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THESIS

**AN ANALYSIS OF DRIVERS BEHIND AMERICAN
ARMS ACQUISITIONS TO JAPAN AND TAIWAN**

by

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March 2023

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JAPAN AND TAIWAN**

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ABSTRACT

Arms acquisitions are an important instrument used to carry out a country's national defense and foreign policy strategies. For nations with rich histories of arms acquisitions, investigating the motives that encourage purchasing arms offers a look into the state's security perspectives. Within the Indo-Pacific, several countries that are closely aligned with the United States—namely Japan and Taiwan—have engaged in large volume arms sales with the U.S. in the 21st century. This thesis investigates the factors that have encouraged Japan and Taiwan to purchase American arms in an effort to determine the motives that sustain long-term arms commitments. It examines various domestic and international drivers that have both encouraged and challenged purchases of U.S. made defensive technologies. This thesis argues that both Japan and Taiwan are influenced to pursue arms acquisitions by their long-standing partnerships with the United States, as well as geopolitical security concerns especially the threat of the PRC. However, unique domestic considerations such as Japan's antimilitarism ideology and Taiwan's distinctive Cross-Strait relations have played significant roles in hampering arms acquisitions. When combined, these factors offer insights into the complexities of arms acquisitions and suggest that external factors have the greater influence on arms acquisitions versus internal factors.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....	1
B.	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION.....	2
C.	LITERATURE REVIEW	3
	1. Drivers of U.S. Arms Sales to Japan	4
	2. Drivers of U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan.....	8
D.	POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES	12
	1. Explanations and Hypotheses for Japanese/Taiwanese Behaviors and U.S. Arms Sales.....	12
E.	RESEARCH DESIGN	15
II.	DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DRIVERS BEHIND JAPANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS	19
A.	DOMESTIC DRIVERS BEHIND JAPANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS	22
	1. Economic Drivers of Arms Acquisitions.....	22
B.	POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DRIVERS OF ARMS ACQUISITIONS.....	26
C.	EXTERNAL DRIVERS BEHIND JAPANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS.....	29
	1. The U.S.–Japan Alliance	29
D.	CHINESE DEVELOPMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO JAPANESE DEFENSE BUILD-UP	34
E.	CONCLUSION	42
III.	DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DRIVERS BEHIND TAIWANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS	43
A.	TAIWAN’S OVERALL DEFENSE STRATEGY AND ARMS PURCHASES	47
	1. Overview of Taiwan’s Defense Strategy	47
B.	U.S.–ROC HISTORIC RELATIONSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON ARMS SALES	50
C.	DRIVERS BEHIND TAIWANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS.....	54
	1. A Brief History of U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan, 2000–2016	54
D.	DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DRIVERS BEHIND TAIWANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS.....	55

1.	The Influence of Taiwan’s Domestic Environment on Arms and Cross-Strait Relations.....	55
E.	SHIFTING AMERICAN AND TAIWANESE ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CONCERNS DURING DPP AND KMT ADMINISTRATIONS.....	60
1.	Economic and Security Concerns During the DPP Administration (2000-2008)	60
F.	CONCLUSION	68
IV.	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION	71
A.	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	71
B.	A COMPARISON OF JAPANESE AND TAIWANESE ARMS DRIVERS.....	73
C.	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	76
	LIST OF REFERENCES	79
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	93

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Military Expenditure of Japan as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product, 1999–2021	23
Figure 2.	Estimates of Chinese Defense Spending.....	35
Figure 3.	Military Expenditures of China (red) and Japan (blue), 2000–2022, in U.S. millions	36
Figure 4.	Phases of Taiwanese Arms Sales by Presidential Administration, 2000–2021.....	55

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ACS	AEGIS Combat System
ADIZ	Air Defense Identification Zone
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defense
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
DSCA	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
ECS	East China Sea
EU	European Union
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
JMSDF	Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force
JSDF	Japanese Self-Defense Force
KMT	Kuomintang Political Party
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MND	Ministry of National Defense
NDPG	National Defense Program Guidelines
NSS	National Security Strategy
OTH-B	Over-the-Horizon Backscatter radar
PAC-3	Patriot Configuration-3
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLA(N)	People's Liberation Army Navy
PLARF	People's Liberation Army Rocket Force
PLASSF	People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force
PM	Prime Minister
PRC	People's Republic of China
R&D	Research and Development

RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
ROC	Republic of China (Taiwan)
ROCAF	Republic of China Armed Forces
SCS	South China Sea
SLOC	Sea Line(s) of Communication
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SM-3	Standard Missile 3
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act
U.S.	United States
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis seeks to identify and analyze the drivers behind Japanese and Taiwanese arms acquisitions from the United States of America. The overarching goal of American foreign policy, and by extension arms transfers, is to foster an Indo-Pacific region that is “free and open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient.”¹ Specifically, arms sales to Taiwan and Japan achieve several foreign policy objectives. They endorse the inherently American desire to support democracies, which the United States government perceives as beneficial for both American interests and the international order.² The sale of arms also supports two of the United States’ biggest democratic partners in the Indo-Pacific, Japan and Taiwan, by encouraging military modernization, the development of credible defenses, and including America within the framework for Indo-Pacific security.³

The rising power of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has introduced uncertainty into the Indo-Pacific. China’s unprecedented economic and military growth is seen as a direct challenge to the U.S.-led order: their increasingly aggressive rhetoric and expanding sphere of influence is considered disruptive towards U.S. interests and allies, as well as harmful to regional stability.⁴ As such, the acquisitions of arms by Japan and deserves scrutiny in order to determine how various factors positively or negatively influence their arms purchases.

American arms sales are an influential tool to promote foreign policy yet are not without controversy. Global opinions might consider U.S. arms sales inflammatory and counterproductive towards stability: they can disrupt status quos, build mistrust in state-to-

¹ “U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy” (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 24, 2021).

² Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “U.S. Department of State – Democracy,” U.S. Department of State Archives (Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs., May 10, 2007), <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/democ/index.htm>.

³ Charbel Kadib, “US to Supply Over One Billion USD in Arms to Japan & Taiwan,” Defense and Security Equipment International, August 5, 2021, <https://www.dsei-japan.com/news/us-to-supply-over-1bn-in-arms-to-taiwan-japan-defence-connect>.

⁴ “U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy,” 5.

state relationships, and either instigate new violence or sustain continued violence.⁵ China, in particular, views arms sales to Japan and Taiwan as a destabilizing element to Indo-Pacific security and protests them: while Taiwan's purchases infringe on China's interests to unify with the island, Japan's purchases actively strengthen a country that is pro-Western and at odds with China's expanding sphere of influence.⁶

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The domestic and international drivers of conventional arms sales associated with Japan and Taiwan are an academically significant topic. Supporters of arms sales argue that they “strengthen the military capability of allies, leverage the behavior of recipients, and promote regional stability in critical areas worldwide.”⁷ For example, one famous sale is the Aegis Combat System, one of the cornerstones of American naval warfighting, to Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). This sale filled a gap in Japan's domestic maritime defenses, encouraged compatible military strategies between the U.S. and Japan, and ensured that the U.S. would have influence in shaping future Japanese military policies.⁸

Considering the potential impacts of arms sales, Japan's and Taiwan's receipt of arms and the motives of the U.S. have become more heavily scrutinized due to an increased interest in Indo-Pacific affairs. Historically, the United States has justified the arms sales using a variety of foreign policy motivations. Taiwan's defense, which is guaranteed by the United States under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), remains at the forefront on Indo-Pacific foreign policy and officially reflects the U.S. commitment towards peace

⁵ Rachel Stohl, “Understanding the Conventional Arms Trade” (Nuclear Weapons and Related Security Issues, Washington, D.C., USA, 2017)

⁶ James Schoff, “The Critical 6 Months for US-Japan Defense Cooperation We Never Saw Coming,” *The Diplomat*, August 21, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/the-critical-6-months-for-us-japan-defense-cooperation-we-never-saw-coming/>; Michael Beckley, “China's Century? Why America's Edge Will Endure,” *International Security* 36, no. 3 (2011): 41–78.

⁷ A. Trevor Thrall, Jordan Cohen, and Caroline Dorminey, “Power, Profit, or Prudence? U.S. Arms Sales since 9/11,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly: SSQ* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 101.

⁸ Brad Hicks, George Galdorisi, and Scott C. Truver, “THE Aegis BMD Global Enterprise: A ‘High End’ Maritime Partnership,” *Naval War College Review* 65, no. 3 (2012): 65–80.

within the region.⁹ The island's continued political freedom from the mainland, coupled with renewed tensions from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regarding unification, has prompted renewed analysis on the effectiveness of the arms sales and whether or not they generate harmful or beneficial effects to regional stability.¹⁰

From a foreign policy perspective, calls for more U.S. arms sales and a stronger Japan have become more common and more debated since the early 2000s. The Global War on Terror and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan kickstarted America's desire for Japan take on a stronger peacekeeping presence during a time when the purpose of Japan's military was becoming increasingly more uncertain.¹¹ Consequently, the Japanese defense budget and U.S.-backed arms sales have increased. While these arms sales have positively contributed to the rise of Japan's military capabilities, they have also clashed with both Japan's culturally ingrained antimilitarism and their constitutionally enforced pacifist approach to international relations and security.¹²

With regards to Taiwan, American arms exports continue to draw the ire of China and remains one of the most inflammatory facets of regional security.¹³ Scholarly debate shows that there are mixed opinions regarding the effectiveness of Taiwan's arm purchases within the 21st century. Arms acquisitions policies have varied by Taiwanese presidential administrations, due to the influence of the United States, and by various international events (e.g., the Global War on Terror, 2008 Global Financial Crisis).

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the various schools of thought that analyze the drivers behind Japanese and Taiwanese arms acquisitions. It illustrates the intersection of

⁹ Shirley A Kan, "Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990," 2014, 62.

¹⁰ Zhang Qingmin, "The Bureaucratic Politics of U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 1, no. 2 (2006): 231–65.

¹¹ Arakawa Ken-ichi, "The Cold War and the Foundation of the Japanese Self-Defense Force," *Army History*, no. 41 (1997): 10.

¹² Jennifer Lind, "Japan Must Disavow Pacifism for Collective Defence," Chatham House, June 22, 2021, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/06/japan-must-disavow-pacifism-collective-defence>.

¹³ John P. McClaran, "U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan: Implications for the Future of the Sino-U.S. Relationship," *Asian Survey* 40, no. 4 (2000): 622, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3021185>.

domestic policies within Japan and Taiwan, how attitudes towards defense shape funding towards arms, and how various 21st century leaders in each country have shaped their administration towards supporting or hindering arms acquisitions.

1. Drivers of U.S. Arms Sales to Japan

The drivers behind Japanese arms acquisitions can be analyzed in a number of different ways. One driver is the prevalence of domestic antimilitarism and pacifism, which developed from post-World War II conditions: the conflict's horrific losses, coupled with foreign occupation, unsurprisingly made policymakers in the war-weary state apprehensive about rebuilding its armed forces.¹⁴ These attitudes were intensified by the American-sponsored constitution of reformed Japan, which permanently renounced war (as a method to achieve national desires), banned a standing military, and prohibited any involvement in foreign conflict.¹⁵ Subsequently, antimilitarism—and an aversion to both arms imports and exports—remain a core aspect of the Japanese security identity.

A second driver prevalent in Japanese society is an attitude that favors renewing Japan's military strength and encourages more arms imports. This has gradually materialized over the end of the 20th century and taken effect within the 21st century. This change is largely due to two geopolitical developments: the threat of the former Soviet Union within the 20th century, and more significantly, the fears surrounding China's daunting military and economic improvements. While Japan's physical proximity and historic military operations alone have contributed towards past conflicts with its western neighbors (e.g., the Russo-Japanese War, World War II), the strength of the post-World War II allegiance with the United States indicated that Japan would not only be involved in any American rivalries with Pacific powers, but would also need to be militarily prepared to participate in the security portion of the U.S.–Japan alliance.

¹⁴ David Hunter-Chester, *Creating Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force, 1945–2015: A Sword Well Made* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 3, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=4776531>.

¹⁵ “The Constitution of Japan,” Webpage of the Japanese Government, accessed May 8, 2022, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html.

Pro-military attitudes began to flourish in the late 1970s due to two significant changes in the Pacific security balance: a growing Soviet military presence in the Russian Far East and the downsizing of America's military presence in the Pacific due to the Nixon Doctrine.¹⁶ U.S. President Richard Nixon's foreign policy decisions under the Nixon Doctrine sought to reduce the overt presence of American military power abroad (due to the Vietnam War), while simultaneously empowering regional partners to assume greater responsibility towards security.¹⁷ Consequently, the effects of the Nixon Doctrine are best shown in 1980s and early 1990s: the Japan Defense Agency (predecessor to the modern Ministry of Defense) under Prime Minister Nakasone paid more attention to autonomous self-defense, vice solely relying on the United States for protection, in order to stand up to Soviet aggression. The effects of this new approach appeared in the form of more bilateral military exercises between the U.S. and JSDF, as well as more support from high-ranking U.S. (e.g. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird) and Japanese officials for the gradual buildup of the JSDF.¹⁸ Most notably, arms sale expenditures from within Japan rose from an average of \$979 million USD (1970-1979) to \$1,673 million USD (1980-1989).¹⁹ By the early 1990s, the post-Cold War JSDF was armed and employed for not only self-defense but also as a budding regional power, albeit one that still relied upon the U.S. for security assurances.

The early 2000s introduced new factors that have shifted domestic Japanese attitudes towards favoring stronger arms imports and an expanded mission set beyond self-defense. The rise of new security challenges around the world, such as the September 11 attacks and the Global War on Terror, have seen Japan's overseas military presence rise. The U.S. has increasingly called upon Japan to involve itself in global peacekeeping

¹⁶ Hunter-Chester, *Creating Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force, 1945–2015*, 173.

¹⁷ Yukinori Komine, "Whither a 'Resurgent Japan': The Nixon Doctrine and Japan's Defense Buildup, 1969–1976," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16, no. 3 (2014): 93.

¹⁸ Komine, 100.

¹⁹ "Arms Exports to Japan, 1950–2021" (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, May 22, 2022), https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php.

operations, such as anti-piracy missions and peacekeeping in the Middle East.²⁰ Additionally, more localized concerns, such as China, have sparked calls for a stronger JSDF. The rise of neighboring China's military spending is increasingly concerning for Japan due to a variety of reasons. One prominent example includes gray zone tactics over disputed territory claims (e.g. Senkaku Islands), like the harassment of Japanese fishing boats.²¹ Another example, China's failed lawsuit against the Philippines over fishing waters and subsequent "flouting of an international court ruling (UNCLOS) that rejected China's claim over the South China Sea," suggests that Chinese strategies within the Indo-Pacific will become characterized by unilateral decision-making, regardless of its work in international institutions.²² These concerns have sparked fears of a rise in instability within the region, a fear that Japan will not be prepared for the rise of China, and ultimately calls for larger defense budgets and arms purchases.²³

The foundation of the 21st century U.S.–Japan security relationship, and of Japan's desire to arm itself, is built upon several formal treaties. Beginning with the 1960 Treaty of Cooperation and Security, the U.S. was entitled to establish permanent bases on Japanese soil; to provide for mutual aid; and to cooperate over building up self-defense capabilities.²⁴ Over the next 60 years, various updates to the treaty occurred. The 1997 revision, meant to provide a framework between the two states in a post-Cold War context, reasserted several dynamics meant to carry into the 21st century. The U.S.–Japan alliance,

²⁰ Andrew L. Oros, "International and Domestic Challenges to Japan's Postwar Security Identity: 'Norm Constructivism' and Japan's New 'Proactive Pacifism,'" *The Pacific Review* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 139–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2014.970057>.

²¹ Bonny Lin et al., "A New Framework for Understanding and Countering China's Gray Zone Tactics" (RAND Corporation, March 30, 2022), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA594-1.html.

²² Vincent P. Cogliati-Bantz, "The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of the Philippines v. The People's Republic of China)," *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 31, no. 4 (November 22, 2016): 759–74, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718085-12341421>; Anthony Kuhn, "After Being Silent For Decades, Japan Now Speaks Up About Taiwan — And Angers China," *NPR*, August 2, 2021, sec. Asia, <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/26/1020866539/japans-position-on-defending-taiwan-has-taken-a-remarkable-shift>.

²³ Lin et al., "A New Framework for Understanding and Countering China's Gray Zone Tactics."

²⁴ "1960 Japan-U.S. Security Treaty," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>.

which was partly established to provide for the development of Japan's self-defense, was now expanded: the stability provided to Japan alone would shift, under specific situations, to using the combined U.S.–Japan might to stabilize areas around Japan that might influence Japan's security.²⁵ Over time, Japan has begun to take more interest in force employment alongside the U.S., as evidenced by the Article Nine revisions (2015), which permit the state to employ forces in situations deemed collective self-defense.

Despite a mutual desire to provide arms to Japan, U.S. foreign policy goals—to provide Japan with arms that enable self-defense—can misalign with both Japanese perceptions of the security environment and the arms that Japan should receive. Among numerous examples, the attempted sale of “Aegis Ashore” stands out as an exemplary clash of U.S. interests with Japanese prudence.

The Aegis Ashore program, primarily meant for Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD), was to be sold to the JSDF in order to build a credible defense system that, due to its American origin, integrates itself within the U.S. security framework. U.S. advocates further argued that the defense system would sufficiently deter states with ballistic missiles—namely, China—while simultaneously proving to be a cost-effective program. Despite U.S. enthusiasm towards the sale, research conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Defense concluded that the costs of this arms sale outweighed the benefits, and ultimately led towards not purchasing the system.²⁶ Hidden fees would make Aegis Ashore exceptionally more expensive than the advertised price (in excess of \$1.5 billion USD), protests regarding the fallout of missiles generated domestic controversy, and the program itself was eventually deemed to not be a viable deterrent for Chinese ballistic missiles.²⁷ The Japanese government considered a mobile (vice stationary) BMD platform more favorable, and committed itself to combining technologies, both foreign and domestic, that

²⁵ James J. Przystup, “The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Review of the Guidelines for Defense Cooperation:” (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, March 1, 2015), 18, <https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA617241>.

²⁶ Michael Unbehauen, “Japan Cancels Aegis Ashore: Reasons, Consequences, and International Implications,” *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, Winter 2020, 31.

²⁷ Unbehauen, 18.

would perform a similar function in a more favorable form.²⁸ This shows that while U.S. sales are largely beneficial and in keeping with Japanese defense goals, domestic attitudes might conflict with sales that the U.S. recommends.

Despite some differences in opinion, Japan has largely approved of U.S. arms sales that improve the credibility of Japan's security forces. However, in keeping with Japan's desire to maintain its peaceful outlook and economic focus amidst the region's security tensions, it is clear that both domestic and international factors are exerting influence on the state's arms acquisitions and security perspectives.

2. Drivers of U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan

Taiwan, another U.S. ally, has played a significantly more controversial role in American arms sales in East Asia. As a general framework, the U.S. has been legally bound by the Taiwan Relations Act to sell "arms of a defensive character" that will enable Taiwan to defend itself from Chinese invasion and attempts to unify the separatist regime.²⁹ However, the United States is intentionally vague and open-ended regarding whether or not it will commit American forces in the defense of the island.³⁰ This historic foreign policy—dubbed "strategic ambiguity"—affords the United States and Taiwan several options that enable both states to adapt with the evolving Indo-Pacific security environment.

One driver behind Taiwan's arms acquisitions is that they demonstrate credibility and a commitment between the U.S. and Taiwan. Like U.S.–Japan arms sales, U.S.–Taiwan arms sales provide the foundation for a credible defense; they maintain a status quo that has largely existed since the formal establishment of U.S.–PRC diplomatic relations; and they enable the both states to maintain a level of influence in one another's political affairs.³¹ Additionally, under the confines of TRA, arms sales are consistent with U.S.

