

Analyzing The Easing of Japan's Arms Disarmament Policy Between 2010-2020

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ABSTRACT

Arms disarmament policy is widely implemented among countries in the world, especially after the Cold War era. On the other hand, the Japanese Government's policy in easing disarmament arms policy has become a new 'way' in Japan's military ideology since its loss in World War II and was forced to implement pacifism. This study uses the defensive realism theory to explain why Japan eased its arms disarmament policy from 2010 to 2020 under three prime ministers. This research was conducted using qualitative methods using primary data from ministries and departments of Japan and secondary data from scientific journals, books, theses, newspaper articles, and websites. The study results show that easing Japan's disarmament policy is a form of action to maintain the balance of power, especially to balance the aggressiveness of the People's Republic of China (China) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) in terms of military.

Keywords: *balance of power, Japan's arms disarmament policy, Japan's military, policy loosening/easing*

Kebijakan perlucutan senjata banyak diterapkan oleh negara-negara di dunia, terutama setelah era Perang Dingin. Di sisi lain, kebijakan Pemerintah Jepang dalam melonggarkan kebijakan perlucutan senjata menjadi 'cara' baru dalam ideologi militer Jepang sejak kekalahannya dalam Perang Dunia II dan terpaksa menerapkan pasifisme. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori realisme defensif untuk menjelaskan mengapa Jepang melonggarkan kebijakan perlucutan senjatanya pada tahun 2010 hingga 2020 di bawah tiga perdana menteri. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan metode kualitatif dengan menggunakan data primer dari kementerian dan departemen di Jepang dan data sekunder dari jurnal ilmiah, buku, tesis, artikel surat kabar, dan website. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pelonggaran kebijakan perlucutan senjata Jepang merupakan salah satu bentuk tindakan untuk menjaga keseimbangan kekuatan, terutama untuk menyeimbangkan agresivitas negara Republik Rakyat Tiongkok (Tiongkok) dan Republik Demokratik Rakyat Korea (Korea Utara) dalam hal militer.

Kata-kata Kunci: *keseimbangan kekuatan, kebijakan perlucutan senjata Jepang, militer Jepang, pelonggaran kebijakan*

Disarmament policy means eliminating the development, manufacture, purchase and ownership of weapons (especially the offensive ones) unilaterally or reciprocally. This policy also refers to reducing the number of weapons or eliminating specific categories of weapons (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2023). Almost all countries in the world, at some level, carry out disarmament policies, especially weapons categories that are prohibited in international treaties. However, several countries have carried out disarmament relatively further than other countries. The disarmament is done, for example, by reducing its military capabilities or not having offensive strategic weapons (Krause 1999).

Japan is one of the countries that has implemented a disarmament policy. After Japan's defeat in World War II (WWII), it was forced to adopt a constitution that made the country a pacifist country. Japan is prohibited from using physical or military force in its foreign policy. Japan still has a *de facto* military, but Japan's military capabilities are limited. The Japanese military, better known as the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), can only defend the Japanese homeland if attacked. The JSDF also needs offensive weaponry. To cover its military limitations, Japan built a military alliance with the United States (US) (Sidas 2018).

The dynamics of the East Asian region that occurred in the second decade of the 21st century required Japan to adapt (Brooks and Wohlforth 2016). The increasingly aggressive actions of its neighbouring countries made Japan change its defence policy. The Japanese government has loosened the disarmament policy it has adhered to for approximately 70 years. This paper will discuss why Japan eased its disarmament policy from 2010 to 2020 under three prime ministers (PM).

The issue of easing Japan's arms disarmament policy is interesting to discuss because various international relations researchers are responding to this issue. This issue has been discussed from various points of view, including causal factors, forms of action, opportunities and challenges, and responses from other countries. In the first discussion, it is explained by Hughes (2016), that this military easing policy is Japan's strategy to compete with China's power. However, the author believes that the impact of this policy is still unclear because it is possible that Japanese power will not

succeed in bringing a balance of power but will instead disrupt regional stability.

In a subsequent discussion by Irsadanar and Warsito (2018), this military policy easing was realized by increasing arms exports to countries in dispute with China and strengthening the domestic military. This action will help stimulate the domestic military industry and increase economic growth for military purposes. Not only that, Kallender and Hughes (2019) explained that Abe is also militarizing outer space by using communications and intelligence satellites as well as active space capabilities. According to an article by Cho and Shin (2018), this change in Japanese military policy caused differences of opinion among the South Korean people. Most considered that Japan's policy would help South Korea balance North Korea. However, a small number of them fear that Japanese power will become a threat to South Korea due to historical factors in the past.

