

Will Japan Fight?
Assessing the Scenarios for Conflict on China's Maritime Periphery

Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission

April 13, 2017

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Introduction

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission on the hotspots along China's maritime periphery.¹ I am prepared to discuss the strategic situation along the entire First Island Chain, but the Commission has asked me to focus in my prepared remarks on how Japan might respond to crises in the East China Sea or the Taiwan Strait. I will address four key questions in this regard:

- What is the geopolitical context for any Sino-Japanese confrontation?
- How is Japan likely to respond to a crisis over the Senkaku Islands?
- How is Japan likely to respond to a crisis in the Taiwan Strait?
- What domestic, economic, political, and security factors are likely to shape behavior in both scenarios?

Geopolitics and Strategic Culture as Context

It is important to situate any scenario-based discussion of potential crises in the East China Sea in the historical context of Chinese and Japanese strategic culture and the geopolitics of East Asia. Let us begin with China. As Alistair Iain Johnston has demonstrated in *Cultural Realism*², the roots of Chinese grand strategy towards the rest of Asia can be traced back at least to the Ming Dynasty. For millennia, the major external threats to the stability and centrality of Chinese dynasties emerged from the steppes of Central Asia. That changed in 1842 when China was defeated from the sea by Britain and France in the First Opium War. Since then, (with the four-decade exception of the Sino-Soviet confrontation at the end of the Cold War) China's major external threats emanated from the maritime flank: first from the Imperial Powers, then Japan, and then the United States. It is therefore understandable, if problematic, that China would seek to establish denial and control over what Chinese strategists call the Near Sea, or the waters between the First Island Chain³ and the Chinese mainland.

¹ I wish to thank Erik Jacobs, Yuka Koshino and Lily McFeeters, CSIS Japan Chair interns, and Jingyu Gao, CSIS China Power Project intern, for their research on the data for this testimony.

² Alistair Iain Johnston, *Cultural realism: Strategic culture and grand strategy in Chinese history* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

³ The islands stretching from Japan to Taiwan and then the Philippines. The Second Island Chain stretches from Japan to Guam to the South Pacific.

A second historical pattern that resonates is the predilection for rising powers to free ride globally while seeking denial and then hegemony over their own immediate region. This is what Bismarck's Germany did in the 19th Century, reordering Central Europe while avoiding direct confrontation with Britain. It is also what the United States did in the Western Hemisphere, until Britain ceded complete leadership south of Canada to the United States at the end of the 19th Century. It is what Japan did in the first part of the 20th Century, allying with Britain to expand its influence in the region, decades before declaring hegemony of East Asia in the "Amau Doctrine" of 1934 and going to war against Britain and the United States in 1941. Beijing's current articulation of a multipolar world in which China stands for Asia—or a "New Model of Great Power Relations," under which the United States refrains from interfering in regional powers' disputes with Beijing—all flow from this same incremental revisionism in the Far East. To be clear, China's strategy like previous rising powers, is to compel, coerce and coax regional states to follow this revisionism while avoiding direct conflict with the *status quo* hegemonic power.

The third historical dimension of China's coercive approach to the maritime powers is the hierarchical structure of power and legitimacy in East Asia. For millennia China sat at the top of that hierarchy until Japan took the lead by defeating the Qing in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. Japan dominated after that. Even during the Cold War, Sino-Japanese rapprochement was based on the two nations lying in the same bed and dreaming different dreams: Japan of tutoring China from its position as leading economic power, and China using Japan's economic assistance to eventually reassert its own leadership in the region based on the full spectrum of military and economic power. In the mid-1990s both powers had a rude awakening when China's missile tests around Taiwan demonstrated that economic power gave Japan little leverage over Chinese use of military force, and China's ability to cast Japan as an illegitimate power gave Beijing little leverage over Japanese security policy. Japan-China relations have deteriorated since, despite high levels of economic interdependence. Today over 80% of Japanese consistently say in polls that they do not trust China.⁴

These geopolitical and strategic cultural explanations do as much to explain Chinese behavior today as do competing (though not incompatible) explanations based on domestic nationalism or bureaucratic politics. Though it would be difficult to prove empirically, I believe that we would see essentially the same Chinese strategy towards the East and South China Seas even if domestic nationalism or bureaucratic politics were not a major factor.

This same frame of reference applies to Japan. Japan's firm stance on the East China Sea cannot simply be explained by domestic nationalism. Japan's own strategic culture was formed by the Sino-centric world that lay beyond the Sea of Japan. While records demonstrate that as early as the Yayoi period (around the time of Christ) the Japanese accepted the cultural and technical superiority of China and the early Korean kingdoms—and later Japanese governments traded at the periphery of China's tributary state system—Japan never accepted the political dominance of China in Asia. Only one state on China's periphery has asserted since ancient times that it too has an "emperor" (as opposed to a king), and that state is Japan. American scholars who predicted Japan would eventually align or bandwagon with China after the Cold War because of growing economic interdependence never understood this enduring foundation of Japan's national identity.

⁴ Bruce Stokes, "Hostile Neighbors: China vs. Japan," *Pew Research Center*, September 13, 2016, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/09/13/hostile-neighbors-china-vs-japan/>.

For Japan, the maritime approaches have always presented the greatest source of external danger. Before the arrival of the West, the focus was on the Sea of Japan and the Korean Peninsula, from whence Mongol invaders attacked in 1274 and 1281, until being destroyed by the *kamikaze*, or divine wind. Japan was eventually forced out of its self-imposed isolation in the mid-19th Century by Commodore Perry's black ships arriving from the Pacific approaches, which prompted a new spirit of naval modernization and maritime strategy in Japan known as *Kaiboron* (maritime defense theory). Modern Japan has sought defense-in-depth by securing the Korean peninsula, first unilaterally and then through the U.S.-Korea alliance, and ensuring that the Japan Sea and the East and South China Seas remained a buffer and a secure route for maritime commerce. China's strategy of reasserting denial and control over these exact same waters therefore threatens Japan's own definition of its historic vital interests. Just as important, a successful Chinese strategy of coercion in maritime Asia would undermine the credibility of American commitments under the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and reopen politically destabilizing questions about whether Japan should take a more Gaullist approach to self-defense.

After the Second World War, Japan's strategic culture and memory of geopolitics were dulled by a new culture of pacifism and anti-militarism. Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida organized Japan's recovery after the war around a doctrine of protection from the United States, minimal rearmament or risk by Japan, and all out economic growth strategies. An important dimension of Yoshida's approach was to ensure that Japan always had better relations with China than the United States did, preserving Japan's role as the top power in Asia and a bridge between East and West. A small group of Japanese intellectuals, politicians and officials maintained a focus on geopolitics, but the public abhorred war and was generally content to restore their nation's prestige through economic performance. However, with the collapse of Japan's economic model in the 1990s and the concomitant growth in Chinese assertiveness, as well as the threat of North Korea missiles and nuclear weapons, the Japanese public was shaken out of its complacency. From 1955 to 2001 the "mainstream" factions of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) followed Yoshida's basic line. Since then "non-mainstream factions" have dominated the LDP and pushed for more assertive foreign and security policies to counter China. The public has broadly, if sometimes cautiously, supported this new trajectory.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was elected President of the LDP and Prime Minister of Japan in 2012 largely because of frustration with the Democratic Party of Japan's weak response to China (though, in fact, the DPJ made several provocative moves to assert Japan's sovereign control of the Senkaku Islands, including purchasing three of the islands from a private Japanese citizen in 2012). Speaking at CSIS in February 2013, Abe declared that "Japan is not and will never be a tier-two country" –an indirect but unmistakable reference to China.⁵ Abe's grand strategy was clearly articulated in Japan's first official National Security Strategy in 2013.⁶ He is focused first on strengthening Japan's economy, though he has had limited success because of the slow pace of restructuring and the American decision to withdraw from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). His second focus is strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance, where he has reversed decades of hedging against entrapment in American wars in the Far East and has instead revised the interpretation of Japan's Constitution to permit more joint operations with U.S. forces and potentially other allies through the exercise of Japan's right to collective self-defense. And third, Abe has focused on Japan's ties with all of

⁵ "Statesmen's Forum: HE Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, February 22, 2013, <https://www.csis.org/events/statesmen%E2%80%99s-forum-he-shinzo-abe-prime-minister-japan>.