²⁸ Yoshihiro Inaba, "Japan Moves Forward with Aegis Equipped Ship Project. But Is It Enough?," *Naval News* (blog), October 11, 2021, <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2021/10/japan-moves-forward-with-aegis-equipped-ship/>.

²⁹ Kan, "Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990."

³⁰ Qingmin, "The Bureaucratic Politics of U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan."

³¹ Thrall, Cohen, and Dorminey, "Power, Profit, or Prudence?," 104.

foreign policy towards the Indo-Pacific in that they “help maintain peace, security, and stability in the Western Pacific.”³²

Strategic frameworks such “U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy” and the “Interim National Security Strategy” approve American foreign policy-backed arms sales and are in keeping with Taiwan’s desire for continued arms acquisitions. Both strategic frameworks clearly state that American policies endorse Taiwan’s right to peacefully determine its future in accordance with the desires of the Taiwanese people. Rooted in this interest is the belief that if the island state maintains credible self-defense capabilities, then it will be able to deal with Beijing more confidently. Specifically, this means that Taiwan would be able to approach Cross-Strait issues in a manner that ensures they can be resolved peacefully and without coercion.³³

Despite a desire for arms acquisitions, it is clear that longstanding domestic drivers exert influence and inject additional factors into the fold. One major example is that Taiwanese leadership tend to vary with regards to how the government should go about providing for national defense. As a foundation, U.S. foreign policy favors strategic ambiguity in order to allow Taiwan and the PRC to resolve the issue of reunification between themselves, and arms acquisitions adequately deter the PRC from unilaterally invading Taiwan and forcibly achieving unification. Unofficially, the strength of the U.S.–Taiwan relationship suggests that, at the very least, both Taiwan and the U.S. favor a status quo that leaves the island as a *de facto* independent state.³⁴ Attempts to revise the *de facto* status or to trend towards independence—such as those by the DPP in 2000–2008—have negatively impacted the U.S.–Taiwan relationship and prompted the superpower to pull

³² “Public Law 96-8, the Taiwan Relations Act,” accessed November 15, 2021, <https://www.congress.gov/96/statute/STATUTE-93/STATUTE-93-Pg14.pdf>.

³³ Joseph Biden, “Interim National Security Strategic Guidance” (Washington, D.C.: The White House, March 3, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/03/interim-national-security-strategic-guidance/>.

³⁴ Richard Haass and David Sacks, “American Support for Taiwan Must Be Unambiguous,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 2, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/american-support-taiwan-must-be-unambiguous>.

back on arms deals to the island.³⁵ This is largely due to how arms acquisitions impact the U.S.-PRC relationship. By endorsing arms sales to Taiwan, the United States is intentionally preserving one of the few issues that could start a U.S.-PRC war: former U.S. ambassador Chas W. Freeman argues that, “America’s continuing arms sales...to Taiwan’s armed forces represent potent challenges to China’s pride, nationalism, and rising power, as well as to its military planners.”³⁶ Critics of Taiwanese independence rhetoric argue that the arms relationship between the two states offers affronts that could potentially force predatory modifications to Chinese economic policies, which the U.S. is ill-positioned to allow.³⁷ Economically, China is America’s largest partner in trade: the U.S. depends on Chinese exports and, on a broader level, Chinese good-will.³⁸

Taiwanese military attitudes have largely supported U.S. arms sales, but the nature of arms sales and their role in shaping the Cross-Strait relations has become increasingly debated. One school of thought advocates that PLA modernization has driven Taipei to appeal for weapons and support systems to discourage Cross-Strait aggression. These appeals have typically favored a symmetrical approach to warfare, where acquisitions are focused on procuring conventional military capabilities (similar to the United States). Historic examples include the sale of tanks, submarines, F-16 fighters, P-3 maritime patrol aircraft, and warships.³⁹

While these arms sales largely support Taiwan’s defense strategies, they have occasionally clashed with U.S. strategic thinking and have offered bilateral discord between the two states. A portion of American policymakers suggest that conventional

³⁵ “DPP Quenches Thirst in Arms Deal With U.S. for Protection,” The Global Times, accessed June 7, 2022, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202204/1257698.shtml>.

³⁶ Chas Freeman, “Beijing, Washington, and the Shifting Balance of Prestige,” <https://chasfreeman.net/beijing-washington-and-the-shifting-balance-of-prestige/>.

³⁷ Jeffrey Kucik and Rajan Menon, “Can the United States Really Decouple From China?,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), accessed May 30, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/11/us-china-economic-decoupling-trump-biden/>.

³⁸ Anshu Siripurapu, “The Contentious U.S.-China Trade Relationship,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed May 30, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/background/contentious-us-china-trade-relationship>.

³⁹ Scott Harold, “Making Sense of U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan,” Institut Montaigne, accessed May 30, 2022, <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/making-sense-us-arms-sales-taiwan>.

high-tech weapons, which are a majority of Taiwan's preferred acquisitions, are growing increasingly unrealistic due to several reasons.⁴⁰ First, the costs of employing high-end weapons systems—in terms of money, manpower, and training—quickly exceeds the expected effectiveness of the systems in terms of both providing deterrence and a credible defense.⁴¹ PLA strategies will likely prioritize the neutralization of sophisticated defensive systems to reduce the offensive capabilities of Taiwanese armed forces. Although Taiwan does have resources and money to train and field symmetrically armed forces, it does not have either capacity in excess to the point that it could overcome the PLA's significant advantages in both force composition and superior technology.

A second reason for U.S.–Taiwanese disagreements over arms sales considers the Chinese strategy. Notably, the PLA's investments in Cross-Strait capabilities, such as ballistic missile systems and UAVs, have made American policymakers reject some of Taiwan's arms aspirations, like anti-submarine warfare helicopters and submarines.⁴² The U.S. theorizes that, thanks to China's large arsenals, one viable strategy would employ large numbers of missiles to overwhelm Taiwanese defense and support amphibious operations to land on Taiwan's shores.⁴³ This line of thinking suggests that high-end technologies, such as helicopters and submarines, would do little in providing a survivable and resilient defense force.

Given this scenario, the U.S. has supported arms sales to Taiwan that enable asymmetric warfare.⁴⁴ Also called a “porcupine strategy,” the employment of large amounts of relatively cheap weapons is considered a more viable long-term strategy. It could either make the prospect of a potential invasion appear to be too costly for the CCP and deter the start of hostilities, or make an actual invasion too costly to sustain in the long

⁴⁰ Lara Seligman, Alexander Ward, and Nahal Toosi, “In Letters, U.S. Tries to Reshape Taiwan's Weapons Requests,” *Politico*, May 10, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/05/10/u-s-taiwan-weapons-request-00031507>.

⁴¹ William S Murray, “Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy,” *Naval War College Review* 61, no. 3 (2008): 3.

⁴² Seligman, Ward, and Toosi, “In Letters, U.S. Tries to Reshape Taiwan's Weapons Requests.”

⁴³ Harold, “Making Sense of U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan.”

⁴⁴ Seligman, Ward, and Toosi, “In Letters, U.S. Tries to Reshape Taiwan's Weapons Requests.”

term and force the termination of conflict.⁴⁵ Despite the appeal of an asymmetric strategy and America's foreign policy that supports complimentary arms sales, Taiwan is largely insistent on meeting Beijing aggression with a "modern, knowledgeable, and professional elite force."⁴⁶ Although Taiwan remains insistent on its course, the growing divide between PRC and Taiwan capabilities has offered fuel for arms acquisitions despite concerns over how they effective they might be.⁴⁷ Accordingly, Taiwan's arms acquisitions can be shaped by both domestic and international factors.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

1. Explanations and Hypotheses for Japanese/Taiwanese Behaviors and U.S. Arms Sales

A number of potential hypotheses exist that could clarify whether or not arms sales to Japan and Taiwan satisfactorily support U.S. foreign policy. This thesis will examine two main options, the international security environment and domestic factors, and determine how either group of factors might more strongly influence arms acquisitions for the two countries.

a. Hypothesis 1: The International Security Environment Has a Larger Impact on Arms Sales

The international security environment suggests that external influences drive foreign policy as well as the desire to acquire arms. For Taiwan, the constant pressure of the CCP's desire to unify through peace or by force, and Taiwan's desire to remain separate, necessitates arms purchases. Japan's perception of the security environment, which is primarily focused on China, drives them to pursue a stronger JSDF that is able to resist PRC assertiveness. Meanwhile, American attitudes might dictate that an effective

⁴⁵ James Timbie and James Ellis Jr., "A Large Number of Small Things: A Porcupine Strategy for Taiwan," Texas National Security Review, December 7, 2021, <https://tnsr.org/2021/12/a-large-number-of-small-things-a-porcupine-strategy-for-taiwan/>.

⁴⁶ Kuo-Cheng Chiu, "The 2021 Taiwan Quadrennial Defense Review" (Ministry of National Defense, Republic of China (Taiwan), March 2021); Timbie and Ellis Jr., "A Large Number of Small Things."

⁴⁷ Raymond Kuo, "The Counter-Intuitive Sensibility of Taiwan's New Defense Strategy," War on the Rocks, December 6, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/12/the-counter-intuitive-sensibility-of-taiwans-new-defense-strategy/>.

foreign policy ensures Indo-Pacific partners are armed and ready to balance against China, while at the same time reassuring global allies that the U.S. remains a viable security partner.⁴⁸

b. Hypothesis 2: Domestic Factors Have a Larger Impact on Arms Sales

Domestic factors could similarly influence countries to purchase arms. Under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) leadership between 2000–2008, arms purchases and close ties to the U.S. were prioritized, as well as a pro-independence rhetoric.⁴⁹ While the DPP’s platform in this era was partly focused on strengthening Taiwan militarily vice working more closely with China, the party’s pro-independence streak led towards inconsistencies within U.S.–Taiwan relations. This led towards periods of declined arms sales in spite of the continued fears regarding PRC military might. Conversely, opponents to the DPP, such as the Kuomintang (KMT), advocated during their presidential administration (2000-2016) for closer economic and cultural ties to China. While this was intended to shy away from the pro-independent rhetoric of the DPP, which weakened Cross-Strait ties, it also had a secondary effect of impacting the spending dedicated towards arms acquisitions.⁵⁰ While both parties recognize the need for Taiwan to maintain its defensive capabilities, ideological clashes and inconsistent policies between administrations offer different interpretations with regards to how domestic factors influence arms acquisitions.

For Japan, previous explanations on pacifism and antimilitarism present an introductory framework for why their domestic environment might curtail arms purchases. Various other factors might contribute towards potential misalignments between the U.S. and Japan. One such factor is a self-imposed limit on spending: the Japanese defense

⁴⁸ Raymond Kuo, “The Counter-Intuitive Sensibility of Taiwan’s New Defense Strategy,” War on the Rocks, December 6, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/12/the-counter-intuitive-sensibility-of-taiwans-new-defense-strategy/>.

⁴⁹ “Taiwan President Tsai Ing-Wen Looks Forward to Cooperation with U.S. on Regional Security,” New York Post, June 2, 2022, <https://nypost.com/2022/06/02/taiwan-president-tsai-ing-wen-looks-forward-to-cooperation-with-us-on-regional-security/>.

⁵⁰ Kuan-fu Chen, “Meaningless Rhetoric by Gou, KMT on U.S. Arms,” Taipei Times, May 12, 2019, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2019/05/12/2003714979>.

budget has been historically restrained to no more than one percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) since the 1970s.⁵¹ Justifications for this limit are multifaceted: economic reasons, such as recession, low annual GDP growth over the last 30 years, and opposition towards overtly increasing defense spending could make policymakers leery of dedicating limited resources towards an intentionally constrained JSDF.⁵²

Another factor, military priority mismatch, goes hand-in-hand with budgetary restrictions. The original 1957 “Basic Policy for National Defense,” adopted to address the capabilities and scope of the JSDF in the long-term, acknowledges that the JSDF is “exclusively defense-oriented:” the size and abilities of the armed forces must be limited to the minimum level necessary to provide for self-defense.⁵³ While this attitude aligned with post-WWII ideology from both Japanese and American perspectives for a minimal military footprint, the 21st century has seen reoccurring calls from the United States for Japan to take on both more defense spending and more security responsibilities.⁵⁴ Japan’s response to this push has mostly trended towards slow acceptance with resistance. Although the need for more capabilities is recognized, especially given disputes with China and heightened tensions in the region, barriers remain. The high costs of purchasing and maintaining America’s sophisticated defense technologies (air defense systems, fighter jets) as well as the resistance towards fully embracing a lethal, modern fighting force has somewhat restrained Japan’s willingness to purchase American arms.⁵⁵

⁵¹ James L Schoff and Sayuri Romei, “The New National Defense Program Guidelines: Aligning U.S. and Japanese Defense Strategies for the Third Post-Cold War Era” (Washington, D.C.: Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 2019), 1.

⁵² Ryo Ikeda, “The Impact of Declining Defense Budgets on Japan Maritime Self Defense Force” (Monterey California. Naval Postgraduate School, 2007), 29.

⁵³ James Buck, “Japan’s Defense Policy,” *Armed Forces & Society* 8, no. 1 (1981): 80.

⁵⁴ Bruce Klingner Terry Jung H. Pak, and Sue Mi, “Trump Shakedowns Are Threatening Two Key U.S. Alliances in Asia,” *Brookings* (blog), December 18, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/12/18/trump-shakedowns-are-threatening-two-key-u-s-alliances-in-asia/>.

⁵⁵ James L. Schoff, “U.S. Reassurance and Japanese Defense Reforms Can Improve Security in East Asia,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/13/u.s.-reassurance-and-japanese-defense-reforms-can-improve-security-in-east-asia-pub-55340>.

Though elements of Japan hesitate to embrace more arms sales due to cultural, economic, and ideological reasons, both the JSDF and ruling Japanese political party—the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)—are slowly shifting towards a positive outlook regarding more arms acquisitions and a more credible defense force. Particularly under Prime Minister Abe (2012-2020), the Japanese domestic environment has arguably become more open to military expansion largely due to Abe’s reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.⁵⁶ Abe’s reinterpretation, which authorized military expansion, came during a time when China aggressively pursued its territorial claims over the disputed Senkaku Islands, and the Japanese people largely questioned whether or not they had the capacity to protect its own claims.⁵⁷ Despite significant controversy over military expansion and arms purchases (to self-immolation protests and public rallies), American foreign policy appears to be somewhat effective in persuading the Japanese to arm and expand.⁵⁸

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis will use a series of comparative case studies to analyze the individual countries, their motivations to purchase arms, and whether or not arms sales have fulfilled U.S. foreign policy objectives. Chapter I lays out the thesis proposal and covers a basic overview of the thesis. Utilizing existing scholarly works, I aim to establish a baseline that explains the drivers behind sales to each country, how they influence each state’s security perspectives, and the motivations and impediments towards acquisitions from each buyer. Next, Chapter I lays out the hypotheses that will be examined within the remainder of the thesis, as well as how they will be tested.

Chapter II examines Japan’s arms purchases and the relevant data/literature and tests the related hypotheses. For quantitative data, several sources will be utilized. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which has a comprehensive

⁵⁶ Jeffrey Richter, “Japan’s ‘Reinterpretation’ of Article 9: A Pyrrhic Victory for American Foreign Policy?,” *Iowa Law Review*, 2016, <https://ilr.law.uiowa.edu/print/volume-101-issue-3/japans-reinterpretation-of-article-9-a-pyrrhic-victory-for-american-foreign-policy/>.

⁵⁷ Jun Tsuruta, “Japan Needs to Prepare for a Possible Senkaku Islands Crisis,” *The Diplomat*, April 21, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/japan-needs-to-prepare-for-a-possible-senkaku-islands-crisis/>.

⁵⁸ Richter, “Japan’s ‘Reinterpretation’ of Article 9.”

electronic stockpile of data dedicated to “research into conflict, armaments, arms controls, and disarmament,” will be consulted.⁵⁹ SIPRI’s open-source records enable arms sales to be tracked over time in terms of volume, type of arms, and value (in USD). A second quantitative source, the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DCSA), provides data on Foreign Military Sales conducted by the U.S. government.⁶⁰ The intent of quantitative data sources is to provide data-driven evidence that builds cases for whether or not domestic or international factors influence various acquisitions. For Japan, an increase in arms sales might suggest a single reason or a combination of several: that Japan is following U.S. recommendations for procurement or that U.S.–Japan objectives align. However, quantitative data alone cannot fully provide a positive correlation between arms purchases and concurrence: the risk remains that Japan could increase funding for purchases but could purchase from other countries or its own domestic arms companies.

Conversely, decreases or stagnation in arms purchases might suggest the opposite: military expansion via arms acquisitions is less favorable due to budget challenges, ideological disagreements, or concerns about international response. Alternatively, a self-perception about the capability of forces—that the current abilities of the JSDF are capable enough to meet Japan’s Indo-Pacific aims—might lessen the urgency that drives arms acquisitions.

Qualitative data sources will provide insight into Japan’s decision-making process and address what factors, whether internationally or domestically, might influence arms acquisitions. Official defense publications, such as Japan’s Defense White Papers and the Japanese National Security Strategy, provide the official perceptions of the government, the military, and policymakers, which will prove invaluable for laying the groundwork.⁶¹ Think tanks, such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, and RAND Corporation will provide

⁵⁹ “About SIPRI: Vision and Mission,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022, <https://www.sipri.org/about>.

⁶⁰ Nathan J Lucas and Michael J Vassalotti, “Transfer of Defense Articles: Foreign Military Sales (FMS),” n.d., 3.

⁶¹ “National Security Strategy” (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2013); “Ministry of Defense Annual White Papers Archive,” Japan Ministry of Defense, n.d., <https://www.mod.go.jp/en/>.

analytical insight from experts with regards to Japan’s perceptions of the security environment, arms sales, and changes over time. Scholarly journals and newspapers, such as *International Security* and *Foreign Affairs*, will round out the selection of qualitative data in order to provide information to test the hypothesis.

Chapter III will have a similar structure as Chapter II and will test hypotheses related to U.S.–Taiwan arms sales. Despite Taiwan’s historic enthusiasm towards strengthening military capability, their ideological approach has both aligned and clashed with American recommendations. As such, an analysis of Taiwan’s domestic and international drivers will rely on a plethora of works. Similar quantitative sources—such as SIPRI—will highlight trends in arms sales purchases and lend credibility to the historic and current acquisitions conducted by the Taiwanese. Qualitative data from a variety of sources will enable the analysis of arms purchases and the ideological and strategic ambitions behind arm sales trends. Notably, Taiwan’s “Quadrennial Defense Review,” an annual military publication, highlights the current status of Taiwan forces and equipment, the ongoing Cross-Strait tensions, Taiwanese attitudes towards the Indo-Pacific security environment, and future plans and objectives.⁶² Similar think tank and scholarly sources—such as CSIS and *International Security*—will be utilized to provide evidence on Taiwan’s support for American foreign policies/arms sales objectives. The combination of these sources will provide evidence and opinions on how domestic and international factors influence Taiwan, and which might play a larger role.

Chapter IV will outline a summary of the findings and likely future trends, as well as recommendations for U.S. foreign policy.

⁶² Chiu, “The 2021 Taiwan Quadrennial Defense Review.”

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II. DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DRIVERS BEHIND JAPANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS

Japan's arms acquisitions within the 21st century are influenced by both domestic and international drivers. The country's arms imports are notable given that, while it retains a historic opposition to military buildup and emphasizes sustaining a military exclusively for self-defense, it is routinely ranked as one of the world's top arms importers and is accountable for roughly 2% of the global arms trade.⁶³ Within the network of American arms importers, it is also a top arms customer who accounts for 5% of American arms exports.⁶⁴ Between 2000–2020, the chosen timeframe for this analysis, Japan spent an annual average of \$381 million USD on American arms, equating to 8% of the Japanese defense budget.⁶⁵ Given that Japan spends a notable amount of its defense budget exclusively on arms, purchases over 90% of its arms from the United States, and is committed to doing so for the foreseeable future, this chapter intends to examine the circumstances and motivations that encourage Japanese policymakers to make sustained arms purchases from the United States.⁶⁶

Multiple domestic factors have played a role in shaping the island state's active commitment to arms acquisitions. Economically, the island state has struggled with “low growth, high debt, and constrained spending” over the 21st century due to a variety of factors, necessitating fiscally limited defense spending and a continued reliance on purchasing ready-made products vice developing them.⁶⁷ Legislatively, Japan preserves its post-World War II constitution into the modern day, emphasizing pacifism, economic

⁶³ “Arms Imports (SIPRI Trend Indicator Values) – Japan,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, accessed August 31, 2022, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.MPRT.KD?end=2020&locations=JP&start=2000>.

