



PROJECT MUSE®

Japan's "Three National Security Documents" and Defense Capabilities: Reinforcing a Radical Military Trajectory

Christopher W. Hughes

The Journal of Japanese Studies, Volume 50, Number 1, Winter 2024, pp. 155-183 (Article)

Published by Society for Japanese Studies

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jjs.2024.a918586>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/918586>

CHRISTOPHER W. HUGHES

Japan's "Three National Security Documents" and Defense Capabilities: Reinforcing a Radical Military Trajectory

Abstract: Japan's government argues that its 2022 three national security documents are at the same time transformational and yet maintain overall continuity in military and security policy. This article through investigating pivotal aspects of the defense reforms—perceived threats and strategy, defense budgets, counterstrike doctrine and capabilities, first island chain defense, and domestic policy and public resolve for implementation—weighs the strength of arguments for essential continuity versus step change. It concludes that the three documents fundamentally change Japan's exclusively defense-oriented policy and the division of labor in the U.S.-Japan alliance, further accelerate Japan's radical military trajectory, and pose important implications for regional security.

Prime Minister Kishida Fumio's administration on December 16, 2022, released simultaneously a revised National Security Strategy (NSS), National Defense Strategy (NDS), and Defense Buildup Program (DBP), often referred to collectively as the "three national security documents" (*anpo sanbunsho*).¹ The overwhelming leitmotif of these documents in the lead

The author would like to thank Max Warrack for assisting on this article and the editorial team at the *Journal of Japanese Studies* for excellent support in preparing the final version for publication.

1. Cabinet Office, "National Security Strategy of Japan," <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryoku/221216anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>; Japan Ministry of Defense (JMOD), "National Defense Strategy," https://www.mod.go.jp/j/policy/agenda/guideline/strategy/pdf/strategy_en.pdf, and "Defense Buildup Program," https://www.mod.go.jp/j/policy/agenda/guideline/plan/pdf/program_en.pdf. Japanese-language versions available at: Kokka Anzenhoshō Kaigi, "Kokka anzenhoshō senryaku ni tsuite," <https://www.mod.go.jp/j/policy/agenda/guide>

up to and since their release—and pervading other policy discussions in Japan itself and in the U.S.-Japan alliance—has been the declared intention to “fundamentally reinforce national defense capabilities” (*waga kuni no bōeiryoku o bappon-teki ni kyōka*). The NSS, NDS, and DBP, in turn, contain a series of eye-catching policy and military capability announcements.

Japan, most notably, enshrined in the NSS defense budget increases to around two per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2027 in line with NATO benchmarks, thus finally abandoning its long-held, if already eroding, stance of keeping the budget to one per cent of GDP. Further, Japan pledged to increase defense expenditure by a factor of at least 1.6 to create the third-largest defense budget globally after the United States and China. Japan for the first time under the NSS and NDS committed to actualizing a “counterstrike” (*hangeki nōryoku*) doctrine to enable the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) in the event of armed attack on Japan to mount “effective counterstrikes against the opponent’s territory” and “disrupt and defeat invasion at earlier timing and location further afield.”² The NDS and DBP outlined significant investments for the JSDF in: “standoff” long-range precision cruise and hypersonic missiles; Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD); “uncrewed assets,” or military drones; “cross-domain warfare” including cyber-defense and military space satellites; air and sea lift for improved mobility; and “sustainability and resilience” (*jizokusei-kyōjinsi*) in the form of munitions stocks, maintenance of weapons systems, and “hardening” of command and base facilities—all serving to enhance the JSDF’s ability to engage in prolonged combat operations. Japan, in addition, made clear that efforts to transform its national defense posture were coordinated with bilateral discussions for strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance—the NDS was formulated in alignment with the U.S. 2022 National Defense Strategy and designed to contribute to joint capabilities and integrated responses to regional and global security challenges—and would provide, in turn, the “cornerstone” and opportunity for Japan to promote security cooperation with other U.S. allies, partners, and like-minded states.³

Japan’s unusually overt and bold determination to strengthen its national defense capabilities and to link these to the service of the U.S.-Japan

line/pdf/security_strategy.pdf; Bōeishō, “Bōeiryoku senryaku ni tsuite,” <https://www.mod.go.jp/j/policy/agenda/guideline/strategy/pdf/strategy.pdf>; Bōeishō Kokka Anzenhoshō Kaigi, “Bōeiryoku seibi keikaku ni tsuite,” <https://www.mod.go.jp/j/policy/agenda/guideline/plan/pdf/plan.pdf>. All documents dated December 16, 2022. All websites accessed June 28, 2023.

2. Cabinet Office, “National Security Strategy,” December 16, 2022, pp. 18–19, 20; JMOD, “National Defense Strategy,” pp. 12, 13–14.

3. JMOD, “National Defense Strategy,” p. 2; Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), “Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee (‘2+2’),” January 7, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100284739.pdf>, p. 1.

alliance, in apparent contrast to its traditionally low-profile military stance in the postwar era, has unsurprisingly attracted considerable domestic and international attention. This is not least because the three documents emerged against the backdrop of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February and China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) exercises around Taiwan in August with missiles falling in Japan's exclusive economic zone, thus raising questions of the extent of Japan's willingness to respond through enhancing military measures to deter aggression, and if necessary to actually engage in combat activity in order to contribute to its own and international security. Inevitably, though, while the three documents and related reforms have been acknowledged as of high importance, their precise significance and impact for Japan's defense posture and the U.S.-Japan alliance—true to form of any examination of Japanese security in the postwar era—have proved inherently controversial.

Japan's government in the NSS and NDS has designated variously the envisaged reforms as "dramatically transforming Japan's national security policy" (*ōkiku tenkan suru*) and a "major turning point for post-war defense policy" (*ōki na tenkanten*).⁴ Kishida, speaking in January 2023 in the United States, asserted that the documents represented a "major shift" and "major transformation" in security policy.⁵ Almost in the same breath, though, Japanese policymakers have sought to downplay and reassure over the degree and type of changes planned. The NSS and NDS argue in successive sentences that any changes remain grounded in fundamental principles of national security (*anzen hoshō ni kansuru kihon-teki gensoku o iji*) and deliver change only on the ambition and means of implementation of those principles.⁶ Kishida took a similar line in January 2023 arguing that, despite the self-proclaimed major shifts and transformation in security policy, "Japan's post-war status of a peace-loving nation has *not changed in the slightest*" (author's emphasis).⁷ Kishida's remarks built upon ones in Singapore in June 2022, trailing and justifying the upcoming changes in defense budget increases and counterstrike:

Japan's posture as a peace-loving nation will remain unchanged. Our efforts will proceed within the scope of our Constitution and in compliance with international law, in a manner that *does not alter the basic roles and*

4. Cabinet Office, "National Security Strategy," December 16, 2022, p. 3; JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 4.

5. Prime Minister's Office of Japan, "Japan's Decisions at History's Turning Point. Policy Speech by Prime Minister Kishida Fumio at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)," January 13, 2023, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202301/_00005.html.

6. Cabinet Office, "National Security Strategy," December 16, 2022, p. 3; JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 14.

7. Prime Minister's Office, "Japan's Decisions at History's Turning Point."

missions shared between Japan and the US under our alliance.⁸ (author's emphasis)

Japan's government in essence, therefore, posits that the three policy documents it terms as delivering transformational change in fact reinforce continuity in overall security policy. However, Japanese defense planners' attempts to maximize and yet minimize simultaneously the claimed impact of policy changes raise questions about the logical consistency and validity of their position and, in turn, the exact extent of the three documents in precipitating shifts in security policy, and not least because of defense planners' known proclivity in the past to obfuscate security policy change.⁹ The three documents and their potential scale of ambition have consequently triggered a range of initial perspectives over the long-term import for Japan's security policy, which often interlink with ongoing debates on the extent of continuity or change in Japan's military trajectory over recent decades.¹⁰

The response of certain elements of academic and policy analysis in Japan itself and internationally has been to accord with the Kishida administration's line of change within continuity and to see the reforms as essentially supporting arguments for the evolution of Japan's security policy rather than fundamental deviation from past trajectories as its "core pillars" remain in place.¹¹ Alternative analyses argue that the Japanese gov-

8. Prime Minister's Office of Japan, "Keynote Address by Prime Minister Kishida Fumio at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue," Singapore, June 10, 2022, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202206/_00002.html.

