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**PREFERRED, NOT ASSURED:
ANTICIPATING U.S.-JAPAN COOPERATION
IN A TAIWAN CONTINGENCY**

by

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September 2023

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ABSTRACT

With the dramatic rise in the PRC's economic and military power, concerns are mounting over the possibility of conflict over Taiwan, which could bring the United States and PRC into direct combat. The ability of the U.S. to effectively provide support to Taiwan in the event of conflict will depend on the degree of support provided by Japan to the U.S.–Japan alliance. Commensurate with the PRC's more assertive behavior since 2012, Japan has committed to efforts to modernize and expand the Japan Self-Defense Forces while, for the first time, vocally expressing its interest in peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. This thesis seeks to answer a key question: How has Japan's defense policy adapted to the greater threat towards Taiwan and to what degree could Japan aid a U.S. military response to defend Taiwan? This thesis reviews national policy documents plus economic and survey data to trace Japan's policy towards Taiwan and the use of military force over the previous decade. It finds that Japan has become more vocal in expressing its desire to maintain the Taiwan status quo, but that Japan is stymied in its ability to respond to a Taiwan contingency by its constitution, public preferences, and realized military capabilities. By better understanding the existing restrictions on the use of the Japan Self-Defense Force, the U.S. can more accurately include Japan in contingency planning for a Taiwan conflict.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A2/AD	anti-access/area-denial
ACM	alliance coordination mechanism
ADIZ	air defense identification zone
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CLB	Cabinet Legislation Bureau
CNAS	Center for a New American Security
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
CSD	collective self-defense
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of North Korea
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
FDI	foreign direct investment
FTA	free trade agreement
GDP	gross domestic product
GOJ	Government of Japan
IPEF	Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity
JASDF	Japan Air Self Defense Force
JCG	Japan Coast Guard
JGSDF	Japan Ground Self Defense Force
JMSDF	Japan Maritime Self Defense Force
JSDF	Japan Self-Defense Force
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCCPC	National Congress of the Communist Party of China
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Strategy
PKO	peacekeeping operation
PLA	People’s Liberation Army
PRC	People’s Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SDF	Self-Defense Forces
SLOC	sea lines of communication
UJST	U.S.–Japan Security Treaty
UN	United Nations
USD	United States dollar

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I. JAPAN, SECURITY POLICY, AND TAIWAN

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION AND FINDINGS

This thesis addresses whether Japan is capable and willing to assist the United States in the event of conflict between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC). Over the previous decade, Japan has exhibited behavior that may increase the likelihood of it aiding the United States in the defense of Taiwan. The primary question this thesis seeks to address is: What has changed and caused Japan to more actively support maintaining the status quo regarding Taiwan and what are the implications for the U.S.–Japan alliance?

Overall, this thesis finds that Japan's meaningful strategic, economic, and military ties with Taiwan are partially responsible for its expressed interest in peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Additionally, the close alliance with the U.S. and the broader danger to the maintenance of the rules-based order have also drawn Japan and Taiwan closer together over the previous decade. However, the legacy of imposed pacifism remains strong, and while the Japanese government has been more proactive in subtly supporting Taiwan, the public is still hesitant to authorize the use of the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) in combat operations abroad, and domestic and fiscal constraints hamper Japan's ability to expand and invest in a more capable, lethal military. Thus, while changes to the regional security environment have loosened public constraints on some changes to the JSDF, these changes do not necessarily increase the likelihood of Japan's participation in combat operations to defend Taiwan alongside the U.S., and the United States may be forced to respond to a Taiwan contingency without the military aid of Japan.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The status of Taiwan has garnered additional attention in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While these situations are not interchangeable, the prospect of war initiated by a greater power is no longer unfathomable. Both the United States and Japan have expressed their national interests in maintaining the Taiwan status quo. President Biden's *National Security Strategy* states, "we have an abiding interest in maintaining

peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, which is critical to regional and global security,” while Prime Minister Kishida’s proclaims that “peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is an indispensable element for the security and prosperity of the international community.”¹ In contrast, Chairman Xi Jinping’s statement to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China warned “we will continue to strive for peaceful reunification with the greatest sincerity and the utmost effort, but we will never promise to renounce the use of force, and *we reserve the option of taking all measures necessary*.”² Therefore, the significance of the research question lies in the contrasting views and the rising potential for conflict between U.S. and China.

While Japan’s stance towards Taiwan is significant on its own merits, it is more significant to the United States by virtue of their military alliance. This thesis assumes, if the PRC does attempt to conquer Taiwan through force, the United States would intervene militarily. In this event, the common assumption is that Japan would join the U.S. Yet, this expectation may not be accurate and, due to the rising risk and cost of conflict, it is necessary to consider whether the Government of Japan would be willing and able to: (1) intervene in a Taiwan Strait conflict itself, (2) provide logistics or other support to the U.S. military, or (3) at a minimum, permit the United States to utilize military forces based within and sustained from Japan. The answer to these questions is critical to the U.S.’s defense posture in the western Pacific with respect to a Taiwan Strait conflict.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. What Is Japan’s “One China” Policy?

The PRC-Japan relationship is complicated by different understandings of each nation’s “One China” policy. According to Adam Liff, Japan’s “One China” policy is a

¹ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States (2022)* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2022), 24, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2022)* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022), 14, https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page1we_000081.html.

² Emphasis added. Jinping Xi, *Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China* (Beijing: China: National Congress of the Communist Party of China, 2022), 51.

framework which contrasts different understandings of the PRC's "One China" principal.³ He notes that when the PRC and Japan formalized relations in 1972, the PRC maintained: (1) that the PRC was the legal government of China, (2) that Taiwan was a part of China, and (3) that the Japan–ROC peace treaty signed after World War II was invalid.⁴ In effect, the Japanese government acceded to the first point, while only offering that it "fully understands and respects" the PRC's claims on Taiwan.⁵ This stance allowed Japan to establish official diplomatic relations with the PRC while maintaining unofficial trade and cultural ties with Taiwan in what became known as the "Japan Formula."⁶ In the fifty plus years since normalization of PRC–Japan relations, the depth and complexity of the ties between Japan and Taiwan have strengthened.⁷ The contemporary, unofficial Japan–Taiwan ties are increasingly at odds with the initial intent of the "Japan Formula."

The framework that Japan uses to interact with Taiwan has garnered greater attention in recent years as recent developments, such as friendlier language towards Taiwan in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) *Diplomatic Bluebook*, "have rung alarm bells in China that Japan is weakening its one-China policy framework."⁸ Japan's "One China" framework has been consistent, but the current debate, as Mochizuki notes, centers around whether Japan should maintain or alter its traditional policy while Liff notes the deepening ties between Taiwan and Japan within the existing framework.⁹ The manner in which Japan defines its relationship with Taiwan is important to this study as (1) a point of friction in contemporary PRC–Japan relations and (2) a potential convergence of U.S.–Japan interests.

³ Adam P. Liff, "Japan, Taiwan and the 'One China' Framework after 50 Years," *The China Quarterly* 252 (September 26, 2022): 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741022001357>.

⁴ Liff, 9.

⁵ Liff, 9–10.

⁶ Liff, 10.

⁷ Liff, 22–24.

⁸ Mike M. Mochizuki, "Tokyo's Taiwan Conundrum: What Can Japan Do to Prevent War?," *The Washington Quarterly* Vol. 45, no. 3 (October 2022): 85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2022.2127881>.

⁹ Mochizuki, 95–96; Liff, "Japan, Taiwan and the 'One China' Framework after 50 Years," 20–21.

2. The Balance of Power in East Asia

In December 2022, the Government of Japan (GOJ) released an updated *National Security Strategy* (NSS) of Japan for the first time since 2013 as well as Japan's first ever *National Defense Strategy* (NDS). Within the introduction, the NSS includes the blunt assessment that "Japan's security environment is as severe and complex as it has ever been since the end of World War II."¹⁰ Furthermore, it clearly attributes Japan's sense that the challenging security environment stems from four sources: (1) the PRC's military expansion coupled with perceived threats to the Senkaku Islands and other territories; (2) the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear and ballistic missile programs; (3) Russian challenges to the liberal international order and deepening military cooperation with the PRC; and (4) the shifting balance of power in East Asia.¹¹ Each of these trends is an important driver of reform and modernization efforts intended to strengthen the JSDF.

a. The People's Republic of China

There is broad consensus that the behavior of the People's Republic of China is one of the primary causal mechanisms for Japan's evolving foreign and defense policy. This is due, in part, to aggressive actions directed towards Japan such as escalated tensions over the Senkaku Islands. For example, a 2010 collision between a Chinese fishing vessel and a Japan Coast Guard cutter in the vicinity of the disputed Senkaku Islands instigated a shift from a matter of law enforcement to "a serious challenge to Japan's island defenses."¹² Another example was the PRC's declaration of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea, which conflicted with Japan's ADIZ in 2013.¹³ The cumulative

¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2022)* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022), 2, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/221216anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>.

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 5, 7–10.

¹² Sheila A. Smith, *Japan Rearmed: The Politics of Military Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 118.

¹³ Smith, 121.

effect of these incidents was the recognition that Tokyo “had to be prepared first and foremost to defend the islands” without Washington’s support if need be.¹⁴

Next, the PRC’s provocations towards Taiwan have increased perceptions of a tense security environment in the vicinity of Japan, and there appears to be increasing concern in Japan that a conflict over Taiwan may involve Japan. Pyle points to the third Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1995–1996, in which the PRC drastically increased military exercises and live fire events around Taiwan, as a paradigm shift for Japan’s strategic thinkers; the crisis demonstrated to a global audience that the PRC’s focus was shifting outward towards the maritime domain.¹⁵ This trend has continued as, following Speaker Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in August of 2022, the PRC conducted live firings around the island that resulted in missiles landing in Japan’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).¹⁶ This illustrated the JSDF’s vulnerability to Chinese offensive strikes in a PRC–Taiwan conflict.¹⁷ Similarly, the PRC’s aggressive posture towards Taiwan elicits concern from Tokyo over the spillover economic impacts if the PRC were to blockade Taiwan or threaten the surrounding shipping lanes.¹⁸ Activities of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) over the previous decade in areas around Taiwan and Japan have thus prompted military modernization efforts which Japan could bring to bear in a cross-strait conflict.

Oros contends that the combination of Japan’s economic challenges, in conjunction with the PRC’s economic rise has exacerbated Japan’s sense of relative power decline; this sense of decline has increased the risk to Japan’s resource imports and product exports and contributed to the desire to reassess Article 9 and the JSDF’s posture.¹⁹ Green writes that recent concerns have roots in the 1990s as Japan, which had been optimistic about relations with China, realized the PRC had a competing vision for order in East Asia and would

¹⁴ Smith, 122.

¹⁵ Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 331–39.

¹⁶ Mochizuki, “Tokyo’s Taiwan Conundrum,” 81.

¹⁷ Mochizuki, 82.

¹⁸ Mochizuki, 91–92.

¹⁹ Andrew L. Oros, *Japan’s Security Renaissance: New Policies and Politics for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 66–75.

eventually possess the ability to challenge the U.S.–Japan led balance of power.²⁰ Of the literature cited above, the majority does not focus on examining Japan’s reaction to an invasion of Taiwan and the potential for China to alter the status quo by force but rather mentions the scenario as an item for further study. Apart from a North Korean nuclear provocation or a confrontation with the PRC over the Senkaku Islands, the U.S.–Japan alliance is the most likely catalyst driving Japan’s reassessment of its of its military capabilities and policy towards Taiwan.

b. The Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea

At the end of the Cold War, North Korea emerged as a top national security priority for Japan. Since then, the DPRK has remained “a primary rationale for strengthening Japan’s military capabilities and for adapting long-standing institutions and practices.”²¹ With the expansion of its conventional missile program in the 1990s, the DPRK presented a new and direct military threat to Japan.²² The testing of nuclear weapons in the late 2000s and early 2010s have only made this threat more acute, while the DPRK’s greater nuclear and missile capabilities has also raised concern over the U.S.’s extended nuclear deterrence.²³ As it relates to Taiwan, the North Korean threat has been important not only for providing legitimation for investing in the JSDF, but also for driving greater cooperation with the United States in areas such as missile defense and intelligence sharing which previously did not exist.²⁴ Yet, perhaps more importantly, Japanese threat perceptions of the DPRK may serve “as a catch all proxy threat to justify changes in security policy that are simultaneously driven by the greater long-term, but diplomatically unacceptable to articulate, threat from China.”²⁵ While the DPRK’s nuclear and missile

²⁰ Michael J. Green, *Line of Advantage: Japan’s Grand Strategy in the Era of Abe Shinzo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 46–49.

²¹ Oros, *Japan’s Security Renaissance*, 77.

²² Oros, 42.

²³ Oros, 161.

²⁴ Oros, 43.

²⁵ Christopher W. Hughes, “Supersizing the DPRK Threat: Japan’s Evolving Military Posture and North Korea,” *Asian Survey* Vol. 49, no. 2 (2009): 311.

threats are important to Japan in their own right, it may have cascading implications for efforts to modernize the JSDF and reform domestic institutions that are equally applicable to a conflict over Taiwan.

c. The Russian Federation

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has important implications for considerations of a future PRC–Taiwan conflict. First and foremost, the Russian invasion has heightened the importance of ensuring the “status quo must not change by force.”²⁶ The Russian invasion has had the practical implications of (1) providing Japanese politicians in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) the justification for raising defense spending to 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), (2) coalescing Japanese public support for providing public and private aid to Ukraine, and (3) prompting discussions in Tokyo about the economic risks and vulnerabilities that China could exploit in a PRC–Taiwan conflict to deter a Japanese and U.S. response.²⁷ While Ukraine and Taiwan are not identical situations, these are examples of important spill-over effects which could prove to be of significance in a Taiwan conflict or in efforts to deter one. Of broader concern, the 2022 NSS asserts that “Russia's external and military activities and others have shaken the very foundation of the international order.”²⁸ Finally, increasing this concern is the “no limits” friendship between the PRC and Russia that was announced in February of 2022 prior to the invasion of Ukraine.²⁹ While the NSS does not make the explicit link, there is an inferred warning that a PRC invasion of Taiwan would be equally disruptive to the international order and, thus, Japanese politicians appear to be eyeing events in Europe for their potential parallels and lessons learned to apply in a conflict over Taiwan.

²⁶ Sheila A. Smith, “The United States, Japan, and Taiwan: What Has Russia's Aggression Changed?,” *Asia Policy* Vol. 17, no. 2 (April 2022): 89.

²⁷ Smith, 86, 90–92.

²⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan* (2022), 2022, 1, 10.

²⁹ Chris Buckley and Steven Lee Myers, “In Beijing, Olympic Spectacle and Global Power Games,” *New York Times*, February 4, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/04/world/asia/olympics-beijing-xi-putin.html>.

d. The U.S.–Japan Alliance and Abandonment Concerns

The end of the Cold War raised concerns in Tokyo about the potential for American abandonment. Because of this fear, there is recognition that “dealing with the heightened threats ... will require more than assurances of the United States’ commitment” and implies that Japan will need greater capabilities and flexibility to defend itself.³⁰ Furthermore, numerous scholars point to U.S.–Japan alliance dynamics as an important factor in the evolution of the JSDF. With an increasingly assertive China, Japan worried that American security priorities would lead to its withdrawal from the region.³¹ These concerns of abandonment in a potential conflict with the PRC or the DPRK returned with the election of President Donald Trump and “America First” messaging.³² As Smith notes, each of these factors combined has led Japan to focus on improving the JSDF’s capabilities as a hedge against potential abandonment and to demonstrate support for U.S. strategic aims in East Asia broadly and the Taiwan Strait, specifically.

3. Domestic Politics, Reforms, and Restraints

This thesis is primarily concerned with how Japan could support the U.S. in a conflict with the PRC, and there are domestic restraints that could limit Japan’s contribution to Taiwan’s defense. As Ellis Kraus notes in her discussion of the U.S.–Japan alliance, “domestic politics influences foreign policy, but the international system produces adjustments in domestic politics as well.”³³ In some instances, the worsening international security environment appears to be affecting a few domestic norms such as: (1) the legacy of the Yoshida Doctrine, (2) public opinion towards constitutional revision, (3) popular support for the JSDF, (4) whether Japan has sufficient national interests in Taiwan, and (5) potential constraints on the use of the JSDF in overseas conflicts.

³⁰ Smith, *Japan Rearmed*, 217.

³¹ Smith, 205–8.

³² Smith, 218; Green, *Line of Advantage*, 78.

³³ Ellis S. Krauss, “Japan-U.S. Relations: The Most Important Bilateral Relationship in the World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen, Online Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 810, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190050993.013.42>.

a. *The Legacy of the Yoshida Doctrine*

The hallmark of Japanese foreign policy from World War II through at least the end of the twentieth century was the dominance of the Yoshida Doctrine. At the outset of the Cold War, Prime Minister Yoshida crafted a policy which consisted of three main tenets, and outlined that “economic rehabilitation must be the prime national goal,” which necessitated a “lightly armed” Japan that avoided “involvement in international political-strategic issues.”³⁴ One scholar highlights the lack of consensus on if the Yoshida Doctrine is still valid stating, “whether this represented the effective end of the Yoshida Doctrine, or merely an internationalized version of it, will probably be debated by Japan specialists for decades.”³⁵ The discussion gained further traction after Prime Minister Abe’s 2014 reinterpretation of Article 9 to permit collective self-defense (CSD), with some scholars declaring the reinterpretation as the end of the Yoshida Doctrine and others seeing it as a gradual trend of loosening the legacy.

Some scholars point to Japan’s recent military modernization efforts as proof that the Yoshida Doctrine is no longer relevant. For example, the “remilitarization” of Japan is evidenced by the emphasis on “cross-domain operations” of the JSDF, the acquisition of F-35 strike fighters, the refit of two Izumo-class destroyers to deploy F-35s, and the creation of a nascent amphibious force by the Japan Ground Self Defense Force (JGSDF) as examples of nascent power projection capabilities.³⁶ Whereas these developments undermine one of the three pillars of the Yoshida Doctrine, it is not exactly a repudiation of the entire premise.

There is broad consensus that the Yoshida Doctrine is not as potent as the original 1950s formulation, but the degree to which the legacy remains is still an open question. This question is important for a potential Taiwan contingency, because even if the doctrine has evolved, it still might constrain Japan’s ability to intervene. Liff succinctly highlights

³⁴ Pyle, *Japan Rising*, 242.

³⁵ Krauss, “Japan-U.S. Relations,” 821.

³⁶ Christopher W. Hughes, “Remilitarization in Japan,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen, Online Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 686–88, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190050993.013.36>.

this caveat, arguing that observers of the potential for Japanese international involvement need “to appreciate the unique constitutional and legal constraints its leaders must confront.”³⁷ In summary, the Yoshida Doctrine has been weakened from its original form, but its constraining nature, particularly in domestic aversion to participation in foreign conflict, remains as a guardrail holding back Japan’s ability to counterbalance China and potentially support to Taiwan.

b. Public Opinion on Article 9 and Corresponding Restraints on the JSDF

Thus, while an amendment to Article 9 is highly desirable to some members of the LDP and interested U.S. parties, the lack of interest or necessity for amendment has led to Article 9’s survival in its current form. The constitution is the oldest unamended constitution in effect today.³⁸ Its longevity is largely due to its brevity and thus flexibility in interpretation, a hesitancy by politicians to expend political capital on the issue, as well as the lack of the public’s desire to change the constitution.³⁹ The Japanese public views popular sovereignty under the emperor, pacifism, and human rights as the “three principles of the Constitution of Japan.”⁴⁰ These pillars are important in understanding why previous efforts to amend Article 9 have failed or been watered down. To the extent that constitutional amendments are desired, it is for public priorities other than Article 9 and, while an international crisis may prompt an effort to change it, none of a significant magnitude has yet occurred to convince the public of the necessity of pursuing the amendment process.⁴¹ Even if the political elite and the public were convinced of the necessity of revision, it is unclear whether agreement could be reached on *how* to amend the document.

³⁷ Adam P. Liff, “The U.S.–Japan Alliance and Taiwan,” *Asia Policy* Vol. 17, no. 3 (July 2022): 165.

³⁸ Kenneth Mori McElwain, “The Japanese Constitution,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen and Pekkanen, Saadia M., Online Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190050993.013.12>.

³⁹ McElwain, 23–24.

⁴⁰ McElwain, 25.

⁴¹ McElwain, 24, 29.

As some scholars note, another factor hampering conservative efforts to revise the constitution is the relatively high bar for constitutional revision. As McElwain states, the LDP “has never won the requisite seats [for amendment] alone” which requires a two-thirds majority vote in the Diet for approval.⁴² Even with a two-thirds majority, the proposal would require approval by majority vote in a national referendum and, if the goal was to specifically address the JSDF’s legality, could potentially pass, as some polling indicates majority support for this change.⁴³ A high bar of support would be required to successfully implement changes to Article 9 to legalize the existence of the JSDF, or to eliminate the article altogether.

Significant disagreements in academic literature emerge when differentiating between what Japan would contribute to a foreign conflict versus what it could commit in accordance with the constitution. For example, Kenneth Pyle contends “Abe has finally and decisively ended all but one of the other self-binding policies adopted to keep Japan from involvement in great-power politics” with the 2014 reinterpretation of Article 9.⁴⁴ Green emphasizes that limits remain on how Japan can use force: although the legislation codifying the reinterpretation represents a “‘positive list’ of measures that would be allowed under collective self-defense” instead of what would not, leaving a considerable “gray area.”⁴⁵ The Congressional Research Service notes that “the removal of the blanket prohibition on collective self-defense enables Japan to engage more in cooperative security activities, like *noncombat* logistical operations and ... U.N. peacekeeping operations.”⁴⁶ The nuance of the various positions presented, whether CSD allows full combat support to

⁴² Kenneth Mori McElwain, “Constitutional Revision in the 2021 Election,” in *Japan Decides 2021: The Japanese General Election*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen, Steven R. Reed, and Daniel M. Smith (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 322.

⁴³ McElwain, 323, 326–28.

⁴⁴ Kenneth B. Pyle, “Japan’s Return to Great Power Competition: Abe’s Restoration,” *Asia Policy* Vol. 13, no. 2 (April 2018): 81–82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26497771>.

⁴⁵ Green, *Line of Advantage*, 95.

⁴⁶ Emphasis added. Emma Chanlett-Avery et al., *Japan-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No RL33436 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2023), 16, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL33436>.

