

Japan's Foreign Policy Shifting in 2022

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Article Info

Article History

Received:

Jan 2024

Accepted:

Jun 2024

Published:

Jul 2024

Keywords:

Foreign Policy

Change; Japan; NSS;

Capability for

Counterattacks

ABSTRACT

This article examines Japan's significant foreign policy changes in 2022, focusing on three crucial documents: the National Security Strategy (NSS), the National Defence Strategy (NDS), and the Medium-Term Defence Force Buildup Program (MTDP), issued on December 6, 2022. The NSS, a pivotal strategic document, outlines Japan's foreign policy direction and includes plans to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2027. It also introduces the concept of the Capability for Counterattacks, both of which signify a shift in Japan's approach to foreign policy. Japan's anti-militarism stance, rooted in Article 9 of its Constitution, prohibits the maintenance of military forces. This article aims to explore the factors driving Japan's foreign policy changes in 2022. Using a qualitative research methodology that incorporates both primary and secondary data sources, this study will analyze these factors through the lens of Coplin's theoretical framework. According to Coplin's Theory, changes in Japan's foreign policy are influenced by three indicators: 1) Domestic politics, 2) Economic and military conditions, and 3) International context.

2024 Politeknik Negeri Bali

INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy is one of the guidelines for assessing the interactions between countries in the International system. The behaviour of a country can be observed through the implementation of foreign policy. Foreign policy encompasses the national interests that a country aims to achieve or protect. Moreover, in the formulation of foreign policy, there are various influencing factors, including domestic and external aspects of the country. Japan, for example, is similarly influenced by both domestic and external factors, especially in the field of security, when formulating foreign policy.

On December 16, 2022, Japan issued a new policy related to the National Security Strategy (NSS). The approval of the latest NSS coincided with two other documents, namely the National Defence Program Guideline (NDPG) and the Medium Term Defence Force Buildup Program (MTDP). All three are strategic documents, with NSS being particularly significant. According to the NSS 2022, Japan plans to increase its defence budget to reach 2% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2027 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). Before this increase, since the end of World War II, Japan's military budget had been capped at 1% of the National GDP (Liang & Tian, 2023). The 2% increase in Japan's National GDP for its defence budget aligns with the budget of NATO members (Koshino, 2022). Countries associated with NATO have agreed to raise defence spending to 2% of the National GDP by 2024 (Glucroft, 2023).

The changes in Japan's policy are not only related to budgetary allocations but also extend to the capability for counterstrike. Previously, there was a prohibition on owning offensive weapons designed for use in destroying other nations (Galic, 2022). The ability for counterstrike would align with the possession and capability of offensive weapons, sparking debates (Galic, 2022). Consequently, it was mentioned that the counterstrike capability in the NSS exclusively aims for defence purposes (Kyodo, 2022). Examples of such weapons include intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range strategic bombers, and aircraft carrier attacks (Galic, 2022). Previously, Japan's counterstrike capability was activated when an attack had already been launched by the enemy. However, the NSS 2022 suggests the possibility for Japan to shoot down and disable enemy attacks before they are launched (Kyodo, 2022). Specifically, the attacks mentioned in the NSS 2022 refer to ballistic missiles (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). Prime Minister Fumio Kishida added that this counterstrike capability is responsive rather than preemptive (Galic, 2022).

This situation highlights the differences compared to when the NSS was first introduced. The NSS was initially issued in 2013 during the leadership of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (Yuzakawa, 2014). In the NSS of 2013, Japan stated that its strategy and policy orientation were Proactive Contributions to Peace (Cabinet Secretariat of Japan, 2013). However, there was no declaration of an increase in military budget and counterstrike capability as seen in the NSS of 2022. Nevertheless, the NSS of 2013 drew attention as it indicated a shift in Japan's foreign policy.

As a crucial document, changes to the National Security Strategy (NSS) have a significant impact on Japan's security sector. Furthermore, alterations to the NSS also affect the direction of Japan's foreign policy (Kawashima, 2022). This situation aligns with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio's statement that Japan is changing its approach, particularly regarding security (Koshino, 2022). The increase in Japan's military activities through the NSS of 2023 indicates a shift from the anti-militarism that has long been part of Japan's identity. This identity has been enshrined in Japan's Constitution since 1946, specifically in Article 9, making Japan known as a peace-loving nation (Yuzakawa, 2014).

