

<b>FORUM:</b>	Disarmament Commission
<b>ISSUE:</b>	Measures to Evaluate the Validity of Japan’s Possession of Counterattack Ability and Increased Armaments
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## Introduction

The increased test-launching of missiles conducted by North Korea has caused disorder in Japan’s northernmost islands and has been considered a security threat by the Japanese government for years. To counter the missile threat, the Japanese government came to the collective decision to adopt “counterattack capability”, a military plan to attack nations that initiate offence toward the national security of Japan. Since Japan has followed a strictly defence-oriented posture toward adversaries since the end of World War II, the Japanese military must increase its supplies of weapons to better accommodate “counterattack capability”.



*North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile, Hwasong-18, fired on April 13, 2023*

While the pursuit of “counterattack capability” is reasonable and would serve as an effective defence plan toward the North Korean missile threats, the Japanese government must increase the military spending budget on self-defence forces and prepare for yet another security challenge, as the country has already been investing to deflect the assertive actions in the East China Sea from China as well as taking into consideration aggression from Russia, heightened by the invasion of Ukraine. Apart from investing in security measures, the country also has other spending priorities such as pledged financing for climate-related spending goals and supporting the general public well-being.

In addition to the issue of funding, the senior members of the Liberal Democratic Party’s (LDP) ruling coalition partner, Komeito, have voiced concern that adopting “counterattack capability” may cause contradictions against Japan’s strictly defensive stance toward oppositions, also known as *Senshu Boei*. Therefore, the outcome of the politically divisive and controversial “counterattack capability” Japan



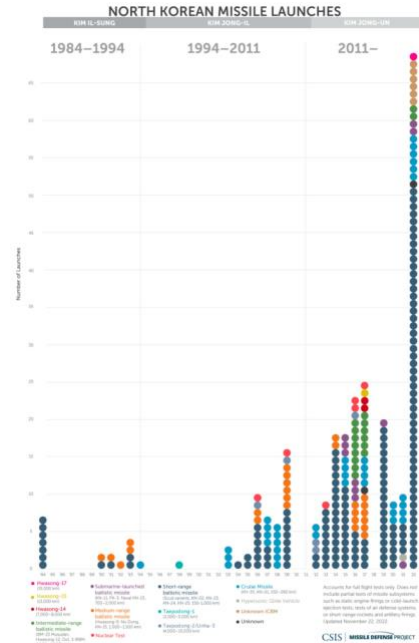
plans to acquire is crucial to the protection of the national security of Japan and the future of its economy and political posture.

## Background

For decades, North Korean missile tests were considered common by neighbouring countries and were often regarded without much concern, as the missiles often landed far from foreign territory. However, when Kim Jong-Un became the Supreme Leader of North Korea in 2011, the average number of North Korean missile tests conducted yearly increased significantly. In only the year 2022, almost 100 missiles were fired. Furthermore, the frequency of intermediate- and medium-range ballistic missiles fired increased as well. While such missiles have affected other countries such as South Korea as well as the United States of America, Japan has dealt with the brunt of the effects on its national security due to its proximity to North Korea and its antagonistic political history with the country.

On April 13, 2023, North Korea conducted its third intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) of the year, known as Hwasong-18. The missile landed between the Korean Peninsula and Japan following a 1000-kilometer (620-mile) flight. The missile is believed to have been fuelled using solid fuel, as it was harder to detect on Japanese radars, which would be a new type of ballistic missile as North Korea's previous known ICBMs all used liquid propellants. On the morning of the Hwasong-18 missile test, Japanese authorities issued evacuation orders to the people of its northmost island of Hokkaido by suspending public transportation services and activating sirens through community speakers. The evacuation order was retracted shortly after being issued as the path of the missile appeared to have no possibility of ending near Hokkaido. The evacuation order was said to have sparked fear and confusion in the public by several news articles.

The North Korean missile testing splurge is believed to be an act of rebellion against the joint military drills involving South Korean and United States military forces North Korea sees as preparation for an invasion of North Korea. However, South Korean and United States officials have mentioned that their drills are strictly defensive and were orchestrated to counter the heightened missile and nuclear threats from North Korea.



