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Japan's Military Modernisation: A Quiet Japan–China Arms Race and Global Power Projection

CHRISTOPHER W. HUGHES

Japan backtracking or inching forward in security?

Japan's security trajectory, in the period following the administration of Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō, has once again come into question. Japan under Koizumi's administration demonstrated startling new proactivism in responding to the events of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing "war on terrorism." Japan despatched the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) from November 2001 onwards to provide logistical support in the Indian Ocean for US and international coalition forces engaged in Operation Enduring Freedom. Japan further demonstrated its new pro-activity through the despatch of the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) and Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) on non-combat reconstruction missions as part of the US-led "coalition of the willing" in Iraq and Kuwait from 2004 onwards. Japan and the US then concluded the 2006 Defence Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) which facilitated the realignment of US bases in Japan, promoted the greater integration of US forces and the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), and now opened the way for the US to utilise its bases in Japan for projecting power globally. Japan was seen to be moving towards the increased militarisation of its security stance, and to be emerging as a more assertive or "normal" military power and reliable US ally.¹

However, following Koizumi's stepping down from power in September 2006, his successors have seemingly found it difficult to maintain a similar level of momentum in Japan's security policy. Prime Minister Abe Shinzō looked to take Japan in yet more radical directions with plans for plans for a

US-style Japan National Security Council (JNSC); to investigate means to breach Japan's self-imposed ban on the exercise of the right of collective self-defence and to revise Article 9 of the Constitution; and to forge closer military links with the US, Australia, India, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) with an implicit intention of countering China's rise. Abe found his plans frustrated, though, by his governing Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) defeat in the House of Councillors elections of July 2007, which turned over control of the upper chamber in the National Diet to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The DPJ proceeded to block renewal of the MSDF mission in the Indian Ocean, forcing Abe's eventual resignation over his failure to fulfil his pledge to the US to maintain Japan's commitment to the "war on terrorism." Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo, Abe's immediate successor, then showed greater caution on security. Fukuda did manage to force the renewal of the MSDF mission through the National Diet in January 2008; and demonstrated some interest in mid-2008 in formulating a permanent despatch law (*kōkyū hōan*) to obviate the need for struggles in the National Diet over JSDF overseas despatch. Fukuda, though, later dropped plans for the permanent despatch law, shelved Abe's plans regarding the JNSC and constitutional reinterpretation, and became preoccupied with fire-fighting Japan Ministry of Defence (JMOD) and JSDF scandals concerning procurement and civilian control. In turn, Fukuda was in part forced, like Abe, to resign in September 2008 due to his continuing problems in the National Diet in securing a further renewal of the MSDF Indian Ocean mission. Japanese security policy momentum only seems to have again been picked up under the current administration of Prime Minister Asō Tarō. Asō again forced the renewal of the Indian Ocean mission through the National Diet in December 2008, and then in March 2009 ordered the despatch of the MSDF on a separate mission to the Gulf of Aden for anti-piracy missions. Japan's concern over North Korea's launch of a long-range missile in April 2009 may also add new urgency to Japan's security policy planning.

Nevertheless, the impression for many observers since 2006 has been of relative stasis and even retrenchment in Japanese security, with Japan retreating back into its reactive security shell post-Koizumi, and with domestic anti-militaristic norms once again overriding international security pressure and ambitions.² The argument of this article is that these observers are indeed correct to see strong residual anti-militaristic principles in Japan, and thus Japan's security policy is still subject to cautious incrementalism. However, this article argues more importantly that Japan is still continuing along its long-term trajectory of becoming a "normal" power relatively unaffected by recent political machinations. Most of the deep structural changes put in train during, and indeed before, the Koizumi administration, in areas such as defence production, the transformation of civilian control, and most especially US–Japan realignments, have continued under Abe,

Fukuda, and Asō.³ This article cannot cover all of these, but instead chooses to focus on the issue of the modernisation of JSDF capabilities as a key illustration of this process of ongoing proactivity in Japanese security policy.