⁶ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, "National Security Strategy," December 17, 2013 http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/___icsFiles/afiedfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf.

China's neighbors, where he has had significant success (with the exception of Korea because of historical issues and complex domestic politics in both countries). Strategically and politically, Japan is better positioned to defend its interests in the East China Sea, but over the same period China has also strengthened its military and paramilitary forces. If China used force to take the Senkaku Islands, would Japan fight? Could Japan fight?

How Would Japan Respond to a Senkaku Crisis?

Japan's response to a crisis in the East China Sea would vary depending on the nature of Chinese aggression. Accidental collisions, blockade, or deliberate amphibious seizure of the Senkaku Islands would all pose different operational and strategic challenges. Nevertheless, there are several moves one should anticipate from Japan in any crisis.

First, Japan considers the Senkaku Islands to be sovereign Japanese territory, and while the United States does not take a position with respect to sovereignty, the Clinton, Bush, Obama and Trump administrations have been clear that the islands are under Japanese administrative control and therefore an attack by China would trigger Article V of the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, which states that:

Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.⁷

However, because the Japanese government considers the Senkaku Islands as sovereign territory, primary responsibility for patrolling and safeguarding the islands falls to the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) and not the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF). In fact, short of an order to deploy the JMSDF, Japan would consider any contingency around the Senkaku Islands to be a police action not necessarily covered under Article V of the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. The JCG is an extremely capable force, but one at risk of being outgunned as China's Coast Guard converts PLA Navy frigates to coast guard cutters and prepares to deploy a new series of 10,000 ton super cutters.⁸ Accordingly, the Japanese government determined in 2014 that in the event that China's use of military force is deemed "extremely difficult or impossible for the JCG to respond" then an "order for maritime security operations would be issued promptly and the Japan Self Defense Forces would be deployed in cooperation with the Coast Guard."⁹ In April 2016 Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary further lowered the threshold for JMSDF operations in an East China Sea crisis when he announced that JMSDF assets could engage in "maritime policing operation[s]" if foreign warships enter Japanese territorial waters under a pretense other than "innocent passage."¹⁰

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan-U.S. Security Treaty," <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>.

⁸ Franz-Stefan Gady, "Beijing Builds 'Monster' Ship for Patrolling the South China Sea," *The Diplomat*, January 13, 2016 <http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/beijing-builds-monster-ship-for-patrolling-the-south-china-sea/>.

⁹ Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2014*: 225, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2014.html.

¹⁰ "East China Sea Tensions: Approaching A Slow Boil," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, April 14, 2016, <https://amti.csis.org/east-china-sea-tensions/>.

Japan has previous experience using its archipelagic geography to contain expanding continental powers. In the 1980s under the U.S.-Japan “Roles and Missions” approach and the Reagan administration’s Maritime Strategy, the government of Yasuhiro Nakasone took responsibility for building up its military capabilities to defend straits north of Hokkaido and bottle-up the Soviet Fleet in the Sea of Okhotsk so that U.S. Air and Naval forces could destroy them.¹¹ Current JMSDF force posture and capabilities reflect this experience with protecting sea lanes, closing straits and complicating enemy planning from an archipelagic position. For the past decade, Japan has been shifting its Northern-focused Cold War posture towards the South to use its archipelagic advantage to respond to China’s expansion. These deployments include:

- Permanent deployment of 500 JGSDF troops on Ishigaki;
- Construction of a radar station on Yonaguni with 150 JDSDF troops in March 2016;
- Deployment of missiles and 800 troops on Miyako and 600 troops on Amami Islands by the end of FY2018;
- 2014 establishment of a new permanent squadron of E-2C Hawkeye AEW aircraft on the Naha Base off Okinawa;
- Increases in early warning detection of foreign aircraft and vessels;
- Deployment of two amphibious regiments to Okinawa by 2018.
- An increase in the deployment of JASDF F-15s to Naha.¹²

Under Japan’s Medium Term Defense Program (2014-FY2018), the Ministry of Defense proposes further to:

- Prepare for contingencies in the East China Sea with increased capabilities for “deployment of units”; “rapid deployment” of units necessary to interdict any invasion; and “recapturing” in case any remote islands are invaded.
- Enhance the JMSDF’s four escort flotillas mainly consisting of one helicopter destroyer (DDH) and two Aegis-equipped destroyers (DDG), and five escort divisions consisting of other destroyers.
- Increase the number of attack submarines;
- Deployment of tilt-rotor aircraft (V-22 Osprey) and Amphibious Assault Vehicles (AAV7);
- Transform two GSDF divisions and two brigades into two rapid deployment divisions and two rapid deployment brigades, including an amphibious rapid deployment brigade.

As noted above, Japan’s operational response would depend on the nature of Chinese actions. In the event of Chinese attempts to change Japan’s *de facto* administrative control of the islands by swarming the area with fishing boats and Chinese coast guard vessels, Japan would likely engage in police actions with the JCG in the lead, though the JSDF supporting role could become more visible depending on PLAN/PLAAF operations. In the event of Chinese blockade of the islands, Japan would likely attempt to remain within the parameters of police actions under the JCG, but depending on the nature of the blockade and role of the PLAN/PLAAF, might move closer to a defensive order for deployment of the JSDF. In the event China attempted to seize the islands, Japan would come under great pressure to issue deployment

¹¹ Michael J. Green, *By More Than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific Since 1783*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 404.

¹² "East China Sea Tensions: Approaching A Slow Boil," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, April 14, 2016, <https://amti.csis.org/east-china-sea-tensions/>.

orders to the JSDF, but this could also depend on whether the Chinese forces were regular PLA units, paramilitary militia units, or unidentified activists. In multiple discussions and unofficial scenario games with well-informed Japanese counterparts, it has been evident that the Japanese government would go to great lengths to avoid escalation from police action to self-defense, or to official invocation of Article V of the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty.

A recent RAND commentary was probably right in suggesting that Japan would respond to Chinese escalation in the East China Sea using the three phases of operations:

1. “Phase Zero” (under peacetime tensions) would entail the deployment of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets near the Senkaku Islands, all of which are currently deployed or planned.
2. “Phase One” (as Chinese forces act) would involve the deployment of a JGSDF “rapid-deployment” regiment consisting of infantry, mortar, and mechanized companies equipped with amphibious vehicles, to buttress the existing JGSDF assets and personnel stationed there.
3. “Phase Two” would see the activation of such units in the event that the islands were seized by an enemy.¹³

For Phase One deterrence and Phase Two response, Japan could have several tactical options to deter or repel Chinese attempts to seize the Senkaku Islands. Each carries the risk of counter-escalation by China and would have to be considered within the current Japanese policy of applying “minimal force necessary.” The first option would be amphibious assault. The Ground Self Defense Force’s (GSDF) deployment of amphibious units and Osprey (with the range for vertical assault operations) to Okinawa would significantly shorten reaction time. However, amphibious assaults against defended positions would be high-risk operationally and politically. The temptation could therefore be to use JSDF amphibious operations to pre-empt escalation by China in Phase One should it appear that Chinese forces are preparing to seize the islands. The second option would be to defeat Chinese amphibious operations with submarines and tactical air. Japan has world-class diesel powered submarines, but to be effective in Phase Two, the “silent service” could not signal its presence as a deterrent in Phase One. Use of kinetic force against Chinese landing forces would also significantly increase the risk of escalation and might not be viewed as “minimal necessary force” by the government. The third option—which was recently recommended for discussion by the ruling LDP’s Security Committee in response to North Korean threats but goes back decades as a topic of debate with an implicit application to China -- would be the deployment of surface-to-surface missiles (SSM). At the tactical level, there would be merit in an SSM capability to deter PLA assault on the Senkaku Islands, particularly when compared with the complexity of amphibious operations or undersea warfare (Japan currently has anti-ship missiles, but this new capability would be somewhat longer-ranged SSMs for stationary targets). The LDP Security Committee did not specify what kind of counterstrike capabilities should be considered, but some members have called for longer-range missiles capable of striking North Korea or the Chinese mainland. They point out in discussions that this is necessary because the PLA would likely target Japanese bases and forces capable of undertaking amphibious, undersea, tactical air or missile operations to stop PLA forces operating against the Senkaku Islands.¹⁴ Counterstrike against the Chinese mainland would pose even greater risk of escalation, of course.

