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Shinzo Abe's legacy: How did Japan's longest-serving Prime Minister Reshape the Course of Japan's Security Policy[∇]?

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Abstract

Despite having left the office in September 2020, Shinzo Abe's legacy will most likely continue to dictate Japan's foreign and security policy for years to come. Throughout his long tenure, Shinzo Abe progressively, by employing multifaceted approaches, succeeded in changing Japan's prolonged tradition of pursuing pacifist policies. Building on long-term trends of reforms, Shinzo Abe made those reforms an integral part of Japan's political agenda when he assumed power as prime minister in December 2012. The contemporary global and regional challenges that Japan has faced during the last few years prompted the Shinzo Abe administration to accelerate and expand the transformation of Japan's prolonged tradition of following pacifistic approaches in the global arena as those traditions were restricting Japan from undertaking an active role internationally. Shinzo Abe sought to loosen the shackles that restricted his country's security policies and hindered its ability to assume a more active role in international politics since the end of the Second World War. Abe's approach took the shape of institutional and legislation revisions, a reinterpretation of constitutional articles, deepening bilateral and multilateral relations and alliances, and increasing Japan's military capabilities. Despite the fact that Shinzo Abe's policies were of transformational nature, they can be positioned within a long string of incremental adjustments that shifted Japan's foreign and security policy from pacifism toward more 'assertive' and realistic trajectories.

Keywords: Shinzo Abe, Japan's security policy, Asia-Pacific, Proactive-pacifism

Introduction:

Although the longest-serving Japanese prime minister left his office in September 2020, Shinzo Abe's legacy will most likely continue to dictate Japan's foreign and security policy for years to come. Throughout his long tenure, Shinzo Abe progressively, by employing

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multifaceted approaches, succeeded in changing Japan's prolonged tradition of pursuing pacifist policies. Building on long-term trends of reforms, Shinzo Abe made those reforms an integral part of Japan's political agenda upon getting into the office of the prime minister in late 2012.[1] In this paper, we **argue that the contemporary global and regional challenges facing Japan prompted the Shinzo Abe administration to accelerate and expand the transformation of long-followed pacifistic approaches because those traditions were restricting Japan from undertaking an active role internationally**. Abe's measures took the shape of institutional and legislation revisions, a reinterpretation of constitutional articles, deepening bilateral and multilateral relations and alliances, and increasing Japan's military capabilities.

Research Questions:

How did Shinzo Abe change the face of Japan's security policy over the course of his tenure? What were the rationales behind Abe's proactive pacifism strategy?

Research Hypothesis:

Japan's security policy witnessed a sea change during the premiership of the late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The transformation of Japan's security and defense policies was prompted by the changes in the regional security environment.

Research Methodology:

A review of existing academic literature is used throughout this study to identify perspectives and interpretations, and major debates.

Research Structure:

This research is structured into several segments and parts. The first segment discusses Japan's foreign policy in the aftermath of the Second World War. The second part of the paper

[1] Sebastian Maslow., 'A blueprint for a strong Japan? Abe Shinzo¯ and Japan's Evolving Security System', *Asian Survey,* Vol. 55, Number 4, July/August 2015, pp. 763–764.

deals with the security and foreign policy of Japan in the wake of the Soviet Union implosion. The third part highlights Japan's security policy during the twenty-first century. Finally, the rest of the paper describes the structural, constitutional, and institutional shifts in Japan's policies that took place during the Abe era and what prompted those shifts.

Japan's Path Toward Pacifism During the Post-Second World War Era

Japan's post-second world war security policy cannot be understood without understanding the legacy of imperial Japan when Japan practiced bellicose foreign policy in the region. For almost a century, Japan expanded and got involved in wars, clashes, and even direct invasions of large swaths across the region. Countries like China, and South Korea, suffered from horrendous crimes and mass massacres committed by the Japanese imperial forces. Even the United States was targeted by Japan in 1941, which led the United States to get involved in WW2 along with allied forces, and eventually defeated and invaded Japan in 1945.[1] To rectify the legacy of imperial Japan and to assure Japan's neighboring countries, Japan's post second world war consecutive governments adopted pacifistic security approaches and concentrated their efforts on building Japan's economic prowess. Japan's new stand was known as the "Yoshida Doctrine", which was accredited to Japan's prime minister Shigeru Yoshida, who occupied the prime minister's office from 1948 till 1956. The core elements of the Yoshida Doctrine were the reliance on the United States of America to guarantee Japan's security on one hand, and the focus on building Japan's economic might.[2]

Other pacifistic features of Japan's foreign policy in the wake of WW2 were the enactment of a new pacifistic constitution, which renounced war as a means to settle struggles internationally and regionally.[3] Further, Japan limited military expenditure to one per cent of its Gross

[1] Kazuhiko Togo. ''Japan's Foreign Policy, 1945-2009: The Quest for a Proactive Policy'', Boston, NL: Brill, 2010, pp. 4-29.
[2] Yuichi Hosoya. ''The Rise and Fall of Japan's Grand Strategy: The "Arcof Freedom and Prosperity" and the Future Asian Order'', *Asia-Pacific Review*, 18:1, 2011, p. 14, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13439006.2011.582677>, retrieved 14 January 2021.
[3] Brittney Washington and Kangkyu David Lee, ''Abe's push to change Japan's defense strategy'', *Japan Today*, 30 April 2018< https://japantoday.com/category/politics/abe%E2%80%99s-push-to-change-japan%E2%80%99s-defense-strategy>, retrieved 17 January 2021.

