U.S. Air Force (Sara Csurilla)

EMERGING FROM BEHIND THE U.S. SHIELD

Japan's Strategy of Dynamic Deterrence and Defense Forces

By DOUGLAS JOHN MACINTYRE

I do not believe that it is a good idea for Japan to depend on the United States for her security over the next 50 or 100 years.

—Former Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, June 10, 2010

Ground Self-Defense Force members receive instructions before departing for mainland Japan in support of Operation *Tomodachi*

As the *Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan* passed its 50-year milestone in 2010, tectonic shifts within the societal, economic, geopolitical, and military landscape of East Asia were already posing serious challenges to many of the treaty's basic tenets. Within the depths of a global financial crisis, domestic stagnation, internal political change, and the shadow of China's rise, Japan's leaders have continued the decades-long transformation of their country's instruments of national power. The most far-reaching of these changes occurred in December 2010, when Japan announced a new national security strategy that established a defense force capable of *dynamic deterrence*: the use of multifunctional, flexible, and responsive military capabilities to respond to complex contingencies and "secure deterrence by the existence of defense capability" in order to contribute to stability within the Asia-Pacific region. Despite the environmental and national political crisis triggered by the cataclysmic earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster, Japan's commitment to this strategy is underscored by the fact that the annual budgets for 2011 and 2012 continued defense funding, including acquisitions programs and capability development, at a rate greater than 1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).[1]

Adopting a strategy of dynamic deterrence, Japan's current generation of leaders has stepped beyond previous strategies—held captive by the legacy of World War II—in order to set the conditions for a near-term resurgence in Asia. Building on decades of incremental reforms, they have focused on national core values of *autonomy* and *prestige* to redefine Japan's security strategy in terms of its own national interests within current and future security environments and to develop a more balanced and symmetrical military capability. Japan's new strategic trajectory presents the United States with an opportunity to renew influence in Asia relative to China; increase cooperation and joint interoperability among diplomatic, economic, and security partners; and foster cooperative engagement through strengthened regional institutions.

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Core Values, Vital Interests, and Realism

Japan's primary core values are autonomy, reflected in rejection of dependence, and prestige, with shame dependent upon the observations of others.[2] Ensuring economic prosperity and maintaining its leadership role within the balance of power in Asia are enduring, nonnegotiable vital interests. The ideal balance of these values was expressed within Japan's foreign policy and grand strategy during the period following the Meiji Restoration and rise of the nation as a great power during the early 20th century. Unique to Japan and in direct conflict with its core values, its national interests have been defined since World War II primarily by its relationship with the United States, characterized by reduced sovereignty, minimal military capability, and constraints imposed by its U.S.-developed constitution. Rather than pursuing its own national interests aligned with its core values, Japan has followed a path more in concert with its common security interests with the United States, including preserving stability, maintaining freedom of action and navigation within the global commons, maintaining leadership roles in regional and global multilateral institutions, keeping the Korean Peninsula peaceful, maintaining peace within the Taiwan Strait, defending against terrorism, avoiding regional proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and ensuring the independence of Southeast Asia.[3]

Japan's political leaders maintained that the U.S.-Japan security alliance was essential until the nation could become more independent and self-reliant

Realism defines international relations in terms of a nation's use of its means—the diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement capability—to increase its power and position relative to other nations as it reacts to changes within the regional and international geopolitical environments.[4] Based on its unique security relationship with the United States since World War II, Japan's foreign policy can best be described by the persistence of its realism, expressed over the past several decades in terms of economic strength and diplomatic power through multilateralism.[5]

For example, under the postwar U.S. security umbrella between 1945 and 1952, Japan developed the Yoshida Doctrine, a mercantile-based realism that shaped its economic and foreign policy during the Cold War.[6] In addition, Prime Minister Eisaku Satō's December 1967 articulation of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, also known as the "Three No's," announced that Japan would not possess, make, or allow the introduction of nuclear weapons into its territory.[7] As the Yoshida Doctrine and Three No's policy established themselves as Japan's foreign policy and grand strategy, autonomy and prestige were supplanted by economic strength and prosperity.[8] Despite a prewar history of expressing national power in terms of military strength and external involvement, Japanese realism under the Yoshida Doctrine differed in that the country would now realize power in terms of economic strength and the Faustian bargain of its conditional sovereignty.[9] This goes far toward explaining why a country that valued autonomy and prestige would allow its foreign policy to be dominated by another country for such a critical period of its history.

