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Digest

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Defence White Paper

Defence Ministry's [annual White Paper](#) positioned Russia's aggression against Ukraine at the centre of its assessment arguing that 'unilateral changes to the status quo by force should never be tolerated, as they shake the very foundation of the international order'. It further suggests that 'this defiance of international order is not just Europe's problem', which aligns with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's [narrative](#) 'Ukraine may be East Asia tomorrow'. The White Paper urged to think 'flexibly beyond existing paradigms in order to preemptively deter changes to the status quo by force and to also be fully prepared for modern warfare, including information warfare and cyber warfare'. In its threat assessment, the White Paper underscores not just Beijing's coercive unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas, but also the implications of a China-Russia 'strategic alliance' with joint navigations and flights being conducted in the areas surrounding Japan. In addition, as strategic competition between the US and China intensifies, the White Paper focusses on the stability in the Taiwan Strait since it is considered critical to Japan's security.

Meanwhile, North Korea's focus on boosting its capability to breach missile defence networks and its repeated launching of ICBM-class missiles in regular intervals pose 'grave and imminent threats to Japan's security'. The White Paper also stresses the expanding scope of national security to include economic security and high-technology in inter-state competition. Priority is also accorded to new domains including space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic spectrum. In order to deal with the severe security situation, the White Paper identifies US-Japan alliance as a 'cornerstone for Japan's security' in addition to effectively building Japan's own national defence capabilities. It also

underscores the vitality of supporting a multi-faceted and multi-layered defence cooperation with other Indo-Pacific partners like Australia, India, the UK, France, and Germany that not only have shared values but also have geographic and historical linkages to the Indo-Pacific region.

US-Japan Economic 2+2

On 29 July, the maiden [Economic Policy Consultative Committee](#) was hosted in Washington. Economic security and rules based international economic order was the mainstay of the discussions between Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Koichi Hagiuda, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. The deliberations focussed on critical technologies, resilient supply chains, countering economic coercion, energy and food security. R&D on critical and emerging technologies, especially next-generation semiconductor technologies and reliable information and telecommunications infrastructure including deployment in third party countries were on the table. The Economic 2+2 is geared towards augmenting competitiveness and resilience by deepening US-Japan cooperation based on the Competitiveness and Resilience (CoRe) Partnership as well as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF).

Shinzo Abe's assassination and Domestic Politics

July has been a momentous month in Japanese political scene. Amid a House of Councillors (Upper House) election campaign, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was shot in Nara on 8 July. The Upper House election was scheduled on 10 July. In a dramatic turn of events, the accused Tetsuya Yamagami, a former Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) personnel,

shot Abe during his campaign rally. Abe's fall has not only sent jitters in the domestic political scene in the run up to the Upper House election, it has shocked the international community as witnessed in the outpouring of condolence from the leaders of major Indo-Pacific stakeholders. Initial [reports](#) suggests that Yamagami has harboured certain reservations vis-à-vis a religious group called Unification Church, and targeted Abe under the impression that the later had ties with the organisation. However, Unification Church has made official statements claiming former Prime Minister was never a 'member' or 'advisor' to the Church. Abe's service was held at Tokyo's Zojoji temple, and the government has confirmed that a [state funeral](#) will be organised on September 27 to honour his 'great achievements' as Japan's longest-serving Prime Minister. He served a total of 8 years and 8 months as Prime Minister. This would be just the second state funeral in post-war history for any former Prime Minister. The first being for Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida who signed the San Francisco peace treaty.

While the nation grappled with a profound sense of loss, the Upper House election was held as scheduled, and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) secured majority of seats. LDP together with its junior coalition partner Komeito now holds a total of [146](#) as opposed to the opposition's 102. Following the election, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stated that 'the election, which is the foundation of democracy, was challenged by violence and it carries a big meaning that the election was carried through'. Some of the key themes in the election campaign included easing economic pressures and bolstering national security in the wake of the Ukraine conflict. With rising food and energy prices, political parties pledged wage hikes and tax cuts in their campaign. Developments in Ukraine has infused new momentum to security

debates, and prompted some opposition parties to promise strong defence capabilities. Following the election results, the numbers indicate that the [pro-constitutional amendment group](#), which includes the LDP-Komeito coalition, two opposition parties and independents, has the two-thirds majority required to pursue revision. Revising the Constitution was a top priority for late Prime Minister Abe.

Abe was one of the most avid supporters of Free and Open-Indo-Pacific (FOIP). During his first term in office from 2006-2007, he pushed the concept through his historic 'Confluence of the Two Seas' speech at the Indian Parliament. But it was in his second term from 2012-2020 that FOIP gained traction. He also remained central to the Quad framework. He argued the case for pursuing an [Asia's Democratic Security Diamond](#) involving Australia, India, and the US in addition to Japan. He played an important leadership role from reviving the Quad to rescuing the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). During his time in office, consequential reforms across all spectrums took shape, from Abenomics to re-interpretation of Article 9 and expanding the scope of right to collective self-defence. In addition to consolidating the US-Japan alliance, he also invested huge political capital in consolidating strategic partnerships with like-minded countries like India, Australia, Southeast Asia and Europe. India-Japan relations was elevated to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership in 2014, and since then depth of the economic, defence and security cooperation expanded manifold. Trust in the bilateral relations developed by Prime Minister Abe and his Indian counterpart Prime Minister Modi led India and Japan to expand strategic cooperation at various trilateral frameworks and the Quad with the aim of navigating geopolitical and geo-economic challenges and opportunities in the Indo-Pacific.