¹³ Lyle J. Morris, “The New 'Normal' in the East China Sea,” *RAND Corporation*, February 27, 2017, <http://www.rand.org/blog/2017/02/the-new-normal-in-the-east-china-sea.html>.

¹⁴ Toshi Yoshihara, “Chinese Missile Strategy and the U.S. Naval Presence in Japan.” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 63 (Summer 2010), No. 3: 47.

If China escalated and forced these decisions on Japan, the Japanese government would increasingly look to the United States for support. As was noted, the Japanese government would initially insist on taking the lead to demonstrate that the Senkaku Islands are unequivocally part of Japan's sovereign territory. Early invocation of Article V seems unlikely, though there would clearly be expectations of a robust U.S. military posture in the region and supporting declaratory policy from Washington. At the same time, Japanese officials would be acutely aware that unilateral escalation by Japan would put at risk American support and potentially allow China to force an unfavorable outcome through U.S. pressure on Japan. An internationalization of the dispute in which Japan were forced by its closest ally to de-escalate and relinquish *de facto* control of the Senkaku Islands would be devastating for the Japanese government and the longer-term credibility of the U.S.-Japan alliance –not to mention other U.S. security commitments in the region. The JSDF would also be well-aware that escalation beyond the tactical level around the Senkaku Islands would require capabilities only the U.S. military has.

The U.S.-Japan alliance enjoys strong support among the Japanese public, and Prime Minister Abe has made strengthening the alliance a hallmark of his administration (demonstrated most recently in his summit with President Trump at Mar-a-Lago). The Abe cabinet's July 2015 reassertion of Japan's right of collective self-defense pertains largely to Article VI of the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, namely the right of Japan's forces to operate with U.S. forces (or Australian forces possibly) in cases where Japan itself is not directly under attack. Since the Senkaku Islands are covered under Article V (defense of Japan), this right of collective self-defense would not necessarily directly apply. However, Abe's commitment to help defend U.S. forces under the collective self-defense right, might be considered the *quid* offered in exchange for the *quo* of a stronger U.S. commitment to defend Japan against an expanding China and more dangerous North Korea. In addition, the new U.S.-Japan bilateral Defense Guidelines that were completed April 2015 in anticipation of the Japanese Cabinet decision on collective self-defense would be highly relevant. Specifically, the new Guidelines establish an "Alliance Coordination Mechanism" (ACM) to coordinate policy and operational responses in case of "an armed attack against Japan and in situations in areas surrounding Japan" (i.e. covering both Article V and Article VI scenarios).¹⁵

Amazingly, no such bilateral coordination mechanism existed prior to 2015, in large part because of Japanese political resistance to being entrapped in Article VI contingencies elsewhere in Asia. In Phase Zero situations, the ACM appears to be functioning well. Since its establishment, the new ACM has been used effectively to share information and coordinate responses in three situations (North Korea's missile tests; the Kumamoto earthquake; and the August 2016 swarming of Chinese vessels around Senkaku Islands).

Whether the mechanism is adequate for a full-blown military crisis is another question. The United States and Japan do not currently have a joint and combined command structure like NATO or the Combined Forces Command (CFC) in Korea. At various points the U.S. side considered relying on Task Force 519, which responded to the March 2011 tsunami disaster in Japan under the Commander of the Pacific Fleet. However, that Task Force has since been disbanded. In an extensive review of the Department of Defense Rebalance Strategy to the Asia Pacific released in January 2016, CSIS warned that the United States and Japan would not be fully prepared to respond to a military crisis in the Western Pacific without some form of well-established bilateral command and control relationships. In any joint or virtually joint

¹⁵ Ministry of Defense, "A Stronger Alliance for a Dynamic Security Environment: The New Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation," April 27, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/js20150427e.html.

set-up, the U.S. Command would have to be designated as “joint task force capable” –which limits options to the III Marine Expeditionary Force in Okinawa, the Pacific Fleet in Hawaii, the Seventh Fleet in Yokosuka or the Pacific Command itself. U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) are not currently joint task force capable. The Japanese government has also begun considering whether the JSDF needs a Joint Operational Command (JOC) for crisis operations comparable to the command set up by Australia. Currently, the Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff Office would be the senior military commander in Japan in a crisis, but the Australians and others have found that the chief-of-defense is rarely able to manage the policy/political requirements of the job and simultaneously lead complex military operations in a crisis.

Visible and robust *joint* U.S.-Japan military operations could also be a key part of Japan’s response to a crisis, though not necessarily in the immediate area of the Senkaku islands during lower levels of confrontatin. In March 2017, the USS Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group and the JMSDF conducted their largest combined exercise in the East China Sea ever.¹⁶ Coordinated air operations would also be critical. By March 2017, for example, Japan’s response to PLA Air Force incursions in the East China Sea had already surpassed the total for the previous year.¹⁷

Whether or how the United States would become *directly* involved in a Senkaku crisis would be difficult to predict, beyond demonstrations of presence, resolve and flexible deterrence options (FDOs) such as deployments of strategic assets to Guam. The United States would have an enormous strategic stake in avoiding either a *de facto* Chinese victory or escalation. The best outcome would be de-escalation under Japanese leadership in responding to the crisis with Japan’s national objectives fulfilled. At the same time, China now has the capacity to escalate across the entire First Island Chain, and the United States could find itself tied down in Phase One of an East China Sea crisis from the South China Sea to Taiwan and even the Pacific. Perhaps Beijing would avoid this approach in order to isolate and pressure Japan, but that might not continue into Phases One and Two of a crisis. Because Chinese escalation could be both horizontal (to other parts of the First Island Chain) or vertical (to domains such as cyber, space or even nuclear), the United States would have every interest in ensuring tight coordination with Japan at every stage. So too would Japan. Significant strides have been made with the Defense Guidelines and the Alliance Coordination Mechanism. However, given the ambiguity of when a Japanese “police action” becomes an Article V contingency, as well as the residual mismatches in command relationships, both sides have more work to do.

How Would Japan Respond to a Taiwan Contingency?

Japanese political and military leaders have had much longer to think about the possibility of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. Though Taiwan was a Japanese colony from 1895 to 1945, post-war Japanese leaders usually tried to distance themselves from any responsibility for the security of Taiwan. Conservative non-mainstream politicians like Abe’s grandfather Nobusuke Kishi, maintained strong ties to the Kuomintang (KMT) on Taiwan and shared a common anti-communist ideology with leaders in Taipei, but the dominant mainstream factions of the LDP saw their long-term future with the mainland. Meanwhile, Japanese defense

¹⁶ “Carrier Strike Group 1, JMSDF Conduct Bilateral Operations,” *SeaWaves Magazine*, March 29, 2017, <http://seawaves.com/2017/03/29/carrier-strike-group-1-jmsdf-conduct-bilateral-operations/>.

