

# JAPAN 70 YEARS ON FROM THE END OF THE WAR

## BALANCING ACT EN ROUTE TO A NEW SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

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Not every good political speech is necessarily "historic". The few seminal addresses that qualify for this special attribute are therefore all the more assured of receiving worldwide attention. It is even rarer for the speech by a top-ranking politician to attract global notice while it is still some time in the future. That is the situation in which Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe finds himself this year.

### **LONG SHADOWS: WHICH WORDS ARE APPROPRIATE TO DESCRIBE THE PAST?**

The conservative head of government is due to make a statement in mid-August on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japanese surrender. And representatives from politics, academia and the media have already been discussing the content of this statement for months. The main question is the wording that will be used to acknowledge Japan's role in World War II and as a colonial power. All eyes will be on Abe to see whether he will change the wording of earlier speeches, and if so, in what way. The assessment will take the statement made in August 1995 on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japanese surrender as its main reference point. This is considered a "milestone" by people around the world. At that time, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama referred to the fact that Japan "caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations". The former head of government expressed his "deep remorse" and "heartfelt apology".<sup>1</sup> Ten years later, in August

1 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Statement by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama", 15 Aug 1995, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html> (accessed 19 Jun 2015).

2005, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi reproduced this phrasing in his speech almost word for word.<sup>2</sup>

At a press conference at the beginning of January, Abe explained that his administration “has and will uphold statements issued by past administrations”.<sup>3</sup> However, several weeks later, the Prime Minister indicated that he may choose different phrases than those used by his predecessor: “Rather than decide whether to use the wording we have been using, I want to issue (a statement) from the viewpoint of how the Abe administration considers the matter [...]”.<sup>4</sup> This may entail the head of government not merely expressing remorse, but also speaking about his country’s pacifist stance since the end of World War II and about Japan’s future role in the international arena.



China’s foreign minister Wang Yi: Ever since his appointment, he has questioned several times Japan’s handling of its past – just as he did at a meeting of the UN Security Council this spring. | Source: Jean-Marc Ferré, UN, flickr ©①②③.

- 2 | Cf. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Statement by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi”, 15 Aug 2005, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2005/8/0815.html> (accessed 19 Jun 2015).
- 3 | Quoted from: Per Liljas, “Japan’s PM Abe to Express Remorse on 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of WWII Surrender”, *The Japan Times*, 6 Jan 2015, <http://time.com/3655187/japan-shinzo-abe-world-war-2/?xid=IFT-Trending> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).
- 4 | Quoted from: “New expressions planned for Abe’s WWII statement”, *The Japan News*, 27 Jan 2015, <http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/new-expressions-planned-abes-wwii-statement> (accessed 17 Jul 2015).

The reason why speculation about the precise wording of the upcoming August speech is not abating is that South Korea and the People's Republic of China demand that Japan provide a clear acknowledgement of its past now that 70 years have passed since the end of the war. Relations between Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo have been under great strain for years.

**Experts look forward to Shinzo Abe hopefully making an effective contribution to détente in the region by the "right" choice of words.**

Europe and the USA are monitoring the situation in the Far East with concern. Renowned experts therefore look forward to Shinzo Abe hopefully making an effective contribution to détente in the region by the "right" choice of words. If that comes to pass, this year's statement by the Japanese head of government will indeed deserve the attribute "historic" in view of the deep-rooted problems between Japan, China and South Korea. However, renewed escalation is also conceivable, as Tsuneo Watanabe from the Tokyo Foundation explains: "If the statement contains a self-righteous tone attempting to rewrite the past, it would provide a perfect excuse for an anti-Japan propaganda campaign."<sup>5</sup> Without naming a specific country, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi made the following critical remark at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council in February: "[...] although the historical facts have long been made clear on the war against fascism, there are still some who are reluctant to recognize the truth and even attempt to overturn the verdict and whitewash past crimes of aggression."<sup>6</sup> Motohide Yoshikawa, Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, subsequently affirmed in a brief statement that peace, democracy and human rights now constitute an inherent part of the identity of the Japanese people. "That is proven by the fact that, based on feelings of deep remorse regarding the Second World War, our people have endeavoured for 70 years to build a free and democratic nation respecting fundamental human rights and the rule of law." Yoshikawa went on to say that this path was "the pride of Japanese people" and that it would never change.<sup>7</sup>

5 | Quoted from: Masaaki Kameda, "All eyes on Abe for war's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary", *The Japan Times*, 2 Jan 2015, <http://japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/01/02/national/politics-diplomacy/all-eyes-on-abe-for-wars-70th-anniversary> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

6 | UN Security Council, 7389<sup>th</sup> meeting, protocol S/PV.7389, 23 Feb 2015, p. 4, [http://securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_pv\\_7389.pdf](http://securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_pv_7389.pdf) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