The policy changes implemented by Japan are intriguing and warrant further examination. While Japan's behavioural shift is a recent development, the statements in the NSS 2023 regarding Japan's counterstrike capability indicate a significant increase in military activities compared to Japan's previous military engagements. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the factors that led to Japan altering its foreign policy in 2022. Thus, the research question is, "Why did Japan change the approach from anti-militarism to militarism in Japan's Foreign Policy in 2022?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

To address the research question, an observation of previous studies was conducted to identify research gaps, aiming to strengthen this research. Existing studies cover various approaches to understanding Japan's anti-militarism and foreign policy. First, some studies delve into Japan's anti-militarism within its security policy, using approaches such as strategic culture (Anindya, 2016; Berger, 1993; Bradley, 2022; Machida, 2023). Additionally, some studies examine Japan's anti-militarism through a combination of realist and constructivist approaches (Izumikawa, 2010). Second, there are previous studies analyzing Japan's foreign policy. Some studies explore policymaker motivations (Hughes, 2006), while others consider both internal and external factors influencing Japan's foreign policy (Anderson, 2017; Arase, 2007).

Based on the previous paragraph, some studies delve into Japan's anti-militarism and foreign policy using various approaches. First, previous studies are addressing Japan's anti-militarism within its security policy, starting with the strategic culture approach. Additionally, some studies examine Japan's anti-militarism through a combination of realist and constructivist approaches. Second, there are previous studies analyzing Japan's foreign policy. Some studies explore policymaker motivations, while others consider both internal and external factors influencing Japan's foreign policy.

Based on the findings from the previous researcher, it is evident that anti-militarism and foreign policy have been subjects of long-standing debate. The formation of Japan's foreign policy is influenced not only by external dynamics but also by domestic factors, and this debate is closely tied to Japan's identity as a nation embracing anti-militarism since the end of World War II. Although there have been numerous studies on the analysis of Japan's foreign policy, particularly concerning security, an investigation into the changes in 2022 is crucial due to Japan's inclusion of aspects

related to Counterstrike Capability in the NSS document. Therefore, by employing the framework of foreign policy analysis, especially theories related to factors influencing the formulation and decision-making of foreign policy, this study will elucidate the changes in Japan's foreign policy in 2022.

The presence of studies related to the analysis of foreign policy has long been a part of International Relations (IR) studies. The contribution provided by foreign policy analysis as one of the subjects in IR studies is the theoretical exposition related to material factors. In addressing the research question, this paper will utilize the decision-making theory. As one of the theories capable of explaining changes in the foreign policy of a country, the decision-making theory primarily elucidates the driving factors behind a policy shift and underscores ideational factors as crucial in understanding a state's behaviour (Hudson, 2005, p. 2). Ideational factors are synonymous with human elements. Hudson states the following (Hudson, 2005, p. 2):

“If our IR theories contain no human beings, they will erroneously paint for us a world of no change, no creativity, no persuasion, no accountability”

This aligns with the understanding of foreign policy according to Calrneas and Nudsen as cited in Hagstrom, which states that foreign policy comprises the goals, commitments, and/or objectives designed by the government (Hagström, 2005, p. 399). Subsequently, this foreign policy is directed towards other actors (C. F. Hermann, 1990, p. 5).

Foreign policies consist of those actions which, expressed in the form of explicitly stated goals, commitments and/or directives, and pursued by governmental representatives acting on behalf of their sovereign communities, and directed toward objective, conditions and actors – both governmental and non-governmental - which they want to affect and which lie beyond their territorial legitimacy.

In formulating foreign policy, various domestic and international factors can drive or influence the birth of a policy. These influences are then identified, decided upon, and subsequently implemented in the form of a policy (M. G. Hermann, 2001, p. 47). One example of a domestic factor is the personal characteristics of a leader (M. G. Hermann, 2001), a single group and/or coalition within the decision-making unit of a country (M. G. Hermann, 1980), the identity of the nation (Ashizawa, 2008), and so forth. As for external factors, an example could be external shocks that impact changes in foreign policy for one or more countries (C. F. Hermann, 1990).

To analyze a foreign policy, it is essential to consider multiple indicators. In examining the influence of both domestic and international aspects, Choplin introduces the decision-making theory. According to his theory, Choplin identifies three indicators that shape a country's considerations in formulating its foreign policy. These indicators are domestic politics, economic and military conditions, and the international context (Choplin & Marbun, 2003). The first indicator, domestic politics, takes into account factors such as the leader of the country, the ideology embraced, or the political dynamics within a nation as determinants. Next, the economic and military capabilities provide insights into how a country will approach its policies. Lastly, the International factor indicator pertains to the global situation and the relationships between countries, influencing how a nation determines its policies to position itself as an International actor.

