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## CHINA'S MILITARY CHALLENGE

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Ashley J. Tellis and Travis Tanner

### Northeast Asia

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**China's Military Modernization:  
U.S. Allies and Partners in Northeast Asia**

*Christopher W. Hughes*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter examines the impact of China's military modernization on the strategic and defense postures of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan—the principal U.S. security partners in Northeast Asia.

### MAIN ARGUMENT:

China's military modernization and probing behavior pose serious challenges for the territorial and maritime interests of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Their particular concerns revolve around symmetric threats from China's buildup of its air defense and blue water naval power and asymmetric threats stemming from its A2/AD strategy. These countries seek engagement with China but are increasingly hedging militarily. In terms of internal balancing, they are augmenting their own air defense and naval power to counter China symmetrically, but also looking to respond to asymmetric threats. Japan is pursuing a new dynamic defense force doctrine, South Korea is adopting a more comprehensive defense policy that looks beyond immediate security issues on the Korean Peninsula, and Taiwan is moving toward a posture reliant on asymmetric capabilities. At the same time, enabled by reduced fears of abandonment and entrapment, all three countries have swung back firmly into the U.S. security fold to redouble external balancing against China.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- Greater friction between U.S. partners and China heightens the risk that the U.S. will become entrapped in potential conflicts. The fact that Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are now aligned in seeking U.S. security engagement enhances Washington's options to shape the regional environment.
- In order to inject substance into its rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific, the U.S. needs to (1) reassure these countries of its future forward-deployed presence, (2) maintain sufficient supplementary and unique military capabilities in the region, and (3) increase the political credibility of its security guarantees.

## China's Military Modernization: U.S. Allies and Partners in Northeast Asia

*Christopher W. Hughes*

Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the Republic of China (ROC) all harbor significant national security concerns vis-à-vis China's rise and its military modernization. For Taiwan, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the prime security concern. For Japan, China likewise increasingly looms as the greatest medium- to long-term threat to national security. Although South Korea is immediately preoccupied with North Korea, China represents a threat standing behind Pyongyang on the Korean Peninsula, and in its own right the PRC constitutes a longer-term threat to the ROK's wider security interests. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan's individual diplomatic and military responses, along with the subsequent Chinese counter-reactions, will strongly test China's grand strategy and deployment of military capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, given the combination of the relative size of the military forces of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan and the core national security issues involved on all sides, the fundamental mismanagement of bilateral relations with China contains real potential for interstate conflict and the destabilization of the entire region.

Due to Japan's, South Korea's, and Taiwan's status as a U.S. ally or partner, respectively, their responses to the modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) carry implications not just for their own national security and China's stance in the region, but also for the United States and the overall regional security order. In responding to challenges from China, these allies and partners will inevitably look to the United States for diplomatic and

military cooperation. Washington thus is confronted with its own set of tests regarding its future strategic intent and maintenance of capabilities in the region. The United States' capacity to support these particular allies and partners in responding to China's rising power may speak volumes about the credibility of its continued military commitment to the region and the likely sustainability of the entire U.S.-led infrastructure of security in the Asia-Pacific.

This chapter will address the following interconnected policy issues. First, it will analyze the impact of China's military modernization on Japan's, South Korea's, and Taiwan's military capabilities; on each country's strategic relations with China; and more widely on regional stability. Second, the chapter will examine the impact of trends in Japanese, South Korean, and Taiwanese military modernization on the United States' maintenance both of its own military capabilities and of its alliances and partnerships in the region, and consequently the continuation of its role as the principal guarantor of regional security in Northeast Asia.

In examining these issues, this chapter makes four major arguments about Japan's, South Korea's, and Taiwan's common challenges and responses, and consequently about the United States' efforts to manage its military ties with regional allies and partners. The first is that these three countries often share concerns about the development of specific Chinese military capabilities. These concerns then serve as common drivers for these states' own military modernization programs.

The second argument is that all three countries are simultaneously seeking engagement with China to dampen security dilemmas and hedging against its rise through varying degrees of internal military balancing. Yet just as they share common modernization ambitions, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan also confront common domestic obstacles, such as political and budgetary constraints, that limit their capacity for internal balancing against China.

The third argument is that Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan display convergent trends in external balancing efforts and in rethinking their individual military ties with the United States. All three have oscillated in their degree of attachment to the United States, influenced both by concerns over maintaining engagement and growing economic interdependence with China and by fears of abandonment and entrapment stemming from the United States' reformulation of its regional and global military postures. More recently, however, these fears have diminished. Consequently Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have moved more firmly back into the U.S. security fold.

The fourth major argument, which follows from the third, is that despite the recent discussion of the United States having "lost Asia" in the face of

a rising China, the key U.S. allies and partners in Northeast Asia are now moving away from China on security issues. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are increasingly hedging hard internally, as well as seeking renewed security assistance from the United States externally.<sup>1</sup> In this situation, rising military competition between China and U.S. allies and partners in Northeast Asia presents the United States with regional security challenges, but also with fresh opportunities to shape the regional security outlook through maintaining its role as the chief security guarantor.

The first section of this chapter concentrates on Japan, arguably the most important U.S. ally in Northeast Asia, if not the entire Asia-Pacific region. It investigates Japan's overall grand strategy toward China in terms of long-term and more recent patterns of engagement, rising security tensions, and hedging through the U.S.-Japan alliance. This is followed by a discussion of Japanese concerns regarding China's development of specific military capabilities. Japan's internal balancing response is then examined, as well as its external balancing, including recent attempts to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance and relations with other U.S. partners. The second and third sections follow this pattern by examining South Korea's and Taiwan's grand strategies, specific concerns over Chinese capabilities, and internal and external balancing efforts. The conclusion considers in more depth the implications of these trends for U.S. strategy and military deployments in the Asia-Pacific region.

## Japan: A Fundamental Military Transformation?

### *Japan's Grand Strategy and China*

Japanese grand strategy for most of the postwar period has included a strong commitment toward the engagement of China. Japan's policymakers, even in the midst of the Cold War, were relatively sanguine about the threat from Chinese Communism and more concerned about the risks that internal Chinese political unrest and disintegration posed for regional stability. In the post-Cold War period, Japan has attempted to accelerate engagement of China by assisting with internal economic reform, political stabilization, and integration into the regional political economy partly in order to moderate China's external behavior.<sup>2</sup> The two countries' economic interdependence has continued to deepen as well. Thus, even in the face of concerns about

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<sup>1</sup> T.J. Pempel, "How Bush Bungled Asia: How Militarism, Economic Indifference, and Unilateralism Have Weakened the U.S. across Asia," *Pacific Review* 21, no. 5 (2008): 547–81; and Victor Cha, "Winning Asia: Washington's Untold Success Story," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 6 (2007): 98–113.

<sup>2</sup> For a full evaluation of the development of Japan's China strategy in the postwar period, see Mike M. Mochizuki, "Japan's Shifting China Strategy toward the Rise of China," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 4/5 (2007): 739–76.

rising Chinese economic and military power, Japan has looked to maintain its default position of engagement. This strategy is reflected in Tokyo's attempts since 2006 to inject substance into a "strategic and mutually beneficial partnership" with China, involving cooperation on a range of economic and political issues. Indeed, Japan's economic gravitation toward China—which surpassed the United States as Japan's largest trade partner in 2006—has been seen at times as a step toward potential bandwagoning with a potential Sino-centric regional order.

The Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) displacement of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) from power in 2009 initially seemed to augur this type of shift. Japan's new top leaders courted and were courted by their Chinese counterparts. The DPJ also seemed to distance itself from the U.S.-Japan alliance over issues such as the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' (USMC) Futenma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture and the withdrawal of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in 2010 from Indian Ocean refueling missions designed to support the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan.

Yet such interpretations of DPJ intentions appear to have been mistaken. DPJ policymakers never entertained any real interest in bandwagoning with China or undermining the U.S.-Japan alliance. The new administration redoubled engagement with China—in part by demonstrating a more autonomous stance vis-à-vis the United States—in order to assume greater responsibility for Japan's own foreign and security relations in East Asia. The government thereby hoped to induce greater Chinese cooperation in projected regional formats such as an East Asian community (EAC), which could help collectively shape and constrain China's rising power. Regarding the Futenma Air Station, the DPJ has been looking to shift the alliance onto a stronger and more sustainable track by resolving the issue in a way that does not consolidate the USMC presence and prolong the disproportionate burden on Okinawa Prefecture. Instead, the DPJ has focused on tightening alliance cooperation closer to Japan itself and the surrounding region.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, Japan's heightened engagement of China has always been tempered by a corresponding strengthening of hedging activities through the U.S.-Japan alliance. Japan, even as it pursued engagement with China in the 1990s, took steps under LDP governments—through the so-called reconfirmation or redefinition of the alliance and the accompanying process of revising the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines in 1997—to hedge against China's rising power by clarifying the interoperability of the alliance and its ability to respond to regional contingencies, including a Taiwan Strait crisis. Similarly, the DPJ, even during the supposed heyday of its bandwagoning

<sup>3</sup> Christopher W. Hughes, "The Democratic Party of Japan's New (but Failing) Grand Strategy: From Reluctant Realism to Resentful Realism?" *Journal of Japanese Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012): 109–140.

with China in 2009, maintained support for U.S. bases and force realignments on the Japanese mainland, endorsed a revised U.S. nuclear strategy, and continued bilateral cooperation on ballistic missile defense (BMD). Since 2010, the DPJ has arguably cooperated with the United States and hedged against China's rising military power with an even harder edge than previous LDP administrations through cooperation with the United States. Given increasing pressure from perceived Chinese provocations, the DPJ, despite its initial intentions to maintain engagement, may actually be obliged to consider an overall tilt toward a containment-style strategy.

Japanese concerns under LDP governments, and now under the DPJ, relate to China's apparent ambitions to project military power outside its immediate territory. These ambitions include not only the protection of core Chinese interests in the Taiwan Strait but now increasingly the assertion of territorial and resource interests in the East China Sea, South China Sea, and the sea lines of communication (SLOC) in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond to the Persian Gulf. The frequent dispatch of "research ships" and PLA Navy (PLAN) vessels into Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around the disputed Senkaku Islands has served to reinforce Japan's concerns about China's expanding area of maritime operations. Likewise, tensions further north in the East China Sea have been intensified by overlapping EEZs and territorial claims to energy resources. Despite the two countries reaching an agreement in principle in 2008 for joint development of gas fields, Japan has been frustrated by China's apparent reluctance to proceed with bilateral development plans and remains suspicious that China is already moving to exploit the fields unilaterally. In addition, Japanese policymakers see China's refusal to recognize the territory of Okinotorishima as an islet—thereby negating Japan's claims to the surrounding EEZ in the Philippine Sea—as another challenge to the territorial status quo.

Finally, the confrontation between a Japan Coast Guard (JCG) vessel and a Chinese fishing trawler in late 2010 forced Japanese policymakers to recognize China's intentions on territorial issues. The DPJ administration's decision to not only detain but then indict the captain of the Chinese trawler for attempting to ram the JCG vessel sparked a major diplomatic row. China was especially offended by Japan appealing to the United States for security guarantees under the assumption that the Senkaku Islands were covered by the bilateral U.S.-Japan security treaty. Beijing reacted by exerting intense diplomatic and economic pressure on Japan. It suspended all high-level contacts and working-level talks, including negotiations on the gas fields in the East China Sea, and halted exports of vital rare earth minerals. The latter move was viewed in Japan as a form of economic warfare. In the end, the DPJ government partly buckled under Chinese pressure, releasing the

trawler captain without charges and eventually restoring barely cordial ties with China by early 2012.