7 | *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Shinzo Abe has been making sustained efforts for months to dispel any doubt in this line. Only in December 2013, the head of government drew sharp criticism above all from Beijing and Seoul for visiting the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, a memorial to the souls of 2.5 million war dead, including 14 convicted war criminals. Just over a year later, he laid a wreath at Yad Vashem, the holocaust memorial to the martyrs and heroes of the State of Israel, during a visit to the country. "This year, which marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war's end as well as the liberation of Auschwitz", Abe said in Jerusalem, "we declare our determination not to repeat such a tragedy, ever again". The head of government continued with this exhortation: "We must continue our efforts to realize a world without discrimination and war and a world that protects human rights. Japan is determined to more proactively contribute to the peace and stability of the world."<sup>8</sup>



Shinzo Abe visits the Yasukuni Shrine: The Japanese government is repeatedly criticised for its remembrance at this location. | Source: © Shizuo Kambayashi, AP Photo, picture alliance.

8 | Quoted from: "70 years after WWII: Regional diplomacy / Abe's statement in August holds key to easing tensions", *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 1 Apr 2015, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001865754> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

During the Asian-African summit in Jakarta, also referred to as the “Bandung Conference” after the location of the first meeting 60 years ago, the Japanese Prime Minister reminded his audience of some of the fundamental principles to which the states represented at the conference had committed themselves, including the following: refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country as well as the settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means. Abe added that “[...] Japan, with feelings of deep remorse over the past war, made a pledge to remain a nation always adhering to those very principles throughout, no matter what the circumstances”.<sup>9</sup>

The Tokyo daily *The Japan News* noted that the Japanese head of government had already been very particular about the wording of the English version of the script for his speech in Jakarta. The paper called attention to the fact that *The New York Times* had also used the word “remorse” in its English translation of a speech delivered in September 1989 by then West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl on the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II and that his speech was praised overseas at the time.<sup>10</sup>

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Literally every word was also closely scrutinised in many media reports and analyses when Shinzo Abe paid a visit to the USA just a few days after the Asian-African summit.

The 60-year old Liberal Democrat was the first Japanese head of government ever to be permitted to speak in front of both houses of the U.S. parliament in late April. “[...] on behalf of Japan and the Japanese people”, Abe said in Washington, “I offer with profound respect my eternal condolences to the souls of all American people that were lost during World War II”. And he continued: “Our actions brought suffering to the peoples in Asian countries. We must not avert our eyes from that.” He confirmed that he would uphold the views expressed by the previous prime ministers in this regard. And Abe once more expressed his “deep remorse”.<sup>11</sup>

9 | Quoted from: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Asian-African Summit 2015”, 22 Apr 2015, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/rp/page3e\\_000325.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page3e_000325.html) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

10 | Cf. “Abe kept sharp eye on English translation of Bandung speech”, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 25 Apr 2015, <http://asianewsnet.net/Abe-kept-sharp-eye-on-English-translation-of-Bandu-74405.html> (accessed 31 Jul 2015).

11 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress”, 29 Apr 2015, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page4e\\_000241.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page4e_000241.html) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

While some critical comments were voiced in the USA, the speech by the Japanese head of government was well received by both Democrat and Republican Representatives. When talking to journalists U.S. Vice President Joe Biden stressed that Abe had “made it very clear that there was responsibility on Japan’s part”, and that the Prime Minister had also shown “empathy to all his Asian neighbors”.<sup>12</sup> According to media reports, Republican Senator John McCain praised the speech as a “historic recognition of two peoples reconciled with their shared history”.<sup>13</sup> During a press conference, however, a journalist put it to Abe that he had “stopped short of a full apology for Japan’s actions during World War II”, in his statement before Congress, “including with regard (to) the estimated 200,000 women enslaved by Imperial Forces”.<sup>14</sup> Abe responded by affirming “[...] I am deeply pained to think about the comfort women who experienced immeasurable pain and suffering as a result of victimization due to human trafficking. This is a feeling that I share equally with my predecessors. The Abe Cabinet upholds the Kono Statement and has no intention to revise it”.<sup>15</sup>

The so-called “Kono Statement” goes back to 1993 and is considered to be similarly ground-breaking as the Murayama Statement two years later. It goes back to then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono, who pointed out that the so-called “comfort women” were made to work as prostitutes on the Korean Peninsula “generally against their own will” and had “suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds”. “Undeniably, this was an act, with the involvement of the military authorities of the day, that severely injured the honor and dignity of many women”, for which the Japanese government was once again extending “its sincere apologies and remorse” in the Kono Statement.<sup>16</sup>

12 | Quoted from: Naoyo Yoshino, “Abe’s remorse goes deep enough for some in Congress”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, 1 May 2015, <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Abe-s-remorse-goes-deep-enough-for-some-in-Congress> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

13 | Quoted from: Justin McCurry, “China and South Korea criticise Japanese prime minister’s speech in US”, *The Guardian*, 30 Apr 2015, <http://gu.com/p/48xn3/sbl> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

14 | The White House, “Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan in Joint Press Conference”, 28 Apr 2015, <http://whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/28/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-abe-japan-joint-press-confere> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

15 | Ibid.

