

Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's new administration is undertaking a thorough review of Japan's alliance with the United States, which is bound to raise further concerns in Washington.

Hatoyama and his centre-left Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) unseated the pro-US Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in a House of Representatives election on 30 August, ending the LDP's near-perpetual one-party dominance since its creation in 1955.

With former communist nations becoming integrated with the modern capitalist world, the LDP had appeared to have finally completed its historical mission in the post-Cold War era – supporting Japan's military role as an anti-communist bastion of the US against China and Russia.

The US 'nuclear umbrella' has protected Japan against potential adversaries such as China, North Korea and Russia, while assuring other states in the region that had suffered from Japan's colonial rule and occupation that Tokyo would not return to its militaristic past.

Due to the US nuclear deterrent, Japan has enjoyed a generally stable strategic outlook, with its population usually risk-averse about any change and even 'military-allergic' since the end of the Second World War: the legacy of the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Thus, the previous LDP governments mainly focused national interest and resources on economic growth.


The era of Japan's strong pacifism, as enshrined in the US-imposed 'peace constitution', determined the posture and structure of Japan's military forces to defend the nation and made the security alliance with the US the centrepiece of Japanese security policy in the postwar period.

During the administration of popular former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi from 2001 to 2006, Japan aimed to strengthen bilateral military and security ties with the US – a drive reinforced by China's military build-up, North Korea's nuclear aspirations and the global threat of terrorism. The US-Japan security alliance under former US President George W Bush and Koizumi is often referred to as a 'golden era' between the two countries. Koizumi deployed Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) units to Iraq to contribute to the US war against terrorism.

Now, the new leaders in Tokyo still regard US strike capabilities and the nuclear deterrence provided by the US as essential for Japan's overall security – as well as for peace and security in the region – but they do not necessarily see a pro-US stance as essential for the nation's economic development.

Enormous economic growth in East Asia – especially in China, which is a 1.3 billion consumer market – is changing the structure of worldwide and regional business and industry. Hatoyama has called for the East Asian community to develop to the extent that it will resemble an Asian version of the EU. He also advocates a common Asian currency as a natural extension of the rapid economic growth

Japan's new dawn



Japanese navy destroyer *JS Kurama* leads other escort vessels during a fleet review off Sagami, south of Tokyo, Japan, in October

PA Photos: 1363679

It remains unclear how the new Hatoyama administration will reshape Japan's relationship with the US, but its major defence review, brought on by government budget restraint, will determine the country's future defence posture. Kosuke Takahashi reports

COUNTRY BRIEFING

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US Army operators demonstrate the **Joint Tactical Ground Station (JTAGS)** system, part of the missile defence initiative at Misawa Air Base, in northern Japan, in 2008. The system analyses the projected impact location of a missile and conveys the information to the US military and the Japanese Defence Ministry

PA Photos: 1363678

in the region. Hatoyama aims to conduct a rapid shift in Tokyo's axis of co-operation towards other Asian nations.

The DPJ, the dominant party in the ruling coalition led by Hatoyama, has advocated policies of multilateral co-operation while calling for a more equal partnership with the US. The DPJ has often refused to support US policies, most notably the war in Iraq, and has criticised post-war Japanese diplomatic policy as 'toeing the US line'.

In an upper house question-and-answer session on 29 October, Hatoyama said the review of Japan's alliance with the US would be "comprehensive". He later told reporters that it would cover Japanese funding of US bases, the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and the relocation of the US Marine Corps (USMC) Air Station Futenma in Okinawa Prefecture.

Hatoyama said his government is exploring the possibility of reducing Japan's host nation spending on US military bases. This so-called 'sympathy budget' began in 1978 and covers utilities and other expenses.

The budget allocation for Fiscal Year 2009 (FY09) comes to JPY189.7 billion (USD2.09 billion). With government debt expected to reach 187 per cent of GDP this year, Tokyo no



longer wants to outlay the large sums of money it currently pays to support US military forces in Japan. This fiscal restraint also places a limit on how much it can spend to modernise its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) domestically.

The SOFA, which governs US military operations in Japan and legal arrangements for its personnel, has not been revised for nearly half a century. A group of governors representing prefectures that host military facilities, such as the Okinawa and Kanagawa prefectures, has called for a clause covering environmental

pollution and destruction at US military bases in Japan.

In terms of the relocation of the USMC Air Station Futenma in Okinawa, the prime minister said "various options" would be considered. The government inherited the 2006 Japan-US agreement that calls for relocating the base within Okinawa, but Hatoyama has indicated that he will seek to relocate the US air station outside Okinawa, possibly even outside Japan.

Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada has floated the idea of merging Futenma's heliport functions with the nearby Kadena Air Base – the largest US military base in the Far East.

The new administration on 16 October decided to postpone by one year the formulation of the new National Defense Program Guidelines that will define the country's basic security policy for the next 10 years, as well as the government's FY10-15 mid-term defence build-up programme, which will be based on the new National Defense Program Guidelines.

The current guidelines were formulated in 2004 and were supposed to be revised by the government before the end of 2009. The administration plans to make interim allowances for the delay in next year's national budget.

On 31 August, just one day after the DPJ won a landslide victory in the last lower house election, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) announced its budgetary request for FY10. The requested amount reached JPY4.84 trillion: up 3 per cent from the budget amount for 2009. However, on



General Ge Zhenfeng (right), Deputy Chief of the General Staff of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA), reviews a guard of honour in Tokyo, Japan, in February

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29 September the Hatoyama cabinet decided to scrap the budgetary requests from every ministry, including the MoD.

The MoD then on 15 October announced a renewed budgetary request for 2010, which amounted to JPY4.70 trillion: down JPY1.9 billion from the previous year. The administration plans to compile the national budget for the next year by the end of 2009.

Land forces

The JGSDF numbers 160,108 personnel, consisting of 151,641 regular SDF personnel and 8,467 reserves.

Since the adoption of the 1995 National Defense Program Guidelines, the JGSDF has seen a reduction of around 28,000 members. In the renewed budgetary request for FY10 submitted to the cabinet, the JGSDF asked for 403 more regular personnel, saying that “in order to perform appropriate tasks, it is important to secure proper human resources”.

Making allowance for Japan’s geographical features – such as its mountain ranges, rivers and straits – the JGSDF has nine divisions and five brigades spread across the nation.

Unlike the now-defunct Imperial Japanese Army, the JGSDF has put more emphasis on the operational readiness, high mobility and compactness of each unit.

Although the Imperial Japanese Army attached great importance to collaboration between each division and brigade, the JGSDF has stressed their independent operation as a basic military unit under the five armies. These are the Northern Army covering Hokkaido, the North Eastern Army covering the Tohoku districts, the Eastern Army covering the Kanto and Koshinetsu districts, the Middle Army covering the Kansai and Shikoku districts and the Western Army covering Kyushu and Okinawa districts.

In addition to these regional armies, the JGSDF has a Central Readiness Force (CRF) of around 4,200 soldiers, which is under the direct control of the defence minister. The CRF was established in March 2007, following the creation of the Japanese MoD from the former Japanese Defense Agency.

The CRF is capable of responding to any situation on either Japanese or foreign soil. The unit can also be employed as a rapid reaction force to meet requirements outlined in the National Defense Program Guidelines for the improvement of the JGSDF’s ability to deal with issues such as foreign peacekeeping operations and anti-terrorist operations.

To date, CRF members have been sent to the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights.

The MoD has requested JPY15.7 billion to procure 16 new TK-X main battle tanks (MBTs) in the next national budget. This new tank will



The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force **Aegis-equipped destroyer *Chokai*** fires an interceptor missile to shoot down a target in space, off the coast of the Hawaiian island of Kauai, in November 2008

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replace and/or complement the existing Type 74 and Type 90 MBTs. The big difference between the TK-X and Type 90 is that the former is equipped with current-generation C4I systems.

Naval forces

As an island nation, Japan has invested heavily in the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), which has some 430 naval vessels.

The JMSDF has an official strength of 45,550 personnel, operating 52 destroyers, including six state-of-the-art Aegis destroyers, and 16 submarines, according to a 2009 MoD White Paper published in July.

The force is based strictly on defensive armament. Its main tasks are to maintain control of the nation’s sea lanes and to patrol territorial waters. It has also stepped up its participation in UN-led peacekeeping operations and maritime interdiction operations.

Deputy Prime Minister Naoto Kan on 25 October advised the JMSDF to prepare for an increased threat from North Korea and to combat terrorism during a fleet review in Sagami Bay off Kanagawa Prefecture.

“As security conditions surrounding Japan have drastically changed recently, the Self-Defense Forces are required to respond to diverse situations involving the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles as well as terrorism,” Kan said in an address aboard the 5,200-ton destroyer *Kurama*, which two days later collided with a South Korean container ship in the Kammon Straits and caught fire, leaving six crew members on the JMSDF vessel slightly injured, according to the MoD.

