

CHAPTER 11

Japan's Security Challenges: North Korea, China, and Peacekeeping Operations

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Introduction

This paper introduces major security challenges Japan faces currently and examines some possible responses for them. The challenges can be largely divided into two groups: traditional ones in East Asia and new ones in international peacekeeping operations. In East Asia, North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile developments, and China's military modernization and expansive moves, pose serious challenges to Japan. They have been central concerns for Japan's security policy in the post-Cold War era and will continue to be so in the foreseeable future. Japan's response to these challenges will be the upgrade of what it has done so far. In peacekeeping operations, expanded security roles under a new legislation provide Japan with both the wider chance of contribution and risks. This is a new type of challenge for Japan and it has to strategically decide to what extent it undertakes these new security tasks in peacekeeping operations.

East Asia: Traditional Challenges

One type of security challenge Japan faces is traditional ones in East Asia posed by North Korea and China. North Korea has continued its effort to build nuclear weapons. It carried out the fourth nuclear test in January 2016 and the fifth one in September.¹ It also has been developing various ballistic missiles, including submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) and has conducted multiple launch tests in 2016.² It has shown no sign of changing the policy and continues to launch missiles in 2017.³ It is understood that North Korea's aims of developing nuclear

¹ Japan's Ministry of Defense (JMOD), *Defense of Japan 2016* (Tokyo: Urban Connections, 2016), 22-23; JMOD, *2016nen no kitachosen niyoru kaku-jikken misairu-hassya nituite* [On North Korea's nuclear tests and missile launches in 2016], 20, http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/surround/pdf/dprk_bm_20161109.pdf.

² JMOD, *2016nen no kitachosen niyoru kaku-jikken misairu-hassya nituite*.

³ JMOD, "North Korea's Missile Launch (February 12, 2017)," February 12, 2017, <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/press/release/2017/02/12b.html>; "North Korea's Missile Launch (March 6, 2017)," March 6, 2017, <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/press/release/2017/03/06b.html>.

weapons are the security of its regime and deterrence against the US.⁴ It has also used them for compellence⁵ against the US, demanding the normalization of the relationship between the two states as well as the provision of economic assistances.⁶

North Korea's nuclear development combined with its militaristic policies and belligerent stance against regional states poses threat to Japan. There is a possibility that North Korea might attack US bases and other targets in Japan by ballistic missiles when military confrontations escalate within or around the Korean peninsula. The threat to Japan will increase if North Korea's nuclear weapons become operational.

With regard to China, it has been modernizing its military capability and strengthening its assertiveness, aiming to secure its interests as a rising power. China's military modernization aims for the utilization of information technology, and the state has also improved force projection capability and long-range missile forces.⁷ Its stance and policies on the East and South China Seas have been assertive, especially since around 2010.⁸ China has employed compellence and fait accompli in order to extend its influence and control in the areas.⁹ It may perceive its actions as reactions to those of other regional states,¹⁰ but its actions have changed the status quo in its favor at the sacrifice of others' interests.

⁴ JMOD, *Defense of Japan 2016*, 21-22.

⁵ Compellence is a strategy that employs pressure, including the threat and/or actual use of force, in order to persuade others to accept one's demands for taking specific actions. Compellence is similar to deterrence, but the latter demands targets not to take specific actions, while the former demands to take specific actions, such as initiating something new, stopping what they are doing or undoing what they have done. Thomas C. Shelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, originally published in 1966); Gary Schaub, Jr., "Compellence: Resuscitating the Concept," in *Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Lawrence Freedman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); David E. Johnson, Karl P. Mueller and William H. Taft, V, *Conventional Coercion across the Spectrum of Operations: The Utility of U.S. Forces in the Emerging Security Environment* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2002).

⁶ William M. Drennan, "Nuclear Weapons and North Korea: Who's Coercing Whom?," in *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy*, eds. Robert J. Art and Patrick M. Cronin (D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003); Narushige Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns, 1966-2008* (London: Routledge, 2010), chaps. 6-7, 9.

⁷ JMOD, *Defense of Japan 2016*, 43, 46-51.

⁸ Liu Feng, "China's Security Strategy towards East Asia," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 2 (2016); Alastair Iain Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness," *International Security* 37, no. 4 (2013).

