

CHAPTER 12

A New Government at a Difficult Time: Japan's Security Outlook

*Yasushi Sukegawa*¹

Introduction

The year 2012 marked several epochs for Japan. It was the 60th anniversary for the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the establishment of diplomatic relations with India; the 40th for Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization; and the 20th for Japan's participation in international peace-keeping operations. However, the year might not be one for full celebration, as it witnessed an array of diplomatic and security problems for the country to deal with.

The year 2012 also witnessed the end of the three and a half year rule of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The general election of the House of Representatives, the lower and more powerful house of Japan's bicameral National Diet, was held on December 16, 2012. The DPJ was routed while the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won a landslide victory, securing a solid majority in the house. The LDP's leader Shinzo Abe assumed his 2nd premiership on December 26, 2012. The LDP government, in a coalition with New Komeito, will play a crucial role in leading the nation's security policy at this difficult period of time.

This paper is intended to provide some thoughts on security challenges Japan faces. It begins with a brief review of the recent regional security environment, followed by notable changes in Japanese bilateral relations in 2012. Then the paper attempts to summarize the achievement of DPJ governments and discuss prospects for the new LDP administration with several concluding remarks.

¹ This paper was presented at the Asia-Pacific Security Workshop, Tokyo, January 16-17, 2012. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Ministry of Defense or the Japanese Government.

Security Environment in Asia-Pacific

At the beginning of 2010, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda spoke at a plenary meeting of both houses of the Diet about the “chance” and “risk” that the Asia-Pacific potentially has for Japan’s future. Prime Minister Noda posits that the “chance” in short is of the region as the “world’s center of growth,” and the “risk” as increasing regional stability and uncertainty concerning the outlook for regional security.² Despite rows and feuds between governments in the region, we should not lose sight of the chance or the overall direction in which Asia-Pacific has been heading. The region is becoming an engine of the world economy, and countries in the region have been developing economic, social, and cultural ties with each other. The governments share in common the notion of peaceful and stable development (at least in principle). One does not have to underestimate what the region has achieved over two decades since the end of Cold War. It requires careful assessment to judge if recent political skirmishes are really harming regional security, or simply remain as several disrupting factors. Otherwise, provocations will be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

However, even in the eyes of those who are optimistic about Asia-Pacific’s future, North Korea poses a difficult challenge. While the Six-Party Talks has been suspended since December 2008, North Korea has potentially made significant progress in developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capabilities.³ Its leader Kim Jong-un, who assumed the positions of First Secretary of Korean Workers’ Party and Chairman of Central Military Commission in April 2012, did not ease concerns over his country’s nuclear and missile programs. Rather, North Korea’s launches in April and December showed its determinedness. The new regime has continued to undermine peace and stability in the region.⁴

The Japanese annual defense whitepaper points out that China’s broad, rapid arms buildup and modernization, in tandem with its insufficient transparency in military spending and security policy could lead to distrust and misunderstanding.⁵

² Noda’s statement at the respective plenaries of the lower and upper houses, January 24, 2012.

³ Ministry of Defense (MOD), *Defense of Japan 2012* (August 2012), pp. 2-3.

⁴ To evaluate North Korea’s “threat,” a balanced analysis like T.J. Pempel’s would be useful, though neighboring countries may tend to feel more uncertainty and unpredictability than others. T. J. Pempel “Security Architecture in Northeast Asia: Projections from Rearview Mirror,” in T. J. Pempel, and Chung-Min Lee eds, *Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia: Architecture and Beyond*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 213-214.

⁵ *Defense of Japan 2012*, p. 3.

This concern would be amplified by China's recent maritime disputes from the Yellow Sea to the South China Sea, notably with the Philippines, South Korea, and Vietnam. Around the Japanese waters, China has been intensifying maritime activity particularly since the Sino-Japanese boat collision in September 2010. Swaine and Fravel argue that Chinese "assertive" behavior is "arguably one of the most important potential causes of serious confrontation or even conflict between the U.S., allied powers, and China over the coming years."⁶

Some may claim that the Russian military's modernization, coupled with its active naval and air force operations in the Far East, could affect Japanese security in the upcoming years.⁷ Yet it is not appropriate to understand Russian security policy solely in relation to Japan, since China and Russia's domestic political conditions are also relevant.⁸

As a whole, the Japanese might see themselves in a somewhat deteriorating security environment. Of course, one country's security situation is not merely a product of its bilateral relations with another country. Also, not every bilateral confrontation is a security issue. Nevertheless, bilateral disputes tend to get a lot of press and easily catch the public eye, weakening the momentum for developing trust and cooperation. This could thus undermine regional security in the long run. Leaders should act with statesmanship and prudence to limit confrontations within parameters, so they can ensure that the overall course of regional development is not hampered. Provoking or resorting to domestic nationalistic sentiment is what is least recommended. In the end, they may get troubled with the "do something, if you are not chicken" kind of growing populist claim. Recent trends in a couple of bilateral relationships involving Japan could suggest a lot in this regard.

