

Section
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The Basis of Defense Policy

1 Basic Policy for National Defense

Under the Constitution, Japan has adhered to its Basic Policy for National Defense, which was adopted by the National Defense Council¹ and approved by the Cabinet in 1957. The national defense objectives provided in the Basic Policy for National Defense are to prevent direct and indirect invasions of Japan, eliminate threats for the remote chance that Japan is invaded, and thus protect the independence and peace of Japan as a democratic nation. In addition, the Basic Policy lays down the following four items as a basic policy for achieving these objectives.

(1) Support the activities of the United Nations, cooperate with other nations, and aim to achieve world peace.

- (2) Establish the foundation necessary to ensure a stable quality of life for the people, boost nationalism, and guarantee the nation's safety.
- (3) Progressively develop efficient national defense capabilities to the necessary limit for self-defense in accordance with national power and circumstances.
- (4) Deal with foreign invasions of Japan based on security arrangements formed with the United States until the United Nations becomes able to effectively prevent the said threats.

See ▶ Reference 6

2 Other Basic Policies

Under the Basic Policy for National Defense, Japan has been building a modest defense capability under the Constitution for exclusively defense-oriented purposes without becoming a military power that could threaten other countries, while adhering to the principle of civilian control of the military, observing the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, and firmly maintaining the Japan–U.S. Security Arrangements.

1 Exclusively Defense-Oriented Policy

The exclusively defense-oriented policy means that Japan will not employ defensive force unless and until an armed attack is mounted on Japan by another country, and even in such a case, only the minimum force necessary to defend itself may be used. Furthermore, only the minimum defense forces necessary for self-defense should be retained and used. This exclusively defense-oriented policy is a passive defense strategy that is consistent with the spirit of the Constitution.

2 Not Becoming a Military Power

There is no established definition for the term “military power.” For Japan, however, not becoming a military power that could threaten the security of other countries means that Japan will

not possess more military force than is necessary for self-defense and that could pose a threat to other countries.

3 The Three Non-Nuclear Principles

The Three Non-Nuclear Principles are that Japan: will not possess nuclear weapons, will not produce nuclear weapons, and will not allow nuclear weapons into Japan. Japan adheres to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles as a fixed national policy.

Japan is prohibited from manufacturing or possessing nuclear weapons also under the Atomic Energy Basic Law¹. In addition, Japan ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and as a non-nuclear weapons state, is not permitted to produce or acquire nuclear weapons².

4 Securing Civilian Control

Civilian control of the military means the subordination of the military to the political control in a democratic state, or in other words, control over the military by democratic political authority.

Learning lessons from World War II, Japan has adopted the

¹-1 The function of this Council was taken over by the Security Council of Japan in 1986.

²-1 Article 2 of the Atomic Energy Basic Law states that “The research, development and utilization of atomic energy shall be limited to peaceful purposes, aimed at ensuring safety and performed independently under democratic management.”

²-2 Article 2 of the NPT states that “Each non-nuclear weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes....not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices...”

following strict civilian control system that is entirely different from the one under the former Constitution³. Civilian control ensures that the SDF is maintained and operated in accordance with the will of the people.

The Diet, representing Japanese people, decides laws and budget including the allotted number of uniformed SDF personnel and principal institutions of the MOD/SDF. It also approves issuance of Defense Operation Orders. The function of national defense entirely falls under the executive power of the Cabinet as a part of general administrative functions. The Constitution requires the Prime Minister and other Ministers of State in the Cabinet to be civilians. Under the Constitution, the Prime Minister, on behalf of the whole Cabinet, is the commander-in-chief of the SDF. The Minister of Defense, who is exclusively in charge of national defense, exercises general control over SDF activities. In addition, the Security Council of Japan⁴ under the Cabinet deliberates important matters on national defense.

As for the Ministry of Defense, the Minister of Defense is in charge of administrative affairs concerning national defense, and controls and manages the SDF. The Minister of Defense is assisted in planning policies by the Senior Vice-Minister and two Parliamentary Secretaries⁵.

In addition, special advisors to the Minister of Defense counsel the Minister of Defense on important issues under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense based on their expertise and experience. The Defense Council consisting of political appointees, civil servants and uniformed SDF personnel of the Ministry of Defense deliberates on basic principles under the Ministry's jurisdiction. Through these ways, the Ministry of Defense aims to further enhance the civilian control system.

As mentioned above, the civilian control system is well established. It is necessary that Japanese people have deep interests on national defense and we need both political and administrative efforts to ensure the civilian control function effectively.



Prime Minister Abe attending the Unit Flag return ceremony of transportation unit dispatched to the Golan Heights



The Unit Flag being returned to Minister of Defense Onodera

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- 3 The Cabinet's control over military matters was limited
 - 4 Members of the Security Council are the Prime Minister (chairman); Minister designated pursuant to Article 9 of the Cabinet Law (Minister of State pre-designated to perform duties of the Prime Minister temporarily when the Prime Minister is absent, involved in an accident, or in a similar situation); Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications; Minister for Foreign Affairs; Minister of Finance; Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry; Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism; Minister of Defense; the Chief Cabinet Secretary; and Chairperson of the National Public Safety Commission.
 - 5 In addition, to help the Minister of Defense effectively handle administrative work related to national defense and to reliably manage the SDF, other systems to assist the Minister have been established. See Part III, Chapter 4, Section 1 for the organization of the SDF, including such advisory systems to the Minister.