¹⁷ Jesse Johnson, “Chinese Defense Spending Stokes Concern, Debate As Military Ramps Up Operations in Air and Sea Near Japan,” *The Japan Times*, March 13, 2017, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/03/13/asia-pacific/chinese-defense-spending-stokes-concern-debate-military-ramps-operations-air-sea-near-japan/#.WOJ--WkrLcs>.

officials and diplomats understood that the United States would have to rely on bases in Japan to defend Taiwan under the 1954 U.S.-Republic of China Security Treaty, but avoided any explicit commitment to make those bases available in a crisis. In 1969 President Richard Nixon coaxed a reluctant Prime Minister Eisaku Sato to agree publicly that the security of Taiwan was “important” to Japan—in exchange for the return of occupied Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty. Sato subsequently pocketed Okinawa and ensured that no Japanese commitment was made to help the United States defend Taiwan. In the 1997 version of the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines, which were promulgated in part because of China’s sabre rattling against Taiwan, Japan agreed for the first time to plan for cooperation with U.S. forces in “situations in the area surrounding Japan that have a direct impact on Japan’s security.” Though not explicitly named, it was expected that a Taiwan Strait crisis could be one such scenario. However, planners quickly hit the wall posed by Japan’s ban on collective self-defense.

In this area, Abe’s reassertion of the July 2015 cabinet decree has represented a critical turning point. The new interpretation of what is allowed under collective self-defense opens the first real possibility of joint planning and exercises related to contingencies in the Taiwan area, at least in theory. To be clear, Japan has no treaty or political obligation to assist with the defense of Taiwan. Even the United States policy is now guided not by formal treaty with Taipei, but instead by the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, which states that: “It is the policy of the United States—to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan.” Moreover, longstanding U.S. declaratory policy regarding contingencies in the Taiwan Strait has been to assert tactical clarity regarding the U.S. ability to defend Taiwan and our interests in the Western Pacific, but strategic ambiguity regarding the exact circumstances under which the United States would use military force to come to Taiwan’s aid (Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush both leaned further forward towards strategic clarity at the beginning of their terms).

Nevertheless, Japan has now become a more reliable element in the United States’ “tactical clarity” with respect to our ability to come to Taiwan’s defense. While Beijing might once have calculated that Japan could be neutralized in any assault on Taiwan, PLA planners are now likely being forced to assume that Japan **will** be in with the United States in any scenario involving Taiwan. This significantly complicates Chinese planning for any attack on Taiwan, and makes seamless U.S.-Japan interoperability and coordination indispensable.

What specifically Japan—or the United States—would do depends very much on the scenario. Chinese blockade, missile attacks or amphibious assaults all present different challenges and requirements. The *casus belli* also matters to some extent (the degree to which Taipei provoked an assault by declaring independence, for example). Broadly speaking, however, Japan would have three major requirements in a Taiwan Strait scenario should Tokyo choose to support U.S. defensive operations for Taiwan. The first would be rear area logistical support. The second would be defense of U.S. bases and Japan itself from Chinese ballistic missile attack. The third would likely be securing sea lanes and perhaps airspace as far as the Senkaku Islands to ensure that the U.S. Navy and Air Force could operate effectively from Japan without having to divert U.S. assets for those missions. These operations would likely involve anti-submarine warfare, missile defense and tactical air warfare. The JSDF has considerable capabilities in all these areas, and has had high degrees of interoperability with the U.S. Navy in ASW since the Cold War (despite some atrophy of competencies after the collapse of the Soviet Union). There is no publicly available evidence of joint planning or exercises for a Taiwan scenario *per se* but the growing interoperability of U.S. and Japanese forces reinforces the potential for unity of action, and that in turn enhances deterrence and stability.

The thing that stands out when one considers scenarios for Taiwan and Senkaku crises side-by-side is how much overlap there is in terms of requirements. This is a critical transition in U.S., Japanese and Chinese strategic calculations. A joint U.S.-Japan ability to operate in defense of the Senkaku Islands under Article V of the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is now very close to what would be required under Article VI of the Treaty to respond to a Taiwan Strait crisis. China is largely responsible for this convergence as the PLA expansion and coercion up and down the First Island Chain has created one continuous front line for the maritime states in the Western Pacific. Japan is in the frontline for the first time since the Soviet expansion in the Northern Pacific in the late 1970s, and in the consciousness of the Japanese public, for the first time since the Second World War. For U.S. policymakers, the path forward is therefore clear. In order to dissuade and deter China in either a Senkaku or Taiwan scenario, the United States should seek greater jointness and interoperability with Japan. In order to avoid unilateral escalation by Japan, the United States should also seek greater jointness and interoperability. The changes in Japanese security policy under Abe, have opened the way.

But Will Japan Fight?

This is the great unknown. The undertow of postwar pacifism in Japan remains strong, to be sure. A 2015 WIN Gallup poll showed that only 11% of Japanese said they would be personally willing to fight for their country.¹⁸ But then, these hypothetical polls are historically weak in the face of actual conflict. In 1940, for example, a large majority of Americans said the United States should never become involved in the conflict in Europe. By 1942 the United States was assembling the largest army in its history to defeat Nazi Germany.¹⁹ Moreover, the broader support for defending Japan in the poll is noteworthy:

If a foreign country invades Japan, what would you do?

6.8% - join the SDF to fight.

56.8% - support the SDF, but not as a member of SDF troops.

19.5% - protest [against the foreign country] without using military means.

5.1% - won't protest

Do you think Japan should educate their own people about the importance of defending their own country?

72.3% - Yes.

21.6% - No

6.1% - I don't know.

Nevertheless, Japanese pacifism is still resilient, as Abe found when he was forced to narrow the scope of his security policy reforms in 2015 because of unexpected public resistance to tinkering too much with

¹⁸ "WIN/Gallup's global survey shows three in five willing to fight for their country," *WIN Gallup International Poll*, 2015, <http://gallup-international.bg/en/Publications/2015/220-WIN-Gallup-International%E2%80%99s-global-survey-shows-three-in-five-willing-to-fight-for-their-country>.

¹⁹ Michael J. Green, *By More Than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific Since 1783*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 178.

Article Nine (the “peace clause”) of Japan’s constitution.

The Japanese public also remains somewhat hopeful about the Senkaku situation, despite growing unease about China overall. When Genron NPO asked Japanese citizens in September 2016 about the Senkaku problem, only 28.4% of respondents said they thought a military dispute was possible and 46.5% said that Japan should negotiate and find a peaceful way to resolve the standoff with China. Problematically, 58.2 % of Chinese respondents to the same poll said that China should continue strengthening its control over the islands to protect its territory.²⁰ The contrast suggests that the Japanese public’s relative hopefulness might be misplaced.

Economic considerations would also affect Japan’s calculations in a crisis to some extent. According to estimates by the Daiwa Research Institute, if Japanese exports to China stopped for one month because of a confrontation over the Senkaku Islands, Japanese manufacturers would see a decrease by 2.2 trillion yen and Japanese automobile makers would suffer a loss of 1.445 billion yen. On the other hand, Japan is China’s third largest trading partner after the EU and the United States, and the nature of modern production networks and capital flows means that the economic pain of any conflict would be felt as much in Beijing as Tokyo –not to mention the rest of the global economy. In some respect, Japanese executives may be more patriotic (or one might argue nationalistic) than their American counterparts -- at least judging from the stoic stance Japanese CEOs have taken when hit with Chinese mercantile countermeasures during past crises. In short, economic interests would be a strong deterrent against escalation by either Japan or China, but not determinative.

The character of Prime Minister Abe and the effectiveness of his new National Security Council would also be key factors. It has been many decades since Japan has had such a clear-eyed national security strategy or well-functioning interagency process with respect to security policy. This might true even in comparison to the pre-war years, when bureaucratic infighting between the Imperial Army and Navy and timidity among leading Prime Ministers propelled Japan into a self-immolating war with the United States and Britain. Whether Abe’s successor –not likely to emerge for several years – has the same expertise and clarity on national security remains to be seen. Many of the security reform policies initiated by Abe preceded him and would likely continue after he is no longer prime minister. But a weak and indecisive leader can undermine the effectiveness of the entire state apparatus and the resolve of the public.

