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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

# JAPAN

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July 2020

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- **Japan's Defence White Paper 2020**

On July 14, the defence ministry issued its annual white paper. The paper comes in the wake of increased Chinese gray zone operations in the East China Sea, changing dynamics in the Korean Peninsula, and the renewed domestic debate on strike capability following Defence Minister Kono Taro's decision to cancel the planned acquisition and deployment of the land-based Aegis Ashore system.

- The white paper argued that the pandemic is likely to intensify great power strategic competition with the aim of creating favourable international and regional orders. It drew attention to Chinese “propaganda” and “disinformation” during the pandemic.
- In addition to the fluidity in the regional power balance, the white paper focuses on new domains, for instance space, cyber, and electromagnetic waves which are posing threats to national security and demands reorientation of traditional focus centred on sea, land and air domains.
- The US-Japan alliance continue to remain as the core pillar of Japan's defence.
- In the latest white paper, Japan expressed “grave” concerns regarding its threat perception from Chinese “relentless” unilateral attempts to change the status quo around the contested Senkaku Islands. This is in contrast to the 2019 white paper which put emphasis on “serious security concern” as opposed to the 2018 assessment of “strong security concerns” with regard to China's attempts to alter the status quo in the maritime order. Japan has scrambled 675 times intercepting Chinese aircrafts in FY 2019, representing a 5.8 percent year-on-year increase. In early July 2020, Chinese patrol ships sailed for 30 hours in the waters around the contested Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, marking the longest Chinese intrusion into the territorial waters of Japan since 2012. Strengthening defence of the remote islands, surface-to-air missile unit and surface-to-ship guided missile unit are deployed in Miyakojima Island in March 2020.
- The paper highlighted that military trends in North Korea pose “grave and imminent threats to Japan's security”. The short range ballistic missiles launched since last year have flown on a lower orbit than conventional missiles, implying that it can circumvent defence networks. With the cancellation of the land-based Aegis Ashore system, defence authorities are currently engaged in exploring alternatives including developing strike capabilities.
- Aligning Japan's “Proactive Contribution to Peace” and its “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision”, the white paper has underscored the significance of cultivating multifaceted and multi-layered defence cooperation with Australia, India, and ASEAN countries. The first India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting was held in November 2019. The defence ministry is setting up a new post at the level of division chief in the Defense Policy Bureau to advance cooperation with ASEAN, India and Australia. The defence ministry is strengthening organisational capacity to bolster coordination with its key Indo-Pacific partners.

- **Japan Discusses Strike Capability**

Following Japan's decision to suspend the deployment of Aegis Ashore land-based missile defence system, discussion has gained momentum on attaining strike capability. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) formed a study team headed by former Defence Minister Onodera Itsunori to discuss alternatives including strike capability and make proposals for consideration in the coming days. Earlier in 2017, LDP suggested using “counterattack capability” to strike enemy missile bases. Japan is getting hypersonic cruise missiles and hypervelocity guiding projectiles.

- **Japan's next-generation multirole fighter aircraft**

The Defence Ministry has indicated that the series-production of the next-generation multirole fighter aircraft to replace Mitsubishi F-2 should start in 2031. The prototype production will reportedly start in 2024, and flight tests will be done from 2028 followed by mass production in 2031. Japan will deploy the new aircraft around 2035. The focus remains on stealth and electronic warfare capabilities, advanced sensors and inter-operability with American military. The ministry has stressed that it will follow a Japan-led development of the new fighter with the option of international collaboration. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) is most likely to lead with engagement on propulsion by IHI Corporation.

- **US-Japan-Australia Defence Ministers' Meeting**

US-Japan-Australia Defence Ministers' Meeting was held on July 7. Discussions focussed on strengthening security in Indo-Pacific in the middle of the pandemic. Regarding South China Sea, the leaders "expressed serious concern" about developments including the militarisation of disputed features, use of "maritime militia" and expressed opposition to the use of force in altering the status quo. Additionally, there was strong opposition to any destabilising or coercive unilateral actions in the East China Sea. Later in the month, Japan along with the US and Australia have done a trilateral passage exercise in the Philippine Sea on the way to participate in Exercise Rim of the Pacific in Hawaii.

- **Japan requests India not to hike tariff on Chinese inputs**

Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) requested India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) not to increase import tariffs or enforce limits on intermediate products obtained from China by Japanese firms, including manufacturing automobiles and consumer durables, since it would adversely affect production activities in India. Japan's External Trade Organisation (JETRO) has reportedly made a list of 990 items such as electronic items, bolts, nuts, air conditioner compressors, integrated circuits, condenser, batteries, LED and inductors that Japan wants India to exempt from possible import restrictions.

- **Japan and COVID-19**

There is resurgence of COVID-19 cases in Japan. Tokyo is registering growing number of cases, bringing its overall total to 11,611 as of July 28. Meanwhile, US Marine base in Okinawa have also seen several cases in July. Previously, COVID-19 cases emerged on USS Theodore Roosevelt and USS Ronald Reagan based in Japan.

- **Nonpartisan Group to Support Freedom of Hong Kong People**

Lawmakers in Japan have formed a nonpartisan group with the goal of supporting the freedom and rights of Hong Kong people following the enactment of the national security law. They are reportedly proposing to increase the period that Hongkongers can stay in Japan without visas, and ease the parameters for attaining work visas.

- **Tension in Japan-South Korea relation**

In the latest development over comfort women issue, a statue reportedly resembling Prime Minister Abe bowing to a comfort women, has been erected at the private Botanic Garden in Pyeongchang. It will open for public viewing from August 10. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide indicated that this will "decisively impact" bilateral relations which suffered in recent years over historical issues of forced wartime labour.