*Number of missiles test-launched by North Korea from 1984 to 2022*

Aside from the pressing issue of the North Korean missile threat, Japan is also facing security threats from China. Due to Japan's proximity to the Taiwan Strait, heavy trade ties with China, and being a U.S. ally, the hostility China asserts against Taiwan puts Japan at risk of direct military involvement with China. Therefore, with security threats to Japan's southern islands received from China and missile threats to Japan's northern islands from North Korea, the Japanese military must invest in preparing for potential combat with China while also using the military budget for "counterattack capability" to counter North Korea's missiles.

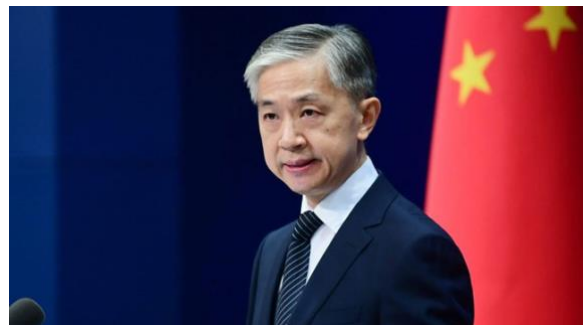
The idea of exploring "counterattack capability" was first introduced on March 30, 2017, when the LDP submitted a series of recommendations to efficiently respond to the missile threat from North Korea. Apart from the exploration of "counterattack capability", the recommendations included fortifying the existing ballistic missile defence (BMD) by acquiring new assets as well as recommended arrangements to protect the exclusive economic zones (EEZ). Japan has already begun the process of exploring and putting into effect "counterattack capability" by reforming its defence strategy, increasing the national defence spending budget, and joining forces with the United States military to accomplish this operational plan.

On December 23, 2022, the Cabinet of Japan published its budget for the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) for the following year. The budget totals up to about 6.8 trillion yen (52 billion U.S. dollars), which indicates a 26 per cent increase from the JSDF budget of 2022. This increase is the largest annual nominal increase in premeditated military spending since the 1950s. The military defence budget of 2023 was the first under Japan's new National Security Strategy (NSS). Announced in 2021, the NSS also included the increasing of the military expenditure limit from one per cent to two per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), after 60 years of strictly keeping the military expenditure under one per cent of GDP. Despite the rise in military spending on defence, the change in the trajectory of the budget has caused a strain on other aspects of military resources such as insufficient maintenance of equipment and inadequate training for its personnel.

## Problems Raised

### *Disputes Against Japan's Post-War Constitution*

Following the end of World War II and the surrender of Japan in 1945, a new Japanese constitution written by the Allied powers was adopted on the premise of democratic reforms and took effect two



*Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin expressing China's dissatisfaction with Japan's increased military defence expenditure*

