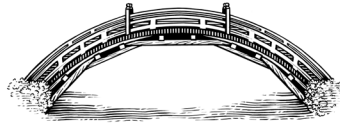


ESSAY SERIES ≈ A U.S.-JAPAN PARTNERSHIP FOR A NEW ERA

Japan's Security Policy Evolution: The Interaction between Think Tank Proposals and Government Implementation

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NOTE: This is the second in a series of four essays in 2022–23 on “A U.S.-Japan Partnership for a New Era,” made possible by the generous support of the U.S.-Japan Foundation. This essay draws on the first-hand experiences of the author at several Japanese and U.S. policy research organizations: the Sasakawa Peace Foundation; the Tokyo Foundation, where the author was director of foreign and security policy research from 2009 to 2016; and the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., where he served as a visiting research scholar, research associate, fellow, and senior fellow from 1995 to 2005 and is currently an adjunct fellow. From 2005 to 2009, the author was a senior fellow at the Mitsui Global Strategic Studies Institute in Tokyo.

KEYWORDS: JAPAN; SECURITY POLICY; U.S.-JAPAN ALLIANCE; SELF-DEFENSE FORCES; COUNTERSTRIKE CAPABILITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This essay spotlights interactions between private think tanks' security policy proposals and the development of the Japanese government's security policies since 1995, identifies items on the current security policy agenda, and suggests the future direction of Japan's security policy.

MAIN ARGUMENT

Japan's defense and security policy is steadily moving in a pragmatic and proactive direction toward becoming a "normal country" through "passive realism," although the direction and speed of change is not dramatic or linear. Interactions between think tanks' policy recommendations and the government's realization of them since 1995 illustrate in part this development process. For example, following a committee's suggestions to revitalize the Japan-U.S. alliance to deal with contingencies on the Korean Peninsula, the Japanese government adopted a related law after it agreed upon the 1997 Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation with its U.S. counterpart. The Abe cabinets implemented many ambitious policies suggested in think tank proposals, including permitting the exercise of the right of collective defense, creating the National Security Council, and establishing the National Security Strategy. Currently, the Japanese government is conducting a series of conversations with security experts to revise the National Security Strategy and the ruling LDP has announced a general policy proposal. The proposal recommends that the Kishida cabinet initiate the development of an indigenous counterstrike capability and increase the defense budget toward 2% of GDP. Past interactions between policy think tanks and the Japanese government suggest that the government will continue to take steps toward becoming a so-called normal country, although such steps could be gradual and incremental.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Japan should continue to implement a realistic security policy agenda, which will contribute not only to its survival but to regional stability in the new era following the post-Cold War.
- The U.S. should encourage and cooperate with Japan's proactive development of its realistic and pragmatic security policy since it will be important both to regional stability and to a sustainable U.S. security strategy in the face of threats from an assertive Russia and China.
- Japan and the U.S. should collaborate on research and development in defense and dual-use technology, which are critical for Japan's sustainable development of its defense capability and industrial base.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent shockwaves around the world. Russia—a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and possessor of nuclear weapons—conducted a military invasion of a sovereign country that was clearly not for self-defense. This attack was a particularly great shock to Japan, which has adopted a policy focused exclusively on self-defense since World War II, with Article 9 of its constitution renouncing war.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine created so great a tremor in international affairs that it prompted former prime minister Shinzo Abe to raise the idea of discussing nuclear sharing with the United States. The Research Commission on National Security, an advisory body within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), has argued that the invasion of Ukraine has brought about a unilateral change of the status quo by force, and that such a situation could also occur in East Asia. It proposed that the Japanese government consider increasing the defense budget to 2% of GDP. The commission also recommended strengthening defense capabilities, including counterstrike capabilities such as ground-launched short- and medium-range missiles.¹

Is Japan's defense and security policy about to undergo a drastic change? The answer is both yes and no. Most likely, Japan's policy will steadily move in a more pragmatic and proactive direction. However, the direction and speed of change will not necessarily be dramatic or linear. Japan's security policy since 1945 has never changed dramatically at any one moment: defeat in World War II led the country to adopt a highly restrained security policy that has gradually modified into a more realistic policy in response to subsequent changes in the international environment. While Japan's approach has been responsive to the international environment, change has been incremental and has involved building a domestic political consensus. From the outside, it has appeared to be a slow and passive movement. In short, the evolution of Japan's defense and security policy to date can be described as taking gradual steps toward becoming that of a "normal country" through "passive realism."²

U.S. allies have often complained about the slow progress of Japanese policymaking. However, if one compares Japan at the time of the Gulf War in 1991 with Japan now, great changes have taken place over the past 30 years. In 1991, Japanese society was strongly self-constrained in its security policy due to its remorse over its aggression of World War II, and Japan's Self-Defense

¹ LDP Research Commission on National Security, "Aratana kokka-anzennhosho-senryaku no sakuteini ni muketa teigen" [Proposals for a New National Security Strategy], Liberal Democratic Party (Japan), Policy Research Council, April 26, 2022 ~ https://jimmin.jp-east-2.storage.api.nifcloud.com/pdf/news/policy/203401_1.pdf.