9. Glenn D. Hook, *Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan* (Routledge, 1995).

10. For recent debates on continuity or change, see: Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy Under the "Abe Doctrine"* (Palgrave, 2015); Andrew L. Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance: New Politics and Policies for the Twenty-First Century* (Columbia University Press, 2017); Adam P. Liff, "Japan's Security Policy in the 'Abe Era': Radical Transformation or Evolutionary Shift?" *Texas National Security Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2018), pp. 9–34; Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels, "Active Denial: Redesigning Japan's Response to China's Military Challenge," *International Security*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (2018), pp. 128–69; Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan in the American Century* (Belknap Press, 2018); Karl Gustafsson, Linus Hagström, and Ulv Hanssen, "Japan's Pacifism is Dead," *Survival*, Vol. 60, No. 6 (2018), pp. 137–58; Sheila A. Smith, *Japan Rearmed: The Politics of Military Power* (Harvard University Press, 2019); Paul Midford, *Overcoming Isolationism: Japan's Leadership in East Asian Security Multilateralism* (Stanford University Press, 2020); Tom Phuong Le, *Japan's Aging Peace: Pacifism and Militarism in the Twenty-First Century* (Columbia University Press, 2021); Adam P. Liff and Philip Y. Lipsky, "Japan Transformed? The Foreign Policy Legacy of the Abe Government," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (2022), pp. 123–47; Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan as a Global Military Power: New Capabilities, Alliance Integration, Bilateralism-Plus* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

11. Adam P. Liff, "Kishida the Accelerator: Japan's Defense Evolution after Abe," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (2023), pp. 63–83; Michael Macarthur Bosack, "What to Make of Japan's New Defense Documents," *Japan Times*, December 23, 2022, <https://>

ernment has majorly underplayed the ramifications of its reforms overall, or at least in specific areas of military activity. These are thus more in line with views of Japan as increasingly in de facto terms breaking away from its past policy principles and military posture. Japan's plans are seen as "ground-breaking," a "revolution," "unprecedented," "historic," an "inflection point," "stunning change," a "break with a tradition of incremental change," "transformational," and "irreversible."¹²

Moreover, many analyses, even if not agreeing on the exact impact of the three documents on the overall direction and shape of Japan's security policy, do agree that their potential for impactful change should be monitored across several key policy areas, including: Japanese threat perceptions; defense budget expansion; adoption of counterstrike and influence on past military constraints and the U.S.-Japan division of labor; and Japan's preparedness for military operations to defend its own territory and to underpin U.S. power projection for the defense of Japan and the first island chain in the wider East Asia region, including even Taiwan. Furthermore, analysts overlap in their assessments that Japan's defense reforms will depend for their ultimate impact and durability upon the determination of the Kishida administration and its successors to see through implementation in terms of consolidating resourcing and maintaining domestic political support.¹³

www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2022/12/23/commentary/japan-commentary/japan-defense-explainer/; Alexandra Sakaki, "A New Course for Japan's Security Policy," March 3, 2023, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2023C13/>; Stephen Nagy, "Is Japan's New National Security Strategy a Paradigm Shift?" *Situation Reports*, December 27, 2022, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/is-japans-national-security-strategy-a-paradigm-shift/>; Zack Cooper and Eric Sayers, "Japan's Shift to War Footing," *War on the Rocks*, January 12, 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/01/japans-shift-to-war-footing/>.

12. Ryan Ashley, "Japan's New National Security Strategy Is Making Waves," Foreign Policy Research Institute, January 4, 2023, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/01/japans-new-national-security-strategy-is-making-waves/>; Ken Jimbo, "Deterrence by Denial: Japan's New Strategic Outlook," Stimson Center, February 22, 2023, <https://www.stimson.org/2023/deterrence-by-denial-japans-new-strategic-outlook/>; Jeffrey W. Hornung and Christopher B. Johnstone, "Japan's Strategic Shift Is Significant, but Implementation Hurdles Await," *War on the Rocks*, January 27, 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/01/japans-strategic-shift-is-significant-but-implementation-hurdles-await/>; Jennifer Lind, "Japan Steps Up: How Asia's Rising Threat Convinced Tokyo to Abandon its Defense Taboos," *Foreign Affairs*, December 23, 2022; Yuki Tatsumi, "How Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Changed Japan's Approach to National Security," Stimson Center, February 16, 2023, <https://www.stimson.org/2023/how-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-changed-japans-approach-to-national-security/>; Takuya Matsuda, "Japan's Emerging Security Strategy," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 85–102; Christopher B. Johnstone, "Japan's Transformational National Security Strategy," Center for International and Security Studies, December 8, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/japans-transformational-national-security-strategy>; Michael J. Green, "The Ukraine War and Northeast Asia," *Asia Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2023), p. 12.

13. Adam P. Liff and Jeffrey W. Hornung, "Japan's New Security Policies: A Long Road to Full Implementation," *Order from Chaos*, Brookings Institution, March 27, 2023, <https://>

Finally, a set of other reactions and analyses concentrate on the impact of Japan's defense reforms in terms of contributing to or detracting from regional security. President Joe Biden in summitry with Kishida has endorsed Japan's moves as vital for bilateral cooperation and regional stability, and strong support has been confirmed in the alliance's Security Consultative Committee (SCC), or "2+2 process," involving defense and foreign ministers.¹⁴ Conversely, though, other international opinion is more critical of Japan's defense reforms. Chinese government-affiliated media noted Japan's defense reforms as "disconcerting" and "deviating from the track of post-war peaceful development." North Korea argued Japan was moving toward acquiring a preemptive strike capability to attack other countries. South Korean media asserted Japan was seeking to "ditch its exclusively self-defense policy."¹⁵

Japan's ambitious defense reforms, viewed from a range of perspectives, are thus subject to questions of how far they are confined within existing principles and frameworks, and whether they are as straightforward, as Kishida might like to assert, in their implications for the trajectory of overall security policy and regional security relations, and so warrant further critical investigation. The consequent objective of this article is to assess in more detail, and by going beyond the immediate judgments, with a longer-term perspective, the exact types and degree of impact of the new defense documents on the development of Japan's military and security policy trajectory. To carry out this investigation, this study examines in detail, across five main sections, those key components of the security documents—threat perceptions, budgets, counterstrike, first island chain defense, and resolve for implementation—that have attracted common attention as most likely to determine the full impact of Japan's reforms. The article argues that each of these components makes for a degree of fundamental change often not fully understood to date, and that taken individually and in combination these changes are generating, and indeed reinforcing, further radical departures from Japan's postwar military posture. In turn, these findings assist in

www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2023/03/27/japans-new-security-policies-a-long-road-to-full-implementation/.

14. MOFA, "Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting," May 23, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page4e_001261.html; MOFA, "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee ('2+2')," January 11, 2023, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100444894.pdf>.

15. "Japan's Passage of Defense Documents Brings Country Away from Track of Post-War Peaceful Development: Chinese Embassy," *Global Times*, December 16, 2022, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202212/1282035.shtml>; "Japan's New Security Strategy Disconcerting: China Daily Editorial," *China Daily*, December 18, 2022, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202212/18/WS639f0d82a31057c47eba4f02.html>; Ashley, "Japan's New National Security Strategy Is Making Waves"; "Japan's Rearmament a Dramatic Policy Change: Korea Herald," *Straits Times*, December 21, 2022, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/japan-s-rearmament-a-dramatic-policy-change-korea-herald>.

adjudicating the ongoing debate on continuity or changes in Japan's security trajectory, with a strong sense of radical change winning out, and raise significant questions for its impact on international security.

Strategic Threat Drivers

Japan's three national security documents clearly follow a series of revisions in defense posture over recent decades. The first NSS formulated in 2013 under the administration of Prime Minister Abe Shinzō drew together a range of developments in security and defense policy already in process in the post-cold war period under previous Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Democratic Party of Japan administrations but provided these ongoing changes with additional momentum and a range of bolder innovations. The NSS drew upon the long-term thinking of policymakers that Japan's security environment was undergoing a fundamental deterioration, manifested in: North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear adventurism; the rise of China's military power and territorial irredentism, including designs on Japan's southwestern islands; the shifting balance of power challenging the U.S.-centered security system in the Asia Pacific; and the emergence of other diverse security threats exacerbated by advances in military technology that, "irrespective of where they originate in the world, could instantly have a direct influence on the security of Japan."¹⁶ The subsequent conclusion of the NSS was that no state, including Japan, could any longer seek to defend itself alone and new threats needed to be met proactively and collectively in cooperation with other states.

Japan in the 2013 NSS thus started to articulate a multilayered security policy, consisting of strengthening its own national defense capabilities; expanding military cooperation with its U.S. ally; and enhancing cooperation with like-minded U.S. allies and partners, as well as with other states in the Asia Pacific and beyond. A constant theme of the NSS, and binding together this multilayered approach, has been that Japan should not just be capable of defeating threats once they reach its territory but should attempt to stop these arising in the first place and thereby push outward its security perimeter and responsibilities.¹⁷ Hence, the NSS promoted Abe's famed foreign and security policy of a Japanese "proactive contribution to peace" (*sekkyoku-teki heiwashugi*).

Successive iterations of Japan's National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) and accompanying Mid-Term Defense Program (MTDP)—the forerunners of the NDS and DBP that lay out essential defense doctrine alongside the envisaged structure of the JSDF force—steadily moved Ja-

16. Cabinet Office, "National Security Strategy," December 17, 2013, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/131217anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>, pp. 6–7.