Kan said Pyongyang’s missile launch in April – which flew over Japan – and a nuclear test in May “can never be tolerated” and the reclusive nation remains “a serious threat to the peace and security of Japan, East Asia and the international community”. Commending the JMSDF for its anti-piracy mission off Somalia, Kan also said he expects that naval officers will “contribute to the peace and stability of the world under democratic control”.

As tensions mounted prior to North Korea’s failed attempt to launch a newly developed, satellite-bearing long-range missile in April, the JMSDF deployed the *Kongou* and the *Chokai* – the two Aegis-equipped ballistic missile



The Kongou-class destroyer **JS *Myoukou*** leads a formation of Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force ships at the end of Exercise ‘Annualex 19G’, the maritime component of the Japan/US Exercise ‘Keen Sword 08’, in the Philippine Sea in 2007

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defence (BMD) destroyers that are fitted with SM-3 missiles from Japan's six Aegis-equipped destroyers – to the Sea of Japan. The Japanese Aegis-equipped destroyer *Kirishima* was sent to the Pacific to detect and track the North Korean projectile's path and to collect data to determine whether it was a satellite or missile (the *Kirishima* had no ability to intercept it).

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) also shifted its Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) ground-based interceptor missiles, originally deployed at the Hamamatsu base in the Shizuoka prefecture, to JGSDF bases in Akita and Iwate in north-eastern Japan, where rocket debris from a failed launch might have fallen.

Japan's BMD Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) can intercept inter-continental ballistic missiles at an altitude of about 100 km while the PAC-3 has a range of about 20 km. The ground-based PAC-3 is responsible for the lower range of the missile shield and is designed to intercept incoming missiles in the event the SM-3 misses.

Japan spent JPY662.3 billion to deploy its ballistic missile defence system between 2004 and 2008. Of this amount, JPY40.3 billion funded the PAC-3.

Meanwhile, the MoD has requested JPY118.1 billion in next year's budget to build its largest-ever helicopter carrier. The new destroyer will be a 19,500-ton amphibious warfare ship that can carry 14 helicopters. Japan's current helicopter destroyers, *Hyuga* and *Ise*, are 13,950-ton



A Mitsubishi-manufactured F-4EJ fighter aircraft. The type is due to retire from 2013

JASDF, 1325410

ships that can carry a maximum of 11 helicopters each.

Air force

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF), like many of its counterparts throughout the world, is also going through a period of transition as it comes to terms with a declining defence budget (in real terms) and the continued need to shift towards modern operations.

The JASDF, which has 47,128 personnel, currently operates 359 fighter aircraft of three main types. According to the July defence

White Paper, the JASDF has 202 F-15J/DJs, 84 F-2A/Bs and 73 F-4EJ jets – although the latter have been in use since the Vietnam War and are scheduled to begin to retire from around 2013.

Japan has considered Lockheed-Martin's F-22 Raptor, regarded as the most advanced air-superiority fighter in the world, to replace the ageing F-4EJs, even though the US government has said the F-22 would never be exported. Japan has repeatedly said that it is seeking access to information on the F-22's technologies and performance data to review its capabilities before procuring next-generation (FX) fighters for the JASDF.

However, in late October US President Barack Obama formally decided to end F-22 Raptor fighter production as he continued to cope with the country's growing national budget deficit.

Japan's MoD was previously scheduled to begin the acquisition of next-generation FX fighters for the JASDF during FY09.

On 15 October the MoD requested a total of around JPY22.5 billion to renovate and upgrade 64 F-2s and four F-15s to improve the country's air defence capabilities – impromptu measures to reduce the impact of a delayed FX selection until Japan selects the new aircraft among the five contenders to replace the F-4 fleet: Lockheed-Martin's F-35, Eurofighter's Typhoon, Boeing's F-15FX and F/A-18E/F and Dassault's Rafale.

The MoD's Technical Research and Development Institute (TRDI), meanwhile, continues to develop a Japanese stealth fighter called Shinshin. The institute is currently conducting experiments such as radar reflectivity. The Shinshin's maiden flight is scheduled for 2013.

Since 2001, the TRDI has worked to develop a next-generation cargo transport (C-X) and a next-generation maritime patrol/anti-submarine warfare aircraft (P-X) as a joint JASDF/JMSDF effort. The C-Xs are planned to replace C-1 aircraft and the P-Xs to succeed P-3Cs. The two aircraft conducted their maiden flights in September 2007.

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Patriot PAC-3 missile launchers at Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, southern Japan, in 2007. The deployment is part of a multibillion dollar effort to build a ballistic missile shield in the Pacific to counter the threat of an attack by North Korea

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