² Michael J. Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

Forces (SDF) were not allowed to join a multinational force even backed by a clear UN resolution. As a thoroughly “pacifist” nation and home to the world’s second-largest economy, Japan provided \$13 billion for the Gulf War effort instead of troops.

That \$13 billion was not much appreciated by Kuwait, which was invaded by Iraq, nor by Japan’s ally, the United States. Based on reflections of that time and after intense domestic debate, Japan subsequently passed a related law in 1992 to allow the deployment of the SDF in UN peacekeeping operations under certain restrictions. Facing the war on terrorism in 2001, Japan passed a special measures law to assist multinational forces operating in Afghanistan, which allowed Maritime SDF ships to provide fueling to the multinational combat mission as logistical support in the Indian Ocean. The same approach was used in the Iraq War in 2003. Using a similar approach, the Ground SDF was deployed to Iraq from 2003 to 2009 in a humanitarian assistance mission. In 2015, the Diet passed the “peace and security legislation” that expanded the scope of the SDF’s operational activities based on a new constitutional interpretation that allows the SDF to exercise the right of collective self-defense in situations that seriously affect the security of Japan. Although there are certain restrictions, this legislation makes it possible to deploy the SDF on international peace cooperation missions without previous or ad hoc legislation.

This essay evaluates the influence of policy research on the evolution of Japanese security policy. From 1995 to the present—nearly 30 years—the author has worked at think tanks in both Japan and the United States, making policy recommendations to the Japanese and U.S. governments. Although implementation has often taken time, the Japanese Diet and government have steadily included important recommendations in their policies. This essay offers a personal look at how policy research recommendations that the author has been involved in making with U.S. and Japanese think tanks have been constructively reflected in Japanese policymaking to date, demonstrating a slow yet steady evolution in Japan’s security policy. It will then review recommendations the Japanese government is currently considering. Through these examinations, the essay may help in predicting the trajectory of Japan’s security policy in the future.

The essay is organized as follows:

- ≈ pp. 111–13 examine the state of the U.S.-Japan alliance in the early and mid-1990s and efforts to reprioritize the alliance in the face of new post-Cold War challenges, resulting in the eventual adoption of the 1997 Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation.

- ∞ pp. 113–16 detail two policy proposals from the Tokyo Foundation with which the author was involved that encouraged reforms implemented under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.
- ∞ pp. 116–19 outline three security proposals from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation that have found some purchase in government policy.
- ∞ pp. 119–24 examine the security environment facing the current Japanese government and propose “homework” items for the government to undertake in policy as it revises the National Security Strategy this year.
- ∞ p. 124 offers observations on the development of Japan’s security policy toward that of a “normal country.”

REDEFINING THE U.S.-JAPAN ALLIANCE IN 1995

In the mid-1990s, there was a sense of crisis in the U.S.-Japan relationship, which had deteriorated due to bilateral trade friction and growing opposition to the U.S. bases in Okinawa owing to the rape of a local elementary schoolgirl by a U.S. soldier. As a result, it was difficult to maintain the alliance without reaffirming its significance for the two countries.

With the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union’s disappearance as a common and serious security threat, the U.S.-Japan alliance began to drift.³ At a time when Japan’s industrial and economic competitiveness was relatively strong in comparison to the United States and U.S. economic competitiveness was weakening, it was often argued in the United States that Japan could convert its economic power into military power and become a new threat to the United States.⁴

The U.S.-Japan 21st Century Committee was a binational initiative comprising private-sector and policy research leaders that was formed to improve the prospects for future cooperation. Looking at the committee’s final 1998 report, in which I was involved as a staff member of the secretariat, there were recommendations on the bilateral trade imbalance and exchange rate policy that recall the shadow cast over the relationship by trade friction. Already at that time, however, participants from both Japan and the United States were reaffirming the importance of the alliance and made

³ Yoichi Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999).

