CHAPTER 9

Japan's Security Outlook: Security Challenges and the New National Defense Program Guidelines

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, or the 9/11 attacks in particular, the importance of joint effort to deal with nontraditional security threats has been shared among nations in the Asia-Pacific, including Japan. On the other hand, the Cold-War legacy remains in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in Northeast Asia. This legacy, exemplified in the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan, has had great impact on regional security. Against this backdrop, Japan faces various security challenges. Also, the changing balance of power in the region may require Japan to reconsider its long-held security policies, although the country has been maintaining the basic tenets of defense policy including an exclusively defense-oriented policy, strict civilian control, and the three non-nuclear principles.[1]

The National Defense Program Guideline (NDPG) sets out the basic principles of Japan's security policy including a force structure in a ten-year timeframe. The NDPG was drawn up in 1976, 1995, and 2004, responding to significant changes in the security environment surrounding Japan. The former NDPG set in 2004 stated that necessary amendments to the defense guidelines should be made in 2009, in consideration of the changing security environment and continuous innovation of military technologies.[2] Accordingly, the new NDPG was issued in December 2010. The issue was delayed because the new DPJ government, assuming power in August 2009, needed time for consideration of the guidelines.[3] The giant earthquake and devastating tsunami on March 11, 2011, followed by the nuclear crisis of the

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1 Yasuaki Chijiwa, "Japan's Security Outlook: Its Implications for the Defense Policy", in *Asia Pacific Countries' Security Outlook and Its Implications for the Defense Sector (The NIDS International Workshop on Asia Pacific Security)* (Tokyo: The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2010), p. 161.

2 *Defense of Japan 2010*, p. 144.

3 Ministry of Defense, "Defense Minister's Remarks on the New National Defense Program Guidelines and Mid-term Defense Program", 17 December 2010, http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2011/daijin.pdf (accessed 20 January 2011).

Fukushima power plants, has the potential to drastically change Japan's perception of security by concentrating much more on nontraditional issues of natural disaster and energy security. However, for Japan's security, it is still salient to consider external factors to define its strategic environment, in terms of considering international cooperation in addressing the nontraditional security matters mentioned above.

This short paper explores Japan's security outlook, mainly by focusing on the newly-defined security guidelines. The first section analyzes security challenges facing Japan, with regard to regional security in particular. The second section examines the new NDPG in relation to Japan's security challenges, centering on China. The final section will consider Japan's security policy toward Southeast Asia and its implications for the Southeast Asian strategic environment.

Security Challenges Facing Japan: Emergence of the "China Challenge"

The introduction of the latest 2010 edition of the "Defense of Japan" (defense white paper) gives an overview of the security environment surrounding Japan. First, as an imminent security issue to the international community, the white paper discusses WMD proliferation, particularly the threat of nuclear development due to North Korea and Iran. Second, it underscores the necessity of tackling trans-national and nontraditional security issues like internal/regional conflict, terrorism, piracy, natural disaster, infectious disease, energy, and climate change. The white paper regards the energy issue as serious in terms of possibly provoking conflicts among countries competing for natural resources. And third, as the regional security outlook, the Defense of Japan reiterates uncertainties concerning the Korean Peninsula, particularly the nuclear and ballistic missile development of North Korea. Taiwan and other traditional and territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas are also referred to as long-lasting, unresolved security issues.[4]

North Korea

The nuclear and ballistic missile development by North Korea is undoubtedly not

[4] *Defense of Japan 2010*, pp. 2-3.

only one of the most serious concerns to Japan's security, but also a destabilizing factor in regional security. Although since the 1990s, the international community has made great efforts to deal with this security issue, the tension has not been alleviated. Various sanctions imposed and resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council, and agreements in the Six-party Talks have failed to lead North Korea to relinquish its nuclear ambition.

