

Policy Recommendations
on Japan's National Security Strategy
and Defense Policies
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The RIPS Committee

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The Most Important Recommendations

Recommendation No. 1

Recognizing that its neighboring countries pose growing military threats, Japan should construct a new National Security Strategy based on the Japan-U.S. alliance and with a view to the whole Indo-Pacific area.

The threats of North Korea and China to Japanese security have become far more serious than they were assumed to be five years ago when the National Security Strategy was first adopted. President Xi Jinping of China declared that by the middle of the current century, China would build a world-class military equivalent to that of the United States. Accordingly, Japan should recognize the rapid improvements in both the quality and the quantity of the Chinese military as well as the military threats posed by North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities.

Japan should build a new National Security Strategy around the Japan-U.S. alliance and then should explain it carefully to and extensively with its citizens.

Recommendation No. 2

To defend the Southwest Islands, Japan should tie more closely all three of the Self-Defense Forces in order to build the foundation for defending the remote islands. In addition, Japan should strengthen the Maritime Security Agency's capability to patrol the Senkaku Islands.

Because the Southwest Islands are spread over such a wide area, each must be defended individually. As a base for the defense of these remote islands, Japan needs to integrate the Self-Defense Force's three services in regard to intelligence, communications, air defense networks, logistics, and air bases, including Shimoji Air Base.

For the defense of the Senkaku Islands, Japan should take into consideration the striking rise in quality and size of China's coast as well as the increasing possibility of a land invasion by armed fishermen. The China Coast Guard (the equivalent of Japan's Maritime Security Agency [MSA]) was incorporated into the People's Armed Police Forces on July 1, 2018, and is now under the command of the People's Liberation Army. Japan should reinforce the MSA's patrol capability and reinforce its framework and positions to tie it closer to the Self-Defense Forces. In this way, Japan will be able to work to prevent both Chinese ships from entering the islands' territorial waters and armed fishermen from invading the islands.

Recommendation No. 3

In order to enhance Japan's surveillance and patrol capability against China's naval ships, oceanic survey ships, and military aircraft that often appear in the area of the Ogasawara [Bonin] Islands (the core of the Second Island Chain), Japan should expand Iwoto's [Iwo Jima's] bases and improve its communication networks.

Indeed, the Ogasawara Islands, including Iwoto (Iwo Jima), have now become much more strategically important to the defense of Japan's south.

For the last one to two years, Chinese naval ships and military aircraft have not only frequently passed through the Miyako Strait to the Pacific Ocean but also have begun to monitor Japan from the Pacific Ocean side.

In response, warning and surveillance radar should be installed in Shikoku, the Ogasawara Islands, Daitojima, Aogashima, and Torishima (Izutorishima), and early-warning aircraft and early-warning and control aircraft should be deployed on Iwoto (Iwo Jima). Communications facilities should also be considered. Likewise, unmanned aircraft, tethered balloon radars, and unmanned submarines should be used to combat threats from the air and sea.

Recommendation No. 4

In regard to the impact on Japan's security of the relations between North and South Korea and the relations between the United States and North Korea, Japan should support a stronger U.S.-South Korean alliance and Japan-U.S.-South Korea partnership in order to preserve the power balance on the Korean peninsula.

The United States and North Korea have held their summit meeting, and other attempts will be made to ease tensions in the future. Yet whether these attempts will bring real peace and stability to the Korean peninsula is uncertain, as the balance of power may shift in the process. Japan therefore should be vigilant and adjust its policies so that Japan, the United States, and South Korea will not be put at a disadvantage.

Nonetheless, despite these actions, radical changes in future U.S.-North Korean negotiations or North-South relations on the Korean peninsula may still turn the balance of power against Japan. Although Japan should prepare for such a contingency, it should still work to strengthen the U.S.-South Korean alliance and the ties among the United States, Japan, and South Korea and should not stop building up its defense forces. In addition, Japan should expand its defense of the islands of Iki and Tsushima, which link the Korean peninsula to Japan.

Recommendation No. 5

Japan should gradually increase its defense budget so as to remove any unbalanced aspects of its defense power and to make the Self-Defense Forces a true fighting force.

Even though military threats by Japan's neighboring countries have markedly increased, Japan has only slightly raised its own defense spending. Moreover, much of it is being spent on the ballistic missile defense (BMD) system and costly defense equipment from the United States. As a result, less is being spent on less expensive but nonetheless indispensable logistical equipment, thereby distorting Japan's true defense capabilities.

