



JAPAN'S MILITARY MODERNIZATION AND REGIONAL SECURITY DYNAMICS

BRAWS Bandara

Faculty of Graduate Studies, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

Japan's defence modernization is a major shift in its defence doctrine, driven primarily by the changing regional threats and regional strategic realignment. This study looks into the factors influencing the Japanese defence policies such as, geopolitical tensions with China and North Korea, technological developments, and further deepening alliances with the United States and other regional partners and tries to analyse how such developments influence the security dynamics of East Asia using qualitative content analysis. The findings reflect Japan's changing approach from a classical pacifist state to a more proactive security role, strengthening deterrence while fuelling regional stability concerns and possible competition in the arms race. Japan's defence modernization enhances the capability of its defence, rewriting its geopolitical role and standing as a crucial player in maintaining regional stability. Still, balancing national security and historical pacifist commitment leaves the complex set of challenges. The study emphasizes the need for strategic diplomacy and multinational cooperation to mitigate tensions and maintain the stability of the security environment in East Asia.

KEYWORDS: Japan, military modernization, Regional security, Defence policy, Strategic alliances, East Asia

Corresponding Author: BRAWS Bandara, Email: brawsbacademic@gmail.com



<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9437-8478>



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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates Japan's military modernization and its impact on regional security dynamics. It explores Japan's evolution from a pacifist, postwar footing to one of a more assertive defence amid rising geopolitical challenges. It tries to unfold historical commitments and new threats' influences which are changing Japan's defence policy by understanding the reasons that brought about changes, the technology involved, and the alliances formed with the examination of key drivers of change. It hopes to help policymakers and regional stakeholders comprehend a delicate balance between deterrence and stability in East Asia.

1.1 Background and Context

After World War II, Japan adopted a new national policy that focused on peace and rebuilding. They were forced to renounce their wartime military ambitions. Japan had a new constitution which was written under allied supervision, and this included Article 9. This Article meant that the country renounced war and deprived Japan of any traditional military forces of its own (The Constitution of Japan, 1946). This was for decades followed by Japan. However, recent changes in the case seem to have warranted that they had to revisit their defence (Rubinstein, 2023).

Japan's nation security policy has undergone much transformation over a long time since the end of World War II. The primary objective was ensuring the economy and country really improved. The country spent huge sums either on educational programmes, industrialization and technological advancement as opposed to military expenditure (Allison, 2018). At initial stages, the Japan Self Defence Force was formed purely as being for only protection. Defining their duties limited them to strictly defence measures and humanitarian efforts (Ministry of Defense Japan, 2021).

In the past few decades, Japan has been disrupted. An intensively complicated security environment in East Asia disrupts Japanese security now. The security challenges faced now by Japan have increased many. Continued missile tests conducted by North Korea are

a challenge. North Korea has increased the missile production and testing. Japan faces direct threats regarding its security from the current missile-test programmes (Fernández, 2025). Another challenge that Japan faces comes from China's naval expansion. Beijing has boasted a strong navy and even extended their territory around the area; thus, their expansion has raised concerns on freedom of navigation and balance of power in East Asia (De Castro, 2012).

Japan's development of defence initiatives stands in contrast to its historically pacifist constitution. This creates a notable tension between a conventional patent for peace and an obvious momentum towards modernization. With the rise in regional threats, Japan has advanced its military capacity. The country has set up modern missile systems that give it an edge in detecting and thereby deterring possible threats. Furthermore, Japan has also improved its maritime capabilities. New destroyers, submarines, and other naval assets are being constructed and modernized to match regional competitors (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2023).

Japan's evolving security policies have also been influenced by its relationship with the United States. The U.S.-Japan security alliance has firmly anchored Japanese defence policy since the end of the Second World War (O'Hanlon, 2019). Through this alliance, Japan has been further endowed with security guarantees. However, the rapidly changing security environment in East Asia has prompted Japan to be more concerned about its self-defence capabilities. Japan is now attempting to strike a fine balance between traditional pacifism and the need to become a responsible regional security actor (Smith, 2019).