16 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the result of the study on the issue of ‘comfort women’”, 4 Aug 1993, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

One remarkable aspect of the recent statement the Japanese Prime Minister made in Washington was that although the expression “sincere apology” was omitted, Abe did point out that Japan wanted to “lead the international community in eliminating sexual violence during conflicts”.<sup>17</sup> He also used the term “human trafficking” in connection with the fate of the “comfort women” for the first time.



A monument remembering Japanese “Comfort Women” was inaugurated in the United States in 2013: Japan is still struggling with this chapter of its history. | Source: Melissa Wall, flickr ©©.

There are critics in the USA, but of course above all in South Korea and China,<sup>18</sup> who maintain that while the new wording “could be seen as some degree of progress”, because it implied the coercion to which the “comfort women” were subjected,<sup>19</sup> there was still no answer to the question of who bore responsibility for the “human trafficking”. The term itself can also be interpreted in various ways; the United Nations apply it not only to sexual exploitation but also to forced labour and to illegal organ removal. Contrary to custom in Japan, the “comfort women” are therefore predominantly

17 | The White House, n. 14.

18 | Cf. “‘Human trafficking’ just tip of comfort women issue iceberg”, *Global Times*, 31 Mar 2015, <http://globaltimes.cn/content/914716.shtml> (accessed 17 Jul 2015).

19 | “Abe may have changed his wording, but his attitude is still the same”, *The Hankyoreh*, 30 Mar 2015, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_editorial/684595.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_editorial/684595.html) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

referred to as “sex slaves” internationally. Addressing the UN Human Rights Committee in mid-2014, the responsible representative of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs by contrast said “the State party had carefully considered the (Geneva) Slavery Convention (of 1926) and did not consider comfort women as a slavery issue”.<sup>20</sup>

In Japan, the issue of “facing up to the past” also caught up with the Japanese Prime Minister during Chancellor Merkel’s visit in early March. When asked during a press conference what Japan should do in the near future to improve relations with China and South Korea, the German head of state stressed that she had not travelled to Tokyo “to give Japan advice”. She could only talk about “what Germany has been doing”. She explained how there had been numerous very intensive discussions – occasionally very harrowing discussions – on how to come to terms with the past and how to face up to the horrors. National Socialism and the holocaust were a terrible guilt the Germans had incurred. In this respect, making efforts to come to terms with the country’s past had been a prerequisite for being able to create the conditions for reconciliation.<sup>21</sup>

Despite her affirmation that she did not wish to give advice to Japan because each country had to find its own way, the Chinese news agency Xinhua reported on the Chancellor’s visit under the headline: “Merkel tells Japan to look squarely at history.”<sup>22</sup> A commentary in the *China Daily* newspaper stated: “It is time for Abe to understand that when West German Chancellor Willy Brandt knelt down at the monument to victims of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, his nation stood up.”<sup>23</sup> The commentary did not deal with the realisation that “of course reconciliation always needs two sides”, as Chancellor Merkel had pointed out during her visit

20 | Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Human Rights Committee considers report of Japan”, 16 Jul 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14878> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

21 | “Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem japanischen Ministerpräsidenten Abe”, 9 Mar 2015, <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2015/03/2015-03-09-bk-abe-japan.html> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

22 | Miah Song, “Merkel tells Japan to look squarely at history”, Xinhua, 9 Mar 2015, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/09/c\\_134051396.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/09/c_134051396.htm) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

23 | “Abe needs German courage”, *China Daily*, 10 Mar 2015, [http://china.dailymail.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/10/content\\_19764080.htm](http://china.dailymail.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/10/content_19764080.htm) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).



to Japan.<sup>24</sup> She went on to say: "We Germans will never forget the hand of reconciliation that was extended to us after all the suffering our country had brought to Europe and the world. We can count ourselves lucky that so much trust was placed in the nascent Federal Republic at that time."<sup>25</sup> In the Far East, by contrast, the distrust is still deeply engrained even 70 years on from the end of World War II.

### **JAPAN IN THE PRESENT: BETWEEN REFORMING ZEAL AND THE NEED TO GIVE ACCOUNT**

The past is not the only thing standing in the way of reconciliation between Japan, South Korea and the People's Republic of China; there is also the fact that the debate on the issues is happening

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at a time when Tokyo and Washington are in the process of reorienting their security policies. The Japanese government is planning reforms aimed at enhancing its capacity to act in the international arena and its capa-

bility of taking on greater responsibility in Asia and beyond. At the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Prime Minister Abe presented "Proactive Contribution to Peace" as the new leitmotif at the end of May 2014.<sup>26</sup> In connection with this reorientation, new Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation<sup>27</sup> were agreed in Washington this April.

Because of its pacifist constitution, Japan is far more limited than many other countries with respect to expanding its international engagement. Article 9 of the 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." To this end "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained". Furthermore, the

24 | N. 21.

