

Japan's Security Strategy and Its Impact on U.S. National Security Interests

by Sung K. Hyong and David A. Anderson

Japan's broadening security strategy reveals the unease with which it views the evolving security order in the Indo-Pacific. Several grave threats to regional stability continue to define the region's changing security environment. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear weapons program and China's maritime claims in the South China Sea relentlessly disrupt the region's equilibrium. The escalation of DPRK's missile launches over Japan as well as the robust and unpredictable responses of the South China Sea littoral states to China's territorial ambitions also contribute to the region's volatility. As Japan shifts to a more assertive security strategy through integrated diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) means, there are potentially far-reaching implications for the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.

Japan's security developments have stoked concerns in China over its longstanding belief in its intended de facto containment through American, Japanese, and Indian "encirclement," a perceived humiliation and direct impediment to its great power ambitions.¹ South Korea, a key ally of the United States (U.S.) and Japan's nominal security partner, has also expressed reservations over Japan's intentions, accentuated by continuing friction over lasting historical issues.

The 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) does list the "revisionist power of China" alongside other main challengers to U.S. interests such as Russia, Iran, DPRK, and transnational threat organizations as significant concerns to national security.² The NSS specifically highlights

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the gravity of China’s revisionist potential, identifying its ambitions to “displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor.”³ As a result, the NSS calls on U.S. allies such as Japan “to modernize, acquire necessary capabilities, improve readiness, expand the size of their forces, and affirm the political will to win.”⁴

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The U.S. is also striving to develop a coherent and viable Indo-Pacific strategy, especially as it confronts the consequences of China’s rapid ascension as a regional and global power.⁵ However, the U.S. is operating under financial constraints and remains distracted by events outside the Indo-Pacific. To maintain strategic relevance and manage the variable balance of power, the U.S. is encouraging and supporting Japan’s efforts to become a more self-sufficient and active security partner.

Peace and regional stability in the Indo-Pacific are paramount to U.S. interests. However, Japan’s transition to a more assertive and regionally engaged security posture may be in conflict with these very interests. This paper explores the potential dangers of misaligned strategy through DIME analysis in order to provide a holistic perspective of the impact of Japan’s national security policies on U.S. strategic security interests and objectives in the Indo-Pacific region. The paper closes with recommendations for action.

In doing so, a three-phased analytical construct is employed. The first phase focuses on investigating Japan’s policies and programs in support of its national security interests—within the DIME framework—in order to understand

and describe Japan’s whole-of-government approach. The analysis seeks to identify and delineate lines of effort based on the type of national power: diplomatic, informational, military, or economic. A line of effort to achieve a national objective may incorporate all four categories, and indeed, often do. However, the strategic weight of effort determines its placement within the four categories of DIME.

The second phase establishes the study’s evaluation criteria analysis using the relevant diplomatic, informational, military, and economic objectives promulgated in the 2017 U.S. NSS. The third phase of the study evaluates the strategic interaction between Japan’s security policies and U.S. security objectives within the DIME construct.

Phase 1: DIME Analysis (Japan)

Diplomatic

Japan has embarked on a wide range of vigorous diplomatic initiatives to counter China’s influence and secure its own national interests and influence throughout the Indo-Pacific. Beginning with the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” in 2007 to the short-lived “Democratic Security Diamond” in 2012, Japan has now settled on the current concept of the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.” In this latest iteration, Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe broadly expands and redefines the scope of Japanese diplomacy to augment the country’s international reputation and foreign relations throughout the region.

First and foremost, Japan has steadfastly improved its diplomatic and security relations with the U.S., its ally and security sponsor. In a February 2017 visit to Washington, Abe quickly secured the newly elected President Donald Trump’s official commitment to defend the Senkaku Islands under the terms of the Mutual Defense Treaty.⁶

In turn, Abe quickly reciprocated by

reaffirming Japan's support for the U.S.' position on the DPRK issue, avowing "we consistently support the stance of the United States: that 'all options are on the table'."⁷ In an address to the UN General Assembly, Shinzo Abe emphatically declared, "We must make North Korea abandon all nuclear and ballistic missile programs in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner. What is needed to do that is not dialogue, but pressure."⁸ Despite his reputation for nationalism and past revisionist sentiments, Abe has upheld and promoted the integrity and desirability of Japan's deep ties with the U.S.

While Japan has taken steps to become a more active and equitable alliance partner, it has also put substantial energy into hedging against the risk of U.S. abandonment. Abe's unilateral approach to local security cooperation underscores "Tokyo's ambition to strengthen the regional dimension of Japanese diplomacy."⁹ He became the first Japanese leader to visit all ten Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members within his first year in office, a historic and symbolic demonstration of his commitment to the ASEAN community. Based on shared values and rules, Japan has actively worked to reinforce ASEAN and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation as the foundation of the Indo-Pacific's regional architecture.

Furthermore, Japan's diplomatic leadership of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is a marked departure from its past preference for narrowly-focused multilateral frameworks. Despite the U.S.'s conspicuous absence, the CPTPP's current membership of Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam represents a nascent, perhaps even "hegemonic," diplomatic framework in the Indo-Pacific.¹⁰ Still in development, Japanese leadership is becoming an increasingly reliable feature of the regional landscape.

Specifically, as part of Japan's "defense

diplomacy," maritime security cooperation has become one of its most influential and desirable characteristics. To secure its sea lines of communication and defend regional freedom of the seas, Japan has strengthened its maritime relationships with key states such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines.¹¹ Japan's military diplomacy efficiently reinforces strategic diplomatic imperatives such as freedom of navigation and maritime commerce. For example, the momentous and widely publicized 2017 deployment of Japan's helicopter destroyer, *JS Izumo* (DDH-183), in the South China Sea is emblematic of Japan's new defense diplomacy.¹²

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The vicissitude of the regional security order is emboldening Abe's concerted campaign to woo ASEAN from China's influence. To do so, he is using a proactive form of diplomacy, backed by hard military capabilities, naval presence, and maritime security capacity-building. Regarding the South China Sea disputes, Japan has diplomatically promoted the resolution of territorial and maritime disputes in accordance with legal international rulings. Especially through maritime security cooperation, Japan has refurbished its reputation as a capable provider of regional commons.

However, Abe has also been careful to avoid the coercive and inflammatory aspects of hard power diplomacy. Recognizing the danger of resurgent historical tension, Abe has cautiously and significantly dampened the negative connotations of Japan's military-based potential for influence. Nobel laureate and economist Professor Thomas Schelling notes that such influence is "based on the harm it can do; used

as a bargaining power, it is part of diplomacy—the uglier, more negative, less civilized part of diplomacy—nevertheless, diplomacy.”¹³ Despite China’s accusations of Japanese jingoism, the littoral states in the South China Sea have been receptive to Japan’s diplomatic overtures. As it sheds its “passive partner” persona to take on a more active one, Japan is not neglecting its hard power capabilities as part of a broader strategy to

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increase its diplomatic prestige and influence.¹⁴ However, while it has long been a necessary component of Japan’s external balancing against China, its hard power has not been assigned much more relevance or significance beyond that role.

In addition, Abe has maintained Japan’s steady bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. In a speech before the UN General Assembly on September 29, 2015, Abe confidently reaffirmed Japan’s determination to “transform the United Nations into a body appropriate for the 21st century, and then, as a permanent member of the Security Council, carry out its responsibilities in making still greater contributions towards world peace and prosperity.”¹⁵ Under the Abe administration, this determined propensity for greater global engagement is bearing fruit. The 2017 Soft Power 30 report ranks Japan’s global soft power sixth, significantly outmatching China at 25th while the U.S. has fallen to third place.¹⁶ Yoichi Funabashi, chairman of the Asia Pacific Initiative, notes in the report how Japan’s main tool for exerting global influence has historically been soft power and further describes its modern three pillars of international relations: hard infrastructure assistance, capability building for maritime peace, and the rule of law.¹⁷ Japan’s

diplomatic initiatives unfailingly incorporate at least one of these soft power elements, if not all. Its well-deserved reputation for soft power and economic assistance has helped endear the island power to most of its neighbors, especially in the South China Sea.