U.S. forces or other non-combat support, is crucial for U.S. military planning in a Taiwan contingency.

c. Institutional Reforms

Even though there have been positive developments in both flexibility of interpreting the constitution and support for Taiwan, numerous scholars assert that limitations remain. First, however proactively Japan may try to respond to a Taiwan emergency, that response could be delayed by domestic politics. Unlike consolidated executive authority in the U.S., Japan's Diet would play an intrusive role in determining if Japan could engage in combat or support operations.⁴⁷ If a threat or attack meets the strict stipulations regarding CSD, a potential response utilizing the JSDF would have to be sent to the Diet for final approval.⁴⁸ In a Taiwan scenario, it remains an open question whether Japan could: a) respond utilizing the JSDF in a manner consistent with constitutional restrictions and b) whether approval from the Diet could be made in a timely manner, assuming they approve a military response in the first place. The Diet's ability to constrain the deployment of the JSDF could be crucial in a scenario akin to the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1995–1996; in a similar but hypothetical scenario where the United States deploys naval assets around Taiwan which are subsequently attacked, crucial days or weeks could pass before the JSDF is authorized to provide support, if this is allowed at all.

It is unclear how exactly the JSDF could participate in an American response to a Taiwan conflict. Hornung and Mochizuki highlight that the 2015 security legislation stemming from the Article 9 reinterpretation only allows Japan to provide logistical support in “areas where combat activities are *not actually being conducted*.”⁴⁹ Therefore, while Japan can now provide fuel, food, and ammunition to the United States military in a conflict, it is possible that Japanese law could prevent the supplying of those provisions where it is needed most—in combat zones. Additionally, one of the conditions restricting

⁴⁷ Mochizuki, “Tokyo's Taiwan Conundrum,” 100.

⁴⁸ Jeffrey W. Hornung and Mike M. Mochizuki, “Japan: Still an Exceptional U.S. Ally,” *The Washington Quarterly* Vol. 39, no. 1 (April 2016): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2016.1170483>.

⁴⁹ Emphasis added. Hornung and Mochizuki, 97.

the use of the JSDF is that “an attack against a foreign *country* threatens Japan’s survival.”⁵⁰ The Japanese position on Taiwanese statehood has been intentionally vague since shifting recognition to the People’s Republic of China in 1972.⁵¹ In a scenario where the PRC has attacked Taiwan but restrains from preemptively striking Japan and the United States, ambiguity exists regarding whether Japan could intervene, even if the fate of democratic Taiwan is judged to be vital to “Japan’s own national security and regional stability.”⁵² Since the intrusive nature of the Diet in the decision-making process “discourages a rush to military action and encourages greater public deliberation,” it is also necessary to examine whether the Japanese populace would be willing to support the Diet’s authorization of JSDF intervention in a Taiwan scenario.⁵³ The recent Russian invasion of Ukraine has prompted concern over the potential for similarly aggressive moves from the PRC towards Taiwan, and additional study is needed to ascertain whether Russia’s invasion of Ukraine makes the Japanese public supportive of involvement in foreign conflicts.

There is consensus that Japanese elite opinion towards military force in general has moved in a favorable direction. For example, Yoon traces support for reinterpretation of the constitution to allow limited CSD over five election cycles; he notes that support for CSD has solidified from 44 percent support of LDP members in 2003 to 97 percent in 2014.⁵⁴ Additionally, Green describes how the Democratic Party of Japan’s (DPJ) tenure in the majority from 2009 to 2012 largely continued and expanded upon the security policies of the LDP.⁵⁵ Both datapoints illustrate that Japan’s more complex security environment is shifting domestic attitudes in favor of expanding the JSDF’s roles and capabilities. Whether this positive trend includes the defense of Taiwan in a military conflict is likely to remain ambiguous. Mochizuki notes that, even in a less stable global

⁵⁰ Emphasis added. Hornung and Mochizuki, 98.

⁵¹ Liff, “The U.S.–Japan Alliance and Taiwan,” 129–33.

⁵² Liff, 130.

⁵³ Hornung and Mochizuki, “Japan: Still an Exceptional U.S. Ally,” 102.

⁵⁴ Support is defined as those who “agree” or “tend to agree” with reinterpretation of CSD. Junil Yoon, “Chrysanthemum Withered: The Faded Yoshida Doctrine and the Shift in the Japanese Security Policy Under the Abe Cabinet,” *Korean Social Science Journal* Vol. 46, no. 1 (June 1, 2019): 26.

⁵⁵ Oros, *Japan’s Security Renaissance*, 99–102.

environment following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there is debate within Japan on whether it should "energetically prepare for such a conflict" or "favor a moderate deterrence policy and the pursuit of diplomacy."⁵⁶ Public opinion in Japan warrants observation as a renewed domestic willingness to revise Article 9 could remove legal barriers to Japan assisting Taiwan alone or alongside the United States.

d. Japan's National Interests in Taiwan

Present literature asserts that Japanese interests in Taiwan are multi-faceted and derive from the fact that: (1) Japan shares a common identity with Taiwan as a democratic nation; (2) Taiwan is of significant geostrategic importance for Japan which facilitates the ability to check the increasing power of the PRC; and (3) the importance of the issue to the U.S. trickles into Japan's concerns due to the U.S.–Japan alliance.

In recent years, as Liff notes, there have been significant diplomatic shifts in Japan's attitudes towards Taiwan related to a sense of shared identity. He points to Japan's MOFA's *Diplomatic Blue Book*, which had defined Taiwan in 2012 as "merely an 'important region with which Japan has close economic relations'" and later "upgraded Taiwan's political and diplomatic important to that of a 'crucial partner and an important friend.'"⁵⁷ He further notes that Japan's diplomatic language has increasingly highlighted Japan's shared values with Taiwan. However, while the language about Taiwan is significant and a change from previous rhetoric, it is unclear if this affinity would translate into public support for military action.

In addition to the identity aspects of Japan's interests in Taiwan, there are practical matters of military and economic importance. Mochizuki succinctly highlights many of these interests. First, he notes that Taiwan is physically close to both the contested Senkaku Islands, U.S. and Japanese forces on Okinawa, and PRC possession of Taiwan would increase the PRC's power projection capabilities throughout the Ryukyu Island chain.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Mochizuki, "Tokyo's Taiwan Conundrum," 95.

⁵⁷ Emphasis added. Liff, "Japan, Taiwan and the 'One China' Framework after 50 Years," 2.

⁵⁸ Mochizuki, "Tokyo's Taiwan Conundrum," 82.

Additionally, he notes that the status quo “help [s] bottle up the Chinese military within the first island chain.”⁵⁹ Watanabe notes that ballistic and cruise missiles which threaten Taiwan also possess the capability to threaten Japan which, in the event of a Taiwan contingency, could be used in a preemptive or retaliatory strike against Japanese territory or U.S. military forces in Japan.⁶⁰ Finally, Mochizuki notes the integration of Taiwan into Japan’s economic supply chains and the negative impact that a change in Taiwan’s status could have on Japan’s economy.⁶¹ While there are other considerations, it is clear that there are important, tangible reasons for Japan to actively support Taiwan if forced alteration of the status quo appears likely.

In addition to Japan’s own interests, the U.S.–Japan relationship contributes to Japan’s stance towards Taiwan. There are significant differences between Japanese and U.S. policy towards Taiwan in the military domain. While both Japan and the United States agree on a “One China” policy that differs from the PRC’s, the two countries vary in their military ties. For example, Japan has never sold arms to Taiwan, trained with its armed forces, nor committed to its defense.⁶² This has remained consistent even with Japan’s recent attitudes expressed in the *Diplomatic Blue Book*. In contrast, the United States has codified, via the Taiwan Relations Act, its desire to provide Taiwan with military assistance for self-defense, and it formerly shared a defense treaty with Taiwan.⁶³ Therefore, one cannot assume that Japan and the United States would react to a hypothetical cross-strait conflict in the same manner, since there is considerable daylight between the two nations’ policies.

⁵⁹ Mochizuki, 83.

⁶⁰ Tsuneo Watanabe, “Japan’s Security Policy Evolution: The Interaction Between Think Tank Proposals and Government Implementation,” *Asia Policy* Vol. 17, no. 3 (July 2022): 121, <https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2022.0040>.

⁶¹ Mochizuki, “Tokyo’s Taiwan Conundrum,” 91.

⁶² Liff, “Japan, Taiwan and the ‘One China’ Framework after 50 Years,” 19.

⁶³ Thomas Wilkins, “A Hub-And-Spokes ‘Plus’ Model of US Alliances in the Indo-Pacific: Towards A New ‘Networked’ Design,” *Asian Affairs* Vol. 53 (July 19, 2022): 14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2022.2090767>.

But this difference in policy also implies that one factor driving changes in Japan's Taiwan policy might be pressure to reduce this gap with the U.S. If the United States were to intervene militarily in defense of Taiwan, it is safe to assume that the U.S. would expect Japan's participation or support. As Green and Oros highlight, there is a historic basis for this expectation. During the Gulf War of 1990–1991, when the United States led coalition forces to retake Kuwait from Iraq, the U.S. called on Japan for military support but only received delayed financial assistance.⁶⁴ Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Japan was more proactive in aiding the United States but was still limited in options by Article 9 restraints.⁶⁵ In a Taiwan contingency, it is reasonable to assume the United States would expect significant assistance from Japan which, if not provided, could irreparably damage the U.S.–Japan alliance. This pressure to meet the expectations of the United States might help explain Japan's more permissive stance, leading to increasing comfort and willingness to use the JSDF as an instrument of foreign policy.

e. Capabilities and Limitations of Japanese Support for Taiwan

The ramifications of Japan's shifting diplomatic language in Japan–Taiwan defense relations is subject to a broad debate. For example, scholars such as Liff and Soeya note that “active-duty Japan and Taiwan military–military ties basically do not exist” and “the possibility of Japan taking independent military action in a Taiwan contingency is nil *unless it is directly attacked*.”⁶⁶ In stark contrast, authors such as Yoon argues that “Japan can now use force in support its allies anywhere with government discretion.”⁶⁷ In essence, the question of whether Japan *could* intervene in a Taiwan contingency is very much open to debate among scholars without addressing if Japan even would.

⁶⁴ Green, *Line of Advantage*, 35, 193.

⁶⁵ Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance*, 44–48.

⁶⁶ Emphasis added. Liff, “Japan, Taiwan and the ‘One China’ Framework after 50 Years,” 19; Yoshihide Soeya, “Taiwan in Japan's Security Considerations,” *The China Quarterly* 165 (August 1, 2001): 144, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009443901000079>.

⁶⁷ Yoon, “Chrysanthemum Withered: The Faded Yoshida Doctrine and the Shift in the Japanese Security Policy Under the Abe Cabinet,” 32.

In keeping with the spirit of Japan's constitution, the JSDF is limited in offensive capabilities. Hornung and Mochizuki outline limitations of Japan's military capabilities, which are also recognized elsewhere in less detail. They point out that many of Japan's weapon systems provide the "minimum level [of force] necessary" for self-defense and exclude offensive "war-potential."⁶⁸ These limitations are crucial in considering Japan's ability to support the United States military in a response to defend Taiwan in the event of conflict. While the JSDF is highly capable of defending Japanese territory, it would struggle to project power in the area surrounding Taiwan, and the ramifications of this gap warrant additional study.

Another significant limitation recognized in existing literature is the lack of integrated contingency planning or command and control between Japanese and American forces. While Oros points to positive trends in recent changes to security legislation, such as increased exercises and interactions between allied forces, he explains that there is no joint allied military command or planning staff, nor is there likely to be one.⁶⁹ In a similar vein, Smith points out that while Japan and the United States have more interoperable equipment, there is no "shared plan on how to use them should conflict arise."⁷⁰ In the majority of the literature discussing contingency planning, the focus is on the potential for conflict on the Korean Peninsula or surrounding the Senkaku Islands dispute. With regards to Taiwan, further study is required to determine how the current lack of integrated planning could impact a response to a cross-strait conflict.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

The literature review yields two broad findings for this thesis to pursue regarding Japan's Taiwan policy. First is the assertion that Japan's stance towards Taiwan has indeed become more permissive, meaning that Japan is more committed to maintaining the current status quo. The second is that there are numerous factors driving Japan's policy changes, not all of which are necessarily Taiwan-centric. With regards to the base assumption that

⁶⁸ Hornung and Mochizuki, "Japan: Still an Exceptional U.S. Ally," 103–5.

⁶⁹ Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance*, 163, 185.

⁷⁰ Smith, *Japan Rearmed*, 197.

Japan's stance towards Taiwan is more permissive, this is evidenced by government documents, official statements, and economic ties between the two nations. It is the intent of this thesis to briefly establish and assume that Japan is indeed pursuing a more permissive policy before focusing more intently on the factors that are driving this change.

The thesis will examine several potential – and not mutually exclusive – explanations for Japan's more permissive approach. One hypothesis is that it is driven by Japan's perception of a greater risk of military conflict in Northeast Asia, primarily due to Chinese military modernization coupled with aggression towards Taiwan and aggressive posturing in the western Pacific but also due to the DPRK's erratic behavior, which has led to the eroding of norms of the formerly predominant Yoshida Doctrine. A second hypothesis is that Japanese national interests in the Taiwan situation have increased in importance or are more apparent. This includes the commonality of Japan and Taiwan as western Pacific democracies vested in the liberal international order. Additionally, the PRC's military modernization may increase Japan's perception that their economic interests along the first island chain are at risk of changing in a manner unfavorable to Japan. A final hypothesis is that domestic political and legal factors have stymied efforts to reform Article 9 despite increased threat perceptions and national interest in Taiwan. If Japan were to pursue weapons with greater offensive capability, or again pursue revision of Article 9, this would be evidence that domestic constraints are becoming less restrictive.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

Following the literature review, this thesis proceeds in four parts: (1) Chapter II analyzes the diplomatic, military, and economic ties between Japan and Taiwan which forge the desire to maintain the Taiwan status-quo as a Japanese national interest. (2) Chapter III then discusses the changes to the international environment, primarily since 2012, that have driven shifts in Japanese foreign and defense policy. These factors include the greater economic and military power of China, the impacts of the U.S.–Japan alliance, the threat generated by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, and the influence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and increased cooperation with China. (3) Chapter IV asserts that, despite trends towards a “normalized” Japan Self-Defense Force, there are significant

constitutional, political, domestic, and practical factors which limit the degree of support that the JSDF could provide to the U.S. or Taiwan in the event of conflict. (4) The concluding chapter provides a summary of findings and recommendations for utilizing the U.S.–Japan alliance to enhance deterrence and prevent a conflict over Taiwan.

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II. JAPAN'S NATIONAL INTERESTS IN TAIWAN

We emphasize that our basic positions on Taiwan remain unchanged, and reiterate the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait as an indispensable element of security and prosperity in the international community. We encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues.

—President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida,
Joint Statement of the United States and Japan, January, 2023

In recent years, Japan has more vocally expressed its interests in a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan Strait issue, and this change is evident when comparing Japan's 2013 and 2022 NSS. Whereas the 2013 NSS vaguely states “the cross-strait relationship contains both orientations towards stability and potential instability,” the 2022 version clearly states that “peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is an indispensable element for the security and prosperity of the international community, and Japan will continue to make various efforts based on its position that the cross-strait issues are expected to be resolved peacefully.”⁷¹ Japan consistently outlines its concerns about the stability of the rules-based order, which is viewed as critical to Japan's security—a Taiwan contingency poses a threat to that order. Thus, as Japan is more openly stating that peace within the Taiwan Straits is a matter of Japan's national interest, it is worth outlining the factors that make it so. Given Japan's stated desire to see continued stability in the region, this chapter analyzes the strategic, economic, and political factors that cause Japan to advocate for maintaining the status quo.

A. STRATEGIC AND MILITARY INTERESTS

First, Japan views the status of Taiwan as favorable from a strategic perspective. The 2013 NSS outlines the strategic importance of stability because Japan is “surrounded by the sea on all sides and blessed with an immense exclusive economic zone and an

⁷¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2013)* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013), 13, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/221216anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2022)*, 2022, 14.

extensive coastline, Japan as a maritime state has achieved economic growth through maritime trade and development of maritime resources, and has pursued ‘Open and Stable Seas.’”⁷² The 2022 NSS continues this theme and pegs Japan’s continued economic vitality to the precondition of a stable international environment.⁷³ Japan’s identity as a maritime nation, whose security and economic vitality depend on a stable, trade-conducive international order, is a primary link between Japan’s national interest and the fate of Taiwan.

Tokyo views a potential cross-strait conflict as a strategic concern because of the threat to the international order that has enabled Japan to become a wealthy, secure nation. Evermore, Japan views the PRC’s actions towards Taiwan as a challenge to the current order. While the 2022 NSS does not explicitly make this point, the document points to the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a direct threat to rules-based order, and insinuates that a similar confrontation over Taiwan is possible and claims “some states ... are expanding their influence through both military and non-military means, attempting to unilaterally change the status quo, and accelerating actions to challenge the international order.”⁷⁴ More directly, the NSS takes issue with the PRC’s rapid expansion of the PLA, its increased activities in the East China and South China Seas, and states that “concerns are mounting rapidly” over the PRC’s approach to potential reunification of Taiwan.⁷⁵ While the 2013 NSS shares concern over the PRC’s “rapidly advancing military capabilities,” the 2022 NSS’s heightened degree of concern and increased prominence of Taiwan as a national security concern are notable.⁷⁶ In the strategic sense, it is evident that Japan views the status of Taiwan as an important consideration because of the commensurate threat a PRC-Taiwan conflict poses to regional stability.

Additionally, the status of Taiwan is a matter of Japan’s national interest due to the island’s importance to the United States. In both the 2013 and 2022 NSS, the U.S.–Japan

⁷² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2013)*, 2.

⁷³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2022)*, 2022, 10–11.

⁷⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2, 5–6.

⁷⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 8.

⁷⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2013)*, 13–14.

alliance is described as the “cornerstone” of Japanese security.⁷⁷ While there has been significant change in the manner that Japan discusses its interests in cross-strait relations, it is worth noting that this trend also exists in the United States. The Obama Administration’s 2015 NSS says that “on territorial disputes, particularly in Asia, we denounce coercion and assertive behaviors” but the document does not specifically mention Taiwan.⁷⁸ However, the Trump Administration’s 2017 NSS adds that the U.S. will “maintain strong ties with Taiwan” and seek to “deter coercion” in order to prevent a unilateral change to the status quo.⁷⁹ Finally, the Biden Administration is arguably the most vocal in addressing the U.S.’s concerns and states bluntly that “we have an abiding interest in maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait” and promises to “support Taiwan’s self-defense and maintain our capacity to resist any resort to force or coercion against Taiwan.”⁸⁰ Thus, as successive U.S. presidential administrations place maintaining the Taiwan status quo squarely in the United States’ national interest, the matter also increases in importance as a national interest for Japan due to the close nature of the U.S.–Japan alliance and its centrality to Japanese national security policy.

Finally, there are military factors which add to Japan’s desire to maintain the status quo such as Taiwan’s adjacency to the Senkaku Islands, PRC military activities within the first island chain, and the potential ability for the PLA to operate in the broader Pacific. The proximity of Japan’s southern territories to Taiwan that increases the desire to deter a PRC-Taiwan conflict; by virtue of geography, American and Japanese military forces stationed on Okinawa and elsewhere within the Ryukyu Islands are within range of PLA missile strikes.⁸¹ From the PRC’s perspective, there is an incentive to strike U.S. and

⁷⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 20; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan* (2022), 2022, 5.

⁷⁸ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (2015) (Washington, DC: The White House, 2015), 13, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf.

⁷⁹ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (2017) (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017), 47, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

⁸⁰ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (2022), 24.

⁸¹ Mochizuki, “Tokyo’s Taiwan Conundrum,” 82.

Japanese military forces in the Ryukyu Islands because of the potential that these forces could “bottle up” the PLA in the East China Sea during a conflict.⁸² This proximity raises the risk that Japan could be drawn into a conflict preemptively or due to miscalculation and, as a result, makes the status of Taiwan an important variable in Japan’s national security.

Conversely, Japan is concerned that, if the PRC were to recapture Taiwan, the PLA could solidify control of the East and South China Seas and have easier access to the broader Pacific Ocean. While Japan and Taiwan have disagreements of their own, the democratic government of the ROC is more likely to pursue diplomacy in pursuit of a resolution than the mainland CCP.⁸³ For example, as tensions increased between the PRC and Japan over Japan’s administration of the Senkaku Islands in 2013, Taiwan’s MOFA “stated it would not enter any agreement with China concerning the disputed Senkaku Islands.”⁸⁴ In the military realm, the Taiwan status quo benefits Japan as it complicates the PLA’s ability to operate in the western Pacific. In a 2014 PLA exercise, PRC military forces “broke through” the Miyako Strait and Bashi Channel to reach the western Pacific through the first island chain.⁸⁵ But if Taiwan were under the governance of the PRC, these same forces would be able to venture outside of the first island chain with significantly reduced risk, which would likely result in expanded PLA operations throughout the Pacific.⁸⁶ Additionally, enhancing the PLA’s dominance in the East China Sea could enable exploitation of natural resources in a manner that excludes Japan while simultaneously reducing the freedom of the U.S. or Japan to operate within the first island

⁸² Mochizuki, 83.

⁸³ Rira Momma, “China-Taiwan Relations from Taiwan’s Perspective,” in *NIDS China Security Report 2017: Change in Continuity: The Dynamics of the China-Taiwan Relationship*, ed. Tetsuo Murooka et al. (Tokyo: The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2017), 39–40, http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/publication/chinareport/pdf/china_report_EN_web_2017_A01.pdf.

⁸⁴ Momma, 39.

⁸⁵ Shinji Yamaguchi, “The Transition in China’s Policy Toward Taiwan,” in *NIDS China Security Report 2017: Change in Continuity: The Dynamics of the China-Taiwan Relationship*, ed. Tetsuo Murooka et al. (Tokyo: The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2017), 11, http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/publication/chinareport/pdf/china_report_EN_web_2017_A01.pdf.

⁸⁶ Yamaguchi, 12.

chain.⁸⁷ The Ministry of Defense (MOD) has noted concern about China’s expansion of operations out to the second island chain, which runs through the Marianas Islands, and has called increased intelligence collection activities and intrusions into Japan’s territorial waters as “a matter of grave concern” and “very deplorable.”⁸⁸ Thus, maintaining the status quo is an important aspect of Japanese national security because, if the PRC controlled Taiwan, China could significantly alter the military and strategic balance of power in East Asia.

⁸⁷ Yamaguchi, 16–17.

⁸⁸ Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Defense of Japan 2022* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense Japan, 2022), 45, https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022_EN_Full_02.pdf.



Figure 1. The First and Second Island Chain⁸⁹

B. ECONOMIC LINKS

Japan's 2022 NSS makes it abundantly clear that economic interests comprise the cornerstone of national security considerations. It states that "Japan will achieve the prosperity of Japan and its nationals through economic growth, thereby consolidating its own peace and security."⁹⁰ Therefore, the economic ties with Taiwan matter because of (1) direct Japan-Taiwan economic links and (2) the implications of Taiwan's status on regional economic stability and the liberal international order.

⁸⁹ Source: U.S. Department of Defense, "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2011" (Washington, D.C., 2011), 23, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2011_CMPR_Final.pdf.

⁹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2022)*, 2022, 4.

