



JAPAN AND ITS ALLIANCE WITH THE US

Structure, Dynamics, Evolution to 2030

Céline PAJON

With participation from John SEAMAN, Alice EKMAN and Françoise NICOLAS

May 2016

The Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri) is a research center and a forum for debate on major international political and economic issues. Headed by Thierry de Montbrial since its founding in 1979, Ifri is a non-governmental and a non-profit organization.

As an independent think tank, Ifri sets its own research agenda, publishing its findings regularly for a global audience. Using an interdisciplinary approach, Ifri brings together political and economic decision-makers, researchers and internationally renowned experts to animate its debate and research activities.

With offices in Paris and Brussels, Ifri stands out as one of the rare French think tanks to have positioned itself at the very heart of European debate.

The opinions expressed in this text are the responsibility of the author alone.

This report is a shorter, updated version of a study originally published in November 2015 with the support of the DGRIS – Directorate General for International Relations and Strategy – of the French Ministry of Defense.



ISBN: 978-2-36567-577-2

© All rights reserved, Ifri, 2016

Cover: © Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet

How to quote this document:

Céline Pajon *et alii.*, « Japan and Its Alliance with the US. Structure, Dynamics and Evolution to 2030 », *Études de l'Ifri*, May 2016.

Ifri

27 rue de la Procession 75740 Paris Cedex 15 – FRANCE

Tel.: +33 (0)1 40 61 60 00 – Fax : +33 (0)1 40 61 60 60

Email: accueil@ifri.org

Website: Ifri.org

Japan and Its Alliance with the US

**Structure, Dynamics and Evolution
to 2030**

BY CÉLINE PAJON

**WITH PARTICIPATION FROM JOHN SEAMAN, ALICE EKMAN
AND FRANÇOISE NICOLAS**

**ÉTUDES DE L'IFRI
MAY 2016**

Acknowledgements

The original, French language version was a collaborative project piloted by the author, Céline Pajon, and involving the research team of the Ifri Center for Asian Studies.

In particular, the first report included a chapter on the US domestic strategic debate and actors regarding the alliance, written by John Seaman, a Research Fellow in the Ifri Center for Asian Studies. Other elements on the US strategy that appear in the current translated version also originate from the interviews John Seaman conducted in Washington for the study. He also proof-read the English version to ensure the quality of the report.

Françoise Nicolas, Director of the Ifri Center for Asian Studies, contributed to the economic dimension of the analysis, mainly regarding issues surrounding the TPP and Chinese economic initiatives, as discussed in pages 38-9.

Finally, Alice Ekman, a Research Fellow in the Ifri Center for Asian Studies and Head of China Research, provided important analysis regarding the dynamics of China's domestic and foreign policy. Juliette Genevaz, a Trans-Atlantic Post-doctoral Fellow in International Relations (TAPIR) at Ifri in 2014-2015, also offered insightful information on China's future evolution in terms of foreign and defense policy.

The whole team of the Center for Asian Studies worked on the scenarios of evolution for the alliance.

Finally, Hadrienne Terres, an intern at Ifri in 2014-2015, helped to design the diagram for the scenarios.

The author would like to express her sincere gratitude for the team's excellent contribution. Any error or omission is her own responsibility.

The author finally would like to extend her warmest thanks to the numerous Japanese experts and officials who agreed to meet with her and discuss the course of the alliance while in Tokyo in 2014 and 2015. These meetings were an invaluable source of information to deepen her understanding of the issues and also the occasion to deepen existing relations of trust and friendship.

Authors

Céline Pajon is Research Fellow at the Center for Asian Studies, Ifri. She researches and analyses Japan's foreign and defense policy for Ifri since 2008. She also follows the major domestic political debates in Japan and conducts researches on the evolving International Relations and geostrategic setting of the Indo-Pacific region. She lectured at INALCO (Langues'O) and is also regularly teaching at ENSTA and EPFL (École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne). Céline Pajon holds a Master in International Affairs from the Graduate Institute of International Studies of Geneva and graduated from Sciences Po Lyon. She studied two years in Japan, at Waseda University and Osaka University. She is an International Research Fellow with the Canon Institute for Global Studies (CIGS) in Tokyo, where she stayed to conduct several research fieldworks.