⁶⁴ “Arms Imports (SIPRI Trend Indicator Values) – Japan.” By 2015, Japan ranked as the 6th largest spender of American arms out of 114 countries.

⁶⁵ “Arms Imports (SIPRI Trend Indicator Values) – Japan.” Calculations were made by the author.

⁶⁶ “Arms Imports (SIPRI Trend Indicator Values) – Japan.”

⁶⁷ Masashi Murano, “RESOLVED: Japan Should Focus on Increasing Indigenous Defense Production,” *Debating Japan* 5, no. 1 (March 10, 2022), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/resolved-japan-should-focus-increasing-indigenous-defense-production>; Thrall, Cohen, and Dorminey, “Power, Profit, or Prudence?,” 115.

development over high-level military expenditure, and noninterventionism.⁶⁸ While these embedded cornerstones have played a role in solidifying Japanese self-perceptions of maintaining a “defense force” instead of a formal military, constitutional revision and a transition towards a “normal” Japan continues to fuel calls for more defense development, arms acquisitions, and spending.⁶⁹

External factors driving Japanese arms acquisitions tend to overwhelmingly involve geopolitical considerations, alliances, and the international order. Asia’s greatest rising power, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), is in a position to intimidate Japan and has held decades-long hostilities towards its eastern neighbor. Increased feelings of regional insecurity and mistrust in Sino-Japanese relations have caused Japan to feel more pressure with regards to arming itself to deter Chinese aggression: negative stereotypes surrounding war time atrocities, the noteworthy 21st century economic and military improvements in China (amidst Japan’s sluggish performance), and territorial disputes also contribute to Japan’s sense of urgency.⁷⁰ Concerning alliances, the U.S.–Japan relationship provides a natural avenue for Tokyo to explore in order to address its problems. via arms acquisitions, intermilitary cooperation, and mutual defense. The well-established agreement that has seen American servicemembers stationed on the island for decades indicates that the security portions of the relationship, to include arms acquisitions, mutual protection, and intermilitary cooperation, will exert influence with regards as to how Japan provides for its own defense. Over the 2000–2015 era, American desires for a stronger JSDF have encouraged Japanese policymakers to purchase American arms, which are readily made available for the island state.⁷¹ Finally, Japan’s arms acquisitions are

⁶⁸ Shivshankar Menon, “Nobody Wants the Current World Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, August 3, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/nobody-wants-current-world-order>.

⁶⁹ Jeffrey Hornung, “Revising Japan’s Peace Constitution: Much Ado About Nothing,” *War on the Rocks*, March 21, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/03/revising-japans-peace-constitution-much-ado-about-nothing/>.

⁷⁰ Bruce Stokes, “Hostile Neighbors: China vs. Japan,” *Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project* (blog), September 13, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/09/13/hostile-neighbors-china-vs-japan/>.

⁷¹ Taisuke Hirose, “Japan’s New Arms Export Principles: Strengthening U.S.-Japan Relations,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, October 14, 2014, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/japan%E2%80%99s-new-arms-export-principles-strengthening-us-japan-relations>.

compounded by its inclusion (and unprecedented success) within the western-led international order: potential threats to that order, such as those posed by China, offer legitimacy to the island's need to arm itself.⁷²

This chapter finds that Japanese arms drivers are primarily influenced by the state's domestic antimilitarism, its formal security alliance with the United States, and a worsening geopolitical environment. Starting with the domestic environment, the sustained ideological antimilitarism found in Japanese culture has strongly influenced both policymakers and defense industry leadership within the country. A deeply ingrained sense of pacificism, reflected in legislature and defense spending, challenges notions that the island needs to build up military capabilities. These ideals have bled into a rejection of the island's indigenous arms industry and have contributed to curtailed enthusiasm for its growth. Concurrently, the island's continued need for defensive technologies is filled by American arms manufacturers, who not only offer opportunities for arms acquisitions but also actively encourage Japan to strengthen itself. This is urged by U.S. security perspectives in the Indo-Pacific, which have reflected Japanese concerns over the PRC and the instability with which China has brought to the region. When combined, this thesis argues that Japan's compulsion to purchase arms is challenged by its rejection of domestic arms growth and antimilitarism, while its easy access to American defensive technologies and geopolitical security concerns have successfully encouraged the state to pursue American arms.

This chapter first examines domestic drivers in Section A, to include economic influences, as well as Section B, which examines political and cultural factors. Next, Section C reviews international factors such as the U.S.–Japan alliance. Section D offers an appraisal of PRC military expansion, and what arms Japan has purchased in order to address these concerns. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of findings that indicate the level of influence these drivers play in encouraging or discouraging Japanese arms acquisitions.

⁷² Bojiang Yang, "Japan and Changes of International Order: Concepts and Countermeasures," *East Asian Affairs* 01, no. 01 (June 2021): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2737557921500054>.

A. DOMESTIC DRIVERS BEHIND JAPANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS

1. Economic Drivers of Arms Acquisitions

Following the conclusion of World War II, the United States and Japan entered into a long-term alliance that enabled commercial, political, and military cooperation. The immediate decade after surrender was largely shaped by an emphasis on economic recovery and stabilization. In spite of its original plan, which saw the United States pledging to provide for Japan's defense and allow the island to focus on economic recovery, Washington gradually reversed course over the 1950s amidst an increasingly challenging global security environment. The Korean Peninsula tensions and conflict, the rapidly evolving Soviet-U.S. rivalry, and the growth of Mao's PRC compelled U.S. policymakers to call for Japan to remilitarize in order to better contribute to American interests in Indo-Pacific.⁷³ Despite the shift in policies, Japan has, until relatively recently, resisted calls for rearmament for a variety of reasons. The importance of economic recovery trumped military development, Japanese citizens were strongly against involving themselves in overseas struggles, and the 1954 Constitution was against the use of force or the maintenance of armed forces.⁷⁴ These broad principles, reliance on the U.S. military and Tokyo's favoring of economic prosperity over defense development have consistently remained at the core of Japanese defense-related thinking for the last 75 years.

By the 21st century, Japan has long since recovered from wartime damages and re-established itself as a global economic powerhouse. Its economy is ranked as the third largest in the world (only behind the PRC and the U.S.), the fourth largest in terms of exports, and the 25th strongest economy in terms of GDP per capita.⁷⁵ Despite major obstacles to economic growth (e.g., natural disasters, recession), Japan's economic growth has largely been positive, albeit slowed from the "Japanese economic miracle" era. While

⁷³ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth Edition (New York Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 247.

⁷⁴ Nathanael Cheng and Lindsay Maizland, "The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance," Council on Foreign Relations, November 4, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-japan-security-alliance>.

⁷⁵ "Japan (JPN) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners | OEC," OEC – The Observatory of Economic Complexity, accessed August 8, 2022, <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/jpn>.

this has benefited the state greatly, it has not been reflected in defense spending. This is largely exemplified by the government's ongoing trend to spend no more than 1% of annual GDP on military expenditures.⁷⁶ Multiple reasons, such as a large existing defense budget and fiscal limitations dissuade policymakers from both committing more funding to indigenous development and from purchasing what little indigenous arms are manufactured.⁷⁷ Instead, arms purchases from foreign developers, mostly the United States, are favored. Figure 1 illustrates this by showing the relatively consistent military expenditures of Japan over 1999-2021.

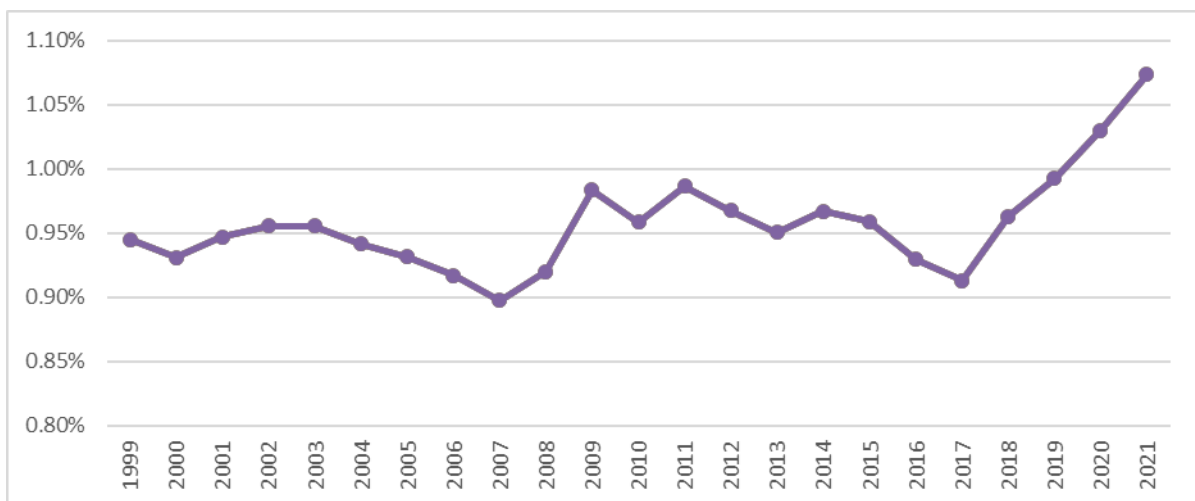


Figure 1. Military Expenditure of Japan as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product, 1999–2021⁷⁸

One limiting economic factor contributing to arms acquisitions is the nature of the Japanese economy in relation to the government. As previously stated, Japanese leadership have overwhelmingly limited their defense budget spending (with a few exceptions) to no

⁷⁶ “Military Expenditure of Japan. as Percentage of Gross Domestic Product, 1999–2021,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, accessed August 6, 2022, <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>.

⁷⁷ John Wright, “Japan’s Arms Exports: A Prudent Possibility Amid Enduring Challenges,” *The Diplomat*, accessed August 10, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/01/japans-arms-exports-a-prudent-possibility-amid-enduring-challenges/>.

⁷⁸ Adapted from “SIPRI Military Expenditure Database: Japan, 2000–2021,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022, <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>.

more than 1% of GDP. Coinciding with this policy is the notable lack of government subsidies for Japanese arms development. For the majority of the 21st century, Japanese arms developers have enjoyed little support due to fears of militarism, a lack of dedicated government funding, and a relatively small pool of customers.⁷⁹ Although countries with a similar GDP clearly benefit from arms exports, such as the United Kingdom's \$22.3 billion USD profit in 2020, Japanese policymakers and business leaders have rejected the development of indigenous weapons and favor purchasing American-made products.⁸⁰

Furthermore, U.S. FMS to Japan has only increased over time: Japanese defense spending on U.S. FMS increased from less than one percent of the total defense budget per year (FY2011) to 10 percent of the defense budget a year (FY2020).⁸¹ During PM Abe's tenure, modifications to Japan's constitution occurred that allow for the JSDF to defend its allies, as well as "expanding the scope of their military operations...and new technologies."⁸² Externally, fears over the PRC's military development and its potential employment against Japan have sparked calls for increased defense spending, from Abe's election in 2010 through the current administration under PM Kishida.⁸³ A rise in Chinese military activity within the East and South China seas, starting in 2017, provided a powerful catalyst for increased spending on air defense equipment, ballistic missile defense, and enhanced radar capabilities from 2018 onwards.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the lack of Japanese military industrial powerhouses (such as America's Raytheon or Lockheed

⁷⁹ Purnendra Jain, "Japan Open for Arms Business," *East Asia Forum* (blog), May 29, 2018, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/05/29/japan-open-for-arms-business/>; Hirose, "Japan's New Arms Export Principles."

⁸⁰ Meagan Harding and Noel Dempsey, "UK Arms Exports Statistics" (House of Commons Library, December 1, 2021), 4, <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8310/CBP-8310.pdf>.

⁸¹ Tom Corben, "Japan Rethinks Its Approach to Arms Deals With the United States," accessed August 10, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/japan-rethinks-its-approach-to-arms-deals-with-the-united-states/>.

⁸² Cheng and Maizland, "The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance."

⁸³ Tim Kelly and Daniel Leussink, "Japan Calls for Defence Spending Hike, Notes Threats to Taiwan," Reuters, June 7, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/japan-calls-defence-spending-hike-policy-paper-notes-threats-taiwan-2022-06-07/>.

⁸⁴ Mina Pollmann, "What's in Japan's Record 2018 Defense Budget Request?," *The Diplomat*, August 28, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/08/whats-in-japans-record-2018-defense-budget-request/>.

Martin) has ensured that policymakers support arms procurements from the U.S.–Japan alliance vice acquiring indigenous developments.

Despite longstanding trends against domestic arms development and a favoritism towards arms purchases, signals from both the Japanese government and the economy suggest that small shifts towards domestic defense growth are occurring. For example, the Japanese Ministry of Defense’s FY2020 Defense Programs and Budget of Japan, which outlines the MOD’s fiscal priorities for the upcoming year, acknowledges the “increasingly severe fiscal conditions” of the current global environment and calls for providing funds that both streamline and strengthen FMS and the native “Defense Industrial Base.”⁸⁵ Specifically, the document dedicates roughly ¥7.3 billion yen (\$54 million USD) of the budget to native corporations that “maintain and strengthen the defense industrial base,” match with the U.S. defense industry, and “promote overseas transfer of defense equipment.”⁸⁶ A second reported trend, increased levels of government scrutiny, suggest that government officials are questioning the notable “spiraling costs,” delayed delivery dates, and swollen maintenance fees associated with technologically advanced FMS.⁸⁷ Notably, under PM Abe’s Minister of Defense, Taro Kono, high profile projects perceived as necessary—like the U.S.-led Aegis Ashore program—were cancelled due to high fees and the pursuit of more cost effective, domestic options.⁸⁸

Economically, the budding Japanese defense sector is seeing growth in indigenous development. This is exemplified by the Abe administration’s 2014 relaxation of arms exports (previously banned) in an attempt to revitalize the sluggish economy.⁸⁹ Although newly freed defense corporations were given more leeway to pursue international contracts, such as the highly publicized attempt to sell Japanese-made submarine tenders

⁸⁵ “Defense Programs and Budget of Japan: Overview of FY2021 Budget” Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2021, 31, https://www.mod.go.jp/en/d_act/d_budget/pdf/210331a.pdf.

⁸⁶ Japanese Ministry of Defense, 31. Author’s calculations included.

⁸⁷ Corben, “Japan Rethinks Its Approach to Arms Deals With the United States.”

⁸⁸ Unbehauen, “Japan Cancels Aegis Ashore: Reasons, Consequences, and International Implications,” 114.

⁸⁹ Wright, “Japan’s Arms Exports.”

to the Australian Navy, defense contractors have fallen short of making significant headway in wrestling the Ministry of Defense's acquisition aspirations away from the U.S.⁹⁰ Reasons for this include a notable lack of serious research and development (R&D) infrastructure and the reappealed laws that banned arms exports.⁹¹ Furthermore, the Japanese government's hesitation to purchase Japanese-made arms has weakened the indigenous market's ability to meet the demand for arms by failing to "provide a base for Japanese defense companies to achieve effective economies of scale:" in short, Japanese arms companies cannot yet compete with their American counterparts.⁹²

Japan's lack of a self-sustaining domestic arms industry effectively justifies the state's purchases of American-made arms. Working with the DSCA to contract FMS sales enables the state to negotiate for its purchases, avoid costly investments (and potential losses) in developing its own arms sector, and make the most of its limited military spending budget. Additionally, while the U.S.–Japan military alliance is discussed in Section B in further detail, it is worth noting that Japan's arms purchases encourage interoperability and cooperation between the two countries' militaries. As such, uniquely Japanese economic factors play a role in driving the state towards U.S. arms purchases. Next, the significance of political and cultural drivers as arms sales stimulants will be highlighted and analyzed.

B. POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DRIVERS OF ARMS ACQUISITIONS

Japan, both as a state and as a nation, is often perceived as "juggling multiple identities" in terms of attitudes towards military matters.⁹³ Article Nine of the Constitution and well-grounded pacifistic tendencies contribute to Japan's ideological "security identity of domestic antimilitarism (SIDA)."⁹⁴ Japan's SIDA, which includes the legal aspects of

⁹⁰ Hiroyuki Sugai, "Japan's Future Defense Equipment Policy" (Washington, DC: Brookings, October 2016), 22.

⁹¹ Murano, "Resolved," 4.

⁹² Murano, 4–5.

⁹³ Oros, "International and Domestic Challenges to Japan's Postwar Security Identity."

⁹⁴ Oros.

having no standing armed forces, not employing force except in self-defense, and not participating in foreign wars, has largely embedded itself in the psyche of both Japanese culture and politics. Few, if any, openly challenge the emphasis on antimilitarism: these tenets provide structure for policy formation and heavily influence both public opinion and political rhetoric.⁹⁵ Multiple 21st century leaders, such as PM Abe (2012-2020), his predecessor, PM Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006) and the current minister, Kishida, have emphasized that the resiliency of antimilitarism is strong: all have declared, domestically and on the world stage, that modern Japan is a “peace-loving nation.”⁹⁶

In spite of its SIDA principles, Japan favors a stronger military: this is exemplified by participation in overseas conflicts (non-combatant operations in Afghanistan and Iraq), conventional military capability build up (aerial tanking, sophisticated warships), and, most notably, the acquisition of an increasingly more lethal defense force via U.S. arms acquisitions.⁹⁷ Although this movement was muted during the immediate post-9/11 era, Japanese arms acquisitions notably rose during the years leading up to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. Despite arms imports declined during the following multi-year economic slump, defense imports notably began to increase after the election of Abe in 2012.

The Abe era’s buildup of conventional military weapons and equipment suggests that the state was (and is) increasingly accepting of modifications to SIDA ideology. High-profile acquisitions of E-2D Advanced Hawkeye command and control/early airborne warning aircraft, Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) interceptors, and Aegis Combat System (ACS) ship upgrades coincide with and arguably originate from Abe’s political and national security reforms.⁹⁸ Steps such as the establishment of the 2013 National Security

⁹⁵ Oros.

⁹⁶ “Japan’s Orientation as a Peace-Loving Nation,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, accessed August 10, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page1we_000077.html; “Koizumi: Japan a Peace-Loving Country,” accessed August 10, 2022, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-01/19/content_513574.htm; Fumio Kishida, “Address by Prime Minister Kishida at the Seventy-Seventh National Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead,” https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202208/_00006.html.

⁹⁷ Lind, “Japan Must Disavow Pacifism for Collective Defence.”

⁹⁸ “Japan DSCA Procurements,” Defense Security Cooperation Agency, accessed August 09, 2022, <https://www.dsca.mil/tags/japan?page=1>.

Council and the subsequently published “2013 National Security Strategy (NSS)” publicly highlight the increased importance given to defensive matters.⁹⁹ Particularly, the document outlines that Japan’s strategic thinking is shifting away from SIDA, arguing, “Japan should play an even more proactive role as a major global player in the international community.”¹⁰⁰

Further pieces of legislation, such as the 2015 revisions to the “U.S.–Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines” and corresponding security bills implemented some of the most bold and controversial security changes seen in the 21st century. Under new laws, Japan could assert itself in “collective defense” of an ally without being attacked.¹⁰¹ Widespread anger and dismay at the “gutting” of Article 9, from both domestic and international audiences, shortly followed.¹⁰² While implemented to enhance security cooperation for Japan in the Indo-Pacific and beyond, the effects of Japanese political reform—and their acceptance by Japanese society and beyond—remains debated to the modern day.