25 | Federal Government, "Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel bei der Tageszeitung 'Asahi Shimbun' am 09. März 2015", 9 Mar 2015, <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Rede/2015/03/2015-03-09-merkel-asahi-shimbun.html> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

26 | "Keynote Address: Shinzo Abe", The ISS Shangri-La Dialogue, 30 May 2014, <https://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri-la%20dialogue/archive/2014-c20c/opening-remarks-and-keynote-address-b0b2/keynote-address-shinzo-abe-a787> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

27 | "New Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation", 27 Apr 2015, [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/anpo/shishin\\_20150427e.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/shishin_20150427e.html) (accessed 31 Jul 2015).

“right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized”.<sup>28</sup> These stipulations are deemed exceptional by comparison with other countries around the world. Media at home and abroad therefore frequently associate the reorientation of Japan’s security policy with the desire to become a “normal country”.<sup>29</sup>

Against this backdrop, criticism in the lack of owning up to the past and criticism in the current restructuring of the country’s security architecture frequently become linked. According to an opinion piece published in April by the Chinese news agency Xinhua “[...] without seriously reflecting on its past crimes against peace and humanity, the island country is untrustworthy”. The commentator fears that if Japan were to “get emboldened, it would be more likely to retake its self-destructive path and bring about regional troubles and even global disasters”.<sup>30</sup> In June 2014, after the speech given by the Japanese Prime Minister at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, a commentator stated the following in the *Korea Times* in Seoul: “Abe’s historical revisionism is all the more worrisome, as it combines with his foremost objective to make Japan a ‘normal’ country – one that can conduct war – reviving Japan as a global military power.”<sup>31</sup> At the beginning of May, another commentary from Beijing displayed a similar view in an assessment of the outcome of Shinzo Abe’s trip to the USA: “Such miscalculations will risk peace and stability in the entire region, and escalating tensions between Japan and its neighbors will also jeopardize U.S. interests.”<sup>32</sup>

Understandably, Tokyo and Washington have a totally different take on the matter. A joint statement about the new Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation by the foreign and defence ministers of the two countries – the so-called 2+2 Security Consultative Committee (SCC) – published in Washington in April contained

28 | The Constitution of Japan, [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

29 | The phrase does not originate with Shinzo Abe but with Ichiro Ozawa’s 1993 original Japanese version of the book *Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation*, Tokio, 1994.

30 | Zhu Dongyang, “Commentary: Abe’s dodging on war history shames Japan, insults world”, Xinhua, 30 Apr 2015, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-04/30/c\\_134199198.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-04/30/c_134199198.htm) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

31 | “Watered down apology”, *The Korea Times*, 20 Jun 2014, [http://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2014/06/202\\_159511.html](http://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2014/06/202_159511.html) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

32 | Liu Tian, “Commentary: Abe’s speech in U.S. Congress disappoints Asian neighbors again”, Xinhua, 1 May 2015, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-05/01/c\\_134201695.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-05/01/c_134201695.htm) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

the affirmation: "In light of the evolving security environment, the Ministers reconfirmed the Alliance's commitment to the security of Japan and to maintenance of international peace and security."<sup>33</sup> In this statement, the American side not only pays tribute to the new Japanese leitmotif of a "Proactive Contribution to Peace", it also stresses its support for the "recent monumental achievements" of Abe's government at the same time. In this connection, the text makes reference to the reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution approved in July 2014.<sup>34</sup> It gives Japan the right to "collective self-defence" subject to strict conditions. "Collective self-defence" in this context means providing military support to an allied state or to allied armed forces that are under military attack.<sup>35</sup> The USA also explicitly welcomes the regulations on arms exports, which the Japanese government

**The USA has praised the Japanese government for its "monumental achievements", including the establishment of a "National Security Council" and the "Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets".**

approved in April 2014.<sup>36</sup> While the new regulations include strict conditions as well, the "Policies on the Control of Arms Exports"<sup>37</sup> mean that, with some exceptions, the export ban on arms exports, which had been in place for almost 50 years, has now been lifted.<sup>38</sup> The "monumental achievements" the USA has attested the Japanese government include the establishment of a "National Security Council" at the end of 2013, the "Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets" (SDS), which came into force in December 2014 and covers information and documents that are officially classed as secret, as well as the "Cyber Security Basic Law" approved by the lower house of the Japanese parliament in November 2014.

33 | "A Stronger Alliance for a Dynamic Security Environment: The New Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation", Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee, 27 Apr 2015, [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/anpo/pdf/js20150427e.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/pdf/js20150427e.pdf) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

34 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People", 1 Jul 2014, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/np/pnsp/page23e\\_000273.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/np/pnsp/page23e_000273.html) (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

35 | In greater detail: Paul Linnarz, "Erweitertes Einsatzprofil für japanische Selbstverteidigungsstreitkräfte", KAS-Länderbericht, 1 Jul 2014, <http://kas.de/japan/de/publications/38233> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

36 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan's Policies on the Control of Arms Export", <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/policy> (accessed 25 Jun 2015).