Japan's political leaders in the latter stages of the Cold War differed greatly regarding the timeframe to change the nature of the country's relationship with the United States to restore full sovereignty and reassert itself on the regional and global stage. They steadfastly maintained that the U.S.-Japan security alliance was essential until the nation could become more independent and self-reliant.[10] As Japan's leaders examined their position in Asia, relationship with the United States, and international standing relative to the application of national power, they perceived increased vulnerability within a rapidly changing and highly volatile region, overdependence on the United States for security, and increasingly qualified international and regional respect.[11] From the early 1990s through Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's (2000–2006) tenure until today, geopolitical changes and increased uncertainty in Asia have shifted Japan's strategic policymakers; they have moved from the economic realism of the Yoshida Doctrine and U.S. security umbrella toward a new security strategy based on the interests of an independent nation facing regional threats, challenges, and

State Department

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competition within the Asia-Pacific region and the international system.

A Complicated and Uncertain Asia

Three security issues are central to understanding the impetus behind Japan's reassessment of its strategic environment and shift toward a new strategy:

China's Rise and Regional Ambitions. Japan finds itself between two superpowers: the United States, an ally refocusing on the Asia-Pacific region following its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and China, an economic competitor defining national interests in the South China Sea, expanding its regional and global presence, and seeking to prevent Japan from countering its regional ambitions as it attempts to weaken the U.S.-Japan alliance.[12] With both Japan and China reliant upon maritime trade, increasingly interdependent due to capital investments, and reigniting territorial disputes due to keen resource competition, the vulnerabilities inherent within the Yoshida-era Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) structure and capabilities represented high strategic risk for Japan.[13]

Regional Territorial Disputes. Despite the cooperation and transparency engendered through dialogue and exchange within organizations such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN + 3, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and East Asia Summit, regional territorial disputes remain at the center of potential conflict within the region. Japan currently has disputes regarding claims

of sovereignty with China over the Senkaku Islands (Diaoyutai to the Chinese), with Russia over the Northern Territories (Southern Kuriles to the Russians), and with South Korea over Takeshima (Dokdo to the Koreans).[14] Also, sharp resource competition has led China to extend its exclusive economic zone via claims of an extended continental shelf into the Okinawa Trench within the East China Sea, posing both an economic and sovereignty challenge to Japan.[15]

WMD and the Ballistic Missile Threat. In 1998, North Korea launched its first missile over Japan. Since that time, the development, testing, and employment of ballistic missiles throughout the region by both North Korea and China, and the increasing regional proliferation of these weapons, have generated significant Japanese political commitment toward the joint development of ballistic missile defenses (BMD) with the United States and a reexamination of collective self-defense under the U.S.-Japan security treaty. Without necessary changes to the treaty, Japan's future BMD capabilities could not provide defense to U.S. forces in the region or engage missiles fired at the United States from third parties.[16]

Faced with the emergence of these security issues and the recognized limitations of its previous strategy, Japan's leaders engaged in serious efforts to reexamine their foreign policy and began to stake out a more independent security strategy. Unlike the United States, which regularly updates its national security strategy and defense plans, Japan's National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) represent a comprehensive, forward-looking, strategic-level document outlining every aspect of its security strategy until the national leadership determines that there has been enough of a change within the strategic environment to warrant an update. Since the initial NDPG in 1976, it has been updated three other times: 1995, 2004, and most recently in 2010. The evolution and increasing frequency of NDPG revision clearly signal that Japan is taking stock of its security environment and developing the necessary strategic concepts and military capabilities to achieve its national objectives.

Minimum Defense Capability and JSDF Reforms (2004–2010)

Each NDPG prescribes JSDF capabilities, acquisition goals, and annual budgetary outlays within a corresponding 5-year Mid-Term Defense Program and annual budgets. Within NDPG 1976, the Basic Defense Force (BDF) concept was established to address Japan's static deterrence posture, and budget outlays resourced the JSDF at levels sufficient to meet a minimum defense capability. NDPG 1976 was based on five key assumptions: global and regional security environments would remain stable, JSDF could perform essential defense functions, Japan had adequate intelligence and surveillance capabilities, JSDF could be rapidly reinforced by the United States, and the development of an independent military capability would upset the regional balance of power.[17] While the NDPG 1995 reviewed Japan's security posture for the first time in 18 years and codified the national security process, it offered no substantive changes and retained the legacy BDF concept.