Japan's defense planners have viewed China's recent maritime activities as shadowboxing for potentially aggressive future territorial designs. In November 2004, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) tracked a PLAN Han-class nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN) navigating in Japanese territorial waters. In September 2005, five PLAN ships, including a Sovremenny-class guided-missile destroyer (DDG), traveled in the vicinity of the disputed gas fields in the East China Sea; and in October 2008 another Sovremenny-class DDG and four other warships made the first passage by PLAN vessels through the Tsugaru Strait and then circled the rest of the Japanese archipelago. In November 2008, a PLAN flotilla including destroyers passed between the main island of Okinawa and Miyako Island, on course toward the Pacific Ocean; and in March 2010 a group of six PLAN warships, including a Luzhou-class DDG repeated this passage. Japan looked on askance as the PLAN dispatched ten warships on the same route in April 2009, including two destroyers, one of which was Sovremenny-class; three frigates; three support vessels; and two Kilo-class attack submarines (SSK). Japanese policymakers took particular note of the size and composition of this PLAN squadron, described in some media sources in rather hyperbolic terms as an "armada."<sup>4</sup> The squadron not only was the largest to date, but the variety of vessels it included, replete with air-defense destroyers, pointed to the type of force necessary to support a future aircraft-carrier battle group. Moreover, PLAN bravado was evident in two incidents of the squadron's helicopters buzzing MSDF vessels that were shadowing the destroyers and also in the fact that the Kilo-class SSKs were willing to surface. In July 2010, another PLAN flotilla of one Luzhou-class DDG and a frigate again passed through the Okinawa and Miyako Island route; and in June 2011 the PLAN sent a still larger squadron of eleven warships, including a Sovremenny-class DDG, through the same route.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, China's maritime activities vis-à-vis other powers in the region have been taken by Japan as evidence of potentially aggressive intent. Japanese defense analysts have noted Chinese actions—such as the surfacing of a PLAN Song-class SSK near the USS *Kitty Hawk* close to Okinawa in October 2006, and the "harassing" of the U.S. naval surveillance vessel the USNS *Impeccable* operating within China's EEZ, 75 miles south of Hainan in the South China Sea—as challenges to the U.S. presence in the region and

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<sup>4</sup> "MSDF Tracks China Armada Off Okinawa," *Japan Times*, April 14, 2010, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20100414a2.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Boeishohen [Ministry of Defence], *Boei hakusho 2011* [Defense White Paper 2011] (Tokyo, Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, 2011), 85–88.



more widely the principle of the freedom of navigation.<sup>6</sup> The intensification of PLAN activities in the South China Sea in recent years has compounded Japanese views of China's willingness to use intimidation in pursuit of territorial claims. The National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), which is under the Japan Ministry of Defense (JMOD), stated in 2011 that it "can be inferred that the reason why the PLAN is focusing on the South China Sea is that it is aiming to resolve territorial issues in its own favor regarding the Spratly Islands...based on the flaunting of overwhelming military power."<sup>7</sup> In turn, Japan's policymakers have watched with great interest China's expansion of naval activity outside the Asia-Pacific and noted the country's enhanced capabilities to project sustained naval power across SLOCs. For example, the PLAN has dispatched ships to engage in antipiracy escort and naval diplomatic activities in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia, thereby advancing key interests in the Middle East and Africa.

Japanese analysts acknowledge that China's expanded military ambitions may be driven by an understandable concern for the protection of SLOCs and the country's now global economic interests and that in many cases even potentially provocative behavior, such as sending squadrons close to Japanese territory, has to be tolerated under international conventions. Nevertheless, Japan entertains deep anxieties that China's rising military power is no longer focused simply on "access denial" and preventing Taiwan independence but is now looking to assert the longer-term aim of "area control" over the "first island chain" of the East and South China seas. Japan worries that China will pursue this goal by transgressing established international norms relating to freedom of navigation and EEZs, and thereby gradually neutralize the Japanese and U.S. naval presence in the region. Japanese analysts are fond of reporting that China is engaged in tactics of media, legal, and psychological warfare designed to cow the surrounding powers into submission, and they see this strategy as increasingly backed by the acquisition of asymmetric and symmetric capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

### *Japan's Concerns over China's Military Modernization*

Japanese perceptions of Chinese military modernization coincide closely with those of other states in the region. Japan sees the PLA as set on procuring capabilities that will serve the immediate asymmetric warfare ends of anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) in the sea and air space surrounding China, as

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<sup>6</sup> Boeisho Boeikenkyushohen [National Institute for Defense Studies], *Chugoku anzen hoshō repoto* [China Security Report] (Tokyo, Boeikenkyujo, 2011), 17.

<sup>7</sup> Boeisho Boeikenkyushohen, *Chugoku anzen hoshō repoto*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Boeishohen, *Boei hakusho 2011*, 76.

well as the longer-term symmetric warfare ends of penetrating neighboring air, sea, and land defenses and projecting power equal to other great powers in the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) has long been accustomed to maintaining qualitative superiority among the region's powers, but the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) has begun for the first time to pose air-defense challenges for Japan. The PLAAF's introduction of fourth-generation fighters since the late 1990s—including the J-10, J11-B, Su-27, Su-30MKK, and Su-30MK2, which together constituted around one-third of China's fleet in 2010—has now raised concerns that the ASDF's aging fleet of F4-Js and F-15Js may be rapidly losing its edge in air superiority.<sup>9</sup> Indications since 2009 that the PLAAF will introduce a fifth-generation J-20 “stealth” fighter, along with its current deployment of KJ-2000 early warning and control aircraft and H-6U and Il-78 in-flight refueling aircraft, have only exacerbated ASDF fears. Official statistics show that the ASDF scrambled its fighters 83 times by mid-2011 to intercept Chinese aircraft, which is three times as often as it did over the same period in 2010 and on pace to far exceed the total intercepts for that entire year.<sup>10</sup>

The ballistic-missile forces of the PLA's Second Artillery Corps, although clearly directed primarily at Taiwan rather than Japan, nevertheless raise concerns in that they are capable of striking JSDF and U.S. forces stationed in Japan. Specifically, Japanese policymakers might envision a Taiwan contingency in which DF-15/CSS-6 short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM) are used to target U.S. Air Force (USAF) units at Kadena in Okinawa—or DF-3/CSS-2 intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBM) are used to attack U.S. military assets at Iwakuni, Misawa, and Yokota in Honshu—in order to deter the United States and Japan from intervention.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, PLAAF DH-10 or CJ-10 cruise missiles are seen as posing problems for Japan's defense of key military infrastructure. Perhaps even more worrying for Japan in the long-term is China's development of antiship ballistic missiles (ASBM) capable of striking U.S. aircraft carriers operating out of Japan and in the Asia-Pacific,

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<sup>9</sup> U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2010 Report to Congress of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, 111th Congress, 2nd session (Washington, D.C., 2010), 76, [http://www.uscc.gov/annual\\_report/2010/annual\\_report\\_full\\_10.pdf](http://www.uscc.gov/annual_report/2010/annual_report_full_10.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> “Kuji no kinkyu hasshi, tai-Chugokuki ga 3baizo, konnendo hanki” [ASDF Scrambles in First Half of Year Triple against Chinese Aircraft], *Asahi Shimbun*, October 13, 2011, <http://www.asahi.com/politics/update/1013/TKY201110130527.html>.

<sup>11</sup> David A. Shlapak, “The Red Rockets’ Glare: Implications of Improvements in PRC Air and Missile Strike Capabilities,” in *New Opportunities and Challenges for Taiwan’s Security*, ed. Roger Cliff, Philip Saunders, and Scott Harold (Santa Monica: RAND, 2011), 75; and U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2010 Report to Congress*, 90.

which might severely undermine the U.S. force projection and deterrence posture in the region.<sup>12</sup>

MSDF concerns about China revolve around its modernization of a range of anti-access and blue water maritime capabilities. The PLAN has introduced Kilo-, Yuan-, and Song-class diesel-powered and Shang-class nuclear-powered submarines with quieting technologies. These developments may complicate the MSDF's traditional defensive role in keeping the seas around Japan free from enemy submarines in order to enable the U.S. Seventh Fleet to concentrate on the effective projection of offensive power. The PLAN has also introduced Luyang-class and Luzhou-class DDGs with a fleet air-defense role, combined with Sovremenny-class DDGs capable of targeting U.S. aircraft carriers, as well as Jiangkai-class guided-missile frigates (FFG) with stealth characteristics. These developments demonstrate China's potential ability to deploy modern fleet formations and thereby complicate Japanese and U.S. naval dominance in the region. China's pursuit of aircraft carriers through the refit of the ex-Soviet carrier *Varyag* has likewise generated intense interest in Japan. While Chinese carriers lag far behind those of the United States in capability, they are nevertheless taken as yet another sign of China's determination to pursue offensive power projection and challenge the United States' effective monopoly in this area. An additional concern for Japanese planners is China's upgrading of its amphibious warfare capabilities with the addition of Yuzhao-class landing ships, which might help China seize Japanese far-flung islands in a contingency.

Beyond these air and maritime capabilities, the other principal sources of concern for Japan's military planners are China's space and cyberspace capabilities. China's successful anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon test in January 2007 poses obvious future problems for both the United States' and Japan's space-based military information-gathering and early warning systems. Japan has already felt the possible impact of China's emerging cyberspace capabilities. Frequent attacks originating from China have been made on the JMOD and civilian ministries' infrastructure, and attempts were also made in September 2011 to hack into the systems of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Japan's largest defense contractor.

### *Japan's Internal Balancing in Response to China*

Japan's long-term reform of its national military capabilities under successive National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) has been driven by the two principal concerns of North Korea and China. North Korea's nuclear- and ballistic-missile programs have served as the most immediate

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<sup>12</sup> Boeishohen, *Boei hakusho 2011*, 81.

driver for major changes in Japan's military posture. The range of security problems that these programs present should not be underestimated, not least in how Pyongyang's provocations have at times threatened to drive a wedge between the United States and Japan over differing immediate attachments to the nuclear and missile threats. North Korea's missile programs have thus tested the alliance's political solidarity more than its military strength.<sup>13</sup> However, North Korea has arguably functioned more as a secondary driver, and indeed at times a convenient legitimizing pretext, for an agenda of change in a Japanese defense policy driven more fundamentally by the rise of China and the associated looming military challenges. The latter are of a far greater magnitude than those of North Korea. Hence, even though the North Korean and Chinese threats have worked in combination over the past two decades to exert pressure on Japan to revise its defense policies, as well as introduce more mobile and technologically advanced JSDF capabilities, it is actually China that demonstrates the greatest propensity to deliver radical change in Japan's military posture over the longer term.

The function of China as the underlying primary driver for Japan's defense modernization is demonstrated in the JMOD's past NDPGs and most strikingly in the latest revised NDPG of 2010. The 1996 National Defense Program Outline (NDPO) omitted any direct reference to China, but the revised 2004 NDPG noted China's modernization of its nuclear- and ballistic-missile forces and increasing ambitions for out-of-area operations, and recommended that Japan "remain attentive to its [China's] future actions."<sup>14</sup> The NDPG then stated that the JSDF would increasingly reorient its capabilities to respond to scenarios such as ballistic-missile attacks, invasion of Japan's offshore islands, and violations of Japanese sea and air space—all indirect references to China's military activities. The 2010 NDPG went much further, emphasizing China's rapid military modernization and development of power projection and the accompanying lack of transparency in defense spending and procurement. The 2010 guidelines stressed that all of this was a "concern for the regional and global community," which is oblique Japanese language for China's growth as a

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<sup>13</sup> Christopher W. Hughes, "Supersizing the DPRK Threat: Japan's Evolving Military Posture and North Korea," *Asian Survey* 49, no. 2 (2009): 291–311.

<sup>14</sup> Boeishohen, "Heisei 8 nendo iko ni kakawaru Boei Keikaku no Taiko" [NDPO for 1996 Onward] (Tokyo, November 28, 1995), [http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/1996\\_taikou/dp96j.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/1996_taikou/dp96j.html); and Boeishohen, "Heisei 17 Nendo iko ni kakawaru Boei Keikaku no Taiko ni tsuite" [NDPG for 2005 Onward] (Tokyo, December 10, 2004), <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2005/taikou.html>.

significant threat.<sup>15</sup> The 2012 NDPG added responses to cyberwarfare to its list of anxieties clearly related to China's capabilities.

Most importantly, though, the 2010 NDPG initiated a potential step-change in Japanese defense doctrine—apparently derived principally from concerns over Chinese activities and capabilities—in that it moved to abandon the concept of the basic defense force (BDF) in favor of a new dynamic defense force (DDF). The BDF was essentially a Cold War construct first established in the 1976 NDPO, which was the forerunner of the NDPG, and used to justify the development and maintenance of the minimum JSDF capabilities sufficient to deter Soviet aggression, while still allowing for the possibility of ramping up the size of forces if Japan were threatened with large-scale aggression.<sup>16</sup> Hence, the BDF made for a JSDF posture limited to a static defense of Japanese territory and characterized by the buildup of heavy land forces concentrated in northern Japan, especially in Hokkaido, to prevent Soviet incursions. The JSDF did depart somewhat from the BDF in the late 1980s with a significant expansion of air interceptor and destroyer capabilities. This shift enabled the JSDF to fulfill a greater defensive role around the Japanese archipelago and SLOCs and helped free up U.S. forces for greater power projection against the rising Soviet threat. Nevertheless, the BDF remained intact through the remainder of the Cold War and in the 1996 NDPG. It was not until the 2004 NDPG that Japan edged away from the concept by arguing for the adoption of more mobile, flexible, and multifunctional forces capable of responding to various contingencies regionally and out of area.

