



## Japan: Abe's constitutional and security agenda

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Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (the LDP) won a decisive victory in snap elections held in December 2014. Along with its ally, the Komeito party, the LDP now has a two-thirds majority in the lower house, the House of Representatives (Diet), and a majority in the upper house, the House of Councillors.

One of the reasons for holding early elections was Abe's desire to amend Japan's 'peace Constitution' so that in future it expressly permits the country's armed forces to come to the aid of allies under attack. This is known in Japan as the right of 'collective self-defence'.

In mid- 2014 the Japanese Cabinet approved interpreting the Constitution in this way. Abe is now seeking to give this new interpretation legal and constitutional underpinning.

However, for the Constitution to be amended, new legislation must be passed by a two-thirds majority in both houses and a majority of the people must give approval in a national referendum. With many ordinary Japanese as yet unpersuaded, this remains a major challenge. Nonetheless, the new government hopes to have the legislation passed by the end of June 2015, with the referendum potentially happening in the summer of 2016.

Important as it is, amending Article 9 of the Constitution is just one part of Abe's plans on the defence and security front. Japan is now looking to enhance its defence capabilities so that it can play a greater role in promoting international "peace, stability and prosperity".

But it will also increase its ability to respond effectively to any attack on the Senkaku Islands (as Japan calls them) in the East China Sea. Over the last five years Japan has viewed changes in the Asia-Pacific security environment with increasing unease. Tensions with China, which also claims sovereignty over these islands, have risen markedly in recent years, although there are efforts under way to establish a 'crisis management mechanism'.

Although the US is committed to come to the support of Japan in the event of an armed attack on the islands, there is some anxiety in Tokyo over the extent of US commitment to its alliance with Japan.

Later this year, China will also be scrutinising carefully the precise wording of Prime Minister Abe's apology for Japan's wartime aggression, whose text is being drafted now, when it is made on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II.

Overseas aid is set to be linked more to Japan's defence and security priorities in future. Policy has been changed to allow Japan to use its Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to fund foreign military forces, provided that the funds are used for non-military purposes. Critics question how far Japan will be able to avoid such funds being diverted to military purposes.

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## 1 Abe wins a new mandate

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called a snap general election for the lower house, the House of Representatives (Diet), on 14 December 2014, only two years after the previous elections in December 2012.

Abe's motivations for calling a fresh election were based mainly on his desire to renew his mandate to pursue economic reforms widely known as 'Abenomics', which are designed to end Japan's long period of economic stagnation.<sup>1</sup>

When announcing the snap election, he said that he wanted a mandate to impose a second sales tax increase in 2015 – the first increase had caused an economic slowdown. In his first term, Abe largely picked off relatively low-hanging economic fruit but did not make much progress on structural reforms.

Another reason identified for the snap election identified by commentators was the fact that Abe faced elections for the presidency of the LDP in September 2015 and wanted to ensure that he was in an unassailable position ahead of them. Re-election in September 2015 would then guarantee that he could remain prime minister until September 2018, long enough to achieve his economic and political goals.

With the main opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan in continued disarray, there was never much doubt that Abe and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) would prevail. The only issue was by what margin.

Once the votes were counted, the LDP had won an overwhelming victory, taking 290 seats out of 475 in the Diet. Its previous coalition partner, the Komeito party, won 35 seats. Combined with the LDP's majority in the upper house, the House of Councillors, it gave Abe the majority he needed unilaterally to enact any legislation that he wished. However, he has retained Komeito as a coalition partner.

Abe was also hoping that a decisive victory would also give him greater impetus in his campaign to change Japan's 'peace constitution' (see below). A constitutional amendment must be passed by both houses with a two-thirds majority, followed by achievement of a majority vote in favour of the amendment in a national referendum.

## 2 Towards amendment of Article 9 of the Constitution?

Article 9 of the 1947 'peace 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.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.<sup>2</sup>

However, Article 9 has been interpreted sufficiently loosely to permit the establishment of minimum military forces (the Self Defense Force (SDF)) for the sole purpose of self-defence in the event of a military attack on Japan.

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<sup>1</sup> For more background, see Library briefing SN06629, "[Japan's economy: from the 'lost decade' to Abenomics](#)" (last updated October 2013)

<sup>2</sup> Constitution of Japan, Article 9

During his first term in office (2012-14), Abe sought to build impetus for reform of the Constitution so that Japan can in future come to the aid of an ally that is under military attack.

