



**How Does the Democratic Party of  
Japan Affect Security Policy?**

**High-Profile Stumbles and Quiet Progress**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) took power in Japan in 2009, both Japanese and American observers feared sea changes in Japanese security policy. Compared to the long-governing and familiar Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the DPJ seemed young and inexperienced, farther left and less ideologically coherent, and eager to make policy change for change's sake. The DPJ has appeared to earn this reputation over the last three years, as exemplified by its early mishandling of reorganization plans for U.S. military installations in Okinawa, which prompted widespread criticism both within Japan and from U.S. alliance managers and observers.

This notion of a hapless DPJ is only partly correct. The DPJ government has indeed begun to popularize and politicize Japanese security policy, leaving security decisions more exposed to political and public leverage. This reflects the party's anti-bureaucratic policymaking instincts, its top-heavy structure, and its promotion of two-party competition. In some ways, though, the party has been a victim of its own success. It has stumbled most badly over the most high-profile, politically salient issues: military base politics, incidents surrounding territorial disputes, North Korea crisis management. This has reflected poor coordination more than misguided or unpopular policy stances.

But at the same time, on many substantively important but less politically salient issues – arms non-export policies, military-military relations with South Korea, the updating of National Defense Program Guidelines – the DPJ is quietly progressing along a security policy trajectory that is familiar, constructive, and not particularly worrying for either the U.S. or the Japanese public. This pattern may be somewhat reassuring for American alliance managers, but it suggests the need to watch for gradual politicization of previously under-the-radar security matters. It also suggests that the handling of security policy has new potential to vex all incumbent Japanese governments, DPJ-led or otherwise, and thereby to contribute to governance destabilization across the board in Japan.

## INTRODUCTION

When the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) first took power in 2009, it was an unknown quantity – and thus a worrisome one – to many observers of Japanese security policy and U.S.-Japan relations, both within Japan and in the U.S. Compared to the long-governing, familiar, and reliably pro-U.S. Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the DPJ appeared young and inexperienced, farther left and less ideologically coherent, eager to make policy change for change’s sake, and eager to ignore the accumulated wisdom of Japan’s bureaucracy.

Less glaring but similarly important, the party took power within a Japanese policymaking environment that had already begun to amplify the (potential) influence of public and political opinion. Through repeated institutional reforms and reorganization, Cabinet power, particularly the power of Prime Minister, was strengthened. The greater “presidentialization” of political leadership and a greater emphasis on two-party competition triggered politicization of a wide range of policy issues, including those, such as security policy, that had been considered “non-political.” Such popularization is not problematic in itself – after all, it is the essence of democracy. But to those that are satisfied with the status quo, it poses a threat to the stability and predictability of security policy, especially when the very leaders promoting popular influence are thought to lack the knowledge and leadership skills needed to wield such influence wisely.

But how much more popularized and politicized *is* the security policymaking process under the DPJ becoming? More importantly, has any such change in process led to any tangible change in policy outcomes?

Through its first three years in office, the DPJ has indeed appeared to earn its unreliable reputation. In the area of security policy, the party has both suffered notable failures demonstrated notable differences from the policy supported by the LDP. The party’s difficulties have been exemplified by its mishandling of various security-related items:

- Reorganization plans for U.S. military installations in Okinawa, most notably Futenma Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS), immediately upon taking office in 2009.
- The collision between a Chinese fishing trawler and a Japan Coast Guard ship off the Senkaku Islands in 2010.
- The nuclear reactor disasters that followed the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake of March 2011.

These stumbles prompted widespread criticism both within Japan and from the U.S., and they have hastened the resignation of two DPJ prime ministers in two years.

Ironically, one can argue that the party has been a victim of its own success. The DPJ's pursuit of two-party competition and anti-bureaucratic policymaking indeed has begun to popularize and politicize Japanese security policy, leaving security policy decisions more exposed to political and public leverage. The party so far has tripped most badly over the most high profile, politically salient issues – military base politics, incidents surrounding territorial disputes, and North Korea crisis management – and has been punished more for poor policy execution than for misguided or unpopular stances. The party's organizational structure, meanwhile, has the potential to continue to inject considerable inexperience and volatility into policymaking.

The characterization of the DPJ as “simultaneously radical and hapless” is only partly correct, however. In particular, on many substantively important but less well-publicized or politically salient issues – such as arms non-export policies, military-military relations with South Korea, and the updating of National Defense Program Guidelines – the DPJ actually quietly progresses along a security policy trajectory that is familiar, constructive, and not particularly worrying for either the U.S. or the Japanese public.<sup>1</sup> Though this pattern may be reassuring to the US, it still suggests the need to be aware of the risk of politicization of previously under-the-radar security issues. It also suggests that the management of security policy has new potential to vex all incumbent Japanese governments, DPJ-led or otherwise, and thereby to contribute to governance destabilization across the board in Japan.

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<sup>1</sup> For similar arguments concerning the DPJ's maintenance of Japan's security policy trajectory, if not the correlation of success with low political salience, see Jeffrey Hornung, “Japan's DPJ: The Party of Change,” *PacNet* 24 (April 4, 2012); Rikki Kersten, “Japanese Security Policy Formation: Assessing the Koizumi Revolution,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 65:1 (2011), 5-23; and Paul Midford, “Japan's Security Policy under the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ),” *ISPI Analysis* 81 (December 2011). For an argument that the DPJ retains a good portion of its opposition-nurtured DNA and may well deviate significantly from the status quo, see Daniel Sneider, “The New Asianism: Japanese Foreign Policy under the Democratic Party of Japan,” *Asia Policy* 12 (July 2011), 99-129. For a more neutral forecast made during the early days of the DPJ administration, see Leif-Eric Easley, Tetsuo Kotani, and Aki Mori, “Electing a New Japanese Security Policy? Examining Foreign Policy Visions within the Democratic Party of Japan,” *Asia Policy* 9 (January 2010), 45-66. For a pre-DPJ argument concerning built-in pressures toward continuity in Japan's security policy trajectory, see Christopher Hughes, “Japan's Military Modernisation: A Quiet Japan-China Arms Race and Global Power Projection,” *Asia-Pacific Review* 16:1 (2009), 84-99.

Below, we discuss how the DPJ's policy positions, party structure, and policymaking style have injected new popular inputs into security policymaking since the party's rise to power, and whether these changes have actually led to changes in policy outcomes.

## **NEW POPULAR INPUTS IN JAPANESE SECURITY POLICYMAKING**

### **DPJ Policy Stances**

“Popular inputs” into the Japanese security policymaking process have undergone significant changes in the last decade. They have primarily surfaced with the emergence of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) as a capable challenger to the LDP and then as Japan's governing party – that is, first as a party with indirect influence over security policy, and then as the party with most immediate control. They also reflect the emergence of a more genuine two-party political system in Japan and the displacement of a governance system dominated by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and often characterized as opaque and corrupt. This is something for which the DPJ clearly deserves the most credit, but the two-party competition that the ascendance of the DPJ introduced will present new types of policy inputs regardless of which of the two parties (if either) governs.

First, contrary to common impressions, the DPJ is not particularly leftist. More significant is the fact that the party is diverse and uncoordinated in its opinions – not necessarily along ideological lines – to the point that it is sometimes extremely difficult to distinguish “the DPJ's position” on a given security policy issue from that of the LDP.

As mentioned, the DPJ is not particularly leftist. The party is often described as “progressive” or “center-left,” but this reflects two misguided assumptions: that the party hasn't evolved beyond its more genuinely left-wing roots, and that if the LDP is a center-right party, the DPJ must be center-left. The center-left label fits only for certain aspects of the DPJ's approach to security policy (and to politics more generally). Of course, the DPJ does have more leftist influences than the LDP. Moderate Socialists and a few “liberal conservative” defectors from the LDP founded the DPJ, and some prominent former Socialists, such as Sengoku Yoshito (Chief Cabinet Secretary under Prime Minister Kan Naoto) and Yokomichi Takahiro (former governor of Hokkaido and the incumbent speaker of the House of Representatives)<sup>2</sup>, now occupy

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper, Japanese names appear according to Japanese practice, with family names first and given names second, except in citations of those English-language publications in which Japanese authors' names are listed with family name last.



important leadership positions. Furthermore, the party continues to rely on labor unions, traditionally leftist, for electoral support. Nevertheless, leftist/liberal influence within the DPJ has waned over the years since the party was first formed in 1998.

Reduced leftist influence within the party can be attributed to the process of DPJ's expansion as a political party. The DPJ grew into a major party largely by absorbing successive waves of conservative politicians that defected from the LDP, including Ozawa Ichirou and the members of his Liberal Party in 2003 and other political descendants of the groups that originally left the LDP in 1993. In addition, many of those DPJ original members who were formerly Socialists lost their Diet seats before the party had amassed much electoral strength, only to be replaced by new candidates or the conservatives absorbed from other parties. Today, conservatives outnumber former Socialists and other leftist/liberal elements within the DPJ, especially among the party's rank-and-file. The few remaining former Socialists are not organized into a coherent sub-group of their own, but rather are divided among several of the party's groups.

To the extent the DPJ maintains its leftist political origins, these are as much about consumer-advocate, social-issue leftism – i.e., a brand of leftism not trained directly on security issues – as they are about traditional Japanese leftism. One observes nothing close to the polarization found in the Republic of Korea (ROK) or Taiwan. At the same time, those within the DPJ who focus on security issues have tended to be conservatives or former members of the Democratic Socialist Party of Japan (a center-left party relatively hawkish on security in part because the Japanese defense industry employed some of its private-sector labor supporters).<sup>3</sup>

In fact, leftist/liberals have more potential to exert influence on the DPJ through the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ). As the former junior partner in the DPJ's initial governing coalition, the SDPJ enjoyed policy influence that its defectors among the DPJ rank and file lack, despite its increasing irrelevance in Japanese domestic politics overall. In some cases, the SDPJ exerted influence through direct intra-coalition negotiations; in others, DPJ politicians supporting progressive policies conveniently blamed purported Socialist pressure. The latter pattern describes the DPJ's rejection of revisions to the Three Principles of Arms Exports called for in the revised 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG). Both types of SDPJ influences were likely at work in the Hatoyama administration when the government revisited Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma relocation plans. Ultimately, the SDPJ quit the DPJ-led government in May 2010 because its stance on Futenma was rejected by the DPJ. It has remained outside the coalition since. Today, the SDPJ needs the particular balance of power

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<sup>3</sup> Personal interview with DPJ staff official.

in the Diet in order to stay relevant—the party itself is only likely to decline in numbers as time passes. Its inability to join the ruling coalition will only accelerate its decline.

As observed above, the leftist ideological current within the DPJ may not be as strong as it is often perceived. Instead, internal discord and lack of coordination on almost all policy issues, including security policy, looms large as a major characteristic of the DPJ. As discussed below, this is reflected in the party's approach to policymaking and therefore may continue to be applicable for the foreseeable future. Unlike the LDP and SDPJ, the DPJ has no basic document – a *koryo* or manifesto or platform – that both establishes a party consensus on basic policies and remains consistent over time. There are many groups that function similar to LDP's factions developing within the DPJ, but these groups are divided more by personal ties and disagreements over the distribution of senior party posts and policy *style* than they are divided over policy content, let alone foreign and security policy content. For instance, prior to Ozawa's departure from the DPJ, a clear cleavage had already begun to emerge between “pro-Ozawa” and “anti-Ozawa” politicians. In this environment, security policy may be used as a proxy for factional disputes, rather than a legitimate issue for policy debate within the party. Even attempts to ameliorate factional disagreements can have indirect policy effects. Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko, for example, appointed Ichikawa Yasuo and then Tanaka Naoki – both of whom were considered allies of Ozawa – as his first and second defense ministers in part to make an overture toward Ozawa and his supporters, despite these two politicians' clear lack of defense policy expertise.<sup>4</sup>

There are some areas in which the DPJ is both relatively united and distinct from the LDP. Still, these areas tend to involve *approaches* to security policy rather than *outcomes*. Some may worry the U.S., while others allow the DPJ to pull Japanese security policy in a direction agreeable to U.S. interests.

On the positive side, the DPJ is not as burdened by the legacy of Japan's wartime past vis-à-vis Asia as the LDP has been. It is also not beholden to domestic pressure groups with non-strategic foreign policy views, such as the Japan War-Bereaved Association (*Izokukai*) or the association of the families of North Korean abductees, which tend to be more conservative. Furthermore, the DPJ is not handicapped by the party history that has led the LDP to avoid certain initiatives for fear of association with heavy-handed wartime or immediate post-war policies – for example, improved intelligence-gathering capabilities and the secret Diet sessions

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<sup>4</sup> Takao Toshikawa, “Barons Anoint Noda,” *The Oriental Economist* 79:9 (2011), 3-4.

this might involve.<sup>5</sup> Thus, all else equal, the party has a freer hand to pursue closer relations with its Asian neighbors.

More generally, the DPJ may be inclined to take a less “status quo” approach to foreign policy and security. This often result in an inconsistent policy direction, however. For example, the Hatoyama administration, the first DPJ government, publicly pondered reassessing the U.S.-Japan alliance and developing stronger ties with China. But the Kan administration, the second DPJ administration, demonstrated its willingness to admit a greater emphasis on China relative to North Korea, as reflected in the “dynamic defense” concept within the 2010 NDPG and the initial apprehension of the Chinese trawler captain in the Senkakus incident in September 2010.

Three years of DPJ rule suggests that the higher profile the issue is, the more likely it is for the DPJ to try to differentiate itself, as reflected in the Hatoyama administration’s move to reevaluate Futenma MCAS relocation plans. The DPJ also often attempts to differentiate itself – largely for differentiation’s sake – by insisting on transparency. The DPJ’s decision to investigate and publicize secret understandings between Japan and the U.S. regarding the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japanese territory is an indication that the DPJ, at least at the time, attached great significance to demonstrating difference from the LDP, often without regard to potential diplomatic and other repercussions.

### **New DPJ Party Structure**

The DPJ has a different structure than the LDP. Most significant is that the DPJ is bottom-heavy with inexperienced legislators. This party demographic concentrates the party’s policymaking authority in the hands of a small cadre of leaders, without much opportunity for others in the party to chime in on policy debates. This leaves security policy more vulnerable than before to mismanagement and volatility.

Overall, the DPJ is an inexperienced party with only a small group of veteran legislators. As of June 2012, of 291 DPJ affiliates in the Lower House, fully 129 were elected to that House for the first time in the DPJ landslide of 2009, 33 were serving their second terms, and 49 more were serving their third terms.<sup>6</sup> In other words, nearly half the party’s Lower House legislators

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<sup>5</sup> Personal communication with former Self-Defense Forces official.