John Seaman is Research Fellow at the Center for Asian Studies, Ifri. He joined Ifri in 2009, where he specializes in the geopolitics and political economy of energy and natural resources in Asia, with a focus on China and Japan. He also conducts research on Chinese foreign policy, the U.S. strategy and policy in East Asia, European perceptions of Asia, international relations and geopolitics in East Asia, and the political economy of critical raw materials (incl. rare earth elements). Mr. Seaman holds a Master in International Affairs – International Security from Sciences Po, Paris, a Bachelor of Arts in International Economics from Seattle University, and studied as a NSEP David L. Boren Scholar at the Beijing Center for Chinese Studies (2002-03). In the summer of 2011 and 2013 he was a visiting researcher with the Energy and Environment Program of the Canon Institute for Global Studies (CIGS) in Tokyo, Japan and is currently an International Research Fellow with CIGS. He has spent a number of years studying and working in both China and Japan.

Françoise Nicolas has been Research Fellow in Ifri since 1990 and Director of the Center for Asian Studies, Ifri since 2010. She is conducting researches on emerging economies, with a focus on East Asia, East Asian regional economic integration, Foreign direct investment and growth and globalization and its impacts on global governance. She is also an assistant Professor in international economics at the University of Paris-Est (Marne-la-Vallée), and teaches at Langues' O, Sciences Po (Paris) and Sciences Po (Lyon). Françoise Nicolas holds a Ph.D in international economics (1991) and a MA in political science (1985) from the Graduate Institute of

International Studies (Geneva, Switzerland). She has spent some time as a visiting fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore (1999) and at the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP) in Seoul (2004).

Alice Ekman is Research Fellow and head of China research at the Center for Asian Studies, Ifri. She researches and analyses China's major domestic and foreign policy changes for Ifri. She is an associate professor at Sciences Po Paris and Sciences Po Lille, and also lectures at the French Institute for Higher National Defence Studies and the War College. Fluent in Mandarin Chinese, she regularly undertakes research fieldwork in China and East Asia and advises public and private institutions working in the region. She is a member of the EU committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). She holds an MA from the London School of Economics in International Relations, Economics, and Anthropology (China focus), and a PhD from Sciences Po Paris on China's contemporary practice of diplomacy (Center for International Studies and Research – Asia programme). She also holds a BA in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from the University of Kent, a graduate degree in Political Sciences from Sciences Po Lille and a Chinese language diploma from Lille III University.

Executive summary

The Japan-US alliance is currently experiencing a particularly favorable period, benefiting from the synergy between the acceleration in Japan's military normalization under Shinzo Abe and the US policy of rebalancing towards Asia. The strengthening of the alliance is subject to a broad consensus in Japan, as in the United States.

Strategic convergence between the allies is therefore increasing in a number of areas:

- **A common strategic priority:** Both countries seek **to create conditions to ensure that the rise of China does not threaten the allies' interests** (deter provocations, protect themselves from such actions, foster positive and co-operative behavior by Beijing and encourage its participation in the current international order).
- **Broadly similar approaches vis-à-vis China:** Washington and Tokyo wish to maintain co-operative (or at least functional) relationships with Beijing, while guarding against the threats associated with increasing Chinese power. **Therefore** for this reason, **their Chinese policies** constantly **swing between a strategy of engagement and balancing/deterrence**. The variations in approach are mainly based on Chinese behavior (political and military assertiveness from Beijing will result in a "tougher" approach toward China).
- **A mirroring evolution in terms of security governance:** The latest defense reforms in Japan concentrate the decision-making process on security issues in hands of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, in particular with the establishment of a National Security Council, based on the US model. This development should facilitate bilateral cooperation.
- **A convergence of approaches, in terms of operational concepts,** particularly through the **"integrated dynamic defense" posture and anti-access measures** involving a permanent mobilization of forces and improved interoperability to respond to problems raised by Chinese maritime expansion on the

one hand (including pre-conflict "grey zone" situations) and anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) measures taken by Beijing on the other hand.

