FY2015 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Foreign/Security Affairs Research Project Grant
(for Extended General Projects)

A Reality Check on Security Policies:
The New Security Legislation/Guidelines and
Circumstances on the Korean Peninsula and in the Middle East

1. Project background

Confronted with a challenging security environment, the Japanese government formulated a "National Security Strategy" in 2013 and then amended the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) and the Medium Term Defense Program (MTDP) accordingly. To ensure a seamless response to any situation threatening the nation's security and prosperity, the Cabinet adopted a resolution in July of last year regarding the legal foundations for security (security legislation). Against this backdrop, the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation ("the Guidelines") were revised and efforts made to pass the proposed security legislation.

The security environment surrounding Japan is becoming increasingly complex. Characterizing that environment are circumstances that cannot help but have a direct impact on Japan's security, even threats arising in areas far from Japan, stemming from changes in the power balance on a global scale caused by the rise of emerging countries such as China and India, the rapid development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missiles, cyberwarfare capabilities and other military technology, and international terrorism as typified by "the Islamic State (IS)." As can also be seen in Russia's annexation of Crimea, North Korea's provocative actions in the Yellow Sea, the Sea of Japan and cyberspace, and the territorial disputes between China and neighboring countries in the South China Sea, "gray zone" situations that infringe on national sovereignty and security without resort to military force can easily arise. Japan also faces major security issues in the East China Sea, where Chinese government vessels sail into the sea areas surrounding the Senkaku Islands and Chinese military aircraft continue to approach Japanese airspace.

The revisions made to security legislation and the Guidelines greatly facilitate seamless responses during ordinary times, gray zone situations, and armed attacks against Japan. They will also enhance the effectiveness of collective defense with Japan's ally the US and of collaboration with friendly countries in the region, and help prevent armed conflict in the region. Furthermore, Japan should be able to improve its security environment and contribute to greater peace and stability by actively participating in UN peacekeeping operations (PKO), efforts to protect important sea lanes, and international counter-terrorism measures and similar cooperative efforts. However, putting effective security policies into practice requires that preparations fitted to these potential crises and conflicts be in place at all times.

The implications of enacting security legislation and revising the US-Japan Guidelines must therefore be understood and a reality check conducted to determine what can and cannot be done under a new Japanese security policy. Running simulations based on scenarios of threats to Japan's security and prosperity developed through accurate analyses of international circumstances would be a useful methodology for this purpose.

2. Project aims

      The purpose of this project is to organically link studies and research on security legislation and the Guidelines with studies and research on circumstances on the Korean Peninsula and in the Middle East by developing scenarios and running simulations, and then to make policy recommendations for seamless responses to various situations that impact Japan's peace and security. To accomplish this, the project will create a Security Policy Research Group to analyze security legislation and the Guidelines as well as two regional research groups to analyze circumstances on the Korean Peninsula and in the Middle East.

3. Project structure

<Policy Research: Security Policy Research Group>

(Group Leader: KAMIYA Matake, Professor, National Defense Academy; Adjunct Fellow, The Japan Institute of International Affairs)

      This Research Group will assess the new security legislation and the revised Guidelines, and conduct a reality check of Japan's new security policy and the Japan-US alliance. It will work with the two regional research groups described below being set up independently and simultaneously to jointly carry out the simulations that are the central focus of this project.

<Regional Research (1): Comprehensive Analysis of Circumstances on the Korean Peninsula and Japan's Security Research Group>

(Group Leader: OKONOGI Masao, Professor Emeritus, Keio University)

      This Research Group will present an "internal context for the region" by analyzing and examining (a) current circumstances on the Korean Peninsula (North and South Korea) and (b) short-, medium- and long-term prospects in light of these current circumstances. Tasked with concentrating on the "status quo" on the Korean Peninsula and its significant impact on Japan's security and with presenting a perspective on how Japan should interact with this region, the Research Group's efforts will function as a highly concentrated stand-alone situational analysis project, the knowledge from which will provide bottom-up support in attaining the objectives of the Project as a whole: delineating the changes in Japan's security environment and making policy recommendations tailored to these changes.

<Regional Research (2): Current Situation in the Middle East and the New Regional Order Research Group

(Group Leader: TATEYAMA Ryoji, Professor Emeritus, National Defense Academy; Visiting Fellow, The Institute of Energy Economics, Japan)

      This Research Group will analyze two issues that could have a major impact on Japan's security: (a) the future course of the new regional order in the Middle East and (b) radical Islamist activities and counter-terrorism measures. With its focus on the Middle East, a region that plays a major role in Japan's security and especially in its energy security, the Research Group will analyze the impacts that future political developments will likely have on Japan's and the world's security environment.