Domestic Production. Additionally, Japan imposed a ban on the deployment of military forces overseas, and on the acquirement of nuclear weapons. Also, in alignment with the new pacifistic approach, Japan enacted a self-imposed embargo on weapons exports.[1]

The significance of the US-Japanese relations increased due to the rise of the global tension between the United States and the former Soviet Union during the cold war. Not long after the end of the second world war, the United States became Japan's main trade partner.[2] Japan gave the United States exceptional privileges, like the right to construct military basses inside Japan, in accordance with the terms of the 1951 peace treaty, which prohibited Japan from granting similar privileges to other countries unless the United States approves that.[3] Gradually, Japan started rebuilding its military forces, although they were defined as self-defense army this time. The rebuilding of the military forces divided the Japanese public opinion as part of the public opinion saw the necessity of this undertaking, whereas the idealist saw that the rearmament of the Japanese army is infringing upon Japan's pacifist constitution. In all, Japan's post second world war policy was predicated on two pillars: the reliance on the US to underwrite its security and focusing on fostering Japan's economic power.[4]

It did not take Japan long to emerge as an economic powerhouse regionally and globally. The newly acquired economic capabilities however were not matched to similar military ones. Some see that Japan's economic miracle would not have taken place, had not Japan's security been guaranteed by the United States. The freedom from assuming additional security duties allowed Japan to save immense financial costs that this kind of duties entail, and to shift the money to the process of reinvigorating Japan's economy.[5] It was not until the early nineteen-seventies that Japan started to seriously consider taking more security responsibilities upon itself. The

[1]Sebastian Maslow. ''A blueprint for a strong Japan? Abe Shinzo¯ and Japan's Evolving Security System', p. 743.
[2]David Potter. ''Evolution of Japan's Postwar Foreign Policy" Research Gate, 2008, p. 7,< https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237767319_Evolution_of_Japan's_Postwar_Foreign_Policy>, retrieved 17 January 2021.
[3] Kazuhiko Togo. ''Japan's Foreign Policy, 1945-2009 : The Quest for a Proactive Policy'',p. 53.
[4] Yutaka Kawashima., ''Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century''. New York, NY, US: Brookings Institution Press, 2003, p. 7.
[5] Kevin Cooney,'' Japan's Foreign Policy Since 1945'', Armonk, US: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2007, p. 36.

new outlook was prompted by the shifts in the US policies in the region, specifically when the Nixon administration decided to open up on China in 1972.[1]

The second motive behind Japan's reappraisal of its security policy was the Arab-Israeli war in 1973. When the United States sided with Israel and provided it with huge military support, Arab oil exports responded by banning oil shipments to the United States and its main allies. This decision affected Japan's economy harshly because of Japan's reliance on Middle Eastern oil as the main source of energy. Japan's vulnerability to political crises and shocks beyond its border had shown its decision-makers the necessity of naturality and the risks of overreliance on the United States. Together, the Nixon shock and the Arab oil embargo set into motion the incremental transformation of Japan's foreign policy from post-war pacifist policies.

Throughout the following two decades, Japan started to adopt more active roles that took the shape of expanding bilateral and multilateral relations and joining regional and international treaties and forums. The new doctrine was translated effectively in 1978 when Japan started participating in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meetings plus three, which included South Korea and China. As of 1980, Japan became part of the ASEAN regional forum and Asia-Pacific Economic Corporation. Both of these entities are involved in economic and security matters. Also, Japan utilized financial aid and investment to expand its political sway overseas. Thus, it is safe to say that this era represented the real beginning of the shifts and changes in Japanese security policies.

The Effects Soviet Union's Implosion and Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait on Japan's Foreign Policy.

The early 1990s represented a turning point for Japan's foreign policy. The changes in the international geopolitical landscape affected the dynamic of Japan's security policy significantly.

[1], Richard Douglas., 'The Nixon "shocks": implications for Japan's foreign policy in the 1970s'', Unpublished master's thesis, Portland State University, 1972, pp. 58-59,< http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2573&context=open_access_etds>, retrieved 19 January 2021.

The seismic collapse of the former Soviet Union had a direct implication for Japan. First, the implosion of the Soviet Union speeded up the decline of the leftist and communist role in Japanese political life. The absence of those parties gave the conservative parties a domination and control inside the Japanese parliament and thus more ability to legislate laws and bills to remove the shackles that restrict Japan from practicing an active role globally.[1] Secondly, the disintegration of the Soviet Union meant the disappearance of the communist threat, which was the glue that was holding the US-Japanese relationship together. The political discourse inside Japan started to speculate about the possibility of the diminishment of the US commitment toward the alliance between the two countries.[2]

However, nothing has given momentum to the process of changing Japan's foreign policy like the crisis in the gulf, which followed the Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait in the summer of 1990. Until then, Japan was known for its "chequebook diplomacy", in which Japan used financial aid to gain status and leverage. During the Gulf War, Japan contributed a large sum of money, which was estimated around $14 billion. Despite the colossal donation, Japan's donation was looked down upon by the United States. The latter believed that Japan should have participated in the military efforts to liberate Kuwait in a way that is commensurate with Japan's status, especially given the significance of the gulf oil to the global economy in general, and to Japan's economy in particular.[3]

Japan was torn between US pressure to do more, and the categorical public rejection of the participation, which was translated into mass protests sweeping the Japanese streets. Japan's constitution is clear on not allowing sending military forces on combat missions overseas unless it was an act of self-defence. Eventually, Japan circumvented the constitutional obstacle by claiming that the security of the gulf is part of its security and ended up dispatching a small naval task force, something that did not happen ever since the end of WW2.[4]

[1] Potter, David., 2008, p.11.
[2] Ibid, 2008, pp. 11-12.
[3] Kevin Cooney. ''Japan's Foreign Policy since 1945.'' Armonk, US: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2007, p. 38.
[4] Ibid, p. 40.