With this in mind, Japan’s identity—both as a peaceful, antimilitarist state and a state arming itself for conflict—is clearly challenged by new attitudes. Politically and culturally, the island’s history of pacifism and defense-only ideology is in a transitional state towards a more normal status: the state’s increased defense budget, emphasis on purchasing more sophisticated weapons, and less restricted approach to defense-related politics suggests that significant factors are driving these changes. As the next section will show, one major factor, China’s military advancements over the 21st century, has resulted in the development of a global superpower that challenges Japan’s status quo as a leader in Asia. PRC ambitions -militarily, economically, and geopolitically—pose a direct threat to

⁹⁹ Sugai, “Japan’s Future Defense Equipment Policy,” 10.

¹⁰⁰ “National Security Strategy 2013” (Japanese Ministry of Defense, December 17, 2013), 1, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/131217anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ Jeffrey W. Hornung and Mike M. Mochizuki, “Japan: Still An Exceptional U.S. Ally,” *The Washington Quarterly*, April 29, 2016, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0163660X.2016.1170483>.

¹⁰² Jennifer, “Japan’s Security Evolution,” Cato Institute, February 25, 2016, <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/japans-security-evolution>.

Japan's own interests and provoke distrust and anxiety from the state.¹⁰³ As such, well-founded fears of China provide significant motivation for Japan's arms build-up and purchases. In the next portion will discuss the implications of China's buildup, its impact on Japan, and the effects of the U.S.–Japan alliance in greater detail.

C. EXTERNAL DRIVERS BEHIND JAPANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS

1. The U.S.–Japan Alliance

Considered by American foreign policymakers as a “cornerstone of peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific,” the U.S.–Japan military alliance provides an avenue for both states to work towards common goals.¹⁰⁴ Contextually, the alliance can be considered a summation of security agreements that strongly benefits Japan both as an individual state and as a player in Indo-Pacific regional affairs. One supremely important example is the U.S.–Japan “Status of Armed Forces (SOFA)” agreement between the two states, which allows the permanent forward deployment of some 55,000 American troops on Japanese soil.¹⁰⁵ This agreement helps address the unique challenges that Japan faces, such as the state's military limitations due to SIDA, by bolstering the size of the military forces that Japan has access to at any given point. Although American servicemembers are not under Japanese military leaders and fall under the direct supervision of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the close cooperation of the two states' militaries within the 21st century provides many benefits that show Japan gains much from the agreement. In times of “steady state, crisis, and contingency,” both states are well-prepared to pool resources, technologies, and manpower in order to project power and shape a favorable Indo-Pacific environment.¹⁰⁶ Examples of this can include deterring PRC aggression via a strong, coalition military presence; providing additional resources to rapidly respond to crises; and

¹⁰³ “Japan's Fear of China,” The Jakarta Post, October 7, 2021, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2021/10/06/japans-fear-of-china.html>.

¹⁰⁴ “U.S.–Japan Joint Press Statement,” United States Department of State, March 16, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-japan-joint-press-statement/>.

¹⁰⁵ “MOFA: Agreement Regarding the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan,” accessed September 28, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/2.html>.

¹⁰⁶ “About U.S. Forces Japan,” United States Forces Japan, <https://www.usfj.mil/About-USFJ/>.

preparing the JSDF for combat operations via arms sales and acquisitions. This is best exemplified by real-world cases such as the extensive U.S. military aid provided during the 2011 Tohoku earthquake (crisis response/disaster relief), as well as the Bilateral Advanced Warfare Training (BAWT) exercises designed to encourage confidence and dual-military cooperation.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the advantages of forward deployed American servicemembers, the U.S.–Japan alliance benefits Japan by providing an avenue for arms acquisitions. The need for arms acquisitions is dictated by several factors which will be discussed in greater detail. These factors include the nature of the alliance and the presence of China and its associated military challenges.

First, the terms of the alliance are outlined by the Treat of Mutual Cooperation and Security, which directly acknowledges several key factors that necessitate Japan’s arms acquisitions. For example, the SOFA agreement (a subordinate agreement within the treaty) dictates that Japan readily agrees to lend land to the U.S. in exchange for military support.¹⁰⁸ By committing the “most capable and advanced forces (of the United States),” the U.S. has made it clear that no effort will be spared to defend Japan.¹⁰⁹ While this was originally highly asymmetric (due to Japan’s lack of military forces), the 21st century has seen renewed calls from voices on both sides of the alliance for Japan to sufficiently arms itself. This is further supported by the implied mutual cooperation of the treaty: the U.S. will not be solely responsible for defending Japan but will work alongside the island state in defending itself from outside aggressors. As such, Japan is required to size its own

¹⁰⁷ “U.S. Navy and JMSDF Join Forces for Bilateral Advanced Warfare Training 2022,” United States Navy Press Office, May 25, 2022, <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/2954874/us-navy-and-jmsdf-join-forces-for-bilateral-advanced-warfare-training-2022/> <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/2954874/us-navy-and-jmsdf-join-forces-for-bilateral-advanced-warfare-training-2022/>; “Japan Thanks U.S. Military For Help After 2011 Quake and Tsunami,” Stars and Stripes, October 7, 2015, 5, <https://www.stripes.com/news/japan-thanks-us-military-for-help-after-2011-quake-and-tsunami-1.372024>.

¹⁰⁸ “Agreement Regarding the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1960, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/2.html>.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, “Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region” (U.S. Department of Defense, June 1, 2019), 23, <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>.

forces, ensure that they are adequately prepared for conflict, and be prepared to defend itself. By virtue of this unique situation, the need to provide for its one defense logically encourages Japan to equip itself via American-provided arms purchases.

Along these lines, the importance of Chinese military developments cannot be understated in terms of their role as a driving force behind Japanese arms acquisitions. Part B of this section provides a more in-depth examination of the PRC's military influence on Japanese arms acquisitions. However, the presence of a rapidly militarizing, close proximity neighbor spurs concerns that all surrounding states, not just Japan, must militarily prepare themselves. Should Japan's own security interests (e.g., homeland defense), or those of the United States become threatened by the overt presence of its mainland neighbor, the Japanese military cannot be found lacking due to negligence. Therefore, policymakers in both Japan and the United States have suggested that the significance of China's military growth and technology developments are powerful enough to eclipse Japan and threaten the state's security. Despite U.S. aid and the alliance, Japan serves in its role as a responsible partner and regional leader by acquiring the means necessary to defend itself.

In terms of the benefits of arms sales, acquiring U.S.-made arms shrewdly promotes interoperability, joint operations, and mutually enhanced military power. For example, purchasing weapons and defense platforms (ships, planes, tanks) already in the U.S. arsenal guarantees that the JSDF will have a ready supplier of spare parts, technical knowledge, and subject matter experts (SMEs) available for use. By working with American defense contractors and military officials, Japan is able to observe the inner workings of a more established defense sector, pick and choose facets of the American system that are successful, and adopt them for their own use. In turn, arms purchases allow Tokyo to circumvent the lack of a well-developed defense industrial base, which directly hampers defense supply chains, military contracting, and technology innovation.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ "Japanese National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2019 and Beyond," Japanese Ministry of Defense, December 18, 2018, 23, https://warrior.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11591426/www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/20181218_e.pdf.

Furthermore, Japan's longtime role as a customer to the American defense industry is suggested to translate into a smoother technology transfer process for highly desirable and sophisticated military products between the two states. Top quality technologies such as the American made F-35 Lightning II aircraft, AEGIS-equipped warships, and Standard Missile-3 Interceptor—each having cost billions of dollars in research and development—are readily available for Japanese purchase and use.¹¹¹ This empowers Japan because it can focus on acquiring completed military technologies from a reliable source, in contrast to the hurdles that it encounters in its own defense industry. For example, many Japanese companies whose products might serve military purposes, such as cars and electronics, are typically generated for commercial use but can be adapted to military use. When considering domestic-made products for military consumption, the Japanese government must acknowledge that interested companies are often not prepared to provide rugged, durable, and readily available dual-use technologies for the JSDF. Converting technologies to military use incurs additional costs on behalf of the Japanese government due to the need for high quantities of rugged, durable, and reliable equipment.¹¹² By purchasing American arms, Japanese decisionmakers can acquire well-tested military products meant solely for combat operations, albeit at a profit for American defense corporations. Though the full cost effectiveness of purchasing American arms vice any sort of domestic arms is beyond the scope of this thesis, Japan does directly contract and negotiate with U.S. defense contractors—via the DSCA—in order to assure an acceptable outcome for all involved parties.¹¹³

Another aspect of the U.S.–Japan security alliance is the interregional cooperation opportunities it affords to Japan. Specifically, it permitted membership into the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (colloquially dubbed “the Quad”). The Quad's purpose,

¹¹¹ Hornung and Mochizuki, “Japan,” 35.

¹¹² Stew Magnuson, “U.S.-Japan Defense Tech Cooperation Stymied by Cultural Hurdles,” Defense News, January 17, 2020, <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2020/1/17/us-japan-defense-tech-cooperation-stymied-by-cultural-hurdles>.

¹¹³ Nick Sanders, “Generating Profits Through Foreign Military Sales,” Apogee Consulting, May 14, 2018, http://www.apogeeconsulting.biz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1371:generating-profits-through-foreign-military-sales&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=55.

between the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia, is a “common platform of protecting freedom of navigation and promoting democratic values in the region (Indo-Pacific).”¹¹⁴ While various iterations have existed throughout the 21st century, the current version is meant to address regional concerns shared by all members. These include maintaining conventional security, resisting undesired Chinese influence, and “upholding the rules-based international order where countries are free from all forms of military, economic, and political coercion.”¹¹⁵ Specifically for Japan, the Quad provides a program to encourage democratic solidarity with its fellow Pacific powers, build military cooperation vis-à-vis exercises, and address vulnerabilities in each country’s respective defense measures.¹¹⁶ Japan has been encouraged to buy arms and develop joint technologies with not only the U.S., but also India (unmanned ground vehicles) and Australia (F-35 technology development).¹¹⁷ As such, the benefits of the Quad, and by extension the U.S.-Japan security alliance, stand to enhance Japan’s likelihood to purchase arms, invest in the development of new technologies, and grow closer to like-minded Indo-Pacific powers. This aligns with Japan’s strategic interests by encouraging its appetite for arms, building routes towards acquiring them, and generating more interest in cooperating with the United States.

In conclusion, Japan’s alliance with the United States strongly benefits its own preparedness for armed conflict, escalated regional tensions, and uncertainty. By choosing to purchase arms and work with the United States, Japanese security is bolstered; its military is more closely aligned with the United States’; and it is afforded the opportunity

¹¹⁴ Emma Chanlett-Avery, K. Kronstadt, and Bruce Vaughn, “The ‘Quad’: Security Cooperation Among the United States, Japan, India, and Australis” (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, July 25, 2022).

¹¹⁵ Chanlett-Avery, Kronstadt, and Vaughn, 1.

¹¹⁶ Ben Lamont, “What Arms Trade Data Say About Where the ‘Quad’ Stands,” *The Strategy Bridge*, accessed September 1, 2022, <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/1/11/what-arms-trade-data-says-about-where-the-quad-stands>.

¹¹⁷ Mari Yamaguchi, “Japan, India to Step up Arms Drills, Technology Cooperation,” *AP News*, September 8, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-china-japan-tokyo-0446510bd448d6f460a698e6f575b06a>; “Australia and Japan Agree to Pursue Closer Military Technology Ties,” *Reuters*, June 11, 2014, sec. Aerospace & Defense, <https://www.reuters.com/article/japan-australia-talks-idUSL4N0OS2UZ20140611>.

to develop closer regional partners. All of this is done with the intent to counteract the development of the PRC, whose influence and significance will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

D. CHINESE DEVELOPMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO JAPANESE DEFENSE BUILD-UP

PRC developments over the 21st century have considerably advanced Japan's arms build-up as well as provoked a paradigm shift in Japanese thinking. More specifically, a shift in the balance of power between China and Japan has encouraged CCP leaders to employ the state's economic and military might to achieve national interests. Examples of this include confronting Japan over the Senkaku Islands territorial dispute via a more forward PLA military presence; employing predatory economic practices that threaten Japan's access to trade networks; and China's increasingly overt criticism regarding the Japan-U.S. alliance.¹¹⁸ As a result, 21st century Japan has developed a healthy skepticism concerning its ability to deter an increasingly bold China, even with U.S. aid.

Geopolitically, China's military growth has challenged Japan's level of preparedness for an armed conflict. One such example is Beijing's ever-expanding military budget. Official Chinese military expenditures are based on an annually published budget that provides for personnel, training & maintenance, and equipment across all aspects of the PLA.¹¹⁹ The authenticity of these official figures is debated by professional thinktanks and watchdog organizations, who suggest that these figures are deflated, and the PRC spends even more than officially claimed.¹²⁰ Figure 2, which shows official estimates of Chinese defense spending compared to SIPRI estimates, highlights this.

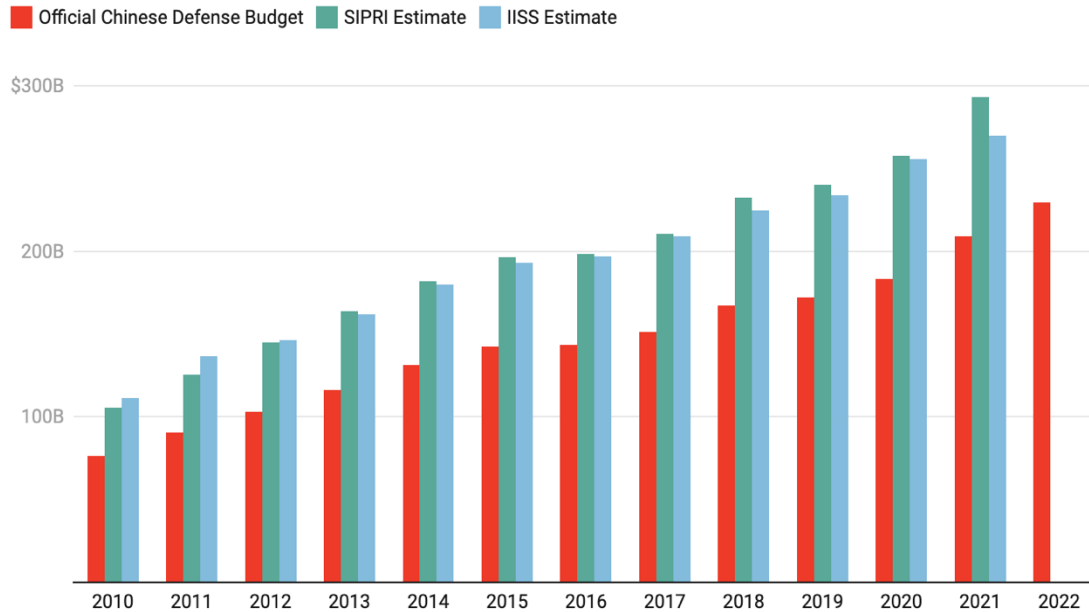
¹¹⁸ Zack Cooper, "Parsing Differing U.S. Views on Japan's Approach to China," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 26, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/01/26/parsing-differing-u.s.-views-on-japan-s-approach-to-china-pub-83708>; Alessio Patalano, "What Is China's Strategy in the Senkaku Islands?," *War on the Rocks* (blog), September 10, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/what-is-chinas-strategy-in-the-senkaku-islands/>; Basu, "Securing Japan from Chinese 'Predatory Economics,'" *The Diplomat*, July 17, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/securing-japan-from-chinese-predatory-economics/>.

¹¹⁹ "What Does China Really Spend on Its Military?," ChinaPower Project at CSIS, December 28, 2015, <https://chinapower.csis.org/military-spending/>.

¹²⁰ ChinaPower Project at CSIS.

Estimates of Chinese Defense Spending

Billions of current US\$



Source: CSIS China Power Project; Chinese Central Government; SIPRI; IISS

Figure 2. Estimates of Chinese Defense Spending ¹²¹

Furthermore, while China's most recent military spending figures pale in comparison to the United States' (\$270 billion vs. \$767 billion in 2021, respectively), it eclipses Japan's spending (\$55 billion) by a factor of almost five to one.¹²² China's larger military expenditure (compared to Japan) is especially intimidating because it has risen almost every year by several percent, at a minimum, while Japan's military expenditure has hovered around 1% of GDP throughout the 21st century due to various limitations outlined in the previous section. Even more alarming for Japan is that China's defense spending has decreased relative to its growing GDP, despite a constant increase in the actual amount of money spent on building the PLA.¹²³ The enormous size and scope of the Chinese economy suggests that, if truly pushed, the CCP could increase military

¹²¹ Source: ChinaPower Project at CSIS.

¹²² ChinaPower Project at CSIS.

¹²³ ChinaPower Project at CSIS.

spending even further. Figure 3 illustrates this by showing Japanese and Chinese military expenditures over the 21st century,

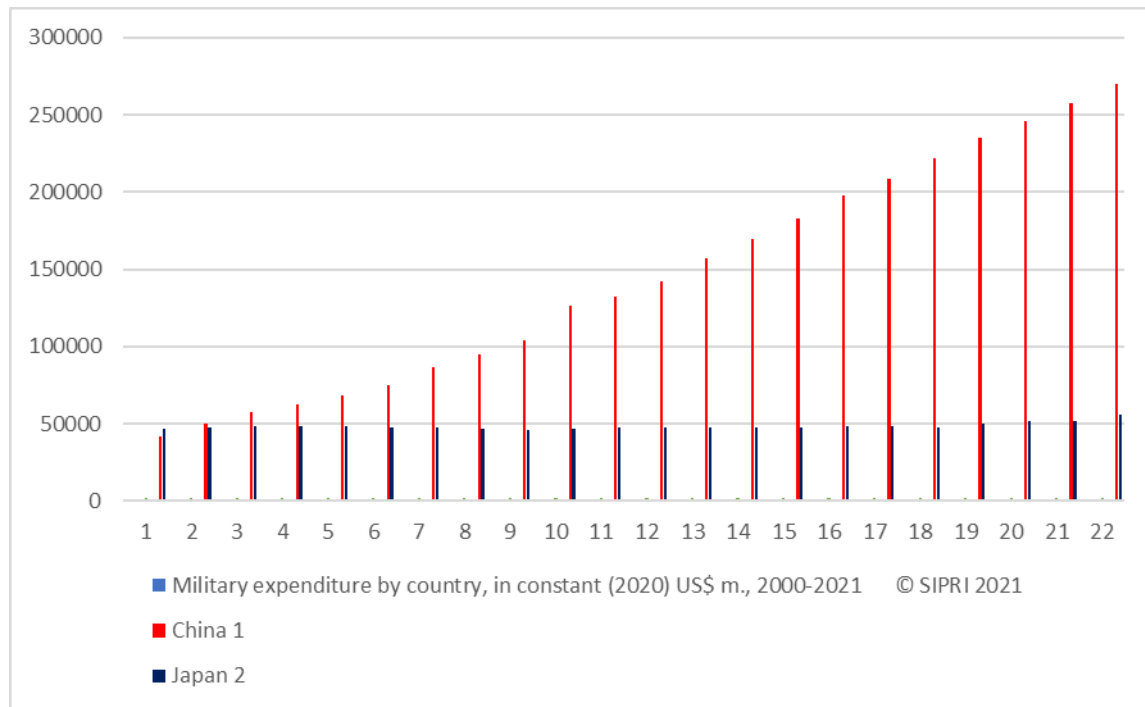


Figure 3. Military Expenditures of China (red) and Japan (blue), 2000–2022, in U.S. millions¹²⁴

The impact of this increased military spending can be seen in the high-end R&D that has produced a modernized PLA capable of seriously threatening the Japanese military. This is codified in the Japanese MOD’s 2018 “National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG),” which acknowledges the development of two significant themes in modern warfare. One, that China is developing military technologies to dominate all aspects of warfare. Naval developments in the PLA(N) support this and suggest that the PRC intends to field a top-quality fleet that could pose a notable threat to any adversaries. These improvements can be seen in the developments of adequate logistics, training, and maintenance; the build-up of 355 ships, submarines, aircraft carriers, and amphibious ships,

¹²⁴ Adapted from “SIPRI Military Expenditure Database,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022, <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>.

with the intent to have a 460 ship fleet by 2030; and the increase of sophisticated anti-ship cruise missiles and ballistic missiles (ASCMs/ASBMs).¹²⁵ Furthermore, the quality of these increasingly sophisticated warships (Luyang-III class destroyers, Type 001 aircraft carriers), amphibious landing ships (Yushen class Type-075), and stealth submarines (Yuan class) suggests that the PRC is attempting to develop combat systems capable of defeating Japanese forces equipped with American arms (e.g. AEGIS ships).¹²⁶

Additional examples include “game-changing technologies” like vast inventories of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), launched from sea, land, or air, that could strike the Japanese homeland; artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that exponentially complicate electronic and cyber warfare; and hypersonic weaponry that outmatches current Japanese and U.S. air defense capabilities.¹²⁷ Organizationally, modernization efforts that have produced the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF), the cyber and space-focused PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF), and Joint Logistics Support Force (LJSF) have generated concerns that the motives behind China’s developments are not in keeping with self-defense or regional peacekeeping.¹²⁸

The implications of the PLA’s military developments suggest that Chinese military ambitions are focused on severely degrading the mobility and effectiveness of Japan’s military forces. MOD officials acknowledge that the improved military bureaucracy, technologies, and expenditure provides the PLA with a variety of tactical options that challenge Japanese capabilities. For example, an “Anti-Access/Area Denial” (A2/AD) scheme of maneuver leverages military hard power (ships, planes, missiles) and military soft power (cyber, electronic warfare) to deny foreign militaries’ access to a given area, as

¹²⁵ Ronald Rourke, “China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress” (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, March 8, 2022), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/RL33153.pdf>.