<sup>6</sup> Data on DPJ Lower House member characteristics are from the Lower House’s web site at [http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index\\_kousei4.htm](http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index_kousei4.htm), current as of February 20, 2012. There are nine DPJ Lower House members who served terms in the Upper House before joining the Lower House. For simplicity’s sake, we count each Upper House term as equivalent to two Lower House terms in calculating those legislators’ experience here, since Upper House terms are fixed at six years and Lower

had only about three years' experience, and nearly three-quarters had less than ten years' experience. The number of DPJ Lower House members who had served more than six terms – the level of seniority traditionally required by the LDP to be considered for a Cabinet post – was just 32, or slightly more than ten percent. The incumbent DPJ prime minister, Noda Yoshihiko, is serving his fifth term.

Many DPJ legislators also lack career backgrounds that might compensate for their lack of political experience. The DPJ has not aggressively recruited candidates with high-quality experience applicable to governing, such as prefecture-level politicians or national bureaucrats.<sup>7</sup> The party does have a comparatively strong record of recruiting candidates with policy analysis backgrounds, such as graduates of the advanced policy academy Matsushita Seikeijuku. This adds a policy perspective not commonly found within the LDP, but one that is more theoretical than applied.

This general lack of expertise extends straightforwardly to security policy. Identifiable “go-to” legislators are few: chiefly, Kira Shuji, Maehara Seiji, Nagashima Akihisa, and former Defense Minister Kitazawa Toshimi, alongside generalists like Ozawa Ichirou and Sengoku Yoshito who frequently weigh in on security issues. Party officials confirm that there is no particular effort under way to recruit new members strong on national security issues.<sup>8</sup> To be fair, the same might be said for the LDP, in which former Defense Minister Ishiba Shigeru and a few others are often entrusted with much of that party's heavy lifting on security matters.<sup>9</sup> This reflects a system-wide dynamic in Japan: security policy expertise is not particularly valuable politically, given the country's limited policy autonomy and the subordinate role, at least until recently, of defense specialists within the defense policymaking bureaucracy.

As noted above, the DPJ concentrates policymaking power at the top, allocating most power to its relatively small cadre of veteran legislators. To some extent, this follows directly from its Diet members' inexperience. But it also represents deliberate decisions not to construct mechanisms that diffuse knowledge and responsibility to party “backbenchers.” The party might

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House terms average about three. This ignores the fact that some Upper House members resign to run for the Lower House before completing their last six-year Upper House term. As of July 18, 2012, after Ozawa and 49 others left the DPJ, the party's affiliates in the Lower House numbered 251.

<sup>7</sup> Ethan Scheiner, *Democracy Without Competition in Japan: Opposition Failure in a One-party Dominant State* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), and Robert Weiner, “The Evolution of the DPJ: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back,” in Leonard J. Schoppa, ed., *The Evolution of Japan's Party System* (University of Toronto Press, 2012), 63-68.

<sup>8</sup> Personal interview with DPJ staff official.

<sup>9</sup> Personal interview with LDP Diet member staff aide.

have used the same approach even if its backbenchers were more senior, and might indeed continue to do so as its backbenchers grow more senior.

Even with decision-making authority limited to a very small number of politicians, power within the DPJ is not distributed according to a clear hierarchy. The LDP remains the more hierarchical party in the sense that it boasts a well-articulated and clear organizational structure. In addition to the position of the party president, the LDP designates three senior party leaders (Secretary-general, Chair of the Policy Affairs Research Council, and Chair of the General Council) who enjoy prestige and seniority over other party positions. In particular, the position of Secretary-general, responsible for managing all aspects of election campaigns and other party operations, was often held by the most influential politicians within the LDP. In the LDP, seniority governs appointments for internal party posts and corresponding appointments as cabinet ministers, deputy ministers, and parliamentary vice-ministers. Indeed, the LDP has instituted unwritten rules prescribing the amount of experience required to serve in any given position.<sup>10</sup>

In practice, the LDP's well-articulated, multi-level hierarchy of senior and junior positions, combined with frequent rotation in and out of all positions, has served to train junior members by ensuring that they gradually gain responsibility and experience communicating with senior politicians and relevant bureaucrats as they rise through the party hierarchy. It is noteworthy that the party's own internal hierarchy duplicates and expands upon the corresponding hierarchy within the bureaucracy. Policy-relevant experience is thus found among those LDP politicians not chosen to take government posts, and among the entire party when out of power.

The DPJ's party structure, on the contrary, is more flat and egalitarian. The party's rules do identify a "standing council" of party leaders that includes 19 positions. In addition, there are 11 "regional representatives." Although the DPJ mirrors the LDP's three "senior" positions of Secretary-general, Policy Affairs Council Chair, and Chair of the Administration Committee, these positions do not carry as much importance or influence within the party, and relationships among them are not as clearly defined.

Unlike the LDP's hierarchical personnel system, the DPJ's relatively flat and egalitarian structure does not offer much opportunity to train its members. Furthermore, the structure is not *wholly* egalitarian. At the top is a relatively small group of leaders, including those who hold senior party positions, veterans with unofficial power, and Cabinet ministers. They enjoy at least

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<sup>10</sup> Satou Seizaburo and Matsuzaki Tetsuhisa, *Jimintou seiken* (Chuuou Kouronsha, 1986).

some level of policymaking power by virtue of their positions, while the rest of the party is, by and large, left out. Ministry of Defense officials confirm that while their consultations with cabinet ministers are more frequent than before, their involvement with the DPJ as a *party* – that is, with any members of a DPJ defense policy *zoku* (“tribe”), Policy Research Council committees, and so on – has declined. The DPJ more closely models a Cabinet-led, Westminsterian style of governing.

The DPJ had always been critical of the close relationship during LDP rule between government and party – that is, between the LDP-led Cabinet and parallel policymaking institutions within the LDP. Under the LDP, it was not uncommon for that party to act as if prior party approval was required for the government to proceed with important policy decisions. DPJ leaders, including Ozawa, believed that this “dual governance” often led to a lack of accountability, and that the government and ruling party should therefore speak in unison on policy matters, with the party deferring final decision to the government. Indeed, the Hatoyama government aimed to streamline the policy- and decision-making process so as to place final decision-making authority with the Cabinet. At Ozawa’s strong recommendation, then-Prime Minister Hatoyama also eliminated the Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC) within the DPJ on September 16, 2009. Furthermore, as soon as the party gained control over the policymaking process, it excised from all policy- and decision-making processes any members not holding party or government positions. One defense official remarked that the DPJ encouraged internal information and opinion exchange more in its days in the opposition: once it took control of government, incentives to maintain active intra-party policy debate disappeared, in part due to the elimination of internal party organization to support such activities and in part because opposition lawmakers simply had more time.<sup>11</sup>

One of the unintended consequences of restricting authority to a limited number of party leaders is the weakening of any mechanism within the DPJ for developing future leaders. As a criterion both for advancement within the party and for policymaking, skill at politics, particularly domestic politics, often tends to trump skill at policy. DPJ members with greater strengths as generalists, such as Minister of Foreign Affairs Genba Kouichirou and Minister of the Environment Hosono Goushi, have come to enjoy more influence than foreign and security policy specialists, such as Policy Research Committee Chair Maehara Seiji and Nagashima Akihisa, in terms of both formal selection to party and Cabinet posts and informal influence in policy deliberations over issues within the specialists’ very areas of expertise.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Personal interview with Ministry of Defense official.

<sup>12</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, September 2, 2011, 3.

This distinction does not necessarily correlate with any progressive-conservative distinction, as exemplified by the prominence of former Socialist and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Sengoku Yoshito. Such specialists as Maehara and Nagashima may be the DPJ members most vocal and visible to American alliance managers and within international security dialogues, but may not be the most influential within the DPJ itself. One analyst, for example, remarks that Maehara, the DPJ's Policy Research Council Chair at the time, was widely criticized within the DPJ for taking the initiative to discuss compensation for Korean "comfort women" – that is, women forced to serve as sex slaves for Japanese soldiers during World War II – and for broaching the possibility of reviewing Japan's three principles of arms non-export and its rules for the use of weapons in peacekeeping activities. "Maehara's statements, using his position as Policy Research Committee Chair without coordinating with the government or ruling parties, was a 'crime of conscience,'" according to a senior DPJ leader.<sup>13</sup>

The DPJ is also less able to make up for its legislators' inexperience with outside expertise, given Japan's relatively weak security and foreign policy think-tank infrastructure.<sup>14</sup> The DPJ could exploit Japan's bureaucracy to this end but is broadly unwilling to do so. The party has clamped down on legislators' contacts with bureaucrats – to an extreme degree upon first taking office, but still to some extent today – thus cutting legislators off from bureaucrat-led study groups and briefings.

The DPJ's inclination to inject more popular influence into policymaking, combined with the overall inexperience of the party's members and severe power concentration, could leave Japanese security policy more vulnerable to poor or idiosyncratic political leadership. Most immediately, inexperienced policymakers are more likely to mismanage policy, as demonstrated by the Hatoyama administration's approach to MCAS Futenma. The DPJ's security policy inexperience might be mitigated if the party were to adopt the approach of the LDP, which deferred to bureaucrats more often. But the DPJ so far has chosen to amplify the effects of its security policy inexperience through an approach that emphasizes political influence. Meanwhile, the DPJ's political interventions can only come from the top, making them more likely to be grand and sudden.<sup>15</sup> The LDP provided its members more diffuse institutional means to intervene in policymaking, which allowed such interventions to be more incremental and spread more thinly and widely. Leadership by a small elite cadre also increases the possibility of erratic policy should the cadre's members disagree.

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<sup>13</sup> Takao Toshikawa, "Edano Speaks: On Maehara, Ozawa, Sengoku, Others," *The Oriental Economist* 79:11 (2011), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Personal interviews with Ministry of Foreign Affairs official and LDP staff official.

<sup>15</sup> Personal interview with Ministry of Foreign Affairs official.

Furthermore, concentrating power among a small cadre of leaders tends to stretch thin those with decision-making authority. At any given time, as many as 20 to 25 percent of the party members with six or more Lower House terms under their belts might be tasked with Cabinet positions. Security and foreign policy experts must sometimes cover other issue areas, in part to fill gaps and in part to gain generalist experience useful for party leadership – as, for example, when Maehara served as Minister for Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism. Meanwhile, the DPJ leaves itself with a “weak bench,” a problem whose effects are heightened for governing parties, which churn through leaders more quickly than their opposition counterparts (especially in parliamentary systems, with their lack of guaranteed term lengths). Prime and other Cabinet Ministers’ responsibility for policy puts them on short leashes in the eyes of citizens and media. Prime ministers, in particular, also cannot be recycled as easily: former prime ministers rarely return to that post, or to the Cabinet at all. This leads to more volatile rotations among the small group of more experienced leaders, and volatility in personnel allows more volatility in policy. It also more quickly exhausts the supply of such leaders and brings less experienced politicians to power. During the DPJ’s decade-plus in opposition, the party had five different leaders, with multiple stints for party co-founders Hatoyama and Kan. Upon taking power, Hatoyama and Kan served and resigned as prime ministers, giving the party three different leaders in less than three years.

The problem is more acute in specialized fields like defense, where the party’s “bench” is particularly weak, as noted above. After two years in office, the DPJ’s first Defense Minister, Kitazawa, yielded to two successive non-specialists, Ichikawa and Tanaka, both of whom were ultimately removed for poor performance. In June 2012, to replace Tanaka, the party tapped academic Morimoto Satoshi, having exhausted, at least temporarily, its supply of security policy expertise among parliamentarians.

A longer-term concern is that the DPJ’s hierarchical style might trigger overall party-system volatility by leaving junior legislators unhappily underutilized and thus more likely to leave the party. This has recently come to pass in the form of another departure by Ozawa, who left the DPJ on July 2, 2012 with 49 DPJ legislators in tow.

### **New DPJ Policymaking Process**

The DPJ also approaches the policymaking *process* differently from the LDP, and in a way that usually amplifies the influence of popular (public and party-driven) opinion. During the election campaign of the summer of 2009, the DPJ differentiated itself from the ruling LDP by emphasizing that a DPJ-led government would be guided by “*seiji shudo*,” or “political



leadership,” unlike past LDP governments, which the DPJ claimed relied heavily upon bureaucracy for policy expertise. The DPJ also argued that it would seek a more transparent governing style. Though this emphasis on policymaking process was not why Japanese voters propelled the DPJ into government – most voters were simply tired of the series of weak and indecisive LDP-led governments that followed Koizumi Jun’ichirou’s resignation as prime minister in September 2006 – the DPJ followed through on its campaign pledge and launched several initiatives to help ensure that politicians, not technocrats, were in charge of government decision-making.

Upon first taking office in 2009, the Hatoyama administration quickly consolidated policy decision-making power among a small group in the Kantei (Prime Minister’s Office) and Cabinet, isolating both foreign policy and defense bureaucrats and the party’s own non-Cabinet legislators. This approach took advantage of executive-strengthening reforms that had begun a decade before, but the new DPJ government also displayed clear political will, lacking in prior governments, to exploit and accelerate these reforms.

Soon after becoming prime minister, Hatoyama eliminated the DPJ’s Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC). This body, loosely modeled on its longstanding counterpart within the LDP, had served as a “shadow Diet committee” system in which DPJ legislators could debate and formulate policy initiatives. It also served as a vehicle for bureaucrat-led “study sessions,” something particularly valuable for the DPJ members with fewer terms in office. More importantly, these study groups served to provide a forum for policy deliberation for legislators not currently occupying government positions – that is, for the large majority of legislators who at any given time are *not* serving as Cabinet ministers or ministers’ deputies. Eliminating the PARC and its related study groups may have unified policymaking authority under the Cabinet and lessened the influence of the DPJ as a *party* relative to the DPJ *government*. Ironically, however, it also effectively prohibited DPJ politicians from engaging in anything more than informal policy discussions, robbing them of the opportunity to develop areas of policy expertise.

