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# The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Significance and Role

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## **Executive Summary**

**T**he alliance between the United States and Japan, born at the end of the Second World War, continues to play a vital role in the defense of the Japanese Islands and in U.S. regional Indo-Pacific strategy. The People's Republic of China is challenging the U.S.-Japan alliance in the Indo-Pacific Region. China has greatly increased its defense budget, expanded and modernized its navy, and increased operations that challenge the region's status quo—including in the East China Sea, where the PRC regularly violates Japan's territorial waters, in the vicinity of the contested Senkaku Islands. China's belligerent behavior poses a strategic threat to Japan's domestic security and will continue to encroach on Japanese and U.S. interests in the region.

The PRC's threatening behavior and an aggressive nuclear-armed North Korea are testing the U.S.-Japan bilateral alliance as it has not been tested since the Cold War. The United States continues to serve as a guarantor of Japan's national security. The U.S. military has stationed naval, air force, army, and amphibious forces in Japan as a strategic deterrent against would be aggressors.

With U.S. forces in Japan as a deterrent, Japan has developed a pacifist strategy based on non-aggression and security limited to self-defense. The Japanese constitution's Article 9 enshrined this principle into law. Japan's regional strategy has paid dividends through political, diplomatic, and economic engagement with Indo-Pacific countries. This includes Japan's increasing defensive security cooperation in the region. The Japanese Self-Defense Forces have participated alongside the United States and such neighboring states as South Korea in bilateral and multilateral exercises that build both capabilities and security relationships.

Beyond diplomatic and soft power engagement, Japan has in recent years increased its defensive capabilities. To counter Chinese and North Korean missile threats, Japan has worked with the United States to build an advanced ballistic missile defense. In addition, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces have acquired medium-range cruise missiles for its air forces to deter potential adversaries from launching attacks. Tokyo has expanded its defense to counter challenges below the threshold of war against Japan's outlying islands. Improved intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and the establishment of amphibious forces contribute to this defense.

## **Summary of Recommendations:**

Despite the successes of Japan's pacifist strategy, its maturing defensive capabilities, and growing regional engagement, the country is reticent to become an equal partner in the alliance with the United States. The time is right for a reconsideration of this self-view. This paper recommends that the U.S.-Japan alliance should be reconstructed as an equal partnership. Tokyo and Washington will advance their shared interests from a more candid expression of viewpoints. A more assertive Japanese self-defense strategy would acknowledge increasing tensions and armaments in the Indo-Pacific. A parallel transformation would advance Washington's position as the dominant Pacific power: The United States should regard Japan not simply as a forward operating base for U.S. forces, but as an ally whose defense demands sustained resources and effort, one that, with sufficient protection, can contribute significantly to the U.S.' regional strategy.

## **Increased Political Security Cooperation**

To strengthen the alliance, this paper recommends that Japan augment the bilateral relationship through improved political-security cooperation. Japan's role in securing a prosperous and peaceful Indo-Pacific is as essential as its continued attention to strong ties with regional states. Candid and open discussions between the two allies over regional and interstate issues will help both Tokyo and Washington add to existing trust and face growing threats with increased confidence.

## **Improving Defense Technology Cooperation**

The alliance would benefit further from recent changes in Japanese defense industry policies. Japan has high-quality defense technologies that until recently were prevented from export by strict laws. The new 2014 "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology" allows Japanese companies to sell defense technologies abroad and participate in joint research and development projects with foreign companies.

Still, Japanese companies have been hesitant to conduct defense business abroad, and the Japanese government has struggled to streamline the technology transfer process. The Ministry of Defense's Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Agency (ATLA) can advance this process by streamlining the approval of foreign sales, identifying foreign purchasers, and strengthening Japan's defense industrial base. A reform and standardization in the classification of sensitive technologies would further ease the necessary approval of defense sales.

Improved defense technology cooperation between Japan and the United States would benefit the alliance by giving Japanese companies the ability to fill niche gaps in U.S. defense supply chains and in U.S. capabilities. It would allow U.S. and Japanese defense contractors to collaborate on defense projects to the benefit of both countries. Japan's defense industry can contribute high quality technology to the U.S. and global defense markets.

## **Building Joint Operational Capabilities**

To strengthen the alliance, the United States and Japan should further build and strengthen joint operational capabilities. This would include greater integration of both countries' command structure which have hitherto been separate and connected only recently by the Alliance Coordination Mechanism, a structure that aims to synchronize responses between the countries to major contingencies (e.g. an attack on Japan or the United States). However, the ACM could be improved through greater integration of command structures that would hone their joint operational capabilities.

China's increasing military capabilities and their use throughout the region suggest that Japan's defense of its vulnerable outlying islands require greater attention. Integrated air defenses between the United States and Japan would help achieve this. Japan's development of its amphibious capabilities to respond swiftly if deterrence fails would be materially assisted by such amphibious platforms as the US-2 seaplane. The JSDF's provision of defense hardware that would be needed for search-and-rescue operations in a large-scale and prolonged conflict between the United States and China would further serve alliance preparedness.

While improving these capabilities, the Japanese government will benefit by continuing to demonstrate that its weapon acquisitions and improved defense capabilities are defensive. A stronger JSDF will emphasize Japan's nonaggression, maintain its own security, and allow Tokyo to fulfill a more prominent role in the U.S.-Japan alliance.



## **Introduction**

**T**he US-Japan alliance has been the fundamental cornerstone of Japan's security policies and the center of gravity of the United States' East Asian security strategy since the end of the Second World War. When the war ended Japan renounced its rights to a traditional state's use of military force in favor of a limited self-defense. Accompanying this change in a sovereign state's usual rights was the explicit understanding that the United States would act as its protector and guarantee security for its territory.

In turn, the U.S. would maintain a permanent military presence in Japan, which would become the central element of America's Asian strategy in the Cold War. The alliance between the two states, born of this arrangement, would continue to grow throughout the second half of the twentieth century. With the establishment of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces in the 1950s and their increased responsibilities from the 1970s onward, Japan has assumed more responsibility in its relationship with the U.S., while adhering to a strict policy of non-aggression. The alliance persevered following the Cold War's end and has seen a renaissance in recent years.

The U.S.-Japan alliance remains the cornerstone of both Japan's defense as well as the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy. The alliance has endured across administrations in both countries and has strengthened as further challenges in the region have multiplied over the past two decades, most notably because of China's growing strength throughout the Indo-Pacific. Not only has the United States continued to base its strategy in the region on the alliance with Japan and its forward deployment of military forces in the country, but the current Japanese government, led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has also taken concrete steps to improve the country's defensive capabilities.

