Part I

Security Environment Surrounding Japan

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The security environment surrounding Japan has become increasingly severe, with various challenges and destabilizing factors becoming more tangible and acute.

Even after the end of the Cold War, interstate conflicts remain in the periphery of Japan. While nations with large military forces are concentrated in this region, a regional cooperation framework in the security realm has not been sufficiently institutionalized. Opaque and uncertain factors such as territorial disputes and reunification issues remain. There has been also a tendency towards an increase in and prolongation of so-called "gray-zone" situations, that is, neither pure peacetime nor contingencies over territory, sovereignty, and maritime economic interests. In addition, there has been a noticeable trend among neighboring countries to modernize and reinforce their military capabilities and to intensify their military activities. In this regard, security challenges and destabilizing factors in the Asia-Pacific region including the area surrounding Japan are becoming more serious.

In particular, North Korea’s further progress in nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles development through its fourth nuclear test and ballistic missile launches, coupled with repeated provocative rhetoric and behavior that disregard the international community, constitute serious and imminent threats to the security of the region including Japan and of the international community. Additionally, while China’s reinforcement of its military capabilities without transparency, along with active maritime advancements, has been rapidly shifting the regional military balance, China’s attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas based on its unique assertions which are incompatible with the existing order of international law, have become security concerns to the region including Japan and to the international community, including the likelihood of increasing the risk of causing unintended consequences due to misunderstanding or miscalculation.

In a global security environment, interdependence among countries has expanded and deepened with globalization and rapid advances in technological innovations. At the same time, there is a growing risk that unrest or a security problem in a single country or region could immediately develop into a challenge or destabilizing factor for the entire international community. The activities of international terrorist organizations, including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), continue to gain momentum. Today, the threat of terrorism is not confined to the Middle East and North Africa, but is expanding globally. Furthermore, while Russia has still been subjected to the sanctions by the international community, the outcomes of Russia’s changes to the status quo by force or coercion through so-called “hybrid warfare” in Ukraine have taken on an aspect of being entrenched, and it is expected that the international community will make further efforts to improve the situation. Simultaneously, China’s unilateral acts that alter the status quo and heighten tension, such as large-scale and rapid land reclamation in the South China Sea, establishment of outposts there, and their use for military purposes, have left challenges for the international response, in the midst of China’s continued attempt to further create a fait accompli. In addition, the recent spate of cyber attacks has become more sophisticated and skillful by the day, with government involvement suspected in various attacks. In this context,
there are increasing risks to the stable use of cyberspace. Under these circumstances, the United States, while faced with a difficult financial situation, has made it clear that it would continue to give greater focus to the Asia-Pacific region in its strategies, including the National Security Strategy, and strengthen its relations with allies in the region (rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region). In addition, the United States has made a clear commitment to continue playing a leading role in tackling global security challenges, based on the recognition that it is the only country capable of leading the international community. Furthermore, with expanding and deepening interdependence, major countries have a growing shared interest in building a more stable international security environment. Countries with a shared interest in resolving issues are increasingly collaborating to take proactive responses to achieve regional and global stability. For example, the international community is working together to protect the existing international order based upon law, including an open, free, and peaceful maritime order. The coalition and countries such as Russia are conducting military activities against ISIL as part of the “War on Terror.” Countries are also engaged in diplomatic efforts at the summit level to find solutions to the ever more complex and divisive regional conflicts.

The multi-polarization of the world continues as a result of shifts in the balance of power due to the extension of the international influence of countries such as China, India, and Russia on the political, economic, and military fronts, and the relative change of influence of the United States. Increases in demand for natural resources, energy, and food stemming from economic growth in emerging countries and a larger middle class are expected to further intensify the international competition for these resources. Against this backdrop, changes in or denial of the existing regional and international order, or assertions and activities to secure economic interests could become more tangible and acute. This in turn could lead to increases in “gray-zone” situations and regional conflicts in the future.

Additionally, the rapid spread of the Internet and information and communications technology (ICT) networks, including social media – one of the key factors of globalization – have given non-state actors a much greater ability to disseminate their opinions and assertions as well as mobilize supporters, and by extension, have significantly increased their influence on countries and the international community. For example, criticism of a nation sent out by an individual, or extremism disseminated by an international terrorist organization, have tended to propagate and spread explosively or be transmitted across the world by ICT networks. Controlling these activities have become increasingly challenging even for countries like authoritarian nations with strong control over their people, as well as for the international community that strives to contain the operations of international terrorist organizations. As a result, countries have been forced to pay greater consideration to public opinion on domestic governance and management of state affairs. At the same time, the international community is faced with more complex issues which need to be resolved and which are increasingly difficult to address.

