

## A New Security Strategy for Addressing Challenges in the Turbulent International Order



President Trump boards JMSDF helicopter carrier Kaga along with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, May 2019.  
(Photo Yomiuri Shimbun/AFLO)

The post-World War II international order, which was formed under the leadership of the United States, was based on the premise that all nations, large and small, should abide by international law and spread liberal values such as individual freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, the peaceful resolution of disputes, and free trade. In recent years, however, countries discontented with the existing international order, such as China and Russia, have been trying to create an environment favorable to authoritarian regimes by unilaterally changing or denying internationally established norms and systems.

The Trump administration, under the banner of “America First,” has chosen to strategically compete with China and Russia, viewing them as “revisionist states” that challenge the existing international order. At the same time, the Trump administration has placed greater priority on protecting its own interests rather than on maintaining the existing order, and has called for correcting trade imbalances and increasing burdens on its allies. In particular, the Trump administration’s policy of valuing the contributions of its allies from a financial perspective is a serious issue that could undermine the credibility of the Japan-US alliance.

China has declared that it will aim to become a strong nation by the middle of this century. Based on its “Belt and Road Initiative,” China has focused on the development of ports in coastal countries in the Indian Ocean and Pacific island countries, while at the same time providing huge amounts of unrepayable aid to developing countries, creating unequal diplomatic relations between the debtor countries and China. China is also developing infrastructure such as 5G, submarine cables, and satellite positioning technology, extending its influence by expanding its own e-commerce network, and exporting a digital surveillance social model using facial recognition technology to other authoritarian countries, creating an order that is incompatible with the concept of a free and open Indo-Pacific. While China’s anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities in the East and South China seas have already become a real threat, China has been using government ships, fishing boats, and marine militias to create a gray-zone situation without leading up to war and to continue trying to change borders.

North Korea has leapfrogged its nuclear missile capabilities, combined with its traditional heavy weapons

and special operations capabilities, to become a serious threat in Northeast Asia. Dialogue between North Korea and the United States has not led to the denuclearization of North Korea, and it continues to develop new short- and intermediate-range missiles while continuing to evade sanctions through ship-to-ship transfer of prohibited goods. Thus, the future of denuclearization is unpredictable.

Russia has been strengthening its nuclear and conventional forces in the Far East, and is working to militarize the Northern Territories by deploying anti-ship missiles. In addition to military cooperation and joint exercises, Russia and China have begun to cooperate in operational areas, such as joint patrols of strategic bombers. Meanwhile, negotiations on a peace treaty between Japan and Russia have made little progress, and Russia opposes the deployment of Japan’s Aegis Ashore systems.

China and the United States are investing in the development of cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and automation, as well as in efforts to use them for military

purposes. Military competition between the two countries over cyberwarfare, anti-satellite weapons, electronic warfare capabilities, and hypersonic weapons is accelerating. These “game-changer technologies” will alter the future of warfare and affect the military balance in East Asia.



A Russian TU-95 bomber flies over East China Sea, July 23, 2019. (Photo the Joint Staff Office of the Defense Ministry of Japan /Reuters/AFLO)

Despite the above-mentioned deterioration of the international environment, the government of Japan continues to view the current 2013 National Security Strategy as “appropriate.” However, the alliance policy of the Trump administration and the expansion of China’s influence have greatly changed since the initial assessment, and a review of this strategy is essential. In doing so, the following points should be emphasized.

With China disrupting the international order and the United States giving top

priority to its own interests, Japan should strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations, ASEAN, India, the EU, and others in order to maintain a rules-based international order and promote the rule of law and the peaceful resolution of disputes in the international community in order to counter changes in the status quo by authoritarian regimes. It is also necessary to oppose protectionism and address the challenges brought about by globalization through the G7, the Group of 20 and APEC. With regard to the suppression of individual rights by authoritarian states, the government should continue to seek further actions together with the international community. In addition, it is necessary to deepen Japan’s contributions to international peace cooperation activities from Self-Defense Forces (SDF) dispatches, as done heretofore, to support for capacity building such as the provision of equipment and training to developing countries and for the building of a security framework so that these capabilities can be used efficiently.

In order to strengthen its own defense capabilities, Japan should steadily build a “multidimensional integrated defense force” that effectively fuses capabilities

in all areas, including space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum. At the same time, a Joint Operations Command should be established to further strengthen SDF integration. Given the possibility that the SDF's missile defense system could be nullified by further upgrading of the DPRK's missile capabilities, it is necessary to consider new countermeasures, such as directed energy weapons, boost phase interception, and preemptive attacks with hypersonic weapons. In addition, Japan and the United States should constantly update their flexible deterrence options and joint plans in order to strengthen command and control and operational coordination between the SDF and the US Indo-Pacific Command, and to appropriately respond to the expansion of conflicts from peacetime to gray-zone situations and armed attack situations. Along with the steady realignment of US forces, Japan should promote the joint use of bases and facilities, expand US military access to Japanese civilian facilities, maximize operational cooperation based on the "Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation" and strive to rectify the asymmetry of the alliance. In addition, in the wake of the expiration of the Intermediate-

Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, Japan and the United States should undertake bilateral consultations on the joint development and deployment of new intermediate-range missiles.

Stable relations between Japan and China are indispensable to the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region, and Japan should build a "mutually beneficial strategic relationship" in every field, including security, from a broad medium- to long-term perspective. Meanwhile, as the United States competes strategically with China, Japan needs to take a pragmatic approach to China's growing power and revisionist activities. As China's economic growth slows, Japan should also consider adopting a cost-imposing strategy in which China pursues more open economic policies and gains broader benefits by diverting resources from military expansion to social and civilian uses. Furthermore, in addition to strengthening the capabilities of the Japan Coast Guard, Japan should establish a system to respond appropriately to hybrid warfare in gray-zone situations and armed attack situations. With tensions mounting in the Taiwan Strait, the strategic importance of a democratic Taiwan

should be reassessed, and security cooperation with Taiwan corresponding to developments in China-Taiwan relations and US-Taiwan relations should be pursued in addition to the promotion of pragmatic economic and human resources exchanges.

To achieve a “free and open Indo-Pacific”, Japan should strengthen its presence in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean region, maintain the cooperative framework among Japan, the United States, Australia, and India (QUAD), and strengthen its partnerships with the United Kingdom, the core of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and the UK-USA Agreement (Five Eyes), and with France, which has territory in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, Japan should promote the development of high-quality infrastructure aimed at expanding connectivity that generates active flows of people and goods, and should propose alternative measures for the “debt traps” in the region and provide financial support to countries already suffering from debt to China. In this regard, it is important to steer China’s aid to the international level through practical third-country economic cooperation in talks

with China, while at the same time urging China, as a creditor nation, to implement relief measures in line with the standards of developed countries, including China’s participation in the Paris Club.

Japan should strengthen international cooperation to transform North Korea’s strategic ability to favorably negotiate on nuclear weapons into a strategic liability that leads the country to bankruptcy by maintaining maximum pressure and preventing loopholes in sanctions, including through tighter enforcement of ship-to-ship transfers – in collaboration with its international partners – and the deportation of North Korean workers overseas until North Korea responds with genuine denuclearization. In addition, Japan, the United States and South Korea should deepen cooperation on missile defense, antisubmarine warfare, proliferation prevention and noncombatant rescue operations. Furthermore, Japan, the United States and the ROK should strengthen their cooperation toward the establishment of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula in the event of progress in denuclearization, in which they should reaffirm their shared recognition of the role and

importance of US Forces Korea. On the other hand, in order to build Japan-North Korea relations based on the Pyongyang Declaration, Japan-North Korea dialogue should be promoted alongside progress in US-North Korea negotiations.

While the peace treaty and territorial negotiations between Japan and Russia need to be continued tenaciously, it should be recognized that the strengthening of Japan-Russia relations, in the context of the major strategic relationships among the United States, China, and Russia, has a limited impact on Sino-Russian relations, and Japan should make it clear that economic cooperation cannot be pursued if Russia continues its militarization of the Northern Territories and provocative actions in areas surrounding Japan. Japan also strongly urges Russia to play a constructive role in dealing with North Korea, Syria, Iran and Ukraine.

The foundations that support Japan's defense capabilities have become so fragile that they cannot be ignored any longer. For example, given that China's defense spending has increased nearly 15-fold over the past 30 years and is now more than three times that of Japan, it

is clear that a slight increase will not be sufficient for Japan to maintain its true independence and ensure its own security and prosperity. In light of this situation, it is necessary to make serious efforts to strengthen Japan's technological and financial bases and to work out necessary technological innovation and defense expenditures from the perspective of investment in the future.

In order to strengthen the defense industry infrastructure that supports Japan's defense capabilities, the defense industry should concentrate its resources on the technical fields and infrastructure that must be maintained in order to enhance the capabilities of domestically-produced defense equipment. At the same time, the defense industry should be reorganized to establish stronger companies and business entities, and the infrastructure for the development and manufacture of higher-performance defense equipment and the fostering of international competitiveness should be developed. It is also necessary to promote the transfer of defense equipment by utilizing the framework of the Three Principles on the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Materials to expand markets and reduce

equipment prices.

Based on the trends in the defense technology environment, Japan should develop a system to ascertain, protect, and foster advanced technologies developed in Japan, and draw up a roadmap to introduce them to the Ministry of Defense and the SDF. In line with Japan's demographic trends, the government should also utilize cutting-edge technologies to cope with the labor shortages caused by the declining birthrate. Furthermore, from the perspective of realizing more efficient defense spending, the government should review investment in large vessels, short-range aircraft, and fixed platforms that are vulnerable in modern warfare, and also utilize unmanned systems that conduct autonomous operations using artificial intelligence under human control. ■