Reacting to the evolving strategic environment, specific reforms commenced by Prime Minister Koizumi to adapt Japan's foreign policy and domestic institutions began to lay the groundwork for an increasingly globalized security relationship with the United States apart from constitutional and Yoshida policy constraints.[18] These efforts included:

- The Yoshida Doctrine prohibition against deploying Japanese forces was challenged by deploying forces in support of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations.
- Japan's constitutional ban on collective self-defense was challenged by deploying elements of the JSDF to Iraq and Afghanistan in support of its U.S. ally.
- Japan began acquiring power-projection capability, such as in-flight refueling tankers, amphibious shipping, and air transports, and updated its strike capability by obtaining precision-guided munitions (PGMs).
- Japan began procurement of advanced military technology such as BMD, partnered with the United States on emergent technologies, and began to invest in its military industries.[19]

In 2004, an updated NDPG was published that redefined Japan's basic security principles. To demonstrate that Japan was a "responsible stakeholder in the international community" without fundamentally altering its relationship with the United States, NDPG 2004 defined two objectives for national security: the defense of Japan and prevention of regional threats "by improving [the] international security environment."[20] It detailed three approaches concerning the application of Japan's instruments of national power: through its own efforts, in cooperation with its U.S. ally, and as part of the international community.[21] Reforms initiated by Koizumi were codified in NDPG 2004, and there was a concerted effort to critique the validity of the BDF concept given changes in the strategic environment. JSDF roles were redefined to "provide effective response to new threats and diverse situations; prepare to deal with full-scale invasion; and take proactive efforts to improve the international security environment."[22]

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The articulation of Japan's security strategy in terms of the strategic situation in the Asia-Pacific region and its own national interests within NDPG 2004 provided continuity despite the repeated changes in political leadership in the period between Koizumi's successor, Prime Minister Shinzō Abe (2006–2007), and current Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda (who assumed office September 2, 2011) and set the stage for the development of NDPG 2010, which established defense forces capable of dynamic deterrence.

NDPG 2010 and Dynamic Deterrence Strategy

In the summer of 2010, then Prime Minister Naoto Kan received a report from Japan's Security Council that represented a clear departure from NDPG 2004 and the BDF concept to "secure deterrence by the existence of defense capability." Within this report, the council stressed that, due to decreased warning times before contingencies and the increased imperative to respond to threats that have not been effectively deterred, Japan's security strategy would have to shift toward enhanced JSDF operational capabilities based on responsiveness and the use of "dynamic deterrence."[23]

U.S. Navy (Robert Stirrup)

JMSDF *Uzushio* (SS 592) moors at Joint Base Pearl Harbor–Hickam after training deployment around Hawaiian Islands

Dynamic deterrence is defined by Charles T. Allen, Gary L. Guertner, and Robert P. Haffa, Jr., as conventional military deterrence that combines efforts "to dissuade, capabilities to neutralize or capture, credible threats to retaliate, and the ability to defend" coupled with "an explicit embrace of the use of force" to effectively communicate a deterrent threat or compel an enemy to change its behavior.[24] Within the context of NDPG 2010, published December 17, 2010, the adoption of dynamic deterrence language signals Japan's recognition of its strategic challenges and commitment to develop and use multifunctional, flexible, and effective JSDF capabilities to respond to complex contingencies.[25]

Despite the vague language, there is an important difference between the static deterrence posture of previous policies and dynamic deterrence. While NDPG 2004 continued to define JSDF roles in terms of deterrent effect, the new NDPG 2010 redefined the role of the JSDF in terms of the development and use of a dynamic response capability for national security.[26] The principal message of NDPG 2010 to outside policymakers is that, given the strategic environment in Asia, Japan's dynamic deterrence strategy includes "an explicit embrace of the use of force" to defend its national interests. Tokyo's basic security policy objectives have changed to "(1) prevent and reject external threat from reaching Japan; (2) prevent threats from emerging by improving international security environment; and (3) secure global peace and to ensure human security."[27] The three-pronged approach of NDPG 2004 is retained, and Japan will continue to uphold a strategic defensive policy and the Three No's. However, analysis of the strategic environment contained within NDPG 2010 recognizes that Japan's current and future security environments will be characterized by increasing disputes in "gray zones," representing confrontations over sovereignty and economic interests.[28] Further analysis details North Korea's nuclear and missile threat; China's military modernization, insufficient transparency, and destabilizing actions; and a regional shift in power based on the rise of emerging nations, such as China and India, relative to U.S. influence.