Hatoyama also established a National Strategy Bureau (NSB, or *kokka senryaku kyoku*) with an eye toward further strengthening political leadership. To this end, Hatoyama created a new cabinet-level position, Minister in Charge of National Strategy (*kokka senryaku tantou daijin*), and appointed Kan Naoto to the position (because the establishment of the NSB required Diet approval, the National Strategy Office [*kokka senryaku shitsu*] was established as its precursor in the meantime). At the same time, the Hatoyama government eliminated the Cabinet vice ministers’ meeting (*jimu jikan kaigi*), a regular coordination meeting held among administrative vice ministers (that is, the top non-politically-appointed official in each ministry)

prior to Cabinet meetings. The DPJ viewed these as a symbol of politicians' dependence on the bureaucracy. Meanwhile, the government established as the ultimate decision-making body within each ministry the Three Political Appointees Meetings (*seimu sanyaku kaigi*) for ministers, deputy ministers (*fuku daijin*), and senior parliamentary vice-ministers (*seimu kan*) – that is, for the only political appointees within each ministry.

The party has not only created multiple such bodies, including the Government Revitalization Unit, but also failed to establish clear official lines of authority or a predictable *de facto* division of labor among them and other unofficial policymakers within the party. On security policy matters in particular, the DPJ also established a freestanding advisory panel, headed by former Defense Minister Kitazawa, independent of both the Cabinet and the Policy Research Committee.<sup>16</sup>

The DPJ's structural reforms were driven by a deep sense of distrust and outright rejection of bureaucratic expertise. Bureaucrats, amid this decline in policymaking potency, cultivated symmetrical distrust of DPJ policymakers. As months went by, criticism grew that DPJ politicians simply refused to listen to bureaucrats as a matter of principle, even when not knowledgeable about policy issues, and that this resulted in the Hatoyama government's making erratic decisions on issues important for Japan, raising concerns about DPJ's ability to govern. Meanwhile, defense bureaucrats remain highly wary of political control. They describe the DPJ, in particular, as amateurish, disorganized, vacillating, and insufficiently concerned with security policy. In particular, bureaucrats have been put off by the DPJ's inability to make a decision as a party and the lack of transparency surrounding the policymaking process. Foreign affairs and defense officials repeatedly point to the DPJ's "lack of a decision-making process" as a source of frustration.<sup>17</sup>

With each of its three successive yearlong administrations, though, the DPJ has gradually (though not yet entirely) backtracked away from its insistence on political leadership and the isolation of bureaucrats. Hatoyama and the DPJ leadership began to relax their rules in January 2010, permitting DPJ members to receive briefings from government officials within parliamentary committees. Following Hatoyama's failed attempts to revise the Futenma MCAS reorganization plans without the benefit of bureaucratic input and his subsequent resignation in May 2010, the DPJ leadership, under Prime Minister Kan and Chief Cabinet Secretary Sengoku, reinstated the Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC), as well as *bumon kaigi* (Policy

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<sup>16</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, February 21 and 22, 2012, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Personal interviews with Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials.

Department Meetings).<sup>18</sup> Kan's successor, current Prime Minister Noda, has directed all of his cabinet members to "optimize the potential of the bureaucracy" and has reinstated regular meetings among the administrative vice ministers of all government agencies and augmented the position of the DPJ's PARC as the key organization in the DPJ's policymaking process. He further emphasized the importance of that decision by appointing former Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara as its chairman (though, as noted above, even this position is no guarantee of policy influence).

### **New Party System**

In addition to the changes in policy-making environment brought about by the ascendance of the DPJ, broader, system-level changes in Japan's party system, beyond the DPJ's own attributes as a governing party, also stand to impact security policy.

First, two-party competition – that is, two-party competition with parties that are similar to each other but not identical – promises greater politicization of security policy. Greater politicization can result in part from the DPJ's own efforts – for example, its going out of its way to politicize issues like MCAS Futenma relocation or secret U.S.-Japan nuclear weapons agreements. But it can also reflect new government-opposition dynamics. Under the 1955 System's pairing of a center-right LDP government with an opposition Socialist party that hewed strongly to the left on security and foreign policy, differences between the two parties on security policy were certainly important. Indeed, some argue that these differences, as much as any other single policy area, defined the difference between the two parties and their voters. But this cleavage between the two parties was inert. The parties' separation on policy grounds was so vast and clear, and the opposition's stance so delegitimized in the eyes of all but its own supporters, that security policy debates were unlikely to translate into political pressure on the LDP. Now, Japan's two major parties are close enough "on the merits" with regard to security to leave security policy open for real contestation. This allows security to become a front-burner issue.

Meanwhile, the LDP is an unusual opposition party: a "party of government" that finds itself in opposition. As such, it is different than its own opponents used to be. But whether this stands to make the opposition LDP more responsible or more reckless remains unclear. As the author of the main currents of Japanese security policy and the U.S.-Japan alliance, the LDP is in a difficult position to criticize DPJ policies that remain relatively consistent with its own – that

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<sup>18</sup> Personal interview with a Ministry of Defense official, December 2011.

is, at least, when it doesn't enjoy a blocking majority in one house of parliament.<sup>19</sup> Criticizing the DPJ on security also has the potential to create rifts within the LDP itself when the LDP is not fully unified on the issue at hand.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the LDP's oxygen is government power, with the distributive benefits and prestige governing brings. The LDP is also now free of the need to consult as closely with its former governing coalition partner Koumeitou.<sup>21</sup> The party may be particularly motivated to regain and maintain power, even at the expense of policy consistency.

Japan's overall political process is also growing more subject to popular influence in a manner reminiscent of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Progressive era in the United States. This does not necessarily imply that elections will increasingly serve as decisive referenda on security policies. Nevertheless, security policy may prove indirectly affected if increasing popularization selects for different types of leaders or makes such selection more volatile in several important ways.

First, both the DPJ and LDP now select their leaders through primaries rather than deliberations among party elites. Prospective leaders who enjoy widespread support among parliamentarians but not in the mass media or among the public at large – for example, Ozawa in his leadership contest against former Prime Minister Kan – are now at a decided disadvantage.

Second, the prime ministership has grown “presidentialized.”<sup>22</sup> Prime ministers, as well as opposition leaders who style themselves as prospective prime ministers, have become the public faces of their respective parties to an extent not seen under the previous 1955 System. This is especially the case when elections are approaching, and thus will prove more significant when national elections begin to occur more frequently (unlike the unusual and partly coincidental drought of national elections in the three years since 2009).

Third, election results have grown more volatile even as the set of viable national parties has grown more stable. The DPJ's and LDP's fortunes have swung wildly from one national election to the next. This most threatens – and thus promises to make more sensitive to public opinion – the youngest and least influential parliamentarians, but it affects current and rising leaders as well.

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<sup>19</sup> Personal interviews with Ministry of Defense officials.

<sup>20</sup> Personal interview with LDP staff official.

<sup>21</sup> Personal interview with LDP Diet member.

<sup>22</sup> Ellis S. Krauss and Benjamin Nyblade, “Presidentialization in Japan? The Prime Minister, Media, and Elections in Japan,” *British Journal of Political Science* 35:2 (2005), 357-368.

None of these processes particularly selects for leaders with foreign and security policy knowledge, given the relative distance of such matters from the minds of Japanese voters. These processes also tend to yield shorter leadership careers – witness the short tenures of all Japanese prime ministers other than Koizumi over the last fifteen years – and thus a higher “burn rate” through existing policy expertise.

Note that electoral system change is *not* one of the system-wide political process changes that promises to increase the importance or politicization of Japanese security policy. Despite some arguments to the contrary, the switch in 1996 to an electoral system dominated by plurality-rule, single-member districts has not made public goods like defense more electorally important than pork barrel. One finds little evidence that candidates or parties are campaigning based on their foreign and security policy positions. They might juxtapose their own purported expertise with the bumbling of the opposite party, but that does not constitute the public-goods-driven approach often argued to result from the adoption of single-member districts.

## **HAS SECURITY POLICY ACTUALLY CHANGED UNDER DPJ RULE?**

It seems to go without saying that the DPJ has the potential to impact Japanese security policy – and negatively so from the perspective of the United States. The clearest example, and the one that served as the party’s “first impression” upon its taking power, was the Hatoyama administration’s attempted re-negotiation of Futenma MCAS relocation plans between August 2009 and May 2010. DPJ policymakers went out of their way to re-examine previously established agreements between Japan and the U.S., consulted defense and foreign affairs bureaucrats only minimally, and displayed poor coordination among themselves in the process – and were then widely blamed for policy failure. Though the immediate end result was a reversion to the *status quo ante* preferred by the U.S., the path to that result involved an unnecessary expense of resources on both countries’ parts and strained relations between the two.

But this was an unusual episode of security policymaking: an inexperienced governing party and unsteady prime minister were dealing with an unusually sensitive issue. How representative is Futenma of DPJ policymaking? Has the DPJ’s ample potential for policy change, rooted in its policy preferences, party structure, and approach to the policymaking process, indeed resulted in much policy change? Or, more to the point, how much *undesirable* change has the DPJ brought about? Have early concerns about the party, partly aggravated by its performance over Futenma, been borne out?

Examined more broadly, the DPJ's policy record proves not to be so worrisome, especially from the perspective of U.S.-Japan alliance supporters (a group that includes the majority of Japanese citizens, who support the alliance at least tacitly). The party has committed high-profile errors, some of them "unforced," but in many areas it has also maintained the status-quo trajectory of gradual expansion of the Japan Self Defense Force's roles and capabilities and overseen the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

We also observe a rough correlation between greater popular influence and unsuccessful policy. The security policy areas in which the DPJ has stumbled most badly are those most politically salient to the Japanese public. This is not simply a matter of policy failures *becoming* politically salient, though that certainly happens as well. Rather, the DPJ has found it difficult to handle inherently salient, politicized, "hot-button" issues. In some cases, the DPJ has gone out of its way to pursue policy change on these issues; in others, outside events have forced the party to grapple with them. Ironically, the very issues on which the DPJ has succeeded in its policy-process goals of imposing more public and political influence on policy have been those issues on which the party has proven least able to impose its vision for policy outcomes. On the other hand, on issues not highly visible to the public at large, the DPJ has made policy changes that not only escape public criticism but also constitute progress in the eyes of mainstream security professionals in both Japan and the United States – and such "under the radar" issues are numerous and significant.

Recent security policy developments might be grouped into one of three categories. First, high-profile stumbles: cases of DPJ policymaking that garnered great public attention but poor results from both the DPJ's and the United States' points of view, exemplified by the Futenma MCAS wrangle. Second, rare high-profile domestic successes for the DPJ, with varying degrees of desirability to American alliance managers, as exemplified by Operation Tomodachi and the cessation of Indian Ocean refueling. Third, and most notable here, a significant number of lower-profile policy initiatives pushed by the DPJ and largely welcomed by the United States.

### **High-profile Stumbles**

Prime Minister Hatoyama's mishandling of the Futenma MCAS relocation issue neatly showcased the various aspects of security policy mismanagement many feared from the DPJ. Indeed, it helped *create* these fears, since it represented the first substantial security policy initiative the party took upon gaining power. The details of Hatoyama's approach to the Futenma issue have been well rehearsed elsewhere, but here we briefly recount the relevant elements.

Hatoyama's inexperience and apparent policymaking naiveté was combined with extremely poor coordination among top DPJ officials within the party and government. Target dates for "back to the drawing board" relocation solutions were loudly trumpeted but often unmet – and the most crucial of these was clumsily scheduled for two months before an impending Upper House election. Cabinet ministers freelanced and floated the names of potential base relocation sites without informing their colleagues, and they openly aired disagreements about how to proceed.<sup>23</sup>

The party largely ignored input from Japan's defense and foreign affairs bureaucrats. Though then-Defense Minister Kitazawa himself cultivated strong relationships with his ministry, these were trumped by standoffishness on the part of the Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet.<sup>24</sup> Members of Japan's Defense and Foreign Ministries stress that their opposition was not to politicians' taking the lead on such a sensitive subject, since political leadership provides helpful cover for bureaucrats' work, but that the Futenma process often involved flat-out exclusion of bureaucratic expertise.<sup>25</sup>

Though the reasons behind Hatoyama's insistence on forcing the Futenma issue are still debated and poorly understood, the most plausible among them suggest attempts to manipulate the issue for popular appeal rather than genuine, policy-rooted concerns. Some point to a DPJ attempt to win Okinawan voters in particular, though the notion that the DPJ might go out of its way to challenge the foundations of the U.S.-Japan alliance simply to solidify victories in little more than one percent of the Lower House's districts – districts in which minimal DPJ organizational infrastructure existed to consolidate any short-term gains in any case – seems shortsighted even by the low standards imputed to the DPJ by its critics. More generally, though, Hatoyama appears to have made an attempt to appeal to the Japanese electorate at large by confronting the U.S. and thereby differentiating the DPJ from the LDP. This proved to be ill-advised. Though the Japanese electorate outside of Okinawa is not unsympathetic to limited adjustments to Japan's alliance with the United States, it does fundamentally value the alliance. A well-orchestrated and well-explained effort to reevaluate the alliance might garner support, but the DPJ's poorly coordinated effort suggested that the party stood to be poor stewards of the alliance more broadly.

The Kan government was also heavily criticized in Japan for its failure to effectively respond to a Chinese trawler that rammed into a Japan Coast Guard vessel near the disputed

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<sup>23</sup> Daniel Sneider, "Déjà Vu on Okinawa: Is There a Crisis in US-Japan Relations?," *The Oriental Economist* 77:11 (2009), 1-3.

<sup>24</sup> Personal interview with Ministry of Defense official.

<sup>25</sup> Personal interviews with Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials.

Senkaku Islands, and to Russian President Medvedev’s surprising visit to one of the islands in the contested Northern Territories shortly before Japan hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in November 2010.

DPJ Defense Ministers Ichikawa and Tanaka, both novices in the field, also committed a series of gaffes that undermined confidence in both their individual viability as ministers and the DPJ’s ability to pursue defense policy effectively. Ichikawa described *himself* as a novice in one of his first press conferences and professed ignorance about details of the 1995 rape of a Japanese schoolgirl by three U.S. servicemen, but went on to make an analogy to rape when describing the Futenma MCAS relocation itself.<sup>26</sup> Tanaka displayed unfamiliarity with basic policy issues during Diet deliberations, once left an Upper House Budget Committee meeting without authorization, and had his intended dismissal of the Defense Ministry’s Okinawa Defense Bureau Chief vetoed by subordinate officials despite that Chief’s apparent inappropriate involvement in electioneering within Okinawa.<sup>27</sup> Almost by definition, however, these mini-scandals were of more symbolic than substantive importance.

### **High-profile Successes**

Security policies that have successfully dealt with issues highly visible to the Japanese public have been rare. Perhaps the clearest example has been Operation Tomodachi (or “Friend”), the joint humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) effort undertaken by Japan’s Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. military following the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011.<sup>28</sup> HA/DR operations constitute a classic “valence” issue: they tend to be universally supported so long as they are carried out competently. The two nations’ forces did just that. The potential for poor management and/or public resistance to large-scale mobilization of the SDF certainly existed, as the Japanese government’s poorly received response to the 1995 Kobe Earthquake makes clear. But Kobe’s lessons appeared to have been well absorbed, and critical accounts of Operation Tomodachi are nearly impossible to find (at least among open-source materials available to date).