37 | Ibid.

38 | In greater detail: Paul Linnarz, "Japan stellt die Weichen für künftige Rüstungsexporte", KAS-Länderbericht, 2 Jul 2014, <http://kas.de/japan/de/publications/37320> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).



Prime Minister Abe together with U.S. Secretary of Defense Hagel: The U.S.-Japanese defense cooperation has persisted for decades. | Source: Aaron Hostutler, U.S. DoD, flickr ©.

Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation were first agreed in 1978 and were subsequently revised by Tokyo and Washington in 1997. The regulations detailed in the Guidelines are based on the “Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan”, which was signed in 1952 and amended in 1960.<sup>39</sup> The new Guidelines approved this year supersede those from 1997. The first aspect to note is that the text makes no mention of either the People’s Republic of China, South or North Korea or, for instance, the Senkaku Islands (Chinese: Diaoyu) in the East China Sea. In their joint statement on the new Guidelines, however, the foreign and defence ministers of Japan and the USA stress “[...] that the Senkaku Islands are territories under the administration of Japan and therefore fall within the scope of the commitments under Article 5 of the Japan-U.S. Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, and that they (Japan and the USA) oppose any unilateral action that seeks to undermine Japan’s administration of these islands”.<sup>40</sup> Unlike the new Guidelines themselves, the associated joint ministers’ statement also makes mention of “key partners” in Asia. In this connection, the statement expresses Tokyo’s and Washington’s wish to expand trilateral and

39 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan”, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html> (accessed 27 Jul 2015).

40 | N. 33, p. 2.

multilateral cooperation, particularly with the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Australia as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The new Guidelines now envisage both an "Alliance Coordination Mechanism" and a "Bilateral Planning Mechanism" for the U.S.-Japanese Defence Alliance. One of the principles laid down for coordinated activities is that "Japan will maintain primary

**Japan and the USA have made a commitment to provide "mutual protection of each other's assets". This statement is not further specified in the Guidelines.**

responsibility for defending the citizens and territory of Japan".<sup>41</sup> According to the new Guidelines, the USA, for its part, will "take actions to shape the regional environment in a way that supports the defense of Japan

and re-establishes peace and security".<sup>42</sup> Japan and the USA have further made a commitment to provide "mutual protection of each other's assets". What this covers precisely – ships, technical equipment, buildings, etc. – is not specified in the Guidelines. An indication that the U.S.-Japanese Defence Alliance will no longer necessarily be restricted to Japanese territory is provided by the following passage: "The Alliance will respond to situations that will have an important influence on Japan's peace and security. Such situations cannot be defined geographically."<sup>43</sup> This could mean, for instance, that the USA will deploy ships and aircraft to support its ally in evacuating its citizens from a foreign country if they become embroiled in a military conflict. The most important provisions of the new Guidelines further include the commitment that the two governments "will cooperate closely with each other on measures to maintain maritime order based upon international law, including freedom of navigation".<sup>44</sup> And Japan and the USA even intend to cooperate in space in the future. To this end, they "will share information to address emerging threats against space systems and will pursue opportunities for cooperation [...] that will strengthen capabilities and resiliency of the space systems [...]".<sup>45</sup>

In an article about the new Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, the *China Daily* newspaper quoted the following pertinent opinion of a Chinese commentator in New York at the end of April: "It not only aims to contain the influence of China but also

41 | Ministry of Defense of Japan, "Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation", 27 Apr 2015, p. 10, [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/ano/pdf/shishin\\_20150427e.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/ano/pdf/shishin_20150427e.pdf) (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

42 | *Ibid.*, p. 11.

43 | *Ibid.*, p. 7.

44 | *Ibid.*, p. 6.

45 | *Ibid.*, p. 21.

seeks to defend hegemony of US-Japanese alliance in East Asia.”<sup>46</sup> U.S. President Barack Obama, on the other hand, declared that while there were some “real tensions that have arisen with China around its approach to maritime issues and its claims, [...] that’s not an issue that is arising as a consequence of the U.S.-Japan alliance”. According to Obama, the partnership between Tokyo and Washington should not be seen as a “provocation” but “as a continuation of the important work that we (Japan and the USA) have done to ensure that you have a stable area where there are diplomatic conflicts, a healthy economic competition”.<sup>47</sup>

In the meantime, several hundred demonstrators took to the street in Tokyo in mid-May to protest against the legislative package for expanding the range of potential scenarios warranting the deployment of the Japanese self-defence forces, which the government has signed off on. Ahead of the approval by parliament, which is expected to take place by July, Prime Minister Abe has made efforts to dispel criticism in the new provisions among the population and the opposition parties. He also called people’s attention to “hard reality” in this context. Bloomberg reported on the Japanese head of government providing the following explanation: “The number of scrambles by our Air Self-Defense Force against planes of unknown nationality that approach our air space is (now) seven times what it was 10 years ago.”<sup>48</sup> Abe stressed that Tokyo would only take advantage of the new right to collective self-defence under the new legislation if an attack on a close ally posed a “clear danger” to the survival of Japan and its citizens and if there were “no other appropriate means”. The Prime Minister made this promise to journalists: “Some people have vague concern that (Japan) will be dragged into a war the U.S. engages in. I say to them clearly here that such a situation will never happen.”<sup>49</sup>