¹²⁶ Kishi Nobuo, “On the Publication of Defense of Japan 2022” (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2022), 70–75, https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022_EN_Full_02.pdf; Sydney J. Freedberg Jr, “Chinese Missiles Can Wipe Out U.S. Bases In Japan: Aegis, THAAD Can Stop Em,” *Breaking Defense* (blog), June 28, 2017, <https://breakingdefense.com/2017/06/chinese-missiles-can-wipe-out-us-bases-in-japan-aegis-thaad-can-stop-em/>.

¹²⁷ Nobuo, “On the Publication of Defense of Japan 2022,” 10.

¹²⁸ Nobuo, 34.

well as disrupting a state's ability to operate in and around an area of Chinese interest.¹²⁹ Another disruptive tactic, the employment of extensive military over-the-horizon backscatter radars (OTH-B) via the PLAAF Skywave Brigades, significantly complicates Japanese and American operations in the East China Sea (ECS) and South China Sea (SCS) due to their continuous monitoring by Chinese forces.¹³⁰ As such, Japanese forces operating in and around the home islands would be forced to expect that they are under surveillance, in a constant threat environment, and potentially outgunned.

Economically, modern China holds significant power with regards to shaping Japan's view of the Indo-Pacific. Commercially, the two countries have a dualistic approach that reinforces a competitive-yet-tolerant environment: although both states rely upon one another as trade partners, Japan retains concerns over China's hegemonic ambitions. One notable example is the growth in trade between the two states: amidst concerns about a growing dependence on PRC markets, Japanese exports to China steadily hovered between 17 percent to 19 percent (of total exports) over the 2010s, and culminated in China consumption accounting for 22 percent of all exports in 2020, surpassing the U.S.' 18.4 percent.¹³¹ Both states actively participate in organizations that encourage commercial solidarity and Indo-Pacific trade between members, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).¹³² Furthermore, Japan has been perceived as working (to some degree) on maintaining an economic balance between the Chinese-U.S. rivalry. While it has publicly shifted itself towards closer security cooperation with the United

¹²⁹ Japanese Ministry of Defense, "Japanese National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2019 and Beyond," 3–5.

¹³⁰ Mark Stokes, "China's Air Defense Identification System: The Role of PLA Air Surveillance" (May 5th, 2014; Project 2049, n.d.), https://project2049.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Stokes_China_Air_Defense_Identification_System_PLA_Air_Surveillance.pdf.

¹³¹ "China Passes U.S. as Top Japanese Export Buyer, Topping 20%," Nikkei Asia, January 22, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Trade/China-passes-US-as-top-Japanese-export-buyer-topping-20>.

¹³² Alexander Blamberg, "Japan Joins Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership" (USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, November 19, 2020), <https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/japan-japan-joins-regional-comprehensive-economic-partnership>.

States and away from China, Tokyo simultaneously recognizes the importance of the economic status quo and maintaining access to PRC markets.¹³³

In light of Japan's perceived importance on retaining commercial access to China, a sense of competition exists and links itself to Japan's defense buildup. Like Washington, D.C., Tokyo views Chinese commercial developments as plays for regional leadership at the expense of Japan. This is best exemplified by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which triggers fears that China is attempting to win over other Indo-Pacific states to its side by offering a "win-win" scenario to participants.¹³⁴ As the cornerstone of Chinese foreign policy, its successful completion would theoretically provide China unparalleled influence and access to markets and ports around the world, as well as provide participants untapped wealth and commercial prosperity.¹³⁵ Indirectly, its success would likely rob Japan of any claim to regional leadership and lend support for a revised, Chinese-led international order.

While the potential impact of Sino-Japanese trade relations and BRI is beyond scope of this thesis, their impact on Japan's understanding of security cannot be underestimated. The island state has repeatedly emphasized its desire for China to work within the current U.S.-led international system via bilateral negotiations, dialogue, and discussion.¹³⁶ As a "stability seeker," Japan perceives that its self-interests are best suited towards cultivating an environment that avoids any radical shifts in defense thinking and spending: China's efforts to upset the international order fuel perceptions that Japan must prepare itself for defense, economically and otherwise.¹³⁷ Although the full scope of Beijing's military developments is beyond this thesis, the purpose of its inclusion is to show that Japan is correct in appreciating the severity and complexity imposed by Chinese

¹³³ Catherine Putz, "The Art of the Balance: Japan, China and the United States," *The Diplomat*, January 30, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/the-art-of-the-balance-japan-china-and-the-united-states/>.

¹³⁴ Joe Tien, "Balancing Rivalry and Cooperation: Japan's Response to the BRI in Southeast Asia," *E-International Relations* (blog), June 20, 2022, <https://www.e-ir.info/2022/06/20/balancing-rivalry-and-cooperation-japans-response-to-the-bri-in-southeast-asia/>.

¹³⁵ Tien.

¹³⁶ Ryo Sahashi, "Japan's Strategy amid US-China Confrontation," *China International Strategy Review* 2, no. 2 (December 2020): 236, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-020-00061-9>.

¹³⁷ Sahashi, 236–40.

military advances. The challenges imposed by the PLA have built an environment that all but demands Japan adequately prepare itself for conflict, whether it happens or not. By pursuing more advanced weaponry and purchasing American arms, Tokyo can begin to address the asymmetric nature of the PRC-Japan relationship and work to achieve some level of parity.

The fears and anxieties provoked by PRC influence and might have encouraged Japanese policymakers to focus on expanding defensive capabilities. Japanese leaders perceive this policy as an appropriate response to the “increasing uncertainty over the existing order.”¹³⁸ Since the early 2010s, Japan has increased its yearly acquisitions budget for U.S. arms, growing from \$205 million USD in 2012 to \$724 million USD in 2020.¹³⁹ Under the current prime minister, proposals for doubling annual defense spending are gaining political traction, despite a lack of public budget planning.¹⁴⁰ Most notably, from 2020–2021 the MOD had \$22.1 billion USD worth of open defense procurement contracts between the two governments, and clearly pursues technologies intended to counter PLA advancements.¹⁴¹ For example, within the realm of missile defense and in response to the challenges imposed by the PLARF’s large inventory of missiles, the MOD has actively procured BMD-capable missiles (70+ SM-3 interceptors at \$4 billion USD); four AEGIS warships (\$8.27 billion USD each) that could employ SM-3s; and over a dozen BMD-oriented, ground-based radars (FPS-5) valued at over \$90 million USD each.¹⁴² Combined, these technologies provide some level of deterrence against missile employment towards both the Japanese homeland and JSDF forces.

¹³⁸ Japanese Ministry of Defense, “Japanese National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2019 and Beyond,” 3.

¹³⁹ SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, “Arms Imports (SIPRI Trend Indicator Values) – Japan.”

¹⁴⁰ Mari Yamaguchi, “Japan, Seeking Arms Buildup, Makes Opaque Budget Request,” AP News, August 31, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-taiwan-biden-technology-japan-4175c479cd3a6dffa0216f0ec70d782>.

¹⁴¹ Jeffrey W. Hornung, Japan’s Potential Contributions in an East China Sea Contingency (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2020), 55.

¹⁴² Reuters, “Japan’s New Aegis Ships to Cost at Least 900 Bln Yen-Asahi,” *Reuters*, May 21, 2021, sec. Aerospace & Defense, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/japans-new-aegis-ships-cost-least-900-bln-yen-asahi-2021-05-21/>; “Mitsubishi Wins Contract to Sell Air Radar System to Philippines | The Asahi Shimbun: Breaking News, Japan News and Analysis,” *The Asahi Shimbun*, accessed September 28, 2022, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13247035>.

To address concerns of PLA air and radar dominance, between 2020–2022 Japan has heavily pursued the acquisition of almost 150 F-35 Lighting II aircraft (the first 105 sold for \$23 billion USD) in order to mobilize the platform’s well-touted stealth capabilities towards overmatching its PRC counterparts.¹⁴³ Support aircraft, such as airborne early warning (nine E-2D, valued at \$180 million USD each) and aerial refueling aircraft (four KC-46A, valued at \$172 million each) have been procured to some degree.¹⁴⁴ Concurrently, associated purchases such as munitions air-to-air missiles (\$293 million USD in 2021), support equipment, and missile guidance systems have also been purchased in bulk to provide adequate opportunities for training and use.¹⁴⁵ Ground based forces have notably benefitted from the acquisition of the V-22 Osprey (valued at \$67 million each).¹⁴⁶ Additionally, modernization costs have played a role in Japanese arms acquisitions. Within the realm of FMS, Japanese purchase, such as computer upgrades or enhancements, come with “parts, training, and logistics support.”¹⁴⁷ These acquisitions have largely originated from the need to maintain maximum capability of ships, planes, and other combat equipment, as well as to build proficiency in Japanese aircrews, maintenance personnel, and associated technical support. In turn, the modernized air forces directly provide Japan the opportunity to build interoperability with other F-35 operators, hone battlefield management skills via the E-2, and successfully ensure ground forces are employed in strategic environments via the V-22.

¹⁴³ Valerie Insinna, “US Gives the Green Light to Japan’s \$23B F-35 Buy,” Defense News, July 10, 2020, <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/2020/07/09/us-gives-the-green-light-to-japans-massive-23b-f-35-buy/>.

¹⁴⁴ Nobuo, “On the Publication of Defense of Japan 2022,” 206.

¹⁴⁵ “Japan – AIM-120C-7/8 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAMs),” Defense Security Cooperation Agency, July 25, 2022, <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/japan-aim-120c-78-advanced-medium-range-air-air-missiles-amraams>.

¹⁴⁶ Nobuo, “On the Publication of Defense of Japan 2022,” 465.

¹⁴⁷ “Japan-Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) Mission Computing Upgrade (MCU),” Defense Security Cooperation Agency, September 26, 2013, <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/japan-airborne-warning-and-control-system-awacs-mission-computing>.

E. CONCLUSION

Japan's 21st century arms acquisitions are a crucial factor in the country's overall defense strategy and are substantially influenced by a variety of factors. Domestic considerations such as antimilitarism and an opposition to increased defense spending endure as fundamental ideals within Japanese defense thinking. These factors are powerful enough to offer resistance towards military expansion, curtailed budget growth, and a sluggish domestic arms industry. It is apparent that by themselves, these factors have been more than capable of influencing 21st century arms acquisitions to remain at their current level. These notable domestic drivers play a substantial role in shaping national defense thinking and will continue to exert some level of influence on how Japan thinks about arms purchases.

However limiting the role that domestic factors have played in shaping arms acquisitions, this chapter has shown that external factors exert themselves and overpower the state's reluctance towards buying arms. This is exemplified by the U.S.–Japan alliance, which primarily acts as motivating element for increasing arms acquisitions via access to American arms markets, as well as the ongoing bilateral dialogue that has seen the United States encourage JSDF expansion. American support for a stronger Japan has stimulated arms purchases, as well as Japanese inclusion into defense cooperation dialogues in the region. Compounding the U.S. influence is the doubt and unease surrounding the PRC's intentions and actions, which have so far offered the best justification for expanding Japanese acquisitions. China's increased defense spending, military activities, and aggressive dialogue have stirred up enough controversy among both Japanese and American policymakers to the point where constitutional revision, military normalization, and deterrence—particularly through arms buildup and intermilitary cooperation—has begun to reorient Japan towards building stronger defense forces. Over time, these external factors might continue to direct Japan towards becoming more comfortable with greater defense spending, overriding the ingrained antimilitarism ideology, and taking bolder steps to deter external threats.

III. DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DRIVERS BEHIND TAIWANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS

Taiwan's 21st century arms acquisitions are influenced by the state's international position and domestic environment. In a similar vein to Japan, who has historically relied upon the United States as a patron for arms, defensive technologies, and security, Taiwan relies mostly on an import-based, U.S.-origin arms strategy in order to meet its needs. From 2000–2016, the chosen time period for this analysis, over 90% of Taiwan's arms purchases have originated from the United States, while accounting for 3.61% of total U.S. arms exports during the same period.¹⁴⁸ Taiwan's arms acquisitions are largely driven by the neighboring PRC, with whom it has had a decades-long relationship. This relationship can be characterized by periods of cordiality, positive economic relations, and cultural exchange one hand, and a of political disagreements, mutual distrust, and conflict on the other.¹⁴⁹ Its relationship with China is unique in that Taiwan's status (from the PRC's perspective) as a separatist state invokes extremely sensitive political challenges and significant levels of frustration regarding Cross-Strait relations. "The Taiwan Question," or how China will deal with the island's *de facto* independence, generates unique considerations for evaluating the arms acquisitions that are vital to national security.

Numerous motives support Taiwan's enthusiasm for defensive technologies. Geopolitically, Taiwan's continued existence as a separate state outside of PRC control remains an ongoing source of yet-unresolved tension. Harkening back to the KMT's exodus to the island after the Chinese Civil War, the establishment of a KMT-led government-in-exile, and its claim as "the sole legitimate government of all China," a

¹⁴⁸ "TIV of Arms Exports from the United States, 2000–2021," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, n.d., https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php; "TIV of Arms Imports to Taiwan, 2000–2021," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, accessed November 12, 2022, https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php.

¹⁴⁹ Scott L. Kastner, "Ambiguity, Economic Interdependence, and the U.S. Strategic Dilemma in the Taiwan Strait," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 49 (November 1, 2006): 651–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560600836705>. Referencing the First, Second, and Third Cross-Strait Crises between the PRC and ROC

natural enmity between the two states has existed for over 70 years.¹⁵⁰ Despite the CCP-led government's recognition by the U.N. and most states as China's sole legitimate representative, the Chinese Communist Party considers Taiwan a lingering, unresolved challenge to its own authority and claims of sovereignty. These frustrations have culminated in four separate Cross-Strait crises; an incredible build-up of the People's Liberation Army and the employment of these forces (within the 21st century) to coerce, intimidate, and test the resolve of the Taiwanese government.¹⁵¹ While the CCP has not yet committed itself to an armed invasion of Taiwan to "correct" Taiwan's separatist status, its immense military buildup and the threat of invasion has given Taipei ample reason to fear this possibility. As such, the development of a sophisticated, modern arms arsenal is a top priority.

In addition to its Cross-Strait challenges, Taiwanese arms acquisitions are crucial to the state's efforts to maintain its lifeline with the United States. Washington's historic commitment to Taiwan have centered around arms sales. Despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations, the United States has a security partnership with Taiwan via the Taiwan Relations Act that commits Washington to both continuously provide arms to Taipei, and to maintain its own military capabilities in order to ensure Taiwan has the ability to peacefully resolve its issues with China.¹⁵² This security relationship has contributed to Taiwan's *de facto* independence by deterring PRC aggression, promoting peaceful dialogue as an alternative to military coercion, and solidifying Taiwanese military might. Although the U.S.–Taiwan relationship is increasingly characterized by disagreements over what arms (and strategies) the ROC Armed Forces (ROCAF) should pursue, few could argue against the idea that Taiwan's arms acquisitions strategy is a crucial element to the U.S.–Taiwan relationship.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Susan V. Lawrence, "Taiwan: Political and Security Issues," *Congressional Research Service* IF10275 (November 29, 2021): 3.

¹⁵¹ Joel Wuthnow et al., eds., *Crossing the Strait: China's Military Prepares for War with Taiwan* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2022), 88.

¹⁵² "Public Law 96-8, the Taiwan Relations Act."

¹⁵³ A. Trevor Thrall, Jordan B. Cohen, and Michael Klare, "New Arms Sales Send the Wrong Signal on Taiwan," *Defense News*, August 17, 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2021/08/17/new-arms-sales-send-the-wrong-signal-on-taiwan/>.

In addition to U.S. influence on Taiwanese arms acquisitions, the island's domestic environment complicates the state's drive to acquire arms. As a democratically elected government, Taipei must balance calls for increased defense spending with the competing interests of "constituents, political parties, and different branches of government."¹⁵⁴ While its representative system emphasizes democratic virtues and plays a key part in maintaining the strength of the U.S.–Taiwan relationship, it notably detracts from the state's ability or willingness to completely commit itself to defense matters. Taiwanese politicians must work much harder to consolidate support for defense spending and increasingly expensive arms purchases while also addressing civilian concerns, such as social services, healthcare, and economic development. As discussed in Section 2, Taiwan's history of 21st century arms acquisitions were notably influenced by both civilian constituents and political parties.

Further expanding on politics, Taiwan's domestic political parties play a polarizing role in defense spending and arms acquisitions. The two main groups—the KMT party and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)—hold contrasting values, opinions, and approaches to dealing with China and Taiwan's overall defensive strategy. Given that these two groups have traded the presidency between one another within the 21st century, modern Taiwan has naturally struggled to maintain a clear and coherent strategy towards the U.S.–Taiwan relationship, Cross-Strait relations, and arms acquisitions. This can be felt in Taipei's status as number 21 of the top 25 arms importers (in millions of USD) from 2000–2016, behind the likes of countries with less urgent defense situations like Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia.¹⁵⁵

In terms of public perception, the attitudes towards increased defense spending and arms acquisitions are characterized by a perceived lack of urgency. A variety of factors, ranging from economic interdependence to cultural unity, have cushioned many Taiwanese into accepting a relaxed sense of security. Despite the increased pressure from the mainland

¹⁵⁴ Steven Li, "Why So Little? The Curious Case of Taiwan's Defense Spending" (Thesis, University of Washington, 2020), 17, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu:443/researchworks/handle/1773/46343>.

¹⁵⁵ "TIV of Arms Imports to the Top 25 Largest Importers, 2000–2021," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2021, https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_toplist.php.

over the last decade, to include military buildup, threatening “gray zone” military tactics and inflammatory anti-Taiwanese media rhetoric, the civilian threat perception of Cross-Strait conflict is surprisingly hopeful. In a 2021 survey, approximately 57.9% of surveyed Taiwanese believe that China will ultimately not use force to unify Taiwan, while nearly 60% believe that the United States would intervene militarily in the event China invades the island.¹⁵⁶ These optimistic numbers contribute to the popular idea that proposed funds for defense spending might be better spent elsewhere, and that public attitudes place a great confidence in a continued status quo. Accordingly, public perception plays a role in shaping arms acquisitions by somewhat encouraging the idea that a status quo shift is unlikely: therefore, arms acquisitions and defense matters might take secondary precedence behind other matters of state.

The consequences of these geopolitical, domestic, and public perception drivers are that Taiwan is motivated to purchase arms, albeit with consideration for increasingly complex international and domestic environments. Given the urgency of its geopolitical situation, this chapter reviews and analyzes the various drivers that shape Taiwan’s arms acquisitions strategy. It first reviews the ROCAF defense strategy and a summary of arms acquisitions from 2000 to 2016. Next, it discusses the U.S.–ROC relationship and Taiwan’s international position. It then examines the influence of the domestic government, as well as the role of public perception among Taiwanese citizens.

This chapter determines that Taiwan’s arms acquisitions are both aided and hindered by various drivers, and external factors better incentivize arms acquisitions when compared to domestic factors. Some external factors, such those discussed in Section A and B—the nature of Cross-Strait relations and the U.S.–ROC relationship—generate support for arms sales. This is due to the instilled necessity in providing for the defense of the island, the legal agreements within the U.S. that ensure arms sales to Taiwan, and the fears of forceful reunification. However, international challenges such as the Global War on Terrorism and the 2008 Financial Crisis have shown that arms acquisitions can be

¹⁵⁶ Shuren Koo and Peihua Lu, “Should Taiwan Put Its Future in U.S. Hands?,” *Commonwealth Magazine*, January 13, 2022, <https://english.cw.com.tw/article/article.action?id=3161>.

impeded and that external factors do not exclusively aid arms acquisitions. challenge the ROC's aspirations.

Regarding domestic factors, Sections C, D, and E offer insight into the role of party politics, leadership changes between presidential administrations, and civilian perceptions. These sections show how arms acquisitions between 2000–2016 have been influenced and highlight how the country is able to spend its limited defense budget, and to what end domestic factors have shaped these acquisitions. This chapter finds that, while it is universally acknowledged that Taiwan needs to dedicate funding towards security, opinions differ regarding how defense expenditures can best maintain the island's *de facto* independence. As such, domestic factors largely play a role in restricting arms acquisitions, while international factors—such as U.S. alliance and the Chinese mainland—continue to encourage them.

A. TAIWAN'S OVERALL DEFENSE STRATEGY AND ARMS PURCHASES

1. Overview of Taiwan's Defense Strategy

Taiwan's overall defense strategy aligns with the National Defense Report (NDR), a Ministry of National Defense (MND) publication that provides a comprehensive look at the threat perceptions, policies, and combat readiness of the ROC Armed Forces. The most recent iteration (released in 2021) continues the policies of its predecessors by articulating that the ROCAF's main goal is cultivating an “all-out defense aimed at preventing war.”¹⁵⁷ Within this report, several basic premises are established that provide insight into the ROCAF's outlook.

First, regarding threat perception, the ROCAF continues to expound that Taiwan is a beacon of democracy in the Indo-Pacific; that the PRC is a revisionist power seeking to upset the international security order; and that PLA aggression towards Taiwan undermines regional and global security. It recognizes that the increased use of threatening “gray zone” tactics has amplified security concerns in the region. These include PLA-led violations of

¹⁵⁷ Ministry of National Defense, “Taiwan National Defense Report 2021” (Taiwan: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of China (Taiwan), 2021), 8, <https://www.ustaiwandefense.com/tdnswp/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Taiwan-National-Defense-Report-2021.pdf>.

Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), military exercises conducted close to Taiwanese waters, and overt attempts to intimidate Taiwan via simulated offensive operations against mockup Taiwanese bases.¹⁵⁸ Outside of the military realm, efforts in “cognitive warfare,” or the continuous attempts to force the ROC to accept its political requests, have become more common. Beijing's anti-Taiwanese propaganda, extensive media employment, and economic leverage have been sufficiently raised concerns that the mainland is escalating its attempts to intimidate Taiwan via all means of its national power.¹⁵⁹ Although Taiwan has justifiably perceived China as its enemy since the state's foundation, the ROCAF threat perception logically recognizes that the combined might of PLA forces vastly exceeds that of Taiwan's, which drives the island to seek technologies (e.g., arms) that can balance the asymmetric relationship.

Second, the NDR articulates the current and future defense policies as set forth by the President, National Security Council, and MND.¹⁶⁰ It prioritizes building a flexible force structure that emphasizes a combat-ready active-duty component, a large reserve force, and access to the most modern equipment and arms available. Due to the last point, defense spending policies not dedicated to personnel and logistics are dedicated towards arms acquisitions and procurement, which has declined over time. Approximately 25.7% of the total MND budget (\$2.99 billion USD) is dedicated towards military hardware, both in developing indigenous capabilities and purchasing arms.¹⁶¹ Befitting the “whole-of-society” approach, all arms acquisitions are prioritized by their contributions to a joint fighting construct, which is considered crucial for the island's defense.

Although the NDR specifically allocates towards a portion of its defense policy discussion towards importance of indigenous arms production, the report deeply acknowledges the importance of Taiwan-U.S. military technology exchange. While the “major endeavors for force buildup” will be discussed in further detail in the next section,

¹⁵⁸ Ministry of National Defense, 45.

¹⁵⁹ Ministry of National Defense, 46–50.

¹⁶⁰ Ministry of National Defense, 62.

¹⁶¹ Ministry of National Defense, 133.

it is apparent that the MND arms acquisitions strategy favors a force built around arms that mainly support conventional strategies (tanks, ships, planes) with some acknowledgement of unconventional (sea mines, coastal defense missiles, drones) strategies.

Finally, the MND has made it clear that it overwhelmingly favors building and training a force that will engage adversaries in a symmetric, force-versus-force approach. Its long-term emphasis on requesting and procuring expensive and sophisticated arms from the American government, vice massive amounts of cheaper, simpler weaponry, offers several justifications. First, its military institution considers itself capable of successfully waging a war with the PRC, as long as its arsenal is filled with modern equipment.¹⁶² Second, its history of purchasing U.S.-made products reveals that Taiwanese defense planners intend to incorporate the U.S. into the defense of the island: signals from Washington, such as the currently debated Taiwan Deterrence Act, encourage Taipei that the U.S. government and military are preparing for the possibility of military intervention.¹⁶³ Third, the preference for high-profile purchases is likely perceived as a stronger confidence and morale builder when compared to less visible displays of military might (e.g., sea mines).

Though the aforementioned argument suggests that Taiwan is overly invested in a conventional approach to warfare, the island state has adjusted its arms approach over the 21st century due to evolving security challenges in the international system. Although the scope of this discussion falls outside of the 2000–2016 time frame of this chapter, more recent events—such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the 2022 Nancy Pelosi visit to Taiwan—have notable implications that will be discussed in the conclusion to this thesis.

In essence, Taiwan’s strategy relies on sustaining a defensive approach, arming itself in a conventional manner, and encouraging the U.S. to continue to provide support via arms and possible military intervention. While relatively recent events have offered

¹⁶² Rachel Oswald, “Taiwan’s Military Needs Overhaul Amid China Threat, Critics Say,” Pulitzer Center, September 28, 2022, <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/taiwans-military-needs-overhaul-amid-china-threat-critics-say>.

¹⁶³ James E. Risch, “Taiwan Deterrence Act,” Pub. L. No. S.3192 (2021), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/3192/text>.

initiatives for change, the island's arms purchases and strategy are largely aligned with building and sustaining forces that are similar to the U.S. and modern states. To do this, Taiwan has extensively engaged in arms purchases over the 21st century, which will be covered in the next section.

B. U.S.–ROC HISTORIC RELATIONSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON ARMS SALES

The conclusion of the Chinese Civil War led to the establishment of some of the main actors, power dynamics, and relationships in modern East Asia. Mao's victory in the Chinese Civil War led to the establishment of a Communist-led government on mainland China and a Taiwanese government-in-exile under the KMT. Recognizing that the continued survival of their wartime adversaries would pose a continuous risk to the legitimacy of the fledgling nation, military leaders under Mao Zedong prepared to invade early as June 1949 (prior to the formal foundation of the PRC, October 1949).¹⁶⁴ These plans were derailed by the outbreak of the Korean War, which drew both China and the United States into its fold, as well as the 1950 deployment of the U.S. Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait in order to deter any Cross-Strait invasion into Taiwan.¹⁶⁵

Recognizing the ROC's anti-Communist stance and desiring to strengthen U.S. allies in the region, U.S. President Truman initiated a long-standing, multi-faceted relationship with the ROC. Aside from deterrence via U.S. maritime forces, Truman (and later presidents) endeavored to arm the Taiwanese in order to shift some of the defense burden to the government-in-exile. Arms sales started occurring as early as 1954 in the form of aircraft (F-86 Sabres), missiles (Sidewinders) and conventional small arms, as well as training and logistic support via U.S.-based troops on Taiwan.¹⁶⁶ Politically, a 1954 mutual defense treaty guaranteed U.S. military, economic, and political support in the event Taiwan itself was attacked, while unofficially drawing Taiwan under the U.S. nuclear

¹⁶⁴ Ian Easton, *The Chinese Invasion Threat: Taiwan's Defense and American Strategy in Asia* (Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, 2017), 41.

¹⁶⁵ Easton, 41–42.

¹⁶⁶ Easton, 59–61.

umbrella.¹⁶⁷ Washington also bolstered engagement with Taiwan by endorsing Taiwan's membership on the U.N. Security Council until 1971, promoted commercial trade between the two states, and ensured that Taiwan would have access to the U.S. defense industry's products via arms sales. Various pieces of legislation, such as the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Communiques have enhanced the significance of arms sale promises and have guaranteed their continuity up until the modern day.¹⁶⁸

From the onset of the 21st century, Taipei's relationship with the U.S. has continued to ensure several lines of effort. First, defense technology cooperation remains a pillar of U.S.–ROC interaction, despite previously mentioned challenges. Cooperation contributes towards building and maintaining a status quo of deterrence between the PRC and ROC, reinforcing U.S. foreign policy from the 20th century, and enable the U.S. to maintain its long-term commitments to a crucial non-treaty partner. First, these efforts support Taiwan's will to neither capitulate under PRC pressure for “One Country, Two Systems”—the primary deal offered for a peaceful reunification—nor to offer an easy target for invasion and enable the state to maintain *de facto* independence from mainland China.¹⁶⁹ Second, arms sales also guarantee that the U.S. remains invested in not only securing Taiwan, but also securing American interests in Indo-Pacific security matters. By choosing to continuously engagement in armament talks with Taiwan, Washington demonstrates that, despite the growing complexities of PRC military modernization and expansion, the U.S. is still committed to aiding its partners in a disputed region.

Third, the U.S.–Taiwan security partnership near-single handedly sustains the island's defense capabilities and remains the only viable option for Taiwanese policymakers. According to SIPRI, only four countries (France, Germany, Israel, Italy) besides the U.S. sold arms to Taiwan between 2000–2016, and even then made their arms

¹⁶⁷ Easton, 60–63.

¹⁶⁸ Easton, 12.

¹⁶⁹ Ben Blanchard, “China Fears Taiwan's Democracy the Most, Island's President Says in Election Pitch,” *Reuters*, December 18, 2019, sec. Emerging Markets, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-election-idUSKBN1YM1M3>.

available in sporadic, infrequent deals.¹⁷⁰ The fear of political and economic backlash from China, as well as concerns over a perception of European escalation in Cross-Strait relations (e.g., the E.U. adopting a similar stance to the U.S.) has largely stalemated arms sales outside the U.S.–Taiwan partnership.¹⁷¹ As such, Taiwan engages with the United States not only due to its expansive arms industry, but also because it has no other choice. From Taipei’s perspective, the continued existence of the state overwhelmingly depends on U.S. cooperation and engagement.

Notwithstanding its long-standing relationship with the United States, Taiwan’s unique international status overwhelmingly drives it towards U.S. arms sales out of sheer necessity. In all aspects, Taiwan has made efforts to bolster its international standing and inclusiveness within the international order. For example, it has official embassies or unofficial diplomatic missions within countries on every continent except for Antarctica; maintains permanent missions to various institutions like the European Union and the World Trade Organization; and participates in global efforts for various causes like anti-piracy, Covid-19 aid, and disaster assistance.¹⁷² Fueled by Taipei’s desire to achieve normalcy and legitimacy within the international order, these efforts have been largely ineffective in an official diplomatic context: only 13 states have recognized Taiwanese sovereignty, and of that small portion only two have come to recognize Taipei within the 21st century.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ “TIV of Arms Imports to Taiwan, 2000–2021.”

¹⁷¹ Oliver Bräuner, “How Europe Shies from Taiwan,” *The Diplomat*, March 20, 2012, <https://thediplomat.com/2012/03/how-europe-shies-from-taiwan/>.

¹⁷² “Taiwan Raises WTO Complaint against China in Fruit Dispute | Reuters,” accessed November 13, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/business/taiwan-raises-wto-complaint-against-china-apple-imports-sources-2021-11-04/>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs China (Taiwan) Republic of, “Taiwan, EU Beef up Anti-Piracy Cooperation,” website, Taiwan Today (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), February 15, 2012), <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=2&post=2219>; Editor, “Taiwan’s Contribution to a More Resilient Global Society,” *Taiwan Insight* (blog), October 21, 2020, <https://taiwaninsight.org/2020/10/21/taiwans-contribution-to-a-more-resilient-global-society/>; Alain Guilloux, “Taiwan’s Humanitarian Aid/Disaster Relief: Wither or Prosper?,” *Brookings* (blog), August 9, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/taiwans-humanitarian-aiddisaster-relief-wither-or-prosper/>.

¹⁷³ “Countries That Recognize Taiwan,” *World Population Review*, April 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-that-recognize-taiwan>.

Accordingly, Taiwan's defense needs have largely been met by the United States due to its difficult geopolitical position. Taiwan's efforts to alleviate its reliance on the U.S.' defense technology industry has had limited success. For example, the early 2000s saw the Ministry of National Defense make allegations towards French defense companies, whom they had been in negotiations over arms sales, and accuse them of bribery and criminal misconduct. Investigations by the French government verified these claims, resulting in multiple French arms companies paying the Taiwanese government fines over excessively priced Lafayette-class frigates and Mirage fighter jets (2011), and have soured Taipei's enthusiasm for non-U.S. defense contracts.¹⁷⁴ As recent as 2020, a point when Taiwan-French relations had warmed to a point where negotiations were announced over French arms upgrades, China's subsequent political and economic backlash sufficiently motivated the European state to cease its arms sales to Taiwan.¹⁷⁵ Even U.S. allies and geographic neighbors to Taiwan, such as Australia and Japan, have made relatively little progress in securing arms sales to Taiwan in spite of their strong non-military commercial relationships.¹⁷⁶ Although senior Australian officials, such as former Minister of Defence Peter Dutton (2021-2022) have suggested sending arms to deter the PRC, the lack of forward progress from either U.S. ally indicates that non-U.S. arms sales to Taiwan will not start anytime soon.¹⁷⁷

The examples of France's aborted arms sales to Taiwan and the lack of progress from close proximity U.S. allies are strongly indicative of the challenges Taiwan faces in trying to relieve its reliance on U.S. arms sales. Although Taiwan is eager to diversify its supply chains, corporations and governments alike have shunned openly trading with the

¹⁷⁴ Eric Setzekorn, "Military Reform in Taiwan: The Lafayette Scandal, National Defense Law and All-Volunteer Force," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 21, no. 1 (2014): 7–19; "Thales Pays up in Taiwan Frigate Battle," UPI, accessed November 13, 2022, <https://www.upi.com/Defense-News/2011/07/15/Thales-pays-up-in-Taiwan-frigate-battle/56631310764247/>.

¹⁷⁵ At Contributor, "China Urges France to Scrap Taiwan Arms Deal," *Asia Times*, May 13, 2020, <https://asiatimes.com/2020/05/china-urges-france-to-scrap-taiwan-arms-deal/>.

¹⁷⁶ "The Australia-Taiwan Relationship," Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2022, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/taiwan/australia-taiwan-relationship>.

¹⁷⁷ Henry Belot and JAne Norman, "Peter Dutton Flags Australia Sending Weapons to Taiwan, Acquiring Nuclear Submarines before 2040," *ABC News*, March 6, 2022, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-03-06/peter-dutton-flags-australian-military-support-for-taiwan/100886412>.

island nation in order to avoid the wrath of the PRC. China's powerful influence on the global market, as well as its enthusiasm for bilateral trade agreements (which allow the CCP to exert an asymmetric level of influence on its partners) have made Taiwan a virtual pariah in the international arms community. Taiwan's international position, both in the past and in the future, will continue to be characterized by a reliance on the United States.

C. DRIVERS BEHIND TAIWANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS

1. A Brief History of U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan, 2000–2016

U.S.–Taiwanese arms sales have several distinct phases in accordance with domestic and geopolitical factors. Starting in 2000, during the latter half of the first DPP-led administration since the democratic transition, arms sales continued in a similar manner to those of the 20th century. A notable decline in arms purchases occurred from 2000–early 2003 due to DPP accusations directed towards the U.S. regarding arms extortion and price gouging, which motivated Taiwan to reduce its arms acquisitions budget (discussed in further detail below). By the end of 2003 these frustrations turned towards renewed arms enthusiasm due to an observed buildup in PLA armament, which encouraged Taiwan to arrest its defense budget decline and spend more on arms acquisitions through 2005. From 2006–2008, both partisan opposition and a perceived lack of diligence amongst DPP leaders saw the special budget requests normally used to purchase arms fail, resulting in stagnant arms growth.

In the 2010s KMT era (2008–2016), the election of KMT President Ma Ying-jeou saw the arms budget sluggishly grow due to economic constraints, the Global Financial Crisis, and the heavy expenses incurred to transition the ROCAF to an all-volunteer force. However, this turned around due to an increased threat perception, a highly visible escalation of PLA military buildup, and a renewed dedication due to defense spending. Since 2014, arms purchases have largely declined in value due to various challenges. These include Taiwan's emphasis on military reform and indigenous technology development, delays from U.S. policymakers in approving and finalizing sales, and the outbreak of Covid-19. As illustrated by Figure 4, different eras of 21st century Taiwanese political administrations have spent significantly different figures on U.S. arms.

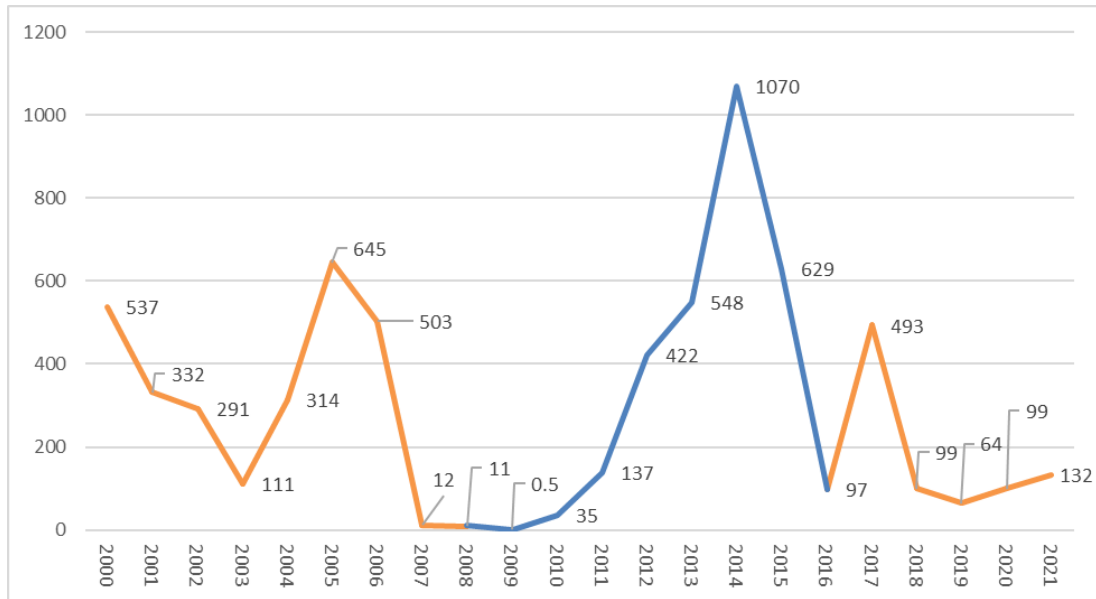


Figure 4. Phases of Taiwanese Arms Sales by Presidential Administration, 2000–2021¹⁷⁸

D. DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DRIVERS BEHIND TAIWANESE ARMS ACQUISITIONS

1. The Influence of Taiwan’s Domestic Environment on Arms and Cross-Strait Relations

Taiwan’s domestic environment adds a complicating layer to arms acquisitions and defense strategy. Self-proclaimed by Tsai Ing-wen as “one of the freest countries in the world,” the benefits of its democratic nature afford peaceful transitions of power, a robust political party system, and a variety of civil liberties.¹⁷⁹ Although democracy has contributed to the richness of the U.S.–Taiwan relationship (as well as a growing Taiwan-Japan relationship), the state’s political system struggles to develop a cohesive, clearly laid

¹⁷⁸ Adapted from “TIV of Arms Exports to Taiwan, 2000–2021,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022, https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php. Note that color symbolizes the ruling administration (yellow for DPP, blue for KMT). Figures in USD millions.

¹⁷⁹ “Taiwan: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report,” Freedom House, 2022, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/taiwan/freedom-world/2022>; Ing-wen Tsai, “The Taiwan Relations Act at Forty and U.S.-Taiwan Relations,” <https://www.csis.org/analysis/taiwan-relations-act-forty-and-us-taiwan-relations>.

out strategy for dealing with China, as well as one for how best to equip its forces.¹⁸⁰ This can be seen in the lack of increased defense spending, disagreements within the Ministry of Defense over the best course to providing an adequate defense, and a lack of popular support from the citizenry.

Within the 21st century, Taiwanese policy makers have struggled to mobilize support for increased spending on defense matters. This is exemplified by several factors. First, defense spending within the Taiwanese budget has stagnated over the last decade. Political scientist Richard Bush articulates that, with few exceptions, Taiwan's defense spending as a share of total government expenditures has varied less than one percent, from 2009–2016, with a low 10.85% and a high of 11.47%.¹⁸¹ As a share of GDP, Taiwan's total military expenditure has similarly declined from 2.6% (2000) to around 1.8% (2016).¹⁸² Described as a “choosing butter over guns” policy, political parties in power have shifted towards focusing on non-security expenditures over security ones.¹⁸³ This can be attributed to increased challenges that demand more resources, such as an aging population, government healthcare burden, and an increased desire for stronger economic support.¹⁸⁴

On a political party level, the discord between DPP and KMT national security strategies have contributed to mixed opinions from constituents regarding arms purchases. During their respective periods of presidency, each party has advocated for different approaches to defense and Cross-Strait relations. From a KMT perspective, the desired approach to Cross-Strait relations and arms purchases has been to support commercial and

¹⁸⁰ Takahashi Ikumoto, Sato Masahisa: No Time to Waste on Japan-Taiwan Defense Cooperation, November 9, 2022, <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-topics/c11403/>.

¹⁸¹ Richard C. Bush, *Difficult Choices: Taiwan's Quest for Security and the Good Life* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2021), 177.

¹⁸² “Taiwan Military Expenditures, Share of GDP (2000-2021),” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022, <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>.

¹⁸³ Bonnie Glaser and Anastasia Mark, “Taiwan's Defense Spending: The Security Consequences of Choosing Butter over Guns,” Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, March 18, 2015, <https://amti.csis.org/taiwans-defense-spending-the-security-consequences-of-choosing-butter-over-guns/>.

¹⁸⁴ “Taiwan Military Snapshot,” Janes, July 21, 2022, https://customer.janes.com/CountryIntelligence/Countries/Country_1080/military.

cultural coordination with the PRC, pursue conventional military build-up, and maintaining defense spending at a steady rate. KMT politicians are known for leaning more towards friendly relations with Beijing, holding true to the “One China Principle,” and for their appeal to older demographics on the island.¹⁸⁵ By the numbers, the 2008–2016 era of KMT rule saw relatively small-yet-expensive purchases of U.S. defense products and can be directly attributed to the KMT-led government’s focus on conventional warfare. These acquisitions include ASW/ASUW aircraft (12x P-3 Orions), combat helicopters (45+ AH-64E Apache, APG-78 Longbows), and frigates (2x Oliver Hazard Perry-class), as well as amphibious armed vehicle craft (36x AAVs).¹⁸⁶ This approach has won much support from the ROC Armed Forces, whose historic strategy has emphasized force projection, sea lines of communication (SLOC) control, and directly contesting Beijing for control of the airspace and seas around Taiwan. Conversely, policymakers and defense officials in Washington criticized the KMT’s symmetric approach, arguing that the double-digit defense spending increases in China, year by year, will bar Taiwan from ever successfully repelling China with pure force.¹⁸⁷

In contrast, the DPP defense strategy has tended to favor Taiwanese sovereignty, increasing defense budgets, and asymmetric warfare. DPP leadership has pushed for increasingly larger purchases of equipment that line up with the “porcupine” strategy of asymmetric defense: larger numbers of sea mines, coastal defense missiles (400x Harpoons), mobile artillery (11x HIMARS), and over a thousand anti-tank missiles.¹⁸⁸ In conjunction with U.S. Department of Defense recommendations, DPP leadership has

¹⁸⁵ Amber Lin, “Taiwan’s Kuomintang at a Crossroads: Should the Nationalist Rethink Its China-Leaning Posture?,” Pulitzer Center, July 24, 2020, <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/taiwans-kuomintang-crossroads-should-nationalist-rethink-its-china-leaning-posture>.

¹⁸⁶ “Trade Registers, Arms Sales to Taiwan from the United States, 2000–2021,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022, https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

¹⁸⁷ Dennis Weng, “U.S.-Taiwan Defense Industry Conference 2021, Keynote Speech” (U.S.-Taiwan Defense Industry Conference 2021, Leesburg, VA, October 11, 2021), <https://www.taiwandefenseconference.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Weng-Dennis-KMT-Keynote-at-USTDIC-2021.pdf>.

¹⁸⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Trade Registers, Arms Sales to Taiwan from the United States, 2000–2021.”

encouraged larger defense budgets, despite political opposition from the KMT and coercive pressure from the mainland.

Accordingly, the variance in defense policies has led to strangleholds in arms purchases and can be directly attributed to domestic party disputes that have limited efforts to increase defense spending. This is best summed up by Taiwanese Legislator Lo Chih-Cheng, who notes that partisan opposition, a common facet of democracy, hampers arms procurements. In an interview, the DPP legislator notes that when KMT lawmakers have held the majority within the Legislative Yuan (the legislative branch of the Taiwanese government), they have “boycotted special military budgets four years in a row...inhibiting Taiwan’s ability to move forward with defense procurements.”¹⁸⁹ This has led to a compromise where neither party can fully execute their defense policies in the long-term and advocate for their preference on arms purchases or defense budget.

a. Civilian Perspectives

Since the balance of power has overwhelmingly shifted in China’s favor for nearly two decades, Taiwan’s public opinion has accordingly shifted towards a perplexing amount of natural pessimism mixed with an optimistic approach to the future. In a 2017 Taiwan Social Change Survey (TSCS), most citizens realistically agreed (50.9%) that the “independence-unification issue” could lead to war, and that an invasion would lead to the majority of Taiwanese people engaged in some form of resistance.¹⁹⁰ According to the same survey, most Taiwanese appear to recognize the immense futility of their situation: roughly 70%-80% of Taiwanese have serious doubts regarding the capability of the ROCAF to defend the island. Although this would suggest that the Taiwanese people might exist in a state of constant concern, the majority of citizens are evidently less fearful on a day-to-day basis. Less than a third of Taiwanese believed that there was more than a 50%

¹⁸⁹ Li, “Why So Little?,” 76.

¹⁹⁰ Easton, *The Chinese Invasion Threat*, 182.

chance of PRC invasion, which could be attributed to a shared cultural affinity, the strength of economic interdependence, or sheer optimism.¹⁹¹

When viewed critically, this suggests that the closeness of two peoples (Taiwanese and Chinese) could contribute to a sense of familiarity. This might translate into a desire to avoid bloodshed, which has been pushed by China's Xi Jinping.¹⁹² More concretely, economic growth and interdependence follow a contradictory line of thinking. More than half of Taiwanese believe that Beijing will leverage its economic power if Taiwan gets too dependent on mainland commercial markets, while at the same time, 53.3% argue that the Taiwanese government should increase its economic ties to Beijing.¹⁹³ This line of thought likely concludes that while the risk of dependence is acknowledged by the majority, the commercial benefits outweigh any downsides. Furthermore, with roughly 100,000 firms on the mainland, as well as 50% of non-island based Taiwanese citizens working in the PRC, one could easily encourage the idea that Taiwan is already dependent on China.¹⁹⁴ This indirectly constrains the Taiwanese government's options: any party in power that damages cross-Strait trade will run the risk of inflaming potential voters, costing the country much-needed employment opportunities, and losing the next election. In turn, leadership on the island is forced to balance the island's economic health and its constituent's concerns with security interests.

In terms of defense spending, which directly influences arms acquisitions budgets, approximately 66.8% of Taiwanese favored an overall national policy that prioritizes negotiations over defense spending, while only 22.8% actually encouraged an increase in military spending (2016-2017).¹⁹⁵ Further showing the priorities of many, almost half

¹⁹¹ Dean Karalekas, *Civil-Military Relations in Taiwan: Identity and Transformation* (United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2018), 52, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=5498128>.

¹⁹² Philip Wen, "China and Taiwan a 'Family', Says Xi Jinping at Historic Meeting of Leaders," The Sydney Morning Herald, November 7, 2015, <https://www.smh.com.au/world/china-and-taiwan-a-family-says-xi-jinping-at-historic-meeting-of-leaders-20151107-gktf07.html>.

¹⁹³ Bush, *Difficult Choices*, 163.

¹⁹⁴ Bush, 48.

¹⁹⁵ Easton, *The Chinese Invasion Threat*, 163.

(46.5%) of Taiwanese citizens asserted that the state of the economy was more concerning than Cross-Strait relations or the state of the military.¹⁹⁶

By these measures, it is clear that the Taiwanese public have sufficient motivation to favor non-military investments instead of building a stronger military. Aside from the benefits the average civilian might reap should government non-discretionary funding shift away from defense spending, many citizens could argue that, while closer relations to the United States is a good thing, increases in defense spending to purchase U.S. arms might decrease Cross-Strait stability and elevate the risk of conflict. Consequently, policymakers elected by the public must keep in mind that their political decisions should align with the desires of their constituents in order to remain in office. This imposes an additional barrier for arms acquisitions and challenges Taiwan's enthusiasm for U.S. products.

E. SHIFTING AMERICAN AND TAIWANESE ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CONCERNS DURING DPP AND KMT ADMINISTRATIONS

1. Economic and Security Concerns During the DPP Administration (2000-2008)

Between 2000 and 2016, U.S.–Taiwan arms sales were shaped by the security and economic concerns of both countries. Starting with security concerns, the newly elected Bush administration intended to bolster U.S.–ROC relations by offering Taiwan larger arms packages and more diplomatic support.¹⁹⁷ However, the September 11 terrorist attacks shifted American security interests away from Taiwan and towards the blossoming Middle Eastern conflicts. Concurrently, Taiwanese efforts to secure more arms over the following years floundered: despite valid security concerns and the growth of Chinese military power, the state was unable to consistently acquire more arms due to inter-party squabbles, leadership failures under the DPP administration (2000-2008), and pro-PRC policy shifts under the KMT administration (2008-2016). Although arms sales reached their lowest point during the years following the Great Financial Crisis (2008-2009), the

¹⁹⁶ Easton, 24.

¹⁹⁷ Kelly Wallace, "Bush Pledges Whatever It Takes to Defend Taiwan," CNN News, April 24, 2001, <https://edition.cnn.com/2001/ALLPOLITICS/04/24/bush.taiwan.abc/>.

2010s “Pivot to Asia” renewed America’s focus on Taiwanese security and ultimately enabled both states to make efforts towards serious arms sales.

Starting in 2001, the George W. Bush administration kickstarted 21st century U.S.–Taiwan arms sales via its approval for a sizable number of acquisitions. In keeping with the tendency to offer practical, if dated platforms, the Bush administration approved of the sale for major items such as eight diesel-electric submarines, four decommissioned *Kidd*-class destroyers and 12 P-3 Orion aircraft, as well as associated missiles and torpedoes.¹⁹⁸ Smaller sales, such as 54 amphibious assault vehicles and 12 MH-53 mine countermeasure helicopters, rounded off the total approved items. The Bush administration either deferred or outright denied some arm requests, such as AEGIS-equipped destroyers, M1A2 Abrams tanks, and expensive munitions (JDAM, HARM). This occurred for several reasons. First, the excessive costs of arms could exceed Taiwanese budget capabilities and lead to domestic backlash from within Taiwan—spending too much on procurement means shifting funding away from other projects. Second, senior leadership in the Department of Defense occasionally limited their approval of arm sales to Taiwan in order to keep up with changes in DOD strategy or to signal disagreements to the island.¹⁹⁹ As time will tell, both domestic challenges on the island and international factors, such as U.S. government constraints, play a role in shaping the arms packages offered to the island.

In describing arms sales to Taiwan, it should be noted that significant delays, numbering in months and years, have typically occurred between the U.S.’ approval for sale and the actual acquisition by the Taiwanese. This can be attributed to various reasons, such as a lack of approved funding from the Taiwanese side, which is a separate voting matter for Taiwan’s central legislature; concerns of technology leakage, should Taiwanese-acquired platforms of U.S. origin fall into PRC hands; and a general lack of continuity between both parties.²⁰⁰ For example, U.S. decommissioned *Kidd*-class destroyers, approved for sale in early 2002, were first received by Taiwan at the end of 2005 due to

¹⁹⁸ Kan, “Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990,” 8.

¹⁹⁹ Kan, 8.

²⁰⁰ Kan, 11.

lengthy delays in removing classified hardware.²⁰¹ Other causes, such as Taiwanese negotiations for price reductions and a lack of special budget approval (requiring a majority of Legislative Yuan members to vote yes) led to significant delays. Negotiations for the 12 P-3 Orions, for example, were estimated at a total of \$4.1 billion USD (\$300 million each, plus parts and training). Negotiating and inquiry delays led to Taiwan receiving the dozen between 2012–2015, despite requesting them as early as 2001, and can largely be blamed on U.S. reluctance vice Taiwanese domestic causes.²⁰² A third example, the negotiated purchase of a joint command and control system that would intentionally integrate Taiwanese/U.S. services (JTIDS/Link 16), failed to blossom due to Taiwan actually underinvesting in the program. Despite Pentagon recommendations, the MND was criticized for moving too slowly to fully invest in a program that would heavily integrate both countries' weapon systems, resulting in ROC military forces receiving a billion-dollar technology estimated to operate with one-third the capability of its U.S. counterpart.²⁰³ Finally, under the Chen Shui-bian administration, typical arms talks between both countries were reduced from formal, annual discussions to occurring “as-needed,” which enabled either multiple discussions per year or none at all.²⁰⁴

With these considerations in mind, it should come as no surprise that a slow turn around in politics, lengthy negotiations, and differing interpretations of necessity have contributed to either delays or declines in U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. From 2005–2006, a decline occurs from \$645 million USD to \$503 million USD. The ROCAF received relatively lackluster (albeit necessary) equipment in the form of 10 AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles, five AIM-7 Sparrows, and training for air-to-air combat amounting to \$280 million USD, as well as previously ordered Harpoon missiles and the first of the four *Kidd*-class destroyers.²⁰⁵ This declining trend is further exacerbated during the 2006–2007

²⁰¹ Kan, 11.

²⁰² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Trade Registers, Arms Sales to Taiwan from the United States, 2000–2021”; Kan, “Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990,” 16.

²⁰³ Kan, “Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990,” 19.

²⁰⁴ Kan, 22.

²⁰⁵ Kan, 58–59.

period, where arms sales fell from an estimated \$503 million USD to only \$12 million USD. This reduction, merely 2.06% worth of the 2006 value, began the start of a trend that can be attributed to various causes. Despite initial U.S. support for sales, a lack of inter-partisan agreement within Taiwan’s legislature, a failure to pass special budget requests for arms, and Taiwan’s political failure to commit funding to desired programs (diesel submarines) led to delays in arms purchases. This lasted from the early DPP era until several years into the President Ma’s KMT administration.

During this DPP period, it should be noted that the erratic nature of Taiwanese senior leadership encouraged the U.S. to slow its arms sales to the island state. Chen’s presidency is often characterized by periods of cautious, pro-*status quo* dialogue that maintained stability, followed by inflammatory and radical steps intended to build voter support.²⁰⁶ Chen’s pro-independence rhetoric during the 2000–2008 period was potent enough to trigger responses not only from China, but also the U.S. The culminating point of his claims—that China is “one country on each side of the strait”—only served to alienate the U.S., even resulting in President Bush publicly rebuking his Taiwanese counterpart for stirring trouble (in both 2003 and 2005).²⁰⁷ In response to China’s predictable backlash and out of a desire to appease its U.N. Security Council peer, Washington felt comfortable pulling back arms sales in order to avoid signaling support to Chen, and the DPP ultimately lost the 2008 election in favor to the KMT.

a. Arms Sales During the KMT Administration (2008-2016)

The election of KMT President Ma Ying-jeou heralded in a continuity of ineffectual arms acquisitions that lasted for several years. Partly elected on a platform to reduce Cross-Strait tensions and shift away from the Chen’s inflammatory, pro-Taiwan independence rhetoric, President Ma’s initial administrative era can be characterized by a notable deficit in arms acquisitions due to a lack of domestic funding and minimal interest. Ma shifted towards an alternative approach to Cross-Strait relations and strongly encouraged Chinese-

²⁰⁶ Timothy W. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third-Party Statecraft and the Pursuit of Peace*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 190–95.

²⁰⁷ Crawford, 194–96.

Taiwanese trade during his first administration, as well as the reestablishment of “institutional channels of communication.”²⁰⁸ These efforts led towards more access to travel via tourism; renewed postal services; and stronger bilateral transportation agreements.²⁰⁹

Over 2008 to the mid-2010s, Ma’s efforts led towards increased trade with China and warmed relations with the mainland. These efforts culminated in an attempt to pass legislation that would establish a PRC-ROC Free Trade Agreement (FTA), with the intent to allow unprecedented access to one another’s markets and services. Supporters of the FTA, such as the KMT policymakers who held the legislative Yuan majority, advocated that this legislation would lead to even deeper levels of stability and interdependence between the two countries and could dissuade conflict across the Taiwan Strait.²¹⁰ The importance and complexities of building ROC-PRC relations and the budding FTA was such that it occupied legislative manpower and attention, arguably to the detriment of engaging with the U.S. for stronger arms sales and defense support. Although Ma focused on deterrence through commerce, the early Ma period (2008-2011) and the Obama administration sustained the U.S.–ROC arms relationship via small volume arms sales. These include deliveries of surface-to-air missiles (144 SM-2s), anti-tank missiles (182 FGM-148 Javelins), 264 MIM-104F (Patriot BMD missiles) and 196 Stinger MANPADs over a four-year period.²¹¹ Notable acquisitions include the approval for sale of seven Patriot Configuration-3 (PAC 3) systems, with the intent to acquire and pay for them over the next decade.²¹²

²⁰⁸ Bush, *Difficult Choices*, 61–63.

²⁰⁹ Bush, 63.

²¹⁰ Bush, 61–63.

²¹¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Trade Registers, Arms Sales to Taiwan from the United States, 2000–2021.”

²¹² Jim Wolf, “Obama Eyes Arms Sales to Taiwan,” Reuters, December 9, 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/businessproco-us-taiwan-usa-arms-exclusi/exclusive-obama-eyes-arms-sales-to-taiwan-idUKTRE5B906Y20091210>; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Trade Registers, Arms Sales to Taiwan from the United States, 2000–2021.”