The regional security challenges are many in East Asia. Missile tests by North Korea, for instance, create a continuous security dilemma. Each missile launch raises tensions and triggers neighbouring states to examine their defence posture. Furthermore, China's naval expansion and increasing activities in the South and East China Seas have given rise to overlapping territorial claims and disputes. This expansion has raised the spectre of power projection and potential conflict. All these challenges have a direct dimension for Japan. Japan must consider its internal and external

security policies to sustain its safety and stability in the region (Dooley and Ueno, 2022).

Japan's shift from a purely pacifist policy to one that embraces modernization is a slow process. This process has had to be mindful of public opinion within the country while balancing it against the strategic requirements that arise outside Japan's borders. For many Japanese citizens, the pacifist ideals have held strong over the decades in which the post-war period has fallen. Yet a newly emerging group of scholars and politicians believes that modernization is imperative. The reason for such belief is the necessity for Japan to modernize its defence against an onslaught of new technologies and consequential changing threats to security (Rubinstein, 2023). This study also notes the role of domestic politics in shaping Japan's defence policy. Political leaders, military experts, and the public have often debated which means would best serve to balance peace with security. Such debates are becoming more and more common as new defence technologies are anticipated. The Japanese government now has to modernize its military while attempting to live up to its history of peace (Glosserman, 2024).

The backdrop and context in which polemics surround Japan's security policy is, on the one hand, a well-established long service record for quietism and commitments to peace. As one would suspect, the other hand is filled with both the urgent necessity imposed by the newly transforming security environment in East Asia and modernization pressures on Japan's military establishment. Such modernization will not purely involve technology but rather adaptation of a new geopolitical reality. Japan is forced to grapple with preventing external threats while arguably taking up its share of maintaining regional stability (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2020).

The literature on military modernization in East Asia is extensive. Various studies among other issues have focused on such militaries which seem to grow in powers. One of the issues at the centre of existing scholarship is the velocity with which military hardware – especially their technology changes. Missile developments, particularly, naval systems,

have continued to shape the security environment, according to researchers (Smith, 2019). According to various researchers, some studies compare the specifications of the new missile systems and the strategic implications of their advancements (Hughes, 2013).

Another theme that takes importance is how military modernization shapes the regional security dynamics with scholars examining military buildup in advanced systems as a possible source of shift in regional power balances. Some studies propound that modern defence capabilities enhance deterrence and stability while others caution against arms race effects in neighbouring countries (Matsuno, 2023). This is the larger scope of debate towards understanding Japan's defence initiatives.

In addition, this literature gap entails that between technological development and security policy, there is not much written. Studies tend to focus on either technologic innovations or security policies. There are very few studies that have integrated both. For instance, there are those which concentrate on China's expansion in navy (Yoshihara, 2010), but not many examine how Japan's modernization impacts both technology and policy. It makes this research necessary.

The literature review highlights that there is an urgent need to recognize the causes of Japan's defence initiatives. Many articles and reports have affiliated the role of the rise of China and North Korea's missile tests as determinants; however, there were fewer studies concerning how such drivers interact with the historical context and domestic debates of Japan. For this reason, this study intends to plug that gap by offering an all-purposeful evaluation of the modernization of Japan's defence.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

There are several research questions that guide the study. First, what are the primary drivers behind Japan's recent defence initiatives? The importance of this question lies in uncovering the internal and external factors that could trigger a change in Japan's policymaking regarding its defence initiatives.

It is important to understand the fact that there is a tension between historical commitments and new security challenges.

The second question of research is: How do Japan's advanced missile systems, enhanced naval, technological capabilities and cooperation with allies alter regional security dynamics? This question relates to the aspect of examining basically how these technological upgrades can affect direct security in East Asia. By using the changes in military equipment and tactics as an indicator, this research seeks to assess how neighbouring nations may have been impacted by these developments.