- **A convergence of the allies around a strategy of *smart power*** (a combination of hard and soft power). This approach, well adapted to the Chinese challenge, which mixes military assertiveness with economic and institutional activism, is also part of a rationale of efficiency and cost reduction (*all of government approach*).

The alliance is changing as a result of these strategic convergences:

- **A permanent coordination mechanism has been set up.** This mechanism helps to improve political dialogue, update operational planning scenarios, and share information in a more efficient way when a crisis arises. It allows for preventing and/or reducing the differentiated threat perceptions, and increases cohesion and trust between the allies, while permanently improving operational coordination from peacetime to wartime.
- **Co-operation has begun in several key areas to maintain the alliance's military superiority over China**, particularly in the space (including missile defense) and cyber domains and through the joint development of defense equipment (possibly in relation with the *third offset strategy*). These measures, combined with the strengthening of a counter-denial operational posture, should also reinforce the credibility of extended deterrence by expanding its conventional dimension, while the US nuclear component remains mobilized.
- **The allies are extending their cooperation in non-military areas in order to reinforce their power of attraction (*soft power*).** This expansion involves the areas of development assistance (particularly for maritime capacity-building of Asian countries), humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) and the promotion of liberal norms, particularly in the commercial sector (TPP). It should enable the allies to strengthen their relations and, to some extent, regain the initiative and set the agenda in Asia, all while seeking to engage Beijing.
- This *soft power* should also facilitate **the development of a network (or a *web*) bringing strategic partners of the**

alliance in the region together as a way to counterbalance China. Washington is seeking to form a network among its Asian allies and partners in order to strengthen their own defense capabilities, while Tokyo is diversifying its strategic partners to help maintain the US presence in the region and, if necessary, hedge against a possible, relative US scaling down or withdrawal.

For the first time, Japan is playing a leading role in redefining the alliance:

- **Japan is becoming a driving, proactive force.** As the politico-military normalization of Japan is accelerating, the regional security environment is deteriorating, and fears about a possible US abandonment are intensifying, Tokyo has taken the initiative in seeking and achieving a revision of the bilateral Guidelines for Defense Cooperation. **The United States must adapt to this new dynamic and address in particular the need for reassurance expressed by its ally.**
- **The security reforms adopted in Japan in recent years** allowing the Self-Defense Forces to play a larger role, particularly in the exercise of collective self-defense, **have helped to further bilateral cooperation and rebalance the alliance.**
- **Historically, with each disengagement or perceived disengagement of the United States in the region, Japan has granted concessions to its ally and rearmed.** During these key episodes (1969-1978, 1991-1999, 2009-2015), a twofold geostrategic development raised concerns of both a US strategic retreat and a failure by Washington to meet the new geostrategic challenge. The fear of abandonment by its ally became so strong that it led the Japanese leaders to make significant changes in the country's defense posture (most of the time, this process leads to the adoption of New Defense Orientations and bilateral Guidelines).
- **Currently, the eagerness to provide incentives to the US to ensure its strong and long-term engagement in Asia plays a key role in Japanese strategic choices and their formulation.**

These changes in the alliance, which are carried out in an uncertain and fluctuating geostrategic context, will have to be based on thorough dialogue and coordination, as **limitations, differences and frictions could weaken the partnership:**

