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Nakasone Yasuhiro
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THE BASIC ORIENTATION OF JAPAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: INTERNATIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION WITH ENHANCED COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL POWER

Hideshi Tokuchi

- Japan's national security efforts are expected to be dramatically accelerated in accordance with the new National Security Strategy, which has a defense capability buildup at its core.
- The whole-of-government approach adopted by the Strategy should be fully whole-of-government, and comprehensive national power should be strengthened accordingly.
- Alliance cooperation with the US and international security cooperation with other like-minded countries are intertwined, and Japan should promote both to stabilize the rules-based international order.

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1. Acceleration of Japan' national security efforts at a dramatic speed

The Japanese government revised its 2013 National Security Strategy at the end of 2022. With the Russian invasion of Ukraine and great power competition upsetting the rules-based international order and making the international security landscape surrounding Japan more challenging over the past nine years, Japan's strong determination to enhance its national security as expressed in the new strategy document is a natural policy development.

Even though the process of reviewing the National Security Strategy started before the Russian invasion of Ukraine with a deterioration of the security environment caused by China's expansionism and North Korea's nuclear and missile ambitions, the Russian invasion cast a long shadow over a revision of the Strategy.

Since February 2022, the international community has witnessed and realized how important self-help, resilience and sustainability are to defending a country in today's world. The new National Security Strategy, together with the National Defense Strategy and the Defense Buildup Program, emphasizes Japan's own efforts to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of its defense architecture. National security cannot be achieved by military efforts alone. National power in its entirety must be enhanced. While upholding this notion, national defense efforts are prioritized in the new National Security Strategy due to the rapidly growing threat perception among the Japanese populace.

The three strategy documents include a number of new concepts and introduce new approaches such as comprehensive national power, counter-strike capability, active cyber-defense, economic security, and defense production and technological bases as integral aspects of defense capability. In comparison with the National Security Strategy of 2013, which was more a codification of tacit understandings than a development of the pre-existing policy, the new National Security Strategy adopted a wider whole-of-government approach, reflecting the complex nature of the contemporary threats. However, the basic concept of defense force buildup, i.e., the Multi-Domain Defense Force, remains the same. The policy orientation of the new National Security Strategy is not revolutionary but evolutionary. Efforts to achieve this goal will be further accelerated with a dramatic increase in the defense budget.

As Japan's own capability and will to defend itself are the core elements of its national security, its self-help efforts must not stop, given the acute international security environment facing Japan.

One looming question is whether the current willingness to prioritize national security will continue as it requires huge investments over a long time to enhance logistics capability in order to catch up with the frontal equipment and at the same time prepare for the future, but budget austerity and human resource shortages must be overcome to accomplish this. While Japan will not be able to achieve its own national security without robust alliances and international partnerships, investment in self-help is the very basis of such partnerships. If Japan does not help itself, no one else will extend a helping hand.

2. Enhancement of Japan's comprehensive national power

National security is in essence a whole-of-government effort. From this perspective, the policy articulated in the new National Security Strategy to harness Japan's comprehensive national power is the right direction.

As Japan's whole-of-government approach has commonalities with the US's strategic concept of Integrated Deterrence, it should be regarded as one of the driving principles for the modernization of the Japan-US alliance; synergies between the national security strategies of both countries should be generated accordingly.

The Japanese strategy defines five capabilities – diplomatic, defense, economic, technological, and intelligence – as the main elements of comprehensive national power. The whole-of-government approach adopted in the new strategy is broader than that in the previous strategy of 2013. An emphasis on economic capabilities is just one example. Each of the five aforementioned major elements should be strengthened, but the current approach has to be expanded even more as it is not fully whole-of-government.

For example, development of the human resources necessary for the Self-Defense Forces (hereafter Defense Forces) seems less prioritized than in the previous defense policy even though this issue cannot be addressed without concerted efforts by the Defense Forces with schools, industry, the business community, local authorities and other enforcement agencies such as the Japan Coast Guard and the National Police Agency. Additionally, intellectual and cultural capabilities must be enhanced by promoting public education because these capabilities are indispensable for promoting international partnership. However, the National Security Strategy's focus on the intellectual side is mainly limited to technology fields such as cybersecurity. The intellectual base of national security should fully incorporate social science expertise with strong support from the government and think-tanks.