This article has similarities with previous articles, which discussed Japan's arms disarmament loosening policy. However, due to the lack of articles that explain Japan's reasons specifically, this article will explain in more depth the reasons for arms disarmament easing policy using the concept of defensive realism, which will also emphasize that Japan's reasons in this case are the balance of power.

Defensive Realism

An analytical tool in the form of defensive realism theory will be used to answer Japan's reasons for easing its disarmament policy. The theory of defensive realism is the result of the thinking of Kenneth N. Waltz. Waltz's main assumption about the state is that the state is a single actor and, at a minimum level, tries to make policies to ensure its survival. An anarchic international system also motivates countries to try to increase their security. The country also needs to make efforts (self-help) to maintain the balance of power by ensuring that none of its rivals becomes too strong (Waltz 1979).

Waltz's assumptions about the state's motivation to achieve security in an anarchic system have several implications. The first implication is that power is seen as a valuable tool for obtaining security rather than as the primary goal (Waltz 1979). Because maximizing power is not considered the primary goal, the state wants to maintain the existing balance of power to ensure its security. This state's will lead to the second implication, where, from the country's perspective, there is too much risk of becoming dominant in the existing system. The subsequent implication is that countries tend to act defensively in responding to threats to avoid costly wars (Jervis 1978). So, according to the view of defensive realism, states tend to be interested in maintaining the status quo (Schweller 1996).

This article focuses on analysis to understand the reason and motive of the Japanese government's policy in easing its disarmament arms policy. In answering the question, the author used the official government data and reports such as Japanese, the US, NATO, and Singapore governments as primary data since Japan's government has actively published the defence budget increase report, as well as the US's government has been actively reporting Japan's government 'radical' change in the arms disarmament policy. The author also used secondary data from journal articles, books, newspapers and magazines, theses, and credible websites. Then, to answer the research question, a qualitative method with descriptive analysis was used to describe both sources mentioned above.

History of Japanese Defense and Disarmament Policy After WWII

On September 2nd, 1945, aboard the USS Missouri, Japan officially surrendered to the Allies. Japan had to accept that its military had to be disarmed by allied forces, especially by the US troops (Nasir 2016). Japan then received strict supervision from the US with the philosophy of not developing military weapons. In 1947, the US formulated the Japanese constitution, emphasizing the country's peace-loving (pacifism) defence policy and a defence system focused on self-defence. This emphasis can be seen in Article 9 of the 1947 Japanese Constitution, which reads:

“1) Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force to settle international disputes. (2) To accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, air forces, and other war potential will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.” (Nurgiyanti 2013)

Behind the constitution, which prohibits military ownership and war involvement for Japan, the US provides security guarantees for Japan from attacks by other countries. In other words, the US carries out Japan's defence function. Since not focusing on the military, Japan has had four new policies called *Seikei Bunri*, namely policies that focus on economic development and avoid involvement in political and security issues; *Hikaku San Gensoku*, namely three non-nuclear principles; *Senshu Boei* is the development of self-defence forces; and *Sogo Anzen Honso*, namely comprehensive security (Mardialina 2013).

The start of the Cold War and the outbreak of the Korean War, which was motivated by ideological issues, put Japan under the threat of communism. PM Yoshida, who was then in office, made new cooperation in 1951 with the US to stem communism. The US then issued the Mutual Security Act (MSA) policy. MSA is military and economic cooperation, which makes the US obliged to protect Japan when any country attacks Japan. Apart from MSA cooperation, Japan also has nuclear umbrella cooperation, which puts Japan under the protection of the US if it faces a nuclear threat (Williams 1964).

Japan's dependence on the US is part of the Yoshida Doctrine, a post-war strategy in which Japan handed over its defence and security affairs to the US so that Japan could focus on developing its economy. The Yoshida Doctrine and alliance with the US during the Cold War brought economic benefits to Japan. Japan's geographical location close to the Korean Peninsula caused it to become a logistics supplier for the US Army during the Korean War (Sugita 2022).