17. Hughes, *Japan as a Global Military Power*, p. 18.

pan, in foreshadowing and then following the NSS, toward a fundamental restructuring of national military capabilities as the first layer of security strategy. Over time, the JSDF shifted away from its cold war focus on denial of a Soviet land invasion of northern Japan and an essentially static defense posture, characterized by the buildup of Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) main battle tanks and artillery, and supporting Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) destroyers and Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) interceptors. The JSDF instead moved toward a post-cold war posture that emphasized mobility, flexibility, and deployment of advanced military technology and intelligence capabilities to counter North Korea and China, and started to switch deployments southward for the defense of outlying islands. The JSDF by the time of the 2018 NDPG that preceded the NDS sought to convert itself into a Multi-Domain Defense Force (MDDF) (*tajigen tōgō bōeiryoku*) to engage in “cross-domain operations” (*ryōiki ōdan sakusen*), not only across the land, sea, and air domains, but also now across outer space, cyberspace, and electronic warfare. Moreover, Japanese governments increasingly created leeway for strengthening military capacity by discarding self-imposed antimilitaristic principles. Japan overturned the ban on the military use of space in place since 1969 by passing a Basic Space Law in 2008 for “defensive” military purposes; abandoned the ban on the export of arms and military technology in place since 1967 and 1976 and instituted instead in 2014 the Three Principles on the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology; and then in 2017 in effect scrapped the commitment to the one per cent of GDP limit on defense expenditure in place since 1976.

Nevertheless, despite growing cognizance of the deteriorating external environment and the resultant reforms in national security strategy and JSDF doctrine and capabilities found in the NSS and NDPGs, Japanese policymakers appeared still, it has been argued, not to perceive extant threats as sufficiently severe to trigger fully transformational change in security policy.¹⁸ The NSS noted North Korea’s ballistic and missile programs as “grave threats to peace and stability,” merely termed China an “issue of concern,” and in fact argued it was “critical to advance cooperation with Russia in all areas, including security.”¹⁹

The three documents mark, though, a sharp contrast with past and more cautious evaluations of the international security environment and manifest a sense of security crises now visited actually and directly upon Japan itself. The revised NSS asserts that “we live in the world of an historical inflection

18. Le, *Japan’s Aging Peace*, pp. 11–15; Adam P. Liff, “Japan’s Defense Policy: Abe the Evolutionary,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2015), pp. 79–99; Liff, “Japan’s Security Policy in the ‘Abe Era,’” pp. 30–31, 33–34.

19. Cabinet Office, “National Security Strategy,” December 17, 2013, pp. 7, 13, 25.

point and in the face of the most severe and complex security environment since the end of WWII"; now categorizes North Korea as a "grave and imminent threat"; and vastly elevates China to "an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge" for Japan's security, although stops short of naming it an outright threat. Russia, following its invasion of Ukraine, has transmuted into a "strong security concern" that has shaken the "very foundation of the international order," if not in fact precipitating "the complete end of the post-Cold War world."²⁰

Indeed, Russia has proved pivotal in enabling the escalation of Japan's global and regional threat perceptions to the levels necessary to precipitate concomitantly robust policy responses. Kishida summarized the step change in Japan's security concerns posed by Russia's action with the famous statement in June 2022 that "Ukraine may be East Asia tomorrow," and so signifying the risks of China seeking similar unilateral moves to acquire territory by force and challenge the status quo, whether in the case of Sino-Japanese disputes in the East China Sea or even possibly Taiwan. As the NDS tellingly noted, the overriding lesson for Japan from the war in Ukraine so as not to fall victim to a similar fate was that "Ukraine's defense capability against Russia was insufficient" and "thus failed to discourage and deter Russian aggression."²¹ In turn, Japan's security threat perceptions were compounded in the NSS by concerns that it was becoming "increasingly difficult for the United States, Japan's ally with the world's greatest comprehensive power . . . to maintain and develop the international order," making it ever more evident that the United States could no longer be relied upon solely to guarantee regional security and that Japan needed to step up commitments for its own defense and in support of the United States.²²

The overriding impression from the revised NSS, therefore, is that for Japanese policymakers the events of 2022 involving Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's military intimidation of Taiwan that impinged on Japan's own territory—combined with longer-term accumulation of the types of security concerns found in the previous NSS and NDPGs—necessitated identifying strategic threat drivers fundamentally different from those to date in immediacy and scale, and far surpassing anything seen even in the cold war period. As Abe's former special advisor noted in terms of threats, the "new security doctrine calls a spade a spade." Consequently, these new levels of threat recognition have convinced Japanese

20. Cabinet Office, "National Security Strategy," December 16, 2022, pp. 2, 9; Prime Minister's Office, "Japan's Decisions at History's Turning Point."

21. JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 8.

22. Prime Minister's Office, "Keynote Address by Prime Minister Kishida Fumio."

policymakers that they should not only maintain the NSS's overarching triptych of national defense efforts, the U.S.-Japan alliance, and international security cooperation, but fundamentally transform Japan's efforts across each of these aspects.²³

Defense Resourcing

Japan's motivations to fundamentally upscale its security activities as now found in the revised NSS and the NDS and DBP have been matched by a new determination to fully resource these initiatives. Pursuit of a more transformational military pathway has often been seen as hampered by the one per cent of GDP budget limit. Although Japanese administrations at times during the cold war period slightly exceeded this limit, and have consistently sought to suppress declared levels of expenditure by excluding from the calculations items such as military pensions and Japan Coast Guard (JCG) funding that would normally be listed in comparable NATO member state budgets, defense expenditure did remain around the one per cent level.²⁴ The defense budget, moreover, facing increasing competition from government social welfare and infrastructure projects, by the first two decades of the post-cold war period started to plateau at just under ¥5 trillion annually, thus hindering the JSDF's ability to procure equipment and maintain its force readiness.

As noted above, Abe in effect abandoned the one per cent of GDP principle, announcing in the National Diet in March 2017 that his administration had no intention of keeping defense expenditure below the limit, and, indeed, that no such budgetary policy constraint existed. He instituted defense expenditure increases of one to two per cent annually that brought levels firmly back above ¥5 trillion and to around 1.25 per cent of GDP. Abe's budgetary increases assisted the revisions in military doctrine and capability sought in the 2018 NDPG as outlined above, but these policy changes were often still regarded as underfunded.²⁵ Hence, it has fallen to Kishida to implement the increases in the budget that have been long been argued for as necessary for the fuller transformation of Japan's defense capabilities. Kishida and the LDP pledged in election manifestos and successful campaigns for the Lower House in 2021 and Upper House in 2022 to

23. Taniguchi Tomohiko, "Japan's New Security Posture Is Abe's Legacy," *Project Syndicate*, January 27, 2023, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/japan-rearmament-is-abe-shinzo-legacy-by-taniguchi-tomohiko-2023-01>.

24. Christopher W. Hughes, "Japan's Defence Industry: From Indigenisation to Exploring Internationalisation," in Keith Hartley and Jean Belin, eds., *The Economics of the Global Defence Industry* (Routledge, 2020) pp. 396–436.

25. Liff, "Japan's Defense Policy," p. 91; Liff, "Japan's Security Policy in the 'Abe Era,'" p. 23.

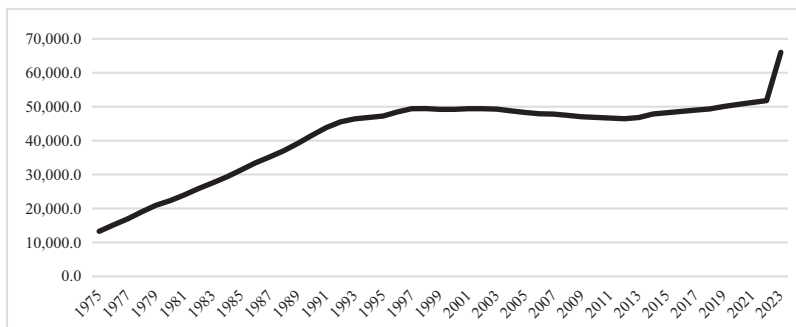


Figure 1. Japan's Defense Expenditure 1975–2023 (¥100 million).

Source: Bōeishō, *Bōeiryoku bappon-teki kyōka "gannen" yosan: Reiwa 5nen yosan no gaiyō*, December 23, 2022, https://www.mod.go.jp/j/yosan/yosan_gaiyo/2023/yosan_20221223-1.pdf.

increase defense expenditure modeled on the NATO target of two per cent of GDP, and the revised NSS cemented this principle.²⁶

The Kishida administration's plan increases the annual budget from 2023 to 2027 by around ¥1 trillion each year from the current level of ¥5.4 trillion—starting with a 26 per cent increase to ¥6.6 trillion approved by the National Diet for fiscal year 2023 (see Figure 1)—to reach a level of ¥8.9 trillion annually, and thus raise the five-year total expenditure during the period of the NDS and DBP from ¥26 trillion to ¥43 trillion. This will increase total spending by ¥17 trillion and a factor of approximately 1.6, and, in combination with reclassifications on a NATO standard of other defense-related expenditures, such as military pensions, the JCG, research and development, and infrastructure, enable Japan to reach the two per cent target.²⁷

Japan's 2023 budget provides an indication of future capability priorities. The JSDF, while increasing absolute outlay on all categories, will reduce the overall proportion of outlay on personnel from 42 to 33 per cent, increase the outlay for equipment procurement from 16 to 21 per cent and for maintenance and for logistics from 25 to 28 per cent, and place Japan on an improved capability and combat sustainability footing.²⁸ The

26. Jiyū Minshutō, *Seiken kōyaku Reiwa sannen: atarashii jidai o minna-san to tomo ni*, October 18, 2021, https://storage.jimin.jp/pdf/manifest/20211018_manifest.pdf, p. 61; Jiyū Minshuto, *Sōgō Seisakushū 2022*, June 16, 2022, https://storage.jimin.jp/pdf/pamphlet/20220616_j-file_pamphlet.pdf, p. 116.