The article starts by briefly examining the international security pressures placed upon Japan by its regional and global security environment that therefore feed through into the need to modernise its military forces. It then considers trends in Japan's defence spending and how far these constrain JSDF procurement ambitions, and moves on to consider the evolving capabilities of the JSDF. It analyses Japan's current and future military procurement plans, as seen in the 2004 National Defence Guidelines (NDPG) and Mid-Term Defence Programme (MTDP), and looks forward to the scheduled revisions of NDPG and MTDP for 2009 onwards, in order to gauge its long-term strategic ambitions. The article considers the on-going and requested procurement programmes for the three services of the JSDF, as well as for the Japan Coast Guard (JCG), a paramilitary extension of Japan's armed forces. The article analyses Japan's plans for the acquisition of a next generation F-X fighter, new transport and maritime patrol aircraft, Destroyer-Helicopter (DDH) light helicopter carriers, and Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) programmes. The article considers also Japan's increasing militarisation of its space activities, through the launching of intelligence satellites and a new Basic Space Law in 2008. Finally, the article considers the upgrading of the JCG's capabilities and role as a so-called "second Japanese navy." Hence, in contrast to analyses that have concentrated only on recent political events post-Koizumi, and thus portray a picture of stagnation in Japanese security policy, this article presents long-term evidence of proactive trends in JSDF procurement, for five or ten years hence, and which indicate growing power projection ambitions and capabilities. Indeed, the article argues that much of Japan's plans to modernise its military capabilities are driven by and reinforcing a quiet Japan–China arms race in East Asia. The consequent conclusion of this article is that Japan, rather than its options shrinking post-Koizumi for international security activities, is actually, in terms of capabilities, widening its choices to respond to potential regional adversaries such as North Korea and China, and to participate in US-led multinational and UN operations in East Asia and on a global scale.

Japan's international security environment and military modernisation

Japan is afforded minimal room for retrenchment in security post-Koizumi, despite continuing anti-militaristic norms, because of continuing pressures from the international system in terms of rising regional and global military challenges, and rising expectations of a Japanese contribution to countering these from the US and other international partners. Japan's immediate anxieties are clearly focussed

on North Korea's development of ballistic missiles and its nuclear programme. Additionally, Japan has been concerned about the incursion of North Korean "spy ships" (*fushinsen*) on espionage missions into Japanese maritime and land territory.

However, it is China which poses the greatest challenge for Japanese security over the longer term. Japan has been concerned at China's modernisation of its conventional and nuclear forces since the early 1990s, and in particular the lack of transparency in its double digit increases in defence expenditure. Japan has watched the augmentation of China's ballistic and cruise missile capabilities, including: new submarine launched cruise missiles with a range of around 2,000 kilometres and with capabilities similar to US *Tomahawks*; and the general upgrading of its air defence and offence capabilities through the deployment of Su-27 and Su-30MK strike aircraft, indigenously developed J-10 and FB-7A combat aircraft, a new J-X stealth fighter, and the airborne and early warning and control KJ-200 and Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) KJ-2000 programmes. Japan was alarmed at China's test of an anti-satellite system in January 2007, probably capable of disrupting US satellite capabilities and also Japan's burgeoning military satellite programme.⁴

Japan has viewed with apprehension China's introduction of Type 052C Luyang II DDGs destroyers, Type 051C Luzhou DDGs destroyers, and Type 054A *Jianguai* frigates, which seemed designed to provide capabilities somewhat equivalent to the *Aegis* air defence system of the US and Japan, and to be experimenting with stealth technologies; as well as China's apparent continuing interest in aircraft carrier technologies, demonstrated by its refurbishment of the former 65,000 tonne Ukrainian aircraft carrier *Varyag* in Dalian since 2002 and speculation that China might purchase fourteen Su-33 fighters from Russia modified for carrier use. Japan has also taken note of Chinese submarine incursions into its territorial waters: detecting the passage of a Chinese nuclear-powered submarine in its territorial waters on November 10, 2004 (Japan later securing an apology from China which claimed the submarine had unintentionally veered off course), and claiming that a Chinese submarine entered its territorial waters in September 2008 (although any involvement in this incident was denied by China). Most recently, Japan has taken special note of China's decision in December 2008 to despatch two destroyers to the Gulf of Somalia for anti-piracy missions as a sign of China's global naval power projection ambitions. All of these capabilities suggest that China is not just modernising its military capabilities *per se*, but that it has a new appetite to project military power outside its own territory to secure its national interests, and thus it may be able to threaten Japan's interests in the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyutai islets, interrupt Japan's vital sea lines of communication (SLOC), and even to attack Japan's southern islands and Okinawa in an attempt to stop the US deploying from its bases in Japan in the event of a Taiwan Strait contingency.