The U.S.-Japan relationship today is not limited to the defense of Japan, but represents an opportunity to strengthen both countries' shared interests in regional security. Japan, as a pacifist state, possesses diplomatic and political advantages for engagement in the region. The combination of the United States' role as a provider of strategic security and Japan's non-military dimension both contribute to the Indo-Pacific region's stability and safety. To preserve this beneficial status quo, U.S.-Japanese relations must continue to draw strength from this complementary relationship.

Strengthening the alliance requires both countries to improve defense technology cooperation. Securing Japan against regional threats requires the U.S. and Japan to improve their operations-level interoperability, so that Japanese defensive capabilities further complement the U.S. military's ability to defend Japan.

## Strategic Challenge of a Rising China

The need for a robust U.S.-Japan alliance has grown substantially as China has become more powerful and increasingly assertive. For Japan, the threat of China's regional ambitions emerged with the 1996 Taiwan Straits Crisis, and the challenge this posed to vital Japanese trade routes.<sup>1</sup> Sustained double-digit increases in China's military budgets, Beijing's blue-water ambitions for its expanding naval power, and its disregard for the sovereignty of neighbors prove the risk that China poses to Japan's security and the United States' position as a great Pacific power. The Japanese Ministry of Defense's 2016 White Paper cites with concern China's actions to unilaterally change the status quo in the region.<sup>2</sup> The United States, under President Trump's 2017 National Security Strategy, calls China a revisionist competitor that "has mounted a rapid military modernization campaign designed to limit U.S. access to the [Indo-Pacific] region and provide China a freer hand there."<sup>3</sup>

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has pursued modernization efforts concentrating on exploiting technology that will likely be applied in the future to a significantly growing fleet that can focus power in the region and project it globally. China's naval fleet size has increased rapidly with the addition of modern ballistic missile submarines, corvettes, destroyers, frigates, fast attack craft, and even the country's first indigenously built aircraft carrier.<sup>4</sup> The PLA Navy (PLAN) currently possesses over three hundred surface combatants, submarines, and missile patrol craft and every year replaces aging, legacy ships with larger modern and multi-mission warships.<sup>5</sup> It is expected to surpass 351 ships, larger than the U.S. Navy, by 2020.<sup>6</sup> The rise of low level, "grey zone" confrontation short of armed conflict, too, has become a challenge,<sup>7</sup> as China probes the red lines of Japan's defense in the East China Sea over the contested Senkaku Islands with Beijing's expansion of its Air Defense Identification Zone.<sup>8</sup> Chinese warships transit near Japanese waters,<sup>9</sup> and the development of a long-range seaplane—the AG600—capable of rapidly delivering Chinese special forces to outlying and contested Japanese islands.

Chinese provocations of Japan—along with other regional governments, such as Taiwan and South Korea—has increased in the past two years. In 2016, the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force scrambled its tactical fighters to intercept approaching Chinese combat aircraft more than eight hundred times, a record number.<sup>10</sup> 2017, too, saw Japanese intercepts of Chinese aircraft increase later in the year, despite a slightly lower level earlier the same year.<sup>11</sup> In the first two weeks of 2018, a PRC frigate sailed close to the Senkakus, prompting the Japanese government to summon the Chinese ambassador.<sup>12</sup> Also in the first weeks of 2018 an advanced Chinese nuclear-powered attack submarine sailed for the first time into Japanese contiguous waters near the Senkaku chain.<sup>13</sup>

China's accelerating belligerence is a long-term threat to Japan and the region's security. In his final years the late and exceptionally smart former leader of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, asked rhetorically "How could (China) not aspire to be number one in Asia and in time the world?"<sup>14</sup>

Answering a question from U.S. Senator Marco Rubio on 13 February 2018 about whether China is planning to become the world's dominant power, Dan Coats, the U.S. director of national intelligence said that, "there is no question that what you have just articulated is what's happening with China."<sup>15</sup> China's accumulating military, economic, and political power in the Indo-Pacific region supports these experienced officials' observation. China's expansion of its military capabilities, including significant increases in its offensive naval capabilities, threaten Japanese territorial claims in the East China Sea and more broadly Japan's defense of its constituent islands.

China's construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea seeks to change the status quo and its effort to control the first island chain, as well as its ability to pressure vital sea lines of communication and trade routes challenge Japan's ability to maintain its economic and energy security. Furthermore, China's encroachment against Japanese air and sea space and claimed Japanese territory threaten the country's territorial integrity. China's military, diplomacy, lawfare, and economic influence in the broader Indo-Pacific threaten Japan's sovereignty and that of all the surrounding states. The same Chinese instruments seek to deny the U.S. military access to the Western Pacific, place at risk the U.S.'s communications with its regional allies, and displace the U.S. as a major economic power in Asia.

Nor do Chinese ambitions stop at the Pacific's first or second island chains. Since Deng Xiaoping, China has made significant progress in transforming its combat fleet from a coastal navy to a blue water one. The planned construction of more aircraft carriers and global naval deployments as well as acquisition of bases and basing rights in the Indian Ocean is powerful evidence that Chinese leaders understand the strategic link between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans and seek to become a great naval power in both. Achieving this goal would affect Japan's access to Middle Eastern oil and markets. It would challenge India's naval, and threaten New Delhi's global commercial, lines of communication. It would further stretch the U.S. Pacific Fleet and strain its ability to provide deterrence in the West Pacific.

## **United States as Guarantor of Japanese Security**

Because of China's bellicosity and North Korea's growing nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities, the U.S.-Japan alliance is critical for maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific and sustaining regional—and ultimately—international order.

The United States is committed to Japan's defense. In 1950, the United States and Japan signed the "Security Treaty Between Japan and the United States of America." Article 5 of the treaty guaranteed that the United States would provide security assistance to Japan in the event of an external threat.<sup>16</sup> Japan committed itself to nonaggression and post-war disarmament.<sup>17</sup> Article 6

of the treaty establishes the permanent presence of U.S. military forces in Japan to maintain security for the islands.<sup>18</sup> The treaty remains today the centerpiece of the U.S.-Japan security relationship, and the United States remains the guarantor of Japan's security.

American forces in Japan remain a lynchpin in Japan's security, and in the United States' ability to project power in the region. These forces act as a deterrent against aggression, and U.S. forces based in Japan are the most strategically important in the Pacific.<sup>19</sup> They maintain the security of allies and reassure friendly regional states. U.S. Forces, Japan consist of nearly fifty thousand soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen. The U.S. Seventh Fleet, the U.S. Navy force responsible for the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean, is based at Yokosuka Naval Base.<sup>20</sup> The Seventh Fleet includes a forward deployed Carrier Strike Group (CSG)—currently the *USS Ronald Reagan*—the only forward deployed carrier of the United States.<sup>21</sup> The US Fifth Air Force operates out of Yokota Air Base, where the command of U.S. Forces, Japan is located.<sup>22</sup> The U.S. Army, too, has a presence of two thousand soldiers and maintains port and logistics facilities. The U.S. Marine Corps hosts an expeditionary force of approximately eighteen thousand in Japan. Both the Army and Marine Corps forces are based on Okinawa and Honshu.<sup>23</sup> Overall, Japan is the strategic center of the United States' forces in Asia.

