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Japan's security policy: A shift in direction under Abe?

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Japan's Security Policy: A Shift in Direction under Abe?

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**Japan's Security Policy:
A Shift in Direction under Abe?**

Change is in the air in Japan under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. "Japan is back," proclaimed the newly elected head of government in February 2013 during a visit to Washington. Two months earlier he had led the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP) back to power after three years in opposition, winning a landslide victory in the Lower House election. For Abe it was a return to the highest office, which he had already occupied for one year in 2006/2007. In his second term, the Prime Minister not only wants to halt Japan's economic decline; he also intends to forestall any further deterioration in the country's geopolitical significance and return Japan to its former strength. Abe secured another four-year term to pursue his proposals in the Lower House snap election on 14 December 2014.

While Abe's economic policy, known as "Abenomics", has garnered mixed reviews in the international press, his security policy has met with overwhelming disapproval. The right-wing nationalist Prime Minister has been reproached for departing from the traditional tenets of Japanese security policy. His detractors point to his intention to reform the country's pacifist post-war constitution. Specifically, several reforms introduced by Abe have given rise to concern, above all in China and South Korea: the first increase in the defense budget in years (in fiscal year 2013); the introduction of a National Security Council and a Security Strategy (December 2013); the relaxation of arms export restrictions (April 2014); and the reinterpretation of the "peace clause" of the Constitution (July 2014). To many observers, these developments constitute a radical change in Japan's security policy.

The mistrust shown towards Abe is not surprising. He is a revisionist politician who downplays Japan's responsibility for war and atrocities in the first half of the 20th century. In neighboring China and South Korea, which were hit particularly hard by Japanese aggression, suspicion over Abe's security agenda runs deep. People sense danger when Tokyo lifts military restrictions in order to gain greater regional influence while at the same time glossing over its military history. Tokyo rejects such fears as unfounded and emphasizes its desire to actively contribute to international peace.

The changes in Abe's security policy must be seen within the context of the constantly shifting regional environment. Japan feels threatened above all by China, which is modernizing its military and assertively pursuing its foreign policy, as well as by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. Japan's perception of Russia, by contrast, is ambivalent. Nearly seventy years after the end of the Second World War, Tokyo has yet to conclude a peace treaty with Moscow.

With the introduction of the National Security Council, Tokyo has found an institutional response to the security changes in its neighborhood. In terms of developing foreign policy strategy, the Security Council is unlikely to wield anywhere near as much influence as its American role model. Nevertheless, the NSC enables Tokyo to intensify its security cooperation with the US and other countries.

In strategy documents published under Abe, Japan's security policy is for the first time ever subsumed under a leitmotif – "proactive pacifism". The Prime Minister makes use of this concept to explicitly contradict the idealistic pacifist notions of the post-war era and thus justify the easing of military constraints. The aim is to facilitate international cooperation in the fields of arms policy and military affairs.

As in past publications, the new strategy documents define three central pillars of Japanese security policy: (1) Japan's capacity to engage in peacekeeping, (2) its alliance with the US, and (3) cooperation with other countries. In all three areas Abe's goals are wholly in line with those of former administrations, but he pursues them more vigorously. Particularly striking is the upgrading of the third pillar, international cooperation – a trend which had already become apparent in recent years. In general the following observations can be made:

- ▶ A detailed analysis shows that international observers attach too much importance to the changes ushered in by Abe. Those who claim to discern seminal changes or even a shift in direction fail to take into account the process of transformation and adjustment that Tokyo has been undergoing since as early as the end of the Cold War. Abe's reforms are the logical consequence and result of Japan's gradual realignment of its security policy, a process long underway. Even the controversial reinterpretation of the "peace clause" (Article 9) of the Constitution merely formalizes what is in fact already practiced.
- ▶ Even though the Abe administration has relaxed military constraints, it would be a mistake to construe this as the start of a new militarism. Japan's

population is extremely skeptical about the use of military power. It is to this public that Abe must answer and justify his actions.

- ▶ The alliance with the US continues to receive top priority, but at the same time Tokyo has intensified its cooperation with partners like Australia, India and some Southeast Asian countries. By ceasing to align its security policy exclusively with the US, Japan has created new room for maneuver, even if scarce financial resources limit Tokyo's ability to play a stronger security role in East Asia. The direction Japan's security policy will take in the future also depends on whether it can manage to revive its stagnating economy.
- ▶ Among Japan's decision-makers there is a consensus that China and North Korea pose the greatest security risk. Abe's policy of ostracizing China, which distinguishes him from his predecessors, serves to aggravate rather than ease tensions. His emphasis in foreign policy statements on values such as democracy, rule of law and human rights has aroused suspicion in Beijing that Japan is pursuing a containment strategy. Absent a trusting, constructive relationship with China, Japan will not be able to sustainably improve the security situation in East Asia.
- ▶ The current security debates in Japan and Germany reveal a series of parallels. Political decision-makers in both countries have called for more willingness to assume responsibility for international security, if necessary using military force. In doing so, they are responding to changes in the security environment and to growing expectations from the US and other partners. Despite the economic crisis, Japan is certain to remain one of the most important players in global politics. Germany and Europe should foster relations with this reliable, democratic partner.

The Security Environment

Over the past decade Japan has felt increasingly threatened in its regional environment. For Japanese security experts, the greatest threat emanates from two countries – China, which is becoming increasingly assertive in its foreign policy and whose defense budget continues to grow steadily, and North Korea with its nuclear and missile program. This perception is shared by the population. In a survey conducted in June/July 2014, the majority of Japanese saw both North Korea and China as military threats (69 percent and 64 percent, respectively) – far ahead of Russia, which was mentioned by only 25 percent of respondents.¹

Indeed, tensions flare regularly in East Asia. The causes include China's rise, territorial conflicts such as those in the East and South China Seas, the fragile situation on the Korean Peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait, and historical animosities. In addition, in the past few years defense spending has risen considerably in the region.² Japan is disillusioned by the ineffectuality of multilateral and security fora, which have thus far achieved little more than confidence-building and have done little to resolve or ease interstate conflicts.³ On the whole, Japanese take a pessimistic view of their country's security situation. According to a survey conducted by the Cabinet Office in January 2012, 72 percent of citizens at the time feared that Japan could be involved in a war, while 22 percent considered this risk remote or non-existent.⁴

1 *Dai jukkai nichū yoron chōsa* [Tenth Japanese-Chinese Opinion Poll], ed. Genron-NPO and China Daily (9 September 2014), 30, <http://www.genron-npo.net/pdf/2014forum.pdf> (accessed 20 September 2014).

2 See, e.g., Sam Perlo-Freeman and Carina Solmirano, *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2013*, SIPRI Factsheet (April 2014) http://books.sipri.org/product_info?c_product_id=476 (accessed 5 July 2014).

3 Takeshi Yuzawa, "Japan's Changing Conception of the ASEAN Regional Forum: From an Optimistic Liberal to a Pessimistic Realist Perspective", *Pacific Review* 18, no. 4 (2005): 463–97.

4 *Jieitai bōei mondai ni kansuru yoron chōsa* [Survey on the Self-Defense Forces and Defense Issues], ed. Cabinet Office (January 2012), <http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h23/h23-bouei/2-6.html> (accessed 1 July 2014).

The Power Shift: US Decline and the Rise of China

The central issue of Japanese foreign and security policy is the rapid rise of China and the resulting shift of power in the Asia Pacific Region. China has been achieving impressive economic growth rates for decades. In 2010 it surpassed Japan as the second-largest economy in the world. Parallel to its economic rise, Beijing has been investing ever-larger sums in its military, primarily in its navy and air force, a development which causes great unease in Japan. Since 1989 China's defense expenditures have been growing at a rate of more than 10 percent per year.⁵ The country's official defense budget, at ¥13.4 trillion (approximately €102 billion) in 2014, is approximately three times that of Japan's.⁶ Although Japan's armed forces are technologically superior to China's, this edge is steadily eroding. A study conducted by the Tokyo Foundation, a foreign policy think tank, concludes that China will attain "overwhelming [military] superiority" over Japan in the near future.⁷ Experts believe that China's defense expenditures could surpass even those of the US around 2030.⁸

Japan, which has been stagnating for two decades, is thus facing an emerging China with growing economic, political and military influence. The US, Japan's most important ally, is suffering the effects of the real estate and financial crisis of 2008. President Obama has declared the Asia Pacific Region a top foreign policy priority and stated that the US presence there will remain unaffected by cuts in defense spending. But many Japanese are skeptical about the long-term commitment of the US in the region.⁹ Budget short-

5 "China Should Stop Its Dangerous Military Expansion", *Asahi Shimbun*, 6 March 2014, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201403060028> (accessed 3 July 2014).

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Japan's Security Strategy toward China: Integration, Balancing and Deterrence in the Era of Power Shift*, ed. Tokyo Foundation (Tokyo, October 2011), 27, http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/additional_info/security_strategy_toward_china.pdf (accessed 4 May 2014).

8 *Ibid.*, 26.

9 Cf. Takashi Kawakami, "Beikoku no senraku kijiku no Ajia shifuto to nichibei dōmei" [The shift of the strategic axis

ages and the instability in the Middle East, it is feared, could force the US to reconsider its focus on Asia.¹⁰ The general assumption in Tokyo is that the US is no longer willing to assume the role of global policeman after the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The fact that the US government has refrained from intervening militarily in the Ukraine conflict is regarded as evidence of this unwillingness.

Some Japanese observers believe the power shift could in the medium to long term prompt Washington – despite existing differences of opinion and tensions – to opt for a cooperative policy of strategic concessions in dealing with Beijing (“strategic accommodation”) in order to preserve US global influence.¹¹ This assessment is accompanied by concerns that the US could enter into agreements with China that disregard Japan’s interests or even run counter to them. Sino-American rapprochement was particularly feared after Obama’s inauguration in 2009, when the new US President announced closer cooperation with Beijing on regional and global issues. Although the US-Chinese relationship has cooled since then, Japan is still not ruling out the possibility that Washington will change course and begin accommodating China.¹²

China’s Foreign Policy Behavior

China is increasingly self-assured and assertive in pursuing its interests. Tokyo is particularly disquieted by the demonstrative presence of Chinese vessels and aircraft in the area of the Senkaku Islands (Chinese Diaoyu) in the East China Sea, which are controlled by Japan and claimed by China. In September 2010, the island dispute came to a head after the Japanese coast guard arrested the captain of a Chinese fishing boat

that had collided with two patrol boats in the disputed waters around the islands. The Japanese government’s decision in September 2012 to purchase three uninhabited islets from their private owner in order to prevent the right-wing nationalist mayor of Tokyo at the time, Shintaro Ishihara, from acquiring them, was construed by China as a provocation. Beijing deemed the purchase a violation of Chinese sovereignty and a unilateral alteration of the status quo of the islands through “nationalization”.

Since then Chinese aircraft and vessels have been active in the island area, where they violate Japanese airspace and intrude into Japanese territorial waters. The number of missions flown by Japan’s air force to hinder violations of its airspace by China has increased drastically since 2010. Whereas in fiscal year 2009 a mere 38 such missions were flown, in fiscal year 2013 the number rose to 415.¹³ In addition, the Japanese coast guard reported 188 cases in 2013 in which Chinese vessels had intruded into Japan’s territorial waters. In 2009 not one such incident had occurred (see Fig. 1).¹⁴ Due to the intensified presence of China in the island area, Tokyo’s government officials have warned against unintentional incidents that could lead to further escalation. In May 2014, for example, military aircraft from the two sides flying over the East China Sea passed each other at a distance of only 30 meters – a dangerous situation for which Japan and China each held the other accountable.¹⁵

Yet it is not only China’s growing presence that causes concern; its aggressive actions are also particularly alarming. For example, an incident in January 2013, in which according to Japanese statements a Chinese navy vessel trained fire-control radar on a Japanese destroyer, caused a great stir. Japan’s defense minister at the time, Itsunori Onedera, declared that

toward Asia and the Japanese-US alliance], *Kaigai Jijō*, 5 January 2012, 55–72.

10 Cf. Izuru Sugawara, Toshiyuki Yasui and Kaneko Masafumi, “PHP gurōbaru risuku bunseki” [PHP Global Risk Analysis], in *Seisaku Shinkutanku PHP Sōken*, January 2011, 27f, http://research.php.co.jp/research/foreign_policy/pdf/PHP_GlobalRisks_2012.pdf (accessed 2 May 2014).

11 Ukeru Magosaki, “Nichibeī dōmei o zettaishisubekarazu: beigun ga nihon o mamoru to kagiranai riyū” [The Japanese-US alliance must not be taken for granted: Reasons why US forces will not necessarily support Japan], in *Nihon no Ronten 2012*, ed. Bungei Shunju (Tokyo, 2012), 120–23.

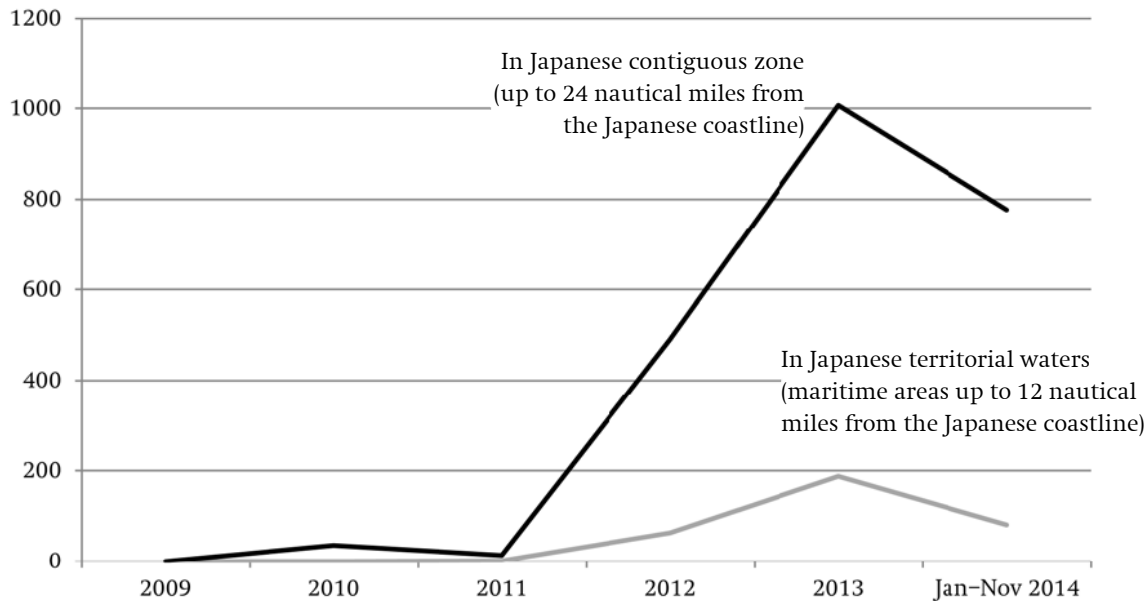
12 Ryo Asano, “Japan-China Relations in a Gray Zone: Search for Stability through Coercion and Deterrence”, in *Japan under the Power Shift: Its Security in the 2010s*, ed. Akio Watanabe (Tokyo: The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2014), 69–89 (76).