Realizing the limitations of the US military during the Korean War, Japan then formed the NPR (National Police Reserve) and the Defense Agency and developed defence equipment ownership. The formation of the NPR began with a letter given by General MacArthur to PM Yoshida in 1950 to form a reserve police unit.

This police unit was then developed into the National Safety Forces (NSF) in 1952. In 1954, the NSF changed to the JSDF and experienced quite significant development because the JSDF already had an army, navy and air force. Between 1960 and 1980, when the Cold War was at its peak, the JSDF strengthened its capabilities as a defence force by conducting military exercises, developing domestic weapons, and collaborating with the US military (Fadilah and Sudirman 2018).

Overview of the Japan Self-Defense Forces

Japan's military strength is unique and different from the militaries of other countries. The Japanese military, better known as the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), is prohibited from using and threatening military force, so it only focuses on self-defence (Hagström and Gustafsson 2015). The status of JSDF personnel is also that of government civil servants with special authority, so they do not have full military status like military personnel of other countries. However, according to international law, JSDF personnel are still military members (Callaghan and Kernic 2004). Despite its limitations, the JSDF is the sixth best-equipped force in the world (Fitzpatrick 2013).

The JSDF consists of the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF), Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF), and Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF). The GSDF comprises several divisions, brigades, and units directly controlled by five regional commands. The divisions and brigades consist of combat units and logistics support units. The GSDF also has a Central Readiness Force consisting of a helicopter and airborne brigade, a Central Readiness Regiment, a Nubika Weapons Defense Unit (NBC), and a Special Operations Group. GSDF personnel numbered 158,938 people (Japan Ministry of Defense 2020a).

The MSDF consists of a Self-Defense Fleet with several central units such as the Fleet Squadron, Fleet Escort Unit, and Fleet Submarine Unit. The MSDF is responsible for defending the maritime areas around Japan through routine patrols. The MSDF also has regional district forces that primarily protect their territory and support the Self-Defense Fleet. MSDF personnel number 45,364 people and are supported by advanced defence equipment such as AEGIS destroyers, *Soryu* class submarines equipped with AIP, and multi-

purpose helicopter destroyers (Japan Ministry of Defense 2015).

Meanwhile, the ASDF has an Air Defense Command consisting of four air defence commands and the South West Combined Air Division. They are assigned general air defence tasks (Japan Ministry of Defense 2020a). The ASDF also has an Air Defense Force consisting of several critical units, such as the Air Wing, the Air Defense Missile Group, and the Control and Warning Wing. ASDF personnel number 46,940 people, equipped with modern defence equipment such as Mitsubishi F-2 and F-35 Lightning II fighter jets (Japan Ministry of Defense 2015).

For most Japanese citizens, the JSDF's primary function besides maintaining Japan's security is a disaster relief force. JSDF personnel received praise for their role in rescue and relief missions, for example, the Kobe-Awaji earthquake in 1995 and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster (Gady 2015).

The Role of the US in the Defense of Japan

The role of the US is an essential pillar in Japan's defence and security. Simultaneous with the Treaty of San Francisco, which formally ended WWII in the Pacific, the US-Japan Mutual Security Act was passed in 1951 (Williams 1964). Under this agreement, Japan would allow US troops to remain in its territory after regaining its sovereignty, in line with the Yoshida Doctrine. In 1960, the MSA was revised to give the US the right to establish bases on Japanese territory, with the condition that the US had to defend Japan in the event of an attack (Maizland and Cheng 2021).

The arrival of the US military in Japan actually caused several problems. The problems that are the main factors causing demonstrations by the community are crime and environmental damage. According to statistical reports from the Okinawa Police, from 1972 to 2020, there were 6,052 criminal cases committed by US soldiers against local residents, with details of 581 of them being heinous crimes such as robbery, murder, and arson and 129 of them being cases of abuse of women and children in Okinawa (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2022).

Meanwhile, regarding environmental issues, Japanese researchers found that the US occupation of Okinawa had contaminated the cleanliness of Okinawa's water and sea. Okinawa has become

one of the world's arsenals of weapons of mass destruction. This warehouse stores around 1000 warheads, 13,000 tons of chemical weapons, nerve agents, and thousands of barrels of herbicides. Apart from that, the US has also conducted biological weapons tests in at least three locations on Okinawa Island. It raises environmental pollution problems. Since 2016, high concentrations of perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have been detected in rivers and groundwater in Okinawa. PFAS is a toxic substance that is usually used by the US military to extinguish fires. Pollution is also found in the form of military waste, such as spent bullets, grenades, drums, cans, bottles, and metal-containing cobalt. Japanese entomologists stated that this problem had a significant impact on people's lives and animal life in Okinawa (Oshiro 2024).