Currently, while the Six-party talks meeting remains stalled, the situation has been exacerbated. The DPRK launched a missile in April 2009 and announced the ensuing implementation of the second nuclear test in May of the same year, following the 2006 missile launch and announcement of an underground nuclear test. Moreover, in July 2009, North Korea launched a ballistic missile. As for nuclear development, in August, the DPRK announced a successful result of the uranium enrichment program, as well as in November a completion of reprocessing spent fuel rods, which would enable the country to produce nuclear weapons from extracted plutonium. The defense white paper of Japan clearly states that North Korea's nuclear development and its reinforced capability of ballistic missiles are not only a grave threat to Japan's security, but also tremendously harmful to peace and stability in Northeast Asia and the entire international community.[5]

Furthermore, North Korea's aggressiveness directed against its southern neighbor has escalated, which is considerably heightening tension on the Korean Peninsula. In March 2010, a ROK navy corvette "Cheonan" was sunk in the vicinity of the sea border between South and North Koreas. According to a report of the ROK investigation committee, the incident was due to a torpedo attack by North Korea.[6] Also in September, the DPRK suddenly attacked the Yeonpyeong island of South Korea by shelling, which claimed the lives of two ROK soldiers and two islanders. These two incidents caused by North Korea indicate that security uncertainties about the Korean Peninsula have been growing, probably owing to the generational change of leadership in North Korea and supposed political turmoil within the DPRK leadership. The unpredictability regarding North Korea is certainly not only a security threat to the ROK, but also directly to Japan, because North Korea's missiles can

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5 *Defense of Japan 2010*, pp. 3-4.
6 *Defense of Japan 2010*, p. 4.

cover the entire Japanese territory. Japan may face contingencies including ballistic/cruise missile strikes and invasion into its territory by Pyongyang's special forces, attacking nuclear facilities by using WBC weapons.[7]

China

The second concern for Japan's security is related to the rise of China. China, as an emerging economic and military power, seems to be pursuing a pivotal position in the international community. In terms of military might, the country is strongly promoting modernization backed by a growing defense budget: China's defense budget has enjoyed double-digit growth consecutively for twenty-one years, which now occupies the second largest place after the US.[8] Japan's defense white paper clearly points out that China's military modernization based on its growing defense budget, combined with lack of transparency of decision-making process for China's security policy, has become a security concern to the countries in the region, including Japan.[9]

Also, the Chinese Navy has recently been very active in its surrounding waters, including the East China Sea adjacent to Japanese territory, which is becoming a security concern to Japan. Particularly since 2004, Chinese naval vessels have often been observed in the vicinity of, or sometimes even within, Japan's territorial waters. In November 2004, a Chinese nuclear-powered submarine was confirmed to be submerging in Japan's territorial waters. In September 2005, five Chinese naval vessels including a Soveremenny-class destroyer were found in the Kashi gas field of the East China Sea. In October 2008, the passage of four Chinese naval vessels including a Soveremenny-class destroyer was identified in the Tsugaru Strait. A Chinese naval fleet including a state-of-the-art Luzhou-class was observed travelling southward between Okinawa Island and Miyako Island in November 2008, June 2009, and March 2010, respectively. Moreover in April 2010, when ten Chinese

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[7] Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era, "Japan's Vision for Future Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era: Toward a Peace-Creating Nation" (August 2010), pp. 19-20.
http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/shin-ampobouei2010/houkokusyo.pdf (accessed 30 December 2010).

[8] The National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2010* (Tokyo: The Japan Times, 2010), p. 124, *Associated Press Newswire*, 2 June 2010.