⁴ George Friedman and Meredith Lebard, *The Coming War with Japan* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991).

recommendations in the direction of strengthening alliance functions.⁵ But around that same time, a shared problem emerged that the Japan-U.S. alliance needed to urgently address: North Korea's nuclear weapons development. In 1994, North Korea announced that it would begin reprocessing to extract plutonium, forced the withdrawal of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors from North Korea, and suggested that it would withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Pyongyang's actions led to a series of nuclear crises, during which the U.S. government considered a military operation against North Korea. Since then, preparing for a military contingency on the Korean Peninsula has been recognized as a critical issue for the alliance.

The committee's recommendations to the Japanese side on how to deal with a contingency on the Korean Peninsula included the following points:

- Enact expeditiously Japanese legislation to implement the new Defense Guidelines.
- Assure that Japan continues to pay a fair share for the maintenance of the U.S. forward deployments in Japan.
- Intensify consultations among the United States, Japan, and South Korea in anticipation of what undoubtedly will be unpredictable change on the Korean peninsula, among other things, to lay the groundwork for managing all aspects of post-reunification challenges.⁶

The Defense Guidelines referred to are the 1997 Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation. In these guidelines, the two governments agreed to "cooperation in situations in areas surrounding Japan that will have an important influence on Japan's peace and security" and include the following:

Japan will provide rear area support to those U.S. Forces that are conducting operations for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. The primary aim of this rear area support is to enable U.S. Forces to use facilities and conduct operations in an effective manner. By its very nature, Japan's rear area support will be provided primarily in Japanese territory. It may also be provided on the high seas and international airspace around Japan which are distinguished from areas where combat operations are being conducted.⁷

⁵ Eri G. Hirano and William Piez, eds., "Alliance for the 21st Century: Final Report of the U.S.-Japan 21st Century Committee," Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 1, 1998 ~ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/alliance-21st-century>.

⁶ Hirano and William Piez, eds., "Alliance for the 21st Century," 56–57.

⁷ "Joint Statement: U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee Completion of the Review of the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation," Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), September 23, 1997 ~ <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/defense.html>.

The U.S.-Japan 21st Century Commission recommended that the contents agreed upon in the guidelines be enacted into law so that they could be implemented. North Korea's test launch in 1998 of a long-range missile that flew over the Japanese archipelago and landed in the Pacific Ocean further heightened the Japanese people's security awareness. Subsequently, in 1999 the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the largest opposition party in the Diet, showed a willingness to be constructive on the issue by actively engaging in the substance of the legislation rather than using the ideological opposition tactics of former opposition parties. The guidelines were subsequently passed into law and gave the SDF the ability to address contingencies in areas surrounding Japan, which had previously been a political taboo. Thus, legislators became more attuned to the risk of a Korean Peninsula contingency and took a first step toward a more realistic direction for Japan's security policy.

TOKYO FOUNDATION PROPOSALS, 2008 AND 2013

A New Security Strategy in 2008

In a 2008 proposal, "New Security Strategy of Japan: Multilayered and Cooperative Security Strategy," the Tokyo Foundation stated that as public dissatisfaction with the long-standing breakdown of the LDP administration grows and Japan's political leadership weakens, it would be necessary for the government to adopt a common sense approach to protecting Japan's security that takes into account changes in the international situation.⁸ Back in 2008, the United States was bogged down with wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the international environment was marked by the threat of terrorist activity, the development of North Korea's missile program, and the relative decline in U.S. power. The Tokyo Foundation recommended policies for the Japanese government to take based on the growing view that in a post-September 2001 world the probability of interstate conflict had diminished and that security policies should increasingly tend to focus on responding to "new threats" such as terrorism by nonstate actors. However, other traditional security issues still remained. Russia's invasion of Georgia served as a reminder that the use of force between nations, especially in the vicinity of Japan, could not be ignored.

⁸ Shinichi Kitaoka et al. "New Security Strategy of Japan: Multilayered and Cooperative Security Strategy," Tokyo Foundation, October 8, 2008 ~ <https://www.tkfd.or.jp/en/research/detail.php?id=88>.

The Tokyo Foundation recommended that the Japanese government create a National Security Council and a national security strategy document that included policies on the exercise of the right to collective self-defense, revision of the “three principles of arms exports,” and legislation to protect classified information. These recommendations were largely implemented by Abe’s second administration, which was formed in December 2012. It is important to note that not only were the Tokyo Foundation’s recommendations visionary but Abe himself, who shared similar awareness of the issues, took the initiative to implement these policies recommended by security experts. Aided by the aggressive “Abenomics” fiscal policy that spurred economic recovery, the second Abe administration lasted seven years and eight months—the longest in Japan’s constitutional history⁹—during which it steadily implemented changes to make Japan’s security policy more reflective of global shifts. These included the creation of the National Security Strategy document in 2014 or the Peace and Security Legislation in 2015, which reflect the exercise of the right of collective defense partly in the international environment.

