

Briefing Memorandum

Regarding the National Defense Program Guideline and the Mid-Term Defense Program

(an English translation of the original manuscript written in Japanese)

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On December 17, 2010, the “National Defense Program Outline for Fiscal 2011 and beyond” (hereafter the NDPG 2011), the new guideline for Japan’s future approaches to security and defense capabilities, and the Mid-Term Defense Program (fiscal 2011-2015) (hereafter the MTDP 2011) were formulated in accordance with decisions by the Security Council of Japan (hereafter the Security Council) and by the Cabinet. This paper will provide a simple introduction to the formulation process and the history of the National Defense Program Outline (hereafter the NDPO), which is a fundamental document concerning defense policy, and will then introduce several points at issue that should be identified when interpreting the NDPG 2011 and the MTDP 2011.

The formulation process of the NDPO and the basic principles (concepts) of defense capability up to now

The NDPG analyses the international situation and the security environment surrounding Japan, and sets out the basic posture and structure of the Self-Defense Forces and the role of Japan’s defense capabilities, while the Mid-Term Defense Program (hereafter the MTDP) sets out a (five-year) build-up plan for the Self-Defense Forces’ defense organization, deployment, authorized strength, capabilities and projects, etc., in line with the NDPG. As a result of the change in administration in 2009, the NDPG 2011 and the MTDP 2011 were the first to be formulated under a Democratic Party of Japan administration. In drawing up the NDPG, it is customary to first hold councils of experts and compile reports. On this occasion, in February 2010 the so-called “Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era” was held in response to a request from the Prime Minister, and in August of the same year a report titled “Japan’s Vision for Future Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era” was submitted. This report was one of the items that was taken into consideration when formulating the NDPG 2011. Platforms for consideration were also set up at each of the political parties, and at the Democratic Party of Japan an investigative committee on diplomacy and security compiled suggestions in

December of the same year. Meanwhile, within the government there was considerable discussion at meetings of the Security Council, and ultimately the NDPG and the MTDP were formulated in line with Cabinet decisions. In the formulation process for the NDPG 2011, debate by related ministers continued to take place in parallel with Security Council meetings, and it has been reported that practical deliberation occurred as a result of the political initiative advocated by the Democratic Party of Japan administration.

Next, I will look back at the defense capability objectives and defense concepts presented in NDPGs up to now, and the situational awareness at the time. Before the NDPG 2011, NDPGs had been formulated three times in all – in 1976, 1995 and 2004. To begin with, the NDPO 1977 presented a build-up plan for basic and standard defense capabilities (hereafter the Basic Defense Force Concept). The goal of this was not “the required defense capabilities” to directly oppose a military threat. Rather, the idea was to possess – as an independent nation – the minimum necessary basic defense capabilities to ensure that Japan itself would not become a destabilizing factor in the surrounding region. This suggested the posture and structure to repel a limited, small-scale act of aggression under one’s own strength, based on the situational awareness that there was little likelihood of a large-scale armed conflict occurring between the East and the West. The NDPO 1996, which was drawn up 19 years later, was formulated in light of a major change in the international situation – namely, the end of the Cold War. In addition, this was also a time of heightened expectation toward the role of the Self-Defense Forces, which arose out of developments such as international peacekeeping activities based on the “Law Concerning Cooperation for United Nations Peace-keeping Operations and Other Operations” that was enacted in June 1992, and the disaster-relief activities for the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, which occurred in January 1995. However, in the NDPO 1996, the international situation was considered to remain fraught with unpredictable and uncertain factors, and it sought to promote “effectiveness and compactness” while fundamentally adhering to the Basic Defense Force Concept. The NDPG 2005 was formulated based on a Security Council and Cabinet decision of December 2003 that is known as “On Introduction of Ballistic Missile Defense System and Other Measures.” This saw the need for “multifunctional, flexible and effective defense capabilities” while at the same time “inheriting the valid elements of the Basic Defense Force,” based on the realization that it was difficult for conventional deterrence to work effectively under a security environment in which new threats and diverse contingencies were surfacing, among them the development of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction by North Korea, proliferation, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

The scope encompassed by “mobile defense capabilities”

Up to now the NDPG has come out with a basic plan for appropriate defense capabilities and defense concepts based on the situational awareness of each era, and in the NDPG 2011 the idea of mobile defense capabilities was presented. Which raises the question, what is being aimed at with this “Dynamic Defense Force” concept, which is to become the guideline for Japan’s defense capabilities from here on? This new concept has already been evaluated by a large number of experts since December 17 last year, and I will concede the particulars to them, but below I will add two supplementary points that should be noted.

