Japan’s historic shift from pacifist policy

Why in news?

Japan, in a significant shift from its long-time post-war pacifist policy, has announced a $320 billion plan for military build-up, the biggest since the Second World War.

How Japan’s pacifist policy evolved?

- After the World War II, Japan’s constitution prohibited to have offensive military forces and rejected force/threat as a means of settling international disputes.
- Article 9 of Japan’s Constitution stated that the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation.
- But after the end of the Cold War, Japan is amending its security policy to increase its capabilities to defend itself outside its own territories.
- According to International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2012, Japan has the world’s sixth-best funded defence forces.
- But Japan believes that its current defence capabilities are insufficient given the rapidly changing global scenario.

What is the proposed strategy?

- Japan has unveiled a 5-year plan and revamped national security strategy document.
- Under the $320bn military build-up plan, it would stockpile spare parts and other munitions, reinforce logistics, develop cyber-warfare capabilities.

  The proposed 5-year plan will make Japan, the world’s third-biggest military spender after the United States and China.

- Also, Japan clarified that this strategy will remain *defence-oriented and does not allow for preemptive strikes*.

Why is Japan re-focus on its military?

- **Russian Invasion** - Regional threats such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and Chinese aggression is one of the main factors for such a move by Japan.
- **Senkaku Islands** - Japan is also witnessing a Chinese attempt to control the uninhabited Senkaku Islands.
- **Supply Restrictions** – It also worried about Russia’s disrupting supplies of advanced semiconductors and a domination on sea lanes that supply Middle East oil.
- **Security Concerns** - Under the National security strategy document, China referred China, Russia and North Korea as security concerns.

- **Co-operation** - It plans for close cooperation with the United States and other like-minded nations, particularly in the Indo-Pacific.

What was the criticism against the policy?

- **China** - China has responded that the Japan and China are cooperative partners and do not pose threat to each other.
- **Russia** - Russia has condemned the plan and stated that it will spark fresh tensions across the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Public opposition** - The military plan would be funded by raising taxes and the majority of Japanese citizens are against it.

References

1. The Indian Express | Why Japan scraps its pacifist policy?
2. The Hindu | Pacifist Japan unveils military plan
3. WION | Japan Citizens' opposes military plan

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