Even though the US occupation of Okinawa caused many problems, Japan still depended on the US for defense and security. The deployment of approximately 55,000 US military personnel in Japan proves the US's commitment to Japan's defence and security. The US has also deployed its most capable military assets to Japan, including the USS Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group, Patriot air defence missiles, and F-35 JSF fighter jets (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs 2021). US military personnel and assets are spread across several places, the two most significant bases of which are Okinawa, which accommodates half of the total US personnel in Japan, and Yokosuka, which is the headquarters of the US Navy's Seventh Fleet (Greer 2019). Since 1997, the US military has regularly partnered with the JSDF in the Keen Sword military exercise. In addition, the US supplies 90% of Japan's defence equipment import needs (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs 2021).

Changes in Defense Policy in the Era of Naoto Kan and Yoshihiko Noda

Geopolitical factors greatly influence Japan's prosperity. Japan's geographical condition, surrounded by sea, ensures that maritime security is crucial for Japan. As explained in the Japanese National Defense Program Guide (NDPG), Japan's territory, which has many small islands, causes Japan to have a long coastline and a wide exclusive economic zone. Japan is a maritime country that relies on international trade to meet its food and natural resources

needs. Therefore, according to the 2010 NDPG, Japan is focused on improving its maritime security (Berkofsky 2011).

The two countries that have the most significant potential to threaten Japan's territorial integrity and survival are North Korea and China. North Korea has become a threat because the country has been developing nuclear weapons since 1994. North Korea has also repeatedly tested ballistic missiles which were fired towards Japanese waters (Johan et al. 2018).

For North Korea, military spending is essential. Between 2010 and 2020, military spending was estimated at 20-30% of North Korea's GDP annually, with an estimated \$7 billion to \$11 billion annually (Central Intelligence Agency 2024).

Meanwhile, China became a threat in the second decade of the 21st century. This is because China has the second most powerful military in the world and has the second highest military expenditure in the world, which is estimated to reach \$252 billion in 2020. This number is an increase of 1.8% from 2019 and 76% from 2011 to 2020 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2021). China and Japan have also been involved in the Senkaku Islands dispute since 2012. Moreover, since the Xi Jinping era, China has become more aggressive in expanding its maritime influence and increasing its activities in the East and South China Sea (Heginbotham and Samuels 2021). Furthermore, China will continually develop its power because of the humiliations that China has experienced in the past, especially in the Japanese colonialization era, which has formed an 'anti-Japanese' mindset in Chinese society (Hennida et al. 2017). These conditions will endanger Japan's territorial integrity and international trade. These two countries have justified Japanese policy revisionists to adopt a more assertive security policy (Suzuki 2019).

In 2010, Naoto Kan, PM of Japan, issued the NDPG to outline Japan's defence strategy policy for the next ten years to restructure and relocate Japan's armed forces (Berkofsky 2011). In particular, the 2010 NDPG focuses on increasing the JSDF's capabilities and preparing them to respond to crises. In the 2010 NDPG, China was assessed as the main threat, resulting in the relocation of JSDF troops and their defence capabilities from the North of Japan to the South of Japan, including the southernmost islands adjacent to China and Taiwan (Nishihara 2011).

The 2010 NDPG also changed the form of Japan's defence strategy from a Basic Defense Force to a Dynamic Defense Force (Nakamura 2013). This shift towards a dynamic strategy allows Japan to respond to a crisis by adapting defence capacity needs rather than simply maintaining minimal basic capacity. In addition, the focus of forces was directed to the sea dimension, with an increase in the number of AEGIS destroyers and submarines and a reduction in the number of tanks and heavy artillery (Fouse 2011).

Then, during the tenure of PM Yoshihiko Noda, Japan loosened the Three Principles of Arms Export and revoked Japan's forty-year policy of banning arms shipments, which prohibited Japanese arms manufacturers from jointly developing and exporting military technology. Japan used this principle to prevent arms exports to communist countries, countries subject to an arms embargo by the United Nations (UN), and countries involved or potentially involved in armed conflict. This change reduces the costs of developing and manufacturing defence equipment with advanced technology (Sakaki and Maslow 2020).