The 2010 NDPG's formal abandonment of the BDF and adoption of the DDF continues the trend of attempting to extricate Japan's military from the legacy posture of the Cold War by emphasizing a shift toward lighter and more technologically advanced forces with power-projection capabilities. The DDF even more crucially emphasizes that the JSDF should not only enhance the quality of its capabilities but now look to utilize these more actively than in the past. In other words, the JSDF should move from just building the force by adding equipment to actually operating it effectively for national defense.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Boeishohen, "Heisei 23 Nendo iko ni kakawaru Boei Keikaku no Taiko ni tsuite" [NDPG for 2011 Onward] (Tokyo, December 17, 2011), <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2011/taikou.html>. Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs echoes this line in its Diplomatic Bluebook for 2012, which stresses the lack of transparency in China's military buildup and increasing maritime activities around Japan, and the consequent concerns for regional and international security. See Gaimusho [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], *Gaiko Seisho Yoshi 2012* [Diplomatic Bluebook 2012], April 2012, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/index.html>, 22.

<sup>16</sup> "Showa 52 nendo iko ni kakawaru Boei Keikaku no Taiko" [NDPO for 1977 Onward], October 29, 1976, <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/docs/19761029.O1J.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Boeisho Kenkyushohen, *Higashi Ajia senryaku gaiyo* [East Asian Strategic Review] (Tokyo: Boei Kenkyusho, 2011), 230–33.

The NDPG charges the JSDF with the responsibility to raise and sustain the tempo of operations; increase patrolling and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) activities; deal swiftly with probing or *fait accompli* occupation activities in Japan's air and sea space; and strengthen general preparedness for regional and global contingencies. In short, Japan seeks to devise a defense posture that is dynamic and capable of responding rapidly and flexibly to diverse threats—no longer just to Japan itself, but in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

Japan's decision to attempt a radical transformation of its defense doctrine through finally adopting the DDF concept is a deep reflection, if not indeed a direct product, of the influence of China's recent military modernization and the security concerns it has created over territory and SLOCs. Although Japan's policymakers, anxious about counter-reactions from their counterparts, refrain from explicitly identifying China as a threat and the prime motivation for revisions to defense policy, the DDF is clearly designed primarily to meet the mounting military challenges from China. In turn, Japan's defense planners have followed through with this transformation of military doctrine by instituting corresponding changes to JSDF deployments and capabilities.

In recent years, Japanese policymakers have progressively shifted the weight of key JSDF capabilities away from the outmoded Cold War emphasis on northern Japan and instead turned southward in order to meet the emerging challenges from China. Since 2009, the ASDF has begun to deploy its most capable fighter, the F-15J, in Okinawa Prefecture; announced that it would redeploy two fighter squadrons to Okinawa; improved the operation of E-2C aircraft from Okinawa; deployed mobile radar equipment closer to Taiwan—on Miyako, Yonaguni, Ishigaki, and Iriomote-jima, the four southernmost Japanese islands; and upgraded three ground-based radar sites on Miyako and Okinoerabu islands, located just north of Okinawa. The ASDF is further looking to improve its airlift capability to support the deployment of Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) defensive reinforcements to the southern islands and the stationing of ballistic missile defense PAC-3 batteries in Okinawa. In December 2011 the GSDF, ASDF, and MSDF conducted joint exercises in Honshu, supported by the United States, based on the scenario of needing to retake one of the southern islands. These involved deploying ASDF F-2s and MSDF P-3Cs to remove enemy warships from surrounding waters and deplete enemy air defenses, and then using ASDF F-15Js to provide air cover for ASDF C-130s to drop GSDF parachute forces.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Jeitai ga rito dakkan kuren, Nansei Shoto sotei shi 12 gatsu" [JSDF Drills for Retaking Distant Islands in December, Envisaging the Southern Islands among Others], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 19, 2010, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/news/20100819-OYT1T00023.htm>.

The GSDF has now been charged with strengthening the defenses of Miyako, Yonaguni, Ishigaki, and Iriomote-jima through deploying a new coastal surveillance unit, as well as forming a first-response unit to gather information and defend the islands. In addition, the GSDF is forming a new anti-aircraft artillery group for rapid air-transport deployment to the southern islands. The GSDF and ASDF were subsequently able to rehearse these operations in the run-up to North Korea's test missile launch in April 2012. The Japanese government, fearful of debris from the missile falling on Okinawa, inserted PAC-3 units into Miyako and Ishigaki and five hundred GSDF personnel into Miyako, Ishigaki, and Yonaguni.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, even further afield, the continued deployment of MSDF destroyers and P-3Cs in antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden—including the construction of the JSDF's first postwar overseas military base in Djibouti in mid-2011—has enabled Japan to monitor China's maritime activities in this region.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of the development of specific military capabilities, Japan has largely sought to counter China's modernization with a symmetrical buildup of JSDF assets. The 2010 NDPG and accompanying Mid-Term Defense Program (MTDP) emphasize focusing on the characteristics of readiness, mobility, flexibility, sustainability, versatility, and jointness. In practice, this policy has meant the continuing reduction of main battle tanks and artillery originally procured to deter the Soviet Union and a switch to investments in lighter, more mobile, and technologically advanced forces capable of responding to regional contingencies (see **Tables 1, 2, and 3**).

The ASDF has first sought to slow any movement in the balance of air-defense power in China's favor by investing in recent upgrades to the radar and AAM-5 air-to-air missiles of its F-15Js, especially to improve aerial dog-fighting and anti-cruise missile capabilities. However, the ASDF has also looked to push the air-defense balance firmly back into its own favor in the medium to long term by acquiring a new F-X fighter.

The ASDF's avowed aim has been to acquire an air superiority interceptor to replace its obsolete F-4Js. It first sought to procure the F-22A as a means to trump China's current fourth-generation inventory and any fifth-generation future ambitions in air power. Japan was eventually denied the F-22A because the U.S. Congress refused to lift its blanket ban on the export of the aircraft for fear of the loss of sensitive technology. The Bush and Obama administrations were also concerned that this aircraft would too decisively shift the air power

<sup>19</sup> "PAC-3 haibi de ondosha: Nansai Shoto no boeiriyoku kyoka" [Differences in Enthusiasm for PAC-3 Deployments: Strengthening the Defensive Power of the Southern Islands], *Asahi Shimbun*, April 1, 2012, 4.

<sup>20</sup> "Jieitai hajimete no "kaigai kichi" kaizoku taisaku de Jibuchi ni" [The JSDF's First Overseas Base in Djibouti for Anti-Piracy], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 28, 2011, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/news/20110528-OYT1T00450.htm>.

TABLE 1 Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) organization and primary equipment

		1976 NDPO	1996 NDPO	2004 NDPG	2010 NDPG
Personnel	Total GSDF personnel	180,000	160,000	155,000	154,000
	Regular personnel	–	145,000	148,000	147,000
	Ready reserve personnel	–	15,000	7,000	7,000
Major units	Regionally deployed units	12 divisions	8 divisions	8 divisions	8 divisions
	Mobile operation units	2 combined brigades	6 brigades	6 brigades	6 brigades
		1 armored division	1 armored division	1 armored division	1 armored division
		1 airborne brigade	1 airborne brigade	Central Readiness Group	Central Readiness Group
		1 helicopter brigade	1 helicopter brigade	–	–
Ground-to-air missile units	8 anti-aircraft artillery groups	8 anti-aircraft artillery groups	8 anti-aircraft artillery groups	7 anti-aircraft artillery groups	
Main equipment	Battle tanks	~1,200	~900	~600	~400
	Artillery	~1,000	~900	~600	~400

SOURCE: Japan Defense Agency, *Nihon no boei 1995: Boei hakusho* [Defense of Japan 1995: Defense White Paper] (Tokyo: Okurasho insatsukyoku, 1995), 312, 321; and Japan Ministry of Defense, *Nihon no boei 2011: Boei hakusho* [Defense of Japan 2011: Defense White Paper] (Tokyo: Zaimusho insatsukyoku, 2011), 175.



TABLE 2 Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) organization and primary equipment

		1976 NDPO	1996 NDPO	2004 NDPG	2010 NDPG
<b>Major units</b>	Destroyer units (for mobile operations)	4 flotillas	4 flotillas	4 flotillas	4 flotillas
	Destroyer units (regional district units)	10 divisions	7 divisions	5 divisions	6 brigades
	Submarine units	6 divisions	6 divisions	4 divisions	6 submarine units
	Minesweeping units	2 flotillas	1 flotilla	1 flotilla	1 flotilla
	Land-based patrol aircraft units	16 squadrons	13 squadrons	9 squadrons	9 squadrons
<b>Main equipment</b>	Destroyers	~60	~50	47	48
	Submarines	16	16	16	22
	Combat aircraft	~220	~170	~150	~150

SOURCE: Japan Defense Agency, *Nihon no boei* 1995, 312, 321; and Japan Ministry of Defense, *Nihon no boei* 2011, 175.

TABLE 3 Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) organization and primary equipment

		1976 NDPO	1996 NDPO	2004 NDPG	2010 NDPG
Major units	Aircraft control and warning units	28 groups	8 groups	8 groups	4 warning groups
		1 squadron	20 squadrons	20 squadrons	28 squadrons
		–	1 airborne early warning squadron	1 airborne early warning squadron	1 airborne early warning squadron
	Interceptor units	10 squadrons	9 squadrons	12 squadrons	12 squadrons
	Support fighter units	3 squadrons	3 squadrons	–	–
	Air reconnaissance units	1 squadron	1 squadron	1 squadron	1 squadron
	Air transport units	3 squadrons	3 squadrons	3 squadrons	3 squadrons
	Ground-to-air missile units	6 groups	6 groups	6 groups	6 groups
Main equipment	Combat aircraft	~400	~400	~350	~340
	Fighters	~350	~300	~260	~260

SOURCE: Japan Defense Agency, *Nihon no boei* 1995, 312, 321; and Japan Ministry of Defense, *Nihon no boei* 2011, 175.

balance toward Japan vis-à-vis China and trigger a destabilizing regional arms race.<sup>21</sup> Japan then launched an F-X competition, finally selecting in December 2011 the Lockheed-Martin F-35A over the BAE Systems Eurofighter Typhoon and Boeing F/A-18. Japan's choice of the F-35A was controversial because it is not strictly an air superiority fighter, unlike the Eurofighter; is not yet operationally capable or combat-tested; will likely not be delivered until the end of the decade; and is expensive at an estimated 10–20 billion yen per aircraft. The Japanese defense industry will also receive minimal or possibly zero opportunities to maintain its competency in fighter production by purchasing an essentially off-the-shelf import.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, Japan's procurement of a fleet of 42 F-35As will eventually provide the ASDF with a formidable fifth-generation multirole aircraft. The F-35A features stealth characteristics and should match up well with, if perhaps not totally supersede, future Chinese capabilities. Just as interestingly, Japan's attachment of importance to the stealth capabilities of the F-35A, along with its greater associated strengths as an air defense–penetration fighter rather than an air superiority fighter, suggests a future ASDF interest in developing an offensive counter-air doctrine. This type of Japanese capability might be used to strike against North Korean missile bases and even the Chinese mainland in a contingency and would mark a radical departure from Japan's defense-oriented posture. Meanwhile, the other key air power development, partially in response to China's military modernization, has been the ASDF's procurement of the indigenously produced C-2 transport. This aircraft will provide the necessary airlift around the Japanese archipelago to respond to possible invasions of offshore islands.

Japan's reaction to China's missile forces has again been largely symmetric in attempting to neutralize these capabilities through the deployment of BMD. The 2010 NDPG mandates the ASDF to maintain six anti-aircraft groups equipped with PAC-3 batteries, and the MSDF to maintain six Aegis DDGs equipped with BMD SM-3 interceptors. The JSDF now deploys, after the United States, the most sophisticated BMD capabilities in the Asia-Pacific, and thus pursues deterrence by denial of China's ballistic-missile threat. However, Japan still might entertain the prospect of edging toward a form of “deterrence by punishment” if it were to deploy the F-35A for strikes on missile launchers, armed with the joint direct attack munitions (JDAM) introduced by the ASDF in 2009. Although cruise missiles are usually discussed as a means of striking

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<sup>21</sup> Christopher Bolkcom and Emma Chanlett-Avery, “Potential F-22 *Raptor* Export to Japan,” Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, RS22684, March 11, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> “F35 sentoki: kakaku kosho ni seifu kuryo nesage kosho muzukashiku” [F-35 Fighter: Government Suffering at the High Cost, Difficulty of Negotiations for Lowering Price], *Mainichi Shimbum*, May 9, 2012, <http://mainichi.jp/select/news/20120510k0000m010107000c.html>.

at North Korean missile launch pads and are not yet openly contemplated as an option for responding to China's missiles, the MSDF might value a cruise-missile capability as another form of deterrence by punishment.