⁹ Liselotte Odgaard, "Maritime Security in East Asia: Peaceful Coexistence and Active Defense in China's Diaoyu/Senkaku Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China* (2016); Andrew Taffer, "State Strategy in Territorial Conflict: A Conceptual Analysis of China's Strategy in the South China Sea," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 37, no. 1 (2015): 95-97.

¹⁰ Feng, "China's Security Strategy towards East Asia," 174; Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness," 19-20.

China has been increasing its military and law-enforcement agencies' presence in the air and on the sea around Japan in the last decade.¹¹ In June 2016, a combatant vessel of the Chinese Navy entered the contiguous zone around the Senkaku Islands for the first time.¹² In August, twenty-eight Chinese government vessels intruded into Japan's territorial water around the Senkaku Islands following Chinese fishing boats just in four days.¹³ China's aim seems to be the establishment of a new status quo of its presence in order to impress on the international community that China also exerts administrative rights in the area.¹⁴ China also seems to be trying to compel Japan to accept the existence of a territorial dispute over the Senkaku Islands.¹⁵

These Chinese moves pose a difficult challenge to Japan. China's claim over the Senkaku Islands is unacceptable to Japan, whose position is that they "are clearly an inherent part of the territory of Japan" and "[t]here exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved" in regards to them.¹⁶ It is likely that China continues to try to expand its control over the areas surrounding Japan based on its territorial claims and strategic incentive to secure a buffer zone as wide as possible against the US.

A response to these challenges from North Korea and China is an act of necessity in a sense that Japan cannot escape from them. The challenges are likely to persist in the foreseeable future and the geographical proximity forces Japan to face them. In fact, they have been central concerns in Japan's defense planning.¹⁷ What it has to do from now on is basically the upgrade of the measures already taken.

Since the challenges described above have already emerged and are the status quo, Japan's response should consist of two different approaches: the prevention of deterioration and the improvement of its security environment. Regarding the former,

¹¹ JMOD, *Defense of Japan 2016*, 52-56. As for the number of intrusion into Japan's territorial sea by China's government vessels, see the website of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page23e_000021.html.

¹² JMOD, *Defense of Japan 2016*, 53.

¹³ The figure is the aggregated number of vessels. *Status of Activities by Chinese Government Vessels and Chinese Fishing Vessels in Waters Surrounding the Senkaku Islands* (2016), <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000180283.pdf>.

¹⁴ Odgaard, "Maritime Security in East Asia," 11-13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶ "Japanese Territory: Senkaku Islands," MOFA, last modified April 13, 2016, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/index.html>.

¹⁷ *National Security Strategy* (2013), http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/pdf/security_strategy_e.pdf; *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and Beyond* (2013), http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf.

the basic response will be the deterrence of escalation through the improvement of Japan's defense capability and the enhancement of the Japan-US alliance.

Japan has taken steps to improve its defense capability. Under the Medium Term Defense Program, the Self-Defense Force (SDF) is to increase the number of Aegis-equipped destroyers and introduce advanced Patriot surface-to-air missiles for missile defense against the threat from North Korea. The program also includes the acquisition of new equipment for the defense of southwestern region including F-35 multirole fighters, V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft and Global Hawk unmanned reconnaissance aircraft. In addition, a new amphibious rapid deployment brigade will be established.¹⁸

As for the Japan-US alliance, the two states updated the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation in 2015. The new Guidelines emphasize seamless coordination between the two states from peacetime to contingencies. They reaffirm the US' support to the defense of Japan and also expand the cooperation including the mutual defense of assets based on Japan's new stance on the right of collective self-defense.¹⁹ The new Guidelines are expected to strengthen deterrence through demonstrating the commitment of the US to defend Japan.²⁰

With regard to the improvement of Japan's security environment, it goes without saying that dialogues and confidence building measures (CBM) with North Korea and China are necessary for this purpose. However, mere talks are not likely to bear fruit taking into account the seriousness of the issues, and the realization and effectiveness of CBM depend on whether parties recognize mutual interests in such measures.²¹ It is also important for Japan to obtain and strengthen international understanding and support for its stance through defense diplomacy including that in multilateral

¹⁸ *Medium Term Defense Program (FY2014-FY2018)* (2013), http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/Defense_Program.pdf.

¹⁹ *The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* (2015), http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/pdf/shishin_20150427e.pdf.

²⁰ Tomohiko Satake, "The New Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation and an Expanding Japanese Security Role," *Asian Politics and Policy* 8, no. 1 (2016): 31.

²¹ Kazuo Asai, "Kaijyo-jikoboushi-kyotei (INCSEA) niyuru shinraijyosei: Kako no jirei to nittyu kaiku-renraku-mekanizumu no kadai" [Confidence building through Incidents at Sea Agreement (INCSEA): Past examples and Japan-China Maritime and Air Communication Mechanism], *Reference*, no. 770 (2015). Japan and China has negotiated on the Japan-China Maritime and Air Communication Mechanism since 2008, but the Mechanism is not yet operational. JMOD, *Defense of Japan 2016*, 60.

dialogues.²² International support can enhance Japan's position in dealing with the challenges, but at the same time, the impact would remain indirect. Japan cannot rely on wishful thinking and should explore other options as well. Theoretically, more forceful options also exist such as destroying threatening equipment directly or using threats to attack in order to compel the change of behavior. These options, however, are unrealistic for Japan because of political and legal constraints including those of the constitution and the risks and costs involved.

Economic sanctions are a realistic choice in dealing with North Korea, but Japan cannot be optimistic about their effect. Japan and the international community have applied economic sanctions and tried to affect the behavior of North Korea for more than a decade but failed to derive a positive response.²³ Although the United Nations (UN) has repeatedly strengthened sanctions since 2006, their implementation remains porous.²⁴ This means that it is possible to strengthen economic pressure against North Korea through the thorough implementation of already placed sanctions. However, the cooperation of China, which has been said as a key for this, is not likely to be realized in the foreseeable future. Also, the stake seems to be too high to compel North Korea to give it up by economic measures.

The US under the new administration may use compellence by employing the threat of force as it did in the 1990s.²⁵ US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson stated that “[a]ll of the options are on the table,” including the use of force, in dealing with North Korea.²⁶ President Donald Trump indicated that he would be willing to negotiate with Kim Jong Un,²⁷ although recently he and Secretary Tillerson took a stance that it was not time to start a negotiation.²⁸ At least, the US seems to have renewed its attention

²² Tomohiko Satake, “Toward a More Strategic Use of Multi-lateral Security Cooperation/Dialogue,” *NIDS Commentary*, no. 42 (2015).

²³ Japan started to impose unilateral sanctions against North Korea in 2006. “Keizai seisai sochi” [Economic sanction measures], *Center for Information on Security Trade Control*, last modified December 22, 2016, http://cistec.or.jp/export/keizaiseisai/saikin_keizaiseisai/index.html.

²⁴ Kim Jina, “UN Sanctions as an Instrument of Coercive Diplomacy against North Korea,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 26, no. 3 (2014): 319-326.

²⁵ Drennan, “Nuclear Weapons and North Korea”; Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, chap. 6.

²⁶ “Remarks with Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se Before Their Meeting,” US Department of State, March 17, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/03/268501.htm>.

²⁷ Stephen Evans, “What Will President Trump Do about North Korea?,” BBC, November 17, 2016, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38001843>.

²⁸ Steve Holland, “Trump Wants to Make Sure U.S. Nuclear Arsenal at ‘Top of the Pack,’” Reuters, February 24, 2017, accessed March 30, 2017,

to North Korea, partly because the latter is advancing the development of inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) which can reach US mainland.²⁹ Negotiation with North Korea may derive a positive result if the US can devise a well-thought-out combination of military threats, positive inducements, and assurances. However, taking into account that the North Korean regime is developing nuclear weapons as the guarantor of its security, the military threats in compellence would need to be very serious. It is up to the US whether to employ compellence, but such a decision should be based on serious and thorough examination of the possibility of success, and the risks and costs involved.

