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Strategic Cooperation for Extended Deterrence A New Dimension of Japan-US Security Cooperation

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Security cooperation between Japan and the US needs to be expanded into the hitherto little explored dimension of strategic cooperation aimed at facilitating the function of US extended deterrence. Enhanced credibility of the US extended nuclear deterrent, increased Japan-US defense cooperation for common deterrence purposes and closer Japan-South Korea policy coordination to facilitate the function of US extended deterrence are particularly important to this end.

Obviously, it is Japan rather than the US that will have to act more in order to expand strategic cooperation under the Japan-US Security Treaty so as to make the 50 years old Treaty relevant to present and future security requirements.

First, for Japan to become more confident in the US extended nuclear deterrent is essential for Japan's security as the country addresses the issues of North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile development, China's continued expansion of military power and activities and Russia's increasing dependence upon nuclear weapons.

Japanese perceptions about US assurances are the question at issue. The US commitment to extend the nuclear deterrent for Japan has been repeatedly affirmed, most recently by President Barack Obama. But, the body politic of Japan, if not the government, is not fully convinced of its credibility. Nor is the government equipped with resources, except for US assurances, to articulate before the public the reliability of US commitment.

This is the consequence of Japan's ambivalence to date about the strategic relationship with the US: While depending upon the US nuclear deterrent in coping with nuclear threats, Tokyo has been evading involvement in US nuclear strategy. For the Japanese government to engage in consultations with Washington on common deterrence strategy is necessary in order to assure the public that the US extended nuclear deterrent is reliable. It is also long overdue for Japan to change its approach toward US deterrence strategy from one of sheer recipient to one of participant.

Secondly, the role for Japan's Self Defense Forces(SDF) to play in support of US forces for common deterrence purposes will have to be expanded as US deterrence strategy will come to depend less on nuclear weapons and more on the "forward presence of conventional forces" and missile defense, as stressed in the Obama administration's Nuclear Posture Review Report. To this end, Japan will have to rectify the long recognized deficiencies of its defense and security policy, such as self-imposed prohibition of the right of "collective self-defense" and the continued decrease of defense budget.

Thirdly, the time has come for Japan and South Korea to cooperate

in facilitating the function of US extended deterrence. The Japan-US and South Korea-US security arrangements are designed since their inception to support each other, and Tokyo and Seoul now see common interests in ensuring US extended deterrence for the sake of security and stability in Northeast Asia and beyond.