



Japan's Shifting Diplomatic Posture

For Prelims: [India-Japan Defence Exercises](#), G-20, [QUAD](#), G-4

For Mains: Significance of changing diplomatic posture of Japan, Challenges in India-Japan Relationship

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

In the recent past of changing geopolitics, the world is witnessing a turning point as Japan, long a symbol of post-war pacifism, strengthens its military capabilities. This transformation has the potential to significantly alter the balance of power in Asia and beyond.

What are the Key Facts About the Japan's Diplomatic Posture?

▪ Japan's Diplomatic Journey Before World War II:

◦ Seclusion (1600s-1850s):

- For over 200 years, Japan remained largely closed off from the world. This **policy of isolation aimed to preserve social order and prevent foreign influence.**

◦ Catching Up (1850s-1900s):

- The arrival of **Portuguese Commodore Perry's "Black Ships" in 1853** forced Japan out of its self-imposed seclusion. The Japanese government aimed to:
 - They **modernised the military and adopted Western technology** to become a strong nation.
 - Japan renegotiated previous treaties to regain control of its trade and foreign policy.

◦ Aggressive Stance (1900s-1930s):

- Despite its victories, Japan wasn't treated as a full equal by Western powers, particularly regarding racial equality (e.g., rejection of the racial equality clause in the Treaty of Versailles).
- This frustration with the West fueled a shift towards aggressive expansionism like the militaristic takeover of Manchuria in 1931, formed **the Axis Alliance before World War II etc.**
- This sense of disrespect and a desire to challenge the Western-dominated world order ultimately led Japan down a path of militaristic conquest that culminated in [World War II.](#)

▪ Japan's Diplomatic Journey After World War II:

- After the **defeat of Japan in World War II**, the United States led the Allies in the occupation and rehabilitation of the Japanese state. Thus, Japan embraced a **policy of pacifism.**
- Military spending was strictly limited, and the nation focused on rebuilding its economy. This strategy proved wildly successful, propelling [Japan](#) to become the world's second-largest economy by the 1970s.
- Over the recent decades, Japan has undergone a significant **shift in its diplomatic**

posture, moving away from strict post-war pacifism and towards a more assertive role on the world stage.

What Factors led Japan to Change its Diplomatic Posture?

- **External Factors:**
 - **China's Rise:** China's growing military power and **assertive claims in the East China Sea**, particularly regarding disputed territories like the [Senkaku Islands](#), have created a sense of urgency for Japan to strengthen its defences.
 - **North Korean Threat:** North Korea's continued **development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles** remains a major security concern for Japan.
 - **Uncertain US Commitment:** The **perceived erosion of US commitment to Asian security** under the Trump administration, along with the **rise of isolationist tendencies in the US**, has pushed Japan to become **more self-reliant** in its defence.
 - Examples include the **failure of USA's Middle East policy in maintaining peace**.
- **Internal Factors:**
 - **Conservative Resurgence:** A growing number of **conservative voices** in Japan advocate for a **more active security role** and argue that Japan, as a "normal power," has a responsibility to contribute to regional stability and defend its interests.
 - **Pacifist Fatigue:** Decades of relying solely on the US for security have led some to question the sustainability of this approach, especially in the face of a changing regional landscape.

How is Japan Changing its Diplomatic Posture?

- **Manifestations of Change:**
 - **Increased Defence Spending:** Japan has **significantly increased its defence budget**, ending the self-imposed cap of 1% of GDP.
 - From 1960 to 2020, Japan's military spending remained at or **below 1% of GDP**.
 - **Military Buildup:** Japan is **acquiring new military capabilities**, including offensive weapons like cruise missiles, and easing restrictions on arms exports.
 - Prime Minister Kishida announced that Japan will **increase annual defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2027**.
 - **Deeper Security Cooperation with the Allies:** Japan is working closely with the **US on joint military exercises** and exploring deeper integration of command structures.
 - The Key **Japan-US joint military exercises** are Keen Sword, Orient Shield, and Valiant Shield (a ballistic missile defence-focused exercise).
 - The **Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP)** is a multinational initiative led by the **United Kingdom, Japan, and Italy** to jointly develop a sixth-generation stealth fighter by 2035.
 - Also, Japan has decided to **ease its strict defence export rules**, allowing it to **collaborate with Britain and Italy** to build a next-generation fighter jet for export under certain conditions.
- **Active Regional Diplomacy:** Japan is strengthening its relationships with other regional powers like **India and Australia**, promoting a "**free and open Indo-Pacific**" vision.
 - **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD):** A **strategic security dialogue involving Japan, the US, India, and Australia** to address regional security concerns.
 - **Pacific Island Forum (PIF):** Japan actively engages with **Pacific Island nations**, offering development assistance and fostering closer ties.
 - **Support for Ukraine:** Japan's strong stance in support of Ukraine against Russia is seen as a signal of its commitment to upholding international norms and deterring similar aggression in Asia.
- **Shifting Stance on Historical Issues:** Japan is attempting to **reconcile with South Korea**, a historical adversary, in an effort to create a more cohesive regional security architecture.

