CHAPTER FIVE

JAPAN AND INDO-PACIFIC SECURITY

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JAPAN'S STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo returned to the Japanese premiership in 2012, after a five-year gap, to find that Japan continues to face myriad challenges. These include dealing with deep structural shifts in the regional military and economic balance of power; careful management of alliances and international partnerships; upgrading Japan's national-security infrastructure and military capabilities; and, at times, avoidance of sheer diplomatic self-harm.

Japan predictably remains highly exercised about the rise of China and the attendant diplomatic and security pressures. Japanese policymakers understand the inevitability of China's growing political and economic power; the importance of Sino-Japanese economic interdependence in investment, manufacturing networks and trade for Japan's own prosperity; and the need to influence China's interaction with the international system. Nonetheless, Japan's leaders are concerned that China may seek to use its increasing political and economic dominance of Asia through mechanisms such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to marginalise Japanese and American influence, and to use a growing relationship of asymmetric economic interdependence to exert leverage on Japan. Of primary concern is Japanese leaders' perception that China's desire to pursue territorial irredentism, coupled with its significant military modernisation, poses threats to Japan's sea lines of communication in the South China Sea, and even directly to Japan's own control of maritime zones and outlying islands, including the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea.

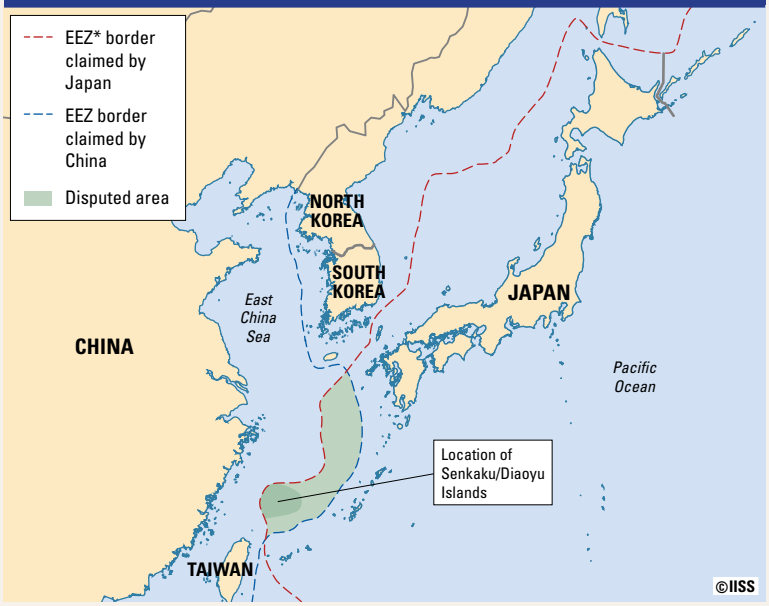
Japan's response under Abe has been to persist with the engagement of China, but also to quietly advance preparations to balance China's influence through its own diplomatic, economic and military efforts, and through strengthening the United States–Japan alliance.[1] This approach, however, gained limited traction in the initial years of his administration. Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping were unable to hold any type of bilateral meeting during the first two years of Abe's premiership. In that period, Japan became inured to constant coastguard and naval tensions around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands – a continual reminder that bilateral relations needed to be managed to avoid inadvertent escalations. Since 2015, Abe and Xi maintained said relations by holding regular bilateral meetings on the sidelines of large multilateral summits to try to keep a lid on tensions.[2] The two sides then sought a greater degree of rapprochement, in order to demonstrate support for the international trading order from which both benefit greatly, and thereby mount implicit resistance to US bilateral pressures on trade.[3] Abe and Xi were eventually able to hold their first full bilateral summit in Beijing in October 2018, the first between Japanese and Chinese leaders since 2011.[4] It is still arguable that closer bilateral ties such as these are only temporary and mask deeper structural problems in the Sino-Japanese bilateral relationship. Japan and China's recent axis of convenience is apparently paradoxical given their professed differences over the shape of the international order; Japan views its values of liberalism, democracy and the rule of law as standing in sharp contradistinction to China's values.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) remains Japan's other principal security threat. Japanese policymakers have watched with alarm North Korea's rapid succession of medium-range ballistic-missile (MRBM), intermediate-range ballistic-missile (IRBM) and potential intercontinental ballistic-missile (ICBM) tests – accom-

panied by nuclear-weapons tests – throughout 2016 and 2017, and then a flurry of short-range missile tests in mid-2019. Japan has been acutely aware of the ballistic-missile threat to its own territory and population since the late 1990s. But North Korea's growing ability to strike at US forward-deployed forces in the Asia-Pacific (on Guam and in Hawaii, as well as in South Korea) with IRBMs and the US homeland with ICBMs, coupled with recent estimates by the Japan Ministry of Defense (JMOD) that the DPRK is close to miniaturising its nuclear devices for mounting on its missiles, means that both Japan and the US are now faced with the possibility of nuclear attack.[5] This then raises the possibility of Japan's defence decoupling from the United States' extended-deterrence posture, as North Korea exerts direct pressure on the US to force the latter to consider risks to its own security first and to deprioritise defensive commitments to Japan.

Japan's policy towards the Korean Peninsula has also been affected by a drastic deterioration in relations with the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea). The downturn had been triggered initially by festering tensions over Japan's colonial history on the peninsula. The 2015 Japan–South Korea agreement concluded between the Abe and then-president Park Geun-hye governments sought once more to resolve the comfort-women issue – 'comfort women' being a euphemism for females forced into wartime sex slavery for the Japanese imperial armed forces during the 1930s and 1940s.[6] The agreement, however, was problematic from the outset. It lacked any new concessions by Japan and repackaged past approaches in the form of a private foundation for compensating comfort women, which had limited utility.