Trade between Japan and Taiwan, while not as extensive as trade with the PRC or U.S., is nonetheless a significant link. Taiwan was Japan's fourth largest trading partner in 2022 with imports and exports valued at \$93 billion United States dollars (USD).⁹¹ In comparison, the PRC was Japan's largest trading partner at \$335 billion USD, the U.S. was second at \$229 billion USD, and Australia third at \$105 billion USD.⁹² Since 2013, trade between Japan and Taiwan has steadily increased from \$48 billion to \$93 billion USD in 2022 which represents a 187 percent increase.⁹³ This data illustrates that Taiwan is an important trading partner for Japan and corresponds with Japan's more vocal support for stability in the Taiwan Strait. Not only has Japan's trade with Taiwan increased, the total value between Japan and the other democratic nations listed above exceeds that of Japan's trade with China. If considered in the broader context, this combined trade with other democratic nations is a powerful incentive for Japan to maintain the current status quo.

Furthermore, foreign direct investment (FDI) between Japan and Taiwan has increased, which illustrates strengthened economic ties. From 2013 to 2021, the total value of FDI from Taiwan grew from \$2.3 billion to \$7.8 billion USD.⁹⁴ In comparison, FDI from the PRC increased from \$.6 billion to \$7.4 billion USD.⁹⁵ Examining FDI flows in the opposite direction, Japanese investors have developed a meaningful stake in both the PRC and Taiwan through outbound FDI. Between 2013 and 2021, the value of Japanese FDI in Taiwan nearly doubled from \$11.8 to \$19.5 billion USD.⁹⁶ While this value is dwarfed by total FDI in the PRC at \$146.8 billion USD, the overall share of Japan's

⁹¹ Ministry of Finance of Japan, "Trade Statistics of Japan: Value by Country," accessed March 28, 2023, <https://www.customs.go.jp/toukei/srch/indexe.htm?M=23&P=1,,,,,,4,1,2022,0,0,0,,,,,,5,106,601,105,304,103,,,,,,20>.

⁹² Ministry of Finance of Japan.

⁹³ Ministry of Finance of Japan, "Trade Statistics of Japan: Yearly and Monthly Data for Total Value of Exports and Imports," accessed March 28, 2023, <https://www.customs.go.jp/toukei/srch/indexe.htm?M=27&P=1,,,3,106,1,,,,,2013,2023,,,,,,20>.

⁹⁴ Japan External Trade Organization, "FDI Stock (Based on International Investment Position, Net) / Inward," Unpublished Raw Data, JETRO Trade and Statistics, May 27, 2022, https://www.jetro.go.jp/ext_images/en/reports/statistics/data/22fdistock02_en.xls.

⁹⁵ Japan External Trade Organization.

⁹⁶ Japan External Trade Organization, "FDI Stock (Based on International Investment Position, Net) / Outward," Unpublished Raw Data, JETRO Trade and Statistics, May 27, 2022, https://www.jetro.go.jp/ext_images/en/reports/statistics/data/22fdistock01_en.xls.

outward FDI to the PRC has fallen from 8.8 percent in 2013 to 7.3 percent in 2021 as a share of global investment value.⁹⁷ Japan undoubtedly has a significantly greater investment in the PRC in terms of total value, but the trends show economic ties between Japan and Taiwan through FDI and trade have only strengthened despite greater tension in the region.

Taiwan's status as a leading manufacturer of semiconductors is also a national concern for Japan. Figure 2 shows that, even considering the relatively small size of the Taiwan's economy, the island produces a large amount of the world's supply of advanced semiconductors. Taiwan produces 35 percent of logic chips, which are critical to the functioning of modern devices such as smartphones, vehicles, supercomputers, and ongoing development of emerging technologies.⁹⁸ The importance of Taiwan's semiconductor industry to Japan is two-fold; first, numerous Japanese companies are major consumers of the finished product and, second, Japan is an important supplier of semiconductor manufacturing equipment for Taiwan's factories. Many of Japan's most recognized exports are electronics and automobiles from companies such as Sony, Toshiba, and Toyota to name a few. As far as inputs, Taiwan partially relies on Japan to supply advanced photolithography equipment, which is a necessary component of semiconductor production; Japan also produces 49 percent of the global supply of blank wafers.⁹⁹ In the event of a blockade or invasion of Taiwan, Japan would be subject to significant supply-chain disruptions which would seriously hamper or prevent Japanese economic growth.

⁹⁷ Japan External Trade Organization.

⁹⁸ Manpreet Singh, Karen M. Sutter, and John F. Sargent Jr., *Semiconductors and the Semiconductor Industry*, CRS Report No R47508 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2023), 2–3, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47508>.

⁹⁹ Singh, Sutter, and Sargent Jr., 17–18.

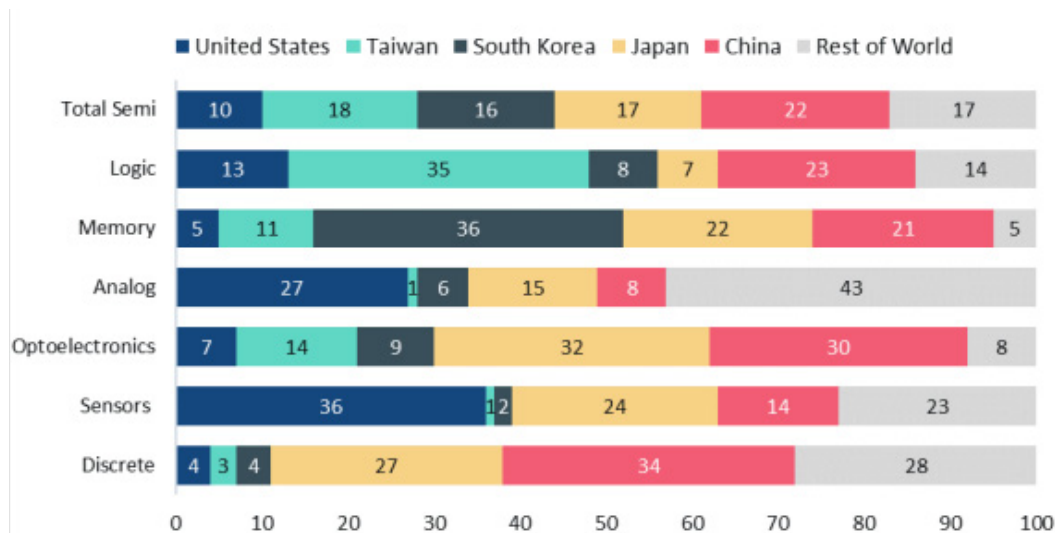


Figure 2. Semiconductor Manufacturing Share by Country/Type¹⁰⁰

Japan's economy is also highly dependent on energy imports that are transported on sea-lanes adjacent to Taiwan. The shuttering of Japan's nuclear reactors in the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster has increased the difficulty of reducing dependence on imported energy sources.¹⁰¹ Of Japan's crude oil imports, 90 percent is sourced from the Middle East.¹⁰² Apart from oil, the sea-lanes are integral to Japan's economy as over 40 percent of Japan's maritime trade, approximately \$240 billion USD, passed through the South China Sea in 2016.¹⁰³ In the event of a Taiwan crisis, these vital maritime trade routes could be targeted or disrupted by the PLA at significant cost to Japan. Even without direct conflict between the PRC and Japan, the reunification of Taiwan with the PRC would only serve to increase the vulnerability of these supply lines.

A final, less-concrete economic matter with the potential to strengthen Japan's national interests Taiwan's desire to improve integration with the global economy.

¹⁰⁰ Source: Singh, Sutter, and Sargent Jr., 9.

¹⁰¹ Keisuke Iida, "Linkages Between Security and Economics in Japan," in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen, Online Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 675, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190050993.013.34>.

¹⁰² Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Defense of Japan 2022*, 148.

¹⁰³ Center for Strategic and International Studies, "How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea?," *China Power* (blog), accessed March 30, 2023, <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/>.

Taiwan's participation in international free-trade agreements (FTAs) or other economic frameworks is limited by Beijing's insistence on its "right to block Taiwan from membership in regional groups and bilateral FTAs with any third country, on the grounds that the island [is] a part of China."¹⁰⁴ As a result, Taiwan remains relatively isolated from international economic agreements and only maintains bilateral FTAs with two nations that do not formally recognize Taiwan: Singapore and New Zealand.¹⁰⁵ Further, Taiwan expressed interest in joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in 2016 along with the U.S., Japan, and 10 other nations;¹⁰⁶ but, even though inclusion here is more feasible than other agreements because CPTPP is "open to any economy in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum," and the agreement does not include the PRC, Taiwan has not been able to join.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, as Taiwan has expressed its desire to create new economic connections with the global economy, to include CPTPP in which Japan is heavily influential, Japan has an added interest in maintaining Taiwan as a democratic, market economy because of the prospect of further economic integration and cooperation.

C. POLITICAL TIES WITH TAIWAN

A final set of interests in Taiwan stems from both the cultural ties between Japan and Taiwan as well as their statuses as democratic states. Japan's NSS notes that many countries have benefited from "the fruits of international peace, stability, and economic development in this globalized world" which it attributes to an international order based on "universal values such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law ... to shape the international society of coexistence and

¹⁰⁴ Richard C. Bush, *Difficult Choices: Taiwan's Quest for Security and the Good Life* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2021), 62.

¹⁰⁵ Taiwan does maintain a handful of FTAs with nations that maintain diplomatic recognition of the Republic of China. Bush, 61–62.

¹⁰⁶ Brock R. Williams and Michael. D Sutherland, *China and Taiwan Both Seek to Join the CPTPP*, CRS Report No IN11760 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2021), 1, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11760>.

¹⁰⁷ Bush, *Difficult Choices: Taiwan's Quest for Security and the Good Life*, 65–66.

coprosperity.”¹⁰⁸ Increasingly, Tokyo identifies Taipei as a partner which could contribute to the furtherance of this rules-based order, which has provided Japan the opportunity to blossom into a secure, wealthy country.

The PRC’s interactions with Taiwan are an important factor in Japan’s perceptions of China and drives domestic support in Japan for the Taiwan status quo. The third Taiwan Straits Crisis, in which the PRC responded to Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui’s 1995 visit to the United States with military exercises around Taiwan, was a matter of great interest and concern in Japan. The crisis was extensively covered by media in Japan and led to public concerns about the intentions of the PRC and continued peace and stability in East Asia.¹⁰⁹ The 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait crisis was not the sole event prompting a downturn in Japanese perception of China, but by the early 1990s Japanese respondents stating they had a positive view of the PRC had dropped from approximately 80 percent throughout the 1980s to around 50 percent by the end of the 1990s.¹¹⁰ This negative public perception of the PRC has solidified in the 21st century with 87 percent of Japanese respondents holding an unfavorable opinion of China which has been very consistent over the previous decade.¹¹¹ Because Taipei and Tokyo are both democratic governments, the PRC’s aggressiveness towards Taiwan is one of many factors responsible for Japan’s increasingly negative view of China.

As Japan’s relationship with the PRC has become increasingly tense, there is evidence that the Japanese public is willing to support Taiwan in the event of a challenge to the status quo. For example, when polled, 74 percent of respondents stated that “their

¹⁰⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2022)*, 2022, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Oros, *Japan’s Security Renaissance*, 43.

¹¹⁰ Tsuneo Watanabe, “Changing Japanese Views of China: A New Generation Moves Toward Realism and Nationalism,” in *The Rise of China in Asia* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 165–68, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep12065>.11.

¹¹¹ Laura Silver, Christine Huang, and Laura Clancy, “How Global Public Opinion Has Shifted in the Xi Era,” *Pew Research Center* (blog), September 28, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2022/09/28/how-global-public-opinion-of-china-has-shifted-in-the-xi-era/#:~:text=As%20Xi's%20tenure%20has%20continued,his%20approach%20to%20world%20affairs>.

country [Japan] should help with the defense of Taiwan.”¹¹² While this question formatting is vague and could refer to support on a spectrum from non-lethal military aid to full-scale intervention of the JSDF, it still demonstrates public interest in the status and future of Taiwan. Further, the ruling LDP included language in its 2021 campaign platform citing concern over “China’s unilateral efforts to change the status quo around the Senkaku Islands and Taiwan through force.”¹¹³ This public perception link of PRC–Japan and Japan–Taiwan relations is important because of the Japanese government’s stated desire to “reinforce collaboration with like-minded countries” of which Taiwan can reasonably be considered to be like-minded.¹¹⁴ One takeaway is that Tokyo is more convinced that Taipei is a diplomatic partner while Beijing is an international threat and, therefore, Japan is more sympathetic to Taiwan’s struggle.

Part of Japan’s affection towards Taiwan is due not only to negative feelings towards the PRC, but also due to Taiwan’s own democratization in the 1990s. Some argue that, because of these events, “in the minds of the Japanese elite and the mass public alike, Taiwan has strengthened the legitimacy of its political independence.”¹¹⁵ While the Japan–Taiwan bond is not without friction, their shared status as democratic nations has “created a new value-based dimension in Japan–Taiwan relations.”¹¹⁶ In addition to their shared identities as democracies, Japan–Taiwan relations are also strengthened by shared security concerns, vis-à-vis an increasingly aggressive PRC, and close ties with the United States.¹¹⁷ Further, Japan lists its intent to “maintain and protect universal values,” to include freedom and democracy, as within its national interest and, in this context, the

¹¹² Michael J. Green, “Foreign Policy and Defense,” in *Japan Decides 2021: The Japanese General Election*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen, Steven R. Reed, and Daniel M. Smith (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 352.

¹¹³ Kristin Vekasi, “China in Japan’s 2021 Election,” in *Japan Decides 2021: The Japanese General Election*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen, Steven R. Reed, and Daniel M. Smith (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 366.

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Defense of Japan, *National Defense Strategy of Japan* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense Japan, 2022), 10, https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/strategy/pdf/strategy_en.pdf.

¹¹⁵ Jing Sun, “Japan-Taiwan Relations: Unofficial in Name Only,” *Asian Survey* 47, no. 5 (October 2007): 808.

¹¹⁶ Sun, 809.

¹¹⁷ Sun, 797–98.

importance of Taiwan’s democratic stability fits the mold.¹¹⁸ The resulting effect of these factors is that Japan increasingly sees Taiwan as a “like-minded” partner in pursuit of stability.

¹¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2022)*, 2022, 4.

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III. THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The world is at a turning point in history. The international community is facing its greatest trial since World War II (WWII), and we have entered a new era of crisis.

—Minister of Defense Hamada
Forward to Defense of Japan 2023 White Paper

This chapter surveys changes within northeast Asia that, since the end of the Cold War but particularly since the early 2010s, have exacerbated Japan's concerns of instability in the region and encouraged changes to domestic policy. All in all, significant changes in relations with China, Russia, North Korea, and even the U.S. have resulted in a Japanese government and public that is more concerned with direct threats to Japan and the surrounding region. Simultaneously, Japan is less confident in the ability of the U.S.–Japan alliance to contain those challenges, and thus more willing to invest in its own defense forces with the intent of playing a more active regional role, alongside the U.S., in ensuring peace and stability in the western Pacific. Notably, this chapter examines four areas of concern, which include: (1) the growing economic and military power of the People's Republic of China, coupled with a perceived increase in assertive behavior; (2) the importance of the U.S.–Japan alliance to Japanese security, but more importantly the impacts of pressure from the U.S. to commit more to regional security coupled with fears of potential abandonment; and (3) the combined effects of North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its challenge to the rules-based order, and deepening cooperation between the PLA and Russian military in East Asia.

A. THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Japan's primary international concern stems from the growth of the People's Republic of China and the perceived increase in aggressiveness towards Japan, particularly over the previous decade. In that limited amount of time, the PRC has eclipsed Japan in terms of military power, militarized competition over the Senkaku Islands and broader East China Sea and demonstrated the PLA's new capabilities throughout the western Pacific. While not an all-inclusive list, these examples constitute the primary concerns for both the

Japanese public and its government that are driving the loosening of some legal restrictions on the JSDF and encouraging further investment and modernization efforts.

1. The Balance of Power in East Asia

Over the previous decade Japan has developed concern with the size, capabilities, and activities of the PLA. For context, China surpassed Japan in terms of military spending in 2004 and GDP in 2009.¹¹⁹ However, this shift in spending and economic power between Japan and China did not immediately cause concern within Tokyo because efforts to modernize the PLA, which began in the 1990s, did not bear noticeable fruit until the early 2010s. During a military parade celebrating the 60th anniversary of the PRC in 2009, Japanese defense analysts took notice of the PLA's unveiling of modernized intercontinental ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, modernized fighters, and other upgraded ground combat equipment.¹²⁰ Additionally, even though military spending between the PRC and Japan was roughly equal at the start of the decade, Japan's defense budget was one-fifth the size of China's by 2020."¹²¹ The 2010s represented the acceleration of trends that had been occurring since the end of the Cold War which have only elevated Japan's feelings of insecurity in its own neighborhood.

By 2013, Japan started to publicly voice concerns about China's rise and its impact on regional stability. Prime Minister Abe's NSS took issue with China "rapidly advancing its military capabilities" without "sufficient transparency," and described the developments as "an issue of concern to the international community including Japan."¹²² The language of the 2022 NSS exhibited an apprehensive tone, stating that "China's current external stance, military activities, and other activities" now "present an unprecedented and *the greatest* strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and security of Japan."¹²³ In a relatively

¹¹⁹ Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance*, 70–72.

¹²⁰ Masafumi Iida et al., *NIDS China Security Report (2011)* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, 2011), 2–3.

¹²¹ Green, *Line of Advantage*, 57.

¹²² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2013)*, 12–13.

¹²³ Emphasis added. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2022)*, 2022, 9.

short period of time, Japan went from the largest economic and military power in East Asia to second-best with an ever-increasing gap between its main competitor.

A limited comparison of JSDF and PLA military capabilities are crucial to understanding why, in the eyes of Japan, the PRC has transformed from a modest concern to Japan’s greatest challenge in approximately a decade. As Table 1 shows, while the size and composition of the Japan Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) and Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) has moderately grown since the early 2010s, their PRC counterparts have grown substantially. While a qualitative, service-by-service comparison is not the purpose of this thesis, a select sample is useful for illustrating that the relative balance of military force in the western Pacific has shifted in an unfavorable direction from Japan’s perspective. Considering that Japan is primarily a maritime power, a comparison of PLA and JSDF power projection capabilities is most relevant to regional concerns.

Table 1. Naval and Air Force Comparison of the PLA and JSDF¹²⁴

Year	2011	2022
Surface Combatants		
JMSDF	48	54
PLA Navy	79	137
Subsurface Combatants		
JMSDF	22	22
PLA Navy	54	65
Fighter Aircraft		
JASDF	260	320
PLA Air Force	1,680	1,900

¹²⁴ Adapted from U.S. Department of Defense, “Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2011,” 74,76; U.S. Department of Defense, “Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2022” (Washington, D.C., 2022), 166–67, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Nov/29/2003122279/-1/-1/1/2022-military-and-security-developments-involving-the-peoples-republic-of-china.pdf>; Ministry of Defense of Japan, *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and Beyond* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense Japan, 2010), 20, https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11591426/www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf; Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Defense Buildup Program* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense Japan, 2022), 54–55, https://www.mod.go.jp/j/policy/agenda/guideline/plan/pdf/program_en.pdf.

While Japan assesses a potential PRC invasion of Taiwan as the principal driver for the expansion of the PLA, the platforms and capabilities acquired for an invasion of Taiwan also present concerns for Japan's security in the western Pacific. The 2022 *Defense of Japan* white paper indicates "that China has given top priority to dealing with a Taiwan contingency" and further notes "the stability of the situation surrounding Taiwan is also critical for Japan's security and must be closely monitored with a sense of urgency."¹²⁵ Thus, as China modernizes its military forces to push for unification with Taiwan, these same forces present a threat to Japan, and the imbalance of combat power in the western Pacific has only grown in the previous decade. While the quantitative growth in and of itself is worrisome to Japan's defense establishment, this alone does not explain shifting Japanese defense posture. The way these platforms and capabilities are employed in the western Pacific, which is discussed in the following section, is an equally important factor in Japan's perception of its threat environment.

The shifting military balance of power has been accompanied by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) expressing their intent to transform China into a maritime power. If China were to become a maritime power, it would be in direct conflict with Japan's national interests, and compounds the sense of urgency driving Japan's defense policy transformation. At the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (NCCPC), General Secretary Hu Jintao stated that to "resolutely safeguard China's maritime rights and interests" the nation should strive to "build China into a maritime power."¹²⁶ Additionally, he emphasized the linkage between the PRC's economic growth and military modernization with his hope to "ensure both economic development and development of defense capabilities" while aiming to fully adopt modern military technology by 2020."¹²⁷ Finally, he called for an emphases on "active defense" as the predominate military strategy and pressed to "attach great importance to maritime, space, and cyberspace security."¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Defense of Japan 2022*, 11, 31.

¹²⁶ Jintao Hu, *Report to the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China* (Beijing, China: National Congress of the Communist Party of China, 2012), 15.

¹²⁷ Hu, 16.

¹²⁸ Hu, 16.

China's desire to transform into a maritime power, following the escalation of tensions between 2010 and 2013 around the Senkaku Islands dispute, caused great concern in Tokyo because, at its core, Japan is a maritime nation. Given the growing economic power of China, this change in maritime strategy raised concern in Tokyo with the prospect of having to directly compete with the PRC in local waters.

Xi Jinping's accession to General Secretary of the CCP in 2013 and his statements at the 19th and 20th NCCPC proved that Hu Jintao's goal of developing a credible, technologically advanced maritime force was no aberration. Both of Xi Jinping's reports said that the party would "step up efforts to build China into a strong maritime country."¹²⁹ Perhaps more important and concerning for Japan's strategic environment was Xi Jinping's proclamation that "we will make it our mission to see that by 2035, the modernization of our national defense and our forces is basically completed; and that by the mid-21st century our people's armed forces have been fully transformed into world-class forces."¹³⁰ Not only did the CCP have the intent to develop as a nautical nation, Xi's goal committed an ever increasing allotment of resources to attain that goal.

The theme of PLA modernization is a throughline for the 2012, 2017, and 2022 NCCPC work reports, and the language concerning Taiwan has grown increasingly bellicose in tandem with the growing capabilities of the PRC. In 2012, Hu Jintao stated that "peaceful reunification is in the best interests of the Chinese nation, including our compatriots in Taiwan," and while Xi Jinping's 2017 and 2022 work reports also claimed to "uphold the principles of 'peaceful reunification'" this language came with a warning.¹³¹ All three reports, with some variation, state that China will "resolutely oppose any separatist attempt for Taiwan independence" but, under Xi Jinping, the work reports expanded to include warnings to supporters of Taiwan.¹³² For example, Xi stated that

¹²⁹ Jinping Xi, *Report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China* (Beijing: China: National Congress of the Communist Party of China, 2017), 30, np.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/Diplomacy/201211/t20121118_1586373.htm; Xi, *20th National Congress Work Report*, 27.

¹³⁰ Xi, *19th National Congress Work Report*, 48.