Replacing the outdated BDF concept, Japan's Dynamic Defense Force (DDF) should increase the deterrent credibility of Japan through timely and active operations.[29] As stated within NDPG 2010, DDF capabilities require that the role and force structure of the JSDF change to develop an operationally deployable force that can provide effective deterrence and response, specifically to protect Japan's sea and airspace and respond to attacks on offshore island territories; conduct efforts to promote stability within the Asia-Pacific region; and support improvements to the global security environment.[30]

The associated Mid-Term Defense Program (2011–2015) for procurement and acquisitions indicates resource allocation priority is given to the development of an effective response capability through DDF. Initial changes to the JSDF structure include a reduction in heavy forces and increased mobility and repositioning of units to island territories in southwestern Japan for the Ground Self-Defense Force; expansion of the submarine fleet and regional deployment of destroyer units for the Maritime Self-Defense Force; shifting of a fighter squadron to Naha and the establishment of a new Yokota base for the Air Self-Defense Force; and reduction of active-duty personnel to shift toward a younger force.[31]

NDPG 2010's acquisitions programs specifically target areas that promote growth of DDF capabilities within the JSDF. These include capabilities to ensure security of sea and air space around Japan, respond to attacks against island areas, counter cyber attacks, defend against attacks by special forces, provide BMD capability, respond to complex contingencies throughout the region, and provide consequence management and humanitarian assistance to large-scale and special disasters.[32] Focus areas for future development include joint operations, international peace cooperation activities, intelligence, science and technology, research and development, and medical capability.

Total expenditures for the 5-year plan will be approximately 23.49 trillion yen (¥), equivalent to $279 billion, as reflected within

U.S. Marine Corps (Steve Acuff)

Ground Self-Defense Force officer candidates look over Marine Corps weapons during bilateral training at Camp Kinser, Okinawa

the Mid-Term Defense Program and corresponding annual budget plans, representing a total reduction of ¥750 billion from 2005–2009 levels.[33] Given the turbulent domestic political situation faced by Prime Minister Noda and his Democratic Party of Japan, internal tensions regarding the country's budget deficit, and the current nuclear crisis, funding levels articulated to support the new security strategy initially appear consistent with Japan's dedication of approximately 1 percent of GDP toward defense.[34] However, closer examination of the budget reveals another story.

The Ministry of Defense's budget monitoring and streamlining initiatives including active investigation of fraud, bulk procurement of equipment, acquisitions reform, labor cost reform, and the adoption of performance-based logistics have realized significant savings, estimated at over ¥20 billion annually.[35] After combining these savings with the special budget allocations of over ¥475 billion per year for modernization and selected DDF acquisitions programs supporting NDPG 2010 implementation, neither of which were included as part of the totals cited above, the actual Japanese defense budget shows a 3 percent real growth rate and exceeds 1 percent of current GDP.[36] In 2012, Japan's annual defense budget and ¥1.4 billion supplemental represent a 0.6 percent growth over 2011 and continue to align annual budget requests with NDPG 2010 goals.[37] While policymakers and military leaders may wrestle with the details regarding NDPG 2010 implementation, what would the execution of dynamic deterrence look like in operational terms?

Dynamic Deterrence: Country X in the Gray Zones

Based on the theorists' definition of dynamic deterrence and the NDPG 2010, the following illustration is offered using Japan's response with prepositioned DDF to a territorial dispute with Country X in the gray zones. While Japan would use its diplomatic strength, its relationship with the United States, and multilateralism within regional forums to attempt to dissuade Country X, its DDF—in the form of a highly capable and responsive ground, sea, and air force positioned well within operational reach of the territory—would pose a credible threat of retaliation, including neutralization, capture, or defeat of an enemy, and would compel Country X to reevaluate its actions or face defeat. Japan could frequently demonstrate its ability to defend its territories through unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral joint exercises. An explicit embrace of the use of force to defend its national interests should be interpreted by Country X as meaning that Japan would use the full potential of its military capability in response to an attack. As detailed within NDPG 2010 and the Ministry of Defense's fiscal years 2011 and 2012 budget requests, Japan's ability to respond effectively to any territorial incursion would be predicated on the permanent repositioning of some elements of the JSDF to become DDF, on enhanced capabilities as a result of procurement and acquisitions programs, and on development of rapid force projection expertise through increased training within its services and with U.S. Pacific Command, specifically elements of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.[38]

As the JSDF evolves into a highly capable and responsive force within the next 5 years, Japan's dynamic deterrence strategy will help it avoid becoming an isolated, irrelevant "Galapagos" within Asia.[39] Given the reemergence of Japan's gleaming sword within its strategy, what would be the impact on its

neighbors in Asia and the region as a whole? Does Japan's new policy represent an opportunity for the United States?