## 2.1 Reinterpreting the Constitution

An ‘Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security’ published its [recommendations](#) in May 2014. That report concluded:

The security environment surrounding Japan has become ever more severe, due to various factors including technological progress, expansion of cross-border threats, and changes in the inter-state power balance. In addition, the deepened Japan-U.S. alliance and the broadening of regional security cooperation mechanisms, together with the increasing number of cases that ought to be addressed by the whole international community, Japan needs to fulfill an even greater role in a host of areas. Considering the remarkable scale and speed of the changes occurring in the security environment, Japan is now facing a situation where adequate responses can no longer be taken under the constitutional interpretation to date in order to maintain the peace and security of Japan and realize peace and stability in the region and in the international community [...]

[...] the provision of paragraph 1 of Article 9 should be interpreted as prohibiting the threat or the use of force as means of settling international disputes to which Japan is a party. The provisions should be interpreted as not prohibiting the use of force for the purpose of self-defense, nor imposing any constitutional restrictions on activities that are consistent with international law. The provision of the paragraph 2 of Article 9 should be interpreted as stipulating that “in order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph,” war potential will never be maintained. The paragraph should therefore be interpreted as not prohibiting the maintenance of force for other purposes, namely self-defense or so-called international contributions to international efforts

In July 2014, following a period of public consultation that culminated in a report by an advisory panel, the Cabinet approved interpreting the Constitution as permitting ‘collective self-defence’.

To justify this shift, the Prime Minister has cited two examples where the previous interpretation of Article 9 prevented Japanese forces come to the aid of an ally under attack. He pointed out that Japanese troops have been unable to help fellow UN peacekeepers from another nation if they came under attack. In addition, Japanese ships have also been unable to help US naval ships providing ballistic missile defence to Japan if they came under attack. Abe has argued that “my country cannot be the weak link in the chain.”<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2 Proposed legislation ahead of a national referendum

Abe now hopes to amend the Constitution to permit acts of ‘collective self-defence’ – first by passing legislation to in both houses of the Japanese Parliament by a two-thirds majority and then by winning a majority vote in favour in a national referendum.

While the December 2014 election result has increased the likelihood of this happening, it remains a big challenge. The ‘pacifist’ constituency remains strong in Japan. The LDP’s coalition ally, Komeito, is an avowedly pacifist party. The two parties have begun talks on the wording of the draft legislation. These are due to be completed by the end of March.

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<sup>3</sup> [“Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s remarks”](#), *Hudson Institute*, 25 September 2013

The draft legislation under discussion is reported as specifying that “the use of force to protect another nation should be allowed only if Japan is in a close relationship with the country, the attack threatens Japan’s own survival and there are no other appropriate means of response.”<sup>4</sup>

The government hopes that this legislation can be passed by both houses by the end of June. Commentators claim that Abe might then try to hold a referendum after elections to the Senate, which are due in the summer of 2016.

China and South Korea are highly suspicious of the move. However, Abe is assisted by the fact that the US has publicly endorsed his efforts, which may reassure ordinary Japanese that the spirit of the 1947 Constitution, of which the Americans were the architects, would remain intact.

Abe and his supporters are reportedly hoping that the execution of two Japanese hostages in Syria in early 2015 by the so-called Islamic State will increase public enthusiasm for amending Article 9. But ordinary Japanese may conclude instead that this happened precisely because Japan is becoming too closely involved with US-led military operations abroad.<sup>5</sup>

In recent weeks, Abe has consciously linked his campaign for constitutional reform to the fight against international terrorism. He is also calling for the Constitution to be amended to include a right to protect the lives and assets of Japanese citizens abroad, which would in theory have permitted a ‘rescue mission’ to save the two hostages.<sup>6</sup>

### **3 Wider defence and security developments**

#### **3.1 Defence**

Over the last five years Japan has viewed changes in the Asia-Pacific security environment with increasing unease. Those concerns have been reflected in both the Ministry of Defense’s [annual defence plans](#) and in the [National Defense Program Guidelines](#). As described above, one of the major political ambitions of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe over the last few years has been the ‘normalisation’ of Japan’s SDF and amending Article 9 of the Constitution in order to allow Japan the right to collective self-defence.

In December 2013 a new National Security Council was established and Japan’s first ever [National Security Strategy](#) (NSS) was subsequently published.