With regard to China, a possible option for Japan is to compel it through the accumulation of actual responses to its violating moves. Although it would take time, such accumulation may be able to persuade China of the futility of its attempts by demonstrating the prospect for success is dim.³⁰ So far, China has challenged Japan's administrative control of the Senkaku Islands through the deployment of maritime law agency vessels, which means that actual violating moves remain at the law enforcement level. Therefore, Japan's response to deny Chinese moves also should be at that level, and the central actor for this role is the Japan Coast Guard (JCG). In order to demonstrate that Japan can maintain administrative control over its maritime territory, the JCG should keep intercepting Chinese government vessels approaching Japan's territorial waters. It also should keep repelling and, if necessary, detaining illegally operating fishery boats around the Senkaku Islands in accordance with Japanese laws. For these purposes, further enhancement of the JCG's capability is desirable and, in fact, the Japanese government is working on it. In December 2016, the government adopted the Policy on Strengthening the Maritime Security System which includes the acquirement of new vessels, the improvement of infrastructures,

²⁹ Nicole Gaouette and Barbara Starr, "Facing Growing North Korea Nuke Threat, Trump Vows: 'It Won't Happen!,'" CNN, January 3, 2017, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/02/politics/north-korea-icbm-threat-trump/index.html>.

³⁰ Some strategists call this strategy as "cumulative deterrence." However, it is rather compellence than deterrence, because the aim is to persuade targets to stop what they are doing, rather than preventing something from happening in the first place, and involves not only threats but also actual responses. As for "cumulative deterrence," see, Uri Bar-Joseph, "Variations on a Theme: The Conceptualization of Deterrence in Israeli Strategic Thinking," *Security Studies* 7, no. 3 (1998); Doron Almog, "Cumulative Deterrence and the War on Terrorism," *Parameters* 34, no. 4 (2004/5); Thomas Rid, "Deterrence beyond the State: The Israeli Experience," *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no. 1 (2012): 142.

and the reallocation of existing resources of the JCG.³¹

The options discussed above are logically possible responses to the challenges posed by North Korea and China. However, they are not panaceas and success is not guaranteed. Japan should consider all possible options it has, reevaluate situations constantly, and respond flexibly to the challenges.

Peacekeeping Operations: New Challenges

The other type of security challenge for Japan has to do with the SDF's expanded role in international peacekeeping operations. The revised International Peace Cooperation (IPC) Act, which was a part of the new Legislation for Peace and Security, enabled the SDF to conduct security related tasks with wider authority to use weapons in peacekeeping.³² This expansion is a catch-up to the transformation of international peace operations in the post-Cold War era.

Before the amendment of the IPC Act, the SDF units were assigned tasks only related to logistics, humanitarian assistance, and peace building in peacekeeping operations. The law stated that the SDF could undertake a limited type of security related tasks, such as the monitoring of cease-fire, but Japan had never assigned such tasks to SDF units in actual missions. The extent of the use of weapons authorized for SDF personnel was also very limited. They could use weapons only to protect members of the Japanese contingent on the scene and those who under their control, which is defined as those who are not able to defend themselves and expected to follow the directions of SDF personnel.³³

Under the new law, the SDF came to be able to undertake the maintenance of public security (safety-ensuring), the rescue of mission related personnel (*kaketsuke keigo*) and the guard of mission's compounds with contingents from other states. SDF

³¹ *Kaijyo-hoan-taisei kyouka ni kansuru houshin* [The policy on strengthening the maritime security system] (2016), <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kaihotaisei/dai1/siryuu.pdf>; "Ministerial Council on the Strengthening of the Maritime Security System," Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, December 21, 2016, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/actions/201612/21article4.html.

³² JMOD, *Defense of Japan 2016*, 213, 217-219.

³³ JMOD, *Defense of Japan 2002* (Tokyo: Urban Connections, 2002), 225-226, 256; Act on Cooperation with United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations (translated January 15, 2010), accessed March 30, 2017, <http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/law/detail/?id=2232&vm=04&re=01>; Shigenobu Tamura, Kenichi Takahashi and Kazuhisa Shimada, eds., *Nihon no bouei housei* [Japan's defense legislation], 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Naigai Shuppan, 2012), chap. 12.

personnel undertaking the public security task can use weapons in order to carry out the task and protect others (simply stated so without restriction). In the rescue and compound guard tasks, SDF personnel can use weapons to protect mission related personnel who are to be rescued and personnel in compounds, respectively. In all circumstances, the use of weapons harming others is allowed only in the situations of self-defense and the aversion of present danger.³⁴

This wider security role in peacekeeping operations is a challenge for Japan. It is an act of choice to some extent in a sense that Japan can choose whether to participate in each mission. On the one hand, in the globalized world, the improvement of the international security environment is an interest of Japan. Conflicts and instability anywhere on the globe can affect Japan directly or indirectly. Peace operations nowadays are activities to stabilize fragile states that suffered from civil wars and sometimes even involve the proactive use of force. Japan can contribute more to this stabilization effort if it undertakes security tasks as well as peace building ones in robust peacekeeping operations. On the other hand, security tasks involve greater risk for SDF troops. Robust peacekeeping can turn into counterinsurgency-like resource consuming activities. Taking into account more direct challenges in East Asia, the cost and risk Japan can accept in peacekeeping have a natural limit.