Map 5.1: **Territorial and maritime disputes between China and Japan**



Sources: IISS; US Energy Information Administration, www.eia.gov. *Exclusive economic zone

JAPAN HAS BEEN ACUTELY AWARE OF THE BALLISTIC-MISSILE THREAT TO ITS OWN TERRITORY AND POPULATION SINCE THE LATE 1990S

Arguably, the 2015 deal constituted more concessions by the South Korean side in committing Seoul to not raise the issue again, and Abe making only a limited apology. In the end, the deal proved unworkable for the domestic politics of President Moon Jae-in's administration (from 2017 onwards), leading to its dissolution of the private foundation. In turn, the South Korean Supreme Court's decision in 2018 that Japanese firms should provide compensation for conscripted South Korean labour in the colonial period was viewed by the Japanese government as a violation of the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations, which had normalised bilateral ties and settled all claims to colonial compensation. Japan–South Korea relations took an even more surprising downturn over security matters with bilateral claims and counter-denials that a Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) destroyer had directed its fire-control radar at a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) P-1 patrol aircraft in the Sea of Japan (East Sea) in December 2018.[7]

Tensions intensified to the point that Japan, in mid-2019, imposed export controls on the transfer of key substances and parts for use in South Korean semiconductors, and then removed South Korea from the 'white list' of destinations that do not require individual applications for each contract item, thereby treating South Korea in a similar fashion to China or other less economically and politically developed Asian states. Japan justified its action due to South Korea's lack of careful management of sensitive export items, so hinting at a potential security motive. The JMOD in its 2019 Annual White Paper downgraded South Korea from its list of key security partners, and the JMSDF declined to invite the ROKN to its October 2019 fleet review.[8]

The South Korean side has argued that Japan is imposing 'sanctions' in retaliation over the conscripted-labour compensation issue, especially as no convincing examples have been given by Tokyo of any export-security breaches. In turn, South Korea has retaliated by threatening to take legal action

Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and South Korean President Moon Jae-in fail to see eye to eye at the G20 summit in Osaka, Japan, 28 June 2019

Russian President Vladimir Putin talks with Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo after the plenary meeting of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Russia, 5 September 2019

against Japan through the World Trade Organization. In August 2019, Seoul said that it planned to withdraw from the bilateral General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), which is vital for Japan–ROK–US trilateral cooperation on ballistic-missile defence (BMD).[9] On 22 November – the very day that the agreement was due to expire – Seoul announced that it would halt its withdrawal from the agreement, reportedly as a result of US pressure. Hence, the Abe administration now finds itself in a perilous situation of overseeing the deterioration of diplomatic relations with South Korea to the point that it is undermining security ties with a supposedly key partner – a development that could also impact Japan's alliance with the US.

Japanese attempts to improve ties with Russia as a potential counterweight to China's rising influence have been hard going.[10] Abe has been seeking a 'new approach' towards Russia since 2016 – focusing on improving economic ties as a foundation for improved political ties, and being prepared to revert to the 1956 Joint Declaration between Japan and the Soviet Union to secure a peace treaty. This would allow for the return of two of the four islands of the Northern Territories/Kuril Islands now controlled by Russia, rather than demanding, like many previous Japanese administrations, the immediate return of all four. However, even whilst accepting this formula, Russian President Vladimir Putin has imposed several conditions. For example, Japan would have to acknowledge that the islands were lawfully seized by the Soviet Union during the Second World War and accept that no US military facilities are to be placed on the islands upon their return. Putin has also been vague about the possibility of returning the other two larger islands in the future. By September 2019, Abe had held no fewer than 27 summit meetings with Putin but with no discernible positive outcome. Consequently, Abe has faced strong domestic criticism for his policy, given that it has neither been able to progress Japan's diplomatic goals nor enabled Japan to fully align with the West to pressure Russia on its international behaviour.[11]

Japan's strategic concerns have been compounded by uneasy relations with its US ally. Abe established relatively stable alliance management after returning for his second stint as prime minister in 2012 and when working with the Obama administration. Japan strengthened bilateral security ties in 2015 through the revised Guidelines for Japan–US Defense Cooperation; by passing extensive security legislation to enable the exercise of the right of collective self-defence; and by signing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2016. At the same time, Abe has sought to enhance Japan's identity as an autonomous actor by declaring itself a champion of liberal values and vigorous diplomacy. It has extended defence ties in Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, and pledged a 'proactive contribution to peace'.[12]

The advent of the Trump administration in 2017, however, has exposed Japan's alliance travails.[13] President Donald Trump's 'America First' doctrine has stressed a transactional approach to alliance – as well as potentially adversarial – relationships, intimating that the US may leverage its security ties to redress perceived unfair trade practices. Japan and other Asian allies are a particular object of this approach. Japan's immediate response has been to ingratiate itself with the new administration. Abe sought early meetings with president-elect Trump in New York in November 2016, invited Trump for a state visit in May 2019, and has attempted to build strong interpersonal ties with the US president. Importantly, the Abe administration had some early impact on the Trump administration's strategy through its articulation of the concept of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy.[14] Japan first outlined the FOIP explicitly in August 2016, and the US appeared to adopt the concept with its Indo-Pacific Strategy in 2019.[15]

All the same, Japan's policymakers have been aware that they have limited traction in fundamen-

tally shaping Trump administration strategy. Trump has at times appeared indifferent to Abe's recent efforts to strengthen the alliance under the revised defence guidelines, and has constantly revisited his mantra on the lack of fairness in US obligations to defend Japan without a similar level of reciprocity. For his part, Abe has managed at times to reset the narrative, and Trump declared on his visit to Japan in May that the alliance was 'stronger than ever'.[16] But prior to the G20 summit in Osaka in June 2019, Trump reportedly mused about ending the 'unfair' alliance, and even followed meetings with Abe by repeating his oft-used critique of the nature of their bilateral ties.[17] Japanese policymakers are aware that Trump's critical statements on the alliance have usually been accompanied by requests angling for Japan to provide some form of quid pro quo economic compensation, and they have been prepared to accede to these through the purchase of US military equipment and bilateral trade concessions.

However, Japanese policymakers have remained deeply concerned about the real risks of entrapment and abandonment by the capricious Trump administration. The early bellicose rhetoric between Trump and the North Korean regime in 2016 and 2017 raised concerns for Japanese policymakers of becoming embroiled in a new Korean Peninsula conflict. But of greater concern to Tokyo has been Japan's potential abandonment by the US in its North Korea policy. In firmly aligning with the United States' policy of 'maximum pressure', Japan had the diplomatic rug pulled out from under its feet by the United States' rapid switch to engagement with the DPRK through the Trump–Kim summits in 2018 and 2019.[18] Abe thus effectively abandoned the policy of maximum pressure by the autumn of 2019. Japan, nevertheless, has still found itself isolated among the major powers in Northeast Asia in being unable to engineer an opportunity for a summit meeting with DPRK leader Kim Jong-un, thereby reducing its influence as a regional player in Korean Peninsula security affairs.

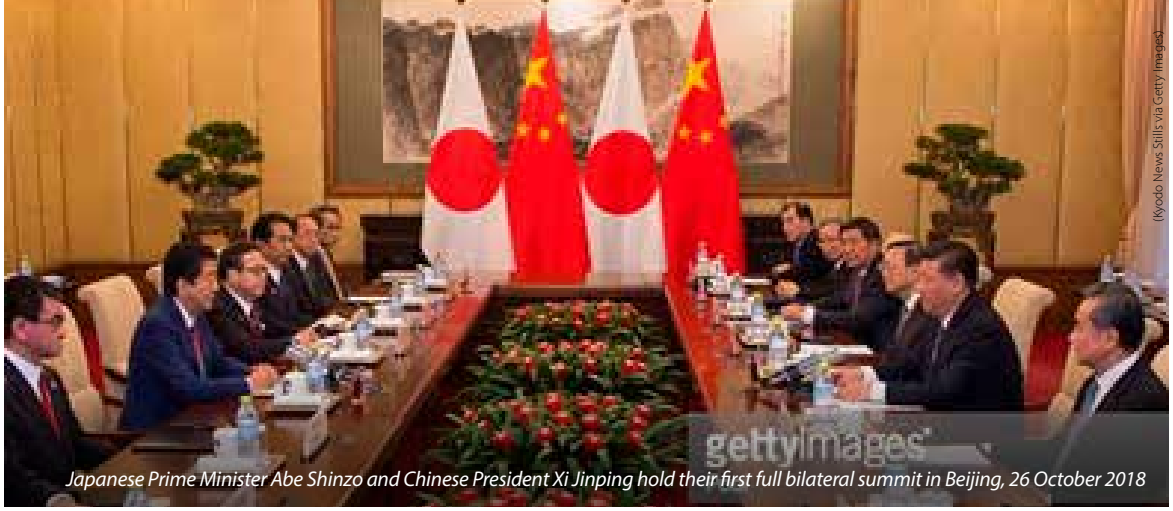
Japanese leaders have remained sceptical throughout about Trump's diplomacy resulting in North Korea's agreeing to denuclearise, and have only drawn limited comfort from Trump having not yet eased economic sanctions on North Korea. They have been given further cause for alarm by Trump's apparent sangfroid in the face of North Korea's short-range ballistic-missile (SRBM) tests throughout 2019. Trump dismissed the missiles as 'standard' and intimated that the tests fell outside the scope of the 2018 US–North Korea Joint Statement. In Japan's view, the tests were violations of United Nations resolutions and a direct threat to Japan itself.[19]

US President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo at the G20 summit in Osaka, Japan, 28 June 2019

Meanwhile, Trump's Middle East policy has further stoked Japanese doubts over US reliability. Since the 1970s, Japan has traditionally maintained cordial ties with the Iranian regime and has had an interest in developing the energy supplies in the Azadegan oilfields. As a result, Japan strongly supported the Iran nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, of 2015) with the US and a number of European powers. Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear framework and imposition of sanctions on not only Iran but also any states importing Iranian oil has placed Japan in a difficult position. Abe did attempt, with the approval of Trump, to broker contacts in US–Iran relations during his visit to Tehran in June 2019. But Tehran essentially rebuffed his efforts, and the US requests for Japan to participate in a military 'coalition of the willing' for the protection of tankers in the Persian Gulf has presented new risks of entrapment. JMSDF assets – including a destroyer in addition to the one already stationed at its base in Djibouti, and P-3C aircraft – are involved in counter-piracy and maritime-security activity in areas including 'the Gulf of Oman, the northern Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden, but not the Strait of Hormuz', as of early February 2020.[20] Japan's intention appears to be to keep this mission deliberately low-key, stressing that the JMSDF is dispatched under the 'survey and research' provisions of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) Establishment Law rather than an explicit patrolling role; avoiding the use of the 2015 security legislation that might commit Japan to a combat role; and stating that the mission would take place in coordination with, but separately from, the US-led coalition effort.[21]

JAPAN'S DEVELOPING POLITICAL AND MILITARY FRAMEWORK UNDER ABE

Japan's challenging strategic environment, combined with Abe's skilful exploitation of the domestic political scene, has enabled his government to forge



(Kyodo News Stills via Getty Images)

Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and Chinese President Xi Jinping hold their first full bilateral summit in Beijing, 26 October 2018

ahead with fundamental reforms relating to national-security policy and US–Japan alliance cooperation. In November 2019, Abe's extraordinary dominance of domestic politics was marked by his becoming the longest-serving prime minister in Japanese constitutional history, with close to eight years in power, if combining his first and second terms in office. Abe's third term as Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president extends until 2021, meaning that his current turn as prime minister will stretch close to nine years, and during this period he has secured three consecutive victories in the House of Representatives elections and three in the House of Councillors. Abe has largely neutralised any serious internal challengers to his position as party president, and utilised reforms of the Prime Minister's Office to establish more centralised policy control over the LDP's factions and the central bureaucracy.[22] The resurgence of Abe and the LDP has been accompanied by the increasing division and ineffectiveness of the opposition parties. The result is that Abe has been able to pursue his domestic agenda of 'Abenomics' largely unchecked, and to create the relatively high degree of domestic stability necessary for his government to pursue an ambitious foreign- and security-policy agenda. Indeed, it has often been the LDP's own dovish Komeito coalition partner that has been the principal constraint on Abe's ambitions.

Abe has continued to strengthen significantly the domestic frameworks for Japan's revised security posture. Japan established its first National Security Council (NSC) in 2013, designed to be the 'control tower' for coordinating foreign and security policy and bringing together the key decision-makers: the prime minister, the minister of foreign affairs, the minister of defence and the chief cabinet secretary. The NSC was accompanied by Japan's first National Security Strategy (NSS) in the same year, with a strong emphasis on the need for Japan to bolster its defence capabilities and to expand its international security contribution.[23]

Table 5.1: **The second Abe administration: timeline of security reforms**

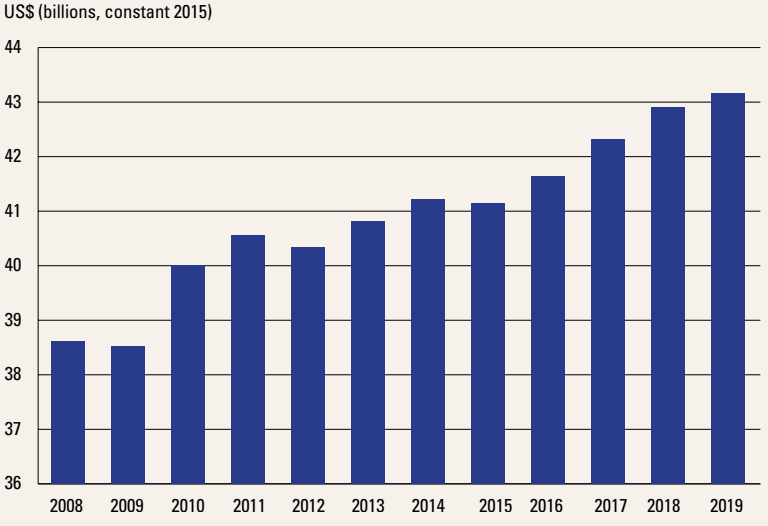
Date	Event
Dec 2013	■ Establishment of Japan's first National Security Council (NSC) ■ Adoption of the National Security Strategy (NSS) ■ Revision of the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) ■ Revision of the Medium Term Defense Program (MTDP) ■ Adoption of the Joint Dynamic Defense Force concept ■ State Secrecy Law passed
Apr 2014	■ Adoption of the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology
Feb 2015	■ Revision of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter allowing for the transfer of aid to foreign militaries if used for humanitarian and disaster-relief purposes
Apr 2015	■ First revision of the US–Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation since 1997
Sep 2015	■ Japanese parliament passed the National Security Legislation for Peace and Security, comprising 11 bills, including most prominently: 1. **The Law on Response to Contingencies** Enabled Japan's exercise of the right of collective self-defence in a scenario where an armed attack on a state in a close relationship with Japan threatens Japan's survival; where there is no other appropriate means to repel the attack; and where the use of force is limited to the minimum needed to repel the attack 2. **The Law to Ensure Security in Contingencies Significantly Affecting Japan** Replaced the 1999 Regional Contingencies Law, which intended to increase Japan's non-combat logistical support to the US, and now other states as well 3. **International Peace Support Law** Removed the requirement for Japan to pass separate laws for each Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) dispatch in order to give logistical support to multinational forces 4. **International Peace Cooperation Law** Permitted the JSDF during UN peacekeeping operations to use force in pursuing certain duties, rather than solely for the defence of JSDF personnel
Dec 2018	■ Revision of the NDPG ■ Revision of the MTDP ■ Adoption of Multidimensional Joint Defense Force concept

Sources: BBC News, www.bbc.co.uk; Japan, Ministry of Defense, www.mod.go.jp; Japan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, www.mofa.go.jp; *Japan Times*, www.japantimes.co.jp

The Abe administration has overturned many of Japan's long-running post-war anti-militaristic prohibitions. In April 2014, Japan adopted the 'Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology', decisively ending previous 1967 and 1976 bans on the export of weapons technology.[24] Abe further indicated that the 1%-of-GDP limit on defence expenditure, in place formally since 1976, was effectively to be discarded if deemed expedient. Abe stated in the National Diet in March 2017 that this prohibition should no longer constrain Japan, and his administration had no intention of necessarily suppressing defence expenditure below this level, and that in fact no such budgetary-policy ceiling existed.[25] During his second premiership, Abe has ramped up Japan's defence budget, with average annual growth rates of around 1% between 2013 and 2018.[26] The JMOD planned to raise defence expenditure from around ¥5 trillion to ¥5.3trn (US$46 billion to US$49bn) between 2019 and 2020, which would remain below 1% of GDP.[27]