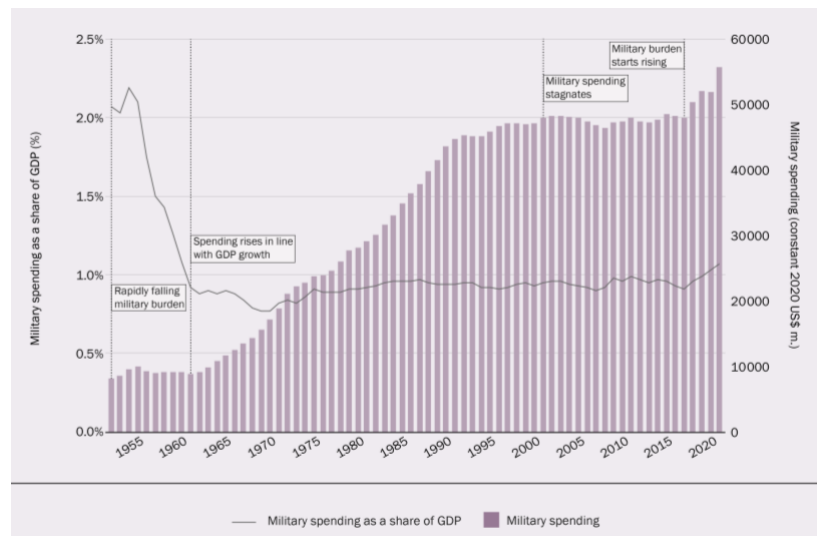


years after the end of the war. Among other major changes made to the governing of Japan, one of them was the use of military power and the role of the military. Article 9 of the post-war Japanese constitution states, “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.” This article of the constitution is the core precept of the exclusively defensive-oriented policy Japan currently has also known as *Senshu Boei*. With the adopting of “counterattack capability”, modifications to *Senshu Boei* were made that was said to “normalize” Japan’s foreign and security policy.

The modifications to *Senshu Boei*, however, have raised doubts and concerns among the neighbouring countries of Japan regarding the national security of those countries and whether Japan is committed to following a defence-oriented stance toward international difficulties. For instance, at a briefing on December 27, 2022, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin mentioned that Japan’s increased military budget “raises major doubts” regarding Tokyo’s commitment to “defensive strategies and peaceful development”.

### *Insufficient Military Funding and Resources*

The proposed expansion of Japan’s military expenditure that follows the implementation of “counterattack capability” has caused the Japanese government to struggle with financially supporting this incrementation while also maintaining its other spending priorities. Apart from countering North Korean missile threats, Japan must continue to invest in responding to other national security threats such as aggression from China and Russia.



*Japanese military expenditure from 1955-2020*

Other investments made by the military include equipment maintenance, training personnel, and purchasing arms from other countries. The government plans to increase its self-reliance by urging the Japanese arms industry to increase domestic production. However, Japan is still reliant on the United States and other allies for aircraft and explosives. The proposal of spending cuts and tax increments has been suggested on numerous occasions. However, the idea was quickly rejected by the LDP and other government ministers for fear of public backlash as many businesses are still recuperating from the economic stagnation induced by the pandemic. In conclusion, while Japan has made its intention of





increasing its armaments clear, the country is struggling to see this goal through as it has already been well-acquainted with its preplanned financial arrangements for the country before “counterattack ability” was introduced; furthermore, the original financial arrangements were devised to accommodate to *Senshu Boei* while the arrangements that come with “counterattack capability” are believed to be drastically different.

## International Actions

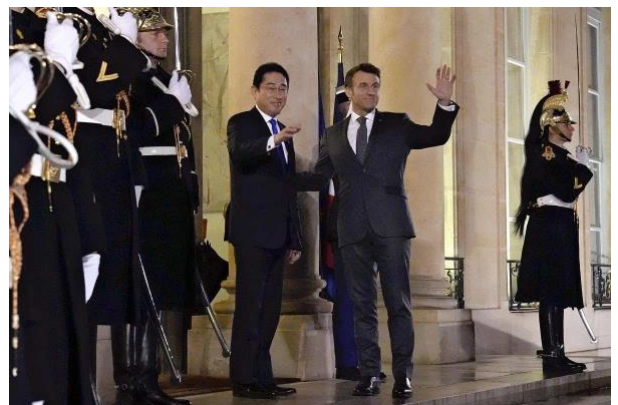
### *Strengthening the United States-Japan Alliance*

Less than a month after the cabinet released the revised military expenditure and the first steps of “counterattack capability”, Japanese prime minister Kishida Fumio visited Washington DC to meet President Joe Biden, the current president of the United States. During the meeting, President Biden expressed that the United States approves and supports the change Japan has acquired to acclimatize to the worsening security environment. To modernize the alliance with the United States to provide better support to the Japanese “counterattack capability”, Japan began a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council while also assuming the presidency of the body in January.