Japan, in addition to issues regarding North Korea and China, also entertains additional concerns over the resurgence of Russian power. Japan in February 2008 scrambled two F-15s to intercept a Russian Tu-95 strategic bomber which had violated its airspace at the end of the Izu island chain, some 650 kilometres south of Tokyo.⁵ Russia's constant railing against US Missile Defence (MD) plans, and by implication Japan's cooperation with the US on BMD, has also been discomfiting, as has Russia's resort to force in Georgia in August 2008, with Japan mindful of its own ongoing territorial dispute with Russia over the Northern Territories.

Japan's security agenda has been complicated by the rise of concerns in East Asia and beyond about transnational terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and by increasing pressure from the US to provide support for international efforts to counter these threats. Japan has faced continued demands from the US to recognise the need to upgrade its military capabilities and the US–Japan alliance to respond to global contingencies. The US has stressed a move from “threat-based” regional alliances to “capabilities-based” global alliances that are capable of constructing flexible coalitions with inter-operable military assets for operating in the “arc of instability” stretching from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. In addition, the Global Posture Review (GPR) of 2004 made clear the US intention that bases provided by regional alliances should be integrated into its strategy for the “surging” and global deployment of its forward deployed forces. Japan thus is increasingly obligated to develop the necessary inventory of capabilities that can slot in alongside US-led multinational coalitions.

Japan's evolving defence doctrines

Japan, in order to respond to multifarious security challenges, has found it necessary to embark on successive revisions of its national defence doctrines and capabilities, a process initiated towards the end of the Koizumi administration, but still rolling forward under his successors, and indeed to be reinitiated from 2009 onwards. Japan released a revised NDPG in December 2004, together with the release of a new MTDP for 2005–2009 setting out Japan's long-term military procurement plans. The NDPG stressed Japan's regional security concerns and the importance of the US–Japan alliance in responding to these, and outlined a range of new threats to Japan, including responses to ballistic missile attacks, guerrilla and special operations attacks, incursions into its territorial waters, and chemical and biological warfare. These concerns are a clear reflection of recent perceived regional threats from North Korean and Chinese activities, and the NDPG went further in identifying North Korea specifically as a destabilising factor in East Asia and, for the first time, also in identifying concerns about China's impact on

regional security, although this was couched in the oblique language of needing to “remain attentive” to China’s future military modernisation. The NDPG also demonstrated a new emphasis upon global security interests outside East Asia. The NDPG stated that the “the region spreading from the Middle East to East Asia is critical to Japan,” thereby mapping Japan’s own security interests onto those of the US in the “arc of instability,” and focussed on the need for Japan to engage actively in “international peace cooperation” activities through the despatch of the JSDF to support US-led and UN multinational operations.⁶

In turn, for Japan to fulfil these regional and global responsibilities, the NDPG and MTDP advocated that the JSDF should seek to establish “multi-functional, flexible and effective” forces. These forces are to be characterised by mobility and rapid-reaction; enhanced joint command and control, and the capability to undertake joint tri-service operations; increased inter-operability with UN and US forces; and the utilisation of state-of-the art intelligence and military technologies. In terms of specific JSDF organisation and hardware, the MTDP stresses a quantitative build-down from Japan’s Cold War-style forces, and a switch instead to a lighter and qualitatively strengthened JSDF, now disposing of greater power projection capabilities.

The 2004 NDPG set the agenda for the augmentation of Japanese military power and capabilities for a five year period stretching beyond the end of Koizumi’s premiership, and as of 2009 Japanese security planners are engaged in the process of devising another revised NDPG for release at the end of the year. The JMOD started internal discussions on the revised NDPG in 2008, and, in the tradition of the revisions of the 1995 NDPO and 2004 NDPG, Prime Minister Asō established within his own office in January 2009 a new Prime Minister’s Advisory Group on Defence. Hence, Japan is engaged in long-term planning for its security policy, and it is within this context that the extent of dynamism in its security policy is best able to be judged.

