to future pandemics caused by novel infectious diseases.

Moreover, the MOD has been utilizing the channels established through the existing defense exchanges and security dialogues to share information with its counterparts on preventing the spread of COVID-19. For example, former defense minister Kono Taro and Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo have been holding telephone talks and teleconference meetings during the COVID-19 crisis with their counterparts from 24 countries and organizations and on 38 occasions in total between April and December 2020. The MOD places importance on communicating with other countries precisely because of the pandemic situation. The MOD also takes the position that even if the spread of COVID-19 comes to an end, further cooperation with other states that share values and interests is necessary in order to maintain the free and open international order that has supported the world's peace and prosperity.<sup>11</sup> In this respect, Japan is distinguishing itself from China, which aims to shape its favorable international and regional order through its own contributions for COVID-19 countermeasures.

National defense authorities of various countries are employing their assets to respond to COVID-19, but there are concerns that doing so will reduce their

capabilities and readiness for national defense, which is their primary mission.<sup>12</sup> In addition, if the response to the spread of COVID-19 is further prolonged and, consequently, infections spread to SDF personnel on a large scale, the SDF's readiness would be affected. Therefore, the SDF must take the utmost care to ensure that its future activities do not seriously affect its core missions, particularly national defense. However, the MOD/SDF possess unique capabilities that cannot be easily replaced, and thus will be expected to contribute as long as preventing the spread of COVID-19 remains a critical issue.

## 2. The Japan-U.S. Security Treaty Marks the 60th Anniversary of Its Signing

### (1) An Alliance Based on Shared Values

The Japan-U.S. Security Treaty (the former Security Treaty) was concluded on September 8, 1951 at the same time as the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and the Alliance has been the cornerstone of Japan's security since the end of World War II and throughout the Cold War. The importance of the treaty has not changed in the 30 years since the end of the Cold War. The National Security Strategy issued in 2013 positions the Japan-U.S. Alliance as the "cornerstone of Japan's security." It points out, "For more than 60 years, the Japan-U.S. Alliance, with the Japan-U.S. security arrangements at its core, has played an indispensable role for peace and security in Japan as well as peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region." It also states, "In recent years, the Alliance has also played a more critical role for peace, stability, and prosperity in the international community."

Echoing the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2019 and Beyond (hereinafter, "2018 NDPG") also recognizes that, "As inter-state competitions prominently emerge, it has become all the more important for Japan's national security to further strengthen relationship with the United States, with whom Japan shares universal values and strategic interests." Reflecting this recognition, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo stated on January 19,

2020, “Today, more than ever, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is a pillar that is indestructible, a pillar immovable, safeguarding peace in Asia, the Indo-Pacific, and in the world, while assuring prosperity therein.” He also went on to call the Japan-U.S. Alliance “an Alliance of Hope.”<sup>13</sup>

However, the path by which the Japan-U.S. Alliance evolved into an “Alliance of Hope” was not straightforward. Firstly, the former Japan-U.S. Security Treaty signed in 1951 was created with the main purpose of allowing the continuous stationing of U.S. troops in Japan in order to maintain security for Japan, which had no military. However, at this time, the former Japan-U.S. Security Treaty did not clarify the obligation of the United States to defend Japan, which led some to believe the nature of the treaty was to ensure the United States’ commitment to defend Japan in exchange for the United States having continued access to bases in Japan.<sup>14</sup>

Nine years later, the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty (the new Security Treaty), which was revised on January 19, 1960, aimed to rectify this unilateral nature of the Alliance. Firstly, Article V of the new Security Treaty clearly stated the defense obligations of the United States to Japan. Secondly, the Kishi-Herter Exchange of Notes was signed, which made clear that the use of facilities and zones by the United States as stipulated in Article VI would be subject to prior consultation with Japan by the United States. As a result, U.S. military bases in Japan came to be operated under close coordination between the two countries, which institutionally strengthened bilateral security cooperation.<sup>15</sup>

Since 1960, there has been no change in the text of the new Security Treaty itself. However, defense cooperation based on the Japan-U.S. Alliance has been dramatically strengthened. In particular, the bilateral cooperation deepened with the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation agreed in 1978 and has been further developed in the process of two major revisions of the Guidelines.