On the other hand, Japan’s security ties with South Korea remain stalled over unresolved World War II (WWII) issues, namely due to lingering bitterness over the Imperial Japanese Army’s enslavement of “comfort women” before and during the war.¹⁸ South Korea’s continual rebuff of Japan’s apologies, despite the efforts of several Japanese administrations, prevents any serious progress in mending bilateral ties. In an October 2017 interview, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford acknowledged the severe difficulties in the military-to-military relationship between the two ostensible security partners.¹⁹

The General Security of Military Information Agreement was signed in 2016 between South Korea and Japan, replacing the indirect Trilateral Information Sharing Arrangement framework. A long overdue and notable diplomatic achievement, it overhauled the antiquated military information exchange system. However, reflecting South Korea’s evasion of a trilateral military alliance, the Moon administration has strictly limited the scope of General Security of Military Information Agreement to DPRK’s nuclear and missile program.²⁰

Conducting diplomatic hedging between China and the U.S., President Moon Jae-in has resisted U.S. pressure to develop the trilateral cooperation into a military alliance. To restore Sino-South Korean relations after China’s economic retaliation over Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, South Korea assured China it will abstain from additional Terminal High Altitude Area Defense deployments, other U.S. missile defense systems, and a trilateral alliance with the U.S. and Japan.²¹ Furthermore, President Moon pointedly cautioned Japan against using “any of

North Korea's nuclear activities as an excuse to pursue the path of development into a military power."²² The two East Asian democracies share the threat of missile attacks from North Korea and other security concerns emanating from the northern half of the Korean peninsula. However, imperfect strategic alignment and South Korea's social obstinacy obstruct Abe's endeavors to deepen the cooperative relationship "for a new era with a future-oriented perspective."²³

With the cautious exception of South Korea and China, Japan's relationships with other Indo-Pacific states, the U.S., and the European Union have appreciably improved in recent years. Taking a "panoramic view of the world map," Abe initiated Japan's first 2+2 (comprised of defense and foreign ministers) meetings with France and England.²⁴ In addition, Abe became the first Japanese prime minister to visit NATO, the preeminent security organization in Europe, in 2006. More recently, the Joint Political Declaration in April 2013 and the launch of the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme in 2014 both demonstrate a deepening Japan-NATO relationship.²⁵ Abe's strategic interest in strengthening ties with Europe can be further seen in his efforts to establish a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the European Union.²⁶

At the same time, Abe has pursued closer diplomatic relations with Russia, especially in the context of balancing against China. He initiated Japan's first 2+2 meeting with Russia in November 2013 and more importantly, agreed upon a "framework for a comprehensive partnership on security affairs."²⁷ Despite Russia's annexation of Crimea and lackluster support for human rights, Japan forged ahead with the second 2+2 meeting on March 20, 2017.²⁸ In his first speech of 2018, Abe emphatically announced that "the relationship between Japan and Russia has the most potential of any bilateral relationship."²⁹ The bilateral diplomatic initiatives, "Japan Year in Russia"

and "Russia Year in Japan," further highlight improvements in security collaboration and cross-cultural ties.³⁰

Although India has traditionally championed the foreign policy of non-alignment, Abe's appeal for greater Indian participation in regional affairs is striking a chord with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his desire for strategic autonomy. Underlying Abe's personal affinity with Modi, the Japanese prime minister's

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unfailing support for considerable foreign direct investment in India has further incentivized the two states' strong diplomatic ties. However, taking into account India's habitual avoidance of overt power politics and the danger of entrapment, Japan's diplomatic inducements carry geopolitical risk. After all, there is little doubt that Abe's active diplomacy is partly, if not mostly, directed at counterbalancing China and its gradual accumulation of power in the Indo-Pacific.³¹ Moreover, views of China diverge between Japan and other regional actors such as Australia, and in some cases to a significant extent.³² In light of Japan's increasingly assertive security policies, concerns of entanglement have injected caution and moderation into Japan's state-to-state interactions in the region. Acknowledging such trepidations, Abe sought to ease concerns by jointly announcing a "fresh start" with President Xi Jinping during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in November 2017.³³

Basing his diplomatic enterprises on shared values, protection of regional commons, and economic willingness, Abe has improved Japan's diplomatic profile in the region and around

the world. In his January 2018 speech to the Diet, Abe touted his visits to 76 countries and regions and over 600 summit meetings since his rise to the post of prime minister.³⁴ Under an unusually active and charismatic leader, Japan has emerged as a poised, well-traveled, and increasingly popular diplomatic power. Noting the “security environment surrounding Japan is the most severe in postwar history,” Abe avows the strategic necessity for Japan to boldly engage with like-minded states to ensure the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific.³⁵

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Informational

Perhaps more than any other instrument of power, Japan’s informational lines of effort have enabled its national strategy to gain regional power, mitigate strategic mistrust, and influence domestic and foreign discussion on its security policies. Through decades of peaceful behavior and an impressive record for economic aid and shared values, memories of Japan’s wartime legacy have slowly faded throughout the Indo-Pacific. Especially among the littoral states of the South China Sea, the Abe administration has moved decisively to capitalize on this good will to push forth its security initiatives and exploratory drive for regional leadership. Acknowledging the rise of state-sponsored influence operations, led by China and Russia, Japan has elevated the importance of the information domain to “influence the social, political, economic, and military behavior of human beings . . . in the support of national security objectives.”³⁶

The foremost architect of Japan’s security

resurgence and perhaps the longest-serving post-war prime minister in November 2019, Abe has forced a critical reexamination of the country’s traditional and outdated security policy. To that end, the Abe administration is leveraging the media and other information channels to advance its strategic agenda and develop mass influence domestically. Japan is successfully adapting its national strategy to take advantage of the possibilities inherent in the dynamic information spectrum. Extending his control over the fourth estate, a political appointee heads Japan’s flagship public broadcaster, NHK.³⁷ He also enjoys the support of several leading national newspapers such as the conservative *Sankei Shimbun* and Japan’s largest newspaper, *Yomiuri Shimbun*.³⁸

Relatively unknown outside of Japan, the Nippon Kaigi organization has also been a dominant actor in Japan’s domestic information domain. The largest right-wing organization in Japan, the Nippon Kaigi has not only developed an extensive conservative grassroots movement but also represent sixteen out of twenty ministers in Abe’s Cabinet in the government.³⁹ Immensely influential and well-connected, it is an under-appreciated informational enabler for the Abe administration’s strategic messaging. Despite international concerns over Japan’s prospective return to revisionism and jingoism, such support has helped the Abe administration spur change in Japan’s domestic anti-war identity, albeit slowly.

On the international front, Japan has made great strides in crafting a cohesive and unifying information campaign. Its values-based diplomacy, proactive economic outreach, and declarations of regional solidarity have made inroads among its neighbors, despite the lingering handicap of its historical legacy. By integrating consistent themes and messages within its initiatives, Japan has been able to parlay regional anxiety over China’s rising influence and ambitions into concrete diplomatic gains.

Abe's long-held aspiration for a quadrilateral security dialogue, mentioned in the U.S.' 2017 NSS, continues to show potential for fulfillment as concerns over China mount in the region. Even in the limited role of a consultative mechanism, it creates more informational space for Japan and its partners to raise costs for China, constrain its behavior, and force it to externally adjust its strategic calculus. Under the umbrella of regional solidarity and hedging against uncertainty, Japan has built strategic channels with fellow democratic partners such as India and Australia. The revitalization of the "Quad" demonstrates the convergence of values and interests among its members, indicating informational alignment based on their unique yet overlapping concerns.⁴⁰ Through its promotion and implementation of confidence-building measures such as official dialogue, information sharing, and consultative frameworks, Japan is preserving conditions of stability and the status quo while gaining regional goodwill in the process.

Seeking to maintain the rules-based order and balance of power, Japan has consistently framed "the Japan-U.S. alliance as an international public good that guarantees not only the defense of Japan but also the defense of South Korea and the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region."⁴¹ Even as the Abe administration seeks to elevate Japan's role in the region, it also upholds the integrity of the alliance and Japan's strategic alignment with U.S. national interests in the Indo-Pacific.

The U.S.' alliances with Japan and South Korea have remained at the forefront of a rapidly shifting relative-power configuration in the Indo-Pacific. However, they share a sense of compromised sovereignty, a pervasive mainstay of South Korean and Japanese cultural discontent with the U.S. More strategically complementary and willing to balance than the U.S.-South Korea alliance, the U.S.-Japan alliance embodies both stable and evolving asymmetries and a shift towards aspirations

for a more values-based alliance partnership.⁴² Figure 1 (see page 10) aptly captures Japan's overwhelming prioritization of its relationship with the U.S., in stark contrast to South Korea.