Furthermore, this article attempts to present the findings of factors influencing the changes in Japan's foreign policy through several sections. First, an introduction is provided, encompassing the background and objectives. The next section is a literature review and the analytical framework employed in this research. Subsequently, the article delves into the methods, results and discussion. The final section is the conclusion, summarizing the research findings.

METHODS

The method approach in this research is qualitative research. Qualitative research refers to strategic analysis based on a collection of non-numerical data (Lamont, 2015). The data collection technique used in this study is a literature review. The abundance of data sources aids in answering the research questions through a deductive approach. The gathered

data is divided into two categories: primary and secondary data. Primary data in this research is derived from official Japanese government documents related to foreign policy, especially those concerning security policy. Another primary source includes statements and speeches from the Japanese government. As for secondary data, it is collected from previous studies and research found in articles, journals, books, book chapters, and websites, as well as reports or news covering issues related to Japan's foreign policy changes in 2022. This approach will explain based on the relationship between the theoretical framework and the research problem. The variables in Coplin's theory will be explained in this paper based on the collected data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In explaining the changes in Japan's foreign policy in 2022 based on William D. Coplin's decision-making theory, there are influencing variables, namely domestic political conditions, economic and military conditions, and international conditions.

Domestic Political Conditions

The NSS 2022 was officially introduced during the tenure of Prime Minister Kishida Fumio. This document represents a significant shift in Japan's policy, contrary to its historical stance as a nation without military capabilities, in line with Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. According to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's statement at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies on January 13, 2023, the NSS is part of three crucial documents for Japan and is a major decision by PM Kishida regarding Japan's foreign and security policies (The Government of Japan, 2023).

"I am convinced that this decision represents one of the most historically critical milestones for strengthening the alliance, following such precedents as the conclusion of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty by Prime Minister YOSHIDA Shigeru, the revision of the Treaty by Prime Minister KISHI Nobusuke, and the Legislation for Peace and Security by Prime Minister ABE Shinzo."(The Government of Japan, 2023)

In line with Prime Minister Kishida's statement, the transformation of this policy was previously an ambition of the former Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe. PM Abe's desire for the military build-up of Japan caused divisions, but PM Kishida managed to implement policy reforms (Campbell, 2023). The resistance during PM Abe's government was due to the deeply rooted anti-militaristic ideological position. For instance, in 2017, the Science Council of Japan mentioned the need to reiterate its statement opposing its members' involvement in scientific research for military purposes ("Japan's New National Security and Defence Strategies," 2023). A different situation is evident during PM Kishida's administration, with 60% of the public supporting the government's decision regarding the NSS 2022, especially concerning Japan's counterstrike capability (Shinichi, 2023). This condition is supported by the statement of Japan's Foreign Minister, Yoshimasa Hayasi, on December 16, 2022. Hayasi mentioned that the presence of NSS 2022 strengthens the importance of Japan's comprehensive defence architecture (Panda, 2022). Japanese security experts have also emphasized the importance of enhancing combat readiness, particularly in dealing with China (Matsuda, 2023).

In the domestic political landscape of Japan, there is the Komeito Party, which has been in existence since 1964. Komeito, with its foundational principle of pacifism, was once disbanded in 1994 but became a coalition partner of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on December 25, 2012 (Valentine, 2016). In 2014, when PM Abe proposed a reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, Komeito rejected the idea (Valentine, 2016, p. 7). As a coalition partner of the LDP, Komeito plays a crucial role in curbing the security ambitions of the LDP leadership concerning Japan's national security (Liff, 2023). During the formulation of NSS 2022, the LDP initially used the term "enemy base strike capability," but Komeito opposed it as the term could imply a right to pre-emptive attacks, which is prohibited by Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution (Johnson, 2022; Nakamura, 2022). Eventually, the LDP recommended using the term "counterstrike capability" to avoid misunderstandings in society and to appease Komeito (Nakamura, 2022). Based on its history, the LDP has a track record of major initiatives related to Japan's national security, such as the reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution (Liff & Hornung, 2023). Therefore,

Komeito fundamentally supports the inclusion of counterstrike capability in the NSS after its approval by the Cabinet and the National Security Council of Japan (Liff, 2023, p. 76; Liff & Hornung, 2023).