**According to Abe Tokyo would only take advantage of the new right to collective self-defence if an attack on a close ally posed a “clear danger” to the survival of Japan and if there were “no other appropriate means”.**

46 | Quoted from: “US, Japan unveil new defense guidelines”, *China Daily*, 28 Apr 2015, [http://chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-04/28/content\\_20561799.htm](http://chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-04/28/content_20561799.htm) (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

47 | The White House, n. 14.

48 | Quoted from: Isabel Reynolds/Maiko Takahashi, “Abe Vows to Limit Use of Force After Approving Defense Bills”, *Bloomberg*, 14 May 2015, <http://bloom.bg/1H4pzCm> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

49 | Quoted from: Masaaki Kameda, “Abe: Japan won’t slide into U.S. war despite collective defense loophole”, *The Japan Times*, 14 May 2015, <http://japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/05/14/national/politics.diplomacy/abe-says-new-security-bills-are-not-war-legislation> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

## CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE – SUBJECT TO SOME RESERVATIONS

As things stand, India is probably the first country worldwide that will purchase military hardware from Japan under the new regulations on arms exports, most likely by the end of the year. This involves several amphibian aircrafts of the type ShinMaywa US-2, which the Indian Navy intends to use for search and rescue (SAR) missions. Negotiations about the purchase of aircraft have been going on since 2011. At that time, it was not the Liberal Democrats (LDP) under Shinzo Abe who were in government but the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) under Prime Ministers Naoto Kan and later Yoshihiko Noda.

**Japan handed over the first of a total of three patrol boats to the Vietnamese Coast Guard as a gift in February.** The Philippine Coast Guard expects to take delivery of two or three patrol boats of Japanese manufacture in the third quarter of 2015.<sup>50</sup> Japan already handed over the first of a total of three patrol boats to the Vietnamese Coast Guard in February by way of a gift. The boat is already over 20 years old and was thoroughly overhauled before delivery.<sup>51</sup> In March, Japan made an agreement on closer cooperation with Indonesia as well. The main aim is to improve communication between the foreign and defence ministries of the two countries to enhance cooperation in the area of security policy.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the criticism voiced in some media reports about Japan's role in the global defence equipment business, one should bear in mind that the island state only plays a minor role in this area compared to other countries. For the period 2010 to 2014, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) lists the USA, Russia, China, Germany and France as the largest arms export nations. These five states alone account for almost three quarters of the entire market. The USA and Russia had a joint

50 | Cf. Jerry E. Esplanada, "Patrol boats from Japan start arriving in 2015", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 31 May 2014 <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/590453/patrol-boats-from-japan-to-start-arriving-in-2015> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

51 | Cf. "Japan gifts patrol ship to Vietnam after upgrade", *Thanh Nien News*, 6 Feb 2015, <http://www.thanhniennews.com/politics/japan-gifts-patrol-ship-to-vietnam-after-upgrade-38522.html> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

52 | Cf. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Towards Further Strengthening of the Strategic Partnership Underpinned by Sea and Democracy", Japan-Indonesia Joint Statement, 3 Mar 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000072695.pdf> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

market share of close to 60 per cent. With its global market share rising to five per cent, China replaced Germany as the third largest defence equipment exporter in the relevant period. According to SIPRI, exports of defence equipment from the People's Republic rose by 143 per cent between 2005 to 2009 and 2010 to 2014. Almost 70 per cent of all military equipment from Chinese manufacture exported within Asia was supplied to Pakistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh alone. According to SIPRI, China's customers also include 18 African countries. Japan, on the other hand, figured neither among the ten largest exporters nor among the most significant importers. China, by contrast, was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> worldwide on the SIPRI list with respect to the import of defence equipment and South Korea 9<sup>th</sup>.<sup>53</sup>

**Almost 70 per cent of all military equipment from Chinese manufacture exported within Asia was supplied to Pakistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Among China's customers are also 18 African countries.**

Reports about the "record budget" for the Japanese self-defence forces, which the parliament in Tokyo approved in April, also need some explaining.<sup>54</sup> At 4.98 trillion yen, currently equivalent to some 37 billion euros,<sup>55</sup> the relevant budget for the current fiscal year (1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016) is the highest in post-war history. However, according to a report by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AHK) in Tokyo, this only constitutes a nominal rise of 0.2 per cent over the period from 2003 (4,969 trillion yen) to 2015. China, by contrast, increased its military spending fourfold from 2003 to 2013 to the equivalent of 160 billion euros according to the AHK.<sup>56</sup> This year, the Chinese defence budget is expected to increase by a further ten per cent according to media reports.<sup>57</sup> Looking elsewhere, South Korea has also announced a significant increase for the next few years. According

53 | Cf. Peiter D. Wezeman/Siemon T. Wezeman, "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2014", SIPRI Fact Sheet, Mar 2015, <http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1503.pdf> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

54 | Cf. "Diet enacts record Y96.34 trillion budget for fiscal 2015", *Japan Today*, 10 Apr 2015, <http://japantoday.com/category/politics/view/diet-enacts-record-y96-34-trillion-budget-for-fiscal-2015> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

55 | As of: 10 May 2015.