13 *Heisei 25 Nendo no Kinkyū Hasshin jishi jōkyō ni tsuite* [On the scrambles carried out in fiscal year 2013], ed. Japan Ministry of Defense, 9 April 2014, 3, http://www.mod.go.jp/js/Press/press2014/press_pdf/p20140409.pdf (accessed 13 May 2014). The Japan Ministry of Defense calculates number of missions per fiscal year.

14 *Senkakushotō shūhen kaiiki ni okeru chūgoku kōsentō no dōkō to wa ga kuni no taisho* [The activities of official Chinese vessels and similar ships in the waters around the Senkaku Islands and the countermeasures taken by our country], ed. Japan Coast Guard, July 2014, <http://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/senkaku/index.html> (accessed 13 August 2014).

15 “Beijing Defends Scrambling of Fighters against SDF Aircraft in East China”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 26 May 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201405260051 (accessed 27 May 2014).

Fig. 1
Number of Chinese vessels in Japanese maritime areas around the Senkaku Islands since 2009



Source: Japan Ministry of Defense, <www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/senkaku/index.html>.

China's behavior could be considered a "threat of military force" under the United Nations Charter.¹⁶ According to Japanese reports, a similar event may have occurred in May 2014.¹⁷ Japan was also outraged when Beijing established an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) encompassing large swathes of the East China Sea, including the disputed island region, in November 2013. Beijing announced it would require all aircraft flying within this zone to submit flight plans to Chinese authorities in advance.

Potential for Conflict with China

According to Japanese security experts, China is employing a "salami tactic" (*salami senjutsu*), meaning that Beijing routinely seeks pretexts to successively expand and consolidate its control over the disputed

territories and surrounding maritime areas.¹⁸ Japanese observers draw a parallel to China's actions in the territorial disputes over islands in the South China Sea.¹⁹ China has ostensibly been applying its step-by-step method in conscious avoidance of committing explicitly belligerent acts. Tokyo views these activities as "gray zone conflicts" on the borderline between peace and war. Japanese government officials believe one future scenario could involve Chinese special forces landing on the islands disguised as fishermen.²⁰ Tokyo wants to avoid yielding to Beijing in the island dispute at all costs; China could perceive concessions as an affirmation of its salami tactic and be prompted to apply it even more resolutely.

¹⁸ "Seiji no genba' nicchū reisen: minami-shina-kai muhōna kakuchō" ["Political practice' Cold war between Japan and China: Ruthless expansion in the South China Sea], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 12 February 2014.

¹⁹ See also: Gerhard Will, *Tough Crossing: Europa und die Konflikte in der Südchinesischen See* [Tough crossing: Europe and the conflicts in the South China Sea], SWP Research Paper 10/2014 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, June 2014).

²⁰ "Gree zōn jitai, jikō de taisho ni mizo. Kyōgi nankō ka" [Gray-zone cases, LDP and Komeito divided on how to respond. Consultations proceeding haltingly], *Asahi Shimbun*, 19 May 2014. Russia's actions in Ukraine are also discussed as an example of a gray-zone conflict.

¹⁶ "China's Dangerous Conduct", *Japan Times*, 8 February 2013, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/02/08/editorials/chinas-dangerous-conduct/#.U9jyIxAviaM> (accessed 14 April 2014).

¹⁷ "Japan Says Chinese Warship Could Have 'Locked' on SDF Vessel, Patrol Plane", *Asahi Shimbun*, 14 June 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201406140031 (accessed 14 June 2014).

Due to the nuclear deterrence provided by its ally, the US, Japanese defense ministry officials consider a Sino-Japanese war unlikely,²¹ though they add that the current security situation is characterized by a “stability-instability paradox” and that the possibility of an armed conflict limited to the Senkaku Islands cannot be excluded.²² Paradoxically, mutual deterrence at the level of nuclear weapons can give rise to instability at a lower level of escalation. Should the leadership in Beijing come to the conclusion that Washington is firmly committed to avoiding a war with China and can therefore be expected to act with restraint, they may be tempted to acquire control over the disputed islands by conventional military means. Particularly troubling for Tokyo in this context is the fact that the Senkaku Islands, as well as the surrounding islands, are nearly impossible to protect as they are too small to accommodate the stationing of any sizeable air-defense systems.²³ Japanese strategists are also disquieted by China’s asymmetrical capabilities, including anti-ship missiles and submarines, which enable Beijing to disrupt US power projection into the western Pacific (anti-access/area-denial strategies).²⁴ Japanese observers do not anticipate an improvement in bilateral relations with China, for two reasons. First, for the foreseeable future the balance of power will continue to shift in favor of the Chinese side, so that Beijing’s willingness to make concessions vis-à-vis a stagnating Japan is likely to be circumscribed.²⁵

21 *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and beyond*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense, 17 December 2013, http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf (accessed 15 April 2014). Hereafter abbreviated as NDPG 2013.

22 Sugio Takahashi, “Kakuheiki o meguru shomondai to Nihon anzen hoshō: NPR Shin START taisei, ‘kakuheiki no nai sekai’, kakudai yokushi” [Various problems regarding nuclear weapons and Japan’s security – NPR and new START system, ‘world without nuclear weapons’, extended deterrence], *Kaigai jijō* 58, no. 7/8 (2010): 30–51.

23 Daisaku Sakaguchi, “Aratana Bōei Senryaku no Sōzō Nansei Chiiki ni okeru Sekkyokuteki Eashii Batoru no shinajii kōka” [Creating a new defense strategy: Synergy effects of active defense and air-sea battle in the Southwest Region], *Kokusai anzen hoshō*, 39, no. 3 (2011): 3–13 (3).

24 Satoru Fuse, “Taichū akusesu kyohi senryaku – aratana taichū bōei senryaku no arikata o mezashite” [Anti-access strategy vis-à-vis China – the search for a new defense strategy vis-à-vis China], *Kokusai anzen hoshō* 39, no. 3 (2011): 63–73.

25 *NIDS China Security Report 2013*, ed. National Institute for Defense Studies (Tokyo, January 2014), 3, http://www.nids.go.jp/publication/chinareport/pdf/china_report_EN_web_2013_A01.pdf (accessed 15 April 2014).

Second, China’s leadership under head of state and party leader Xi Jinping has been capitalizing on anti-Japanese nationalism to win popular support for its intransigent foreign policy toward the former occupier and to simultaneously divert attention from domestic problems like political corruption, environmental degradation, or a slow-down in economic growth.²⁶

North Korea’s Missile and Nuclear Programs

Japanese observers see a further security threat in the advancement of North Korea’s missile and nuclear technology. Over the past several years the regime in Pyongyang has managed to increase the range and precision of its ballistic missiles in successive tests, a development which is not lost on the Japanese government.²⁷ In addition, the defense ministry in Tokyo does not rule out the possibility that North Korea, following its third nuclear test in February 2013, has developed nuclear warheads small enough to arm ballistic missiles.²⁸ Ever since North Korean intelligence agents kidnapped Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s in order to employ them to train North Korean spies and agents in Japanese culture and language, the Japanese have come to view North Korea predominantly as an unpredictable and insidious neighbor. A number of assumed kidnappings remain unresolved due to a lack of cooperation on the part of Pyongyang.

Japanese security experts are convinced that North Korea’s leadership is unlikely to deploy missiles, let alone nuclear weapons, against Japan or South Korea due to the fear of an annihilating retaliation.²⁹ Pyongyang could, however, attempt to use the threat of attacks to blackmail Japan.³⁰ As security experts point out, the torpedo attack on the South Korean warship “Cheonan” in March 2010 and the artillery attack on the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong in November

26 *East Asian Strategic Review 2014*, ed. National Institute for Defense Studies, 3, http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/pdf/2014/east-asian_e2014_introduction.pdf (accessed 15 July 2014).

27 NDPG 2013, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 3.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Narushige Michishita, “N. Korean Nuke Test Increases Threat Level”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 14 February 2013, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/AJ201302140040> (accessed 17 February 2013).

30 Patrick M. Cronin, “Time to Actively Deter North Korea”, *The Diplomat*, 25 June 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/06/time-to-actively-deter-north-korea/> (accessed 27 June 2014).

2010 demonstrate that the regime does not shy away from military provocations. Japanese observers even consider the deployment of missiles and nuclear weapons possible. Should the North Korean regime threaten to collapse and the young, inexperienced leader Kim Jong-Un assesses the situation as hopeless, he could in desperation order the deployment of such weapons.³¹

Ambivalence toward Russia

Russia is perceived ambivalently in Japan. Although surveys show that since the end of the Cold War fewer and fewer Japanese consider Moscow a military threat, Russia's annexation of the five islands of the Kuril Archipelago toward the end of World War II continues to put a strain on relations between the two countries.³² The ongoing territorial dispute has to this day prevented the signing of a peace treaty. As Japanese security experts observe, Russia has been expanding its military presence on the islands since 2011.³³ The activities of military detachments there continue to put Japan's armed forces on alert with increasing frequency. According to the defense ministry, Japanese interceptors were deployed 359 times in fiscal year 2013 because Russian aircraft threatened to violate the country's airspace.³⁴

Still, Russia's show of force around the Kuril Islands are not assessed in Japan as an immediate military threat but rather as an attempt to extract political or military concessions from Tokyo, for example in negotiations over the Kuril issue itself.³⁵ Moreover, Japanese strategists are aware that the maneuvers are not only aimed at Japan but also designed to impress an ascending China. In recent years the potential military threat posed by China has become a subject of open debate in Russia, a trend monitored very closely in

Japan.³⁶ In light of this development, some Japanese observers hope for closer cooperation with Moscow, which could serve as a counterbalance to China. Others, on the other hand, consider this hope overly optimistic, since Moscow is likely to continue pursuing cooperation with Beijing.³⁷ The latter cite the Ukraine crisis as validating this view, in the course of which Russia has responded to Western sanctions by aligning itself more closely with China in economic, military and geostrategic terms.

³¹ Michishita, "N. Korean Nuke Test" (see note 29).

³² Akio Kawato, "How Russia Matters in Japan-US Alliance", in *The US-Japan Security Alliance: Regional Multilateralism*, ed. Takashi Inoguchi, G. John Ikenberry and Yoichiro Sato (New York, 2011): 177-93 (179).

³³ *Defense of Japan 2012*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense, 54, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2012.html (accessed 3 May 2014).

³⁴ *Heisei 25 Nendo no Kinkyū Hasshin jishi jōkyō ni tsuite*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 13), 3.

³⁵ See also: Margarete Klein, *Russland als euro-pazifische Macht: Ziele, Strategien und Perspektiven russischer Ostasienpolitik* [Russia as a Euro-Pacific power: Objectives, strategies and prospects of Russia's East Asia policy], SWP Research Paper 12/2014 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, July 2014), 13.

³⁶ *East Asian Strategic Review 2014*, ed. National Institute for Defense Studies (see note 26), 231.

³⁷ *East Asian Strategic Review 2013*, ed. National Institute for Defense Studies, 271, http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/pdf/2013/east-asian_e2013_07.pdf (accessed 3 May 2014).

The Establishment of a National Security Council

Faced with the security challenges in Japan's regional environment, the Abe administration founded a National Security Council (NSC) with its own Secretariat in December 2013.³⁸ By conducting regular consultations in the small circle of experts in the NSC, the Prime Minister aims to gain more influence over the country's strategy.³⁹ The institution is modeled after the US National Security Council, which plays a leading role in shaping and implementing US foreign policy. But the Japanese NSC is unlikely to attain a level of significance comparable to that of its US counterpart in terms of developing foreign policy strategy. On the other hand, it is apparent that Japan is making use of its new National Security Secretariat to intensify security policy cooperation with the US and other countries.

The Role of the NSC in Strategy Development

In the past it was primarily the elite ministerial bureaucracy and less the prime minister and his cabinet who determined the orientation of Japan's foreign policy. But under this arrangement there was a lack of inter-ministerial strategic planning and cooperation between the foreign ministry and the ministry of defense.⁴⁰ In future the NSC is expected to provide the political leadership with the means to improve its mid- to long-range planning.⁴¹

The precursor to the NSC was the "Security Council of Japan", a body consisting of nine ministers and tasked with providing advice on security challenges, defense plans and crisis response. But the Security Council was regarded as ineffective due to the relatively large number of participants, which is why it was often not convoked for several months at a time.⁴² The idea of introducing an NSC with only a few members was discussed in governmental circles during Abe's first premiership 2006/2007, but a law to this effect was not drafted until Abe's second term of office.⁴³

Like the US model, the new NSC comprises four members of the government who meet fortnightly: the Prime Minister as chairman, the Chief Cabinet Secretary,⁴⁴ the Foreign Minister and the Defense Minister. The consultations conducted in the old Security Council of nine ministers continue to be held in order to discuss policy documents such as the National Defense Policy Guidelines or international deployments of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), Japan's military. In crisis situations the Prime Minister can also convene sessions with the respective experts. The newly established National Security Secretariat assists with devising security strategy at all these meetings. Around sixty security policy experts from various ministries, such as the foreign ministry and the defense ministry, are seconded to the body for a limited time.⁴⁵ Abe has entrusted the chairmanship of the Secretariat to his

³⁸ Remarks made by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in the Lower House, 25 October 2013, see <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp> (accessed 4 May 2013).

³⁹ "Nihon ban NSC (Kokka anzen hoshō kaigi) no gaiyō to kadai: Nihon ban NSC kōsō, beiei tonō hikaku, kadai o chūshin ni" [Form and function of the Japanese NSC (National Security Council): Concept of the Japanese NSC, central issues in comparison with the US and Great Britain, and problems], ed. National Diet Library, *Issue Brief* 801 (October 2013): 4.