⁶ Michael D. Swaine and M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Assertive Behavior Part Two: The Maritime Periphery," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 35 (Summer 2011), p. 15.

⁷ *Defense of Japan 2012*, p. 3. See, also, Foreign Minister Gemba's statement at the security committee of the lower house on March 2, 2012 and November 24, 2012; Defense Minister Tanaka's at the security committee of the lower house on March 2, 2012 and at the foreign affairs and defense committee of the upper house on March 22, 2012; Defense Minister Morimoto's at the security committee of the lower house on June 14, 2012 and at the foreign affairs and defense committee of the upper house on the same day.

⁸ National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), "Russia: Crafting an East Asian Strategy with an Eye on China," *East Asian Strategic Review* (May 2012), pp. 183-191.

Bilateral Relations

China

A case in point is Sino-Japanese relations. The issue of the Senkaku Islands is what has most attracted political and public attention in Japan in terms of its foreign relations in the last few years, particularly in 2012.⁹ In January, the Japanese government announced that it would assign a name to 39 uninhabited islets in an effort to make clear the boundaries of Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). This was immediately followed by repercussions from China because four of the 39 islets are located within the Senkaku Islands. In March the Japanese media reported that the naming was completed, and on the same day, China announced on the website of the State Oceanic Administration that it had named 71 islands, including those in the Senkakus.

The bilateral relationship was further tensed as Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara revealed his plan in April that his Metropolitan Government would purchase the Islands from a private landowner. In July, Prime Minister Noda said that the central government would buy them with a view to manage the Senkakus "in a calm and stable manner."¹⁰ In response, massive anti-Japanese protests erupted in China. One example of such protests is the landing of Hong Kong activists on *Uotsurishima*. The Japanese government endorsed the purchase of three of the Senkaku Islands on September 10. The relevant legal procedures were completed the next day.

This "nationalization" fueled Chinese resentment. The Washington Post reported that demonstrators "threw rocks at the Japanese Embassy in Beijing, attacked Japanese factories and looted Japanese department stores."¹¹ The Chinese government responded again immediately by announcing its own base points and baseline for the Chinese territorial waters on the day of nationalization. Shortly after, they also

⁹ This paper is not to recount the official lines of the Japanese government on the issue. For a recent summary of the issue from a Japanese perspective, see, for example, Yasuo Nakauchi, "Senkaku Shoto wo Meguru Mondai to Nicchu Kankei: Nihon no Ryodo Hennyu kara Konnichi madeno Keii to Kongo no Kadai [Issues over the Senkaku Islands and Sino-Japanese Relations: Details from Incorporation by Japan to Today and Challenges Ahead]," *Rippo to Chosa* [Legislation and Investigation], No. 334 (November 2012), pp. 69-84. The Japanese official position is stated in Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), "Japan-China Relations: Current Situation of Senkaku Islands" (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/index.html>).

¹⁰ *Asahi Shimbun*, July 7, 2012.

¹¹ "Panetta to Urge China and Japan to Tone Down Dispute Over Islands," *Washington Post*, September 16, 2012. See also "Panasonic, Toyota Report Damages in China as Protests Widen," *Bloomberg*, September 16, 2012; "Anti-Japan Protests Spread across China," *Financial Times*, September 18, 2012.

announced the filing of the baseline announcement with the United Nations. China Daily sponsored a full-page opinion advertisement titled "Diaoyu Islands belong to China" in the September 28 editions of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.¹² China cancelled the ceremony which was scheduled to be held in Beijing on October 29, the day celebrating the 40th anniversary of the normalization of ties with Japan.