Given that Japan's primary concerns over China relate to maritime security, the MSDF has embarked on the most significant buildup of capabilities under recent NDPGs, many of which are designed to negate both the PLAN's access-denial and blue water naval strategies. Under the 2010 NDPG and MTDP, the MSDF is set to increase the SSK fleet by more than one-third, from 15 to 22 boats. The destroyer force is maintained at 48 in number, and Japan as part of this buildup continues to introduce helicopter-carrying destroyers (DDH). The MSDF has taken delivery of two 7,000-ton Hyuga-class 16DDHs, with a regular complement of four helicopters but capable of carrying up to eleven. It is then set to procure two additional 19,000-ton 22DDHs, capable of carrying up to fourteen helicopters. MSDF DDHs are the largest vessels built for service in the postwar period and are light helicopter carriers in all but name. The prime function of these assets is to provide a very powerful antisubmarine warfare (ASW) capability, clearly aimed against China's access-denial strategy. But Japan's venturing back into carrier technology presages a possible Sino-Japanese carrier arms race, and analysts suspect that the MSDF might eventually attempt to operate fixed-wing aircraft from the 22DDHs, such as the maritime variant of the F-35. Japan's maritime air and ASW capability will be further strengthened through the procurement of a replacement for its P-3Cs: the indigenously developed P-1 patrol surveillance aircraft. The P-1 will be able to sweep over a range of eight thousand kilometers.

Japan is also beginning to try to match China in other potential combat spheres. The Cabinet Secretariat's 2009 Basic Plan for Space Policy contains highly ambitious goals for the development of early warning satellites to assist the BMD program; and the JMOD's Committee on the Promotion of Space Development and Use established basic guidelines in the same year that argue for taking measures to protect satellites against attack and improve C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance). The Information Security Policy Council and JMOD are jointly looking to counter Chinese asymmetric warfare through devising measures to defend information networks against cyberattack.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, Japan's internal balancing efforts vis-à-vis China have markedly strengthened in recent years. These internal military efforts are, however, predictably accompanied by concomitant domestic constraints. Japanese policymakers still hold out hope that diplomacy and engagement

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<sup>23</sup> Boeishohen, *Boei hakusho 2011*, 208, 210.

will curb China's future military ambitions, and the continuing strength of anti-militaristic sentiment among Japan's citizenry means that the Japanese state remains reluctant to openly resort to military deterrence. Yet a bipartisan consensus is emerging between the DPJ and LDP, reflected in the defense measures outlined above, that Japan must face up to and hedge harder against the impending threats from China's military modernization. Prior to losing power to the DPJ, the LDP sought to characterize the DPJ as a party soft on defense issues. However, the DPJ has actually followed very closely and then superseded the LDP in terms of reinforcing Japan's national defense capabilities, with the result that the two parties' defense policies appear indistinguishable in relation to China. This process of convergence was only accelerated by the Sino-Japanese spat over the Senkaku Islands in 2010. Moreover, public opinion may also be converging with the views of policy elites. According to a Cabinet Office survey following the 2010 Senkaku Islands incident, 78% of the public feels no affinity with China, the highest percentage since the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1980.<sup>24</sup>

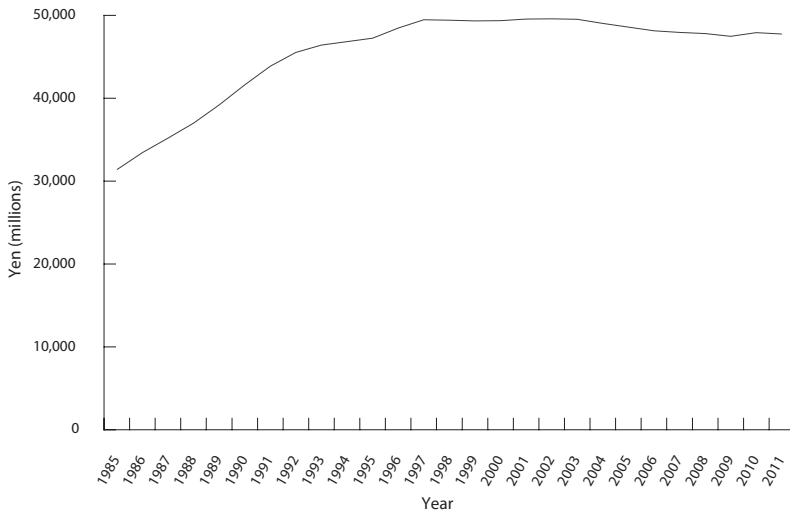
The principal domestic constraint on Japan's ability to hedge hard against the potential threat from China is not denial of the risk involved but the limited availability of resources to address competing priorities. Japan's struggling economy and the growing demands for welfare expenditure—compounded by the need for reconstruction funds following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami and the ensuing crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant—have meant that the defense budget continues to be squeezed. Japan's persistence in limiting defense expenditure to 1% of GNP in an era of declining GNP inevitably constrains the budget. Since the mid-1990s, defense spending has remained limited to around 6% of total government expenditures and a de facto ceiling of 5 trillion yen (see **Figure 1**). An even greater constraint on Japan's military modernization is that the proportion of the defense budget available for procuring new equipment has now shrunk to 17% (see **Figure 2**), further reducing the volume of new platforms produced (see **Figure 3**).<sup>25</sup> These constraints make it all the more important for Japan to leverage internal balancing efforts in conjunction with external balancing against China through the U.S.-Japan alliance.

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<sup>24</sup> "Gaiko ni kansuru Yoron Chosa" [Public Opinion Poll on Diplomacy], Naikakufu Daijin Kanbo Seifu Kohoshitsu, January 30, 2012, <http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h23/h23-gaiko/zh/z10.html>.

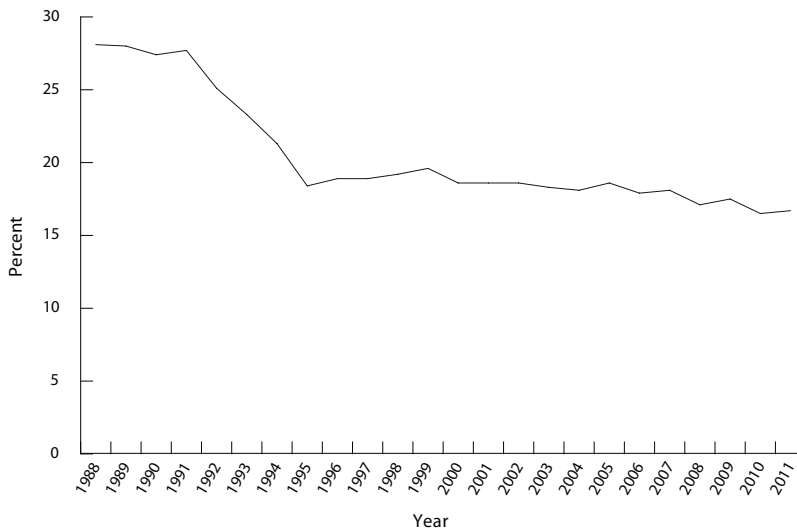
<sup>25</sup> For a full analysis of Japan's defense budget and the impact on the Japan Self Defense Forces' ability to procure new equipment and national strategic autonomy, see Christopher W. Hughes, "The Slow Death of Japanese Techno-Nationalism? Emerging Comparative Lessons for China's Defense Production," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 34, no. 3 (2011): 451–79.

FIGURE 1 Japanese defense expenditure, 1985–2011 (millions of yen)



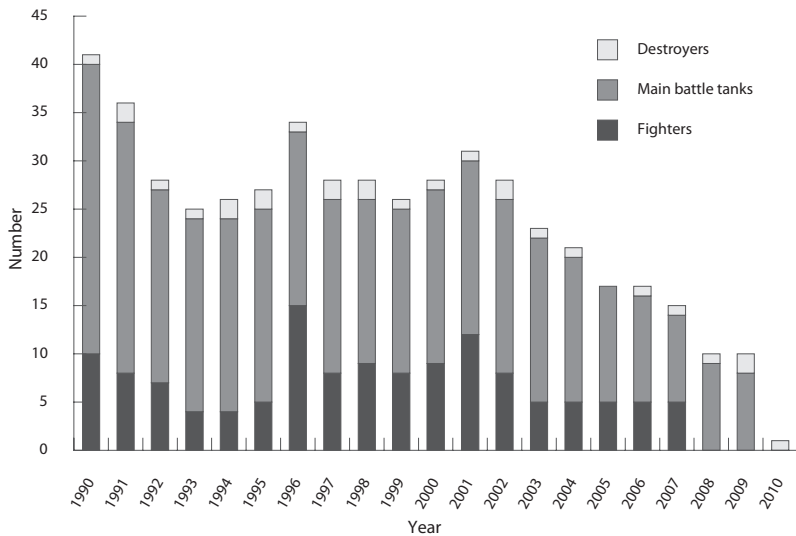
SOURCE: Japan Defense Agency and Japan Ministry of Defense, *Nihon no boei: Boei hakusho* [Defense of Japan: Defense White Paper], various years.

FIGURE 2 Percentage of the Japanese defense budget spent on equipment procurement, 1988–2011



SOURCE: Japan Defense Agency and Japan Ministry of Defense, *Nihon no boei*, various years.

FIGURE 3 Japanese procurement of weapon platforms, 1990–2010



SOURCE: Japan Defense Agency and Japan Ministry of Defense, *Nihon no boei*, various years.

### *Japan's External Balancing through the U.S.-Japan Alliance*

Japanese policymakers, as noted above, have consistently utilized the U.S.-Japan alliance as an indispensable, if not indeed their principal, hedge against China's military rise. This dependency, as the junior partner in the bilateral framework, on the United States, and Japan's consequent possibility of finding itself confronting not just its own bilateral strategic pressures from China but also being caught between the interactions of its U.S. ally and China, has always carried the alliance-dilemma risks of abandonment and entrapment. Japanese foreign and defense policy planners have feared U.S. abandonment in the event of strategic accommodation between the United States and China, especially if Japan's security interests are not deemed by the United States to converge with its own core interests and warrant the mobilization of U.S. forces in defense of Japan. Some Japanese analysts suspect that the defense of the Senkaku Islands, even though it is included under the scope of Article 5 of the bilateral security treaty, could be just such an issue where the United States would be reluctant to intervene on Japan's behalf for fear of putting the entire Sino-U.S. relationship at risk. In particular, they

worry that if China were to seize the islands first, the United States would be reluctant to help Japan recover the territories through a full-scale conflict, even if it is willing to assist in deterring such aggression.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, this lack of faith in U.S. security guarantees has apparently spurred Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara's provocative move, publicly announced in April 2012, for his municipal government to attempt to purchase the Senkaku Islands from their private owners. Ishihara hopes to cajole the central Japanese government into possibly taking its own actions to procure the islands in order to bolster national territorial claims and defenses.<sup>27</sup>

Japanese abandonment concerns are exacerbated by the fact that the United States might lack not only the commitment to intervene in these types of regional conflicts but also the necessary military power to counter China's probing and access-denial strategy. The consequence is that Japanese defense planners and analysts have increasingly focused on assessing the degree of implementation of the United States' air-sea battle (ASB) concept as a means to judge the surety of U.S. capabilities to face off against China. Additionally, they have stressed the need for Japan's own military strategy and capability to complement ASB planning.<sup>28</sup>

Conversely, Japan must consider the possibility of not only confronting bilateral strategic pressure from China but also being caught in the strategic interactions between China and the United States. Entrapment concerns have historically revolved around the possibility of Japan becoming embroiled in a Sino-U.S. conflict, such as in the Taiwan Strait, that does not fully converge with its own core interests.

As a result of these fears of abandonment and entrapment, all Japanese administrations have attempted to obviate these types of dilemmas through a mixture of engagement with China to dampen conflict and elaborate hedging games within and outside the U.S.-Japan alliance to preserve limits

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<sup>26</sup> Magosaki Ukeru, "Nichibei Domei o zettai shisubekarazu: Beigun ga Nihon o mamoru to kagirana! Riyu," in *Nihon no Renten 2012* [Japan's Debating Points in 2012], ed. Bungei Shunjuhen (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 2012), 120–23; and Magosaki Ukeru, *Fuyukai no genjitsu: Chugoku no taikokuka, Beikoku no senryaku Tenkan* [Unpleasant Realities: China's Rise to Great Power, America's Change of Strategy] (Tokyo: Kodansha Gendai Shinsho, 2012), 130–34.

<sup>27</sup> Ishihara Shintaro, *Shin Darukuron: Gayoku to Tenbatsu* [New Depravity Theory: Egoism and Heaven's Judgment] (Tokyo: Shincho Shinsho, 2011), 78–81.