The annual defence white paper, [Defence of Japan 2014](#), was published in July 2014. That document summarised the Government’s current view on measures for self-defence permitted under Article 9. It concluded that:

As a result of careful examination in light of the current security environment, the Government has reached a conclusion that not only when an armed attack against Japan occurs but also when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan’s survival and [...] when there is no other appropriate means available to repel the attack and ensure Japan’s

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<sup>4</sup> “Abe begins effort to revise Pacifist charter”, *Straits Times*, 14 February 2015

<sup>5</sup> “As Abe pushes for more robust military, Japanese push back”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 February 2015

<sup>6</sup> “Abe’s ongoing defense policy changes”, *Chinese Government press release*, 9 February 2015

survival and protect its people, use of force to the minimum extent necessary should be interpreted to be permitted under the Constitution...<sup>7</sup>

The Ministry of Defense states that it is unconstitutional to possess what are described as “offensive weapons that, from their performance, are to be used exclusively for total destruction of other countries, since it immediately exceeds the minimum level necessary for self-defense.” It cites as examples intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range strategic bombers or offensive aircraft carriers.<sup>8</sup>

Having said that, the *Military Balance 2013* noted that Japan’s Self-Defence Forces “are the most modern Asian armed forces in terms of their equipment.”<sup>9</sup> All three services are well equipped, primarily with US-sourced technologies.

It has an active force of 247,150 personnel, divided into 151,050 ground self-defence forces; a maritime self-defence force of 45,500 personnel; an air self-defence force of 47,100 personnel and central staff of 3,500.

### **National Defence Program Guidelines 2014 and Beyond**

In December 2013 new [National Defense Program Guidelines](#) for 2014 and beyond, and a [Medium Term Defense Program](#) for 2014-2018 were approved. While the emphasis remains upon maintaining an exclusively defence-oriented posture and not becoming a military power that poses a threat to other countries, in line with the Government’s current thinking on collective self-defence, the premise of both papers is that:

In light of the National Security Strategy, Japan will strengthen its diplomatic and defense capabilities along the policy of “Proactive Contribution to Peace” based on the principle of international cooperation, thereby expanding the role it can play. At the same time, Japan will contribute even more proactively in securing peace, stability and prosperity of the international community while achieving its own security as well as peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region by expanding and deepening cooperative relationships with other countries, with the Japan-U.S. Alliance as its cornerstone.

Under this basic principle, Japan will build a comprehensive defense architecture and strengthen its posture for preventing and responding to various situations. In addition, Japan will strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance and actively promote bilateral and multilateral security cooperation with other countries while closely coordinating defense and diplomatic policies. Japan will also seek to establish an infrastructure necessary for its defense forces to fully exercise their capabilities.<sup>10</sup>

With respect to military capability, the intention going forward is, therefore, to:

Enhance... deterrence and response capability by improving the mission-capable rate of equipment and its employment to conduct tailored activities swiftly and sustainably based on joint operations, as well as by developing defense capabilities adequate both in quantity and quality that underpin various activities to realize a more robust defense force.

In order to realise the aims set down in the 2014 Defense Guidelines, and develop the new Dynamic Joint Defense Force, emphasis over the next five years will be on developing Japan’s intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, including the

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<sup>7</sup> [Defence of Japan 2014, Chapter 1](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Fundamental concepts of National Defence](#), Ministry of Defence Japan, accessed 23 October 2013

<sup>9</sup> “The Military Balance 2013” p306

<sup>10</sup> [National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2014 and Beyond](#), December 2013

procurement of UAVs,<sup>11</sup> intelligence sharing, command and control and communication, and transport and logistics capabilities. In addition, capabilities will be enhanced, across the board, to enable a response to any attack on remote islands, including developing new amphibious operations capabilities based upon a 3,000 strong force equipped with amphibious assault craft and tilt-rotor aircraft; to respond to ballistic missile attacks, threats emanating in cyber space, large scale disasters and to contribute to international peace co-operation efforts.

Ensuring maritime supremacy and air superiority are identified as specific priorities and therefore ground-based heavy armour assets are expected to be reduced. Ground forces will instead be focused on rapid mobility. The maritime force will be expanded with the procurement of an additional 6 destroyers, a further 2 aegis-equipped destroyers and an additional 6 submarines. Japan's new class of helicopter carrier also reportedly began initial sea trials in September 2014. The current fleet of F-15 and F-2 fighter aircraft will be modernised, while the F-35A (which was chosen in 2011) will be steadily introduced. New aerial refuelling and transport aircraft will also be acquired. Maritime surveillance will also be improved with the acquisition of the P-1 maritime aircraft to replace its P-3C Orion fleet and anti-submarine warfare capabilities will be boosted with the acquisition of the Seahawk helicopter. Air defence systems will be modernised and a new medium-range coastal air defence system will be procured for deployment on Japan's southwestern islands.