27. Xiao Ling and Nan Tian, "The Proposed Hike in Japan's Military Expenditure," SIPRI, February 2, 2023, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-background/2023/proposed-hike-japans-military-expenditure>.

28. Bōeishō, *Bōeiryoku bappon-teki kyōka "gannen" yosan: Reiwa 5nen yosan no gaiyō*, December 23, 2022, https://www.mod.go.jp/j/yosan/yosan_gaiyo/2023/yosan_20221223-1.pdf, p. 8.

Japan Ministry of Defense (JMOD) over the full five-year DBP aims to increase total expenditure on standoff capabilities to ¥5 trillion from the current ¥1.4 trillion; IAMD to ¥3 trillion from ¥1 trillion; uncrewed assets to ¥1 trillion from ¥0.2 trillion; cross-domain warfare to ¥8 trillion from ¥1.6 trillion; mobility to ¥2 trillion from ¥0.2 trillion; command-and-control to ¥1 trillion from ¥0.3 trillion; and “sustainability and resilience” to ¥15 trillion from ¥2.5 trillion.²⁹

The Kishida administration is seeking to fund increases in defense expenditure through a combination over the life of the plan of savings and unspent surpluses from other budgets, the grouping together of largely one-off monies to create a Defense Capability Reinforcement Fund (*Bōeiryoku Kyōka Shikin*), construction bonds for base infrastructure and major equipment purchases such as ships, and reallocating and increasing taxes. The most contentious part of Kishida’s plan has been the approximately ¥1 trillion of taxation, with elements of the LDP preferring increased deficit spending and leading to the deferral of a decision on this element of funding. Japan is thus not likely to find it entirely easy financially or politically to implement the step change in defense spending, with dissent even inside the governing LDP over elements of the funding and pressure from rival policy priorities. Moreover, Japan may need to continue high, or even higher, levels of expenditure beyond the current plan to 2027 to sustain its military build-up.³⁰ Nevertheless, the LDP and elements of the opposition parties agree over the broad objective and necessity of significantly increasing defense expenditure, and one of the major obstacles claimed to prevent Japan from undertaking more radical steps to date in military doctrine and capabilities has been largely dismantled.

Counterstrike: New Doctrine, New Alliance Division of Labor

The second-most headline-making outcome of the revised NSS and NDS has been Japan’s exercise of options for counterstrike and the implications for national defense doctrine and U.S.-Japan alliance cooperation. Ever since Prime Minister Hatoyama Ichirō’s February 1956 statement in the National Diet, Japan has explicitly reserved the right to “strike against enemy missile bases” (*teki kichi kōgekiryoku*).³¹ In the event “sudden and unjust harm” (*kinpaku fusei no higai*) is inflicted by means of a guided missile, then, in line with the purport of the constitution, which does not mandate total passivity in the face of destruction, Japan is permitted, using

29. “Kotsunuki senshū bōei,” *Asahi shinbun*, December 17, 2022, p. 2; Bōeishō, *Bōeiryoku bappon-teki kyōka “gannen” yosan*, pp. 5–6.

30. Jennifer Kavanagh, “Japan’s New Defense Budget Is Still Not Enough,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 8, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/02/08/japan-s-new-defense-budget-is-still-not-enough-pub-88981>.

31. Asagumo Shinbunsha, *Bōei handobukku* (Asagumo Shinbunsha, 2019), pp. 687–88.

the minimum force possible and if there are no other measures available, to defend itself through the launching of an attack on missile bases. Thus, this is within the bounds of the constitution and the exclusively defense-oriented policy of *senshū bōei*. Japan did not, though, actively pursue any counter-strike doctrine or capability given that it could rely on the United States for this "spear" (*hoko*) strike function.

After the cold war, however, and as outlined in earlier sections, in the face of the advance of North Korea's and China's ballistic missile programs and China's threat to Japan's southwestern islands, and as U.S. military dominance was felt to be under challenge, Japanese policymakers periodically debated the necessity and feasibility of the JSDF possessing its own strike option and "spear" to supplement the U.S. deterrence.³² Japan's principal response to missile threats has been to invest extensively in ballistic missile defense (BMD) to bolster its "shield" (*tate*) functions and deterrence by denial. However, it has also become apparent that the MSDF's *Aegis* destroyer and ASDF's PAC-3 systems may be insufficient to dissuade adversaries from attacks, especially if missiles are used against Japan in large-scale and continuous attacks that saturate defenses.³³ Japan's concerns over neutralizing missile attacks solely through BMD were compounded with the decision in 2020 to abandon procurement of *Aegis Ashore*—a land-based version of the *Aegis* BMD system that involved two interceptor batteries in Akita and Yamaguchi Prefectures to provide year-round, all-weather coverage of the entire archipelago—that might have upgraded its defensive capabilities.

The revised NSS, following various internal JMOD, think-tank, and pivotal LDP studies in August 2020 and April 2022, finally and formally committed Japan to the now officially named counterstrike policy.³⁴ Japan's rationale was that BMD was insufficient alone to address ballistic missile threats and that these needed to be prevented at source:

In cases where armed attack against Japan has occurred, and as part of that attack ballistic missiles and other means have been used, counterstrike

32. James L. Schoff and David Song, "Five Things to Know About Japan's Possible Acquisition of Strike Capability," Carnegie International Endowment for Peace, August 14, 2017, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/08/14/five-things-to-know-about-japan-s-possible-acquisition-of-strike-capability-pub-72710>.

33. Jeffrey W. Hornung, *Japan's Potential Contributions in an East China Sea Contingency* (RAND Corporation, 2020), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA314-1.html, p. 78.

34. Jiyū Minshutō Seimu Chōsakai, "Kokumin o mamoru tame no yokushiryoku kōjō ni kansuru teigen," August 4, 2020, <https://www.jimin.jp/news/policy/200442.html>, p. 3; Jiyū Minshutō, "Arata na kokka anzen hoshō senryaku nado no sakutei ni muketa teigen: yori shinkokuka suru kokusai kōseishita ni okeru wagakuni oyobi kokusai shakai no Heiwa to anzen o kakuho suru tame no bōeiryokyu no bappon-teki kyōka no jitsugen ni mukete," April 26, 2023, <https://www.jimin.jp/news/policy/203401.html>.

capabilities enable Japan to mount effective counterstrikes [*yūkō na hangeki*] against the opponent's territory. . . . By possessing such capabilities to mount effective counterstrikes, Japan will deter the armed attack itself. If an opponent ever launches missiles, it will be able to prevent the opponent's further armed attacks by counterstrike capabilities, whilst protecting itself against incoming missiles by the missile defense network.³⁵

Japan, as all analysis agrees, must address a range of issues to realize fully "effective counterstrike," but its shift in this direction makes for a potentially transformational military posture. Japan must first develop a doctrine or "concept of operations" for utilizing counterstrike, although its policymakers argue that this will not necessarily mark a departure from past positions given that it has been a potential option since the 1950s and thus adoption now is simply implementation. Moreover, Japanese policymakers have insisted on the consistency of the stance—despite in the past frequent domestic and international speculation to the contrary—that the JSDF will not seek to undertake preemptive strikes. Defense planners define preemption as when an attack is *feared* to be imminent and argue that acting at that point would be beyond constitutional limits. Japan can only strike when an adversary has taken *actual* steps to inflict damage.³⁶ Consequently, policymakers and strategic commentators have debated scenarios and actual steps taken by an adversary that would permit a Japanese strike at the earliest possible moment but that is not preemptive, including preparations such as fueling missiles or raising a missile launcher to vertical. More recently, though, the Japanese debate has edged away from attempts to strike an enemy missile before launch, accepting that North Korean and Chinese road-mobile and ready-launch solid-fuel missiles are difficult to strike at source before an attack has been initiated. Instead, Japan expects BMD capabilities may absorb some initial attacks, and then it may become more feasible operationally to pinpoint the source of attacks and more justifiable constitutionally to strike back as a clear act of self-defense. The NSS and NDS still offer no actual definition as to when an "armed attack has occurred" (*kōgeki ga hassei*) but assert that preemptive strikes are not permitted, backed by the statements that "if an opponent ever launches missiles, it will be able to prevent the opponent's *further* armed attacks by counterstrike capabilities" (author's emphasis).³⁷

Japan's policymakers also maintain that the adoption of counterstrike remains fully within the existing policy and constraints of *senshū bōei*. Kishida in his December 16, 2022, press conference, on the release of the

35. Cabinet Office, "National Security Strategy," December 16, 2022, p. 19.

36. Asagumo Shinbunsha, *Bōei handobukku*, pp. 687–88.

37. Cabinet Office, "National Security Strategy," December 16, 2022, p. 19; JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 14.

three documents, argued that Japan for counterstrike would only “use force in response to an armed attack, that the response would be within the minimum necessary for self-defense, and the defense capabilities maintained limited to the minimum necessary for self-defense,” and thus following *senshū bōei*.³⁸ Kishida’s administration sought to affirm this pledge by stating in the revised NSS that counterstrike would not change the exclusively defense-oriented policy, and, as a concession to the Kōmeitō, the LDP’s coalition partner often regarded as dovish in security matters, counterstrike would operate in accordance with the “three conditions on the use of force” (*sanyōken*). These conditions were applied also to the 2015 Legislation for Peace and Security and enable the exercise of the right of collective self-defense only when national survival is threatened, there is no other means available to address the threat, and force is limited to the minimum necessary.³⁹