The third question of research is: What are the implications of these modernization efforts for Japan's role in East Asia? This question seeks to analyse the wider ramifications of military modernization, concerning whether the enhanced Japanese defence capabilities will induce stability or exacerbate regional tensions. The answer to this question is crucial for policymakers who need to balance national security with regional peace.

The overall objectives of the study are clear. The research seeks to:

- Identify and analyse the key drivers behind Japan's defence modernization.
- Explore the changes in Japan's military capabilities, with a focus on missile systems and naval power and technology.
- Assess how these changes affect the balance of power and security dynamics in East Asia.
- Provide recommendations for policymakers based on the findings of the study.

All questions and objective definitions have set out into the initial conception on this study's contribution to the academic debate in military modernization. It shall also offer practical implications for national and regional security strategies

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper was written by using the qualitative content analysis method. It was essential to collect data from

academic journals, policy analysis papers, books, news articles, and reports published by states and international organizations. As described above, qualitative content analysis was the principal method applied for data interpretation. This research is purely based on secondary data, mostly drawn from the past decade. The documents provided captured the essence of the topic in a reliable and sufficient manner and were therefore selected.

The data underwent systematic scrutiny to extract trends and patterns pertinent to Japan's defense initiatives and the security of the region. Unbiased conclusions based on the information provided were drawn during analysis, all while considering the broader political and strategic setting of the region, specifically East Asia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Primary Drivers behind Japan's Recent Defence Initiatives

1. Domestic Political and Security Environment

In recent years, a pronounced change has occurred in public opinion in Japan, favouring a more active and proactive defence stance. Many citizens have come to believe that Japan ought to do more to protect its national security. Part of this paradigm shift has resulted from greater media attention on regional threats, coupled with historical memories of conflict. Civil servants in government have perceived this change and begun implementing policies that are transposed to a more vigorous defence posture (Midford, 2020).

The Japanese government has drafted various policy documents and official reports centered on the need to modernize its self-defence capability. For instance, the (Ministry of Defense, 2022) outlines concrete steps toward improvements to military modernization and training. This shift is not only in reaction to public opinion but also represents pertinent changes in the international security environment.

Economics also play a very major role in this shift. Japan has a highly developed and technologically advanced economy. The government capitalizes on this economic strength to fund the development of

advanced defence technologies (Tatsumi, 2024). Economic reports from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (2021) show that a high level of economic output gives Japan the resources to modernize its military. Furthermore, investment in technology aids Japan in developing stateside advanced missile systems and naval platforms that can compete with its counterparts on the global scene. During Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's administration, Japan's defence spending has seen a significant increase. The Kishida administration set a new target for military spending over the next five years to 43 trillion yen (\$318 billion), which is 1.5 times the current level. This increase is part of a broader strategy to bolster Japan's defence capabilities in response to regional security threats (Yamaguchi, 2022).

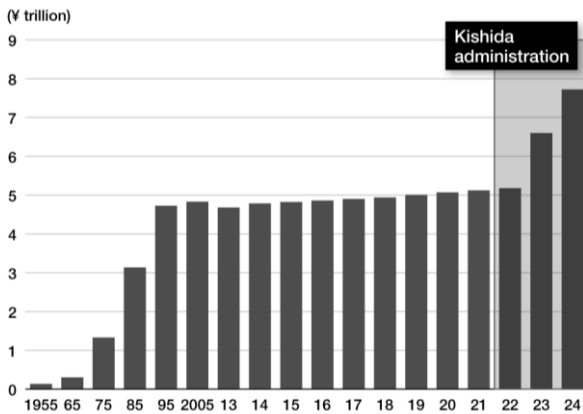


Figure 1: Japan's Defence Budget Growth
Source: (Japan Ministry of Defence, 2024)

(This chart shows a steady increase in Japan's defence budget, underlining the economic commitment to modernization.)