The professionalism of the JSDF, and particularly the maritime services (JMSDF and Coast Guard), is also an important factor. Anyone who has worked intimately with these officers and enlisted personnel would likely answer “yes” if asked whether they would put their lives at risk to defend Japan’s territory and people. This is a landmark change compared with the past. Even during the close U.S.-Japan cooperation to contain Soviet expansion in the 1980s, American officers were not certain if the JSDF was truly ready to fight. Today the JSDF are the most respected institution in Japan according to polls. While some of that is because of the JSDF role in responding to natural disasters, the respect also stems from pride in the forces as a national institution. When I was a student in Tokyo University in the late 1980s, JSDF officers only put their uniforms on when they entered their bases or the Defense Agency. Uniformed officers never entered the Prime Minister’s Office. Today the JSDF officers wear their uniforms with pride and are regular participants in the new NSC meetings.

²⁰ “The 12th daytime joint public opinion poll: results [*Dai 12 kai nicchuu kyoudou seron chousa: kekka*],” *Genron NPO*, September 23, 2016, <http://www.genron-npo.net/world/archives/6365.html>.

Of course, readiness is about more than morale. Japan still spends less than 1% of GDP on defense and faces significant shortcomings in readiness (ammunition reserves, for example) and command and control relationships among the three services and with the United States, as was noted.

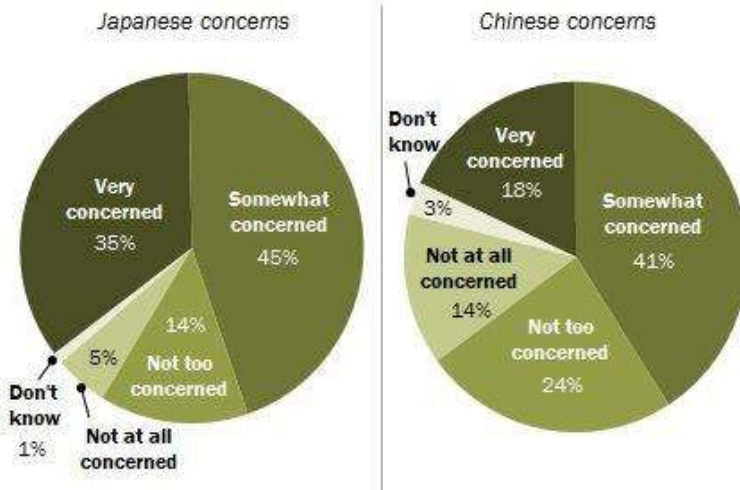
Ultimately, the point for U.S. and Japanese policy is to ensure that *nobody* has to fight to defend the open and secure order that our alliance has underpinned for the past six decades in the Pacific. Military preparedness is essential to deterrence, but the goal of our strategy is to win the peace and not be forced to win the war. An active and confident Japan working to strengthen rules and norms in Asia and to strengthen ties among the states on China’s periphery is no less important than military preparedness. Indeed, a Japan that can confidently seek reassurance and stability in bilateral relations with China is also indispensable. And in all of this, Japan’s confidence and activism will depend on American leadership as well.

APPENDIX

I. “Majorities in Japan and China concerned about territorial disputes,” Retrieved from: Bruce Stokes, “Hostile Neighbors: China vs. Japan,” *Pew Research Center*, September 13, 2016, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/09/13/hostile-neighbors-china-vs-japan/>.

Majorities in Japan and China concerned about territorial disputes

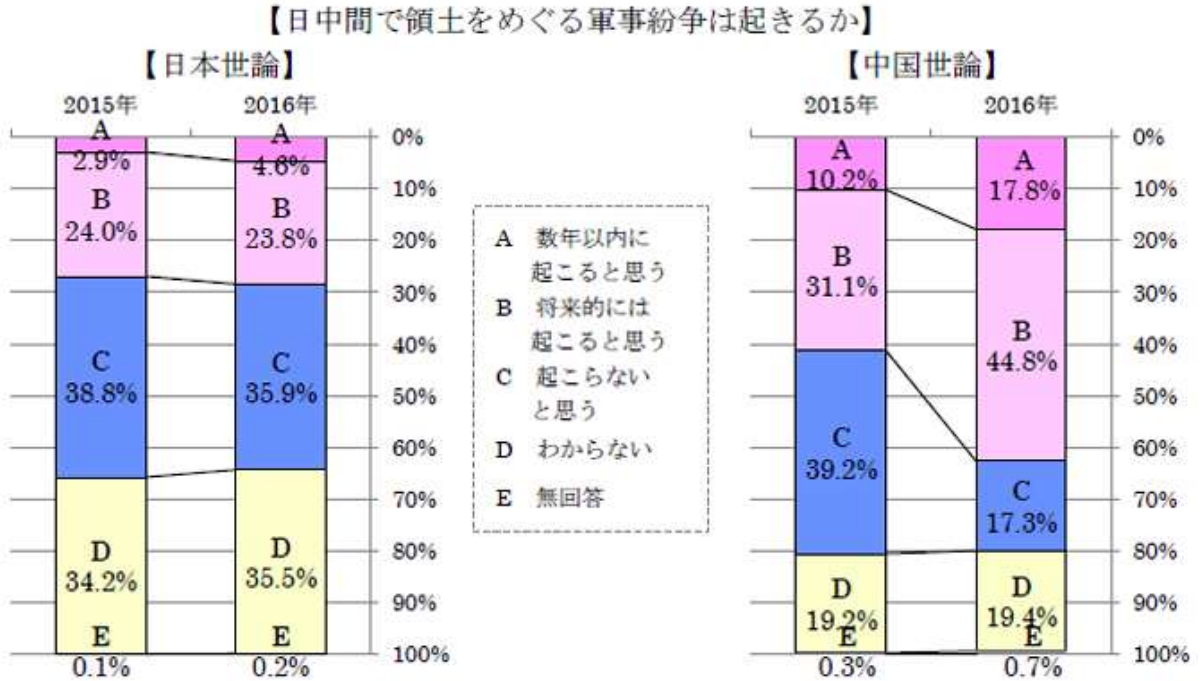
How concerned are you, if at all, that territorial disputes between China and neighboring countries could lead to a military conflict?



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey, Q100.

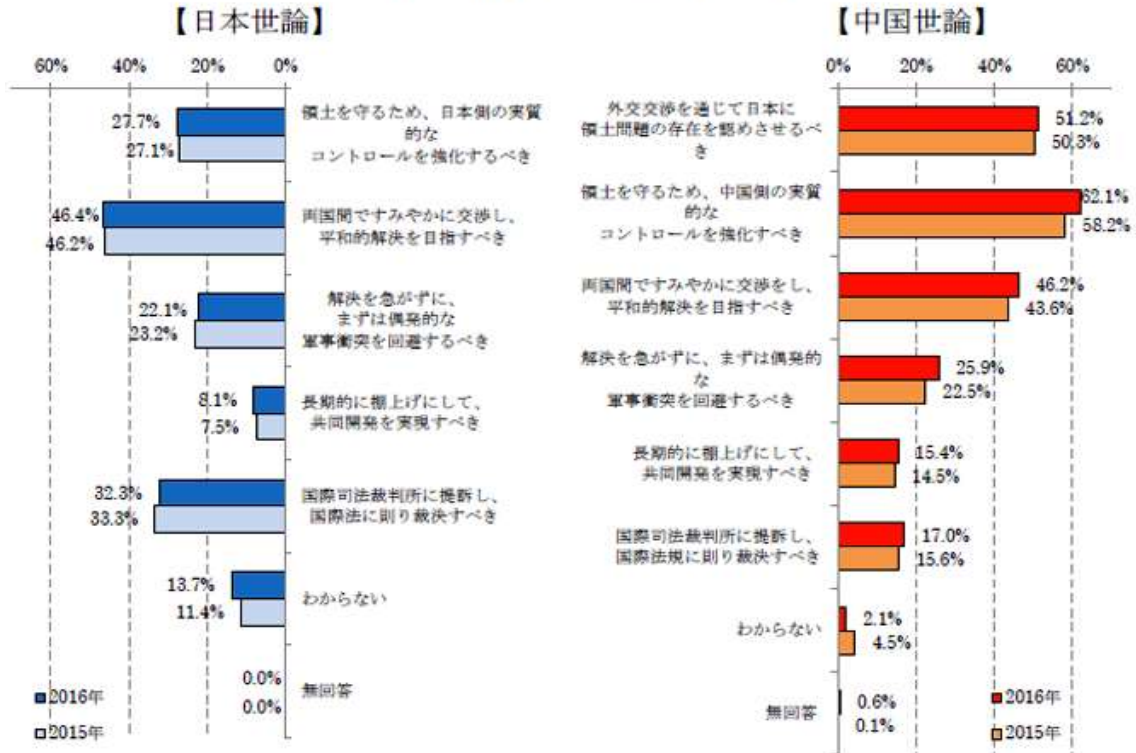
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III. “How will territorial disputes be settled? [Ryoudo mondai wo dou kaiketsu suru ka].” Retrieved from “The 12th daytime joint public opinion poll: results [Dai 12 kai nicchuu kyoudou seron chousa: kekka],” Genron NPO, September 23, 2016 <http://www.genron-npo.net/world/archives/6365.html>