A Maritime Security Proposal in 2013

In 2013, the Tokyo Foundation issued a policy proposal entitled “Maritime Security and the Right to Self-Defense in Peacetime.” The main issues in the proposal were addressing the normalization of Chinese public vessels intruding into waters around the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, part of Japan’s territorial waters, and responding to China’s maritime expansion in the South China Sea in disregard of international law. The proposal advocated for a “seamless response” between the Japan Coast Guard, which is under the oversight of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and the Maritime SDF, which is overseen by the Ministry of Defense. The report also proposed that Japan take a more proactive role in maritime security in the Asia-Pacific, including not only in Japanese territorial waters and the East China Sea but also in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean.¹⁰

Specifically, the report recommended that the Ground SDF should be stationed on several of the Nansei Islands in the East China Sea to make clear

⁹ Abe’s first cabinet was in place from September 25, 2006, to September 27, 2007. His second, third, and fourth cabinets spanned December 16, 2012, to September 16, 2020.

¹⁰ Tokyo Foundation, “Kaiyoanzennhosho to heiji no jieiken: Anzenhosho-sennryaku to jikiboueitaiko eno teigen” [Maritime Security and Peacetime Self-Defense: Recommendations for the Security Strategy and the Next National Defense Program Outline], November 2013 ~ <https://www.tkfd.or.jp/files/files/doc/2013-03.pdf>.

Japan's intention to defend its national territory and establish a posture of deterrence through integrated operations with the Maritime and Air SDFs in cooperation with the U.S. military. In the event of a deterrence failure, the proposal advised using the SDF's developing amphibious warfare capabilities (U.S. Marine Corps-like functions) to repel aggression and quickly recapture islands. In addition, it recommended that the Maritime and Air SDFs be given the capability to ensure maritime and air superiority, even in waters remote from the mainland, by introducing aircraft carriers capable of supporting air cover in the sea areas necessary for Japan's defense. Finally, it recommended that the government's "three principles on arms exports" be reviewed and reconsidered so that Japan could provide maritime capacity-building assistance to other states, especially Southeast Asian countries.¹¹

Over time, the Abe cabinet made most of these recommendations a reality. Japan opened new Ground SDF garrisons on Yonaguni Island and Miyako Island in the Nansei Islands and plans to open another on Ishigaki Island in 2022.¹² Joint amphibious warfare training by the SDF and the U.S. military for the recapture of any islands is steadily underway, and Japan is developing its amphibious warfare capabilities. For air cover over the sea areas necessary for Japan's defense, preparations are taking place to operate the F-35B vertical takeoff and landing aircraft on existing helicopter-carrying destroyers.¹³ The Tokyo Foundation's proposal made specific recommendations on the operation of the F-35B, but at the time the team thought these recommendations might go too far to be feasible. Many of the suggested policies were, however, realized by the Abe administration.

The "three principles on arms exports and their related policy guidelines" have been replaced by the "three principles on transfer of defense equipment and technology." The new principles more positively allowed the Japanese government's transfer of defense equipment and technology to improve the regional security environment, whereas the previous principles basically banned transfers with specific exceptions. Japan's ability to support capacity building in the Indo-Pacific region has been progressively expanded.¹⁴ These

¹¹ Tokyo Foundation, "Kaiyoanzennhosho to heiji no jieiken."

¹² Louise Watt, "Japan Missile Plan on Ishigaki Island Helps Boost Taiwan Defense," *Nikkei Asia*, August 20, 2021 ~ <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Japan-missile-plan-on-Ishigaki-island-helps-boost-Taiwan-defense>.

¹³ "Japan Formally Announces Decision to Buy F-35B Stealth Fighter Jets from U.S.," *Japan Times*, August 17, 2019 ~ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/08/17/national/japan-formally-announces-decision-buy-f-35b-stealth-fighter-jets-u-s>.

¹⁴ National Security Council (Japan), "Implementation Guidelines for the Three Principles on the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology," April 1, 2014 (Amendment: November 24, 2015) ~ <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/gaiyou/jimu/pdf/bouei4.pdf>.

changes continue to have an impact on Japan's foreign and security policies and diplomacy. On April 29, 2022, for example, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Indonesia and promised President Joko Widodo that the Japanese government would initiate a study on providing patrol vessels to the Indonesian Coast Guard and would issue additional loans for the expansion of Patimbang Port.¹⁵

