

[Urgent Statement] Protesting the Liberal Democratic Party's "Security Proposal", which deviates from constitutional principles and increases the risk of war

In preparation for the scheduled revision of three security policy documents at the end of 2022, including the National Security Strategy, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) today compiled a set of recommendations. The content of this proposal is a policy of military expansion, deviating from the principles of Japan's Peace Constitution and increasing the risk of war.

First, it proposes the possession of a substantial capability to attack enemy bases. This has in the new proposal been given the different name 'counterattack capability' against ballistic missile attacks or similar, however, from the history of discussions within the party it is clear that this refers to enemy base strike capability. The proposal further states that the targets of attack "are not limited to missile bases, but also include the command and control functions of the other country". Having such an offensive capability would effectively contravene Japan's basic policy of defense under the Constitution - that is, exclusively defense-oriented policy. Although the proposal claims that this is "under the concept of exclusively defense-oriented policy", it is in reality an extremely dangerous policy, coming as close as possible to a pre-emptive attack by Japan. Having offensive capability does not eliminate the threat of missiles, nor does it completely stop enemy missiles. If Japan adopts such an offensive posture, other countries will naturally react in the same way. This would unnecessarily increase military tensions in the region and in fact increase the likelihood of a potential attack on Japan.

Second, it proposes to expand defense spending within five years, with a target of 'at least 2 per cent of GDP'. This is in other words a declaration to double defense spending. Such an expansionary stance by Japan would accelerate the arms race in Asia. In the first place, the very stance of setting an increase in defense spending as a political goal is incompatible with the pursuit of an effective defense and security policy. Various wasteful and opaque practices have been pointed out in contracts between the Japanese government and the defense industry, and in the introduction of weapons from the US. Correcting these problems must be the first priority.

Third, it calls for a review of the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, and to consider the provision of lethal weapons to countries undergoing aggression, in a way that "allows for the transfer of equipment in a wide range of fields". This is an abandonment of the principle of 'not aggravating conflict', which is the cornerstone of Japan's arms export control policy maintained under the Constitution. It is extremely likely that such a change would lead to a situation of arbitrary interpretations going unchecked. It is unacceptable that people could be killed or injured by weapons exported by Japan.

To propose such a policy of military expansion at a time when people are feeling insecure because of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is a highly inflammatory and provocative act. Such policies in the name of strengthening deterrence would actually create distrust of Japan's pacifism, provoke neighbouring countries militarily and consequently increase the risk of war.

The COVID-19 pandemic which has persisted over more than two years has left Japan's society and economy in the same state of exhaustion as the rest of the world. The expansion of healthcare and welfare and measures to address inequality and poverty are the most urgent needs. A prolonged war in Ukraine could have further negative social and economic consequences. Money must now go to serve the people, not to weapons.

The fact that the ruling LDP has issued such a proposal will have a major impact on the revision of security policy by the Government. What is, however, required of Japan now is not to stir up an arms race, but diplomacy for mutual disarmament and easing of tensions with neighbouring countries, and efforts to restore international law and order, with the United Nations at the core. The LDP proposal must not be taken as a given. Rather, we call for a calm and broad-based debate by both the ruling and opposition parties, returning to the fundamentals of diplomacy and security based on the Peace Constitution.

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