¹³¹ Hu, *18th National Congress Work Report*, 17; Xi, *19th National Congress Work Report*, 50; Xi, *20th National Congress Work Report*, 51.

¹³² Hu, *18th National Congress Work Report*, 17.

China “will never allow the historical tragedy of national division to repeat itself,” that the PRC “will never promise to renounce the use of force” and that the military option was “directed solely at outside interference by outside forces.”¹³³ The NCCPC reports do not name the U.S. directly but, it is fair to infer that the U.S. is the main audience, which includes Japan by proxy through the U.S.–Japan alliance. As the PLA has grown in both size and capability since the early 2010s, the rhetoric emanating from the PRC regarding the status of Taiwan has evolved to warn the international community more directly against further support for Taiwan.

With this context, the reasoning behind the shifting language in Japan’s *National Security Strategy* and *Diplomatic Blue Books* is apparent. China has gone from “an issue of concern” to “the greatest strategic challenge” while Taiwan has evolved from an “important region” to “an extremely crucial partner and important friend” in the official parlance of Tokyo’s diplomatic and strategic documents.¹³⁴ While the PRC’s militarization is primarily intended to help achieve a resolution of the status of Taiwan, it also challenges Japan’s national interests and has been used to exert military pressure on Japan in other areas of contention in the Japan–PRC relationship.

2. The East China Sea as a Stage for Interstate Competition

Tensions around the Senkaku Islands and throughout the East China Sea between 2010 and 2022 are illustrative of how the PRC’s greater military capability has also increased competition between Japan and China. The PRC has long held that the status “of Taiwan is China’s internal affair in which no other country has the right to interfere” and, from both of these stances, it is clear that the unification of the PRC and Taiwan is one of the PLA’s core interests.¹³⁵ But the PLA, regardless of its main focus on Taiwan, has come

¹³³ Xi, *19th National Congress Work Report*, 51; Xi, *20th National Congress Work Report*, 52.

¹³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan* (2013), 12–13; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan* (2022), 2022, 9; Liff, “Japan, Taiwan and the ‘One China’ Framework after 50 Years,” 16–17.

¹³⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People’s Republic of China,” Joint Communiqué (Shanghai: U.S. Department of State, February 27, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d203>.

to represent a persistent challenge to the JSDF through constant PLA presence around the Senkaku Islands and the East China Sea as a whole.

Arguably, the relationship between Japan and the PRC assumed a militaristic nature following the arrest of a Chinese fisherman in the vicinity of the Senkaku Islands by the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) in 2010. While the intent of this thesis is not to hash out which nation shoulders fault for this particular incident, the PRC “responded furiously with mercantilist boycotts” while the DPJ-led government “grasped for a response.”¹³⁶ Japan eventually released the fisherman to Chinese custody and the PRC “incursions into the Senkakus returned to precrisis levels,” but resumed when Prime Minister Noda nationalized the Senkaku Islands in 2012.¹³⁷ Relations continued to worsen as the JSDF and PLA frequently interacted with one another throughout the East China Sea. In 2013, a PLA Navy warship illuminated a JMSDF military vessel with its fire control radar and the PRC declared an ADIZ in the East China Sea which included territory both claimed and administered by Japan.¹³⁸ The constant, continuous pressure on Japan, the JSDF, and the JCG to respond to the whipped up waters around the Senkaku Islands, in light of the PLA’s modernization and expansion, became increasingly taxing for Japan’s defense forces and illustrated that China’s desire to become a maritime power would exacerbate long-standing tensions with Japan.

While the domestic ramifications of increased tensions in the East China Sea will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, the “clear pattern of Chinese expansion and DPJ unsteadiness ... helped to revive Abe’s political fortunes in the LDP” which would account for many of the changes in Japan’s defense posture and policy throughout the 2010s.¹³⁹ This concerted military pressure exerted by the PRC on Japan has been widely publicized by Japan’s MOD to highlight the PLA’s pressure campaign in the East China Sea. The JASDF executed nearly 800 sorties in fiscal year 2022 to respond to PLA and

¹³⁶ Green, *Line of Advantage*, 53.

¹³⁷ Green, 53–54.

¹³⁸ Green, 56.

¹³⁹ Green, 55.

Russian Air Force airspace intrusions; nearly three-quarters of these intercepts were responses to PLA aircraft and, of these, 90 percent were in the JASDF district responsible for the East China Sea and Ryukyu Islands.¹⁴⁰ In the maritime domain, the rate of PLA Navy intrusions into Japan's territorial waters, the majority conducted by surveillance vessels, has also increased with at least five intrusions since 2021 compared to three between 2004 and 2020.¹⁴¹ As the PLA expands, whether it be to conduct offensive operations against Taiwan or deter outside intervention in a Taiwan conflict, the PRC has shown its willingness to use its military forces to contest claims with Japan throughout the East China Sea. So long as China's military modernization and expansion is utilized to ramp up pressure on both Taiwan and Japan, the status of Taiwan will remain a matter of Japan's national interest and spur further efforts to upgrade and enlarge the JSDF.

B. THE U.S.–JAPAN ALLIANCE

The U.S.–Japan alliance also prompts efforts to expand, modernize, and reform Japanese security policy to encourage burden sharing in the western Pacific, is an important driver of Japan's "normalization," as well as a factor in placing the status of Taiwan within Japan's national interests. First, since at least the 1990s, the U.S. has pressured Japan to contribute more to international peace and stability, commensurate with its status as the world's third largest economy. Recently, Japan's politicians have been receptive of pressure from the U.S. to contribute to East Asia's security because of the recognition that stability can no longer be maintained by the U.S. alone. Second, longstanding concerns of U.S. abandonment, which were more acute during the Trump Administration, has prompted the Government of Japan to invest more in its own security as a safeguard against U.S. isolation, but also to encourage continued American military presence in the region.

¹⁴⁰ Dzirhan Mahadzir, "Japan Scrambled Fighters Almost 800 Times Against Chinese, Russian Aircraft in 2022," USNI News, April 19, 2023, <https://news.usni.org/2023/04/19/japan-scrambled-fighters-almost-800-times-against-chinese-russian-aircraft-in-2022>.

¹⁴¹ Takahashi Kosuke, "China's Navy Sets Record Pace for Intrusions into Japan's Territorial Waters," *The Diplomat*, November 3, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/11/chinas-navy-sets-record-pace-for-intrusions-into-japans-territorial-sea/>.

Historically, Japan has rebuffed U.S. pressure and referred to Article 9 of the constitution as a means to avoid entrapment in military conflicts, such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars, despite pressure from the U.S. to assist militarily in thwarting communism in Asia.¹⁴² Yet, with Japan's rapid economic growth in the latter half of the 20th century and a more potent threat environment, this hesitancy to view the JSDF as an instrument of foreign policy has gradually shifted since the 1990s. There was no single event which precipitated Japan's evolving security policy. As Andrew Oros notes "the end of the Cold War, the first Persian Gulf War, the North Korean missile test that overflowed Japan, the September 11 attacks, and any of several crisis points with China related to the Senkaku Islands" led to both elite and popular recognition that Japan needed "greater military capabilities" to "address newly perceived security threats."¹⁴³ Further, as Japan's economy grew rapidly in the 1980s its "reliance on its only military ally, the United States," came into question.¹⁴⁴ Essentially, Japan's path towards a "normal" military force started around the end of the Cold War, but the trend has accelerated markedly in the previous decade.

1. The Gulf War and the Global War on Terror

Calls for Japan to increase its military contribution to the U.S.–Japan alliance has been a constant factor of the relationship since at least the 1990s. With U.S.–Japan economic competition in the early 1990s, the utility of the alliance even came into question with Americans wondering why "they should continue to spend money and risk their son's lives to defend a country that continues to 'bash us' on trade."¹⁴⁵ The trade-based tensions ameliorated, but the experience of the Gulf War illustrated that underlying concerns were still present. The U.S. sought Japanese contribution to efforts to repel Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in the 1990–1991 Gulf War, with the U.S. Ambassador to Japan Michael Armacost noting that the invasion was a "challenge to the international order, and

¹⁴² Green, "Foreign Policy and Defense," 83; Krauss, "Japan-U.S. Relations," 812–13.

¹⁴³ Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance*, 35.

¹⁴⁴ Oros, 36.

¹⁴⁵ Krauss, "Japan-U.S. Relations," 820.

Japan's own interests were at stake.”¹⁴⁶ This request represented a “clear signal from Washington that Tokyo should assume more responsibility (and risk) in maintaining global security and reconsider ... Japan's postwar military capabilities.”¹⁴⁷ However, Japan did not commit the JSDF to the United Nation's (UN) coalition in Kuwait until Desert Storm ended and the JMSDF belatedly dispatched minesweepers to the Persian Gulf, which resulted in international criticism of Japan's substitution of “checkbook power” for military force.¹⁴⁸ While Japan had preferred economic aid in place of the use of military capabilities in foreign policy, the global audience and the U.S. in particular was less willing to accept this substitution in the post–Cold War era.

Exertion of pressure from the U.S., prompted the Government of Japan to pass some reforms to avoid a similar incident in the future. As a result, the Diet passed a 1992 law which would allow the JSDF to participate in UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) with notable restrictions to noncombat roles.¹⁴⁹ A decade later in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks, Prime Minister Koizumi's cabinet sought to prevent a repeat of the Gulf War experience by introducing legislation in the Diet to authorize JSDF support for U.S. operations in Afghanistan and cited the constitution's intent for “Japan's responsibility to contribute to international peace and stability.”¹⁵⁰ Efforts to support American operations in Afghanistan were, like the Gulf War, confined to noncombat roles, and there was limited domestic opposition to the JASDF and JMSDF's efforts to provide logistical support to the U.S. military.¹⁵¹ Thus, it is likely that one of the factors that explains Japan's different response to the September 11th attacks was the previous experience of U.S. pressure and displeasure with Japan's contribution to the Gulf War.

¹⁴⁶ Smith, *Japan Rearmed*, 57.

¹⁴⁷ Smith, 57.

¹⁴⁸ Smith, 57–59.

¹⁴⁹ Smith, 62–63.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, 69–70.

¹⁵¹ Smith, 70–71.

2. Will Continued Pressure to “Do More” Result in Doing More?

Japan’s limited support for the U.S. in the Global War on Terror did not mark an end to the pressure campaign to encourage a more involved Japan. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, numerous U.S. officials called for Japan to actively contribute to global security efforts like Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who simply implored Japan to “do more” to promote security in East Asia, being a notable example.¹⁵² More recently, President Trump criticized Japan’s contribution to the U.S.–Japan alliance by saying, “if Japan is attacked, we will fight World War three” but “if we’re attacked, Japan doesn’t have to help us at all.”¹⁵³ Each of these examples from the post–Cold War era highlights the U.S.’s occasional dissatisfaction with burden sharing in the U.S.–Japan alliance but also demonstrates that, to a degree, this pressure is partly responsible for developments in Japanese national security and defense policy which have occurred in the twenty-first century.

The application of U.S. pressure on Japan has occurred simultaneously with the United States’ relative power decline and the realization that the U.S. is hard pressed to uphold the international order with minimal assistance. Japan’s 2022 NDS alludes to this shifting balance of power by stating that the PRC’s efforts “improving military capabilities [is] to deny foreign military’s access to, and deployment in, China’s surrounding areas as well as to impede foreign military activities in those areas.”¹⁵⁴ While the NDS does not specifically refer to the U.S.’s ability to operate in the western Pacific, it is likely that Japan is concerned with the U.S. military’s ability to operate in an increasingly contested environment.

¹⁵² Emma Chanlett-Avery and Weston S. Konishi, *The Changing U.S.–Japan Alliance: Implications for U.S. Interests*, CRS Report No RL33740 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 13, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA504451.pdf>.

¹⁵³ Linda Sieg and Daniel Leussink, “Trump Renews Criticism of Japan-US Alliance Before G20 Summit,” *Reuters*, June 26, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-g20-summit-trump-japan/trump-renews-criticism-of-japan-us-alliance-before-g20-summit-idUSKCN1TS057>.

¹⁵⁴ Ministry of Defense of Japan, *National Defense Strategy of Japan*, 5–6.

3. Relative Power and Burden Sharing

Since the turn of the 21st century, Japan has experienced its own decline in relative power vis-à-vis China; the PRC's economy eclipsed Japan's in 2010 and the PLA's budget surpassed that of the JSDF in 2004.¹⁵⁵ As important as this is for understanding Japan's perception of its security environment, China's growth has had a similar effect, though to a lesser degree, on the relative power of the United States. In 2000, U.S. military spending totaled \$485 billion USD compared to the PRC's \$50 billion USD; by 2021 the U.S. increased defense spending to \$768 billion USD and the PRC to \$270 billion USD.¹⁵⁶ Over this period, the ratio of U.S. to PRC defense spending dropped from \$9.7:1 to \$2.8:1; U.S. spending increased 158 percent in contrast to 540 percent for the PLA. It is important to caveat, however, that this analysis in pure numbers does not account for purchasing power parity differences, which capabilities and platforms each nation opted to invest in, nor does it consider the U.S. military's global footprint as opposed to the more regionally oriented PLA. The end result is that the U.S. military, even though it has a larger budget, faces greater difficulty providing the same degree of confidence in the credibility of the U.S.–Japan alliance's security guarantee.

In part, Japan's shifting national security policy is in response to the erosion of U.S. military dominance in the western Pacific. Although not exclusively military oriented, this concern was foundational in Prime Minister Hatoyama's desire in the late 2000s to advocate for "a more assertive and autonomous Japanese diplomacy that sought to hedge against a growing expectation of U.S. decline."¹⁵⁷ In later years this evolved into Inada Tomomi, then Japan's Defense Minister, seeking "greater military self-reliance within the alliance."¹⁵⁸ The dilemma of satisfying American desires for Japan's participation in contributing to maintaining the international order as the PRC is increasingly capable of presenting a credible challenge is best described below:

¹⁵⁵ Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance*, 67, 84.

¹⁵⁶ Values in constant 2021 USD. "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, accessed April 4, 2023, <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>.

¹⁵⁷ Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance*, 113.

¹⁵⁸ Smith, *Japan Rearmed*, 233.

At the core of Japan's relationship with the United States, however, is a strategic bargain that trades American willingness to use military force on Japan's behalf for Japan's willingness to support American dominance in Asia. China is challenging the latter while the United States itself may be reconsidering its appetite for the former. ... Keeping China at bay while holding the United States close will be a difficult diplomatic strategy.¹⁵⁹

4. Further Prospects for Partnership

To summarize, the U.S.–Japan alliance is one mechanism which is driving changes to Japan's longstanding aversion to utilizing the JSDF as an instrument of foreign policy. The U.S. has welcomed Japan's shifting foreign policy as evidenced by Jake Sullivan, the National Security Advisor, stating “we congratulate Prime Minister Kishida and the people of Japan on their historic new *National Security Strategy* which will help us and our partners achieve lasting peace, stability, and prosperity” and will likely continue to encourage further efforts at modernization and reform.¹⁶⁰ The U.S. welcomes Japan's increased investment in the JSDF and contribution to stability in East Asia, and will seek continued partnership, as President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida have recently demonstrated, in expressing their interest in and the importance of “maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait as an indispensable element of security and prosperity in the international community.”¹⁶¹ As the U.S. encourages Japan's assistance in maintaining regional stability, this will include potential cooperation in a Taiwan contingency. So long as the U.S. continues to play an important role in the region, Japan will probably remain receptive to the United States' calls to do more in the region.

¹⁵⁹ Source: Smith, 218–19.

¹⁶⁰ The White House, “Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Japan's Historic National Security Strategy,” December 16, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/12/16/statement-by-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-on-japans-historic-national-security-strategy/>.

¹⁶¹ The White House, “Joint Statement of the United States and Japan,” January 13, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/01/13/joint-statement-of-the-united-states-and-japan/>.

C. THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Finally, the belligerency of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation are important drivers of Japan’s defense and foreign policy transformation over the previous decade. While concerns about the DPRK and Russia are not necessarily new, the severity of challenges posed by each nation has intensified concurrent with the rise of China. Throughout the twenty-first century, the DPRK’s nuclear and missile programs as well as Russia’s more recent invasion of Ukraine and deeper military cooperation with the PRC have altered Japan’s strategic calculus and encouraged the development of military technologies and loosening of domestic constraints that could better enable Japan to respond to a regional threat.

1. The North Korean Nuclear Threat and the JSDF’s Modernization

The development of nuclear weapons and associated missiles has intensified the sense of concern felt by both the government of Japan and the domestic populace in a manner that makes JSDF modernization less taboo. Before delving into the causation, the heightened concern is apparent when comparing Japan’s NSS documents of the past decade; in 2013 Japan noted concern over greater “capability of WMDs [weapons of mass destruction] including nuclear weapons and that of ballistic missiles,” while noting that the DPRK’s military activities, “some of which are directed at Japan” had raised tension in the region.¹⁶² Nearly a decade later, Japan still highlighted the threat of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles but increased the degree of concern stating that “North Korea’s military activities pose an even more grave and imminent threat to Japan’s national security than ever before.”¹⁶³ The classification of the DPRK’s nuclear and missile programs as a grave and imminent threat provide greater impetus, and political cover, for reforms to the JSDF and possibly to Article 9 of the constitution.

The DPRK has therefore led Japan to invest in military capabilities that it did not possess or previously refused to develop. As North Korea’s nascent missile program

¹⁶² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan* (2013), 12.

¹⁶³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan* (2022), 2022, 9.

expanded in the 1990s and “posed a direct military threat to Japan,” the Japanese government “developed its own indigenous surveillance satellite capabilities to monitor this newly perceived threat ... and to deploy an effective limited missile defense capability.”¹⁶⁴ The underlying notion of this development was that, with North Korea’s increasing nuclear and missile capabilities, “many Japanese question whether the United States would really sacrifice Los Angeles for Tokyo, as the model of extended deterrence posits” and encourages Japan’s development of its own indigenous military capabilities.¹⁶⁵ Yet, the examples of North Korea pushing Japan to pursue new military capabilities is as much a historic example as it is a contemporary phenomenon.

The North Korea factor is somewhat distinct from other threats discussed thus far due to the nature in which the threat has been felt by the Japanese public. Although relatively rare compared to the number of total missile tests, missiles launched from the DPRK have overflown Japan on at least two occasions—the first was in 2017 and a second 2022.¹⁶⁶ A recent missile test conducted by North Korea prompted the Japanese government to issue an alert for residents in Hokkaido to take shelter, which the government later stated was issued in error.¹⁶⁷ These incidents illustrate the cross-over between Japan’s security environment and domestic concerns, and contribute to the trend of “supersizing the DPRK threat,” which suggests a connection between North Korea’s weapons programs has “helped propel Japan toward being ready to use force to deter security threats from other states.”¹⁶⁸ Thus, to connect North Korea’s activities to a Taiwan contingency, it is feasible that “North Korea’s poor standing in Japan and internationally has meant that the North has often been used by policy makers as a convenient proxy threat

¹⁶⁴ Oros, *Japan’s Security Renaissance*, 42–43.

¹⁶⁵ Oros, 161.

¹⁶⁶ Choe Sang-Hun and David E. Sanger, “North Korea Fires Missile Over Japan,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/world/asia/north-korea-missile.html>; Motoko Rich and Choe Sang-Hun, “North Korea Fires Powerful Missile, Using Old Playbook in a New World,” *New York Times*, October 3, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/03/world/asia/japan-north-korea-missile.html>.

¹⁶⁷ Choe Sang-Hun, “North Korea Launches Missile as Japan Issues Brief Evacuation Alarm,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/north-korea-missile-launch.html>.

¹⁶⁸ Hughes, “Supersizing the DPRK Threat,” 292.

to legitimize pushing through changes in Japanese security policy.”¹⁶⁹ Rather than directly justify JSDF reform and modernization as a response to China, North Korea is “a catch-all proxy threat used to justify changes in security policy that are simultaneously driven by the greater long-term, but diplomatically unacceptable to articulate, threat from China.”¹⁷⁰ In effect, negative developments in the Japan–North Korea relationship drive changes to Japan’s defense posture and policy as capabilities and authorities designed to respond to a North Korean threat could reasonably be repurposed to a Japanese military response in a PRC–Taiwan conflict.

Japan’s intent to acquire stand-off missiles provides a great example of how the nuclear and ballistic missile threat has normalized the JSDF’s acquisition of modern capabilities. The 2022 NDS bluntly puts forth an assessment that “missile attacks against Japan have become a palpable threat” and warns that “if Japan continues to rely solely upon ballistic missile defenses, it will become increasingly difficult to fully address missile threats” and as a result “Japan needs counterstrike capabilities.”¹⁷¹ Notably, the stated desire to acquire counter-strike weapons has been followed-up with budget authorizations of \$2.4 billion to acquire U.S.-produced Tomahawk cruise as well as a \$2.8 billion contract to Japan-based Mitsubishi to provide a domestically produced counterstrike capability by the late 2020s.¹⁷² While the NDS does not explicitly state who has prompted Japan to finally acquire counter-strike weapons, it is fair to assume that North Korea is the primary causal factor for this change. However, taking the military intelligence satellites and counter-strike capabilities as examples, neither of these capabilities are hard-wired into Japan’s defense capabilities as a North Korea-only option; theoretically, the capabilities Japan is acquiring to deter the DPRK’s nuclear and missile threats could also be of utility in a PRC–Taiwan conflict should Japan choose to get involved.

¹⁶⁹ Hughes, 294.

¹⁷⁰ Hughes, 311.

¹⁷¹ Ministry of Defense of Japan, *National Defense Strategy of Japan*, 13–14.

¹⁷² Dzirhan Mahadzir, “Japan Issues Military Equipment Wishlist That Includes Hypersonic Weapons, Unmanned Systems,” USNI News, January 25, 2023, <https://news.usni.org/2023/01/25/japan-issues-military-equipment-wishlist-that-includes-hypersonic-weapons-unmanned-systems>; Dzirhan Mahadzir, “Japan Awards \$2.8B in Contracts for New Standoff Weapons,” USNI News, April 12, 2023, <https://news.usni.org/2023/04/12/japan-awards-2-8b-in-contracts-for-new-standoff-weapons>.

2. The Russian Federation

The final piece of the puzzle is the Russian Federation which, since its invasion of Ukraine and increased military activity with China, is increasingly viewed as a threat to the rules-based order and Japan itself. The 2022 NDS lays out Japan's stance that Russia's attempt to create "unilateral changes to the status quo by force" in Ukraine is "unacceptable" and that Japan is concerned by and "will pay attention to communication with China and Russia."¹⁷³ In the current circumstances, Japan's response to the war in Ukraine and ties between Russia and the PRC could be seen as a potential test of the degree to which the public is supportive of their government's efforts to support the current international order.