To begin with, mobile/dynamic defense capabilities place the focal point on the “operation” of defense capabilities, and emphasize demonstrating volition and high performance by implementing appropriate and timely intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) activities during peacetime. Furthermore, based on the trend toward shorter lead times up to various contingencies occurring, rather than considering peacetime activities and the handling of emergencies separately, it calls for defense capabilities that respond to various contingences immediately and seamlessly. It should be noted that the range of “mobile defense capabilities” includes “the multilayered promotion of cooperative activities with foreign nations” (discourse by Japan’s Minister of Defense, December 17, 2010). This is the expectation that engaging proactively in international peacekeeping activities, anti-piracy activities and other international activities will help to cultivate cooperative relationships with foreign nations, and in the MTDP 2011 concrete measures were presented, among them the development of geographical and ethnological survey and the strengthening of features such as the capacity for supporting sanitation, communication facilities and transportation for activities in distant and outlying areas. In addition, as an initiative for improving the international security environment, the MTDP also came out with the idea of expanding activities in nontraditional securities sectors, including utilizing the Self-Defense Forces’ knowledge in areas such as defense medicine and the disposal of mines and unexploded ordnance in order to support capacity-building in countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

In contrast to the concept of “Dynamic Defense Force,” central to which is “operation,” the Basic Defense Force Concept that has been passed on until now, even as its shape has changed, focused on scale and sought to emphasize the deterrence effect the presence of defense capabilities has. Because the concept simultaneously aimed for order, to retain a

“balanced organization and deployment” (NDPO 1977), some have argued that when it came to the Self-Defense Forces’ budget allocations, this may have restricted moves to reject lack of coordination and to undertake bold reviews (Tokyo Shimbun, December 18, 2010; p. 3, etc). The NDPG 2011 called for “the pursuit of structural reforms in defense capabilities, with resources selectively concentrated on genuinely necessary functions” in order to respond to the increasingly severe security environment, within a severe fiscal situation. However, that is not to say this means the “Dynamic Defense Force” concept is not concerned with posture that is balanced. Conversely, it can be described as seeking to achieve the nationwide watertight defense deployment that was pursued in the Basic Defense Force Concept. For example, the MTDP 2011 includes deploying Ground Self-Defense Force units for coastal monitoring in the Southwestern island areas, as well as commencing a program to newly create units to handle initial responses. These plans were praised by former Chief of Staff, GSDF, Tsutomu Mori, who noted that “The region is a defense vacuum in terms of the Ground Self-Defense Force...In addition to its significance in eliminating a (defense) capability vacuum, it will also create a foundation that will enable troops to be deployed flexibly from throughout the country” (Mainichi Shimbun, December 18, 2010; p. 11).

New directions in the NDPG 2011

As outlined above, “Dynamic Defense Force” could be described as a concept that subsumes the various policies presented in the NDPG 2011. Meanwhile, aside from this, there are also several new directions presented in the NDPG 2011. That being the case, from here on I will dovetail recent topics concerning security, present their implications and conclude this paper.