Japan’s defence budget

Japan’s defence budget since the late currency terms has not experienced the large scale growth of the US, major NATO states, Russia, and even China, in the post-September 11 period, staying rooted at a less than 1% annual growth rate until 2002, and then actually contracting to rates of growth between 0.1 and 1.0% up until 2008.⁷ Defence expenditure can be seen to be declining in relative importance as a government priority in comparison to the increasing proportion of expenditure devoted to social security and public works in the last decade. The amounts available within this tightening defence budget for the procurement of new weapon systems are also under apparent pressure. The breakdown of the defence budget demonstrates the long term trend of an increasing proportion of

funds, up to 44% by 2008, directed towards personnel and provisions, whereas the proportion directed to equipment acquisition has declined from around 23% of the budget in 1988 to around 17% in 2008.⁸ Japan's defence allocations remain under constant budgetary attack from other sectors, with JMOD requests for 1.2–1.5% increases in its budget cut down to below 1%. Japan has thus been able to keep its defence budget well below the 1% of GNP ceiling first established in 1976.

However, whilst it is indisputable that the size of the defence budget is an important constraint on Japan's procurement plans, it has to be noted that Japan has been able in other ways to maintain or actually increase defence expenditure, and that as a consequence the apparent quantitative budgetary restrictions have not been an absolute bar on the qualitative expansion of military power. Japan, firstly, has actually increased the budget for its paramilitary JCG.⁹ Secondly, Japan has found budgetary flexibility through the practice of deferred payments (*saimu futan koi*).¹⁰ This has been used since the 1970s to spread the costs of weapon systems over a number of years, building up large-scale future payments equivalent to 60%-plus of defence expenditure. These payments have to be serviced at some point from the current defence budget, and thus may limit future budgetary growth, but the practice has allowed for considerable flexibility with regard to surpassing the formal 1% GNP limit, and has enabled Japan to continue the procurement of qualitatively upgraded capabilities.

JSDF capabilities: a shift to power projection

The GSDF, in line with Japan's intent to build up qualitative capabilities, is seeking to convert itself into a mobile force for overseas operations. The GSDF has continued to introduce the 50-tonne M-90 main battle tank (MBT), and is developing a lighter weight 44-tonne TK-X MBT, more easily transportable within and outside Japan, and designed for anti-guerrilla operations and with armour particularly effective against rocket propelled grenades and improvised explosive devices (IED). The GSDF maintains an interest in acquiring 300-kilometre range shore-to-shore missiles for the defence of off-shore islands, having originally been denied these in the 2004 NDPG.

The GSDF was dealt a setback in 2009 with the decision to halt procurement of the AH64D *Apache Longbow* attack helicopter at just 10 units, having originally planned to acquire 52 of the aircraft through licensed production. However, the JMOD was forced to curtail orders due to the rising unit costs associated with licensed production, and instead may opt for upgrading its existing AH-1 *Cobra* attack helicopters or to develop an attack version of its OH-1. However, the GSDF's power projection ambitions continue to be demonstrated by its procurement of CH-47JA transport helicopters, and the provision within the 2009 defence

budget of additional ballistic protection for these helicopters. Japan appears to be following the example of states such as the UK which have added armour to their Chinook helicopters to cope with conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and thus is preparing the option of despatch to such theatres if necessary.

The GSDF established a Central Readiness Group (CRG) in 2007, combining the elite 1st Airborne Brigade; 1st Helicopter Brigade; 101st NBC Unit; and Special Operations Group (SOG). The CRG represents a new innovation for Japan, aiming to function as a rapid reaction force for coordinating nationwide mobile operations, responding to domestic terrorism, guerrilla incursions, nuclear, biological and chemical warfare, and for training personnel for overseas despatch. Japan's establishment of SOG in 2004 also represents a new interest in special forces with the SOG's balaclava-clad personnel parading publicly during the ceremony for the establishment of the CRG in 2007.