The first set of Guidelines promoted Japan-U.S. defense cooperation concerning the defense of Japan as codified in Article V of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. These Guidelines led to regularly held meetings between top Japanese and U.S. defense officials, and joint Japan-U.S. exercises became more frequent in the 1980s.

The Guidelines were next revised in 1997 after the end of the Cold War. While the 1978 Guidelines promoted cooperation in the case of contingencies in Japan, there had been comparatively less progress in considering responses and cooperation for contingencies other than the defense of Japan. However, with the escalation of the North Korean nuclear and missile issues from 1993 to 1994, as well as the Taiwan Strait crisis in 1996 caused by China’s military exercises aimed at putting pressure on Taiwan’s presidential election, there was growing recognition of the need to expand responses and cooperation in so-called “situations in areas surrounding Japan.” This led to a review of the Guidelines in 1997.

The Guidelines were revised again in 2015 primarily due to the changes in the international environment since the 1997 revision. In a remark on January 16, 2020 at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Defense Minister Kono pointed out that the need to respond to changes in the security environment amid increasing uncertainty in the international environment led to a major review of the Guidelines. Kono listed such changes as the ballistic missile launch by North Korea in 1998, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, the use of force in Afghanistan and the Iraq War, and the incident involving the collision of a Chinese fishing boat with Japan Coast Guard patrol vessels in Japan’s territorial waters near the Senkaku Islands in September 2010.<sup>16</sup>

The new Guidelines formulated in 2015 strengthen deterrence and response capabilities in all phases from peacetime to contingencies, and include cooperation for regional and global peace and security. The Guidelines also include cooperation in the new strategic domains of space and cyberspace and play a role in promoting closer operational cooperation and policy coordination between the Japanese and U.S. defense authorities. Furthermore, one of the major characteristics of the new Guidelines is the establishment of the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) to seamlessly and effectively address all situations, including those that affect Japan’s peace and security. The ACM can be used during peacetime, for large-scale disasters in Japan, and for regional and global cooperation. It also enables whole-of-government coordination including all relevant U.S. and Japanese agencies.<sup>17</sup> The establishment of the ACM has enabled Japan and the



Prime Minister Suga receives a courtesy call from U.S. secretary of state Pompeo on October 6, 2020 (Prime Minister's Office of Japan official website)

United States to cooperate more closely together in response to the Kumamoto earthquake in 2016 as well as North Korea's ballistic missile launches and nuclear tests in 2016 and 2017.

The Legislation for Peace and Security enacted in September 2015 also facilitated alliance cooperation.

For example, as stipulated by Article 95-2 of the Self-Defense Forces Law, the SDF is now able to protect naval vessels, aircraft, and other weapons and equipment of the units of the U.S. Forces actually engaged in activities that contribute to the defense of Japan in cooperation with the SDF. The scope of the supplies and services that the SDF can provide to U.S. Forces was also expanded through the legislation. At the same time, the Japan-U.S. Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) was revised in April 2017, which enabled smooth provision of supplies and services during not only Situations that Will Have an Important Influence for Japan and Survival-Threatening Situations, but also in multilateral exercises in which both the SDF and the U.S. Forces participate. Together with making ammunition an eligible supply for provision, the revised ACSA has further increased the effectiveness of Japan-U.S. security cooperation.

Reflecting this deepening of alliance cooperation, on January 15, 2020, Defense Minister Kono met with Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and welcomed that the Japan-U.S. Alliance had become even stronger. The ministers affirmed that Japan and the United States would continue to closely work together to reinforce the Alliance's deterrence and response capability.<sup>18</sup> In addition, on January 17, 2020, the United States and Japan made a joint statement on the 60th anniversary of the signing of the new Security Treaty, stating that the Japan-U.S. Alliance has

“played and will continue to play an integral role in ensuring the peace and security of our two countries, while realizing our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific including through regional security cooperation.”<sup>19</sup>

However, the Japan-U.S. Alliance is not without pressing issues. Securing the stable U.S. military presence is essential for maintaining the Alliance. However, the United States is asking its allies to bear more of the burden for defense, requesting not only their increased defense spending, but also a higher share of the cost of stationing the U.S. Forces. Nevertheless, in light of Japan's tight fiscal situation, it will be indispensable for both Japan and the United States to share the burden in an acceptable manner while enhancing the deterrence and response capabilities of the Alliance.

The Japan-U.S. Alliance is expected to remain the cornerstone of Japan's security even after Japan inaugurated a new cabinet on September 16, 2020, and the United States will make a fresh start under the new administration led by President Joseph Biden. Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide stated at his inaugural press conference on September 16 that he intends to “deploy policies that place a well-functioning Japan-US Alliance as their linchpin”<sup>20</sup> in the diplomacy and security fields. In addition, during a telephone talk with President-elect Biden on November 12, Prime Minister Suga stated, “[T]he Japan-U.S. Alliance is indispensable for the peace and prosperity of both the region surrounding Japan, where the security environment is becoming increasingly severe, as well as the international community, and that we must [work] together to further strengthen the Alliance.” He also expressed his “wish for Japan and the U.S. to work together to realize a ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific.’”<sup>21</sup> His successive statements indicate that the previous administration's emphasis on the Japan-U.S. Alliance will be inherited by the new administration.

## (2) Deepening Security Cooperation Centered on the Japan-U.S. Alliance

The United States' alliance network, including the Japan-U.S. Alliance, has developed since the Cold War period in a “hub-and-spoke” form resembling a wheel extending radially centered on the United States. This form of network

was effective when individual allies only needed to respond to their respective threats jointly with the United States and did not require much cooperation among the allies. However, with the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the clear threat of the Soviet Union, the United States and other countries came to face diverging threats. For example, in the 1990s, the nuclear and missile issues of North Korea and the crisis over the Taiwan Strait intensified, while at the beginning of the 21st century, the need to respond to non-traditional threats such as international terrorist groups, guerrillas, and insurgents also arose. In order to respond to this diversification of threats, since the early 2000s, conscious attempts have been made to strengthen a web of security cooperation by extending cooperation among U.S. allies in addition to bilateral cooperation with the United States.<sup>22</sup>

Reflecting this security trend, Japan's National Security Strategy formulated in 2013 calls for strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance as well as building trust and developing cooperative relations with partners in and outside the Asia-Pacific region in order to improve the security environment surrounding Japan. The 2018 NDPG also states, "Japan will position the Japan-U.S. Alliance as its cornerstone and will work closely with the countries that share universal values and security interests," and articulates enhanced cooperation with other U.S. allies and partners. Moreover, in the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed to "promote and improve trilateral and multilateral security and defense cooperation" as part of "cooperation for regional and global peace and security."<sup>23</sup> In this line of effort, particular importance has been placed respectively on trilateral cooperation with Australia and the ROK, which are U.S. allies, and India, which is gaining influence as a regional power.

Firstly, Australia is a "Special Strategic Partner" for Japan in the Indo-Pacific region, not only because it is a fellow U.S. ally, but also because it shares fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law, as well as strategic interests for security. Mutual cooperation between Australia and Japan has been strengthened with a focus on disaster relief and humanitarian assistance operations, as well as cooperation on capacity building

support. The scope of the Japan-Australia ACSA in light of increased joint operations with the Australian Defence Force is a result of the expanding bilateral defense cooperation and exchanges. In particular, at the Japan-Australia Defense Ministers' meeting on October 19, 2020, the ministers instructed their officials to commence necessary coordination to create a framework to protect Australian Defence Force assets by the SDF personnel under Article 95-2 of the Self-Defense Forces Law. In addition, at the Japan-Australia Summit Meeting on November 17, Prime Minister Suga and Prime Minister Morrison reached an agreement in principle on the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement, laying the foundation for further strengthening of strategic cooperation between the two countries.

In parallel with the deepening bilateral ties, trilateral security cooperation between Japan, the United States, and Australia has been strengthened rapidly since the inaugural director general-level meeting of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) in the early 2000s. The TSD was elevated in March 2006 when the first ministerial-level meeting was held by the foreign ministers of the three countries. As for consultations among their defense authorities, a director general-level meeting of the Japan-U.S.-Australia Security and Defense Cooperation Forum was held in April 2007 in Tokyo, and a Japan-U.S.-Australia Defense Ministers' meeting was held in Singapore in June 2007. These initiatives, it is argued, were aimed at having Japan and Australia jointly support the United States' global and regional role to maintain and strengthen the U.S. presence in the region based on the "hub-and-spoke" system.<sup>24</sup>

As high-level discussions between Japan, the United States, and Australia deepened, defense cooperation and exchanges also progressed. As a major trilateral military exchange, in November 2019, the MSDF hosted a Japan-U.S.-Australia trilateral exercise (a special mine warfare exercise) with U.S. and Australian minesweepers in the Hyuga-nada Sea. The Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) conducted a trilateral humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) exercise known as Christmas Drop in the South Pacific including the Federated States of Micronesia, and cohosted a trilateral field and HA/DR exercise, Cope

North, from February to March 2020.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the GSDF also conducted a trilateral exercise known as Southern Jackaroo in Australia together with the U.S. and Australian forces from May to June 2019.<sup>26</sup> These exercises have contributed to improved mutual understanding and interoperability among the three countries. At the same time, the fields of cooperation are expanding beyond peacekeeping operations and non-traditional security areas to include traditional security areas such as anti-submarine warfare and amphibious assault operations.<sup>27</sup>

The ROK is also an ally of the United States, which makes Japan-ROK bilateral cooperation as well as Japan-U.S.-ROK trilateral cooperation all the more important in dealing with North Korea's nuclear and missile issues. However, Japan-ROK relations have deteriorated since the October 2018 judgment by the ROK Supreme Court ordering Japanese companies to pay compensation to the "former civilian workers from the Korean Peninsula." Reflecting the tense relationship, affinity for the ROK fell in public opinion in Japan, and the Cabinet Office's public opinion survey conducted in October 2019 found that the percentage of respondents who "feel affinity" toward the ROK decreased (39.4% to 26.7%) and the percentage of those who "do not feel affinity" increased (58.0% to 71.5%) compared to the same period in 2018.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the relationship between the Japan and ROK defense authorities is also very strained namely due to the ROK's response to the flag of the MSDF at the international fleet review hosted by the ROK in October 2018 and the incident of an ROK naval vessel directing its fire-control radar at an MSDF patrol aircraft in December 2018.

In terms of Japan-U.S.-ROK trilateral cooperation, Japan's National Security Strategy states that "trilateral cooperation among Japan, the U.S. and the ROK is a key framework in realizing peace and stability in East Asia," and that it will be strengthened, including cooperation on the North Korean nuclear and missile issues. At the working level, the three countries have held director general-level and director-level talks within the framework of the Defense Trilateral Talks (DTT) as well as Trilateral Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings. For high-level consultations as well, Japan-U.S.-ROK Defense Ministerial Meetings have been regularly held using the opportunities of the Asia Security Summit (Shangri-La Dialogue) and

the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). Although the 2020 Shangri-La Dialogue was cancelled, it is noteworthy that the DTT plenary meeting of director-generals was held in May 2020 via videoconference to discuss regional security issues, including the situation in North Korea, despite the strained Japan-ROK bilateral relations.<sup>29</sup> These trilateral dialogues play an important role in information sharing, especially on North Korea's nuclear and missile issues, and contribute to strengthening deterrence by publicly demonstrating trilateral cooperation.

As for trilateral defense cooperation, the three countries have sustained efforts to strengthen operational cooperation despite some constraints in Japan-ROK and U.S.-ROK relations. For example, the Pacific Dragon exercise to detect and track ballistic missiles in the vicinity of Hawaii was held for the first time in June 2016 with participation by Aegis-equipped destroyers from Japan, the United States, and the ROK. The three countries also conducted ballistic missile information-sharing exercises in the waters surrounding Japan in November 2016, January 2017, March 2017, October 2017, and December 2017, through which trilateral information sharing has been facilitated.<sup>30</sup> The sensors and interceptors of missile defense systems require extremely high performance, and the resulting cost is generally high. It is thus difficult for a single country to have a large number of these sophisticated systems. Accordingly, it would be significantly more effective to enhance synergy of the assets held by the three countries through strengthening trilateral cooperation in missile defense.