Another DPJ policy initiative well received within Japan – though not by U.S. alliance managers – was the termination in January 2010 of the Japan Maritime Self Defense Forces’ (JMSDF) refueling operations in the Indian Ocean in support of U.S. and allied forces engaged

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<sup>26</sup> *Yomiuri Shinbun*, December 5, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, February 5, 2012, 4; *Sankei Shinbun*, February 7, 2012, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Note the distinction between Operation Tomodachi and the roundly criticized Japanese response to the nuclear power plant failures triggered by that day’s natural disasters, which is not considered security policy for the purposes of this report.



in Afghanistan. In contrast with Futenma, Indian Ocean refueling offered an ideal opportunity for the DPJ to set itself apart clearly – but politically safely – from the LDP and the status quo of the Japan-U.S. alliance, thanks to the highly asymmetrical political salience of the operation. SDF deployments, even in comparatively safe and politically uncontroversial environments, are closely watched within Japan. But to the United States, the JMSDF’s contribution carried more symbolic than operational importance. The DPJ’s quick cessation of the operation upon taking power – as promised in its election campaign – constituted a notable, if not extremely weighty, policy success for the party.

### **Low-profile Successes**

A significant amount of Japanese security policy under the DPJ, though, involves low-profile successes that either maintain the pre-DPJ security policy trajectory or largely improve upon it (from the point of view of Japanese citizens and elites and United States alliance managers alike). In most cases, these policy initiatives have remained out of public view not due to any effort to suppress their coverage, but rather due to the nature of the policy areas themselves – that is, their inherent lack of interest to the general public and, by extension, to ambitious politicians. That the public less closely watches these policy areas by no means suggests they are unimportant. If anything, in many cases, the Japanese public and media pay less attention to them because of their complexity, and their complexity reflects their importance.

As discussed at length below, the DPJ issued National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) that could just as easily been issued by the LDP, despite the DPJ’s having produced them through an enhanced process of political deliberation.<sup>29</sup> The 2010 NDPG, which aims to guide Japanese security policy in the medium term, not only reaffirms Japan’s core alliance commitments, but also calls for a significant shift in the alignment of SDF forces from a Cold War-era, ground-based, northern orientation to a post-Cold War, maritime-focused, southern orientation with explicit consideration of Chinese military trends as part of a new doctrine of “dynamic defense.” Concrete changes included an increase in the size of Japan’s submarine fleet from 16 to 22, “one of the largest submarine buildups of the post-war era.”<sup>30</sup>

The DPJ has maintained Japan’s ballistic missile defense (BMD) development and cooperation with the United States, and under Prime Minister Kan moved to increase the size of

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<sup>29</sup> Personal interviews with LDP staff official and DPJ Diet member.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Midford, “Options Vis-à-vis PRC, US,” *The Oriental Economist* 80:2 (2012), 11-14. See also Masao Kobayashi, “‘Sensuikan 22-seki taisei’ no kaijō bouei,” *Gunji kenkyū* (December 2011).

the Aegis fleet by two.<sup>31</sup> BMD, though a vitally important arena of security policy, is less apt to capture the interest of average citizens due to its technical complexity, with the important exception of periods of crisis response to North Korean missile launches, as in April 2012. Notably, Japan's slow response to that actual launch earned the DPJ widespread criticism, but its enthusiastic response to the deployment of BMD assets in cooperation with the U.S. in the weeks leading up to the launch may be the more important underlying policy development. Relatedly, the party has gradually pushed for the relaxation of the Three Principles of arms non-export, in part to ease participation in such U.S.-led ventures as BMD and the development of the next-generation F-35 fighter plane.<sup>32</sup>

The party has also continued to push for the creation of a Japanese version of the U.S.'s National Security Council as a means of unifying and streamlining security and crisis management, an initiative originally proposed by LDP Prime Minister Abe Shinzou.<sup>33</sup>

The DPJ has worked to improve relations with Asian neighbors other than China, contrary to early concerns that the party might align Japan more closely with China at the expense of the United States and other partners in Asia. South Korea has been a particular focus. As noted above, the DPJ enjoys a favorable position vis-à-vis the ROK thanks to its lack of baggage with regard to tensions over island sovereignty disputes and interpretations of historical Japanese-Korean relations (though tensions over these issues have certainly not disappeared, and matters are also helped by the fact that the South Korean presidency is occupied by conservative Lee Myung-Bak and that recent North Korean provocations have provided vivid incentive for the two democracies to cooperate). The DPJ has moved Japan closer to signing bilateral military pacts with South Korea, though grievances over historical issues threaten progress – notably, more so on the South Korean side. Seoul has sent observers to U.S.-Japan Keen Sword exercises for the first time, and the SDF has observed U.S.-ROK exercises for the first time. Then-Prime Minister Kan apologized to South Korea upon the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korea's annexation by imperial Japan. Japan and South Korea have signed a civilian nuclear pact setting the terms for transfer of nuclear technology and agreements to jointly develop mines for rare-earth metals. Under the DPJ, Japan has also continued to expand strategic relationships with Australia, India, Vietnam, and the Philippines.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, the DPJ has maintained and even expanded SDF overseas deployment activity (tame by U.S. standards, perhaps, but significant by Japan's), establishing the SDF's first

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<sup>31</sup> Midford, "Japan's Security Policy."

<sup>32</sup> *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, December 21, 2011, 3; *Asahi Shinbun*, December 28, 2011, 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Sankei Shinbun*, February 29, 2012, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Hornung, "Japan's DPJ."

permanent overseas base in Djibouti in 2010 to support anti-piracy operations, exploring the stationing of SDF personnel on U.S. territory in the Northern Marianas, and dispatching Ground Self Defense Force units to South Sudan on a United Nations peacekeeping mission in 2012.<sup>35</sup> It has also begun to explore relaxing the standards governing SDF members' use of weapons to allow for protection of international and NGO officials, or even other countries' troops, operating outside of the SDF's own bases.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Role of Political Salience**

A number of factors may distinguish the security policy issues on which the DPJ succeeds – both by its own standard and by those of the United States – and those on which it stumbles. One simple rule of thumb that seems to have emerged, however, is that security policy areas more salient to the Japanese public are those where the DPJ fares worse.

Politically salient issues are ones that popular actors – politicians, and especially citizens – are aware of, engage with, and develop opinions about, to the point that a foundation exists for popular pressure on policymakers (even if such pressure actually emerges only occasionally). *Relatively few security issues are politically salient.* Only some aspects of security policy align with longstanding political and historical themes, allow easy packaging and presentation by mass media and political actors, and thereby become easily comprehensible and/or politically motivating to average citizens. Many others are “under the radar” and largely fail to penetrate voters' consciousness, despite substantive importance recognized by security policymakers and analysts.

Of course, certain security policy issues are predictably salient, and thus more sensitive to popular and political influence. That is, a given issue's degree of political salience is at least in part exogenous, and not simply the endogenous product of media or politician efforts to *make* the issue salient. Policy areas that should always be expected to have high public salience in Japan generally touch on Japan's wartime history and subsequent constitutional constraints on military power. These include dispatches of Self Defense Force to highly violent areas (that is, specific dispatches, as opposed to the general legal infrastructure surrounding such dispatches), territorial disputes with Asian neighbors, U.S. military installations in Okinawa (though salience for this issue area is often low in mainland Japan), and revisions to the Constitution. Responses to immediate incidents and crises also tend to be highly salient. This, of course, is not a novel

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<sup>35</sup> *Sankei Shinbun*, February 22, 2012, 1; *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, April 18, 2012, 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, February 29, 2012 (evening ed.), 2; *Mainichi Shinbun*, March 7, 2012, 5; *Asahi Shinbun*, March 15, 2012, 4.

observation in itself. But note the distinction between responses to incidents and crises and policies enacted in *anticipation* of incidents and crises. Japan's response to a North Korean missile launch will be highly salient to its citizens; Japan's general strategy and policy toward the Six-Party Talks will not.

Security policy areas that we should expect not to carry great political salience, it follows, generally involve long-term or broad security strategy or infrastructure and/or more highly technical matters. Examples include Self Defense Force assets and capabilities and most developments in U.S.-Japan alliance relations outside of Okinawan basing issues.

In the security policy realm, political salience makes policy more vulnerable to unpopularity, criticism, and impeded progress within Japan, which usually constitutes an unfavorable outcome in the eyes of the United States as well. This has asymmetrical effects. In theory, political salience should magnify whatever success or failure a policy achieves on its merits. But in practice, salience usually magnifies failure more than it magnifies success. Politicians and governments have little to gain from success and much to lose from security policy mistakes. Foreign policy triumphs in Japan, as elsewhere, are much more salient to policy elites than to citizens, and "rally round the flag" effects are weak (with the possible exception of responses to North Korean or Chinese provocations). Political salience does not provide opportunities for public buy-in so much as opportunities for critique. Japanese politicians gain little electoral capital from foreign and security policy expertise and accomplishment, as evidenced by the small number of politicians who specialize in these areas relative to those who concentrate on agriculture, construction, or even finance. To borrow an example offered by Epstein and O'Halloran, security policy in a non-polarized but competitive party system may be like airline safety: the aim is to prevent failure, and there is little credit to be had when things go right.<sup>37</sup> Salience may also *make* failure slightly more likely if politicians falter under the close scrutiny it attracts.

Of course, in a vicious cycle, policy failure does also reinforce the salience of the policy area. Failure attracts disproportionate media and parliamentary attention.

There are exceptions: Japanese politicians and parties can sometimes achieve political success on highly salient foreign and security policy issues. There have been occasional triumphs, such as Prime Minister Satou Eisaku's presiding over the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty or Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to North Korea, or successful crisis responses such as Operation Tomodachi (again, as opposed to the nuclear reactor component of

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<sup>37</sup> David Epstein and Sharyn O'Halloran, *Delegating Powers* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

the government's response), or hardline stances against consensus adversaries, such as Abe Shinzou's against North Korea prior to his becoming prime minister.

Policy initiatives on non-salient issues, in contrast, are less prone to failure (or, indeed, to any rousing success). This is in part by definition, as they are largely shielded from public scrutiny. Japanese security policymakers are able to proceed without immediate popular constraints. It *is* possible for policies on non-salient issues to fail in less direct ways; they may be ill advised for the long term absent any immediate repercussions, or they may be undesirable from a U.S. perspective even absent controversy within Japan. But in practice, most DPJ stances on non-salient issues have thus far proven favorable to both Japanese and U.S. security policy elites.

The DPJ has stumbled on highly salient security policy issues not because of policy stances per se, but over competence and process. In their approaches to Futenma and the Senkaku incident, DPJ governments have appeared indecisive and unprepared, not out of touch with Japanese opinion. Security policy is thus becoming a proxy for competence, but not yet a means to distinguish the main parties from each other on policy grounds. This is the case even for issues like that have the potential to be controversial "position" issues over which citizens disagree about policy ends, such as Okinawan military installations and Constitutional revisions, not just for ones that appear to be "valence" issues over which citizens disagree only about means to a consensus end, such as disaster relief. This is in part because the DPJ and its opposition do not clearly disagree on security issues, but also, and more importantly, because citizens prove willing to judge parties' competence even when they lack well-formed opinions on policy.

These patterns imply that higher political salience for security policy issues may be undesirable, from the perspectives of both the DPJ itself and the United States. This assumes, of course, a narrow goal of policy success, rather than, say, a deepening of Japanese democracy for its own sake, in which case more public awareness and political involvement in security affairs would be highly desirable. To the DPJ, though, popularization and politicization of security policy has proven troublesome. And for the United States, if the DPJ is bogged down on a security issue, then the party is failing to make progress on that issue – or, even if inertia is *preferable* to the United States on the issue in question, the DPJ's limited policymaking resources are diverted from more productive use elsewhere.

In turn, the United States should be concerned when it observes previously non-politically-salient issues being made more salient. This might occur when the DPJ goes out of its

way to make an otherwise-obscure security issue more salient, as with its investigation into past secret U.S.-Japan nuclear agreements; when either the government or opposition attempts to politicize a security issue in the context of two-party competition, as with the DPJ's promise to cease the JMSDF's Indian Ocean refueling operations; or when the United States itself weighs in heavily on an issue, as it did in responding to Hatoyama's questioning of Futenma MCAS relocation plans.

## **EXTRAPOLATING TRENDS**

The preceding discussion has centered on the DPJ as a governing party, but it is certainly possible that the party will fall from power in the near term. Even if and when this occurs, the DPJ is a major and durable contender within Japan's current party system, one with the potential to affect security policy even from the opposition benches. But the party also does face a persistent risk – as do Japan's other parties – of imploding at any point amid further throes of party realignment. Even if *this* occurs (with a likelihood and timing beyond the scope of this report), the DPJ's approach to security policy still offers important lessons on the politics behind security policy more generally in Japan, no matter which particular parties find themselves in charge.

With this in mind, though, we might distinguish between security policy changes and patterns that reflect only current DPJ practice (and are therefore likely to vanish if and when the DPJ falls from government), ones that are likely to evolve even as the DPJ remains in power, and ones that reflect a more general evolution of Japanese politics and security policy and thus are more likely to prove durable in the medium term or beyond. Given the DPJ's short time in power – less than three years – this is somewhat difficult to discern, but we offer brief notes here on certain distinctions that can be made even at this early stage.

As long as the DPJ remains in power, its relative inexperience will, of course, persist as an influence on security policy outcomes. The DPJ's youth is partly an artifact of its huge 2009 Lower House victory, which swept a large number of first-term “freshmen” into office. As such, it is likely to be “corrected,” in part, after the party's inevitable failure in the next election to repeat its extraordinary performance (and by the recent departure of many young members alongside Ozawa). But it is also a built-in and enduring feature of the party's evolution. There is no way to acquire experienced personnel quickly, short of poaching current LDP members or former LDP members currently out of office after having lost the last election. Even if these were available to be injected into the DPJ, the DPJ would first have to dislodge its young incumbents. Note the distinction here between experience as a professional national politician –

even in the opposition – and experience in the broader sense of skills that might be usefully applied to a political career. The DPJ might always step up its efforts to recruit candidates knowledgeable about security affairs (though it currently shows no signs of doing so), but the pool of *incumbents* (and former incumbents) is finite.

