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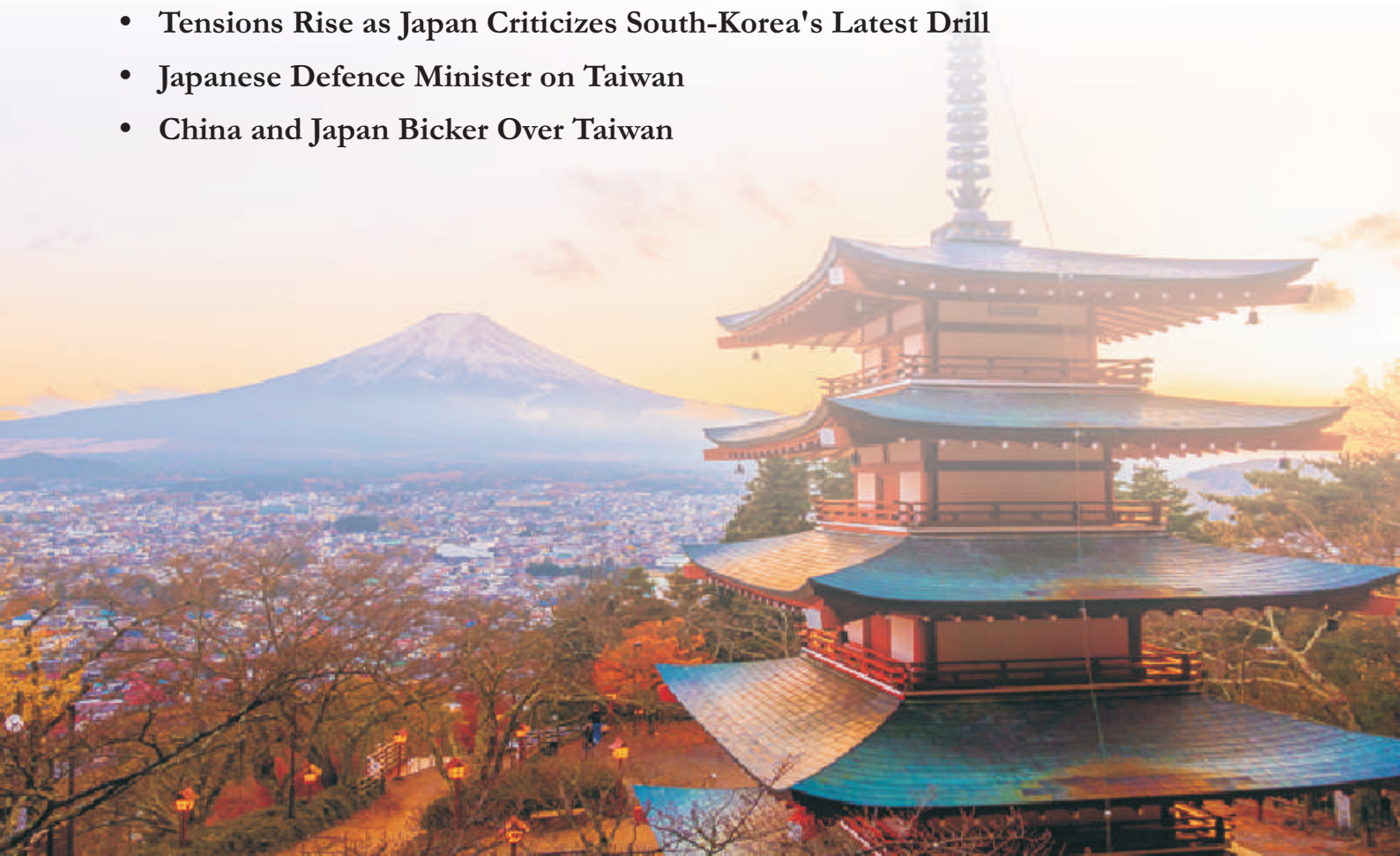
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

JAPAN

Digest

June 2021

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Japan's Defence Spending May Increase beyond One Percent of GDP

Defence Minister Kishi Nobuo has argued that Japan needs to enhance its defence capabilities at a relatively faster pace given the fluid regional security situation on the one hand and keeping pace in new domains including space, cyber and electromagnetic domains. In this context, Tokyo may no longer restrict the defence budget to its [one percent GDP cap](#) for annual defence spending.

Minister Kishi suggested that Japan needs to appropriately allocate funding that is required to defend the country. Japan is especially prioritising the bolstering of its capabilities in the Nansei Islands which includes Osumi, Tokara, Amami, Okinawa, Miyako and Yaeyama. Notably, Japan's defence spending has witnessed a northward movement for nine straight years through 2021 while maintaining the one percent cap. It is important to also note that the former US President Donald Trump called on American allies including Tokyo to allocate two percent of GDP for defence.