The United States' military presence in Japan provides a strong strategic deterrent against regional aggression. Furthermore, it provides a logistic hub from which U.S. military forces can operate further afield to provide security and freedom of navigation in the broader Indo-Pacific region. Importantly, it allows Japan a significant degree of security reassurance in the form of American forces forward deployed to the Japanese Islands. The confidence that the United States security umbrella provides Japan allows the country to maintain its pacifist stance and pursue a regional strategy focused on economic and political engagement in a region historically apprehensive of Japanese power.

## **The Dividends of Japan's Pacifist Strategy**

A notable feature of Japan's Constitution is its declaration in Chapter II, Article 9 that "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."<sup>24</sup> For more than seven decades, the country has conducted policy as a non-military state. Japan's defense policies, while restricted to self-defense—which since a 2015 re-interpretation of the constitution includes collective self-defense of allies—have also given the country an advantage in its relations with regional states. Because of this unique constitutional provision other countries can view Japan as a safe alternative ally to more aggressive powers like China. Since the end of the Second World War, Japan has employed its high-end technologies for peaceful development, and has since contributed to the industrial development of all of Asia. Japanese diplomatic and political engagement, alongside its economic investments, are regarded as magnanimous rather than

predatory. Japan has supported a free and open Indo-Pacific region,<sup>25</sup> along with investment in the development of high quality infrastructure and connectivity from India to the Philippines.<sup>26</sup>

Japan has also taken a leading role in the reconstitution of the Trans-Pacific Partnership as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), after the United States withdrew in 2017.<sup>27</sup> Approval of Japan in parts of the Indo-Pacific region, including Australia, Vietnam, and the Philippines have reached and remain over eighty percent. Indonesians continue overwhelmingly to approve of Japan, with three-quarters holding a favorable view of the country. Even among South Koreans, who harbor overall negative views of the Japanese, favorability of Japan has risen nine percent since 2013.<sup>28</sup>

Japan continues to undertake serious efforts to maintain strong security ties with like-minded partners. The country's security, while underwritten by the presence of American strategic forces, is increasingly dependent on strong, effective partnerships and bilateral alliances with other democratic states in the region.

Most notably, Japan has engaged a rising democratic India through bilateral exercises and initiatives. In addition to Japan's growing strategic relations with India, Japanese submarines and surface vessels have made port calls in other states: self-defense does not preclude prudential security relationships. In 2016, a Japanese coast guard vessel visited Vietnam, under an agreement allowing coast guard exchanges between the two states.<sup>29</sup> Japan also sold Vietnam six used surveillance ships in 2014 to improve the latter's maritime surveillance and patrol capabilities.<sup>30</sup> Japanese destroyers<sup>31</sup> and submarines<sup>32</sup> have made port calls in the past two years in the Philippines, and Japan expects to complete the delivery of ten of its domestically-manufactured vessels to the Philippine coast guard by the end of 2018.<sup>33</sup>

In short, Japan's growing security engagement with its neighbors, while limited by Article 9, does not proscribe defensive cooperation with allies, including the United States. Japan's economic and political engagement with the Indo-Pacific contributes to the region's stability and development. Japan's self-defense approach is an important, non-military component of statecraft and contribution to the region's security.

## Building Effective Deterrence

While Japan rejects war in principle and in law, this may complicate but does not attenuate its security, neither in Asia nor in its bilateral relationship with the United States. Nor does Japan's unique constitutional provision preclude it from developing its self-defense. Japan must convince an enemy that there is nothing to be gained and much to be lost by attacking Japan.

Japan's strategic interests require deterrence of missile attacks against the Japanese Islands—particularly from China and North Korea. Japan's national strategy aims to defend the nation from regional powers' growing missile threats to include nuclear or conventional, and their ability to target the country's population centers. The Japanese government in recent years has sought to improve its ballistic missile defense (BMD) capabilities. Beginning in 2004 and continuing to present day, Japan has built up its anti-missile defenses, constructing an integrated, multi-layered defense system<sup>34</sup> that includes destroyer-based AEGIS radar and SM-3 interceptors, as well as Patriot PAC-3 air defense missile systems.<sup>35</sup> For 2018, the Japanese have allocated funds to build AEGIS-ashore land-based radar systems and more advanced Patriot systems.<sup>36</sup> In addition, there is a possibility that Japan might also purchase the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, or THAAD, from the United States, although no deal has yet been reached.<sup>37</sup> The THAAD system offers protection beyond the close-in defense capability of the Patriot missile.

Beyond ballistic missile defense the Japanese government aims to establish an effective deterrent to dissuade adversaries from even initiating an attack on the country. The Japanese government in late 2017 proposed the purchase of medium-range, air-launched cruise missiles. The addition of two new types of cruise missiles to Japan's F-15 and new F-35A fighter aircraft, capable of hitting targets a thousand and five hundred kilometers respectively,<sup>38</sup> would give Japan for the first time the capability to preempt enemy launch sites before their missiles could be launched. This would provide Japan a means to deter attacks before they are initiated. This concept might raise issues with Japan's article 9. Still, Japan has hitherto not maintained such a deterrent capability. Now, it does.

In addition to a vigorous missile defense and the protection of Japan's main islands and population centers, Japanese defense planners have to consider how best to deter other conventional and “grey zone”—asymmetrical, low intensity conflict below the threshold for war.<sup>39</sup> Such threats are obvious instruments of force against the country's outlying islands. They can reasonably be inferred to apply to Japan as the People's Republic of China uses similar methods in the South and East China Sea, and against Taiwan and other Asian states.