A series of laws revisions and legislation enactments ensued the gulf crisis and throughout the next decade. All aimed to give Japan more leeway to engage with outside world problems actively. The 1992 legislation permitted sending troops to join peacekeeping missions for humanitarian purposes under the direct leadership of the United Nations.[1] In 1995 and 1998, consecutively, new laws related to the deployment of the Japanese self-defence forces in missions outside the country were introduced. Both of these laws however emphasized that any military deployment must not occur during an ongoing conflict, and it should strictly happen when a peace agreement is reached. Japan's participation in peacekeeping missions in places like Kosovo and Mozambique would not have happened had not been for this set of law revisions.[2]

9/11 Terrorist Attacks and the Uptick in the Pattern of Gradual Change of Japan's Security Policy

Upon the turn of the century, the world was changing rapidly around Japan. Japanese foreign policymakers had to adapt to the new geopolitical environment that was induced by the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001. After those attacks, the United States needed a more active course of action from its allies to help in its global war on terror. Japan, as a historical ally of the United States, started to alter its security strategy in a way in which it can provide the needed assistance in combating terrorism.[3] Yet the constitutional restrictions that prevent Japan from practicing a more active role in fighting terrorism were still in place. The first measure that the government of Koizumi Junichiro took was granting the prime minister more powers, along with the legislation of the "Anti-Terrorism Measures Law".[4] The new measures and authorities allowed Japan to provide logistical support for the US troops in Afghanistan, and to dispatch a reconstruction contingent to Iraq in 2003. By participation in the US wars,

[1] Togo, Kazuhiko., pp. 388-389.
[2] Kevin, p. 46 & Togo, K., p. 391.
[3] Matthew Funaiole, ''Conceptualizing Japan's Foreign Policy Trajectory Through Social Identity Theory'', *East Asia,* December 2015, Volume 32, Issue 4, p. 369,< http://link.springer.com.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/article/10.1007/s12140-015-9249-z>, retrieved 2 February 2021.
[4] Funaiole, Matthew.,2015, p.373.

Japan crossed a psychological barrier that was restricting it from assuming any security responsibilities internationally.[1]

Japan's domestic political climate was becoming increasingly more accepting of the notion of engaging in international affairs, even if this engagement requires the deployment of the Japanese Self-defense forces. The inclination to amend the Japanese legislation in a way that helps Japan to become a proactive international player transcended partisan politics. Both of the major Japanese political parties, the Liberal Democratic party which formed the government in 2006 and again in 2012, and the Democratic Party of Japan, which led the government from 2009 and 2012, maintain the same stance as for Japan's assuming a leading role in its region and the rest of the world. In fact, it was under the leadership of the Democratic Party of Japan, the Japanese military base in Djibouti was opened up, a precedence that has never taken place since 1945.[2]

Making Japan a Normal State Again Through Proactive Pacifism: The Strategic Imperatives Behind Shinzo Abe's New Approach

For almost a half-century since the end of the second world war, Japan's conduct in the economic and strategic spheres was dubbed as reactive. That is, Japan does not take initiative as much as it responds to events from the outside word.[3] One of the first politicians that diagnosed and worked on rectifying this 'defect' was the late Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, who came back to power in 2012. In his second tenure, the first was in 2006, Abe declared that Japan's new approach will be what he named "proactive pacifism'.[4]

Shinzo Abe's new approach was built on a three-decade trend of incremental changing in Japan's security policy. However, what distinguished Abe's attempts from the previous ones

[1] Micheal Auslin, 'Japan's new realism: Abe gets tough', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 2, March/April 2016, p. 128.
[2] Ibid, p. 376.
[3] Kent E. Calder, "Japanese Foreign Economic Policy Formation: Explaining the Reactive", *World Politics*, Vol.40, No. 4, 1988, p. 518, < http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010317?origin=JSTOR-pdf&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>, retrieved 4 February 2021.
[4] Maslow, S., p. 740.

was the institutionalization of the transformation of Japanese foreign policy. That is, Shinzo Abe realized that for Japan to practice a more active role internationally, new security institutions and legislation should emerge. Theses security bodies would allow any Japanese government to circumvent the constitutional constraints that restrict Japan's foreign conduct, especially as the challenges and threats of the regional and international environments require rapid and studied responses.

Shinzo Abe's rise to power coincided with the rise of China and its increasingly assertive conduct in the region. The Korean ballistic missile and its nuclear capabilities were posing a serious threat to Japan. Finally, the US oscillation and the growing isolationist tendency among the consecutive US administrations worried Japan that it would be abandoned by its main powerful ally.

First of all, China's economic and military might has increased exponentially over the last few decades. Should china continue this economic and military growth rate, it will be well positioned to play a hegemon role in the Asia-pacific region within the foreseeable future. Once in this place, China will try to change existing rules-based system and might disrupt the free navigation in the region waterways, and consequently threaten Japan's interests.[1]

In addition, Japan's nationalization of the disputed group of uninhabited islands known by Japan as Seenkaku and by China as Diaoyudao in 2012 caused the rise of the tension between the two countries. China increased its military activities in the territories around those islands and declaring vast segments of the South China Sea as Chinees sovereigns.