Of the regional countries affected by Japan's war actions, China and South Korea exhibit the greatest sensitivity to Japan's apparent efforts to normalize its security profile. South Korean policymakers are increasingly viewing China as a "stabilizing and influential player on the Korean Peninsula," primarily because Beijing prioritizes stability and behavioral change while Washington prioritizes confrontation, isolation, and coercion.⁴³ Despite Japan's apologies, mutual anti-Japanese sentiment due to Japan's brutal war legacy and respective territorial disputes have contributed to closer Sino-South Korean ties.⁴⁴ As a result, South Korea has not significantly upgraded its security infrastructure or "engaged in either external or internal balancing behavior against the rise of China."⁴⁵ This runs counter to Japan's more pessimistic view of a strategically unpredictable and ominous China and its balancing-focused actions. Despite the international community's initial hopes for China's gradual integration into the rules-based order, those expectations have started to fade. Endangering state sovereignty throughout the Indo-Pacific, China's pursuit of power politics and off-putting mercantilist economic approach puts regional stability at risk.

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However, rather than challenging China outright, Japan has cautiously yet firmly sought to constrain it instead. To promote regional stability and with due regard to Sino-Japanese economic interdependence, Japan has strenuously sought

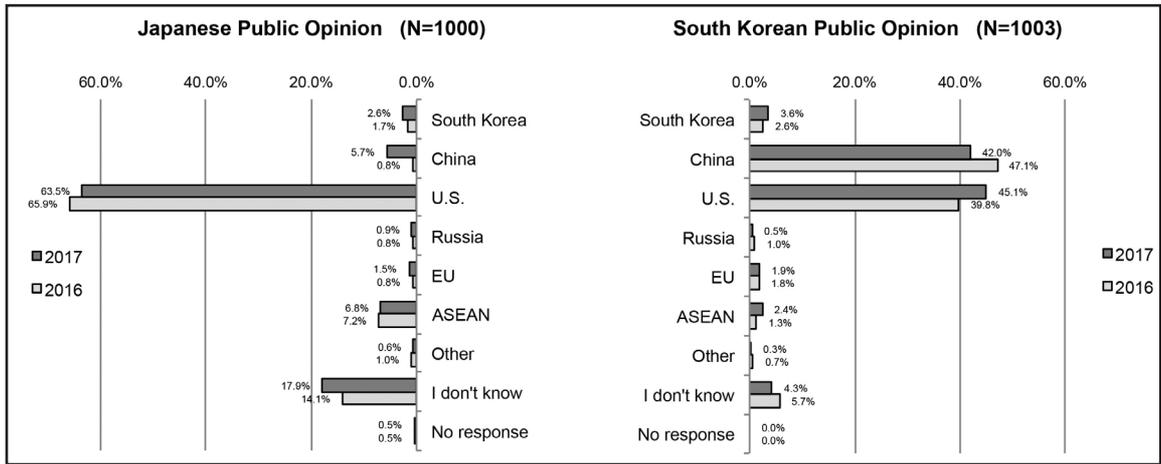


Figure 1: Opinion Poll – Countries I Think are Important to My Country's Future
 Source: Genron NPO, "The 5th Japan-South Korea Public Opinion Poll," July 2017, 13, accessed February 10, 2018, http://www.genron-npo.net/en/archives/170721_en.pdf.

to avoid any misconstrued notions of its security objectives. To that end, Japan has meticulously refrained from any mention of a containment policy or expansionist intent. Even with the South China Sea littoral states and proposed security quadrilateral partners, Japan has rigorously managed its strategic messaging and informational campaigns to allay China's concerns over geostrategic issues such as containment and energy insecurity. While the Indo-Pacific countries recognize and respect the influence of the United States on the region's future peace and stability, they "also consider Sino-Japanese ties to be of critical importance for Asian stability in the short and long term."⁴⁶

Japan's renewed focus on its at-risk national security interests, exemplified by its proactive approach to peace, signals a broad reorientation in political-economic thinking among Japanese policymakers. Perception of a deteriorating threat environment during his tenure has only solidified Abe's determination to challenge Japan's internal view of its traditional geopolitical role and force self-assessment and critical inquiry. The urgency of this change is compounded by the rapid rise of China and the ominous prospect of the United States as a mercurial Pacific power in retreat. In response, Japan continues to expand the appeal of shared values, regional solidarity, human

security, and mutual economic prosperity within the Indo-Pacific.

By emphasizing these fundamental concepts, the linkages between Japan's economic policies and programs with strategic and diplomatic endeavors have become more explicitly recognized, defined, and endorsed. Furthermore, Japan's long-term commitment to human security and respected experience in health and education are two areas in which the country has contributed internationally.⁴⁷ These positive developments have eased concerns in the region that Japan's eagerness for more geopolitical responsibility may be a resurgence of Japan's Meiji Restoration in 1868, a development that led to Japanese imperialism in WWII.⁴⁸ Building upon these modest successes, Japan is productively demonstrating its proficient application of informational power as "an essential, perhaps indispensable, foundational component and enabler for the creation and exercise of all other forms of power."⁴⁹

Military (Japan)

Despite a post-war constitution that continues to adhere staunchly to its pacifist principles, Japan incongruously has one of the most capable forces in the world. In its 2018 Military Strength Ranking of Asian-Pacific

powers, Global Firepower ranks Japan sixth while China and India rank third and fourth, respectively.⁵⁰ It has traditionally avoided the trappings of a normal military power, instead conducting military bandwagoning with the U.S. as the dominant Pacific power. During the Cold War era, Japan's Yoshida Doctrine emphasized Article 9 to reduce the risk of entrapment and resist U.S. pressure to contribute more as an ally.⁵¹ By forgoing outright pursuit of military power, Japan was then able to accelerate its economic progress while still benefiting from the transfer of advanced military technology from the U.S.

However, due to an increasingly contested security order in the Indo-Pacific, the limitations of the Yoshida Doctrine and its hedging basis have become markedly evident to the Japanese political and military establishments. As they explored options to ensure national security, key trends such as the rise of regional piracy helped pave the way for Japan's increased yet still limited use of naval and maritime security assets. In the spring of 2000, Japan hosted the "Regional Conference on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships," the world's first multilateral counter-piracy conference.⁵² Japan's leadership role in regional counter-piracy activities, requiring it to project power in waters far from its shores, slowly altered regional perception and acceptance of the Japan Self-Defense Force's (JSDF) presence and activities.

The Abe administration was able to successfully reverse the trend of decline in defense spending and engineer considerable adjustments in national security policies, organization, and doctrine. The most symbolic yet controversial change was the July 2014 reinterpretation of Japan's constitution to permit collective self defense. Adapting to public resistance to constitutional revision, the Abe administration reconvened the Yanai Commission to analyze the current security environment and sanction the JSDF's ability

to defend its allies and partners.⁵³ In 2015, the Abe administration passed security laws that permitted the JSDF to defend U.S. naval ships in international waters when those ships are protecting Japan, intercept ballistic missiles targeting the U.S. and U.S. Pacific bases, and defend and logistically support allied forces during peacekeeping operations.⁵⁴ The approval of collective self-defense has been called a watershed moment in Japan's "radical security trajectory."⁵⁵ Subject to key constraints such as the requirement for an identified risk to Japan's survival, collective self-defense is a positive yet restrained step towards military normalization.

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The National Defense Program Guidelines of FY2014 and beyond sets out Japan's approach to defense capability for the next decade. Recognizing the inherent island vulnerability and regional anti-access/area denial challenges, it categorically states the JSDF "will develop full amphibious capability."⁵⁶ China's controversial possession of Mischief Reef in the South China Sea is considered a key influence on Japan's defense planners.⁵⁷ In April 2018, the JSDF established the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade. Similar to other countries' amphibious rapid response marine units, the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade represents Japan's first activated marine unit since WWII and is implicitly geared towards the defense of islands contested by China.⁵⁸ The Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade also reflects the JSDF's revised strategic posture that prioritizes air and maritime threats from China rather than the Cold War-era focus on a Russian attack from the north.⁵⁹ In the face of China's irredentist efforts in the East China Sea, Japan's joint

dynamic defense force has made great strides in its amphibious capabilities within a broader expeditionary and naval context.

...Japan's historic 2018 defense budget of 5.19 trillion yen sets aside funding for long-range missile programs...

With respect to its most capable force, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, the National Defense Program Guidelines increases the destroyer fleet from 48 to 54, including two additional Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense-equipped destroyers.⁶⁰ Due to high demand for ballistic missile defense capabilities, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force recently procured the U.S.-developed Cooperative Engagement Capability system to enhance interoperability against the threat of DPRK missiles.⁶¹ The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force took possession of its second *Izumo*-class helicopter destroyer, *JS Kaga*, in March 2017; the *Izumo*-class is a potent symbol of “Abe’s push to give the military a bigger international role.”⁶² Japan’s capable submarine fleet expands from 16 to 22 boats, augmented by the advanced *Sōryū*-class submarine platform.⁶³ Known for its quiet propulsion and iterative design, the *Sōryū*-class headlines Japan’s status as the sixth largest submarine power in the world.⁶⁴ The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force’s consistent procurement of its indigenous P-1 platform, a highly capable maritime patrol aircraft, significantly improves Japan’s intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare capabilities. Japan’s emphasis on these capabilities reflects its understanding of its vulnerable sea lines of communication, especially after the success of U.S. submarines in WWII.

Additional expected acquisitions include 42 F-35A fifth generation fighters, C-2 transports with a 6,500-kilometer range, and advanced

unmanned aerial vehicles for coastal patrols.⁶⁵

Furthermore, Japan’s historic 2018 defense budget of 5.19 trillion yen sets aside funding for long-range missile programs such as the Joint Strike Missile by Kongsberg Gruppen ASA of Norway and Lockheed Martin Corp.’s Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile.⁶⁶ In addition, 137 billion yen is earmarked for ballistic missile defense, bolstering Japan’s layered structure of the land-based Aegis Ashore system, ship-based Aegis system, and ground-based PAC-3.⁶⁷ In December 2017, the Japanese Diet approved the purchase of additional Aegis Ashore systems to augment its existing ballistic missile defense infrastructure. The following month, the U.S. Department of State approved the possible sale of four Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA missiles to Japan, valued at 133.3 million U.S. dollars (USD).⁶⁸ Focused on the DPRK threat, the SM-3 Block IIA missile was jointly developed by Japan and the U.S. as part of a bilateral effort to improve ballistic missile defense and interoperability. Figure 2 (see pag 13) delineates the gradual increase in Japan’s defense-related expenditures up to the now-approved budget request for FY2018. The gradual uptick beginning with FY2012 coincides with the return of Shinzo Abe as Japan’s prime minister.

Key security partners and regional powers have tacitly or publicly encouraged Japan’s continued modernization and development of military power. For example, Australia’s 2017 defense white paper affirmed its support for Japan’s defense and strategic policy reforms as well as “Japan’s efforts to improve its security capabilities and to play a more active role in the security of the region.”⁶⁹ In 2015, India and the U.S. welcomed Japan as a permanent participant in the annual Malabar naval exercise, marking a “deepening regional awareness of the importance of offsetting China’s strategic rise.”⁷⁰ Professor Hughes highlights how “Japanese policymakers have for the first time in the post-

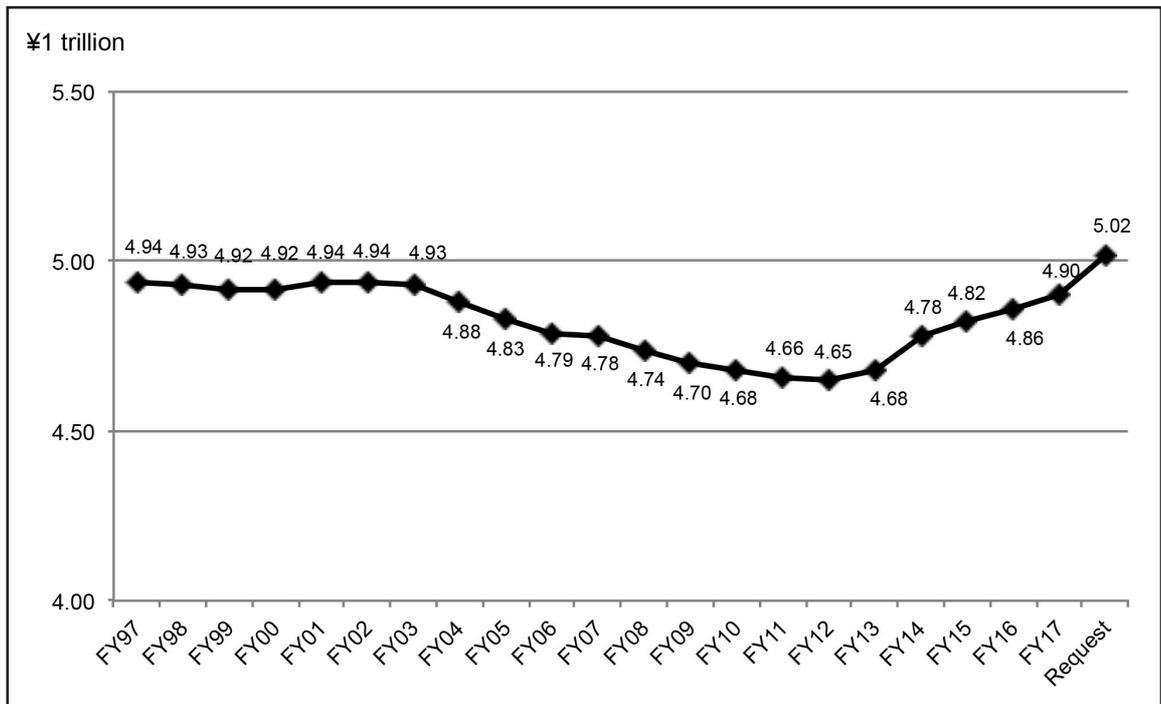


Figure 2: Japan's Defense Expenditures
 Source: Ministry of Defense, "Defense Programs and Budget of Japan," August 2017, 3, accessed January 14, 2018, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_budget/pdf/291222.pdf.

war period began to doubt seriously whether the USA possesses the necessary military power” to counter China and its anti-access/area denial, especially regarding territorial disputes and maintaining sea lines of communication.⁷¹ As the military dynamics of the regional security environment slowly appear to invalidate the strategic post-war bargain between Japan and the U.S., Japan’s insecurity is manifesting through its experimentation with active balancing.

However, driven by resentful realism, Japan’s efforts may not restore equilibrium and stability in the region to accommodate China’s rise, but instead become another source of unpredictability and instability.⁷² China’s recent flexing of naval power projection only exacerbates Japan’s sense of unpreparedness in security policy. China’s 2015 *Military Strategy* white paper stresses the “strategic requirement of offshore waters defense and open seas protection.”⁷³ It notably adds the strategic function of “open seas protection” to the People’s

Liberation Army Navy’s traditional “offshore waters defense” responsibilities.⁷⁴ On April 12, 2018, China held the largest naval parade in the country’s history in the South China Sea, demonstrating its rapid transformation from a defensive brown-water force to a significant blue-water fleet.⁷⁵ As China aptly demonstrated, power projection and strategic depth in the Indo-Pacific remains predominantly founded on maritime control and sea spheres of influence. Critical of China’s claims of peaceful aims, Sir Gerald Howarth, former undersecretary of state at the U.K. Ministry of Defense, warns that “what matters is not intentions, but capabilities because intentions can change overnight, capabilities cannot.”⁷⁶

Operating under the constitutional ban on offensive weaponry, the JSDF presents a moderate yet growing suite of capabilities well-suited for its specialized national requirements. However, despite a slow and steady rise in the defense budget under the Abe administration,

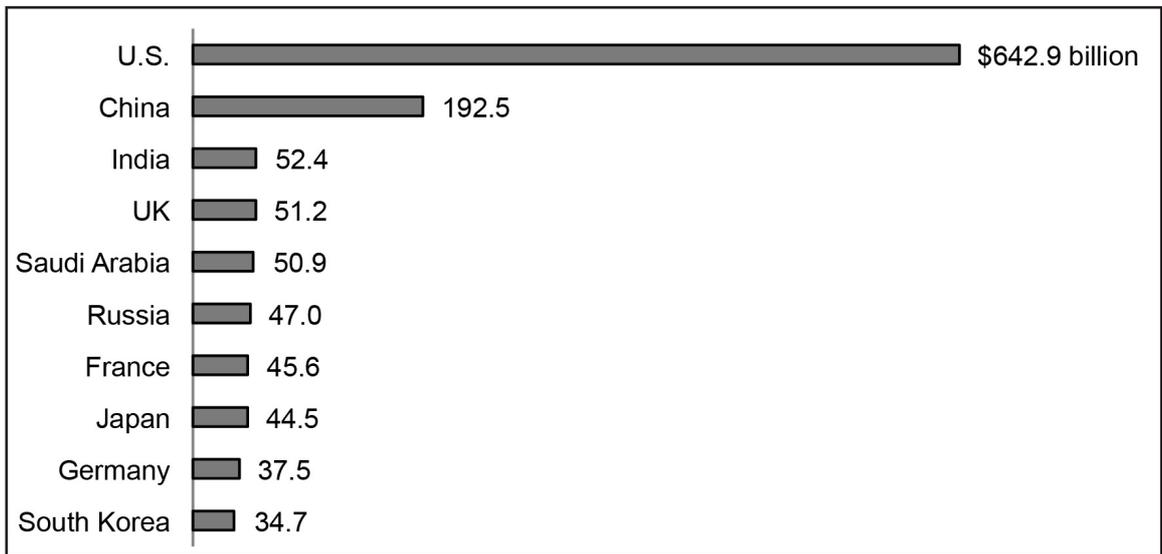


Figure 3: The World's Top 10 Defense Spenders (2017)

Source: IHS Markit, "Global Defence Spending to Hit Post-Cold War High in 2018, Jane's by IHS Markit Says," December 18, 2017, accessed February 4, 2018, <http://news.ihsmarkit.com/press-release/aerospace-defense-security/global-defence-spending-hit-post-cold-war-high-2018-janes-i>.

Japan has yet to demonstrate the significant increases in military research, expenditure, and capacity-building that would generally accompany an arms race with China. Figure 3 shows U.S. dominance in military spending, followed distantly by China while Japan trails behind with the eighth largest defense budget.

While arms races in the past have been mostly or completely dyadic in nature, the regional trend of rising military spending in the Indo-Pacific complicates traditional arms race modeling. The ongoing discussion on the potential conversion of the *Izumo*-class helicopter destroyer into a "true" aircraft carrier, a continual point of controversy in Japan's defense establishment, underscores Japan's interest in security through military means.⁷⁷ Such interest in the aircraft carrier, a platform not seen since Japan's defeat in 1945, within the Ministry of Defense reflects rising tension due to "China's maritime expansion and North Korea's missile and nuclear development."⁷⁸ Considered the "amalgamation of power projection at its foremost" the Carrier Strike Group is a dominant aspect of U.S. military presence in the region.⁷⁹ Therefore, other countries such as China, have

viewed Japan's *Izumo*-class with suspicion, with some calling it an aircraft carrier-in-disguise and perhaps rightly so. Regardless of their classification, the number of aircraft carriers or equivalents and the number of Indo-Pacific countries operating them will likely expand over the next decade.⁸⁰

Refraining from overt reliance on military power to achieve Japan's national security, the Abe administration is cautiously balancing military readiness against the perception of militarism. Abe's policy success in enabling partial use of collective self-defense and the JSDF's increasing capabilities, especially through amphibious and naval assets, demonstrate Japan's return to an increasingly normal military state. That is not to say the strategic bargain, semi-characterized by Japan's reliance on American hard power, is null. However, the fluid and multiplex security environment is necessitating Japan's reexamination of its own military potential. Driven not only by ballistic missile defense requirements due to North Korea and the implications of the burgeoning Sino-American military rivalry, Japan's own unwillingness to be militarily marginalized by

China is a key consideration. In its carefully considered employment of JSDF capabilities, Japan is incorporating a deeper appreciation for the role of its military potential into a smart power approach, “combining the tools of both hard and soft power.”⁸¹

Economic (Japan)

Ever since the Yoshida Doctrine essentially traded military development for economic growth, Japan has emphasized the geoeconomic aspect of its national power. The benefits of this post-war trade-off is becoming only more apparent and pivotal as vibrant economic transformation in the region reshapes the regional distribution of power in the Indo-Pacific. The region comprising of Asia and the Pacific has seen its share of global Gross Domestic Product increase from 25 percent in 2000 to 33 percent in 2016.⁸² Demonstrating the qualified success of Abenomics in Japan, the International Monetary Fund projects 1.2 percent Gross Domestic Product in FY2018, continuing the Japanese economy’s promising trend of above average growth over the past eight consecutive quarters.⁸³ The Bank of Japan concurred in its April 2018 report, stating “Japan’s economy is likely to continue growing at a pace above its potential in FY2018.”⁸⁴ Primarily predicated on the strength of its economic relationships and resources along with its diplomatic influence, the Lowy Institute’s influential Asia Power Index ranks Japan third, behind only the U.S. and China.⁸⁵

However, the continuation of Japan’s economic power remains in some doubt, beset by a multitude of significant challenges. Key concerns arise from Japan’s “widening primary deficit and very high government debt,” as well as from the unsatisfying progress of Abenomics’ third arrow, structural reforms.⁸⁶ A burdened social security system and lack of corporate governance reform are additional prohibitive considerations. Despite its longest growth stretch in decades, domestic factors such as a shrinking

labor force will affect Japan’s strategic ability to draw on its economic power and influence through Official Development Assistance (ODA) and other means. At the very least, these significant limitations will force the Abe administration to adjust its strategic calculus in its geoeconomic efforts to shape and influence its regional security environment.

More so than any other Pacific power, including the U.S. and China, Japan wields greater influence than is expected from its resources.

More so than any other Pacific power, including the U.S. and China, Japan wields greater influence than is expected from its resources.⁸⁷ It has signed Economic Partnership Agreements with fourteen countries, including India and Australia, as well as a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with ASEAN.⁸⁸ Furthermore, Japan continues to negotiate an Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union and a Free Trade Agreement with China and South Korea.⁸⁹ Although Japan was overtaken as the second largest economy by China in July 2010, Japan remains the most diverse and sophisticated economy in the world as of 2016.⁹⁰ As economic interaction and relations gain influence and emphasis in power politics, Japan has demonstrated a confident willingness to exercise regional leadership over economic activities and frameworks.

Alongside the U.S.-led World Bank, Japan uses the Asian Development Bank as the primary regional platform for wielding its economic influence. With 15.6 percent of shares each, Japan and the U.S. have controlled the institution’s agenda and guided the Asian Development Bank towards “inclusive economic growth, environmental sustainability, and regional integration” for the past fifty years.⁹¹

Japan has unfailingly held the presidency of the regional development bank since its inception in 1966, reflecting Japan's virtual monopoly of the Asian Development Bank's management. Japan's persistent efforts to develop influence in the Asian Development Bank and other multilateral forums such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation reflect the country's traditional pride in its long-held status as the Asian model of economic prosperity.

In response to emerging regional economic threats such as the Washington-backed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as well as contemporary ones like the Japan-dominated Asian Development Bank, China has formed the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and its own regional framework, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. This underscores how these varying forms of economic statecraft are nonetheless based on the same geoeconomic principle: "the desire to secure the rules of economic exchange in the region."⁹²

The U.S.' withdrawal from TPP and its "America First" doctrine accelerated efforts by allies and trading partners in Asia to advance regional economic integration...

In fact, once the U.S. withdrew from the TPP in January 2017, it offered a unique opportunity for Japan to "step into a trade leadership role in the region."⁹³ The U.S.' withdrawal from TPP and its "America First" doctrine accelerated efforts by allies and trading partners in Asia to advance regional economic integration while it stands on the sidelines.⁹⁴ As a result, Abe has put forth Japan as the primary architect of TPP-11, the replacement to the original TPP framework. Otherwise known as the CPTPP and excluding the U.S., it represents 14 percent of global Gross Domestic Product compared to the Regional

Comprehensive Economic Partnership's 24 percent.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Japan has strategically positioned the CPTPP as a rules-based economic structure and attractive alternative to China's power-based frameworks, namely the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and its overarching economic-political initiative, the Belt and Road Initiative.

Ironically, it took Japan nearly three years to overcome domestic opposition and join the original TPP.⁹⁶ However, it is now the foremost champion of the CPTPP, occupying a unique position between the U.S. and China to influence Indo-Pacific geoeconomics. In addition, Japan and other CPTPP members have kept the door open for the U.S. to rejoin. Executive Director Deborah Elms at the Asian Trade Centre notes the TPP-11 countries chose to suspend the U.S.-championed provisions rather than cancel them.⁹⁷ Spearheaded by Japan, the CPTPP's regional willingness to work with the U.S. stresses the continued attraction and influence of the U.S.-led system of free markets and rules-based economic order.

The Abe administration has recognized that many of its ambitious national security initiatives ultimately rest on the success of the country's economy. While Abe continues to expand the capabilities and scope of Japan's military, he has demonstrated a sharpened regard for geoeconomics as a crucial element of Japan's overarching national security strategy. The prominent emergence and consequence of regional economic frameworks such as the CPTPP, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank only underscore the relevance of geoeconomics in the Indo-Pacific region. By seeking to cement the Asian Development Bank's and CPTPP's higher standards as the economic templates for the Indo-Pacific, Japan is enhancing its regional reputation for the provision of public goods. In the wake of

retreating U.S. commitment, Japan's ability to navigate an increasingly complex regional geoeconomic landscape will be instrumental to maintaining the relevance of the CPTPP and Asian Development Bank against competing economic institutions and frameworks.

With infrastructure financing becoming progressively translated into geopolitical influence, Japan's prospective role and leadership in the Asian Development Bank, CPTPP, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and other economic organizations is vital to furthering its strategic objectives. Finance Minister Taro Aso reiterates Japan's commitment to quality infrastructure, noting that it is "critical to utilize infrastructure in an open, transparent and non-exclusive manner to enhance its connectivity."⁹⁸ Japan's export of infrastructure systems to major Asian countries has been described as a calculated attempt to counter China's regional influence through strengthened relationships.⁹⁹ In April 2018, the Second Public-Private Sector Roundtable Discussion on U.S.-Japan Cooperation on Third Country Infrastructure underscored their mutual geoeconomic understanding of linking infrastructure assistance to broader regional goals.¹⁰⁰ While Japan continues to gain goodwill through traditional humanitarian aid and infrastructure development projects, its focus on "capacity-building programs" has taken on newfound strategic importance.¹⁰¹ In the influential realm of infrastructure assistance, the soft power context of Japan's infrastructure financing and governance compares favorably against the hard power nature of China's economic policies.

The issue of regional economic governance is a prominent feature of not only Asia's security environment but also the great power rivalry between the U.S. and China.¹⁰² With its expertise and historical reliance on economic power for exercising regional influence, Japan occupies a distinctive role in the Indo-Pacific geoeconomic environment. Japan was conspicuously present

during India's May 2017 announcement of the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, a calculated attempt to counterbalance China's Belt and Road Initiative. Japan's involvement in this latest India-backed Asia-Africa Growth Corridor illustrates its strategic reservations regarding the Belt and Road Initiative as well as the appeal of its infrastructure expertise to India and regional partners.¹⁰³ As the region's leading proponent for non-military security, Japan has developed a well-deserved reputation for reliability and integrity as an economic partner and international creditor.

As the region's leading proponent for non-military security, Japan has developed a well-deserved reputation for reliability and integrity as an economic partner and international creditor.

Indeed, Japan's use of financial and development aid as a foreign policy tool has become an increasingly prominent and vital part of its national security strategy. Its 2016 Development Cooperation Charter champions the use of ODA as a principal means of bolstering Japan's national interests in the Indo-Pacific. More explicitly than ever before, "Japan has redefined its aid orientation to serve its geostrategic and national interests, largely due to the changes in the global geostrategic environment in the wake of China's rise."¹⁰⁴ Japan has positioned ODA as a key component of its "Proactive Contribution to Peace" strategy in order to achieve the "medium- to long-term national interests of Japan."¹⁰⁵

Already ASEAN's single largest source of investment and its third-largest trading partner, Japan continues to expand the scale of its ODA and economic diplomacy in the region.¹⁰⁶ Commenting on the robust Japan-ASEAN relations in April 2017, Japan's Ambassador to Singapore Kenji Shinoda

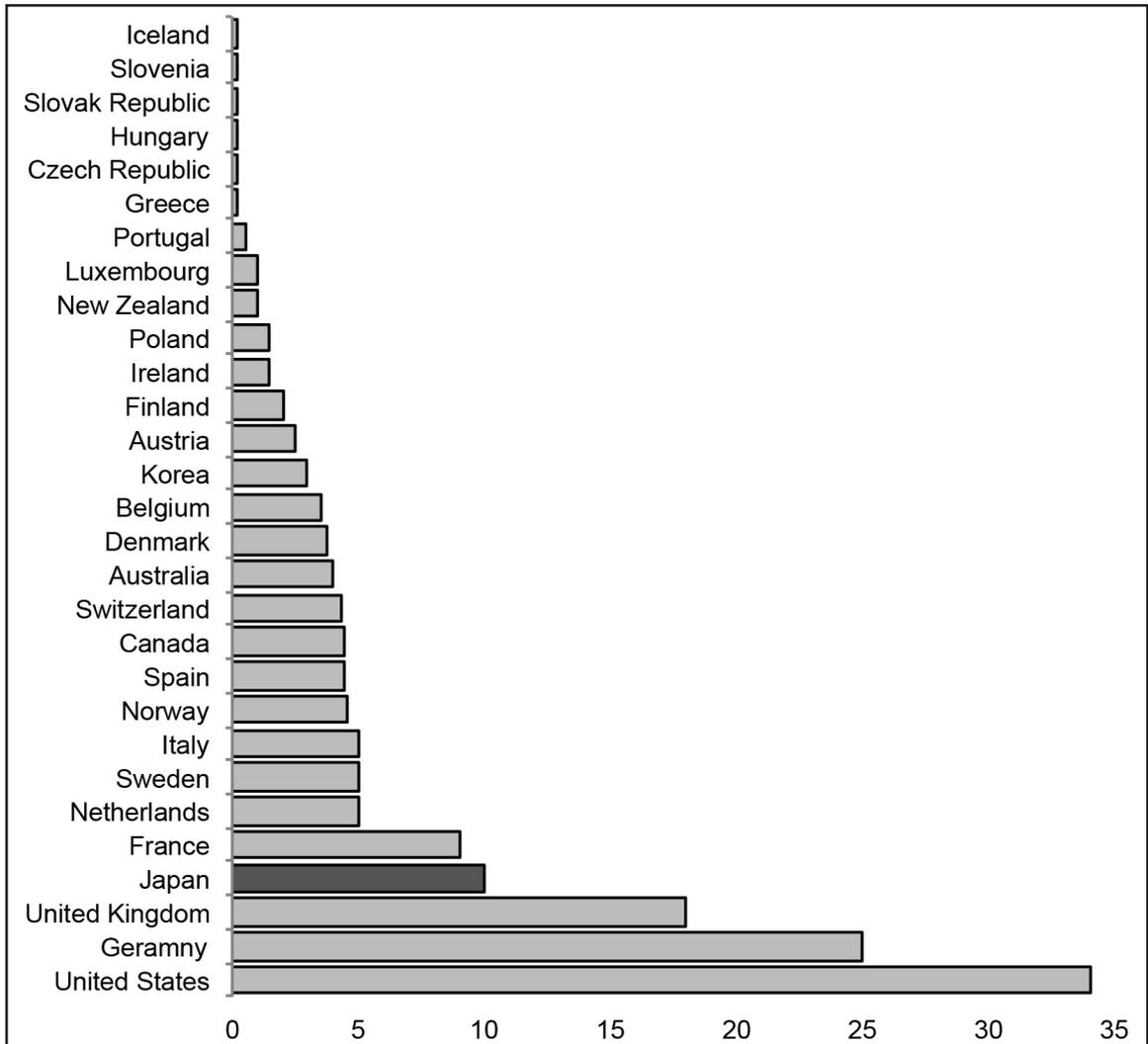


Figure 4: Official Development Assistance by Total Volume in 2016

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Official Development Assistance 2016, 2017, accessed February 4, 2018, <http://www2.compareyourcountry.org/oda?cr=oeecd&lg=en>.

announced a 2 trillion yen ODA package for ASEAN community-building as well as deeper integration with ASEAN through a new 100 million USD Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund.¹⁰⁷ In charge of administering Japan’s ODA, the Japan International Cooperation Agency wryly notes Japan “is not necessarily very good at bringing armed conflicts to an end.”¹⁰⁸ Instead, Japan International Cooperation Agency President Dr. Kitaoka highlights Japan’s unique approach to peacebuilding, pointing to the Tokyo International Conference on African Development meetings as representative of

Japan’s critical role in maintaining the system of international cooperation.¹⁰⁹ As a result, there has been rising appreciation within Japan for ODA’s utility in improving the country’s standing in the international community, and by extension, ensuring its peace and prosperity. The Abe administration has explored the deliberate and strategic use of ODA to achieve Japan’s national security interests. Figure 4 shows Japan was the fourth largest contributor of development assistance in the world in 2016 with 10.37 billion USD in net ODA total volume.

Japan’s use of ODA is primarily focused on

economic development, especially among the littoral states of the South China Sea and Strait of Malacca.¹¹⁰ Its traditional basis lies in quality growth and human security, layered with a high level of economic governance and transparency. In line with its Development Cooperation Charter, Japan has maintained “the principle of avoiding any use of development cooperation for military purposes or for aggravation of international conflicts.”¹¹¹ However, the Abe administration has reframed defense cooperation to ease restrictions on the ability for Japan to supply other nations with military equipment and engage in security and military capacity-building. Japan’s 2017 donation of two TC-90 trainer airframes to Manila marked the “first instance of Japan transferring excess defense equipment to another country free of charge following ongoing changes in its domestic laws.”¹¹² Japan’s largesse to the Philippines, including the expedited procurement of multi-role response vessels, has in turn sparked requests from other ASEAN states.¹¹³

Despite the good will that comes with military donations and the 2014 relaxation on arms export restrictions, Japan’s defense industry has yet to show equivalent progress. Japan has not inked any significant defense export deals despite its global stature as an export powerhouse, ranked fourth in global exports with 645 billion USD in 2016.¹¹⁴ Japan’s failed bid for Australia’s 2014 submarine tender deal marked a “major setback for Abe’s push to develop an arms export industry as part of a more muscular security agenda after decades of pacifism.”¹¹⁵ This may be attributable to Tokyo’s inexperience and lack of solid marketing strategies, attractive costing, and negotiating skills.¹¹⁶ To gain a toehold in the competitive international arms market and streamline its policies, the Abe administration established the Acquisition Technology and Logistics Agency inside the Ministry of Defense.¹¹⁷ However, Japan, like many Indo-Pacific militaries, remains dependent

on foreign suppliers such as the U.S. for imports of advanced weaponry and platforms.¹¹⁸

As an island nation in the Pacific, energy security is an inescapable geoeconomic aspect of Japan’s national security. Geographically isolated and driven by persistent energy security concerns, Japan is keenly aware of the vulnerability of its sea lines of communication. Japan must import over 90 percent of its energy requirements, of which 80 percent of its oil and 20 percent of its natural gas comes from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz.¹¹⁹ A critical geoeconomic issue for China, the Malacca Dilemma certainly applies to Japan as well. Therefore, the pro-nuclear Abe administration faces a complex challenge: how to obtain energy security in the face of strong anti-nuclear sentiment among the public? Of Japan’s 48 existing nuclear reactors, only four were in operation as of January 2017.¹²⁰

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Following the Fukushima disaster in March 2011, Japan has endeavored to diversify its energy supply and reduce its dependence on nuclear power.¹²¹ Japan leads global liquefied natural gas demand, representing 83.3 metric tons and 32.3 percent by global market share in 2016.¹²² In fact, Japan tops the world’s five largest liquefied natural gas importers, all located in Asia and collectively representing roughly 70 percent of globally traded liquefied natural gas.¹²³ Japan notably received its first import of liquefied shale gas in January 2017 from the contiguous United States, a rising energy provider expected to be the world’s top liquefied natural gas exporter by 2022.¹²⁴ Given its rising trade surplus with the U.S., 51.6 billion USD in 2011 to 62.6 billion USD in 2016, Japan’s

interest in American liquefied natural gas also helps assuage U.S. geoeconomic concerns.¹²⁵

Despite a long history of economic cooperation with the U.S., Japan warily prepares to blunt the Trump administration's preference for bilateral free trade agreements. In addition, "Japan's continued efforts to 'multilateralize' concerns about China's maritime ambitions" and increase its own energy security remain works-in-progress.¹²⁶ It is also still vulnerable to energy and resource manipulation, evidenced by China's 2010 halt on exports of rare earth minerals to Japan due to geopolitical tensions.¹²⁷ In this acutely sensitive and interdependent economic landscape, modern power politics is now increasingly defined and described by economic statecraft "as the foreign policy of choice for great powers."¹²⁸

The recent NSS promulgated by the Trump administration in December 2017 underpins the evaluation criteria to be used in analyzing Japan's DIME findings.

Phase II: Evaluation Criteria (U.S. National Security Interests)

The recent NSS promulgated by the Trump administration in December 2017 underpins the evaluation criteria to be used in analyzing Japan's DIME findings. This strategic document puts forth an array of instructive and key objectives across the dimensions of national power. Consequently, the strategic guidance lends itself well to the provision of relevant metrics for this study's evaluation criteria.

The U.S.' 2017 NSS lays out a comprehensive strategy for reaching U.S. national objectives on an "America First" premise. It underscores a whole-of-government approach to securing its national interests, emphasizing relationships with regional partners and allies. It notes the return of great power politics, a geostrategic structural

transformation that may presage the imminent shift from unipolarity to multipolarity, or to a multiplex order. In the Indo-Pacific region, this holds particular implications for Japan as the U.S.' most reliable and capable ally.

U.S. Diplomatic Objectives

Throughout the NSS, the diplomatic emphasis remains consistently on the importance of allies and partners to maintain and promote U.S. interests and "magnify American power."¹²⁹ Through U.S. leadership in multilateral political and security institutions, "diplomacy is indispensable to identify and implement solutions to conflicts in unstable regions of the world short of military involvement."¹³⁰ It specifically emphasizes quadrilateral cooperation with Japan, Australia, and India. It echoes Abe's ambitious call for a regional security infrastructure with the inherent capabilities to match China's potential and ensure security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. Among its descriptions of key U.S. allies in the region, the NSS expressly notes the leadership role of Japan and the emerging global power stature of India.¹³¹

The NSS also emphasizes equitable burden-sharing, while simultaneously highlighting the need for allies and "the collective resources of like-minded nations and organizations to address shared problems."¹³² This underpins the strategic recognition that "changes in a regional balance of power can have global consequences" and complicate the U.S.' ability to contain threats.¹³³ These threats expressly include DPRK's nuclear regime and China's geopolitical aspirations. To address them, the NSS reasserts the U.S.' stance on "complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula" and the preservation of "the non-proliferation regime in Northeast Asia."¹³⁴ It also endorses U.S.' efforts to bolster the vulnerable sovereignties of South Asian states against China's "economic inducements and penalties, influence operations, and implied military threats."¹³⁵

U.S. Informational Objectives

The NSS pointedly asserts the U.S. must “compete for positive relationships around the world,” implicitly referencing strategic competitors such as Russia and China.¹³⁶ It positions American influence and values as a “positive alternative to political and religious despotism.”¹³⁷ Despite carrying faint undertones of “American exceptionalism,” the 2017 NSS and its fundamental America First principle also adds the proviso that the U.S. will abstain from imposing those values on others.¹³⁸ Furthermore, the NSS advances the concept of a contested information domain as an accelerant in political, military, and economic competitions. It further proclaims “states throughout the region are calling for sustained U.S. leadership in a collective response that upholds a regional order respectful of sovereignty and independence.”¹³⁹ In order to do so, the U.S. must “create a network of states that advance our common interests and values.”¹⁴⁰ To serve as the foundation of this rules-based system, the NSS underscores the necessity of fundamental individual liberties.¹⁴¹

U.S. Military Objectives

The NSS emphasizes the concept of peace through strength, delivered through two primary means: 1) A forward military presence capable of deterring and, if necessary, defeating any adversary; 2) Development of a strong defense network with our allies and partners.¹⁴² The NSS also stresses the strategic significance of the nuclear deterrence extended to more than 30 allies and partners, thus assuring their security while reducing their need to possess their own nuclear capabilities.¹⁴³ Nested within the U.S. whole-of-government pursuit to prevent nuclear proliferation in East Asia, modernized nuclear deterrence remains the “foundation of U.S. strategy to preserve peace and stability by deterring aggression.”¹⁴⁴