Now, Chinese vessels come to the Japanese territorial and contiguous waters on an almost daily basis. Chinese airplanes approach Japan's airspace on an almost daily basis as well.¹³ This situation has yet to improve since the new leaders came to office in the respective countries. Whereas China has maintained that its vessels and aircrafts are simply conducting routine patrols, the Japanese feel that they are being harassed, and that China's claim is unilateral irredentism.¹⁴ From the Chinese side, Japan's nationalization might go beyond their tolerance.¹⁵

South Korea

Another case would be bilateral relations between Japan and South Korea. Regardless of the territorial and historical disputes, the two countries were promoting security dialogue in the first half of 2012. For example, in May 2012 Prime Minister Noda and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak met in Beijing to confirm that the two countries would cooperate in dealing with North Korea. In June, the defense leaders of Japan, South Korea, and the United States agreed to continue to reinforce trilateral policy coordination and collaboration.¹⁶ Japan and South Korea together joined trilateral naval drills with the United States in June and August.¹⁷

¹² "China Takes Islands Dispute with Japan to Pages of U.S. Newspapers," *Reuters*, September 28, 2012.

¹³ Y-12 propeller plane of the Chinese State Oceanic Administration intrudes Japan's airspace on December 13, for the first time that China's aircraft do so. *Mainichi Shimbun*, December 13, 2012.

¹⁴ *Yomiuri Shimbun*, December 18, 2012.

¹⁵ Masayuki Masuda, "Senkaku Shoto wo Meguru Chugoku no Tainichi Seisaku: Kakushinteki Rieki to Taikyoku no Hazama [China's Policy on the Senkaku Islands: Between Overall Situation and Core Interests]," *Toa* [East Asia], No. 545 (November 2012), p. 32.

¹⁶ Japanese Senior Vice-Minister Shu Watanabe, South Korean Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin, and US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta met at the 11th IISS Asia Security Summit (Shangri-la dialogue). US Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), "Joint Statement of the U.S.-Republic of Korea-and Japan Meeting at Shangri-La," June 2, 2012.

¹⁷ Staff Office of Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF), "On Japan-US-South Korea Joint Drill," Press Release, June 15 and August 7, 2012.

However, a drastic downturn in bilateral relations came in the latter half of the year. This was indicated by the South Korean request to put off the signing of the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) twice, which was scheduled to be held in Tokyo in May and postponed to June.¹⁸

President Lee's actions were critical. On August 10, Lee landed on Takeshima, something Korean presidents had never done before. The Japanese foreign minister immediately called the Korean ambassador in Tokyo to protest the visit, and ordered Japan's ambassador to Korea to return to Tokyo—an action viewed as virtually a recall.¹⁹ Japan urged South Korea to jointly bring the territorial dispute to the International Court of Justice, which South Korea rejected. Furthermore, Lee allegedly requested an apology from the Emperor for the Japanese prewar colonial rule.²⁰ Both houses of the Japanese Diet endorsed a resolution to protest Lee.²¹

Security dialogue and cooperation between the two countries including the GSOMIA and ACSA (Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement) reached a roadblock and no remarkable developments were made, although they did not necessarily suspend all exchanges in the field of defense and security. The situation was carried over to the new governments in the respective countries.

Russia

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to the Kunashiri Island, one of the four islands of the Japanese Northern Territories in November 2010 (the first visit as Russian head of state), dealt a significant blow to its political relationship with Japan. However, senior politicians of the two countries have met on several occasions in 2012, hinting at some upturn in Russo-Japanese relations. In January, Foreign Minister Gemba and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov highlighted the importance of

¹⁸ *Nihon Keizai Shinbun (Nikkei)*, June 29, 2012.

¹⁹ *Asahi*, August 10, 2012.

²⁰ According to a South Korean news agency, Lee said: If Japan's emperor "wishes to visit South Korea, I think it would be good if he apologizes sincerely to those who passed away while fighting for independence" at a local teachers' university. Chang Jae-soon, "Lee: Japan's Emperor Should Apologize if He Wants to Visit S. Korea," *Yonhap News*, August 14, 2012.