Another challenge that China poses to the Japanese interests is the threat to the freedom of navigation in regional and international waterways across the Indo Pacific region. China has already started building artificial islands across the disputed waterways of the South China Sea. The militarization of those islands by basing weapons, artillery, radars, and aircraft runways

[1] Alex Ward, "The rise of Japanese militarism: What the growth and change of Japan's armed forces means for the world", *VOX*, April 30 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2019/4/30/18100066/japan-shinzo-abe-sdf-emperor-china>, retrieved 11 February 2021.

indicates that China may deploy its military might to disrupt the freedom of navigation in a region where the third of the world shipping trade flows through.[1] Japan's decision-makers are aware that even though the United States is obligated to defend Japan in the event of being attacked, this kind of obligation might not be enforced if China's aggression on Japan took the shape border skirmishes.[2]

In the end, Japanese decision-makers don't hold out much hope about a futuristic change in China's conduct toward Japan because of China's military superiority over Japan, and because China's leaders are investing in the enmity between the two countries to fuel jingoism amongst the Chinese people, and to shift the public attention from the corruption of the Chinese officials.[3]

Furthermore, although the United States declared its plan to 'repivot' to Asia in 2011, Shinzo Abe feared that a decline in the US power might lead to an eventual withdrawal from the region and therefore an abandonment of Japan. The US withdrawal from the Middle East, the non-interference after the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, and the isolationist stance of the Trump administration all contributed in feeding Abe's fears that the United States security guarantee won't last forever.[4]

If anything, the election of President Donald Trump, whose America First agenda prioritized the US interests over the interests of its allies, accentuated Japan's concerns. Even before coming to office, President Trump was determined on renegotiating and revising the US bilateral and multilateral economic and strategic partnership agreements.[5] The Trump administration believed

[1] Sam Ellis, ''Why China is building islands in the South China Sea," *Vox*, Febrauray 17 2017, < https://www.vox.com/videos/2017/2/17/14642818/china-south-china-sea-us-islands>, retrieved 25 February 2021.
[2] Ibid, p. 10.
[3] Ibid, p. 10.
[4] Titli Basu, ''Japan's Strategic Calculations: Constraints and Responses'', *Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses*, 17 January 2019, < https://idsa.in/issuebrief/japan-strategic-calculations-titlibasu-18119>, retrieved 25 February 2021.
[5] William Sposato, "Japan regrets trusting Trump on Trade", *Foreign Policy*, December 5 2019, < https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/05/tokyo-abe-japan-regrets-trusting-trump-on-trade/>, retrieved 25 February 2021.

that the United States has for long been exploited by its allies, and Japan is one of those countries that ''freeride'' the United States by not contributing enough toward its own defence.[1] The Trump administration sought to secure better economic and security concessions from Japan through revisiting and revising the existing deals.[2] Accordingly, the US military protection that the US provides to Japan started to become increasingly conditioned upon Japan's willingness to prop up its financial commitments to the United States, which could undermine the durability of the US–Japan alliance and has pushed Japan further to rethink its strategic and security policies.[3]

On the other hand, during Abe's tenure, the North Korean threat to Japan increased. North Korea's long-range missile capabilities along with the ability of these missiles to carry nuclear heads have developed over the course of the last few decades. North Korea's leadership unpredictable conduct presented another challenge for Japan.[4] The last US–North Korean direct negotiations and presidential summits between the two sides worried Japan. The latter fears that the United States could reach a deal with North Korea that does not include a process of gradual denuclearization of North Korea. [5]

Abe's Three-pronged Strategy:

Shinzo Abe's strategy to address Japan's international and regional challenges took three directions. The first approach was the revision and enactment of laws and legislations and the

[1] Lully Miura, ''How Trump forced Japan to take security into its own hands'', *This Week in Asia*, 13 January 2019, < https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/2181764/how-trump-forced-japan-take-security-its-own-hands>, retrieved 25 February 2021.
[2] Right after his election, the US president Donald Trump withdrew from the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement, which was supposed to consolidate the US economic and strategic relations with the Asia-Pacific nations, including Japan. See, Mireya Solís, ''U.S.-Japan relations in the era of Trump: Navigating the turbulence of "America First", *Brookings,* September 3 2019, < https://www.brookings.edu/articles/us-japan-relations-in-the-era-of-trump/>, retrieved 1 March 2021.
[3] Jeff Kingston, ''Japan's warship deployment could push a pacifist country into conflict'', *The Guardian*, 3 January 2021, < https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/03/japan-warship-deployment-conflict-shinzo-abe-donald-trump>, retrieved 15 March 2021.
[4] Sakakim, A., 2015, p. 10.
[5] Robbie Gramer, ''Hanoi Summit Has Tokyo Feeling Left Out'', *Foreign Policy*, February 26 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/26/hanoi-summit-has-tokyo-feeling-left-out-japan-north-korea-shinzo-abe-kim-jong-un-nuclear-deal-trump-asia-security-denuclearization/>, retrieved 25 March 2021.

establishment of new security bodies. The second pillar of Abe's strategy was expanding and fostering Japan's relationships both bilaterally and multilaterally. Finally, Shinzo Abe's proactive pacifist strategy focused on beefing up Japan's military prowess.[1]

First: Reshaping Japan's Security Institutions and Laws

It is worth mentioning that Abe's attempts to amend Japan's security policy started during his first term from 2006-2007. Once in office, the newly elected prime minister commissioned an advisory group, which then came to be known as the ***Yanai Commission***, to reconsider Japan's right of collective self-defence.[2] In 2008, the commission concluded that Japan's existing policies threaten not only the U.S.-Japan alliance but also Japan's security, and it recommended that Japan should revise Article 9 of the constitution in order for Japan to become able to exercise its right of collective self-defence and to help its allies when they are under attack.[3]

When Shinzo Abe was re-elected in December 2012, his cabinet initiated a series of institutional restructuring and legal reforms pertinent to Japan's national security. First, Shinzo Abe, having failed to revise Article 9 of the constitution during his first term, tried to revise Article 96 that stipulates the provisions required to revise the constitution.[4] Again, Abe's efforts to revise Article 96 failed. After those attempts, Abe realized that the policy of revising the constitution is a hard sell to the Japanese public. Therefore, he believed a less controversial

[1] As a part of his electoral campaign, Abe declared that "Japan is back", and Japan ''is not now and will never be a tier two nation''. See, Maslow, S., p. 751.

[2] Ian E. Rinehart, ''Collective Self-Defense and US-Japan Security Cooperation'', *East-West Center Working Papers*, No. 24, October 2013, p. 13 <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/system/tdf/private/pswp024.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=34298>, retrieved 10 April 2021.