- **Japanese domestic political factors** still represent the main limitation to deepening the alliance. **The antimilitarist regulations and norms** implemented in the 1950-1970s, and which are deeply rooted (politically, legally, and in public opinion), **will indeed continue to curb the expansion of military cooperation. In particular, Japanese actors remain reluctant about military commitments outside Asia** (except for humanitarian or peacekeeping missions under a UN mandate) and it is likely that they will use the options opened up by the defense reforms and bilateral Guidelines in a very limited way.
- Structurally, **economic constraints in Japan and the United States, combined with a population decline in the archipelago, will complicate a political decision** related to the choice of foreign policy and investments in the defense budget – an essential basis for continuing the alliance.
- **The fluctuating nature of the American and Japanese approaches vis-à-vis China ("reactive approaches") explains the persistence of strong fears, on the Japanese side, of an abandonment by its ally** in favor of Beijing, **and on the US side, of being trapped in a spiraling Japanese-Chinese rivalry** as Tokyo and Beijing oppose each other more directly on political and military matters. Therefore, intensifying the political dialogue between the allies is an essential factor for maintaining strong cohesion.
- Furthermore, although the allies' main objective is clearly identified and shared (to ensure that the rise of Chinese power is compatible with their national interests), **their secondary expectations vis-à-vis the alliance may differ. Washington wants above all to encourage a greater military contribution by Japan, in Asia but also outside the region**, in unstable areas where the United States could be required to intervene in a crisis. It has high expectations, especially since the adoption of the latest security reforms by Japan facilitating military deployments abroad. **For its part, Tokyo remains focused on Asian (or even North-East Asian) security issues** immediately affecting its own interests, and above all is seeking to ensure long-term and credible US political and military engagement in the region. These differences in

the order of the two allies' priorities and expectations are a latent factor of frustration.

- **Finally, friction related to the conditions and the impact of the US military presence in Japan are a persistent point of tension within the alliance, and could potentially result in a serious crisis.**

The scenarios of evolution for the Japan-US alliance to 2030 presented in the study draw on previous points of analysis. They start from the assumption of an alliance mainly evolving in response to the Chinese variable (see the diagrams on p. 83).

The baseline scenario (1) envisages a successful adaptation of the alliance to a China that continues to blow hot and cold in Asia. Therefore, a large number of Asian actors all adopt a *hedging* posture that seeks to keep the United States in the region as the main guarantor of regional security, but also promotes functional cooperation with China, the key economic actor in the region. The alliance's power of attraction, which is considered as a provider of public goods, allows it to attract cooperation from most Asian countries. **This environment, which maintains a balance of power favorable to the alliance,** allows Japan to ensure its security and strengthen its political, economic, and military role in the region.

The “weakening alliance” scenario (2) assumes that the main threat to maintaining a strong alliance is not an aggressive China, but on the contrary, an appeased China, more moderate in terms of military assertiveness, but still proactive in terms of economic and institutional diplomacy. The reduction in the main threat cementing the alliance leaves the allies more vulnerable to their domestic irritations and relatively isolated, as the rest of Asia is turning to Beijing. In the long run, the allies decide to scale down their security cooperation.

The “transforming alliance” scenario (3) envisages an inward-looking China, caused by a severe economic crisis. **As a result, the alliance adapts to fill the strategic vacuum and changes** from a defensive alliance into a positive partnership for the prevention and management of crises in Asia, and the promotion of cooperation and economic integration, among others.

The main lesson drawn from the scenario exercise is that the challenge for the Japan-US alliance is not strengthening its military deterrence, which in its current state appears to be satisfactory, and which over time will inevitably be challenged by the rapid modernization of the Chinese military. **The real challenge is rather being able to handle an appeased China appeased in terms of assertive military**

behavior, but still active in terms of economic and institutional diplomacy. To do this, the allies should strengthen their power of attraction. Firstly, by ensuring the support and backing of **security partners in Asia, who will not agree to enter into an "anti-Chinese quasi-coalition"** but are willing to build their capacities and positively contribute to regional security cooperation. This regional support will make the difference in the eventuality of an open military crisis with China. **In addition, it is crucial for maintaining the alliance's influence** in the region and avoiding its isolation in the event that China relatively eases off militarily, but continues its economic and institutional activism. **Finally, the continuation of this "positive cooperation" will help to maintain cohesion in the alliance,** even if the central, common threat is reduced. To this end, Japan and the United States should work to strengthen their cooperation and coordination in the non-traditional security domains (development assistance, maritime safety, anti-piracy operations, HA/DR operations, the fight against proliferation, energy security, climate change and environmental protection, economic and trade norms, etc.) by seeking to work with like-minded partners in the region, but also by encouraging the creation of cooperation mechanisms and inclusive regional institutions likely to engage the Chinese regime in a constructive manner.