ASDF power projection capabilities have been strengthened in recent years through the procurement of the F-2 fighter-bomber (although in smaller numbers than originally hoped for), and through gaining for the first time an in-flight refuelling capability with the procurement of four KC767 tanker aircraft (the first delivered in February 2008). The ASDF is also upgrading its E-767 AWACS radar to improve capabilities to counter cruise missiles.

The ASDF has been forced to curtail some of its defensive capabilities due to Japan's eventual agreement to sign the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions in December 2008. Japan maintains considerable stocks of cluster bombs deemed useful for the defence of its long coastline against invasion. Japan originally proposed a partial ban on cluster bombs, prohibiting their use in urban areas, and the adoption instead of "smart" versions with a smaller number of bomblets and with self-destruction mechanisms to prevent injury to non-combatants. Japan's government decided in the end to fully commit to the Oslo Convention and to dismantle its stocks of cluster bombs at considerable cost (reportedly JPY20billion), not to introduce new cluster bombs, and to provide JPY600 million for assisting the victims of these weapons.¹¹ Japan's stance was in many ways a demonstration of the continuing strength of its anti-militaristic principles, confirmed by its securing cross-party agreement in the National Diet.

At the same time, though, Japan used the abandonment of its cluster bomb capabilities as an opportunity to strengthen the ASDF's capabilities in other ways. The ASDF has compensated for the loss of this more crude defensive capability by including for the first time in its budget allocation the fitting of its F-2s with Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM), providing an arguably more sophisticated defence, and even offensive, capability.¹² The ASDF procurement of JDAMs, its continuing interest in airborne electronic jamming equipment, and its in-flight refuelling assets should now provide it with the potential to strike against enemy missile bases.

In addition, the ASDF is looking to replace its ageing F-4J fighter-bomber with a new F-X air-superiority interceptor that is capable of besting China's Su-27, J-10 and JF-17. Japan has shown prime interest in the US's FA-22A *Raptor*, and a secondary interest in BAE System's *Eurofighter Typhoon*. The F-22 thus far, though, has been denied to Japan due to the US Congress's Obey Amendment and consequent embargo on the overseas sale of the aircraft. Prime Minister Abe during his visit to Washington DC in April 2007 requested that the US release data on the F-22, and Minister of Defence Kyūma Fumio again raised the issue with Defence Secretary Robert Gates in a meeting in Washington on April 30. The US Congress, however, maintained the ban on exports in July 2008, a move compounded by US fears that Japan might leak sensitive technical information given an ongoing scandal over failures to maintain safeguards on the protection of *Aegis* system specifications, and possibly also by concerns about the impact on the regional balance of power of providing the F-22 to Japan. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia David Sedney in an interview of May 13, 2008 advised that the US was highly unlikely to transfer information on the F-22 to Japan, and that it should look instead to the F-35 as a new fighter acquisition. US Ambassador Thomas Schieffer repeated this stance in Tokyo the same month.¹³

Japan, in the absence of any immediate opportunity to acquire the F-22, and because of the related need to assess other possible candidates for its new fighter, has decided to defer a decision on procurement of the F-X until the new MTDP for 2010–2014. In the meantime, the ASDF as a stopgap measure is investing in upgrades to the radar and AAM-5 air-to-air missiles of its F-15s, especially to improve dog-fighting capabilities and to counter cruise missiles. The JMOD has apportioned JPY8.5 billion for the Technical Research and Development Institute (TRDI) and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to conduct research into an Advanced Technology Demonstration-X (ATD-X) stealth fighter prototype, and with a profile strikingly similar to the F-22.

Japan, in deferring the decision on the F-X may try to hold out for the F-22 under the new Barak Obama administration, although the Pentagon's announcement in April 2009 of its intent to end F-22 production only throws into further doubt Japanese ambitions for this aircraft. Japan's possible future success in procuring the F-22—and the very fact that it seeks such a capable fighter and similar stealth technologies—are important indications of its expanding military ambitions. The F-22 would provide Japan with important air defence capabilities for its own territory. At the same time, though, the ASDF's deployment of the F-22, combined with new in-flight refuelling capabilities (and consistent with the aircraft's role for the USAF), would provide Japan with a potential new capability to penetrate and destroy the air defences of any regional adversary—indicating again new power projection capabilities.