[3] The Yanai Commission's findings were met by public opposition and the ensued pushback forced prime minister Shinzo Abe to resign abruptly in December 2007. See, Brittney Washington and Kangkyu "David" Lee, ''Abe's push to change Japan's defense strategy'', *Japan Today*, April 30, 2018, < https://japantoday.com/category/politics/abe%E2%80%99s-push-to-change-japan%E2%80%99s-defense-strategy>, retrieved in 10 April 2021.

[4] The requirements are a two-thirds majority in both houses of the Diet, and a majority vote in a national referendum. See, Brittney Washington and Kangkyu "David" Lee, Ibid.

policy would be a 'reinterpretation' of the constitution that allows Japan's self-defence force to be deployed when Japan's interests are threatened. [1]

Accordingly, in 2014, not only did Abe reconvened the above-mentioned ***Yanai Commission,*** but also hired a new general director to the **Cabinet Legislative Bureau,** a government agency that advises the cabinet members on drafting legislation and bills.[2] The Yanai commission recommendation was that Japan needs to reinterpret Article 9 in a way that allows Japan's defence force to exercise collective self-defence because it is facing new and increasing challenges from North Korea and China.[3] The recommendation was approved by the Cabinet Legislative Bureau, leading the Japanese government to overturn the interpretation of Article 9, and allowing Japan to exercise collective self-defence for the first time since WW2.[4]

Moreover, in December 2013, and despite the mass popular opposition, the National Diet of Japan legislated the ''**State Secrecy Protection law**'' which stated that the government has the right to designate 23 types of information, including diplomacy, counter-terrorism, and defence, as ''special state secrets''.[5] It was reported that the impetus behind the enactment of this law was a request from the United States as previous incidents of sensitive information leaking occurred in Japan.[6]

Moreover, in December 2013, Abe's government created the **National Security Council** "NSC", an institution similar to the one that exists in the US political system. Japan's National Security Council is consisted of the prime minister, a chairman, chief cabinet secretary, and the ministers of defence and foreign affairs.[7] The new body effectually enabled the prime minister to gain more influence over the country's strategy by overcoming bureaucratic obstacles.

[1] Ibid.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Maslow, S, p. 755.
[6] Mina Pollmann, ''Japan's Controversial State Secrets Law: One Year Later'', *The Diplomat*, December 9 2014, < https://thediplomat.com/2015/12/japans-controversial-state-secrets-law-one-year-later/>, retrieved 7 April 2021.
[7] Maslow, S, p. 753.

Besides, the secretary of the National Security Council plays an important role in coordinating security cooperation with Japan's allies, specifically the United States.[1]

Another significant step undertaken during Shinzo Abe's second term was the adoption of the **National Security strategy** in 2013. This strategy stated that the geopolitical landscape of the region is changing due to the rise of China and the U.S retrenchment. Accordingly, Japan must "strengthen its defence capabilities and seek a larger regional role as a balancer of this power shift."[2] However, the new concept this strategy presented was the "**proactive pacifism**' policy. This policy means that Japan will "actively contribute to international security instead of merely reacting to events as it has done in the past".[3]

The Shinzo Abe administration also revisited the laws and legislation that were perceived as constraining Japan from practicing an active role on the global stage. For instance, in April 2014, both the 1967 and 1976 **bans** on arms exports were lifted.[4] In the same vein, Japan's parliament enacted a historical, although extremely controversial amendment that gives Japan the right to "assist allies whose forces or territory are under attack and provide logistical support to countries engaged in a military operation that does not directly concern Japan."[5]

Second: Strengthening Japan's Bilateral and Multilateral Security Arrangements and Expanding its Global Engagement.

The second pillar upon which Abe's strategy was predicated was fostering Japan's bilateral and multilateral security and defence coordination in a variety of areas with the United States and other partners within and outside the Asia-Pacific region. Japan's engagement in regions extending from the Western Pacific to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean was broadened exponentially since Abe came to the office. This expansion of Japan's strategic horizon was prompted by the regional and global power shift resulting from the rise of China

[1] Alexandra Sakakim, 2015, p. 12.
[2] Ibid, p. 758.
[3] Sakakm, A., 2015, p. 16
[4] Maslow, S., p. 763.
[5] Auslin, M., p. 130.

and the threat this rise poses to the freedom of navigation in international water, which has been so far guaranteed by the existing rules-based international order.[1] According to Tomohiko Satake, Japan's security approach to countries in the Indo-Pacific region has three aspects: first, strengthening Japan's presence in maritime Asia through extensive participation in drills and exercises, second, expanding the partner countries' capabilities, and finally, sharing the norms and principles of freedom of navigation and peaceful solution of conflicts.[2]

As the main historical ally of Japan, the Shinzo Abe government did broaden and deepen its alliance with the United States through a variety of measures. Japan's new National Security Strategy asserts the indispensability of the US-Japanese alliance for the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region[3]. ''In April 2015, Tokyo and Washington upgraded their ties for the first time since 1997, announcing that they would start cooperating more closely on maritime security and regional stability''.[4] Japan's new national security policy documents, especially the **National Defense Program Guidelines**, emphasize the importance of the ''seamless cooperation'' with the United States, even in the events of incidents in the "grey zones"*, and on the responsibility of Japan to ensure the "smooth and effective stationing" of US troops''.[5] The National Defence programme Guidelines were revised in 2018. The new document broadened the extent of the US-Japan cooperation in defence and security matters. The revision of the guidelines has shown Japan's desire to expand the cooperation to include ''

