

Japan: Defence and security policy reform

SUMMARY

After a lengthy, fraught parliamentary process, on 20 September 2015 the National Diet of Japan finally approved a long-awaited reform of Japan's defence and security laws. Prime Minister Shinzō Abe's determination won out against opposition from within Parliament and the public. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution has been reinterpreted: Japan's Self-Defence Forces can now come to the aid of any ally which is under attack, in particular the US, which has guaranteed Japan's security since the end of the Second World War. This change was one of a series of reforms and initiatives, which included setting up a National Security Council, defining a national security strategy, adopting a law on classified information and revising the Principles on Arms Exports. The guidelines for cooperation with the US have also been revised. At the same time, Tokyo has begun to develop its military cooperation with other countries in the region. The purpose of these reforms was to make Japan an 'active contributor to peace' in a regional context overshadowed by Chinese ambitions and the growing nuclear threat from North Korea.



In this briefing:

- A 'pacifist' constitution in a non-pacifist environment
- Alliance with the US
- Shinzō Abe's 'three arrows' for security
- Reinterpreting the constitution
- Looking ahead
- Main references

A 'pacifist' constitution in a non-pacifist environment

The Japanese Constitution and the inherent right of self-defence

The Japanese Constitution was adopted a year after the end of the Second World War, while Japan was under US occupation, and came into force on 3 May 1947. The purpose of Article 9 of the constitution, among other things, was to ensure that the country would never again pose a threat to the US. The post-war international political situation changed rapidly, however. The Cold War, the Communist Party's victory in China and its alliance with the USSR and the Korean War from 1950-1953 brought the issue of Japanese rearmament to the fore. The country's right to rearm had [already been recognised](#) by General MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Japan, in his 1950 New Year's speech. It was, however, the [Peace Treaty with Japan](#), signed in San Francisco on 8 September 1951, which officially recognised Japan's inherent right of individual or collective self-defence (Article 5(c)) and made explicit reference to [Article 51](#) of the [United Nations Charter](#).

Article 9 of the [Japanese Constitution](#)

'Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.'

However, the absence of any reference to this right in the constitution led Japan to assert its inherent right of individual self-defence, but not its right of collective self-defence, according to which an attack against one country is considered an attack against all that country's allies. As a result, the law must [make express provision](#) for every mission carried out by the Self-Defence Forces set up in 1954. Japan has therefore been obliged to update its laws every time a new mission is to be carried out, with the risk that the legislator would overlook certain eventualities and the Self-Defence Forces would thus be rendered powerless.¹ This also had consequences for the status of the Self-Defence Forces, which is similar to that of the police force,² despite their difference in size ([247 000](#) soldiers) and, particularly, in resources (according to [IISS](#) and [SIPRI](#), Japan's defence budget is in the top 10 worldwide).

The Defence Ministry: a young institution

In 1954, a Defence Agency answerable to a government minister was set up alongside the Self-Defence Forces. Japan remained without a Ministry of Defence, however, for a further half century, until January [2007](#).

Peacekeeping operations

Despite its significant military resources, Japan has not been involved in any wars since 1945. Since 1992, however, the Self-Defence Forces have [participated](#) in numerous peacekeeping operations (PKOs) under the auspices of the UN,³ notably in Cambodia from 1992-1993, on the basis of the [legal framework](#) established when the International Peace Cooperation Bill was adopted (see box). They also participated in mine-sweeping operations in the Persian Gulf after the first Gulf War,⁴ resupplied vessels as part of operation Enduring Freedom,⁵ offered logistical support to the international coalition in Iraq,⁶ participated in international anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden⁷ and have provided humanitarian aid to a number of Asian countries hit by natural disasters.⁸ In addition, Japan [co-finances](#) a number of military training academies in Africa, including the Peacekeeping School in Bamako (Mali).

