

CHAPTER 10

Security Reforms and Development of Japan in 2014

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Introduction

Japan's security environment in 2014 continued to be tossed around by the relative decline in power of the United States (US) and the correlated assertive rise of China. US financial constraints and multiple crises in other parts of the world in recent years have stimulated concern in Japan about the viability of the US rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region. In the face of this increasingly complex security environment, Japan has been compelled to seek new ways to situate itself in the international security arena. The coalition government, formed by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and New Komeito, led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, aggressively instituted a series of security reforms in its first year, including the formation of the National Security Council (NSC), the issuance of the first National Security Strategy (NSS), and the enactment of the Information Protection Law.

One of the most significant developments in Japan's security policy has been the strategic moves toward achieving Prime Minister Abe's ambition to restore Japan's position as a "first-tier" country in the world and a "peace contributor" backed up by economic power. In 2014, such strategic moves included the establishment of the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology (DE&T), a set of revised principles on overseas transfer of defense equipment and technology, as well as the Cabinet decision on the reinterpretation of a constitutional prohibition related to "collective self-defense."

This paper aims to review the development of security policy in Japan in the complex international security and economic environment in 2014. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the international and regional security environment in 2014 and the shift in the regional power balance. Section 3 reviews developments in Japan's security policy, with viewpoints mainly from Japan's role as a "proactive contributor to peace" as proclaimed in the NSS. Based on these

¹ Cabinet Secretariat, "National Security Strategy of Japan," December 17, 2013, p. 4.

reviews, the paper concludes in Section 4 with the challenges and constraints that Japan faces to achieve Abe's ambition for security policy reform.

International and Regional Security Environment in 2014

The year 2014 has been described as the year in crisis², marked by the Ukraine conflict, the emergence of a radical Islamist group, the so-called "Islamic State," and the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. Borders are becoming increasingly fictitious, particularly to people, crime, information, money, weapons, pollution, and pandemics. In such an intricate world environment, the international efforts for containment – led by the US, regardless of its relative decline in power – are all the more acute. The US is consequently facing multiple issues that require appropriate responses under continuous fiscal restrictions.

Turning to the security environment of the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in relation to Japan, one persistent situation is the so-called "gray-zone contingencies" in China-Japan relations, which fall short of armed conflict but are growing in tension and instability. North Korea's continued nuclear and missile development is another prevailing concern for Japan's security environment.

In such an environment, Japan continues to support the US rebalancing policy in the Asia-Pacific region, as the US aspires to enhance its presence in the region and strengthen cooperation with its allies, based on the US Defense Strategic Guidance³. In July 2014, Itsunori Onodera, the then Minister of Defense, at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), stressed that a favorable future for the Asia Pacific does not exist without US commitment⁴. US presence in the region, however, has not been apparent enough owing to its fiscal constraints and engagement in international crises, as described above.

² Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Year in Crisis*, accessed December 22, 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/specialprojects/YearinCrisis2014/?lang=en>

³ US Department of Defense, "Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," January 2012, http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf

⁴ Itsunori Onodera, "Japan's New Security and Defense Policy: An Enduring Partnership in the US-Japan Alliance," Remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 11, 2014, accessed January 6, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/youjin/2014/07/11_speech_e.html

Meanwhile, China emerged as a capable and confident global leader by successfully hosting the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in November 2014, in clear contrast with the politically weak and militarily over-extended US. During the summit, APEC leaders agreed, in the final communique, to endorse the Beijing Roadmap for APEC's Contribution to the Realization of the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP)⁵. This aims to become an alternative mechanism for the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade negotiations, which is being promoted as a major tool for enhancing the economic prosperity and security of the US and Japan. This could also lead to the US rebalancing policy to Asia Pacific region to ensure its continued influence in the region in response to China's growing power.

Furthermore, APEC members also agreed on the adoption of the APEC Strategic Blueprint for Promoting Global Value Chains Development and Cooperation, the APEC Accord on Innovative Development, Economic Reform and Growth, and the APEC Connectivity Blueprint for 2015-2025⁶. Through these initiatives, China set the foundation for advancing its "One Belt, One Road" strategy, the purpose of which is to explore and stabilize development opportunities. To advance this grand strategy, China also announced, a few days prior to the summit, the launch of the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which is seen as a rival to the US and Japan-led Asian Development Bank (ADB)⁷. China will hold the G20 presidency in 2016, the success of which could help to bolster China's global reputation. China's institution-building initiatives in Asia could plausibly shift regional multilateralism from harmless talk to sources of competition and confrontation⁸.

Developments in Japan's Security Establishment in 2014

Japan's Security Policy under the Abe Government

Japan, in light of the declining power of the US and complications in the world security situation, is concerned about the sustainability of the US rebalance to the region. Japan also considers China's assertiveness as a threat to Japanese national interests, a destabilizing force in the regional security environment, and a challenge

⁵ APEC, "2014 Leaders' Declaration," November 11, 2014, http://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/2014/2014_aelm.aspx

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Kuniko Ashizawa, "Time to Get Serious About Regional Institution-building in Asia," *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, no. 294 (2014).

⁸ Ibid.

to the norms and institutions that have underwritten the post-war regional order in Asia. Prime Minister Abe, since his return to office in December 2012, has grown concerned that Japan's voice and influence in the region are diminishing, and strives to restore its position as one of the leading countries in the world. His determination was expressed in his speech at the CSIS in February 2013, when he declared that "Japan was back"⁹.

To this end, the Abe government created the NSC and issued Japan's first NSS in December 2013 as an umbrella document presenting its long-term national security guidelines. The NSS articulates Japan's determination to become a "proactive contributor to peace," based on the principle of international cooperation, as a fundamental principle of its national security¹⁰.

This principle is a transformation of the previous model of "passive pacifism," the idea of which is based on the understanding that world peace would more likely follow if Japan were unarmed¹¹. This transformation, however, is not a sudden turnabout. The NSS repeatedly stresses that Japan is a "peace-loving nation;" thus its "proactive contribution to peace" is an extension of its continuous efforts for the stabilization of the region and the world, including contribution through Official Development Aid (ODA) in South-East Asian countries since the 1950s, participation in the United Nations' (UN's) Peacekeeping Operation (PKO) missions since 1992, and promotion of the concept of "human security" since the late 1990s.

Accordingly, for Japan to fulfil its role as a "proactive contributor to peace," the NSS sets strategic approaches that could contribute to the realization of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and the world. Two major elements of such strategic approaches are strengthening the Japan-US alliance, and strengthening and expanding Japan's capabilities and roles that could contribute to international peace and stability. This involves diplomacy and security cooperation with Japan's partners, including multilateral frameworks such as the UN and other regional institutions, as well as cooperation based on universal values.

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan is Back," policy speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the CSIS, February 22, 2013, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us_20130222en.html

¹⁰ "National Security Strategy of Japan," December 17, 2013, p. 3.

¹¹ Shin'ichi Kitaoka, "The Turnabout of Japan's Security Policy: Toward 'Proactive Pacifism'," *Nippon.com*, April 2, 2014, <http://www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00108/>

Prime Minister Abe has made efforts to accomplish Japan's goal of becoming a "proactive contributor to peace" with complementary strategies, including advancing Japan's diplomatic relations with other countries with "a panoramic perspective of the world map¹²" or in other terms, a bird's eye view of global affairs. He visited up to 50 countries within two years since his inauguration in December 2012. In addition to his tireless visits all over the world, a notable development from his diplomatic endeavors is strengthened ties with regional organizations including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

On May 6, 2014, Prime Minister Abe visited NATO Headquarters, the second visit after January 2007 when he became the first-ever Japanese prime minister to visit the Headquarters. As an outcome of his visit, Japan and NATO signed the "Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme between Japan and NATO¹³." In line with this document, the first-ever joint naval exercise in counter piracy activities between NATO and Japan was conducted in the Gulf of Aden in September 25¹⁴. Furthermore, Lieutenant Colonel Chizu Kurita, from the Japan Ground Self-Defense Forces (SDF) was sent to NATO Headquarters as an advisor to the Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security for two years¹⁵. This new development has a twofold significance in embodying the prospects of contributing to international peace and security: as the first SDF officer's appointment to NATO Headquarters, this engagement strengthens Japan's ties with NATO, and the dispatch of a female to NATO aligns with the UN's gender mainstreaming efforts.

Turning to Japan-ASEAN relations, the first Japan-ASEAN Defense Ministers' Round Table Meeting, which was initiated by Prime Minister Abe, was held in Naypyidaw, Myanmar, on November 19, 2014. The participating countries highlighted the importance of freedom of navigation and the rule of law, and shared their expectations for further cooperation through capacity-building assistance, joint exercises, and equipment/technology cooperation¹⁶.