The needed logistical items include maintenance, ammunition, education and training, research and development, and personnel and capacity-building. A balanced defense buildup is key.

According to estimates by the Research Institute for Peace and Security, those items that need to be added amount to approximately ¥2,000 billion (US\$17.4 billion). If this is added to Japan's current defense budget, the revised defense budget would be about ¥7,000 billion (US\$60.9 billion), which is roughly equivalent to 1.4% of Japan's GDP. To reach that level in ten years, the current defense budget would have to increase by 3.5% each year.

Important Policy Recommendations on Japan's National Security Strategy

Recommendation No. 6

To carry out its "free and open Indo-Pacific strategy," Japan should create a framework of diplomatic, economic, and military cooperation with like-minded nations in order to maintain the region's current, and advantageous, balance of power.

To give form to its "free and open Indo-Pacific strategy," Japan should continue its links with Australia, India, and the United States, holding periodic meetings at the prime-minister, foreign-minister, and defense-minister levels, and the four countries should schedule joint military exercises as well as meetings among the countries' think tanks.

Efforts such as Japan's proposed initiative for "a consultative mechanism between Japan and the maritime Southeast Asian nations," as well as Japan's support of the Five-Power Defence Arrangement (formed in 1971), would hedge against China's maritime advancements. At the same time, Japan should reinforce its friendly relations with countries bordering the Indian Ocean, particularly Oman, Djibouti, and Kenya.

Recommendation No. 7

Through its partnership with like-minded nations, Japan should build an international order preventing China from forcibly changing the status quo through military and economic means and oblige it to adhere to international agreements.

Japan, together with Australia, the United States, and the ASEAN and EU countries, should try to persuade China to join a “free and open Indo-Pacific order,” thereby giving it no other choice but to act peacefully. By opposing China’s military pressure and diplomatic intimidation and by imposing sanctions against the country, Japan and like-minded countries should create an international order that obliges China to respect both international law and the rule of law. This order should be reinforced by security cooperation and other concrete power arrangements among those countries supporting the order.

The United States also should be encouraged to reenter the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) Agreement in order to establish a more desirable (wider membership) economic order in the Pacific area.

Recommendation No. 8

Japan should strengthen its ties with Taiwan, as it is an important component of its “free and open Indo-Pacific strategy.”

China adopted the Anti-Secession Law in March 2015, and since then, President Xi Jinping’s government has conducted military exercises in the Strait of Taiwan to pressure Taiwan to accept annexation. As a country upholding freedom and democracy, Taiwan holds an important place in Japan’s and the United States’ “free and open Indo-Pacific strategy.” The two countries should therefore seek a way to retain Taiwan in the network of maritime nations and to prevent its entry into China’s authoritarian regime. Taiwan’s entry into the TPP would be welcomed. In addition, Japan’s Ministry of Defense should develop stronger relations with Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense through the exchange of personnel and capacity-building support.

Recommendation No. 9

Japan should increase its use of official development aid (ODA) to help those areas beset by terrorism and civil strife, with the aim of restoring peace and rehabilitation, establishing peace, and enhancing “human security.”

Ethnic disputes, religious strife, and military conflicts that originate in a society's internal vulnerabilities present threats to local "human security" as well as to the security of society worldwide.

Diplomatic efforts and peacekeeping operations (PKO) play a role in terminating military conflicts, as does social and economic reconstruction after conflict. Many areas, however, find it difficult to turn to reconstruction after a cease-fire and instead repeatedly return to military conflict. ODA should thus be introduced at each stage of reconstruction to support the rebuilding of both infrastructure and training projects, thereby contributing to peace building.

Recommendation No. 10

Japan should rapidly expand its Self-Defense Forces' role by acquiring national cyber defense countermeasures and training specialists.

Japan has a pressing need to formulate a strategy for cyber defense, which should include policies to counter cyber attacks and to support cyber defense organizations and human resources development. The Ministry of Defense should be in charge of Japan's national cyber defense.

Important Policy Recommendations on Japan's Defense Policy

Recommendation No. 11

To help enhance Southeast Asia's security capacity and to contribute to regional stability, Japan should support the countries' capacity-building and also provide its equipment.

Japan should help maritime Southeast Asian countries and the littoral countries of the Indian Ocean build their capacity for air defense, rescue, patrols, and the like. As an important part of its own security strategy, Japan should support these countries' capacity-building and supply their defense equipment. Comprehensive support for areas such as determining the defense budget, educational training, supplies, and equipment also is important.