The International Peace Cooperation Act

This law, adopted in 1992, makes the participation of Japanese troops or civilians in a PKO contingent on five criteria: a ceasefire must have been reached among the parties to the conflict; the parties to the conflict must have given their consent to the deployment of the peacekeeping force and Japan's participation in the force; the peacekeeping force must maintain strict impartiality, not favouring any party to the conflict; if it deems that one of these conditions has ceased to be met, the Japanese Government may withdraw the Self-Defence Force (SDF) contingent; the use of weapons must be kept to the minimum necessary to protect the lives of Japanese personnel.

Japan and its neighbours



Map created by Christian Dietrich, EPRS.

Closer to home, the situation on the Korean Peninsula⁹ presents a constant threat to Japan. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) [withdrew](#) from the [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#) in 2003¹⁰ and subsequently carried out nuclear tests in October 2006, May 2009, February 2013 and [January 2016](#); it [may](#) already possess between [six and eight](#) nuclear warheads. It is also developing a space programme which is [suspected](#) of being a cover for ballistic missile testing. The [Six-party talks](#)¹¹ launched in 2003 were unsuccessful. Japan's geographical proximity to North Korea, and in particular the fact that it is the only country to have been attacked with nuclear weapons, are giving rise to legitimate concern among the Japanese.

China's maritime ambitions are also a major cause for concern: Beijing is in the process of [unilaterally](#) altering the status quo in the South China Sea – the crossroads between shipping routes which are vital to global trade. China has also begun a territorial dispute with Tokyo in the East China Sea over a group of uninhabited islands (known as Senkaku in Japanese and Diaoyu in Chinese¹²): these islands remain under Japanese administration, but incursions by the Chinese coastguard are increasing.¹³ In October 2015, the US made a show of emphasising the international nature of the waters in the region by [patrolling](#) the area surrounding some artificial islands created by the Chinese in the South China Sea.

The [risk of escalation](#) in these areas has forced Japan to update its security policy, which must now take into account new threats, such as the proliferation and increased sophistication of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism¹⁴ and cyber terrorism. Furthermore, Japan is situated in an area of high seismic activity and the dispersed nature of its 6 852 islands means it is essential for the country to safeguard the security of its maritime lines of communication.

Alliance with the US

Japan's alliance with the US is the cornerstone of its defence strategy and foreign policy. The '[Treaty of Security between the United States and Japan](#)', signed on the same day in 1951 as the Peace Treaty of San Francisco, was revised in 1960 and became the '[Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan](#)'. By relying on protection from the US and thus limiting its defence spending, Japan was able to rebuild its economy. This strategy was outlined in the [Yoshida Doctrine](#), which was based on three principles: emphasis on international economic relations to rebuild the economy, limited intervention in global politics, and the reliability of the security guarantees offered by the US. By following this doctrine Japan became the world's second largest economy.

Following the end of the Cold War, the Guidelines for Japan-US Defence Cooperation were revised in 1997. They then remained unchanged until the revision of 27 April 2015, necessitated as much by concerns over North Korea's nuclear weapons – which, as well as continuing to [threaten South Korea](#), are now capable of [reaching the US](#) – as by China's increasing power in the region. This revision also reflects the new tasks that the Self-Defence Forces are preparing to take on. The US's obligation to defend Japan remains the cornerstone of its policy in the region. In April 2014, President Barack Obama announced that this obligation [also covered the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands](#).

A new 'battle' in Okinawa¹⁵

Around half the [47 000](#) US soldiers stationed in Japan are based in Okinawa along with [21 000](#) of their family members. US bases take up 20% of the island, which is situated in the far south-east of the country, well away from the main archipelago.¹⁶ They make up almost [75%](#) of the US bases in Japan, while Okinawa accounts for only 0.6% of the country's total surface area. In the 1990s, the US and Japanese governments made a joint agreement to close Futenma, a US Marine air corps station located in a densely populated area in the heart of Okinawa and therefore considered to be '[the most dangerous](#) American military air base in the world'. It was due to be relocated to a new site in the Bay of Henoko on the same island. A total of 8 000 soldiers (and 9 000 family members) would have been transferred to the base in [Guam](#) in the Pacific Ocean.

The relocation plan has, however, been shelved for 20 years: the local population [opposes](#) the project as it may have a significant impact on the environment. In October 2015, following the breakdown of negotiations with the government, the Governor of Okinawa Takeshi Onaga, who had been elected in November 2014, [revoked](#) the authorisation granted by his predecessor to transfer the military base from Futenma to Henoko, and [confirmed](#) his intention to refer the case to the UN Human Rights Council ([HRC](#)). According to Onaga, who has the backing of local people, the base should now be moved, but to a location outside the Okinawa Prefecture.

The situation is very [complex](#) as it involves a number of levels of government. On the one hand, Okinawa remains fundamental not only to the US presence in Japan, but also to its security strategy in Asia. On the other, the local population has been forced to live with this presence on the island – a constant reminder of three months of dramatic fighting between April and June 1945 – and the wide-ranging impact this presence has had on the local area. The case is ultimately bound up with relations between the central government and the region (the Ryūkyū archipelago), which has an [identity](#) very [distinct](#) from that of the rest of the country.

In addition to this military alliance, the two countries have forged strong political and economic ties. The United States has long been one of Japan's main trading partners, and is currently second only to [China](#). The success of the [Trans-Pacific Partnership \(TPP\)](#) negotiations, which culminated in the signing of a trade agreement on 5 October 2015, was largely contingent on the successful outcome of the [bilateral negotiations between](#)

[the USA and Japan](#), as the two nations account for approximately 80% of the economic output of the 12 TPP members. Japan demonstrated its loyalty to the USA when it [refused to become](#) a founding member of the Chinese-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank ([AIIB](#)), one of Washington's only allies to so refuse.

Shinzō Abe's 'three arrows' for security

The United States has been encouraging Japan to reform its security policy for a number of years. Over time, the USA has bolstered its military presence in the Pacific Ocean and has sought closer cooperation with its regional allies, urging them to do more to counter Beijing's increasing interference in the region, in accordance with the American 'pivot' towards the Asia-Pacific region referred to in November 2011 by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the Japanese Government has found itself in the difficult position of having to spend enough to support economic growth and defence operations while attempting to curb Japan's rising public debt, which stands at [230%](#) of the country's GDP, the highest of any [OECD](#) member. The government has therefore launched a series of reforms and initiatives designed to strengthen Japan's security while limiting the impact on the budget. The so-called 'three arrows' of the government's security policy are a reference to the more widely known three arrows of Abe's economic policy, often referred to as '[Abenomics](#)'.

The defence budget

Abe's government increased the Japanese [defence budget](#) for the first time in 11 years in 2013. The budget rose by 0.8% in [2013](#), 2.2% in [2014](#) and 2% in [2015](#). The 2015 budget was not far off the symbolic amount of [¥5 000 billion](#) (€37 billion), beating the previous record set in 2002. The Ministry of Defence has called for a budget increase of 2.2% for [2016](#). In the medium term, the Japanese Government plans to increase military spending by 5% over the period [2014-2019](#), bringing total expenditure to ¥24 700 billion (€182 billion).

First arrow: Bolstering defence capabilities

In November and December 2013, the Japanese Parliament passed a series of bills to establish a US-style [National Security Council](#) and, subsequently, a bill on classified information (state secrets). In December 2013 the government also laid down new [National Defence Programme Guidelines](#) (which had not been reviewed since 2010¹⁸) and, for the first time, adopted a [National Security Strategy](#) designed to enhance Japan's role as a 'Proactive Contributor to Peace'.

In April 2014, Japan [lifted](#) its ban on selling weapons and military hardware to foreign powers. In 1967, Tokyo adopted the 'Three Principles on Arms Exports', which banned the export of weapons to countries in the Communist bloc, countries subject to UN Security Council arms embargoes and countries involved, or likely to intervene, in international conflicts. Nine years later, Japan decided to extend the ban to all arms exports, including to regions not covered by the 'Three Principles'.