THREE POLICY PROPOSALS FROM THE SASAKAWA PEACE FOUNDATION, 2018–22

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) is a Japanese private foundation and think tank that works to advance international exchange and cooperation. In September 2018, it released the report “Policy Proposals for Implementing Proactive Contributions to Peace I: Strengthening the Defense System to Defend Japan,” for which the author served as project leader. The report focused on Japan's territorial defense, targeting the 2018 revision of the National Defense Program Guidelines. As noted in the subtitle, the recommendations focused on strengthening the SDF's capability and resilience—specifically, to prepare for a situation in which Japan is subjected to an armed attack. They included the following:

- Enhance the capabilities to take over the battle (rear support capability) and human and material reserves to ensure the execution of the mission.
- Bolster resilience to protect war-fighting capacity.
- Strengthen medical provision capacities, such as emergency medical care for personnel in the event of a military operation.
- Maintain and strengthen the base for defense production and technology to increase the vertical depth of defense.¹⁶

These recommendations were received by the Ministry of Defense with a sense of the gravity of the situation, given concern about a “Taiwan contingency” and the possibility that such a scenario could lead to a Japan contingency. Their influence is visible in the National Defense Program

¹⁵ “Press Conference on Japan-Indonesia Summit and Other Matters,” Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, April 29, 2022 ~ https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202204/_00015.html.

¹⁶ Sasakawa Peace Foundation, “Sekkyokutkiheiwashugi no tameno teigen I: Wagakuni o mamorinukutameno boeikyoka” [Policy Proposals for Implementing Proactive Contributions to Peace I: Strengthening the Defense System to Defend Japan], 12–13, September 2018 ~ <https://www.spf.org/global-data/20180907165603270.pdf>.

Guidelines in FY2019 and Beyond, which endorsed “strengthening the sustainability and resilience of defense capabilities, including in the rear area, so that Japan can continuously conduct various activities required at all stages from peacetime to contingency.” It also stated that “the government will take necessary measures to secure ammunition and fuel, secure maritime transportation routes, and protect critical infrastructure. In particular, the government will improve sustainability through safe and steady maintenance and stockpiling of ammunition and fuel, etc., in cooperation with related ministries and agencies.”¹⁷

In February 2020, the same SPF project released the follow-up “Recommendations for the Realization of Positive Pacifism II: For a Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” which focused on Japan’s regional security cooperation.¹⁸ Japan’s previous contributions of capacity-building support to UN peacekeeping operations and regional nations had received a certain level of recognition and appreciation from the UN Secretariat and countries that deployed personnel but were not well-recognized, not even within Japan. SPF recommended the formulation of a “Capacity Building Support Program Outline” to further leverage this asset in the future and strategically expand capacity-building support not only for UN peacekeeping operations but also for other countries in the Indo-Pacific region, which are critically important to Japan’s security.

In Southeast Asia in particular, with the successive establishment of coast guard agencies in the South China Sea littoral states, requests to the Japanese government for assistance, such as provision of vessels and technical guidance, have been increasing both qualitatively and quantitatively. However, to respond to the speed with which China is changing the status quo in the South China Sea, the project recommended that the Japan Coast Guard further strengthen its capacity-building support for these coastal states by providing more patrol vessels and increasing the number of mobile cooperation teams (MCTs).

Furthermore, in October 2021 the SPF issued a proposal, which the author again supported as project lead, entitled “Strengthening Japan’s Defense

¹⁷ Ministry of Defense (Japan), *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2019 and Beyond* (Tokyo, December 18, 2018) ~ https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11591426/www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/20181218_e.pdf.

¹⁸ Sasakawa Peace Foundation, “Policy Proposals for Implementing ‘Proactive Contributions to Peace’ II: For a Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” July 2020 ~ <https://www.spf.org/global-data/user33/proposal2fin.pdf?20200720160915>.

Diplomacy.”¹⁹ It recommended “establishing the idea of utilizing the means possessed by the defense authorities, particularly the Self-Defense Forces, to realize the national interest as a tool for the nation’s external relations” by following the example of the United Kingdom’s 2013 “International Defense Engagement Strategy.”²⁰ To this end, the proposal recommended the creation of a “Defense Diplomacy Strategy”—a document that would go beyond the framework of the Ministry of Defense and encompass a whole-of-government approach to external relations, including defense equipment cooperation (such as on arms exports), as an integral part of the strategy, with a view to linking defense diplomacy with development assistance and political dialogue.²¹ The SPF proposal also pointed out that “the lack of a legal framework—such as a status of forces agreement—for joint training with the militaries of countries other than the United States is a serious shortcoming,” and recommended that one be established not only with the United States but also with other countries that promote regional security cooperation.²² Although a Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) had been broadly agreed upon, for example, the speed of the work was slow. The report suggested accelerating the process of reaching cooperation agreements.²³ The proposal also recommended the development of a framework for more extensive cross-decking (i.e., receiving partners’ aircraft and personnel on Japanese ships for joint operations) and the expansion of cadre exchanges to the UK and France, which are increasing their involvement in the Indo-Pacific region.²⁴

On January 6, 2022, Prime Minister Kishida and then Australian prime minister Scott Morrison signed the RAA that had long been in development.²⁵ In addition, on May 4, 2022, the Japanese and British governments reached a general agreement on an RAA between the SDF and British forces during

¹⁹ Sasakawa Peace Foundation, “Strengthening Japan’s Defense Diplomacy: An SPF Policy Proposal,” March 22, 2022 ~ <https://www.spf.org/en/security/publications/20220322.html>.