Japan, secondly, must develop the required capabilities and infrastructure, or “kill-chain” architecture, for effective counterstrike, including standoff long-range precision-guided missiles and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) for target acquisition and assessing the success of strikes on an adversary’s missile bases. Japan’s government argues that the possession of standoff missiles is within the bounds of *senshū bōei* and security policy to date because, even if used to strike the territory of another state, this is for the purposes of self-defense, and they cannot be categorized as among prohibited “offensive weapons” (*kōgeki-gata*), such as intercontinental ballistic missiles and long-range strategic bombers, due to not being designed for the “mass destruction” of another country and thereby not “war potential” (*senryoku*).⁴⁰ The result has been for the JSDF under previous NDPGs and MTDPs to have progressively built a latent counterstrike capability. The 2018 NDPG first emphasized the need for Japan to develop standoff defense capabilities for the defense of southwestern islands and initiated procurement of long-range missiles for delivery by ASDF F-35, F-15J and F-2 fighters, comprising a 500–kilometer range Joint Strike Missile, 1,000-kilometer range Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile-Extended Range, and a long-range antiship missile.⁴¹ Japan started

38. Kishida Fumio, “Naikaku sōri daijin kisha kaiken,” December 16, 2022, https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/101_kishida/statement/2022/1216kaiken.html.

39. Cabinet Office, “National Security Strategy,” December 16, 2022, p. 19.

40. JMOD, *Defense of Japan 2022* (JMOD, 2002), p. 192.

41. JMOD, “National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2019 and Beyond,” December 18, 2018, https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11591426/www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/20181218_e.pdf, pp. 21–22; JMOD, “Medium Term Defense Program (FY 2019–FY 2023),” December 18, 2018, https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11591426/www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/chuki_seibi31-35_e.pdf, p. 12.

also to invest in elements of the counterstrike kill-chain through the deployment and procurement of improved ISR, including the stationing of GSDF garrisons and coastal observation units with radars on southwestern islands, E-2D early-warning aircraft, *Global Hawk* uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAV), upgrading E-767 airborne warning and control aircraft, and utilizing space assets with the introduction of information-gathering satellites, the X-band satellite communications system, and the Quasi-Zenith Satellite System for global positioning and targeting.

Japan's decision in 2022 to declare openly a counterstrike doctrine now requires, though, a different order of magnitude of capabilities. The NDS and DBP have committed the JSDF, with a near-fourfold increase of investment, to a full panoply of standoff missiles deployed not just by the ASDF but across all domains. The GSDF is to upgrade its Type-12 surface-to-surface missiles (SSM) from the current 200-kilometer range to 900 kilometers and then up to 1,500 kilometers; the MSDF is instructed to develop a maritime version for mounting on destroyers and frigates, and a vertical launch system (VLS) for submarines; and the ASDF will carry a version on F-2 fighters as well as a version for launch from transport aircraft.⁴² In the interim, before the upgraded Type-12 is available, Japan is to acquire approximately 400 *Tomahawk* Block-5 cruise missiles from the United States capable of being mounted on the MSDF's ten *Aegis* warfighting system-equipped destroyers with an upgraded VLS, indicating that it is building a substantial stockpile of counterstrike munitions.⁴³ Japan will further develop hyper-velocity gliding projectiles and hypersonic guided missiles (a similar capability to that Russia has employed in Ukraine) that are regarded as particularly difficult to intercept due to their speed and variable trajectory. In the space domain, and for improved ISR for counterstrike, the DBP commits the JSDF to establishing a satellite constellation for "acquiring target detection and tracking capabilities," and reportedly to consist of 50 compact satellites in low Earth orbit.⁴⁴

In turn, the JSDF's standoff capabilities are to form part of the larger envisaged IAMD that brings together in one system counterstrike and BMD assets, including the MSDF's *Aegis* destroyer Block-IIA interceptors, the ASDF's PAC-2, and the GSDF's Type-03 surface-to-air missiles (SAM), and which through shared technologies of fire control and Cooperative Engagement Capability (CEC) (facilitating one weapons platform drawing

42. JMOD, "Defense Buildup Program," pp. 6–7, 22, 24.

43. "Japan Eyes Upgrading *Aegis* Ships with *Tomahawk* Missiles by FY 2027," *Japan Times*, March 25, 2023, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/03/25/national/msdf-aegis-destroyers-tomahawk-missiles/>.

44. JMOD, "Defense Buildup Program," pp. 10, 14; "Japan Eyes Network of 50 Satellites to Track Enemy Missiles," *Asahi shinbun*, November 15, 2022, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14759571>.

on the networked sensor information of others for target acquisition and launching a strike without necessarily using its own sensors) should enable the networking of all three services' ISR, main combat platforms, and precision-guided munitions.⁴⁵ The JSDF's ambition in line with counterstrike is to pave the way for cross-domain and joint service operations that leverage and act as a force multiplier for all available military capabilities.

Japan's process of adoption of counterstrike indicates that the third requirement for establishing the doctrine is not only the forging of the JSDF's own joint capabilities but also the further strengthening of U.S.-Japan military cooperation. The NSS and NDS acknowledge that Japan's acquisition of counterstrike carries implications for alliance ties but insist it makes for overall continuity in that "the basic division of roles between Japan and the United States will remain unchanged" and "the two nations will cooperate in counterstrikes just as they do in defending against ballistic missile threats."⁴⁶ The SCC in January 2022 and January 2023 welcomed Japan's counterstrike and coordination within bilateral alliance strategy.⁴⁷

At the same time, though, the indications are that Japan through counterstrike may have to further accelerate and step change levels of bilateral military cooperation, and in line with the longer-term trends of the JSDF's deepening and integration of capabilities with those of the U.S. military. The JSDF's pattern of developing cooperation with the U.S. military in the post-cold war period has been to shift away from the classic, if asymmetric, "shield" and "spear" division of labor manifested in complementary but separate roles and force structures. The Abe administration's 2015 revision of the U.S.-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation further expanded the functional and geographical scope of JSDF cooperation, including for the first time support for the U.S. military in a limited range of collective self-defense combat operations. The administration made these missions possible with its reinterpretation in May 2014 of Article 9 of the constitution to permit the exercise of the right of collective self-defense under the three conditions outlined above.

The JSDF, furthermore, as part of this process of strengthening U.S.-Japan alliance roles and missions, started crucially to integrate its capabilities with those of the United States. Japan's adoption of BMD required bilateral sharing of sensor information and command-and-control functions and was an important driver for exercising the right of collective self-defense

45. Mike Yeo, "Japanese Destroyers Intercept Ballistic Missiles in Tests with US Navy," *Defense News*, November 22, 2022, <https://www.defensenews.com/battlefield-tech/2022/11/22/japanese-destroyers-intercept-ballistic-missiles-in-tests-with-us-navy/>.

46. JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 20.

47. MOFA, "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee ('2+2')," January 7, 2022, p. 2; MOFA, "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee ('2+2')," January 11, 2023, p. 1.

to enable U.S. and Japanese assets to work seamlessly and effectively; and the revised 2015 Defense Guidelines started to integrate space assets with the agreement that, in the event of a contingency and damage to space-based sensor systems, the alliance partners would offer their own capabilities as substitutes. The NSS and NDS's assertions, therefore, that BMD has been an exemplar of the upholding of the alliance's strict previous division of labor is questionable given that it has forged the integration of U.S. and Japanese capabilities and to a degree also has blurred roles and missions, and hence counterstrike capabilities set alongside BMD may prove equally or more impactful on the nature of bilateral military cooperation. In fact, as noted earlier, Japan's clear key driver for the adoption of counterstrike has been for JSDF capabilities to supplement U.S. deterrence posture and thereby solidify alliance cohesion, rather than viewing counterstrike as a hedge to ensure distancing from the United States.

The NDS itself concedes that for counterstrike to function it may necessarily have deeper ramifications for the division of labor in the alliance, noting that "Japan and the United States will jointly establish a cooperative posture including relevant information-gathering to employ the capability more effectively."⁴⁸ Moreover, the consensus of most Japanese and international analysis is that for Japan to deploy effective counterstrike, it must in the immediate future depend upon its U.S. alliance partner to develop the full kill-chain in ISR, targeting, electronic warfare infrastructure, and to learn how to operationalize in detail a strike doctrine. Eventually over the longer term, Japan may need to accept integration of its counterstrike architecture with that of the United States.⁴⁹

In seeking to stress continuity, Japanese policymakers might thus have underplayed, or deliberately obfuscated, the impact of counterstrike. The adoption of a counterstrike doctrine and capabilities is not just a matter, as often portrayed, of incremental procurement of a new capability in one narrowly defined area of Japan's defense policy, but instead the spearhead, near literally, of a massive and heavily resourced effort by the JSDF to acquire and integrate existing and new technologically advanced military capabilities across all domains for joint and network-centric warfare. This effort stretches inextricably into strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance. The

48. JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 19.

49. Takahashi Sugio, "Dealing with the Ballistic Missile Threat: Whether Japan Should Have a Strike Capability Under its Exclusively Defense-Oriented Policy," *NIDS Security Reports*, September 7, 2006, http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/kiyo/pdf/bulletin_e2006_4_takahashi.pdf; Jeffrey W. Hornung, "Japanese Strike Capabilities and the US-Japan Alliance," in RAND Corporation, ed., *Japan's Possible Acquisition of Long-Range Land-Attack Missiles and the Implications for the US-Japan Alliance: Summary of a February 2021 Conference* (RAND Corporation, 2022), pp. 21–34; Hornung and Johnstone, "Japan's Strategic Shift is Significant."

transformation underway of Japan's defense capabilities precipitated by counterstrike then raises questions of how long previous security frameworks can be maintained.