Under the new 'Three Principles on Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology', Japan will: 1) ban exports of defence equipment that pose a clear threat to international peace and security; 2) implement careful screening of exports which are approved; and 3) authorise exports only when there is a guarantee of appropriate checks to prevent the equipment from being used for unintended purposes or transferred to third countries.

Following these changes, two [military cooperation agreements](#), with the United Kingdom and the United States, were announced in July 2014. In the same month, Japan and Australia signed an agreement on the transfer of defence equipment and technology. A Japanese consortium is currently in contention to land a defence contract to build submarines for [Australia](#) worth US\$35 billion, while New Delhi and Tokyo are negotiating a deal involving the sale of Japanese ShinMaywa US-2 amphibious search and rescue aircraft to India. France and Japan, meanwhile, stepped up their cooperation on military equipment in 2015, paving the way for joint research into drone systems.

The defence policy reforms also led to the setting-up of the new Acquisition Technology and Logistics Agency ([ATLA](#)) and to an overhaul of the Ministry of Defence. On 10 February 2015, the Japanese Government revised the country's public development aid policy by adopting a '[Development Cooperation Charter](#)', which includes provisions for Japan to [send financial aid](#) to foreign armies for non-military use.

The new state secrets law

The state secrets [law](#), which was [adopted](#) on 6 December 2013 and entered into force on 10 December 2014, is designed to protect information considered vital to Japan's national security. The new law authorises all Japanese ministries to classify any information concerning defence, diplomacy, counter-espionage and counter-terrorism which is deemed sensitive as a 'state secret'. Previously, only the Ministry of Defence had such a power. Passing the law was essential to enable the National Security Council to function properly and to convince Washington to share intelligence with Tokyo. The law has been highly controversial, however, facing resistance from the opposition parties in the Diet and drawing heavy criticism from civil society, notably journalists. The law's definition of what constitutes a 'state secret' has been described as too vague and is seen as granting individual ministries too much leeway.

Second arrow: Revamping the alliance with the USA

The New [Guidelines](#) for US-Japan Defence Cooperation were published to coincide with Prime Minister Abe's visit to the United States on 27 April 2015. The guidelines were revised following the Japanese Government's decision in April 2014 to reinterpret Article 9 of the Constitution in such a way as to assert Japan's right to collective self-defence. The new guidelines [redefine](#) the nature of the Self-Defence Forces' overseas operations, removing previous geographical restrictions on their deployments. On 28 April 2015, the two nations released a [joint vision statement](#), which referred to closer cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Third arrow: Cooperation with the other democracies in the region (and elsewhere)

Japan has been working to foster stability in Asia since the 1950s, in particular by granting public development aid to a number of countries in the region – including, at one time, China and South Korea, who have since become foreign aid donors. Changes to the geopolitical landscape in Asia have convinced Tokyo to forge closer ties with various partners.¹⁹ India and Australia – often with the encouragement of Washington – fall into this category. A meeting on maritime security held between high-ranking officials from the three countries on 8 June 2015 in New Delhi marked the beginning of a [trilateral cooperation](#) partnership. [India](#), located at the centre of transport routes connecting the Japanese archipelago to the Middle East and Africa, is a key partner for Tokyo, as emphasised by the fact that, in October 2015, Japan joined India and the United States in their annual [Malabar](#) military exercise for the first time since 2007. In July 2015, Japan took part in the biennial joint [US-Australia](#) military exercise [Talisman Saber](#) for the first time.