[9] *Defense of Japan 2010*, p. 4.

naval vessels including Kilo-class submarines traveled from the East China Sea to the Pacific Ocean, Chinese ship-borne helicopters approached MSDF destroyers as close as 90 meters, as if they were demonstrating a provocative intention.[10] China's growing assertiveness in the East China Sea has been considered as enhancing capability to intercept enemies' operations, preventing Taiwan's independence, and securing important sea-lanes as well as natural resources.[11]

Against the backdrop of China's assertiveness in the East China Sea, an incident occurred that had a great and immediate impact on Japanese' security landscape, awakening perception of a threat to Japan's territory. On 7 September 2010, a Chinese fishing boat clashed into a Japan Coast Guard vessel in the Senkaku waters. The Japanese coast guard apprehended a Chinese fisherman for his boat's public nuisance to the coast guard's patrol activities. While the Japanese government insisted on legal procedure for his "crime" within Japan's territorial waters, China very strongly opposed Japan's reaction, and took various political and diplomatic actions to overturn Japan's decision. Finally, on 25 September the prosecutor's office in Okinawa announced the release of the fisherman, who was deported back to China on the same day. This incident clearly demonstrated China's assertive attitude toward Japan's territorial islands and since then, it has been widely recognized among Japanese people that Japan's sovereignty over the Senkaku area might be threatened. Japanese public opinion has demanded that the government should take appropriate and determined measures to protect Japan's sovereignty over offshore islands, especially southwestern ones neighboring China.

China is highly likely to adopt a more resolute and aggressive stance on the East China Sea to maintain diplomatic and military leverage over Japan.[12] On 2 October 2010, the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* reported that Beijing had classified the Senkaku Islands into the category of "core national interests", which included Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, and the South China Sea.[13] The East China Sea "contains what China refers to as their core interests", in terms of economic interest

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[10] *Defense of Japan 2010*, pp. 58-9.
[11] *Defense of Japan 2010*, pp. 60-1.
[12] Krista E. Wiegand, "China's Strategy in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Dispute: Issue Linkage and Coercive Diplomacy". *Asian Survey* 5/2 (2009), pp. 189-91.
[13] *South China Morning Post*, 2 October 2010.

and sovereignty.[14]

In fact, the Chinese government has reportedly decided to regularly deploy large fishing patrol vessels in the East and South China Seas, and reinforce the North Sea fleet of the Chinese Maritime Surveillance Force that covers the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea by adding more than thirty patrol vessels in the year ahead.[15] China is likely to continue its territorial claim over the Senkaku Islands, probably with even stronger assertiveness. Furthermore, since the Senkaku incident in September, PLA Navy aircraft have begun to fly into Japan's air defense identification zone and even beyond the EEZ middle line between Japan and China, which has resulted in a marked increase of JADF scrambles.[16]

Since the 2008 Joint Statement, Japan and China have agreed to promote a "mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests", according to which the two sides should foster "mutual trust in the political and security area" to make the East Chin Sea a "sea of peace, cooperation and friendship".[17] Also, economic interdependence has been increasingly deepened between the two countries.[18] Despite that, Japan's concern about its own territorial security is certainly growing in the context of Chinese naval activities in the East China Sea.

Trans-national and Nontraditional Threats

In addition to the re-emerging and aggravating concerns about regional security, global security challenges are continuously crucial to Japan's defense policy. International terrorists' activities as well as sporadic terrorist attacks influenced by international terrorism continue to be a grave threat to the international community, pertaining to the problem of vulnerable and failed states.[19] The Japanese government

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[14] "U.S. commander says China aims to be a 'global military' power", *asahi.com*, 28 December 2010, http://www.asahi.com/english/TKY201012270241.html (accessed 21 January 2011).
[15] *Asahi Shimbun*, 19 December 2010, *Xinhua News Agency*, 7 January 2011.
[16] *Asahi Shimbun*, 27 December 2010.
[17] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Joint Statement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Comprehensive Promotion of a 'Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests", http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/joint0805.html (accessed 21 January 2011).
[18] Leszek Buszynski, "Sino-Japanese Relations: Interdependence, Rivalry, and Regional Security". *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31/1 (April 2009), p. 144.
[19] *Defense of Japan 2010*, p. 2.

insists that the international community should jointly tackle imminent nontraditional security issues like WMD proliferation, international terrorism, and piracy. Based on a shared concern about those nontraditional security threats, Japan has been pursuing multilateralism. From this viewpoint, the role of the military has been diversified, ranging from armed conflict to confidence building.[20]