【領土問題をどう解決するか】



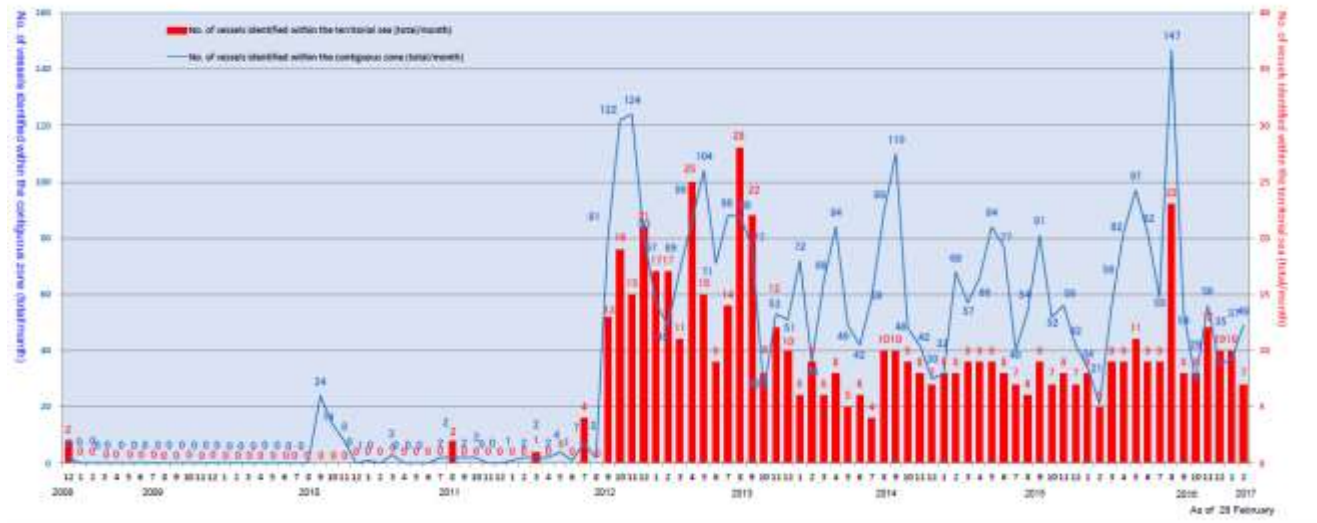
IV. "Comparison of Coast Guard Assets." Retrieved from: "East China Sea Tensions: Approaching a Slow Boil," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, April 14, 2016, <https://amti.csis.org/east-china-sea-tensions/>.



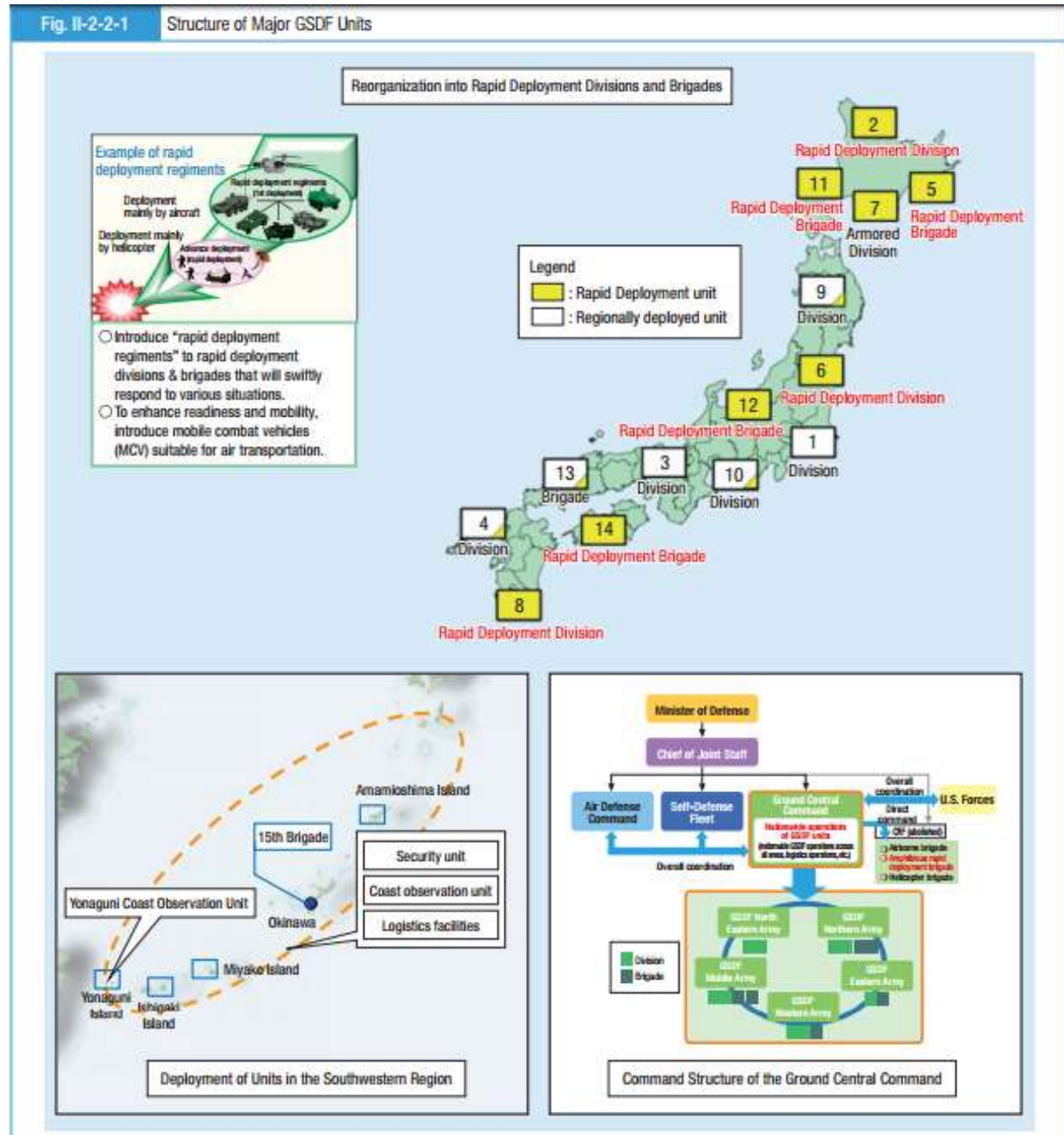
V. "Response to attacks on remote islands." Retrieved from: Japan Ministry of Defense, "Outline of the Medium Term Defense Program," http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2016/DOJ2016_2-2-2_web.pdf.