[1] Tomohiko Satake, ''Expanding Strategic Horizon'', in *East Asian Strategic Review* 2017 (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies), 2017, p.237, < http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/pdf/2017/east-asian_e2017_08.pdf>, retrieved 13 April 2021.
[2] Tomohiko Satake, ibid, p. 237.
[3] Sakakim, Alexandra., 2015, p.26
[4] M. Ausli, p. 133.
* The term gray zones does not refer to particular territories or locations; rather, it means using tactics that although they are not wartime activities, they are still aggressive and have consequential effect in terms of the gradual undermining of the status quo in the Asia-pacific region. See, Denny Roy, "China's Strategy to Undermine the U.S. in Asia: Win in the 'Gray Zone,'" *The National Interest*, September 18, 2015, < https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/chinas-strategy-undermine-the-us-asia-win-the-gray-zone-13874>, retrieved 13 April 2021.
[5] A. Sakiki, p. 26.

space and cyber domains, comprehensive air and missile defense, bilateral training and exercises, bilateral ISR operations, and bilateral flexible deterrence options''.[1]

In addition to fostering its ties with the United States, Japan reinforced its relationships with Australia and India and Southeast Asia countries. Abe's administration relaunched the political and security dialogue with Australia, India, and the United States. This dialogue, which is a part of an initiative to create a liberal community in the region, was stopped in 2007 when Abe's left his office.[2] When Abe was reelected, he called upon India, Australia, and the US to'' form a "security diamond" to jointly safeguard the maritime commons stretching from these countries and the Indian Ocean region to the western Pacific''.[3]

Japan's relationship with Australia during Shinzo Abe tenure was particularly significant in terms of maintaining a US-centric regional order comprising both security and trade.[4] Both Australia and Japan rely heavily on the support of their common ally, the United States. Furthermore, not only are the two countries worried about the demise of their main ally's influence across the Indo Pacific region, they are also concerned that the Chinese growing assertiveness in the east and South China seas is threatening the freedom of navigation in the international waters. Therefore, Japan and Australia agreed about the significance of maintaining a rules-based international system and the need to sustain open and free navigation of international and regional waterways.

In 2014, Shinzo Abe administration elevated Japan bilateral ties with Australia to ''special strategic relationship''. Throughout Shinzo Abe premiership Japanese-Australian relationships

[1] James L. Schoff & Sayuri Romei, "The New National Defense Program Guidelines: Aligning U.S. and Japanese Defense Strategies for the Third Post-Cold War Era", *Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA,* May 7 2019, p.3, <https://spfusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Japan%E2%80%99s-New-National-Defense-Program-Guidelines-Aligning-U.S.-and-Japanese-Defense-Strategies.pdf>, retrieved 20 April 2021.

[2] David Lang, "The not-quite-quadrilateral Australia, Japan and India", *Strategic Insights,* July 2015,< https://www.aspi.org.au/publications/the-not-quite-quadrilateral-australia,-japan-and-india/SI92_Australia_Japan_India.pdf>, retrieved 20 April 2021.

[3] Tomohiko Satake, ibid, p. 241.

[4] H. D. P. Envall, "The 'Abe Doctrine': Japan's new regional realism", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* Volume 20, 2018 p. 16, < https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcy014>, retrieved 28 April 2021

focused on several strategic avenues such as transferring defense equipment and military technology, conducting exercises and military drills, and intelligence-sharing agreements [1]. The first implementation of Shinzo Abe's adopted principles towards exporting Japanese manufactured weapons was supposed to be building a fleet of submarines worth fifty billion dollars for the Australian Navy. However, the plan fell through when Australia opted for contracting France to accomplish this undertaking.[2] On the other hand, since building capacities of like-minded nations across the region was one salient aspect of Abe's strategy, Japan worked closely with Australia to help ASEAN members, especially in the area of nontraditional security.[3]

Japan's relationship with India was boosted at an exponential rate, not least because Japan's prime minister and India's prime minister shared deep personal chemistry.[4] During his first term in 2007, Shinzo Abe promoted the concept of the ''arc of Freedom and Prosperity'' which revolved around the idea of a global partnership between Japan and India.[5] Shinzo Abe, during his second administration, reiterated and expanded his vision of security arrangements that cover the Pacific and Indian oceans, which included other countries, along with Japan, like

[1] Benjamin Schreer, ''Australia's special strategic relationship' with Japan: another 'China choice'?'', *Australian Journal of International Affairs,* 13 October 2015, p.38 < https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10357718.2015.1058340>, retrieved 2 May 2021

[2] In late 2021, Australia called off the submarine construction deal with France and signed a contract with the United States and the United Kingdom to build nuclear-powered submarines instead. Tory Shepherd, Australia tore up French submarine contract 'for convenience' Naval Group says'', *the Guardian*, 29 September 2021, < https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/29/australia-tore-up-french-submarine-contract-for-convenience-naval-group-says>, retrieved 2 May 2021.

[3] Japan's bilateral and trilateral, along with the United States, military exercises became more regular during Abe's reign, including combat operations, and anti-submarine warfare. The first bilateral fighter jet exercise, the Bushido Guardian, held between Japan and Australia did not take place until September 2019. See, Grant Wyeth, Japan and Australia Deepen Defense Ties, *The Dipolomat*, 25 November 2019, https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/japan-and-australia-deepen-defense-ties/>, retrieved 5 May 2021, & Renato de Castro, ''The Special Japan-Australia Strategic Partnership Within the Ambit of Democratic Security Diamond: Seeking Partnership with the Philippines in Maritime Security'', Stratbase ADR institute, p. 15 <https://www.scribd.com/document/366856077/The-Special-Japan-Australia-Strategic-Partnership-Within-the-Ambit-of-Democratic-Security-Diamond-Seeking-Partnership-With-the-Philippines-in-Maritim>, retrieved 2 May 2021.

[4] D. Lang, p. 2.

[5] Tomohiko Satake, p. 241.

India, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Singapore.[1] Japan, besides the United States and India, participated in the Malabar naval exercise hosted by India in 2015.[2]

Another region where Shinzo Abe emphasized greater interaction was Southeast Asia, represented in its main regional organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This significance of the ASEAN countries for Abe's administration lied in the role those countries were supposed to play in fulfilling Abe's vision of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, rules-based order, and Japan's proactive contribution to peace. In 2014, Shinzo Abe vowed that his country would "offer its utmost support for efforts by ASEAN member countries to ensure the security of the seas and skies and rigorously maintain freedom of navigation and overflight."[3] Japan used diplomatic, financial, and security approaches to foster its ties with key Southeast Asian countries, especially the states with whom China has had territorial and maritime disputes.[4]

On the diplomatic front, the first overseas visit Shinzo Abe made after returning to office was to Indonesia, where he declared the five principles of Japan's ASEAN diplomacy.[5] During his time in office, Shinzo Abe visited every single country of the ASEAN, an indication of the importance of these countries to Japan. Meetings between Japan's prime minister and

[1] Tomohiko Satake, p. 242.
[2] M. Auslin, p. 132.
[3] David Arase, ''Japan's Strategic Balancing Act in Southeast Asia'', *The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies*, Issue 2019, No. 94, November 2019, p. 2, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_94.pdf>, retrieved 22 June 2021.
[4] Phuong Nguyen, ''Southeast Asia Dances to the Tune of Japan's Abe Doctrine'', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 17 March 2016, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/southeast-asia-dances-tune-japan%E2%80%99s-abe-doctrine>, retrieved 22 August 2021.
[5] Shinzo Abe listed the principles that would guide Japan's regional diplomacy: "universal values"; governance of the maritime commons by "laws and rules, not by might"; networking to strengthen economic ties through "trade and investment, people and goods"; promotion of intercultural ties between Japan and the region; and promoting people-to-people exchanges among the next generation of leaders.'' See, James Przystup, and Tatsumi Yuki, ''The Foreign Policy of Abe Shinzo: Strategic Vision and Policy Implementation'', *The Asian Forum*, February 5th 2015, <http://www.theasanforum.org/the-foreign-policy-of-abe-shinzo-strategic-vision-and-policy-implementation/#4>, retrieved 7 September 2021.

ministers of defence with their counterparts in the ASEAN countries increased and became on a regular basis.[1]

Abe strengthened Japan's partnership with the ASEAN member states through financial measures like the Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Japan allocated a two trillion-yen ODA package to the ASEAN countries that included money for new forms of assistance: quality infrastructure, maritime patrol vessels, and support for the rule of law.[2] Furthermore, more than half of Japan's foreign direct investment in Asia goes to six countries, being Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, all of them are members of the ASEAN.[3]

Lastly, Shinzo Abe sought to build the capacity of the ASEAN countries to monitor and protect their maritime jurisdictions and rights. Japan's security and defence collaboration with the Southeast Asian states mainly took the shape of conducting a series of bilateral and multilateral drills, establishing operational routines, and providing technical and logistical assistance. In 2015, Japan and the Philippines conducted their first joint naval exercises, and in early 2016 signed an agreement that permitted Japan to transfer defense equipment and technology to the Philippines. In an alike manner, at the beginning of 2016, Japan and Vietnam conducted their first joint naval drills, one year after conducting their first joint Coast Guard exercise. [4]

In addition, the Abe administration signed a string of agreements with member states of the ASEAN that gave Japan a greater leeway to provide those states with military equipment. In 2015, Abe and Indonesian President Joko Widodo came to an agreement to increase maritime defense cooperation, with the possibility of the two countries to develop defense equipment in

[1] Nori Katagiri, ''Shinzo Abe's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Japan's recent achievement and future direction'', *Asian Security*, 16 May 2019, p. 12, < https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2019.1607304>, retrieved 29 September 2021.
[2] David Arase, ''Japan's Strategic Balancing Act in Southeast Asia'', p.3.
[3] Nori Katagiri, p. 13.
[4] Phuong Nguyen, 2016, ibid.

the future.[1] In 2016 and 2018, Japan signed with both Philippine and Malaysia, respectively, agreements on the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology.[2]

Finally, Shinzo Abe's outreach extended to include European countries, NATO, and the African continent. Japan concluded bilateral partnership and cooperation program, and with France and Britain, as Japan signed a military equipment and technology transfer agreement with the former and a defence agreement with the latter.[3] As for Africa, Abe realized that Japan needed to work with Africa "to make the seas that connect the two continents into peaceful seas that are governed by the rule of law."[4]

Third: beefing up Japan's military might

Finally, Abe's administration was determined to enhance Japan's military capabilities. Three main variables were driving the Shinzo Abe government's surge of military build-up. The first driver behind Japan expansion of its defence prowess is China's burgeoning military expansion and the Chinese assertive conduct in contested and disputed waterways. Second, the fact that North Korea nuclear and intercontinental missile threats are growing played a significant role in Japan's quest to ramp up its military capabilities. Thirdly, as Donald Trump came to office, the US pressure on Japan to acquire American military equipment and for Japan to assume security duties has increased, which put Abe's government under new pressure to meet the American demands[5]

[1] Phuong Nguyen, 2016, ibid.
[2] Japan donated 10 patrol boats, 13 high-speed boats and TC-90 training aircraft to the Philippine Coast Guard. Between 2014 and 2017, Japan provided Vietnam with second-hand ships, maritime security-related equipment, and six new patrol boats. Also in 2017, Japan provided Malaysia with two of its Ojika-class patrol boats, one of the world's largest patrol boats. See, Mie Oba, ''Post-Abe: Japan-ASEAN partnership crucial in navigating great power rivalry'', *Think China*, 7 September 2021,<https://www.thinkchina.sg/post-abe-japan-asean-partnership-crucial-navigating-great-power-rivalry>, retrieved 10 October 2021.
[3] M. Auslin, p. 132.
[4] Tomohiko Satake, p. 242.
[5] Milton Ezrati, ''Japan Accelerates Its Defense Buildup'', *The National Interests*, January 13 2019, < https://nationalinterest.org/feature/japan-accelerates-its-defense-buildup-41277>, retrieved 5 May 2021.