The U.S. NSS requires allies to modernize, acquire necessary capabilities, improve

readiness, expand the size of their forces, and affirm the political will to win.¹⁴⁵ This latest NSS consciously recognizes the vulnerabilities and gaps in the U.S.’ global capabilities and security requirements. This strategic realization informs the NSS’ consistent call on allies and partners to contribute and moreover, demonstrate the willingness to confront dangerous and mutual threats. At the same time, it stresses the need to enhance layered missile defense focused on North Korea and Iran while simultaneously upholding strategic stability and longstanding strategic relationships. Finally, the NSS notes expanded defense and security cooperation with India, labeled a Major Defense Partner of the United States.¹⁴⁶

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U.S. Economic Objectives

Based on the principles of economic fairness and reciprocity, the 2017 NSS carries forth the concept of competition to global geoeconomic statecraft. Reiterating its focus on allies and partners, the NSS highlights the economic aspect of free markets and meaningfully links it to protection from forces that would subvert their sovereignty.¹⁴⁷ In addition, the NSS notes prosperous states are also stronger security partners who are then able to share the burden of confronting common threats. The NSS puts forth the requirement to “compete and lead in multilateral organizations so that American interests and principles are protected.”¹⁴⁸ It also reinforces the objective to “shape and reform international financial and trade institutions.”¹⁴⁹ The goal of adopting “new trade and investment

U.S. National Security Objectives	Japan National Security Policies
Diplomatic	Supporting
Informational	Supporting
Military	Neutral-Supporting
Economic	Supporting

Table 1: Evaluation Criteria Table

Source: Created by Author.

agreements and modernizing existing ones” while “countering unfair trade practices” are complementary priority actions.¹⁵⁰

The NSS highlights access to the geostrategic Indo-Pacific markets in order to expand U.S. trade and investment opportunities while increasing the market base for U.S. goods and services. It specifically underscores the potential of U.S. economic power and relationships to “bolster states threatened by competitors.”¹⁵¹ By upholding the rules of a fair and reciprocal economic order, the NSS argues it will not only “benefit all with equal levels of market access and opportunities for economic growth” but also enhance U.S. security.¹⁵² In the NSS, economic ties are extolled not only for market access but also for their ability to advance common political and security interests through deepening relationships. It accentuates the role of geoeconomics in the U.S.’ foreign policy and power politics engagement with other states, as well as its influence on U.S. national interests both at home and abroad.

Phase III: Evaluation Criteria Analysis

The evaluation criteria table displays the DIME interaction between Japan’s security policies and U.S. objectives from a national security perspective. The level of symmetry between the U.S. and Japan across all instruments of national power will inform the overall degree of security integration in the Indo-Pacific. The three-tiered scale system in Table 1 demonstrates the strategic alignment between U.S.’ national security objectives and Japan’s

national security policies. Categorized within the DIME framework, the scale runs along a continuum from Opposing (O) to Neutral (N) to Supporting (S). Based on each category of national power, the table notes the degree of agreement between Japan’s policies and the U.S.’ objectives. The desired outcome is “Supporting” in most, if not all, of the four categories while avoiding any “Opposing.” Table 1 presents the following results:

According to the table, there are no opposing conditions in any of the categories of national power. This indicates there is minimal contradiction or conflict between Japan’s security policies and the U.S.’ security interests. However, a neutral to supporting state exists in the military category between the U.S. and Japan. It considers the U.S.’ support for the Abe administration’s drive to normalize military power as an instrument of national power and policy. It also notes Japan’s moderate successes in military modernization through constitutional reinterpretation, policy and organizational updates, and achievement of key JSDF objectives. On the other hand, it recognizes the inhibitive impact of domestic opposition and the JSDF’s burdened shift from the molasse of its traditional status quo. The “Neutral-Supporting” reflects the continual capability gap between the Abe administration’s U.S.-supported ambitions for regional power normalization and its historical risk-averse role as a passive military alliance partner.

Conclusions

While maintaining the strength and necessity of its military alliance with the U.S., Japan is simultaneously establishing its preference for a more equitable, multilateral, and reliable security framework for the Indo-Pacific. Japan's firm pivot to its concept of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" indicates a restless perspective of the current outdated hub-and-spoke alliance structure. Confronting the realization of how untenable its security may become if left on its current course, Japan is striving to gain greater control over its own future. Japan's ambitious unilateral diplomacy, evolving national identity, progressive military modernization, and energetic economic outreach collectively frame its security strategy for the post-American Century threat environment. Its omnidirectional national security strategy acknowledges the historical, geoeconomic, and geopolitical conflicts of interests simmering within the Indo-Pacific and seeks a strategic approach to overcome those challenges.

Although the dynamic nature of the region's security environment poses difficulties for policy formulation and long-term strategic thinking, it also offers opportunities for Japan and the U.S. to jointly reshape the Indo-Pacific security landscape. Based on U.S. national security interests gleaned from its 2017 NSS, Japan's national security strategy is mutually beneficial for both allies.

Japan is leading a thorough and well-calibrated regional response to manage change in the regional balance of power. Therefore, these multilateral security evolutions bode well for a strengthened set of collective and cooperative regional security mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific.

Japan's security strategy is *not* detrimental to U.S. national security interests in the Indo-Pacific region. Rather, Japan's security policies are highly complementary with U.S. national security objectives. Despite some recognized shortfalls in the military domain of national power, Japan is strategically well-aligned with U.S. Indeed, Japan's unique constraints on its military potential contributes to its greater flexibility in adopting a regionally reassuring and moderated security approach. Its limitations are an integral aspect of its strategic smart power aspect, although that may frustrate any immediate U.S. hopes for a significantly increased JSDF presence in the Indo-Pacific.

It is important to recognize Japan as not only the U.S.' most critical ally in the Indo-Pacific but also a significant regional power in its own right. While this alliance structure has remained remarkably intact till now, Japan's strategic calculations are forcing it to revise its role in the alliance in light of rising threats.

The U.S. will increasingly rely on Japan to support its efforts to engage with and influence the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S.' delegation of responsibility and insistence on burden-sharing merges with the Abe administration's desire to manage, circumvent, or overcome its domestic limitations so that Japan can achieve greater control over its own geopolitical destiny.

Recommendations for Action

The U.S. must take action to shore up Japan's confidence in the U.S. security guarantee. Surrounded by nuclear threats such as China and DPRK, allies such as South Korea and Japan may increasingly view the development of nuclear weapons as a strategic imperative if they lose confidence in the U.S. security commitment. A sense of insecurity will raise the likelihood of the U.S.' gradual exclusion from the regional community, nationalist and militaristic security policies, and risky security-seeking behavior.

Second, the U.S. must become a foundational member of the Indo-Pacific "security diamond,"

otherwise known as the “security quadrilateral.” Strategically, such a role would re-invigorate the perception as well as the reality of the U.S. as a Pacific power. It would also increase its influence and leverage over Japan’s policies, as well as those of India and Australia.

Third, the U.S. must prioritize economic integration with the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S. is now excluded from the CPTPP as well as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which will soon be the world’s largest trade bloc in terms of population, making up 46 percent.¹⁵³ In order to maintain influence over the most significant economic region in the world, the U.S. must assure its inclusion in these economic frameworks. In its newfound leadership role within the CPTPP and with its acknowledged expertise in infrastructure development and capacity-building assistance, Japan has accumulated considerable credibility in the region. Alongside an influential and proactive Japan, the U.S. should use the CPTPP to reinforce “omnibus diplomatic, economic, and security regionalisms.”¹⁵⁴

Lastly, the U.S. must increase strategic emphasis on rapprochement between Japan and South Korea as a critical component of U.S. regional security strategy for the Indo-Pacific region. Despite the recent strategic tilt towards the security quadrilateral, the U.S. must not lose sight of South Korea’s geopolitical significance and maintain its close relations with this critical security partner. Its geostrategic location on the Korean peninsula and proximity to China assigns the Asian middle power a unique significance. To reflect the dynamics of the evolving security environment, the U.S. should promote South Korea’s adoption of Japan’s minilateral approach. It facilitates burden-sharing and increased perceptions of equality among both parties through reduced dependence on the antiquated hub-and-spoke structure. In addition, it helps manage South Korea’s economic vulnerability to Chinese pressure through deeper integration in economic and security frameworks founded on the rules-based system. **IAJ**

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