Japan under Abe has also overturned arguably one of the most significant post-war taboos in place since the mid-1950s – the self-imposed ban on the exercise of the right of collective self-defence. The NSS argues that contemporary security challenges are so diverse, and exacerbated in reach and impact by advances in military technology, that no state can defend itself alone and international collective responses are indispensable.[28] Japan consequently announced a Cabinet Decision in May 2014 providing for significant reinterpretations of Article 9 – the so-called 'peace clause' that prohibits Japan's use of force to settle international disputes – that then formed the basis for an extensive range of security legislation eventually passed by the National Diet in 2015.[29]

Figure 5.1: **Japan's defence budget, 2008–19**



Source: IISS, Military Balance+, milbalplus.iiss.org

Protesters demonstrate against Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's plans to revise Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, in Tokyo, 25 March 2018

The most radical piece of legislation was indeed the new Law on Response to Contingencies, enabling Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defence under 'three new conditions':

- where an attack on another state in a close relationship with Japan poses a clear danger of 'overturning' the Japanese people's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness;
- where there are no other appropriate means to repel the attack;
- where the use of force is restricted to the minimum necessary to repel the attack.[30]

In addition, a new International Peace Support Act has obviated the need for Japan to enact separate laws for each JSDF dispatch to provide logistical support to multinational forces. Revisions to the International Peace Cooperation Law of 1992 have also enabled the JSDF during UN peacekeeping operations to use force in pursuing certain duties such as coming to the assistance of other militaries rather than just defending its own personnel. The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) had this collective self-defence element added to its UN peacekeeping operations mission in South Sudan from late 2016 until early 2017, although exercise of the right of collective self-defence remained untried despite the deteriorating security conditions.

The Abe administration argues that the 'three new conditions' still significantly circumscribe the probability and extent of Japan's involvement in collective self-defence actions in support of the US and other states.[31] Yet these constraints appear empty in reality, given that the Abe administration has consistently avoided defining in detail the actual conditions that form a clear danger to national existence; has not made clear the threshold for deciding when there is no alternative to military action; and has obfuscated definitions of the minimum use of force. The government has, therefore, retained considerable flexibility to interpret the need for military action as it sees fit, in particular to respond to US calls for assistance.[32]

Japan Ground Self-Defense Force personnel serving as part of UN peacekeeping operations in Juba, South Sudan, 14 November 2016

In conjunction with the reinterpretation of Article 9, the Abe administration had moved in mid-2015 to revise the 1997 US–Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation, significantly expanding the potential range of support for the US military in regional contingencies. The functional range of support is increased to now specify intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; BMD; maritime-security-asset protection; the joint use of facilities; peacekeeping operations; humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; and, for the first time, cyberspace and outer space.[33] The revised guidelines stress a concept of 'seamless cooperation', removing the rigid separation in previous guidelines of bilateral cooperation into 'Japan' and 'regional' contingencies. The intention is that military cooperation will operate more smoothly across all potential scenarios and levels of conflict escalation. In turn, the revised defence guidelines emphasise that bilateral cooperation should now be global, and not necessarily restricted geographically, as in past formulations, to Japan itself or the surrounding region. Most significantly, the guidelines outline the areas where the JSDF can now exercise collective self-defence with US forces, such as the protection of US shipping, interdiction of other shipping, BMD and providing logistical support during conflicts.[34]

In turn, Abe's ambitions since 2019 have extended to overturning the very final post-war taboo on Japan's military posture, with his plans to not just reinterpret but formally revise for the first time Article 9 of the Japanese constitution. Abe has presented his revisions as essentially moderate – proposing the apparently limited revision of paragraphs one and two of Article 9 to recognise that the 'JSDF is

Table 5.2: **US–Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation, 1997 and 2015 compared**

Scope/activity	1997	2015
Use of force	■ Individual self-defence (solely for cases of attacks on Japan itself)	■ Collective self-defence (for cases of responding to attacks on other states, including the US)
Rear-area support (geographical scope)	■ Contingencies in areas surrounding Japan (no strict geographical definition but in practice limited to Korean Peninsula and Taiwan)	■ Global scale for contingencies (no geographical restrictions)
Functional cooperation activities	■ Intelligence sharing and surveillance ■ Logistics support ■ Refugee relief ■ Search and rescue ■ Non-combat evacuations ■ Use of facilities	1997 activities, plus: ■ Protection of US warship assets ■ Ballistic-missile defence ■ Minesweeping ■ Peacekeeping operations ■ Humanitarian support ■ Disaster relief ■ Counter-piracy ■ Counter-terrorism ■ Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance ■ Space and cyberspace
Grey-zone contingencies	N/A	■ 'Seamless' cooperation from peacetime to contingencies (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance)
Coordination mechanism	■ No example of mechanism in actual usage	■ Alliance Coordination Mechanism as standing mechanism

Sources: Japan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, www.mofa.go.jp; Japan, Ministry of Defense, www.mod.go.jp

maintained as an armed organisation to take necessary self-defence measures'.[35] But Abe's plans again contain radical intent; in contrast to other plans for revision, the 'necessary self-defence measures' remain undefined and thus flexible and potentially extensive. How far Abe will succeed in his constitutional-reform plans is questionable. He does not command the necessary two-thirds majority in both houses of the National Diet to proceed with the constitutional revision; needs to rely on the support of the Komeito and other smaller conservative opposition parties; and would also have to win a majority in a national referendum. But even though Abe has a strong desire to revise Article 9 as a symbolic gesture to mark a new stage in Japan's post-war security policy, in fact he has already achieved many of his security goals through simple reinterpretation.

JAPAN'S EVOLVING DEFENCE PROGRAMME AND THE JSDF'S GROWING CAPABILITIES

Under Abe, Japan has pressed ahead determinedly with upgrading the JSDF's defence posture.[36] Abe has overseen two revisions of the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) and the Medium Term Defense Program (MTDP) – the documents that set out Japan's essential doctrine alongside the necessary JSDF capabilities. The 2011 NDPG devised under the previous Democratic Party of Japan administration had already abandoned the JSDF's Cold War doctrine of a 'Basic Defense Force' – designed essentially for static defence and repelling a large-scale invasion of Japanese territory – and adopted instead a 'Dynamic Defense Force that possesses readiness, mobility, flexibility, sustainability, and versatility'. This stressed a more active JSDF posture to counter threats from North Korea and China, with increasing deployments of forces southwards and new power-projection capabilities.[37] Abe's first NDPG in 2014 emphasised a Joint Dynamic Defense Force to enable the JGSDF, the JMSDF and the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) to work more effectively together. The 2019 NDPG went a step further with the ambition to transform the JSDF into a 'multi-domain defense force' to engage in 'cross-domain operations', not only across the land, sea and air domains, but now also across the domains of outer space, cyberspace and electronic warfare – essentially, shorthand for the improved networking of forces.[38]

The 2019 iterations of the NDPG and the MTDP were particularly notable for the decision to increase the procurement of F-35 fighter aircraft for the JSDF.[39] The JASDF is set to procure another 63 F-35As, on top of the 42 already on order since 2011. It will also procure for the first time 42 short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) F-35Bs. Japan will thus have an inventory of 147 F-35s in total, making it the second-largest operator of the aircraft after the US itself.

JMSDF helicopter-carrying destroyer Izumo*, to be converted to operate F-35B fixed-wing aircraft under the new Medium Term Defense Program, sails to Yokosuka naval base, 25 March 2015*

The F-35A will provide the JASDF with a fifth-generation combat aircraft able to penetrate air defences for potential strikes against North Korean and Chinese missile bases and other high-value military sites. The JASDF further plans to acquire stand-off missiles for its upgraded F-15Js, and has indicated that it is looking to replace its F-2s with an F-3 sixth-generation twin-engine stealth fighter, possibly developed in collaboration with the United Kingdom's *Tempest* combat-aircraft project.

Following the 2019 MTDP, the JMSDF finally confirmed that it intended to convert its two *Izumo*-class helicopter-carrying destroyers (full-load displacement of around 24,000 tonnes) to operate the new STOVL F-35Bs. The JMOD considered redesignating the refitted vessels as 'defensive aircraft carriers' but in the end opted for 'multi-function destroyers' as they may not continuously carry F-35Bs.[40] In reality, though, Japan will possess a limited fixed-wing aircraft-carrier capability for the first time since the Pacific War. The JMSDF will also procure four of a new class of multi-mission frigate with stealth characteristics, a compact hull design and high level of automation, as reflected in the 2018 and 2019 budgets.

One of the JGSDF's major innovations, in line with NDPGs since 2014, has been the establishment in 2018 of an Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB) of around 3,000 personnel, equipped with 52 amphibious armoured personnel carriers and 17 MV-22B *Osprey* transport aircraft.[41] The ARDB is in effect a proto-marine corps, has trained with the US Marines, and is designed primarily for the defence and retaking of southwestern Japanese islands in the East China Sea.

The JSDF as a whole seeks to promote cross-domain operations by constructing an integrated air- and missile-defence architecture, which will

Figure 5.2: **National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG): 2014 and 2019 comparison**

			2014 NDPG	2019 NDPG
JOINT UNITS		Cyber-defence units		1 squadron
		Maritime-transport units		1 group
JGSDF	OVERALL PERSONNEL	Authorised number of personnel	159,000	159,000
		Active-duty personnel	151,000	151,000
		Reserve-ready personnel	8,000	8,000
	MAJOR UNITS	Regional-deployment units	5 divisions 2 brigades	5 divisions 2 brigades
		Rapid-deployment units	3 rapid-deployment divisions 4 rapid-deployment brigades 1 armoured division 1 airborne brigade 1 amphibious rapid-deployment brigade 1 helicopter brigade	3 rapid-deployment divisions 4 rapid-deployment brigades 1 armoured division 1 airborne brigade 1 amphibious rapid-deployment brigade 1 helicopter brigade
		Surface-to-ship guided-missile units	5 surface-to-ship guided-missile regiments	5 surface-to-ship guided-missile regiments
		Hyper-velocity gliding projectile intended for the defence of remote islands units		2 battalions
		Surface-to-air guided-missile units	7 anti-aircraft artillery groups/regiments	7 anti-aircraft artillery groups/regiments
		Ballistic-missile-defence units		2 squadrons
JMSDF	MAJOR UNITS	Destroyers	4 flotillas (8 divisions) 6 flotillas	4 groups (8 divisions)
		- Destroyer and minesweeper vessels		2 groups (13 divisions)
		Submarine units	6 divisions	6 divisions
		Minesweeper units	1 flotilla	
		Patrol-aircraft units	9 squadrons	9 squadrons
	MAJOR EQUIPMENT	Destroyers	54	54
		Submarines	22	22
		Patrol vessels		12
		Combat aircraft	approx. 170	approx. 190
JASDF	MAJOR UNITS	Air warning and control units	28 warning squadrons 1 airborne early-warning group (3 squadrons)	28 warning squadrons 1 airborne early-warning wing (3 squadrons)
		Fighter-aircraft units	13 squadrons	13 squadrons*
		Aerial-refuelling/transport units	2 squadrons	2 squadrons
		Air-transport units	3 squadrons	3 squadrons
		Surface-to-air guided-missile units	6 fire groups	4 fire groups (24 fire squadrons)
		Space-domain mission units		1 squadron
		Uninhabited-aerial-vehicle units		1 squadron
	MAJOR EQUIPMENT	Combat aircraft	approx. 360	approx. 370
		- Fighters	approx. 280	approx. 290

Source: Japan, Ministry of Defense, 'Defense of Japan 2019', p. 225
*Including fighter-aircraft units consisting of STOVL aircraft

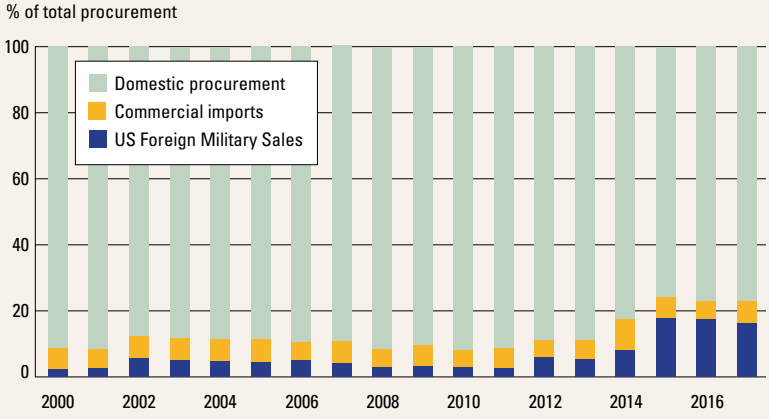
bring together the JMSDF's and JASDF's existing sea-based *Aegis* and land-based *Patriot* ballistic-missile defence systems; JMOD satellites and early-warning systems; and two units of the *Aegis* Ashore system due to be procured from the US by 2023. The JMOD will also establish by 2022 an 'Outer Space Force' for space situational awareness.

One notable feature of Japan's continuing defensive build-up is the increasing large-scale procurement of platforms from the US, including the F-35, *Osprey* and now *Aegis* Ashore. It is questionable whether the procurement of these systems is appropriate for Japan's defensive needs. The F-35 is not necessarily the most able air-to-air combat fighter that Japan could purchase at scale and at lower cost for its air-defence interceptor needs, and the retrofitting of *Izumo*-class ships as aircraft carriers may detract from the JMSDF's arguably more pressing requirement for anti-submarine-warfare capabilities to counter China. Moreover, the rising share of foreign-military-sales imports from the US as a proportion of total defence-equipment procurements – ballooning from 7% in 2012 to 28% by 2019 – raises concerns over the sustainability of Japan's indigenous defence-industrial base (the latest tranche of F-35s are entirely off-the-shelf imports from the US with no local workshare) and its concomitant autonomy as a security actor.[42] Abe's preparedness to purchase these systems, therefore, is a clear quid pro quo to ensure the Trump administration's ongoing defence commitment to Japan and ease potential trade frictions.

JAPAN'S WIDENING DEFENCE RELATIONS: AUSTRALIA, INDIA, SOUTHEAST ASIA AND EUROPE

Since the early 2000s, but particularly in line with Abe's concept of a 'proactive contribution to peace', Japan has looked to broaden its security horizons

Figure 5.3: **Japanese defence-equipment procurement, 2000–17**



Source: Government of Japan, 'Defense Yearbook', various years

Japan's new Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade and US Marines conduct drills in Kagoshima prefecture, 14 October 2018

beyond the defence of its own territory, and beyond channelling its international military cooperation solely through the US–Japan alliance. In many cases, Japan's widening of defence relations has been with like-minded US partners and thus a complement and reinforcement of the US–Japan alliance relationship and US presence in the Asia-Pacific region. However, at the same time, Japan has looked to diversify its security relations to retain a degree of security autonomy, and to moderate the vagaries of dependence on the US and especially the Trump administration.

Among its new defence relations, Japan has perhaps moved furthest so far with Australia, with the formation of a so-called 'quasi-alliance'.[43] The 2007 Japan–Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation affirmed the emerging 'strategic partnership' between the two states, and established the intention for a broad range of security cooperation, spanning 'counter-terrorism; disarmament and counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; maritime and aviation security; peace operations; and humanitarian-relief operations'.[44] The joint declaration established a regular 2+2 mechanism for consultation between the respective foreign and defence ministers of both countries. A bilateral Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) was signed in 2010 and came into force in 2013; a new ACSA was signed in 2017. Also in 2013, Japan and Australia established an Information Security Agreement for sharing classified information and then an Agreement Concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology in 2014. These two agreements opened the way for Japan to engage in an attempt in 2015, ultimately unsuccessful, to sell its *Soryu*-class submarines to the Royal Australian Navy. In 2014, Japan and Australia subsequently elevated their relationship to a 'Special Strategic Partnership'.[45]

Japan's defence relations with India have developed along similar lines to those with Australia, if at a slower pace given India's caution to not diminish its traditional non-aligned status. Japan

Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and British Army personnel conduct joint training in Shizuoka prefecture, 2 October 2018

and India announced a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2008 that outlines cooperation through enhanced dialogue, military-to-military exchanges and maritime security, and concluded an Agreement on the Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology in 2015. This eventually led to the planned sale of the *ShinMaywa* US-2 search-and-rescue seaplane to India, which Japan had been trying to sell since 2013. In that year, they also announced their Special Strategic and Global Partnership covering political, economic and security cooperation.[46] Since 2007, the JMSDF has joined the annual US–India *Malabar* naval exercises, and Japan and India initiated their first bilateral exercises in 2012. Australia, India, Japan and the US started to bring their defence cooperation together in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue in 2007, although the initiative has since lost momentum. However, Australia, India and Japan started a trilateral dialogue in 2015, and the 'Quad' dialogue – involving Australia, India, Japan and the US – has been rebooted from 2017 onwards.[47]

Japan under Abe has also continued to strengthen ties with key Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states. The Japan–ASEAN Vientiane Vision of 2016 seeks to bolster defence cooperation and the role of Southeast Asian states in order to help uphold the rule of international law and maritime security, through building capacity, transferring defence equipment and undertaking joint exercises. Japan and the Philippines signed a Memorandum on Defense Cooperation and Exchanges and an Action Plan for Strengthening of the Strategic Partnership in 2015. Japan and Indonesia announced a Memorandum on Cooperation and Exchanges in the Field of Defense in 2015. In 2018, Japan and Vietnam announced the upgrade of their relationship to an Extensive Strategic Partnership for Peace. These agreements promote high-level and operational-level cooperation between Japanese military officials and their Southeast Asian counterparts. Japan has donated five TC-90 maritime-patrol aircraft to be used for a number of roles including maritime patrol to the Philippines, and in March 2019 concluded an agreement to supply spare parts for the Philippines' UH-1H helicopters. Moreover, Japan as part of its Official Development Assistance policy has continued to transfer coast-guard cutters to ASEAN countries, including 12 vessels to the Philippines in 2016, 12 to Vietnam from 2014 onwards, eight to Malaysia from 2017 and three to Indonesia since 2006.[48] Since 2017, Japan has joined the annual *Balikatan* exercises with Australia, the Philippines and the US. The JMSDF has not taken part in US freedom-of-navigation operations but has begun to show ever more presence in Southeast Asia; most prominently, its *Izumo*-class helicopter destroyers conducted extensive defence diplomacy and then anti-submarine-warfare exercises in the South China Sea in 2017 and 2018.

JAPAN'S ECONOMIC POWER AND SECURITY: BALANCING THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

Japan under Abe has expressed wariness at China's regional economic initiatives. Abe refused outright for Japan to join the AIIB on its launch in 2015, viewing it

Signatories of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), also known as the TPP-11, at a press conference in Santiago, Chile, 8 March 2018

as a rival to the Japan-led Asian Development Bank. In addition, the Abe administration was initially sceptical of China's BRI. Japan recognises the need for increased investment in Asia's infrastructure but sees the BRI as another move by China to assert dominance over the region.

Japan's response has been in part to manoeuvre against China through the signing – with the US Obama administration – of the TPP in 2016. The trade deal sought to set the future economic rules of the game in the region and excluded China. However, Japan has continued to engage China through the ongoing negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The advent of the Trump administration and its subsequent withdrawal from the TPP seriously complicated Japan's regional economic diplomacy, and it has been further complicated by Japan itself becoming a potential target of US trade sanctions. Japan has sought to keep the US on board its regional economic diplomacy through the shared FOIP concept – emphasising that Japan's own objectives for this strategic concept are not just cast in strategic security concerns, but also in the use of the FOIP as a means to channel development assistance and trade deals in order to better connect East Asia to the Indian Ocean, Middle East and Africa.[49] However, Japan has hedged its bets by pushing ahead with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), also known as the TPP-11, even if shorn of US membership, and has renewed its commitment to RCEP negotiations with a push to conclude negotiations by the end of 2019, thus providing multilateral insulation and leverage against anticipated US trade demands.[50]

Japan has subsequently resisted US requests for a bilateral comprehensive free-trade agreement or services agreement, and has chosen to focus instead on a limited number of sectors through the formula of a trade agreement on goods. At the June 2019 G20 summit in Osaka, Abe and Trump announced that both sides had agreed an outline deal that would mean that Japan would import surplus US corn stocks generated by US–China trade disputes and reduce tariffs on certain US agricultural imports. Japan and the US continue to work on eliminating tariffs for Japanese automobiles and components, and the two countries concluded a final bilateral agreement in late 2019.[51] Crucially for Japan, the US appears to have accepted that any bilateral concessions should not supersede those of the TPP framework, so preserving Japan's use of the TPP as a means to exert influence over US trade policy and not sacrifice its influence in the broader Asia-Pacific.

At the same time, Japan has started to demonstrate a more forthcoming line on regional economic cooperation with China – both sides realise the need for some accommodation to sidestep the further escalation of bilateral tensions, but also to counter Trump administration attempts to undermine the liberal trading order from which they greatly benefit. Japan since 2017 has indicated that it can cooperate with the BRI if the initiative becomes more focused on sustainable development and transparency in its financing methods.[52] But Japan has still not given up its hedging options vis-à-vis China, with Japan and the EU concluding in September 2019 a new deal on infrastructure cooperation to improve connectivity between Asia and Europe, and so shadowing and potentially diluting the dominance of the BRI.[53]

JAPAN RECOGNISES THE NEED FOR INCREASED INVESTMENT IN ASIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE BUT SEES THE BRI AS ANOTHER MOVE BY CHINA TO ASSERT DOMINANCE OVER THE REGION

CONCLUSION

As Abe continues his record-breaking period in office, he has certainly generated significant new proactivity in Japan's diplomatic and security posture, and attempted to respond to many regional and international challenges. However, Abe's record to date is mixed in terms of actually generating significantly improved outcomes for Japan's international situation. Japan has perhaps proved most influential in its statecraft for shaping the political economy of the region through the TPP and the RCEP. But its situation in other quarters appears far more precarious and Abe has achieved limited traction through his activities, and in the face of far from pliable partners and neighbours. The US is continuing to prove a fickle ally. The current rapprochement between China and Japan may have limited mileage as both sides diverge in their regional vision. Russia has consistently frustrated Abe's plans for moving the relationship to a new stage. Japan has risked isolation in dealing with North Korea, and Japan–South Korea relations have nosedived. It is thus far from clear that Abe, despite eight years of vigorous activity, has managed to articulate an effective approach to keep his pledge that 'Japan is back' as among the most important of international players.[54]

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