To counter these threats, Japan has increased defense spending, from 4.65 trillion yen in FY 2012<sup>40</sup> to more than 5.19 trillion yen for FY 2018.<sup>41</sup> Since 2010, the Japanese Ministry of Defense has sought to improve the SDF based on a concept of a Dynamic Defense Force,<sup>42</sup> not only to provide

conventional defense from China's defense buildup and North Korea's ballistic missiles, but also to counter "grey-zone" challenges "swiftly and seamlessly" through achieving intelligence superiority and persistent ISR,<sup>43</sup> by securing vital sea lines of communication, and providing flexibility for immediate responses to threats based on joint operations with the United States and other friendly states.<sup>44</sup>

Japan's defense procurement reflects this. It aims to enhance Japan's intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities, through the purchase and maintenance of patrol fixed wing aircraft, helicopters, and UAVs.<sup>45</sup> Further strengthening the nation's maritime and air defenses, Tokyo also plans to purchase new submarines, F-35 Joint Strike Fighters from the United States, and other ships—including a new surveillance ship—and surveillance/intelligence/radar capabilities to ensure early warning for the country's outlying islands and sea space.<sup>46</sup>

Japan's 2016 Defense White Paper laid out the formation of an "Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade" (ARDB) within the Ground Self-Defense Forces to function as a Marine Corps and rapidly deploy (per the name) within Japan's littoral space—particularly the vulnerable southwest—and as part of a national strategy to recapture any islands that might fall during a conflict.<sup>47</sup> This is part of a larger shift in focus by the country towards amphibious capabilities.<sup>48</sup> The ARDB, officially stood up in 2017,<sup>49</sup> provides a deterrent to Chinese claims over Japanese territory (including the Senkakus).<sup>50</sup>

Japan knows from experience the vulnerability of its outlying islands. They can be used as invasion routes. China understands this as well. It would be unwise not to consider the islands as possible stepping stones toward Japan in a major West Pacific conflict. Although China's amphibious capabilities have progressed in the past 25 years, they are still in the formative stage. They can be expected to develop in the future and become a real threat. Japan's defense planners are acting prudently in hardening the defense of their outlying islands.

To support added defensive and amphibious capabilities, the country has also commissioned two "helicopter destroyers." The ships are technically categorized as destroyers but function as small helicopter carriers with a capacity to hold nine helicopters and the potential to carry V-22 aircraft and F-35B (STOVL variant) Joint Strike Fighters<sup>51</sup>—of which Tokyo has already begun to procure the A variant for the ASDF. The two commissioned helicopter destroyers, the *JS Izumo* and *JS Kaga*, add to the MSDF capacity to rapidly deploy helicopters for disaster relief or in a conflict. However, neither ship has a well deck. Neither ship is capable of deploying landing vehicles.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Japanese amphibious forces will still rely on the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps in a conflict to assist in conducting an amphibious landing, opposed or unopposed.<sup>53</sup>

Japan has also maintained and expanded its fleet of advanced submarines to provide capabilities not only to maintain open sea lanes during conflict, but also for intelligence-gathering and

surveillance in the country's maritime and littoral territories.<sup>54</sup> The Japanese submarine force currently consists of seventeen diesel-electric boats: nine Oyashio-class, the last of which was commissioned in 2008<sup>55</sup>, and eight Soryu-class, the most recent of which was commissioned in 2017<sup>56</sup>, with four more to be completed by 2021 for a projected total force of 22 ships.<sup>57</sup> Both classes are specifically designed to operate near the seabed in shallow water in the littoral and straits around Japan.<sup>58</sup>

The Japanese government has also procured a number of ShinMaywa US-2 amphibious aircraft, a Short Takeoff and Landing (STOL) seaplane capable of reaching 261 of Japan's outlying islands with a range of 4,700 km.<sup>59</sup> The US-2 not only bolsters the country's ability to conduct the surveillance needed to deter grey zone threats to Japan's distant islands, but also hosts a number of assets that fit into Japan's new defensive posture, such as search and rescue operations or emergency medical evacuation in the event of a conflict.<sup>60</sup> The aircraft possesses the capabilities necessary rapidly to deploy troops—such as members of the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade or Japanese Special Forces Group—to secure Japanese islands in the event of a grey zone contingency.

## **Joint Exercises and Security Cooperation**

In addition to strengthening the Self-Defense Forces, the Japanese government has in recent years expanded its regional and international security partnerships. As noted, Japan has improved its security cooperation with India, the Philippines, and Vietnam. US-Japan security cooperation, however, has been foremost in Japan's expanding security cooperation further afield. The U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. service branches continue to maintain close Japanese Ministry of Defense and Self-Defense Forces. U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis and Japanese Minister of Defense Itsunori Onodera have met twice in-person in August and October 2017 and speak regularly on the phone to discuss regional challenges, speeding implementation of the 2015 Revised Guidelines for Bilateral Defense Cooperation, and further bilateral means to improve Japan's defense capabilities.<sup>61</sup> Secretary Mattis further reinforced the Trump administration's commitment to Japan's defense in these meetings, and explicitly embraced the inclusion of the Senkakus and the Nansei Islands under the U.S.-Japan defense treaty.<sup>62</sup>

Along with top level defense meetings and cooperation, both countries have aimed to further their military interoperability. In 2013, the two countries formed a defense Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Working Group consisting of director level defense officials from the two states to develop joint ISR policy and further interoperability.<sup>63</sup> This has also included joint exercises to train both sides to improve their working relationship in the event of a regional contingency. Annual exercises include Keen Sword,<sup>64</sup> Multi Sail,<sup>65</sup> Malabar,<sup>66</sup> RIMPAC,<sup>67</sup> Pacific Partnership,<sup>68</sup> and Cobra Gold.<sup>69</sup>

Bilateral exercises in 2017 also included Northern Viper in August, where two thousand U.S. Marines joined 1,600 of Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force soldiers to improve bilateral coordination and interoperability through exercises in peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief.<sup>70</sup> In April 2017, several Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyers practiced helicopter landings on allied vessels and communications drills alongside the *USS Carl Vinson* carrier strike group<sup>71</sup> and in November, Japan dispatched its largest warship, the helicopter (carrier) destroyer *Izumo*, and two escorts to participate in joint exercises with three U.S. aircraft carriers in the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea near the Korean Peninsula.<sup>72</sup> To further demonstrate their close maritime security relationship, U.S. warships have made port calls in Japanese ports<sup>73</sup>—along with U.S. ships already forward deployed in Japan currently—and Japanese ships have visited ports in the continental United States as far as Florida.<sup>74</sup> Japan's GSDF forces have trained with the United States Marine Corps—in Iron Fist in California<sup>75</sup>—and in Australia in joint amphibious exercises—e.g. Talisman Sabre—to hone operational capabilities.<sup>76</sup>

Japan's security cooperation has also expanded beyond joint training and exchanges with the United States. In December 2017, Japan, the U.S., and South Korea held trilateral ballistic missile defense exercises to improve tracking missiles and information-sharing capabilities, a response to recent missile tests by North Korea.<sup>77</sup> Japan is also planning bilateral naval exercises with France,<sup>78</sup> and has signed an agreement with the United Kingdom to conduct joint exercises with the Royal Navy,<sup>79</sup> as well, as part of its broader efforts to build regionally focused security partnerships. Japanese surface warships have participated since 2009 in Combined Task Force 151, the multinational counter-piracy mission in the Gulf of Yemen and off the coast of Somalia, where for the first time since the end of the Second World War a Japanese naval officer commanded an international flotilla.<sup>80</sup>

In total, Japan has increased its cooperation with allied states, even as it strengthens its own defensive forces. Its cooperation with the United States under the auspices of the mutual defense treaty between the two countries has increased in recent years as the SDF builds confidence in its own advancing capabilities.