First, in response to the Russian invasion, Japan has been proactive in supporting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) by "sending material assistance to Ukraine ... offering aid to nations that border Ukraine, and admitting Ukrainians who seek refuge."¹⁷⁴ In addition to these efforts, Japan's response to the invasion was notable in that it "had imposed a comprehensive menu of economic sanctions on Russia" while simultaneously moving to offer economic aid and JSDF gear to Ukraine.¹⁷⁵ Further, Prime Minister Kishida has classified the invasion as "a systemic threat to the postwar order that Japan relies on for its own security and prosperity" and aid to NATO could be "an investment in a possible future scenario in the Indo-Pacific that would require a coordinated and concerted response to the use of force to change the status quo."¹⁷⁶ In a Taiwan scenario, similar economic sanctions on China would be orders of magnitude more complex due to the extensive PRC–Japan trade, but the possibility exists where "Beijing might be dissuaded from the use of force if it thought a similar Western coalition could be built in response to an invasion of Taiwan."¹⁷⁷ Essentially, Japan's efforts to aid Ukraine and deter Russia could provide insight into a potential response to an invasion of Taiwan.

¹⁷³ Ministry of Defense of Japan, *National Defense Strategy of Japan*, 3, 23.

¹⁷⁴ Smith, "The United States, Japan, and Taiwan: What Has Russia's Aggression Changed?," 85.

¹⁷⁵ Smith, 86.

¹⁷⁶ Smith, 85.

¹⁷⁷ Smith, 87.

Further, an important aspect of Japan's reaction to the war in Europe has been that "Japanese public opinion has largely favored this wholesale economic sanctions approach."¹⁷⁸ While this response falls well short of intervention of the JSDF, it is nevertheless significant as an indication that the domestic constituency in Japan is comfortable with Japan's active role in global affairs and shares the government's apprehension over the use of force to settle disputes between nation states.

The war in Ukraine may be changing public opinion in a manner that makes it more likely that Japan would aid the U.S. in a Taiwan conflict. Approval for "providing logistic support ... off the battlefield" grew marginally after the Russian invasion of Ukraine to 41 percent with 29 percent undecided.¹⁷⁹ However, as the polling summary notes, "they [the Japanese public] tend to take the view that as a country with critical threats very close to their own borders, the scope within which Japan can engage with international problems is limited, particularly in military terms."¹⁸⁰ This conclusion suggests that, in a regional conflict in East Asia, the Japanese public could be more supportive of military support than the polling suggests when considering these questions in a European conflict.

In addition to the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on public opinion in Japan, which alludes to parallels in a conflict over Taiwan, the Japanese government has noted heightened concern over Russian military activity around Japan and greater ties with the PRC. The 2022 NSS calls out "joint navigation by their [Russian and PRC] vessels and joint flights of their bombers in the vicinity of Japan" is concerned that "these two countries have ramped up their military coordination."¹⁸¹ Figure 3 illustrates that, as China and Russia deepen their military cooperation, the military threat to Japan spreads along the length of home islands, rather than being contained to the southern portion of the archipelago.

¹⁷⁸ Smith, 93.

¹⁷⁹ Craig Kafura et al., *The U.S.-Japan Alliance in the Age of Crisis: Public Opinion in Japan and the United States Following Russia's Invasion of Ukraine* (Chicago: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, March 29, 2023), 9, <https://globalaffairs.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/US-Japan%20Report%20PDF.pdf>.

¹⁸⁰ Kafura et al., 16.

¹⁸¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan (2022)*, 2022, 10.

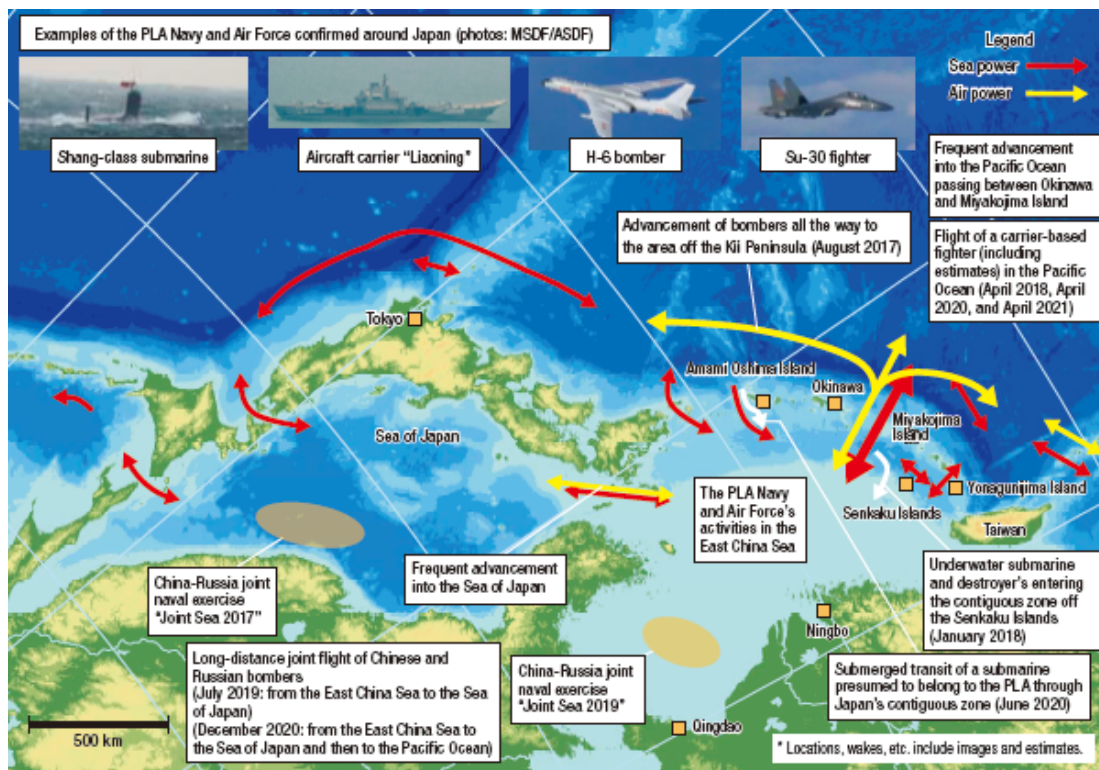


Figure 3. Joint Russia–PRC Military Exercises near Japan¹⁸²

¹⁸² Source: Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Defense of Japan 2021* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense Japan, 2021), 18, https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022_EN_Full_02.pdf.

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IV. JAPANESE DOMESTIC POLITICS AND TAIWAN

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

—Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan

Thus far, this thesis has focused on how the external environment is driving Japan to change its foreign and defense policy. This chapter furthers that discussion by analyzing the effects of Japan's difficult international security environment by connecting the international dangers to efforts to modify or remove domestic restrictions on the use of the JSDF. It begins with a survey of the debate concerning Article 9 revision and public support thereof, then analyzes the effect of reforms to the Guidelines for U.S.–Japan Defense Cooperation, the effectiveness of the prime minister to direct the actions of the JSDF through the newly created National Security Council, and efforts to enhance intelligence sharing capabilities. Finally, this portion discusses the physical capabilities and limitations of the JSDF. This chapter will show that, in terms of capabilities, the JSDF has become more capable over the previous decade but remains hampered in its ability to assist the U.S. military in a Taiwan contingency due to a lack of public desire to use force in that capacity. This chapter begins with an exploration of the domestic debate regarding the legacy and future of Article 9, it then briefly surveys the prevailing public opinion on topics of the JSDF and the U.S.–Japan alliance, and then discusses changes since 2012 to the agreed implementation of the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty as well as the creation of the National Security Council and reforms to state security laws. The chapter concludes with a survey of the fiscal and physical changes affecting the JSDF and a brief analysis of Japan's rules regarding export controls for military equipment.

A. LEGAL STRUCTURES AND FRAMEWORKS CONCERNING THE JSDF

Whether an observer views changes to Japanese defense policy as a continuation of pacifism, a step towards normalization, or full-blown militarization, it is indisputable that both the domestic legal constraints and public opinion regarding the JSDF as an instrument of foreign policy is indeed less restrictive than a decade ago. This section delves further into the specific changes to ascertain the impact of these reforms and the likelihood of further alterations to the constitution and argues that, so far, reinterpretation of the constitution has had minor impact on Japan's ability to assist the U.S. in a Taiwan conflict and that additional efforts to change Article 9 are unlikely to succeed.

1. Debates About Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan

The constitution was re-interpreted in 2014 to loosen restrictions on collective self-defense and, since then, a common misconception outside of the academic community with Article 9 is that, as a result, constitutional restraints on the JSDF's ability to assist U.S. forces in combat is negligible. A realistic appreciation of the constitution, and the debates around its character, is important for addressing the question of whether the U.S. could count on the assistance of Japan in a conflict over Taiwan. For Japan, the constitution is a core part of its cultural identity, and to assume it would cast off its pacifist ties is not a fair assumption when formulating the alliance's response to a Taiwan crisis.

Interestingly, the recent impetus to change the constitution predominately derives from the opposite trend that cemented the article in the 1950s; historically, Japan's elites, were wary of being drawn into American-led conflicts throughout the Cold War. Conversely, the contemporary debate focuses on revision to equalize burden sharing within the U.S.–Japan alliance and to encourage continued U.S. engagement in Northeast Asia. In the context of increasingly soured relations between the PRC and Japan, the issue of constitutional change is a prominent matter in Japan's domestic political discourse and the discussion has centered around three main camps: (1) the elimination of Article 9, (2) the revision of Article 9 to legalize the JSDF, (3) desire to maintain the post-2014 interpretation, and (4) not to change the constitution in any manner.

Article 96 outlines the process to amend the Constitution of Japan and sets a high bar for alteration. To change the constitution, a proposal must be initiated within the legislature, the Diet, and approved by two-thirds.¹⁸³ If this initial step is met, the amendment must then pass a national referendum by which 50 percent of votes cast must be in favor of amendment.¹⁸⁴ The 2014 reinterpretation to permit CSD was not so much a monumental shift in Japanese public opinion towards supporting a more engaged JSDF in the international arena; rather, it was the path of least resistance for Prime Minister Abe to alter the understanding of the constitution without formal amendment.

a. Elimination of Article 9

One of the proposed methods to unshackle the JSDF and establish an independent Japanese foreign policy in light of a rising China, erratic DPRK, and potentially unreliable United States is to eliminate Article 9 of the constitution altogether. Efforts to eliminate this portion of the constitution are not necessarily new; at least as far back as the early 1960s, a minority of conservative elites publicly called for striking Article 9 because it was “robbing Japan of a ‘normal’ right to self-defense.”¹⁸⁵ In the modern era, this line of contention remains, but is relegated to a minority, more fringe view. This desire to eliminate Article 9 mainly rests within small factions of the LDP who “believe [s] that the long-term goal should be to strike or fundamentally revise Article 9.2.”¹⁸⁶ While this point of view maintains language in the constitution that foreswears the use of force to settle international disputes, it would remove the prohibition on Japan maintaining military forces for offensive purposes and, therefore, remove the defensive orientation of the JSDF. This option would present the most radical change to Japan’s military establishment.

Within the discourse for abolishing Article 9, there are two ideas for what comes next: (1) establishing Japan as a regional power independent of the U.S., or (2) embracing

¹⁸³ The Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, “The Constitution of Japan” (Tokyo: The Office of the Prime Minister of Japan, May 3, 1947), https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html.

¹⁸⁴ The Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet.

¹⁸⁵ McElwain, “The Japanese Constitution,” 30.

¹⁸⁶ Article 9.2 refers to the second paragraph of the article’s text. McElwain, 32.

Japan's position as a regional power in a manner that compliments the U.S.'s efforts. As with initial calls to amend the constitution in the 1950s, the contemporary notion supports the older movement's desire for "true independence" – a new constitution, an equal alliance with the U.S. as part of an autonomous foreign policy, a robust trade policy, and a new military."¹⁸⁷ The objective of crafting Japan into a regional, independent power has gained significant media attention, without necessarily becoming more popular, due to a "more favorable political environment, with growing public concern over perceived threats from North Korea and China."¹⁸⁸ Despite this faction's long-term consistency, however, the proclivity to eliminate Article 9 is decidedly a minority opinion and is viewed as a more extreme form of conservative thinking.¹⁸⁹ Regardless, the existence of this point of view has been detrimental to efforts to revise the constitution because it prevents the formation of consensus and attainment of the two-thirds majority required to pass an amendment in the Diet, even when the conservatives hold a super-majority. While the elimination of Article 9 could spur growth and modernization of the JSDF in a manner useful to U.S. contingency planning for a Taiwan conflict, this option could also result in Japanese foreign policy more independent of the U.S., not to mention be greatly disturbing to its neighbors, and in the long run be contrary to U.S. interests.

b. Revision of Article 9

In contrast to conservative elements calling for the elimination of Article 9, the LDP mainstream, and some minor parties call for *adding* language to the constitution. This view would assert that "the right to self-defense and the existence of the Self-Defense Forces would simply be acknowledged" in the constitution and, therefore, end debate over the legality of the JSDF.¹⁹⁰ This line of approach was adopted by the LDP and Prime Minister Abe in the lead-up to the 2012 elections with a draft constitution that maintained

¹⁸⁷ Tobias Harris, *The Iconoclast: Shinzo Abe and the New Japan* (London: Hurst & Company, 2020), 15.

¹⁸⁸ Keiko Hirata, "Who Shapes the National Security Debate? Divergent Interpretations of Japan's Security Role," *Asian Affairs* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 143.

¹⁸⁹ Hirata, 142–45.

¹⁹⁰ McElwain, "The Japanese Constitution," 32.

Japan's pacifist leanings while legalizing the right to maintain the JSDF, territorial integrity, and exercise of CSD in accordance with the UN charter.¹⁹¹ In 2017, Abe again announced his plan to revise the constitution and echoed the sentiment of the earlier LDP draft to add a third clause that authorized the existence of the JSDF.¹⁹² Efforts to amend the constitution appear to have abated as, following electoral victory in 2022, Prime Minister Kishida made note of his intent to “table the proposal [of revision] in the Diet as soon as possible” but did not set a specific deadline for this motion.¹⁹³ While adding a third clause is a more agreeable form of amendment, the prospects for success remain negligible in the near-term.

For American military planners, little would change even if these efforts were successful because it would only provide “a clearer legal basis” for the JSDF but would maintain “the government’s position that the SDF does not constitute ‘war potential,’” which would only act to maintain the current boundaries of the JSDF.¹⁹⁴ Yet, the more mainstream proposals would “not establish a legal basis for the SDF to be deployed *on combat missions abroad*” nor would it “alter what kind of defense equipment Japan can procure for the SDF or export abroad.”¹⁹⁵ In some manner, all of the hullabaloo about revision is to “codify the status-quo.”¹⁹⁶ The current language of Article 9 does not prevent the JSDF from acquiring weapon systems which would be of value in a Taiwan conflict, but it does hamper allied cooperation on deterrent efforts with respect to the PRC and Taiwan. Not only is it unclear as a matter of U.S. policy if America would intervene in a PRC-initiated Taiwan conflict, but it is unclear whether the JSDF could operate alongside

¹⁹¹ “LDP Announces a New Draft Constitution for Japan,” Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, May 7, 2012, <https://www.jimin.jp/english/news/117099.html>.

¹⁹² Kenneth Mori McElwain, “Constitutional Revision in the 2017 Election,” in *Japan Decides 2017*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 302.

¹⁹³ Will Fee and Kanako Takahara, “Constitutional Revision Inches Closer in Japan, but Actual Change Still Far Off,” *Japan Times*, July 11, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/07/11/national/politics-diplomacy/constitutional-revision-prospects/>.

¹⁹⁴ Emphasis added. Jeffrey W. Hornung, “Revising Japan’s Constitution: Much Ado About Nothing,” *War on the Rocks - Texas National Security Review*, March 21, 2018, 3.

¹⁹⁵ Emphasis added. Hornung, 4–5.

¹⁹⁶ Hornung, 7.

the U.S. in combat zones, and codifying the current status of the JSDF, would not clarify that.

c. Reinterpretation of Article 9

In 2014, the Cabinet Legislation Bureau (CLB) changed its official interpretation of Article 9 to permit collective self-defense. The CLB decided that CSD was in keeping with the self-defense tenets of Article 9 and the broader UN charter, and therefore permissible.¹⁹⁷ Soon after, Abe announced his intent to codify the CLB's new interpretation into law by introducing the "Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect Its People."¹⁹⁸ Although this series of events was indeed substantial and permits greater cooperation between the U.S. military and JSDF, it does so under limited circumstances. While the changes to CSD are important, the option to reinterpret the constitution was essentially the path of least resistance and represented a watering down of efforts to change the constitution, as previously discussed.

Restrictions on the use of force by the JSDF still exist. As such, within the previous decade, Japan has not become an unbridled and unconstrained military power as some claim.¹⁹⁹ The CLB's reinterpretation of Article 9 is certainly *less* restrictive, but still provides restrictions on when and how the JSDF may act outside of Japan with allied forces. As Michael Green notes, while Japan may now engage in CSD when "an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs," it may only do so if:²⁰⁰

- The attack is a direct threat to Japan's survival.
- Armed force is the only appropriate means to protect Japan.
- The minimal amount of force necessary to defeat the threat is used.

¹⁹⁷ Green, *Line of Advantage*, 92–93.

¹⁹⁸ Green, 94.

¹⁹⁹ Pyle, "Japan's Return to Great Power Competition: Abe's Restoration," 70; Yoon, "Chrysanthemum Withered: The Faded Yoshida Doctrine and the Shift in the Japanese Security Policy Under the Abe Cabinet," 32–33.

²⁰⁰ Green, *Line of Advantage*, 94–95.

While the changes do herald a shift for the U.S.–Japan alliance in certain circumstances, mostly concerning a direct attack on American or Japanese military forces near Japan, it remains an open question whether the reinterpretation would allow Japan to respond alongside the U.S. in a PRC–Taiwan conflict. For that matter, it is not necessarily apparent that the CCP’s desired end-state is a full-scale invasion of Taiwan; it is unclear if the alliance could manage a coordinated response to an overt invasion, but even murkier when considering that the PRC could use force in a more covert manner which would complicate the ability of the alliance to respond. Frankly, “it is not known when—if ever—Beijing might launch a military assault” but it is evident that “Beijing is well underway in its political campaign of coercion without violence.”²⁰¹ In the following cases, as a few select examples outlined by Hass et al., China could delay a response from the U.S.–Japan alliance by taking advantage of the vague nature of Japan’s interpretation:

- The PRC could seize Taiwan’s offshore islands which are “militarily indefensible.”
- The PLA could “impose a quarantine on Taiwan” and require “all inbound air and maritime traffic to be diverted to the mainland ... before travelling to Taiwan.”²⁰²

There are activities under the threshold of war that could complicate the ability of Japanese politicians to determine if the PRC’s actions towards Taiwan constituted a survival-threatening situation for Japan and warranted a military response. For the United States, the possibility that the PRC could employ coercion, though not force, could complicate the ability of Japan to respond and thus prevent or severely undermine a unified course of action.

d. Public Opinion and the Watering Down of Constitutional Amendment

With a rising and increasingly provocative PRC applying pressure on Taiwan and the Senkaku Islands, mixed with the DPRK’s threatening nuclear and missile program, it is puzzling on the outside that efforts to change Article 9 since 2012 have been

²⁰¹ Ryan Hass, Bonnie Glaser, and Richard Bush, *U.S.-Taiwan Relations: Will China’s Challenge Lead to a Crisis?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2023), 114.

²⁰² Hass, Glaser, and Bush, 115–16.

unsuccessful. But the high bar and complexity of the constitutional revision process, disagreement on *how* to amend Article 9 within elite and public circles, and varying priorities between constituencies and politicians help to explain why the Constitution of Japan remains unamended despite the LDP's most recent efforts.

In response to Japan's complicated security environment, the public is more amenable to amending Article 9 in theory. In 2014, polling indicated that only 31 percent of the electorate were in favor of amendment, but had increased to 55 percent by 2021.²⁰³ Although 55 percent in favor would theoretically meet the threshold for a national referendum, it is questionable whether support would remain for a specific proposal or if sufficient numbers of supporters would turn out to vote in a referendum.²⁰⁴ This increase in support illustrates that some combination of PRC posturing, DPRK missile testing, and elite messaging within Japan has made inroads towards convincing the public of the necessity of constitutional amendment. However, the numbers are far from guaranteeing the requisite two-thirds approval in the Diet or the majority vote in a national referendum.

Another roadblock to amendment is that the public may support the idea of constitutional revision, but do not necessarily support concrete proposals when put forward. The argument for revision tends to fall on a spectrum where the most conservative voices support the removal of Article 9, with moderate forces seeking to add clauses that legitimize or clarify the role of the JSDF and keep the spirit of Article 9 intact. This debate factors into both discussions by the elite and the population at large. The populace appears to support the thought of Article 9 amendment at a higher rate than specific proposals where, indeed, "public approval for amending the COJ [constitution of Japan] tends to fall when the LDP puts forth a concrete proposal" as they did in 2005 and 2012.²⁰⁵ The high bar for constitutional revision and the public's disagreement on how to amend the constitution, has therefore resulted in the constitution remaining unamended in spite of recent efforts to alter the document.

²⁰³ McElwain, "Constitutional Revision in the 2017 Election," 306; McElwain, "Constitutional Revision in the 2021 Election," 324.

²⁰⁴ McElwain, "Constitutional Revision in the 2021 Election," 322.

²⁰⁵ McElwain, "Constitutional Revision in the 2017 Election," 309.

Further, foreign policy and defense are not the public's top electoral concerns. Prime Minister Abe likely recognized this himself, as his first stint as prime minister from 2006 to 2007 was short-lived "in part because he gave the public the impression he wasn't interested in their domestic issue concerns" as he focused on foreign affairs.²⁰⁶ Abe's efforts to change the constitution were likely met with less public opposition in his second stint, in part, due to his co-equal push to implement "Abenomics," but also keeping reforms limited to the spirit of Article 9 which meant none of the "changes would alter Japan's defense only policies, or mean Japan was going to become a constitutionally unrestrained military power."²⁰⁷ The domestic population was not apathetic towards Abe's efforts, but the combination of economic, governance, and foreign policy positions of the LDP as well as the tendency to make defense reforms within the bounds of the spirit of Article 9 preempted and prevented an electoral backlash.

Cognizant of the lukewarm public support for revision, and wary of prompting public protests, the LDP has placed less emphasis on efforts to amend Article 9 and attempted to direct focus on other issues.²⁰⁸ As Abe and the LDP approached the 2017 elections, his proposal to reform Article 9 was included in a proposal that accompanied similar efforts to address public priorities such as access to education – likely in an effort to make amending the peace clause more palatable.²⁰⁹ In the most recent election, this trend appears to have remained intact. When asked to name their top three legislative priorities, only 9 percent listed constitutional revision but, even had revision held a higher priority, the most desired amendments were provisions regarding environmental protection (73%), an enumeration of government powers in times of national emergency (61%), and then revision to Article 9 (60%).²¹⁰ Additionally, the public's desire to amend the constitution may be lower because the CLB's 2014 decision may have reduced, "the

²⁰⁶ Ellis S. Krauss, "Unraveling the Abe Conundrum in Foreign Policy: The Mystery of the 'the Dog That Didn't Bark,'" in *Japan Decides 2014*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen, Ethan Scheiner, and Steven R. Reed (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 228.