Japan has reinterpreted the Three Principles for Arms Exports to facilitate more cooperation in developing and producing weapons for international trade for humanitarian and peaceful purposes. This principle has increased domestic weapons production and reduced Japan's defence budget so that it is affordable. The easing of this policy has also allowed Japan to be involved in the joint development of weapons projects and become a supplier of weapons for humanitarian purposes (Santoso and Perwita 2016).

Further Defense Policy Reform in the Shinzo Abe Era (2012-2020)

Since Shinzo Abe was elected Japan's PM in December 2012, he has continued to accelerate Japan's defence reform. This acceleration is because threats from North Korea and China continue. North Korea's nuclear development activities and ballistic missile tests over the past few years have posed a security threat to Japan. For example, in 2016, North Korea launched a Pukguksong submarine-based ballistic missile which travelled 500 km and fell in eastern Japanese waters (Kwon 2016). Meanwhile, China continues to carry out provocations by flying its fighter jets into Japanese airspace. In 2013, the Japanese Air Force made 810 interceptions,

an increase from 567 the previous year. Around 70% of foreign aircraft that violate Japanese territory come from China (Japan Ministry of Defense 2020b).

At the same time, the US, through Minister of Defense Chuck Hagel, supported Japan in increasing its military strength, especially by taking a more active role in the alliance between the two countries. This support is inseparable from the interests of the US, which is currently fighting for hegemony in Asia with China (Pertiwi 2018; Garamone 2023). With existing threats and support from the US, Shinzo Abe carried out several defence and security policy reforms as follows.

Doctrine of Proactive Pacifism

Based on the December 2013 national strategy document, the Shinzo Abe government coined the concept of “proactive pacifism, based on the principle of international cooperation” as Japan’s new national security doctrine. In his speech, Abe cited Japan’s involvement in international crises and disasters as an example of “proactive pacifism.” At the same time, he also called for easing restrictions on Japan’s military under its constitution. He views this as necessary for Japan to cooperate with its partners and contribute to international stability (Matsuoka 2020).

National Defense Program Guidelines 2013

Shinzo Abe developed the 2010 NDPG to emphasise regional security issues, especially when dealing directly with North Korea and China. Apart from that, PM Abe also strengthened Japan’s identity as a maritime country (Katagiri 2019), given Japan’s geographical characteristics and the government’s belief that Japan needs to address several problems regarding security issues.

At the same time, PM Abe also promoted security cooperation with other countries, both bilaterally and multilaterally. In dealing with regional security issues, the JSDF is important in preventing and resolving various situations. The JSDF’s method is to strengthen security in Japan’s sea and air, increase outer island surveillance, and defend against ballistic missiles (Japan Ministry of Defense 2020a).

The main components of PM Abe’s government’s national security strategy policy consist of three pillars. First is strengthening and expanding Japan’s role capabilities by strengthening territorial

defence. The second is strengthening the Japan-US alliance with a more equal relationship (Ramirez 2019)³³(1. Third, actively promote security cooperation with countries in the Asia-Pacific. This security strategy is carried out by strengthening relations with third parties, meaning that Japan is establishing security cooperation with the US and other countries (Liff 2018).

Mid-Term Defense Program and Japanese Military Modernization

This Medium-Term Defense Program (MTDP) focuses on reorganizing the JSDF, especially the most significant reform for the Japanese Army (GSDF) since its founding. This plan was carried out by relocating the GSDF from northern Japan to southern and southwest regions to join the Dynamic Joint Defense Force. This plan was done to defend Japan's territorial waters and surrounding seas from potential threats from Japan's neighbouring countries (Japan Ministry of Defense 2020a). Apart from that, a Quick Reaction Amphibious Brigade unit was also formed under the GSDF. This new troop unit can retake islands occupied by the enemy in the event of war (Panda 2018).

In addition to the shift in power, Japan is actively modernizing its military. An example of Japan's military modernization program is the purchase of 105 F-35 JSF fighter jets from the US, which will strengthen the ASDF (South China Morning Post 2019). In 2018, Japan also plans to upgrade the Izumo class helicopter destroyer warship into a light aircraft carrier and purchase 42 B variant F-35 units that can be placed on its aircraft carriers (Chang 2020).