The New National Defense Program Guidelines

The National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) is the "highest-level document" of Japan's defense policy to set the basic principles, roles and force posture of its Self-defense Forces, based on the fundamental perception of the security environment. The NDPG had been reviewed every five to ten years, and the former NDPG, adopted in 2004, declared that the 2004 NDPG would be revised in 2009 in consideration of changing trends in the security environment, as well as the progress of military technologies.[21] The new NDPG was finally adopted in December 2010, due to the launch of the new DPJ government in August 2009.

Before the new NDPG was released, a "Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era", a prime minister's committee mainly composed of security experts, issued an important report in August 2010. For the purpose of making proposals for Japan's basic defense policy, this report suggests that the future defense policy of Japan should be based on a "dynamic deterrence" concept which can cope with a complex security environment, where there might be various contingencies occurring simultaneously and consecutively, rather than the traditional "basic defense force" concept based on "static deterrence".[22] In November of the same year, the ruling DPJ committee on foreign policy and security released a report that points out the importance of increasing the capability of "dynamic deterrence" and of protecting the southwestern region.[23]

Actually, the new NDPG underlines effective deterrence and defense, stabilization of

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[20] "National Defense Program Guidelines from FY2011" (referred to hereafter as "NDPG2011"), p. 2.
[21] *East Asian Strategic Review 2010*, p. 250.
[22] "Japan's Vision for Future Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era", pp. 18-9.
[23] *Asagumo*, 2 December 2010.

the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region, and improvement of the global security environment as the three dimensions of self-defense forces. For attaining these objectives, the new NDPG introduces a new concept of "dynamic defense force", replacing the traditional concept of "basic defense force", which aims at maintaining deterrence by defense capability per se. This new "dynamic defense" concept aims to increase the credibility of Japan's defense capabilities by conducting "timely and active" military operations for deterrence, as well as participating actively in international peace cooperation.[24]

The new defense concept was introduced in the 2010 NDPG because of the change in strategic environment surrounding Japan; unlike the Cold War era, a nation's defense force should be employed even for peacetime operations, including humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, peace keeping, and anti-piracy activities. Also, particularly in East Asia, the danger of nuclear power is still imminent and Japan's neighbors are strongly promoting military modernization. In this context, with the objective of demonstrating the national will and capabilities to secure its sovereignty and territory and protect the nation, Japan should increase SDF activities on the basis of "dynamic deterrence". Therefore, the "dynamic defense" concept underlines the constant and strategic implementation of intelligence, patrol and reconnaissance activities.[25] Along with the new NDPG, a new Mid-term Defense Program (MDP) has been adopted to implement the new "dynamic defense" concept in terms of creating appropriate defense capabilities.

Facing the aggression of North Korea, the new NDPG states that Japan should seek closer cooperation with the US to rely on its extended deterrence and reinforce its ballistic missile defense capability.[26] This basic principle in the NDPG leads the new MDP to suggest that Japan should increase the number of missile-equipped Aegis destroyers from the current four to six, as well as enhance the capability of the Patriot surface-to-air missile. This "countermeasure against ballistic missile attacks" clearly aims at dealing with possible military actions by North Korea.[27]

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24 NDPG2011, p. 6.
25 NDPG2011, p. 2.
26 NDPG2011, p. 2.
27 "Mid-term Defense Program FY2011-2015", p. 6.

Although North Korea is one of the most salient security issues to Japan, the new NDPG and MDP can be said to focus more on how to cope with China's activity in the East China Sea. The NDPG reiterates that China's continuously growing military expenditure, "extensive and rapid" military modernization mainly for strengthening power-projection capability, and expanding and increasing activities in its surrounding waters arouse concern in not only the region but also the entire international community, along with "insufficient transparency" of its defense policy.[28] Based on this perception of China, the NDPG defines the role of defense forces primarily as effective deterrence and defense, centering on securing Japan's surrounding waters and airspace above them, and taking appropriate countermeasures for attacks against offshore islands.[29] The NDPG strongly connects the "dynamic defense" concept with the protection of Japan's offshore islands.