¹² Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, Press Conference by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, June 26, 2013, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201306/26kaiken_e.html

¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme Between Japan and NATO," May 6, 2014, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000037772.pdf>

¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Joint Exercise in Counter Piracy activities between Japan and NATO," Press Releases, September 26, 2014, http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000438.html#

¹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Dispatch of a Female Self-Defense Force Personnel to NATO Headquarters," Press Release, November 4, 2014, http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000488.html

¹⁶ Ministry of Defense, *Japan Defense Focus*, no. 59 (December 2014), <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/jdf/no59/specialfeature.html>

Japan has also been actively engaged in multilateral gatherings in the Asia Pacific region including the ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit, and ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus. In addition to such multilateral diplomacies, the development of the Round Table Meeting is a clear indication of Japan's recognition that the current security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region cannot be resolved without enhanced multilateral cooperation with the countries in the region. What the defense ministers discussed at this meeting is basically in line with the agendas of the already existing forums, but the significance of the meeting is the establishment of a formal security framework between Japan and the ASEAN.

Complementary to its diplomatic endeavors, as a specific manifestation of its proactive posture, the Abe government set out two major Cabinet decisions in 2014: "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology (DE&T)" on April 1, 2014, and "Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People" on July 1, 2014, following submission of its report by the Advisory Panel on National Security and Defense Capability (APNSDC) to Prime Minister Abe on 15 May. In addition, the government has undertaken revision of the US-Japan defense cooperation guidelines and of Japan's ODA Charter. The following sections will focus on the two Cabinet decisions and analyze how they affect Japan's security policy as a "proactive contributor to peace."

Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology

The Cabinet decision on Three Principles on Transfer of DE&T was the first change in Japan's weapons export strategy in nearly half a century. The last principles, which were established in 1967, had prohibited weapons sales to communist countries, countries subject to arms embargoes under UN resolutions, and countries involved in or likely to become involved in international conflicts. They were tightened in 1976 when Prime Minister Miki Takeo declared that Japan should be "prudent"¹⁷ in exporting arms overseas, and since then the government's policy became a general ban on all exports of arms, defense equipment, and the like.

The adoption of the Cabinet decision in April 2014, however, was not a sudden development out of nowhere. Both the LDP and the Democratic Party of Japan

¹⁷ Masamitsu Morimoto, *Bukiyushutsu Sangensoku Nyuumon* (Introduction to the Three Principles of Arms Exports), Shinzansha, Tokyo, 2011.

(DPJ) administrations had attempted to amend and bypass the principles, adopting an incremental approach of establishing exemptions. Since Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone approved the export of defense technologies to the US for the first time in 1983, the Japanese government has implemented 21 exemptions to the rules and created a footing for policy change while convincing domestic opposition factions and other countries in the region that the amendments are necessary and non-threatening¹⁸.

Furthermore, in December 2011, the Noda administration of the DPJ partially deregulated the arms export policy of 1970 and paved the way for Japan to participate in the international joint development and production of defense equipment. The Noda administration's guidelines provided for exceptions that covered not just specific cases but general categories for the overseas transfer of defense equipment for cases related to peacekeeping and international cooperation, as well as for cases regarding the international joint development and production of defense equipment contributing to Japan's security¹⁹. Subsequent to this revision, on July 4, 2013, the United Kingdom (UK) became the first country to sign a comprehensive agreement with Japan—the Defense Cooperation Framework Agreement and an Information Security Agreement—which enabled the joint research, development, and production of defense equipment²⁰.

Thus, the new principles decided by the Abe government in April 2014 essentially streamline the existing rules and exemptions into a coherent policy²¹. This was also based on the NSS, which states that Japan is required to contribute to peace and international cooperation including through utilizing defense equipment, and to participate in the joint development and production of defense equipment²².