Similarly, the small size of the DPJ's leadership cadre, coupled with a fairly disorganized set of intra-party security policy institutions, is likely to persist. This suggests that the identity of particular party leaders and Cabinet ministers is now more important than general politician-bureaucrat relations when assessing likely security policy developments: individuals have greater influence than they did under the LDP, whose policymaking *system* often outweighed the importance of any single individual within it. In one sense, this makes it easier to predict policy, as the cadre of influential leaders within the DPJ is knowable and finite; but in another sense, it ensures the continued volatility that personality-driven policymaking brings.

Other elements affecting the DPJ's approach to security policy are likely to evolve if the party remains in power – or, more broadly, if the DPJ remains one of the two poles of a two-party-competitive party system in Japan, whether in government or opposition. Though the party has by no means abandoned its goal of injecting political influence into formerly bureaucratic security policymaking, we have observed a certain amount of backtracking from the Hatoyama to the Kan and then the Noda administrations, even within the short span of three years. In security policy in particular, popularization of policymaking might prove appealing as a campaign slogan, but it might not be evolutionarily ideal for the party's survival. The DPJ, again, appears to be learning from its early missteps over Futenma MCAS. We should expect to see at least a partial return to reliance on bureaucratic expertise, even if not to the degree practiced previously by the LDP. This is in part because bureaucrats themselves may grow more willing and able to resist the politicization of security policymaking as time passes. This may also vary among different security areas – for example, bureaucrats have already appeared to hold a strong position in the process of revising the National Defense Program Guideline (NDPG), as discussed in detail below.

But this is also because the DPJ seems to be aware of the salience-failure dynamic and seems to be learning to avoid it – even with regard to the Futenma MCAS relocation issue itself, though this may have been an unintended result of its earlier missteps. By April 2012, the U.S. and Japan had agreed to disaggregate plans to relocate several thousand Marines off Okinawa from plans to relocate remaining Futenma MCAS personnel within Okinawa, proceeding with the former while remaining inertial on the latter. One might argue that the DPJ's re-airing of the Futenma MCAS relocation issue under Hatoyama helped to illustrate more vividly the

intractability of that portion of the two countries' plans, and thus to convince the countries to at least proceed with other, more tractable components.<sup>38</sup>

More generally, Japanese governments will likely try to redirect their limited political resources away from security issues and toward domestic concerns. This dynamic is one that applies to all parties in Japan and in many other countries, not the DPJ alone. The LDP learned this lesson most recently when voters repudiated former Prime Minister Abe's focus on foreign affairs. The DPJ, meanwhile, finds that "it's better for us to move ahead quietly when it comes to defense policy – if we advertise our progress, the LDP gets serious and lashes back."<sup>39</sup>

But governments are unlikely to fully succeed in deemphasizing security concerns. Security issues often emerge as unpredictable "exogenous shocks" that inevitably attract media and public attention, as seen with the Futenma re-negotiations, the (most recent) Senkakus incident, and former Russian President Medvedev's visit to the Northern Territories. The emergence of security as a proxy for competence, combined with the asymmetrical dynamic that gives politicians and governments little to gain from success and much to lose from mistakes, suggests that security policy, at least in the short term, might serve as a de facto and generic anti-incumbency force – something similar to the generic "pains of governing" that produce secular-trend erosion in any government's public support ratings with each additional month that that government serves. Security now occupies a more prominent place among the many policy challenges governments must navigate and, inevitably, sometimes stumble upon. This inherent anti-incumbency effect of security policy challenges could be particularly hurtful for DPJ, since that party has a "shorter leash" with regard to public opinion over security policy competence – and because security, unlike economic management or corruption, is one area in which the LDP *hasn't* come under fire for incompetence. A generic "valence issue" dynamic, in which all governments stumble to some degree over security policy challenges, could harden into one in which the DPJ, in particular, loses trust over foreign policy, as has tended to be the case for the Democratic Party in the United States.

Beyond this, though, the increased salience of security policy issues is unlikely to restructure the party system itself in a way that yields a longer-term effect on the direction of Japanese security policy. It is also unlikely to go so far as to trigger fundamental party realignment by providing a decisive advantage to one of the current two major parties or aggravating fissures within one or both parties (this is not to say that fundamental realignment

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<sup>38</sup> Personal interview with Japan Defense Ministry official; Yuki Tatsumi, "The U.S. and Japan Make a Good Step Forward, for Now," *PacNet* 29 (May 3, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> Personal interview with DPJ staff official.



might not occur for reasons other than foreign and security policy – and we might still expect security policy to trigger non-realigning party splits more frequently or bring down the occasional prime minister, as was the case with Hatoyama for the first time in 50 years in Japan). Fundamental policy differences between Japan’s two main parties – and between their supporting voters – are much smaller (or at least more obscured) than they were under the 1955 System. Security concerns are unlikely to provide a new dimension of partisan cleavage or to map directly onto pre-existing cleavages. Looking at other countries also gives us little reason to expect a partisan security policy cleavage in Japan: the few countries in which we observe foreign and security policy to be one of the chief characteristics distinguishing major parties from each other (as opposed to economics and/or social issues and/or some form of ethnic cleavage) are countries with a clear existential threat, such as South Korea, Taiwan, or Israel. Given this, alongside the track record of the DPJ thus far, it seems likely that though new governing parties and policymaking practices will continue to inject volatility into the *methods* of Japanese security policymaking, the fundamental direction of that policy, and of the U.S.-Japan alliance, is likely to remain stable.

## **CASE STUDY: FORMATION OF NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES (NDPG)**

Since 2009, the DPJ has implemented many changes in Japan's policymaking process, many of which were aimed at reducing the influence of the bureaucracy in developing policy. Current Prime Minister and DPJ leader Noda has attempted to reverse part of this trend in recent times, but how many of the changes will survive the next power transition remains uncertain. Some in Japan, particularly those in the media, have been critical of Noda's decisions, describing them as stepping back to the way business was conducted under LDP rule.

Regardless of how long the DPJ may stay in power, one seemingly irreversible trend has emerged in Japan's policymaking process: the intention on the part of most politicians to depend less on the bureaucracy for policy input. Indeed, calls for "politicians' leadership" (*seiji shudo*) had already been made under the LDP government. Some argue that the trend toward "politicians' leadership" was originally set by the reorganization of government ministries based on the Basic Law to Reform Central Ministries and Other Agencies (*Chuo Shouchou Tou Kaikaku Kihon Ho*) enacted under Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro in June 1998. In more recent years, LDP Prime Minister Abe Shinzou sought to enhance policymaking capacity among the prime minister's staff by increasing the number of special assistants to the prime minister (*shusho hosakan*) and seeking to establish a Japanese-style national security council. While these efforts did not bear fruit during his short tenure in the office (Abe resigned after only one year), the DPJ has repeated, and in some case enhanced, these efforts since taking power in September 2009.

As noted above, the full impact of the legal, administrative, and institutional changes made by the DPJ to expand the authority of politicians to engage in policymaking processes is yet to be determined, and it is difficult to precisely assess how the recent changes under the DPJ will impact Japan's security policy making in the long run. However, a comparison of the processes under which the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) – Japan's core mid-term security policy document – has been shaped under the LDP and the DPJ can provide some sense of how these changes, particularly the increased role of politicians in policymaking processes, may affect Japan's future security policy making.

The case study that follows, therefore, aims to compare the processes by which the Japanese government revised the National Defense Program Guidelines in 2004 and 2010. The 2004 NDPG revision took place under LDP rule with Koizumi Jun'ichirou as the prime minister,

whereas the 2010 revision took place under the watch of then-Prime Minister Kan of the DPJ.<sup>40</sup> This case study attempts to identify the following:

- What are the main differences between the 2004 and 2010 NDPG revisions?
- Did differences emerge as the result of changes in policymaking processes under the DPJ?
- Did policymaking process differences lead to changes in the contents of the NDPG that would not have happened otherwise?

After analysis on these three points, we conclude with an interim assessment of how the NDPG illustrates ways in which changes in policymaking processes, particularly the increased role of politicians therein, may affect Japan's security policy making in the future.

### **Background: What Are the National Defense Program Guidelines?**

The National Defense Program Guidelines (*Bouei Keikaku no Taikou*)<sup>41</sup> were produced for the first time in 1976. The purpose of the NDPG is to establish the basic principles and goals of Japan's defense policy, define the defense capability necessary to realize these goals, and thereby set priorities for defense acquisition.

Originally, the NDPG was supposed to be announced in 1957 when the Japanese government issued the Basic Principles of National Defense (*Kokubou no Kihon Hoshin*). However, the political environment at that time prevented it: during the 1950s, strong disagreement existed over the fundamentals of Japan's defense policy, such as the constitutionality of the SDF (whether the SDF could be considered as "war potential" [*senryoku*] that Article Nine of the Japanese Constitution prohibits Japan from possessing, for example), and therefore it was politically impossible for the Japanese government to issue the NDPG, which could be interpreted as a plan to rebuild Japan's military capability. Instead, Japan's government decided to allow its defense capability build-up to begin based on a series of five-year defense plans.

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<sup>40</sup> The revision process began in 2009 with Hatoyama as the prime minister, but Kan had succeeded him by the time the revision was completed in December 2010.

<sup>41</sup> When it was originally announced, the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) gave the document the English title "National Defense Program Outline." When the 2004 revision took place, the JDA changed the English translation to "National Defense Program Guidelines" (NDPG). Given that the Japanese title of the document has never changed, the English translation of NDPG will be used throughout this report to avoid confusion.

As Japan's economy began to grow in the 1960s, the country's defense budget steadily increased. By the late 1960s, there was growing concern that Japan's defense build-up was taking place without any policy guidance. Concern emerged regarding how much defense spending was appropriate for Tokyo to maintain the level of defense capabilities that are permissible within the constitution. It was under these circumstances that the NDPG was created. While the document has essentially been a policy document for the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and its non-ministerial predecessor, the Japan Defense Agency (JDA), Cabinet approval is required.

When first released in 1976, the NDPG was designed to provide the basic principles of defense policy for the next ten or so years. Despite this original intention, the first NDPG revision did not take place until 1995, well after the Cold War had ended. As the first NDPG revision unfolded, however, an advisory group report published in the process attracted a great deal of attention among alliance managers in the United States. The Advisory Group on Defense Issues (*Bouei Mondai Kondan-kai*), better known as the Higuchi Commission, was convened by then-Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro, Japan's first non-LDP prime minister in decades, in February 1994. After a total of twenty meetings in six months, the Council submitted its final report, *The Modality of the Security and Defense Capabilities of Japan: Outlook for the 21st Century*, to Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi on August 12, 1994.<sup>42</sup> Released in the midst of U.S.-Japan tension over bilateral trade imbalances, the Higuchi Commission Report provoked concerns among alliance managers that Tokyo might be drifting away from the U.S.-Japan alliance, as it appeared to place greater emphasis on multinational security cooperation than on cooperation with Washington. However, the revised NDPG, approved by the Murayama cabinet on November 28, 1995 after more than a year of deliberation, alleviated such concerns by proposing that the U.S.-Japan alliance remained indispensable for Japan's security, while also noting the fundamental change in international security environment in post-Cold War world.<sup>43</sup>

Although it is a document that aims to guide Japan's defense policy in the medium term, the NDPG has also functioned as a trigger for reaffirming and/or redefining the U.S.-Japan alliance. The NDPG's first revision in 1995 served as one of the driving forces behind the two countries' efforts to reaffirm and redefine the U.S.-Japan alliance in the post-Cold War era.<sup>44</sup> The revision in 2004 became an important consideration when the United States and Japan engaged

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<sup>42</sup> Advisory Group on Defense Issues, *The Modality of the Security and Defense Capabilities of Japan: Outlook for the 21st Century*, August 12, 1994, <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/JPSC/19940812.O1J.html>

<sup>43</sup> *Heisei 8-nendo ikou ni Kakawaru Bouei Keikaku no Taikou ni tsuite* [The National Defense Program Outlines for FY 1996 and After], November 28, 1995, <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/ampbouei/sankou/951128taikou.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Yoichi Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift* (Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999).

in discussions toward a new vision for the U.S.-Japan alliance under the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI). The NDPG review in December 2010 also informed discussions among alliance managers in both countries as they tried to articulate how the United States and Japan should deepen their relationship. Their discussion culminated in the Security Consultative Committee (more commonly known as the “2 plus 2” meeting between the two countries’ foreign and defense ministers) Joint Statement issued in June 2011. As such, a great deal of attention has been paid to the NDPG as the official document that sheds light on Japan’s security policy priorities. Similarly, the report by the advisory group on defense and security issues convened by the prime minister has also begun to attract attention as an unofficial preview of the NDPG.

The NDPG consists of two parts. The first is a narrative in which Japanese perception of the regional security situation, the core principles of Japan’s security policy, and the basic organizing principles of SDF force posture are described. The second part is called the “Annex” (*beppyō*) and includes the number of personnel in each of the three SDF services and the list of major equipment that the SDF is expected to acquire. The Annex is closely linked to the Mid-Term Defense Program, a 5-year defense acquisition plan.

### **The 2004 NDPG Revision**

Japan revised its NDPG for the second time in 2004. The 2004 NDPG was announced on December 10, 2004, upon approval by the Cabinet led by LDP Prime Minister Koizumi. The 2004 revision distinguishes itself from the original NDPG in 1976 and the 1995 NDPG on two accounts: the introduction of the concept of a “multi-functional, flexible, and effective defense force” (*takinou de danryoku-teki na jikkousei no aru boueiryoku*) and the reference to the necessity of revisiting the “Basic Defense Capability Concept” (*kibanteki boueiryoku*) that served as one of the fundamentals of postwar Japanese defense policy.<sup>45</sup>

The report attracted significant attention from the international community because it was the first NDPG revision after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks against the United States in 2001. Japan had sent oil tankers to the Indian Ocean in November 2001 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and dispatched the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) and Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) to support Operation Iraqi Freedom in January 2002. When the Japanese government began to revise the NDPG in 2004, there was a rising expectation that the revision might result in a major change in Japan’s defense policy.

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<sup>45</sup> Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Heisei 17-nendo Bouei Hakusho* [Defense of Japan 2005], 91-93.