⁴⁰ Hideyuki Takahashi, "Kokka anzen hoshō senryaku sakutei ni fukaketsu na nihon ban NSC setsuritsu ni mukete: kokunan no imakoso ōdanteki ishi kettei shisutemu kakuritsu o" [On the foundation of the NSC, which is essential for the Security Strategy: Especially now, in times of crisis, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive decision-making system], *Kokusai anzen hoshō*, 39, no. 3 (2011): 14–27 (14f.).

⁴¹ Starting in the mid-1990s, administrative reforms strengthened the role of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, above all

in crisis situations such as an earthquake catastrophe. See Alexandra Sakaki and Kerstin Lukner, "Japan's Crisis Management amid Growing Complexity: In Search of New Approaches", *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 14, no. 2 (2013): 155–76 (160ff.).

⁴² Satoshi Morimoto, *Nihon Bōei saikōron* [Revisiting Japanese defense policy], (Tokyo, 2008), 237.

⁴³ "Nihon ban NSC no gaiyō to kadai", ed. National Diet Library (see note 39): 2.

⁴⁴ The Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary has the status of a cabinet member. He not only plays an important role in making policy – through coordination and mediation among various government agencies –; he is also the government's principle spokesperson.

⁴⁵ Yuriko Koike, "Securing Japan", *Project Syndicate*, 31 October 2013, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/print/yuriko-koike-on-japan-s-new-national-security-council> (accessed 27 May 2013).

former Deputy Foreign Minister and National Security Adviser, Shotaro Yachi.

Although the regular sessions provide the four government members with an opportunity to discuss challenges and priorities as well as to coordinate policies within the intimate circle of the country's senior political cadre, the ministries will undoubtedly continue to have a say in policy-making in the future. As in previous reform attempts, the ministerial bureaucracy will presumably contest any changes which would result in a loss of influence to the Cabinet.⁴⁶ As the staff of the National Security Secretariat is comprised of officials who are dispatched from their ministries only temporarily, their loyalties toward the "home ministries" are likely to remain intact. In this way inter-ministerial rivalries are carried over into the Secretariat, thus rendering inter-agency planning difficult.

Furthermore, cabinet reshuffles, which occur more than once a year on average, can also be expected to hinder strategic deliberations in the NSC. The Prime Minister uses such shake-ups to secure the support of rival factions within parties by allocating government posts.⁴⁷ Thus, the composition of the NSC can be expected to fluctuate substantially. New members must first become acquainted with the work of the Council, and their ideas and views may differ substantially from those of their predecessors. As a result, planning that has already been set in motion may come to a standstill.

Moreover, the discretionary power of the NSC is limited by the fact that the Japanese prime minister does not dispose of the wide-ranging authority of the president of the United States.⁴⁸ Decisions taken in the National Security Council become legally binding only once they have been unanimously accepted by the entire Cabinet.⁴⁹ As long as Cabinet members can influence or prevent NSC planning by means of a veto, the discussion and decision process is unlikely to become more efficient.

⁴⁶ Sakaki and Lukner, "Japan's Crisis Management amid Growing Complexity" (see note 41), 160f

⁴⁷ Since 2000 there have been 27 cabinets in Japan. See <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/rekidainaikaku/index.html> (accessed 20 October 2014). The major Japanese parties, LDP and DPJ, are split into rivaling internal factions (or groups). These are based largely on loyalties or patronage and play an important role in inner-party power struggles.

⁴⁸ "Nihon ban NSC no gaiyō to kadai", ed. National Diet Library (see note 39), 7.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 12.

The National Security Secretariat as a Vehicle for Security Policy Dialogue

It remains to be seen how effective the new institutions are in terms of strategy development, but it is already becoming apparent that Japan is using the National Security Secretariat to intensify the security dialogue not only with the US but also with other partners. The Secretary General of the Secretariat, Shotaro Yachi, traveled to the US immediately after assuming office in January 2014, where he held talks with National Security Adviser Susan Rice, Secretary of State John Kerry and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel.⁵⁰ The Japanese government also announced that Yachi would be meeting with government officials in the UK, Germany, Belgium, France, India and Russia.⁵¹ All that is known about these talks is that the security situation in East Asia was among the issues to be discussed.⁵² In addition, the US and the UK have agreed to establish a security hotline between Yachi and their respective national security advisers to facilitate the swift and secure exchange of confidential information around the clock in emergency situations.⁵³ Japan is also exploring the establishment of hotlines with Australia, France, Germany, India, South Korea and Russia.⁵⁴

Unlike Japanese Cabinet members Yachi is not required to be present at the frequent sessions of parliament due to his position. This gives him more scheduling flexibility and frees him to undertake extended trips abroad. His considerable independence allows him to engage in spontaneous and intimate personal exchange with government officials in other coun-

⁵⁰ J. Berkshire Miller, "How Will Japan's New NSC Work?", *The Diplomat*, 29 January 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/01/how-will-japans-new-nsc-work/> (accessed 15 May 2014).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² "Japan, U.S. Security Advisers Agree on Closer Bilateral Cooperation", *Japan Times*, 18 January 2014, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/18/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-u-s-security-advisers-agree-on-closer-bilateral-cooperation/> (accessed 22 January 2014).

⁵³ "Japan to Set Up National Security Hotline with Britain", *Asahi Shimbun*, 24 October 2013, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201310240072 (accessed 20 May 2013). Zur Rolle von Hotlines siehe auch: Euan Graham, "Maritime Hotlines in East Asia", *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Policy Brief*, May 2014, http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/RSIS_RFQ_Maritime-Hotlines-in-East-Asia_160514_Web.pdf (accessed 29 October 2014).

⁵⁴ "For Japan's New Security Council, It's All about Communication", *Nikkei Asian Review*, 3 December 2013, <http://asia.nikkei.com/print/article/7592> (accessed 27 May 2014).

tries.⁵⁵ As the representative of an institution that is analogous to the US National Security Council, Yachi can meet with Security Adviser Susan Rice on equal footing and thus strengthen direct communication with the National Security Council in Washington. Since the terror attacks of 11 September 2001, the US National Security Council has played an increasingly important role in planning and implementing foreign policy. Japan's institutional changes in the domain of security policy, which open a new channel of communication with the White House, can also be seen as a reaction to US policy.⁵⁶

Intelligence-Sharing

In conjunction with the creation of the NSC, on 6 December 2013 the Japanese parliament adopted a contentious law stiffening penalties for breaches of state secrecy. Prime Minister Abe called the law a necessary precondition for intensifying intelligence exchange with other countries and explained that it gave the NSC access to a wealth of data that could serve him as a basis for discussions and decisions.⁵⁷ Abe cited his administration's plans to expand intelligence cooperation with the US and the UK as one example of this intensified exchange.⁵⁸

Before the change in legislation, the penalties for disclosing sensitive information were relatively mild compared with those in other countries. For example, government officials who passed on secret information faced a maximum prison sentence of one year.⁵⁹ Under the new law, by contrast, leaking state secrets is

punishable by up to ten years in prison and a fine. Moreover, the government can classify information related to diplomacy, defense, espionage and the fight against terror as state secrets for a period of up to sixty years. Critics argue that the law restricts freedom of the press and freedom of information and can be used to cover up government abuses and intimidate the opposition.⁶⁰

In passing the new law, Tokyo seems to have responded to pressure from the US. The US feared that Japan's formerly mild penalties for breaches of secrecy were unlikely to discourage the negligent handling of classified information⁶¹ – which explains why Washington has been so reluctant to share technical details on the F-35 stealth fighters that Japan's air force is scheduled to acquire in 2017.⁶² Accordingly, in October 2013 the US expressed satisfaction over Japan's efforts to enact new legislation.⁶³

In Japan, too, there had been calls in recent years for a tougher secrecy law. Above all, the lack of data exchange among government agencies was criticized. Instead of reporting their information to a central intelligence authority, each Japanese ministry maintains its own office to collect and analyze relevant data.⁶⁴ The individual authorities withhold intelligence, partly because they distrust each other and want to claim successes for themselves.⁶⁵ The new law is designed to promote administrative information exchange, thereby providing the NSC with a better

55 Alexandra Sakaki, "Japan und die EU: Enttäuschte Erwartungen" [Japan and the EU: Unfulfilled expectations], in *Die EU im Beziehungsgefüge großer Staaten: Komplex – kooperativ – krisenhaft* [The EU in the relational framework of major players: Complex – cooperative – crisis-ridden], ed. Kai-Olaf Lang and Gudrun Wacker, SWP Research Paper 25/2013 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, December 2013): 53–64 (58).

56 Kurt Campbell, "Watch the Rise of Asia's National Security Councils", *Financial Times*, 9 January 2014, <http://blogs.ft.com/the-a-list/2014/01/09/watch-the-rise-of-asias-national-security-councils/> (accessed 10 April 2014).

57 "Anzen kaigi, kadai nokoshi shidō he, jōhō no atsukai, gijiroku sakusei 'himitsu hogo hō to ittai' mujun mo" [Security Council begins work despite unresolved problems, treatment of information and keeping of official minutes partially inconsistent with corresponding secrecy law], *Asahi Shimbun*, 28 November 2013.

58 Remarks made by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in the Lower House, 25 October 2013 (see note 38).

59 Morimoto, *Nihon Bōei saikōron* (see note 42).

60 "NSC secchi hōan to tokutei himitsu hogo hōan" [Draft bills on the establishment of the NSC and state secrecy], *NHK*, 23 October 2013, <http://www.nhk.or.jp/kaisetsu-blog/100/170936.html> (accessed 15 May 2014).

61 "Tokutei himitsu hogo hōan wa 'nichibeī dōmei no kyōka' no tame ni tsukurareru?" [Is the state secrecy law being drafted to strengthen the Japanese-US alliance?], *The Huffington Post Japan*, 4 October 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.jp/2013/10/04/japan-nsc_n_4041820.html (accessed 26 May 2014).

62 "Himitsu hogo hōan dōmei koku to kimitsu kyōyū he NSC hōan to setto" [Draft secrecy bill: Exchange of classified information among allied countries, together with NSC draft bill], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 27 January 2013.

63 Minister for Foreign Affairs Kishida, Minister of Defense Onodera, Secretary of State Kerry, Secretary of Defense Hagel, *Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities*, 3 October 2013, 5, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/us/JointStatement2013.pdf (accessed 20 May 2014).

64 Morimoto, *Nihon Bōei saikōron* (see note 42), 240ff.

65 "Himitsu hogo hō, naze hitsuyō? NSC unyō he, taisei o seibi" [Why is the secrecy law necessary? Towards the use of the NSC, adaptation of the organization], *Sankei News*, 6 December 2013, <http://sankei.jp.msn.com/politics/news/131206/plc13120609450006-n2.htm> (accessed 26 May 2014).

basis for making decisions. In order to achieve this, a department has been established within the National Security Secretariat that gathers intelligence centrally, evaluates it and submits it to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet.

“Proactive Pacifism” as a New Leitmotif: Departure from Former Policy?

Two publications from December 2013 provide insight into the direction Tokyo’s security policy has taken under the Abe administration: The National Security Strategy (NSS) and the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG). Both documents outline how the government intends to protect the country from threats and enhance regional and international stability. The most salient innovation in the strategy documents is the leitmotif of “proactive pacifism”. By promoting this concept the Prime Minister explicitly rejects the idealistic pacifist notions of the post-war era and thus justifies what he considers to be a necessary easing of military constraints. Abe intends to create better conditions for security cooperation with other countries and bolster Japan’s ability to influence regional developments. For the most part, however, his reforms serve merely to align existing guidelines with reality and legitimize what the Japanese government already practices.

The Security Strategy adopted by the NSC and the Cabinet introduced binding rules for all agencies for the first time ever. The strategy document is intended to cover a ten-year period. Should there be a “significant change” in the security environment, however, the NSC can decide to revise it sooner.⁶⁶ Since 1976 the Japanese Cabinet has issued National Defense Program Guidelines in irregular intervals dealing with the defense strategy and the military capabilities necessary to implement it. In the last two revisions of 2004 and 2010, however, the paper evolved into a strategic framework document addressing security relations with the US and other countries.⁶⁷

Basic Principles

The strategy documents of December 2013 define the guiding principles of national security policy. According to these documents, Japan champions universal

values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law.⁶⁸ Moreover, as a “peace-loving nation”, it is committed to maintaining a security policy designed exclusively for defense,⁶⁹ “not becoming a military power that poses a threat to other countries”, and observing the “Three Non-Nuclear Principles”, i.e., neither possessing nor producing nuclear weapons nor allowing third parties to bring such weapons into the country.⁷⁰ These basic principles are already part of the Defense Guidelines of 2010 and are found in past White or Blue Books.⁷¹

For the first time, Tokyo has subsumed its security policy under a leitmotif: “proactive pacifism, based on the principle of international cooperation”.⁷² The term “sekkyokuteki heiwashugi” – literally “proactive pacifism” – is translated as “proactive contributor to peace” in official government documents drafted in English.⁷³ In subscribing to this concept, Japan wants to work with other nations to actively contribute to international security instead of merely reacting to events as it has done in the past.⁷⁴ According to the National Security Strategy, the increasingly difficult security environment with its complex challenges requires international policy coordination; furthermore, the only way the country can effectively pursue its national interests – such as defending its sovereignty and increasing its prosperity – is through cooperation with the international community.⁷⁵ Although previous strategy documents have called for Japanese contributions to international peace, for example in the form of international peace-keeping missions, humanitarian aid or disaster relief, the guiding idea of a “proactive pacifism” is new in the country’s security policy.

⁶⁶ *National Security Strategy*, ed. Prime Minister of Japan, 17 December 2013, 2, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf (accessed 13 April 2014). Hereafter abbreviated as NSS.

⁶⁷ *East Asian Strategic Review 2014*, ed. National Institute for Defense Studies (see note 26), 55.

⁶⁸ NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3; *NDPG 2013*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 6.

⁷¹ The Blue Book is a report on Japan’s foreign policy published annually by the foreign ministry.

⁷² NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 1; *NDPG 2013*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 5.

⁷³ Literally translated as “proactive pacifism” by the author.

⁷⁴ NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 15.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

Nevertheless, the most recent strategy papers reveal little about the policy implications of the concept. Like previous papers, the last two papers refer to three central pillars of Japanese security policy: (1) Japan's own capabilities and defense measures, (2) the alliance with the US, and (3) cooperation with other countries. The measures proposed in these three areas do not constitute any substantial change in Japan's foreign policy (see next chapter).