## **A Ready, But Unsure Partner**

Despite the Japanese government's efforts to increase the capabilities of the SDF and strengthen bilateral and multilateral security ties, the country remains reticent to accept a broader role in the region, particularly within the context of the country's bilateral ties with the United States. Many Japanese still believe that the U.S.-Japanese relationship is one of dependence: Japanese security stems solely from the strategic presence of American forces in the country. In this view, Japan is not only protected by the United States, but dependent on the U.S. for broader regional policy. In general, there is resistance in Japan to open discussion of what Japan's role should be in the alliance, and how the country ought to proceed in the broader region's security. This has complicated the Japanese government's effort to assume the role of a more equal partner in its relationship with the United States, despite Prime Minister Abe expressed desire.<sup>81</sup> It has been politically easier for the government to explain that foreign and defense policies originate from Washington, rather than arguing them on their own merits. However, Japan has many strong attributes—beyond the realm of defense—that could meaningfully contribute to the alliance.

At the same time, the Japanese public remains uncertain over expanded capabilities for the SDF, despite the Japanese government's goal of a broader role in self-defense. This is rooted in Japanese attitudes since the Second World War. Japanese society has resisted the adoption of a more assertive security policy, a trend that runs far deeper than votes in favor of the more assertive self-defense that the ruling LDP favors.<sup>82</sup> Domestic skepticism about security reform also reinforces the United States' perception that Japan does not want to take an assertive role in the region, and incorrectly assumes that Japan cannot play a larger non-military part in a broader regional strategy.

## **Recommendations**

### **Reconstructing U.S.-Japan Alliance Based on Equality and Trust**

**T**he US-Japan alliance continues to be of great importance for both countries. It provides a security framework for Japan to maintain its pacifist, self-defense-only stature in a time of increasing regional frictions. It provides the United States a close ally and forward basing that enables effective regional power protection to protect American and allied interests. However, despite the benefits that the Tokyo-Washington security relationship offers, there are large and untapped advantages. Misperception on both sides is an obstacle to unlocking them. The United States and many in Japan continue to view the latter as a junior partner. Japan is hesitant to take a more active role, despite the Abe government's desire to transform the alliance into a partnership of equals.

To achieve its greatest benefit in the face of a growing threat from China, the US-Japan alliance should rest on the sturdiest ground. Washington and Tokyo will benefit from a relationship based on equal partnership. Both the United States and Japan will benefit as Japan recognizes and acts upon the greater role it can take in providing its own defense and in building relations with countries across Asia. Japanese and America policy-makers and the two countries' citizens' understanding that U.S. and Japan are equal partners is essential. For Japan, this will require building a greater self-confidence in its strategy of a more assertive self-defense. It does not prevent Japan from assuming greater non-military and collective defense roles in the region.

America will benefit by regarding Japan less as a forward operating base for U.S. forces in the Western Pacific and more with the understanding that a solid alliance requires defending Japan from China and North Korea. Complementing this is increased U.S. understanding of, and encouragement and support for the part that Japan itself can take as an ally in the region. This would change the character of combined military exercises, military sales, technology transfer, and military interoperability. To these ends, the alliance can focus on three areas in which to improve: increasing political-security cooperation, improving technological cooperation, and building greater joint operational capabilities.

### **Increasing Political-Security Cooperation**

The category of political-security is one in which Japan could demonstrate value by providing significant support to the United States. As discussed, Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy has made important advances in engagement within the region. Tokyo continues to deepen its

economic, political, and security ties with regional states that seek alternative allies to balance an increasingly aggressive China. Japan's prominent role in maintaining a prosperous and peaceful Indo-Pacific occurs as the United States has begun to pursue its own Indo-Pacific policy based on the same principles. This area could provide opportunities for Japan to demonstrate its ability to contribute meaningfully as an equal partner in the alliance/ This would include building strong ties with regional states that can cooperate with a United States-led coalition to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The Japanese government's provision of information and advice to the United States about relations with other Asian states is in the shared interest of both states. Misunderstandings due to miscommunication or withholding do not advance the cause of allied solidarity. For example, greater clarity in recent exchanges of views between Tokyo, Seoul, and Washington about the DPRK would likely have produced more productive results. Japan and the United States should seek a trusting intelligence relationship similar to the one that exists between the United States and United Kingdom. Information and intelligence-sharing about China and North Korea, as well as Japanese expertise about the Association of Southeast Asian Nations—ASEAN—and other states on the Asian periphery such as Mongolia is valuable as Washington comes to accept the state of strategic competition that exists between China and the U.S. Greater sharing could benefit the United States' understanding of these countries and allow more effective policy planning in the U.S. and Japan. Such information-sharing would not seek to make Japan an intelligence asset of the United States. It is important to preserve the independence of both countries' intelligence services, and simultaneously benefit from equal contributions to security.

The more equal partnership that this paper supports will be advanced when Japan and the United States expand the coordination of their political-security policies as their interests dictate. This means straight talk: Tokyo and Washington will each gain by more forthright communication—by disagreeing, if necessary, and then working together toward a resolution. The Japanese government's confidence as an equal partner of the United States will be demonstrated by voicing its opinions on U.S. policy candidly.

Candor, openness, and a frank expression of views among allies is good. It builds confidence, deepens the alliance, and encourages the equality which any useful partnership demands. Promoting these qualities in relations between Tokyo and Washington is in the interest of both nations.

## **Improving Defense Technology Cooperation**

Japan has long maintained a high-quality, albeit niche, defense industry that has manufactured equipment for the Self-Defense Forces. Despite the advanced and effective nature of Japan's domestic defense industry, until recently the government maintained complex and daunting limitations on what to the export of defense equipment. The justification for these obstacles has been Article 9's disavowal of war and belligerence as instruments of state policy. These limited Japan's ability to sell high-quality weapons abroad. Simultaneously, the U.S. defense industry has worked extensively with Japanese companies to upgrade U.S.-origin weapons systems sold to the SDF. The Japanese government's lifting constraints on selected foreign military sales would open the country's industrial capability to compete internationally. Both the Japanese and American governments should capitalize on this opportunity to improve defense technology cooperation between the two countries, and between Japan and other allies and partners that contribute to the democratic states' collective security.