The December 2003 Cabinet Decision announcing Japan's decision regarding the introduction of ballistic missile defense (BMD) served as the official trigger for the NDPG revision in 2004. Following the December 2003 Cabinet Decision, the formal revision process was launched in April 2003 when the prime minister appointed the Council on Security and Defense Capability, more commonly referred to as the Araki Commission. The Araki Commission submitted its final report to the prime minister six months later on October 4, 2004. The report attracted considerable attention for suggesting the new concept of *tougouteki anzen hosho senryaku* (Integrated Security Strategy); questioning the validity of *kibanteki boueiryoku kousou* (Basic Defense Capability Concept), which had been one of Japan's fundamental defense principles; and even discussing the need for constitutional revision in its Annex.<sup>46</sup>

Following the Araki Commission Report, NDPG revision discussions within the Japanese government began in earnest on October 21, 2004. A total of six rounds of discussions were held before the 2004 NDPG was released upon the cabinet's approval on December 10, 2004.<sup>47</sup> Following the Araki Commission Report closely, the 2004 NDPG announced that Japan's primary security policy goals would be (1) the defense of Japan and (2) improving the international security environment, and that it would seek to develop "multi-functional, flexible, and effective" defense capabilities to support these goals. As with the 1994 NDPG, it articulated a belief in the "indispensable" nature of the U.S.-Japan alliance. In addition, it explicitly acknowledged for the first time that Japan would rely on U.S. nuclear deterrence to counter nuclear-armed states and nuclear threats.<sup>48</sup>

Although the formal process of the 2004 NDPG revision did not begin until January 2004, the preparation that ultimately led to the Cabinet Decision in December 2003 began more than two years prior. In September 2001, shortly after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks against the United States, the JDA launched an internal discussion group labeled the Meeting to Examine the Modality of Defense Capability (*Bouei-ryoku no arikata kentou kaigi*, better known as *Arikata Kentou* for short). The 2005 Defense White Paper described the efforts of the *Arikata Kentou* as playing an important role in shaping the new NDPG through its deliberations on the global security environment, the role of the new defense capabilities and concepts, and the

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<sup>46</sup> The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities, *The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities Report: Japan's Visions for Future Security and Defense Capabilities*, October 4, 2004, <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/ampobouei/dai13/13siryoku.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Heisei 17-nendo Bouei Hakusho* [Defense of Japan 2005], 88-90.

<sup>48</sup> *Heisei 17-nendo ikou ni kakawaru Bouei Keikaku no Taikou ni tsuite* [The National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2005 and After], December 10, 2004, <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/kakugikettei/2004/1210taikou.html>.

necessity of jointness among the three Self-Defense Forces (SDF) services and their new force posture.<sup>49</sup>

More importantly, as discussed below, the December 2003 Cabinet Decision is considered within the MOD as largely responsible for pre-determining the content of the 2004 NDPG. As noted above, the primary purpose of the December 2003 Cabinet Decision was to announce Tokyo's decision to introduce BMD and explicitly direct the Japanese government to revise the NDPG and the Mid-Term Defense Program (MTDP). Its critical salience was in the parts of the decision that did not attract much media attention, however. The December 2003 Cabinet Decision included a very detailed description of what Japan's future posture should be and how it should accommodate BMD.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the rest of the process was regarded, by and large, as confirming and justifying the December 2003 Cabinet Decision.

During the revision, there were two ways in which politicians from the ruling parties – the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Koumeitou (Clean Government Party) – engaged in the discussions.<sup>51</sup> One was an effort by the LDP's Committee on National Defense. Following the December 2003 decision to introduce BMD, the LDP's Committee on National Defense began a discussion on Japan's future defense posture. This discussion culminated in the report *Teigen: Atarashii Nihon no Bouei Seisaku* (Recommendations: Japan's New Defense Policy), which was issued on March 30, 2004. A senior MOD official who was detailed to the Office of National Security and Crisis Management in the Cabinet Secretariat at the time recalls that this report heavily influenced the discussion in the Araki Commission. He also stated that the Araki Commission incorporated many recommendations that were proposed by the LDP report.<sup>52</sup>

In addition, the LDP and Koumeitou launched the *Yotou Project Team* (*Yotou PT*, or Ruling Parties Project Team) in the summer of 2004. The *Yotou PT* continued its discussion until only a few days prior to December 10, when the Japanese government approved and announced the 2004 NDPG. According to one Koumeitou member of the *Yotou PT*, the *Yotou PT* was formed to examine all important policy issues, including the NDPG revision, and the *Yotou PT* began to meet frequently on the NDPG revision following the release of the Araki Commission's Final Report on October 4, 2004. In the *Yotou PT* discussions, senior officials

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<sup>49</sup> Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Heisei 17 nen-do Bouei Hakusho* [Defense of Japan], 89.

<sup>50</sup> Government of Japan, *Dandou Misairu Bouei Shisutemu no Seibi-nado ni tsuite* [In Regards to the Introduction of Ballistic Missile Defense System, etc.] *Kakugi Kettei* [Cabinet Decision], December 19, 2003.

<sup>51</sup> Koumeitou (Clean Government Party) is a political party whose support base is almost entirely drawn from *Souka Gakkai*, a Buddhist sect.

<sup>52</sup> Personal interview with a MOD official, Tokyo, Japan, December 22, 2010.

(usually at the director-general level, and at a minimum at the division director level) from the relevant agencies – the Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI); Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA); and JDA – were often invited to brief on various issues. “We left no important issues unexamined, and our final recommendations were cleared by the official decision-making process in [the] LDP and Komeitou [coalition] before being submitted to the government,” both Komeitou and LDP members of the *Yotou PT* recalled. “The main purpose of our discussion was to offer a set of overall guiding principles for the NDPG revision. We didn't get involved in the details of NDPG such as the exact wording of the final document.”<sup>53</sup>

The feeling prevails that the 2004 NDPG revision was not conducted properly. Many MOD officials and JSDF officers interviewed for this report still question whether it was appropriate to use the December 2003 Cabinet Decision to introduce BMD as a trigger for revising the NDPG. For instance, a senior MOD official suggested that the MOD had not planned on revising the NDPG when the December 2003 Cabinet Decision was announced. “We thought we would be able to introduce BMD without revising the NDPG,” another senior MOD official said. This official suggested that it was then-Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo who decided that the introduction of BMD should be implemented in the broader context of revising and readjusting Japan's defense posture.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, many in the MOD and the Office of National Security and Crisis Management in the Cabinet Secretariat suggest that the introduction of BMD itself was by and large “forced upon the MOD” by then-Defense Minister Ishiba Shigeru, who promised then-U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that Japan would introduce BMD under his watch.<sup>55</sup> MOD and SDF officials express particular frustration that the December 2003 Cabinet Decision essentially pre-determined the context of the 2004 NDPG before the revision process actually began. “The NDPG was revised in 2004 in order to create a space for BMD in Japan's defense,” a senior SDF officer said. “That is why we call the 2004 NDPG ‘*BMD Taiko*’ (BMD NDPG).”<sup>56</sup>

One can argue, therefore, that the 2004 NDPG, despite the prevailing perception that it was very much driven by the bureaucracy, involved a fair degree of engagement by political leaders. Still, much of the substance of the 2004 NDPG was worked out among bureaucrats in the MOD and Cabinet Secretariat without any intimate interaction with political leaders. A senior

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<sup>53</sup> Personal interview with a Komeitou Diet member, Tokyo, Japan, December 15, 2010; personal interview with an LDP Diet member, Tokyo, Japan, February 9, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Personal interviews with MOD officials, Tokyo, Japan, December 15-22, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> Personal interview with a SDF officer, Tokyo, Japan, December 14, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Personal interview with a SDF officer, Tokyo, Japan, December 17, 2011.



MOD official described the division of roles in drafting the 2004 NDPG as follows: “The Cabinet Secretariat wrote the main text of the 2004 NDPG. The MOD worked on the Annex that describes the force structure sought under the 2004 NDPG.”<sup>57</sup> It is worthwhile to note that government officials involved in the NDPG revision in 2004 considered the revision process to be a “closed” one, with little anticipation of feedback from outside. For example, a senior MOD official who was seconded to the Cabinet Secretariat at the time of the NDPG revision in 2004 confessed that he and everyone else in the Cabinet Secretariat involved in the NDPG revision “did not think about getting outside experts’ input for the NDPG revision.” “At maximum, we thought it would be sufficient to get feedback from outside experts once the Cabinet Secretariat had a complete draft to circulate. But then the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary insisted on involving non-government experts. His suggestion prevailed, and the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities (Araki Commission) was convened.”<sup>58</sup>

LDP and Koumeitou politicians seem to have taken a two-step approach in their engagement in the revision of NDPG in 2004. At first, they tried to engage in the very beginning of the revision process. This was particularly the case when the LDP Committee on National Defense issued its recommendation for the NDPG revision in its March 2004 report. However, once government officials began to draft the 2004 NDPG following the Araki Commission Report, LDP and Koumeitou politicians did not involve themselves in the details. Rather, by having a parallel discussion on the NDPG in the *Yotou PT* until several days before the 2004 NDPG was approved by the Koizumi Cabinet, they functioned more as a sounding board for government officials, providing them with feedback on what would be politically acceptable, rather than debating with bureaucrats over the content of the NDPG for its own sake.

### **The 2010 NDPG Revision**

The most recent NDPG revision took place in 2010. However, this revision occurred under very different political circumstances, as this was the first revision to take place under the leadership of the DPJ rather than the historically dominant LDP.

The 2010 NDPG revision was a politically charged process from the very beginning. The 2004 NDPG stipulated that it should be revised in five years. Following such guidance, the MOD had begun preparatory efforts to revise the NDPG in 2008 by launching a new cycle of *arikata kentou kai* (Defense Council for Defense Posture Review). The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities (more commonly known as the Katsumata Commission) was also convened by then-Prime Minister Aso Tarou in January 2009. After eleven meetings, the Council

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<sup>57</sup> Personal interview with a Cabinet Secretariat official, Tokyo, Japan, December 21 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Personal interview with a MOD official, Tokyo, Japan, December 22, 2010.

submitted its final report to Prime Minister Aso on August 4, 2009. At the time, it was expected that the Council's report would inform the planned revision of the NDPG, to occur by the end of 2009. However, the LDP's loss in the general election in August 2009 and the transfer of governing power to the DPJ suspended the revision effort. Despite initial signs that the NDPG revision might proceed as planned, the Japanese government under then-Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio decided in mid-November 2009 to postpone the revision by one year. The decision was officially announced one month later in the form of Cabinet Decision *Heisei 22-nendo no bouei-ryoku seibi sonota ni kansuru kakugi kettei* (Cabinet Decision in regard to the FY 2010 Build-Up of Defense Capabilities, Etc.).<sup>59</sup>

The formal NDPG revision process under the new DPJ government proceeded in a way that was very similar to the revisions in 1995 and 2004 under the LDP government. It began with the appointment of the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era (known as the Sato Commission) in February 2010, which issued its final report in August 2010 after six months of deliberation. Council members met for formal meetings nine times. In addition, they met for fourteen informal "study sessions" (*benkyokai*), to which officials from the MOD and MOFA as well as non-government issue experts were invited to brief the Council members. As discussed below, this was a different process than the deliberations of the Higuchi and Araki Commissions.

The Sato Commission submitted its final report to Prime Minister Kan on August 27, 2010. Entitled *Japan's Vision for Future Security and Defense Capabilities for the New Era: Toward a Peace-Creating Nation*, the report identified three security policy objectives: Japan's own security and prosperity, the peace and stability of the international security environment, and the maintenance of a free and open international system. The report proposed that, through efforts to achieve these security goals, Japan should seek its identity as a "*heiwa souzou kokka*" (peace-creating nation) that would proactively engage in global efforts for peace and security. Although the report did not advocate a security policy drastically different from that laid out in the 2004 NDPG, the Sato Commission report attracted particular attention for explicitly declaring that the Basic Defense Capability Concept has "lost its validity" and for advocating the establishment of new principles for arms exports and defense cooperation.<sup>60</sup>

Following the submission of the Council's final report, deliberation within the Japanese government – the MOD and Cabinet Secretariat, in particular – picked up speed. The revised

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<sup>59</sup> *Heisei 22-nendo no Bouei-ryoku Seibi sonota ni kansuru Kakugi Kettei* [Cabinet Decision in regards to FY 2010 Build-Up of Defense Capabilities, Etc.], December 17, 2009.

<sup>60</sup> Council on Security and Defense Capabilities for the New Era, *Japan's Vision for Future Security and Defense Capabilities for the New Era: Toward a Peace-Creating Nation*, August 27, 2010. <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/shin-ampobouei2010/houkokusyo.pdf>.

NDPG was approved by the Kan cabinet on December 17, 2010. Incorporating the proposition put forward by the Sato Commission that the Basic Defense Force Concept is no longer valid, the 2010 NDPG introduced the concept of *douteki boueiryouku* (dynamic defense), which focuses on deterring threats by developing defense capabilities that have high readiness and are agile, flexible, sustainable, and multi-purpose. The 2010 NDPG also declared that Japan will shift its defense focus from its northern region (where it had prepare for a land invasion by the Soviet Union) to the southwestern island chain.<sup>61</sup>

DPJ politicians were actively engaged throughout the NDPG revision process in 2010. They used several methods to involve themselves in the process. First was the effort to engage officials within the MOD in discussions on defense needs. In January 2010, then-Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense Nagashima Akihisa convened a study group with an eye toward NDPG revision. In these study group sessions, MOD senior officials and SDF officers would brief Nagashima and his fellow Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense Kusuda Taizo. The study group for the two parliamentary vice-ministers continued until Nagashima and Kusuda left the MOD due to the change of prime minister from Yukio Hatoyama to Naoto Kan in May 2010.<sup>62</sup>

DPJ politicians also attempted to engage in the revision process through study groups convened by parliamentary committees and through discussion within the DPJ. Their engagement through these routes was constrained in the beginning, however, due to several decisions made by Prime Minister Hatoyama. Soon after becoming prime minister, Hatoyama ordered in September 2009 that the Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC) in the DPJ be eliminated so that policymaking authority would be unified under the Cabinet.<sup>63</sup> In this context, Hatoyama and the DPJ leadership also prohibited parliamentary committees from holding study groups on policy issues and from interacting with bureaucrats. This effectively prohibited DPJ politicians from engaging in policy discussion independent of the Cabinet.<sup>64</sup>

However, Hatoyama and the DPJ leadership began to relax these rules in January 2010. First, they permitted DPJ members to receive briefings from government officials within parliamentary committees. This decision prompted engagement in the revision process by DPJ politicians who were the members of the Committee on National Security Affairs in the House of Representatives (Lower House) and the Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Defense in the House of Councillors. These two committees convened an informal study group in January

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<sup>61</sup> *Heisei 23-nendo ikou ni kakawaru Bouei Keikaku no Taikou* [The National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and After], approved by the Cabinet on December 17, 2010. <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2011/taikou.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> Personal interview with an MOD official, Washington, DC, November 30, 2010.