<sup>28</sup> Yoichi Kato, "Japan's Response to New U.S. Defense Strategy: 'Welcome but...,'" Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), PacNet, no. 17, March 15, 2012, <http://csis.org/files/publication/Pac1217.pdf>; and Michael McDevitt, "The Evolving Maritime Security Environment in East Asia: Implications for the U.S.-Japan Alliance," CSIS, PacNet, no. 33, March 31, 2012, <http://csis.org/publication/pacnet-33-evolving-maritime-security-environment-east-asia-implications-us-japan-alliance>.



on Japanese military commitments to the United States.<sup>29</sup> As noted earlier, the DPJ initially pursued this type of strategy. The party worked to redouble engagement with China and strengthen U.S.-Japan alliance ties in certain areas, while at the same time attempting to back away from the LDP's previous military commitments to broader U.S. military campaigns and strategy, which it saw as increasing the risk of entrapment in various security scenarios.

Nevertheless, as argued above, the DPJ is now swinging back firmly, and perhaps more firmly than the LDP ever did, toward recentralizing the United States within Japan's grand strategy in order to cope with China's rise. This prioritization of the U.S.-Japan alliance has clearly been catalyzed by the DPJ's failure to gain traction in moderating China's assertiveness over territorial issues in the East China Sea and the general trajectory of its military buildup. Thus, Japan has currently demoted its concerns about entrapment and seeks above all to prevent military abandonment by the United States at this crucial juncture in Sino-Japanese relations.

Japan's recentering of the United States in its grand strategy toward the Asia-Pacific region and vis-à-vis China is demonstrated politically by the DPJ's move away from active support for an EAC as its preferred future mechanism for macro-regional cooperation and toward a new emphasis on the East Asian Summit (EAS). The United States was not envisaged as a member of the former, whereas it has been a full participant in the latter since 2011. Thus, Japan can bring the United States' presence to bear in checking Chinese influence in designing regional frameworks and pushing alternatives such as the ASEAN +3. Economically, the DPJ has indicated since November 2010 that it intends to participate in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in order to facilitate the larger, long-term goal of creating a free trade area for the Asia-Pacific. The United States has emerged as the de facto leader of efforts to negotiate the TPP, while China is unlikely to become a participant. Japan has not abandoned participation in other emerging frameworks for economic cooperation that are also viewed as building momentum for a free trade area encompassing the entire region, such as an East Asian free trade area, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership for East Asia, and a Northeast Asia trilateral free trade agreement, which all include China as a member. Nevertheless, the fact that Japan is now attempting to prioritize the TPP in the face of stiff domestic opposition signifies that it intends to push a U.S.-led and Asia-Pacific-dominant standard for regional cooperation. Japan hopes

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<sup>29</sup> Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels, "Japan's Dual Hedge," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 5 (2003): 110–23.

that China will ultimately have to subscribe to this standard and accept limits on its ability to lead a counter-region centered on East Asia.<sup>30</sup>

In security terms, the DPJ has clearly accelerated moves to strengthen the alliance following the 2010 incident over the Senkaku Islands. The 2010 NDPG was devised with close linkages to the United States' own 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), and Japan's reorientation toward the United States has coincided in general with Washington's own rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific, announced in January 2012.<sup>31</sup> Japan's confidence in U.S. security guarantees received a boost in September 2010 following the Senkaku Islands incident, when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and then secretary of defense Robert Gates offered swift assurances that Article 5 of the security treaty encompassed the islands. The U.S.-Japan alliance was further strengthened in the wake of the March 11 disasters. The United States launched Operation Tomodachi (literally "Operation Friend"), which utilized the full panoply of U.S. military assets in Japan and the Pacific, including 20 U.S. Navy (USN) vessels, 140 aircraft, and 20,000 USMC personnel, to support the JSDF's mobilization of 100,000 troops for disaster relief.

The DPJ's early attempts to revisit plans under the 2006 Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) for the relocation of the Futenma Air Station inside Okinawa Prefecture were a political and diplomatic debacle. Since mid-2010, the party has advocated reverting to the original bilateral agreements, despite continued local opposition to the implementation of this policy. The DPJ has been assisted in these plans by Washington's easing of immediate pressure for the relocation of Futenma. In February 2012 the United States agreed to relocate 4,700 USMC personnel, rather than the full 8,000 originally requested, from Okinawa to Guam without predicating these moves on a resolution of the Futenma issue. Japan's cooperation with the United States on base realignments under the DPRI has continued with support for the relocation of the USS *George Washington's* carrier wing to Iwakuni on Honshu. More generally, the DPJ's support for the U.S. military presence in Japan was demonstrated by its agreement in 2010 to maintain host-nation support at the same levels for 2011–15 in spite of budgetary pressures. Moreover, in regard to BMD—perhaps the most important long-term driver of U.S.-Japan military integration—cooperation under the DPJ has rolled forward. Japan and the United States have continued to jointly develop the SM-3 Block IIA interceptor missile, and the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee

<sup>30</sup> Takashi Terada, "Trade Winds: Big Power Politics and Asia-Pacific Economic Integration," *Global Asia* 7, no. 1 (2012): 90–95.

<sup>31</sup> Boeisho Kenkyushohen, *Higashi Ajia senryaku gaiyo 2012*, 224–25; Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, November 2011, 56–63; and U.S. Department of Defense, "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," January 2012, 2, [http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense\\_Strategic\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf).

(SCC) agreed in June 2011 that Japan would make an exemption to its arms export ban in order to permit the export of the missile to other countries.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, in April 2012, Japan and the United States completed DPRI plans for collocation of the ASDF Air Defense Command with that of the USAF at Yokota Air Base near Tokyo. The move is intended to improve information-sharing in response to missile attacks.<sup>33</sup>

Japan under the DPJ has also picked up the pace of cooperation by updating the 2005 and 2007 “common strategic objectives” of the bilateral alliance during the 2011 SCC process. Japan and the United States pledged to continue to press China on its military transparency; noted the complementarities of Japan’s DDF concept in the NDPG and the U.S. commitment in the QDR to meeting the regional challenges posed by China’s ballistic-missile program and A2/AD strategy, as well as to ensuring cyber and maritime security; and agreed that both sides would enhance cooperation in responding to regional contingencies through measures such as strengthened joint ISR.<sup>34</sup>

The SCC’s update of the common strategic objectives also strongly endorsed Japan’s support for the U.S. presence in the region through the building of security links with a range of other U.S. partners. Japan and Australia’s security ties have advanced relatively steadily since the “Joint Declaration on Security” in 2003, and the DPJ administration concluded an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) with Australia in 2010 for the sharing of military logistical support in peacetime and UN operations. Modeled on Japan’s ACSA with the United States signed in 1996 and revised in 1999, the agreement clearly provides a template compatible for possible trilateral logistical cooperation among Japan, the United States, and Australia in the future.

In contrast, Japanese security ties with India have proceeded more slowly since their initial Joint Declaration on Security and Cooperation in 2008. But the DPJ administration appears willing to step up cooperation with this emerging U.S. partner. Japan conducted the foreign ministry’s first-ever trilateral security talks at the director level with the United States and India in December 2011 and reached an agreement with India to hold joint naval maritime security exercises in 2012.

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<sup>32</sup> Hillary Clinton et al., “Toward a Deeper and Broader Alliance: Building on 50 Years of Partnership,” Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee, June 21, 2011, 9, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/pdfs/joint1106\\_01.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/pdfs/joint1106_01.pdf). The SCC comprises the two countries’ defense and foreign ministers and is the principal coordinating mechanism for the alliance.

<sup>33</sup> “ASDF Command Now at Yokota Base,” *Japan Times*, March 27, 2012, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120327a2.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Clinton, “Toward a Deeper and Broader Alliance,” 4, 7–8.

Similarly, Japan and the DPJ government have been more willing to explore meaningful ties with South Korea, another important U.S. partner. MSDF officers for the first time observed U.S.-ROK military exercises in July 2010 as a demonstration of trilateral unity in the wake of the *Cheonan* incident. South Korean naval officers then participated as observers for the first time in large-scale U.S.-Japan military exercises in December 2010, this time following North Korea's bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island. Since early 2011, Japan and South Korea have been considering, and in April 2012 were reportedly close to signing, an ACSA and general security of military information agreement for the exchange of BMD early warning intelligence, although in May 2012 the South Korean government shied away from finally concluding the agreements due to domestic political sensitivities over military cooperation with Japan. Japan and South Korea attempted to sign the agreements again in June, only for the South to again pull out twenty minutes before the ceremony, precipitating the resignation of President Lee Myung-bak's advisers in the face of domestic criticism of the secretive nature by which the agreements had been negotiated.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, Japan has followed the U.S. agenda in supporting the ASEAN states against pressure from China in the South China Sea. The JCG continues to demonstrate Japanese maritime presence in the region through cooperation on antipiracy. Japan and Indonesia also held their own strategic dialogue on maritime issues in February 2011, and Japan concluded a joint statement on enhancing its strategic partnership with ASEAN in November 2011, which pledged to promote cooperation on maritime security in the region.<sup>36</sup>

Japan's support for the U.S. agenda has thus moved the United States squarely back into the center of Japan's strategic calculations for responding to the rise of China. Nevertheless, Japan's external balancing with the United States is still likely to encounter obstacles. Both countries must contend with immediate problems in their joint management of the alliance that could undermine its stability. Operation Tomodachi undoubtedly improved the alliance's political confidence, but contrary to some predictions has not created sufficient momentum to help achieve a decisive breakthrough on the Okinawa issue. The United States' decoupling of Futenma from the rest of the DPRI is helpful in the short term but has created other concerns for Japan. Specifically, it may reduce the incentives for both sides to resolve the issue in the longer term, leading to the USMC facility remaining in its

<sup>35</sup> "Nikkan Boei 2 kyoryoku, sakiokuri: Kankokunai de shinchoron" [Postponing Two Japan-South Korea Defense Cooperation Agreements: Caution Due to Domestic Politics], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 19, 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Joint Statement for Enhancing Japan-ASEAN Strategic Partnership for Prospering Together (Bali Declaration)," November 18, 2011, 3, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/conference/pdfs/bali\\_declaration\\_en\\_1111.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/conference/pdfs/bali_declaration_en_1111.pdf).

current location and engendering further local opposition to U.S. bases in Okinawa. Recent U.S. requests for Japan to fund the repair of the Futenma runway in the absence of any immediate prospect for relocation only compound fears of the issue remaining unresolved. Moreover, the United States' failed requests for Japan to increase funding for USMC realignment to Guam, despite the fact that with the decoupling of Futenma the scale of the reduction of burden on Okinawa would have actually decreased, could have generated bilateral frictions.<sup>37</sup>

But even more important for the success of Japan's external balancing efforts will be a shared sense of the credibility of U.S. security guarantees. From the Japanese perspective, China's maritime activity in the East China Sea poses an increasingly important test of the threshold necessary for the United States to support Japan's territorial integrity and broader security. Japan's new DDF doctrine may to some extent deter Chinese activity and thus help avert any probing of this threshold. However, Japanese anxieties over the United States' willingness to intervene in these types of scenarios may ultimately expose weaknesses in the alliance that need to be addressed.

Hence, Tokyo continues to harbor doubts about Washington's budgetary ability to back up its commitments and strategies with the deployment of hard military capabilities. These doubts will persist even if Japanese policymakers look to support ASB through the DDF and encourage the United States' shift of naval and air assets to the Asia-Pacific—having drawn reassurance from Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta's indication in June 2012 that the United States will deploy 60% of its naval assets to the region.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, although North Korea remains a second-order security issue for Japan compared with China, any sign of failure of U.S. implacability to contain North Korea in response to missile and nuclear tests will be taken as a wider indication of the lack of U.S. commitment to support Japan against China.

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<sup>37</sup> "Futenma koteika no kenen: hoshuhi yokyu" [Concerns at the Immovability of Futenma: Requests for Additional Funding], *Asahi Shimbun*, April 5, 2012, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Leon Panetta, "The U.S. Rebalance Towards the Asia-Pacific" (remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue of the 11th IISS Asia Security Summit, Singapore, June 2, 2012), <http://www.iiss.org/conferences/the-shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2012/speeches/first-plenary-session/leon-panetta/>; and "Ajia Taiheiyo no Beikaigun kyoka, kinketsu tsuzuki jitsugen futomei" [The Strengthening of the U.S. Navy in the Asia-Pacific, A Lack of Clarity in Implementation as a Lack of Funds Continues], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, June 6, 2012, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/world/news/20120602-OYT1T00833.htm>.

## South Korea: The Korean Peninsula and Post-Reunification Concerns toward China

### *South Korea's Grand Strategy and China*

Among the three powers analyzed in this chapter, South Korea is the one that has been forced to react the least and most indirectly to China's military modernization. The ROK's most immediate security concern remains North Korea. Nonetheless, South Korean policymakers increasingly recognize the need for a grand strategy to contend with China's rise and the associated military challenges both from growing Chinese influence over North Korea and directly from Chinese military modernization. Likewise, they now recognize the importance of pursuing hedging strategies through internal balancing and also external balancing via the U.S.-ROK alliance.