Abe's Proactive Pacifism Approach: An Alternative to the Yoshida Doctrine

There is consensus among Japanese observers that the term "proactive pacifism" stands for Abe's goal of establishing Japan as a "normal" power that does not reject the use of military force categorically.⁷⁶ The term has apparently been chosen in order to generate acceptance in the population, which is extremely skeptical about military missions.⁷⁷ In his speeches Abe likes to cite Japan's non-military involvement in international crises and catastrophes as examples of "proactive pacifism" – such as the emergency assistance after the "Haiyan" typhoon in the Philippines in 2013.⁷⁸ At the same time, however, he has called for relaxing the military restrictions Japan has imposed on itself with its "Peace Constitution",⁷⁹ a move he considers necessary to enable Japan to work together with partners and make a greater contribution to international stability.

According to Article 9 of the Constitution of 1946, the people of Japan renounced not only their right to wage war but also the right to maintain a standing army. Nevertheless, one year after the Korean War (1950–1953) Japan's Self Defense Forces were created. Tokyo argued at the time that the Constitution

allowed the defense of Japanese territory (individual self-defense).⁸⁰ By contrast, Japan was not permitted to support any other country that had been attacked (collective self-defense). For a long time Japan deftly sidestepped US calls for military contributions. The country stayed out of international conflicts under a policy stipulated by the "Yoshida Doctrine". The doctrine is named after Shigeru Yoshida, who served as prime minister in 1946/1947 and from 1948 to 1954 and who significantly shaped Tokyo's foreign policy. By exercising self-restraint in security policy matters, Japan hoped to regain trust internationally and concentrate on rebuilding its economy. With this in mind, the country introduced more rigid guidelines for weapons exports (1967) and committed itself to the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" (1967). Additionally, defense spending was capped at one percent of gross national product (1976).

Abe's concept of "proactive pacifism" is based on a counter-proposal to the Yoshida Doctrine put forth in 2009 by Kenichi Ito, President of the Japan Forum on International Relations, a think tank.⁸¹ Ito argued that passive pacifism under the Yoshida Doctrine had reduced Japan's security and defense policy to a negative list that with respect to the use of military force consisted of only renunciation and prohibition, and that strategic debate over Japan's international policy goals and the expansion of its defense capabilities had been stifled.⁸² Ito therefore believed that the time had come for Japan to define clearly what foreign policy tools were necessary to achieve its own goals. Like Ito, Abe's close advisors criticize the previous security policy.⁸³ According to Shinichi Kitaoka, President of the International University of Japan, China's military build-up

⁸⁰ Cf. Markus Tidten, *Japans Militär. Neuer Auftrag und alte Grenzen?* [Japan's military. New mandate, old limitations?], SWP Research Paper 23/2003 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, June 2003), 7.

⁸¹ Akiko Fukushima, *Japan's "Proactive Contribution to Peace" a Mere Political Label?*, 19 June 2014, <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2014/japans-proactive-contribution-to-peace> (accessed 24 June 2014).

⁸² *Sekkyokuteki heiwashugi to nichibeī dōmei no arikata* [Proactive pacifism and the guiding principles of the Japanese-US alliance], ed. Japan Forum on International Relations, October 2009, 7, <http://www.jfir.or.jp/j/activities/pr/pdf/32.pdf> (accessed 14 May 2014).

⁸³ "Sekkyokuteki 'heiwashugi' ga kannyō Kitaoka Shinichi-shi" (see note 76); Shotaro Yachi, "'More Proactive Contribution to Peace' Changes Japan's Diplomacy. Abe Administration's Policy Toward Asia and the United States", *Diplomacy*, 20 (April 2014), <http://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/en/archives/diplomacy/pt20140412012137.html> (accessed 15 April 2014).

⁷⁶ "Sekkyokuteki 'heiwashugi' no shōtai wa?" [What is the true face of 'proactive pacifism?'], *Asahi Shimbun*, 30 May 2014; Shinichi Kitaoka, "Sekkyokuteki heiwashugi' ga kannyō" [The relevance of 'proactive pacifism'], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 3 November 2013.

⁷⁷ "Shushō no iu 'Sekkyoku heiwashugi' tte?" [What actually is Prime Minister Abe's 'active pacifism?'], *Asahi Shimbun*, 15 January 2014.

⁷⁸ Shinzo Abe, *Speech in the Lower House*, 26 March 2014, <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp> (accessed 10 June 2014).

⁷⁹ Shinzo Abe, *Remarks by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the Occasion of Accepting Hudson Institute's 2013 Herman Kahn Award*, 25 September 2013, The Pierre Hotel, New York City, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201309/25hudson.html (accessed 2 June 2014).

and North Korea’s missile and nuclear weapons program demonstrate the failure of passive pacifism.⁸⁴

Under the banner of “proactive pacifism”, the Abe administration has lifted self-imposed restrictions in three areas by (1) reinterpreting Article 9 of the Constitution, (2) changing arms export rules, and (3) revising the Official Development Assistance Charter. It should be noted, though, that Abe’s initiatives merely serve to accelerate a “normalization process” in Japanese security policy that has been observable for years. The government is legitimizing a less restrictive approach to military force that has long become accepted practice.

The New Interpretation of Article 9

Abe was unlikely to achieve the majorities necessary to fundamentally amend the Constitution, neither in parliament nor by referendum. He therefore limited himself to reinterpreting Article 9.⁸⁵ After fierce debate, the LDP and their coalition partner, the Komeito, agreed on such an interpretation on 1 July 2014. Under the agreement, Tokyo can take military action within the framework of collective self-defense if armed aggression is directed against a country with close ties to Japan resulting in a threat to Japan’s existence and the right of its citizens to life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness.⁸⁶ In this interpretation, collective self-defense is thus permissible if a concrete threat exists for Japan and its citizens.

Abe cited warding off an attack on a US vessel evacuating Japanese civilians from a crisis region or intercepting North Korean missiles fired at US troops stationed on the Pacific island of Guam and traveling

over Japanese territory as hypothetical examples of how the armed forces could be deployed.⁸⁷ At the same time, the Premier ruled out the possibility of Japanese military operations in a conflict like the Iraq war led by Washington in 2003.⁸⁸

With the Cabinet decision, Japan was responding to calls from Washington to support its Asia policy. Government officials in Tokyo point out that in a Sino-Japanese crisis the country can rely on the support of its ally only if it is prepared to reciprocate by standing up for the security of the US. Otherwise, they warn, there is a danger that Washington could refuse Japan its support.⁸⁹ Abe has cited the difficult security environment as justification for reinterpreting Article 9, emphasizing that the new reading does not change Japan’s status as a pacifist country.⁹⁰ He further argues that partially exercising the right to collective self-defense in concert with the US increases the deterrence potential, thereby reducing the chance of Japan becoming involved in a war.⁹¹

The reinterpretation of Article 9 supersedes interpretations in effect since the 1950s, according to which Japan conceded itself the right only to individual self-defense. Some observers view this new interpretation as the “greatest change” in Japanese security policy since the foundation of the Self-Defense Forces.⁹² But a closer look reveals that the process is little more than a symbolic turning point, for in practice rigorous rejection of collective self-defense has been increasing-

⁸⁴ Shinichi Kitaoka, “The Turnabout of Japan’s Security Policy: Toward ‘Proactive Pacifism’”, *Nippon.com*, 2 April 2014, <http://www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00108/> (accessed 20 May 2014).

⁸⁵ Abe was accused of using a Cabinet decision to circumvent the formal procedure of a constitutional amendment, thereby undermining Japan’s democratic principles.

⁸⁶ *Zum Kabinettsbeschluss zu Maßnahmen für die Gesetzgebung über die Sicherheit vom 1.7.2014* [On the Cabinet decision of 1 July 2014 regarding security legislation measures], ed. Botschaft von Japan in Deutschland [Embassy of Japan in Germany], http://www.de.emb-japan.go.jp/aktuelles/140701_kabinettsbeschluss.html (accessed 4 July 2014). Two further criteria for exercising the right of collective self-defense are (1) that there are no other effective means available to respond to an attack, and (2) that the use of weapons be restricted to an absolute minimum. Comparable criteria also apply to the exercise of the right of individual self-defense.

⁸⁷ Adam Liff, “Japan’s Article 9 Challenge”, *The National Interest*, 27 June 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/japans-article-9-challenge-10766> (accessed 28 June 2014).

⁸⁸ “New Defense Era for Japan: Collective Right OK’d in Severe Security Environment”, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 1 July 2014, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001394249> (accessed 2 July 2014).

⁸⁹ Gabriel Domínguez, “Japan’s Security Policy Shift: ‘A Blow to Ties with East Asia’”. Interview with Jeremy A. Yellen”, *Deutsche Welle*, 1 July 2014, <http://www.dw.de/japans-security-policy-shift-a-blow-to-ties-with-east-asia/a-17748656> (accessed 14 July 2014).

⁹⁰ “Tokushū shūdanteki jieiken, shushō no kisha kaiken yōshi ‘kenpō kaishaku no kihon kawarazu” [Special: Summary of the press conference of the Prime Minister on the right to collective self-defense, ‘The fundamental interpretation of the constitution remains unchanged’], *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 2 July 2014.

⁹¹ “‘Sensō arienu’ shushō kaiken, nando mo kyōchō” [‘War is impossible’, Prime Minister repeatedly emphasizes at press conference], *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 2 July 2014.

⁹² “Japan’s Democracy to Be Put to the Test”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 2 July 2014, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201407020038> (accessed 5 July 2014).

ly giving way to a more pragmatic approach since the 1980s. Tokyo continues to approve more and more interaction and integration between its own and foreign troops in joint exercises or UN peacekeeping missions. The deployment of Japanese troops from 2001 to 2010 in connection with the war in Afghanistan is considered by observers as a de facto exercise of the right to collective self-defense.⁹³ Thus, the re-interpretation of Article 9 is more an evolutionary than a revolutionary step in Japan's defense policy.

The Cabinet decision to reinterpret Article 9 facilitates closer cooperation with Japan's ally, the US. In addition, Abe argues in favor of Japanese troops participating in UN peacemaking missions or mine clearance.⁹⁴ Some in the LDP have proposed supporting the Philippines and other countries in their territorial disputes with China;⁹⁵ but coalition partner Komeito is strictly opposed to such operations.⁹⁶ There is also disagreement within the LDP regarding the newly acquired room for maneuver; the opposition, incidentally, is similarly divided on the issue. In order to exercise the right to collective self-defense, Tokyo must amend more than ten laws, including the Self-Defense Forces Act.⁹⁷ Parliamentary consultations over legislative changes could thus take months, if not years.⁹⁸ It is therefore difficult to predict what effects Japan's security policy will have outside its alliance with the US.

Most Japanese continue to reject the use of military force. In surveys, over half the population is opposed to exercising the right to collective self-defense in cases of emergency, while only about a third is in favor.⁹⁹ Im-

ponderables notwithstanding, Japan's global military involvement is thus unlikely to grow in the future.

The Revision of Arms Export Rules

On 1 April 2014 the Abe administration relaxed the rules governing arms exports. In future the export of such goods is permitted providing it contributes to Japan's security, promotes peace and is in line with the principle of "proactive pacifism".¹⁰⁰ Arms exports to conflict regions or countries subject to UN sanctions continue to be prohibited. The new principles supersede the arms export rules introduced in 1967 and tightened in 1976, which were tantamount to an export ban.

The debate over relaxing or revising the rules is not new. Since the 1980s, Japan's government has gradually watered down standards by allowing exceptions to the export ban. In 1983 Japan began to deliver defense technology to the US. In 2004 Tokyo decided to permit the joint development and production of missile defense technology in the form of a Japanese-US collaborative project.¹⁰¹ The government that preceded the Abe administration in the end gave blanket approval to arms cooperation with friendly countries in 2011. This step paved the way for arms projects with the US, the UK, France and Australia.¹⁰² For example, Japan is currently developing missile technology with the UK and is collaborating with Australia on submarine construction.¹⁰³

93 Liff, "Japan's Article 9 Challenge" (see note 87).

94 "Abe Offers 1st Explanation in Diet, But Many Not Buying It", *Asahi Shimbun*, 15 July 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201407150054 (accessed 16 July 2014).

95 "Shūdanteki jieiken – Kōshi yōken, shūsei isogu, jimin, kōmei ni hairyo, shūnai gōi no kanōsei" [Right to collective self-defense, criteria for application. LDP, in making hasty improvements, shows consideration for Komei Party, agreement possible by the end of this week], *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 22 June 2014.

96 "Abe Offers 1st Explanation in Diet, But Many Not Buying It" (see note 94).

97 "Kokkai Ronsen, Shushō, teineina setsumei ishiki" [In parliamentary debates, Prime Minister is mindful of well-founded argumentation], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 15 July 2014.

98 "Opposition Parties Divided over Collective Self-defense", *Mainichi Shimbun*, 2 July 2014, <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140702p2a00m0na008000c.html> (accessed 3 July 2014).

99 "Shūdanteki jieiken – Kōshi yōnin kettei, hantai ga 54%, kyōdōtsūshin yoron chōsa" [Opinion poll conducted by Kyodo

news agency: 54 percent against decision to allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defense], *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 3 July 2014.

100 "Buki yushutsu shin gensoku, kakugi kettei, NSC ga hatsu no unyōshishin" [Cabinet decision on new weapons export principles – NSC issues its first implementation guideline], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 1 April 2014.

101 Stephanie Nayoung Kang, "Arms Export Control Policies in Japan: Revising the 'Three Principles' and the Role of the Japan-US Security Alliance", *CSIS Issues & Insights* 14, no. 12 (2014): 18–27 (19).

102 "Japan, France Agree on Development, Exports of Weapons", *Asahi Shimbun*, 10 January 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201401100087 (accessed 14 April 2014).