Economic and Military Conditions

After World War II, the implementation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution led Japan to impose limitations on its military capabilities. In contrast to the defence and military sectors, Japan prioritized economic development. Aligned with the implemented Yoshida Doctrine, Japan emphasized the development of its economic sector over defence (Youn, 2023, p. 65). Currently, Japan is the world's third-largest economy (The Economist, 2023). Japan's GDP growth from 1980 to 2023 averaged 0.43% (Trading Economics, n.d.). Despite experiencing economic stagnation since 1990, Japan has maintained its position as a major economic power (Sposato, 2023).

Traditionally, economic strength is often accompanied by military capabilities. However, this is not the case for Japan. Despite being one of the three largest global economies, the situation differs when it comes to Japan's military sector. One aspect that illustrates this is Japan's defence budget. From 2011 to 2021, Japan's defence budget was not larger than that of China or Russia. In terms of military aspects, including the defence budget, Japan has experienced a decrease in recent years. When compared to China and Russia, Japan's defence budget appears to be lower. Japan's military forces are known as the Self-Defense Force (SDF), comprising the ground, maritime, and air forces.

	Japan	US	South Korea	China	Russia
2011	58.4	739.3	-	89.8	52.7
2012	59.4	645.7	29.0	102.4	59.9
2013	51.0	600.4	31.8	112.2	68.2
2014	47.7	581.0	34.4	129.4	70.0
2015	41.0	597.5	33.5	145.8	65.6
2016	47.3	604.5	33.8	145.0	58.9
2017	46.0	602.8	35.7	150.5	61.2
2018	47.3	643.3	39.2	168.2	63.1
2019	48.6	684.6	39.8	181.1	61.6
2020	49.7	738.0	40.4	193.3	60.6
2021	49.3	754.0	46.7	207.3	62.2

Table 1 : Comparison of security budgets in USD bn for several countries
 The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021
 [source] - reprocessed by the author.

The military division is facing a shortage of personnel in terms of numbers. One example is the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF). The current personnel strength of the MSDF is 43,435, which is lower than the target of 45,307 personnel (Porter, 2023). The personnel shortage is attributed, in part, to recruitment difficulties and a force design that is not aligned with Japan's defence priorities (Porter, 2023). Various factors contribute to the challenges in recruiting new personnel, including non-competitive salaries that fail to attract interest from citizens to join the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) (Porter, 2023).

In addition, the roles and functions of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) also have limitations. According to the interpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, the use of armed force is only permitted in the event of a direct armed attack on Japan's territory and people (Yuan, 2023). This limitation makes it difficult for the SDF to enhance its military capabilities, both in terms of weaponry and duties. Although the SDF has been able to participate in peacekeeping operations under the framework of the United Nations (UN) since 1990, the deployment of personnel is restricted only to non-military tasks such as technicians, observers, and others. Recognizing the deficiencies in the SDF, Japan sees the importance of enhancing its military capabilities, which have been constrained by the constitution.

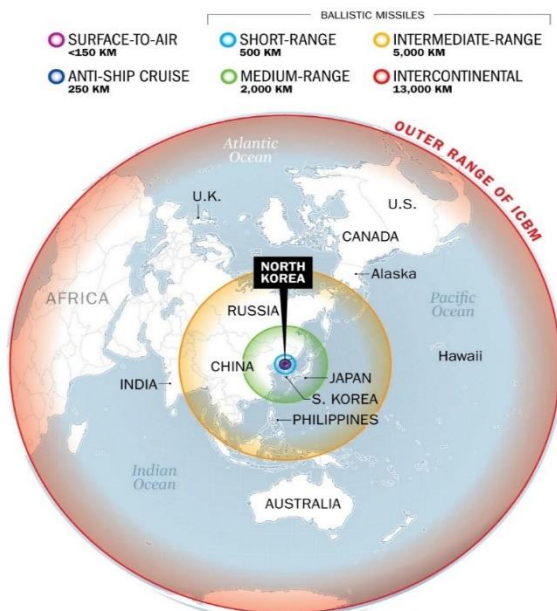
International Context

The variable of international context can also be referred to as an external aspect that is divided into three indicators: geographic, economic, and political. This article finds that the driving indicators are geographic and political conditions influencing Japan's policy changes. Based on geographic factors, the author observes that proximity to several other countries poses threats to Japan. Meanwhile, for the political indicator, political conditions in other conflicted countries become one of the drivers for Japan to enact its latest policies in 2022.