Collective Self Defense

In July 2014, PM Abe proposed a reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution to allow the JSDF to fight in another country for the first time since the constitution was created. The new Security Law passed in September 2015 resulted from a reinterpretation of Article 9, allowing Japan to assist its allies in foreign conflicts (Richter 2016). This decision was the most significant change in Japanese defence and security policy since WWII (McCurry 2016).

According to the new Security Law, Japan can use military action within the framework of collective self-defence, namely if an armed attack occurs against a country that has close ties to Japan and could directly threaten Japan's survival. In addition, these attacks can pose dangers to citizens, such as threatening their rights to life

and freedom (Akimoto 2016). However, military action remains limited by conditions such as the absence of other non-military options, and the use of violence is minimized only to prevent aggression (Gady 2015).

Challenges to Change in Japanese Security Policy

Under Shinzo Abe, Japan really had the ambition to increase its military capacity due to possible threats from China and North Korea. The increase in Chinese military activity in the South China Sea and the territorial dispute over the Senkaku Islands since 2012 have become the main factors for Japan to be wary of the Chinese military (Nakano 2016). Meanwhile, North Korea is also frequently involved in nuclear weapons and ballistic missile tests and provocations. These actions constitute a severe and direct threat to Japan's security and peace in East Asia. Despite this, Japan still experiences obstacles in implementing its security policies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2016).

The implementation of Japan's new security policy changes has not gone smoothly. Some challenges come from Japanese society itself. The reason for the challenges to Japan's new defence policy is cultural. Japanese society is pacifist, anti-war and militaristic (Gustafsson, Hagström, and Hanssen 2019). This condition cannot be separated from the enormous losses incurred by Japan after losing in WWII. Japanese society's pacifist and anti-militarist attitudes were demonstrated after the ratification of the new Security Law in September 2015. Thousands of people took to the streets to demonstrate against the law. The demonstrators considered the concept of proactive pacifism coined by Shinzo Abe as the basis for passing this law to be a new form of militarism (BBC News 2015).

Apart from protests against the new Security Law, the pacifist attitude of the Japanese people is also visible in their lack of patriotic attitudes. A survey conducted by WIN/Gallup International in 2015 recorded that only eleven per cent of respondents from Japan were willing to fight for their country if a war broke out. This result is the lowest among other countries surveyed (Gallup International 2015).

Another problem besides pacifism in Japanese society is the demographic problem. The birth rate in Japan, which is getting

lower every year (Jozuka et al. 2019; Boyd and Martin 2022), impacts the structure of the JSDF as the main organ of Japan's defence and security. 2018, for example, the number of Japanese residents aged 18-26 fell to 11 million people from 17 million people in 1994. This age group is the main potential recruitment target to fill the need for JSDF personnel. Since 2014, JSDF has always had difficulty filling the recruitment quota. Then, in March 2018, the JSDF could only recruit 77% of the total requirement of 9,734 enlisted personnel. The Japanese government also provided a budget for 247,154 JSDF personnel, but the JSDF only employed 226,789 personnel (Sieg and Miyazaki 2018).

Conclusion

Changes in Japan's defence and security policy between 2010-2020 were a response to dynamics in the region, such as during the early days of the Cold War. If analyzed using a defensive realism perspective, easing Japan's disarmament policy is a form of action to maintain the balance of power. China's rapid military development in the last two decades has changed the balance of power in the East Asian region. In addition, North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities are also increasing. So, Japan responded to security threats from China and North Korea by loosening restraints as a disarmament policy on its military.

For the first time after WWII, Japan had a rapid reaction amphibious unit and planned light aircraft carriers. Japan's actions to form new military units, modernize defence equipment and own light aircraft carriers were carried out to increase the JSDF's capabilities and provide a more significant deterrent effect. Even so, Japan's actions are still considered defensive because they respond to existing threats and do not purchase or develop offensive weapons such as ballistic missiles.

Apart from shifting military units and modernizing defence equipment, the easing of Japan's defence policy can be seen in the adoption of a doctrine of proactive pacifism and a policy of collective self-defence. A collective self-defence policy would increase Japan's role in assisting its allies, although to a limited extent. Adopting and implementing this new defence and security policy did not go without challenges because there were challenges in the form of community resistance and problems recruiting

JSDF personnel. The suggestion for the following research is to analyze the reasons for Germany's 'remilitarization' in today's era for comparison study, knowing that Japan and Germany were the two countries in the same 'group' at WWII, and have significantly reduced their military power.

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