¹⁸ Heigo Sato, "From the 'Three Principles of Arms Exports' to the 'Three Principles of Defense Equipment Transfer'," *AJISS Commentary*, no. 197 (May 2014): 2, http://www2.jjia.or.jp/en_commentary/pdf/AJISS-Commentary197.pdf

¹⁹ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, "'Boueisoubihintou no kaigaiten nikansuru kijun' nitsuiteno naikakukan bouchoukan danwa [Briefing by Chief of Cabinet on the Three Principles of Arms Exports]," December 27, 2011, <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/tyokan/noda/20111227DANWA.pdf>

²⁰ Government of the United Kingdom, "Foreign Secretary Signs Groundbreaking Defence and Security Agreements with Japan," press release, July 4, 2013, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-signs-groundbreaking-defence-and-security-agreements-with-japan>

²¹ Sato, "From the 'Three Principles'," 4.

²² "National Security Strategy of Japan," 19.

The new principles set (1) clarification of cases where transfers are prohibited, (2) limitations to cases where transfers may be permitted with strict examination and information disclosure, and (3) appropriate control on extra-purpose use or transfer to third parties²³. In order to implement these principles, the NSC decided on the “Implementation Guidelines for the Three Principles on Transfer of DE&T” (hereafter “Implementation Guidelines”)²⁴, which specify the following three cases in which overseas transfers of DE&T may be permitted:

- a. Overseas transfers that contribute to the active promotion of peace contribution and international cooperation, only if the transfers have a positive meaning from the viewpoint of peace contribution and international cooperation, and when the recipient is a foreign government or the UN system or organizations conducting activities based on a UN resolution;
- b. Overseas transfers that contribute to Japan’s security, only if the transfers have a positive meaning from the viewpoint of Japan’s security; and
- c. Overseas transfers whose impact from the viewpoint of Japan’s security is judged to be very small, such as return of misdelivered items, export of samples to be returned later and re-export of equipment that was brought into Japan by police officers of a foreign governmental agency.

With this decision, Japan now enables the transfer of defense-related equipment to foreign governments and international institutions like the UN, provided that doing so will “contribute to peace and be helpful for the active promotion of international cooperation [and] [...] Japan’s national security²⁵.”

Correspondingly, the Strategy on Defense Production and Technological Bases (hereafter “the Strategy”) adopted by the Ministry of Defense in June 2014 based on the new principles, calls for more aggressive participation in international joint projects to develop and produce fighter aircraft and missiles²⁶. The Strategy sets

²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology,” provisional translation, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000034953.pdf>

²⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Implementation Guidelines for the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology,” adopted by the National Security Council, April 1, 2014, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000034954.pdf>

²⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Implementation Guidelines for the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology.”

²⁶ Ministry of Defense of Japan, “Strategy on Defense Production and Technological Bases: Toward Strengthening the Bases to Support Defense Forces and ‘Proactive Contribution to Peace’,” June 2014, accessed January 10, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/others/equipment/pdf/2606_e_honbun.pdf

the goals as ensuring the sovereignty of security, contributing to latently enhance deterrence, maintaining and enhancing bargaining power, and eventually contributing to advancing domestic industry driven by highly sophisticated technology²⁷. The Strategy also states that these goals should be achieved through establishing long-term government-industry partnerships, strengthening international competitiveness, and ensuring consistency with effective and efficient acquisition of defense equipment²⁸.

Soon after the Cabinet made this decision, in June 2014, the Japanese delegation, which included military contractors, presented at the Paris-based Eurosatory, which is one of the world's biggest defense and security industry trade shows. Two new bilateral agreements were also concluded in 2014, with Australia and with France. On July 8, Japan and Australia signed a defense science and technology accord and agreed that the first research project would be in marine hydrodynamics, which will set the foundation for potential collaboration in future submarine projects²⁹. On July 29, Japan and France signed a Memorandum of Understanding that will lead to closer defense cooperation, including the joint development of military equipment³⁰. Moreover, as the first arms export under the new principles, the NSC approved the export of gyro sensors to the US, which is used in the Patriot Advanced Capability-2 (PAC-2) air-defense systems³¹.

While Japan may experience a number of near-term benefits from the revisions, such as strengthened relations with the US and increased partnership opportunities with neighboring countries, dubious views about the future impact also exist in light of international peace and stability. For example, increased arms export assurances are considered important to guarantee that future arms transfers do not inadvertently promote an idea of justified armaments in the name of peace³².

²⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁹ Ministry of Defence of Australia, "Minister for Defence—Defence Minister David Johnston Hails Defence Science and Technology Accord with Japan," press release, July 8, 2014, <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/2014/07/08/minister-for-defence-defence-minister-david-johnston-hails-defence-science-and-technology-accord-with-japan/>

³⁰ Ministry of Defense, *Japan Defense Focus*, no. 56 (September 2014), <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/jdf/no56/leaders.html>

³¹ Kosuke Takahashi and James Hardy, "Japan Approves Export of PAC-2 Components for Qatar," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, July 17, 2014.

³² Shanon Dick and Hana Rudolph, "Japan Updates Arms Export Policy," *Spotlight*, April 24, 2014, <http://www.stimson.org/spotlight/japan-updates-arms-export-policy/>

To ensure that transfers are in accordance with the three principles, the Implementation Guidelines further state that every case will be strictly examined, taking into consideration the appropriateness of the destination and end user. Extra-purpose use and transfer to third parties also require the recipient government to gain prior consent from the Japanese government. However, the Implementation Guidelines also state that appropriate control of the recipient may be ensured with the confirmation of a control system at the destination when the transfer involves participation in an international system for sharing parts, or delivery of parts to a licensor³³. Thus, for example, the US transfer of parts related to a US-licensed product imported from Japan to the third country might be permitted without Japan's prior consent.

As defense equipment and technology become increasingly high tech, the dual-use nature of such weapons makes the distinction between weapons and non-weapons increasingly ambiguous. Setting conditions on arms transfers is becoming an international norm, which is observed in the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, the first multilateral treaty to regulate the conventional arms trade in light of the humanitarian aspect. Japan was one of the co-authors of its draft resolution. A major challenge for Japan in becoming a "proactive contributor to peace" is how to do so without implicitly advocating a more weaponized international system. For the Three Principles on Transfer of DE&T to serve as a tool for this goal, Japan will need to employ enhanced mechanisms to judge cases of DE&T transfer, which should also include an improved intelligence capacity.

Collective Right of Self-Defense and Participation in International Peace Cooperation

Another preeminent development in Japan's security policy in 2014 was the "Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People," which was decided by the Cabinet on July 1, 2014³⁴. This decision was aimed at developing domestic legislation to secure the lives of the Japanese people as well as to more proactively contribute to the peace and stability of the international community, as declared in the NSS.

³³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Implementation Guidelines for the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology."

³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People," provisional translation, July 1, 2014, http://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page23e_000273.html

Among other new recognitions and intentions of the Abe government in this decision, the clause that has attracted most attention is:

[...] as a result of careful examination in light of the current security environment, the Government has reached a conclusion that not only when an armed attack against Japan occurs but also when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, and when there is no other appropriate means available to repel the attack and ensure Japan's survival and protect its people, use of force to the minimum extent necessary should be interpreted to be permitted under the Constitution as a measure for self-defense in accordance with the basic logic of the Government's view to date³⁵.

The decision partially lifted Japan's self-imposed ban on the right of collective self-defense, the hallmark of its post-war foreign policy, and reinterpreted Article 9 of its Constitution, which forbids the use of force to settle international disputes. However, as highlighted above, in a compromise acknowledging the New Komeito's concern, the government sets three conditions to invoke the collective right of self-defense. In addition, even when the "use of force" is permitted under the reinterpreted Constitution, prior approval of the Diet is in principle required upon issuing orders to the SDF. As such, while the reinterpretation of the Constitution will allow the SDF to engage in the "use of force" in situations where a foreign country that is in a close relation to Japan is under armed attack, the conditions under which it can be exercised are still very restrictive.

This limited concept of collective self-defense was expected to be translated into operational practice for the Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation (hereafter "the Defense Guidelines"), which was planned to be revised by the end of 2014. On October 8, 2014, the US and Japan jointly released the Interim Report of the ongoing revision of the Defense Guidelines, but the completion of the review was postponed. One reason for the postponement is that it allows Japan time to pass legislation delimiting the exercise of the right to collective self-defense³⁶. The Interim Report was thus limited in its indication that the revised Defense Guidelines will detail cooperation between the two governments "in accordance with the Cabinet decision by the Government of Japan on July 1, 2014³⁷."

³⁵ Ibid., p.7–8 (emphasis added).

