

17th February 2022

Submission to the Inquiry into the Treaty: Australia-Japan Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA)

Dear Inquiry.

The Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) enables more shared access and cooperation between the armed services of Australia and Japan. This includes access to our respective military bases and ports, logistical cooperation and cooperating on security protocols. This will enable stationing of troops between the two countries, joint-training exercises and disaster support.

Conducting defence operations between multiple countries can be an intense logistical exercise, which also requires trust and familiarity (Wilkins 2022). This Treaty will enable the armed services of Australia and Japan to train and work together, which will build up an effective operational relationship that will be essential if they are tested during tensions or conflict. It will also help the respective publics of each nation to become more familiar with and trust the armed services of the other being stationed.

Japan is a significant partner in the Asia-Pacific region. We have shared values, with Japan being a democratic nation with a commitment to the rules-based international order. Japan also emphasises diplomacy and peacefully resolving disputes, with Article 9 of their Constitution upholding “international peace based on justice and order” and renounces “the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.” Japan retains a defence force for self-defence (of themselves and allies) and for humanitarian operations. Japan is seeking to expand its engagement in regional and international affairs, including with its defence force.

On disaster support, Australia was helped by various Asian and Pacific Island countries during the 2019/2020 Black Summer bushfires. Disaster support will become more significant as the impacts of the climate crisis lead to more extreme weather and natural disasters, such as bushfires, floods and cyclones. Easier cooperation between Australia and Japan will enable our countries to better use our armed services capabilities to help each other respond to natural disasters.

Benjamin Cronshaw

2

Australia has deepened its defence relationship over the last couple of decades, cooperating in a range of issues and regions. I previously made a submission in 2017 into the Reciprocal Supplies and Services Treaty between Australia and Japan, which enabled the exchange of logistical supplies and services between the Australian and Japanese armed services (a renewal of a similar treaty signed a decade or so previous). The addition of this new Reciprocal Access and Cooperation Treaty indicates that Australia is continuing to deepen our relationship with Japan and cooperation between the armed services. The relationship with Japan has also deepened because of the assertiveness and posturing of China over disputed maritime and island territory in the Asia-Pacific. For Japan, the agreement indicates both their trust in Australia and their concern about the current geopolitical security environment (Wilkins 2022). Indeed, it has been described as the “most significant security pact” between Japan has signed with another country since a 1960 Status of Forces with the United States (Hui 2022).

I believe the Treaty between Australia and Japan is a good sign of our deepening relationship and the trust that is forming between our two countries, including forming a more direct and mature bilateral relationship (not merely relying on the United States). It will also enable Australia and Japan’s armed services to have a more streamlined and effective working relationship, which will build trust and a working relationship and enable cooperation on various security issues.

Kind Regards,

Benjamin Cronshaw.

References

Tan Ming Hui. 11th January 2022. “A new defence pact marks a stronger partnership for countries driven by shared values and regional dynamics.” *TheInterpreter*. <<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/japan-and-australia-ties-blossom>>

Thomas Wilkins. 20th January 2022. “Another piece in the jigsaw: Australia and Japan sign long-awaited Reciprocal Access Agreement.” *Australian Institute of International Affairs*. <<https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/another-piece-jigsaw-australia-japan-sign-long-awaited-reciprocal-access-agreement/>>.