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Japan's National Security At a Crossroads: Time to craft security strategy

03-30-2020

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*Series: Trajectory of Heisei, way forward to Reiwa (No.6)

As the Cold War drew to a close, Japanese politicians and the public underwent a change in their country's Self-Defense Force (JSDF) and the Japan-U.S. alliance. Japan's capacity to ally with the United States and its alliance were no longer eschewed as being harmful or capable of dragging the nation into a world war. After the end of the high-tension East-West confrontation under the Cold War framework, Japan gradually became aware that Japan's military and the alliance were instruments that served to ensure its national security. Nevertheless, they did not overvalue the importance of these two tools. Rather, Japan took a pragmatic approach to achieve its national security interests, and in this way established its national security institution by the end of the Heisei era.

Reiwa-era Japan is exposed to a rapidly changing and increasingly acute security environment: the competition of different worldviews and models of political governance; technology-driven challenges in cyberspace and outer space; a rapid shift in the balance of power in traditional physical domains on land, sea, and air; and non-traditional challenges, not excluding natural disasters. As Japan faces growing security challenges, its resources are much more limited than before.

In order to ensure its national security in this challenging environment, Japan should es security strategy to mobilize all the instruments of its national power in a coherent, effecti The role of JSDF and the Japan-US Alliance should be redefined clearly in this strategy.

1. Japan's National Security Accomplishments in the Heisei Era

The development of Japan's national security policy after the end of the Cold War was r related measures include, inter alia, legislation to enable Japan's participation in UN-spons the subsequent dispatch of troops to Cambodia in 1992; the redefining of the Japan-US A subsequent renewal of the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation in 1997; the 200 Measures Law enacted in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks and the subsequ for refueling operations on the Indian Ocean; the 2003 legislation for war contingencies, in the 2003 Law Concerning Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistanc subsequent dispatch of troops, the 2009 Anti-Piracy Measures Law and subsequent count Gulf of Aden; and a reinterpretation of the Constitution with regard to the use of force in 2 to put this new interpretation into practice in 2015. These developments have contributed the role JSDF holds in ensuring national and international security.

In the meantime, the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), which outlines the defense architecture, went through frequent revisions. It was revised in 1995 to adapt to was renewed in 2004, in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, to reflect concerns a terrorism. It was revised again in 2010 because of the region's shifting power balance, an the changing balance and because of an administration change. Finally, it underwent a rev Japan could counter the increasingly acute and uncertain security environment. According JSDF buildup was changed from "Basic Defense Force" to "Dynamic Defense Force", "Dyna and then finally to "Multi-domain Defense Force."

As the Cold War came to a close, Japanese politicians and the public underwent a chang their country's Self-Defense Force (JSDF) and the Japan-U.S. alliance. Japan's capacity to alliance were no longer viewed as something that would expose Japan to danger, or capak into unnecessary warfare. Meanwhile, nearby regional conflicts nearby such as the first Nc in the early 1990s and the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, as well as domestic contingencies suc earthquake in January 1995 and the Tokyo Sarin Attack in March 1995, made the public n After these incidents, the Japanese gradually gained awareness of JSDF's and the alliance their security.

Nonetheless, they did not overrate the importance of these two instruments. Japan took approach in aiming to achieve its national security interests. Maneuvering the nation's rela dealing with North Korea's nuclear and missile ambitions, managing the Japan-U.S. allianc China--all of these issues required a whole-of-government approach. JSDF's role had to be within Japan's overarching security strategy to shape an international environment favora interests. For this reason, the government established its first-ever National Security Strat squarely face the volatile and uncertain security environment.

The fundamentals of Japan's national security policy were implemented in the Heisei era when the concept of "Asia-Pacific" started being commonly used as a way to integrate the

Asia. Japan's defense capability and the Japan-U.S. Alliance became integral to Asian-Pacific the groundwork constructed in this period will continue to be relevant in the present and i

2. Japan's Current Security Challenges at the Beginning of the Reiwa Era

The development of Japan's national security and defense policy was not proactive; it was a reaction to a changing outside environment. The developments were also incremental, which is why it started with international cooperation such as peacekeeping, then dealt with the need for alliance cooperation, and then finally addressed mechanisms for coping with the most serious armed attacks against Japan) instead of vice versa.

Now that Japan is back as a growing economy and a dependable U.S. ally, its power in the international community is evolving. As a nation which has long reaped substantial benefits from the existing order and as a maritime nation on the periphery of the Asia, where China occupies a considerable position to utilize its power to advance the global and regional order in a more proactive manner. The international order Japan has benefitted from is eroding. The underlying causes are the clash of worldviews ("the rules-based liberal order" and "a community of common destiny for mankind") and the rise of different models of governance (liberal democracy and digital authoritarianism). Not only that, but Japan's real effort to implement the choice is increasingly critical to international security and the prosperity.

When Japan reinterpreted its Constitution and declared that it could exercise the right to self-defense, it was at a time when Japan's own territorial integrity and sovereignty were at stake because of China and North Korea. Nonetheless, the new legal tool for the exercise of its military power is necessary because of the highly connected nature of today's international community. In other words, national security is inseparably linked to global and regional stability. The reinterpretation of the Constitution and the new legislation are tools that allow Japan to contribute to the stability of the globe and of the region.

The connected world has brought another type of challenge to the international front. As we are mainly fighting in traditional physical domains, in particular at sea, the new strategic space and cyberspace have also become grounds for competition and governance. International cooperation to be a common concern for the peace and prosperity of the region. Natural disasters including earthquakes and typhoons are increasingly pressing issues, and international cooperation to address natural disasters, to which Japan is geologically and geographically prone, is a serious security challenge.

A serious question for Japan is whether it has enough resources to cope with such diverse challenges. Japan's economy is in better shape but remains weak. The fiscal condition is worse. Its population is aging.

The right answer to these difficult questions must be articulated and presented to the Japanese and the international community in a transparent manner.

3. Outlook for the Future

The global and regional order is in flux; its uncertainty is increasing. Does the existing order will undergo a fundamental restructuring, or will it simply be another round of adjustment

answer for sure. It is a pressing question for all the members of the international community who depend on the side one is on: for or against the existing order. In this critical moment, Japan, a member of the international community, must reach its conclusion together with its allies.

The Japanese government provided a portion of its answer by establishing the new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG). The main objective of the NDPG is to define the roles and missions of the Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) and to accordingly plan the defense force buildup; thus it is basically of a balance-of-power approach focused on military power. Japan's 2013 National Security Strategy is still intact; however, it is based on the security environment five years ago. It is a well-organized expression of the group of security measures that exist in the current environment, yet does not fully address the huge flux and decline of the international order.

The new concept of the "Indo-Pacific" must be addressed as well. Although the "East Asia-Pacific" remains alive, the newer concept reflects India's rise as well as the significance of the Indian Ocean in ensuring the security and prosperity of the region.

In order to ensure its national security in the challenging Indo-Pacific environment, Japan should update its national security strategy to mobilize all the instruments of its power in a coherent, effective manner, generating synergy of all its security efforts. The new strategy should define clearly the vision of the Indo-Pacific (FOIP) and elaborate on how it will be achieved. The defense capability Japan has with its 2018 NDPG should be embedded in the strategy. The role of the JSDF and the regional alliance must also be redefined in a clear-cut fashion.

Strategy is about where we should go and how we will achieve it. It is a declaration of Japan's stance in the international order. Japan needs a new strategy to direct itself in this acute, uncertain, and changing environment.

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