Both information sharing on North Korea and cooperation in missile defense among the three countries necessitate a framework ensuring the smooth sharing of classified information. In December 2014, Japan, the United States, and the ROK concluded the Trilateral Information Sharing Arrangement, which enables the sharing of classified information between Japan and the ROK via the United States on the nuclear and missile threats posed by North Korea. However, for timelier and smoother information sharing among the three countries, it is also essential to directly share a wide range of classified information between Japan and ROK made possible by stably maintaining the Japan-ROK General Security of Military



Information Agreement (GSOMIA).

Finally, although not an ally of the United States, India is highly important to Japan. India is a major power with the world's second largest population and a strong economy, and centrally located along the sea lanes connecting East Asia with the Middle East and Africa. The two countries share fundamental values and have common interests in the peace, stability, and prosperity of Asia and the world. Consequently, bilateral cooperation has been promoted in the fields of training, exercises, defense equipment and technology from the perspective of strengthening strategic cooperation with India. In particular, the ACSA signed between the two countries on September 9, 2020 enables smooth provision of supplies such as food, water, fuel, and clothing, as well as services such as transportation, use of facilities, repairs, and maintenance when both the SDF and Indian Armed Forces participate in multilateral exercises and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

Trilateral meetings between Japan, the United States, and India have been held at the director-general level since 2011. Subsequently, the level of consultations has increased with the first foreign ministers' meeting held in New York in July 2015 and the first Japan-U.S.-India Summit Meeting held in November 2018. In addition, at the Japan-U.S.-India Summit Meeting held on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Osaka in June 2019, the leaders shared recognition of the increasingly complex security environment and agreed to promote cooperation in various fields, including maritime security, space, and cyberspace.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, in the field of service-to-service exchanges, trilateral exercises among the MSDF and U.S. and Indian navies have been conducted as the centerpiece to enhance trilateral cooperation. In 2017, the Japan-U.S.-India trilateral naval exercise Malabar was conducted to improve the tactical skills of the MSDF and strengthen cooperation with the U.S. and Indian navies. The Malabar 2019 exercise was hosted in the waters around Japan, which demonstrates deepening trilateral cooperation.<sup>32</sup>

What is important in these initiatives to expand the web of multi-layered networks centered on U.S. allies and partners is the ongoing effort to further develop the Japan-U.S.-Australia and Japan-U.S.-India trilateral frameworks into

quadrilateral cooperation. On the diplomatic front, the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. Ministerial was held in New York on September 26, 2019. In addition, the second Japan-Australia-India-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on October 6, 2020, at which it was agreed that the Foreign Ministers' Meeting would be held regularly. These frameworks are attracting attention as the four countries seemingly move to hedge against an uncertain future, in light of the intensifying Sino-U.S. rivalry as well as China's unilateral and coercive actions in the South China Sea and beyond.

The Japan-Australia-India-U.S. cooperation at present constitutes consultation between diplomatic authorities. However, it may develop into consultation and cooperation between defense authorities in the future. In a press conference held after the Japan-U.S. Defense Ministers' Telephone Talk, Defense Minister Kishi said that quadrilateral cooperation among the defense authorities of Japan, the United States, Australia, and India is important in promoting a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," and that it is also useful to have a forum for exchanging views on defense.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the four countries are moving forward with more substantial defense cooperation. For example, the MSDF and the navies of Australia, India, and the United States conducted the quadrilateral exercise Malabar 2020 in the Bay of Bengal from November 3 and in the northern Arabian Sea from November 17. Defense Minister Kishi stated that the MOD will promote further cooperation among the defense authorities of the four countries, including the Malabar exercise.<sup>34</sup>

It is true that these four states have not always been completely aligned in terms of their threat perceptions and policies toward China. They also take different stances on the United States-led international order, which led some to conclude that high-level cooperation is still premature.<sup>35</sup> However, if China continues to take actions that are of concern to the international community, including unilateral changes to the status quo, it is highly likely that cooperation among the defense authorities of the four countries will be facilitated by the China factor.