<sup>63</sup> *Ryukyu Shimpo*, November 16, 2010. <http://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/storyid-149965-storytopic-3.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Personal interview with an MOD official, Washington, DC, November 30, 2010.

2010 to examine *Bouei Nihou* (Two National Defense Laws: the Self-Defense Forces Law and the Ministry of Defense Establishment Law) and began to invite MOD officials for briefings on Japan's national defense policy in general. When the DPJ leadership relaxed the rule further to allow the chairmen and majority whips of parliamentary committees to host study groups, the chairmen and majority whips of the Committee on National Security Affairs in the Lower House and the Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Defense in the Upper House began to convene weekly study group meetings focused on the NDPG revisions.<sup>65</sup>

Following the resignation of Hatoyama in May 2010, the DPJ leadership under Prime Minister Kan and Chief Cabinet Secretary Sengoku Yoshito decided to reinstate the PARC within the DPJ. In addition, DPJ leadership under Kan and Sengoku decided to reinstate *bumon kaigi* (Policy Department Meetings) within the DPJ. Following this decision, the weekly study group on the NDPG hosted by the parliamentary committees expanded to include the members of the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy Departments. The expanded study group on the NDPG was co-hosted by the majority whip of the parliamentary committees and the head of the DPJ's Foreign Affairs and National Security Departments.<sup>66</sup>

In addition, parallel to this study group, a separate study group on the NDPG was established in the DPJ's Research Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Security within the PARC. The Committee was chaired by Nakagawa Masaharu, but Nagashima Akihisa (parliamentary vice-defense minister in the Hatoyama cabinet) and Kira Shuji (parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs in the Hatoyama cabinet) were in charge of the day-to-day management of the study group. After five months of intensive discussions, the Research Committee on Foreign Affairs issued a set of recommendations for the new NDPG on November 30, 2010.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, DPJ politicians engaged in the revision of the NDPG through the *Yon Daijin Kaigou* (Four Ministers Meeting) and *Anzen Hoshō Kaigi* (Security Council of Japan).<sup>68</sup> The chief cabinet secretary, defense minister, foreign minister, and finance minister were the core

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Personal interview with a DPJ politician, Tokyo, Japan, February 9, 2011.

<sup>68</sup> The *Anzen Hoshō Kaigi* [Security Council of Japan] was established in 1986 as a meeting to address issues critically important for the national defense of Japan. It is chaired by the Prime Minister and includes the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications; the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry; the Minister of Finance; the Minister of Land Infrastructure and Transportation; the Minister of Defense; the Chief Cabinet Secretary; the Chairman of Public Safety Commission; and whoever else the Prime Minister deems appropriate. *Anzen Hoshō Kaigi Secchi-ho* [The Law to Establish the Security Council of Japan], enacted May 27, 1986, last revised December 22, 2006. [http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/hourei/houritu/anpo\\_h.html](http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/hourei/houritu/anpo_h.html).

participants in this meeting. They were often joined by two deputy chief cabinet secretaries, the deputy defense minister, and the assistant chief cabinet secretary for National Security and Crisis Management. This meeting began at the initiative of then-Chief Cabinet Secretary Sengoku. The four cabinet-level officials met seven times between May 2010 (when Kan succeeded Hatoyama as prime minister and Sengoku succeeded Hirano as chief cabinet secretary) and December 2010 when the revised NDPG was announced. In addition, the cabinet-level *Anzen Hoshō Kaigi* (more commonly referred to as *Anpo Kaigi*) met nine-times to discuss matters related to NDPG revision. According to a MOD official interviewed for the project, these meetings were convened either early in the morning or late in the evening on weekdays, as well as on weekends “to accommodate Sengoku’s schedule... he really wanted to attend all the meetings.”<sup>69</sup>

What was unique about the *Yon Daijin Kaigou* was that Chief Cabinet Secretary Sengoku, who chaired the meeting, was supported by a team of scholars and non-government policy experts convened at his request. Known as the “Support Group,” the team was headed by Kitaoka Shinichi, a professor of political science at University of Tokyo, and included Lieutenant General Yamaguchi Noboru (retired, JGSDF), Michishita Narushige of the Graduate Research Institute of Policy Studies, and Jimbo Ken of Keio University.<sup>70</sup> The group provided information to Sengoku throughout the NDPG revision and even prepared its own draft NDPG and submitted it to Sengoku at the end of November 2010.

As a result, when the *Yon Daijin Kaigou* met for the last time on December 3, 2010, three competing drafts for the 2010 NDPG – the draft submitted by the government officials, the draft prepared by the “Support Group,” and a hybrid draft of the two born from negotiation between MOD/Cabinet Secretarial officials and Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuyama Tetsuro – were put before the four cabinet ministers for consideration.<sup>71</sup>

The minutes of the meeting demonstrate that the DPJ legislators at the meeting – Foreign Minister Maehara, Defense Minister Kitazawa, Finance Minister Noda, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuyama, Deputy Defense Minister Azumi, and former Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense Nagashima (who played the role of moderator for the meeting) – debated not only the content of the revised NDPG, but also the wording of the document. For instance, the meeting minutes show considerable disagreement between the defense minister and deputy defense minister, on one side, and the foreign minister and deputy chief cabinet secretary, on the other,

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<sup>69</sup> Personal interview with a MOD official, Tokyo, Japan, December 21, 2010.

<sup>70</sup> Personal interview with a MOD official, Tokyo, Japan, December 14, 2010.

<sup>71</sup> Minutes of the December 3, 2010 *Yon Daijin Kaigou* meeting provided to the author in Tokyo, Japan by a DPJ politician, February 9, 2011.

over whether the recommendation to create a Japanese-style National Security Council (NSC) should be included in the revised NDPG, and, if so, in what way.<sup>72</sup>

### **Differences Between the Two Revisions**

When examining the NDPG revision processes under the LDP and DPJ, two main differences can be identified. First is the way in which politicians engaged in policy discussion. In the 2004 revision under the rule of the LDP-Koumeitou coalition, interested politicians engaged with the process in a structured manner. The timing of their engagement was concentrated at the very beginning of the process (in the period leading up to the announcement of the LDP Committee on National Defense Report in March 2004) and the final several months of the revision (*Yotou PT*). Their routes of participating in the discussion were also limited. In the 2010 revision, interested DPJ politicians engaged in discussions throughout the revision process, with participation intensifying in the final several months of the revision. The routes through which they took part in the discussion were also more varied.

Second, the nature of participation varied. In the 2004 NDPG revision, politicians played the role of setting politically acceptable parameters for the new NDPG. They also played a role in facilitating communication between the government and the ruling parties so that the LDP and Koumeitou, as ruling parties, did not explicitly disagree with the NDPG as an official government document. In the case of the 2010 NDPG revision, however, DPJ politicians engaged in revision discussions in a more competitive manner. That the Research Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Security within the DPJ's PARC submitted its own recommendations for the NDPG at the end of November, when the government was already finalizing its own NDPG draft, was one indicator of the competitive nature of the party's engagement. Sengoku's utilization of his "Support Group" as a parallel to *Yon Daijin Kaigo* is another such indicator (no such group played any role in the 2004 NDPG revision). Finally, the minutes of the last *Yon Daijin Kaigo* demonstrate that DPJ politicians were in competition with the bureaucracy not only over substance but also over such details as phrasing.

Evaluations of the role of the politicians in the NDPG revision in 2004 and 2010 vary considerably. In general (and understandably), politicians tend to be positive about the role played by politicians when their own political party controls the government. DPJ politicians are dismissive of the role played by LDP and Koumeitou politicians in the 2004 NDPG revision process. They describe the 2004 revision process as "completely controlled by the

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

bureaucrats.”<sup>73</sup> “Our cabinet ministers met seven times to specifically discuss the NDPG. I bet the LDP and Koumeitou cabinet ministers never met that often,” a DPJ politician challenged.<sup>74</sup>

But LDP and Koumeitou politicians, who were involved in the 2004 NDPG revision, disagree. “The *Yotou PT* for the NDPG revision may have been active only for several months, but we were very much involved,” one Koumeitou *Yotou PT* member asserts. “Back then, the MOD and the Ministry of Finance had a serious disagreement over the personnel level of the Ground Self-Defense Force. In order to reconcile the difference between the two ministries, our PT met every other day toward the end of the revision period.”<sup>75</sup> In turn, they argue that theirs is the more appropriate way to exercise *seiji shudo* (politicians’ leadership). “Our job as politicians is to provide overall guidance and make sure to provide clear and politically-permissible parameters for the bureaucrats and others who discuss the details of the NDPG, or for any important policy issues, for that matter,” one former LDP defense minister insists. “Intervening on how the document should be phrased, for instance, is the area where we, as politicians, do not have to get involved. Suppose the government works like a corporation. A politician’s job is that of the Chief Executive Officer, or the Board of Directors. No corporation has a CEO who gets involved in the negotiation of every single business contract that his or her corporation enters, nor does he or she calculate the corporation’s profit margins him or herself. That is the job of the employees, or the bureaucrats in the case of the government.”<sup>76</sup>

One Koumeitou politician agrees: “We need to have the confidence of the bureaucracy that we would not meddle with what is supposed to be their job... In the *Yotou PT* discussion for the 2004 NDPG, the members of the PT had very tense exchanges with the government officials at times. We challenged their arguments and pushed them for clarification until we felt convinced. But it never occurred to us that we would give them our own draft of the NDPG, for example.”<sup>77</sup> “It is silly to think that we can compete with the bureaucracy,” says another Koumeitou politician. “Whether you like it or not, it is a reality that the bureaucracy functions as the biggest think tank for the Japanese government. We have to work with them.”<sup>78</sup>

When it comes to the 2010 NDPG revision, DPJ politicians applaud the role of the politicians in the process. Dismissing the 2004 NDPG revision as “controlled by bureaucrats for the most part,”<sup>40</sup> they appear more or less content with their level of engagement. “The

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with a DPJ politician, Tokyo, Japan, December 15, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010, February 8-10, 2011.

<sup>74</sup> Personal interview with a DPJ politician. Tokyo, Japan. February 10, 2011.

<sup>75</sup> Personal interview with a Komeito politician, Tokyo, Japan, December 15, 2010.

<sup>76</sup> Personal interview with a LDP politician (former defense minister), Tokyo, Japan. February 7, 2011.

<sup>77</sup> Personal interview with a Komeito politician, Tokyo, Japan, December 15, 2010.

<sup>78</sup> Personal interview with a Komeito politician, Tokyo, Japan, December 20, 2010.

bureaucrats were very nervous this time, because they were not able to control our discussion at *Yon Daijin Kaigou* or the DPJ Research Committee on National Security,” several DPJ politicians suggest.<sup>79</sup> Interestingly, some bureaucrats agree with this proposition. For instance, one Cabinet Secretariat official allows that *seiji shudo* was “positively exercised” during the 2010 NDPG revision process. “The 2004 NDPG, because the main text was primarily prepared by the Cabinet Secretariat and the Annex was primarily worked out by the Ministry of Defense, did not read like one coherent document. The 2010 NDPG does not have that problem much,” he said. “It really helped that the ministers who were the principal members of *Yon Daijin Kaigou* – Chief Cabinet Secretary Sengoku, Defense Minister Kitazawa, Foreign Minister Maehara, and Finance Minister Noda – all had serious interest in the security issues. They discussed every aspect of the NDPG, both main text and Annex, at the *Yon Daijin Kaigou*, which helped to make the NDPG a better packaged document.”<sup>80</sup>

Others disagree. In particular, LDP and Koumeitou politicians and many government officials criticize the “lack of transparency” and “unclear decision-making process within the DPJ” in the 2010 NDPG revision. “I have no idea how the DPJ makes decisions on policy issues,” one LDP politician remarked.<sup>81</sup> “The DPJ has the PARC, but do their recommendations mean anything?” asked one Koumeitou politician.<sup>82</sup>

Further, they criticize the DPJ’s anti-bureaucracy approach to policymaking. “The DPJ’s emphasis on *seiji shudo* alone shows their shallowness,” one senior LDP politician argued. “We members of the Diet, as elected officials, have always been ultimately responsible for the decision that Japan makes as a country. That means each one of us, regardless of whether you are in the ruling party or opposition, is accountable for the decisions made by the Japanese government. The public sent us to the Diet to supervise the bureaucrats, so that they can optimize their potential in conducting their day-to-day management of the country — our job is not to compete with them.”<sup>83</sup>

Many government officials are also critical of the DPJ’s style of engagement in the discussion of the NDPG revision. They were particularly critical of the role played by the “Support Group,” criticizing the DPJ for its undefined relationship with non-government intellectuals. For instance, one MOD official comments that the Support Group’s “insertion” of

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<sup>79</sup> Personal interviews with DPJ politicians, Tokyo, Japan, December 15-22, 2010.

<sup>80</sup> Personal interview with a Cabinet Secretariat official. Tokyo, Japan, December 21, 2010.

<sup>81</sup> Personal interview with a LDP politician, Tokyo, Japan, December 16, 2010.

<sup>82</sup> Personal interview with a Komeito politician. Tokyo, Japan. February 6, 2011.

<sup>83</sup> Personal interview with a LDP politician, Tokyo, Japan. February 9, 2011.



their own NDPG draft made the revision process “unnecessarily confusing.”<sup>84</sup> Another MOD official describes the role of the Support Group as “kind of like an alibi to show that the DPJ was not controlled by the bureaucrats like the LDP.”<sup>85</sup> MOD and Cabinet Secretariat officials seem to agree that the significance of the Support Group was as a symbol of independent thinking and not in the substance it provided to the NDPG – but they also pointed out that utilizing non-government intellectuals in such a manner is unique to the DPJ.<sup>86</sup>

What causes these differences? Many government officials (and some LDP politicians, too) point to *structural differences* between the LDP (and Koumeitou) and DPJ as the primary reason, as discussed above. Specifically, both senior LDP and Koumeitou politicians and senior bureaucrats point to the lack of a clear decision-making process within the DPJ. “In the LDP and Koumeitou, we have a certain decision-making process that everyone accepts, and the decisions that are made according to the process are considered to reflect the will of our parties as a whole. That is not the case with the DPJ,” they explain. “Take the report put forward by their Research Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Security, for example. That report does not carry any political weight within the DPJ, because there is no established decision-making system within the DPJ. So that report, no matter how much media attention it receives, is just the report of the Research Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Security, and it does not reflect the DPJ’s stance on national security policy.”<sup>87</sup>

In regards to the structure difference between the LDP/Koumeitou and DPJ, a MOD official also identifies the “demographic” difference that a large number of DPJ politicians are currently only serving their first or second terms in office. “In today’s DPJ, the majority of its Diet members act as if they are small business owners. That is, they are only thinking about their own career advancement. In the LDP, and in Koumeitou to a large degree, due to the established hierarchy based on seniority, politicians have to spend at least some time playing a role of invisible quiet facilitator in intra-party business as they acquire knowledge and expertise in certain policy areas. By the time they move up the ladder within the party and start playing more visible roles, they already have a level of credibility within the party. The DPJ has no such system of cultivating its own members.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Personal interview with a MOD official, Tokyo, Japan, December 20, 2010.