²⁰ Ministry of Defense and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (United Kingdom), “International Defence Engagement Strategy,” February 6, 2013 ~ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-defence-engagement-strategy>.

²¹ Sasakawa Peace Foundation, “Strengthening Japan’s Defense Diplomacy: An SPF Policy Proposal,” March 22, 2022, 2 ~ https://www.spf.org/en/global-data/user33/SPF_DefenceDiplomacyProposal.Mar2022.pdf.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ “Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), January 6, 2022 ~ https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/ocn/au/page4e_001195.html.

Kishida's visit to the UK.²⁶ The Kishida cabinet, following the style of the Abe and Suga cabinets, is proving so far its "ability to listen" to advice, as Kishida vowed he would do during his campaign.²⁷

REMAINING HOMEWORK FOR THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT

Possess Ground-Launched Short- and Medium-Range Missiles

The Tokyo Foundation's 2008 policy proposal "New Security Strategy of Japan," discussed above, included an important policy item that has never been implemented: the retention of Japan's own ground-based missile counterattack capability, which would increase deterrence. The recommendation was formulated as follows:

In defending Japan from the threat of ballistic missiles, the deterrence power of denial by the ballistic missile defense (BMD) system alone is not sufficient because there is no guarantee that the system can intercept every single incoming missile. The BMD system must be supplemented by the deterrent of punitive measures to ensure that opponents with ballistic missile capabilities are clearly aware of possible counterstrikes, thereby deterring the missile attack in the first place. For such deterrence, Japan and the U.S. should maintain in their alliance the capability to directly attack the missile launching sites (operational bases) of adversaries.²⁸

Now, fourteen years after the proposal was made, it is all the more urgent that the Japanese government address this unfinished assignment. The missile capabilities of North Korea and China have both improved dramatically since 2008, and there are heightened concerns about the possibility of a Taiwan contingency, making it imperative for Japan to expand its military options.

The 2013 Tokyo Foundation proposal "Maritime Security and the Right to Self-Defense in Peacetime" also set three goals for Japan's strategic strike capability, which should be established by strengthening and utilizing the joint Japan-U.S. joint posture:

1. Establish a posture that allows Japan to proactively utilize the U.S. military's strategic strike capability under a joint Japan-U.S. posture.

²⁶ "Japan, UK Agree on Defense Pact amid China's Rise in Indo-Pacific," *Nikkei Asia*, May 6, 2022 ~ <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/Japan-U.K.-agree-on-defense-pact-amid-China-s-rise-in-Indo-Pacific>.

²⁷ Ryo Nemoto, "Leading by Listening: Kishida Offers Japan a Traditional Style of Politics," *Nikkei Asia*, October 6, 2021 ~ <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/The-Big-Story/Leading-by-listening-Kishida-offers-japan-a-traditional-style-of-politics>.

²⁸ Kitaoka et al., "New Security Strategy of Japan," 13–14.

2. Realize a posture that allows “greater mission sharing among the SDF” and “deeper involvement of the SDF” in a joint Japan-U.S. strategic strike posture.
3. Clarify the government’s policy position that “Japan possesses the capability to attack strategic areas as an inherent right of an independent nation.”²⁹

Similarly, in 2021, Shinichi Kitaoka of the University of Tokyo, the project leader of the Tokyo Foundation’s 2008 policy proposal, and Satoshi Mori of Keio University (then professor at Hosei University), a member of the SPF project “Policy Proposals for Implementing Proactive Contributions to Peace I,” jointly published an essay in which they proposed that Japan retain a counterattack capability in the event of a crisis over the Senkaku Islands or Taiwan, given that China might resort to military force. They pointed out that in recent years China has significantly increased its capability to attack war theaters by focusing on missile strategy. For example, medium-range ballistic missiles such as the DF-21 (with a maximum range of 2,150 kilometers) and DF-26 (with a maximum range of 5,000 kilometers) can hit U.S. bases in Japan and Guam, as can the CJ-20 (range over 1,500 kilometers), and the CJ-100/DF-100. China also has a large number of short-range ballistic missiles that endanger Taiwan. As for the counterattack capabilities to be retained by Japan, Tomahawk missiles (cruise missiles), medium-range ballistic missiles, and hypersonic ballistic missiles should all be introduced, and additionally the retention of high-speed anti-ship missiles should be considered.³⁰