Despite growing optimism for the FTA and its hopeful byproducts, these efforts ultimately failed due to civilian protests (even occupying the Legislative Yuan building in 2013) and DPP political blockades, both of which opposed the apparent concessions that would weaken Taiwanese influence and sovereignty.²¹³ This failure saw retaliation from Beijing, which worked to obstruct any Taiwanese bilateral FTA establishments with other Indo-Pacific nations and press the island into commercial submission.²¹⁴ The aftermath of the failed FTA saw Ma's ability to pass legislation become greatly weakened. Any efforts to pass legislation—even those which would dedicate more funding for arms—were hampered by DPP political opposition and a continually constrained defense budget.²¹⁵ Furthermore, even after the FTA experience, Ma's attitudes towards the PRC remained unchanged. He continued to emphasize “economic, social, and institutional linkages” which would oppose independence, encourage Beijing to favor the status quo, and strengthen ROC-PRC relations.²¹⁶ Ma's unwavering anti-revisionist agenda would see nominal effort given towards making new ground in building or sustaining large arms acquisitions.

In addition to the mentioned influences, various other international factors influenced Taiwan's arms acquisitions strategy throughout Ma's administration. Chief among these was the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and its impacts, which challenged Taiwan's decision-making and forced the state to make fiscal concessions that damaged military spending. During and after the crisis, government spending on social welfare rose from 14.6% (2009) to 19.7% (2014) and was directly attributed to the public's demand for increased support from the state.²¹⁷ The state's desire to spend on the military took secondary precedence over helping the public during the Crisis, and the KMT administration sought to maintain public support by working to strengthen trade and recover lost revenue. The state's fortunes were further exacerbated by a decline in Taiwan's

²¹³ Bush, *Difficult Choices*, 63–65.

²¹⁴ Bush, 64.

²¹⁵ Bush, 63–65.

²¹⁶ Bush, 151.

²¹⁷ Bush, 34.

largest exports industry, high-end microelectronics, over the early 2010s: a downshift in high-end, non-essential electronic consumption worldwide ultimately meant that the KMT-led government was unable to source large sums of funding towards arms purchases.²¹⁸

Overseas, this period also saw the Ma administration have to contend with U.S. government foot dragging. This was attributable to Washington's own Crisis-related economic challenges, as well as fatigue from its exhaustive ongoing commitments in the Middle East: despite the Obama administration's interests in building up Taiwan, diplomatic pressure (via strongly worded protests) from China sufficiently signaled that the U.S. should reconsider increasing arms sales to Taiwan.²¹⁹ While it did not stop arms sales, the United States allowed them to stagnate with Taiwan for nearly four years (2008-2012) in favor of addressing more pressing concerns.²²⁰

Another example of international factors shaping Taiwanese arms acquisitions was the arms acquisitions improvements from 2011–2015, which came about due to shifts in U.S. foreign policy. This started in 2006 and a five-year attempt to procure new tactical aircraft. Requests for F-16 Fighting Falcon purchases enjoyed broad political support in both Taiwan and the U.S. yet were repeatedly denied by the U.S. government for sale or approval due to concerns over Taiwanese credibility on funding. The 2006–2010 period also saw a reluctance towards damaging Sino-American relations, which carried over into the early 2010s and played a role in Washington's hesitancy to arm the rival of one of its top trade partners.²²¹ However, by the end of 2011, the Obama Administration reversed course and bolstered support for a variety of reasons.

First, a coalition of retired U.S. generals, senators, and F-16 producer Lockheed Martin appealed to the Obama Administration for an approval of sale, arguing that the delay in arming Taiwan would irrevocably damage cross-Strait relations and U.S. regional

²¹⁸ Bryce Wakefield, "Taiwan and the Global Economic Storm" (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 2009), 1–3.

²¹⁹ Wolf, "Obama Eyes Arms Sales to Taiwan."

²²⁰ "Military Optimistic on U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan," website, Taiwan Today (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), December 11, 2009), <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=2&post=795>.

²²¹ Kan, "Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990," 23.

interests. Second, and perhaps more importantly, is the Obama Administration's announcement of the "Pivot to Asia." This shift intended to refocus U.S. energy towards Indo-Pacific affairs, build more credibility amongst Indo-Pacific states, and strengthen military ties with Asian partners and allies.²²² U.S. government pledges made at the time also guaranteed "planned and future reductions in defense spending will not come at the expense of the Asia-Pacific," with the unspoken intent to bolster U.S. practices and past policies (e.g., arming Taiwan).²²³ Given multiple pressures from both domestic and international angles, as well as the potential to generate roughly \$8.7 billion USD for the American economy, the Obama administration approved the F-16 sale in 2011, leading to a record spike in Taiwanese procurements.²²⁴ Between F-16 aircraft purchases, associated missiles, and sensor upgrades, Taiwanese spending increased from \$35 million USD (2011) to \$1.07 billion USD (2014).

In conclusion, 21st century Taiwanese arms acquisitions (2000-2016) can be understood and analyzed via the state's presidential administrations, in particular the similarities and differences between the DPP and KMT. In terms of shared experiences, both Chen and Ma clearly desired to maintain Taiwan's long-lasting relationship with the U.S. and pursue arms acquisitions to some degree. Each president faced challenges in mobilizing support for legislation regarding defense spending, and both parties struggled to convince their oppositional party to support their efforts. In the international realm, both Chen and Ma had to deal with an increasingly stronger China and Washington's focus on its military operations in the Middle East. However, both administrations had uniquely specific factors and influences which shaped arms sales during this period. For the DPP period, Chen's inflammatory, pro-independence rhetoric clashed with some of the highest arms sales (by volume) experienced in the century (see Figure 1). Public outcry from Beijing and frustrations with the DPP leader pushed Washington to shift its priorities and

²²² Mark E Manyin et al., "Pivoting to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's 'Rebalancing' Towards Asia" (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2012), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R42448.pdf>.

²²³ Manyin et al., 2.

²²⁴ Kan, "Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990," 22–24.

distance itself from arms sales to Taiwan in order to calm the situation. Whereas Chen arguably motivated the U.S. to step back due to his emphasis on independence, Ma's KMT period saw shifts in domestic attitudes that encouraged Taiwan to build up closer bonds with the PRC. In conjunction with international factors like the Global Financial Crisis and "Pivot to Asia," Taiwan dealt with significant challenges and ultimately ended the KMT era with large arms acquisitions.

F. CONCLUSION

Taiwan's 21st century arms purchases remain a crucial aspect of its overall defense strategy, as well as a major influence that shapes the state's approach to Cross-Strait relations. Changes in arms purchases between administrations provides a metric for analysis and can offer suggestions for how domestic and international factors shape the island's acquisitions. For the most part, Taiwan's 21st century arms deals have been positively influenced by external factors. The island state's relationship with the United States has afforded opportunities for both countries to demonstrate a commitment to cross-Strait stability and to sustain Taiwan's defensive capabilities via arms sales. Furthermore, the threat of the PRC incentivizes Taiwan to pursue arms and commit itself towards resisting malignant Chinese influence. Based on the evidence provided in this chapter, it is clear that the Cross-Strait relationship is the most influential driver behind Taiwanese arms acquisitions, and that the United States (as another driver) is a close second with regards to providing them.

In analyzing the domestic drivers behind Taiwan's arms acquisitions, it is clear that the state has faced many challenges over the first 16 years of the 21st century. These include the misalignment of the DPP's pro-independence rhetoric, the KMT's more appeasing approach to Cross-Strait relations, and interparty conflicts that force delays on arms acquisitions approvals. Opinion differences, such as the MND's insistence on building security via a traditionally strong military contrasts with the civilian population's relative lack of urgency with regards to defense, and further muddles the overall security narrative on the island. The evidence provided in this thesis shows that domestic factors introduce unnecessary complexities into the state's national defense and tend to hinder

rather than help arms acquisitions. While Taiwan's liberal democratic nature necessitates the importance of civilian rule, it can also challenge the ease at which the state commits resources towards defending itself.

When combined, these factors offer a compelling argument for the complexities and challenges surrounding Taiwan's ability to acquire arms. While the process is by no means perfect, arms sales remain Taiwan's only viable option to readily acquire defensive technologies quickly and fulfill its defensive obligations. As such, the state will likely continue to invest in arms acquisitions that contribute to the status quo, deter Cross-Strait conflict, and maintain the U.S.-ROC relationship.

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IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This thesis has explored the drivers that motivate both Japan and Taiwan to purchase arms from the United States within the 21st century. The purpose of this last chapter is to summarize the findings, provide a brief comparison of Japan-ROC arms purchase drivers, and provide policy suggestions regarding U.S. arms sales to both countries.

In the research conducted on Japan's 21st century arms purchases, this thesis discovered several trends that have shaped the U.S.–Japan arms relationship. Starting with the formal security alliance, one key trend to the arms relationship is the ongoing stability of the American commitment to Japan. It is apparent that both states gain a great deal from the mutually beneficial relationship and have well-justified reasons to uphold it. Japan most directly benefits from American commitment due to the umbrella of protection and security assurances that the U.S. provides. These allow Japan to rely on Washington when dealing with external threats in the international order such as the PRC, as well as access to joint military training exercises and world-class defensive technologies. In turn, the United States recognizes that, by encouraging U.S.-Japanese stability and continuing to pledge itself to the island-state's security, the U.S. is serving its own Indo-Pacific interests. Selling arms to Japan has encouraged its military growth and ensured that it is a willing supporter of American Indo-Pacific interests. In turn, Japan remains a reliable ally against China, whose activities in the region threaten both Japanese and American interests. As such, this trend will likely continue to remain a cornerstone of the U.S.–Japan arms relationship and promote continued alignment in security and defense.

Another key trend in the U.S.–Japan arms relationship is the state's emphasis on antimilitarism, which can be found in both domestic politics and cultural factors. In terms of national defense, 21st century Japanese political leaders have continued to support the state's historic, ideological commitment to a standing identity of domestic antimilitarism (SIDA). Acting as both a political principle and a cultural staple, SIDA encourages the

Japanese people to view their nation as one that is non-violent and peaceful. This is apparent by the state's constitution, which prohibits war, as well as its domestic politics, which have strongly discouraged military budget increases via an unspoken commitment to a one percent defense GDP expenditure.²²⁵ Compounded by the lack of enthusiasm for a domestic arms industry, Japanese defense leadership rely on American arms in order to maintain credible armed forces while avoiding overly drastic shifts towards militarism, which would likely trigger protests and upheaval amongst its citizens. This thesis highlights that, by relying on American arms acquisitions for the majority of its defensive technologies, Japanese policymakers are able to circumvent popular support for antimilitarism and nonviolence in order to strengthen the country's military capabilities.²²⁶

Combined, these two trends reinforce that Japan will continue to rely on the U.S. for arms. A worsening geopolitical environment—primarily caused by the uncertainty surrounding the PRC—will almost definitely promote the expectation that Japan will take the necessary steps to build its armed forces, provide for the defense of its people, and support a strong alliance with the U.S. Although the state continues to emphasize its nonviolent, antimilitarist character, American arms sales represent the best possible course of action for Japan to achieve its national interests and ensure that it is a military powerhouse in the Indo-Pacific.

Concerning Taiwan, this thesis has identified that the trends associated with its American arms acquisitions in the 21st century are overwhelmingly driven by the state's unique geopolitical situation. One such trend is the relative unpredictability surrounding Taiwanese political parties and their respective approaches to Cross-Strait relations. This thesis' review of Taiwanese arms acquisitions during the Chen and Ma administrations has shown that the ruling political parties in 21st century Taiwan have different approaches to both day-to-day Cross-Strait relations, the U.S.-ROC relationship, and strategic political maneuvering. While Chen's back-and-forth approach regarding Taiwanese independence negatively impacted Cross-Strait relations and made the U.S. hold back on arms sales, Ma's

²²⁵ "The Constitution of Japan."

²²⁶ Emma Chanlett-Avery, "The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance" (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, June 13, 2019), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL33740>.

conservative, placating methods towards the PRC did little to promote arms acquisitions for the island. This lack of consistency between the political parties generated uncertainty with regards to arms, and in turn challenged the consistency of United States' policy of arms sales to Taiwan. By perpetuating a trend of unpredictability, Taiwan complicated arms acquisitions and national defense, which weakened the state's ability to successfully dissuade the PRC from reunification efforts.

Another trend in Taiwanese arms acquisitions is the United States' commitment to sell arms to Taiwan. While not a treaty partner, the United States remains dedicated to arming Taiwan for defense and deterrence. Despite the challenges associated with different administrations, the 21st century has seen the U.S. continue in an unbroken transfer of arms to Taiwan. This is especially crucial due to the intensification of China's military and economic development: as the PRC rises, it has moved into a position where it is able to use coercive methods and gray-zone tactics for intimidation against the Taiwanese. The longstanding trend of U.S. arms commitment to Taiwan has so far remained a staple in Cross-Strait relations and injects some measure of predictability into the complicated security environment, showing that external factors play a stronger role in driving arms acquisitions.

B. A COMPARISON OF JAPANESE AND TAIWANESE ARMS DRIVERS

When analyzed, the evidence provided in the thesis offers several points of comparison between the arms drivers for Japan and Taiwan. In terms of analyzing similarities, a first note of comparison shows that both states have strong similarities in terms of what drives them to purchase arms from the United States. First, both Taiwan and Japan exist within a geopolitical region that places them at odds with neighboring countries who are aligned against the United States. This thesis provides evidence that Chinese military and economic aggression, while falling short of open conflict, continues to test the solidarity of the United States and its allies in the Indo-Pacific. In the face of security challenges within the region, Japan and Taiwan are motivated to arm themselves for similar reasons. American-based arms acquisitions enable both countries to maintain credible defenses, to deter aggressors such as China, and to bolster their strategic partnerships with

the U.S. Purchasing arms allows each country to benefit from American support and ensures that they have an ally to uphold security within the region.

Second, this comparison is advanced by evidence that shows both states do not produce the majority of their own defensive technologies. Both Japan and Taiwan lack an adequate indigenous arms industry that can self-sustain their militaries, and while both states have different reasons for this, it is evident that each must rely on the U.S. for high-end, sophisticated technologies. While benefits to purchasing U.S. arms are discussed in further detail in chapters 2 and 3, it is clear that Tokyo and Taipei recognize the advantages that come with purchasing foreign arms despite the cost of not fully developing their own industries.

A third arms driver similarly shared between the two countries is a desire for strengthened alignment with the United States via arms. As previously mentioned, both countries benefit from a U.S.-led international order. Besides the aforementioned joint exercises that promote inter-military cooperation, Japan's close alignment with the U.S. allows the state to involve itself in U.S.-associated, regional security dialogues such as the "Quad." This enables the state to work with other countries (Australia, India) who share similar desires for a continued U.S.-led international order, as well as supporting causes that promote both U.S. and Japanese interests. Similarly, Taiwan purchases arms to directly align its military capabilities and strategies with those that might be compatible with the United States. While political sensitivity precludes the U.S. from conducting joint military exercises with the ROC, sharing military hardware with Taiwan empowers the island's leadership and overtly shows support for Taiwanese efforts. Arms sales and a pro-U.S. alignment have played a substantial role in maintaining a de facto status quo that has minimalized Cross-Strait conflict, ensured Taiwan remains separate from China, and provided the U.S. with an able democratic partner in the Indo-Pacific.

In terms of differences that distinguish Japanese and Taiwanese arms drivers, this thesis demonstrates that each state has unique factors that influence why it buys American arms. First, the differences in geopolitical situations should be considered. For Taiwan, arms acquisitions are absolutely essential to maintain the state's current status. Given that the threat of forcible reunification constantly looms over the island, the PRC has

diplomatically isolated Taiwan, and that the island's citizens want to remain separate from the mainland, it is imperative that the Taiwanese prioritize their survival and purchase arms. Compared to Japan, who enjoys relatively non-belligerent relations with its neighbors, much stronger diplomatic relations within the international order, and are not claimed by a larger, more aggressive neighbor, Taiwan must contend with the indefinite threat of invasion so as long as the PRC remains committed to reunification. As such, Taiwan has no choice but to accept its unfavorable geopolitical situation and prioritize defensive concerns to a greater degree than Japan does.

A second difference in the two states' drivers behind arms acquisitions is their respective security relationships with the U.S. In this examination, it is evident that Japan has a much stronger relationship with the United States. Japan's national security is heavily bolstered by the U.S. presence on the island, and should Japanese forces or territory fall under attack, the United States would be treaty bound to come to their defense. The permanent presence of U.S. armed forces on Japanese territory incentivizes the JSDF to acquire mutually compatible defensive technologies that will maximize the capabilities of a joint U.S.–Japan military force. In comparison, the U.S.–Taiwan relationship's lack of security promises generates uncertainty and risk for Taiwanese defense planners. The absence of guaranteed American military support forces Taiwan to acknowledge that, in a worst-case scenario, it may need to defeat a Cross-Strait invasion by itself. While the ROC purchases American arms in order to bolster the shared security relationship and promote U.S.–ROC military compatibility, strategic ambiguity continues to remain Washington's official policy. In essence, Japan purchases American arms in order to increase the formal cooperation that already exists, while Taiwan purchases arms to incentivize U.S. military intervention if needed and be ready for war even if the U.S. decided not to intervene.

A final difference between the two states is the influence of national identity considerations on arms acquisitions. This thesis shows that Japan's standing identity of antimilitarism has constrained defense spending and encouraged the state to purchase U.S. arms. Tokyo's emphasis on retaining a peaceful identity hampers any serious support for alternatives to U.S. arms, such as growing its indigenous arms industry, and has led the state to prioritize American arms sales. In contrast, Taiwan's outlook on military affairs

and arms acquisitions is more conventional. Whereas Japan chooses to buy American arms to retain a sense of antimilitarism and constraint (e.g., they do not actively make their own weapons), Taiwan chooses arms sales due their capability in building deterrence and military credibility. This is necessitated by Taiwan's geopolitical situation, which forces the smaller island state to accept that a strong military is crucial to survival in the face of the Chinese threat. As such, Taiwan embraces arms sales without worries about a resurgent militarism, while Japan accepts that arms sales support their antimilitarist outlook and peaceful self-identity.

C. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Building off of the trends identified in this thesis, the U.S. might benefit from various policy recommendations that would enable the state to achieve a more favorable outcome in the Indo-Pacific. First, when considering Japan, the U.S. should continue to invest in a forward deployed troop presence, sell high-quality arms, and ensure that Japan remains a militarily competitive ally in the region. By continuing to provide Japan with American arms, the U.S. can ensure that the militaries of each country will have more thorough understandings of one another's capabilities and limitations. This could have positive implications with regards to coordinating efforts during conflicts, organizing defense-related logistics to Japan (e.g., spare parts and ammo for American-sold weapons), and sustaining deployed forces in the region. This could further improve the effectiveness of joint military exercises between Indo-Pacific countries who also purchase U.S. arms, such as Australia and South Korea, in order to increase cooperation between American partners and allies in the region. By building up the Japanese Self-Defense Forces with American arms, various U.S. objectives—such as deterring Chinese aggression and maintaining a favorable Indo-Pacific security environment—might be more easily achieved.

For Taiwan, the U.S. should continue to commit itself towards maintaining strategic ambiguity and reinforcing the island with arms sales. Encouraging Taiwan to purchase U.S. arms enables defense officials to better understand the security situation on the island and how to help Taiwan successfully achieve its security objectives. Ensuring that Taiwan is

equipped with U.S. arms can permit similar outcomes to U.S.–Japan arms sales: better coordination and logistics in conflict and a synergy of deterrence during peacetime. Furthermore, engaging in arms sales with Taiwan allows the U.S. to influence Taiwanese defense policies and ensure that they are more likely to fall in line with the security policies America envisions for the Indo-Pacific. These arms sales can help maintain strategic ambiguity with regards to Taiwan, signal that the U.S. appears committed to its partnerships, and reinforce America’s commitment to working with Indo-Pacific democracies.

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