



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on March 17, 2023

## China Worried as Japan Accelerates “Dangerous” Militarization

“Militarization for me, but not for thee.”

That is the frequent attitude of global superpowers when they see smaller states wisely building up their military capabilities, viewing it as a potential threat to their ability to boss the smaller country around.

This is where China now stands. As Japan takes the first steps to become a serious military power once more, Beijing is not happy.

As [Reuters reports](#), Tan Kefei, a spokesman for China’s defense ministry, blasted Tokyo for its “very dangerous” recent defense investments, arguing that these actions threaten regional peace and stability.



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“We urge the Japanese side to earnestly learn from the lessons of history, be cautious in words and deeds in matters of military security,” Tan told the press.

In the wake of World War II, Japan — an adept imperial power in the 20th century — adopted a pacifist stance.

But last year, Tokyo unveiled a five-year, \$315 billion military expansion. This amounts to a 20 percent increase in military spending. By contrast, China recently announced it would be increasing its military budget by 7.2 percent, bringing it up to \$225 billion.

Japanese policymakers say the radical return to form for their military is a response to growing tensions in Asia, specifically Beijing’s saber-rattling in the South China Sea and the increasing possibility that China will invade Taiwan.

Moreover, Japan said last month that it believes Chinese spy balloons have entered its territory at least three times since 2019.

Beijing defends its military spending, claiming that it accounts for a relatively small portion of its governmental budget.

“What needs to be emphasised is that China’s limited defence expenditure is entirely for safeguarding national sovereignty, security, and development interests, and for maintaining world and regional peace and stability,” said Tan.

China is rapidly catching up to the United States. At least three of several islands in the disputed South China Sea have been [fully militarized](#) by Communist China, according to a top U.S. military commander. China has equipped the islands in question with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missile systems, laser and jamming equipment, and fighter jets.

China now has the second-largest military budget in the world, after the United States. This comes as



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China has sought to modernize its forces with weapons systems such as the J-20 stealth fighter, hypersonic missiles, and two aircraft carriers (with a third under construction).

China sought to assert dominance over its territorial claims in the South China Sea a decade ago. The U.S. response at that time was to send warships through the region. Although the United States has no claims of its own in the region, it has used Navy ship and aircraft deployments for decades to promote free navigation in international waterways.

China's assertion that Japan's increase in military spending threatens stability in the region but its own militarization does not is laughable, akin to Washington's desire to keep nuclear weapons out of the hands of every nation even while it sits on a stockpile of 5,500 nuclear warheads.

In the case of the United States and nuclear weapons, it's not really about preventing nuclear Armageddon, but about Washington knowing that nuclear weapons are the best deterrent against invasion and their possession makes it possible for small nations to avoid the type of U.S. aggression to which countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq have been subject (North Korea's possession of nukes is what has kept them from suffering the same fate).

In the same way, China wants to be the only viable military power in its region. With Russia on its side and North Korea playing the role of China's attack dog, Beijing believed it had an unbreakable grip on regional control.

But a militarily strong Japan would jeopardize that. Japan may not have China's 1.4 billion population. But it still has a sizable population of 125.7 million — the size of the U.K. and France combined.

Moreover, Japan is a first-world nation with a highly educated populace who are renowned for their ingenuity and innovation. The "Japanese Miracle" in the late 19th to early 20th century, during which Japan transformed from an agriculture-based society to a modern industrial state seemingly overnight, remains one of the great economic wonders in history.

Along with Japanese ingenuity in economics and technology is their military competence. There are strong parallels between Japan and Germany, in that both were historically top-tier military powers but were neutered after World War II.

China knows that history very well, and that is what makes Beijing so nervous about renewed Japanese militarization. China has felt the impact of the Japanese Empire first-hand. During World War II, Japanese forces almost proved too much for China, capturing Manchuria, Shanghai, and Beijing itself.

Japan also proved during the 20th century that it was more than capable of dealing with Russia, humiliating the Russian navy in the Russo-Japanese war.

Thus, a strong Japan entirely upsets the current balance of power in the Pacific. As a result, expect Beijing to continue its anti-Japanese alarmism.



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