

The Process of Reconstruction of Big Companies and Military Industries in Japan after the World War II:

The Case of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries

By SHINICHI SHIRATO

Since the second Abe administration in 2012, and more recently in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Japanese government's "exclusive defense" policy has undergone significant changes. Consequently, the nature of the defence industry may also be required to change. This paper focuses on the supply system of aircraft and guided weapons, which have been emphasised as key equipment for Japanese Self-Defense Forces. The main equipment of the Self-Defense Forces has been maintained through central procurement by the Defense Agency and, since 2007, the Ministry of Defense. The top 20 companies with the largest procurement amount account for approximately 70% of total central procurement, with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Japan's largest arms manufacturer, taking the largest share. As such, we examine the transition of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' weapons production. This time, however, we focused on the period up to 1980s. During the late 1960s, more than 90% of the equipment used by the Self-Defense Forces was procured domestically. However, this does not necessarily indicate that the weapons were domestically produced or that "an independent supply system" was established. Analysis of Japan's procurement of aircraft and guided weapons, which account for a significant portion of the central procurement amount, taking the example of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, indicates that the country relies on license agreements with US arms companies and "Foreign Military Sales". In this sense, Japan's defence industry is believed to be increasingly dependent on the United States.