With wider options, Japan has to decide more independently as to what extent it participates in international peacekeeping. The guard of bases with other contingents and the rescue of mission related people are tasks very basic for multinational operations. Therefore, enabling the SDF to carry out these tasks is a measure to erase deficits in Japan's posture towards peacekeeping. The Japanese government for the first time assigned the two tasks to the SDF contingent which commenced activities in the UN peace operation in South Sudan in December 2016.³⁵ However, the Japanese public is not yet fully supportive of the SDF's wider security role,

³⁴ Kokusai rengou heiwa iji katsudou tou ni taisuru kyouryoku ni kansuru houritsu [Act on Cooperation with United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations] (amended 2015), <http://law.e-gov.go.jp/htmlldata/H04/H04HO079.html>; JMOD, *Defense of Japan 2016*, 217-219.

³⁵ "Press Conference by Defense Minister Inada (08:51-08:53 A.M. November 15, 2016)," JMOD, November 15, 2016, <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/press/conference/2016/11/15.html>.

and opinion polls show the division of public's view on the issue.³⁶ It took time in obtaining wider public support for the SDF's participation in peacekeeping operations which started in the 1990s.³⁷ It seems that the accumulation of successful implementation of the new tasks in actual missions is required in order to obtain public's understanding and wider support.

The dispatch of infantry units with a public security task will be a greater challenge for Japan. Security is a basis of peace building activities and the latter cannot bear fruit without the former. However, the maintenance of security is a task which involves far larger risk than others. Japan has to examine benefits, costs, and risks and decide strategically as every state does when it considers whether to commit to the task.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed contemporary major security challenges for Japan. They are traditional challenges from North Korea and China in East Asia, and wider security roles in peacekeeping operations. Japan cannot escape from the challenges in East Asia and its response is an act of necessity. The response should consist of efforts to prevent the deterioration of and to improve the strategic environment. The response to wider security roles in peacekeeping operations is an act of choice. With wider options available, Japan has to strategically decide to what extent it commits to peacekeeping as every state does.

³⁶ Some news media conducted opinion polls on the assignment of rescue task for the SDF contingent in South Sudan. NHK reported that only 18% of those surveyed were supportive and 42% were against the assignment. Jiji reported that 28.2% were supportive and 47.4% were against it. Yomiuri reported that 49% positively evaluated it while 42% negatively. The poll by FNN that was conducted before the announcement of the assignment reported that 58.0% supported the rescue task while 38.1% were against it. "Seiji ni kansuru FNN yoron chousa" [FNN poll on politics], FNN, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://www.fnn-news.com/yoron/inquiry/161017.html>; "Abe naikaku 'shiji suru' 55% 'shiji sinai' 26%" [Abe cabinet: 55% 'support,' 26% 'not support'], NHK, November 14, 2016, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20161114/k10010768341000.html>; "Kaketsuke keigo hantai 47%, naikaku shiji-ritsu wa 5wari kaihuku: Jiji yoron chousa" [47% is against *kaketsuke keigo*, government support rate is over 50%: Jiji poll], Jiji.com, November 17, 2016, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://www.jiji.com/jc/article?k=2016111700564&g=pol>; "2016nen 12gatsu denwa zenkoku yoron chousa" [Nationwide poll by phone in December 2016], Yomiuri Online, December 5, 2016, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/feature/opinion/koumoku/20161205-OYT8T50003.html>.

³⁷ "20 Years since the Enactment of the International Peace Cooperation Law," Secretariat of the International Peace Cooperation Headquarters, Cabinet Office, accessed March 30, 2017, http://www.pko.go.jp/pko_e/info/20th_anniversary.html.

