



CENTRE FOR AIR POWER STUDIES

In Focus

New Delhi

CAPS InFocus: 59/2022

15 August 2022

An Analysis of Japan's Defence White Paper 2022

Simran Walia

Research Associate, Centre for Air Power Studies

Keywords: Japan, Defence, Security, Indo-Pacific



Image Source: Japan times



Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies [CAPS]

This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution – Non-Commercial – No Derivatives 4.0 International License.

Over the past few decades, strategic competition between major nations has intensified in the changing global context in terms of shifting the balance of power. This strategic competition has been the highlight of the 2022 Japan's Defence White Paper, which included China's aggressive behaviour and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.¹ The key focus areas of Japan's defence paper are 'China's rise and its military intelligentization', 'Russia's aggression against Ukraine', 'Deterrence', 'Space domain cooperation', and the 'Creation of a free and open Indo-Pacific region'.

China has been ramping up its civil-military fusion, which is widely understood as the fusion of military and civilian resources, and its intelligentization through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), etc., in order to build a world-class military. This has the ability to pose a direct threat to Japan's security and defence; therefore, it is an important focus area for Japan's defence security. Japan condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and believes that any unilateral changes to the status quo by force are unacceptable as they affect the international rules-based order. It is also a violation of international law, which prohibits the use of force. It is also foreseen that such unilateral changes may also extend to the Indo-Pacific region, which would further hamper the security and the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. Moreover, China is also continuing with its intrusions near the Senkaku islands through coercion as well as pursuing unilateral changes to the status quo in the South China Sea.

In this year's Japan's defence paper, the key focus was on deterrence, which is vital for preventing changes to the status quo. It is important for states to have the defence capabilities to be able to understand that it is unacceptable to invade one's country. Japan is attempting to strengthen its cooperation in space and cyberspace and is working towards enhancing the US-Japan alliance. Furthermore, Japan is working on embracing its space domain mission units while deepening its cooperation with the US and JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency).²

One of the vital key tenets for Japan's defence security is the vitality of the Indo-Pacific region, as major sea lanes of communication pass through this region. Japan was the first country to come up with the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), which aims at ensuring peace and stability in the entire region while maintaining the rules-based order.

The defence paper mentioned that ties between Russia and China have deepened in recent years through joint navigations and flights being conducted near Japan by Chinese and Russian vessel aircraft.³ Japan overtly mentions that China would unify Taiwan by force and that it would invade Taiwan coercively. Moreover, North Korea has made use of its ballistic missile launches and has also defended Russia while blaming the US and other countries for the situation. Japan's

Minister of Defence, Nobuo Kishi, mentioned that Japan has many like-minded partners through which it can strengthen its cooperation with those partners, such as the US-Japan alliance remains strong and the QUAD grouping among Japan, the US, India, and Australia is also deepening over time. Japan is also working with countries like Europe and the UK to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Japan's Domestic Political Context

As announced by Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Japan is working on coming up with its new National Security Strategy by the end of this year and will work on being prepared for modern warfare and increasing Japan's defence spending as well. What has come up as a shocking statement in this defence paper is the concern over Russia being closer to China amidst the Ukraine crisis. "For Russia, which is internationally isolated and has suffered losses in ground forces, the importance of political and military cooperation with China could increase," the defence paper said.⁴ In Japan's upper house elections in the month of July, the ruling coalition secured enough seats in both houses of parliament to be able to work on the process of revising Japan's pacifist constitution, and Kishida's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) aims at boosting Japan's defence budget. The defence spending is aimed to increase over the next five years to an amount equal to 2 per cent of the GDP which is a target sought by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).⁵

In addition to Japan's concern over the Ukraine crisis, the white paper also raised issues regarding China's assertiveness and the likelihood of military tensions between China and Taiwan. The stability of the situation in Taiwan is vital for Japan's security as well as the stability of the international community. Concerning Japan's security in Northeast Asia, the South Korean government has condemned Japan for its claims to the easternmost Dokdo islands in the defence paper. South Korea protests against Japan's claims over the Dokdo, as for Koreans it is their territory in terms of history and international law.

Chinese officials and spokespersons have criticised Japan's defence paper for disregarding facts, being biased and making irresponsible remarks regarding China's defence and military development. However, Japan is aware of the threat posed by China's rising behaviour in the South China Sea and its intrusions near the Senkaku islands. As far as Japan's defence budget is concerned, Kishida feels that after former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe's death, the discussions regarding the budget increase would have a serious impact as Abe was a standard-bearer of the budget increase. Nevertheless, Kishida is firm on outlining the new National Security Strategy by

the end of this year, and it remains to be seen how the budget for defence spending will take shape in the near future.

NOTES:

¹ Ministry of Defence, Defence of Japan 2022, https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022_Digest_EN.pdf, Accessed on July 31, 2022.

² Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Official Website, <https://global.jaxa.jp/>, Accessed on August 01, 2022.

³ Dzirhan Mahadzir, 'Chinese, Russian Bombers Hold Joint Exercises Near Japan, Korea', *USNI News*, May 25, 2022, <https://news.usni.org/2022/05/25/chinese-russian-bombers-hold-joint-exercises-near-japan-korea>, Accessed on August 2, 2022.

⁴ Ministry of Defence, Defence of Japan 2022, https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022_Digest_EN.pdf, Accessed on July 31, 2022.

⁵ Jess Johnson, "Ukraine war — and impact on Asia — take top billing in Japan defense white paper", *Japan times*, July 22, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/07/22/national/japan-defense-white-paper-2022/>, Accessed on August 05, 2022