Résumé

Montée en puissance de la Chine, rééquilibrage américain en Asie, réformes de défense historiques au Japon, adoption de nouvelles Directives de coopération bilatérales : l'alliance nippo-américaine semble aujourd'hui à un tournant de son histoire.

Cette étude fournit une analyse stratégique et prospective de l'alliance nippo-américaine et du rôle du Japon à l'horizon 2030. La première partie présente les dernières évolutions de la relation de sécurité nippo-américaine, à travers l'analyse des dernières Directives de défense bilatérales et des réformes de sécurité mises en place au Japon depuis 2012.

La seconde partie présente, pour le Japon, les principales écoles de pensée stratégique et leurs poids relatif dans le débat d'une part, et identifie les acteurs de l'alliance (acteurs politiques, économiques, militaires, industriels, opinion publique, *think tanks* au Japon et aux États-Unis), leurs objectifs, problèmes, et moyens d'action, ainsi que leurs interactions, d'autre part. L'analyse de la stratégie des acteurs permet la mise en évidence des zones d'incertitudes, de divergences et de frictions susceptibles de faire évoluer l'alliance.

Sur cette base, trois scénarios d'évolution de l'alliance ont été élaborés et présentés. Un scénario tendanciel (fondé sur l'extrapolation des tendances observées au sein de la relation) est accompagné de deux scénarios contrastés :

- Scénario 1 tendanciel – L'alliance perdure et coopère avec un ensemble de partenaires
- Scénario 2 contrasté – L'alliance s'étiole
- Scénario 3 contrasté – L'alliance se transforme

Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 19 |
| STATE OF THE ALLIANCE | 23 |
| The motives for the alliance: Priority to the Chinese challenge | 24 |
| <i>Dealing with China's rise: The major challenge for the alliance</i> | <i>24</i> |
| <i>North Korea: An immediate military threat and a long-term political threat</i> | <i>28</i> |
| <i>The alliance as a provider of "public goods".....</i> | <i>29</i> |
| The latest changes in the alliance: Interoperability and coordination, expansion, globalization, and triangulation | 30 |
| <i>The revision of the Defense Cooperation Guidelines at Japan's initiative</i> | <i>30</i> |
| <i>Interoperability and coordination: Activating the alliance from peacetime to wartime.....</i> | <i>32</i> |
| <i>Expansion: extending the alliance's areas of cooperation.....</i> | <i>37</i> |
| <i>Globalization: A global field of operations for the alliance?.....</i> | <i>41</i> |
| <i>Triangulation: Developing security cooperation with partners</i> | <i>44</i> |
| <i>Do the Guidelines enhance deterrence?.....</i> | <i>49</i> |
| JAPAN AND THE ALLIANCE: MAKING NECESSITY A VIRTUE | 53 |
| The Japan-US alliance at the heart of Japanese strategic debate..... | 53 |
| The continuity of the alliance: Views of the Japanese actors | 63 |
| <i>The administration and the executive power.....</i> | <i>63</i> |
| <i>The political parties: Heterogeneous parties on Japan's security strategy ..</i> | <i>65</i> |
| <i>Public opinion: Realist, pro-US, but committed to civilian power.....</i> | <i>67</i> |
| <i>Economic actors: The United States, a card to play faced with a less vital China.....</i> | <i>69</i> |
| <i>The defense industry – towards expanded cooperation with the United States</i> | <i>70</i> |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Frictions and differences with the United States | 74 |
| <i>The expectations gap</i> | 74 |
| <i>Fears of abandonment and entrapment: The Persistence of a major alliance dilemma</i> | 77 |
| <i>Tensions related to the US military presence in Japan</i> | 79 |
| <i>The budgetary challenge</i> | 82 |
| SCENARIOS TO 2030 | 83 |
| Baseline scenario 1 – The alliance continues and cooperates with a range of partners. | 86 |
| Contrasted scenario 2 – The alliance weakens | 89 |
| Contrasted scenario 3 – The alliance transforms | 92 |
| CONCLUSION | 95 |

Introduction

China's rise, US rebalancing in Asia, historic defense reforms in Japan, the adoption of new Guidelines for bilateral cooperation¹: the Japan-US alliance has reached a turning point in its history.