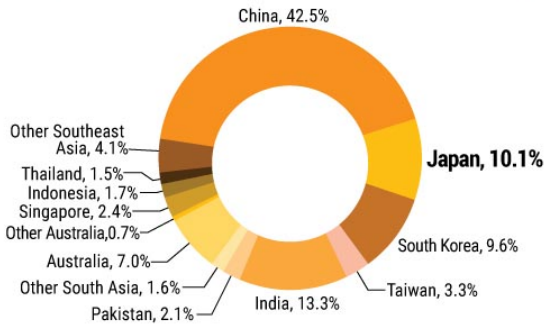
Note:

- Japan has displayed a "**panoramic diplomacy**" under the late Prime Minister Abe Shinzo,

expanding its global visibility and normalising its security policy.

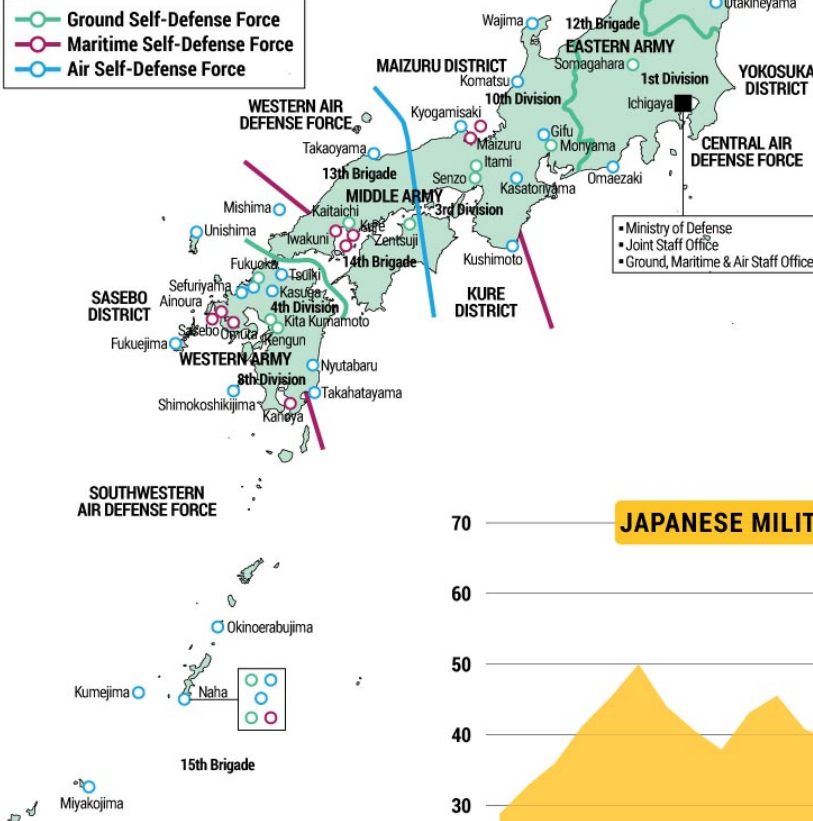
- The term "**panoramic diplomacy**" translates to "**diplomacy that takes a panoramic perspective of the world map**" or "diplomacy with panoramic views."
- It emphasises a proactive and multifaceted approach to international relations, aiming to build strong ties with a wide range of countries.
- **Key Characteristics:**
 - **Broader Scope:** Unlike traditional alliances focused on specific regions or ideologies, panoramic diplomacy seeks to **establish reciprocal relations with as many countries as possible, even if their values don't entirely align with Japan's.**
 - **Cooperation over Confrontation:** While concerns about China's growing influence might have played a role, panoramic diplomacy didn't solely focus on the Indo-Pacific region but **actively engaged with countries across Africa, Latin America, and other areas.**

ASIAN MILITARY EXPENDITURE, 2021



LOCATION OF PRINCIPLE SDF UNITS

- Ground Self-Defense Force
- Maritime Self-Defense Force
- Air Self-Defense Force