### 3. Challenges for Realizing a Multi-Domain Defense Force

#### (1) Efforts to Improve “Cross-Domain Operations” Capabilities

The 2018 NDPG released in December 2018 recognizes that the security environment faced by Japan is becoming increasingly severe. One of the main rationales behind this statement is the dire situation that China’s military power is further increasing. At a web conference held by the CSIS on September 9, 2020, Defense Minister Kono pointed out that China’s defense spending is four times that of Japan, that it is increasing its fighter jets and submarines every year, and that there is a big gap in capabilities between Japan and China.<sup>36</sup>

The 2018 NDPG also points out that China is broadly and rapidly strengthening its military capabilities in terms of both quality and quantity, centered on nuclear and missile capabilities and naval and air forces. In particular, the NDPG also goes on to state that China is aiming for predominance in the new domains by rapidly developing its capabilities in the cyberspace and electromagnetic spectrum domains, which enable disruption of the chain of command, and strengthening its capabilities in the space domain, such as the development and testing of anti-satellite weapons. In order to respond to these changes in the security environment

surrounding Japan, including the qualitative and quantitative enhancement of China’s military power, it will become even more important for Japan to secure superiority in the new domains.

The SDF must first improve the quality and quantity of its capabilities in individual domains to cope with military power that excels in terms of both quality and quantity. However,



Defense Minister Kono hands over the squadron flag at the inauguration of the Space Operations Squadron (Public Relations Office, Air Staff Office)

in light of Japan’s rapidly aging population and dwindling birthrate, as well as its tight fiscal situation, it is increasingly difficult for the SDF to keep up with the rapid increase in military power of neighboring countries simply by augmenting its existing defense capabilities. Therefore, the SDF aims for capabilities that can complement inferior capabilities in individual domains through cross-domain operations that organically fuse capabilities in all domains, including space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum, and leverage them as force multipliers.

In addition, in the space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic spectrum domains, it is likely that potential adversaries will conduct activities to disrupt the SDF’s operations from peacetime, and thus the ability to conduct constant and continuous surveillance and to respond flexibly at all stages from peacetime to contingencies is needed to prevent such disruption.

Against this backdrop, the importance of the space domain for modern warfare is increasing, including the use of satellites for such functions as information gathering, communication, and positioning. At the same time, threats to the stable use of space are also growing. In addition to rapidly increasing space debris, the development of killer satellites that approach satellites to disturb, attack, and capture them is reportedly underway. Therefore, it is necessary for the SDF to develop a Space Situational Awareness (SSA) system to monitor space and accurately assess the situation.

The Space Operations Squadron, which plays the central role in enhancing SSA, was established within the ASDF on May 18, 2020. The squadron was launched at Fuchu Air Base with about 20 members and is planned to conduct operations to ensure the stable use of space, including operation of the SSA system.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, from FY2021, the ASDF will establish a new unit in charge of command and control in the space domain, and plans to form the new Space Operations Group (provisional name) with this unit and the Space Operations Squadron as its subordinate units.<sup>38</sup> Against this backdrop, Prime Minister Abe stated that “[e]volution into the ‘Air and Space Self-Defense Force’ is no longer a pipe dream” at a MOD/SDF Senior Officials’ Meeting on September 17, 2019.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, considering the SDF's increasing reliance on space for information gathering, communications, and positioning in its missions, the SDF is expanding the use of microsatellites and commercial satellites equipped with a variety of sensors in order to enhance its communications and information-gathering capabilities. Also, under consideration are measures to increase the resilience of satellites, as well as the building of capabilities in both space and electromagnetic domains to disrupt the command, control, and communications of opponents.

In the cyberspace domain, the information and communication network forms the foundation of the SDF's operations, and an attack on it would have a serious impact on the SDF's organizational activities. Therefore, the SDF is initiating organizational development and securing and training human resources to drastically increase its cyber defense capabilities.

Firstly, on the organizational development front, the SDF Cyber Defense Command (provisional name) will be established to substantially strengthen cyber defense capabilities.<sup>40</sup> Thus far, the SDF has formed the Cyber Defense Group under the SDF Command, Control, Communication and Computers Systems Command, a joint unit of GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF, in FY2013, and has been monitoring and protecting the Defense Information Infrastructure, a common network of the MOD/SDF. The Cyber Defense Group is to be further expanded by about 70 personnel to reach approximately 290 personnel in FY2020.<sup>41</sup> At present, the GSDF System Protection Unit, the MSDF Communication Security Group, and the ASDF Computer Security Evaluation Squadron have been monitoring and protecting information systems in their respective forces. Instead, the SDF Cyber Defense Command (provisional name) will be formed by abolishing the SDF Command, Control, Communication and Computers Systems Command and transferring personnel from the Cyber Defense Group and cyber-related units of the GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF. The newly formed unit aims to centralize cyber defense functions in order for the SDF to perform its missions more effectively and efficiently.

