

Christopher W., Hughes, *Japan's Remilitarization*

*Shamshad Ahmad Khan**

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Crippled by US drafted pacifist Constitution and growing pressure from the pacifist lobby within the country, Japan adopted a pacifist security policy during the Cold War period and various governments adopted policies such as ban on arms export and related technology, 1% GDP cap on defence spending, three non-nuclear principles and non- use of space for defence purposes. However, these brakes on remilitarisation became less of restraint during the Cold War period as 1% GDP ceiling was first breached in 1986, three non-nuclear principles were weakened with a secret agreement that allows US warships and US aircraft carrying nuclear weapons to stop over in Japan or pass through Japanese airspace or territorial waters. The end of Cold War and new security challenges provided greater impetus to Japan's remilitarisation. Hughes argues that in the post Cold War period Japan is unshackling its own constraints and says a clear picture can be established of Japan's long term remilitarisation.

Hughes argues that Japan's propensity to shift incrementally towards remilitarisation has been accentuated by changes in the regional and global security environment since the end of Cold War. He argues that North Korea represents the most immediate threat to Japan's security while China poses the greatest challenge in the medium to long term. To meet these security challenges Japan has adopted various measures by upgrading its Defense Agency to Ministry of Defense in 2007 and enacted Basic Law for Space Activities in 2008 permitting the use of space for defensive purposes. Hughes says that Japan's deployment of spy satellites and BMD has progressively pushed it to breach entirely the anti-militaristic principle of the peaceful use of space. Then, he analyses growing collusion between industrial, political, military elements in Japan's defence-production structure as well as transnational military industrial complex which he says is a "sign of significant remilitarisation" and departure from anti-militaristic principles banning the

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export of armaments. He then focuses on global security environment and says that growing demand from the US to contribute militarily forced Japan to respond through increased use of its Self Defense Force (SDF) overseas starting from Iraq to the Indian Ocean to support NATO's mission in Afghanistan.

But Hughes says Japanese Constitution, especially war renouncing Article 9 remains the “principal brake on remilitarization”. Though the process of Constitutional amendment expedited during Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who was successful in getting majority approval of the referendum bill from both houses of the Diets and had gone a step ahead by constituting a committee to seek ways how Japan could engage in Collective self-defence with its allies, an option presently banned in the present Constitution. Abe's fall from the power, the author says, choked off the debate on revising the Constitution and successive governments did not pursue the issue considering the public opinion in Japan has been averse to these ideas. Hughes says that it appears that the constitutional change has been pushed down the list of Japanese policy makers' security priorities but the perceived contradiction between Japan's constitution and its security ambitions mean that the issue of revision is likely to return over a longer term.

In conclusion, Hughes argues that Japan's attempt to enhance security ties with Australia, South Korea and India will also impact upon the regional security landscape and suggests Japan to recognise that its remilitarisation may raise concerns that will need assuaging among its neighbours. 