In addition to Prime Minister Kishida’s visit to the United States, he also paid visits to Canada, France, Italy, and Britain. Kishida and the president of France, Emmanuel Macron, vowed to continue the joint military training and security cooperation between France and Japan. The two political leaders also agreed to hold a meeting with the defence ministers of Italy and Canada, known as a “two-plus-two” meeting. In Italy, Kishida agreed to strengthen relations with Italy by coordinating “two-plus-two” meetings alongside Italy. Finally, Prime Minister Kishida and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak signed the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement to expedite joint training and military appointments.

### *Adopting “Two-Plus-Two” Meetings*

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*Japanese Prime Minister Kishida and French President Macron making final arrangements for a two-plus-two meeting*



agreed to strengthen relations with Italy by coordinating “two-plus-two” meetings alongside Italy. Finally, Prime Minister Kishida and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak signed the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement to expedite joint training and military appointments.

## Key Players

### *United States of America*

For seven decades, the United States of America has had a military alliance with Japan. Therefore, it is no surprise that one of Japan’s major supporters of the “counterattack capability” is the United States of America. A joint statement released by the White House on January 13, 2023, stated that a meeting between President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida concluded with President Biden commending “Japan’s bold leadership in fundamentally reinforcing its defence capabilities”. Hence, the United States of America views the Japanese “counterattack capability” favourably and will likely take more actions to support Japan in its pursuit.

### *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*

For decades, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has launched its intercontinental test missiles, some of which are nuclear-capable weapons, and have placed the United States mainland, South Korea, and Japan at risk of being caught in the explosion. The increased frequency of these tests is believed to have been the result of North Korea viewing the joint military exercises of the United States and Japan as preparation for an invasion of North Korea. As a result, the aggressive actions of North Korea have contributed to the Japanese government’s decision to adopt “counterattack capability”.

### *People’s Republic of China*

Apart from the missile threats received from North Korea, another security issue that led to Japan deciding to adopt “counterattack capability” was aggression from China in the South China Sea. China’s involvement concerning the Japanese “counterattack capability” also extends to China’s negative view on the adoption of this operational plan. Since the announcement of Japan’s plan to pursue “counterattack capability”, China has been the only country to voice its concern and criticism about this military approach.



*A Chinese Coast Guard Ship (left) chasing a Vietnamese Marine Guard Ship (right) to the coast*



## Possible Solutions

### *Garnering Financial and Military Support from Other Japanese Allies*

Despite the support already received by the United States of America, Italy, France, and Canada, and the need for Japan to be self-reliant to maintain its sovereignty, the main issue the Japanese government faces when it comes to pursuing “counterattack capability” is the lack of resources and financing the plan. Japan will not be able to accomplish this military approach completely solely on its own and will therefore need the support of its allies. For instance, signing a pact or a treaty with other nations to import and export arms, weapons, or even capital to support “counterattack capability” financially would significantly improve the current state of “counterattack capability”.

### *Publicity or Signed Declarations*

Although the usage of publicity may seem generic, it should not be underestimated. One of the main reasons for “counterattack capability” being a controversial topic of debate in politics is that the increased weaponry supposedly used for defence also can be taken advantage of and used offensively. However, with the need to maintain public support, publicity and signed declarations made known through the public domain can be used as a form of leverage to ensure the increased weaponry obtained through “counterattack capability” will not be used offensively. The implementation of this solution may also contribute to easing the stances of other nations toward “counterattack capability” and consequently garner much-needed international support for this military approach.

## Glossary

### *“Counterattack Capability”*

This refers to the ability to attack enemy bases as well as the amount of weaponry used to attack enemy bases. Japan plans to use “counterattack capability” to strike at enemies that targeted them first to prevent recurrent attacks from the enemy.

### *Intercontinental Ballistic Missile*

Often abbreviated as ICBM, this term refers to land-based, nuclear-armed missiles with a range greater than 5600 kilometres (3500 miles).

*Senshu Boei*



This is a Japanese military policy adopted after the end of World War II that shapes the posture of the Japanese military. Officially translated from Japanese, *Senshu Boei* is the exclusively defence-oriented policy, which is a policy that forbids Japan from using military resources for offensive combat. This policy is used to maintain peace and ensure that Japan refrains from using physical force to combat adversities with other nations.





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