Japan's policy of *senshū bōei* must face questions as to whether it risks, if not being formally breached, then of being hollowed out (*kotsunuki*) by counterstrike. Counterstrike might have always been regarded as a potential option available under *senshū bōei*, but the fact that Japanese policymakers have now actually chosen to exercise it and obtain a "spear" alongside the traditional "shield" provides a new and wider range of active choices for the JSDF's utilization of military power. In strong contrast to the past when it denied itself that capability, Japan is now to become able and willing for the first time to inflict destruction on an "opponent's territory" (*aite no ryōiki*) (JSDF envisaged cruise missiles easily capable of striking deep into mainland China, for instance). Japanese policymakers argue, of course, that the likelihood and level of destruction wrought on overseas territory can be moderated through the three conditions for the employment of counterstrike. But these conditions' stringency, as has been pointed out in the case of the collective self-defense legislation, is highly questionable. Japanese policymakers in the case of collective self-defense have been at pains to avoid defining the actual conditions that form a clear danger to national existence, the thresholds for deciding when there is no alternative to military action, and the scope of the minimum use of force.⁵⁰ In response to questioning in the National Diet, Kishida has been similarly evasive in offering specifics on the application of the three conditions to counterstrike, arguing that Japan should not "reveal its hand" (*te no uchi o akasazu*) operationally to any adversary.⁵¹

The upshot is that, despite the claimed desire to maintain tight restrictions on counterstrike in conformity with *senshū bōei*, Japanese policymakers will have significant leeway to diverge from past interpretations and conditions for the use of force if strategically expedient. The first condition of a threat to national existence is left just as, if not more, undefined in counterstrike as it is for collective self-defense. In regard to the second condition, Hatoyama's 1956 statement is cited standardly to justify the constitutionality of counterstrike, but it is often conveniently forgotten that only a month afterward Inō Shigejirō, director of the Japan Defense Agency, clarified that enemy strike base capability was particularly contingent on Japan having no other measures at all available and that a scenario of no assistance forthcoming from the United States was highly improbable, so negating the

50. Christopher W. Hughes, "Japan's Strategic Trajectory and Collective Self-Defense: Essential Continuity or Radical Shift?" *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2017), p. 105.

51. "Anpo tankan nakami wa jimitsu," *Asahi shinbun*, February 1, 2023, p. 2.

need to consider exercise of the option.⁵² Contemporary Japan's policymakers certainly claim that counterstrike is justified now due to the perceived difficulties noted earlier over U.S. ability to devote sufficient capabilities to assist in the event of a missile attack, and Kishida in the National Diet in March 2023 on these grounds rejected opposition party criticisms of counterstrike derived from Inō's statement.⁵³ Nevertheless, Japanese policymakers' attempts to claim that absolutely no other measures are available for defense might appear as still improbable, given the recent and continual strengthening of U.S.-Japan alliance cooperation, and indicate a propensity to invoke counterstrike even if the conditions for this are dubious, and by implication denude the policy of *senshū bōei*.⁵⁴

The third condition of the minimum use of force appears even more manipulatable to render it meaningless. The JSDF's planned inventory of conventional and precision-guided cruise missiles may not deliver the type of "mass destruction" that under *senshū bōei* would make for prohibition as part of the list of overtly offensive weapons. But Japanese policymakers in planning to make counterstrike effective operationally appear to accept that the JSDF may need to extend the scope of its missile attacks and associated destruction to encompass not just enemy missile sites but also related command-and-control facilities and other infrastructure. This reflects the innovations in military technology since the inception of the enemy missile base strike option in the 1950s that mean missiles with improved mobility and concealment may now be possible to stop at source only by attacking a wider network of enemy ISR infrastructure that supports their launch. The LDP Defense Subcommittee report in April 2022 that contributed to framing the NSS and NDS and helped open the way politically for counterstrike argued for this wider scope of attack to include "command-and-control functions and others" (*shiki tōsei kinō nado*). Moreover, even though strikes on wider infrastructure were a source of LDP-Kōmeitō contention in agreeing the counterstrike policy, the Kōmeitō conceded this point in return for application of the three conditions as a supposed "brake" (*hadome*) on the use of military power. The final versions of NSS and NDS, hence, omit specifying any restrictions on the scope of counterstrike, and thereby do not rule out attack on various types of missile infrastructure.⁵⁵

Japan's avoidance of defining the scope of targets comprising enemy missile capabilities, and indeed avoiding defining at all the scope of what consti-

52. Maeda Tetsuo and Ijima Shigeaki, *Kokkai shingi kara bōeiron o yomidoku* (Sanseido, 2003), pp. 58–59.

53. "Teki kichi kōgeki iken no shiteki: rekidai naikaku 'gōken wa saishōgen, shudan nai bai,'" *Asahi shinbun*, March 28, 2023, p. 4.

54. Handa Masahiro, "Kenpō kyūjō no shi," *Sekai*, February 2002, pp. 27–28.

55. Jiyū Minshutō, "Arata na kokka anzen hoshō senryaku," p. 10; "Teki kichi kōgeki jikō ga jisshitsu gōi," *Asahi shinbun*, December 1, 2022, p. 1.

tutes an "opponent's territory," has consequences. Its counterstrike doctrine may stretch beyond an envisaged posture of counterforce and deterrence by denial to a concept of operations able to target other military facilities across a considerable geographical range, and possibly embedded in urban and civilian centers, and so into the realm of countervalue and deterrence by punishment.⁵⁶ Japan's *Tomahawk* and Type-12 cruise missiles in such scenarios start in their destructive potential to look not entirely dissimilar to the category of medium-range ballistic missiles (a category originally prohibited by Japan during the cold war as offensive weaponry, though removed from the list by 1978 perhaps to leave open the option for counterstrike) and so exceeding the minimum use of force and eroding *senshū bōei*.⁵⁷

The JSDF's possession of an impressive arsenal of cruise and hypersonic missiles and ability for future upgrade could fundamentally reshape defense posture in other ways in the long term. Japan is now thought to possess "threshold" capabilities (or, as termed by a former deputy secretary general of the National Security Secretariat, "modest offensive capabilities") that could enable break out into a more offensive military posture if deemed necessary to respond to extant threats. The dividing line is regarded as notoriously arbitrary between defensive and offensive weaponry as being less dependent on actual capability restrictions and more on changes in political strategy and military doctrine.⁵⁸ Japan might decide—in line with NSS and NDS determination to extend defensive perimeters outside of immediate national own territory and to "disrupt and defeat invasion at earlier timing and at locations further afield"—that it can justify defeating missile threats at source with more overt offensively defensive strikes, straying into the area of preemption, and especially given that the conditions for preemption remain deliberately underspecified.⁵⁹

Japan's security policy also looks to be remade through counterstrike in the domain of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Despite Japan's defense planners' protestations that the alliance division of labor will remain unchanged by counterstrike, it is probable that Japan will have to continue to integrate its strategy, tactics, and capabilities with those of the United States, just as it has done recently in other dimensions of bilateral military cooperation.⁶⁰

56. Fukuda Mamoru, "Aratamete tōu 'hangeki nōryoku' hoyū no ikensei," *Sekai*, May, 2023, pp. 93–95.

57. Hornung, *Japan's Potential Contributions*, p. 8.

58. Johnstone, "Japan's Transformational National Security Strategy"; Nobukatsu Kanehara, "Japan and the Expansion of the Liberal International Order," *NBR Commentary*, March 14, 2023, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/japan-and-the-expansion-of-the-liberal-international-order/>; Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1997), pp. 198–99.

59. JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 12.

60. Matsuda, "Japan's Emerging Security Strategy," p. 93.

The NDS notes that the JSDF “must operate with U.S. forces and integrate a variety of missions such as cross-domain operations, hybrid operations including information warfare, and missile interception and counterstrike.”⁶¹ Japan now has a spear alongside its shield that it can place in service of U.S. offensive power and supplement the lower echelons of the U.S. deterrence system in the region.