To begin with, in the surrounding waters of Japan, activities by China are expanding and intensifying, including numerous passages through the Nansei Islands and advances into the Pacific by Chinese fleets in 2008. Coupled with the uncertainty over the Chinese security policy and military forces, including the broad and rapid modernization of its capabilities, the NDPG 2011 positioned this trend as an item of “concern for the regional and international community.” On the other hand, the NDPG 2011 cited attacks on offshore islands and ensuring the security of surrounding maritime and air zones as points that should be emphasized when having defense capabilities fulfill their role as an effective deterrence and response. In association with these descriptions of “situational awareness” and “the role of defense capabilities,” a large number of media agencies reported the focus

of the NDPG 2011 to be “a China shift.” However, there are indeed differences in expressing something, and the same points had already been made in the NDPG 2005 as well. But in the NDPG 2011 the descriptions of “the role of defense capabilities” and “the disposition of the Self-Defense Forces” are correlative, and so in that regard it may be that the way they were interpreted by the media changed. In other words, it could be said that what is important in the NDPG 2011, a policy guideline, is not what the “focus” is, but rather that it brought further clarification to the relationship between defense capabilities and defense objectives.

Next I will mention two points regarding the relationship with the United States’ defense concepts. In the review of the NDPG 2004, in other words the formulation of the NDPG 2011, the conclusions were to be made following the change of the administration in September 2009 and after plenty of deliberation throughout 2010, and as a result the NDPG 2011 came to be formulated following the announcement of several important documents concerning the United States’ security policies. To begin with, the United States’ Quadrennial Defense Review (the QDR 2010) was released in February 2010. In this QDR a new proposal to strengthen capacity was put forward, including the Joint Air Sea Battle (JASB) concept, in order to deter and defeat Anti Access/Area Denial (A2AD). Commenting on the relationship between the NDPG 2011 and the QDR 2010, Takushoku University Professor Takashi Kawakami says they are “in concert,” but Yoichi Kato, an editorial committee member at the Asahi Shimbun, fears that “the essential point” – how to coordinate it with the JASB concept – is missing (Asahi Shimbun, December 18, 2010, p. 3). Certainly, the NDPG 2011 contains none of the references to improving capacity in response to the A2AD environment that are contained in the QDR 2010, such as resiliency of posture and forward bases, long-range ISR/strike capability and space system defense. At the same time, with regard to the structural development of the Self-Defense Forces, the NDPG 2011 calls for preference to be placed on building up “functions that provide an asymmetric response capability,” and so it is necessary to recognize that the essential strategic concepts appear to have things in common with those of the United States.

Following this, in April the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) was announced after numerous postponements. The NPR presented objectives such as decommissioning the Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles-Nuclear (TLAM-N) cruise missiles and a “sole purpose” policy for nuclear strikes, but it endorsed no change in the extended deterrence capability provided to US allies. In NDPOs up to now, the issue of the threat of nuclear weapons was simply stated as “reliance on the United States’ nuclear deterrent capability.” However, the

NDPG 2011 emphasized that “extended deterrence provided by the United States, with nuclear deterrence as a vital element, will be indispensable,” and in addition, it presented a stance of contributing to maintaining and enhancing the credibility of extended deterrence through Japan’s own efforts, including missile defense and protecting civilians. In this way, it may be said that the positioning of Japan’s engagement in nuclear disarmament/nonproliferation and expansion prevention became more organized following the various debates that took place in 2010.

Going forward, cooperating and contributing under bilateral and multilateral security cooperation frameworks will undoubtedly become increasingly important, as exemplified by the declaration of support for capacity-building at the expanded ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM-Plus) in October last year and the confirmation of the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) at the Japan-South Korea Defense Ministers’ Meeting in January this year. At the same time, at the Japan-US Foreign Ministers’ Meeting and the Japan-US Defense Ministers’ Meeting in January this year, an advance of shared common strategic objectives was confirmed, and an agreement was made to accelerate consultations toward deepening the Japan-US alliance. The NDPG 2011, which was formulated based on political initiative, is receiving acclaim from inside and outside Japan. Going forward, the steady implementation of the build-up plan and the creation of a new era’s defense capabilities under a strong leadership will be demanded.

Key References:

National Defense Program Outlines and Mid-Term Defense Programs – various versions

Defense of Japan (the white paper of defense) – various annual editions

Newspapers: Asahi Shimbun, Sankei Shimbun, Tokyo Shimbun, The Nikkei, Mainichi Shimbun and Yomiuri Shimbun (December 28, 2010)

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