The Japanese government has long officially maintained the so-called "Three Principles on Arms Exports." These principles forbid Japanese export of weapons and defensive technologies to communist bloc countries, countries under U.N. Security Council Arms Embargoes, and countries "involved in or likely to be involved in international conflict." Successive Japanese government have interpreted this to forbid the export of weapons or related defensive products to any destination.<sup>83</sup>

In the prohibition, Japanese companies were proscribed from investments in foreign military production facilities or base construction.<sup>84</sup> In 2014, the government replaced these with "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology." This diluted the limitations on arms exports. It "limited" arms sales to "contribution to the proactive advancement of peace contribution and international cooperation" and "contribution to the security of Japan."<sup>85</sup> The relaxed interpretation also allowed Japanese companies to participate in joint research and development projects with foreign firms.<sup>86</sup>

While the new defense export rules created potential for Japanese defense sales abroad as well as joint R&D ventures, the country has been slow to capitalize on new markets. Despite the quality and reliability of Japanese defense technology in the international marketplace, Japanese companies have been slow to engage with prospective foreign clients.

Unlike U.S. defense contractors, which generate an average 90 percent of their revenue from defense contracts, Japanese companies that manufacture weapons and related equipment produce about ten percent of revenue in defense sales. Japanese firms also restrict much of their manufacturing to Japan. The same self-limitation applies to subcontractors. They are almost exclusively Japanese companies. This is a disincentive to potential foreign government purchasers

that want their own companies and workers to benefit. Potential foreign purchasers of Japanese-made defense equipment also fear that bans on arms sales might be reintroduced in the future before their contracts can be completed.<sup>87</sup> Finally, Japanese companies are “leery of attracting negative opinion,” something that selling weapons or security equipment to other countries might evoke in the pacifist mindset of many Japanese.<sup>88</sup>

Moreover, while the Japanese government has lifted some of the restrictions on defense technology cooperation and sales, it has been hesitant in approving sales. Japan’s inexperience in this sphere is illustrated by the failed Soryu-class submarine deal with Australia. The Soryu-class is a large, air-independent propulsion, and highly capable attack submarine. The Australian defense minister called it “extremely impressive.” Canberra was on the verge of inking a lucrative deal. However, to proceed with the contract, the Japanese Ministry of Defense needed to approve Australian requests to the manufacturer for certain classified data, including an Australian offset program. The MoD failed to respond fully, and on several occasions denied the requested access. The MoD was hesitant about providing access to the necessary sensitive data, a likely result of a lack of standardized procedures for sharing sensitive defense information between the government and defense contractors. Ultimately, the deal collapsed.<sup>89</sup>

To take full advantage of the international defense market, the Japanese government would benefit itself and Japanese firms addressing such challenges. An important first step is improved marketing for its domestic defense products. A thorough streamlining of foreign acquisition rules for domestically-manufactured products would be a natural complement. The Japanese Ministry of Defense’s Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Agency (ATLA), which superintends overseas acquisition, joint R&D, and approval of foreign sales, would be in a better position to assist in foreign sales of defense equipment if its functions were enriched and empowered to positively encourage Japanese companies to identify and work with foreign purchasers. One of the agency’s official functions is to “maintain and strengthen defense production and technological bases.”<sup>90</sup> With this authority, ATLA could actively support Japanese industry’s participation in the international defense sector. The result would be to strengthen defense production domestically. Assisting Japanese companies’ engagement with foreign markets would have the same positive result in helping to strengthen Japan’s defense industrial base—and thus advance our ally’s ability to work together with the U.S. in defending the island nation.

This objective can be materially advanced if Japanese companies could find and fill niches in foreign defense supply chains with the United States that are underserved by American companies. Japan leads the way in advanced electronics and parts that could complement and improve existing U.S. systems. For example, Japanese-designed gyroscopes have bolstered U.S.-built Patriot missile defense systems.<sup>91</sup> The Japanese government could also assist Japanese companies in filling other niche areas in American defense needs, such as the lack of a platform like the US-2 amphibious search-and-rescue aircraft that U.S. domestic industry does not currently produce

independently. Such a platform would be sorely needed in a West Pacific conflict where significant numbers of U.S. pilots needed to be rescued at sea.

At the domestic political level, the Japanese government would advance its security and commercial interests by guaranteeing that defense contracts with foreigners will not be severed by future governments without due process and compensation. This is a problem that faces governments' defense establishments: political instability in defense acquisition discourages innovative, technologically sophisticated firms from government business. Japan is no different. By protecting Japanese companies from the financial loss that a reversal in defense sales policy would bring, the Japanese government would encourage companies to seek contracts abroad.

Japan could also reform its classification system and the process for access to restricted information. Currently, there is no official protocol that governs the sharing of highly sensitive technology between the government and industry. The government would benefit from an effective process to transfer classified information without compromising sensitive systems as well as the standardization of its overall classification system. This could well avoid such accountability issues as the failed submarine sale to Australia, in which the MoD's difficulty in decisions about technology-sharing played a significant role. It could also allow for greater cooperation with the United States: the U.S. has a comprehensive and effective classification system of its own that might complicate Japan's access to sensitive technologies without a system of its own that guarantees protection of American technology on the other side of the Pacific.

Both the United States and Japan should seek to increase joint defense technology transfers and cooperation. ATLA is also responsible for "strengthen(ing) defense equipment and technology cooperation."<sup>92</sup> A streamlined interaction between Japanese companies and their American counterparts would improve the chances for useful cooperation. The United States would find cooperation with Japan in technological development beneficial. Joint efforts have succeeded in the past.

For example, the two countries jointly developed the SM-3 Block IIA, the latest version of the sea-launched anti-ballistic missile interceptor.<sup>93</sup> The AEGIS system was also upgraded with assistance from Japan and applied successfully to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' *Atago*-class guided-missile destroyers, to include the integration of the new version of the SM-3.<sup>94</sup> Japanese contributions to technologies and systems such as this and the Patriot upgrades jointly developed with the United States benefit not only the SDF, but also the U.S. military.

Joint technology development between the United States and Japan could also benefit the corporate defense interoperability of the two countries. For example, a new AEGIS Ashore project for the Japanese Ministry of Defense has even seen competition between joint U.S.-Japan corporate defense teams: Raytheon has worked with Mitsubishi Electric Corp, while Lockheed Martin

collaborated with Fujitsu Ltd.<sup>95</sup> This model shows promise for future bilateral defense cooperation and integration of defense industrial efforts.

The Japanese defense industry has much to offer the United States and the global defense market. Its systems and technologies are marked by high quality and reliability in areas from robotics and energy storage to artificial intelligence. These are key emerging defense technologies where Japan is as a global leader.<sup>96</sup> If the Japanese government can make its defense contractors' products available to other allied and partner states, it can strengthen its own defense industrial base, create jobs, and make valuable additions to the defense of democratic states.

## **Building Joint Operational Capabilities**

Japan has sought to improve its Self-Defense Forces to increase its effectiveness in repelling invasion. The SDF has developed its capacity to address growing strategic threats by strengthening its ballistic missile defense, improving maritime capabilities, and the introducing an amphibious force to counter grey-zone threats to outlying and contested Japanese territory. Japan's expansion of these capabilities is a positive development. It will further invigorate the SDF's operational capacity to counter aggression against Japan's sea, land, and air space. It will effectively preserve as well as increase interoperability with the United States—and if Tokyo perseveres the entire chain of Japanese islands will be transformed into an integrated defense of the Japanese state.

Despite the indispensable nature of the U.S.-Japan alliance to Japan's security and to U.S. regional strategy, the alliance is unlike the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the U.S.-South Korea bilateral security relationship: it does not have an integrated command structure. Instead, the alliance has relied on lines of communication between various elements of the Ministry of Defense, including the SDF, and other relevant agencies to conduct bilateral coordination. This is a major challenge to interoperability between the two countries, in part frustrated by Japan's post-war tradition of reticence to approve any security measure that could be construed as "war potential" pursuant to Article 9. Current events, with China and North Korea, make today a propitious time to reconsider this stricture. Events bear this out.

The Japanese and U.S. government's creation of a conceptual mechanism for increased command and control coordination is prudent and deserves to be put into action. This is evidence that both countries are moving closer to a common integrated command structure.

The 2015 Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation aimed partially to address the lack of a permanent institution to conduct combined operations of the U.S. military and JSDF. Both countries agreed to establish an "Alliance Coordination Mechanism."<sup>97</sup> This should bridge the gap between both countries. The mechanism would serve as a means for the United States and Japan to synchronize responses to attacks on Japan, the United States, or a third-party ally.<sup>98</sup> When

implemented, the measure will be an important step forward in the U.S.'s military's shift away from regarding Japan as a forward operating base and toward emphasizing Washington's role in defending Japan.

The Alliance Coordination Mechanism has been designed to improve the alliance's joint function at three levels: policy operations, and organization.<sup>99</sup> At the policy level, the mechanism would establish an alliance coordination group—the Bilateral Planning Mechanism—to coordinate and calibrate the policies of both countries and present their decisions through the Security Consultative Committee.<sup>100</sup>

At the operational level, the ACM would create a center to coordinate joint operations between the U.S. military and the Japan Self Defense Force. This function already exists, to some extent, in the form of the Bilateral Joint Operations Coordination Center, located at the Yokota Air Base in Japan.<sup>101</sup> The ACM would broaden this bridge.

At the third level of interoperability the ACM seeks to integrate coordination at the division level between similar services in the SDF and US military—such as land, sea, and air—through Component Coordination Centers.<sup>102</sup> The ACM further enables coordination in the event of an attack against either the United States or a third country. It provides for the two nations to align their efforts in responding to a crisis or conflict, as well as a means to coordinate actions with other states in the region.<sup>103</sup>

The ACM as it currently exists will benefit significantly from improvement. Japan and the United States need an effective means of coordinating their military forces during a conflict. While improving joint operational and policy implementation between the US military and the SDF is a step in the right direction, Tokyo and Washington can do more to integrate their operational planning for contingencies, as well as their command structures. This could include testing joint command function at a lower operational level to develop U.S. and Japanese officers' ability to command their counterparts. Further, U.S. and Japanese officials could begin exploring the feasibility of such a defensive command structure, in light of Japan's self-defense restrictions. While the alliance is not prepared today to move directly to a unified command structure such as the US-South Korean alliance, a similar type of joint command and control to be activated in times of significant conflict is a worthy, practical goal.

Beyond the bilateral operational level, the upcoming Japanese national security strategy—to be reviewed in late 2018—will improve national security by adapting to growing Chinese and North Korean aggressiveness by including defense of outer islands that could be used as launching points for an invasion of the Japanese main islands. These islands are vulnerable. Without sufficient means to defend or retake them, they could fall under enemy control, and provide an enemy a significant point of leverage as a political bargaining chip at the end of a limited engagement.

As noted above, the defense of the entire island chain is needed to assure the safety of its centers of population and productive capacity. This means a hardening of Japan's ability to deter against China's land-based and increasingly sea-based aircraft in the portion of airspace over Japan's surrounding islands. From the United States side, this means integrating the defense of Japan with the broader strategic defense of the first and second islands chains. For example, joint air defenses between the Self-Defense Forces and the United States, particularly those based at Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, should link to the air defense of Taiwan, as Chinese aggressiveness against Taipei would likely also compromise outlying Japanese territories such as the Senkakus and the Nansei Islands.

If deterrence fails, Japan's amphibious capabilities will be critical in responding swiftly to an incident on an outer island. Response to contingencies such as the invasion of an outlying island could prevent tensions from escalating to a general conflict. And here, the U.S. can assist. The United States Navy and Marine Corps have significant experience in amphibious operations and can provide this operational knowledge through more joint exercises, military-to-military exchanges, and the integration of such capabilities as the JSDF marines on U.S. Navy amphibious landing ships, and U.S. Marines on MSDF amphibious transports. Japan's increased investment in amphibious platforms as part of an overarching SDF mission to deploy swiftly in the maritime domain would complement its deterrence and conflict capabilities.

The Japanese government would benefit no less from expanding the Self-Defense Forces' role, range, and capabilities. The JSDF's concentration on the purchase of various weapon systems and platforms is praiseworthy. But it is not an end in itself. Strengthening the JSDF's capability to develop contingency operational concepts and explore interoperability options with the United States will help ensure Japan's security.

The SDF should examine how it could further complement U.S. security capabilities would also likely yield useful proposal for Japan's defense. This could, for example, include logistical support for the U.S. Navy in the event of a major conflict. The SDF could provide security for U.S. logistics vessels and could also assist in providing logistics to the U.S. military during peacetime.

Defense planners in both Tokyo and Washington will best fulfill their responsibilities by preparing for a large-scale conflict between the United States and China. Currently, Japanese forces could provide limited defensive security for U.S. forces. Japan could offer valuable support by preparing to conduct extensive search-and-rescue (SAR) capability operations to support U.S. forces during intensive and prolonged naval conflict. In such an engagement there is a high probability that large numbers of U.S. sailors and Marines would need to be rescued at sea. Highly capable SAR would be an important and critical support to potential U.S. operations in and around Japan.