<sup>85</sup> Personal interview with a MOD official, Tokyo, Japan, December 22, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Personal interviews with MOD and Cabinet Secretariat officials, Tokyo, Japan, December 15-22, 2010.

<sup>87</sup> Personal interview with a LDP politician, Tokyo, Japan, February 7, 2011; interviews with Koumeitou politicians, Tokyo, Japan, December 15, 2010, December 20, 2010, and February 8, 2011; interviews with senior MOD officials, Tokyo, Japan, August 25, 2010 and December 16, 2010.

<sup>88</sup> Personal interview with a MOD official, Tokyo, Japan, December 20, 2010.

Furthermore, others point to the lack of agreed-upon protocol between the “*yotou*” (ruling party) and “*seifu*” (the government) under DPJ rule, arguing that this creates greater unpredictability in the decision-making process. “Because the expected role of the party kept changing after the DPJ took the government in September 2009, the DPJ is still in the period of trial and error on establishing the protocol of the relationship between the party and the government,” one MOD official speculates.<sup>89</sup> Many government officials criticize Hatoyama’s decision to eliminate the PARC in September 2009. “Because of that decision, DPJ politicians who were not appointed ministers, deputy ministers, or parliamentary vice-ministers in the government lost their official venue to engage in policy discussions. This was not constructive, because it made them feel excluded from policy- and decision-making, and this prompted them to feel at liberty to be critical of the policy put forward by their DPJ colleagues in government posts.”<sup>90</sup>

Finally, many identified a sense of mistrust among DPJ politicians toward the bureaucracy and an instinct to exclude bureaucrats from policy discussions as the difference in the two major parties’ approaches. They point to the Hatoyama government’s move to eliminate *jikan kaigi* (vice-ministerial meetings) as the decision that symbolizes the DPJ’s mistrust of the bureaucracy. Many also pointed out that in the very early days of the Hatoyama cabinet, the *seimu sanyaku* (the four politically appointed officials in each ministry – the minister, deputy minister and two parliamentary vice-ministers) “tried to do everything, from making decisions on major policy issues to briefing news reporters.”<sup>91</sup> More specifically, many suggest that the Hatoyama Cabinet’s designation of the *seimu sanyaku kaigi* (meetings among these politically-appointed officials minister) as the locus of final decision-making created “a great deal of unpredictability” in the policy- and decision-making processes. One senior MOD official admits that, because the *seimu sanyaku* now make the final decision on all matters in the absence of bureaucrats, “it has become difficult for us bureaucrats to manage the policy- and decision-making processes.”<sup>92</sup>

### **Implications for Japan’s Future Security Policy Making Process**

This case study has examined the process by which the Japanese government revised its NDPG in 2004 and 2010, comparing the roles played by ruling-party politicians. The comparison illustrates that the NDPG revision in 2010 under the DPJ involved participation by ruling-party politicians that was more competitive and intrusive. It also reveals that DPJ politicians engaged

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<sup>89</sup> Personal interview with a MOD official, Tokyo, Japan. August 25, 2010.

<sup>90</sup> Personal interview with a senior MOD official, Tokyo, Japan, December 16, 2010.

<sup>91</sup> Personal interview with a MOD official, Tokyo, Japan, December 22, 2010.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

in the 2010 process in a more disorganized way than their LDP/Koumeitou counterparts did in 2004. Government officials, as well as LDP and Koumeitou politicians, attribute this difference in the level and nature of politician engagement to differences in party structure (hierarchical vs. relatively egalitarian) and policy- and decision-making processes between the LDP/Koumeitou and the DPJ.

But how did these differences in policy making approaches affect the actual content of the NDPG? Some argue that the DPJ's more intrusive and competitive participation in the debate did not affect the content of the 2010 NDPG to any significant degree. "They use different terminology, such as 'dynamic defense force', of course," one LDP politician says, "but when I read the 2010 NDPG, frankly speaking, I cannot see how it differs from the 2004 NDPG."<sup>93</sup> Even many MOD officials and SDF officers quietly agree, concurring with the assessment that DPJ politicians were particularly keen on being perceived as the ones in charge, not bureaucrats, throughout the revision process.<sup>94</sup>

If different levels of politician participation do not necessarily lead to a considerable policy change, can one argue that even with the DPJ's recent changes in policy- and decision-making processes, security policy will not be subject to as much volatility as anticipated? While it is too early at this point to provide a definitive answer, the tentative answer might return to the notion of political salience discussed above.

One counterexample of an issue that has become vulnerable to political volatility under the DPJ – compared to the NDPG, at least – is the Japanese government's position on its Three Principles of Arms Exports (or simply "Three Principles" for short). The Three Principles, originally defined by then-Prime Minister Sato in 1967, prohibit Japan from exporting arms to (1) countries that are involved in armed conflicts, (2) countries that are the subject of United Nations (UN) sanctions, and (3) countries of the Communist bloc.<sup>95</sup> Additional conditions were attached to these principles in 1976 by Prime Minister Takeo Miki that effectively banned Japanese arms exports completely.<sup>96</sup> Since then, the Three Principles have been treated as

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<sup>93</sup> Personal interview with a LDP politician, Tokyo, Japan, February 9, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Personal interviews with MOD officials and SDF officers, Tokyo, Japan, December 15-22, 2010.

<sup>95</sup> National Diet Library of Japan. *Shugiin Kaigi-roku Jouhou Dai 55-kai Kokkai Kessan Iinkai Dai 5-gou* [Information Database on House of Representatives meeting records: the 55<sup>th</sup> Diet Session, Audit Committee, No. 5], April 21, 1967. <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/SENTAKU/syugiin/055/0106/05504210106005a.html>.

<sup>96</sup> National Diet Library of Japan, *Shugiin Kaigi-roku Jouhou Dai 77-kai Kokkai Yodan Innkai Dai 18-gou* [Information Database on House of Representatives meeting records: the 77<sup>th</sup> Diet Session, Budget Committee, No. 18], February 27, 1976. <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/SENTAKU/syugiin/077/0380/07702270380018a.html>.

establishing a Japanese policy of not engaging in arms exports. While there have recently been calls to revise this policy, the government has not yet changed it. Even though both the March 2004 report by the LDP's Committee on National Defense and the 2004 Araki Commission briefly mentioned the possibility that Japan might need to revise its position on the Three Principles, the 2004 NDPG did not embrace the idea.<sup>97</sup>

By 2010, there were rising expectations that the revised NDPG might include the announcement of a change in Japan's policy on the Three Principles. The Sato Commission and the DPJ's Research Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Security both called for the revision of the Three Principles in their reports.<sup>98</sup> In the debate in the House of Councillors' Budget Committee in late October 2010, then-Defense Minister Kitazawa, who had earlier suggested his interest in seeing the issue discussed, explicitly indicated that he believed the Three Principles were constraining Japanese industry and that he would like to discuss how the government might revise its position.<sup>99</sup> In late November 2010, Japanese mass media even began to report that Prime Minister Kan had agreed to revise Japan's policy on the Three Principles.<sup>100</sup> In early December 2010, less than two weeks before the release of the NDPG, the media reported that the critical members of the Kan Cabinet – the chief cabinet secretary, foreign minister, defense minister, and finance minister – had agreed to incorporate the revision of the Three Principles in the NDPG.<sup>101</sup>

However, following a meeting with Fukushima Mizuho, the head of the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), on December 6 2010, Kan reversed his earlier position and decided not to proceed with the revision of the Three Principles. Analyses in the media – which took a critical tone across the board – suggested that Kan abandoned revision of the Three Principles in order to secure the SDPJ's cooperation on the budget and other domestic-issue

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<sup>97</sup> Committee on National Defense, Liberal Democratic Party, *Teigen: Atarashii Nihon no Bouei Seisaku* [Recommendation: Japan's New Defense Policy], March 30, 2004, 13-16; The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities, *The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities Report: Japan's Vision for Future Security and Defense Capabilities*, October 2004. <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/ampoboue/dai13/13siryu.pdf>.

<sup>98</sup> Council on Security and Defense Capabilities for the New Era, *Japan's Vision for Future Security and Defense Capabilities for the New Era: Toward a Peace-Creating Nation*, August 27, 2010. <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/shin-ampoboue/2010/houkokusyo.pdf>; DPJ Research Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Security, *Bouei Keikaku no Taikou no Minaoshi ni Atari Minshuto no Kihon Shisei* [At the revision of the National Defense Program Guidelines: DPJ's Basic Principles], November 30, 2010.

<sup>99</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 26, 2010.

<sup>100</sup> "Buki Yushutsu San-Gensoku: Shushou Minaoshi Ryouhou" [Three Principles on Arms Exports: Prime Minister Agrees to Revise], *Sankei Shimbun*, November 28, 2010.

<sup>101</sup> "Bei igai tonu Buki Kyodo Kaihatsu Kaikin ni Kakuryo Gou" [Cabinet Ministers Agreed to Lift Ban on Joint Weapon Development Other Than the U.S.], *Asahi Shimbun*, December 4, 2010.

legislation.<sup>102</sup> However, several Japanese reporters suggested that Kan used his meeting with Fukushima only as an excuse. One Japanese reporter very close to Kan reveals, “Kan was not happy with Sengoku, who talked with other ministers and came up with the recommendation to revise Three Principles without getting his prior approval. Kan is a liberal. He was never positive about changing the Three Principles, and the need to gain the SDPJ’s support for his key domestic agenda, including the budget, was a perfect excuse for him not to do so.”<sup>103</sup>

MOD officials argue that if coordination within the government over revising the Three Principle had taken place under LDP/Koumeitou rule, such a dramatic reversal would not have occurred: “Once things were approved within the LDP and Koumeitou coalition, there was no way for a single politician, even the prime minister, to undo the approval.” These officials suggest that Kan’s last-minute reversal points to a fundamental flaw in the DPJ’s decision-making process. One MOD official explains, “They have no decision-making process that everyone in the party respects because the party leadership under Hatoyama stripped DPJ politicians who do not have a senior position in the government of the opportunity to participate in the policymaking debate. Even though some of those changes were undone after Kan took over, the DPJ still has not established a process through which they form consensus within the party through discussion... Because of that, the majority of DPJ politicians feel excluded from the party’s decision-making process and therefore feel entitled to openly express their disagreement with the party’s position.”<sup>104</sup>

This has important implications for the U.S.-Japan alliance. If the DPJ’s institutional changes in policy- and decision-making increase politician participation in detailed policy discussions in the long run, this would expose security issues – which have been carefully managed by a limited number of government officials and bureaucrats – to a greater risk of politicization. If the developments in the relocation of Futenma MCAS could serve as any guide, this would not be constructive.

The heightened potential for further politicization of security issues as a result of future changes in party control of the government may also lead to the politicization of senior bureaucrats in the government. A wholesale turnover of senior non-politically-appointed government officials with each change of government has not occurred in Japan thus far. As long as Japan maintains its parliamentary system and the election cycle thus remains somewhat

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<sup>102</sup> “*Shamin Renkei Aseru Shushou*” [Prime Minister Hasten to Align with SDPJ], *Asahi Shimbun*, December 7, 2010; “*Shamin to Kiken na Fukuen*” [A Dangerous Make-up with SDPJ], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, December 7, 2010; “*Buki Yushutu San-gensoku Minaoshi Assari Sakiokuri*” [Revision of Three Principles of Arms Exports Nonchalantly Postponed], *Sankei Shimbun*, December 7, 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Personal interview with *Yomiuri Shimbun* reporter, Tokyo, Japan, December 21, 2010.

<sup>104</sup> Personal interview with MOD officials, August 25, 2010 and December 21, 2010.

unpredictable, it is unlikely that the Japanese government will adopt a personnel system similar to that of the United States, where mid-level and senior official positions undergo major turnover in accordance with the presidential election cycle. However, as security policy faces a greater risk of being politicized, it is difficult to imagine that senior government officials (deputy director-general and above) will be insulated from changes of government. For instance, it may become difficult for a director-general who worked for a DPJ minister to stay in his or her position under a new LDP minister. One DPJ politician indeed points to this possibility: he proposes that in order for *seiji shudo* to be truly effective, “the bureaucrats who serve the politicians in government agencies either must share the politicians’ ideas for policy issues or at minimum remain completely neutral and function as a faithful executor of politicians’ orders.”<sup>105</sup>

Nor will the close-knit community of security policy experts outside the government be insulated from the effects of politicization of security issues. In the past, since security policy issues largely escaped scrutiny in politics, they were managed by a relatively small community of current and former government officials from MOFA, MOD, METI, and the National Police Agency (NPA), as well as a small number of non-government security policy experts often consulted by government officials. Until the change of government in September 2009, this community remained largely non-partisan; there was no room for partisanship during the six decades of LDP rule. However, as security policies increasingly become a part of partisan debate, divisions could emerge within this community between those more closely aligned with the LDP and others more closely affiliated with the DPJ. Will experts who were members of the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities for the New Era or Sengoku’s “Support Group” be re-appointed to government-commissioned advisory panels when the LDP takes back the government?

Finally, greater politicization of security issues may open the door to greater media and public opinion influence. Since security policies have been managed by a small group of government officials and scholars, the impact of the media and public opinion has been negligible. However, as politicians who feel an acute need to be responsive to the public grow more involved in both the policy process and its outcomes, media and public opinion may grow more influential.

It is clearly too early to make a definitive argument about the implications of the 2009 change of government in Japan. It will take several election cycles and changes in government to assess the full impact of politicians’ increased participation in security policy discourse. This report suggests greater unpredictability in security policymaking, but often more in process than

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<sup>105</sup> Personal interview with a DPJ politician, Tokyo, Japan, February 8 and 10, 2011.

in outcomes, and often only in proportion to the popular salience of the issue at hand. These developments in Japan warrant a careful, sustained observation of developments in the relationships between politicians and bureaucrats and between political parties and the government, and the influence of media and public opinion.



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