3. International security cooperation

The National Security Strategy has three pillars: first and foremost, Japan's own efforts; second, the Japan-US alliance; and third, international security cooperation with other like-minded countries. While the first pillar remains the core, the second and third pillars have been growing thicker. The third pillar in particular is becoming more important and extensive.

Until recently, the Japanese government dealt with the second and third pillars separately because the alliance with the US involves a formal agreement on joint military operations for the defense of Japan while international security cooperation does not, but these two types of partnership are becoming increasingly intertwined.

In terms of the second pillar, efforts to modernize the Japan-US alliance continue. In the Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee ("2+2") on January 11, 2023, for instance, the two countries committed to exploring a more effective alliance command-and-control relationship to enhance interoperability and responsiveness, capitalizing on the decision of the Japanese government to establish a permanent joint headquarters for its Defense Forces. With regard to this endeavor to enhance alliance coordination, both countries "share the need to improve effective coordination with partner countries for more robust policy and operational cooperation" in accordance with the Joint Statement.

In terms of the third pillar, the Japanese Defense Forces have been conducting joint military exercises with the armed forces of a larger number of like-minded countries, including Australia, India, South Korea, the UK, France, Germany, and Canada, and has also conducted asset protection operations vis-à-vis Australian naval vessels. Military interoperability with these countries will be accordingly promoted.

In addition, the new Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (JDSC) between Japan and Australia issued on October 22, 2022, states, "We will consult each other on contingencies that may affect our sovereignty and regional security interests, and consider measures in response." More recently, on May 23, 2023, Japan and the UK committed in the Hiroshima Accord "to consult each other on important regional and global security issues and consider measures in response." It is highly probable that a similar expression will appear in diplomatic statements between Japan and other like-minded countries. Though consultation on contingencies and security issues does not necessarily mean contingency planning – and consideration of measures in response does not necessarily include military action – the probability of operational

cooperation to address common dangers similar to an alliance relationship will increase with further consultation and consideration. The Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) between Japan and Australia as well as that between Japan and the UK, both of which were approved by the Japanese National Diet in April 2023, will help enhance bilateral operational cooperation.

As for the security relationship with Europe, if the substantial upgrade of the Japan-NATO Individual Partnership and Cooperation Program (IPCP) is done capitalizing on the Prime Minister Kishida's attendance at the NATO Summit Meeting in Madrid in June 2022, this will strengthen the partnership between Japan and NATO. As the security of Europe is deeply connected with that of Asia, particularly in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and China's expansionism, an enhanced Japan-NATO partnership will make all the difference for international security.


All these efforts will lead to the integration of Japan-US alliance cooperation and international security cooperation with other like-minded countries and make the fundamentals of Japan's national security more robust.

Today, the Japanese vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) is becoming the guiding principle for these efforts. The National Security Strategy states, "As a nation in the Indo-Pacific region, Japan will further promote efforts to realize a FOIP by deepening cooperation with like-minded countries through the Japan-US Alliance as a cornerstone and through efforts such as the Japan-US-Australia-India (Quad) partnership. To this end, Japan will strive to make the vision of a FOIP more universal around the world...."

Japan's FOIP vision has evolved and is better articulated in Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's March 20, 2023 policy speech in India on "Japan's new plan for a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'", which put more emphasis on the basic principles of the rules-based international order such as the rule of law; on equal partnerships; on multi-layered connectivity; and on maritime and airspace safety and security.

Japan should continue aligning the FOIP vision with the Indo-Pacific strategies of the US and other like-minded countries and act together to stabilize the rules-based international order, as Japan cannot enjoy national security without overall stability in the international order.

Steady implementation of the National Security Strategy to strengthen comprehensive national power with a priority on military capabilities is an urgent task for

Japan so that the Japanese people can devote themselves much more to cooperative efforts for international stability. 

Hideshi Tokuchi is President of the Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS).