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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**TITLE:**

**A Battle for Influence: United States and Japanese responses to Chinese Information Operations**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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## Executive Summary

**Title:** A Battle for Influence: United States and Japanese responses to Chinese Information Operations

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**Thesis:** The People's Republic of China (PRC) has used information and influence operations as an instrument of national power to effectively undermine the United States-Japan defensive alliance. That the United States and Japan must develop a coordinated information warfare strategy to preserve the alliance's ability to deter PRC aggression and manage Chinese engagement, and compete and win in the information domain.

**Discussion:** The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States are in the midst of multi-domain competition. The U.S., in cooperation with its staunchest pacific ally Japan, seeks to maintain the rules-based order that has governed international relations since the end of World War 2. The PRC increasingly seeks to undermine and revise the status quo through a variety of means in order to achieve regional dominance and displace the U.S. from the Indo-Pacific.

China has used gray-zone operations (coercive actions designed to operate below the threshold of an armed response) to pressure Japan over energy development rights in the East China Sea and sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diayou islands. PRC gray-zone activities, backed by a rapidly modernizing People's Liberation Army (PLA), have in turn driven the U.S. and Japan towards increasing strategic alignment. This has resulted in a number of tangible benefits to the conventional military aspects of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

However, while the alliance has thus far effectively managed the PRC's conventional threat, the U.S. and Japan are failing to compete in the cognitive domains of information and influence. The PRC is employing influence operations as part of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda operations and as part of the PLA's "Three Warfares" concept. This has allowed the PRC to undermine the U.S.-Japan alliance by isolating it from a geo-politically ideal trilateral partner in the Republic of Korea, and by instigating local tensions over the presence of U.S. forces in Okinawa. The alliance must develop and implement an information warfare strategy to regain the initiative and effectively compete and win the PRC in the cognitive domain.

**Conclusion:** The U.S. and Japan must both make concerted efforts towards formulating and implementing information warfare strategies in order to deter and manage PRC aggression. Each country's strategy must reflect a whole-of-government approach to information operations. The tools for information warfare must be strengthened and reinforced through new means. Finally, each government must determine how to properly empower the agency or personnel responsible for information warfare to ensure it is successfully executed.

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## Introduction

The U.S.-Japan alliance has frequently been called the keystone of the U.S. security strategy in the Pacific over the last 70 years. For over half a century the U.S. has used the Japanese “unsinkable aircraft carrier” as a staging point for military operations throughout the Indo-Pacific region. While the presence of almost 50,000 U.S. service members and families stationed there has arguably been an effective tripwire in deterring an attack against Japan, the U.S. has taken advantage of Japan’s vital location to influence the strategic decision-making of nations that threaten American and allied interests. Despite recent attempts to diversify the distribution of U.S. forces across the Pacific, the closure of U.S. bases in the Philippines during the 1990’s and restrictions on U.S. forces based in Korea means that American power projection in Asia largely starts and ends with Japan.

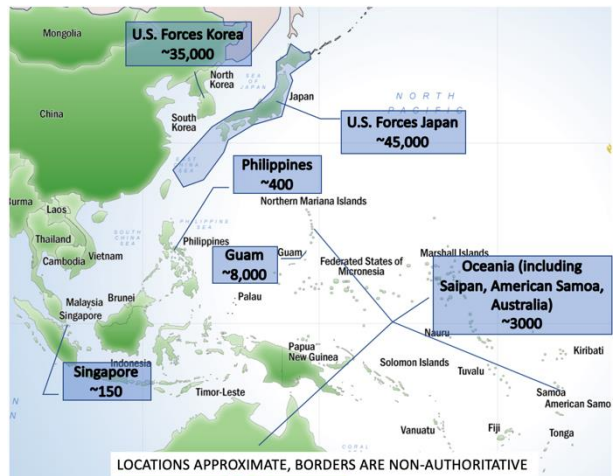


Figure 1 - USINDOPACOM Force Laydown March 2019.  
Source: Graphic composed by author. Data from USINDOPACOM Public Affairs Office.

As a rising nation with the economic and military potential to overtake the U.S. in terms of raw national power, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) appears destined to assume regional dominance in the Asia-Pacific. At least, that is the message the PRC would have its neighbors and the global community accept. China increasingly seeks to displace or replace U.S. hegemony in the region, and it is hyperaware of the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance in maintaining an American foothold in Asia. To achieve its regional objectives, China pursues ways to challenge, undermine, or negate the advantages of the U.S.-Japan alliance. This paper

contends that while U.S. and Japanese defense and policy makers focus and respond to Chinese military and para-military challenges to the alliance, the allies fail to respond effectively in the information domain and cede significant advantage to the PRC. China's use of information and influence operations inside and against the U.S. and Japan, including employing the "Three Warfares" concept, have had the greatest impact in straining the U.S.-Japan alliance, undermining its ability to adapt in an evolving strategic environment. To strengthen the alliance's ability to deter Chinese aggression and manage Chinese engagement, the U.S. and Japan must develop a coordinated strategy to compete and win in the information domain.

This study will employ the following methodology. Because a significant aspect of China's information campaign is the denial of any pursuit of regional domination, the study will begin with an analysis of PRC regional strategy. PRC strategy will be compared against U.S. and Japanese strategies, followed by a review of how the defense alliance has strengthened coordination and cooperation in response to PRC conventional and para-military aggression. The study will then examine PRC influence operations in the political and defense realms as a potential asymmetric threat to the U.S.-Japan alliance. The study will examine alliance responses to PRC influence operations, before recommending potential domestic and alliance policy and operational adjustments to counter this threat.

### **PRC National and Regional Strategies**

In determining how the U.S.-Japan alliance should manage engagement with the PRC it is first important to determine China's Asia-Pacific strategy. An understanding of PRC strategy will inform subsequent strategic decisions by U.S. and Japanese policy makers for, as Sun Tzu

said, “what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy.”<sup>1</sup> Recent history has shown that the PRC is certainly adept at attacking and exploiting the strategic gaps of its rivals. It should come as no surprise then that Chinese statements on defense policy and strategy are notoriously opaque. The following analysis traces PRC strategy from the national to regional level.

The PRC’s current national strategy could best be understood as the pursuit of the “China Dream.” While the term had been used before, Xi Jinping adopted the concept shortly after his selection as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). During a keynote speech in November 2012, Xi asserted the “great renewal of the Chinese nation” as the ultimate expression of the China Dream, and has since cemented the concept as the central focus of his administration.<sup>2</sup> The “China Dream” essentially restores China’s national prestige, ensuring economic prosperity, social stability, and a higher quality of life for PRC citizens and progress in these categories legitimizes the CCP’s one-party rule.<sup>3</sup> President Xi has also aligned the “China Dream” with achieving the existing CCP goal of the “Two Centenaries,” defined as building a “moderately prosperous society” by the centennial anniversary of the CCP in 2021, and building a “modern socialist country” by the centennial anniversary of the PRC’s founding in 2049.”<sup>4</sup>

Using President’s Xi vision of the pursuit of the “China Dream” as strategic guidance, the PRC’s State Information Office publishes the Defense White Paper (DWP). The DWP is an

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<sup>1</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963) 77, <https://web.stanford.edu/class/polisci211z/1.1/Sun%20Tzu.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> “2nd LD-Writethru: Xi Pledges ‘Great Renewal of Chinese Nation’.” 2012. *Xinhua News Agency - CEIS*, Nov 29, <https://search-proquest-com.lomc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1220921501?accountid=14746>.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy R. Heath, Kristen Gunness, and Cortez A. Cooper III, *The PLA and China’s Rejuvenation: National Security and Military Strategies, Deterrence Concepts, and Combat Capabilities* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1402.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1402.html).

<sup>4</sup> Michael D. Swaine, “The 19th Party Congress and Chinese Foreign Policy,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, October 16, 2017, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/10/16/19th-party-congress-and-chinese-foreign-policy-pub-73432>.

authoritative document released biennially that represents the official position of the CCP government. It is “fully vetted and staffed by the various organs of the Party-State” and written to inform and shape the perceptions of both domestic and foreign audiences.<sup>5</sup> In addressing the opaque nature of Chinese policy to outsiders, it is instructive that China’s first DWP published in 1998 was largely an effort to alleviate regional fears of a growing Chinese threat.<sup>6</sup> The document proclaimed a peaceful defensive strategy based off the principle of active defense, while broadly describing the functioning of the PRC’s defense decision-making bodies.<sup>7</sup> Successive white papers have built on the information in the preceding documents and other official sources, but Dennis Blasko notes that “those expecting descriptions of China’s latest weapons and details of its force structure will generally be disappointed.”<sup>8</sup>

While not the sole source for deciphering Chinese defense strategy, the DWP articulates key tasks for the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and signals how the PRC will prioritize force development and exercise military power both near and abroad. The most recent DWP was released in 2015. It confirms achievement of the “Two Centenaries” as the national strategic goal while emphasizing possession of a strong military to serve as a security guarantee for China’s peaceful development. The DWP promotes a “holistic view of national security” that balances “internal and external security, homeland and citizen security, traditional and non-traditional security, subsistence and development security, and China’s own security and the

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel M. Hartnett, “China’s 2012 Defense White Paper: Panel Discussion Report,” in *CNA China Studies* (Alexandria, VA: CNA, September 2013), 5, [https://www.cna.org/CNA\\_files/PDF/CCP-2013-U-005876-Final.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/CCP-2013-U-005876-Final.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> People’s Republic of China State Council Information Office, *China’s National Defense in 1998* (Beijing: State Council Information Office, July 1998), 8-10, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Admin/1998%20White%20Paper%20-%20English.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Dennis J. Blasko, “The 2015 Defense White Paper on Strategy in Perspective: Maritime Missions Require a Change in the PLA mindset,” *China Brief* 15, 12 (June 19, 2015), 3, [https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/China\\_Brief\\_Vol\\_15\\_Issue\\_12\\_v2\\_1\\_01.pdf?x87069](https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/China_Brief_Vol_15_Issue_12_v2_1_01.pdf?x87069).

common security of the world.”<sup>9</sup> Distinct from previous versions, the 2015 DWP emphasizes that the development of maritime power can no longer be subordinated to ground forces, and is accompanied by a new strategic task “to safeguard the security of China’s overseas interests.”<sup>10</sup> Cyberspace and outer space are labelled the new commanding heights for strategic competition. Finally, while active defense remains the current military strategic guidance the 2015 white paper adjusts the basic point for preparation for military struggle (PMS) to “winning informationized local wars, highlighting maritime struggle and maritime PMS.”<sup>11</sup>

The 2015 DWP suggests the PRC views security from a whole-of-government perspective that transcends the military element, tying economic and developmental objectives to national security. This is not entirely dissimilar from the U.S. national security strategy which includes economic prosperity and diplomatic influence as pillars of national security. The difference lies in how China militarizes these other elements of national power. China places increasing importance on the development of a modern powerful armed forces that can secure its interests overseas and in the “informationized” cyber and space domains. China’s balancing of national security against “the common security of the world” suggests that despite a consistently articulated desire to pursue development under conditions of peace and stability, China will unquestionably advance their own interests ahead of others. Fravel points out that while the 2015 white paper does not explicitly identify a main strategic direction or geographic focus of effort, the guidelines point towards a “Taiwan Strait-Western Pacific” direction.<sup>12</sup> This focus on Taiwan is consistent with historical PRC priorities, given the importance of PRC/Taiwan

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<sup>9</sup> People’s Republic of China State Council Information Office, *China’s Military Strategy* (Beijing: State Council Information Office, May 2015), 5, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Admin/2015%20White%20Paper-Eng%20and%20Ch.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-12.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-8.

<sup>12</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, “China’s New Military Strategy: ‘Winning Informationized Local Wars’,” *China Brief* 15, 13 (July 2, 2015), 18, [https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/China\\_Brief\\_Vol\\_15\\_Issue13.pdf?x87069](https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/China_Brief_Vol_15_Issue13.pdf?x87069).

reunification to CCP legitimacy. The proposal of a secondary focus on the western pacific is reinforced by the attention of a 2017 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) white paper entitled “China’s Policies on Asia Pacific Security Cooperation.”

The 2017 MOFA white paper attempts to cement a prominent leadership role for China in Asia-Pacific affairs. The document states that “China has all along taken the advancement of regional prosperity and stability as *its own responsibility*” and is “ready to pursue security through dialogue and cooperation... with other countries *in the region*” [emphasis added].<sup>13</sup> The document is distinctly realist in its assessment of interstate relations, stating that in the relations between great and lesser powers, “major countries should treat the strategic intentions of others in an objective and rational manner... small and medium-sized countries need not and should not take sides among big countries.”<sup>14</sup> When explicitly addressing the PRC-U.S. relationship, the document promotes positive growth in multiple domains, however a majority of the contents are carefully crafted to either criticize the U.S. or omit American participation in key Asia-Pacific organizations. In discussing major regional multilateral mechanisms, the document identifies China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea as the “main drivers of East Asia economic integration” and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Plus Three (APT) as the “main vehicle for East Asia cooperation.”<sup>15</sup> U.S. involvement in either respect is intentionally left unmentioned.

China promotes rule-setting rather than rules-based international conduct, and some observers agree that this white paper is intended to position China as “rule-maker” rather than

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<sup>13</sup> People’s Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *China’s Policies on Asia Pacific Security Cooperation* (Beijing: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 11, 2017), [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1429771.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1429771.shtml).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

“rule-taker.”<sup>16</sup> The document is highly critical of international and regional rules-based systems that appear to be “dictated by any particular country” or instances where “individual countries be allowed to violate the lawful rights and interests of other under the pretext of ‘rule of law.’”<sup>17</sup> In resolving disputes, China calls on all parties to respect historical facts of sovereignty while advancing its own questionable claims to the Spratly islands and Senkakus. Finally, the document condemns the existing Asia-Pacific architecture as outdated, criticizes alliances that could balance against a third party implied to be China, and calls for improving and upgrading existing regional mechanisms.<sup>18</sup>

The 2017 MOFA white paper thus stakes out a number of critical PRC positions on regional security. China believes it is already the dominant actor in the Asia-Pacific, and seeks to shape an environment that is conducive to its interests while increasingly displacing U.S. influence. While China will respect the rights of others, its historical claim to highly-valued physical resources and territory are presumed to outweigh other nation’s rights as recognized by old world order, perhaps best exemplified by the PRC’s refusal to accept the Permanent Court of Arbitration’s 2016 ruling in favor of the Philippines over the PRC regarding territorial claims in the South China Seas.<sup>19</sup> The MOFA white paper makes clear China’s strong discouragement of smaller countries who seek to balance with the U.S. against a potential Chinese threat. The document’s promotion of Chinese economic and security initiatives such as the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are intended to supplant U.S. and

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<sup>16</sup> Ankit Panda, “The Future of the Asia Pacific Security Architecture, as Seen by China,” *TheDiplomat.com*, January 17, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/the-future-of-the-asia-pacific-security-architecture-as-seen-by-china/>.

<sup>17</sup> People’s Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *China’s Policies on Asia Pacific Security Cooperation*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Tom Phillips, Oliver Holmes, Owen Bowcott, “Beijing rejects tribunal’s ruling in South China Sea case,” *TheGuardian.com*, July 12, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/12/philippines-wins-south-china-sea-case-against-china>.

other regional multilateral organizations. The omission of U.S. involvement in discussion of the region's key multilateral organizations is a strong indicator that China wants the U.S. out of Asia. China's inputs to the proposed South China Sea code of conduct it is drafting with ASEAN, even more explicitly attempt to push the U.S. out of its strategic backyard by prohibiting "outside countries" involvement in maritime economic activities and joint military operations without the consent of any "affected" party, i.e. China.<sup>20</sup>

These assessments of Chinese regional strategy are correlated in the U.S. Department of Defense's (DOD) Annual Report to Congress on Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018. The DOD report argues that China seeks to establish regional preeminence and expand its international influence.<sup>21</sup> It casts BRI in strategic terms as a means for China to secure strong economic ties with countries that will then align, acquiesce or tolerate China's interests, and withhold criticism of China's policies. The DOD report assesses that China will attempt to secure its objectives without engendering the existing regional stability that has facilitated its rise, while also demonstrating a willingness to employ coercion to secure its interests in the face of opposition.<sup>22</sup> The report further documents the evolution of the PRC "Active Defense" strategy, from a concept originally based on defensive counterattacks in response to an attack, now modified to suggest pre-emptive strikes to "disrupt an adversary's preparations to attack."<sup>23</sup> Lastly, the DOD report confirms a comment by President Xi that while China will never invade or expand, it will also never permit "any piece of Chinese territory" to

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<sup>20</sup> Carl Thayer, "A Closer Look at the ASEAN-China Single Draft South China Sea Code of Conduct," *TheDiplomat.com*, August 3, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/a-closer-look-at-the-asean-china-single-draft-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct/>.

<sup>21</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2018), i, <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Aug/16/2001955282/-1/-1/1/2018-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT.PDF>.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, i.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

be separated from China, implying a willingness to use any national means to solve its many territorial boundary disputes.<sup>24</sup>

Chinese strategy in the Asia-Pacific clearly seeks to achieve regional dominance at the loss of U.S. influence. While not openly seeking military confrontation, it anticipates military struggle in the maritime domain, while preparing for conflict and seeking the initiative in the “new” domains of cyberspace and outer space. Its armed forces are preparing for conflict under informationized conditions, a Chinese concept resembling the western theory of network-centric warfare. The tone of China’s strategic documents suggest gravitation towards a regional exclusion policy that tells external actors the region is still “open for business, militaries not welcome.” China believes it is already in a position to impress its interests on regional neighbors and will not tolerate less powerful countries balancing with another major power against it, without first applying concerted whole-of-government pressure to deter such offshore balancing. And while China may not completely replace the existing rules that govern multilateral coordination in the region, it seeks to reserve the right to shape and set rules as necessary to benefit themselves.

### **United States and Japanese Regional Strategies**

China’s regional strategy and ambitions threaten the existing balance of power and rules-based status quo in East Asia. U.S. presence throughout the region, and more specifically the U.S.-Japan alliance, has been a major stabilizing influence in the past, providing a secure backdrop for economic growth and development. Current U.S. and Japanese strategies thus define the status quo that China would like to replace, and merit analysis before addressing how

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 46.

the alliance addresses Chinese aggression.

U.S. strategy for East Asia is outlined by two primary documents: the 2017 “America First” National Security Strategy (NSS) and the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) entitled “Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge.” The NSS rests on four broad pillars of homeland security, economic prosperity, preserving peace through strengthened instruments of national power, and advancing American influence. It also provides a tailored strategy for the Indo-Pacific. This tailored strategy recognizes China’s rapidly growing military capability that targets American power projection, and China’s increasing attempts to politically, economically, or militarily dominate neighboring countries, particularly those with whom China shares a boundary dispute.<sup>25</sup> In response, the NSS determines to redouble alliance commitments and military relationships throughout the region, maintain a forward military presence to deter or defeat aggression, act to preserve the rule of law and freedom of the seas, and build military capability with allies.<sup>26</sup> While the NSS acknowledges economic and informational aspects to competition with the PRC, it devotes more attention to the “hard-power” military domain. The fourth pillar of the NSS, “Advance American Influence,” is also the shortest chapter of the strategy and insists that where the U.S. contributes a disproportionate amount of support “we will *expect* a commensurate degree of influence over... the institution” [emphasis added].<sup>27</sup> Such explicitly transactional rhetoric is less-than-inspiring in the cognitive domain of ideas where democratic principles could more effectively contribute to security.

The 2018 NDS explicitly focuses on long-term, great power competition, principally between the U.S., China, and Russia. The unclassified synopsis of the NDS notes China’s

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<sup>25</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC, 2017), 47. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

employment of “military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics” to reset the regional status quo in the Indo-Pacific, with the short-term goal of achieving regional hegemony and the long-term goal of usurping U.S. global preeminence.<sup>28</sup> It further articulates a strategic approach containing three distinct lines of effort: restoring military readiness while modernizing to build a more lethal joint force; strengthening alliances and partnerships; and reforming DOD business practices to achieve a more dynamic performance-driven model while reducing bureaucratic bloat and procurement inefficiency.<sup>29</sup>

Taken as a whole, both American strategic documents identify information and influence aspects to competition with the PRC but neither devotes significant writing to explore how to counter Chinese influence operations. The NSS outlines priority actions for “information statecraft” as a function of “preserving peace through strength,” but these actions focus largely on countering radical Islamism and only briefly touch upon the PRC without providing any substantive direction.<sup>30</sup> The NDS pledges to support other U.S. government interagency efforts in countering adversarial coercion and subversion operations, but contributes little else to the conversation in the unclassified summary.<sup>31</sup> Instead, American strategy towards the PRC emphasizes traditional military aspects such as readiness, modernization, capacity and lethality, as well as the strengthening of alliances to maintain the existing rules-based international order in East Asia and counter Chinese aggression. It is a commitment through conventional defense platforms and domains to maintain what has already been achieved. This also suggests an existing level of comfort in American foreign policy to rely on the “big stick” to solve problems

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<sup>28</sup> US Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-10.

<sup>30</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 35.

<sup>31</sup> US Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense of the United States of America*, 5.

abroad while abandoning the “soft speech” of free and democratic principles.

Japan’s first, and currently only, National Security Strategy was published in 2013. As a basic policy for defense of the nation, the strategy is focused on maintaining Japanese sovereignty, defending Japanese territory, protecting Japanese citizens and property, and maintaining regional and global conditions that contribute to Japanese economic prosperity, specifically the rules-based international order that is regionally girded by the U.S. Japan alliance.<sup>32</sup> To achieve these objectives, the strategy’s approach includes: strengthening and expanding Japan’s Self Defense Force (SDF) capabilities and roles; strengthening integration with U.S. forces in the Japan-U.S. alliance, as well as security cooperation efforts with other partners; an increased contribution to international peace and stability efforts that also reinforces universal values; and strengthening domestic and global support and understanding for security operations.<sup>33</sup> This final line of effort is emblematic of Japan’s unique historical, constitutional, and societal limitations on the use of military of force.

Japan’s strategy is further explained in its National Defense Planning Guidelines (NDPG) and Medium-Term Defense Program (MTDP). The NDPG defines the basic policies for Japan’s future, establishing requirements and objectives for defense organization and procurement.<sup>34</sup> The MTDP is essentially a five-year plan with a targeted budget and materiel procurement goals, and is the foundation for defense expenditure allowances in the annual budget for the following five years.<sup>35</sup> Japan reset the timing of all documents in 2013, when the first NSS was published accompanied by the NDPG and MTDP. While the NSS and NDPG are released on a ten-year

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<sup>32</sup> Japan Kantei, *National Security Strategy* (Tokyo, December 17, 2013), 4-5, [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/documents/2013/\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-37.

<sup>34</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense, “Outline of the National Security Strategy,” *Defense of Japan 2017 II*, Section 3, 217, [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2017/DOJ2017\\_2-1-3\\_web.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2017/DOJ2017_2-1-3_web.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

cycle, Japan decided to publish an updated NDPG ahead of schedule in conjunction with the latest MTDP in December 2018. This decision was based off Japanese assessments of an increasingly severe security environment driving the need to identify new defense capability requirements and revise acquisition strategy for cross-domain defense, particularly in the informational/cognitive domains of space, cyber, and the electro-magnetic spectrum.<sup>36</sup>

Japan's updated strategic documents reflect a conventional warfare-oriented continuation of national defense policy that attempts to maintain the regional rules-based status quo while slowly expanding Japan's defensive abilities. The updated NDPG focuses on strengthening Japan's internal defense architecture, evolving defense capacity into a Multi-Domain Defense Force with potential long-range strike capability to better defend Japan's remote islands. It also strongly emphasizes the importance of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and the need to maintain and strengthen this relationship as a means of perpetuating the existing rules-based order. Finally, the Japan-U.S. alliance is used as a springboard for increased strengthening of defense cooperation and exchanges regionally as Japan pushes its own strategic vision of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific."<sup>37</sup>

The MTDP details the increases in force structure, SDF organization, programs and budget that will be used to support the NDPG. Collaboration and cooperation with the U.S. are baked into the plan, as Japan notes intent to work with the U.S. to improve defense acquisition and joint defense research and development.<sup>38</sup> American defense platforms such as the F-35 fighter aircraft and improvements to the Patriot missile system and Aegis Ballistic Missile

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<sup>36</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2018 Pamphlet* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2018), 13, [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2018/DOJ2018\\_Digest\\_1204.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2018/DOJ2018_Digest_1204.pdf); Japan Ministry of Defense, *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2019 and beyond* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, December 18, 2018), 11, [https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/20181218\\_e.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/20181218_e.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense, *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2019 and beyond*, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense, *Medium Term Defense Program (FY 2019 – FY 2023)* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, December 18, 2018), [https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/chuki\\_seibi31-35\\_e.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/chuki_seibi31-35_e.pdf).

Defense systems are included among a plethora of other advanced military capabilities intended for purchase. Further, Japan's defense budget for security cooperation includes strengthening the capacity of other regional nations who are being pressured by China over territorial claims in the South China Sea, putting substantial money behind its vision of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific."<sup>39</sup>

It is important to note that both the U.S. and Japan have complimentary visions for a "Free and Open Indo Pacific" (FOIP). While the concept was originally advanced by Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and has only recently begun to take loose form under the U.S. Trump administration, both visions focus on the following tenets as outlined by former U.S. National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster: "freedom of navigation and overflight; the rule of law; freedom from coercion; respect for sovereignty; private enterprise and open markets; freedom and independence of all nations."<sup>40</sup> Despite arguments that the FOIP is not intended as a containment policy for China, the tenets as outlined by General McMaster do imply the potential for confrontation with China on a number of different fronts, particularly as China becomes more assertive in pressing territorial disputes with neighbors, or expanding its economic influence through the Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>41</sup> More importantly, seen in the broad context of the regional order the U.S.-Japan alliance has supported over the past 60 years, each allies' variation of the FOIP represents the latest distillation of the rules-based order China seeks to reshape or replace.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Jeff M. Smith, "Unpacking the Free and Open Indo-Pacific," *Warontherocks.com*, March 24, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/03/unpacking-the-free-and-open-indo-pacific/>.

<sup>41</sup> Sarah Zheng, "'Indo-Pacific': containment ploy or new label for region beyond China's backyard?", *SCMP.com*, November 12, 2017, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2119412/indo-pacific-containment-ploy-or-new-label-region>.

## PRC Actions Driving Alliance Defense Reform

While this paper has thus far examined current contemporary strategies for both China and the U.S.-Japanese alliance, as noted previously these strategies reflect evolutionary rather than revolutionary change respective to the last decade. Focusing on the U.S.-Japanese alliance, both nations have increased their military coordination and collaboration as a response to an increasingly tense security environment. Friction between China and Japan over energy resources in the East China Sea and territorial sovereignty regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands has been a critical driver pushing U.S.-Japan defense coordination closer, and has shaped how both allies approach the challenges of managing engagement with China.

Japan and China share overlapping economic development claims in the East China Sea that have not been effectively negotiated and perennially cause friction between the neighbors. Both nations have used the standard United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as a starting point for energy development claims. However, China has argued for an extended EEZ based off the continental shelf while Japan unintentionally conceded a portion of their claim based on domestic law that calls for use of “median line” in the case of conflicting EEZs.<sup>42</sup>



Figure 2 - China/Japan maritime claims in the East China Sea, highlighting the Chunxiao field.

Source: Jamestown.org

<https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-claims-to-an-extended-continental-shelf-in-the-east-china-sea-meaning-and-implications/>

<sup>42</sup> James Manicom, “China’s Energy Development in the East China Sea,” *Jamestown.org*, September 12, 2013, <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-energy-development-in-the-east-china-sea/>.

Tensions over the rights for energy development flared considerably in 2004 when Japan discovered China conducting drilling operations in the Chunxiao field. This field is just a short distance from Japan's proposed median line and Japan was concerned that any potential extractions could inadvertently tap into resources on their side of the line.<sup>43</sup> In response, Japan pushed for joint development of any energy resources along the contested areas of each country's EEZ. After Shinzo Abe succeeded Joichiro Koizumi as Japanese Prime Minister in 2006, he set out to thaw the cooled relationship between China and Japan and the potential for a joint development agreement between the two neighbors slowly coalesced.<sup>44</sup> Despite a period of multiple turnovers in the office of the Japanese Prime Minister, China and Japan did agree to a joint development zone for the East China Sea in 2008.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, China's resumption of unilateral drilling the year following the joint agreement and subsequent years of diplomatic posturing by both parties have contributed to a Japanese sense of grievance over Chinese overreach.

While energy developments in the disputed zone between both nations' EEZs have exacerbated Japanese sensitivities to Chinese expansion, the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands has ratcheted bilateral tensions to a whole new high. Both nations selectively employ historical facts to bolster their individual claims to the Senkakus/Diaoyus. The PRC did not begin actively pressing its claim until just before the U.S. returned the island chain to the Japan as part of reversion in 1972. The Japanese frequently note that PRC claims to the islands began after an U.N. agency, the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, conducted a

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Associated Press, "Chinese Premier urges better ties with Japan," *NBCnews.com*, April 12, 2007, [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/18052633/ns/world\\_news-asia\\_pacific/t/chinese-premier-urges-better-ties-japan/](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/18052633/ns/world_news-asia_pacific/t/chinese-premier-urges-better-ties-japan/).

<sup>45</sup> James J. Przystup, "Progress in Building a Strategic Relationship," *Comparative Connections* (July 2008), <http://cc.pacforum.org/2008/07/progress-building-strategic-relationship/>.

geological survey in the late 1960's suggesting the presence of significant energy resources in the surrounding waters.<sup>46</sup> Both nations tacitly agreed to shelve the dispute over island sovereignty in order to normalize relations against the larger backdrop of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement, with PRC leader Deng Xiaoping commenting in 1978 that future generations might have the wisdom to resolve the issue.<sup>47</sup>

Since Deng's pronouncement, however, nationalist tendencies and domestic politics in Japan and China have caused any prior agreement to unravel. Fravel notes that as the political relationship between the two neighbors has oscillated, waves of activists from both countries have landed or sought to land on the Senkakus/Diaoyus to demonstrate their nations'

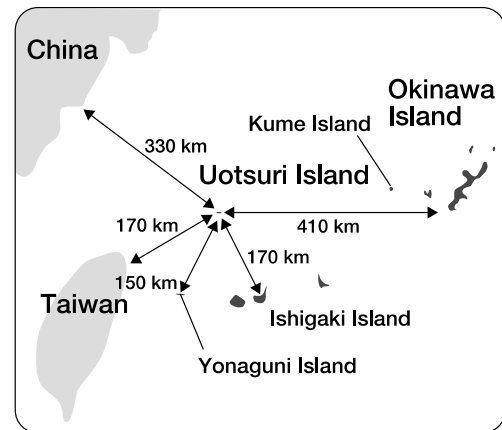


Figure 3 - Relative position of the Senkakus/Diaoyus. Uotsuri (Diaoyu) is the largest island. Source: Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs

sovereignty claim. These landings would ignite protests in the opposing nation, with the responsible state instituting internal controls to avoid further instability. Despite administrative possession of the islets, Japan has largely avoided construction of physical structures ashore or development of the energy resources in the surrounding seabed to avoid provoking the PRC. Fravel contends China was content to employ a delaying strategy that, while keeping the

<sup>46</sup> Tadashi Ikeda, "Getting Senkaku History Right," *TheDiplomat.com*, November 26, 2013, <https://thediplomat.com/2013/11/getting-senkaku-history-right/>. Taiwan also claims the island chain and was actually the first to contest Japan's control in 1970. For the purposes of this study, I have omitted mention of Taiwan's part in the dispute.

<sup>47</sup> Reinhard Drifte, "The Japan-China Confrontation Over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands – between 'shelving' and 'dispute escalation'," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 12, no. 30 (Jul 27, 2014): 10, <https://apjpf.org/-Reinhard-Drifte/4154/article.pdf>. Japan actually denies coming to any agreement over shelving the dispute as doing so acknowledges a dispute exists and would weaken Japan's argument for sovereignty.

questions of sovereignty open politically, has allowed the PRC to build comprehensive national power and global influence to later threaten if not rewrite the Senkaku/Diaoyu status quo.<sup>48</sup>

It would appear the PRC believes it met such criteria in the late 2000's after successfully hosting the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and surpassing Japan as the world's second largest economy in 2010. In 2008, two Chinese Maritime Surveillance (CMS) vessels entered the territorial sea around the Senkakus/Diaoyus, marking the first recorded entry of PRC government vessels into the area, before being ordered to leave and tracked out of the area by Japanese Coast Guard (JCG).<sup>49</sup> Repeated incursions of Chinese government and commercial fishing vessels into the island chain came to a head in 2010. In September, the JCG arrested a Chinese fishing boat captain after his trawler collided with two JCG craft while attempting to flee the Senkakus/Diaoyus. The PRC reacted to what they perceived as an illegal arrest in Chinese territory through diplomatic protests and by halting the shipment of rare earth metals used prominently in Japanese electronics manufacturing.<sup>50</sup> While the fishing boat captain was eventually released, the PRC continued its pattern of increasing activity into the contiguous and territorial seas surrounding the Senkakus/Diaoyus, and in 2012 the *People's Daily* declared the island chain should be a national "core interest."<sup>51</sup> Maritime incursion was also accompanied by increasing amounts of PRC aircraft violating Japanese airspace over the ECS and in the vicinity of the Senkakus.

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<sup>48</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, "Explaining Stability in the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands Dispute," in *Getting the Triangle Straight: Managing China-Japan-US Relations*, eds. Gerald Curtis, Ryosei Kokubun and Wang Jisi, (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 151-158.

<sup>49</sup> Yasuo Nakauchi, "Issues Surrounding the Senkaku Islands and the Japan-China Relationship – A History from Japan's Territorial Incorporation to the Present Day and Contemporary Issues," *Rule of Law Series*, Japan Digital Library (March 2015), 10, [https://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/pdf/digital\\_library/Nakauchi\\_Senkaku.pdf](https://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/pdf/digital_library/Nakauchi_Senkaku.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Keith Bradsher, "Amid Tension, China Blocks Vital Exports to Japan," *NYTimes.com*, September 23, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/23/business/global/23rare.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Aoyama Rumi, "China's Foreign Policy: Continuity and Change," *Nippon.com*, June 15, 2012, <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a00802/china%E2%80%99s-foreign-policy-continuity-and-change.html>.

Under pressure to stabilize the situation against both domestic and PRC pressures, Japan nationalized three of the largest islands later that year in a purchase from their private Japanese citizen owner. Tokyo framed the argument as an internal property transfer that need not concern external parties and a move that would allow the government to better manage peace and stability regarding the island chain.<sup>52</sup> With anti-Japanese protests raging in China, the PRC responded by exponentially increasing its maritime and aviation activity around the islands, employing a blend of different commercial, civil, para-military and military vessels to create a “gray zone” challenge for the JCG, Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) and Air Self Defense Force (JASDF).<sup>53</sup> The PRC followed up this pressure in November 2013 by declaring an ECS Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) that overlapped with Japan’s ADIZ.<sup>54</sup>

Przystup highlights that Japan’s security outlook, particularly from the perspective of PRC activities in the ECS, coupled with the U.S. Obama administration’s continued rebalance to Asia, catalyzed a Japanese-American strategic convergence.<sup>55</sup> Japan’s 2013 NSS and accompanying defense documents and the 2014 U.S. Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) all underscored the increasingly complex nature of operations in the ECS, China’s rapid military modernization and lack of transparency, and the varied coercive tactics China was employing in its near seas to advance PRC interests.<sup>56</sup> Recognizing that the previous 1997 U.S.-Japan

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<sup>52</sup> Riyoshi Takenaka, “Japan buys disputed islands, China sends patrol ships,” *Reuters.com*, September 11, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-china/japan-buys-disputed-islands-china-sends-patrol-ships-idUSBRE88A0GY20120911>.

<sup>53</sup> James J. Przystup, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Review of the Guidelines for Defense Cooperation*, Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, Institute for National Strategic Studies Strategic Perspectives, No. 18, March 2015, 15, <https://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/inss/Strategic-Perspectives-18.pdf>. “Gray zone” tactics or operations are coercive actions designed to operate below the threshold that would trigger a military response from the defending party, operating between peacetime and a state of war.

<sup>54</sup> Simon Denyer, “Obama’s Asia rebalance turns into headache as China, Japan relations spiral down,” *WashingtonPost.com*, January 23, 2014, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/obamas-asia-rebalance-turns-into-headache-as-china-japan-relations-spiral-down/2014/01/23/b0a158b8-7f5b-11e3-93c1-0e888170b723\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.85b3446663e2](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/obamas-asia-rebalance-turns-into-headache-as-china-japan-relations-spiral-down/2014/01/23/b0a158b8-7f5b-11e3-93c1-0e888170b723_story.html?utm_term=.85b3446663e2).

<sup>55</sup> Przystup, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Review of the Guidelines for Defense Cooperation*, 15.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

Guidelines for Defense Cooperation were not adequate to frame the growing gray zone challenge, the allies agreed to revise the defensive agreement to better meet the PRC's contemporary challenge.

### **U.S.-Japan Alliance Defense Reform**

The original Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation were signed in 1978 but since then had been revised just once. The guidelines were initially focused on defending against military attack when threats towards Japan were an inherent part of the Cold War strategic landscape.<sup>57</sup> In 1997 they were updated in response to the 1994-95 Korean peninsula crisis, and a shared awareness of the need for the alliance to address an expanded range of scenarios in the post-Cold War world.<sup>58</sup> Updates encompassed alliance cooperation “under normal circumstances, in case of armed attack against Japan, and in areas surrounding Japan.”<sup>59</sup> The 1997 guidelines also called for establishment of a bilateral coordination mechanism to facilitate operational, intelligence and logistics coordination, and a comprehensive mechanism to facilitate bi-lateral planning across the whole of both governments.

Following release of the 1997 guidelines, the U.S. and Japan took incremental steps to implement the above coordination mechanisms but these efforts lost momentum around the end of the Bush administration.<sup>60</sup> Three broad factors stimulated a resurgence of political energy into the alliance: the Obama administration's “pivot” or re-balance to Asia in 2011; defense-minded Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's return to office in 2012; and the afore-described

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Storch. “Putting ‘Meat on the Bones’ of the U.S.-Japan Alliance Coordination Mechanism,” *Sasakawa USA Forum*, no. 2, June 1, 2016, 2, <https://spfusa.org/sasakawa-usa-forum/putting-meat-bones-u-s-japan-alliance-coordination-mechanism/>.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense, *The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* (Tokyo, Japan: Ministry of Defense), September 23, 1997, 1, [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/anpo/19970923.html](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/19970923.html).

<sup>60</sup> Storch, “Putting ‘Meat on the Bones’ of the U.S.-Japan Alliance Coordination Mechanism,” 3.

escalating and continuing dispute between China and Japan over the Senkakus and energy development in the ECS. Abe's administration led the establishment of a Japanese National Security Council and new defense policy with a focus on joint force operations, creating structural elements and strategies necessary for heightened alliance interoperability.<sup>61</sup> Notably, Abe also drove a re-interpretation of Japan's constitution in 2014 that permits Japanese Self Defense Forces (JSDF) to exercise collective self-defense under certain conditions.<sup>62</sup> This history helped set the stage for the alliance to produce revised guidelines for defense cooperation in 2015.

The 2015 defense guidelines are distinguished from past agreements by a number of features, both expanding the scope of allied action and increasing the depth of intergovernmental cooperation. While the 1997 guidelines emphasized alliance coordination for specific circumstances, they lacked an inclusiveness to effectively counter Chinese gray-zone actions in the East China Sea. The 2015 guidelines emphasize maintaining security under "any conditions" while promoting regional security and highlighting the "global nature" of the alliance.<sup>63</sup> Implications of global coordination beyond Japan's geographical borders reflect Prime Minister Abe's ambitions to both modernize the JSDF and remove constitutional self-defensive restrictions on JSDF employment. The increasingly global nature of cooperation also acknowledges the need for bilateral planning and coordination in the cyberspace and outer

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>62</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense, *Outline of the Legislation for Peace and Security* (Ministry of Defense, Tokyo, Japan, 2016), PowerPoint presentation, [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2016/DOJ2016\\_2-3-2\\_web.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2016/DOJ2016_2-3-2_web.pdf). Under previous conditions, the JSDF would not have been constitutionally allowed to defend U.S. military combatants who were under attack, unless the JSDF themselves were under fire. Abe's "re-interpretation relaxed this restriction on the condition that collective self-defense be exercised only against threats that were an existential threat to Japan.

<sup>63</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense, *The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* (Tokyo, Japan: Ministry of Defense), April 27, 2015, 1, [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/ampo/pdf/shishin\\_20150427e.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/ampo/pdf/shishin_20150427e.pdf).

transnational warfighting domains.<sup>64</sup>

The updated guidelines call for a “*seamless*, robust, flexible and effective bilateral response” [emphasis added], acknowledging the shortfalls of previous guidelines and administrations’ efforts in fostering in-depth alliance coordination.<sup>65</sup> Where previous guidelines focused on the operational responsibilities among allies in very specific situations, the updated guidelines include direction on wide-ranging areas of interest that span a whole of government approach. They vary from addressing every level of security crisis the alliance may face to providing guidance on defense equipment and technology cooperation, educational and research exchanges, and cooperation in humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and international activities.

The revised guidelines note multiple means by which detailed coordination will occur. The centerpiece feature is undoubtedly the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM). The ACM is written as a standing organization directly charged to enable the seamless integration called for in the guidelines’ introduction.<sup>66</sup> It is focused on enhancing operational coordination and strengthening bilateral planning across the whole of both governments, with its structure and processes tailored to meet the needs of any given situation. It is also intended to facilitate information sharing, agreement on common situational assessments, and coordination of strategic messaging.<sup>67</sup>

Hornung identifies that the ACM operates on three layers roughly analogous with the levels of war. The senior policy layer consists of an Alliance Coordination Group, focused on coordinating security policy, with 3 sub-groups that include representation from the Japanese Cabinet Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, JSDF, representatives

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 5.

from the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo and U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ), and as required, representatives from the U.S. National Security Council (US-NSC), Department of State (DOS), DOD, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM). The mid-level joint operations layer consists of a Bilateral Operations Coordination Center focused on coordination and conduct of bilateral operations, and is manned by the Japan's joint staff and SDF alongside USFJ with USINDOPACOM and U.S. service component command augments. The lowest layer, the tactical level, consists of three component coordination centers reflecting each of the three JSDF services and U.S. military representation from both the INDOPACOM service component level and forces-in-Japan component level (e.g. Pacific Air Forces and the 5th Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet and 7th Fleet, U.S. Army Pacific and U.S. Army Japan, Marine Forces Pacific and III Marine Expeditionary Force).<sup>68</sup>

The 2015 guidelines use two other broad means of coordinating the alliance. The first is a series of formal alliance meetings. The most senior meeting is the Security Consultative Committee, otherwise known as the “2+2” meeting, where the Japanese Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense meet with the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense to discuss national security issues, promote understanding and strengthen relationships. This meeting is supported by a Security Subcommittee, Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation, and an Alliance Management meeting, the latter of which Hornung notes operates as the workhorse of the alliance management regime, regularly meeting to shape the discussions and decisions held at higher echelons.<sup>69</sup> The other means of alliance coordination is the Joint Committee which acts as

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<sup>68</sup> Jeffrey W. Hornung, *Managing the U.S.-Japan Alliance: An Examination of Structural Linkages in the Security Relationship* (Washington: DC, Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA, 2017), 51-52, <https://spfusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Managing-the-U.S.-Japan-Alliance.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 49

the “principal interface between U.S. military forces in Japan and the Japanese government,” adjudicating issues related to the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), base realignments, and alliance transformation (i.e. facilities) projects.<sup>70</sup>

While having a robust alliance architecture that spans the whole of each government, manages allied operations along the entire spectrum of military and civil operations, and provides a robust administrative mechanism ensuring a solid foundation for continued cooperation, alliance coordination is not without its faults. There is an inevitable asymmetrical relationship between the policy and operational linkages among both allies. Because it has only the one formal alliance with the U.S., Japan has policy departments devoted to every aspect of the relationship where the U.S. has relatively few Japan-specific offices inside a larger Asia-Pacific focus. This can cause a bureaucratic bottleneck, as Japanese policymakers must often operate through the DOD/DOS Japan desk gatekeepers before engaging with our elements of the U.S. government.<sup>71</sup> Conversely, because of its global focus the U.S. DOD is represented throughout alliance coordination at the levels of cabinet/secretary, joint staff, combatant command, regional component command, and in-Japan forces. This panoply of offices significantly dwarves the Japan’s modest representation in the MOD and individual SDF services, which can lead to confusion when JSDF representatives must engage with multiple counterparts who sometime lack a unified position on issues.<sup>72</sup>

Despite these shortcomings, the revised 2015 guidelines, stimulated largely through Chinese action in the ECS, have significantly improved defensive coordination between the U.S. and Japan at more than just the strategic and policy levels. The joint statement of the 2017

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 57.

“2+2” meeting notes the successful use of the ACM to respond to regional events, and reflects the ability of the standing ACM to better synergize the strengths of each partner in times of crisis that do not necessarily constitute armed conflict.<sup>73</sup> During a speech on Japan’s National Strategy in January 2019, Minister of Defense Takeshi Iwaya pointed out that in November 2017 while regional tensions with North Korea ran high, Japan’s helicopter destroyer *Ise* participated in joint maneuvers with three U.S. aircraft carriers in the Sea of Japan.<sup>74</sup>

While the PRC’s maritime and aerial intrusions into the Senkakus have continued to fluctuate but not cease over the years since the U.S. and Japan updated the Guidelines for Defense Cooperation, these actions have driven the allies closer together. The U.S. and Japan have reformed their alliance coordination measures, and continue to work together in materiel efforts that are mutually reinforcing. Japan is increasing defense spending, acquiring expensive American assets to include an expanded inventory of F-35 fighters and long-range Aegis Ashore missile batteries, retro-fitting its Izumo-class destroyers to serve as short-deck aircraft carriers, and beefing up its space and cyber programs.<sup>75</sup> The JSDF made its first appearance in the 12th Schriever Wargames at Maxwell Air Force Base in 2018, joining 7 other U.S. allies and 27 U.S. agencies in combatting a “peer space and cyberspace competitor” seeking to dominate those domains in the pursuit of strategic goals.<sup>76</sup> While the PRC is still developing and fielding to scale impressive capabilities that threaten traditional U.S. power projection, from a military

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<sup>73</sup> US Department of State, “Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee,” joint statement, August 17, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/08/273504.htm>.

<sup>74</sup> Takeshi Iwaya, “Japan’s National Defense Strategy,” (speech, Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS Headquarters Washington DC, January 16, 2019), [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/190116\\_Japans\\_National-Defense\\_Strategy.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/190116_Japans_National-Defense_Strategy.pdf).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.; Thisanka Siripala, “Japan’s Defense Budget Swells to Counter China’s Growing Military Threat,” *TheDiplomat.com*, December 26, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/12/japans-defense-budget-swells-to-counter-chinas-growing-military-threat/>.

<sup>76</sup> Tracy Cozzens, “Schriever Wargame 2018 concludes,” *GPSworld.com*, October 19, 2018, <https://www.gpsworld.com/schriever-wargame-2018-concludes/>.

perspective focused on the domains of air, sea, land, space, and cyber, a shared perception of the PRC threat is driving allied coordination and cooperation towards ever-tighter integration.

### **PRC Influence and Information Operations**

Based off the above assessment, the U.S.-Japan alliance is effectively managing conventional and kinetically oriented competition with China. However, even as the PRC and the alliance continue to wrestle over who will achieve eventual dominance in the conventional military domains, U.S. and Japanese strategic literature appears to be lacking substantive thought or policy regarding information operations. This is concerning for obvious reasons. The world has seen how China has fielded an impressive and asymmetrical anti-area access denial array that, if turned on, could greatly obviate the alliance's traditional defense capabilities. Information operations, where the alliance struggles to effectively operate, are another asymmetrical line of effort that the PRC is exploiting without effective response, and are the focus of the next portion of this study.

The concept of employing information for military advantage is nothing new. Sun Tzu famously said "all warfare is deception," and that the acme of skill is to win without fighting.<sup>77</sup> Understanding an adversary's cognitive behavior and risk or threat perception are fundamental to military and policy decisions, and have been since the dawn of war. To use an American example, in 1989 the Marine Corps Gazette published an article entitled "The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation" which hypothesized a fourth generation of warfare including psychological operations as the "dominant operational and strategic weapon in the form of

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<sup>77</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 66, 77.

media/information intervention.”<sup>78</sup> The article further argued that “fourth generation adversaries will be adept at manipulating the media to alter domestic and world opinion to the point where skillful use of psychological operations will sometimes preclude the commitment of combat forces.”<sup>79</sup> The PRC has embraced similar thinking, as evidenced by their use of militarized information operations such as the “Three Warfares.”

In 2003 the CCP’s Central Military Commission (CMC) approved the “Three Warfares” as a guiding concept for information operations in the PLA.<sup>80</sup> In a report prepared for the Office of Net Assessment under the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Stefan Halper notes how the “Three Warfares” envision results “in longer time frames and... measured by different criteria [than U.S. defense analysts]; its goals seek to alter the strategic environment in a way that renders kinetic engagement irrational.”<sup>81</sup> The concept involves the coordinated use of three mutually supporting strategies: psychological warfare, public opinion and media warfare, and legal warfare; all designed to “manipulate strategies, defense policies, and perceptions of target audiences abroad.”<sup>82</sup> The 2011 DOD Annual Report to Congress on Military and Security Developments Involving the PRC defines each of the “warfares” as follows:

Psychological Warfare seeks to undermine an enemy’s ability to conduct combat operations through operations aimed at deterring, shocking, and demoralizing enemy military personnel and supporting civilian populations.

Media [or Public Opinion] Warfare is aimed at influencing domestic and international

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<sup>78</sup> William S. Lind et al., “The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 73, No. 10 (October 1989): 24.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Emilio Iasiello, “China’s Three Warfares Strategy Mitigates Fallout from Cyber Espionage Activities,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 9, no. 2 (2016), 51, <https://search-proquest-com.lomc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1800147259?accountid=14746>. The Central Military Commission is the party organ within the Chinese Communist Party which controls and directs the People’s Liberation Army.

<sup>81</sup> Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares*, prepared for Andrew Marshall, Director of the Office of Net Assessment, May 2013, 11-12, <https://cryptome.org/2014/06/prc-three-wars.pdf>.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Raska, “China and the ‘Three Warfares’,” *TheDiplomat.com*, December 18, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/12/hybrid-warfare-with-chinese-characteristics-2/>.

public opinion to build support for China's military actions and dissuade an adversary from pursuing actions contrary to China's interests.

Legal Warfare uses international and domestic law to claim the legal high ground or assert Chinese interests. It can be employed to hamstring an adversary's operational freedom and shape the operational space. Legal warfare is also intended to build international support and manage possible political repercussions of China's military actions...<sup>83</sup>

All three "warfares" are intended for use in the run up to and during a conflict, and thus constitute continual shaping operations. The units responsible for their employment reflect this perspective.

Within the PLA, the 311 Base appears to be responsible for the "Three Warfares," as it is the only known organization in the PLA responsible for psychological warfare.<sup>84</sup> The 311 Base is part of the larger Strategic Support Force (SSF), and the SSF is a separate service from the traditional ground, sea, air and rocket branches of the PLA. The SSF's domain is information. Established in 2015 during a reorganization of the PLA, the SSF is constituted of operational space, cyber, electronic and psychological warfare units formerly organized under the PLA's General Departments.<sup>85</sup> Unlike the other branches of the PLA who essentially act as force providers to regionally-focused joint commands, the SSF falls under direct command of the CMC. This structure allows the SSF to transition seamlessly between peace and wartime operations.<sup>86</sup>

It is important to note, however, that the SSF and "Three Warfares" concept represent a

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<sup>83</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2011* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2011), 26, [https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2011\\_CMPR\\_Final.pdf](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2011_CMPR_Final.pdf).

<sup>84</sup> John Costello and Joe McReynolds, *China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era*, Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, Institute for National Strategic Studies China Strategic Perspectives, No. 13, October 2018, 16, <http://www.ssri-j.com/MediaReport/DocumentUS/ChinaPerspectives13.pdf>. Costello and McReynolds point out a "base" is a form of Corps-level command unique to the PLA.

<sup>85</sup> Elsa Kania and John Costello, "China's Quest for Informatization Drives PLA Reforms," *TheDiplomat.com*, March 4, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/chinas-quest-for-informatization-drives-pla-reforms/>.

<sup>86</sup> Costello and McReynolds, *China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era*, 12.

distillation of information operations theory and practice for specific use by the PLA. They do not account for the full extent of PRC influence operations. The PLA is after all the armed wing of the CCP and exists foremost to protect the party. It would be a mistake then to look at PLA influence operations in isolation from larger CCP activities. Peter Mattis links the overall concept of the “Three Warfares” to an “outgrowth of the CCP’s united front and propaganda systems.”<sup>87</sup> The CCP has long understood the value and need for ideological primacy, and has multiple apparatus to assist in achieving such dominance. Two of the most prominent are the CCP’s Propaganda/Publicity department and the United Front Work Department.<sup>88</sup>

While each department ostensibly performs different functions for the CCP, their efforts in foreign engagement are mutually reinforcing. The Propaganda/Publicity Department oversees China’s extensive state-owned media enterprises, to include Xinhua and China Daily, and recently undertook a merger of domestic and international radio and television broadcasters into a conglomerate “Voice of China.”<sup>89</sup>

#### Chinese airwaves over D.C.

Approximate broadcast coverage of WCRW-AM 1190 in the Washington suburbs, a station leased by G&E Studio, a company 60 percent owned by a subsidiary of the Chinese government. The station’s 50,000-watt towers began broadcasting in 2011 and point toward the U.S. capital.

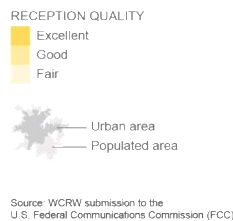


Figure 4 - Example of PRC Influence efforts in Washington, D.C. (Source: Reuters)

The international reach of these stations is increasingly documented as seen in a Reuters report

<sup>87</sup> Tasha Wibawa, “China’s national security and the ‘three warfares’: How Beijing decides who or what to target,” *Abc.net.au*, 25 Feb 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-26/chinas-three-warfares-how-does-beijing-decide-who-or-what-to/10825448>.

<sup>88</sup> David Gitter, “Introduction: Trends Since the 19th Party Congress” in *Party Watch Annual Report 2018*, eds. David Gitter and Julie G. Bowie, (Center for Advanced China Research, October 18, 2018), 2, [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/183fcc\\_01939af351a04003aafb65c4537fcc8a.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/183fcc_01939af351a04003aafb65c4537fcc8a.pdf).

<sup>89</sup> Chris Buckley, “China Gives Communist Party More Control Over Policy and Media,” *NYTimes.com*, March 21, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/21/world/asia/china-communist-party-xi-jinping.html>.

from 2015 regarding WCRW, a Washington, D.C. radio station controlled by a Beijing-based subsidiary of China Radio International, broadcasting pro-PRC content throughout the U.S. Capitol.<sup>90</sup> Similar messaging has been orchestrated through PRC-funded advertising in New York's Time Square, and Chinese propaganda as paid-advertising in the prominent U.S. newspapers, or via the 24-hour coverage of China Global Television Network's around-the-world multilingual broadcasting.<sup>91</sup> These efforts target foreign audiences to modify domestic thinking and rhetoric regarding PRC behavior. They have even been shown to have an effect on how domestic media, the much-needed "free press," reports on PRC-related events.<sup>92</sup>

The Propaganda/Publicity department works hand-in-hand with the United Front Work Department (UFW). United Front is often described in the words of Mao Zedong as a "magic weapon" to "mobilize friends to strike at enemies."<sup>93</sup> The organization is designed to generate a broad base of domestic and international support for the CCP. It is connected to the highest levels of the party, with President Xi establishing a leading small group on United Front Work led by himself in 2015, to ensure the department's efforts are closely aligned with the party's

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<sup>90</sup> Koh Gui Qing and John Shiffman, "Beijing's covert radio network airs China-friendly news across Washington, and the world," *Reuters.com*, November 2, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-radio/>.

<sup>91</sup> James Fallows, "Official Chinese Propaganda: Now Online from the WaPo!", *TheAtlantic.com*, February 3, 2011, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/02/official-chinese-propaganda-now-online-from-the-wapo/70690/>; "Buying Love; Soft Power," *The Economist*, March 25, 2017, 56, <https://search-proquest-com.lomc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1894701599?accountid=14746>; Julia Bowie, David Gitter, "Abroad or at Home, China Puts Party First," *Foreignpolicy.com*, December 5, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/12/05/abroad-or-at-home-china-puts-party-first-global-influence-united-front/>; Peter Mattis, "China's 'Three Warfares' In Perspective," *Warontherocks.com*, January 30, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/chinas-three-warfares-perspective/>.

<sup>92</sup> Halper, *China: The Three Warfares*, 79. The example cites PRC success in perception management during the 2001 EP-3 incident where, after *Xinhua* began reporting, the New York Times modified its description of the EP-3 from "plane" to the PRC-preferred term "spy-plane."

<sup>93</sup> *U.S. Responses to China's Foreign Influence Operations: Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific*, 115<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2 (March 21, 2018) (statement of Peter Mattis, Fellow, The Jamestown Foundation), <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA05/20180321/108056/HHRG-115-FA05-Wstate-MattisP-20180321.pdf>.

strategic agenda.<sup>94</sup>

The UFWD targets a diverse set of audiences in order to achieve the support the CCP requires to advance its agenda, though here the focus is solely on the department's international efforts. A major element of United Front work includes influencing overseas Chinese populations through a variety of motivations (political, personal/emotional, economic, etc.) to support CPP perspectives in the domestic discourse.<sup>95</sup> This is accomplished through a multitude of programs such as academic outreach via Confucius Institutes and the China-U.S. Exchange Foundation (CUSEF), among many others. CUSEF is notably registered under the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act, but has provided endowments to the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), the Brookings Institution, and many other prominent American think-tanks.<sup>96</sup> While this doesn't mean that the aforementioned U.S. institutions have suddenly adopted pro-CCP biases in their international studies, it does demonstrate that the CCP, using a wide range of tools in the Propaganda/Publicity Department, UFWD, and in other departments, is devoting considerable energy and resources towards influencing the thought processes of its potential adversaries. And while governments routinely attempt to modify the perceptions of other nations, Mattis points out that the "difference between the United Front Work Department conducting propaganda and organizations like Voice of America or even China's China Global Television Network is the degree of openness and transparency about who is delivering the message."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Alexander Bowe, *China's Overseas United Front Work* (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, August 24, 2018), 6, [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China%27s%20Overseas%20United%20Front%20Work%20-%20Background%20and%20Implications%20for%20US\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China%27s%20Overseas%20United%20Front%20Work%20-%20Background%20and%20Implications%20for%20US_final_0.pdf).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>97</sup> Peter Mattis, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Chinese Communist Party Interference in the Public Square," *Warontherocks.com*, March 7, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/03/talk-talk-chinese-communist-party-interference-public-square/>.

Given the subtlety of the CCP's influence efforts both within the PLA via the "Three Warfares" and throughout other organs of the party, as well as the longer acceptable time horizon inherent to the achievement of CCP objectives, it can be difficult to prove beyond a shadow of doubt the role PRC influence operations have in undermining the U.S.-Japan defense alliance. It is equally difficult to identify the agency responsible for said action, as the previous review has shown how influence operations span the divide between political/CCP departmental and military/PLA Strategic Support Force and can incorporate a number of different state actions for the purposes of psychological or public opinion warfare. The long arm of Chinese influence via United Front work and its various front agencies in shaping foreign audiences is equally hard to quantify. Finally, analysis must also not be given to jumping at shadows, lest the search for potentially covert, malignant PRC-influenced actors and organizations descend into McCarthyism. Having gained perspective on the depth and breadth of the PRC's tools for influence operations, the following examples highlight two strategies of PRC influence operations that undermine the alliance: isolating the alliance from meaningful trilateral partnership with the Republic of Korea (ROK); and undermining the U.S. position in Okinawa which is the hub of U.S. power in Japan.

The U.S. and Japan both have a natural interest in expanding a rules-based security architecture across Asia with like-minded partners to protect the rights of all nations in accordance with international law. Japan and Australia have already formed a strategic partnership and are both members of the Indo-Pacific "Quad," however for the purposes of security in North East Asia, Australia is a long way away and possesses just a small defence force when compared to other major players in Asia. The U.S. already shares defense treaties with both Japan and South Korea. Recognizing the proximity to threats in the form of the North

Korea and China, creating a trilateral defense treaty with Japan and South Korea has been a natural objective for the U.S. The 2017 U.S. NSS specifically notes a desire to work with both allies on missile defense to “move toward” an area defense capability, which has strategic and deterrent implications for both the PRC and North Korea.<sup>98</sup>

However, China effectively blocked this goal in extracting the “three no’s” from South Korea in 2017, ostensibly in response to the U.S. deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system to the Korean peninsula.<sup>99</sup> The “three no’s” are: no further THAAD missile system deployments to South Korea; no ROK participation in a U.S. missile defense system, and no trilateral military alliance with the U.S. and Japan.<sup>100</sup> This development is interesting for a number of reasons.

First, South Korea and the U.S. had maintained that the purpose of the THAAD deployment was to better counter a North Korean missile threat and had even extended the PRC an invitation to technical talks, which the PRC declined.<sup>101</sup> Second, China unofficially sanctioned South Korean industries to include its globally popular entertainment sector while limiting tourism, in effect costing the South Korean economy billions in revenue and creating a strong motivation for the ROK government to reach some type of agreement with the PRC.<sup>102</sup> These actions were preceded by a cacophony of Chinese state media reporting that the U.S. was

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<sup>98</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 47.

<sup>99</sup> Park Byong-Su, “South Korea’s ‘three no’s’ announcement key to restoring relations with China,” *Hani.co.kr*, November 2, 2017, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/817213.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/817213.html).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. The second “no” in regards to joining an U.S.-led area missile defense system is an almost 20-year old South Korean policy to avoid antagonizing Beijing and risking lucrative economic ties between the two countries.

<sup>101</sup> Ankit Panda, “China and South Korea: Examining the Resolution of the THAAD Impasse,” *TheDiplomat.com*, November 13, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/china-and-south-korea-examining-the-resolution-of-the-thaad-impasse/>.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.; Ralph Jennings, “Why It Hurts Less Now As China Punishes South Korea With Tourism Cuts,” *Forbes.com*, March 4, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ralphjennings/2018/03/04/china-keeps-punishing-south-korea-with-tourism-cuts-for-now/#7532fd2c366c>.

destabilizing the Korean peninsula further and demanding South Korea reject the THAAD's deployment.<sup>103</sup> Third, despite the fact that any defensive alliance between South Korea and Japan will be hard to achieve given the historical baggage between the two countries, China was able to achieve assurances from a U.S. ally limiting the scope of its behavior in ways incongruent to alliance interests in North East Asia.<sup>104</sup>

This final point appears the most compelling: that PRC influence could directly impact U.S. security objectives with one of its longest and strongest allies. It is also interesting to note that since 2017, relations between South Korea and Japan have dropped precipitously. South Korea has continued to raise the issue of “comfort women” forced into brothels to service the Japanese Imperial Army during World War 2, despite the two countries agreeing to settle the issue by a formal apology and reparations payments from Japan in 2015.<sup>105</sup> It should be pointed out that China similarly dealt with the issue of “comfort women” during World War 2 and uses this as emotional leverage to forge solidarity with South Korea against Japan.<sup>106</sup> In December of 2018, a South Korean warship allegedly locked onto a Japanese patrol aircraft with its fire-control radar, prompting both sides to trade accusations and exacerbating already-existing tensions. Meanwhile, despite the coercive efforts it employed against South Korea just a year

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<sup>103</sup> Ethan Meick and Nargiza Salidjanova., *China's Response to U.S.-South Korean Missile Defense System Deployment and its Implications* (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, July 26, 2017), [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Report\\_China%27s%20Response%20to%20THAAD%20Deployment%20and%20its%20Implications.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Report_China%27s%20Response%20to%20THAAD%20Deployment%20and%20its%20Implications.pdf).

<sup>104</sup> Panda, “China and South Korea: Examining the Resolution of the THAAD Impasse.”

<sup>105</sup> Rebecca Tan, “Despite protests from Japan, South Korea holds first memorial day for ‘comfort women’ enslaved in World War II brothels,” *WashingtonPost.com*, August 14, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/08/14/despite-protests-japan-south-korea-holds-first-memorial-day-comfort-women-enslaved-world-war-ii-brothels/?utm\\_term=.eeb45fc8eec4](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/08/14/despite-protests-japan-south-korea-holds-first-memorial-day-comfort-women-enslaved-world-war-ii-brothels/?utm_term=.eeb45fc8eec4).

<sup>106</sup> Thomas J. Ward and William D. Lay, “State Politics vs. East Asian Security: The Growing Role of China,” *E-International Relations*, March 8, 2019, <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/03/08/state-politics-vs-east-asian-security-the-growing-role-of-china/>; email conversation between author and James Schoff, Senior Fellow, Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for World Peace.

prior, China's relationship with South Korea is on the upswing.<sup>107</sup> While Beijing and Seoul may not become steadfast bedfellows, the more important objective is the denial of a U.S. strategic objective, and an attack on U.S. regional credibility when it cannot get two of its most staunch allies to cooperate on a shared strategic vision.

Shifting to Japan, Larry Diamond and Orville Schell report in *China's Influence & American Interests* that evidence of covert PRC meddling in Japanese affairs is exceptionally hard to find, with one exception: Okinawa and the Senkakus.<sup>108</sup> The basing of a preponderance of U.S. forces on the island of Okinawa is progressively under siege by local and prefectural politics.<sup>109</sup> The basing has long been a political convenience for mainland Japan, dating back to the U.S. post-war occupation of Japan, and is increasingly viewed as a burden to the Okinawan people based on the crime, pollution, and inevitable mishaps that surround military bases worldwide.