One example of a Japanese platform that that can perform SAR and other combat support missions is the ShinMaywa US-2 four-engine seaplane. The US-2's range and volume are excellent qualifications that could augment both Japan's ability to conduct joint operations with the United States as well as its ability to deter aggression against Japan's islands. With an approximate range of 2,500 nautical miles, the platform would allow Japan to conduct SAR over a wide area in the event of a large-scale conflict with China.

Already, the US-2 has been used to conduct more than 1,000 SAR missions in the waters off Japan. The US-2 can transport thirty personnel or twelve stretchers, which would enable it to pick up larger numbers of stranded U.S. or Japanese sailors and Marines directly from the ocean.<sup>104</sup> To advance the cause of greater security cooperation, Japan could also deploy the US-2 for other essential missions. The airframe has the capability to patrol and surveil outlying islands against Chinese threats. It could land and deploy special forces or U.S. or Japanese marines to these islands to secure them from attack or reinforce them. The US-2 can provide tactical insertion of forces within Japanese territory. The aircraft's long range allows it to reach 261 outlying Japanese islands, including the Nansei Islands and the Senkakus.<sup>105</sup> The plane has also shown the ability to fly the 1700 km between the outlying Okinotori Island in four hours, a trip which would take a ship two days.<sup>106</sup>

Other states in the maritime theater of operations that is the West Pacific have also grasped the utility of an amphibious airplane. The Chinese AG600 has similar capabilities to the US-2. Its size, range, and volume pose a direct challenge to the Japanese islands, in much the same way that the US-2 offers a defense to the same islands. The AG600 represents not only a competitor to the US-2, but also a threat to Japan and its territorial sovereignty. The US-2 is an effective counter to the Chinese platform. It is a sensible offset to China's capability and a prime candidate for participation in the U.S.-led RIMPAC exercises. The cause of Japanese security and a more balanced allied relationship with the U.S. would be advanced by the National Defense Program Guidelines' inclusion of additional US-2 platforms.

What is sorely needed is for the Japanese government to articulate a logical justification for weaponry that will force an adversary to think very carefully before attacking. The reason is straightforward. Deterrence does not equal only defensive equipment or platforms. There are many examples. NATO deployed armored tanks, large-bore howitzers, and attack aircraft that in the center of Germany during the Cold War. These were never intended as an invasion force against the Warsaw Pact states. They existed as a powerful reminder that a Soviet invasion of Western Europe would be vigorously resisted. This is deterrence. Weapons are neither inherently offensive nor defensive. The purpose of the weapons determines whether they are offensive or defensive.

The intercontinental missiles aboard American submarines are not intended to start a war, but rather to prevent one by assuring a potential enemy that an attack against America could—and would—be answered swiftly and powerfully. These are deterrent, not offensive, weapons.

Japan's defense increasingly requires more powerful weapons. While such weapons are capable of offense, political leadership's articulation should reiterate that they will not be employed as such, but under the strict regulation of Article 9. The meaning of self-defense is changing as threats in Japan's increasingly dangerous neighborhood grow. Old descriptions, such as "offensive" and "defensive" obscure the greater truth: the region is becoming more and more dangerous.

The necessary requirements of effective deterrence will not abandon Japan's commitment to its defensive principles. A strengthened JSDF would function as a defensive tool to reinforce Japan's nonaggression. Improving the country's ability to deter attacks lessens the possibility that such attacks could occur. This minimizes the possibility that Japan might be forced to engage in a wider conflict to defend itself. Japan's commitment to its nonaggressive self-defense is one of its greatest assets. The commitment does not pose a threat to others, and inclines others to trust in Japan's economic and political engagement. Maintaining an effective deterrent helps Japan improve its own security, as it contributes to the U.S.-Japan alliance's ability to deter conflict and, if needed, defend the country and the U.S. forces stationed there.

## **Conclusion**

**T**he US-Japan strategic alliance will continue to remain critical to both countries' security. For the United States, it remains the hub from which the United States extends its strategic forces into the Indo-Pacific and as such, a *primus inter pares* in Washington's defensive umbrella. For Japan, the alliance provides an assurance of security from external threats. The future offers new and important opportunities to expand the relationship. It should no longer be viewed as a one-sided security agreement. Rather, the alliance should serve as an increasingly cooperative endeavor. Japan has great potential in its non-military engagement with the region that is a pillar of its strong contribution to the alliance. Japan today has an unparalleled opportunity to raise the value of its stock as an equal and valued regional partner, beyond serving as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" for American strategic forces in Asia.

At home, the challenge is to convince Japan's population that the government has no interest or wish to transform itself into a nation with offensive ambitions. Its pacifist alignment has served it well for seventy years and can continue to be a source of trust with other countries that might otherwise be wary. Japan can demonstrate its technological value through contributions to the United States, and to other allies. Its increasing deterrent capabilities would serve its own self-interest, the future strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance, and the world's interest in a stable international system that provides global order, prosperity, and security.

## **Author Biographies and End Notes**

### **Seth Cropsey**

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Senior Fellow Seth Cropsey began his career in government at the Defense Department as Assistant to the Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and subsequently served as Deputy Undersecretary of the Navy in the Reagan and Bush administrations, where he was responsible for the Navy's position on efforts to reorganize DoD, development of the maritime strategy, the Navy's academic institutions, naval special operations, and burden-sharing with NATO allies. In the Bush administration, Cropsey moved to OSD to become acting assistant secretary, and then principal deputy assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict. Cropsey served as a naval officer from 1985-2004.

During the period that preceded the collapse of the USSR, from 1982 to 1984, Cropsey directed the editorial policy of the Voice of America on the Solidarity movement in Poland, Soviet treatment of dissidents, and other issues. Returning to public diplomacy in 2002 as director of the US government's International Broadcasting Bureau, Cropsey supervised the agency as successful efforts were undertaken to increase radio and television broadcasting to the Muslim world.

### **Jun Isomura**

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Senior Fellow Jun Isomura joined Hudson Institute in September 2005. He directs the U.S.-Japan Strategic Summit Program. Prior to joining Hudson, Isomura spent 12 years running his own international public affairs firm and risk consulting firm. He was a pioneer in the cyber security field in Japan. From 1997 to 2000 he conducted the cyber security project "Committee for a Large-Scale Plan for Network Security" for the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. He was also a cabinet office member of the committee responsible for the "Special Action Plan of Countermeasures against Cyber-Terrorism on Critical Infrastructure." As staff to the late Shintaro Abe, former minister of foreign affairs and former secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party, in 1990 Isomura arranged a meeting between the Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and Shintaro Abe. Isomura had a private meeting with Soviet Vice President Gennady Yanayev in the Kremlin just three days before the August 1991 coup.

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