

Changes in the Japan-U.S. Relationship Concerning Security and Japan’s Defence Industry: From a Defence Industry of “Exclusively Defence-Oriented Policy” to a Defence Industry under the “U.S.-Japan Alliance”

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The Japan-U.S. relationship concerning security, based on the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, was one in which Japan maintained military capabilities for its own defence while relying on U.S. offensive power, striving for a policy of “exclusively defence-oriented policy” (a relationship of “shield” and “spear”). However, since 2014, this relationship has begun shifting towards a more offensive-defensive alliance between Japan and the U.S., following the Japanese government’s acceptance of the exercise of collective self-defence rights and the retention of counterstrike capabilities. Reflecting this change, Japan’s military industry has steadily realised developments such as stand-off missile development and aircraft carrier construction, which form part of these counterstrike capabilities. The integrated air and missile defence capability being promoted by the Ministry of Defence could simultaneously function as an enemy base attack capability. As the example of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries clearly shows, alongside the development and manufacture of the latest joint U.S.-Japan missiles, domestic development and production of long-range missiles have begun to surge. Although next-generation fighter development has commenced as an international joint venture, Japan’s military industry has deep ties with major U.S. defence contractors through years of licence production and joint development. Even with independent weapons development or joint ventures with non-U.S. nations, these relationships are unlikely to weaken easily.