³⁶ David Fouse, "US-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines Review: US Wise to Take a Patient Approach," *PacNet*, no. 86 (December 2014), <http://csis.org/files/publication/Pac1486.pdf>

³⁷ Ministry of Defense of Japan, "The Interim Report on the Revision of the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation," October 8, 2014, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/ampo/20141008.html

Meanwhile, the Cabinet decision showed the unclear position of the government on collective security based on the UN Charter. At a press conference held on the same day, July 1, 2014, Prime Minister Abe stressed that the Constitution permits only self-defense measures for the purpose of ensuring Japan's survival and protecting its people, and thus Japan would not engage in use of force for the purpose of defending foreign countries³⁸. Accordingly, he stressed that the SDF will never participate in such wars as the Gulf War in the early 1990s or Iraq War in 2003.

The NSS repeatedly declares Japan's role as a "proactive contributor to peace," and states that Japan will actively contribute to diverse UN-led efforts, including UN peacekeeping operations and collective security measures. The report of the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, which was submitted to Prime Minister Abe on May 15, 2014, and provided the basis for the July 1 Cabinet decision, also even insists that it is not appropriate to interpret Article 9 as prohibiting Japan's participation in collective security measures of the UN³⁹. It continues that Japan should make a proactive contribution, based on its own decision, because participation in collective security measures under UN Security Council resolutions is a duty of the international community and the Constitution itself is premised on the fundamental principle of international cooperation.

Nevertheless, the July 1 Cabinet decision specified the SDF's use of weapons only associated with so-called *kaketsuke keigo* (coming to the aid of a geographically distant unit or personnel under attack) or "for the purpose of execution of mission" in international peace cooperation activities. This shows, despite the principle of "proactive contribution to peace," the government's limited commitment to collective security efforts based on the UN Charter.

Conclusion

In 2014, The Abe government exerted multiple efforts to materialize the fundamental principle of Japan's security policy of "proactive contribution to peace" stipulated in

³⁸ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, "Press Conference by Prime Minister Abe," July 1, 2014, provisional translation, accessed January 10, 2015, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201407/0701kaiken.html

³⁹ The Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, "Report of the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security," May 15, 2014, p. 32, http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/anzenhosyou/2/dai7/houkoku_en.pdf

the NSS. One effort was through advancing diplomatic relations with other countries with a bird's eye view of global affairs. In addition to Prime Minister Abe's tireless foreign visits, Japan's growing ties with regional organizations such as NATO and ASEAN brought notable developments in line with the government's endeavor to make a "proactive contribution to peace." Further substantial cooperation with these partner countries and regional organizations is expected for Japan to fulfil its role as a contributor to the international peace and stability.

A complementary effort to achieve a "proactive contribution to peace" was through translating the principle into legislations. Two Cabinet decisions were set out as a first step, and negotiations on the revision of legislations are likely in parliament in 2015. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Abe called a snap election for December 14, 2014. The LDP's landslide victory in the election with the New Komeito gives Abe's ruling coalition a comfortable majority to pass nearly all legislation. The election, nonetheless, received a grim evaluation, as voter turnout was 52%, a record low in Japan's postwar history. Although the LDP won 290 seats in the 475-seat House of Representatives, it was a 5-seat decrease from before the election, which is an indication of its declining popularity.

What this analysis of the last election indicates is that, even with the super-majority seats the coalition government gains in the lower house, Abe still has challenges and hurdles to overcome if he is to achieve his goals. With regard to the security policy reform that the Abe government has been pursuing, the implementation of Cabinet decisions made in 2014 is proving less straightforward. Prime Minister Abe's reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution have been watered down from his original ambition after negotiations with the New Komeito, with a number of constraints imposed on the exercise of the collective right of self-defense. Even so, the decision was controversial among the Japanese, and overextending security reforms could undermine the government's popularity and hinder its capacity to undertake difficult economic changes.

In the meantime, President Obama gave a speech on the US rebalancing policy to Asia, at the end of his trip to the G20 summit in Brisbane, Australia. He declared that meeting the challenges in the world, whether it be the emergency of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Ebola in West Africa, or Russia's aggression against Ukraine, would not distract the US from its engagement in the Asia-Pacific

region⁴⁰. However, at the same time, he did not fail to reiterate that the US rebalance is also about the Asia-Pacific region doing more with the US around the world. The Abe government will certainly have its hands full in the coming years in pursuing its primary objectives of strengthening the US-Japan alliance and truly becoming a proactive contributor to international peace and security.

⁴⁰ The White House, "Remarks by President Obama at the University of Queensland," November 15, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/15/remarks-president-obama-university-queensland>