Response to attacks on remote islands	Development of a persistent ISR structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deploy a coast observation unit to Yonaguni Island; introduce new airborne early warning aircraft; establish one squadron in the air warning unit and its deployment at Naha Air Base. ○ Prepare a deployment structure for mobile air defense radar on remote islands in the southwestern region.
	Obtaining and securing air superiority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase the number of fighter aircraft units at Naha Air Base from one squadron to two; steadily procure fighter aircraft (F-35A); modernize fighter aircraft (F-15). ○ Procure new aerial refueling/transport aircraft (*3); equip transport aircraft (C-130H) with aerial refueling capabilities, and procure rescue helicopters (UH-60J).
	Obtaining and securing maritime supremacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase the number of Aegis-equipped destroyers. ○ Steadily procure patrol helicopters (SH-60K) and surface-to-ship guided missiles. ○ Introduce ship-based multipurpose helicopters.
	Improvement of capabilities for rapid deployment and response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce tilt-rotor aircraft (*1); steadily procure transport aircraft (C-2). ○ Acquire amphibious vehicles; refit Tank Landing Ships (LST). ○ Consider active utilization of civilian transport capabilities, and implement necessary measures. ○ Newly establish rapid deployment regiments with a focus on improvement of mobility; newly establish area security units in charge of initial responses on remote islands in the southwestern region; newly establish an amphibious rapid deployment brigade. ○ Improve guidance capability of precision-guided bombs; increase firing range of ship-to-ship guided missiles.
	Development of C3I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Station GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF personnel in the main headquarters of each of the other services. ○ Extend the secured exclusive communication link for the SDF to Yonaguni Island; deploy mobile multiplex communication equipment at Naha Air Base.

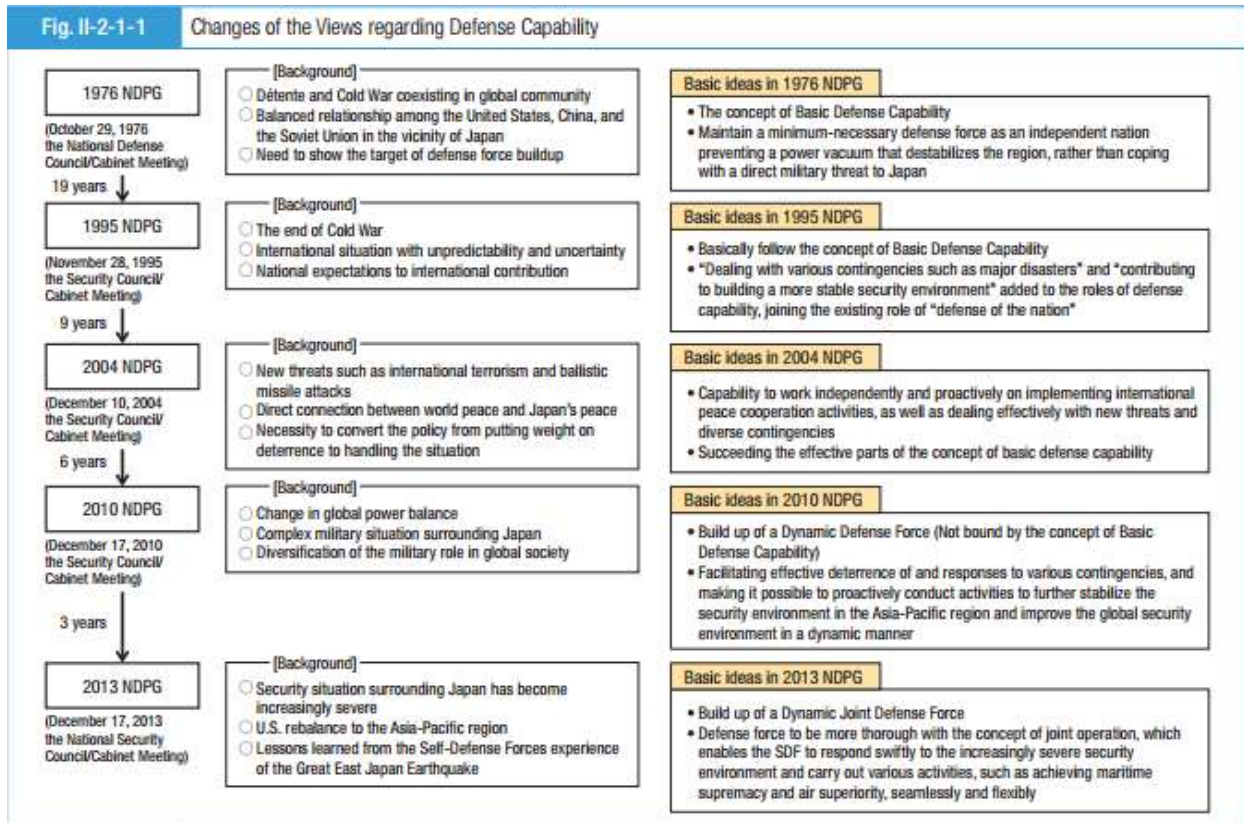
VI. Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Trends in Chinese Government and Other Vessels in the Waters Surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and Japan's Response," March 6, 2017, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page23e_000021.html.