An article in *Jane's Defence Weekly* has suggested "the majority of these acquisitions are explicitly linked to fortifying Japan's posture in its southwestern islands and surrounding waters in the face of increasing Chinese activities and the ongoing dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands".<sup>12</sup>

### **Defence budget**

The expenditure required to realise the aims of the Defense Program Guidelines is expected to total 24bn Yen (\$201m) over the next five years.<sup>13</sup> The government has committed to providing the necessary budgetary resources and announced a 0.8% increase in the defence budget in 2013, followed by a 2.2% increase in 2014. A request for a 1.97% increase in 2015 has been submitted which would increase the overall defence budget from 4.885 trillion Yen (\$41.8bn) to 4.91 trillion Yen (\$42.7bn).<sup>14</sup> That request was significantly lower than the 3.5% increase the Ministry of Defense had initially requested in August 2014. However, this period of budgetary growth reverses almost a decade-long stagnation in defence spending.

In line with budget increases, the Ministry of Defense has also announced its intention to create a new Defense Procurement Agency, in order to obtain maximum efficiency from its defence budget across the three services.

In July 2014 the Japanese government also overhauled its defence export regime, in order support its indigenous defence industry and allow technology transfer. The move has also been seen as significant for Japan's efforts to bolster defence relationships with other Asia-Pacific nations.

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<sup>11</sup> In 2015 the US is reported to be planning to deploy four Global Hawk UAVs to Japan, ahead of a potential Foreign Military Sale between the two countries.

<sup>12</sup> "Japanese finance ministry raises defence spending", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 14 January 2015

<sup>13</sup> Defence of Japan 2014, p.170

<sup>14</sup> "Japanese finance ministry raises defence spending", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 14 January 2015

## Overseas deployments

Japan's longstanding policy of maintaining an exclusively defence-oriented policy has effectively limited the deployment of the Japanese Self Defense Force overseas to peacekeeping operations and other military tasks that are non-offensive in nature such as humanitarian/disaster relief operations.

In the last few years, and as part of moves toward realising the goal of 'collective self-defence', Japan has demonstrated an increasing willingness to deploy its forces in support of offensive operations, albeit limiting troops to non-combat, largely logistics and humanitarian roles. For example, in November 2001 Japan deployed a naval contingent to the Indian Ocean to provide logistics support to Operation Enduring Freedom, and then subsequently to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. That operation was terminated in mid-January 2010 and forces returned to Japan on 6 February 2010.

In January 2004 Japan also deployed a contingent of non-combat troops to serve alongside Dutch forces in Iraq, a decision of the Japanese government that was labelled at the time as historic. Despite significant domestic opposition, those forces remained in theatre until mid-2006. Japan continued to provide airlift and other logistics support to the UN mission in Iraq until the end of 2008.

Japan currently has 272 troops deployed as part of the UN Mission to the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS),<sup>15</sup> Japan withdrew its forces from the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) stationed in the Golan Heights in early 2013, having been in the Golan Heights since 1996. Japan also regularly contributes naval assets to counter-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden and has 180 personnel and two Orion P-3 aircraft deployed in Djibouti.

### 3.2 'Securitising' overseas aid?

Japan has been providing humanitarian aid to countries in the Middle East confronting the so-called Islamic State. In January 2015, days before the militant group issued a ransom demand of \$200 million for the release of the two Japanese hostages it held, Japan had pledged the same amount in humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced people in the region.

Critics argued that this step triggered the Islamic State's ransom demand as a punishment for taking the side of its enemies. Following the execution of the hostages, Japan asserted that it would not be deflected from providing further humanitarian assistance in future.<sup>16</sup> A few days ago, Japan announced a further \$6 million in humanitarian assistance.<sup>17</sup>

More broadly, the Japanese government has been revising its overseas aid policy. The main objectives has been to put its aid programme to more 'strategic use' in pursuit of global stability and security. Indeed, some critics argue that Japan's aid is becoming more 'securitized'. This reflects the National Security Strategy adopted by the Japanese cabinet in December 2014.