Implications for Key Nations and the Region

NDPG 2010 indicates a resurgent Japan seeking to achieve autonomy and prestige through national strength. In the future, Japan will act independently of the United States and no longer rely solely upon an American shield. Given this trajectory, impacts will be greatest for China, Russia, the Koreas, Australia, and within the Asia-Pacific region.

China. Military modernization, clashes over resource claims in disputed territorial waters, and economic posturing regarding exotic minerals are just a few of the recent actions that demonstrate China's increasing threat perception regarding Japan, a trend that has grown greatly since 1980.[40] China's insecurity can best be ascribed to the tension between its regional ambitions, the counterweight represented by the U.S.-Japan alliance, and an increasingly capable and active JSDF, particularly in light of the near-term changes proposed within NDPG 2010. As stated within its dynamic deterrence strategy, Japan's reorientation toward defending its southern islands, including stationing forces within its islands near the Miyako Strait and extending its Air Defense Identification Zone toward Taiwan, is aimed directly at China's growing economic and military assertiveness in the South China, East China, and Yellow Seas.[41]

China should not be surprised by Japan's dynamic deterrence strategy. Strategic deterrence has a long history within Chinese military thinking and is defined in terms of *weishe zhanlue* as both deterrence and compellence through "the display of military power, or the threat of use of military power, in order to compel an opponent to submit."[42] That countries such as the United States and Japan would react negatively toward China's application of *weishe zhanlue* throughout Asia by adjusting their own military strategies only adds additional weight to the chorus of Asian countries calling for greater Chinese transparency regarding its goals in the region.

Russia. Within northeast Asia, Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev seek to leverage the increasing economic interdependence among Russia, China, South Korea, and Japan to further reintegrate the Russian Far East region into the national economy.[43] For example, comparing 2009 and 2010 trade numbers, the total trade volume between Russia and Japan jumped by 45 percent to over $20 billion.[44] With considerable additional trade deals regarding energy, natural resources, and manufacturing at stake, Russia seeks to maintain regional stability as it rebuilds its industrial and economic base. Currently, there is a low threat perception within Russia regarding Japan; however, Russian leaders have expressed concerns regarding the impact of planned U.S.-Japan BMD employment in the region and have directly countered continued Japanese claims regarding disputed territories.[45]

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Tied directly to Japan's perception of its autonomy and prestige, its determination to maintain sovereign claims on the Northern Territories (Southern Kuriles) and the assertive language of NDPG 2010 have the potential to jeopardize improved economic ties. Japan's insistence on the return of these small islands, which were occupied by Soviet Russia following World War II, seems far out of proportion to their current or potential economic or military value. Without a diplomatic solution, political rhetoric from both sides, planned expansion to the Russian defenses in the Southern Kuriles, and upgrades to the Russian Pacific fleet may create the conditions for instability and continued stalemate between the two nations.[46]

The Koreas. The year 2010 marked the 100th anniversary of the Japanese annexation of the Korean Peninsula that ended with Japan's defeat in 1945 and was followed by the division that challenges the world today. Despite lasting remnants of animosity based on the Japanese occupation and the continued territorial dispute over Takeshima (Dokdo), political leaders in both Japan and South Korea have taken steps to bring the two nations closer. Approaching the annexation's anniversary, former Japanese Prime Minister Kan offered a renewed apology, while South Korean President Lee Myung-bak expressed his hope that the nations could work together for a new future.[47] Recognizing South Korea as its third largest trading partner, Japan sees its relationship with Korea as both economically and militarily vital.

Faced with a belligerent and nuclear-capable North Korea, South Korea's ability to enhance multilateral security arrangements by leveraging its alliance with the United States remains its key strategy. Security arrangements between Tokyo-Washington and Seoul-Washington serve as an important unifying force to address North Korea, avoid unintended escalation with China, and defend freedom of navigation and territorial sovereignty. High-level discussions with Japan have led to agreements regarding intelligence and logistics support, while the South Korean political leadership has expressed a desire to reinvigorate trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and Korea.[48] For example, a renewed Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group process, first initiated by the United States in 1999, would enable the trio to better coordinate policy regarding North Korea, denying it the ability to use wedge tactics to negotiate on a bilateral basis to extort economic and food aid.[49]