103 Paul Kallender-Umezu and Nigel Pittaway, "Japan, Australia Deal Poses Tech Issues", *Defense News*, 15 June 2014, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140615/DEFREG03/306160010/Japan-Australia-Deal-Poses-Tech-Issues> (accessed 17 July 2014); *Agence France-Presse*, "Japan, Britain to Launch Joint Missile Research", *Defense News*, 17 July 2014, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140717/DEFREG03/307170036/Japan-Britain->

The cuts in Japan’s defense budget have led to a steady drop in orders for the domestic arms industry. Between 2003 and 2014, more than a hundred Japanese companies bowed out of the arms business.¹⁰⁴ The most recent relaxation of export rules is aimed at retarding this process. The goal is to sustain Japanese arms producers and help them regain their competitiveness through exports and international collaborative projects.¹⁰⁵ The revised rules allow Japan to sell armaments from multinational projects to third countries, making it an attractive international collaborative partner. The US government had urged Japan to make this change in light of missile technology cooperation and in connection with the production of the F-35 stealth fighter.¹⁰⁶

Under the new rules, Japan has expanded its arms exports in the East Asian region. The government has already taken advantage of the new rules; it is currently negotiating with India over the delivery of US-2 amphibious airplanes. Japan also hopes to find new customers for its arms industry in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁷ Tokyo has expressed an interest in selling ships, aircraft and submarines to Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines.¹⁰⁸ The majority of Japan’s citizens, however, reject such plans. In surveys, only 17 percent favor the relaxation of rules proposed by Abe, with 77 percent opposed.¹⁰⁹

Launch-Joint-Missile-Research (accessed 17 July 2014).

104 “Buki yushutsu kijun meikaku ni, shin san gensoku, kakugi kettei, shishin de hadome” [Cabinet decision on the new three principles brings clarity on standard in weapons-export guidelines], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 2 April 2014.

105 “Sōbi okusai kaihatsu o suishin, bōeishō soan ‘kimon wa kokusan’ minaoshi” [Promoting the international development of equipment – the Ministry of Defense plans to revise the ‘Basic principle of domestic production’], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 4 April 2014.

106 Shannon Dick and Hana Rudolph, “Japan Updates Arms Export Policy”, *Stimson Spotlight*, 24 April 2014, <http://www.stimson.org/spotlight/japan-updates-arms-export-policy/> (accessed 30 April 2014).

107 “Japan Hopes to Sell Asean on Defense Tech”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, 22 August 2014, <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Policy-Politics/Japan-hopes-to-sell-Asean-on-defense-tech> (accessed 24 August 2014).

108 Corey J. Wallace, “Japan’s Strategic Pivot South: Diversifying the Dual Hedge”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 13, no. 3 (2013): 479–517 (490).

109 “Shūdanteki jieiken, kōshi yōnin ni hantai 63%, sakunen yori zōka” [63% against allowing the exercise of the right of collective self-defense, up from previous year], *Asahi Shimbun*, 7 April 2014.

The New Development Cooperation Charter

On February 10, 2015, the Abe cabinet approved a new ‘Development Cooperation Charter’ which replaces the 2002 Official Development Assistance Charter as a guide for Japan’s aid policy for developing nations.¹¹⁰ The new Charter stipulates for the first time that Japan can provide assistance to foreign military forces, although only for ‘nonmilitary purposes’ such as disaster relief. Critics argue, however, that it is impossible to distinguish military from non-military activities and that the government has not established explicit standards for decision-making.¹¹¹ Even if Japan’s assistance ostensibly serves nonmilitary purposes, it is unclear how Tokyo can prevent the aid from being diverted to military purposes subsequently.¹¹²

In 2002 the allocation rules had already been relaxed to make it easier to support foreign military detachments. Whereas the use of development aid for military purposes was strictly prohibited under the Charter of 1992, the revised version merely recommended avoiding such aid.¹¹³ Although Japan continued to refrain from supporting foreign military detachments, it increasingly assisted foreign coast guards in the fight against “non-traditional” security threats such as piracy or terrorism. In 2006 Tokyo transferred three coast guard vessels financed by development funds to Indonesia to assist in fighting piracy.¹¹⁴ Applying this allocation policy increasingly placed Japan in a gray area. In recent years Tokyo has supported Southeast Asian countries in building their military and paramilitary capabilities vis-à-vis China’s military power. Under the new Development Assis-

110 *Asahi Shimbun*, “Editorial: ‘Development cooperation charter’ could transform Japan’s foreign policy”, February 11, 2015, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201502110030> (accessed February 11, 2015).

111 Atsushi Hiroshima, “Panel Calls for ODA to Foreign Militaries for Nondefense Use”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 27 June 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201406270060 (accessed 27 June 2014).

112 Masaaki Kameda, “Japan adopts new aid policy, may aid foreign militaries,” 10 February, 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/02/10/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-adopts-new-aid-policy-may-aid-foreign-militaries/#.VOyEhWNSmPU> (accessed 20 February 2015).

113 “Govt Mulls Relaxing ODA Ban on Military-related Projects”, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 27 June 2014, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001385619> (accessed 29 June 2014).

114 Atsushi Hiroshima, “Abe Administration Seeks to Revise ODA Charter to Assist Militaries”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 1 April 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ20140410044 (accessed 5 July 2014).

tance Charter, Japan is likely to pursue such projects more extensively.

In the right-leaning press, criticism from South Korea and China is attributed to political motives.

Reactions in Japan and Abroad

On the whole, Abe's efforts to relax Japan's self-imposed restrictions on the use of military force have met with resistance in the population. Most Japanese feel that the task of the country's armed forces consists in defending Japanese territory in cooperation with the US as well as contributing to disaster relief and UN peacekeeping missions.¹¹⁵ Any further expansion of Japan's military role in the world, by contrast, is rejected by the public. This ardent skepticism with respect to the use of military power has always limited Tokyo's room for maneuver in deploying its troops abroad (for example, in terms of number of troops or constraints on the use of military force).¹¹⁶ Fears that the Japanese government could use its armed forces to project power in Asia or other regions of the world therefore seem unfounded.

In the past few months Japanese observers have been carefully monitoring reactions in neighboring states to the security changes under Abe. More left-leaning newspapers such as "Asahi" or "Mainichi" warn against further harming the already strained relations with South Korea and China, pointing to the widespread distrust shown toward Abe in these countries.¹¹⁷ Right-leaning newspapers such as "Yomiuri" or "Sankei", by contrast, emphasize that the majority of Japan's neighbors express understanding and even support for Abe's security policy: Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, Australia and New Zealand, for example, all welcome the reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution and look forward to Japan contributing more actively to international security.¹¹⁸

115 *Jieitai bōei mondai ni kansuru yoron chōsa*, ed. Kabinettsbüro (see note 4).

116 Paul Midford, *Japanese Public Opinion and Security: From Pacifism to Realism?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

117 "Kiken haramu gunji yūsen shūhenkoku shigeki kinchō maneku kenen, shūdanteki jieiken kakugi kettei" [Prioritization of military poses risks. There are concerns that neighboring countries might feel provoked, thereby creating tensions. Cabinet decision on the right of collective self-defense], *Asahi Shimbun*, 2 July 2014.

118 "Shūdanteki jieiken: Chūkan nozoku Kantaiheyōshokoku wa shiji, Shūhenkoku hantairon no 'kyozō'" [The right of collective self-defense: Pan-Pacific countries excluding China and South Korea show support. 'Illusory image' of opposition among neighboring countries], *Sankei Shimbun*, 3 August 2014,

<http://www.sankei.com/politics/news/140803/pl1408030008-n1.html> (accessed 5 November 2014).

The Three Central Pillars of Japan's Security Policy

Japan's security policy is based on three central pillars: (1) Japan's own capabilities and defense measures, (2) the alliance with the US, and (3) cooperation with other countries. In none of these three areas do the most recent security documents indicate a new policy orientation. Apart from various shifts in emphasis, the precautions and responses to provocations called for in the documents are identical to those outlined in the Defense Guidelines of 2010.

However, Abe is pursuing these goals more vigorously than preceding DPJ administrations, even if he is constrained by limited financial resources, domestic resistance and conflicting interests in partner countries. Particularly the third security pillar, international cooperation, has been enhanced significantly under Abe – a trend that had already become apparent in recent years. The focus is predominantly on bilateral efforts and less on cooperation with existing multi-lateral institutions.

Japan's Own Capabilities and Defense Measures

Strategic Plans: Mobile and Rapidly Deployable Troops

According to the NSS, Japan is encouraged to show more “diplomatic creativity” and increase its presence in international organizations such as the UN – for example, by dispatching personnel.¹¹⁹ In terms of defining Japan's own capabilities, however, the focus is on the Self-Defense Forces, which in the NSS are described as the “ultimate guarantee” of national security and protection from threats.¹²⁰

Despite the restraints imposed by the Constitution, Japan's armed forces are among the best equipped in the world. Although Japan with its 247,000 troops ranks only fifth in force levels in East Asia after China, the US, North Korea and Russia, in terms of equipment and weapons systems its state-of-the-art, professional military is in some regards far superior to the forces of

those countries. Even China has not yet caught up with Japan despite intense efforts to modernize its military.¹²¹ Among the regional powers Japan is surpassed by only the US, China and Russia in defense spending, which in Japan totals just over ¥4.8 trillion (approximately €37 billion, fiscal year 2014).¹²² In addition, Japan disposes of a well-equipped 13,200-man coast guard with a budget of approximately ¥183 billion (approximately €1.4 billion, fiscal year 2014).¹²³

The new strategy documents emphasize that the SDF must concentrate on preparing for gray-zone incidents in the island dispute with China. The central objective is to transform the SDF into a “dynamic joint defense force” that is rapidly deployable, mobile and flexible and in which army, navy and air force closely cooperate.¹²⁴ Furthermore, through a build-up of troops in Japan's southwest island province, Okinawa, and regular reconnaissance and surveillance activities in the disputed island area, Japan intends to “clearly express its resolve not to tolerate the change of the status quo by force”.¹²⁵ This announcement is an unequivocal warning to China and bolder than in the previous Defense Guidelines, in which Japan was merely urged to “clearly demonstrate its national will and its strong defense capabilities.”¹²⁶

However, the new concept of a “dynamic joint defense force” is only marginally different from the one published by the DPJ administration in 2010. The former approach was also aimed at creating a more rapidly deployable, more mobile military that could deter China and North Korea from provocations by demonstrating its capabilities. The new NDPG em-

¹²¹ Klein, *Russland als euro-pazifische Macht* (see note 35), 19.

¹²² *Defense of Japan 2014*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2014.html (accessed 2 October 2014); Klein, *Russland als euro-pazifische Macht* (see note 35), 19.

¹²³ Japan Coast Guard, *Kaijō Honanchō Panfuretto* [Brochure on the Japan Coast Guard], March 2014, 3, <http://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/jipam.pdf> (accessed on 17 August 2014).

¹²⁴ NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 15; NDPG 2013, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 7f.

¹²⁵ NDPG 2013, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 13f.

¹²⁶ *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and beyond*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense, 17 December 2010, 6, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/guidelinesFY2011.pdf (accessed 13 June 2014).

¹¹⁹ NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 14f.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

phasize that Japan should not only strive to deter gray-zone situations but must be ready for action at all times. Even if there is no clear evidence of an armed attack, Japan must be in a position to react “seamlessly”.¹²⁷ In addition, the Guidelines oblige the country to fortify its defense capabilities in such a manner that it can ensure maritime and air superiority even if faced with military escalation.¹²⁸

Before the drafting of the new National Defense Program Guidelines, the question of whether Japan needed to prepare itself for a retaliatory or even preventive strike on North Korean missile bases had led to heated debates. LDP politicians, among them Prime Minister Abe, advocated utilizing the new Guidelines to seek such capabilities, for example by acquiring cruise missiles. But Abe's coalition partner, the Komeito, rejected the highly contentious proposals.¹²⁹ As a result, the Guidelines state merely that Japan will continue to explore possible ways of responding to the missile threat.¹³⁰

Implementation: The Island Dispute as a Central Theme

The Abe administration continues to pursue the most important armament plans of its predecessors, particularly the modernization of the navy and air force. The top priorities remain unchanged: upgrading surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, repelling ballistic missile attacks, reacting more quickly and flexibly to provocations, and ensuring maritime and air superiority.¹³¹ To this end, the fleet of diesel-electric propelled Soryu-class submarines is to be increased from 16 to 22 units. Two Izumo-class “helicopter destroyers”, which can transport up to 14 helicopters, are currently under construction and are scheduled to be delivered between 2015 and 2017. These destroyers are capable of repelling submarine attacks.¹³² In order

to improve its ability to intercept ballistic missiles, Japan has decided to increase the number of Aegis destroyers equipped with modern SM-3 missile defense systems from four to six. And like the previous administration, Abe plans to equip the air force with 42 F-35 multirole combat aircraft. With this equipment, Japan will increasingly dispose of power projection capabilities that it has previously eschewed due to the defensive focus of its security policy.¹³³

In anticipation of future military conflicts over the Senkaku Islands, the Abe administration is stepping up implementation of the provisions contained in the most recent strategy documents. To begin with, Tokyo decided in December 2013 to establish an amphibian unit similar to the US Marine Corps. It is to be composed of members of all three branches of the armed forces and in the case of an enemy invasion be in a position to land on islands and recapture them. Although joint amphibian training between the US Marines and SDF troops had already taken place under the DPJ administration, Tokyo had thus far rejected the establishment of such a special force as too offensive.¹³⁴ The new unit is to grow to 3,000 troops within five years and be stationed in southwest Japan, on either the Kyushu Islands or the Nansei Islands.¹³⁵ In order to provide the troops with terrestrial capabilities, Japan plans to purchase seventeen V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft with vertical lift and landing capability as well as 52 amphibian vehicles, including the AAV-7 (Assault Amphibious Vehicle 7), a floatable armored vehicle used by the US Marines.¹³⁶

Second, the Abe administration is reinforcing the presence of the Self-Defense Forces in the immediate vicinity of the disputed Senkaku Islands. In April 2014 Japan began construction of a radar station and base for around 100 soldiers on Yonaguni – Japan's western-

¹²⁷ NDPG 2013, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 13.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 19.

¹²⁹ “Japan Eyes Cruise Missiles to Attack N. Korea”, *Chosun Ilbo*, 21 February 2013, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/02/21/2013022101139.html (accessed 5 June 2014).

¹³⁰ “Shasetsu: Abe seiken no anpo senryaku, heiwa shugi o torichigaeruna” [Editorial: The security strategy of the Abe administration – do not mistake it for pacifism], *Asahi Shimbun*, 18 December 2013.

¹³¹ NDPG 2013, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21).

¹³² *Heisei 21 nendo seisaku hyōka sho* [Policy evaluation for fiscal year 2009], ed. Japan Ministry of Defense, October 2009,

<http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/hyouka/seisaku/results/21/jizen/honbun/01.pdf> (accessed 14 August 2014).

¹³³ Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Remilitarization* (London: Routledge for International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009), 51.

¹³⁴ Justin Goldman, “An Amphibious Capability in Japan's Self-Defense Force: Operationalizing Dynamic Defense”, *Naval War College Review* 66, no. 4 (2013): 117–34 (125).