²¹ House of Representatives, "Resolution to Protest to South Korean President Lee Myung-bak's Landing on the Takeshima and His Remark about the Emperor," August 24, 2012; House of Councillors, "Resolution to Protest to South Korean President Lee Myung-bak's Landing on the Takeshima and His Remark about the Emperor," August 29, 2012.

both countries' contribution to the Asia-Pacific region.²² They met again in July to express their expectations toward exchanges between defense authorities, as well as military units of the two countries.²³ In October, Nikolai Patrushev, Russia's security council secretary and an aide to President Vladimir Putin, came to Tokyo and met with the Japanese prime, foreign, and defense ministers. Patrushev and Gemba signed a memorandum to strengthen ties between the Japanese foreign ministry and Russian Security Council, and agreed to further develop cooperation in such areas as joint naval search and rescue drills, and anti-drug cooperation in Afghanistan.²⁴

The heads of state of the two countries met as well. In June, on a visit to Mexico to attend the G20 Summit, Prime Minister Noda met with President Putin, which was the first meeting for the two leaders. Noda and Putin agreed to strengthen efforts to contribute to regional stability and prosperity, including promoting defense and security cooperation, and cooperation on the sea.²⁵ In September, they met again to affirm such efforts. These high level face-to-face communications would gather momentum for substantial progress in Russo-Japanese relations.²⁶

In these cases, some provocative actions seem to have derived from domestic political situations (i.e., aimed at the domestic audience) on one side, and are symbolic in nature. Yet through such behaviors, and in tandem with bitter verbal exchanges, governments may have less and less room for maneuvering, and may even be forced to climb the escalation ladder. In this respect, it should be highly appreciated that Chinese and Japanese defense authorities had a meeting in June 2012 amid tense bilateral relations in order to continue their work to establish a naval contact/communication mechanism.²⁷

²² MOFA, "Russo-Japanese Foreign Ministerial Meeting between Minister Gemba and Minister Lavrov (Summary)," January 28, 2012.

²³ MOFA, "Foreign Minister Gemba's Visit to Russia (Summary)," July 28, 2012.

²⁴ MOFA, "Gemba Gaimu-Daijin to Patorushefu Roshia Renpo Anzenhosho-Kaigi Shoki ni yoru Kaidan [Meeting between Foreign Minister Gemba and Russian National Security Council Secretary Patrushev]," October 23, 2012.

²⁵ MOFA, "Japan-Russia Summit Meeting at the G20 Los Cabos Summit (Overview)" June 19, 2012.

²⁶ MOFA, "Japan-Russia Summit Meeting on the Occasion of APEC Leaders' Meeting in Vladivostok (Overview)," September 8, 2012.

²⁷ MOD, "3rd Working Group Consultation on Naval Contact Mechanism between Sino-Japanese Defense Authorities (Summary of the Result)," June 29, 2012.

Policy Developments

In 2012, partly because the ruling DPJ had lost control of the upper house, and partly because the Noda administration had strongly focused on the tax issue, it is difficult to determine whether security policy showed much progress.²⁸ Nonetheless, an exceptional policy development occurred to the area of arms export control. The DPJ government relaxed restrictions on defense equipment exports in the fields of (i) peace contribution/international cooperation, and (ii) international joint development and manufacture.²⁹ Before, the overseas transfer of defense equipment was judged on an individual basis. The relaxation this time makes such individual exemptions no longer necessary if the case falls into one of the two categories.

Another policy development may be outer-space policy. As a result of reorganization, a space policy committee was established in the Cabinet Office for the purpose of achieving greater coordination among relevant ministries and agencies, one of which, the Japan Aerospace Exploring Agency (JAXA), was tasked to serve national security as part of the agency's missions. Yet another policy development was cyber-security. Following the establishment in the previous year of a cyber-security office, the Ministry of Defense created a cyber-security strategy and decided to set up a cyber-space command both in September.

Defense cooperation could be viewed as remarkable given the domestic political situations. US-Japanese "dynamic defense cooperation" is a good example.³⁰ In April 2012, at the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee ("2+2"), foreign and defense ministers of the two countries noted that "bilateral dynamic defense cooperation, including timely and effective joint training, joint surveillance and reconnaissance activities, as well as joint and shared use of facilities, would

²⁸ For a detailed explanation of the conception of dynamic defense force, see NIDS, "Japan: The Adoption of the New National Defense Program Guidelines—Toward a More Dynamic Defense Force," *East Asian Strategic Review 2011* (May 2011), Chap. 8.

²⁹ "Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary on Guidelines for Overseas Transfer of Defense Equipment etc.," December 27, 2011.

³⁰ Dynamic defense cooperation (DDC) was first announced after the meeting of Japanese Defense Minister Yasuo Ichikawa and US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta in December 2011. The two ministers agreed on energizing the operations of units, demonstrating the presence and abilities of both Japan and the United States, and developing a "dynamic" relationship in terms of defense cooperation. "Japan-U.S. Defense Ministers Conference," *Japan Defense Focus*, No. 24 (December 2011). DDC is based on America's strategic rebalancing and Japan's effort to develop a dynamic defense force. See, for important elements of DDC, Tomohiko Satake, "US Rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific and Japan-US Dynamic Defense Cooperation," *NIDS Briefing Memo*, No. 169 (November 5, 2012).

strengthen deterrence” in their joint statement.³¹ In the same month, Prime Minister Noda and President Barak Obama agreed to further enhance bilateral security and defense cooperation.³² The leaders also welcomed the 2+2 statement, saying that it “marks a major step forward in our bilateral security relationship and opens the way for new Alliance initiatives to enhance our operational cooperation including dynamic defense cooperation.”³³ The two countries have initiated a review to revise the Guidelines for Japan-US Security Cooperation.

Also, security dialogue between Australia and Japan was successful. In September 2012, the two countries held the 4th Joint Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultations (“2+2”) in Sydney. In the joint statement, they set forth common strategic objectives and pledged to jointly promote a wide range of cooperation in bilateral, trilateral, regional, and international security matters.³⁴ The Japanese Cabinet endorsed a bill to revise the SDF Act to implement the Japan-Australia ACSA.³⁵ The bill was then sent to the Diet and on November 26 was finally approved. The bill was also to strengthen the ACSA with the United States by authorizing SDF units to provide supplies and services to the American forces when they jointly work in international disaster relief missions.

In fact, Australia, Japan, and the United States have been promoting trilateral cooperation. In February 2012, Cope North Guam was conducted with the participation of the air force units from the three countries—the first trilateral joint exercise. Also, Australia joined as an observer for the first time in the joint Japan-US army command post exercise during the same month. In June, the 2nd trilateral defense ministerial meeting was held in conjunction with Shangri-La Dialogue. In the first-issued joint statement, the three defense leaders announced that they would “work to refine and consolidate the trilateral defense relationship to support the network of existing alliances, forums, and dialogues to meet a variety of common

³¹ “Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee,” April 27, 2012.

³² “U.S.-Japan Joint Statement: A Shared Vision for the Future,” April 30, 2012.

³³ “Fact Sheet: U.S.-Japan Cooperative Initiatives,” April 30, 2012.

³⁴ “Australia and Japan—Cooperating for Peace and Stability: Common Vision and Objectives,” September 14, 2012.

³⁵ The two countries signed an ACSA at the 3rd Joint Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultations (“2+2”) in May 2010. For Japan, this was the second ACSA only after the one with the United States which was originally concluded in June 1996. While Australia completed its domestic process to enact the Agreement in March 2011, Japan did not. The Diet approved the Agreement *per se* in April 2012, but Japan’s legal system additionally requires a law to implement it. So, legislation on an earliest opportunity was required. See, *Defense of Japan 2012*, p. 280.

security challenges.”³⁶ The Australia-Japan 2+2 joint statement of September 2012 also shows the two countries’ commitment to develop and implement an action plan that promotes a strong, dynamic, and flexible trilateral defense relationship.

Japan has also been promoting security and defense cooperation with other countries in the Asia-Pacific. In June, Japan and India had a joint naval drill for the first time.³⁷ MOD strengthened its effort to support capacity-building in Southeast Asian countries, following the establishment in the previous year of an office in charge of this matter. In 2012, for example, projects to work with Timor-Leste and Cambodia began. Japan is also boosting capacity-building effort vis-à-vis Vietnam.³⁸ Although some may view these efforts as an attempt to counter China,³⁹ the 2010 NDPG states that the purpose of capacity-building activities is to contribute to Asia-Pacific regional stability and improve the global security environment.

³⁶ Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), “Joint Statement of the U.S.-Australia-and Japan Meeting at Shangri-La,” June 2, 2012.

³⁷ Staff Office of MSDF, “Indo-Japanese Joint Drill,” June 5, 2012. Japan and India had meetings between their prime and foreign ministers in 2012. Leaders agreed to foster security cooperation, in particular on maritime security. MOFA, “Japan-India Summit Meeting (Overview),” November 20, 2012.

³⁸ MOD, “Vice Minister Kanazawa’s Visit to Vietnam, November 25-27 (Summary),” December 3, 2012.

³⁹ Martin Fackler, “Japan Is Flexing Its Military Muscle to Counter a Rising,” *New York Times*, November 27, 2012.

Prospects for 2013

End of the DPJ rule

In 2009, the DPJ came to power in a coalition with the People's New Party and the Social Democratic Party. The Democrats pledged to bring about political leadership and de-bureaucratization. The Cabinet and its committees were supposed to make decisions at the center with ministers and junior ministers in each line agency, and the role of civil servants was to be somewhat negated. However, persistent intra-party fights and the need to coordinate with junior coalition partners hampered effective decision-making. The media was critical concerning the DPJ's management of government and itself, and sometimes the DPJ seemed unable to define the decision making process, let alone to make decisions.⁴⁰

A serious failure of political leadership in security policy is exemplified by the party's handling of the relocation of the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, located in Ginowan City on the island of Okinawa. All the biggest four Japanese newspapers expressed concern, disappointment, and criticism concerning the prime minister's lack of leadership, and resulting loss of public confidence in addition to that of his allies.⁴¹ After more than a half year of "straying," the final decision was that the Futenma base would be moved to an offshore location in Henoko, northeastern Okinawa. This was virtually the original plan that the governments of Japan and the United States had agreed to on in 2006.

The DPJ's foreign policy, at first conducted under the banner of "fraternity diplomacy" with neighbors and the idea of East Asian integration, came to an end with soured relations with China and the first visits to the disputed islands by the heads of state of Russia and South Korea. Although US-Japanese relations improved through joint response to the 2011 quake/tsunami and nuclear disasters, the DPJ was blamed for this diplomatic disaster by the LDP.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Asahi*, October 2, 2012; *Mainichi*, November 17, 2012; *Yomiuri*, December 17, 2012.

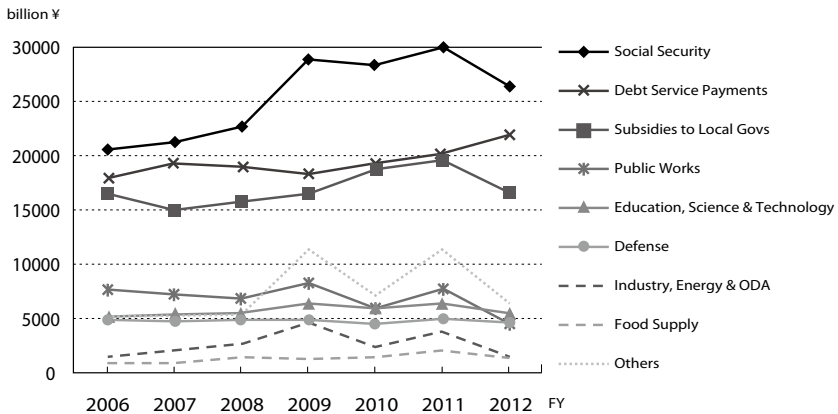
⁴¹ *Asahi*, December 4, 2009, March 29 and May 29, 2010; *Mainichi*, December 4, 2009, March 27 and May 26, 2010; *Nikkei*, December 5, 2009, March 21 and May 29, 2010; *Yomiuri*, December 4, 2009, March 28 and May 29, 2010.

⁴² Mainichi's editorial on January 3, 2013 claims that the DPJ was not alone responsible for the diplomatic strain.

Looking at the domestic political scene, the Democrats faced difficulty in pushing forward their agendas especially after the DPJ lost the 2010 upper house election. No substantial defense legislative proposals cleared the Diet (except a couple of bills to deal with personnel and military base matters). For example, in July 2012, the DPJ gave up sending to the Diet a bill to revise the Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peace Keeping Operations (PKO Act), which will allow SDF units on peacekeeping operations to rescue civilians in remote locations.⁴³ The DPJ government also submitted in vain several times to the Diet a bill to amend the MOD and the SDF Acts. At the very end of their rule, the Diet approved a revised version of the bill whose major scope was reduced to implement the Japan-Australia ACSA as described above, which was the only development in terms of the national defense legal system during the DPJ rule.

In terms of government spending, the DPJ was neither pro-defense nor anti-defense compared to the LDP, given that social security expenditures and debt payments had already been expected to go up. In 2009, after coming to power, the Democrats generously distributed money to various social and economic programs amid the global economic crisis. However, the next year they squeezed spending on the favorably treated areas. While spending on economic programs and public works shows volatility to some extent, education and defense outlays are kept somewhat constant—not so different from the way of budget allocation by the LDP.

⁴³ Under the current law, SDF units engaged in a UN peacekeeping operation are authorized to use weapons only under strictly limited conditions (Article 24 of the PKO Act). The SDF may not be allowed to fire to protect civilians, refugees, and foreign militaries even in imminent danger if they are in remote locations.

Fig. 1 Government spending on major policy areas, FY2006-2012

Notes: General Account expenditures. Until 2010, settlement; 2011, revised budget; 2012, initial budget.
 Source: Fiscal Data on the website of Ministry of Finance (Tables 19-2 and 20, downloaded from <http://www.mof.go.jp/budget/reference/statistics/data.htm>)

Security policy did not necessarily stagnate in every aspect under the Democrat's rule. The achievement of their governments include: adopting the conception of a dynamic defense force; proactive stance on the arms exports ban; reinforcing defense cooperation including capacity-building; and developing cyber-security policy and space policy. These are all mentioned in the 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG)—that is, the DPJ government was implementing the NDPG. While the 2010 NDPG was a breakthrough from the standpoint of the 2004 NDPG (established by the LDP government), it can be understood as a development/extension rather than a denial of the previous one. One may want to assess that the DPJ government did not depart from the policy lines of the LDP era. The opposite would be true at least to some extent. For the LDP government, challenges are not only what the DPJ has yet to address. What the DPJ has been working on will remain challenges for the LDP as well.

LDP's security policy and challenges for the Party

In its electoral manifesto, the LDP states its overall policy lines: strengthening the alliance with the United States; improving relationships with China, Korea, and Russia; promoting cooperation with ASEAN member countries such as Australia

and India in security and energy; and conducting diplomacy proactively based on the principles of freedom, justice, and the rule of law.⁴⁴ Also, the LDP has proposed the following policy agendas in its recent official documents published for the election.⁴⁵

- Establishing a national security council
- Authorizing collective self-defense
- Enacting a “basic law” for national security
- Increasing the personnel, equipment, and budget of the military and coast guards
- Amending the Constitution to legally give the SDF the status of an armed force
- Reorganizing the defense establishment, e.g. unifying civilian and military offices and establishing an integrated office for military operations
- Revising Japan-US Security Cooperation Guidelines
- Maintaining deterrence while reducing local burdens in the process of American military base relocation
- Promoting human security
- Enacting a law for international peace cooperation at large
- Legislating to protect the territory and territorial waters
- Strengthening control of the Senkaku islands, e.g. getting the government personnel stationed in the islands
- Making every effort to solve the issues of abduction and missile/nuclear development
- Strengthening cyber security
- Strengthening anti-terrorist and anti-transnational organized crime measures

Some agendas on this list go along with those of the DPJ or have even already been addressed since the past LDP administrations. Others, for instance, constitutional revision and authorization of collective self-defense, have been among the most controversial issues of postwar Japanese politics—so big that it would consume much time, energy, and political resources for any government to undertake. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga has been appointed as Minister in charge of enhancing national security. The assignment of this special portfolio to a cabinet

⁴⁴ LDP, “Juten Seisaku 2012 [Key Policies 2012],” Manifesto for the 46th General Election of House of Representatives, p. 12.

⁴⁵ LDP, “Key Policies 2012,” pp. 12, 21-22; LDP, “J-Fuairu 2012: Jiminto Sogo Seisaku-shu [J-File 2012: LDP’s Policy List 2012],” Policy 95-133.

member could demonstrate “Cabinet’s determination to enhance national security.”⁴⁶

The new government has started to carry forward some of their programs. Prime Minister Abe has ordered his defense minister to revise the NDPG and the medium-term defense program. The prime minister has also ordered defense and foreign ministers to revise the Japan-US Security Cooperation Guidelines. Budget proposals for increasing military and coast guards spending have already been announced.

On the other hand, the new prime minister has shown he can be flexible. For example, the LDP made a pledge in its manifesto that it would hold a national ceremony on February 25, the date which has been celebrated as the “*Takeshima day*” by a local prefecture.⁴⁷ Abe announced after the LDP won the election that he would “carefully consider” the pledge. Likewise, the media reported that he either declined to comment or said he would carefully consider such issues as his possible visit to the annual spring festival of the Yasukuni shrine, and the plan to station government officials in the Senkaku Islands.⁴⁸

New Komeito is also supposed to influence security policy. The policy accord between the LDP and New Komeito concluded a day before the formation of a new coalition government, states that they will strengthen the Japan-US alliance and build confidence with China, South Korea, and Russia.⁴⁹ The two parties also agreed to increase government spending on the military and coast guards to protect Japan’s territory, territorial waters, and territorial space. (Controversial issues such as constitutional revision were not included.)

On one hand, the LDP would be required to manage a good balance between a difficult task to rebuild confidence and tough rhetoric the party has used on disputed issues vis-à-vis neighbor countries; on the other, domestically, between “hawkish” claims within and its pacifist coalition partner.⁵⁰ How this approach progresses will

⁴⁶ *Mainichi*, December 26, 2012.

⁴⁷ LDP, “J-File 2012,” Policy 328.

⁴⁸ *Nikkei*, November 20, 2012; *Yomiuri*, December 23, 2012.

⁴⁹ “Agreement of the Coalition Government between Liberal Democratic Party and New Komeito,” December 25, 2012.

⁵⁰ *Asahi*, September 27 and December 17, 2012; *Mainichi*, September 27 and December 20, 2012; *Nikkei*, December 18, 2012.

become much clearer after the upper house election this coming summer.

Conclusion

In 2012, Prime Minister Noda described the Asia-Pacific security environment as “increasingly difficult” throughout the year.⁵¹ This may well be exemplified by a speech he delivered to the members of the Maritime Self-Defense Force at the fleet review on October 14:

There is no need for me to reiterate to you that the security environment surrounding Japan is facing increasing and unprecedented difficulties. A neighboring country has launched a missile, which it called a “satellite,” and is engaging in nuclear development. Various incidents are occurring that relate to Japan’s territory and sovereignty.⁵²

His cabinet members followed suit. At a meeting of the security committee of the lower house on March 2, Defense Minister Tanaka and Foreign Minister Gemba used exactly the same phrase: “Japan is facing increasingly difficult security situations.” Satoshi Morimoto, who succeeded Tanaka as Defense Minister in June, followed the line his predecessor made.⁵³

At the same time, at the beginning of 2012 Noda claimed that Japan will not prevail without the Asia-Pacific and vice versa.⁵⁴ He also states that “building stable confident relations with neighbors including China, South Korea, and Russia, from a broad perspective, is the basis for peace and prosperity for Japan and the entire [Asia-Pacific] region and thus is one of the important responsibilities for the government to take.”⁵⁵ Likewise, China’s new President Xi Jinping advocates to “maintain [Sino-Japanese] bilateral relations from a broad perspective” when he met as vice president

⁵¹ Noda’s statement at the plenary of the upper house, January 27, 2012; at the budget committee of the upper house, June 13, 2012; at the plenary of the lower house, July 26, 2012; at the plenaries of the lower house, November 1 and November 8, 2012.

⁵² Prime Minister’s Office, “Address by Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda at the 2012 Fleet Review of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (provisional translation),” October 14, 2012.

⁵³ At the security committee of the lower house, 180th Session of the Diet, June 14; at the security committee of the lower house, 181st Session of the Diet, November 2.

⁵⁴ Noda’s statement at the respective plenaries of the lower and upper houses, January 24, 2012.

⁵⁵ Noda’s statement at the plenary of the lower house, October 29, 2012.

with the speaker of the Japanese lower house who visited Beijing.⁵⁶ Both Noda and Xi used the same word “大局” which means “broad perspective” or “big picture.” Japanese leaders are expected to act in this manner and persuade their counterparts to do the same.

In the longer term, Japanese policy makers will need to take into consideration such global factors as economic power shift, globalization, climate change, and new energy development, which would affect Japan's security (and regional/global security). At the domestic level, the prolonged sluggish economy and declining population are the most important factors. For the foreseeable future, the need for fiscal reconsolidation will continue to limit the room for maneuvering available to the government in terms of defense spending. To deal with those varying kinds of variables may require a security policy based on smartness and resilience. The coming years will see how Japan can tackle these urgent and long-term missions, and to what extent.

⁵⁶ Masuda, “China's Policy on the Senkaku Islands,” pp. 30-31; *Xinhua*, May 4, 2012.