56 | Cf. "Verteidigung: Die Mär von Japans 'Rekord'-Rüstung", *Japan Markt*, 15 Jan 2015, <http://japanmarkt.de/2015/01/15/wirtschaft/verteidigung-die-maer-von-japans-rekord-ruestung> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

57 | Cf. Franz-Stefan Gady, "Confirmed: China's Defense Budget Will Rise 10.1% in 2015", *The Diplomat*, 5 Mar 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/confirmed-chinas-defense-budget-will-rise-10-1-in-2015> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).



to news agency Yonhap, Seoul is responding to the North Korean nuclear and missile programs with the planned budget rise.<sup>58</sup>



China is one of the countries which consistently increase their defense budget dramatically. Meanwhile, regional tensions continue to exist. | Source: Chad J. McNeeley, U.S. DoD, flickr ©©.

Of course none of these developments are conducive to lowering tensions in the Far East; but there are some positive indications too, which were totally unthinkable only a year ago! The first of these was the summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in November of last year in Beijing. This was the first official occasion<sup>59</sup> at which Japan's Prime Minister Abe met Chinese Head of State Xi Jinping. Representatives from the two sides had agreed four points for improving bilateral relations only a few days before the meeting, which lasted just under half an hour. The English translation of these points on the website of the Chinese news agency Xinhua<sup>60</sup> does not match the wording on

58 | Cf. Oh Soek-min, "S. Korea to raise defense spending by 2020", Yonhap News Agency, 20 Apr 2015, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/search1/2603000000.html?cid=AEN20150417009700315> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

59 | The two top-ranking politicians had briefly met before on two occasions; once in September 2013 at the G20 summit in Saint Petersburg and once in October of the same year at the APEC CEO Summit on the Indonesian island of Bali.

60 | Cf. Yamei Wang, "China, Japan reach four-point agreement of ties", Xinhua, 7 Nov 2014, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/07/c\\_133772952.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/07/c_133772952.htm) (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan<sup>61</sup> in every detail; but in this agreement, the two countries basically declare their willingness (1.) to continue to promote the development of a mutually beneficial relationship based on strategic interests, (2.) to overcome political differences (here the two text versions also make reference to the past with different wordings), (3.) to prevent the situation in the East China Sea from deteriorating through dialogue and consultation and (4.) to resume dialogue at a political and diplomatic level as well as in the area of security through various bilateral and multilateral channels. Also, China and Japan are prepared to make efforts to build mutual trust.

On the occasion of the Asian-African summit in Jakarta in April, Xi Jinping and Shinzo Abe then had another meeting lasting close to half an hour. Many media reports emphasised the fact that both politicians smiled when they greeted each other this time. President Xi subsequently spoke about China-Japan relations having “improved somewhat” since the APEC summit in November 2014.<sup>62</sup> Prime Minister Abe shared his assessment.<sup>63</sup>

A meeting between the foreign ministers of China, South Korea and Japan had been scheduled to take place in Seoul back in March, the seventh of such trilateral dialogues; the previous meeting had, however, taken place almost three years earlier. While the discussions in March lasted less than two hours overall, the three ministers agreed a joint press release, in which they acknowledged the “steady progress in trilateral cooperation in various areas, despite fluid situations in the Northeast Asian region in recent years”.<sup>64</sup> March also saw the deputy foreign ministers of China and Japan meeting in Tokyo for a one-day round of talks on security issues. This was the first meeting at this level for four years. After a gap of over five years, Japan and South Korea resumed their “2+2” talks in April. The meeting in Seoul was

61 | Cf. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Regarding Discussion toward Improving Japan-China Relations”, 7 Nov 2014, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/c\\_m1/cn/page4e\\_000150.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_m1/cn/page4e_000150.html) (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

62 | Quoted from: Hasyim Widhiarto, “Abe and Xi discuss regional stability”, *The Jakarta Post*, 23 Apr 2015, <http://thejakartapost.com/news/2015/04/23/abe-and-xi-discuss-regional-stability.html> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

63 | Cf. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Japan-China Summit Meeting”, 23 Apr 2015, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/c\\_m1/cn/page1e\\_000041.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_m1/cn/page1e_000041.html) (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

64 | Foreign Ministry of Japan, “Joint Press Release of the Seventh Trilateral Foreign Ministers’ Meeting among the Republic of Korea, Japan, and the People’s Republic of China”, Mar 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000072163.pdf> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

attended by high-ranking officials from the foreign and defence ministries of both countries. Reportedly, regional security issues were at the center of this round of talks as well.<sup>65</sup> During the same month, the ministers responsible for tourism from China, South Korea and Japan met in Tokyo, where they presented a joint initiative for attracting tourists to the Far East ("Visit East Asia").