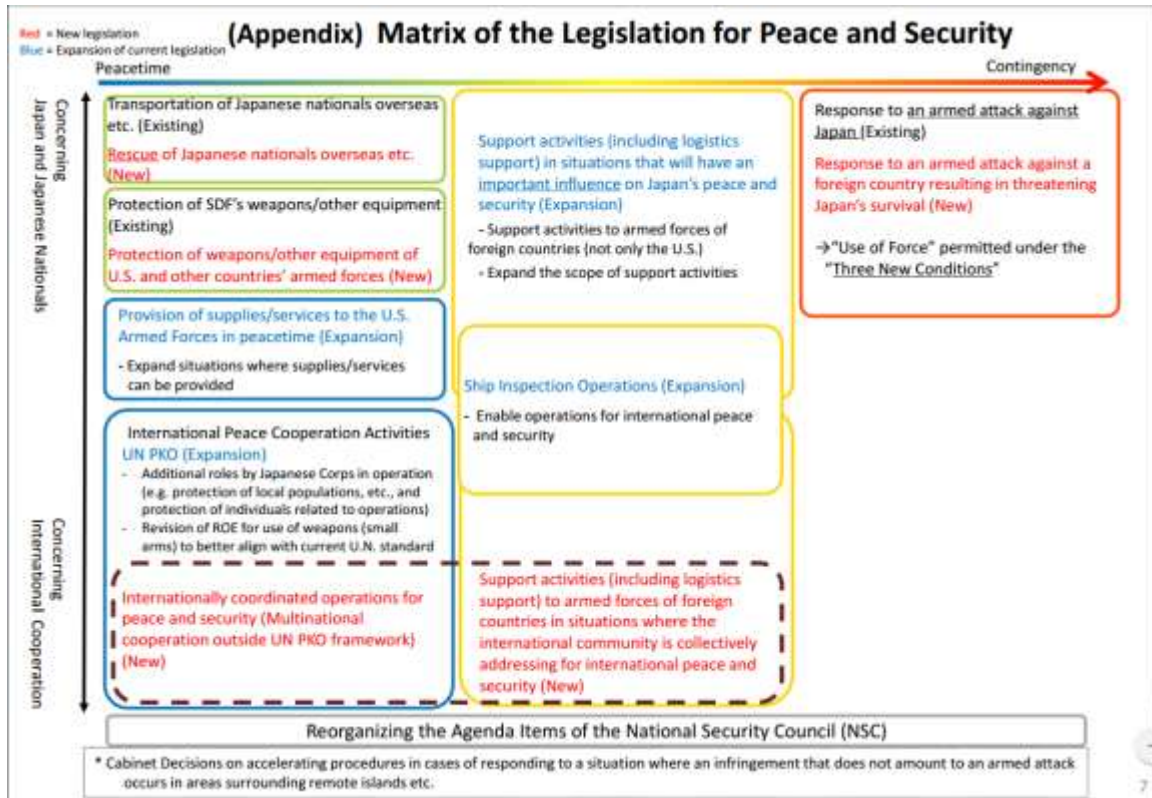
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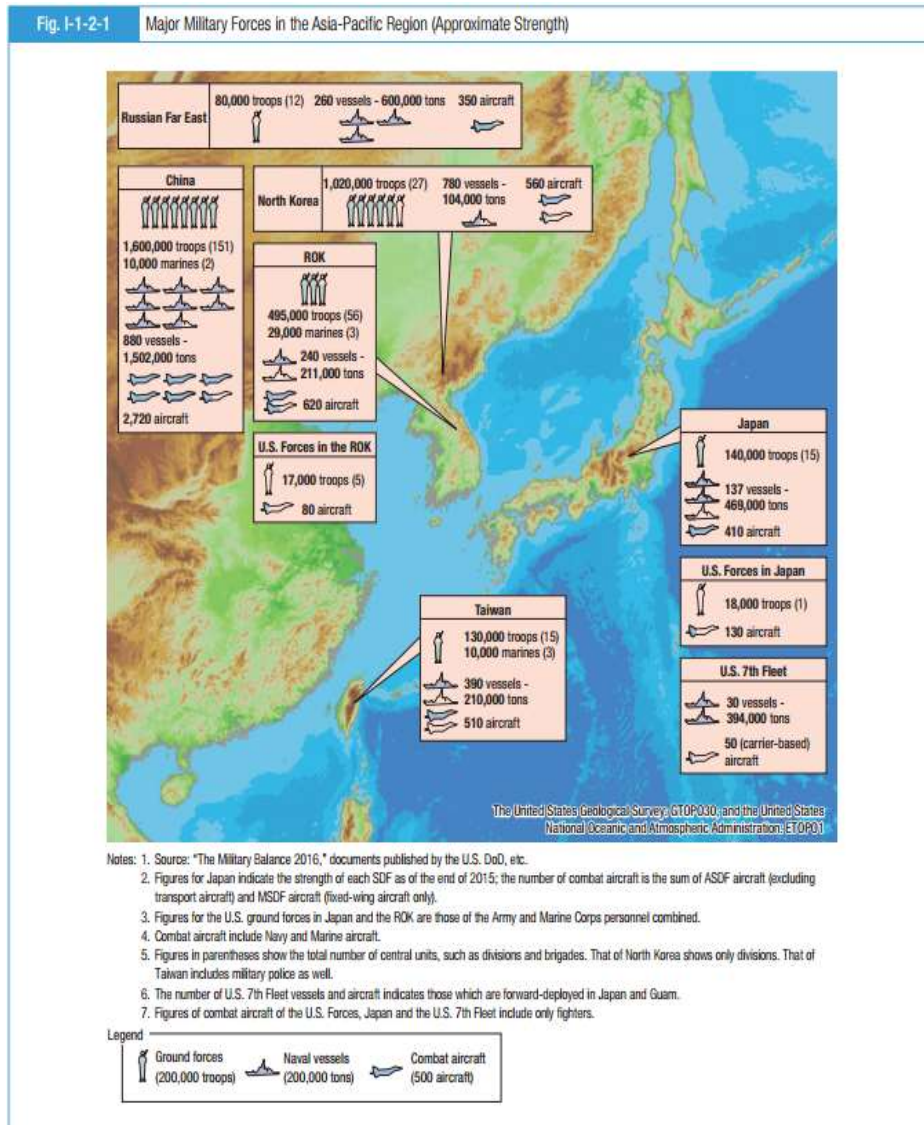
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Figure 3

Year 2016											
	PLAN	SSN in Asia-Pacific	JM SDF	Brunei	Indonesia	Malaysia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam	Taiwan	
CV	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
SSBN	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
SSN/SSK/SSA	59	8	18	0	2	2	0	0	6	4	
Destroyers	21	22	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	
Frigates	51	2	6	0	9	2	3	9	4	22	
Corvetts	18	0	0	4	22	12	12	10	9	0	
Year 2030											
CV	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
SSBN	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
SSN/SSK/SSA	87	15	22	0	15	5	0	5	6	10	
Destroyers	34	55	48	0	0	0	0	0	5	10	
Frigates	68	15	6	0	0	6	3	13	15	35	
Corvetts	26	0	0	4	30	20	12	13	20	0	

Source:

HS Jane's Fighting Ships 2015–2016

Andrew S. Erickson, *Chinese Navy Shipbuilding* (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 2016)

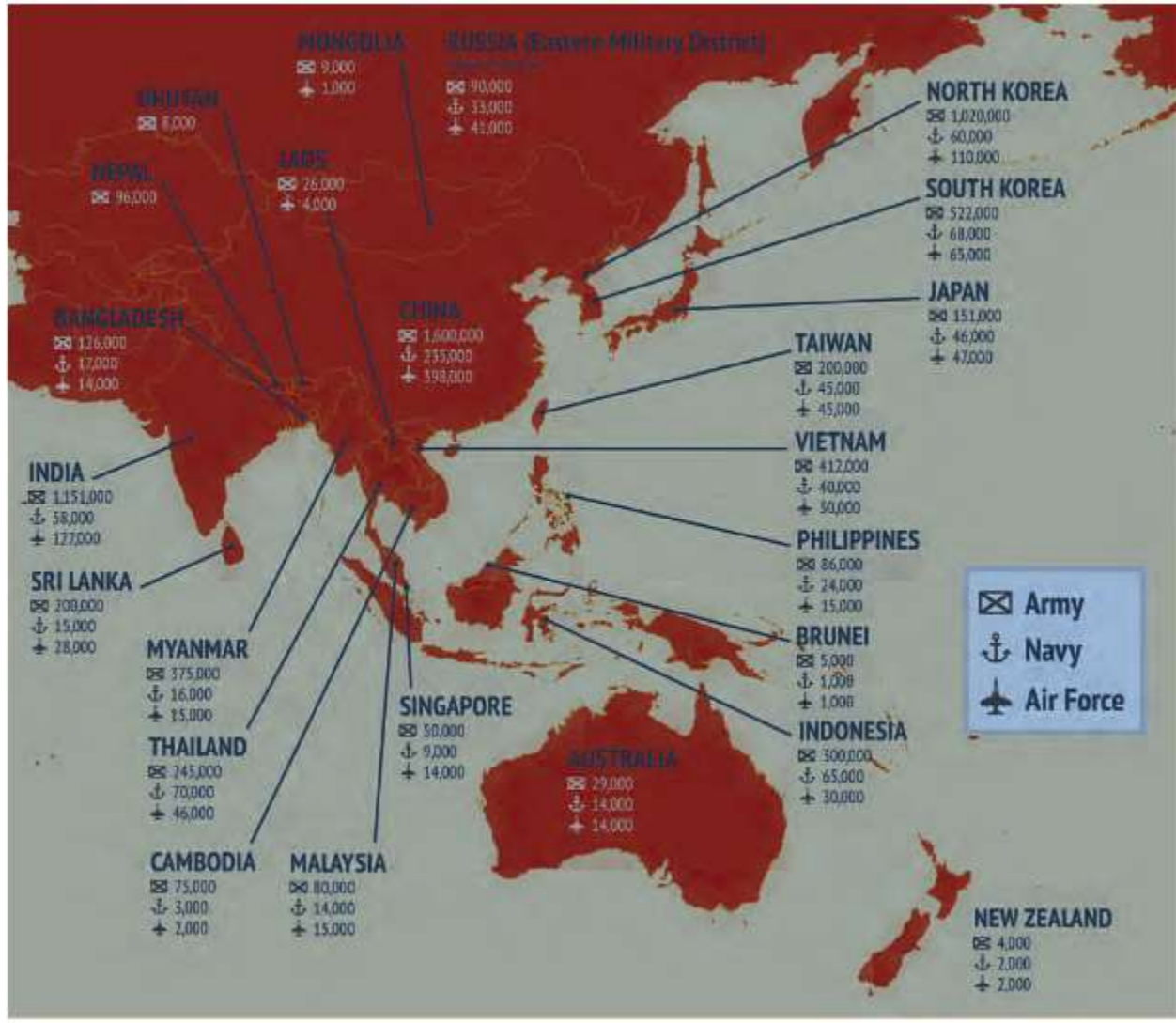
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