

**Introductory Remarks to the Launch Event for the ASPI Report
“Japan’s Security Strategy” by H.E Ambassador YAMAGAMI Shingo
ASPI Main Theatre, Thursday 21 July 2022**

1. Introduction

- Dr Thomas Wilkins
- Professor Rikki Kersten
- Ms Bec Shrimpton
- Distinguished ASPI fellows, members of the online audience
- Ladies and gentlemen

- I am delighted to join you all this evening for this launch event for the ASPI report - “Japan’s Security Strategy”.

- I should at the very outset congratulate both Tom and Rikki for their fantastic work highlighting this important area, both for an Australian audience and for the broader international community.

- I should also thank ASPI for the invitation to address you this evening. I'm beginning to become quite a regular around the ASPI premises. Perhaps I should open my own branch office here!
- It is true to say that this subject matter is very close to my heart. As a diplomat and a national security professional, I have spent the best part of my career examining how Japan can better defend itself against external and internal challenges, and I hope to share a little bit of that insight with you this evening.

2. Japan's security and the shift in mindset

- Like most countries across the Indo-Pacific region, Japan has witnessed an increasingly severe security situation, partly as a result of the emergence of a new and more belligerent regional power coupled with events in Europe.
- With its long-standing defence and security relationship with the United States, quite a few Japanese spent many decades in a relatively benign state of awareness about its security and the threats beyond its borders.

- With its prime geographical and strategic location housing the forces of the world's most dominant military power, the security arrangement initially forged between John Foster Dulles and YOSHIDA Shigeru ensured that Japan could primarily concentrate on economic recovery and growth following the devastation of World War Two, while providing the US with bases for the defence of Japan and the peace and security of the region..
- In time, the strength of the Japanese economy would return it to the forefront of the international stage, in turn supporting the economic development of many countries around the region and the globe, including Australia's.
- On that point, even a number of Chinese intellectuals have privately admitted that without the massive amount of economic assistance, robust investment, and technological transfer from Japan, the Chinese economy could not have grown so large, so quickly.

- Yet the legacy of the war years, which led to the loss of 3.1 million Japanese lives, still lingered deep within the national psyche of the Japanese. Having been brought to the edge of the abyss, there was a strong, almost visceral reluctance to become engaged in any activity that might resemble a pro-active defence stance.
- My own personal experience reminds me that it was only after intense scrutiny of aims and lengthy constitutional legal arguments in the Japanese Diet that Japan's first peacekeepers were able to be deployed to Cambodia in 1990, where they worked in tandem with the ADF, as well as deploying SDF assets to the Middle East following the First Gulf War in 1991.
- This relatively ambivalent state of affairs continued until around 2012, when it was announced that Japan would undertake a force posture shift in response to the growing challenge to Japan's sovereignty and territorial integrity over the Senkaku Islands by a rising and increasingly assertive China.

- In the years since then, the continuing threat posed by the nuclear and missile programs of North Korea, combined with the attempts by China and Russia to challenge the status quo and undermine the rule of law, have accelerated a shift in Japan's collective mindset towards adopting an active, dynamic national security doctrine.
- Some might say that what was once considered a glacial change in mindset has, in relative terms, jumped to light speed in the wake of Russia's egregious and brutal invasion of Ukraine.
- That change is borne out by polls of public opinion towards providing defence equipment to Ukraine and adopting more pro-active activities abroad.
- In an NHK poll conducted in May this year, 55 per cent of respondents said they agreed with Japan possessing counter-strike capabilities, while 52 per cent agreed that Japan should increase its level of defence spending.

- On the subject of constitutional revision, attitudes are also changing. In a Yomiuri Shimbun poll held in this month, 58 per cent of respondents are anticipating debate on constitutional revision to take place in the Diet.

3. Policy changes and new initiatives

- This remarkable change in mindset has been reflected in government policy. The KISHIDA Government has already agreed to a substantial increase in the defence budget and to fundamentally reinforce Japan's defence capabilities.
- In a major break with the past, the KISHIDA Government also agreed to provide non-lethal defence equipment, such as drones, bulletproof vests, emergency rations, helmets, and medical supplies, to Ukraine in March this year to aid in Ukraine's defence against Russia's invasion.
- What has happened to Ukraine has come as a stark reminder of how deterrence must be used to defend the national interest and uphold territorial integrity, sovereignty, and the rule of law.

- Japan's past is replete with examples of the need to use its latent strength in arms to defend itself, to practice what is known in Japanese as *'jiriki kyusai'*, or 'self-help'.
- With the perils of proximity impacting on Japan's well-being, an increase in defence spending is a natural outcome which most of the Japanese populace accepts as a necessity.
- Yet Japan also knows that it cannot insure its security by force of arms alone.
- It has presented an ambitious vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific in which each and every member enjoys security and prosperity.
- It revived and has been a driving force in promoting the Quad, the Leaders' Meeting of which recently took place in Tokyo and where new initiatives in maritime domain awareness, climate change, HADR, cyber, space and infrastructure were announced.

- Partners are also a necessity in this new strategic reality, and Japan has been blessed by the strong support Australia has shown in building defence ties with us over the past decade, which recently culminated in the Reciprocal Access Agreement.
- This is the first such agreement that Japan has signed with any country, and is a mark of the respect and trust in which we hold our Special Strategic Partner, Australia.
- With the RAA's conclusion, expectations are that our bilateral defence relationship will become a lot more active with a concurrent increase in exercise activity.

3. Conclusion

- So that, ladies and gentlemen, is just a glimpse into what changes are taking place in Japan's strategic thinking.
- We're making a much larger, much more dynamic, and much more ambitious contribution to regional and global security than at any time in the post-war period.

- Some might say that every change in Japan's national security position occurs incrementally. But let me point out that when change comes, it is permanent and irreversible.
- How our security strategy might evolve from here are obviously arguments that Tom and Rikki are well-qualified to examine, and I encourage everyone in the audience and watching on-line to read the report and draw your conclusions from it.
- At a time when the world stands at a precipice between protecting the rule of law or submitting to the law of the jungle, Japan is actively working to keep the beasts at bay with the help of like-minded and law-abiding residents of the global village.
- Thank you.

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