Japan-Australia 2+2 Virtual Consultation Held

On June 9, Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu and Defence Minister Kishi Nobuo held virtual consultation with their Australian counterparts Marise Payne and Peter Dutton. The leaders discussed the converging strategic interests in Indo-Pacific security, and further encouraged continuing leadership of the US in the region. Additionally, the significance of working together with like-minded powers such as India in the Quad framework and also Trilateral Strategic Dialogue was underscored.

Both sides opposed any coercive and destabilising actions aimed at changing the status quo and undermining the rules-based international order, both in East and South China Seas. In addition, they expressed "serious concerns" regarding human rights situation in Xinjiang and developments in Hong Kong. Both leaders reiterated the strategic imperative of the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), and further expressed commitment to [accelerate the signing of the RAA](#) at the earliest possible date.

Japan-Pakistan Security Dialogue

At the eighth round of Pakistan-Japan Security Dialogue held on June 29, both sides reiterated their commitment to enhance bilateral ties and defence and security cooperation during an [exchange](#) of views on several issues including counter-terrorism measures and current regional security development. The dialogue was held at two levels: politico-military talks and military-military talks.

At the politico-military level, the Pakistan side was led by Additional Secretary Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri while Kobayashi Kenichi of Japan's ministry of Foreign Affairs led his country's side. For Pakistan, the military-military dialogue was led by Rear Admiral Mirza Foad Amin Baig, while the Japanese delegation was led by Noguchi Yasushi of Japan's ministry of Defence.

Vice Foreign Minister to be the New National Security Adviser

Akiba Takeo, the Vice Foreign Minister has been [appointed](#) as Japan's new National Security Adviser. He is assuming charge in place of Kitamura Shigeru. Akiba is known to be close to both Prime Minister Suga and also former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo.

Akiba became senior vice foreign minister in January 2018, and was responsible for negotiations with both China and the US. It is after almost two years that the top position of Japan's National Security Secretariat will be held by a diplomat.

Japan registers protest against South Korean drill near disputed Islands

Japan has expressed strong reservations against South Korean military and maritime police's joint defense exercise near the contested Takeshima/ Dokdo Islands. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary, Kato Katsunobu called the drills ["unacceptable and extremely regrettable."](#)

Tokyo has reportedly protested against the drill including through diplomatic channels. Bilateral relations are undergoing a turbulent phase over historical and trade issues. Earlier, media reports indicated that Japan unilaterally cancelled a meeting between the heads of both states during the G7 summit, over the issue.

Japanese Defence Minister on Taiwan

Japan's defence minister Kishi Nobuo has appealed to the international community to think about Taiwan's security and pay more attention to the cause of Taiwan including its ["survival"](#). Expressing his concern that Chinese military was "enveloping" Taiwan, he stated that "broad international pressure was crucial" to protect Taiwan.

International media have viewed Kishi's comments as indication of Japan breaking with "years of precedent" of maintaining reticence on issues related to Taiwan. Earlier, Japan's 2021 Defence White Paper expressed concerns over Taiwan's security and accused China of intensifying military

activities around Taiwan. Besides, the 2021 Paper urged to the international community to ["pay close attention"](#) on the Taiwan issue with a greater ["sense of crisis"](#).

China and Japan Bicker Over Taiwan

Japan's Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide in a meeting at the National Diet referred to Taiwan as a country. Suga was debating privacy rights in the parliament, where he noted Taiwan, Australia, and New Zealand as ["three countries"](#) for having robust privacy rights, in order to control the spread of Covid-19. This has elicited a strong reaction from China.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin accused Japan of ["severely violating"](#) Sino-Japanese agreed-to principles. Beijing also demanded a clarification from Tokyo, and asserted that "there is only one China in the world and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory". Besides, it sternly warned that Tokyo should not indulge in any form of activities that will set a ["wrong signals"](#), encouraging ["Taiwan's independence"](#).

Further, in response to China's official reaction, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Kato Katsunobu had to reiterate that the Japanese policy of adhering to the 1972 Japan-China Communique has not changed and Japan's ties with Taiwan are ["practical and non-governmental"](#). In the meantime, Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu has defended Tokyo's vaccine assistance to Taipei stating that it is under "international frameworks" and has further [stated](#) that Tokyo will continue to support the provision of the AstraZeneca vaccine to Taipei and stay engaged with Taiwan under the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association.