Earlier this month the Japanese Cabinet endorsed a new '[Development Cooperation Charter](#)', which updated the 1992 'Overseas Development Assistance Charter'.

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<sup>15</sup> As of 31 January 2015, UN Peacekeeping Statistics

<sup>16</sup> "Abe wants to alter constitution after '16 election, legislator says", *International New York Times*, 6 February 2015

<sup>17</sup> "Japan to grant \$6m relief to Syrian refugees", *Bahrain News Agency*, 25 February 2015

The new charter stipulates for the first time that Japan can use its Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to fund foreign military forces, provided that the funds are used for non-military purposes. Critics question how far Japan will be able to avoid such funds being diverted to military purposes.

There are also continuities. The charter continues to prioritise the Asian region for receipt of Japanese ODA. It also retains Japan's traditional emphasis on private sector development, most notably through funds for infrastructure projects.<sup>18</sup>

Japan's aid budget increased between the 1960s and 1990s to the point where in 1989 it was the world's biggest aid donor. However, Japan's aid expenditure fell over the subsequent 20 years.

According to the OECD [development cooperation report 2014](#) (pp 324-7), in 2013 Japan was the fourth largest donor of ODA by volume, after the US, UK and Germany.

In 2013, Japan's ODA was worth \$11.8 bn. This was 0.23% of GNI. This represented an increase of 36.6% on 2012 and was the first significant rise for five years.

Japan's bilateral ODA has long been heavily focused on Asia. Only 16% went on Sub-Saharan Africa in 2013. 22% went to Least Developed Countries in 2012.

In 2012, 40% of Japan's bilateral ODA went on economic infrastructure and services.

Japan's ODA includes a relatively high level of concessional loans as compared with that of the US or UK.

In 2014, Japan's ODA [was set to a further 5%](#) to US\$16.5 billion.

## **4 Ongoing tensions with China**

### **4.1 East China Sea**

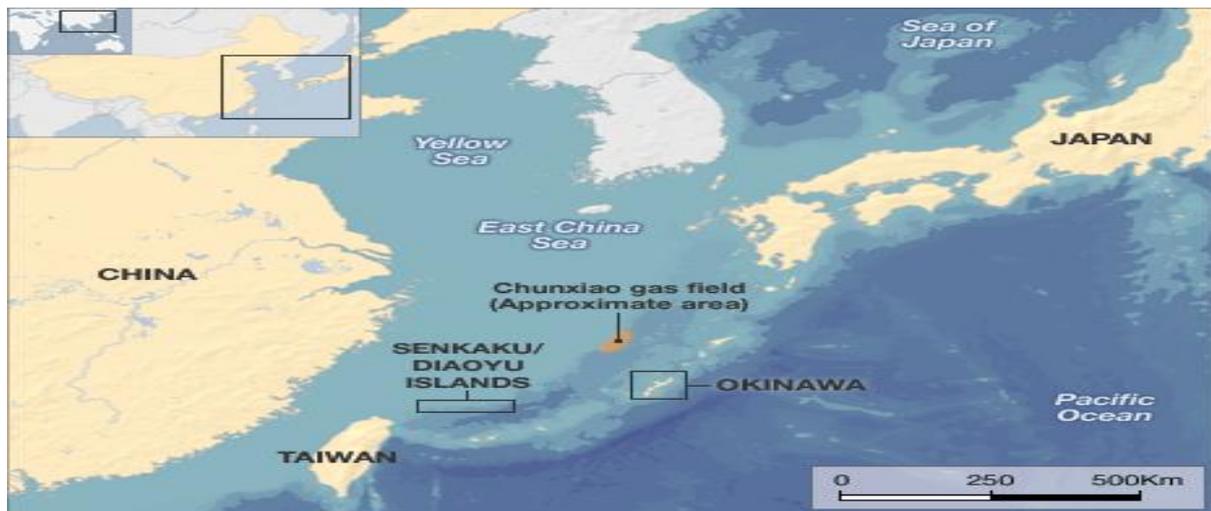
Eight uninhabited islands and rocks in the East China Sea have been the subject of long-standing rival claims to sovereignty on the part of China, Japan and Taiwan. They are called the Senkaku Islands in Japan, the Diaoyu Islands in China and the Tiaoyutai Islands in Taiwan.<sup>19</sup>

Japan and China have also been unable to agree a maritime boundary in the East China Sea. As in the South China Sea, competition over oil and gas resources is a big factor.

