Chapter 1 Overview

Section 1 Characteristics of Current Security Environment

What is notable about the current security environment is first of all that interdependency among countries is further expanding and deepening. On the other hand, thanks to further growth of the national power of such countries as China, changes in the balance of power are accelerating and becoming more complex. In addition, uncertainty over the existing order is increasing. Against such a backdrop, prominently emerging is inter-state competition across the political, economic and military realms, in which states seek to shape global and regional order to their advantage as well as to increase their influence.

Such inter-state competition occurs on a continuous basis. In conducting inter-state competition, states leverage various means such as undermining another country's sovereignty using military and law-enforcement entities, and manipulating a foreign country's public opinion by exploiting social media. In the competition, methods employed to alter the status quo, such as "hybrid warfare," that intentionally blur the boundaries between the military and non-military realms is sometimes adopted. These methods combine operations using anonymous units concealing their nationality, cyber attacks against communications and critical infrastructure, and information manipulation campaigns through distribution of false information via the internet and other media. The methods are forcing affected actors to take complex measures not limited to military ones.

Also, as a result of the use of various methods, including hybrid warfare, so-called gray-zone situations, which are neither purely peacetime nor contingency situations, are becoming persistent over a long period of time, playing out as part of inter-state competition. They may possibly further increase and expand. Such gray-zone situations harbor the risk of rapidly developing into graver situations without showing clear indications.

Secondly, technological progress is about to fundamentally change how security should be managed. Against the backdrop of the advance of military technology due to rapid technological innovation in information & communications and other fields, contemporary warfare increasingly features capabilities combined across all domains: not only land, sea and air but also new domains, which are space, cyberspace and electromagnetic spectrum. Aiming to improve overall military capability and acquire asymmetric military capability that effectively prevents opponents with superior overall military capability from exercising their strengths, states are seeking to gain superiority in technologies that undergird capabilities in new domains.

States endeavor to develop weapons that leverage cutting-edge, potentially game-changing technologies that could drastically change the conduct of future warfare. Specifically, major powers such as the United States, China and Russia are believed to be focusing on the research and development of unmanned technologies, artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, hypersonic technologies that are necessary for the development of Hypersonic Glide Vehicles (HGV) and Hypersonic Cruise Missiles (HCM), and high-power laser technologies, among other technologies. Meanwhile, non-state actors and countries without advanced technologies may be attempting to develop and acquire means for asymmetrical attack, such as weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and cyber capabilities, and obtain the technologies of developed countries through illicit means in order to make up for their disadvantages.

Progress in military technology relies heavily on the development of civilian technologies as well as technological development in the military field. It is believed that the development and international transfer of civilian technologies will have a major impact on improvements in the military capabilities of each country. Further technological innovations hereafter are expected to make it difficult still to foresee future warfare.

Thirdly, expanded and deepened interdependency among countries are raising the risk that a conflict or other security issue in a country or region will soon grow into a destabilizing factor that could affect the entire international community. The following security challenges, which cannot be dealt with by a single country alone, are prominently emerging.

(1) Security of Maritime Traffic

In the maritime domain, which has been regarded as a

foundation for supporting international trade, there have been cases where a country unilaterally claims its entitlement and takes actions based on its own assertions that are incompatible with the existing international order, thereby unduly infringing upon the freedom of navigation in high seas and of overflight. In addition, piracy acts have taken place in various parts of the world.

In response to these situations, the international community has been taking various measures, such as collaborating to protect the existing international order based on law including a free and open maritime order, and implementing initiatives designed to avoid and prevent unexpected situations in the maritime domain and airspace. In addition, the international community is continuing to conduct anti-piracy operations in Asia and Africa.

(2) Securing Stable Use of New Domains: Space and Cyberspace

Recently, securing the stable use of new domains such as space and cyberspace, in addition to the conventional domains of the land, sea, and air, has become an important challenge for the security of the international community. The further development of military technology along with significant advancements in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has increased the dependence of social infrastructure and military activities on space and cyberspace. On the other hand, the development of anti-satellite weapons by countries and the great occurrence of cyber attacks with suspected government involvement have exacerbated the risks to the stable use of space and cyberspace. In recent years, countries are moving ahead with specific efforts aimed at acquiring the capabilities to monitor threats to space assets such as satellites and a reinforcement of their ability to combat cyber attacks, including private sector companies. There are also moves seen in the international community to promote the rule of law in space and cyberspace, including an establishment of certain norms of behavior.

(3) Response to Proliferation of WMDs

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, including East Asia. As for chemical weapons, the Malaysian police announced that VX, a chemical whose production and use is banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), was detected from the body of Kim Jong-Nam following his assassination that occurred in Malaysia in February 2017. Additionally, the then U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May made a statement which said that it was clear that Novichok,

a Russian-made military-grade nerve agent, was used, and that it was highly likely that Russia was responsible for the attack on a former Russian intelligence agent that occurred in the United Kingdom in March 2018. Concerning the situation in Syria, in April 2017, the United States determined that the Assad regime used chemical weapons in an attack on a region in the south of Idlib Governorate in northwest Syria controlled by anti-government forces, and in response launched a missile strike on Shayrat Airbase, the base of the planes used in the Assad regime's attack which is believed to be housing chemical weapons. Furthermore, in April 2018, the United States, United Kingdom and France determined that the Assad regime used chemical weapons against civilians once again in Eastern Ghouta on the outskirts of Damascus, the capital of Syria, and in response they launched a missile strike on three chemical weapons-related facilities, demonstrating resolve to stop the use and proliferation of chemical weapons.

In addition, 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.

(4) Response to Regional Conflict and International Terrorism

There are underlying differences in the nature of conflicts occurring around the world. In the case of prolonged conflicts, it is believed there is a rising possibility that human rights violations, refugees, starvation, and poverty occurring as a result of conflict will affect a much broader area than the countries involved.

Meanwhile, mainly in the Middle East and Africa, there are prominent examples where geographic blind spots without government control in vulnerable nations with unstable political situations and weak governance capabilities have become a hotbed for the activities of international terrorist organizations.

Terrorist organizations are carrying out activities across national borders while obtaining personnel, weapons and financial resources by taking advantage of vulnerable border controls. Also, in European and North American countries, there is growing concern over the threat of terrorism posed by persons who sympathize with violent extremist thoughts propagated by international terrorist organizations or by persons returning to their home country after fighting in conflict zones. Taking into account that the extremist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has repeatedly cited that Japanese nationals are a target of its terrorist attacks, and that Japanese nationals died in the