More specifically, the new MDP applies the concept of "dynamic defense force" to the protection of the southwestern region, and border small islands in particular. The MDP plans to change the defense posture of all three services to make it suitable for strengthening the protection of southwestern Japan; for example, the Ground Self-defense Force establishes a new coast guard unit in the southwestern islands, as well as a unit responsible for the first strike. The Maritime Self-defense Force will more flexibly operationalize its security squads in order to effectively conduct intelligence, reconnaissance, and antisubmarine operations in Japan's surrounding waters. The MSDF will also increase the number of submarines from sixteen to twenty-two. And the Air Self-defense Force (ASDF) will add one more fighter aircraft unit to the Naha base of Okinawa to form two squadrons, and establish a new air wing as well.[30] Moreover, the ASDF is seeking to enable the E-2C early warning aircraft to conduct continuous operations in the southwestern area.[31]

From this perspective, Japan renewed its recognition of the basic importance of the US-Japan alliance, although the alliance had been shaken due to the base relocation issue in Okinawa.[32] Since the Senkaku incident, this sense of importance has been

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28 NDPG2011, p. 3.
29 NDPG2011, pp. 9-10.
30 "Mid-term Defense Program FY2011-2015", pp. 2-3.
31 "Mid-term Defense Program FY2011-2015", p. 4.
32 NDPG2011, p. 3.

shared more widely among Japanese. In January 2011, the Japanese government agreed with its US counterpart to begin talks on the new "shared security objectives", aiming to clarify the strategy vis-à-vis North Korea and China.[33] Foreign Minister Maehara declared in his January 2011 speech in Washington DC, "An unshakeable Japan-US alliance will be essential".[34] Moreover, in his January 2011 speech in Tokyo, Prime Minister Kan clearly stated that the US-Japan alliance should be maintained and reinforced regardless of change of government in Japan.[35]

Also, the NDPG emphasizes the necessity of reinforcing ties with "value-sharing" nations, like Australia and South Korea, seeking trilateral cooperation between US-Japan-Australia and US-Japan-South Korea. In fact, it has been revealed that the Japanese government has been talking with the ROK government to issue a joint declaration to strengthen a comprehensive relationship between the two countries including security cooperation.[36] Moreover, Japan is seeking trilateral cooperation between Japan, the US and India by launching a trilateral strategic dialogue to discuss security issues in the Asia-Pacific region and the Indian Ocean.[37]

Multilateralism and Implications for Security in Southeast Asia

In the Asia-Pacific region, it is vital to establish a network of multilayered, bilateral/multilateral security cooperation for creating a more stabilized security environment.[38] In this regard, the new NDPG repeatedly underlines the significance of security multilateralism. Particularly, it inevitably requires cooperation among nations to effectively tackle trans-national/nontraditional security issues. Also, from the perspective of confidence building, multilateral cooperation on nontraditional security can alleviate tensions even in traditional security issues.[39] Therefore, Japan

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33 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 6 January 2011.
34 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Opening a New Horizon in the Asia Pacific (Foreign Policy Speech by H.E. Mr. Seiji Maehara, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan at the Center for Strategic and International Studies)", http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/juk_1101/speech1101.html (accessed 7 January 2011).
35 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 21 January 2011.
36 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 4 January 2011.
37 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 5 January 2011.
38 NDPG2011, p. 8.
39 Dominik Heller, "The Relevance of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) for Regional Security in the Asia-Pacific". *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27/1 (April 2005), p. 124.

should foster security cooperation not only with South Korea and Australia based on the alliance with the US, but also seek security dialogue and defense exchange with China and Russia, as well as multilateral defense dialogue and cooperation. With regard to China in particular, the Japanese government emphasizes the importance of forging a mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests.[40]