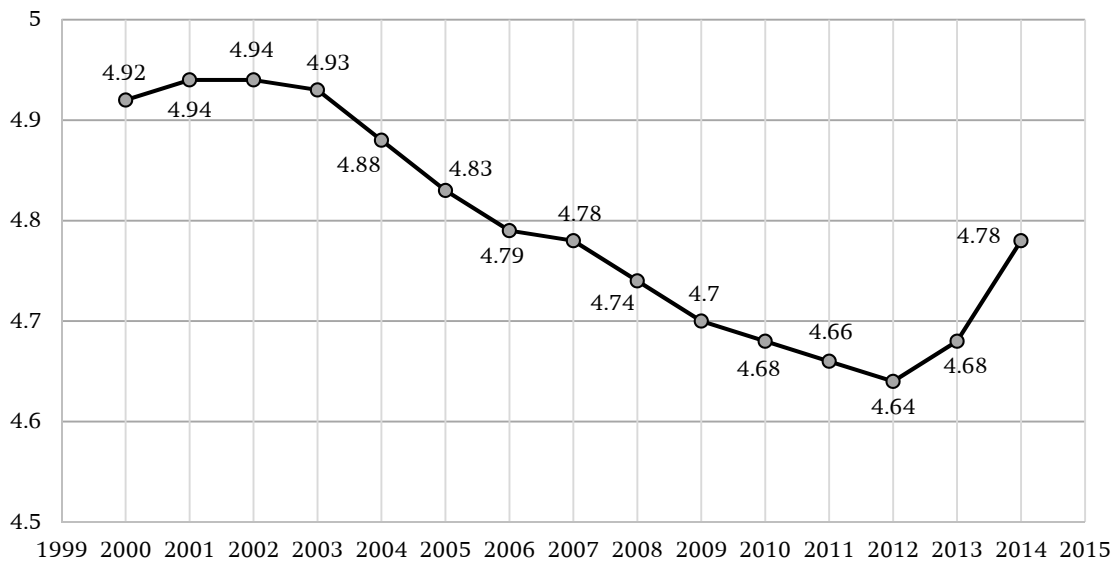
¹³⁵ Yuka Hayashi, “Japan Builds Amphibious Force Modeled on U.S. Marines”, *Wall Street Journal*, 18 July 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/japan-builds-amphibious-force-modeled-on-us-marines-1405597172> (accessed 15 August 2014).

¹³⁶ Koji Sonoda, “A Lot of New Equipment Purchases in Latest 5-year Defense Plan”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 14 December 2013, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201312140033 (accessed 20 December 2013).

Map
Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in regional context



Fig. 2
The Japanese Defense Budget (in ¥ trillion), fiscal years 2000–2014



Note: ¥5 trillion corresponds to approximately €38 billion (in March 2015). The expenditures do not include the costs of ameliorating the negative effects of the US military presence on the local population in Okinawa.

Source: White Book 2014.

most island, located just over 100 kilometers from Taiwan and around 150 kilometers from the Senkaku Islands (see map).¹³⁷ In establishing this base, Abe is carrying out a plan drafted by the DPJ administration in 2011. Further bases are to be built in the coming years on the islands of Amami Oshima, Ishigakijima and Miyakojima in southwestern Japan.¹³⁸ Furthermore, by 2016 the coast guard is to be enlarged by the addition of a 600-man unit exclusively responsible for patrolling the disputed island area.¹³⁹ All these measures are designed to enable Japan to respond more quickly in a future conflict over the Senkaku Islands.

Third, the Abe administration plans to acquire three Global Hawk reconnaissance drones in fiscal year 2015. The drones will help Japan to conduct

reconnaissance and surveillance of Chinese activities around the Senkaku Islands. The fact that Japan's ally, the US, stationed these very drones on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu in May 2014 facilitates the exchange of data.¹⁴⁰ In addition, Japan and the US plan to jointly develop an unmanned reconnaissance submarine in the coming years.¹⁴¹

The financial scope is limited, however, when it comes to providing the armed forces with additional personnel and more modern equipment. Japan's national debt has already grown to two-and-a-half times its annual economic output. It is worth noting in this context that only about 17 percent of the defense budget is spent on new arms purchases while 44 percent is spent on personnel.¹⁴² Although Japan increased its defense budget in fiscal year 2013 by 0.8 percent and then again by 2.2 percent in 2014, these

¹³⁷ "Bōei shō, yonaguni jima ni kanshi shisetsu chakkō" [Ministry of Defense begins construction of surveillance station on Yonaguni], *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 20 April 2014.

¹³⁸ "Ritō bōei 'kūhaku' o kaishō, amami ni rikujī, senkaku no kanshi kyōka" [Elimination of the 'vacuum' in the defense of remote islands, ground forces on the Amami island chain, reinforcing surveillance around the Senkaku Islands], *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 24 August 2014.

¹³⁹ Cherrie Lou Billone, "Japan Coast Guard to Form 600-member Unit Tasked Solely with Patrolling Senkakus", *Japan Daily Press*, 31 January 2013, <http://japandailynews.com/japan-coast-guard-to-form-600-member-unit-tasked-solely-with-patrolling-senkakus-3122472/> (accessed 3 August 2014).

¹⁴⁰ US Air Force, Misawa Base, "RQ-4 Global Hawk Arrives at Misawa", *Misawa Air Base*, 23 May 2014, <http://www.misawa.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123412132> (accessed 20 August 2014).

¹⁴¹ "Japan, U.S. to Develop Unmanned Submarine", *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 8 August 2014, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001482239> (accessed 9 August 2014).

¹⁴² *Defense of Japan 2014*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 122). Additional costs incurred include the repair and maintenance of bases.

increases came on the heels of a decade of budget cuts (see Fig. 2). Furthermore, the budget increase was partially eaten up by the rising cost of imports caused by the weak yen.¹⁴³

The Alliance with the US

Strategic Plans: Smooth Cooperation with Washington

Japan's relationship with the US, based on shared strategic interests and values, is considered a "cornerstone" of Japanese foreign and security policy.¹⁴⁴ In the US-Japanese security treaty, signed in 1951 and revised in 1960, Washington commits to guarantee Japan's security. In exchange, Japan allows the US to maintain bases on Okinawa and the Honshu Peninsula, where around 49,000 US soldiers are currently stationed.¹⁴⁵ According to the NSS, the alliance plays an "indispensable" role in the peace and security of Japan and the whole Asia-Pacific region.

According to the NDPG, the alliance should continue to be intensified in order to effectively deter aggressors and increase Japan's security.¹⁴⁶ Tokyo intends to expand joint exercises and surveillance activities as well as bilateral crisis planning.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, together with its allies Japan intends to contribute to international stability, for instance through capacity building, international peacekeeping operations, and joint initiatives in humanitarian missions or emergency response management. These goals are already outlined in the Defense Guidelines of 2010.

In the documents published under Abe, two points are given particular emphasis. First, there is a call for "seamless cooperation" with the US in all situations,

143 Kiichi Fujiwara, Yuichi Hosoya and Akiko Yamanaka, "Year Two of the Abe Administration: Prospects for the Future of Japanese Foreign Policy", in *Chatham House Asia Summary* 11 (2014), 3, http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/home/chatham/public_html/sites/default/files/20140211AbeAdministrationFujiwaraHosoyaYamanaka.pdf (accessed 25 June 2014).

144 NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 20; NDPG 2013, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 8.

145 "US Forces in Japan. Welcome", *U.S. Forces Japan Official Website*, <http://www.usfj.mil/Welcoming.html> (accessed 15 August 2014).

146 NDPG 2013, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 9; NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 20.

147 NDPG 2013, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 9.

with gray-zone incidents explicitly mentioned.¹⁴⁸

Second, the new strategy documents emphasize more strongly that Japan has a duty to ensure the "smooth and effective stationing" of US troops.¹⁴⁹ Although it is acknowledged that the massive US military presence has a negative effect on the quality of life of the local population – through environmental contamination, noise pollution or restrictions due to military zones, the goal of reducing the number of US troops in the Okinawa region seems to be of secondary importance.

Implementation: Resolving the "Futenma" Dispute

As announced in the security documents, the Abe administration is pressing for even closer cooperation with Washington. It is with this goal in mind that the Prime Minister has ordered a revision of the 1997 Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation, to be completed by mid-2015 – a step earlier advocated by his predecessor, Yoshihiko Noda of the DPJ. The Guidelines define the role and tasks of the armed forces of the two countries during joint operations. As part of the revision process, Tokyo intends to develop strategies and plans in preparation for a potential conflict over the Senkaku Islands.¹⁵⁰

Abe is also anxious to bring closure to the long-standing tug-of-war over the relocation of US Air Station Futenma on Okinawa Island. His efforts have met with resounding approval in Washington. As early as 1996, the two allies agreed to relocate the heliport from the city of Ginowan to a less densely populated area. But the implementation of this agreement has been repeatedly hindered because the majority of Okinawans oppose the construction of a new base.¹⁵¹ The local protest movement received a boost from the DPJ election campaign promise of 2009 to move the entire 4,000-man base to another prefecture – a promise that proved impossible to enforce against the will of the US.¹⁵² Under enormous pressure from the Abe

148 Ibid.

149 NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 22; NDPG 2013, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 10.

150 "Japan, U.S. Agree to Revise Defense Guidelines by End of 2014", *Asahi Shimbun*, 1 October 2013, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201310010069 (accessed 25 October 2013).

151 Emma Chanlett-Avery et al., *Japan-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 20 February 2014), 1.

152 Christopher W. Hughes, "The Democratic Party of Japan's New (But Failing) Grand Security Strategy: From 'Reluctant

administration, Okinawa's governor, Hirokazu Nakaima, finally abandoned resistance to the relocation plans. He then authorized a landfill in the Bay of Henoko in northwestern Okinawa, where the new base with two landing strips was to be built. Nakaima's consent removed the last impediment to the relocation plans. In return, Tokyo pledged to provide the prefecture with over ¥30 billion (around €2 billion) in annual economic aid through 2021.¹⁵³

Nevertheless, it is unlikely that US Air Station Futenma will now be quickly relocated. In January 2014 Abe's plans were dealt a serious setback in mayoral elections in the city of Nago, which belongs to Henoko. Susumu Inamine, an opponent of the Henoko base, was re-elected for a second term and vowed resistance.¹⁵⁴ The November 2014 gubernatorial elections in Okinawa were also won by an opponent of the base, Takeshi Onaga, who replaces former governor Nakaima. It will be extremely difficult to carry out the Henoko plans against the resistance of local administrations.

Abe's efforts to intensify cooperation with the US have met with resistance elsewhere as well. In July 2013 Tokyo decided to take part in negotiations over a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which were spearheaded by Washington. The planned free-trade zone, to which, in addition to Japan and the US, Australia, Brunei, Chile, Canada, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam intend to accede, is considered the most important component of Obama's policy of "rebalancing" toward Asia.¹⁵⁵ But as Tokyo and Washington hold widely diverging views regarding the market liberalization of Japan's agricultural sector, it is difficult to predict how talks will proceed and whether Japan will accede to the agreement.¹⁵⁶

Abe also caused disgruntlement by visiting the divisive Yasukuni Shrine in December 2013, at which

Japanese war victims – including convicted war criminals from World War II – are commemorated. The US was extraordinarily trenchant in its criticism of the visit and warned Japan against further damaging its already strained relations with South Korea and China.¹⁵⁷ Washington fears that the incident could complicate security coordination between its two most important allies, Japan and South Korea – irrespective of the tense situation in North Korea and China.¹⁵⁸

Cooperation with Other Countries

Strategic Plans:

Bilateral Cooperation and Maritime Order

The third pillar of Japanese security policy, Tokyo's cooperation with other countries, is addressed more extensively in the new security documents than in previous ones. Focus continues to be placed on bilateral cooperation and less on existing multilateral institutions and security fora such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS) or the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus).¹⁵⁹ In the Asia Pacific region Japan prefers to pursue security cooperation with countries that share its "universal values and strategic interests".¹⁶⁰ Among these are South Korea, Australia, several ASEAN member states, and India – countries that were already listed in the previous Guidelines. The new Security Strategy highlights South Korea as a "neighboring country of the utmost geopolitical importance".¹⁶¹ Relations with Seoul play an important role for regional stability and in confronting the threat posed by North Korea. With a view to strengthening relations among US allies in Asia, the new strategy documents for the first time call on Japan to pursue trilateral security cooperation among the US, Japan and other allies like South Korea, Australia or India.¹⁶²

Realism' to 'Resentful Realism'?", *Journal of Japanese Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012): 109–40.

153 Gavan McCormack, "Bitter Soup for Okinawans – The Governor's Year-End Betrayal", *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 12, no. 1:2 (2014), <http://japanfocus.org/-Gavan-McCormack/4056> (accessed 5 February 2014).

154 "Nago shichōsen Henoko hantai, Inamine-shi saisen" [Mayoral election in Nago against Henoko, another election victory for Inamine], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 20 January 2014.

155 Chanlett-Avery et al., *Japan-U.S. Relations* (see note 151), 31.

156 "TPP May Leave Japan Behind: U.S. Farm Chief", *Japan Times*, 29 April 2014, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/04/29/business/economy-business/tpp-may-proceed-without-japan-fails-open-agriculture-sector/#.U-tkTBBCyAM> (accessed 20 August 2014).

157 George Nishiyama, "Abe Visit to Controversial Japanese Shrine Draws Rare U.S. Criticism", *Wall Street Journal*, 26 December 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304483804579281103015121712> (accessed 13 January 2014).

158 Chanlett-Avery et al., *Japan-U.S. Relations* (see note 151), 1.

159 See also: Gudrun Wacker, *Sicherheitskooperation in Ostasien. Strukturen, Trends und Leistungsgrenzen* [Security cooperation in East Asia. Structures, trends and limitations], Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, January 2015 (SWP-Studie S2/2015).

160 NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 23.

161 Ibid.

162 NDPG 2013, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 11; NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 26.