The ASDF is further seeking to augment its power projection capabilities with an indigenously produced C-X replacement for its C-1 transports, providing an

increased 6,000 kilometre range and broadened fuselage for a 26 ton payload which will serve as the principal means of air transport for a GSDF rapid reaction force to regional contingencies and beyond. However, the JMOD chose not to request the immediate procurement of the C-X in the 2009 defence budget, choosing instead to divert funds to the immediate upgrades of the F-15s.

MSDF power projection capabilities have been boosted by the procurement of three *Ōsumi*-class transport ships, with flat decks for the landing of transport helicopters and an integral rear dock for the operation of hovercraft capable of landing tanks. The MSDF justifies these ships as necessary for GSDF UNPKO and other “international operations in support of peace,” and two of the class have already been deployed to East Timor, Iraq, and to Sumatra during the 2003–2004 Asian tsunami humanitarian operations.

Most significantly, the MSDF is constructing two new DDH (Destroyer-Helicopter) *Hyūga* class vessels, each displacing 13,500 tons deadweight (and approximately 20,000 tons when fully loaded with fuels and weapons) and with a standard complement of three SH-60J and one MCH-101 helicopters. The first of the class, the *Hyuga*, was commissioned in March 2009. Despite the JMOD's designation of these vessels as destroyers, the fact that they are the largest ships launched by the MSDF in the post-war period at 13,500 tonnes (equivalent in displacement to Spanish, Italian and UK helicopter carriers and light carriers), combined with their end-to-end flat tops and below deck hangars, and their capacity to carry up to eleven helicopters including MH-53Es, indicates that Japan is now reviving its expertise in aircraft carrier technologies.

The MSDF is further seeking indigenous development of a P-X replacement for its P-3C patrol and surveillance aircraft (although Japan has faced pressure for purchasing the US Multi-mission Maritime Aircraft), with an expanded 8,000 kilometre range suited to patrolling as far as the further reaches of the South China Sea.

Japan's other major procurement project is BMD, which occupies the largest budget item for the 2004–2009, and the objective is to roll out the full panoply of BMD systems by 2011. The MSDF has procured an off-the shelf BMD system with a Standard Missile-3 Block IA (SM-3 BLK IA) from the US, and seeks to fit BMD capabilities to a total of six *Aegis*-equipped *Kongō* and *Atago* class destroyers. The MSDF conducted its first successful interceptor test launch off the coast of Hawaii in December 2008. Its second in November 2008 proved less successful—the SM-3 interceptor failing to track the target ballistic missile—but still the BMD *Aegis* system was deemed to have passed most of the test objectives.¹⁴ Japan and the US in the meantime continue to work on upgrades to the interceptor missile to create the SM-3 Block IIA (SM-3 BLK IIA).

The ASDF between 2006 and 2008 completed the deployment of four Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) terminal phase interceptor batteries, consisting of

16 fire units (FU), at bases around Tokyo. The essential responsibility of these batteries is to defend the capital, and the ASDF conducted drills for deployments in Yoyogi Park and Shinjuku Gyōen National Garden in central Tokyo in September 2007 and January 2008. The ASDF successfully tested the PAC-3 system in New Mexico in September 2008. It also deployed the PAC-3 system to Iwate and Akita prefectures in March 2009 in readiness for a possible intercept of a North Korean missile test scheduled for the following month. The ASDF has completed the upgrade of its Base Air Defence Ground Environment (BADGE) command and control system to create the Japan Air Defence Ground Environment (JADGE) as the principal coordinator of Japanese air defence in the event of a missile attack. The JSDF is further upgrading the FPS-3UG (Enhanced Capability) ground-based radar and developing a new FPS-XX ground-based radar for BMD purposes.

The JSDF is further attempting to embark on its own US-style “force transformation.” Japan has moved towards the indigenous development of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) for coastal battlefield surveillance, including this item for the first time in the defence budget in 2009. The JSDF has now begun to embark on joint tri-service operations, experimenting with force integration for the first time during the Asian tsunami humanitarian relief operations, with GSDF helicopters and trucks operating from the MSDF’s *Ōsumi* amphibious ships.