Australia. Responding to a rising China, perceived U.S. distraction, and increased economic and diplomatic ties between the two nations, Australia and Japan signed a joint declaration on security cooperation and entered into the Australia-Japan-U.S. Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) in 2007.[50] The bilateral relationship between Australia and Japan followed decades of skillful internal political shaping and external diplomacy including Japanese support of Australia's participation in ASEAN and other regional forums and Australian support of Japan's efforts to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council.[51] Common strategic goals include countering the often unilateral approach of the United States in the region, especially toward China; supporting U.S. and regional efforts to improve security and capacity development; and engaging China in multilateral forums, such as the ARF, to convince it to become a more transparent and responsible regional partner.[52] An example of the success of the TSD is Australia's participation in annual Proliferation Security Initiative maritime interception exercises with its U.S. and

Japanese naval partners aimed at the illegal trade of weapons and WMD technology.[53]

Concern over China's naval expansion, antiaccess tactics, and missile capability has reached Canberra. Australian politicians plan on spending $279 billion over the next 20 years to further develop the Australian Defense Forces (ADF), specifically within air and naval forces.[54] Published in 2009, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030* reorients Australia's security policy to develop ADF capabilities to act independently when its strategic interests are challenged, provide leadership within military coalitions, and make tailored contributions to these coalitions where Australian strategic interests match those of its partners.[55] Shared interests regarding freedom of action and navigation, sovereignty and resource protection, and increased ADF and JSDF capability should enable Australia and Japan to increase joint operations throughout the Asia-Pacific region, including providing security, aid, and capacity development within the fragile South Pacific Island states.[56]

Asia-Pacific Region. Despite the lingering memory of Japan's World War II legacy, China's increased threat perception, and regional tensions regarding natural resources, Japan's new assertiveness will be a positive factor within the Asia-Pacific region. Contrary to often emotional reactions by pundits, a dynamic deterrence strategy within the context of disputed "gray areas" will resonate with many countries throughout the region, as smaller, less capable nations face the same challenges and may negotiate diplomatic or even military support from Japan to back their own territorial sovereignty or resource claims.[57] A more capable JSDF will be able to provide a more balanced military role within existing security arrangements, such as those with the United States, South Korea, and Australia, and provide additional assets in support of freedom of action, navigation enforcement, and counterproliferation efforts. In addition to the economic investment and development aid the country provides across the region, Japan may also be able to offer greater response to the region's many natural disasters and assist in increasing local governments' capacity-building efforts. Finally, Japan's reemergence as a more independent and assertive regional actor will serve as an additional counterbalance to China's ambitions and place greater importance on regional forums for coordination, dialogue, and action.

Prospects for the United States

Japan's new strategic direction opens a window of opportunity for the United States to strengthen its bilateral alliance system to foster multilateral cooperative engagement within regional institutions, while also increasing military cooperation, joint operability, and load-sharing with a key partner for security in the Asia-Pacific region.

Developed as part of the Cold War containment strategy and to address the heterogeneity of the Asian peoples, the United States has employed a "hub and spokes" approach, where it is the hub extending power and influence into Asia through its bilateral alliances—its spokes—with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and Australia.[58] Due to geopolitical changes in the region, the United States is examining the evolution of formal and informal, bilateral, and multilateral relationships in Asia for opportunities to leverage these linkages in pursuit of its national interests.[59]

As stated within NDPG 2010, Japan places a continued emphasis on multilateral options concurrent to the implementation of its dynamic deterrence strategy. This presents Washington with an opportunity to leverage its alliance relationship in a meaningful manner to enhance its position relative to China and for increased regional security cooperation. With the U.S.-Japan alliance as the core security function, bilateral and multilateral agreements between ASEAN member states and Japan should be encouraged to enable the United States to expand its influence in a politically acceptable manner while engaging China regarding transparency and territorial issues.[60]

Assured access to the global commons and defending against threats to the security of allies are core functions within the U.S. security strategy.[61] Increased JSDF operational capability, with an intent to provide a more meaningful contribution through increased load-sharing with its ally, presents USPACOM with an opportunity to expand its joint interoperability with the JSDF throughout the region in mission areas such as ensuring freedom of action and navigation, maritime domain awareness, BMD defense, counter-WMD proliferation, contingency response, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and theater security cooperation.[62]

The evolution of Japan's national security strategy, influenced by its alliance with the United States and a rapidly changing security environment, signals Tokyo's determination to navigate its own strategic course but also represents a positive factor for the region while enhancing U.S. influence. As today's generation leaders take Japan in a new, independent direction, returning to its national core values and its role as a world power, Japan's sword is indeed beginning to gleam once again. **JFQ**

NOTES

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