The increasing and inextricable integration of Japanese and U.S. counterstrike capabilities and operations, and likely necessary conjoining of their respective IAMD systems, facilitated by CEC, may make for the near-indistinguishability of their “spear” and “shield” functions and a more symmetric and active fusion of the division of labor, and thus fundamentally transform the alliance into a far more effective warfighting system.⁶² In turn, counterstrike, just as with BMD, may become an important justification for Japan’s exercise of collective self-defense, especially given the logic of counterstrike advocates that in a contingency the United States may become stretched militarily. Facing threats of missile attacks on its own forces engaged in and around Japan in a regional contingency, the United States is likely to call on the JSDF as an allied military to assist in negating the threats, not just through its BMD assets but also through its cruise missile capabilities that can be readily integrated with U.S. capabilities and tactics. Japan may find it difficult in possessing the necessary capabilities to refuse extending these to assist the United States without jeopardizing the very existence of the alliance. As one astute analyst of the alliance sums up the changes relating to counterstrike:

Fundamental reinforcement of Japan’s defense capability will lead not only to Japan’s own defense but also to the effective projection of U.S. power. The SDF’s standoff defense capability will also provide wide-area force projection support to U.S. forces. Integrated air and missile defense capabilities, sustained and robust operations, and the strengthening of domestic and international facility areas will be key elements for U.S. forces conducting operations in the war zone.⁶³

First Island Chain Defense and U.S.-Japan Strategic Integration

Japan’s introduction of counterstrike and the revised U.S.-Japan division of labor are influential components also of the changes devised in the

61. JMOD, “National Defense Strategy,” p. 12.

62. Masaya Kato, “Japan and US to Sharpen Missile Defense with Real-Time Data Sharing,” *Nikkei Asia*, August 25, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Japan-and-US-to-sharpen-missile-defense-with-real-time-data-sharing>; Hughes, *Japan as a Global Military Power*, p. 52; “Teki kichi kōgeki Nichibeī yūgō,” *Asahi shinbun*, December 10, 2022, p. 2.

63. Jimbo, “Deterrence by Denial.”

three documents for JSDF defense of southwestern islands and the East China Sea first island chain, and with thus similarly radical impacts on Japanese security policy. As noted above, the JSDF under previous NDPGs had started to shift its focus and capabilities toward the defense of southwestern islands, including since 2016 for the first time the GSDF's garrisoning of around 2,000 troops on the islands of Yonaguni, Amami-Ōshima, Miyako, and Ishigaki, with the latter three locations hosting Type-03 SAM batteries and Type-12 SSM batteries. The GSDF also announced in September 2021 it would deploy for the first time by 2023 Type-12 SSMs on Okinawa Island. The GSDF in 2018 established the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB) as a "proto-marine corps" for retaking of southwestern islands. The MSDF has maintained assets to deny adversaries the sea space around Japan, including large fleets of destroyers, submarines, and patrol aircraft, but also invested in forces to assist defense of Japanese land territory in the form of BMD, amphibious vessels, and the conversion of *Izumo*-class destroyers into "defensive" aircraft carriers to operate ASDF maritime F-35B fighters to provide air defense for land and maritime operations. The ASDF, for its part, along with standoff missiles, has invested in F-35A and F-35B fighters, UAVs, airlift, and inflight refueling, and redeployed F-15J fighter units from the mainland to Naha in Okinawa.

The NDS and DBP, though, have significantly accelerated the shift of forces to southern Japan with the decision in December 2022 to deploy a Type-12 SSM battery on Yonaguni Island, just over 100 kilometers east of Taiwan. The GSDF's 15th Brigade based in Okinawa is to be upgraded into a division now commanded by a general. The GSDF is to improve its mobility through the establishment by 2024 of a new Maritime Transport Group equipped with medium-sized Logistics Support Vessels (LSV) capable of carrying about 2,000 tons of cargo; and the GSDF will create a new depot in Okinawa to preposition combat supplies. The GSDF will further reorganize its units to become more sustainable and resilient through possessing their own intelligence, strike missiles, air defenses, and logistics dispersed in wide areas to survive and fight independently when under assault.⁶⁴ These GSDF and other JSDF deployments in and around the southwestern islands seek to deny the PLA from seizing the islands or neutralizing their defenders, and further enable the JSDF in effect to close off the surrounding straits to PLA power projection, including the maritime zones to the east of Taiwan.

Japan's southwestern islands defense strategy and related JSDF force dispositions are, in turn, transformational for the integration of U.S.-Japan

64. JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 30; Yusuke Kawachi, "The Case for Japanese Land Power in the First Island Chain," *War on the Rocks*, February 14, 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/02/the-case-for-japanese-land-power-in-the-first-island-chain/>.

planning for regional contingencies in the first island chain and extending to Taiwan. Japan and the United States since March 2021 in bilateral summits and the SCC, as well as other multilateral fora, have started to refer explicitly to the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Japanese policymakers appear to have accepted that they can no longer easily hedge on the importance of Taiwan for national security and for the maintenance of U.S.-Japan alliance cohesion, given that Japan increasingly stands on the frontline of any conflict with China in the Taiwan Strait with implications for its own ability to preserve control over disputed territories with China. Resultingly, Japan's role in a Taiwan contingency may need to go beyond the former division of labor of providing and defending bases for the United States to project power and now more actively assist the United States in the defense of Taiwan. Japan and the United States were reported in late 2021 to be working on a joint operational plan to enable the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) to establish an attack base in the southwestern islands in a Taiwan contingency and to be supported by the JSDF, and the SCC in 2022 acknowledged the two states were making "robust progress . . . on bilateral planning for contingencies . . . to increase joint/shared use of U.S. and Japanese facilities, including efforts to strengthen JSDF posture in areas including its southwestern islands."⁶⁵

The JSDF's and U.S. military's disposition of forces consequently have increasingly mirrored each other and started to fuse in function for southwestern islands and Taiwan defense. The U.S. 2018 National Defense Strategy and 2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy seek to negate China's A2/AD approach and attempts to impose *fait accompli* control on the first island chain. Key U.S. forward-deployed forces are realigned to the second island chain to enhance their survivability and to enable long-range counterstrikes and force surges to then prevail in any conflict. The process of the U.S.-Japan Defense Posture Review Initiative and Roadmap for Realignment Implementation in the mid-2000s involving the reshuffling of USMC forces within and from Okinawa to Guam was an earlier stage in this strategy.⁶⁶ At the same time, U.S. strategies advocate maintaining sufficient "stand-in" forces in the first island chain for contact with, blunting, degrading, and thus denying, any

65. "Japan and U.S. Draft Operational Plan for Taiwan Contingency," *Japan Times*, December 23, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/12/23/national/taiwan-contingency/>; MOFA, "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee ('2+2')," January 7, 2022, p. 2.

66. Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>; Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region* (Department of Defense, June 1, 2019, <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>).

rapid advances of PLA forces.⁶⁷ The expectation is that such U.S. forces may prove sufficiently resilient to endure an initial Chinese assault but will draw upon deployments from and greater interoperability with the forces of regional allies. Japan, as the key bilateral ally in the region, with the most capable military and interests in Taiwan's security, is clearly expected in U.S. thinking to anchor the topmost end of the first island chain for the United States.

Consequently, it appears that the GSDF's southwestern island deployments, or "wall strategy," emphasizing survivability, ISR, the ability with cruise missiles to close off surrounding sea passages to PLA vessels, and to then call for further support from the ARDB, MSDF, ASDF, and U.S. forces, is in practice an integral part of this larger U.S. first island chain and Taiwan defense strategy.⁶⁸ Japan and the United States to realize this strategy have started to collocate and train their forces in the southwestern islands. The SCC in January 2023 agreed that the United States would deploy MQ-9 UAVs to the MSDF's Kanoya air base in Kyushu, the JSDF would share the U.S. Air Force's Kadena Ammunition Storage Area in Okinawa, and the 12th USMC Regiment based in Okinawa would be reorganized into the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) by 2025.⁶⁹ The MLR is capable of sea-denial operations being equipped as both an infantry battalion and an antiship battery armed with the medium-range NMESIS ground-based antiship missile system and serves as a stand-in force that matches the GSDF's own reorganization and deployment of forces in the southwestern islands.⁷⁰ The GSDF and U.S. Army conducted drills on Amami Island in September 2022, deploying the Type-12 alongside the U.S. High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) (as transferred to Ukraine for the war with Russia).⁷¹ Japan and the United States look set to further coordinate strategy with improved command-and-control arrangements in the theater: the JSDF under the NDS established for the first time a Permanent Joint Headquarters to command the three services in a contingency; and

67. Ashley Townshend, Brendan Thomas-Noone, and Matilda Steward, *Averting Crisis: American Strategy, Military Spending and Collective Defence in the Indo-Pacific*, August, United States Studies Centre, University of Sydney, 2019, <https://www.ussc.edu.au/analysis/averting-crisis-american-strategy-military-spending-and-collective-defence-in-the-indo-pacific>.

68. Scott W. Harold, Koichiro Bansho, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Koichi Isobe, and Richard L. Simcock II, *U.S.-Japan Alliance Conference: Meeting the Challenge of Amphibious Operations*, RAND Corporation, 2018, www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF300/CF387/RAND_CF387.pdf, pp. 10–11.

69. MOFA, "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee ('2+2')," January 11, 2023, pp. 3, 6.

70. U.S. Marine Corps, "Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR)," January 11, 2023, <https://www.marines.mil/News/News-Display/Article/2708146/marine-littoral-regiment-mlr/>.

71. "Nihon no bōei 'tate' kara 'hoke' e?" *Asahi shinbun*, October 23, 2022, p. 1.

the United States established a complementary new Joint Force Headquarters for the Indo-Pacific.⁷² The GSDF's upgrade of the 15th Brigade to be commanded by a general as the equivalent of USMC force commanders in Okinawa has further enhanced the ability of the United States and Japan to coordinate strategy.