In addition, it is believed that national security decision-making is more complex than ever before, as some nations have important economic relationships despite differences in fundamental values and strategic interests as seen in the case of Europe and Russia with regard to the Ukraine issue in 2014, as well as the response of Europe, ASEAN member states, and other countries to China’s proposal to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2015.

The security challenges and destabilizing factors in the international community which has these characteristics are complex, diverse, and wide-ranging, and it is becoming ever more difficult for a single country to deal with them on its own. In this context, it is increasingly important for countries which share interests in regional and global stability to cooperate and actively respond to security challenges. Cross-cutting government efforts are also critical to overcome these challenges.
The Asia-Pacific is a unique region with a concentration of large-scale military forces. Recently, the shift in the global balance of power stemming from the increase in power of China and other nations is having an acute impact on military trends in the region. Under this situation, countries in the region have made efforts to enhance and strengthen specific and practical intra-regional coordination and collaboration with a particular focus on non-traditional security fields such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. On the other hand, this region abounds in political, economic, ethnic, and religious diversity. Also, views on security and perceptions of threats are different by country. Therefore, a regional cooperation framework in the security realm has not been sufficiently institutionalized, and long-standing issues of territorial rights and reunification continue to remain in the region.

In the Korean Peninsula, the Korean people have been divided for more than half a century, and the faceoff continues between the military forces of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and North Korea. There are issues concerning Taiwan and the South China Sea. Furthermore, with regard to Japan, territorial disputes over the Northern Territories and Takeshima, both of which are inherent parts of the territory of Japan, remain unresolved.

On top of this, recent years have seen a continued tendency towards the prolongation of “gray-zone” situations, raising concerns that they may develop into more serious situations in the absence of a clear path towards the resolution of the situations.

In North Korea, it is deemed that following the change of regime that made Chairman of the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) Kim Jong-un the leader of the country, the regime continues to strengthen and tighten its grip to make KWP Chairman Kim Jong-un the sole leader. North Korea is military-focused and deploys a massive military force. It is also furthering its development, deployment, transfer, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and it maintains a large-scale special operations force. Through these activities, North Korea continues to maintain and strengthen asymmetrical military capabilities. In particular, it is regarded that North Korea has further advanced its entire ballistic missile program, including new ballistic missiles, through technological verification conducted by launching a series of ballistic missiles. In addition, recently, North Korea has not only engaged in research and development of ballistic missiles, but has also intensified activities to increase their operational capabilities, including surprise attack. North Korea has conducted nuclear tests in defiance of calls of restraint from the international community, and is believed to be seeking to acquire hydrogen bombs to further enhance its nuclear forces. Considering the technological maturity reached through the past four nuclear tests, it is possible that North Korea has successfully miniaturized nuclear weapons for warheads and enabled them to be equipped on ballistic missiles. With the passage of time, there will likely be a growing risk that North Korea would deploy ballistic missiles mounted with a nuclear warhead that have ranges covering Japan. North Korea has repeated provocative rhetoric and behavior against related countries including Japan, especially in 2013, emphasizing that Japan is within the range of its missiles, referring to specific Japanese cities. Such North Korean military trends constitute a serious and imminent threat to the security not only of Japan but also of the entire region and the international community. North Korea’s abduction of Japanese nationals, a grave issue concerning the sovereignty of Japan and the lives and security of the Japanese people, is yet to be resolved. A solution will require concrete actions by North Korea.

Today, China has significant influence in the international community. Accordingly, China is strongly expected to recognize its responsibility in the international community, accept and comply with international norms, and play an active role in a more cooperative manner in regional and global issues. In the meantime, China has been continuously increasing its defense budget at a high level, and has been rapidly reinforcing its military capabilities in a wide range of areas, without sufficient transparency. In particular, China is believed to be making efforts to strengthen its asymmetrical military capabilities to prevent military activities by other countries in the region, denying access and deployment.

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4 Asymmetrical military capabilities, in this context, refer to means of attack different from those of an opponent with superior conventional military capabilities. Such measures are exploited to compensate for disadvantages in conventional weapons and troops. Examples include WMDs, ballistic missiles, terrorism, and cyber attacks.
of foreign militaries to its surrounding areas (so-called “Anti-Access/Area-Denial” [“A2/AD”] capabilities\(^5\)), and recently, pursuing large-scale military reforms designed to build its joint operations structure with actual combat in mind. In addition, China is rapidly expanding and intensifying its activities both in quality and quantity in the maritime and aerial domains in the region, including in the East and South China Seas. In particular, China has continued to take assertive actions with regard to issues of conflicts of interest in the maritime domain, as exemplified by its attempts to change the status quo by coercion, and has signaled its position to realize its unilateral assertions without making any compromises.