Currently, the Japanese government is conducting a series of conversations with defense experts to revise the National Security Strategy formulated in 2013, and the ruling LDP has announced a general policy proposal. During the process to shape the policy proposal, the LDP Research Commission on National Security conducted a series of discussions with policy experts. On February 14, 2022, the LDP Research Commission on National Security convened a hearing on so-called enemy base attack capability. I testified that the government should address these long-standing omissions and also rename the so-called enemy base attack capability more neutrally as the counterattack capability.

²⁹ Tokyo Foundation, “Kaiyoanzennhosho to heiji no jieiken.”

³⁰ Shinichi Kitaoka and Satoshi Mori, “Misairubouei-kara-hangekiryoku-e: Nihon-no-senryakuminaosi-o” [From Missile Defense to Counterattack Capability: Review Japan’s Strategy], *Chuokoron*, April 2021.

At the LDP hearing I also emphasized that in the event of a Taiwan contingency, China could make precision-missile threats against Japan as Tokyo decides whether to support Taiwan and the United States, and that, as it stands today, the political hurdles for refusing such support are high. Japanese leaders must at minimum be prepared for strikes by China on U.S. military and SDF bases in Japan. In such a situation, Japan could improve its deterrence by possessing short- and medium-range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles with conventional warheads, reducing the effectiveness of its threats against China by assuming an “active denial strategy.”³¹ A strategy focused on greater missile capability would allow Japan to defend itself against China’s threats more effectively. The introduction of ground-launched missiles with conventional warheads—an armament that has been introduced not only by China and North Korea but also by South Korea and other countries—would not upset and destabilize the military balance in the region. Rather, with its status quo position, Japan has created a power vacuum that is having a negative impact on the regional military balance. These measures are within the scope of self-defense according to international law and do not exceed the scope of the constitution’s Article 9 as being part of Japan’s “exclusive defense.”³²

On April 21, 2022, the LDP Research Commission on National Security gave Prime Minister Kishida its recommendations for the new national security strategy. The proposal recognizes that Japan’s strike capability has so far depended on the U.S. military with close cooperation, but that the rapid evolution of missile technology has made it difficult to intercept missiles, and that Japan may not be able to fully defend itself with its current missile defense system. The LDP Research Commission on National Security therefore concluded that Japan should possess counterattack capabilities for deterrence, and that doing so is within the scope of the constitution and international law, while maintaining both the basic division of roles between Japan and the United States and the concept of exclusive defense.³³

The process of reflecting the LDP’s proposal in Japanese government policy may take some twists and turns, partly due to adjustments that might need to be made with the LDP’s coalition partner the Komeito Party,

³¹ Eric Heginbotham and Richard Samuels, “Active Denial: Redesigning Japan’s Response to China’s Military Challenge,” *International Security* 42, no. 4 (2018).

³² “Jimin, tekikichikogekinoryoku de ikenkokan Nichibeikan-Kyoryoku mo” [LDP to Hear Opinions on Enemy Base Attack Capability as well as Japan-U.S.-South Korea Cooperation], *Sankei shimbun*, February 14, 2022 ~ <https://www.sankei.com/article/20220214-f2jm7w4yozlhlc4bkwroyiyie>.

³³ Liberal Democratic Party, “Aratana kokka-anzennhosho-senryaku no sakuteini ni muketa teigen” [A Policy Proposal for the New National Security Strategy], April 26, 2022 ~ https://jimin.jp-east-2.storage.api.nifcloud.com/pdf/news/policy/203401_1.pdf.

which retains a more traditional pacifist sentiment. However, as discussed in this essay, given the gradual evolution of Japan's defense capabilities and the changes in Japan's international environment, there seems to be little likelihood that the Japanese people will fully reject the option of retaining counterattack capabilities. According to an April 2022 poll conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, the largest newspaper in Japan, public opinion is evenly split at 46% on Japan having "enemy base attack capability." However, 64% of respondents agreed that Japan should strengthen its defense capability, far more than the 27% who opposed such a move. This reflects the current international situation in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and North Korea's ongoing testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles.³⁴