Consequently, Japan's defence budget increased annually since Abe assumed power ending ten years of defence budget cuts.[1] Abe government approved a record defence budget of 48.6 billion for the fiscal year 2021.[2] This budget ought provide the necessary financial resources to build up efficient amphibious capabilities that enable Japan to buttress its stand in the disputed Senkaku Islands.[3] In 2018, Japan's military structural reform manifested itself in the creation of the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB). The new naval body comprises two regiments and it is eventually set to include three regiments.[4] This brigade is tasked with defending Japan's remote islands. The ARDB is considered Japan's version of the U.S Marine Corps. The increasing Chinese assertiveness in the region's waterways seems to have prompted Japan's resolve to establish this military body. The ARBD will also have the ability to conduct a landing operation to retake Japanese territories should they fall under foreign occupation.

Another major development related to Japan's transformation of its military capabilities that took place during Shinzo Abe reign was Japan's quest to add aircraft carriers to its naval power. In 2018, Japan unveiled a plan to modify its own Izumo helicopter destroyers into full-fledged aircraft carriers so they accommodate its newly acquired F-35 fighters. The modification of the Izumo destroyer into an aircraft carrier will allow Japan to project power and use this carrier as a sea-based airport. This move is perceived as yet another step taken by the Shinzo Abe government which aimed to unshackle Japan from decades of pacifism.[5] Japan's constitution bans Japan from acquiring an attack aircraft carrier; however, Japan's Ministry of Defence assured that this carrier is to be used for defensive purposes only.[6]

[1] Franz-Stefan Gady "Japan Approves Record Defense Budget", *The Diplomat,* December 28, 2015,<http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/japan-approves-record-defense-budget/>, retrieved 5 October 2021.
[2] Robin Harding, "Japan to raise military spending to new record", *Financial Time,* December 20 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/9e897000-22ef-11ea-b8a1-584213ee7b2b>, retrieved 5 October 2021.
[3] Ibid,
[4] Franz-Stefan Gady, "US, Japan Conduct Amphibious Warfare Exercise", *The Diplomat*, 21 February 2021, < https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/us-japan-conduct-amphibious-warfare-exercise/>, counsulted 13 October 2021.
[5] Alex Ward, "The rise of Japanese militarism: What the growth and change of Japan's armed forces means for the world", *VOX*, April 30 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2019/4/30/18100066/japan-shinzo-abe-sdf-emperor-china>, retrieved 13 October 2021.
[6] Milton Ezrati, "Japan Accelerates Its Defense Buildup", *The National Interests*,

As a measure to counter China, Japan has plans to purchase RQ-40 Global Hawk long-distance drones. Not only that, but Japan aimed to foster its naval prowess by purchasing more anti-air missiles and anti-torpedo ammunition as well as standoff missiles.[1] Japan also planned to construct two new multipurpose, compact destroyers that can also sweep mines, which would bring the fleet escort force to a total of fifty-four vessels. Those efforts were accompanied by Japan's desire to procure a tanker to support the navy at sea, which is seen as evidence that Japanese naval power is going beyond coastal defense. In the same vein, the Ministry of Defense also seeks to acquire a new C-2 transport aircraft and six more UH-X helicopters specifically aimed at rapid deployment.[2]

The long shopping list of military equipment was a stark indication of a quest for structural change embarked by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. In a drastic change from its original plan, Japan is set to purchase some 147 F-35 fighters over the next few years instead of 42.[3] Furthermore, Japan declared that it was planning to build two new destroyers and arm Japan's submarine force with 22 modern diesel boats. Acquiring advanced surveillance drones and around 20 new maritime patrol planes, and updating Japan's ballistic missile warning systems and satellites, is part of the Japanese Defence minister plan.[4] Indeed, Japan's new military strategy is manifested in the Ministry of Defense long- run plans. By 2023, Japan aims "to convert seven out of the current 15 Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) brigades and divisions into mobile divisions and brigades that can be more easily transferred to the East China Sea in the event of a crisis".[5]

Conclusion

Shinzo Abe did indeed change the course and contours of Japan's foreign policy during his eight years in office, and his initiatives domestically and regionally will have long-lasting

[1] Milton Ezrati, Ibid.
[2] Milton Ezrati, Ibid.
[3] Milton Ezrati, Ibid.
[4] M. Auslin, p. 130.
[5] F. Gady, 2015.

security and strategic effects on Japan and the whole Asia-Pacific region. Japan's longest-serving prime minister sought to loosen the shackles that restricted his country's security policies and hindered its ability to assume a more active role in international politics since the end of the Second World War. Through a wide range of legislation revisions, constitutional reinterpretations, and institutional changes, compounded with upgrading military capabilities and deepening Japan's regional partnerships and security networks, Shinzo Abe succeeded in redefining Japan's global role in world affairs. Too many exogenous factors drove Shinzo Abe's efforts to redirect Japan's security strategy to become more active and responsive to the challenges produced by the rapidly changing regional and global geostrategic environment, such as the rise of China, the North Korean nuclear threat, and the vacillation of the US stance towards the region. Although Abe's efforts to change his country security strategy were profound and momentous in certain aspects, Japan's prime minister's approach was evolutionary and bearing features of continuity to the gradual departure of the pacifist post-war stance. The legacy of proactive contribution to peace and the framework and institutional bodies created by Shinzo Abe not only will be dictating and directing Japan's future leaders and Japan's foreign policy for years to come, but it will allow them to adopt more transformative policy shifts.