Since the normalization of ROK-China relations in 1992, South Korea has emerged as a highly committed engager of China. Efforts at engagement have been spectacularly successful economically, with China surpassing the United States to become South Korea's largest trading partner in 2004 and the number-one destination for South Korean FDI in 2000 (including a near 300% increase between 2003 and 2004).<sup>39</sup> In turn, South Korea's growing interdependence with China, especially economically, has begun to generate questions about South Korean grand strategy, as recent presidential administrations have wrestled with the implications of China's rise.

The administration of President Roh Moo-hyun (2003–8), in line with booming Sino–South Korean economic interdependence and China's growing influence over North Korea, appeared to pursue a pronounced “tilt” toward China in its grand strategy. The flip side of this growing strategic convergence with China was a degree of diplomatic distancing from the United States. Roh attempted to establish more equidistance between the two great powers through elaborating the concept of the South as a regional balancer in Northeast Asia.<sup>40</sup> In terms of defense policy, the Roh administration's call for a “cooperative self-reliant” military posture indicated its intention to shift away from exclusive strategic reliance on the United States. More generally, Roh seemed to contribute to a mood in wider South Korean society of disaffection

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<sup>39</sup> David Kang, “South Korea's Embrace of Interdependence in Pursuit of Security,” in *Strategic Asia 2006–07: Trade, Interdependence, and Security*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Wills (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2006), 146–47; Samuel S. Kim, *The Two Koreas and the Great Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 75–80; and Jonathan D. Pollack, “The Korean Peninsula in U.S. Strategy: Policy Choices for the Next President,” in *Strategic Asia 2008–09: Challenges and Choices*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Mercy Kuo, and Andrew Marble (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008), 140–41.

<sup>40</sup> Sukhee Han, “From Engagement to Hedging: South Korea's New China Policy,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 20, no. 4 (2008): 336.

with the U.S.-ROK alliance, even to the point of anti-Americanism.<sup>41</sup> The Roh administration's policies have even been construed as the beginnings of South Korea as a small power being drawn into China's strategic orbit and thus bandwagoning with an emerging Sino-centric regional order.

In fact, a more straightforward interpretation is that South Korea was initiating strategic hedging behavior, confronted for the first time by the dilemma of navigating strategic relations with two major partners. Even though the Roh administration oversaw the significant strengthening of the U.S.-ROK alliance, this process was perceived to contain significant alliance dilemmas of abandonment and entrapment vis-à-vis the United States and concomitantly security dilemmas vis-à-vis China. Navigating these risks necessitated strategic hedging by South Korea.

If the Roh administration tilted South Korea toward China for reasons of economic interdependence and strategic hedging, then this logic has dictated that, under the successor administration of President Lee Myung-bak, the South has swung back toward the U.S. strategic fold as more negative views of China's rise have taken hold. In the earlier stages of the Roh administration, China's rise was viewed as predominantly benign in nature, but by the administration's later stages Sino-South Korean relations began to deteriorate over a range of issues, reflecting fears of increasing Chinese dominance. These issues included China's assertions over the historical origins of the Goguryeo Kingdom in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula, creating suspicions that Beijing might entertain territorial claims; disregard for human rights in returning escapees back to North Korea; apparent lack of will in cooperating with the South and the international community to halt the North's nuclear program; and growing economic dominance over the South in trade relations.<sup>42</sup> The result is that, according to a 2011 poll, China was seen by 63% of Koreans as the greatest threat to Korea post-unification, whereas only 21% and 12% of respondents, respectively, perceived Japan and the United States as threats.<sup>43</sup>

This changing perception of China's rise, interlinked with dissatisfaction toward the Roh administration's North Korea policy, has forced a general recalibration of North Korea strategy, U.S.-ROK alliance ties, and Sino-South Korean relations under the Lee administration. As will be explained below,

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<sup>41</sup> Gi-Wook Shin, *One Alliance, Two Lenses: U.S.-South Korea Relations in a New Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 2010, 197-200; and National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review* (Tokyo: Japan Times, 2006), 91.

<sup>42</sup> Jae Ho Chung, "China's 'Soft' Clash with South Korea: The History War and Beyond," *Asian Survey* 49, no. 3 (2009): 468-74; and Scott Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas: Politics, Economics, Security* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2009), 94-104.

<sup>43</sup> Karl Friedhoff, "South Korea 2011: The Asan Institute's Annual Survey," Asan Institute for Policy Studies, 2012, 16, [http://asaninst.org/eng/01\\_research/public\\_list.php](http://asaninst.org/eng/01_research/public_list.php).

this strategic agenda involves arresting South Korea's move away from the United States and instituting a new harder hedge against China's military modernization through internal and external balancing.

### *South Korean Concerns over China's Doctrines and Capabilities*

Defense Reform 2020, which was released by the Korean Ministry of National Defense (MND) in 2006 as the principal document for initiating new military planning for the ROK armed forces, provides a sense of the types of concerns that China's military modernization has engendered in South Korea. In some ways the product of the Roh administration's heavy engagement with North Korea and China, Defense Reform 2020 estimated that the possibility of full-scale war on the Korean Peninsula was declining. The plan was reluctant, though, to designate alternative sources of threat due to apparent fears of creating new regional antagonisms. Moreover, the Korean MND shortly thereafter was obliged to revise its estimates of Korean Peninsula security in reaction to North Korea's renewed threat posture, especially in terms of the North's asymmetric capabilities to penetrate South Korea's defenses, as seen in the *Cheonan* sinking and Yeonpyeong bombardment incidents of 2010. The result is Defense Reform 307, which was adopted in 2011 and modifies Defense Form 2020 in order to bolster South Korea's ability to respond to North Korean asymmetric threats, specifically through enhanced early warning and command and control.

Even though North Korea has returned to the forefront of the Korean MND's immediate security concerns, Defense Reform 2020 and its longer-term plans to institute new structures and capabilities for the ROK military—beyond those necessary to respond to North Korean threats—hint at China as a future priority for national defense efforts. South Korean defense planners appear to envisage a number of scenarios for national security arising from China's military modernization.

The ROK military still must plan for a full-scale conflict on the Korean Peninsula, which might trigger Chinese military intervention. But more specifically, in a conflict short of all-out war, many analysts believe that China might choose to intervene primarily through maritime access-denial activities aimed at complicating U.S. naval deployments and South Korean SLOCs in the Yellow Sea.<sup>44</sup> China's strong objections to exercises between the USN and ROK Navy (ROKN) in the Yellow Sea in November 2010, following the Yeonpyeong incident, may reflect its concern with any resistance to future

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<sup>44</sup> Bruce W. Bennett, *A Brief Analysis of the Republic of Korea's Defense Reform Plan* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2006), 18.



Chinese dominance in this area.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, scenarios of North Korean collapse, whether occurring peacefully or otherwise, raise clear concerns for Korean MND planners with regard to Chinese military power. The ROK military needs sufficient capabilities to move north in order to meet a PLA southward intervention to secure North Korea's nuclear weapons; to conduct stability operations in the North during a possible PLA occupation of other parts of the country; and, eventually, to maintain border security with China in a reunited Korea.<sup>46</sup>

Even more interestingly, South Korea now appears to be preparing for an entirely new set of threats from China not entirely related to the Korean Peninsula and primarily derived from China's maritime modernization. These threats include increasing pressure from China over maritime disputes in the Yellow Sea, such as the dispute over the sovereignty of Socotra Rock (also known as Ieodo or Suyan) in 2006, violent clashes between trawlers over fishing grounds in 2010 and 2011, and tensions over SLOCs, as both countries compete for stable energy supplies. In addition, South Korea is planning for the possibility that it may become caught, in classic middle-power style, in a Sino-Japanese maritime arms race, necessitating a more robust ROKN presence to fend off these two larger powers.<sup>47</sup>

### *South Korea's Internal Balancing in Response to China*

Defense Reform 2020 and subsequent revisions of this plan in the Lee administration's defense master plan of 2009 have initiated a significant strengthening of the ROK military. The plans again largely address North Korea's growing asymmetric threat but at the same time add capabilities to ensure against threats outside the immediate Korean Peninsula, including China's rise.

The defense master plan emphasizes an overall modernization of South Korea's defense posture: a reduction of the total number of personnel from 655,000 in 2009 to 517,000 by 2020 (originally planned for 500,000 under

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<sup>45</sup> Chung Min Lee, "Coping with Giants: South Korea's Response to India's and China's Rise," in *Strategic Asia 2011–12: Asia Responds to Its Rising Powers—China and India*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Travis Tanner, and Jessica Keough (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2011), 180.

<sup>46</sup> Chung Min Lee, "Reassessing the ROK-U.S. Alliance: Transformation Challenges and the Consequences of South Korea's Choices," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 57, no. 5 (2003): 297–98; and Bruce W. Bennett and Jennifer Lind, "North Korean Collapse: Military Missions and Requirements," *International Security* 36, no. 2 (2011): 84–119.

<sup>47</sup> Jae Ho Chung, "China's Place in South Korea's Security Matrix," in *Beyond North Korea: Future Challenges to South Korea's Security*, ed. Byung Kwan Kim, Gi-Wook Shin, and David Straub (Stanford: Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2011), 143–44; National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2007* (Tokyo: Japan Times, 2007), 87; and Tae-Hyo Kim, "Korea's Strategic Thoughts toward Japan: Searching for a Democratic Future in the Past-Driven Present," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 20, no. 2 (2008): 147.

Defense Reform 2020), the greater professionalization of the military by increasing the proportion of volunteers, and a general rebalancing of the military away from the ROK Army (ROKA), which currently accounts for around 80% of personnel, toward the ROK Air Force (ROKAF) and the ROKN. The MND's objective is furthermore to create a more technologically advanced military, one that is capable of network-centric warfare and joint operations, by replacing up to half of its total weaponry with new systems.<sup>48</sup>

The ROKA is to be strengthened through the introduction of a multiple-launch rocket system, the upgraded K1A1 and new K2 main battle tanks, the K-21 infantry fighting vehicle, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). The ROKAF is investing in 60 F-15K fighters and the Boeing 737 AEW&C, and has plans to acquire a fifth-generation KF-X fighter. However, it is the ROKN that has undergone the most striking developments. The Korean navy has procured Aegis air-defense systems in the new KDX-3 (Sejong-class) DDG; the multipurpose KDX-2 (Chungmugong Yi Sun-shin-class) DDH; the 14,000-ton Dokdo (LPH-6111), which offers improved amphibious capability and is in essence a light helicopter carrier; and Type 214 (Son Won-il-class) SSKs.<sup>49</sup> These new technologies have converted South Korea into a serious blue water naval power in Northeast Asia and provide the capability to meet China's expanding maritime activities symmetrically.

Despite South Korea's ambitious plans to acquire a more flexible military with enhanced power-projection capabilities, there remain considerable domestic constraints on internal balancing. Domestic politics and the differences in policies toward North Korea between the Roh and Lee administrations obviously play a role in influencing security strategy. That said, there is actually significant agreement between Defense Reform 2020 and the defense master plan in terms of projecting a stronger military posture beyond the Korean Peninsula itself. Instead, the principal domestic constraint is the inability of governments to prevent the politicization of defense expenditure. Defense Reform 2020 set the goal of annual 10% increases in defense expenditure from 2006 to 2010, followed by 9% annual increases until 2015 and then 1% increases until 2020. But the 10% goal was lowered to 7% in 2006 and then revised to 7.6% in the defense master plan

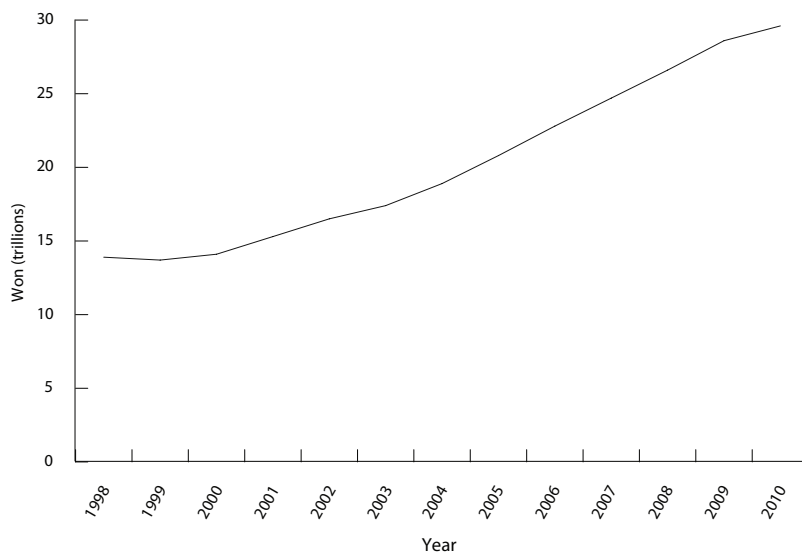
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<sup>48</sup> Bennett, *A Brief Analysis of the Republic of Korea's Defense Reform Plan*, 87; and Michael Raska, "RMA Diffusion Paths and Patterns in South Korea's Military Modernization," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 23, no. 3 (2011): 378–80.

