

Defense policy in the crosshairs

Japan's military program shows it is shifting from a pacifist stand to a dynamic one based on bilateral, multinational ties

On July 30, Japan's defense ministry held a naming and launching ceremony in Yokohama for the country's Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) seventh Aegis escort warship, which was named *Maya*.

It is the MSDF's first vessel equipped with cooperative engagement capability (CEC), a device that can share a large volume of data in real time without the use of satellites. *Maya* is expected to intercept missiles and enemy fighter aircraft.



Cai Hong

With China in mind, Japan wants to strengthen cooperation with the US military. Aegis warships and E-2D airborne early warning aircraft of US forces stationed in Japan have already been equipped with CEC. *Maya* is set to be commissioned around March 2020.

Since March, Japan's government and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) have showed interest in converting the Japanese helicopter carrier *Izumo* into an aircraft carrier for fighter jets.

The LDP has recently called for introducing a "multipurpose aircraft carrier" in its proposals for the new National Defense Program Guidelines for fiscal 2019-23 Japanese government plans.

Japan has a defense policy called nonaggressive national security policy, or *senshu boei* in Japanese. Japan's successive governments have stuck to the position that the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution bans Japan from possessing offensive aircraft carriers, intercontinental ballistic missiles or long-range strategic bombers.

If the *Izumo* were converted, *The Asahi Shimbun* said in an editorial, it would be an aircraft carrier with highly enhanced offensive capabilities. And Japan's gradual shift away from its defense-only principle could result in an arms race with its neighbors.

Japan has several major defense procurement programs in progress.

The country mulls spending 466.4 billion yen (\$4.2 billion) to deploy the Aegis Ashore system manufactured by Lockheed Martin. It wants to deploy the Aegis Ashore units at its Ground Self-Defense Force's maneuvering grounds in Akita prefecture in northern Japan and in Yamaguchi prefecture on Honshu to counter potential missile strikes from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and China.

The advanced radar system has a range of about 1,000 kilometers. Japan's defense ministry has announced that the planned Aegis Ashore ground-based missile defense system will be equipped with state of the art solid-state radar, also produced by Lockheed

Martin. The Aegis Ashore is expected to start operations in fiscal 2025.

Japan continues to deem the DPRK as a threat, though the DPRK's leader Kim Jong-un recently met with US President Donald Trump.

All three branches of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) plan to jointly operate the RQ-4 Global Hawk unmanned reconnaissance aircraft from fiscal 2021, in a bid to monitor security situations, including military moves by China and the DPRK.

The next defense program is expected to include the introduction of the joint operation system that would include some 150 personnel. The SDF's existing joint units are currently limited to groups in charge of areas including cyber defense and preventing intelligence leaks.

The *Sankei Shimbun* reported that Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force is currently examining a plan to purchase transport ships independent of the MSDF to transport men and materiel to the nation's southwestern islands in an emergency.

The plan would also see the vessels prepositioning materiel to support the ground force's response to emergency and "gray zone" scenarios.

Japan's defense-related expenditures in fiscal 2018, including costs related to the realignment of US military bases, totaled 5.2 trillion yen, marking an all-time high. Defense spending has been on the

rise since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe returned to power in late 2012.

According to data compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, military spending rose by 1.1 percent worldwide in 2017 to \$1.74 trillion. US spending remained the highest in the world, amounting to \$610 billion, followed by China, Saudi Arabia and Russia. Japanese spending was roughly \$45.4 billion, the eighth highest spender.

During a meeting of the Upper House's Budget Committee in March 2017, Abe pledged to secure the budget necessary to efficiently maintain national defense in light of the current security environment in the Asia-Pacific region. He added that he did not think it necessary to keep defense spending below 1 percent of GDP.

The 1 percent limit was established through a cabinet decision made by the administration of prime minister Takeo Miki in 1976 to prevent Japan becoming a military superpower. In 1987, the Yasuhiro Nakasone administration abolished the official limit, but it remains a powerful unspoken ceiling for the country's defense spending.

The Abe administration has proposed major changes in Japan's defense policy, designed to shift Japan away from an isolated, pacifistic defense posture to a more dynamic one based on bilateral and even multilateral relationships.

To strengthen cooperation

between Japan's SDF and the armies of Canada and France, Tokyo signed an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement with Ottawa and Paris.

The Canadian government announced in a statement that the deal would allow both countries to make efficient use of each other's military equipment during operations and exercises in Canada, Japan, and other locations.

According to a statement by the French Ministry of the Armed Forces, the agreement is aimed at "strengthening interoperability, reducing the cost of mutual support services between our armies, and facilitating, in the long term, joint military interactions".

At the so-called two-plus-two meeting between Japanese and Russian foreign and defense ministers in Moscow on July 31, Russia expressed concerns about Japan's plan to deploy the Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defense system.

Russia has long contended that the Aegis Ashore system is a direct national security concern because it is part of the US plan to deploy a missile defense system in Asia.

With all these developments, Japan's new defense program will attract a lot of attention, as a means of gauging the country's defense-related policy trends.

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US could trigger arms race

Washington's rise in defense spending may prompt other nations to counter American military supremacy

By ZAMIR AHMED AWAN

On Aug 1, the United States Congress approved at record speed the defense budget for the year 2019. The bill, which earmarked a total budget of \$717 billion, making it the biggest in more than 40 years, included a 2.6 percent military pay increase.

Increase in salaries may incentivize Americans to join the armed forces, but most of the budget will go toward research and development, and the acquisition of weapons and ammunition. Acquisition of weapons and ammunition means further destruction of humanity.

Every country has its own armed forces, but limits them to specific requirements such as defensive

needs or to some extent for deterrence purposes, but when a country does not shy away from striking other nations far away, then you need an obvious superiority of military capabilities, which is why the US needs to increase its defense budget.

The increased spending, however, might have an impact on the rest of the world. Definitely, the increase in the US' defense budget is target oriented, and the targeted nations may also need to respond in a similar manner.

That may lead to another arms race in the world.

Any arms race is a direct threat to human life. Civilized nations, and individuals, condemn the loss of human life in any part in the world.

China has been a victim of coloni-

zation and has suffered a lot, but it decided to live in peace and spend all its energies on development. As a result, China has pulled 700 million people out of poverty and the nation has developed overall.

The quality of life in China is much better than that of many countries in the West. The purchasing power and lifestyle in China has led many to wonder about China's development.

There must be several reasons for China's rapid development, such as a visionary leadership, a hard-working nation, reforms and attractive policies. But I believe the Chinese approach of working toward peace has been instrumental in its development.

China has forgotten all disputes with its neighbors and other

nations. All their energies have been focused on nation development. The economy was the main focus, and welfare of the common man was the priority. As a result, China has emerged as the second-largest economy and a geopolitical world power.

The China-led Belt and Road Initiative is a message of "peace, harmony and development". Under the initiative, connectivity, trade and interaction among nations are promoted. It is a peaceful means for economic development.

Recognition of the Belt and Road Initiative is increasing worldwide. Around 80 countries have already joined the initiative; the latest inclusions are Nepal in June, and Senegal in July.

Pakistan has supported the Belt

and Road since its inception and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is the pilot project of the initiative. It is being executed smoothly and its early-harvest projects are being enjoyed by Pakistan and China as well. It is a role model and the rest of the world may follow its example.

The world is in dire need of peace, economic development and social welfare. The world may rethink and focus on humanity. It is expected that big countries may show the lead and set examples for others.

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