As for the seas and airspace around Japan, China has intruded into Japanese territorial waters frequently by its government ships, and has engaged in dangerous activities that could cause unintended consequences, such as its vessel’s direction of fire control radar at a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) destroyer, the flight of fighters abnormally close to SDF aircraft, and its announcement of establishing the “East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ)” based on its own assertion thereby infringing the freedom of overflight over the high seas. In the South China Sea, China has continued to take unilateral actions that change the status quo and heighten tension, including large-scale and rapid reclamation of multiple features, establishment of outposts there, and their use for military purposes, based on China’s unique assertions which are incompatible with the existing order of international law, and has made steady efforts to create a fait accompli. In addition, a Chinese fighter is alleged to have flown abnormally close to and conducted an intercept of a U.S. Forces aircraft. These Chinese activities represent security concerns of the region encompassing Japan, and of the international community. For this reason, China is urged to further increase transparency regarding its military and enhance its compliance with international norms. It is a key task to further strengthen mutual understanding and trust by promoting dialogue and exchanges with China, and make further progress on measures to build trust, such as measures to avoid and prevent unintended consequences in the maritime domain.

Russia, while perceiving the buildup of an affluent nation as its task for the present, attaches importance to becoming an influential power in a multipolarizing world, based on the deployment of its new economic, cultural, and military might. Russia has promoted the strengthening of the readiness of its Armed Forces and the development and induction of new equipment, while continuing to give priority to its nuclear force. Recently, a confrontational relationship has developed between Russia and such countries as the United States and European nations over Ukraine which Russia deems is part of its sphere of influence. Meanwhile, Russia took actions intended to expand its international influence, including military interventions in Syria. Russia faces a severe economic situation due to falling crude oil prices, a plunging ruble, and the impacts of EU and U.S. economic sanctions, among other factors. Even as expenditure cuts are thus made in a wide range of areas, Russia has striven to secure defense spending with priority and has continued to modernize its Armed Forces. Recently, Russia has intensified its military activities not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but also in the Arctic, Europe, the periphery of mainland United States, and the Middle East, and has been expanding the area of activities. In the Far East, the Russian Armed Forces have conducted large-scale exercises. Furthermore, Russia’s changing of the status quo by force or coercion in Ukraine has heightened the threat of Russian “hybrid warfare,” especially in Europe, and is perceived as a global issue that could affect the entire international community, including Asia.

As seen above, in the Asia-Pacific region, where the security environment has increasingly grown severe, the presence of the U.S. Forces remains extremely important in order to achieve regional stability. Accordingly, Japan and other countries, such as Australia and the ROK, have established bilateral alliances and partnerships with the United States, and allow the stationing and rotational deployment of the U.S. Forces in their territories. In addition, the U.S. Forces have recently taken measures to further strengthen their presence. As regards the responses to the unilateral changes in the status quo by force or coercion based on unique assertions, the international community centered around countries in the region are making concerted efforts to protect the existing international order based on law.

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\(^5\) Anti-Access (A2) is a concept introduced by the United States. It refers to capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area. Area-Denial (AD) refers to capabilities, usually of shorter range, designed to limit an opposing force’s freedom of action within the operational area. Weapons used for A2/AD include ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, anti-satellite weapons, air-defense systems, submarines, and mines.
Meeting-Plus (ADMM Plus), conferences hosted by non-governmental institutions with the participation of relevant defense ministers, and bilateral and multilateral joint exercises are held. Promoting and developing such multi-layered approaches among countries is also important to ensure stability in the region.
Global Security Issues

A range of regional conflicts still exists across the globe, which have complex and diverse backgrounds and forms. Especially in the Middle East and Africa, against the backdrop of the turmoil, civil war, and regional conflict that followed the “Arab Spring,” there is an increase in areas which lack national governance. In many cases, international terrorist organizations made inroads in these areas, expanded their organizations, and intensified their activities. These cases have made regional conflicts more complex, making it increasingly challenging for nations and regional organizations with conflicts in their regions to address and resolve them, as well as for the international community. On the other hand, climate change and competition between sovereign nations to secure resources and energy could become more tangible, and cause regional disputes. They have become new factors that affect the global security environment.

Furthermore, even as the various functions of military forces are utilized more to conduct prompt rescue activities in response to large-scale natural disasters and outbreaks of infectious diseases, the presence of countries with weak governance has made it more difficult to deal with risks such as the explosive outbreak and spread of infectious diseases.