Ambition and Resolve for Implementation

Japan's ambition to transform military capabilities and advance its threefold strategy does not stop in the areas of counterstrike and south-western islands defense. The JSDF is preparing as never witnessed before in the postwar period to place itself on a war footing with a "tenacious fighting posture" (*nebari tsuyoku tatakau shisei*) aiming to build stockpiles of munitions and underground command-and-control and hardened shelters for equipment, and to requisition civilian airports and seaports in a contingency.⁷³ Japan is committed to massive upscaling of cybersecurity, expanding its Cyber Defense Command from 500 to 4,000 personnel, and to having a total of 20,000 JMOD and JSDF cyber personnel by 2027. It seeks to move to an "active" cyber defense posture to "interfere or neutralize the use of space, cyber, and electromagnetic domains by an opponent."⁷⁴ The NDS further aims to establish a military edge for the JSDF through the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance command-and-control and the gathering and analysis of information, and also aims to combine AI with uncrewed assets to become "a game changer that fundamentally transform[s] force structure and way of warfare methods, enabling Japan to gain asymmetrical advantages in the air, sea, and underwater domains."⁷⁵

Japan's push in cyber and AI is likely to further stress and deform *senshū bōei*, given that "active" defense to interfere and neutralize may become codewords for cyber counterattacks and that entail the same definitional difficulties of utilization conditions as for counterstrike. Moreover, the JSDF's integration of AI into intelligence and weapons platforms will pose even more challenges for limitations on the use of force and rules of engagement as they likely mean delegation of decisions on military action decisions to automated systems.⁷⁶

Japan in international partnerships, as its third layer of security strategy, is set to continue developing "quasi-alliances" bilaterally and multilaterally,

72. JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 30; Cooper and Sayers, "Japan's Shift to War Footing"; Chijiwa Yasuaki, "A Thorough Dissection of the Three Security Documents," *Discuss Japan*, March 31, 2023; <https://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/diplomacy/pt2023033111381213064.html>.

73. JMOD, "Defense Buildup Program," p. 17.

74. *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12, 15–17; JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 26.

75. JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," pp. 25, 26.

76. Hornung and Johnstone, "Japan's Strategic Shift is Significant."

as seen through the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreements and Reciprocal Access Agreements in place with Australia and the United Kingdom by 2022 and 2023 to facilitate mutual logistics support and training and exchange of personnel on their respective territories; participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, involving itself, the United States, Australia, and India; and since 2016 promoting its own concept of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific emphasizing maritime security cooperation. Just as significantly, though, Japan under the NSS and NDS is set for further joint development and transfers of defense equipment with international partners. Japan in January 2023 announced the merger of its sixth-generation F-X fighter program with the U.K.'s *Tempest* fighter program to form a new Global Combat Air Programme to become the first major weapons platform Japan has sought to develop with non-U.S. partners. Japan, in line with the NDS assertion that "transfer of defense equipment and technology overseas is a key policy instrument to ensure peace and stability," approved in April 2023 a new framework of Official Security Assistance (OSA; Seifu Anzen Hoshō Nōryoku Kyōka Shien). The OSA enables transfers on a grant basis of equipment and supplies and assistance for the infrastructure development of the armed forces of like-minded states for "enhancing their security and deterrence capabilities" as long as not directly involved in a conflict, and thus goes outside and beyond Abe's 2015 Development Cooperation Charter that permits assistance to armed forces only for nonmilitary purposes.⁷⁷

Japan's implementation of OSA and other ambitious reforms has without doubt been facilitated by a newly revealed level of domestic political and public support. The LDP is clearly highly committed to the reforms, and Kishida successfully campaigned for the party presidency and twice in national elections on a manifesto that laid down the blueprint for the NSS and NDS. Dissent within the LDP has been minimal—excepting former prime minister Fukuda Yasuo critiquing the impact on ties with China—and the principal contention has been the levels of taxation to fund the defense budget but not the policy of increases overall. The Kōmeitō attempted to moderate defense reforms by insisting on the three conditions, although these *hadome* are revealed to be as toothless as in the case of collective self-defense, and the party, as with past initiatives in security policy, folded relatively easily in negotiations with the LDP in acceding to counterstrike and all other defense changes.⁷⁸ Japan's main opposition parties, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, Japan Innovation Party, and Democratic Party for the People, have struggled to challenge effectively

77. JMOD, "National Defense Strategy," p. 35; MOFA, "Implementation Guidelines for Japan's Official Security Assistance," April 5, 2023, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100487375.pdf>, p. 1.

78. The Kōmeitō similarly compromised pacifist principles in coalition with the LDP in agreeing to the Regional Contingencies Law in 1999, JSDF dispatch to Iraq in 2003, and the exercise of collective self-defense in 2014.

the defense buildup rationale and focused instead on the levels of taxation for defense budget funding.⁷⁹

The Japanese public have crucially, and contrary to supposedly deep-rooted antimilitarism, proved remarkably sanguine and supportive of the reforms. The Cabinet Office's public opinion survey on the JSDF and national defense conducted at the end of 2022 demonstrated the highest support since the question of whether the JSDF should be strengthened was first asked in 1978, registering at 42 per cent of respondents.⁸⁰ *Yomiuri shinbun* and *Nikkei shinbun* polls in November and December 2022 recorded 68 and 55 per cent support for strengthening defense capabilities.⁸¹ An *Asahi shinbun* poll in December 2022, with a readership not renowned as hawkish, showed 56 per cent in support of counterstrike, and a *Kyodo News* poll in the same month indicated 50 per cent support.⁸² Japanese public opinion, though, has been more ambivalent on defense budget increases and especially, echoing the debate at political party level, the use of taxation for funding. An NHK poll in October 2022 produced 55 per cent support for increased spending, but 61 per cent favored paying for it with public spending cuts; *Kyodo News* recorded 54 per cent opposition to increases; and the *Asahi* 46 per cent in favor of increases versus 48 per cent against and 66 per cent against tax-funded increases.⁸³ Another *Asahi* poll in May 2023 showed support at 52 per cent for counterstrike and 57 per cent for plans to strengthen Japan's defense capabilities.⁸⁴ Most remarkable, though, and in stark contrast to Abe's collective self-defense legislation in 2015, has been the absence of any large-scale public protests against the defense policy reforms—all indicating Japanese domestic opinion has aligned increasingly with policymakers on the necessity for change.

Conclusion: Japan's Radical Military Trajectory

As an outcome of the three documents, Japan will continue to emerge as an ever more formidable military power with a determination to face down intensifying regional threats. The necessary budgetary resources, in-

79. "Japan's Opposition Parties Struggle to Dispute Defense Build-Up," *Nikkei Asia*, January 25, 2023, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Defense/Japan-s-opposition-parties-struggle-to-dispute-defense-buildup>.

80. Naikakufu, *Jieitai, bōei mondai ni kansuru yoron chōsa*, November 2022, <https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/r04/r04-bouei/index.html>.

81. Watanabe Tsuneo, "What's New in Japan's Three Strategic Documents," CSIS, February 13, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/whats-new-japans-three-strategic-documents>.

82. "Teki kichi kōgeki nōryoku 'sansei' 56%," *Asahi shinbun*, December 20, 2022, p. 4.

83. "64% Disapprove Tax Hikes to Cover Japan's Rising Defense Budget: Poll," *Kyodo News*, December 18, 2022, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/12/173edc4cc0c1-breaking-news-64-disapprove-tax-hikes-to-cover-japans-rising-defense-budget-poll.html>.

84. "Kenpō, Anpo e omoi wa," *Asahi shinbun*, May 3, 2023, p. 7.

roduction of counterstrike and other capabilities for sustained warfighting, and integration into U.S. strategy for first island chain defense all accelerate the transformation of JSDF doctrine and force posture. Japan's military buildup will not necessarily be friction-free, with ongoing caution over the strategic and resource implications. But Japan appears unlikely to backslide on this overall trajectory given the shifting external security environment and emerging broad domestic consensus of policy elites and the public as shown in public opinion surveys on the need for a far more robust military response.

Kishida's reforms certainly build upon the trajectory set by previous administrations and given radical momentum by Abe's innovations of the MDDF, revised U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines, and collective self-defense. The three documents now further step change and accelerate this trajectory, and, while on the surface they adhere to past principles and policies by not announcing any wholly new strategy or new required legislation, they will inexorably erode, exceed, and reconfigure fundamentally past constraints of *senshū bōei* and the alliance division of labor.

Hence, Japanese policymakers' assertions of the three documents delivering transformation without change appear untenable and tending toward obfuscation. In fundamentally reinforcing defense capabilities, Japan is moving further down the pathway of pivotal changes in military strategy and doctrine, and this reinforces the views of those engaged in the debate on Japan's security policy that have long observed major deviations from past stances and far more change than continuity in core principles. In turn, Japan's changing security policy presents important ramifications for regional and global security. Japan, in further and inextricably deepening military cooperation with the United States, is becoming an ever more effective and indispensable ally to contribute to U.S. efforts for stability in the region. At the same time, though, Japan's bolstering of its own and the U.S.-Japan deterrence posture, while clearly designed to obviate conflict, carries implicit risks of escalating military tensions and clashes with its neighbors and now particularly in a Taiwan contingency.