<sup>49</sup> Yoji Koda, "The Emerging Republic of Korea Navy," *Naval War College Review* 63, no. 2 (2010): 23–26.

of 2009, though in fact there was only a 3.6% increase in 2010.<sup>50</sup> Hence, in spite of the impressive increase of government resources for defense (see **Figure 4**), it appears that the Korean MND is falling short of the pace and level necessary to fund all of its defense programs.

FIGURE 4 South Korean defense budget, 1998–2010 (trillions of won)



SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance* (London: Routledge, various years).

### *South Korea's External Balancing through the U.S.-ROK Alliance*

The U.S.-ROK alliance is certainly crucial for South Korea's current deterrence of North Korea and for future deterrence of a rising China. As noted earlier, however, the alliance has been strained in recent years, precipitating more pronounced South Korean strategic hedging. Thus, future external balancing of China through the bilateral alliance is unlikely to proceed in a smooth, linear fashion.

<sup>50</sup> Bennett, *A Brief Analysis of the Republic of Korea's Defense Reform Plan*, 21–22; National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2010* (Tokyo: Japan Times, 2010), 96–97; and ROK Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper* (Seoul, 2010), 407, [http://www.mnd.go.kr/cms\\_file/info/mndpaper/2010/2010WhitePaperAll\\_eng.pdf](http://www.mnd.go.kr/cms_file/info/mndpaper/2010/2010WhitePaperAll_eng.pdf).

In many ways these pressures are actually the product of substantial bilateral achievements in recent years that boosted the military strength of the alliance, even under the supposedly anti-alliance Roh administration. The U.S. Global Posture Review (GPR) and the 2003 Future of the U.S.-ROK Alliance Policy Initiative succeeded in the realignment objectives of consolidating the U.S. Army and USAF military presence in South Korea south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) around Osan and Pyeongtaek (in contrast to the still partially gridlocked process of realignment in Japan). The solidity of the alliance was further demonstrated by the dispatch of ROKA medical personnel and engineers to Iraq between 2003 and 2008, in the face of considerable domestic opposition. The Korean contingent in Iraq had a regular complement of six hundred personnel but at one point reached more than three thousand.

Nevertheless, these moves to strengthen the bilateral alliance have simultaneously enhanced the risks of abandonment and entrapment for South Korea. The U.S. realignment of forces south of the DMZ signaled for some South Korean policymakers that this crucial “tripwire” presence had been removed. They worried that the North might be emboldened to attack but that the United States would no longer be obligated to intervene. Moreover, the U.S. determination under the GPR to free up forces to respond to other regional and global contingencies raised questions about the denuding of the U.S. security presence in South Korea. Conversely, Korean policymakers were afraid that the withdrawal of U.S. forces to south of the DMZ might enable Washington to launch preemptive attacks on the North. Furthermore, they grew concerned that the United States might seek to use its new hubs at Osan and Pyeongtaek to support intervention in a Taiwan Strait crisis, thus drawing South Korea into an undesirable war with China.<sup>51</sup>

The Lee administration, though, has largely succeeded in overriding South Korean fears of entrapment. Instead, it has emphasized the need to avoid abandonment in the face of North Korean provocations and respond to new concerns about the rise of Chinese military power. Consequently, the Lee administration has swung firmly back into the U.S. security fold with the announcement of the Joint Vision for the Alliance of the ROK and the United States in 2009 and has pledged to reinforce military cooperation as well as for the United States to maintain extended nuclear deterrence over South Korea.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, as noted previously, South Korea has appeared more willing than

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<sup>51</sup> Chang-hee Nam, “Relocating the U.S. Forces in South Korea: Strained Alliance, Emerging Partnership in the Changing Defense Posture,” *Asian Survey* 46, no. 4 (2006): 626; and Jonathan D. Pollack, “The Strategic Future and Military Capabilities of the Two Koreas,” in *Strategic Asia 2005–06: Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Wills (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2005), 153.

<sup>52</sup> Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*, 78–79.

before to pursue trilateral security cooperation with the United States and Japan. A public opinion poll in 2011 even indicated that 54% of South Koreans were in favor of an ROK-Japan alliance to fend off China in the event of Korean reunification.<sup>53</sup> However, historical animosities regarding the colonial past and the territorial dispute over the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands, as well as possible perceptions of a remilitarized Japan as a threat to national security, continue to hamper fuller South Korean participation in trilateral security.<sup>54</sup>

## Taiwan: Asymmetric Balancing of China's Asymmetric Capabilities

### *Taiwan's Strategy and Views of China's Military Modernization*

Taiwan's grand strategy and defense policy are driven overwhelmingly by the condition of relations with China and assessments of its military modernization. Nevertheless, even within these relatively tightly defined strategic parameters, transitions in domestic politics have meant that different Taiwanese administrations have in varying degrees both engaged with China and concomitantly resorted to hedging by means of strengthening national military power or attempts to reinforce quasi-alliance ties with the United States. Chen Shui-bian's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) administration (2000–2008) managed not only to alienate China through intimating moves toward *de jure* independence but also to gradually disaffect U.S. Democratic and then Republican administrations, which similarly disapproved of the potential destabilization of the political status quo across the Taiwan Strait. In contrast, Ma Ying-jeou's Kuomintang (KMT) administration has shown a willingness for closer engagement of China and preservation of the status quo, while more skillfully maneuvering to improve U.S.-Taiwan relations.

As will be detailed later, even though the DPP and KMT may diverge in their assessments of the optimal means to respond to China's rise, both parties at least share an understanding of the scale of the mounting challenges posed by Chinese military modernization. Recent analysis of the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait argues that China has gained ascendancy in a number of crucial capabilities.<sup>55</sup> China's deployment of up to one thousand DF-11 and DF-15 SRBMs along the coasts of its southeastern provinces poses a massive

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<sup>53</sup> Friedhoff, "The Asan Institute's Annual Survey."

<sup>54</sup> Note that Dokdo is the class name of the ROKN's largest amphibious ship, while the Sejong-class DDG is named after a monarch who defeated Japan in the fifteenth century. Donald Keyser, "Regional and Global Challenges to South Korea's Security," in Kim, Shin, and Straub, *Beyond North Korea*, 56–57.

<sup>55</sup> U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military Developments Involving the People's Republic of China* (Washington, D.C., 2011), 47, [http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/2011\\_cmpr\\_final.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/2011_cmpr_final.pdf).

asymmetric threat to Taiwan's military defense infrastructure.<sup>56</sup> The PLAAF also now appears to be gaining mastery in air defense over the Taiwan Strait with its deployment of fourth-generation fighters.<sup>57</sup> In addition, the verdict seems to be that the PLAN is acquiring both a quantitative and qualitative advantage in destroyers and submarines, which could provide it with the capacity to launch amphibious assaults, blockade Taiwan, and impose access-denial vis-à-vis U.S. attempts at intervention in the Taiwan Strait.

### *Taiwan's Internal Balancing in Response to China*

In the face of this new reality, Taiwan's military strategy has abandoned previous pretensions of maintaining sufficient offensive power to impose its political objectives on the mainland (including the historical goal, however outlandish, of overthrowing the Communist Party) and prevail decisively in any conflict situation. Instead, Taiwan's strategy has shifted to a predominantly defense-oriented stance that is focused on achieving the more straightforward goal of national survival. This strategy aims to maintain adequate deterrent capabilities and to exact high enough costs on the PLA to prevent China from imposing its reunification objectives on Taipei.<sup>58</sup>

Defense planners in Taiwan continue to have hopes for a symmetrical response to China's military buildup. In part, this includes developing capabilities for air-to-air, naval-to-naval, and ground-to-ground defensive interdiction, as well as acquiring counter-force and counter-value offensive weaponry.<sup>59</sup> In the dimension of air defense, the ROC Air Force is attempting to match up to China's ballistic missiles and advanced fighters by procuring from the United States the PAC-3 system and requesting F-16C/Ds. Similarly, the ROC Navy has procured P-3Cs and Kidd-class DDGs, as well as requesting from the United States the Aegis system and diesel submarines, in order to meet the PLAN's enhanced submarine and destroyer capabilities.

However, the growing recognition by Taiwanese policymakers that they simply cannot succeed in a symmetric arms competition with China has encouraged recent consideration of the need to switch to a more asymmetric defense posture.<sup>60</sup> The Ma administration has encouraged this trend,

<sup>56</sup> Shlapak, "The Red Rockets' Glare," 74–75.

<sup>57</sup> U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2010 Report to Congress*, 150–52.

<sup>58</sup> Michael D. Swaine and Roy D. Kamphausen, "Military Modernization in Taiwan," in Tellis and Wills, *Strategic Asia 2005–06*, 393; and Robert S. Ross, "Explaining Taiwan's Revisionist Diplomacy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 48 (2006): 446–47.

<sup>59</sup> Swain and Kamphausen, "Military Modernization in Taiwan," 394, 400.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander Chieh-cheng Huang, "A Midterm Assessment of Taiwan's First Quadrennial Defense Review," Brookings Institution, February 3, 2012, 4, [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/02\\_taiwan\\_huang.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/02_taiwan_huang.aspx).

apparently influenced by U.S. assessments advocating that Taiwan adopt a defense-oriented “porcupine” strategy.<sup>61</sup> Increasingly, Taiwanese defense planners are emphasizing the need for the hardening of critical infrastructure, such as airfields and ports, to survive PLA missile bombardments, as well as for investment in hardware such as mines, fast missile boats, attack helicopters, and special forces. This strategy is designed to raise the costs for China of an assault on Taiwan and to buy time for a hoped-for U.S. intervention.

The first QDR of 2009 by Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense and subsequent national defense reports (NDR) significantly rethink defense policy and attempt to meet China’s asymmetric threats with Taiwan’s own asymmetric capabilities.<sup>62</sup> These reports argue for a significant transformation of Taiwan’s defense posture by promoting an all-volunteer military; streamlined forces, with a reduction in total personnel from 275,000 to 215,000; and an increased capacity for joint operations between the three services. The QDR and NDR talk of “a rock-solid and impregnable defensive force that, by implication, could not be dislodged, shattered, or breached by a numerically superior enemy force during an attempt to attack or invade ROC territory.”<sup>63</sup>

The modernization of Taiwan’s defense policy in reaction to China’s modernization, however, is likely to be shaped and impeded by continuing domestic contentions. Taiwan’s MND is not likely to shift entirely to an asymmetric response but rather will continue to require the replacement and updating of aging equipment. For example, Taiwan continues to ask the United States for F-16C/Ds, the provision for which is seen as a key means to test the seriousness of commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act.<sup>64</sup> Even more importantly, just as in Japan and South Korea, the trajectory of military modernization will be dictated by the availability of national budgetary resources. Defense procurements have been regularly subject to budget disputes between the DPP and KMT in the Legislative Yuan. The two parties have disagreed over whether plans to procure equipment from the United States fit Taiwan’s defense profile, represent value for money, and are overly

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<sup>61</sup> Baohui Zhang, “Taiwan’s New Grand Strategy,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 69 (2011): 278–80; and William S. Murray, “Revisiting Taiwan’s Defense Strategy,” *Naval War College Review* 61, no. 3 (2008): 13–37.