**Representatives from the Japanese government coalition made an agreement with the Communist Party of China to resume participation of party members in events of the respective other country.**

There have also been a remarkable number of meetings at a party-political level during the last few weeks and months. Representatives from the Japanese government coalition of LDP and Komeito, for instance, made an agreement with the Communist Party of China in March to resume a program involving party members taking part in events of the respective other country. The three parties had begun to maintain contacts at this level back in 2006; but the program was put on hold in 2009. The printed version of *The Japan News* quoted the following statement made by LDP General Secretary Sadakazu Tanigaki after the decision had been made to resume the initiative: "We had sad times before, and we should overcome them [...]." According to the newspaper report, Yu Zhengsheng, Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, voiced the view that the "Japan-China relationship is heading in the right direction, though the momentum is weak [...]".<sup>66</sup> Within a very short time, at the beginning of May, an eleven strong delegation of Japanese parliamentarians headed by LDP Vice-President Masahiko Komura paid Beijing a three-day visit.<sup>67</sup>

After the various bilateral and trilateral rounds of talks over the last few months, the term "thaw" has been used several times in the international media to describe relations between Japan, China and South Korea. The economic conditions are also conducive to Seoul, Tokyo and Beijing taking a serious interest in an easing of

65 | Cf. "South Korea, Japan hold first 'two plus two' talks in five years", *The Japan Times*, 15 Apr 2015, <http://japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/15/national/politics-diplomacy/south-korea-japan-hold-first-two-plus-two-talks-in-five-years> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

66 | Quoted from: Yusuke Amano, "Japan, China ruling parties to resume exchanges", *Asia One*, 25 Mar 2015, <http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/japan-china-ruling-parties-resume-exchanges> (accessed 31 Jul 2015).

67 | Cf. "Japanese lawmakers hold talks with China's No. 3 leader", *Nikkei Asian Review*, 5 May 2015, <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Japanese-lawmakers-hold-talks-with-China-s-No.-3-leader> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

tensions. China, for instance, which had to announce a decline in its economic growth to seven per cent for the first quarter of 2015 in April,<sup>68</sup> has a great interest in reviving direct Japanese investments in the People's Republic. These had decreased by almost 40 per cent year on year in 2014.<sup>69</sup> The tensions in the bilateral relationship had been mentioned as one of the reasons besides rising wages.<sup>70</sup> Tokyo, for its part, is focusing more strongly on tourism for its economic growth – partly in anticipation of the Olympic Summer Games in 2020. The number of foreign visitors to Japan already reached record levels last year. And almost 60 per cent of all people holidaying in Japan in 2014 came from China, South Korea and Taiwan alone.<sup>71</sup> The number of Chinese tourists visiting Japan in February represented a year-on-year increase of almost 160 per cent.<sup>72</sup>

Of course a renewed escalation of the security situation in the Far East would not be conducive to economic interests and developments in China, South Korea or Japan. Insofar, there is definitely cause for cautious optimism at this level as well. However, no one can predict for certain whether the trend towards détente will consolidate. The reactions to Shinzo Abe's speech on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japanese surrender will provide important indications as to whether there is indeed a thaw in the offing in the Far East, at least with respect to the Japan's relations with China and South Korea. Beijing will make another pronouncement on the topic by September at the latest. That is the time when the People's Republic will hold its own events to commemorate the end of World War II. This year is the first time that a military parade is to be held in the Chinese capital on this occasion.

68 | Cf. Kevin Yao/Koh Gui Qing, "China growth slowest in six years, more stimulus expected soon", Reuters, 15 Apr 2015, <http://reut.rs/1aRGSxA> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

69 | Cf. The State Council of the People's Republic of China, "China boosted by Japanese inflows", [http://english.gov.cn/state\\_council/ministries/2015/02/17/content\\_281475057126350.htm](http://english.gov.cn/state_council/ministries/2015/02/17/content_281475057126350.htm) (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

70 | Cf. Norihiko Shirouzu/Kaznori Takada, "Two years after protest, 'China risk' still haunts Japan firms", Reuters, 12 Sep 2015, <http://reut.rs/1xSsZJD> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

71 | Cf. "Rise in Foreign Tourism Brings Economic Benefits to Japan", *Nippon*, 24 Feb 2015, <http://nippon.com/en/features/h00098> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).

72 | Cf. Japan Tourism Marketing Co., "Statistics of Visitors to Japan from Overseas", 13 Apr 2015, <http://www.tourism.jp/en/statistics/2015-04> (accessed 30 Jun 2015).