Furthermore, in terms of securing and developing human resources, the MOD is expanding the common cyber course at the GSDF Signal School and training

cyber warfare command personnel in the United States. The MOD also plans to recruit highly skilled cyber talents and train personnel with advanced knowledge and expertise on cybersecurity by sending them to external educational institutions from FY2021.<sup>42</sup>

Lastly, the electromagnetic spectrum domain has been utilized thus far for command, control and communications as well as warning and surveillance, but its scope of use and applications are expanding. In the new way of warfare, it is expected that both sides try to maintain the electromagnetic spectrum's use and effectiveness on one's own side and disrupt the adversary's use, which necessitates use of frequencies previously thought unsuitable for military use.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, it has become urgent for the SDF to acquire and strengthen its capability to secure superiority in the electromagnetic spectrum domain.

On the organizational front, the GSDF currently deploys the 1st Electronic Warfare Unit in Hokkaido to constantly gather and analyze information on the electromagnetic spectrum. The Medium Term Defense Program (FY2019–FY2023) lays out a plan to establish new electronic warfare units under the Ground Component Command. The plan is to establish a new 80-member electronic warfare unit in Kumamoto Prefecture during FY2020, as well as additional electronic warfare units in six garrisons and camps in Japan in FY2021.<sup>44</sup>

As for capabilities, in addition to the development of stand-off electronic warfare aircraft and the acquisition of a network electronic warfare system, the MOD is conducting research to improve the capabilities of naval vessels' radio detection and jamming capabilities. In the electromagnetic spectrum domain, high-power microwaves and high-power laser weapons that can instantaneously disable large numbers of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) and missiles at low cost and with a short reaction time are potential game-changing technologies, thus the MOD is emphasizing research and development of such technologies.<sup>45</sup>

## (2) Challenges for the New Way of Warfare

Building capabilities in response to the new way of warfare outlined in the 2018 NDPG will be considered again in planning the next NDPG. Japan's NDPGs

are formulated for a period of about 10 years, based on which the Medium Term Defense Program determines the amount of equipment and the total amount of defense spending for five years. About 20 years separate the first NDPG formulated in 1976 from the second NDPG approved by the Cabinet in 1995, while the third NDPG was reviewed after nine years. The subsequent NDPGs in 2010, 2013, and 2018 were reviewed after significantly less than 10 years.

The quickening pace of reviews demonstrates that the security environment surrounding Japan is rapidly changing and becoming more severe, requiring constant adjustment of the defense strategy. The changing international situation has increased the momentum for a review of the 2018 NDPG as well. At the same time, it is necessary to be cognizant of long-term challenges in conducting successive reviews, considering that it takes more than 10 years to develop a defense capability from conceptualization to equipment procurement and operationalization. This is exactly the reason why NDPGs are formulated as long-term strategic guidance in the first place.

One of the major long-term challenges in responding to the new way of warfare is to develop innovative technologies, particularly so-called “game changers.” The 2018 NDPG articulates that the MOD will direct focused investments through selection and concentration in important technologies, including cutting-edge technologies that could be game changers, and suggests artificial intelligence (AI) as a potential candidate.

The need for game-changing technologies partly comes from the growing threat of ballistic and cruise missiles, especially those possessed by Japan’s neighbors. In order to respond to the missile threat, Japan has been improving its missile defense system, mainly with the Patriot system and Aegis-equipped destroyers. However, in light of the significant improvements in the capabilities of various types of missiles as well as the current situation in which attackers have an edge in terms of cost-effectiveness, it will become difficult to respond to the growing missile threats in the future.