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<sup>18</sup> "Japan adopts new aid policy, may aid foreign militaries", *Japan Times*, 11 February 2015

<sup>19</sup> For more background, see Library briefing SN06475, "[The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands: tension between Japan and China in the East China Sea](#)" (last updated April 2013)



Source: BBC

There was a major crisis between China and Japan in September 2012, when the Japanese government bought three of the Islands from a private Japanese owner. China viewed this action as an alteration of the *status quo* and announced that it now viewed the islands as subject to ‘overlapping control’ – a concept Japan rejects.

In November 2013 the Chinese Government announced the creation of an ‘[Air Defence Identification Zone](#)’ in the East China Sea, under which all non-commercial air traffic is expected to submit flight plans before entering the zone. Both Japan and the US considered this a provocative move but responded relatively calmly. While refusing to acknowledge the zone, the US authorities have recommended that US airlines comply. Japanese airlines originally complied but ceased to do so under pressure from the government. The Chinese zone overlaps with similar Japanese and South Korean zones. Such zones are not binding under international law and no country has the right to shoot down airlines that enter without authorisation. The zones remain international airspace. The EU has also expressed concern about the zone.<sup>20</sup>

Since late-2014, Japan and China have sought to stabilize relations through several rounds of security talks, most notably in November, when Abe met Chinese President Ji Jinping in the margins of the APEC summit in Beijing and the two sides agreed to establish a ‘crisis management mechanism’ for resolving potential clashes between their forces in the East China Sea. But the mechanism is fragile and untested. A further round of security talks has been agreed for April.

Ongoing tensions with China over the East China Sea dispute have arguably been the main impulse for the Abe government’s determination since 2012 to increase defence spending (see below).

#### 4.2 The US stance

Although it does not take a position on the sovereignty issue, the US has confirmed that the islands known as Senkaku by Japan and Diaoyu by China are covered by 1960 US-Japan

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<sup>20</sup> No UK airlines currently schedule flights that cross the Chinese ADIZ, and the British authorities have taken no actions to ensure compliance with it.

Security Treaty, under which the US has pledged to come to Japan's defence if its territory is attacked.<sup>21</sup>

In an interview with the Japanese newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Obama [said](#):

The policy of the US is clear – the Senkaku islands are administered by Japan and therefore fall within the scope of Article 5 of the US-Japan Treaty of Mutual Co-operation and Security. And we oppose any unilateral attempt to undermine Japan's administration of these islands.

President Obama also stressed that this was “not a new position”, adding that “it would be a profound mistake to continue to see escalation around this issue instead of dialogue.”

Article 5 of the [US-Japan Security Treaty](#) says:

Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

In exchange for the US promise to defend Japan in the event of an attack, the US was given the right under the treaty to establish military bases in Japan. The largest is a US Marine base at Futenma in Okinawa prefecture. There has been considerable local resentment over the years about the base, although in April 2013 the two governments [agreed](#) that it – and five other US bases – would be returned to Japan by the late 2020s

In recent years, there has been growing Japanese nervousness about the state of its longstanding alliance with the US. There are concerns that the US ‘pivot to Asia’, first announced in 2011, could in practice become a pivot to China. US commentators have noted that Japan has taken steps to improve relations with Russia recently.

Relations between the US and Japan have also been strained by the fact that Japanese government ministers continue to visit the controversial Yasukuni shrine, at which Japanese war dead, including several convicted as ‘war criminals’ at the end of World War II, are honoured.

#### **4.3 Legacy of World War II: reviewing apologies**

Another highly sensitive issue between Japan and China (not to mention other countries in the region) is Abe's stance on Japan's role during World War II. 15 August 2015 will be the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. There is considerable debate in Japan about whether Abe should stick to the apologies made by past prime ministers for Japan's wartime aggression and colonial rule, or – as ‘historical revisionists’ would like – scale them back. Abe has expressed his sympathy with the revisionist view at times in the past.

Abe has asked an advisory panel to come up with recommendations about what statement he should make on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It contains both revisionists and moderates. China's

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<sup>21</sup> For more background, see Library briefing SN06873, “[The US-Japan Security Treaty and the East China Sea](#)” (last updated May 2014). The UK Government takes the [same position](#) on sovereignty as its US counterpart.

response should Abe ultimately water down Japan's previous apologies is bound to be hostile.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> "Japan's tug-of-war over World War II statement", *Associated Press*, 26 February 2015