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LDP Submits Defence Related Proposal

In April, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) submitted to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi their [proposal](#) with regard to the revision of three important defence documents, including Japan's National Security Strategy (NSS), National Defence Programme Guidelines (NDPG) and the Medium-Term Defence Force Build-up Programme (MTDP). Defence Minister Kishi mentioned that in the wake of the Ukraine crisis, Japan needs to drastically strengthen its capabilities. This will be the first revision of the NSS which came in 2013. LDP's proposal reflects on Moscow's invasion in Ukraine, advancements in Pyongyang's missile and nuclear programmes, and Beijing's increasing assertiveness around Taiwan and recommends the government to undertake steps ensuring Tokyo's security "without being constrained by precedents". Ministry of Defence confirmed in April that Japan scrambled Air Self-Defence Force (ASDF) jets more than [1000 times in FY2021](#). The proposal suggests including acquiring "counterstrike capabilities" to attack enemy bases and command-and-control nodes. The debate on Japan developing the ability to strike enemy bases is ongoing and Prime Minister Kishida after assuming office mentioned that he would not rule out any options for bolstering Japan's defence. Given the reservations with the term "pre-emptive strike capabilities" under the constitution, LDP recommended that the government could employ the term "counterstrike capabilities" in order to alleviate fears among the public and the coalition partner Komeito. It further suggests to double defence spending to two percent of GDP over five years. LDP proposal emphasised that it very important to timely secure the necessary defence capabilities given that the security environment around Japan is likely to

become even more severe over the next decade. In its recommendation, LDP noted Germany's policy shift to increase its defence budgets in the wake of the Ukraine war. However, the proposal did not include the call made by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to consider discussion on a NATO-style nuclear weapons-sharing deal with Washington. As Japan reviews its key security documents, LDP called for formulating a National Defence Strategy instead of the NDPG, and a Defence Force Development Plan to replace the MTDP. It was suggested that "acquiring counterstrike capabilities that can target both enemy bases and command posts would give Japan more options for retaliating against mobile- and submarine-launched missiles and serve as a deterrent against possible attacks".

In a related development, media reports indicate that Japan may opt to [classify](#) portions of the NDPG following recommendations by LDP in addition to the suggestions made by security experts invited to the government's closed-door hearings. However, there is a view that it would be difficult to review Japan's security strategy in case the Guidelines come under the 2014 secrecy law.

Japan's 2022 Diplomatic Bluebook

Ministry of Foreign Affairs published the 2022 edition of the [Diplomatic Bluebook](#). The highlight of this year's edition includes the reference of Taiwan Strait and the row over Northern Territories. While the 2022 Diplomatic Bluebook has stressed for the first time in almost two decades that Japan's Northern Territories have been "illegally occupied" by Moscow, it mentions Taiwan five times which is in contrast to total absence in earlier editions from 2017 to 2021. The Bluebook indicates that Russia's military invasion of Ukraine has damaged the foundation of international order, and emphasises that Moscow needs to pay a high price for its behaviour imposed

through coordinated sanctions. Japan and Russia failed to sign a peace treaty after the Second World War. The dispute over the Northern Territories lay at the heart of Japan-Russia relation. Meanwhile, Moscow has suspended talks with Tokyo in response to the sanctions imposed following invasion of Ukraine. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Trutnev has indicated that since the Islands “belong to Russia,” Moscow will continue with the development on the four Islands. Furthermore, 2022 marks 50th anniversary of normalizing Japan-China diplomatic relations. The Bluebook refers to Beijing as a major security concern given its increasing military activities near Japan, and also reflects on China’s relation with Moscow. Taiwan featured alongside Tokyo’s concerns over the contested Senkaku Islands, the South and East China Seas. Tokyo maintains that unilaterally altering the status quo by force cannot be accepted. Threats emanating from North Korea’s repeated launching of different types of missiles is a cause of grave concern. The Bluebook mentions that Japan seeks full implementation of the relevant UNSC resolutions vis-à-vis Pyongyang in cooperation with the international community.

Japan and Ukraine

The Group of Seven (G7) condemned the atrocities by Russian forces in Bucha and extended support to UN Secretary General’s call for an independent investigation placing accountability. Japan has stepped up coordination with the US and European powers in its response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In late April, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Japan and suggested that it is imperative for Japan and Germany to exercise leadership in providing assistance to Ukraine. Prime Minister Kishida is visiting Italy and the UK to continue cooperation on sanctions

against Russia and support Ukraine. Earlier in March, he was in Brussels alongside the G7 members to show solidarity in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis. Meanwhile, Moscow has reportedly [banned 63 Japanese](#) citizens, including Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, a few Diet members, university professors and journalists from entering Russia as a response to Japanese sanctions.

Japanese Yen Depreciates

In April, Japanese yen [dipped to its weakest level](#) vis-à-vis the dollar in two decades. It slid below 126-yen mark. The broadening difference between Japanese and US interest rates has considerably weakened the Japanese yen. Investors are reportedly purchasing dollars with the aim of seeking greater returns in the US. Bank of Japan has pursued a low interest rate policy. Bank of Japan Governor Kuroda indicated that the central bank will adhere to monetary easing policy. He maintains that a weak yen is [favourable](#) to the Japanese economy in general given it benefits export-driven industries. But the uncertainty may adversely affect business planning.

India-Japan Commemorates 70th Anniversary

28 April, 2022 marked the 70th anniversary of establishment of India-Japan diplomatic relations. Diplomatic relations was established in 1952. Prime Minister Modi stressed that as the two nations celebrate seven decades of diplomatic relations, India-Japan ties have deepened in every sphere including strategic, economic and people-to-people contacts. Japanese Prime Minister Kishida’s visit to Delhi in March for the annual summit outlined the roadmap for further deepening our Special Strategic and Global Partnership in a post-COVID world.