This concern seems to be behind former prime minister Abe’s statement on September 11, 2020, urging consideration of a “new course for security

policy regarding countering missiles.”<sup>46</sup> On December 18, the Cabinet approved “Procurement of a New Missile Defense System, etc. and Strengthening Stand-off Defense Capability,” stating the policy that the Japanese government “will continue its deliberation on the enhancement of deterrence.” This policy should of course include consideration of means to deter missile launches other than interceptor capabilities. At the same time, it should not exclude the development of technologies that would transform the cost-effectiveness of missile strikes and defense as well. In this regard, such cutting-edge technologies as high-power microwaves and high-power laser weapons have the potential to handle a large number of missiles while reducing the cost of interception, and they are highly likely to be game changers in missile defense if they can be put to practical use. Therefore, the key challenge will be to identify promising technologies and commit to their long-term development.

The next important challenge is the long-term development of human resources. Human resource development was clearly addressed in the 2018 NDPG, which emphasizes the need to reinforce the human resource base. The NDPG also makes it clear that the MOD will devote more efforts to recruit and retain talented personnel and improve their capabilities and morale, based on the principle that “the core element of defense capability is SDF personnel.” For example, efforts have been put forth to expand the applicant pool so as to recruit more college graduates and promote the appointment of women. The 2018 NDPG also lists such measures as extending SDF personnel’s mandatory retirement ages, utilizing retired uniformed officers and SDF Reserve Personnel as well as improving the fulfillment rate of the SDF service members.

Also, cross-domain operations require more than upgrading the existing capabilities of the SDF. As in the case of the newly formed Space Operations Squadron, it is essential to secure and develop novel human resources who lead the way within the SDF to leverage the new domains of space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum, which is addressed in the Medium Term Defense Program (FY2019–FY2023).

The SDF already established the necessary training courses and began to train



experts in the new domains in cooperation with other countries, particularly the United States. With the advancement of military technology and the increasing sophistication of equipment, SDF service members are required to have a high level of expertise and knowledge. The SDF thus needs to send personnel to higher educational institutions in Japan and abroad, promote cooperation in human resource development, and implement personnel management to develop their expertise. At the same time, it is equally important to utilize the skills of retired officers in highly specialized fields together with raising the retirement age of uniformed officers and making use of reenrollment of retired officers.

Since the new domains require new areas of expertise within the SDF, it is also necessary to consider whether training of specialized personnel should be all carried out in-house, or whether outside experts should be more aggressively pursued. The basic human resource development model of the SDF is to enroll personnel at a young age and train them over a long period of time. However, there are quite a few hiring options for experts, including part-time and fixed-term employment systems. Therefore, systematic development of highly capable human resources is indispensable while leveraging top-notch expertise in the civilian sector by utilizing these flexible hiring options.

Furthermore, units in charge of the new domains, namely the Space Operations Squadron, the SDF Cyber Defense Command (provisional name), and the electronic warfare units, are to be expanded in the coming years. In doing so, the SDF will need to transfer some personnel to the new units by reorganizing existing units and organizations with decreasing relevance. However, transferring personnel with different expertise is not always easy and feasible, as it is often difficult for them to acquire the high level of expertise required in the new domains through in-house training alone.

It is also critical for the SDF to retain the highly skilled experts it has trained. Consideration is thus necessary for improving the working conditions of experts in the new domains including their benefits and promotion. How to replace resigned experts is another critical issue to be considered. More flexible personnel management will be required to this end while utilizing the above-mentioned

employment systems including fixed term and part-time employment systems.

The MOD has already started recruiting civilian defense officials in a fixed term employment system and through mid-career recruitment, and it would be beneficial to hire experts in the new domains in the same manner. In 2020, the MOD recruited civilian staff in a fixed term system for positions related to space and maritime policy, AI, and cybersecurity, as well as recruited mid-career cybersecurity experts.<sup>47</sup> The MOD's new recruitment efforts are likely due to its recognition that recruiting outside experts with specialized knowledge and experience in the new domains is an urgent matter. The mid-career recruitment has already been introduced for commissioned and noncommissioned officers specialized in technology and engineering. However, in concert with the expansion of part-time and fixed-term employment systems, it is worthwhile to consider further expanding the areas of expertise applicable to the new recruitment methods while there remain some issues in terms of their career path.

In any event, the new domains that enable cross-domain operations bring new challenges as well as opportunities to the SDF. In particular, there is a clear trend that Japan's declining birthrate will make it increasingly difficult to recruit talented personnel in the future, which is expected to trigger a fundamental review of the development and redistribution of human resources in response to the new domains.

## NOTES

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