Cooperation between Japan and South Korea is being hampered by several contentious issues, including a [dispute](#) over the sovereignty of an island situated midway between the two countries, known as Dokdo by the South Koreans and Takeshima by the Japanese. However, an [agreement](#) to settle the long-running dispute concerning 'comfort women', signed on 28 December 2015, represents a promising step forward. Against a backdrop of thawing relations between Japan and [South Korea](#), strongly backed by the Obama administration, Tokyo has cemented ties with the countries of south-east Asia, both through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ([ASEAN](#)) and bilaterally. Many of these countries have expressed concern at [China's actions](#) in support of its territorial claims in the [South China Sea](#). Japan has repeatedly called for the region's territorial disputes to be resolved through the application of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ([UNCLOS](#)).

Japan has formed a close strategic partnership with [Vietnam](#), and delivered six vessels to the Vietnamese coastguard in 2014 to help strengthen its maritime security capabilities. In September 2015, Japan [pledged](#) to provide additional vessels. In the context of closer security cooperation with the [Philippines](#), under a deal signed in June 2015, Tokyo is due to build ten patrol vessels for the Manila coastguard to help combat piracy. The two countries now carry out joint [military exercises](#) in the South China Sea. Security ties have also been strengthened with countries such as [Laos](#) (the Japan-Laos bilateral relationship has been upgraded to a strategic partnership), [Cambodia](#) and [Indonesia](#).

In May 2014, Japan, NATO's [longest-standing](#) partner, [signed](#) an Individual Partnership and Cooperation [Programme](#) with the organisation to enhance cooperation in areas such as combating piracy, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. The agreement follows a Joint Political [Declaration](#) adopted in April 2013.

Reinterpreting the constitution

A lengthy, controversial passage through parliament

Before the new security and defence laws were adopted in September 2015, the Self-Defence Forces were not authorised to defend the United States even if that country was under direct attack. Japan could defend itself in the event of an invasion, but was not allowed to come to the aid of its allies. The new geostrategic context and the expanded role of the Self-Defence Forces under the revised guidelines on the US-Japan alliance created the need for a new legal framework.

Article 96 of the Japanese Constitution stipulates that the constitution can be revised only if the change is approved by a two-thirds majority vote in both Houses of the Diet and subsequently by a referendum. The post-war constitution has never been revised and a referendum on reinterpreting Article 9 would have been extremely risky, given the deeply rooted pacifism of a Japanese people still traumatised by memories of the war and two atomic bombs.

The government opted to go down a different route by reinterpreting the constitution by means of a cabinet decision and the subsequent passing of new legislation by parliament. Before the decision was adopted, on 15 May 2014 a report examining its potential implications was submitted to the government by the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security. Negotiations were required between Prime Minister Abe's Liberal Democrat Party ([LDP](#)) and its coalition partner, New Komeito, whose pacifist stance imposed limits on the scope of Japan's collective right to self-defence. The [decision](#) was adopted on 1 July 2014.

Three conditions for the application of the new collective right to self-defence (under Article 9 of the Constitution)

1. When a close ally is attacked, and the attack threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger to the Japanese people's constitutional right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;
2. When all other non-military options to assist the ally in question have been exhausted;
3. The use of force is limited to the minimum necessary.

The decision would not have had any practical implications without legislation to bring it into effect however. A [series of bills](#) was put before the Diet, proposing, on the one hand, reforms to ten existing laws on peace and national security (Self-Defence Forces Act; UN International Peace Cooperation Act; Act on the response to an attack in areas surrounding Japan; Act on vessel inspection; Act on Japan's response to armed attack; Act on logistical support to the US Army; Act on the use of state institutions in the event of an attack; Act on restricting sea transport; Act on the treatment of Prisoners of War; National Security Council Act) and, on the other, a reinterpretation of what constitutes support for international peace. The bill on supporting international peace provided for the overseas dispatch of the Self-Defence Forces to offer logistical support to foreign militaries fighting to 'eliminate threats to the peace and security of the international community'. Previously, a new law had been required for each individual operation.