Japan's defence policies have been substantially altered by the Ukraine war, which is ushering in the abandonment of traditional pacifism (Adetunji, 2024).

2. External Threat Perceptions

Japan's defence initiatives are also driven by perceived external threats. Two of the most important ones are China's military assertiveness and North Korea's missile tests and unpredictability. In response to the conflict and increased regional threats, Japan

has been bolstering its military capabilities and strengthening alliances, particularly with the United States. In shifting away from decades of pacifism, this has signalled Japan's attempt to strengthen its security posture in an increasingly fragile neighbourhood (Adetunji, 2024).

a) The Growing Military Assertiveness of China

Japan takes the military expansion of China as a security concern. Such concern for example finds expression in policy documents like the National Security Strategy published by the (National Security Council and Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). There are deep concerns about fast naval expansion of China and development of an advanced missile system. This argument is also supported in academic studies like Koga (2020) who argues that modernization of armed forces in China is a direct threat to regional stability.

Reputable news agencies such as Reuters (2021) and BBC (2021) have been reporting increasing military activities of China in the East and South China Sea. These documents testify how China has been patrolling and the conduct of military exercises almost on a daily basis, which could have caused that region a lot of tension. This body of evidence strongly points out that Japan perceives Chinese military actions as a motivating force toward its own defence upgrades. China regularly sends its coast-guard ships into the territorial waters of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Besides, China has also held live-fire military drills in reaction to territorial claims against its neighbouring countries, thereby intensifying the tension in the region (Kosuke, 2025).

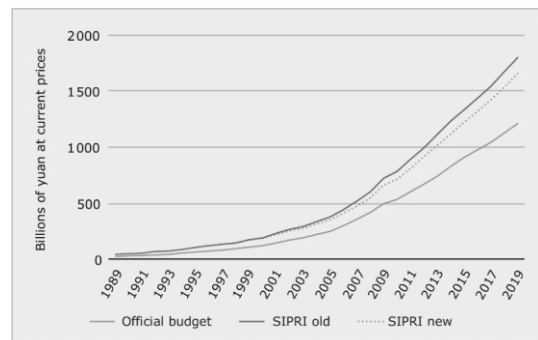


Fig 2: Chinese military expenditure according to the official budget and the old and new SIPRI estimates, 1989–2019 (Source: SIPRI, 2021)

Given the unreliability such as lack of transparency and off-budget expenditures not made public, predicting China's military spending is very difficult. Apart from this, the varying accounting standards also use methods of purchasing power parity, which makes it even more difficult to make correct evaluations.

According to the official budget and the old and new SIPRI estimates, China's military expenditure has seen significant growth from 1989 to 2019.

China's ICBM test on September 25, 2024, was the first known ICBM launch by China in over four decades, thus increasing concerns in the regional and worldwide security. This ICBM test, involving the Dongfeng-41 (DF-41) missile, affirmed China's advancing military capabilities and tension in the Indo-Pacific (Zhang, 2024).

b) North Korean Missile Tests and Unpredictability

North Korea's continuing missile tests are more difficult to provide for in a security environment. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2022) has repeatedly stuck to official statements condemning North Korean missile launches as causing an increase in readiness. Independent research into East Asian Policy Journal by Kim (2020) contends that missile programs of North Korea have brought into being a security dilemma with respect to Japan. Further affirming this position were independent analyses by the RAND Corporation (2020), which observed that the unpredictability of North Korea necessitates even more sophisticated defence technologies that are responsive by Japan.

The "Hero Kim Kun Ok," North Korea's tactical nuclear attack submarine launched in September 2023, really symbolizes a milestone in the country's naval modernization. This submarine is now armed with ballistic and cruise missiles that would broaden North Korea's nuclear strike capabilities and add a potential space of threat to regional security (Al Jazeera, 2023; KCNA via Reuters, 2023).