Japan’s military space programme

Japanese policymakers have now moved decisively to break the 1969 principle on the peaceful use of space. These moves first gained momentum in the wake of North Korea’s *Taepodong-1* test in 1998, with the introduction of “multi-purpose satellites” (*tamoku-teki eisei*) or “intelligence-gathering satellites” (*jōhō shūshū eisei*) (ISG).¹⁵ Japan uses these terminologies to obfuscate the military nature of these satellites. Japan between 2003 and 2007 completed the launch of four indigenously produced ISGs, two optical and two with synthetic aperture radar (SAR). These satellites have already proved of some use in monitoring North Korea’s missile bases, although at resolutions of one metre for the optical satellites and one to three metres for the SAR they lack the capabilities of those of the US. Japan thus still remains dependent on crucial infra-red satellite surveillance from the United States for the detection of actual missile launches and the early-warning necessary to operate any BMD system, as again demonstrated by North Korea’s April 2009 missile test and Japan’s failure to track its trajectory without assistance from US satellites.

Japan’s government in deploying these satellites has incrementally shifted from its original 1969 interpretation of peaceful (*heiwa no mokuteki*) as “non-military” (*higunji*) to now emphasising instead the “defensive” military use of space. In June 2007, the LDP introduced into the National Diet a new Basic

Law for Space Activities, Article 2 of which states that Japan will conduct activities in space in accordance with the principles of the Constitution, thereby now permitting the use of space for “defensive” purposes.¹⁶

The Basic Law mandated the August 2008 establishment of a Strategic Headquarters for the Development of Outer Space (SHDOS) within the Cabinet under the direction of the Prime Minister. In turn, the JMOD established its own Committee on the Promotion of Outer Space in September 2008 to advise on space-related activities in the upcoming revisions of the NDPG and MTDP. The SHDOS produced a draft report in November 2008, notable for arguing that Japan might need to introduce infrared early-warning satellites for detecting ballistic missiles in their launch phase.¹⁷ The JMOD Committee on the Promotion of Outer Space produced its first report on January 15, 2009. It similarly argued that Japan should promote the use of communications, global positioning and weather satellites, investigate means to protect its satellites from ASAT, and to improve IGS capabilities and investigating the acquisition of infrared early warning satellites to improve the effectiveness of BMD.¹⁸

Japan's participation in the militarisation of space is clearly driven by its assessment of the regional security environment. Japanese policymakers perceive a requirement to try to catch up with China's burgeoning military space capabilities, and even maintain parity with South Korea's and India's military interests in space. Japan further requires enhanced capabilities to keep in step with and improve interoperability with its US ally, but also to try to lessen dependence on the US for key early-warning satellites for BMD. Japan's ability to develop a full-range of satellite capabilities will be constrained by its tight defence budget, but it seems the revised 2009 NDPG for 2009 and 2010-2014 MTDP will emphasise the continuing build-up in this area.

Japan Coast Guard

The JCG, Japan's paramilitary force, has been quietly augmenting its own capabilities and external power projection capabilities. The JCG's *Shikishima*-class Patrol Large Helicopter (PLH) displaces approximately 6,500 tons and is larger than the MSDF's *Kongō*-class *Aegis* destroyers; it also carries two helicopters, and is armed with two twin 35-millimetre cannons and an M61 20-millimetre gatling gun. The JCG has a further 55 vessels over 1,000 tons, many of which are similar in displacement to the MSDF's *Hatsuyuki*-class destroyers. The JCG is reported to have a tonnage close to 60% of that of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN).¹⁹ The JCG also disposes its own quasi-special forces in the shape a Special Security Team (SST) for boarding of ships; and has long-range early-warning and patrol craft. The JCG has projected power through participation in US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) multinational exercises;

and through increasing joint bilateral anti-piracy exercises with states in Southeast Asia, and with ulterior motive of indicating Japan's willingness to China to exert its presence in the South China Sea.²⁰

Conclusion: JSDF proactive procurement and proactivity in overall security policy