In this sense, Japan's effort to reinforce security cooperation with Southeast Asia assumes great significance. In fact, the new NDPG refers to the ARF and the ADMM Plus as effective frameworks for multilateral security cooperation. Through these frameworks, Japan should play an appropriate role in promoting practical cooperation in addressing nontraditional security issues, aiming eventually to create a regional order.[41] As one of the founding members, Japan has been deeply committed to the ARF, striving to implement practical cooperation in order to increase the relevance of this security forum. Regarding the ADMM Plus, Japan seems to be resolute for supporting ASEAN in promoting nontraditional security cooperation and dialogue for conflict resolution. The ARF and the ADMM Plus include both China and Russia as their members, so deepening cooperation through these dialogue channels will enable Japan to consolidate confidence and trust with these countries, which is compatible with Japan's security policy vis-à-vis China (and Russia).

Reinforcing security ties with ASEAN has another dimension. As the new NDPG refers to ASEAN member countries just after South Korea and Australia for Japan's important security partners, Southeast Asia is of great significance for Japan's multilateral security cooperation. Japan is clearly pursuing the strengthening of security ties with Southeast Asia not only because of stabilizing the strategic environment in the Asia-Pacific region, but also the importance of Southeast Asia to Japan's economy and security and for securing sea-lanes in particular.

In recent years, the Ministry of Defense of Japan has been strengthening a security partnership with ASEAN by annually holding a vice-minister level meeting, followed by a "Tokyo Seminar", where academics from Japan and Southeast Asia gather to discuss nontraditional security issues. In addition to this security dialogue, Japan's

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40 NDPG2011, p. 8.
41 NDPG2011, p.8.

MOD has been active in fostering more practical cooperation. Japan's MOD is reported to be embarking on supporting Southeast Asia by capacity-building to manage nontraditional security issues. More specifically, Japan will collaborate with Vietnam in disaster relief, with Indonesia in antipiracy measures, and with Cambodia in demining.[42]

Furthermore, Japan's pursuit of security cooperation with ASEAN has implications in terms of China's expanding influence in Southeast Asia. Japan seeks a multidimensional relationship with ASEAN including security cooperation to keep it relevant as an important dialogue partner to ASEAN. Actually, closer security ties with Southeast Asia might enable Japan to expand its strategic choices to deal with the China challenge. Some Japanese scholars and practitioners hold that there will be more room for cooperation between Japan and ASEAN in coping with China's growing assertiveness in its surrounding waters, including the East and South China Seas. Japan and ASEAN would be able to take joint actions to encourage China to have talks about these issues in multilateral dialogue channels. However, there might be challenges to the joint actions. Within ASEAN, the member countries are not necessarily unanimous in how to manage the South China Sea issue. Also, even the claimants to sovereignty over the South China Sea may be reluctant to adopt a determined stance toward China's assertiveness.

Conclusion

Japan has repeatedly expressed concern about China's growing military power and lack of transparency of its defense budget and decision-making process in security policy. Against this backdrop, the Senkaku incident in September 2010 made Japan more aware of China's security challenge. The new NDPG clearly reflected this sense of crisis; in the face of China's growing assertiveness in the East China Sea, Japan has decided to reinforce the protection of the offshore islands by changing its defense posture and strengthening the alliance with the US, as well as seeking trilateral and multilateral security cooperation with South Korea, Australia, India, and ASEAN. Japan's approach to pursue closer security ties with Southeast Asia, centering on addressing nontraditional security, can be interpreted as expanding

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42 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 5 January 2011.

Japan's strategic choices for the China challenge. Although the Japanese government obviously appreciated assistance offered by China in disaster relief for the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011, Japan will continue to be vigilant concerning China's growing activity in the East China Sea, seeing both improving aspects and increasing concern in Japan-China relations.

(The views expressed herein are entirely the author's own and do not represent the official position of the National Institute for Defense Studies or the Ministry of Defense).