Efforts by Abe's Government to push these laws through the Diet met with fierce opposition in Japan, both in [Parliament](#) itself and in academic and media circles. [Protest](#) movements revealed the public's frustration with the government's frequently inadequate explanations for its actions. The LDP unexpectedly scored what some commentators termed an '[own goal](#)', when Yasuo Hasebe, Professor of Constitutional Law at Waseda University, Tokyo, whom the LDP had invited to speak in a Commission on the Constitution [debate](#) on 4 June 2015, said that Article 9 of the Constitution provided only for individual self-defence, whilst collective self-defence was unconstitutional. Opinion polls conducted by the [Asahi Shimbun](#) newspaper and the [Kyodo](#) press agency to coincide with the final adoption of the laws in parliament revealed that most Japanese people were opposed to them. On 7 October 2015, the [Japan Times](#) alleged that the [Cabinet Legislation Bureau](#) had failed to keep records of its internal discussions on the security laws. However, on [16 July 2015](#) the House of Representatives approved the security laws, which were then formally adopted following a vote in the House of Councillors on [19 September 2015](#).

What will change?

The new security laws will mean that Japan can defend its allies, the United States in particular, and other countries with which it has strong ties, even if it is not under attack itself. The Diet will still have to approve overseas operations, but it will no longer be necessary to pass ad hoc legislation.

The new legislative framework gives the Self-Defence Forces operational possibilities which they did not have in the past, or which required authorisation on a case-by-case basis. Keeping in mind the three conditions for exercising the right to collective self-defence, in particular threats to Japan and its people, the following are examples of operations which can now be undertaken:

- taking part in international peacekeeping operations, under the auspices of the UN or otherwise, including the possibility of engaging opposing forces;

- defending and resupplying allied ships attacked by a third country in Japanese waters or elsewhere;
- defending and resupplying allied ships involved in air-sea defence operations;
- protecting allied ships which are evacuating Japanese citizens;
- searching ships suspected of illegally transporting weapons;
- intercepting ballistic missiles which are aimed at allied countries and fly over Japanese territory, at the request of the country in question;
- destroying underwater mines;^{20, 21}
- rescuing Japanese and non-Japanese citizens who have been kidnapped overseas, provided that the country in question agrees and that it monitors the situation.

With regard to this final point, in the aftermath of the capture and execution by ISIL/Da'esh of two Japanese citizens, [Haruna Yukawa](#) and [Kenji Goto](#), in January 2015, Prime Minister Abe [explained](#) that, under Japan's current laws, the Self-Defence Forces could not come to the aid of Japanese citizens in such situations. Japan had already paid a high price: in January 2013, 10 of its citizens were killed following a terrorist attack and hostage-taking at a gas facility near [In Amenas](#), Algeria. On 17 February 2015, the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Yumio Kishida, introduced the [Three Pillars](#) of foreign policy in response to the terrorist incident of January 2015.

Looking ahead

Japan will not be going to war. The Japanese are a peace-loving people with a deep-seated aversion to militarism and involvement in armed conflict. Their country is reinventing its pacifism as a 'proactive contribution to peace' and going through a process of 'normalisation', bringing it into line with its many partners who have the right to engage in individual and collective self-defence under Article 51 of the [United Nations Charter](#). Japan's partners, in particular the United States, have called on it to exercise this right several times in the past. The US, which is committed to defending Japan, is now asking it to take on more responsibilities²² and to play an active role in implementing the deterrence policy which is becoming increasingly necessary in response to Chinese ambitions and the threat from North Korea. On 15 October 2015, despite [objections](#) from [China](#) and North Korea, Japan was elected to a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 11th time, for a period beginning in January 2016 and lasting two years. Japan's election is testament to the international community's support for the country's security reforms (it received 184 out of 190 [votes](#)).