Japan's strategic environment has dictated that it continues to pursue the long-term modernisation of its military forces. Japan has had to make tough decisions about new procurements in the context of a constrained defence budget, in some cases delaying or rolling over procurements. Nevertheless, Japan has succeeded in significantly pushing forward its defensive and potentially even offensive power projection capabilities since the 2004 NDPG. Japan is remodelling a more mobile GSDF, an ASDF with greater regional and global reach, and an MSDF with amphibious and carrier technologies. Japan is moving steadily forward with the deployment of BMD and new space technologies, and the JCG is expanding its capabilities and the range of its missions. Japan is in many cases engaged in something of a quiet arms race with China: matching Chinese growing air power with its own enhanced air defensive power, countering Chinese growing blue-water naval ambitions with its own more capable anti-submarine and carrier assets, and attempting to nullify Chinese ballistic and cruise missiles. Japan's procurement programmes are simultaneously designed to provide the types of capabilities that slot well into the necessary inventories for participation in US-led coalitions.

The Prime Minister's Advisory Group on Defence, currently charged with helping to devise the new NDPG and MTDP for 2009 onwards, is composed of members who have argued consistently in the past for a more assertive Japanese stance on national defence and for greater US–Japan alliance cooperation.²¹ The Advisory Group is thus likely to counsel a redoubling of efforts in these areas, to press ahead with the F-X, C-X and BMD programmes, and to continue efforts to quietly counter China's rise.

Japan's ongoing process of military modernisation and power projection has thus not been halted by budget constraints nor by political machinations in recent years, and demonstrates that Japan's proactivism in security has certainly not ground to a halt post-Koizumi. Japan has not retreated into its security shell, but is actually engaged in a long term programme to acquire the types of capabilities that will allow it an expanded role in international security. In this sense, Japan's security policy, viewed in conjunction with other key developments such as civilian control, defence production, the US–Japan alliance, and shifts in anti-militaristic norms, has not hit the buffers in recent years, and, even if less spectacular after Koizumi, continues on its gradual trajectory of "normalisation" under his successors.²²

Notes

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- 2 H. Richard Friman, Peter J. Katzenstein, David Leheny and Nobuo Okawara, "Immovable Object? Japan's Security Policy in East Asia," in Peter J. Katzenstein and Takashi Shiraishi, *Beyond Japan: The Dynamics of East Asian Regionalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 85–107; Paul Midford, "Japanese Mass Opinion Toward the War on Terrorism," in Robert D. Eldridge and Paul Midford (eds.), *Japanese Public Opinion and the War on Terrorism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 11–42; and Andrew L. Oros, *Normalizing Japan: Politics, Identity and the Evolution of Security Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).
- 3 For a full analysis of these long-term changes in Japan's military stance, see Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Remilitarisation* (London: Routledge/IISS, 2009).
- 4 Bōeishōhen, *Bōei Hakusho 2008* (Tokyo: Zaimushō Insatsukyoku, 2008), pp. 50–51; Bōeishō Bōeikenkyūshō, *Higashi Ajia Senryku Gaikan 2008* (Tokyo: The Japan Times, 2008), pp. 16–33.
- 5 Bōeishōhen, *Bōei Hakusho 2008* (Tokyo: Zaimushō Insatsukyoku, 2008), p. 66.
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- 9 David Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local: Sex, Violence and Anxiety in Contemporary Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 157–69; Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 78–79; Richard J. Samuels, "'New Fighting Power!' Japan's Growing Maritime Capabilities and East Asian Security," *International Security*, vol. 32, no. 3, Winter 2007–2008, pp. 84–112.
- 10 Harrison M. Holland, *Managing Defense: Japan's Dilemma* (New York: University Press of America, 1988), pp. 34–35; Michael E. Chinworth, *Inside Japan's Defense: Technology, Economics and Strategy* (Washington, DC: Brassey's US, 1992), p. 63; Masako Ikegami-Andersson, "Arms Procurement Decision Making: Japan," in Ravinder Pal Singh (ed.),

- 11 *Arms Procurement Decision Making Volume I: China, India, Israel, Japan, South Korea and Thailand* (Oxford: OUP for SIPRI, 1998).
- 12 "Bōeisho, Shingata Kurasutā Bakudan Chōtatsu e no Kinshi Jōyaku no Taishōgai," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, ō; 22 June 2008, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/national/news/20080621-OYT1T00830.htm>; "Japan joins effort to ban cluster bombs," *Japan Times Online*, 31 May 2008, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20080531a2.html>.
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