With respect to Russia and China, the old Guidelines called for confidence-building measures and the promotion of cooperative relations without differentiating between the two countries.¹⁶³ The new documents, by contrast, dedicate a separate section to Russia in which Japan is urged to pursue active security dialogue and enhanced bilateral cooperation. Improving relations with Russia and working with Moscow to “[secure] peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region” is described as “critical for Japan”.¹⁶⁴ On the subject of cooperation with China, on the other hand, there is little difference between the old and new documents. Japan supports bilateral dialogue and confidence-building measures and encourages China to behave as a responsible and constructive international actor. Beijing’s attempts to change the status quo in territorial disputes by coercion are to be countered “firmly but in a calm manner”.¹⁶⁵

Japan’s intention to create a maritime order based on international law and the freedom of navigation constitutes a further focus in the new strategy documents.¹⁶⁶ On the one hand, Tokyo is expected to help establish international maritime rules, for example by supporting the Code of Conduct for the South China Sea proposed by ASEAN.¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, Japan intends to work more closely with countries abutting its most important shipping routes, above all in Southeast Asia, and to improve their ability to monitor coastal waters through joint training (capability building assistance).¹⁶⁸ By empowering these countries, Japan can actively help to create stability in the region.¹⁶⁹

Implementation: Old and New Partners

The government in Tokyo has long been criticized both at home and abroad for allowing Japan to become a client state of the US through its one-sided dependence on the US to guarantee its security.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and Beyond*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 9.

¹⁶⁴ NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 25.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *NDPG 2013*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 4; NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 17.

¹⁶⁷ NSS, ed. Prime Minister of Japan (see note 66), 8, 24.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶⁹ *NDPG 2013*, ed. Japan Ministry of Defense (see note 21), 16.

¹⁷⁰ Wilhelm Vosse, “Grundzüge und Tendenzen der japanischen Außenpolitik” [Main features and tendencies in Japanese foreign policy], in *Japan 2007*, ed. Deutsche Vereinigung für sozialwissenschaftliche Japanforschung [German Association

Over the past decade or so, however, Japan has stepped up its efforts to establish additional security partnerships and consolidate existing ones. Prime Minister Abe is vigorously pursuing this objective. Unlike the previous administration, Abe strives for rapprochement with Russia and North Korea. His stance toward China, by contrast, is more confrontational. Unless it constructively engages Beijing, however, Tokyo will not be able to live up its own goal of establishing a maritime order based on common rules.

Japan’s “Pivot South”: A Coalition of the Willing

According to the strategy documents, Japan’s diversification efforts are directed primarily toward Australia, India and ASEAN member states, among the latter particularly the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia. Tokyo is interested in partners who are equally concerned about China’s rise and who also champion democratic values, though Vietnam does not fulfil the second criterion. Through cooperation with strategic partners of the US, Japan wants to contribute to US security strategy and respond to the global power shift.¹⁷¹ The impressive pace set by Tokyo in pursuing security cooperation with these countries has prompted some observers to use the term “pivot south” – analogous to the US “pivot to Asia”.¹⁷²

The strategic partnership with Australia is particularly well-established. In 2007 Tokyo and Canberra signed the “Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation”, in which they pledged to coordinate more closely on regional strategic issues, intensify intelligence cooperation and conduct joint military exercises.¹⁷³ Since then, so-called 2+2 talks have been held regularly and attended by the two countries’ foreign and defense ministers. Since 2006, Tokyo and Canberra have been holding trilateral security talks together with the US (Trilateral Strategic Dialogue).¹⁷⁴ Further-

for Social Science Research on Japan] (Hamburg, 2007): 101–124 (115).

¹⁷¹ *New Security Strategy of Japan: Multilayered and Cooperative Security Strategy*, 8 October ed. Policy Research Division, Tokyo Foundation (2008), 21f., http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/additional_info/New%20Security%20Strategy%20of%20Japan.pdf (accessed 30 August 2014).

¹⁷² Wallace, “Japan’s Strategic Pivot South” (see note 108).

¹⁷³ *Japan’s Security Strategy toward China*, ed. Tokyo Foundation (see note 7), 54f.

¹⁷⁴ Daisuke Akimoto, “The Japan-Australia Security Alignment: Its Development and the Implications for Regional Integration of the Asia-Pacific”, in *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 13, no. 4 (2013), <http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcs/vol13/iss4/akimoto.html> (accessed 14 May 2014).

more, Japan and Australia have signed an agreement on data security (2012) and a so-called Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (2013) aimed at formalizing mutual logistic support during military operations.¹⁷⁵

Japan has also intensified its cooperation with India. In 2008 Tokyo and New Delhi signed a “Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation”; the following year they adopted an implementation action plan. Since 2010 high representatives of the foreign and defense ministries have been holding annual 2+2 talks.¹⁷⁶ A trilateral strategic dialogue has existed with the US since 2011.¹⁷⁷ The maritime forces of the two countries conducted two joint training sessions in 2012 and 2013. In 2015, Tokyo and New Delhi are furthermore likely to conclude a deal for the sale of at least twelve Japanese US-2 amphibian aircraft.¹⁷⁸ Japan is also pursuing close security cooperation with ASEAN countries, as evidenced by its strategic partnerships with Indonesia (since 2006), Vietnam (2009), the Philippines (2011), Thailand (2012), Cambodia (2013) and ASEAN itself (2011).¹⁷⁹ In only eleven months in office, Abe visited all ten ASEAN member states, thus demonstrating the importance he attaches to Southeast Asia. He was the first Japanese Premier to do this.¹⁸⁰

As the most recent security documents show, Japan is especially committed to providing capacity-building assistance in Southeast Asia. Tokyo supports the development of paramilitary and military capabilities in

ASEAN countries through joint exercises and infrastructure projects. In fiscal year 2011, the Japan Ministry of Defense set up a Capacity Building Assistance Office that helps other countries to develop their disaster relief and coastal waters surveillance capabilities. In order to avoid giving China the impression that a containment policy is being established, the program includes projects outside the Asia Pacific region.¹⁸¹ The budget, at ¥236 million (€1.8 million, fiscal year 2014), is currently very limited but could be increased considerably in the coming years.¹⁸²

The Abe administration caused a great stir by announcing plans in December 2013 and August 2014, respectively, to deliver ten patrol boats to the Philippines and six to the Vietnamese coast guards – thereby implementing plans of the previous DPJ administration.¹⁸³ For Manila, the delivery amounts to more than a doubling of its fleet, from nine to nineteen ships.¹⁸⁴ Although this capability boost in the Philippines and Vietnam does little to shift the power balance vis-à-vis China with its powerful military, it nevertheless signals that Tokyo is not prepared to stand by listlessly and watch Beijing’s aggressive behavior in the South China Sea. Japanese political scientist Yoshihide Soeya sees Tokyo’s security policy as an attempt to form its own “coalition of the willing” in order to prevent China from forcefully asserting its territorial claims.¹⁸⁵

Japan and South Korea are linked by shared values such as human rights, democracy and the rule of law

175 Hayley Channer, Andrew Davies and Peter Jennings, *Something New under the Rising Sun: Expanding Australia-Japan Defence Cooperation*, ASPI Policy Analysis no. 111 (Barton, AUS: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, June 2013), <https://www.aspi.org.au/publications/something-new-under-the-rising-sun-expanding-australia-japan-defence-cooperation-by-hayley-channer-andrew-davies-and-peter-jennings> (accessed 14 April 2014).

176 Daniel M. Kliman and Daniel Twining, *Japan’s Democracy Diplomacy*, GMF Asia Paper Series, 11 July 2014, 14, http://www.spf.org/media/upload/3_GMF_final.pdf (accessed 12 July 2014).

177 *Ibid.*, 15.

178 “India and Japan Inch Closer to Surveillance Aircraft Deal”, *The Diplomat*, 5 March 2015 <http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/india-and-japan-inch-closer-to-surveillance-aircraft-deal/> (accessed 9 March 2015).

179 Thuy Thi Do, *Locating Vietnam-Japan’s Strategic Partnership in the Changing East Asian Political Landscape*, JIIA Paper, 11 July 2014, http://www2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/fellow_report/140711_Vietnam-Japan_Strategic_Partnership-Final_paper_Thuy_Thi_Do.pdf (accessed 30 July 2014).

180 “With Visits to all 10 ASEAN Nations, Abe’s China Containment Strategy Complete”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 18 November 2013, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201311180082 (accessed 25 November 2013).

181 Yoshihiro Makino, “Defense Ministry Quietly Begins Providing Assistance to Military Forces Overseas”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 27 August 2012, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/AJ201208270082 (accessed 13 August 2014).

182 *Heisei 25nen gyōsei jigō rebyū shūto, nōryoku kōchiku shien jigō, jigō bangō 11* [Administrative assessment 2013: Assignment Number 11 on Capability Building Assistance], ed. Japan Ministry of Defense, http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/others/service/kanshi_koritsu/h25_res/r-sheet/0011.pdf (accessed 28 August 2014).

183 Vu Trong Khanh, “Japan to Help Vietnam Improve Maritime Capability”, *Wall Street Journal*, 1 August 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/japan-to-help-vietnam-improve-maritime-capability-1406883961> (accessed 2 August 2014).

184 Jerry E. Esplanada, “Patrol Boats from Japan to Start Arriving in 2015”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 31 March 2014, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/590453/patrol-boats-from-japan-to-start-arriving-in-2015> (accessed 2 August 2014).

185 Martin Fackler, “Japan Is Flexing Its Military Muscle to Counter a Rising China”, *New York Times*, 26 November 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/27/world/asia/japan-expands-its-regional-military-role.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed 2 August 2014).

as well as by similar strategic interests in relation to North Korea and China. Both are allies of the US. One would expect them to be close security partners. But despite the declarations in the most recent strategy documents, Seoul is hardly taken into account by the Japanese government in its “pivot south”. Closer cooperation is repeatedly hindered by historical animosities that have never been sufficiently laid to rest and by a territorial dispute. Since Abe assumed office, relations have again deteriorated, which can be attributed to the Prime Minister's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine and his apologetic stance in the dispute over the “comfort women”, predominantly Korean women forced to serve as prostitutes by the Japanese army during the colonial period. The tensions reveal the fragile nature of the bilateral relationship between Japan and South Korea.

Value-oriented Foreign Policy and the Isolation of China

Abe emphasizes the foreign policy significance of values such as democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights more vocally than his predecessors. As early as his first term in office, in 2006/2007, he propagated a value-oriented foreign policy.¹⁸⁶ He was criticized both at home and abroad for precluding cooperation with China by emphasizing these values.¹⁸⁷ Abe's plan to initiate a formal “quadrilateral partnership” among the US, Japan, India and Australia was condemned by Beijing as a containment strategy. As a result, India and Australia promptly discontinued the cooperation begun by the group of four in 2007.¹⁸⁸ After Abe's resignation, both the LDP and the DPJ administrations intensified bilateral cooperation with India and Australia but avoided explicitly ostracizing China by focusing on values.¹⁸⁹

In Abe's second tenure, however, it has become clear that his value-oriented foreign policy is indeed aimed at containing and ostracizing China. In his own words, he intends to form a “democratic security diamond for Asia” with the involvement of Japan, the US (Hawaii), India and Australia. In making this proposal, Abe intends to resuscitate cooperation among the four largest Indo-Pacific democracies.¹⁹⁰ As the South China Sea threatens to become the “Beijing Sea”, he argues, the group of four must keep China's hegemonial aspirations in check and safeguard freedom of navigation from the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific Region.¹⁹¹ Abe also invites the UK and France, as democratic seafaring nations, to contribute to stability in Asia. Furthermore, in his speeches Abe continually demands that international law be respected – also a veiled criticism of China and its aggressive behavior in the territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas. In a keynote address delivered at a forum for security experts during the so-called Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in May 2014, Abe pledged to stand by any Southeast Asian countries that see their territorial integrity threatened by Beijing's growing assertiveness.¹⁹²

It is not difficult to see that Abe's value-oriented foreign policy is a pretext for isolating China. How else can one explain his close cooperation with auto-critically-governed Vietnam? But many Japanese observers doubt that Abe's policy will endure since China, as a central actor in important regional security issues (such as the Taiwan issue or North Korea), cannot be excluded.¹⁹³

With his confrontational value-based foreign policy, Abe has not been able to make any substantial progress in the Sino-Japanese relationship in the first two years of his tenure, even if he insists that he wants to build “a mutually beneficial relationship based on common

¹⁸⁶ Yuichi Hosoya, “The Rise and Fall of Japan's Grand Strategy: The ‘Arc of Freedom and Prosperity’ and the Future Asian Order”, *Asia Pacific Review* 18, no. 1 (2011): 13–24.

¹⁸⁷ “Kachi no gaikō wa nihon gaikō no shin-kijiku to narieru ka – dai 166 kokkai ni okeru gaikō rongi no shōten” [Can ‘value-oriented foreign policy’ constitute a new maxim for Japan's foreign policy? Focal points of the foreign policy debate in the 166th session of parliament], *Rippō to Chōsa* 272, no. 9 (2007): 3f.

¹⁸⁸ Kliman and Twining, *Japan's Democracy Diplomacy* (see note 176), 17.

¹⁸⁹ Ken Jimbo, “Long Term Outlook for Japan's Foreign and Security Policies”, *The Tokyo Foundation Website*, 8 May 2009, <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2009/long-term-outlook-for-japan2019s-foreign-and-security-policies> (accessed 12 April 2014).

¹⁹⁰ Yuichi Hosoya, “Japan's Two Strategies for East Asia: The Evolution of Japan's Diplomatic Strategy”, *Asia-Pacific Review* 20, no. 2 (2013): 146–56 (154).

¹⁹¹ Shinzo Abe, “Asia's Democratic Security Diamond”, *Project Syndicate*, 27 December 2012, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe> (accessed 27 December 2012).

¹⁹² Shinzo Abe, *Shangri-La Dialogue 2014 Keynote Address*, May 2014, International Institute for Strategic Studies, <https://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri%20a%20dialogue/archive/2014-c20c/opening-remarks-and-keynote-address-b0b2/keynote-address-shinzo-abe-a787> (accessed 1 June 2014).

¹⁹³ Tanaka Hitoshi, *Forging a Common Regional Approach to China*, *East Asia Insights* 9:3 (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, July 2014), 3.

strategic interests” with Beijing.¹⁹⁴ In the multilateral context, Japan is conspicuously short on creative ideas regarding how to constructively integrate China into a rule-based international order. Even so, Tokyo succeeded in arranging a bilateral summit on the margins of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum that took place in Beijing in mid-November 2014, made possible in part by repeated visits to Beijing by Shotaro Yachi, head of the National Security Secretariat, and former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda. Beijing had previously ruled out bilateral summit talks, saying that Abe had hurt the feelings of the Chinese people by visiting the Yasukuni Shrine.