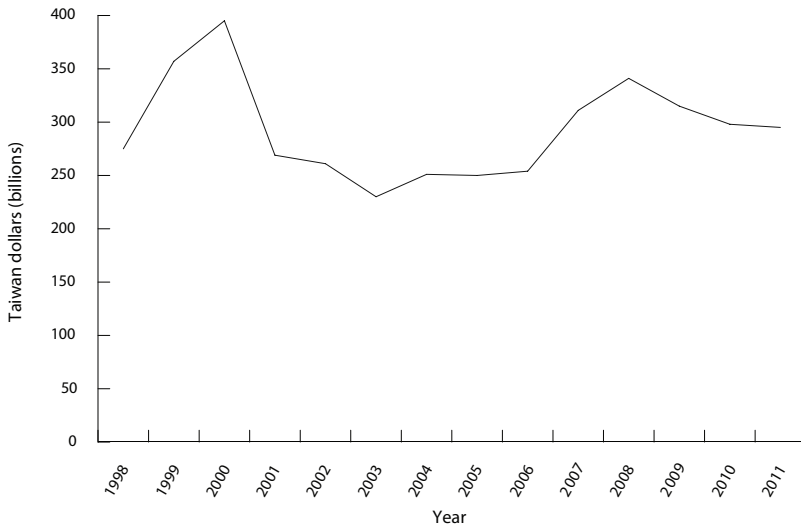
<sup>62</sup> Julia M. Famularo, *The Taiwan Quadrennial Defense Review: Implications for U.S.-Taiwan Relations*, Project 2049 Institute, June 22, 2009, 3, [http://project2049.net/documents/the\\_taiwan\\_quadrennial\\_defense\\_review\\_implications\\_for\\_US\\_taiwan\\_relations.pdf](http://project2049.net/documents/the_taiwan_quadrennial_defense_review_implications_for_US_taiwan_relations.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> Republic of China (ROC) Ministry of National Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2009*, 10; and ROC Ministry of National Defense, *National Defense Report 2011*, <http://2011mndreport.mnd.gov.tw/en/info07.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Famularo, *The Taiwan Quadrennial Defense Review*, 9; and U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2010 Report to Congress*, 151–52.

provocative toward China.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, despite the fact that Taiwan is pitted against rising Chinese military expenditure, the defense budget continues to fall with the deterioration of the national economy in the midst of the global financial crisis (see **Figure 5**). This trend suggests a lack of serious prioritization of the military.<sup>66</sup>

FIGURE 5 Taiwan defense budget, 1998–2011 (billions of Taiwan dollars)



SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, various years.

### *Taiwan's External Balancing through U.S.-Taiwan Relations*

Taiwan's internal balancing efforts vis-à-vis China are clearly highly dependent also on external balancing with the United States, either through the continued supply of advanced military weaponry or the possible eventuality of U.S. intervention in a Taiwan Strait conflict. As seen with other

<sup>65</sup> Shirley A. Kan, "Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales since 1990," Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, RL30957, September 15, 2011, 33–43; and Swain and Kamphausen, "Military Modernization in Taiwan," 398.

<sup>66</sup> Huang, "A Midterm Assessment of Taiwan's First Quadrennial Defense Review," 3.



U.S. partners in Northeast Asia, however, Taiwan's dependency on the United States raises concerns of abandonment (though not entrapment, given that Taiwanese policymakers would dearly like to be more closely integrated with U.S. security strategy). These abandonment anxieties spring partially from the fact that the United States maintains no formal alliance or security guarantee with Taiwan. Further, the U.S. approach toward Taiwan is more influenced by the condition of Sino-U.S. relations than are U.S. policies toward Japan and South Korea. Strategic accommodation between the United States and China thus always carries the risk for Taiwan of abandonment by the United States—a risk that was underscored by U.S. reluctance under the George W. Bush administration to supply Taiwan with certain types of weaponry.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, the DPP administration's inability to secure funding for arms procurement only compounded the problem of weakening ties between Taipei and Washington.

Nonetheless, the KMT administration has now, in a fashion similar to other U.S. partners, returned to the U.S. strategic fold. President Ma's re-engagement with China, emphasis on maintaining the cross-strait status quo, and follow-through on arms procurement packages reassured the Bush and now the Obama administrations that Taiwan is a reliable partner.<sup>68</sup> The Obama administration's release in 2011 of a \$6.4 billion arms package to Taiwan—including Black Hawk UH-60s, PAC-3s, Harpoon antiship cruise missiles, Osprey-class mine-hunting ships, and multifunctional information distribution systems for C4ISR—is a manifestation of the United States' renewed commitment to Taiwan's defense. The improved U.S.-Taiwan relationship should thus provide the Ma administration with more flexibility to hedge against China's rise through external balancing.

Moreover, the Ma administration appears to be reconsidering its strategic relations with Japan, after initially neglecting ties, and has called for a special partnership to recognize implicit, mutually shared security concerns. Nonetheless, security ties will continue to be constrained by both sides' concerns over Chinese reactions, Japanese anxieties over entrapment in a Taiwan Strait contingency, and an apparent lack of KMT affinity with Japan over issues of territorial sovereignty and the colonial past.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Zhang, "Taiwan's New Grand Strategy," 280–81.

<sup>68</sup> Shirley A. Kan and Wayne M. Morrison, "U.S.-Taiwan Relationship: Overview of Policy Issues," Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, R41952, August 4, 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas S. Wilkins, "Taiwan-Japan Relations in an Era of Uncertainty," *Asia Policy*, no. 13 (2012): 113–32.

## Conclusions and Implications for U.S. Policy

China's military modernization has precipitated common challenges and responses for the United States' key allies and partners in Northeast Asia. The first conclusion is that China's strategic and military rise is increasingly impinging on the security of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan in terms of their territorial integrity and access to SLOCs. This trend is especially manifested in the PLAN's recently expanded maritime activities and probing behavior toward these countries' respective national defenses. In turn, defense planners in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan maintain similar concerns over China's development of specific military capabilities. All three countries view the PLA's expansion of its air defense and maritime power-projection capabilities as posing a symmetric threat through its fourth-generation fighters, advanced destroyers, and aircraft carriers, as well as an asymmetric threat through its ballistic-missile forces and submarines that can be deployed for access-denial.

The second conclusion is that Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan seek to continue to engage China in order to minimize growing security dilemmas, but at the same time are utilizing hedging options through internal military balancing. All three countries are pursuing similar military modernization in terms of building symmetric air-defense and maritime capabilities. Japan and South Korea, in particular, are looking to procure fifth-generation fighters and continue to augment their powerful blue water navies by equipping them with air-defense destroyers, helicopter carriers, and ASW capabilities. Japan and Taiwan are seeking to counter Chinese asymmetric capabilities in areas such as Aegis and PAC-3 missile defense. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan further share an approach to military modernization characterized by an emphasis on joint operations, mobile forces, professionalization of the military, and technological advancement. Meanwhile, the current and future challenges posed by China have been sufficient to initiate a fundamental change in military doctrines. Japan has moved toward a more active response to China's probing behavior through the DDF concept, while Taiwan appears to be contemplating a radical shift toward a defense posture that counters China's asymmetric capabilities through a far deeper asymmetric posture of its own. But despite these common impulses for internal balancing and military modernization, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are also encountering common domestic impediments for their defense efforts. Domestic political divisions over the extent of the threat posed by China and competing priorities for state finances have limited the ability to fully fund modernization plans: in Japan the defense budget remains stagnant; in South Korea it continues to rise, though not fast enough to keep pace with modernization efforts; and in Taiwan military expenditure is now falling significantly.

The third conclusion is that Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan all demonstrate a marked degree of convergence in their external balancing and re-adhesion to military ties with the United States. These three allies and partners have wavered in recent times in their degree of attachment to political and security relations with the United States. They have been anxious to maintain engagement with China and also concerned about abandonment and entrapment in U.S. military strategy. Entrapment and alliance dilemmas were especially prevalent during the George H.W. Bush administration but have increasingly abated during the George W. Bush administration and the Obama administration. The United States' disengagement from its riskier military expeditions in the Middle East, the continuing rise of China, and domestic political leadership changes in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have helped reduce fears of entrapment and abandonment, with the result that these three allies and partners have swung firmly back into the U.S. security fold. The United States thus remains indispensable to their attempts to deal with China's rise.

The final set of conclusions concerns the implications of both China's military modernization and the reactions of allies and partners for the United States' strategic position in Northeast Asia and security in the wider Asia-Pacific region. China's rise presents the United States with both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, Washington must recognize the risks associated with the growing suspicions of its allies and partners toward China's rise. A quiet arms race is developing in Northeast Asia that could incite highly destabilizing interstate conflicts that jeopardize U.S. interests. In particular, the possibility exists for tensions to rapidly escalate over issues of territorial sovereignty, such as the Senkaku Islands. Although in relative terms, such issues are not very strategically important to the United States, they are politically vital to its allies and partners and could entrap the United States in regional conflicts. On the other hand, the fact that these allies and partners are increasingly aligned in emphasizing the crucial role of the United States in their external balancing against China's rise enhances Washington's strategic leverage in Northeast Asia.

The United States is thus presented with opportunities to not just maintain but also further augment its security relations with Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, while actively shaping the region's security structures in readiness for the developing challenges from China. The Obama administration's "rebalancing" of U.S. strategic priorities toward East Asia is already helping advance this security agenda. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have all proved receptive to the United States' renewed emphasis on East Asia, as seen by their return to the U.S. strategic fold, whether through demonstrating flexibility on base realignments, extended nuclear deterrence, or arms sales packages.

However, the analysis presented above indicates that the United States cannot take for granted this renewed influence over allies and partners in Northeast Asia. In the first place, these countries' economic interdependence with China—mirroring the United States' own interdependence—constrains their freedom of strategic action for open balancing and even hedging. Moreover, despite the United States' continued efforts, corralling its Northeast Asian partners into cooperating more closely with each other is proving to be slow work, given residual Japan–South Korea suspicions and apparent Japan–Taiwan disaffection. Consequently, in order to amplify its influence, the United States will need to carefully calibrate its military capabilities and management of individual alliances to allow it to maintain its indispensability for Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. At the same time, the United States must be careful to avoid exacerbating its own security tensions with China, as well as tensions between Beijing and its partners and allies. In particular, Washington needs to bolster its rebalancing strategy through demonstrating to allies and partners how the United States will maintain its role as a regional guarantor of security, given cuts to the U.S. defense budget and the quantitative drawdown of force deployments.

The first step in reassuring allies and partners about U.S. rebalancing is to maintain a robust forward-deployed military presence in Northeast Asia. The Bush administration's emphasis on strategic flexibility and realignments in the GPR was the principal driver of abandonment and entrapment dilemmas for Japan and South Korea, which damaged their alliances with the United States. Similarly, relations with Taiwan proved hard to improve given the fears of abandonment generated by Sino-U.S. strategic accommodation. The 2010 QDR's stress on forward-deployments should help reassure allies and partners about the strength of the U.S. presence in the region and reduce anxiety about abandonment and entrapment scenarios. Nevertheless, U.S. policymakers are still tasked with explaining in exact terms how rotation and dispersal to sites such as Guam will prevent a reduction in the long-term U.S. military presence.

The next crucial step in reassuring Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan will be for the United States to maintain not just a presence per se but also the actual disposition of capabilities in the region. Washington may seek to nudge its allies and partners to maintain or boost their own defense budgets. However, given the constraints on local efforts to pursue internal balancing of China, the United States will need to continue to provide supplementary and unique capabilities for the implementation of the ASB concept, for instance. The United States can reinforce symmetric air-defense and maritime responses to Chinese military modernization through the deployment of its most powerful inventory of F-22s, air-defense destroyers, and attack submarines and the continued forward-

basing of aircraft carriers. In terms of asymmetric threats and responses, U.S. ballistic-missile defenses and cybersecurity capabilities are areas for continued cooperation with Northeast Asian allies and partners. Moreover, even though the United States has removed tactical nuclear weapons from East Asia, it will also be crucial that Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan feel that the United States can provide nuclear deterrence from a distance.

The final priority for U.S. security planners is to look beyond the presence and disposition of capabilities in Northeast Asia and concentrate on the political credibility of the U.S. commitment to regional security. For example, recent Chinese probing behavior in the East China Sea, especially the 2010 Senkaku Islands incident, constitutes a test not just for Japan's material defenses but also for the political and psychological solidity of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Japan is attempting through the DDF concept to take more responsibility for defense against such provocations in order to avoid needing to test the U.S.-Japanese alliance. However, this stance is a means to stave off a still genuine fear that the United States may not come to Japan's assistance in the East China Sea. Meanwhile, confidence in the alliance was further undermined by North Korea's missile test in April 2012. The launch generated calls from Japan for stern action against the North but drew a milder response from the United States, which is still more concerned about the North's nuclear proliferation. The incident thus opened up divisions between the two allies. In these areas the United States will need to convince its allies and partners in the region that their interests coincide with U.S. interests and that the threshold for U.S. support is not so high as to leave the potential for abandonment in the face of Chinese provocations.

Concomitantly, U.S. policymakers would also do well to avoid attempting to impose U.S. interests on allies with the assumption that they are automatically shared. The Bush administration's focus on the Middle East made the United States appear as a distracted superpower to allies unconvinced of the war-on-terrorism agenda. To the extent that the Bush administration did pay attention to the Asia-Pacific, it gave the appearance of prioritizing U.S. interests over those of allies and partners, as seen with the perceived strategic accommodation of China or the lack of implacability in maintaining its own red lines for North Korea's missile and nuclear programs. Hence, if the Obama administration's strategic rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific is to succeed, the United States will need to work with allies and partners to forge joint security agendas.