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# CHANGING MILITARY DYNAMICS IN EAST ASIA POLICY BRIEF 4, JANUARY 2012

## *A Dynamic Defense Force for Japan*

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### SUMMARY

Among the various innovations introduced under the new National Defense Program Guidelines released by Japan in 2010, the most important is the “Dynamic Defense Force” concept, which will enable the Japan Self-Defense Forces to operate effectively in the gray area between war and peace that characterizes modern military missions.

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## THE NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Government of Japan (GOJ) released a capstone document on Japanese defense policy, its latest National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), in December 2010. The NDPG analyzes Japan's security environment, defines the roles, missions, force structure, and capabilities of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF). Along with the new NDPG, the Japanese government released its Mid-Term Defense Program (MTDP), a military defense shopping plan for coming five years.

This new NDPG is actually the fourth. The first was first drawn up in 1976, during the Cold War, and the second came in 1995 after the end of the Cold War. In 2004, the third NDPG was released. The 2004 version set a direction for the SDF in the post-9/11 international security environment.

On 17 December 2010, the latest version of the NDPG was adopted by the Security Council of Japan and the Cabinet. Among the various innovations introduced under the new NDPG, the most important is the "Dynamic Defense Force" concept, which consists of readiness, mobility, flexibility, sustainability, and versatility reinforced by advanced military technology and intelligence capabilities.

### BACKGROUND

The fundamental idea that underlies the new Dynamic Defense Force concept is recognition of a transforming conception of military forces from roles and missions based on the dichotomy of peace and war, to roles and missions in the gray area between wartime and peacetime. Looking back on recent military history since the first Gulf War, most military operations unfold in this gray area; for example, the Northern Watch/Southern Watch Operation, peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, counter-insurgency/stabilization operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, counter-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia, and various UN peacekeeping operations. Military operations in such gray areas often begin suddenly, and usually continue for a long time. This is why the "Dynamic Defense Force" concept emphasizes readiness and sustainability.

The regional security situation also requires the SDF take on these "dynamic" characteristics. Even with two big security challenges in the Asia-Pacific, North Korea and a rising China, it is unlikely that conventional, high-end, military conflict will break out within the next five years. The current situation is relatively stable even in the Taiwan Strait. However, this seeming stability does not mean that East Asia is a

conflict-free region. North Korea continues to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. With robust deterrence in conventional conflict through the U.S.–ROK alliance, a Korean War–like conventional invasion is highly inconceivable; however, military provocation at a low level, such as the *Cheonan* incident or the Yeonpyeongdo artillery fire in 2010, may happen. In the case of China, although large-scale conventional amphibious invasion against Japan is inconceivable as well, there is a certain degree of possibility for "opportunistic creeping expansion" if Japan shows "windows of opportunity" or gives China the sense of that there is a "power vacuum" in the East China Sea. Consequently, the new NDPG is strongly focused on military operations in the gray area somewhere between war and peace, with emphasis on the importance of continuous, steady-state operation.

This idea of a "dynamic defense force" was affirmed by Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa's remarks, released the same day as the new NDPG. Kitazawa's remarks outline three operational guidelines for Japan's dynamic defense force. The first is "continuous steady-state intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations in areas surrounding Japan." Since everyday activities by Chinese armed forces, including the PLA, have become more prevalent, Japan must conduct constant and more frequent ISR activities. Such activities by Japan will make China sensitive to the fact that they are being monitored. This corresponds to the "dynamic deterrence" which is another important component of the new NDPG.

The second guideline is "immediate and seamless response to contingencies." With the development of highly sophisticated military technology, the sudden occurrence of contingencies is becoming increasingly likely. Seamless interagency coordination and cooperation is indispensable to responses to "gray area" situations.

The third guideline is "layered cooperation with the international community." Since security issues and destabilizing factors are becoming more complex and multilayered, it is necessary to coordinate responses with the international community to deal with these problems effectively. Therefore Japan needs to pursue solutions to such problems from all possible angles, including effective cooperation within a bilateral or multilateral framework. For example, after collaboration between Japan and Australia in Iraq, the security relationship between the two countries developed greatly. Cooperation in Iraq paved the way for the current close alliance between Japan and Australia. In this way, shoulder-to-shoulder military cooperation on

global security issues would help create collaborative relationships between Japan and international community.

## **COUNTERING CHINESE OPPORTUNISTIC CREEPING EXPANSION WITH DYNAMIC DETERRENCE**

One big security challenge from China's rise is "opportunistic creeping expansion." Again, with deep economic interdependence and robust deterrence by the U.S.–Japan alliance, a large-scale conventional amphibious invasion by China is highly unlikely. However, if China finds there are "windows of opportunity" or a "power vacuum," they may take advantage of the situation. Therefore, an important role for the Japanese SDF is not to provide windows of opportunity to China in the first place. "Dynamic deterrence," a newly-invented concept in the new NDPG, is designed to counter such creeping expansion and is a very important element of the dynamic defense force.

According to deterrence theory, there are some "windows of deterrence" situations in which deterrence barely works, including "fait accompli" and "probing." Fait accompli is a situation in which an adversary adopts a strategy to attempt to change the status quo without giving the defender enough time to react. Probing is a situation in which the adversary challenges in order to find the defender's lower bound-

ary of deterrence commitment. China's opportunistic creeping expansion is exactly the type of challenge that concerns Japan in these windows of deterrence. The dynamic deterrence concept was developed as a direct result of concerns that certain situations could not be dealt with by the traditional deterrence posture, which was designed to deter high-end, conventional conflict. In the dynamic deterrence concept, the objective is not to deter conventional invasion or armed attack, but rather, activities that cannot easily be assigned to one or the other of the traditional dichotomous categories of war and peace.

In particular, the main objectives of dynamic deterrence are the two types of situations mentioned above, fait accompli and probing activities, in which conventional deterrence would likely fail. These objectives are accomplished through continuous steady-state ISR, information gathering, military exercises, and actual military operations such as international cooperation or disaster relief. In these ways, dynamic deterrence differs considerably from traditional deterrence in that it comes into being through the actual operations of military forces.

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