Therefore, it is firmly considered these perceptions of external threats, especially with respect to the military build-up of China and missile testing towards North Korea, which will support the drive for defence

modernization in Japan. These threats forced Japanese policymakers to allocate more resources for advanced missile systems as well as navy capabilities.

3. Global Geopolitical Influences

Global geopolitical events have also served as catalysts for Japan's defence initiatives. A key factor in this regard has been the impact of the Ukraine-Russia war.

a) Impact of the Ukraine-Russia War

The impact of this conflict on global security goes beyond Ukraine and Russia. It is a conflict close to home that Japanese planners figure out as an example of how quickly disputes can escalate in the region (Smith, 2022). The war emphasizes the dangers of unrestrained aggression and has forced Japan to rethink its defence posture. In the interview, Paul O'Shea (2024), an expert on Japan's defence policies, discusses how Japan's strategic response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict influences defence and security in the Indo-Pacific region, highlighting the need for modernization and strategic alliances.

Thus, it has become clear that traditional deterrence is not sufficient to prevent aggression as indicated by Russia's invasion in spite of considerable Western efforts (Takacs, 2017). It thus requires developing a more self-reliant defence posture by Japan with reduced dependency on outside support (Maslow, 2024). In addition, Japan's own military capability and regional alliances should be further developed to meet any threats.

Official documents from Japan cite the Ukraine-Russia conflict in terms of the lessons learned on the dangers of regional instability (National Security Council and Cabinet Office of Japan, 2022). It further validates Japan's need to upgrade its military with that of the responses by the international community to the conflict to deter similar actions in East Asia.

b) Effects of East Europe on East Asia

There are quite a few things that can be hemmed in terms of the security faced by Eastern Europe and East Asia. Just as most European countries were concerned regarding Russia's actions against Ukraine, so as well is Japan concerned regarding China's military activity

in the region (Brown, 2023). The International Institute for Strategic Studies has drawn comparisons between the two regions, arguing that increasing military capabilities from one country compel neighbouring states to improve their defences (IISS, 2021). Such comparisons have further built Japan's resolve to upgrade its military into modern technologies.

4. Strategic Reassessment and Alliance Considerations

Japan's defence initiatives are not only influenced by internal and external threats. However, it should be noted that such initiatives will be assessed further by Japan regarding its strategic overseas involvement through alliances. One significant development has been the strengthening of the alliance with the United States, along with other robust collaborations over the past decade.

The U.S. is Japan's long-time ally. The joint exercises and recent agreements concerning defence have shown Japan is willing to take all, or part, of the burden of regional security in relation to its alliance partner (The White House, 2021). These narratives of cooperation are well documented in the official statements and policy documents (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2021). Right now, Japan has been working hard to establish closer ties with other regional partners, including Australia and South Korea (Corben, 2024). India and Japan also taking their defence partnership to new heights, moving from just exercises and talks to exciting joint research on advanced technologies. Their collaboration is crucial for security in the Indo-Pacific region. It is driven by multiple factors beyond just the rise of China. Such alliance dynamics are important for showing power and helping ensure that Japan will remain a credible security actor in international forums (Naidu and Yasuyuki, 2019).

In July 2024, Japan and South Korea, along with the United States, signed a trilateral security agreement to further cooperation amid growing regional security threats. This agreement establishes policy consultations at the senior level, information sharing, trilateral exercises, and defence exchange cooperation for the betterment of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region (Tucker, 2024).

Such diplomatic developments across borders are driving Japan's more proactive posture in security matters. Earlier, national defence reports noted that increases in defence spending and modernization efforts were meant primarily to deter aggression and signal the start of a new era of leadership with respect to regional security (Naidu and Ishida, 2022). All these changes show a huge contrast from the traditional cautious Japan approach and go beyond them to reflect a much wider trend in global security policymaking.