²⁰⁷ Krauss, 229.

²⁰⁸ McElwain, "Constitutional Revision in the 2017 Election," 301.

²⁰⁹ McElwain, 302–3.

²¹⁰ McElwain, "Constitutional Revision in the 2021 Election," 326.

perceived urgency of this particular amendment.”²¹¹ As the public appears satisfied with the current role of the JSDF and has other day-to-day priorities, there is little impetus for politicians to expend political capital pushing for change, nor is it guaranteed that sufficient support would turn out in a referendum, so further reform is unlikely.

A lack of public appetite for revision is not the only obstacle between conservative politicians and constitutional revision as the LDP has not gained a super-majority in any of the four elections since 2012. As a result, to pass an amendment in the Diet and trigger a referendum, the LDP would need support from its coalition partner, Kōmeitō. But, by and large, Kōmeitō’s views are decidedly more pacifist than the LDP’s, and the party has yet to voice support for LDP efforts to amend the constitution;²¹² blocking the initial stage of the amendment prior to a referendum. Barring the LDP gaining the necessary two-thirds majority, or forming a new coalition, the odds of a constitutional amendment being placed in front of the Japanese public for approval is negligible.

e. Takeaway from the Constitutional Debate

Japan is a liberal democracy, and its constitutional restraints are not just legal they are baked into the society and would likely limit the degree of support that the JSDF could and would provide the U.S. military in response to a PRC invasion of Taiwan. There is little reason to expect sweeping change to the Constitution of Japan that would loosen or remove restriction imposed by Article 9. However, even if there were a change to Article 9, the societal pressure on elected officials in Japan would be to legitimize the existence of the JSDF, which would not necessarily have an impact on how it could aid the U.S. military in a Taiwan conflict.

2. Public Opinion on the JSDF

The Japanese public’s views on the purpose and use of the JSDF, as well as their perspective on the role of the U.S.–Japan alliance, is an additional factor that limits the likelihood of Japan’s involvement in a Taiwan emergency. Even if Article 9 were a non-

²¹¹ McElwain, “Constitutional Revision in the 2017 Election,” 300.

²¹² McElwain, “Constitutional Revision in the 2021 Election,” 323–25.

factor in Japan's defense policy, the seven-decades long legacy of non-use of military force is a key pillar of domestic politics. The public's view of the JSDF as an institution intended for self-defense, coupled with a reluctance to use it as an instrument of foreign policy, means that the public is hardly supportive of using the U.S.–Japan alliance as an instrument for defending Taiwan.

a. *The Role and Popularity of the JSDF*

One of the challenges that has faced the successive governments of prime ministers Abe, Suga, and Kishida is the post-World War II legacy of the Japanese military, which skews what the population sees as the principal purpose of the JSDF. As the U.S. seeks Japan's assistance in deterring or responding to an invasion of Taiwan, a critical consideration in what type of aid the JSDF could provide stems from how the Japanese public views their military. Interestingly, the JSDF is in the unique position of needing to convince the Japanese public that "it poses no threat to the public or to peace, and can benefit them" because, tracing back to the 1930s and 1940s, the Japanese military was instrumental in the collapse of Japan's democracy and following imperial expansion, which has made the Japanese public skeptical of the trustworthiness of the JSDF since its creation.²¹³ Figure 4 shows that the JSDF has been successful in crafting a positive image for itself in the eyes of the Japanese public, but this has largely been the result of intentional efforts to reassure them that the JSDF is not a threat to democracy and is beneficial for society, mainly because of its contribution to disaster relief operations.²¹⁴ As a result, an astounding 90 percent of the Japanese public has a favorable view of the JSDF and the high rate of approval has been fairly constant over the previous decade.

²¹³ Paul Midford, "The JSDF's Quest for Public Acceptance and the 'Allergy' Myth," in *The Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force*, ed. Paul Midford and Robert D. Eldridge (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 297.

²¹⁴ Midford, 298.

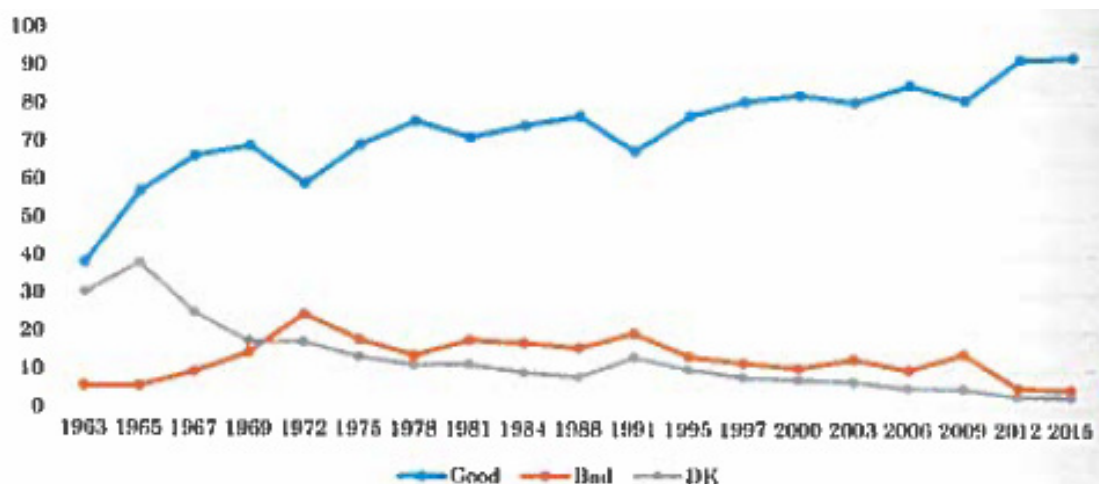


Figure 4. Domestic Perceptions of the JSDF²¹⁵

At first glance, this strong sense of approval for the JSDF is at odds with the unwillingness to alter the text of the constitution; however, the high degree of support is based on the public's perception of what types of missions the JSDF should execute. Following its response to the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, as well as the Fukushima nuclear emergency, on March 11th, 2011 (3/11), the JSDF has become the most trusted public institution in Japan.²¹⁶ This corresponds to the favorable opinion of the JSDF, but the response to 3/11 cements the public's belief that the "main duties" of the JSDF is disaster relief operations (80%), followed by national defense (75%), and significantly trailed by international involvement in peacekeeping or humanitarian operations (40%).²¹⁷ Thus, while the JSDF remains popular, the intended use of the self-defense forces is best characterized as the embodiment of "defensive-realist attitudes, meaning that they [the public] see the SDF as having utility for defending national territory, but not for overseas offensive and power projection missions."²¹⁸ This perception, even considering the changes to Japan's defense environment discussed in Chapter III, appears to hold steady as the most recent government polling indicates that 91 percent of the population had a "good

²¹⁵ Source: from Midford, 298.

²¹⁶ Midford, 330–34.

²¹⁷ Midford, 315.

²¹⁸ Midford, 336.

impression” of the JSDF; further, 88 and 78 percent identified “disaster-relief dispatch” and national defense as a role “they expect the SDF to play.”²¹⁹ Therefore, even though the public has an exceptionally high degree of trust in the JSDF, it is doubtful that this support extends to military operations in defense of something other than Japan, such as Taiwan.

b. The Use of the JSDF Abroad

In keeping with the domestic-oriented view of the JSDF, the public’s aversion to committing it abroad is highly relevant to Japan’s potential contribution to a conflict over Taiwan. Although the JSDF is viewed highly favorably and viewed as necessary for the defense of Japan, the public is unwilling to commit its capabilities to combat abroad. In 2011, Japan contributed engineers from the JGSDF to a UN PKO in Sudan which, after the 2015 passage of the new national security laws, was “granted wider permissions for the use of weapons.”²²⁰ In 2016, “the JSDF encountered serious exchanges of fire between the national armed forces of South Sudan” which “was the first serious incident” where the JSDF was confronted with the risks of combat.²²¹ After this incident, a majority of the public stated they “did not support the JSDF’s new combat functions” and calls surfaced in the press for the JGSDF to be removed from South Sudan.²²² Following the incident, Prime Minister Abe, seeking public support to continue Japan’s involvement in the PKO, pledged “to resign if any JSDF personnel were killed” and worked to assure the public that the units would not be “placed in a situation where they needed to use their weapons.”²²³

²¹⁹ Takahashi Kosuke, “Poll: Japanese Support for Self-Defense Forces Rises to Record High,” *The Diplomat*, March 7, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/03/poll-japanese-support-for-self-defense-forces-rises-to-record-high/>.

²²⁰ Atsushu Yasutomi, “Combat-Related Death of Soldiers and Public Support for Military Missions Abroad: The Case of Japan,” *Comparative Culture, The Journal of Miyazaki International College* 23 (2018): 51.

²²¹ Yasutomi, 52.

²²² Yasutomi, 52–53.

²²³ Adam P. Liff, “Japan’s Defense Reforms Under Abe: Assessing Institutional and Policy Change,” in *The Political Economy of the Abe Government and Abenomics Reform*, ed. Takeo Hoshi and Phillip Y. Lipsy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 493.

This incident, while it did not result in any casualties, highlights Japan's limited willingness to participate in international coalitions and to accept risk to the forces abroad.

The broad aversion to risk implies that, in a Taiwan scenario, Japanese citizens would be hesitant provide forces to a U.S.–Japan coalition. Although the JSDF was established in 1954, it “has yet to experience combat-related casualties” and therefore “it is not difficult to imagine the public’s initial shock and panic” that would result from a combat-related death.²²⁴ So, even if the assumption is made that Japan would be legally permitted to operate with the U.S. military in the defense of Taiwan, the fact that no member of the JSDF has perished in combat means “the chance for continuing public support for military missions will be slim once the JSDF suffers its first casualty in combat.”²²⁵ Further, the “Japanese tend to view the use of military power to solve international conflicts in foreign countries to be ineffective and inappropriate,” which helps explain the difference between positive views of the JSDF and the commitment to using it as an instrument of foreign policy.²²⁶ In essence, while this section so far has illustrated that the public believes one of the JSDF’s primary missions is the defense of the homeland, it is unlikely the population would permit support for U.S. forces defending Taiwan, and even more doubtful that the JSDF would be committed to combat operations of its own.

c. Opinions on the U.S.–Japan Alliance

According to public polling, the Japanese public is by and large supportive of the U.S.–Japan alliance and is largely satisfied with the current extent of JSDF support for the U.S. military; 48 percent of Japanese believe the alliance is equally beneficial to both countries and an additional 37 percent say it mostly benefits Japan.²²⁷ An overwhelming 91 percent of respondents believe the U.S. should play a dominant or shared leadership

²²⁴ Yasutomi, “Combat-Related Death of Soldiers and Public Support for Military Missions Abroad: The Case of Japan,” 48.

²²⁵ Yasutomi, 55.

²²⁶ Yasutomi, 51.

²²⁷ Craig Kafura et al., *Strong Partners: Japanese and American Perceptions of the US and the World* (Chicago: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, March 29, 2022), 2, <https://globalaffairs.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/220324%20Final%20US-Japan%20Report.pdf>.

role in East Asia.²²⁸ Even with this broad support for the alliance, the prevailing opinion is that Japan's contributions to the alliance are adequate with 55 percent supporting Japan's current level of financial commitment and 63 percent satisfied with the level of military cooperation.²²⁹ Finally, Figure 5 shows the majority of the public would not endorse the JSDF providing logistical or combat aid to the U.S. military which would be the likely U.S. expectation in a Taiwan contingency. Thus, even if the public had the appetite for constitutional revision and more expansive JSDF operations and capabilities, it is not clear that loosening of restrictions would translate into greater support for the U.S. in a Taiwan-centered conflict.

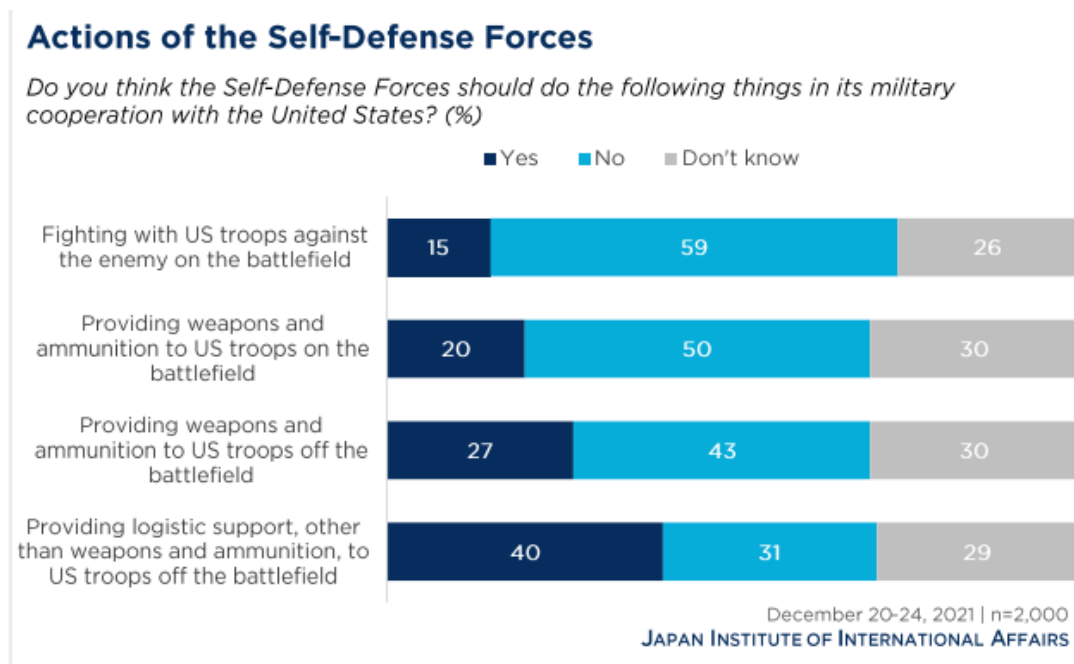


Figure 5. Public Opinion Polling for JSDF Support to the U.S. Military²³⁰

²²⁸ Kafura et al., 4.

²²⁹ Kafura et al., 9.

²³⁰ Source: Kafura et al., 10.

3. The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security

The U.S.–Japan Security Treaty (UJST), commonly misunderstood as an agreement similar to NATO and its mutual defense clause, does not guarantee Japan’s support in the event of U.S. intervention in a PRC–Taiwan conflict. This is because the UJST, unlike the creation of NATO, factored in Japan’s constitutional restrictions on the use or maintenance of military capabilities. The UJST, does not declare that an attack on either partner mandates an automatic military response from the other; rather, Article V of the UJST requires both the U.S. and Japan to “act to meet the common danger *in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes*” but only when an attack occurs against U.S. or Japanese forces “in the territories under the administration of Japan.”²³¹ In return for the U.S. providing assistance in response to an attack on forces in Japan, Article VI of the UJST states that “the United States of America is granted the use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan.”²³² The initial bargain is basically “a trade of bases for security and protection.”²³³ So while Japan is more capable of providing for its own defense in 2023 than it was in 1960, the original trade is still the primary function of the alliance because of Japan’s constitutional and domestic restraints.

Further, there is an understanding between the U.S. and Japan that, under Article VI, “the U.S. would engage in ‘prior consultation’ with Japan regarding ... ‘the use of facilities and areas in Japan as bases for military combat operations’ that did not involve the defense of Japan proper.”²³⁴ This basic request for consultation gives Japan sway in shaping the U.S.’s response to a Taiwan conflict, “and technically even a veto over U.S. military operations originating from Japan.”²³⁵ However, “most Japanese defense analysts believe that Japan would probably give United States permission” to use Japan-based assets

²³¹ Emphasis added. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1960), <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>.

²³² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

²³³ Green, *Line of Advantage*, 85.

²³⁴ Mochizuki, “Tokyo’s Taiwan Conundrum,” 88.

²³⁵ Mochizuki, 88.

for the defense of Taiwan.²³⁶ Thus, one of the constant aspects of Japanese defense policy over the previous decade, even with changes to the interpretation of Article 9, is that the UJST is not a mutual defense treaty, but an agreement by both nations to defend Japan proper. While Japan would probably approve the use of its bases by the U.S. in a Taiwan conflict, the possibility exists for those facilities to be denied.

In recent wargames, for example, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) as well as the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) acknowledge this limitation in their analysis. CSIS noted that, as one of four conditions to successfully defeat a PRC invasion of Taiwan, “the United States *must* be able to use its bases in Japan for combat operations.”²³⁷ Other scholars have noted that “without Japanese assistance, U.S. forces would be hard pressed to operate effectively” and U.S. military presence in Japan “all but guarantees ... [the U.S.] would want to access U.S. bases in Japan and Japanese support” in response to a military invasion of Taiwan.²³⁸ As remote as the possibility of the denial of Japanese bases may be, it is incumbent on the U.S. to work to ensure access is assured.

These scenarios have also factored in the bind of Japan’s political restrictions into their analyses. The CSIS study determined that whether Japan would intervene in a PRC–Taiwan conflict with the U.S. rested on the assumption that “Japan would most likely enter the war only if Japanese bases or U.S. bases in Japan were attacked.”²³⁹ Similarly, CNAS predicated Japan’s military involvement only “after Red attacked Blue forces on bases in Japan and Guam,” which led to further escalation in a simulated PRC–Taiwan conflict.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Mochizuki, 88.

²³⁷ Emphasis added. Mark F. Cancian, Matthew Cancian, and Eric Heginbotham, *The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023), 3, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/230109_Cancian_FirstBattle_NextWar.pdf?VersionId=WdEUwJYWlYsMPiR3ivhFolxC_gZQuSOQ.

²³⁸ Sheila A. Smith, “The United States, Japan, and Taiwan: What Has Russia’s Aggression Changed?,” 72; Liff, “The U.S.–Japan Alliance and Taiwan,” 128.

²³⁹ Cancian, Cancian, and Heginbotham, *The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan*, 44.

²⁴⁰ Stacie Pettyjohn, Becca Wasser, and Chris Dougherty, “Dangerous Straits: Wargaming a Future Conflict Over Taiwan” (Center for a New American Security, June 2022), 6, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/CNAS+Report-Dangerous+Straits-Defense-Jun+2022-FINAL-print.pdf>.

While these scenarios are both accurate representations of Japan's involvement with respect to constitutional and treaty restraints, this base consideration is on the assumption that a PRC attack on Taiwan includes a swift, simultaneous strike on the U.S. and its allies, which is not necessarily a given. While an analysis of the various methods in which the PRC could invade or coerce Taiwan is not the intent of this thesis, there are potential scenarios that do not involve a direct attack on Japan, in conjunction with an attack on Taiwan, and would not prompt an automatic Japanese response under the terms of the UJST.

a. *Guidelines for U.S.–Japan Defense Cooperation*

Although the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty remains unchanged, the document which outlines how the U.S. and Japan will split their duties in the event of an attack on Japan did receive an update in 2015. Previously, these guidelines had been updated only twice—the first time in 1978 and again 1997. The 2015 guidelines introduced substantial changes but, most importantly, it (1) established the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) and (2) introduced specifics on how the 2014 CSD reinterpretation would affect roles and responsibilities of the two allies.²⁴¹ The 2015 guidelines emphasized that the JSDF would be primarily responsible for the defense of Japan in the event of conflict. The new guidelines state, “Japan will maintain primary responsibility for defending the citizens and territory of Japan,” the “Self-Defense Forces will have the primary responsibility to conduct defensive operations in Japan and its surrounding waters and airspace,” and “the United States Armed Forces will support and supplement the Self-Defense Forces to defend Japan.”²⁴² While Japan assuming primary responsibility is not a departure from previous versions, the 2015 guidelines place added emphasis on the role of the U.S. military as complimentary to Japan's efforts.

The most recent guidelines established the ACM to improve JSDF and U.S. military to coordination of plans and operations. This organization is intended to “to contribute to

²⁴¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation (2015)* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2015), 3–4, 15–17, 21–22, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000078188.pdf>.

²⁴² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 10–11.

timely information sharing,” to facilitate the execution of “regular training and exercises,” and to emphasize the development of “bilateral plans to ensure smooth and effective execution and coordination of operations” with respect to possible “contingencies relevant to Japan’s peace and security.”²⁴³ However, the ACM would likely have minimal effect in the event of a Taiwan contingency because, as the guidelines state, this cooperation would still require the JSDF and U.S. military to “take action through their respective chains-of-command.”²⁴⁴ As Andrew Oros notes, this “allows for more advance planning of coordinated action ... [but] there remains no unified US–Japan combined military command and little prospect of one.”²⁴⁵ Unlike in other U.S. alliances, the U.S. and Japan would maintain separate operational authorities while executing coordinated plans, assuming the requisite contingency had been adequately predicted and planned for. It is not clear if the ACM would improve the ability of the alliance to adequately respond to a dynamic, fast-paced Taiwan emergency.

However, the 2015 guidelines explicitly include a division of labor for contingencies that involve the U.S., but not a direct attack on Japan. This new language implements the 2014 reinterpretation of Article 9 and outlines what the JSDF *will* do in these scenarios so long as it meets the CSD caveats listed in the previous section. So long as that criterion is met, the guidelines provide examples of JSDF support to include: (1) asset protection of U.S. forces, (2) combat and non-combat search and rescue, (3) maritime operations to include minesweeping, protection of sea lines of communication (SLOC), and vessel escort, (4) defense against ballistic missile threats, and (5) JSDF logistics support to the U.S.²⁴⁶ Of course, the document also adds the stipulation that the actions each nation takes will be “in accordance with ... their respective Constitutions and laws to respond to an armed attack.”²⁴⁷ Therefore, the 2015 update provides a list of positive

²⁴³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 3–4.

²⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 4.

²⁴⁵ Oros, *Japan’s Security Renaissance*, 185–86.

²⁴⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* (2015), 15–17.

²⁴⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 15.

actions the JSDF may take to assist the U.S. in a Taiwan contingency, but actual support could vary based on the political proclivities of the party in power and are very much subject to public and approval.

4. The National Security Council

One notable structural change to Japan's defense capability is the establishment of the National Security Council (NSC) under Prime Minister Abe in 2013. In effect, Japan has established an organization modeled after the U.S.'s NSC to strengthen the ability of the prime minister to effectively respond to an international crisis. Through its creation, the NSC brings the prime minister, chief Cabinet secretary, the ministers of defense and foreign affairs, and others into a single decision-making body.²⁴⁸ The creation of the NSC was the result of "supra-partisan" consensus that "twenty-first century crises would be extremely fast-moving" and "the meaning of 'national security' had expanded ... [to include] so-called gray zone challenges, and economic and financial issues."²⁴⁹ The NSC allows whole-of-government strategic planning, facilitates inter-agency coordination, and acts as the "control tower" for the Japanese government in the event of an emergency at the behest of the prime minister.²⁵⁰ Thus, as Japan faces an uncertain international security environment, the NSC constitutes an internal reform which better prepares the government to respond to future crises and contingencies as it consolidates the prime minister's power to direct the Japanese government's response as they see fit.