The proliferation of WMDs, such as nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons, and of ballistic missiles that serve as the means of delivery of WMDs is still viewed as a significant threat to the international community. In particular, there are continuing concerns about the acquisition and use of WMDs by non-state actors, such as international terrorist organizations. In this regard, the international community continues to pursue efforts to counter terrorism activities that utilize nuclear materials and other radioactive substances. Meanwhile, with regard to Iran’s nuclear program, the United States, the European Union (EU), among other countries have imposed sanctions against Iran, while engaging in discussions with the country. In 2015, a final agreement was reached on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, containing provisions on Iran’s implementation of measures to restrict uranium enrichment activities and ban the production of weapons-grade plutonium. Also, in response to North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile issues, a new United Nations Security Council resolution was adopted following North Korea’s nuclear test and ballistic missile launches in 2016, which includes sanctions that ban the export and import of all items that could contribute to North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile programs. In addition, initiatives which focus on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament are under way, such as the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) entering into force between the United States and Russia in 2011.

Furthermore, there has been a growing tendency for the threat of international terrorism to spread rapidly. The diversification of actors that carry out acts of terrorism, coupled with the increasing complexity of regional conflicts, have made the prevention of terrorism even more challenging. Similar to ISIL, terrorist organizations with abundant funding and powerful and sophisticated military capabilities continue to step up their activities. Through ingenious public relations strategies using the Internet and other tools, they communicate their extremism and gain multiple followers and new members around the world. In addition, the United States, European nations, and elsewhere face concerns over the threat of so-called “home-grown” and “lone-wolf” terrorism – namely, acts of terrorism perpetrated in the home country singlehandedly or by a small number of people, including those who experienced combat in a conflict area and returned to their home country, or those who have become influenced by extremism. As shown by the terror attacks in Paris in 2015 and the terror attacks in Brussels in 2016, the threat of international terrorism is not confined to the Middle East and North Africa, and is spreading globally. In view of incidents including the terrorist attack in Dhaka, Bangladesh in July 2016, it can be said that Japan is in a situation where it needs to squarely address the threat of international terrorism as its own challenge.

Securing the stable use of not only conventional areas of activity – sea and airspace – but also new areas of activity such as outer space and cyberspace is becoming a significant security challenge for the international community. Further developments in military and science technology and the recent dramatic advances in ICT are increasing the dependence of social infrastructure and military activities on outer space and cyberspace. On the other hand, the development of anti-satellite weapons by nations and the increasing number of cyber attacks, in some of which the involvement of government agencies is suspected, are heightening the risks to the stable use of outer space and cyberspace. In recent years, concrete initiatives have been under way in various countries aimed at strengthening an entire country’s capabilities to respond to cyber attacks including private companies,
as well as acquiring capabilities to monitor threats to satellites and other space assets. There is also an effort in the international community to promote the rule of law, including establishing a code of conduct in outer space and cyberspace. With regard to the maritime domain, which has been regarded as a fundamental means for supporting international trade, piracy acts have taken place in various parts of the world, and there have been cases where countries unilaterally assert their rights and take actions based on their own assertion that is inconsistent with the existing order of international law, thereby unduly infringing the freedom of navigation on and flight over the high seas. Recently, China has made further efforts to create a fait accompli through unilateral acts that alter the status quo and heighten tension, such as large-scale and rapid land reclamation in the South China Sea, establishment of outposts there, and their use for military purposes. In response to these situations, the international community has been taking various measures such as continuing to conduct anti-piracy operations in relevant waters including off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, collaborating to protect the existing international order based on law including an open, free, and peaceful maritime order, and implementing initiatives designed to avoid and prevent unintended consequences in the maritime domain.

As seen above, the international community today faces complex, diverse, and broad security challenges and destabilizing factors. Along with deterrence and handling of armed conflicts, the roles of military forces in responding to these challenges are becoming so diverse that they include a broad spectrum of activities from conflict prevention to reconstruction assistance. Moreover, as opportunities for military forces to play such important roles increase, comprehensive responses are required that combine military capacity with other capacities such as diplomacy, law enforcement and justice, intelligence, and the economy.

Developments in science and technology, as represented by the great leaps forward in ICT in recent years, have also had spillover effects on the military. The United States and other developed countries put emphasis on research and development of new technologies including those for precision guidance, unmanned vehicles, and stealth capability, while actively seeking international joint development and production to address rising development and production costs and the deterioration of the national fiscal situation. On the other hand, states and non-state actors without cutting-edge technology are anticipated to develop and acquire WMDs and asymmetrical means of attack such as cyber attacks, while acquiring the technologies of developed countries in an illicit manner. How these trends in military science and technology will unfold is expected to have significant effects on military strategies and military balance in the future.