Controversial Relations: Russia and North Korea

While Japan’s cooperation efforts in the Indo-Pacific region generally meet with the approval of its ally, the US, Washington views Abe’s rapprochement with Russia and North Korea with suspicion. The Obama administration fears that Tokyo’s bilateral efforts could undermine international attempts to deal with the Ukraine crisis and North Korea’s nuclear program.¹⁹⁵

Since 2013 Japanese-Russian relations have improved considerably. In April 2013 Abe visited Moscow, ten years after the last official visit to Russia by a Japanese prime minister.¹⁹⁶ During the visit, Abe and Putin agreed to hold regular 2+2 talks between the two sides’ foreign and defense ministers. A first 2+2 meeting took place in November 2013. In February 2014 Abe attended the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Sochi while the other G7 heads of government stayed home in protest against human rights violations in Russia.

There are several reasons for Tokyo’s rapprochement with Moscow. Since the Fukushima nuclear catastrophe, Japan’s need for energy has grown, as a result of which Tokyo plans to import more liquefied natural gas from Russia. Furthermore, Abe is hoping for an historic breakthrough in relations with Russia,

194 “Japan PM Says Door Always Open for China Talks”, *Channel News Asia*, 8 July 2014, <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/japan-pm-says-door-always/1244520.html> (accessed 10 July 2014).

195 “Washington Irritated by Abe Diplomacy on Russia, North Korea”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 26 July 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201407260033 (accessed 27 July 2014).

196 Dmitri Streltsov, “Japanese Prime Minister Abe’s Visit to Russia”, *East Asia Forum*, 15 May 2013, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/05/15/japanese-prime-minister-abes-visit-to-russia/> (accessed 18 May 2013).

not least because of his country’s poor relations with China and North Korea. Both Abe and Putin seek to end the territorial dispute over the four southern islands of the Kuril chain and to conclude a peace treaty seven decades after the Second World War. A further motivation for expanding the security partnership with Moscow is Tokyo’s fear of an increasingly assertive China. Due to Russia’s annexation of Crimea, rapprochement has been put on hold for the time being. In response to the escalating Ukraine crisis, Tokyo imposed sanctions against Russia in April and August 2014. But these are limited measures that do not hit Russia particularly hard.¹⁹⁷ Japan is unlikely to get tough with Russia anytime soon, for otherwise Moscow could be prompted to seek closer relations with China.¹⁹⁸

Under Abe there are also signs of movement in Japan’s relations with North Korea, which have been at a standstill for years. In July 2014 the Japanese government announced that it would relax sanctions imposed on the communist regime. In return, Pyongyang pledged to investigate the whereabouts of Japanese citizens abducted to North Korea. Tokyo thereby hopes to clarify the fate of those who disappeared in the 1970s and 1980s – a goal to which Abe committed himself long ago. The US and South Korea fear, however, that in the course of trying to shed light on the fate of the disappeared, Japan could veer away from the common policy toward North Korea.

Regional Cooperation: Strengthening Cohesion in ASEAN

According to the strategy documents, Tokyo supports regional institutions such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) or the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) but does not give them priority. Japan views functional cooperation in a multilateral context, such as disaster relief activities, as a contribution to confidence-building.¹⁹⁹ But considering Beijing’s aggressive behavior in territorial

197 Cf. Nadine Godehardt, Alexandra Sakaki and Christian Wagner, *Krise in der Ukraine – Kaum Reaktionen in Asien. Nationale Interessen gegenüber Russland haben Vorrang für China, Indien und Japan* [Crisis in Ukraine – Scant reaction in Asia. National interests vis-à-vis Russia take precedence for China, India and Japan], SWP Comments 33/2014 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, May 2014).

198 “Tokyo-Pyongyang Abduction Talks Still on Despite N. Korean Missile Launch”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 30 June 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201406300036 (accessed 1 July 2014).

199 Hideshi Futori, *Japan’s Disaster Relief Diplomacy: Fostering Military Cooperation in Asia*, Asia Pacific Bulletin 213 (Washington, D.C.: East-West Center, May 2013).

disputes, Tokyo has little hope that China will allow itself to be “socialized” in regional institutions and thereby accept existing international norms and practices.

On the contrary, Tokyo and Beijing are increasingly competing for influence in regional fora.²⁰⁰ The rivalry between the two major powers thereby hinders the development of a durably viable security architecture. At both the establishment of the EAS in 2005 and the start of negotiations over the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), Japan insisted in each case on involving Australia, New Zealand and India in order to restrain China's dominance.²⁰¹ In recent years Japan has increasingly tried to strengthen the cohesion and significance of ASEAN in order to provide members with collective backing in their dealings with China.²⁰² For example, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda pledged ¥2 billion (approx. €15 million) for projects designed to boost integration within ASEAN.²⁰³ At a summit meeting of the organization in December 2013, Abe also declared his support for Southeast Asian integration efforts and pledged a further ¥2 billion in development aid.²⁰⁴

200 Chien-Peng Chung, “China and Japan in ‘ASEAN Plus’ Multilateral Arrangements: Raining on the Other Guy’s Parade”, *Asian Survey* 53, no. 5 (2013): 801–24.

201 Jinsoo Park, “Political Rivals and Regional Leaders: Dual Identities and Sino-Japanese Relations within East Asian Cooperation”, *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 6, no. 1 (2013): 85–107 (103).

202 Tanaka Hitoshi, *Forging a Common Regional Approach to China* (see note 193), 3.

203 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ed.), *14th ASEAN-Japan Summit (Overview)*, 18 November 2011, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/jfpu/2011/11/1118-02.html> (accessed 27 August 2014).

204 Mizuho Aoki, “Japan, ASEAN Tie Up on Flight Rights”, *Japan Times*, 14 December 2013, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/12/14/national/japan-asean-tie-up-on-flight-rights/#.UqxWUuImOpU> (accessed 20 December 2013).

Conclusions and Prospects

Those who believe that Japanese security policy has changed course fail to take into account that it has been undergoing a gradual transformation since as early as the end of the Cold War. Over the past several decades, Tokyo has reluctantly given up its passive security policy stance and gradually relinquished former pacifist principles. New challenges and the increased expectations of Japan's ally, the US, have led Japan to adjust its policies. North Korea's missile and nuclear program and China's gradual rise as an economic and military power, in particular, have forced the country into closer security cooperation with Washington, which in the event of a crisis would also require Japan to contribute militarily.

In view of the complex security environment, the Abe administration seeks to better protect the country from security risks and influence regional developments to Japan's advantage. The alliance with the US remains the linchpin of Japan's foreign and security policy. Closer cooperation with the US is aimed at enhancing the deterrence effect. At the same time, Japan is diversifying its security policy relations. In terms of content, Abe has to a large extent followed on from initiatives and considerations already in existence. Compared with his predecessors, however, he has pursued security policy adjustments and reforms more vigorously and at a faster pace. This applies, for instance, to the plans for establishing a National Security Council, which have been under discussion for years, or the relaxation of arms export guidelines. Abe has endeavored to cultivate diverse foreign and security policy relationships by making an unprecedented number of diplomatic trips abroad. In just over a year in office, he traveled to 49 countries, setting a record for number of visits made by a Japanese post-war premier.²⁰⁵

Abe's security policy constitutes a continuation of two trends of the past several years. First, Tokyo has been working to strengthen security cooperation outside of its alliance with the US. The priority target

group includes Australia and India as well as several Southeast Asian countries. The new partnerships complement Japan's current security policy, which is aligned almost exclusively with Washington. Given the decline in US hegemony and the numerous regional challenges, Japan is seeking additional partners in order to increase its room for maneuver. Dialogue with individual countries serves to sound out concordant interests that can be pursued jointly. This cooperation-oriented foreign policy is essential in view of the fact that the economic power Japan has thus far used to influence international events is dwindling. The network of primarily bilateral relationships will open up new opportunities for Japan to play a larger security role in East Asia in the future.

Second, Japan has continued its "normalization process" under Abe, through which the country is gradually relaxing its restrictions on the use of armed forces and military resources. The Prime Minister is unusually open in his criticism of Japan's traditional passiveness and the categorical rejection of military force as part of security policy, in which up until now only individual self-defense was allowed. To him it is evident that the idealistic pacifism of the post-war period is incompatible with today's geopolitical realities. Abe's reforms, such as the reinterpretation of Article 9 or the amendment of the Development Charter, only legitimize what the Japanese government in fact already practices. For example, Tokyo has for years reframed cases of collective self-defense as individual self-defense, such as the deployment of Japanese armed forces in the Indian Ocean as part of the "war on terrorism".²⁰⁶ Abe's revisions in the areas of collective self-defense, arms exports and development aid render the legitimatizing acrobatics of the past unnecessary.

In the course of the "normalization" that Japan has gone through, Article 9 of the Constitution – the article relevant to security policy – has been reinterpreted, but not reworded or removed. The majority of the

²⁰⁵ The previous record-holder was Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who in his approximately five and a half years in office visited 48 countries. See "Premier's Travel Log Totals 47 Countries", *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 3 August 2014, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001471631> (accessed 5 August 2014).

²⁰⁶ Axel Berkofsky, *Die Neuen Amerikanisch-Japanischen Leitlinien für Verteidigungskooperation: Implikationen für Japans regionale Sicherheitspolitik* [The new US-Japanese guidelines for defense cooperation: Implications for Japan's regional security policy], (Münster, 2005), 278.

Japanese population remains opposed to changing this article, which symbolizes the country's rejection of militarism. Skepticism with regard to the use of military power is deeply rooted. It is therefore not surprising that Abe has foundered on domestic resistance in his attempt to amend the Constitution. Because of the anti-military stance of the population, the government must thoroughly discuss and explain every change of course in Japan's military policy. Thus, there seems to be little danger of Japanese militarism flaring up again. Without a reform of Article 9, however, Japan's security policy will continue to operate in a zone of tension between constitutional principle and political practice.

Two weaknesses in Japan's security policy have become clearly evident under Abe. First, the government has thus far been unable to dispel mistrust in China and South Korea of Tokyo's enhanced security role. Historically both countries have suffered greatly under Japanese military dominance and harbor suspicions against Abe's reforms and initiatives. They find it problematic that Japan is expanding its role without having accounted for the past. Instead, Abe has trivialized Japan's war crimes in East Asia and visited the Yasukuni Shrine, where war criminals are also honored. Abe's criticism is certainly used by China's government to divert attention from domestic grievances. But this does not change the fact that Japan must show more willingness to come to terms with its history.

Second, Tokyo lacks creative ideas on how to improve the security situation in East Asia. This will be possible only on the basis of mutual trust. But Japan's unwillingness to confront its history continues to obstruct the development of constructive relationships with China and South Korea. Instead of promoting regional stability, Abe's policy of focusing on values further exacerbates Japan's rivalry with China. Moreover, Tokyo is so disillusioned by the ineffectuality of multilateral institutions and security fora that it has little interest in reviving and enhancing them. The Japanese government's current policy toward North Korea and Russia attests to the fact that its current course of security diversification is not aimed at bolstering multilateralism. Rather, Tokyo is – reluctantly – pursuing bilateral rapprochement with both countries, which runs counter to multilateral efforts to deal with the Ukraine crisis and North Korea's nuclear program.

The continuity in Japan's security policy over the last few years shows that there is a consensus among

the country's political elite regarding the tasks and priorities in this policy field. Hence, irrespective of what party is in office Tokyo is likely to continue to strive for a more active role in the region. The precise shape Japan's involvement will take, however, can only be partially foreseen. Japan is apparently prepared to respond resolutely to gray-zone disputes in order to preserve its territorial integrity. By reinforcing Japan's military capacities, reinterpreting Article 9, and coordinating crisis response plans more closely with Washington, Tokyo contributes to burden-sharing in the alliance and thus to a US-centered security architecture in the region. Furthermore, Japan is supporting US strategy by cooperating with countries like Australia, India and the Philippines to which the US also attaches great importance. In light of the anti-militaristic stance of its own population, Tokyo is at best likely to exercise the right to collective self-defense in support of the US. However, regional partners can hope for Japanese support in developing their military and paramilitary capabilities (capacity building assistance). It remains unclear whether Japan will in the long run content itself with its role as a junior partner in the alliance with Washington or whether it might cautiously strive to emancipate itself.

Persistent economic stagnation and the public deficit, which has climbed to a record-breaking level, limit Japan's ability to implement its security agenda. In addition, the country has suffered a loss of regional influence because it is no longer seen among Asian countries as a role model for economic development. Whether Tokyo can muster the financial resources needed to undergird its security policy in future depends on the success of "Abenomics", Abe's economic policy.

Despite the shortcomings and risks, Japan's current security policy also presents opportunities, since Tokyo is apparently prepared to assume responsibility for regional and international stability. Accordingly, the former presidents of the European Council and the European Commission, Herman Von Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso, welcomed Japan's efforts to expand its security role at a meeting with Abe in May 2014.²⁰⁷ Europe should regard Tokyo's efforts to diversify its security relationships as an opportunity to jointly develop and realize concrete projects, such as estab-

²⁰⁷ 22nd EU-Japan Summit: Joint Press Statement, ed. Council of the European Union (Brussels, 7 May 2014), 7, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/142520.pdf (accessed 2 August 2014).

lishing and enforcing binding rules and norms for the peaceful resolution of disputes. It would make sense, for example, for the two sides to collaborate on setting up rules to govern the “global commons”. Japan and Europe are economically dependent on the unlimited use of the high seas, airspace, outer space and cyberspace. Binding rules could prevent power rivalries and territorial claims from endangering the global trade routes in the South China and East China Seas. China should be integrated into such initiatives so that it does not perceive them as directed against it. At the same time, the EU could propose ways to revitalize and more effectively shape security dialogues in East Asia.

For the US, with its long-undisputed leadership role in the region, the rise of China constitutes a challenge. Asia’s future order could become more competitive and potentially more instable. Should a military conflict arise, the EU would be directly affected due to close trade relations. Thus, it is in Europe’s interest to devote more attention to the security challenges in East Asia. It is essential that Europe intensify the security dialogue with Asian countries, including Japan.

Abbreviations

ADIZ	Air Defense Identification Zone
ADMM-Plus	ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting Plus
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
EAS	East Asia Summit
FY	Fiscal Year
GMF	German Marshall Fund of the United States
JIIA	Japan Institute of International Affairs
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
NDPG	National Defense Program Guidelines (Japan)
NSC	National Security Council (Japan)
NSS	National Security Strategy (Japan)
ODA	Official Development Aid
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SDF	Self-Defense Forces (Japan)
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations