

## [SE1-CV-2] Extended Deterrence and Assurance in Japan

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### Full Summary

With the concept of extended nuclear deterrence ('END') being challenged in the current era of nuclear arms reduction momentum, constrained defense budgets and steps toward a nuclear-free world, this session focused on issues of deterrent capability and credibility relating to Japan's evolving security and defense posture, in response to the rise of China and the changing security environment in Northeast Asia region. Despite the centrality of the long-standing US-Japan alliance, and the continued deterrent role of the U.S. nuclear umbrella in providing security assurance to a non-nuclear Japan against potentially threatening nuclear neighbours, there are doubts about the future of alliance commitment and deterrent resolve.

Andrew Oros set the strategic scene for panel discussion: firstly, the global strategic context and the phenomena of ongoing reductions in the major power nuclear arsenals, juxtaposed with an increase in the number of proliferating states, and associated issues of rogue risks and terrorist threats; secondly, the United States de-emphasizing its nuclear posture and again immersed in a period of defense rationalization and debate regarding overseas deployments, capabilities and burden-sharing; thirdly, attendant issues of regional anxiety regarding the rise of China, the future of North Korea, the role of the United States in Asia-Pacific, and questions about the overall credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella and ongoing strategic and tactical assurances to Japan.

Sugio Takahashi outlined Japanese defense establishment thinking behind Japan's 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines: its shift to a more 'dynamic', integrated and flexible defense posture, and the needs and concerns for maintaining credible extended deterrence against direct threats to regional stability and ongoing strategic probing by China, seeking to shape a new geopolitical balance in Asia-Pacific. For Japan, extended nuclear deterrence and assurance remain essential factors in an uncertain region, where the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament remains desirable but distant.

Japan's new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), announced in December 2010, outlined a shift from the hitherto 'basic defense concept' to a more 'dynamic defense' posture, encompassing Japan's own efforts with more integrated alliance cooperation and multi-layered security cooperation with the international community.<sup>1</sup> Four elements fed into the new NDPG: regional context and concerns (particularly China's military expansion and the North Korean proliferation threat); regional security architecture and defense force mix; Japan's role in missile defense; and the nuclear component of extended deterrence. Recognizing the 'long-term goal of creating a world without nuclear weapons', the NDPG emphasized that 'as long as nuclear weapons exist, the extended deterrence of the United States, with nuclear deterrent as a *vital element*, will be indispensable.' Follow on text highlighted intentions for closer cooperation to 'maintain and improve the credibility of the extended deterrent' – reflecting elements of concern about the deterrent capability and resolve in the post-Prague world of New START deep cuts and de-emphasis on nuclear assets, as per the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (April 2010). Whilst reiterating declaratory policy in support of extended deterrence coverage for key allies such as Japan, there are concerns about retardation of U.S. nuclear infrastructure and weapons programs, which could adversely affect the credibility of extended deterrence in Northeast Asia. Particular concern relates less to any actual threat of nuclear attack or blackmail, and more towards a "stability-instability paradox" situation, in which adjustments to the general strategic nuclear balance could lead to lower-level instability, for example, China's territorial probing and attendant dangers for regional security and crisis management. Given the prevailing situation and uncertainty in Northeast Asia, the assurance and credibility of the U.S. complete deterrent umbrella remains crucial to peace and stability, and appropriate efforts should be made to 'deepen and develop' Japan-U.S. Alliance coordination and to enhance 'strategic consultation' for maintaining a overall credible, effective deterrent.

Martin Fackler provided an assessment of Japan's security environment and outlook, highlighting the various external and domestic factors shaping Japan's evolving security stance. The recent new NDPG reflects Japan's shifting conventional defense-thinking and confirmed Japan's shifting security orientation: geographically, away from northern concentration toward southern threats; and operationally, to a more flexible, well-rounded, multi-dimensional force structure. The nuclear dimension of the NDPG, namely the U.S. nuclear umbrella, has remained a relatively static issue: acknowledged as a cornerstone of the US-Japan alliance, but receiving little public discussion on what remains a generally sensitive subject in Japan.

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<sup>1</sup> Though not detailed during the panel session, more information about the December 2010 NDPG is available at: [www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/d\\_policy/pdf/guidelinesFY2011.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/guidelinesFY2011.pdf)

The timing and content of the NDPG reflects a region in flux and specific concerns about China. From Japan's perspective, there are reasons for feeling less secure. North Korea's missile and nuclear tests highlighted Japan's geographical vulnerability; the island territorial issues with three neighbors, notably Russia and especially China, resonate geopolitical and diplomatic weakness. Allied with these anxieties are concerns about the implications of a Japanese economy in relative regional and global decline, and attendant fears about U.S. abandonment and "Japan passing", amidst the focus on U.S.-China 'G-2' economic and geopolitical priorities. Fiscal constraints and declining defense budgets, in the face of starkly contrasting Chinese military momentum and modernization, add to Japan's dilemmas about forward defense capabilities and preparedness, with or without full commitment of the United States. Domestically, the subject of Japan's reflexive U.S.-centered defense policy was initially questioned by the new DPJ government, with the Futenma base issue center stage and talk of rebalancing Japan's U.S. and Asian orientation. However, the intervening Senkaku Islands incident and other Chinese actions, including the rare earth metal issue, served to bring attention back to the centrality and vitality of the Japan-U.S. relationship, with both Japan and the U.S. increasingly wary of China's moves and motives. The events of March 11 and the crisis response coordination provided by the U.S. military through 'Operation Tomodachi', served to strengthen Alliance coordination and public perception about the merits of the U.S. relationship and ongoing military presence in Japan. Whether and to what extent, prevailing events and regional threat perceptions are changing 'strategic culture' in Japan, particularly with regard to nuclear issues, is unclear. Though there is more openness and debate regarding defense-related matters in general, there remains little public discussion about nuclear deterrent issues and options. Japan's 'nuclear allergy' remains significant, particularly after Fukushima.

Overall, given Japan's current regional and domestic situation, the NDPG shift to a more dynamic and multi-dimensional force concept represents a reasoned response to prevailing security challenges and longer-term uncertainties regarding the Northeast Asian neighborhood and U.S. commitment to Japan.

Victoria Tuke discussed the changing dimension of nuclear deterrence, in the post-Cold War era of global terrorism, piracy and other non-traditional and non-state actor threats to international security. In an increasingly multi-polar world, with diverse challenges and more resilient European and Asian allies, the rationale and relevance of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence is being questioned. Whilst END remains explicitly in place between the United States and Japan, there are elements of divergence between Japan and U.S. threat perceptions and nuclear emphases, pertaining to matters such as the U.S. decision to withdraw TLAM/N and the question of Sole Purpose/No First Use of nuclear weapons. Both subjects illustrate the important psychological dimension of deterrence rhetoric, resolve and credibility, which

is so important for non-nuclear Japan. Doubts about U.S. commitment, combined with regional nuclear proliferation, have fueled speculation about Japan ‘going nuclear’, i.e. developing its own independent deterrent. Such speculative scenarios have been around since the 1970s and, though it is widely acknowledged that Japan has the technical capability to cross the nuclear threshold, such a step would be highly unlikely, given Japan’s domestic constraints and opposition, and recognizing the irreparable damage that such a move would inflict on Japan’s international reputation and the NPT regime. From Japan’s perspective, it has tremendous political capital to lose by pursuing an independent nuclear path, with little or no strategic benefit by having its own finger on the nuclear button.

Comparing the nuclear narratives of Japan and India provides a picture of ‘two states which have recently rediscovered each other diplomatically, due to common concerns and interests’, most prominently, the growing challenge posed by China’s military growth and maritime ‘muscle-flexing’. Both countries share a concern about crisis stability and threats from their respective nuclear-armed neighbors (Pakistan and North Korea). Both India and Japan promote disarmament and deterrence, though only India has its own independent nuclear deterrent. For India, security autonomy has been a paramount factor in its regional environment and rise to prominence on the world stage. Arguably, its nuclear status is part of the equation of pride, power and purpose, which characterizes India’s growth momentum and global standing. Maintaining a credible minimum deterrent capability remains a key strategic imperative for India and, whilst the merits of the 2005 India-U.S. nuclear deal continue to be hotly debated, it has enhanced India’s nuclear status, as well as opening the door to more active diplomacy and trade between Japan and India. Though looking to benefit from stronger U.S. links and support, India has no intention to give up control of its indigenous nuclear forces through an END arrangement. In contrast to India’s nuclear position, Japan has gained stature through its long-standing non-nuclear stance, backed by a somewhat contradictory reliance on the U.S. nuclear umbrella. emerging power in Asia and the wider world. With power and purpose on its side, India has good leverage to pursue conventional and nuclear avenues for its overall defense. Contrasting the nuclear stances of the two countries, it is clear that Japan’s deterrent stance is more alliance dependent and with less scope for regional autonomy. Under this condition, extended deterrence remains an important tool for stability in Northeast Asia region, with appropriate consultative dialogue and assurances, to assuage anxieties and reinforce deterrent credibility.

Panel session participant discussion contributed comments and questions about the new NDPG and trajectory of Japan’s “remilitarization” versus PRC modernization and territorial probing; bases for anxiety by and about Japanese security policy and ‘strategic culture’, including public perception as a political driving factor for Japan’s enhanced security orientation and defense planning. It is a measure of the shift in China’s own military profile

and neighborhood unease, that Japan's recent NDPG shift gained such a muted response both domestically and regionally. Similarly, the recent opening of Japan's Djibouti "center" for JSDF participation in anti-piracy operations reflects the more dynamic approach to protecting the vital sea lanes of communication and commerce. In a sense, rise of China can be viewed as having changed the strategic script regarding Japan's own military posture and preparedness, to the extent of prompting direct military relations between Japan and South Korea on common areas of concern. The dangers of escalating territorial disputes remain significant and, with assurance and reassurance very much a two-way street in a potentially volatile region, there remains important scope and need for deeper alliance consultation and regional confidence building measures with respect to nuclear and non-nuclear issues, threat perceptions and effective deterrence for crisis and conflict avoidance.

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