B. Alterations in Regional Security Dynamics Due to Japan's Military modernization

1. Technological Advancements and Deterrence

Recent technological advancements have been highlighted in several technology journals. For instance, The Japan News (2023) states that "Japan has accelerated deployment of Enhanced Long-Range Missiles for Strategic Deterrence." Such refinements add to Japan's capacity to defend its territory, and it also serves as a signal to possible adversaries that if attacked, Japan will launch a precise retaliation.

The most advanced missile defence system developed at that moment in Japan is a multi-layered defence system consisting of Aegis-equipped destroyers intercepting at upper-tier and the interception initiated by Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) units at lower-layer levels. This system is composed of interlinked components with the Japan Aerospace Defence Ground Environment (JADGE) system so that ballistic missile threats can be dealt with effectively (Ministry of Defence Japan, 2024).

In addition to missile systems, Japan has initiated improvements to its naval capability. The nation has commissioned new destroyers, submarines, and maritime surveillance vessels. These new platforms are intended to enhance situational awareness and rapid response capabilities in maritime regions (Strafasia, 2024). Japan is enhancing its naval capabilities by integrating advanced unmanned systems for surveillance and reconnaissance missions. These systems improve situational awareness and rapid response in maritime regions (Naval News Staff, 2025). Pedrozo (2023) suggests that these types of

investments are crucial to maintaining deterrence in a region rife with maritime disputes. Construction of the advanced destroyer, namely the 13DDX, and the Aegis System Equipped Vessels (AESV), forms part of Japan's development of naval capabilities to strengthen air and missile defence, particularly considering increased security threats within East Asia (Arthur, 2024).

Japan is investing massively in cyber warfare. It is developing its Active Cyber Defence (ACD) capabilities to protect against digital threats emerging from the modern world. This includes a substantial increase in the defence budget allocated to increase cyber capabilities like expand its pool of cybersecurity personnel and strengthen partnerships with like-minded countries (Mochinaga, 2024).

Under its more extended defence plan, Japan is pursuing the development of Autonomous weapons systems which include the deployment of AI-driven machineries for target identification, controlling drones, and enhanced cybersecurity. The aim of schemes is to increase the country's martial power and to prevent it from falling behind in the rapidly changing security environment (Japan's Defence Ministry, 2024).

2. Changes in Strategic Posturing and Deterrence Theory

The improvements in Japan's defence mechanisms led to observable shifts in its strategic positioning. Incorporating advanced missile systems and new naval assets are intended to help in deterring possible adversaries. Research by Colonel Jeffrey W. Pickler (2022) indicates a strong relationship between the capability of deterrence and advanced military technology used by a country. This new defence enables rapid response and higher precision in any possible conflict with a new aggressor.

Strategic communications have been used by government officials to highlight these improvements, for instance, by emphasizing in official briefings and public announcements that Japan's modernization of the military is for defence and also for regional stability, or, as cited in the U.S. Department of Defense (2024). The enhanced focus on deterrence is

apparent in Japan's increased engagement with its allies in joint military exercises that serve training as much as public demonstrations of strength (U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, 2024).

3. Regional Reactions and Balancing Dynamics

Japan's military modernization has provoked different reactions from neighbouring countries. China has expressed concerns over Japan's strengthening military capabilities. Chinese state media and government reports criticized Japan's military spending, stating that these developments might destabilize the region (Xinhua, 2014). According to a U.S. News (2023) China views Japan's defence system developments as a provocative act that could trigger an arms race.

In similar tones, North Korea has reacted negatively. The Korean Central News Agency (2022) certainly conveyed official condemnation of Japan's missile tests and naval improvements. The perception among these adversaries appears to be that Japan's defence modernization would in turn compel them to upgrade their military capabilities, therefore triggering an escalation spiral (YAMAGUCHI, 2021).