The PRC sought to exploit this grievance in 2013 by questioning Japan's claim to Okinawa, advancing arguments that the Ryukyu island chain in fact belonged to China based off its history as a tributary state to both the Ming and Qing Dynasties, or that the Ryukyus should be granted sovereignty from Japan.<sup>110</sup> A hawkish retired PLA general, Luo Yuan, stated in an interview with state-owned China News Service, "I am not saying all former tributary states

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<sup>107</sup> Scott Snyder and See-Won Byun, "China Reaffirms Tradition: DPRK Friendship and Recovery of South Korean Ties," *Comparative Connections*, Sep-Dec 2018, <http://cc.pacforum.org/2019/01/china-reaffirms-tradition-dprk-friendship-and-recovery-of-south-korean-ties/>.

<sup>108</sup> Larry Diamond and Orville Schell, *China's Influence & American Interests* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2019), 186-188, [https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/00\\_diamond-schell-chinas-influence-and-american-interests.pdf](https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/00_diamond-schell-chinas-influence-and-american-interests.pdf).

<sup>109</sup> Alex Horton, "Okinawa has been eager to expel U.S. troops. A murder-suicide is pouring fuel on those flames," *WashingtonPost.com*, April 16, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2019/04/15/okinawa-has-been-eager-expel-us-troops-murder-suicide-is-pouring-fuel-those-flames/?utm\\_term=.5f1a848edf29](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2019/04/15/okinawa-has-been-eager-expel-us-troops-murder-suicide-is-pouring-fuel-those-flames/?utm_term=.5f1a848edf29).

<sup>110</sup> Diamond and Schell, *China's Influence & American Interests*, 188-189; "Support in China for Japanese Separatists," *Stratfor Worldview*, May 27, 2013, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/support-china-japanese-separatists>.

belong to China, but we can say with certainty that the Ryukyus do not belong to Japan.”<sup>111</sup>

Stratfor reported in 2013 Chinese media encouraging state support to an indigenous Okinawan separatist movement.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, other reports have been made of CCP support and funding to Okinawan groups protesting U.S. bases in the prefecture.<sup>113</sup>

Collectively these actions are designed to weaken the political stability of U.S. forces continued presence in Okinawa by conducting a subtle form of public opinion warfare among the Okinawan people. While Okinawans do not by any account appear to be supportive of CCP policies, that is not the objective. Instead, CCP influence operations in Okinawa are targeting a domestic audience to turn it farther against the U.S. in order to weaken the alliance’s long-term capability. Japan and the U.S. would be faced with a significant challenge if it were suddenly politically untenable to continue stationing U.S. forces in Okinawa, requiring a significant redistribution of assets either to the mainland of Japan or elsewhere through the Indo-Pacific. This would also conveniently erode the proximity of U.S. forces to the ECS where tension between Japan and China remains at its highest level.

PRC influence operations as explicitly militarized within the PLA in the form of the “Three Warfares” and the CCP’s other influence operations represent a complex challenge for the U.S.-Japan alliance that, as the examples in South Korea and Okinawa demonstrate, can take varied paths to undermine the combined U.S.-Japan capability in the region. It is equally important to remember that these specific examples happen against a backdrop of larger influence operations, with the PRC seeking to influence key policy and decision-makers in both

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<sup>111</sup> Patrick Boehler, “Okinawa doesn’t belong to Japan, says hawkish PLA general,” *SCMP.com*, May 15, 2013, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1238080/okinawa-doesnt-belong-japan-says-hawkish-pla-general>.

<sup>112</sup> “Support in China for Japanese Separatists,” *Stratfor Worldview*.

<sup>113</sup> Mattis, *U.S. Responses to China’s Foreign Influence Operations*; emails conversations between author and Colonel Grant Newsham, USMCR (Ret.) and James Schoff, Senior Fellow, Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for World Peace.

countries. But if PRC information and influence operations have done the most relative damage in eroding and undermining the U.S. Japan alliance, how do the allies regain the initiative in the information domain?

### **Alliance Responses and Recommendations**

U.S.-Japan responses in the information domain must recognize some caveats. While the focus of this study has been on the defense aspect of the alliance, the PRC's influence operations operate in both diplomatic/party and military domains, and incorporate actions across the instruments of national powers when one considers the economic coercion Beijing has applied against both Japan and South Korea. Also, the PRC does not share a reciprocal information relationship with the world. As democracies with certain freedoms, to include that of free speech and a free press, the U.S. and Japan have to construct complex legal defenses (such as the Foreign Agent Registration Act) to manage the impact of foreign propaganda. China, with its "great firewall" censoring internet traffic and state-owned conglomerate Voice of China servicing domestic and foreign audiences, does not have the same problem as a liberal democracy. Yet there are still actions the alliance can take to better respond and deter PRC influence operations.

**Develop an Information Strategy.** The U.S. shuttered the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) in 1999. Ever since, periodic calls have been issued for its resurrection in order to better combat the information and influence campaigns of Russia and China.<sup>114</sup> But as has been rightfully pointed out by other writers critical of such a proposal, reviving USIA is "really a

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<sup>114</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, "What the U.S. can learn from its Cold War Fight against Kremlin Propaganda," *WashingtonPost.com*, January 13, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/01/13/will-steroids-help-u-s-counter-propaganda-bigger-isnt-always-better/?utm\\_term=.ddc901c9fe59](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/01/13/will-steroids-help-u-s-counter-propaganda-bigger-isnt-always-better/?utm_term=.ddc901c9fe59).

coded way of saying that we lack a strategy, an organizing principle, and empowered individuals to execute information warfare today.”<sup>115</sup> The U.S. and Japan need to individually, and jointly as an alliance, develop and coordinate a strategy for information warfare to better protect their interests in the Indo-Pacific. Each country’s strategy must utilize the full spectrum of information transmittal and public outreach, much as the PLA’s SSF blends cyber, space, and electromagnetic warfare with information warfare. Further, in both countries, the information warfare strategy needs to be a part of considerations and deliberations on security issues within the respective National Security Council.

**Strengthen and Reinforce our existing Public Diplomacy tools.** When USIA was shuttered, control over its subordinate organizations was distributed throughout other branches of the Executive department. Control of broadcasting agencies such as Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia were spun off to the U.S. Agency for Global Media (formerly the Broadcasting Board of Governors).<sup>116</sup> Since then, they have languished. In 2017, despite ample reporting of PRC influence operations in the Asia-Pacific region, it was reported that President Trump’s FY2018 budget would cut \$4.7 million from Radio Free Asia’s budget, eliminating the agency’s mandarin-language radio and television broadcasts to China.<sup>117</sup> Such a trend must be reversed. Instead, programming should be funded to enable leverage current and emerging means of communicating U.S. messages to target audiences overseas. This would include the exploitation of new means to bypass the PRC’s defense information mechanisms such as the “great internet

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<sup>115</sup> Matthew Armstrong, “No, We Do Not Need To Revive The U.S. Information Agency,” *Warontherocks.com*, November 25, 2015, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/11/no-we-do-not-need-to-revive-the-u-s-information-agency/>.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Dan Southland, “With China Expanding media controls, Congress must fully fund Radio Free Asia,” *TheHill.com*, July 17, 2017, <https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international/342371-with-china-expanding-media-controls-congress-must-fully-fund>.

firewall.”

**Empower an Advocate.** Moving USIA components into the U.S. Department of State marginalized its perspective within the senior agency.<sup>118</sup> While formulating a strategy, improving policy coordination, and providing funding all could contribute to the success of revived Information Warfare operations within the U.S. Government, all programs need an advocate. Consider the example of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program from the Vietnam War, generally seen as a success despite its implementation late in the war. CORDS was successful because the man President Johnson appointed to run it, Robert Komer, had the requisite enthusiasm and energy for the program and was granted specific authorities by the President to ensure its success.<sup>119</sup> The point in whatever agency of the U.S. Government Information Warfare is to reside, the individual appointed to oversee it must have the temperament, the authorities, and the privileged access to power in the form of the U.S. President’s ear in order to ensure the strategy be carried out successfully.

## **Conclusion**

The U.S.-Japan alliance faces a complex, multi-pronged threat from the People’s Republic of China. This threat is designed to ultimately assert Chinese dominance and displace the U.S. from the region. The PRC is using all instruments of national power to affect this change, employing a challenging mix of hard and soft power strategies to rewrite the regional status quo while avoiding military conflict. In the meantime, the PRC continues to rapidly modernize its military in ways that directly contest U.S. power projection. PRC military and

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<sup>118</sup> Cull, “What the U.S. can learn from its Cold War Fight against Kremlin Propaganda.”

<sup>119</sup> Ross Coffey, “Revisiting CORDS: The Need for Unity of Effort to Secure Victory in Iraq,” *Military Review*, March-April 2006, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/coffey.pdf>.

para-military actions have driven the U.S. and Japan into greater strategic alignment and alliance coordination is closer than ever. Yet both allies lack a comprehensive strategy for fighting and winning the information and influence war and are ceding valuable maneuver space to China. These influence operations operate on both a global and regional level, shaping domestic discourse while indirectly isolating and threatening key aspects of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

The U.S. and Japan must both make concerted efforts towards formulating and implementing information warfare strategies in order to deter and manage PRC aggression. Such strategies must be coordinated with each other, and across the spectrum of each country's government. The tools for information warfare must be strengthened and reinforced through new means. Finally, each government must determine how to properly empower the agency or personnel responsible for information warfare to ensure it is successfully executed. While information warfare, propaganda, or the more euphemistic "public diplomacy" have never been held in high regard by democratic societies, the U.S.-Japan alliance must resolve how to better employ such tools to safeguard our vital interests, and the security and stability of a rules-based Indo-Pacific.

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