Recommendation No. 12

To counter ballistic missile attacks by countries like North Korea, Japan should have

a counterattack capability as a part of both its ballistic missile defense and its deterrence capability.

Even though the summit meeting between the United States and North Korea has taken place and various outcomes are possible, the threat of North Korea's launching ballistic missiles has not disappeared. That is, North Korea still could fire ballistic missiles at Japan. Consequently, Japan should have a counterattack capability, including a capability to attack an enemy's missile bases as a supplement to its BMD. Whatever the outcome of the summit meeting may be, Japan must be prepared for the worst-case scenario until "complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement" has been achieved. For Japan, both reinforcing its BMD and building up its counterattack capability are absolutely necessary.

Recommendation No. 13

Japan should improve the treatment of its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) by, for example, increasing the number of SDF members and introducing a pension system solely for the SDF.

Each service of the Self-Defense Forces is critically short of members and thus urgently needs to recruit more. At the same time, since the Japanese population is steadily declining, it will be impossible to add 10,000 new members each year. Therefore, the country should adopt more automatic and labor-saving systems and try to enlist retired SDF members and women. Although these ideas would have only limited effect, in any case the treatment of SDF members must be improved.

Japan's Self-Defense Forces are currently responsible for preserving the country's peace and independence and are expected to "risk their lives fighting." Even so, they are treated exactly like general civil servants in regard to allowance, status, honors, types of memorial service, and the like. It is no wonder that recruiting members is so difficult.

Consequently, the allowance system for SDF members, which is the same as that for general civil servants, must be thoroughly reformed. Members should receive pensions that reflect their special service to the nation, rather than their current pensions, which are based on the insurance fees withheld from SDF members' salaries. SDF members also should be entitled to, among other things, a college education at no cost. In addition, those SDF members who die while on duty should receive a special memorial service, and SDF members should receive decorations before retirement.

Because the people's knowledge and understanding are essential sources of support for the government to carry out its defense policy, they must be patiently helped

to understand it.

Recommendation No. 14

By revising its laws, Japan should create a system that can respond decisively to “gray-zone situations.” (Note: Because SDF members are permitted to use only that force deemed legal, they accordingly hesitate to use force in ambiguous [gray-zone] situations.)

In 2015 when the Peace and Security Legislation was enacted, the cabinet was supposed to make public how the government should respond to “maritime security actions,” “gray-zone situations,” and the like. The cabinet, however, left the details of those actions to be taken to those actually involved. It is important, though, to have a system in which detailed action plans are worked out in advance so that the appropriate responses will be decided at the top.

This procedure must be translated into law as soon as possible in order to protect Japan’s sovereignty and to result in orderly and clearly understood actions by the Maritime Safety Agency and the Self-Defense Forces. This also is important to protect the safety of the MSA and SDF officers involved.

In regard to foreign aircraft that violate Japan’s territorial airspace, Article 84 of the Self-Defense Forces Law states that “necessary measures shall be taken to order such aircraft to land or leave the territorial airspace.” Except for “maritime security action,” however, which is cited in Article 84 and has a clear legal base for weapons to be deployed, the article does not specify the types of weapons that may be used in other situations.

A pilot facing a difficult decision should be given a clear legal base in the Self-Defense Forces Law regarding which weapons to use to protect the sovereignty of Japan’s territorial airspace. The types of weapons to be employed must be specified for legitimate self-defense or emergencies and for those cases accepted by other countries in regard to incoming fire and the like.

Recommendation No. 15

When possible, Japan should manufacture its defense equipment at home and maintain its own defense production and technology.

The Ministry of Defense relies heavily on the civilian sector for the manufacture and repair of defense equipment. But because the quantity of equipment required is limited and much of it is imported, the defense industry has severe management difficulties, often

leading to the closure of plants. In turn, this weakens Japan's defense power, as it has no state-owned factories.

Defense equipment may be acquired through several means, including domestic production, international joint development and production, licensed production, civilian-to-military production, and imports. In June 2014, the Ministry's Committee to Promote the Comprehensive Acquisition Reform decided that defense equipment should be manufactured as much as possible by existing domestic technology if it meets such conditions as performance, application, life-cycle costs, and work schedules.

In order to sustain the sensitive technology in which Japan excels, a certain level of production should be ensured. To that end, as much defense equipment as possible should be produced with domestic technology, and domestic equipment should rely on domestic technology.