The EU is currently negotiating a [Strategic Partnership agreement](#) with Japan. According to the [Declaration](#) released at the conclusion of the Japan-EU summit held in Tokyo on 29 May 2015, 'the EU welcomes and supports the efforts of Japan in promoting and sustaining global security as set out in the policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" based on the principle of international cooperation'. The partners plan to cooperate in Ukraine and Somalia, explore the possibility of Japan's participation in [CSDP](#) missions, cooperate more closely in the fight against terrorism, and continue to cooperate on anti-piracy activities.

Although the increase in Japan's defence spending has not escaped the notice of the international press, the country is not developing its offensive capabilities. Japan has not started nuclear-weapon or ballistic-missile programmes, and is unlikely to do so in the near future. More particularly, Japan's defence budget hike [pales](#) in comparison with the (sometimes double-digit percentage) increase in Chinese military spending. In 2014, [China](#) increased its defence budget by €112 billion, or 12.2%. Between 2005 and 2014, its budget grew by an average of [9.5% per year](#). According to a [Tokyo Foundation Asia Security Project](#) report, by 2020, Chinese defence spending could be 4.8 times higher than Japan's (6.5 times on a generous estimate) and by 2030 as much as 9.1 times higher (12.7 times on a generous estimate), totalling nearly €700 billion (€970 billion on a generous estimate).

Following the adoption of the security laws in September 2015 and [victory](#) in the snap election of 14 December 2014, Prime Minister Abe cemented his political success with his unchallenged [re-election](#) as leader of the LDP on 8 September 2015 and the signing of the [TPP](#) with the United States and 10 other countries on 5 October 2015. Moreover, Abe gave a [long-awaited speech](#), without [raising new problems](#), on 14 August 2015 to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

The new security laws have not weakened the Japanese public's support for the majority government, largely because the opposition has been going through a long period of crisis. The summer 2016 House of Councillors by-elections are fast approaching, however, and the focus will now shift to Japan's still sluggish [economy](#), a problem which prompted Abe to launch his '[three new arrows](#)' of Abenomics. This new approach will place greater emphasis on households in an attempt to lessen the effects of the [demographic slump](#) in the decades to come.

Main references

[La défense japonaise: évolution ou révolution? Vers une puissance militaire « normale »](#), Pfmilin E., Rozec Y., Monde chinois, 2015/1, N. 41, pp. 101-108.

[Le Japon dans son environnement géostratégique](#), Pfmilin E., Borer L. A., Diploweb.com, 6 avril 2015.

[La politique de sécurité du Japon décryptée par Guibourg Delamotte](#), interview with Thomazeau F., Radio France Internationale (RFI), 15 août 2015 (podcast).

Endnotes

¹ This has notably been the case during the Chinese coastguard's incursions near the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Under the previous laws, the Self-Defence Forces were authorised to defend Japanese territory on condition that the armed offensive was an organised and premeditated invasion. The official response to offensives of a smaller scale not fitting these criteria was not defined, except at police level.

² The Self-Defence Forces are subject to civil and criminal law: the Japanese [Constitution](#) (Article 76.2) bans the setting up of any kind of special tribunal. Weapon use itself is subject to police law.

³ For many years Japan has expressed its desire for a [permanent seat](#) on the Security Council. It is the second largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, after the US and ahead of France, Germany and the UK.

⁴ This was the first time since the Second World War that Japanese Self-Defence Force vessels had been sent on a foreign mission. [Japan and the Gulf War. The Dawn of a Nation](#), Fouquiere-Brillet E., Institut de Stratégie Comparée (ISC), 2005.

⁵ 'The Japanese Forces' mandate during operation Enduring Freedom was very tightly defined. The Japanese Navy was only permitted to resupply vessels participating in operations in Afghanistan and not Iraq. They were also only permitted to resupply non-combatant vessels. Everything was running smoothly until the commanders of US vessels participating in operations and combat in Iraq confirmed that they had been resupplied by the SDF (Self-Defence Forces). [La lutte internationale contre la piraterie au large de la Somalie depuis 2008](#), Sciascia E., EchoGéo n. 10, 2009.

⁶ In 2004; it was the first time since the end of the Second World War that Japanese troops had been present on foreign soil.

- ⁷ Japan opened a military base in Djibouti in July 2011, its first overseas base since 1945. Some 600 staff are stationed there and their mission is to participate in the effort to tackle international piracy in the Gulf of Aden.
- ⁸ During typhoon Haiyan, for example, which struck the Philippines in November 2013, the Self-Defence Forces deployed 1 200 soldiers, three warships, ten military aircraft and six helicopters. It was Japan's largest overseas operation since the Second World War.
- ⁹ North and South Korea are technically still at war. There has never been a peace treaty between the two, nor an armistice, although a ceasefire agreement was signed by North Korea, the US and China in 1953.
- ¹⁰ North Korea joined in 1985 under pressure from the [Soviet Union](#). It is the only country to have withdrawn from this treaty.
- ¹¹ The Six-party talks were a series of diplomatic negotiations on North Korea's nuclear programme, which China mediated and North and South Korea, the US, Russia and Japan participated in.
- ¹² These islands are also claimed by Taiwan, which calls them Diaoyutai. In August 2012, Taipei proposed a [peace initiative](#) to facilitate the sharing of natural resources.
- ¹³ Instances of Chinese military aircraft testing the responses of [Self-Defence Force](#) and [US](#) aircraft have become increasingly frequent.
- ¹⁴ Japan will host the G7 Summit in the Mie Prefecture from 26-27 May 2016, the Rugby World Cup from 20 September to 2 November 2019 and the [Tokyo](#) Olympic Games from 24 July to 9 August 2020, followed by the Paralympic Games from 25 August to 6 September 2020. On 4 December 2015, Japan decided to set up a [new counter-terrorism unit](#) to collect information and protect its citizens.
- ¹⁵ The Battle of Okinawa, the last and bloodiest of the Pacific War (excluding the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945), is [regarded](#) as the largest aerial and naval battle in history. It was also the only battle to take place on Japanese soil during the war. [Some](#) 107 000 Japanese people (of whom 100 000 were civilians) and 12 000 American soldiers were killed.
- ¹⁶ Okinawa is the largest island in the Ryūkyū archipelago, situated to the south-west of the Japanese archipelago and 1 500 km from Tokyo. In 1951, after the post-Second World War occupation by the Allied Forces had ended and Japan had regained its autonomy, Okinawa remained under the military control of the US, which caused a great deal of resentment among its inhabitants. Control of Okinawa was returned to Japan only in [1972](#).
- ¹⁷ Although officially denied by Washington for diplomatic reasons, the primary aim of this new policy is to [contain](#) China. Washington sometimes uses North Korea as a pretext, as it did when then-Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, announced the deployment of a second [anti-missile radar system to Japan](#) in September 2012. The system was delivered in 2014.
- ¹⁸ The new guidelines place the emphasis on the concept of mobile, integrated defence. Closer cooperation with US forces and more mobile operating units have become priorities, designed in part to respond to any Chinese aggression in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. [La défense japonaise: évolution ou révolution ? Vers une puissance militaire "normale"](#), Pfilin E., Rozec I., Monde chinois, 2015/1, N. 41, pp. 101-108.
- ¹⁹ There have been [ups and downs](#) in Japan's relations with Russia. Tokyo and Moscow have not signed a peace treaty since the end of the Second World War owing to a [dispute](#) over the group of islands to the north-east of Hokkaido – known as the Kuril Islands by Russia and the Northern Territories by Japan.
- ²⁰ More than 80% of Japan's oil imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz (Persian Gulf). A freeze on imports would seriously undermine the country's economy and energy security.
- ²¹ The clearing of landmines was already provided for under the laws on peacekeeping operations.
- ²² The United States also plans to give South Korea more responsibility for defending itself against North Korea, but plans to transfer operational control were postponed as a result of heightened tensions and Pyongyang's 2009 and 2013 nuclear tests.

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eprs@ep.europa.eu

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