

Japan-U.S. Tomahawk Missile Deal

1. Background

- Japan and the United States signed an agreement for the **purchase of up to 400 Tomahawk cruise missiles**.
- The deal is part of **Japan's ongoing military buildup** amid **rising security threats from China and North Korea**.
- Marks a significant shift in Japan's post-World War II defense policy, moving towards **offensive strike capability**.

2. Details of the Agreement

- **Missiles Purchased:**
 - 200 **Tomahawk Block IV** missiles
 - 200 **Tomahawk Block V (upgraded)** versions
- **Range:** Up to **1,600 km (1,000 miles)**
- **Cost:** Around **\$2.35 billion**
- **Launch Platforms:** Warships (Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels)
- **Training:** Japanese personnel training to begin in **March 2026**
- **Deployment:** Accelerated — beginning **FY 2025** (one year earlier than planned)

3. Tomahawk Cruise Missile - Overview

- **Type:** Long-range, subsonic **cruise missile**
- **Origin:** **United States** (developed by Raytheon)
- **Range:** Up to **1,600 km (1,000 miles)**
- **Speed:** Around **880 km/h (Mach 0.75)**
- **Launch Platform:** Can be launched from **surface ships** and **submarines**
- **Guidance System:** Uses **GPS, inertial navigation, and terrain contour matching** for precision targeting

- **Warhead:** Can carry **conventional or nuclear payloads** (Japan will use conventional versions)
 - **Variants:**
 - **Block IV:** Combat-proven version with reprogrammable targets in flight
 - **Block V:** Latest version with improved navigation, communication, and maritime strike capability
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4. Significance

- Allows **long-range precision strikes** deep into enemy territory.
- Key tool for **deterrence and offensive operations** without deploying troops.
- Used by the **U.S. and allied navies**, now being introduced by **Japan** under its new defense strategy.

5. Japan's Defence Strategy Shift

- Under the **2022 National Defense Strategy**, Japan aims to:
 - **Double its annual defense spending** to ~10 trillion yen (\$68 billion) by 2027.
 - Attain the position of the **third-largest military spender** after the USA and China.
- Seeks to develop **“counter-strike capabilities”** — ability to strike enemy bases if attacked.
- **Integration with Allies:** Japan deepening defense cooperation with:
 - **United States**
 - **Australia**
 - **United Kingdom**
 - **South Korea** and other Indo-Pacific partners

6. Geopolitical Context

- Japan's security environment described as the **“severest since World War II.”**

- **China:** Increasing assertiveness in the East and South China Seas.
- **North Korea:** Advancing missile and nuclear weapons programs.
- **U.S. Strategy:** Ensure deterrence and maintain “**status quo without force-based change**” in the Indo-Pacific.
- **U.S.-Japan Alliance:** Strengthened under PM Fumio Kishida and U.S. Ambassador Rahm Emanuel.

7. Recent Related Developments

- **U.S. Army deployed Typhon missile system in Japan (2025):** Adds to regional deterrence.
- **Easing of Japan’s Arms Export Rules (2024-25):**
 - Allows export of **lethal weapons** and **licensed components**.
 - First major export: **Japanese-made Patriot missiles** sent to the U.S.
- Japan also advancing its **indigenous Type-12 Surface-to-Ship Missile** program for long-range deterrence.

8. Strategic Significance

- **For Japan:**
 - Enhances deterrence capability.
 - Marks a **shift from “self-defense only” to proactive deterrence**.
 - Symbolizes emergence of a “**New Japan**” — **militarily capable and assertive**.
- **For the U.S.:**
 - Strengthens the **Indo-Pacific defense architecture** against China and North Korea.
 - Reinforces **collective defense under the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance**.
- **For the Indo-Pacific:**
 - Contributes to a **balance of power** in the region.
 - May trigger an **arms buildup** among regional powers (e.g., China, North

Korea).

9. Criticism and Concerns

- Critics argue this may:
 - Undermine Japan's **pacifist constitution (Article 9)**.
 - Increase **regional tensions** and provoke an **arms race**.
 - Create **domestic political divisions** over Japan's military expansion.

10. India's Perspective

- India supports a **Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)** framework.
- Japan's enhanced role aligns with India's strategic interests in:
 - **QUAD grouping** (India-Japan-U.S.-Australia)
 - Ensuring **maritime security** and **supply chain resilience** in the Indo-Pacific.
- Strengthens **defense interoperability** and **shared deterrence posture** against coercive actions in the region.

11. UPSC Relevance

GS Paper 2: International Relations

- Bilateral agreements, defense cooperation, Indo-Pacific strategy, and regional security architecture.

GS Paper 3: Internal and External Security

- Strategic capabilities, missile technology, and defense modernization trends in Asia.

12. Possible UPSC Questions

(a) Prelims:

1. The Tomahawk missile, recently in news, is primarily:
 - (a) An intercontinental ballistic missile

- (b) A long-range cruise missile
- (c) A short-range surface-to-air missile
- (d) A hypersonic glide vehicle

Answer: (b)

2. Japan's new defense strategy allows the development of:

- (a) First-use nuclear capability
- (b) Counter-strike capabilities
- (c) Space-based missile systems
- (d) Civil defense systems

Answer: (b)

(b) Mains (GS Paper 2/3):

"Japan's acquisition of long-range strike capabilities marks a fundamental shift in the post-war security balance in East Asia." Discuss its implications for regional stability and India's Indo-Pacific strategy.

13. Summary in Keywords

Japan-U.S. Tomahawk Deal | Fumio Kishida | Rahm Emanuel | Minoru Kihara | 400 Tomahawks | Block IV & V | 1600 km range | Defense doubling by 2027 | Counter-strike capability | Indo-Pacific security | China & North Korea | QUAD | Article 9 | Deterrence

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