MODERN DEFENSE IN JAPAN

ACTIVE-DUTY ARMED FORCES

CHINA ■ = 5,000 personnel JAPAN

2,035,000 TOTAL 247,150

965,000 GROUND FORCES 150,700

260,000 NAVY 45,300

395,000 AIR FORCE 46,950

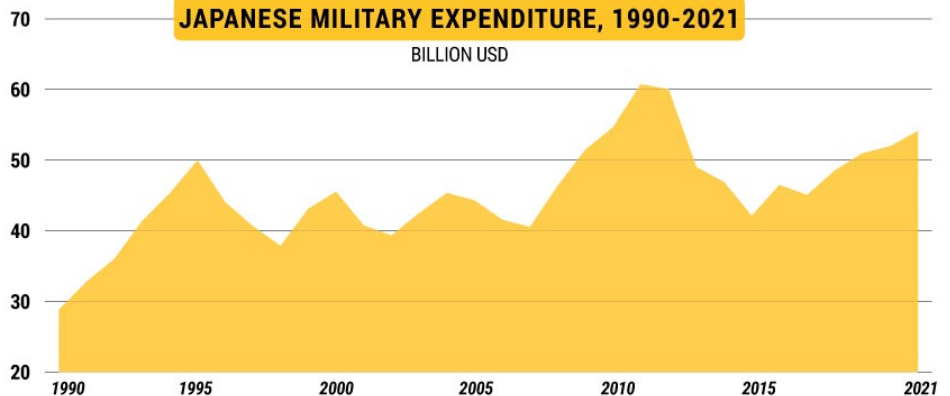
145,000 STRATEGIC SUPPORT FORCE 0

120,000 STRATEGIC MISSILE FORCE 0

150,000 OTHER FORCES 4,200

JAPANESE MILITARY EXPENDITURE, 1990-2021

BILLION USD



How Japan's Changing Posture will Affect Indian Interest?

▪ Potential Benefits:

- **Countering China:** Both India and Japan see **China as a strategic concern**. Japan's increased military capabilities and focus on the Indo-Pacific could strengthen the ability of both countries to deter Chinese aggression.
 - **Both India and Japan** are members of Quad grouping, G20 and G-4, International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).
 - The **India-Japan Act East Forum** was established in 2017 which aims to provide a platform for India-Japan collaboration under the fabric of **India's "Act East Policy"** and **Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy"**.
- **Enhanced Security Cooperation:** The new strategy emphasises cooperation with **like-minded countries like India**. This could lead to **more joint military exercises, technology sharing**, and potentially relaxed export restrictions on Japanese defence equipment for India.
 - Japan is one of the few countries with whom India has **2+2 ministerial dialogue**.
 - India and Japan's defence forces also organise a series of bilateral exercises such as JIMEX (naval), Malabar exercise (Naval Exercise), 'Veer Guardian' and **SHINYUU Maitri** (Air Force), and Dharma Guardian (Army).
- **Infrastructure Development:** The new Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) Loan framework for strategic purposes could provide India with much-needed funding for infrastructure projects in border areas with China. This would improve India's defence preparedness and connectivity.
 - **India** has been the **largest recipient** of the **Japanese ODA Loan framework** for the past decades.
 - **Delhi Metro** is one of the most successful examples of **Japanese cooperation** through the utilisation of ODA.
 - India's Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) project is funded by a soft loan provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.
- **Economic Cooperation:** A stronger Japan could be a more reliable economic partner for India, potentially leading to increased trade and investment.
 - Japan's bilateral trade with India **totalled USD 20.57 billion** during FY 2021-22. India was the 18th largest trading partner for Japan, and Japan was the 12th largest trading partner for India in 2020.

▪ Potential Challenges:

- **Competition:** Both India and Japan are developing long-range strike capabilities. This could lead to an arms race in the region, potentially straining resources.
 - Competition between Japan and India to **export defence equipment** in common nature of market and allies like Africa, Philippines and South America might harm India's interests in the long run.
- **Diplomatic Challenges:** It might become challenging for India to balance more **assertive powers** in competing blocks like the Quad grouping and BRICS.
- **Ideological Conflicts:** Ideological conflicts may arise in areas such as human rights, nuclear proliferation, and international interventions, where India's stance can differ from Japanese stance.

Conclusion

- Japan's diplomatic shift has significant implications for Asia and the world. It will likely lead to a more multipolar regional order, with Japan playing a more prominent role in shaping security dynamics.
- The impact of Japan's dynamic posture on India depends on how effectively both countries manage the relationship. There's significant potential for increased security and economic cooperation, but challenges around competition, affordability, and strategic alignment need to be addressed for a mutually beneficial outcome.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss about Japan's changing political stance in recent decades. How Japan's changing posture will

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q1. In which one of the following groups are all four countries members of G20? (2020)

- (a) Argentina, Mexico, South Africa and Turkey
- (b) Australia, Canada, Malaysia and New Zealand
- (c) Brazil, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam
- (d) Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- The G20 comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, EU, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, UK and USA. Hence Option(a) is correct

Mains:

Q. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is transforming itself into a trade bloc from a military alliance, in present times Discuss. (2020).