Remove the GDP Cap on Defense Spending

The new LDP proposal also indicated a spending target of 2% of GDP for defense—the same target as that of the NATO member states. The decision by German chancellor Olaf Scholz to boost German defense spending to over 2%, including a special procurement fund, soon after the Russian invasion of Ukraine is likely to have had an impact. In the past, Japan, despite its high economic growth and ample national budget, chose to adopt a restrained defense policy, capping defense spending at 1% of GDP for political reasons. On the other hand, Japan's fiscal situation is far more tremulous than that of Germany, which is fiscally sound. The government budget deficit is well above 200% of GDP.³⁵ Retaining a counterattack capability is perceived by some security experts as a relatively inexpensive way to steady Japan's defense capability in a painful fiscal and financial situation than an interceptor missile defense system with a larger budget.³⁶ Going forward, Japan will have to meet the challenging demands of defending itself in the face of a deteriorating security environment, a stagnant economy, and worsening fiscal conditions.

³⁴ "Boeiryokukyoka sansei 64%, hantai 27% okiku uwamawaru—Yomiuriyoronchosa" [64% Favor Reinforcing Defense Capabilities, Far More than 27% Oppose—Yomiuri Poll], *Yomiuri shimbun*, April 3, 2022.

³⁵ "Japan's Coronavirus Response Increases Public Debt Challenge," Fitch Ratings, April 2020 ~ <https://www.fitchratings.com/research/sovereigns/japan-coronavirus-response-increases-public-debt-challenge-15-04-2020>.

³⁶ Kitaoka and Mori, "Misairubouei-kara-hangekiriyoku-e: Nihon-no-senryakuminaosi-o."

Develop Science and Technology in the Defense Sector and Maintain the Defense Production Base

Under such circumstances, Japan's next security policy challenge will be to create an all-Japan structure that can reflect the research and development of Japanese academia in defense policy and technology infrastructure, as suggested by the LDP Research Commission on National Security.³⁷ This is a difficult task among the many assignments for the government and the SDF. The aversion to military-related research in Japanese academia will not disappear quickly, and the democratically elected government must respect academic freedom. This is a fundamental difference from the U.S. system, in which the government agency DARPA (the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) invests in R&D of advanced technology, which is reflected both in the technology and equipment for national defense and in the competitiveness of private industry (through spin-offs). Even the LDP proposal describes developing this framework in a more reserved manner than the section on retaining the counterattack abilities.

In this regard, the Tokyo Foundation has already pointed out the importance of building the industrial base in its 2013 proposal:

The competitiveness of the Japanese defense industry remains fragile at an extremely serious level. Although the domestic production base is barely protected by government safeguards... the Galapagosization of defense technology and equipment and the continuation of a high-cost structure persist. In order to keep up with the global trend of advanced technology, Japan should participate in the international joint development and production of defense technology and equipment.³⁸

Furthermore, in the 2017 SPF's "Proposals for Implementing Proactive Contributions to Peace I," Satoshi Mori recommended forming comprehensive, medium- to long-term policies on issues such as R&D of weapon systems, operational concepts, and command and control organizations as a framework for joint Japan-U.S. R&D. In particular, the report emphasized the need to establish a system to promote joint R&D in advanced technology, focusing on the weapon systems technology needed by Japan.³⁹

³⁷ LDP Research Commission on National Security, "Aratana kokka-anzennhosho-senryaku no sakuteini ni muketa teigen."

³⁸ Tokyo Foundation, "Kaiyoanzennhosho to heiji no jieiken."

³⁹ The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, "Sekkyokutkiheiwashugi no tameno teigen I."

These issues are steadily being recognized by the United States and Japan. At the U.S.-Japan “2+2” meeting of both countries’ defense and foreign affairs secretaries and ministers in January 2022, the two governments confirmed that they will advance cooperation in emerging technologies based on the official exchange of framework documents for joint research, development, production, and testing.⁴⁰ To meet these challenges, it is necessary to establish a defense industrial base that reflects and develops Japan’s domestic R&D. Given the past pattern of Japan’s security policy realization, this will be a long-term issue that will require further discussion and consensus building within Japan. It may take time, but Japan has a clear path to follow, and there is an agreement between the U.S. and Japanese governments on this agenda.

CONCLUSION

The Japanese government has a track record of steadily implementing pragmatic security policies that are moving toward making Japan a “normal country.” This evolution of direction is occurring through an incremental approach with an emphasis on domestic consensus building, and this approach is unlikely to be halted or reversed, barring a major political change in the environment. On the other hand, it is also unlikely that the pace of policy change will accelerate dramatically unless there is a shock of great magnitude. Given the current fluid international environment, the trend toward Japan becoming a normal country through the steady implementation of realistic security policies appears irreversible. ◆

⁴⁰ “Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee (‘2+2’),” Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), January 7, 2022 ~ https://www.mofa.go.jp/na/st/page4e_001197.html.