As the security environment surrounding Japan grows increasingly severe, Japan faces mounting security challenges it needs to address. Under such circumstances, it is necessary to carry forward the policies pertaining to national security from a strategic perspective under strong political leadership with the Prime Minister at its core. For this reason, the National Security Council was established in the Cabinet in December 2013 to provide a platform to discuss important matters with regard to Japan’s security. Since its establishment, the Council has met 179 times (as of the end of June 2018) and has been serving as a control tower for foreign and defense policies. The National Security Strategy (NSS) and the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) are also deliberated and approved in this National Security Council.

The National Security Secretariat established within the Cabinet Secretariat provides constant support to the National Security Council as its secretariat. The Secretariat is also tasked with planning and designing, and overall coordination of basic guidelines and important matters with regard to foreign and defense policies pertaining to national security. Administrative organs that are deeply involved in policies support the Secretariat with both personnel and information. The Secretariat has many civilians and uniformed personnel of the MOD with concurrent posts, who are engaged in the planning and designing of policies, as well as the utilization of respective specialized knowledge. In addition, information such as global military trends are shared in a timely manner.

The enhanced ability to plan and design national security policies has led to systematic alignment of Japan’s national security, and to providing a direction for policies with regard to new security challenges. Furthermore, individual defense policies are formulated and efforts to expedite decision-making are made based on the basic guidelines discussed at the National Security Council, and this is contributing significantly to improved planning and execution of policies within the MOD.

A scene from a National Security Council meeting held upon North Korea’s launch of ballistic missile (Photo courtesy of the Cabinet Secretariat Public Relations Office)
Japan’s National Security Policy Framework

The NSS approved by the National Security Council and the Cabinet in December of 2013 represents Japan’s first ever basic policy on national security with a focus on diplomatic affairs and defense policy. The NSS defines approaches that Japan should follow based on a long-term view of its national interests. It replaces the Basic Policy on National Defense, which had served as the basis for Japan’s defense policies theretofore.

The NDPG, which was established based on the NSS, defines basic policies for Japan’s future defense, the role of its defense capabilities, and objectives for specific SDF equipment. The NDPG was formulated with a medium-to-long-term outlook because the acquisition of defense equipment and the establishment of troop operational systems cannot be accomplished overnight and requires many years of planning. The NSS and NDPG are mainly designed for the next decade or so.

The Medium Term Defense Program (MTDP) specifies a maximum budget and the amount of mainstay defense equipment to be acquired over the subsequent five-year period in order to achieve the defense capability targets defined in the NDPG. The fiscal year budget is drawn on the MTDP substantiated as projects, and the necessary expenses for each fiscal year will be appropriated based on relevant situations.

To date, the NDPG has contained mention of nationwide basic security policies focusing on defense policy to a certain extent. The NSS carries it with great meaning as the definitive statement of the Government’s basic policy on national security, with a focus on diplomatic affairs and defense policy.

Outline of the National Security Strategy: Proactive Contribution to Peace based on the Principle of International Cooperation

Japan is committed to continuing the path it has followed to date as a peace-loving nation and, as a major player in international politics and business, it also seeks its own security as well as peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region from its stance as a Proactive Contribution to Peace based on the principle of international cooperation. Japan will contribute more proactively than ever before to the peace, security and prosperity of the international community.

In achieving the aforementioned fundamental principle of national security, the NSS stipulates national interests and goals, and presents a strategic approach that needs to be employed.

KEY WORD

Proactive Contribution to Peace

A fundamental principle of national security introduced in the NSS, which refers to Japan’s commitment to contribute to ensuring international peace, stability and prosperity even more proactively and in a manner proportional to Japan’s national power.