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***Session I: National Security –
Concepts and Threat Perceptions***

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Japan's Threat Perception and New Security Legislation

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Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his administration have been active to advocate Japan's positive role in both domestic defense and regional security with his slogan "proactive contribution to peace". His "proactive contribution to peace" was defined as follows in Japan's first National Security Strategy (NSS) document in December 2013.

As a proactive contributor to peace based on the principle of international cooperation, Japan will play an active role for the peace and stability of the international community.¹

The NSS will attain above goal through the following approaches: strengthening diplomacy at the United States, strengthening the rule of law, leading international efforts towards disarmament and non-proliferation, promoting international peace cooperation and promoting international cooperation against international terrorism.²

On May 6, 2014, PM Shinzo Abe gave his second speech at the North Atlantic Council, stating "Japan will commit even more strongly than ever before to fostering global peace and prosperity" and explaining that one objective of his "proactive contribution to peace" policy is for Japan to play a bigger role in defending the freedom of overflight, freedom of navigation, and other global commons.³ His speech was well received by then NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen who remarked: "Our partnership is based on shared values, a shared commitment to international peace and security and to the principles of the United Nations and international law."⁴

US President Barak Obama praised Abe's "proactive contribution to the peace" and his "exceptional commitment to our alliance," and he told Abe at the Japan-US bilateral meeting in April 2014 that "under your leadership, Japan is also looking to make even greater contributions to peace and security around the world, which the United States very much welcomes".⁵

¹ Government of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan*, December 17, 2013, p.28.

² *Ibid.* pp.28-31

³ Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the North Atlantic Council, "Japan and NATO as 'Natural Partners,'" 6 May 2014, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000037774.pdf> (accessed 5 October 2014).

⁴ NATO Newsroom, "NATO and Japan Sign Cooperation Accord to Deepen Partnership, Discuss Ukraine Crisis," 6 May 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_109508.htm (accessed 5 October 2014).

⁵ US White House Press Brief, "Joint Press Conference with President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan," 24 April 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/24/joint-press-conference-president-obama-and-prime-minister-abe-japan> (accessed 5 October 2014).

On the other hand, Abe's commitment is not popular among the Chinese. In its December 18 2013 editorial after the new National Security Strategy, which vowed "proactive contributions to peace", was released, the *China Daily* editorial commented, "the catchy but vague expression 'proactive pacifism' is Abe's camouflage to woo international understanding of Japan's move to become a military power".⁶

On May 15 2015, the Abe administration submitted a security legislation bill to the Diet which then started to examine the contents for legislation in summer 2015. The new security legislation will reflect the Cabinet decision made on July 1, 2014 to change the interpretation of the Constitution in order to exercise a right of collective defense.

The general public reaction to the new security bills so far is a mix of expectations for improvement of the national security on the one hand, and anxiety concerning more responsibility for regional and global security on the other. In the years since World War II, Japanese society has adhered to the spirit of Article 9 of the postwar Constitution, which renounces war as a means of settling international disputes. Like it or not, the Japanese public seems to view the Abe cabinet's legislative initiative as portending a major shift in Japan's basic security posture.

According to a public opinion poll conducted by Japan's public broadcasting corporation, NHK in April 10 to 12, 2015, 23 % supported, 35 % opposed the new security legislation, while 35 % had no opinion.

Support for the legislation may come from public anxiety over the security situation surrounding Japan. Opposition to the legislation may come from reflected public anxiety to Japan's more active participation in international security missions with the United States or the United Nation Peace-keeping-operations, which may increase risks for Japan's Self-Defense Forces. Japanese mixed reaction to the new security legislation can be explained by the classical anxiety concerning the alliance: fear of abandonment and fear of entanglement. In short, the Japanese would like to defend their territory by combining Japan's Self-Defense Force and the military power of the United States. On the other hand, the Japanese do not want to be involved in risky joint military operations in the world such as in the Middle East, which is not directly related to the Japan's security. At the press conference of the submission of the new security bill on May 15, 2015, PM Abe tried to ease public anxiety by stating that Japan won't get involved in US wars, since strict rules for the use the force and pre-approval of the Diet will apply.

⁶ "Abe's Three Shots at Pacifism," editorial, *China Daily*, 18 December 2013, http://www.chinadailyasia.com/opinion/2013-12/18/content_15106729.html (accessed 27 July 2014).

Mixed views even on their own defense and security can be found in another public opinion poll. The Japanese public feels increasingly insecure in the regional situation surrounding Japan. So they are relying on the Japan-US alliance for their security with the fear of abandonment despite of their fear of entanglement.

This poll, conducted by the Japanese government's cabinet office from January 10 to 18, 2015 showed the current public perception. To the question "What is your most concern for Japan's security and peace?" 60.5 % answered China's military modernization and maritime actions, 52.7 % answered the North Korean situation, 42.6 % answered international terrorist activities, and 36.7 % answered the US military posture surrounding Japan.⁷

Compared to a previous poll in 2012, concern with China's military modernization increased from 46.0 % to 60.5 %, concern with international terrorist activity increased from 30.3 % to 42.6 % and concern with the US military posture surrounding Japan increased from 24.8 % to 36.7 %, whereas concern with the North Korean situation decreased from 64.9 % to 52.7 %.⁸

As for concerns about China's military modernization, it is natural for the Japanese to view China with concern since China started sending law-enforcement and fishery vessels to Japan's contiguous zone and territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea since September 2012. The Chinese action is regarded as a response to the Japanese government's purchase of the three islands of Senkaku from the Japanese landowner in September 2012. The Chinese government has claimed the Senkaku Islands as their territory. The number of vessels per month peaked with 124 appearances in Japan's contiguous zone in November 2012 and 28 intrusions of Japan's territorial waters in August 2013.(see figure on the next page)⁹ Such practice has continued until now although the frequency has been reduced. But Japanese do not feel relieved by the lower frequency because they are also watching chilly bilateral relations and China's increasing assertiveness in South China Sea.

As for concerns with international terrorist activity, Japanese realize that they are no exception as a target of Islamic extremists. In January 2013, ten Japanese businessmen were killed by terrorists in a gas field in Algeria. In January 2015, ISIS demanded \$200 million from the Japanese government for two Japanese hostages.

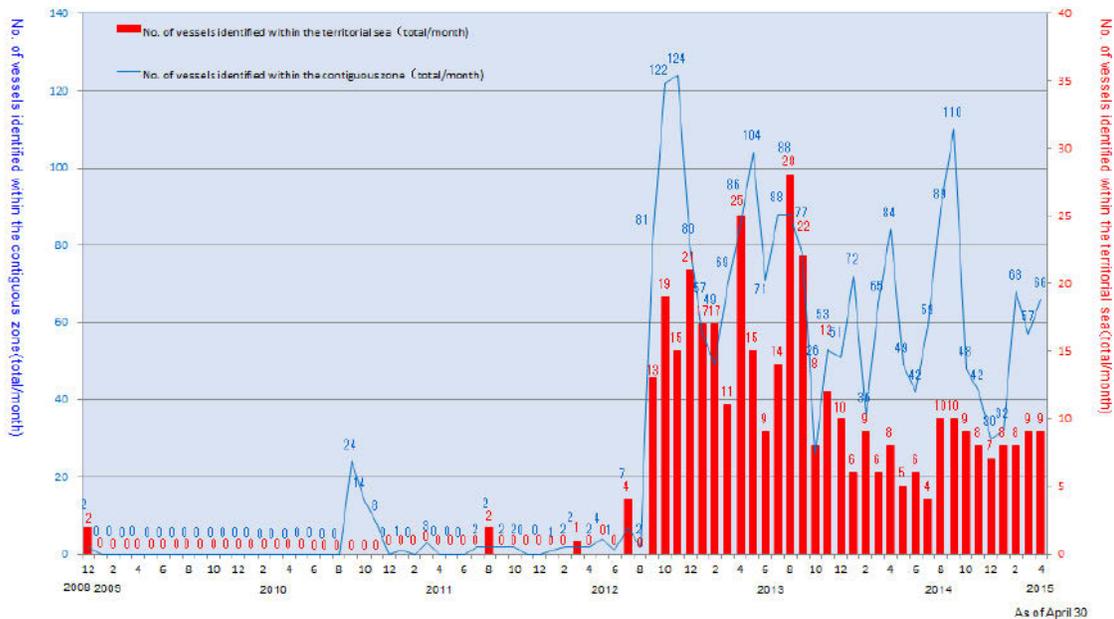
⁷ Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government Jieitai bouei-mondai ni kansuru yoron-chosa (Public Poll regarding to defense issues and Self-Defense Forces) March 2015, <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h26/h26-bouei/gairyaku.pdf> (accessed 31 May 2015).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan "Trends in Chinese Government and Other Vessels in the Waters Surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and Japan's Response" April 30, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page23e_000021.html (accessed 31 May, 2015).

Eventually the hostages were beheaded and the footage of this was posted on the internet.

Figure: Numbers of Chinese government and other vessels that entered Japan's contiguous zone or intruded the territorial sea surrounding the Senkaku Islands



Source: Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Japan website¹⁰

As for concerns with the US military presence, it is an understandable reaction caused by fear of entanglement since Japan is hosting approximately 54,000 US troops on its own territory. At the same time, Japanese see the US forces in Japan as an indispensable resource for defending their territory. In the same poll, the question, “How should Japan defend our territory?” was answered “by Japan-US alliance and Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF)” by 84.6 %, only 6.6 % answered “by the JSDF alone without the assistance of the US” and 2.6% answered “by reducing or abolishing JSDF and giving up the alliance with the US”.¹¹ The last answer may sound peculiar since the choice are totally unrealistic. Interestingly, a certain number of the Japanese are educated to be idealistic and naïve enough to believe that Japan would not be invaded or intimidated if Japan gives up all military forces and alliance by expecting other countries’ conscience. However, the poll shows that a huge majority shares a realistic and pragmatic solution to their own defense and security

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government *op.cit.*

based on the conflicting fear of entanglement *and* abandonment vis-à-vis the alliance with the US.

In addition, 75.5% answered that Japan is likely to be involved in a war while only 19.8% believed that the likelihood of a war is small. 12.9 % thought that Japan could be involved in a war because of the Japan-US alliance while 47.3% believed that Japan is less likely to be involved in a war because of the Japan-US alliance. It is remarkable that still 43.1% believed that Japan is less likely to be involved in a war because of the renouncement of war in the constitution.

These figures shows contradictory characteristics of the Japanese mind concerning their own security. Still, a certain number of the Japanese have an unrealistic and naïve perception that no county would conduct a military attack against Japan as long as they maintain the peace constitution. This is a naïve view compared to the realities in the world. First, these people assume that other countries would not attack Japan if Japan gives up any offensive military capability. The reality is that the JSDF maintain a modernized military capability although they refrain from having an offensive capability. Secondly, they do not realize that Japan is under the umbrella of the US nuclear and conventional offensive military capability due to their alliance. Contrary to the unrealistic and naive minority perception on international security, the majority of Japanese have come to the conclusion that the Japan-US alliance is necessary to defend their territory.

Considering the high approval rate and stable majority in the Diet of the Abe administration as well as people's strong reliance on the Japan-US alliance, current security legislation will eventually be approved in the Diet. Then, what difference will this make for Japan's security policy in the region?

Most importantly, Japan's policy change will be relatively incremental despite the domestic and regional anxiety about the resurgence of Japan's pre-owar militarism or the high expectation of the allied partners concerning Japan's active participation in military operations or security activities as a normal country. The new security legislation will enable Japan to conduct the following five new practices.

First, in reality, the new security practice of Japan will be expanded to provide more logistical support to the US or other countries which would directly affect Japan's own immediate security. In the past, Japan's Self-Defense Forces could cooperate with the US in contingent military operations, but this was restricted to non-combatant logistic support. The new legislation will enable the JSDF to provide ammunition to the US and other countries' military under certain circumstance. For example, Japan could provide more effective cooperation in a contingency at the Korean Peninsula including securing logistic routes. Even with the new legislation,

the provision of weapons will be prohibited and JSDF's combatant activity will not be allowed except for self-protection or Japan's own territorial defense.

Secondly, Japan could send the SDF to participate in international security activities without passing any additional special measurement law. Until now, Japan needed to pass a law to send its forces to international security activities with the exception of UN-sponsored peace keeping operations. In the past, Japan needed to pass special measurement laws to send troops to re-fuel vessels of the multi-national forces in the Indian Ocean during the Operation Enduring Freedom against terrorists in Afghanistan or to send ground troops to provide humanitarian support to Iraqi people during the Operation Iraqi Freedom. With the new legislation, the JSDF would be allowed to use weapons to defend other countries' military in an international mission. Still, the JSDF would not be allowed to participate in any combatant mission.

Thirdly, Japan could intercept missiles aimed at the United States with Japan's missile defense system. In the past, such a practice could be regarded as unconstitutional since this practice would be exercising collective defense.

Fourthly, Japan's territorial defense practice will be more systematic and seamless by enhancing coordination within the Japanese government's branches and with the US forces by the newly agreed Japan-US security guidelines of April 2015. Enhanced capability for Japan's own territory defense theoretically can lessen the burden of the US forces in the region and they could utilize their residual power in other missions in Asia Pacific region.

Fifthly, Japan will engage in capacity building such as coast guard or natural disaster relief capability in South East Asian countries. The Japanese government has eased its strict weapon export policies and changed the ODA charter in order to provide effective capacity building in the security area in 2014.

Thus, Japan's "proactive contribution to the peace" does not mean a massive military buildup but incremental legal changes in its defense and security practice. Japan will continue to restrict its defense practice to the exclusive defense policy which Article 9 of the Constitution allows.

However cautiously and incrementally, Japan's policy changes may affect major players' calculation in the Asian security arena. It is still important for the Japanese leaders to explain Japan's new policies in order to avoid creating a security dilemma with China, which tends to look at Japan's military capability with great caution.

Chikako Ueki, professor of the Waseda University discusses a potential security dilemma between China and the Japan-US alliance. According to her, in the past the Japan-US alliance was expected to dampen the security dilemma between Japan and China. For example, the "cork in the bottle" theory was used as an effective tool to

reassure China that the Japan-US alliance framework would act to contain the resurgence of Japanese militarism. In October 1971, Henry Kissinger, then national security advisor to President Richard Nixon, persuaded Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai that US control of Japan within the alliance framework would be more in line with China's security interests than setting Japan free.¹² But this is no longer the case. Ueki describes that China tends to react acutely to the strengthened Japan-US alliance capability such as Ballistic Missile Defense System rather than at Japan's own defense capability since the former could be used for defense for Taiwan.¹³

Needless to say, Japan's diplomatic efforts to prevent a security dilemma becomes a critical mission from now on. It is important for international observers including China to understand the nature and degree of Japan's changing security policy.

¹² Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1979), p. 1089.

¹³ Chikako Kawakatsu Ueki, "Liberal Deterrence of China: Challenges in Achieving Japan's China Policy" in Takashi Inoguchi, G. John Ikenberry & Yoichiro Sato eds. *The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance: Regional Multilateralism* (Palgrave Macmillan 2011) pp. 142-143.