Picture 1: Map of East Asia
Kumairoh, 2023 [source]

Based on geographical proximity, closeness to certain countries like North Korea and China has an impact on Japan's policy changes. Geographical proximity poses a security threat to Japan. In NSS 2022, it is mentioned that the ability to counterattack in the form of an offensive missile system includes the capability to attack North Korea and China (Lottaz, 2023; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). The mentioned threat is related to Japan's concern about missile attacks from North Korea (Lottaz, 2023). This threat arises due to North Korea's military capabilities, including the development of long-range ballistic missiles and its inventory of nuclear weapons (CSIS, 2022). North Korea's missiles with a range exceeding 5,000 km include Hwasong-13 (5,500 – 11,500 km), Hwasong-14 (10,400 km), and Hwasong (8,500 – 13,000 km) (CSIS, 2022). With the estimated range of these missiles, they could potentially reach countries around North Korea, including Japan.



Picture 2: Ballistic Missile Range of North Korea
Guzman, 2023 [source]

In addition to North Korea, China's position is also a consideration for Japan in its policy changes. China's activities, both military and non-military, are a concern for Japan, especially concerning its security and the international community (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). One example is China's military activities in both sea and air around Taiwan and the ballistic missile launches in the sea near Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). China's military activities around Taiwan are related to the increasing tension between China and Taiwan, which poses a threat to Japan (Yuan, 2023). Like North Korea, China possesses ballistic missiles with a range of more than 5,000 km, including DF-31 (7,000-11,700 km), DF-41 (12,000 – 15,000 km), and DF-5 (13,000 km) (CSIS, 2021). The proximity to these two countries, with their military capabilities, particularly ballistic missiles, poses a geographic threat to Japan.

Furthermore, from a political perspective, one of Japan's concerns is the close relationship between Russia and China in strategic areas. The proximity of these two countries is considered a threat due to their military activities. One aspect of their joint military exercises includes nuclear-capable bombers around the East of Japan (Sorongan, 2022). Japan views the long-range joint flights from the Sea of Japan to the East China Sea through the Pacific as a military threat (JPNN, 2022). Meanwhile, Russia's aggression in Ukraine raises security concerns for Japan. Although the threat from this aggression is not directly felt by Japan, it demonstrates that Russia is not hesitant to use military force to achieve its goals (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). Therefore, Russia's military activities in the Indo-Pacific region pose a threat to Japan.

CONCLUSION

Japan's change in foreign policy through the NSS in 2022 was influenced by three indicators: the domestic political situation in Japan, the economic and military conditions of Japan, and the international context, including geographical and political factors.

In the domestic political context of Japan, there have been pushes for Japan to enhance its defence and military capabilities. These pushes gained strength during Prime Minister Abe's administration and intensified during Prime Minister Kishida's tenure. These efforts are closely linked to the ruling party in Japan, the LDP. However, challenges arose from its coalition partner, Komeito. During Prime Minister Kishida's term, Komeito eventually approved the increase in military defence through the adopted policy known as the NSS. This situation contrasts with the previous administration, where Prime Minister Abe faced criticism and rejection from Komeito.

In terms of the economy, Japan, being a major economic power, stands in contrast to its military strength. Ideally, a country with significant economic power should also have a proportional military capability. However, Japan faces several challenges, such as a shortage of personnel and non-competitive salaries for its military personnel. Moreover, the functions and duties of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) are limited by the constitution, resulting in a lack of strength in Japan's military capabilities and armaments. Through the NSS, Japan aims to address these military challenges.

In terms of the international context, particularly in terms of geographical and political aspects, Japan was driven to change its foreign policy, especially in the security sector. Firstly, the geographical proximity to North Korea and China posed a threat to Japan's security due to increased military activities by these countries around Japan. Moreover, the military capabilities of both countries, possessing ballistic missiles with significant ranges, also posed a threat. From a political perspective, Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the escalating conflict between China and Taiwan raised concerns for Japan in determining its position in the region. Therefore, the geographical and political context in the international arena influenced the changes in Japan's foreign policy, especially in the security aspect.

The change in a foreign policy cannot be enough understood by looking at only one aspect. Domestic and International indicators complement each other in explaining policy changes. Dynamics at both the domestic and International levels continue to occur and Japan's foreign policy can be affected. Therefore, this topic needs to be continuously studied.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author expresses gratitude to Mr. Broto Wardoyo, the thesis advisor in the International Relations program at the Postgraduate School of the University of Indonesia, for the support and assistance in providing input for this writing.

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