This does not constitute blank check in a crisis for the prime minister to act in contradiction to the Constitution of Japan. Under the 2003 Armed Attack Response Law, the prime minister's response after, or anticipation of, an armed attack on Japan requires concurrence of the Cabinet and approval by the Diet.²⁵¹ Without approval, the prime minister "has to order the cessation of all measures relevant to the plan including any SDF

²⁴⁸ Liff, "Japan's Defense Reforms Under Abe," 482.

²⁴⁹ Liff, 483.

²⁵⁰ Liff, 482.

²⁵¹ Hornung and Mochizuki, "Japan: Still an Exceptional U.S. Ally," 100.

deployments.”²⁵² The insertion of the Diet into the approval process gives it a veto power over the prime ministers direction to the JSDF, so the NSC makes a government response to a crises more effective so long as it acts according to domestic law and opinion.

Where the NSC is arguably most beneficial in deterring or responding to a PRC–Taiwan conflict is through coordination with the U.S. and enhanced ability to counter China’s gray-zone activities. The establishment of the NSC helps prevent “divergence from the U.S. strategy on China and Russia” by institutionalizing what had formerly been “ad-hoc relationships” between U.S. and Japanese officials.²⁵³ The establishment of the NSC, which creates counterparts to the U.S. NSC, permits better alliance coordination through all facets of the whole-of-government foreign policy approach.

5. Intelligence Sharing and State Secrets

Following the return of Prime Minister Abe in 2012, one of his focus areas was in the collection, protection, and sharing of intelligence. His efforts were two-pronged and sought to strengthen Japan’s protection of state secrets as well as admission in the Five Eyes intelligence sharing alliance with the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. In 2014, the State Secrecy Law was introduced to the Diet and, in contrast to previously efforts to implement intelligence reform, was not marked as unconstitutional upon submission.²⁵⁴ Abe faced only moderate pushback from more liberal opposition parties because the recently ousted DPJ government had previously drafted legislation with the same intent after intelligence leaked from the JCG in 2010.²⁵⁵ The bill passed and, for the first time, allowed the government to prosecute, penalize, or fine individuals who improperly shared sensitive information and, partially as a result, made increased exchange of classified information between the United States and Japan more feasible.²⁵⁶ This alteration allows better sharing of real-time information, closer

²⁵² Hornung and Mochizuki, 100.

²⁵³ Green, *Line of Advantage*, 199–200.

²⁵⁴ Green, 202.

²⁵⁵ Green, 202.

²⁵⁶ Green, 202–3.

coordination in the conduct of joint missions, and eases the ability of U.S.–Japan military planners to share plans and data to aid contingency planning under the ACM.

Although Abe and the LDP successfully overcame muted opposition to pass the State Secrecy Law, Japan has not gained admission in the Five Eyes intelligence sharing organization because it still does not meet the standards expected for protection of classified material by the Five Eyes group. Regardless of the improved ability of the GOJ to protect classified information, the U.S. and other partners view Japan’s recent efforts as falling “short of Five Eyes expectations in several respects” such as a lack of “procedures to limit and control access to national secrets within the Diet” and the fact that Japan has no “clandestine intelligence service to collect intelligence overseas” which means Japan’s intelligence gathering apparatus is a step below other members of Five Eyes.²⁵⁷ Recent intelligence reforms markedly improve the ability of Japan’s prime minister, via the NSC, to receive “timely information for decision making and steadier coordination with close allies and partners” and encourage joint intelligence sharing across the JSDF.²⁵⁸ Enhancing intelligence safeguards and collaboration standards would be beneficial to both Japan and other members due to their shared interests in the stability of the Taiwan Strait and the Pacific as a whole.

B. JSDF BUDGETING, ACQUISITION, AND WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT

The final, broad area of change for Japan’s foreign and defense policy has been on the budget of the JSDF as well as the types of platforms and weapons that have been designed, procured, or invested in. So far, this chapter has focused on the legal and structural factors which could shape a potential U.S.–Japan response to a PRC initiated conflict over Taiwan. This section analyzes trends in budgeting and weapons development that are indicative of whether Japan’s contribution, considering the political factors, would improve the U.S.’s ability to defend Taiwan.

²⁵⁷ Green, 203.

²⁵⁸ Green, 203.

1. Financial Priorities, Plans, and Limitations

Since the end of World War II, but particularly since 2012, a constant topic of debate in Japanese politics has covered spending allocated to the JSDF. To counter the perceived threats from China, Russia, and the DPRK, Japan is implementing both qualitative and quantitative improvements to the JSDF's capabilities; however, there is inherent tension between what the public would like the JSDF to do and what they are willing to fund. While Japan's politicians have advocated for additional funding, the government faces significant headwinds in its quest to earn a larger slice of the federal budget to include: (1) Japan's modest economy and limited resources compared to the PRC, (2) Japan's significant debt-load, and (3) difficulty securing additional revenue.

By 2012, Japan was already facing an uphill battle with respect to the balance of power in East Asia. The incidents involving the Senkaku Islands served as a wake-up call to the capability imbalance between the JSDF and the PLA; in 2012, the PRC spent approximately \$175 billion on the PLA in comparison to the roughly \$50 billion allotted to the JSDF.²⁵⁹ In following years, the ever-so-slow shrinkage of Japan's defense budget was halted and Abe's government included "small increases each subsequent year throughout his term" but "the modest increases were hardly radical" as defense spending, as a share of GDP, remained around 1 percent.²⁶⁰ In 1987, the GOJ repealed the 1 percent of GDP cap on the JSDF spending, but "a de facto 1 percent ceiling" had been a de facto norm until recently.²⁶¹ Hawkish factions of the LDP have long called for Japan to increase the funding of the JSDF to match 2 percent of GDP – the NATO standard.²⁶² However, Abe rejected these calls, opting for smaller and more palatable increases, even as China's military budget surpassed and then dwarfed Japanese spending on the JSDF.²⁶³ Even with consistently unfavorable views towards China, the Japanese public still values a modest,

²⁵⁹ Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance*, 72.

²⁶⁰ Green, *Line of Advantage*, 210.

²⁶¹ Liff, "Japan's Defense Reforms Under Abe," 493.

²⁶² Liff, 493.

²⁶³ Liff, 493, 496.

minimal spending posture that aligns more closely with aversion to the use of force in international affairs and aligns with other domestic preferences.

If the public were accepting of plans to dramatically increase Japan's defense spending, it is questionable how effective or meaningful an increase would be due to the sheer imbalance of resources available to Japan in comparison to China. As a share of GDP, there is not much of a gulf between PLA and JSDF expenditures: 1.6 to 1.1 percent in 2022, respectively.²⁶⁴ The share of government spending tells a similar story where the defense burden is 4.8 percent for the PRC and 2.5 percent for Japan.²⁶⁵ However, the raw value that this translates to is astonishing: \$292 billion for the PLA to \$46 billion.²⁶⁶ In late 2022 Prime Minister Kishida made waves with his announcement to boost the JSDF's budget by two-thirds over the next five years.²⁶⁷ While this a welcome and much needed investment, it is still modest in comparison to the capabilities of the PLA and would bring the JSDF's budget to roughly \$64 billion USD and 1.5 percent of GDP. Complicating the issue is that Japan's debt-to-GDP ratio is extraordinarily high: 221 percent as of 2021 and up from 185 percent in 2012.²⁶⁸ The burden on Japan's economy is not a trivial matter considering the nation's excessive government debt levels; especially in contrast, due to the size of its economy, the budget of the PLA could continue to grow with less of a burden on China's economy.

Importantly, this relatively modest increase has garnered significant public debate and may prove difficult to sustain. To allocate more resources to the JSDF, the LDP will need some combination of higher taxes, deficit spending, and cutting or reallocating funding from other government programs.²⁶⁹ Since "87 percent of the public felt Kishida had failed to explain the plan sufficiently" and, with a 40 percent approval rating, the

²⁶⁴ Values in constant 2021 USD. "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database."

²⁶⁵ Values in constant 2021 USD. "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database."

²⁶⁶ Values in constant 2021 USD. "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database."

²⁶⁷ Adam P. Liff, "Kishida the Accelerator: Japan's Defense Evolution After Abe," *The Washington Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2023): 70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2023.2192138>.

²⁶⁸ International Monetary Fund, "Global Debt Database - Central Government Debt," accessed July 18, 2023, https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/CG_DEBT_GDP@GDD.

²⁶⁹ Liff, "Kishida the Accelerator," 75.

government would need to expend “significant political capital ... to raise taxes and pass new relevant legislation.”²⁷⁰ And, as Adam Liff explains, public support for this ambitious program will be crucial due to the “5–10 yeartime horizon” of the proposed budget increase and the possibility exists that “future cabinets may have different spending priorities” which could freeze or derail the JSDF’s budget increase.²⁷¹ Kishida’s announcement was well received by the U.S.; for example, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel referred to the plan as “a milestone achievement in transforming U.S.–Japan defense cooperation from Alliance Protection to Alliance Projection” and called the move “a significant down payment on Japan’s leadership role in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.”²⁷² But as tax increases or reallocation of funds from other agencies appear unpopular, the possibility remains for deficit spending to cover the tab; regardless of the path chosen, efforts to increase spending on the JSDF will require sustained commitment and public support.²⁷³ While the praise from the U.S. is understandable, it neglects the fiscal and economic challenges that Kishida and the LDP need to overcome to follow-through with their proposed increase.

These financial issues, which are already constraining efforts to enlarge and improve the defense forces in peacetime, would be exacerbated by an actual conflict over Taiwan because an increase in JSDF operations would be expensive. At the same time, PRC–Japan trade ties would surely be severed in the event of Japan’s intervention in a Taiwan conflict. For the fiscal year 2023 budget, which includes Kishida’s increases, the MOD expects to spend 33 percent of the budget on “personnel and provisions,” 28 percent on maintenance, and 21 percent on research and development.²⁷⁴ Given the large slice of funding devoted to logistics, personnel, and maintenance, it is fair to assume that Japan’s

²⁷⁰ Liff, 76.

²⁷¹ Liff, 76.

²⁷² Rahm Emanuel, “Statement by U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel,” U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Japan, February 28, 2023, <https://jp.usembassy.gov/statement-by-ambassador-emanuel-feb28-2023/>.

²⁷³ Liff, “Kishida the Accelerator,” 75–76.

²⁷⁴ Ministry of Defense of Japan, “Defense Programs and Budget of Japan: Overview of FY2023 Budget” (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense of Japan, December 2022), 7, https://www.mod.go.jp/en/d_act/d_budget/pdf/230330a.pdf.

response to a Taiwan contingency would be costly, and a significant burden on the Japanese economy. In addition to the cost related with responding to a PRC invasion of Taiwan, consider that PRC–Japan trade amounted to \$372 billion USD, or 7.5 percent of Japan’s GDP, in 2021²⁷⁵—that amount would undoubtedly be reduced due to economic decoupling if Japan intervened on behalf of Taiwan. Given the high cost of military operations, Japan’s high debt-to-GDP ratio, and economic ties with China, further consideration should be given to the economic viability of Japan sustaining any effort to support Taiwan.

2. Acquisition, Development, and Force Structure

There has been significant physical change to the JSDF since 2012 in terms of force posture, platform acquisitions, and future capabilities under development. The cumulative effect of these efforts is that the JSDF has transitioned from a military force focused on the defense of Japan to one that is able to project limited power in the region. The ability for the JSDF to reach out and touch potential adversaries is one of the greatest changes to Japan’s defense policy over the previous decade and one that adds value to a possible allied response in a Taiwan contingency. Writing in 2016, Hornung and Mochizuki noted that “the SDF possesses capabilities that make it one of the world’s most advanced militaries – including significant anti-submarine warfare and mine counter-measures capabilities ... [but] Japan continues to lack classic power projection capabilities necessary to project force outside of Japan.”²⁷⁶ Yet, very recent changes have begun to address the capability gaps of the JSDF as Japan responds to threats from China, the DPRK, and Russia as recognition grows that long-range systems are necessary for the defense of Japan.

Many of these shortfalls have been addressed in the last five years alone. In 2018, the JGSDF stood up a small Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade to leverage

²⁷⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Japan-China Relations (Basic Data),” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, July 6, 2023, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/data.html>.

²⁷⁶ Hornung and Mochizuki, “Japan: Still an Exceptional U.S. Ally,” 103.

“amphibious operational capabilities to respond to potential attacks on remote islands.”²⁷⁷ That same year, the GOJ announced its intent to modify two Izumo Class helicopter destroyers to carry the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter; the modifications of both ships were both in progress, as of this writing, with expected completion by 2027.²⁷⁸ Further, the JASDF constructed a second runway and repositioned an additional squadron F-15s to Okinawa; the JGSDF positioned additional ground forces on Ishigaki Island in the Ryukyu chain, and the JMSDF increased maritime surveillance aircraft and submarine patrols in the East China Sea.²⁷⁹ The overall scale of these changes does not place the JSDF in league with the power projection capabilities of the United States, but in the confined space of the East China Sea the modest developments could compliment American efforts to deter the PRC from an unprovoked invasion of Taiwan by complicating the potential battle-space around the island.

Another aspect of Japan’s changing defense posture since 2012 has been in the acquisition of weapons to address long-standing and self-imposed shortfalls in JSDF capabilities. Perhaps the most well-known acquisition is the decision to acquire long range cruise missiles because, according to the 2022 NDS, “Japan needs counterstrike capabilities ... to mount effective counterstrikes against the opponent to prevent further attacks while defending against incoming missiles.”²⁸⁰ This was quickly followed by an announcement that Japan had inked a deal to acquire 400 Tomahawk missiles from the U.S., to be fielded by 2027, as a bridge to eventually fielding an indigenous surface-to-

²⁷⁷ John Taishu Pitt, “The Meaning of Japan’s New Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade Launch,” *The Diplomat*, March 29, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/03/the-meaning-of-japans-new-amphibious-rapid-deployment-brigade-launch/>.

²⁷⁸ Kosuke Takahashi, “Japan Begins Refitting First of Two Izumo-Class Carriers to Support F-35B Operations,” *Janes Defence News*, June 30, 2020, <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/japan-begins-refitting-first-of-two-izumo-class-carriers-to-support-f-35b-operations>; Kosuke Takahashi, “Japan Starts Conversion of Second Izumo Helicopter Carrier,” *Janes Defence News*, April 1, 2022, <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/japan-starts-conversion-of-second-izumo-helicopter-carrier>.

²⁷⁹ Smith, *Japan Rearmed*, 189.

²⁸⁰ Ministry of Defense of Japan, *National Defense Strategy of Japan*, 13–14.

surface cruise missile.²⁸¹ Creating a counterstrike capability is notable because this capability has been considered legal since the 1950s, and the refusal to develop these weapons has been a political and not a legal choice.²⁸² But, keeping with the spirit of self-defense, Kishida concurrently prohibited the use of Tomahawks in offensive strikes.²⁸³ Even with the prohibition on pre-emptive action, counter-strike capabilities could complicate PLA plans to, or at least raise the stakes of, attacking U.S. forces in Japan with the potential for Japan to strike back.

Similarly, the MOD announced efforts to extend the range of the Type-12 anti-ship missile from 200 to 1,000 kilometers by 2026 which would provide the ability of surface, air, and subsurface platforms to hold PLA Navy forces at risk throughout a decent portion of the western Pacific.²⁸⁴ Efforts underway to provide submarines with the capability to launch counter-strike weapons through torpedo tubes, and eventually through installed vertical launch systems, would be a notable capability enhancement for the JMSDF's fleet of diesel submarines.²⁸⁵ Finally, the MOD signed contracts with domestic companies to develop hypersonic weapons of its own and announced plans to jointly research defenses against hypersonic missiles with the U.S.²⁸⁶ While these various capabilities will take years to develop, many should be available by the end of the decade and present a significant change to the JSDF's wholesale capabilities and deterrent value.

²⁸¹ Takahashi Kosuke, "PM Kishida Announces Japan Will Acquire 400 Tomahawk Missiles From US," *The Diplomat*, February 28, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/02/pm-kishida-announces-japan-will-acquire-400-tomahawk-missiles-from-us/>.

²⁸² Liff, "Kishida the Accelerator," 74.

²⁸³ Liff, 74.

²⁸⁴ Shaurav Gairola, "DSEI Japan 2023: Japan Expects to Induct Upgraded Type 12 SSM by 2026," *Janes Defence News*, March 15, 2023, <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/dsei-japan-2023-japan-expects-to-induct-upgraded-type-12-ssm-by-2026>.

²⁸⁵ Matthew M. Burke and Keishi Koja, "Japan Inks Deal to Add Submarine-Launched Missiles by Fiscal Year 2027," *Stars and Stripes*, April 13, 2023, https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2023-04-13/japan-submarine-launched-missiles-9788618.html.

²⁸⁶ Miya Tanaka, "Japan and U.S. Plan Joint Research on Defending Against Hypersonic Weapons," *Japan Times*, September 15, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/09/15/national/hypersonic-weapons-research/>; Kapil Kajal, "Japan Progresses Anti-Ship and Hypersonic Missile Programmes," *Janes Defence News*, June 8, 2023, <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/japan-progresses-anti-ship-and-hypersonic-missile-programmes>.

3. Arms Transfers to Foreign Countries

Early in the Cold War, the GOJ placed restrictions on the export of arms but this, too, has become less restrictive in the previous decade. Initially, arms exports were governed by the three principles which prohibited Japan from supplying arms to “Communist countries, countries under a UN arms embargo, or countries either in conflict or to be in conflict.”²⁸⁷ While the three principles were relaxed in 2011 under the DPJ to allow greater contribution to UN PKOs, they were significantly reformed in 2014 by Prime Minister Abe’s government.²⁸⁸ Even with the gradual changes in 2011 and 2014, “Japan’s arms export regime remains highly restrictive compared to other U.S. allies” and has a light foot-print in the international market.²⁸⁹ As Hornung and Mochizuki describe, these recent reforms nullified the three principles and altered them so that exports would be:²⁹⁰

- prohibited if the sale violated international agreements, UN resolutions, or are destined for a nation engaged in conflict.
- permitted if the sale positively contributed to international peace or improved Japan’s security environment.
- permitted only if appropriate controls existed in the destination country to prohibit the transfer of Japanese produced weapons to third parties.

However, in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Japan’s hesitancy to export military equipment and aid has weakened. Since the invasion in early 2022, in addition to sanctions and other measures, Japan has provided Ukraine with 100 utility vehicles from the JSDF, 30,000 emergency rations, donated \$30 million USD to Ukraine through NATO, and supplied other miscellaneous equipment such as bulletproof vests, helmets, and winter weather gear.²⁹¹ The aid that Japan has provided to Ukraine has all been non-lethal aid, and has not contained weapon systems or ammunition. But the incremental shift is important because, Ukraine is a nation engaged in conflict which, under the 2014 rules,

²⁸⁷ Hornung and Mochizuki, “Japan: Still an Exceptional U.S. Ally,” 105–6.

²⁸⁸ Hornung and Mochizuki, 106.

²⁸⁹ Hornung and Mochizuki, 107, 109.

²⁹⁰ Hornung and Mochizuki, 106–7.

²⁹¹ The Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, “Japan Stands with Ukraine: Overview of Japan’s Sanctions Against Russia and Support for Ukraine,” 1–2, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/ongoingtopics/pdf/jp_stands_with_ukraine_eng.pdf.

should be disqualified from receiving Japanese military equipment. The distinction between lethal and non-lethal aid is likely why Japan is comfortable with providing aid, and this opens the possibility that, if the political will and public support exists, Japan could provide limited military equipment to Taiwan before or after the start of a conflict.

V. CONCLUSION: THE U.S.–JAPAN ALLIANCE AND TAIWAN

As regards the state of Asian waters, let me underscore here my three principles. First, states shall make their claims based on international law. Second, they shall not use force or coercion to drive their claims. And third, to settle disputes, any disputes, they shall do so by peaceful means. For that very reason we must fortify the U.S.–Japan alliance. That is our responsibility.

—Prime Minister Abe,
Address to a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress, 29 April 2015

A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A potential conflict between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan is one of the greatest threats to continued peace and stability in the western Pacific in the 21st century; the United States and Japan are not responsible for solving the PRC-Taiwan dispute, but upholding the status quo and encouraging the peaceful resolution of differences between the two sides are matters of vital national interest and stem from common ideological, economic, and security concerns. Since 2012, the increasing tensions around Taiwan, commensurate with the PRC’s expanding economic and military power, have renewed concerns of a broader conflict between the U.S. and China. By extension, Japan’s security alliance with the United States raises the possibility of a broader conflict and begs the question, how would the U.S.–Japan alliance respond to a PRC invasion of Taiwan and how could Japan contribute?

1. A Matter of National Interest

First, it is apparent that Japan is an interested party in maintaining the Taiwan status quo. Its interests span the gamut from military, economic, and ideological which establishes the foundation of Japan’s potential contribution to the defense of Taiwan in the event of conflict. As outlined in Chapter II, Japan views itself as a maritime nation whose national security and economic vitality is tied to the sea and the rules-based international order. From the military perspective, if the PRC controlled Taiwan, then the PLA could project power outside of the confines of the first island chain, into the broader Indo-Pacific

region, and closer to the Japanese home islands. Whether this is the actual intent of the CCP is a separate question, but the possibility from the Japanese point of view is undoubtedly concerning and encourages a pro-Taiwan stance on behalf of Japan's government. Further, in the economic realm, Japan relies on the import of natural resources and the export of finished products which rely upon safe, secure SLOCs that run adjacent to the island of Taiwan. As China has already demonstrated its willingness to use economic pressure as a form of coercion in international disputes, the continuation of free and open trade is critical to the future of Japan's economy and, therefore, connect the prosperity of Japan with the fate of Taiwan.

2. The International Security Environment

As Chapter III described, Tokyo considers the stability and longevity of the rules-based order as challenged by the combination of a more powerful and assertive China, North Korea's unpredictable behavior, and Russia's war of conquest in Ukraine. Upholding this order necessitates a continued close relationship with the U.S. and, as successive U.S. administrations have become more vocal in their support for Taiwan, they have inherently placed pressure on Japan to follow suit. A final, equally important component for Japan's changing identity has been the longstanding alliance with the United States. While the U.S. has not necessarily declined in terms of absolute economic or military power, it has undoubtedly declined in relative power compared to China in the western Pacific. To compensate for the shifting balance, the U.S. has repeatedly turned to allies and partners to contribute more and, in East Asia, Japan is at the forefront of U.S. efforts to increase the involvement of allies in the sustainment of regional stability. Japan, through modernization and reform of the JSDF, has positively responded to that call because of the centrality of the U.S.–Japan alliance to Japan's security and the importance of the international order to Japan's economic prosperity, which could be irreparably damaged by an invasion of Taiwan,

3. Domestic Politics and Remaining Limitations

Since 2012, the JSDF has definitely become more capable of defending Japan and projecting limited power in the western Pacific. But, as Chapter IV discussed, there are

constitutional, legal, and social constraints that continue to limit whether the JSDF can be employed abroad, which could severely limit its contribution in response to a Taiwan crisis. For the U.S., a healthy respect for the public discourse in Japan is necessary to ensure that political and military leaders hold realistic expectations for the utility of the U.S.–Japan alliance in a Taiwan conflict, assuming the U.S. itself chooses to intervene. The debate on constitutional revision has garnered significant attention and, on a spectrum, the 2014 reinterpretation by Prime Minister Abe’s government to permit CSD reflects a subtle shift from pacifism to normalization, but the practical effects remain a far cry from remilitarization. Moving forward, the public still appears hesitant to consider further changes to Article 9 because revision is neither a priority for the broader public nor is it viewed as necessary. Even if this were to change, efforts to revise the constitution would probably only go so far as to codify the current form of the JSDF and without expanding its ability to fight alongside the U.S. or as an instrument for settling international disputes.

Structurally, the establishment of the NSC, the ACM, and the updated Guidelines for U.S.–Japan Defense Cooperation makes it more likely that Japan could provide effective, non-lethal assistance to the U.S. in a response to a conflict over Taiwan. But the remaining limitations imposed by the constitution, and popular support for the role of the JSDF in international affairs, means that guardrails remain and limit the degree to which Japan would support the U.S.; even with changes to allow for CSD participation in bilateral combat operations is highly unlikely, providing logistics support to the U.S. is not exactly guaranteed, and the use of Japanese bases could be constricted by the terms of the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty based on public prerogatives. The prime minister may have more discretion on how to use the levers of national power in a Taiwan scenario, but the Japanese public would still serve as a powerful check on Japan’s contribution to a pro-Taiwan coalition; even a hawkish, hypothetical prime minister could only push the envelope so far.

4. The Push-Pull of International and Domestic Politics

Overall, this thesis finds there are two predominate factors shaping Japan’s perception of the importance of Taiwan and the potential willingness to support the ROC in a conflict: the first is the growth in power and assertiveness of the PRC, and the second

is the centrality of the U.S.–Japan alliance to Japan’s security. The plight of Taiwan has resonated with the Japanese government and public, as evidenced by consistently negative views of the PRC and favorable views of Taiwan. The combination of Japan’s ties to Taiwan, the perceived threat to stability from China, and the importance of the U.S.–Japan alliance does indeed make it more likely that Japan would provide support for Taiwan in a conflict. But this support does not necessarily entail military aid or combat support, while the public is comfortable with investing in modernizing and expanding the JSDF for defense of the homeland, it is not yet amenable to the possibility of using the JSDF in a foreign conflict which does not involve a direct assault on Japan itself. If the international security environment worsens, which is likely to be the case, then further expansion of the JSDF and removal of restrictions on its use are likely to follow. To the extent that the Japanese public continues to view the current rules-based order, of which Taiwan and the U.S. are both important components, as vital to Japan’s security and prosperity then the domestic political environment will likely remain open to inclusion of the JSDF as a tool of foreign policy. The domestic preference pendulum could shift in the other direction, but Japan is likely to continue its current trajectory so long as the U.S. is viewed as a reliable partner while China is seen as a source of regional instability.

B. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

The U.S.–Japan alliance remains a credible mechanism to accomplish its initial mandate; to defend Japan from external threats and permit the U.S. to maintain a strong presence in East Asia. Since 2012, the alliance has continued a slow transition from a Japan-centric defense focus to one that is more outward looking and regionally minded. However, many of the initial constraints imposed on Japan in the post-World War II era remain as important factors to consider when assessing how the JSDF could be used in a Taiwan conflict. It is uncertain if the U.S.–Japan alliance would manage an effective, coordinated response to an invasion of Taiwan or if the U.S. would be forced to, essentially, go it alone. It is likely that the current trends of loosening restrictions will continue so long as the international security environment remains complex, but the U.S. must take Japan’s domestic politics into account when considering how the alliance could aid Taiwan as it is far from certain that joint, coordinated military action would be practical. To that end, both

American and Japanese policy makers and military planners must take into account Japan's current domestic restrictions and, if greater coordinated action is the desired end-state, then both nations must take concerted action to enhance Taiwan's ability to defend itself, to jointly plan for Taiwan-centric contingencies, and convince the Japanese public that their participation in a U.S.-coalition to defend Taiwan is crucial to upholding the rules-based order and thus ensuring Japan's security and economic prosperity.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made with the understanding that the sole constituency with the responsibility and authority to decide how Japan may use the JSDF in a Taiwan conflict is the Japanese public and government. Pursuant to that recognition, there are several steps, listed throughout this section, which the United States can take to encourage Japan to pursue a more active role in the defense of the current international order, and deter the People's Republic of China from launching a military operation against Taiwan. The aim of these recommendations is to align allied efforts with the goal of strengthening the will and capacity of the Taiwan people to withstand Beijing's coercive efforts, and to mitigate the PLA's odds of success in conflict should that unfortunate scenario come to pass.

Further, each of these recommendations remain subject to constraints discussed throughout this thesis and are likely to antagonize Beijing. Yet, these actions are worth considering as recent studies indicate there is a "strong consensus view that Taiwan matters for Japan's security" and that favorable views exist in Japan for U.S. efforts to increase diplomatic, economic, and military support to Taiwan.²⁹² The United States has significant leverage to encourage Japan's assistance because of the widely accepted view by Japanese officials that the U.S.-Japan alliance is the "cornerstone" of Japanese security, and that U.S. aid to Taiwan is viewed as a litmus test for the credibility and strength of the U.S. commitment to East Asia as a whole.²⁹³ Therefore, coordinated U.S.-Japan action to

²⁹² Jeffrey W. Hornung et al., *Like-Minded Allies?: Indo-Pacific Partner's Views on Possible Changes in the U.S. Relationship with Taiwan*, RR-A739-7 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2023), 46–47, <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR-A739-7>.

²⁹³ Hornung et al., 38–42.

support the status quo will be faced with geopolitical, domestic, and economic trade-offs, but a synergistic alliance strategy is the best bet to deter the PRC and minimize the risk of conflict in the twenty-first century.

1. Diplomatic

There are numerous diplomatic steps that both Japan and the U.S. can take with the intent of dissuading China from attempting a military invasion of Taiwan while also raising Taiwan's profile on the international stage. First, the U.S. must work to convince the Japanese government that a conflict over Taiwan is a survival-threatening situation for Japan. From there, the U.S.–Japan alliance should work to incorporate Taiwan into existing international institutions to increase the legitimacy of the ROC and nullify Beijing's standard assertion that cross-strait relations constitute an internal affair. Finally, the U.S. and Japan can increase bilateral or trilateral diplomatic ties to demonstrate the alliance's interest in the fate of Taiwan.

The U.S. should communicate that a definitive statement from Japan's NSC or MOFA, stating that an invasion of Taiwan would be a survival-threatening situation, would serve to place the PRC on notice that Japan may be involved in a cross-strait contingency, thereby enhancing the deterrent effect of the U.S.–Japan alliance. It would also serve to jump-start the public debate in Japan, shortening the reaction time of the GOJ a crisis or allowing it to act in confidence that it has the public's support. As Chapter IV discussed, for the JSDF to provide support to the U.S. military under collective self-defense, the crises must be declared a survival-threatening situation for Japan. If the Japanese public waits until a conflict erupts to have this debate, "political disputes may arise over the approval of the Diet, which may significantly delay the approval process ... and prevent timely implementation."²⁹⁴ Because of this, there is no guarantee that Japan would commit the JSDF to a coalition as "pacifist public opinion and economic interdependence with China would be the factors that prevent Japan from pursuing consistent policy with the United

²⁹⁴ Rena Sasaki, "Why Defending Taiwan Is Crucial for the Future of the U.S.-Japan Alliance," ed. Christopher Lamont and Jeffrey Ordaniel, *Issues & Insights* 29, no. SR9 (November 2022): 50.

States.”²⁹⁵ There are voices in Japan which are already pointing to a potential Taiwan conflict as a matter of vital national interest; for example, former Prime Minister Abe stated “it could be a situation posing a threat to Japan’s survival.”²⁹⁶ However, comments of this nature have yet to come from sitting members of the Japanese government.²⁹⁷ This is not to recommend that Japan openly state it would defend Taiwan, only that it would have an interest in doing so in a manner that compliments the U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity.

Another aspect of diplomatic support for Taiwan that would benefit from bilateral, allied action is to enhance Taiwan’s standing on the world stage. As Hass et al. note, “sustaining military deterrence is the minimum threshold, but not the measure of success” in cross-strait relations.²⁹⁸ Since 2016, the number of states maintaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan has shrunk from 22 to 14 and “Beijing also has severely restricted Taiwan’s access to international organizations.”²⁹⁹ In May 2022, the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association released a joint statement supporting Taiwan’s participation in the World Health Assembly;³⁰⁰ efforts of this kind are effective means to “support Taiwan’s ability to enjoy dignity and respect on the world stage” and, as such, should be a principal area of U.S.–Japan cooperation.³⁰¹ Since Japan is the de facto leader of CPTPP, as noted in Chapter II, Tokyo could make a meaningful gesture by recommending admission of Taipei that bolsters Taiwan’s international legitimacy. The U.S. should support this invitation, even if it is unwilling to join the organization itself. If pursued, these diplomatic

²⁹⁵ Sasaki, 57.

²⁹⁶ This statement was made after Prime Minister Abe left office. The Japan Times, “Abe Hints at Japan’s Possible Military Role in Taiwan Contingency,” Japan Times, December 14, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/12/14/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-hints-japans-possible-military-role-taiwan-contingency/>.

²⁹⁷ Liff, “The U.S.-Japan Alliance and Taiwan,” 130–32.

²⁹⁸ Hass, Glaser, and Bush, *U.S.-Taiwan Relations*, 121.

²⁹⁹ Hass, Glaser, and Bush, 122.

³⁰⁰ The U.S., Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada also signed on to the joint press release. Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association, “Joint Press Release: Support for Taiwan’s Meaningful Engagement with the World Health Organization and Participation as an Observer in the World Health Assembly,” May 21, 2022, <https://www.koryu.or.jp/en/business/gctf/20220521/>.

³⁰¹ Hass, Glaser, and Bush, *U.S.-Taiwan Relations*, 123.

initiatives would better equip Taiwan with the international standing to resist coercive efforts by Beijing to isolate the small island from global affairs.

The U.S. should encourage other democratic nations to expand cooperation with Taipei; the logical starting point for the effort would be for the U.S. to facilitate Japan-Taiwan dialogue. The benefit of this approach is that “the more the United State normalizes such efforts, the less inhibited other countries would feel meeting below the leader level with Taiwan officials” and could encourage the involvement of other industrialized nations who also have a national interest in maintaining the Taiwan Status quo.³⁰² Further, success in this realm could disavow Beijing of the notion that Taiwan is a “bilateral irritant that is cabined within the U.S.-China relationship.”³⁰³ One potential arrangement that made headlines in 2021 is a “‘2-plus-2’ dialogue among the foreign and defense ministers of Japan and Taiwan,” although some analysts view this as unlikely.³⁰⁴ However, it would be in the United States’ interest to encourage Japan to establish additional contacts with Taiwan with the intent to illustrate that a hypothetical conflict over Taiwan is not solely a matter of U.S. concern, but a concern in the capitals of other democratic nations.

Blending the diplomatic and military realms, the U.S. and Japan should also consider conducting joint Taiwan Strait transits. Although this move would be highly provocative to Beijing, there is precedent for the U.S. conducting Taiwan Strait transits with allies.³⁰⁵ To date, the JMSDF has not transited the Taiwan Strait alone or in concert with other nations.³⁰⁶ Given Japan’s interests in the Taiwan Strait as a critical artery for Japan’s economy, conducting a joint transit would broaden Japan’s “role in maintenance

³⁰² Hass, Glaser, and Bush, 123.

³⁰³ Hass, Glaser, and Bush, 117.

³⁰⁴ Adam P. Liff, “A ‘Taiwan Relations Act’ for Japan?,” *Asia Dispatches* (blog), February 25, 2021, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/taiwan-relations-act-japan>.

³⁰⁵ Heather Mongilio, “USS Higgins Joins Canadian Warship to Transit Taiwan Strait,” USNI News, September 20, 2022, <https://news.usni.org/2022/09/20/uss-higgins-joins-canadian-warship-to-transit-taiwan-strait>; Sam LaGrone, “VIDEO: Chinese Warship Harasses U.S. Destroyer in Taiwan Strait Transit,” USNI News, June 3, 2023, <https://news.usni.org/2023/06/03/u-s-canadian-warships-transit-taiwan-strait>.

³⁰⁶ Kosuke Takahashi, “Japan Should Send Its Naval Ships Through the Taiwan Strait,” *Nikkei Asia*, July 5, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Japan-should-send-its-naval-ships-through-the-Taiwan-Strait>.

and strengthening of the rule-based international order.”³⁰⁷ Further, allowing the JMSDF to transit the Taiwan Strait would demonstrate that Japan is serious about its stance on Taiwan, add Japan to a growing list of international navies who operate in accordance with international law in the Taiwan Strait, and demonstrate the resolve of the U.S.–Japan alliance. The U.S. Department of Defense and Department of State should utilize appropriate channels to encourage Japan to undertake an operation of this nature.

2. Intelligence

The accurate, timely application of combat power in the event of a Taiwan conflict would depend on the ability of the U.S.–Japan alliance to efficiently gather and share intelligence. Chapter IV discussed recent changes to Japan’s national security laws and its quest to join the Five Eyes intelligence sharing group. The group should make detailed recommendations for steps that Japan should take to improve its classified information handling procedures with the understanding that an official invitation to join the intelligence organization will follow the implementation of recommended reforms. Providing recommendations and an invitation can show other Five Eyes members that Japan’s admission “will not expand [the] risks” of intelligence leaks if Japan is amenable to “implementing a tougher legal framework with stricter protections and a robust counter-intelligence setup.”³⁰⁸ Japan’s involvement is “a logical progression, considering the already existing intelligence-sharing apparatus that Japan has with Australia, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.”³⁰⁹ Japan “is skilled in specialized intelligence gathering and sharing, particularly signals intelligence”;³¹⁰ its accession to Five Eyes would provide military benefit to the U.S.–Japan alliance, like-minded democratic nations, and indirectly to Taiwan. However, keeping in mind that the initial reform to the state

³⁰⁷ Takahashi.

³⁰⁸ Hannah Fodale, ed., “Resolved: Japan Is Ready to Become a Formal Member of Five Eyes,” *Debating Japan* 3, no. 8 (December 8, 2020): 2, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/resolved-japan-ready-become-formal-member-five-eyes#:~:text=In%20an%20August%202020%20interview,States%2C%20and%20the%20United%20Kingdom.>

³⁰⁹ Fodale, 1.

³¹⁰ Fodale, 4.

secrecy laws in Japan was met with public opposition, it is incumbent upon the U.S. and the Japanese governments to convince Japan's public of the benefit of their participation in Five Eyes, while also assuring that inclusion would not detract from civil liberties.

3. Military

Japan holds a key strategic position as part of the first island chain, and the U.S. should encourage Japan to deploy military capabilities discussed in Chapter IV along the Ryukyu Islands to deter the PRC from invading Taiwan by implementing its own anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) strategy. In order for the PLA Navy or Air Force to operate outside of the confines of the East and South China Seas, the “only two channels are the Bashi Channel between the south of Taiwan and the Philippines, and the Miyako Strait south of Okinawa.”³¹¹ Whether the PRC opts for a blockade of Taiwan or a full-scale amphibious invasion, the ability of the U.S.–Japan alliance to control the air and sea space along the Ryukyu Island chain and through the Miyako Strait could significantly complicate the PLA's operational design with JSDF deployment of surface-to-surface missiles, anti-submarine warfare equipment, and mine-laying capabilities. The decision to allocate forces for A2/AD would significantly enhance the alliance's capability to supply aid to Taiwan, while complicating PLA access to the Philippine Sea, especially considering that “Tokyo has devoted itself to ASW and minesweeping technologies for decades” and are some of the most capable in the world.³¹² This contribution by Japan could be viewed as a defensive positioning of forces and thus a more palatable contribution in light of constitutional and public opinion restraints.

Another military contribution, which could enhance the deterrent effect of the alliance and provide real benefit in the event of a conflict, would be for the U.S. and Japan to revisit the construction of Aegis Ashore. An initial proposal to construct Aegis Ashore in Japan, initially intended to bolster defenses against North Korean missile threats was cancelled in 2020 because of concerns over cost, technical problems, and local

³¹¹ Ting-Hua Chien and Yi-Chen Hung, “A Review of Defense Development in Japan and Taiwan,” in *Defense Policy and Strategic Development: Coordination Between Japan and Taiwan*, ed. Fu-Kuo Liu, Dean Karalekas, and Masahiro Matsumura (Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific Publishing, 2022), 49.

³¹² Chien and Hung, 54.

opposition.³¹³ In combination, Aegis Ashore and the SM-3 missile could provide for “ground-to-air defense against mid-range ballistic missiles”;³¹⁴ at a minimum, the existence of Aegis Ashore could provide cueing data for U.S. forces. Given the increasingly concerned language of the NSS and NDS as well as the possibility of a larger budget for the JSDF, the U.S. should re-start conversations with Japan to construct Aegis Ashore to defend from North Korea, but also to create additional defense capabilities against the possibility of the PLA using ballistic missiles to target U.S. or Japanese military bases at the onset of a Taiwan conflict.

Finally, the U.S. should encourage enhanced cooperation between the defense industries of Japan, Taiwan, and the United States to ensure that Taiwan can produce an indigenous supply of defensive weapons to protect its own territory. Notably, unlike the United States, Japan does not sell military equipment or hardware to Taiwan.³¹⁵ As Chapter IV discussed, Abe’s reforms to arms export rules now permit Japan’s defense industry to develop joint projects and to export some equipment to foreign countries. Since the 1960s, Taiwan has maintained a “state-run organization” intended to sustain the island’s “ability to design and manufacture domestically produced weapons” which, in 2014, was placed under the supervision of Taiwan’s Ministry of Defense.³¹⁶ As Japan and Taiwan face similar threats, there is potential for technological cooperation that would be a valuable addition to Taiwan’s defense capabilities as “Japan has more comprehensive experience in designing and integrating weapons systems for land, sea, and air.”³¹⁷ While it is doubtful that the Japanese public would be willing to export lethal military equipment to Taiwan, and the move would definitely be unwelcome in Beijing, closer U.S.–Japan–Taiwan industry ties could provide Taiwan with a qualitative edge for self-defense, raise the cost of military action to the PLA, and thus deter the PRC from using force to settle its

³¹³ Megan Eckstein, “Japan Officially Ends Aegis Ashore Plans After National Security Council Deliberations,” USNI News, June 26, 2020, <https://news.usni.org/2020/06/26/japan-officially-ends-aegis-ashore-plans-after-national-security-council-deliberations>.

³¹⁴ Chien and Hung, “A Review of Defense Development in Japan and Taiwan,” 51.

³¹⁵ Liff, “The U.S.–Japan Alliance and Taiwan,” 158.

³¹⁶ Chien and Hung, “A Review of Defense Development in Japan and Taiwan,” 55–56.

³¹⁷ Chien and Hung, 58–59.

dispute. Considering Japan's recent decision to provide non-lethal military aid to Ukraine, this area of cooperation may be worth revisiting by the U.S.–Japan alliance.

4. Economic

The U.S.–Japan alliance should work to further integrate Taiwan into the international economy to improve Taiwan's ability to defend itself. To that end, the U.S. could join CPTPP and support Taiwan's inclusion in the organization, although the chances of the U.S. joining is nearly non-existent. Regardless, the U.S. could encourage Japan to include Taiwan in CPTPP or include Taipei in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF). The Biden Administration announced IPEF in May of 2022 and, while it includes important democratic partners such as Japan and Australia, it does not include Taiwan.³¹⁸ This agreement, unlike CPTPP, would not be an FTA, as the intent of IPEF is to “establish ‘high-standard commitments’ that deepen partners’ economic engagement through four pillars” which are trade, supply chains, clean energy, and fairness.³¹⁹ Further, if Washington is willing to buck Beijing's ire, it could seek a bilateral FTA with Taiwan and could pave the way for a similar agreement between Tokyo and Taipei. The premise of greater economic integration is that “an economically strong Taiwan is essential to reducing its vulnerability to coercion and is foundational to its security.”³²⁰ As Chapter II briefly illustrated, Taiwan's economy is highly dependent on the mainland, and a concerted U.S. effort to broaden Taiwan's economic connections would be a boon to deterring any attempt by the PRC to alter the status-quo by force.

Finally, the U.S. should expand cooperation with Japan and Taiwan on clean energy projects. Both the economies of Japan and Taiwan are heavily dependent on imported oil and natural gas, which would be at risk in the event of a blockade around, or a conflict on, Taiwan. In 2015, President Tsai's government passed a law that set the goal of reducing

³¹⁸ Kyla H. Kitamura and Mark E. Manyin, Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity, CRS Report No IF12373 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2023), 1, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12373>.

³¹⁹ Kitamura and Manyin, 2.

³²⁰ Hass, Glaser, and Bush, U.S.-Taiwan Relations, 124.

greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2050.³²¹ However, little progress has been made on this front because of the decision to shutter all nuclear power plants in Taiwan in response to the Fukushima nuclear incident.³²² With the Biden Administration passing the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022, the possibility exists for enhanced U.S.–Japan–Taiwan cooperation on green energy products. The IRA allots nearly \$400 billion to clean energy projects through spending or tax incentives, but prioritizes domestic manufacturing and labor.³²³ The U.S. could revise the implementation of the IRA in several ways: include Japan and Taiwan in the production aspect of the renewable energy supply chain, or pursue agreements with Japan and Taiwan for the export of American-made energy products or to provide U.S. financing for projects in Japan and Taiwan. Increased U.S.–Japan–Taiwan coordination on renewable energy matters would have multiple benefits, to include growing and diversifying the three economies, contributing to the Biden Administration’s economic and climate goals, and enhancing the resiliency of Taiwan and Japan’s energy profile while keeping their economies linked and national interests unified.

³²¹ Patrick Yu, “The United States Should Prioritize Energy Cooperation with Taiwan,” *Center for American Progress* (blog), January 19, 2021, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-united-states-should-prioritize-energy-cooperation-with-taiwan/>.

³²² Yu.

³²³ Justin Badlam et al., “The Inflation Reduction Act: Here’s What’s in It,” McKinsey & Company, October 24, 2022, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/the-inflation-reduction-act-heres-whats-in-it>; The White House, “Fact Sheet: The Inflation Reduction Act Supports Workers and Families,” August 19, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/08/19/fact-sheet-the-inflation-reduction-act-supports-workers-and-families/>.

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