This understanding is supported in the literature. According to Luo (2021) military modernization in one country can compel neighbouring states to balance against it. Under the lens of competitive dynamics so characterized, scholars often refer to the arms race phenomenon. Other critics (Rider, Findley and Diehl, 2011) argue that while arms races can build deterrence, they also increase the chances of miscalculations and unintended escalation.

Policy-oriented documents, such as the ASEAN document (2022) have advocated for regional dialogue among East Asian nations regarding the tensions spawned by military modernization. An international organization, the United Nations (2020), has also stressed the significance of transparency and confidence-building measures to prevent such an arms race. However, Japan's actions are in line with its right to self-defence as recognized by the UN Charter. Japan has emphasised that its military expansion is aimed at enhancing its defensive capabilities in response to regional security threats, particularly from China and North Korea. Japanese developments in

missile and naval systems serve as deterrents against possible aggression.

The security dilemma between Japan and China is deepening as the two states broaden their arsenals and develop newer weapons. It tends to cultivate an atmosphere of disbelief and military preparations from both sides (Christensen, 1999). This actually presages heightened regional tension, striving for regional security goals, which border on qualms over stability in East Asia.

Answering Research Question 1

The first research question focused on identifying the primary drivers behind Japan's recent defence initiatives. Japan's recent defence initiatives are propelled by a confluence of domestic and external factors. The change from the reserved anti-war sentiment to general consent and a consensus on national politics have prompted addition in Japan's defence capabilities. Financial resources available because of greater economic strength have enabled building materials for modernization, with high investment values for development in elite technology and enhanced training. Regional threats have not waned, especially with North Korea's unpredictable missile tests and China's assertive military expansion. The impact of global geopolitical events like the war in Ukraine is so highlighting. Thus, an urgent need has now arrived for a much stronger standard in the defence area to answer the challenges of the 21st century. Their longstanding strategic alliances with the United States, however, had made it possible for Japan to redefine its role in security issues.

Answering Research Question 2

The second research question focused on understanding how Japan's recently advanced technological capabilities and cooperation with allies have alter regional security dynamics. With advanced military technologies such as integrated missile defence systems, sophisticated naval assets, and top-notch cyber and autonomous systems, Japan has substantially enhanced its deterrence and rapid response abilities. These technological strides signal a robust commitment to national security, compelling potential adversaries to reconsider aggressive postures.

In conjunction with this advancement, stronger international relations have developed with the United States, Australia, and South Korea, as it focuses on co-defence and inter-operational arrangements. These partnerships counterbalance the increasing inclination towards military might amongst neighbouring states while providing resilience in regional terms. While these advancements contribute to a more secure regional environment, they may also trigger reciprocal enhancements by other countries, thereby intensifying the security dilemma in East Asia.

Answering Research Question 3

The third research question focused on identifying the implications of these modernization efforts for Japan's role in East Asia. Japan's increasing modernization of the military signals a paradigm shift from its historical stance of pacifism with an active and influential security actor in East Asia. More capabilities and critical alliances boost the credibility and deterrence muscle of Japan, making the nation a stabilizer in a very precarious East Asian environment. For its part, Japan's transformational power allows it to steer security dialogues, participate in multilateral defence frameworks, and propose initiatives to help create a balance in regional power. In essence, while Japan's modernisation efforts augment its ability to defend national interests and support regional stability, they also require careful calibration to manage the delicate balance between deterrence and escalation in an increasingly complex security landscape.

4. CONCLUSION

Japan's military modernization results from a convergence of domestic political realignment coupled with robust economic capability and most pressing external threats from North Korea and China. However, although some increased technological advancements and new alliances?

have added great bargaining power to Japan's position in the region, this development may lead to possible countermeasures from neighbouring states. Such evolution marks a stepping away from Japan's traditional pacifism into a far more proactive security role in East Asia. The key result comes down to the difficult balance Japan

will have to strike between historical commitments to peace and new defence demands, a balance that will be key in determining regional stability in the years to come.

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