The rise of China, which has become the major trading partner of most countries in the region, nowadays determines the development of international relations in the Asia Pacific. Beijing is seeking to turn its economic might into diplomatic and strategic power, most recently under Xi Jinping through political and military power *coups de force* that are increasingly alarming some of China's neighbors and driving many of them to embrace the US. China's huge and enduring investments in the modernization of its armed forces, accompanied by a lack of transparency, are increasingly a "game changer": **observers estimate that China will achieve strategic stability with the United States by 2030.**

The second factor that structures interstate relations in Asia is the **"rebalancing" policy of the United States in Asia.** The Obama administration has reasserted its willingness to fully re-engage in the region by strengthening its relations with its allies and partners, but also by engaging more in Asian organizations and promoting an ambitious trade integration model via the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). **However, a number of economic and structural factors** – the multiplication of crises in Europe and the Middle East, tension in relations with Russia, the budget crisis and its impact on long-term defense spending, an Atlanticist tradition that is still present, or even isolationist tendencies – **impact on the ability of the United States to remain at the forefront in the Asia-Pacific region.**

These two concurrent trends of China's rise and US re-engagement are generating a change in the balance of power that impacts not only the bilateral relationship, but also interstate relations of all the actors in the region. **At a geostrategic level, the Asian context today is particularly dangerous, complex and fluid.** The traditional threats related to legacies from the Cold War – tensions in the Korean peninsula and around the Taiwan Strait – are added to the reactivation of

1. *The Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation*, 27 April 2015 – referred to here as "the Guidelines" – available at: www.mod.go.jp.

territorial disputes, giving rise to political, military and paramilitary tensions that are difficult to manage because of their hybrid character – **"grey zone" situations between peace and war**. The danger of the situation is exacerbated by a trend of militarization and relative opacity – China's military modernisation programme (including new capabilities associated with space and cyberspace) and North Korean ballistic and nuclear programmes – that affects all actors in the region and reinforces unpredictability and the security dilemma. **The changing balance of power, coupled with a worsening of the security environment, is forcing every country in the region to constantly adjust their strategic posture.**

In this context, the Japan-US alliance, which has been experiencing continued expansion since its inception, remains one of the major guarantors of stability in Asia. It forms the cornerstone of US engagement in the region, with Japan providing bases for US forces in the Pacific that can accommodate more than 50,000 personnel, host technical platforms of an unprecedented level in Asia – the naval base of Yokosuka, among others – and serve as a staging post for a missile defense system. As such, maintaining and strengthening the security relationship with Japan is essential to implementing the rebalancing towards Asia at a lower cost, while maintaining the credibility of the US deterrent in the region.

For Tokyo, the alliance is pivotal to its defense strategy in the region. At the same time, since the end of 2010 Japan has been accelerating the normalization of its defense posture, which has been highly restricted by anti-militarist norms since 1945. In December 2013, the Abe administration adopted the country's first National Security Strategy (NSS) that will be implemented, among other tasks, by the newly-formed National Security Council (NSC). The new Defense Guidelines, revised simultaneously, confirm the evolution of the Japanese defense posture towards an **"integrated dynamic deterrence"**, intended to maintain a high level of performance for the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in peacetime by regularly mobilizing troops for integrated maneuvers. In 2015, Shinzo Abe passed a legislative package allowing Japan to exercise in a **limited manner its right of collective self-defense**, and to facilitate the international deployment of the SDF, including providing rear-area support to US operations outside of the UN framework. Finally, the principle of prohibiting arms exports was lifted at the end of 2014.

Japan's political and military normalization hence significantly determines the alliance's development. Tokyo regards the alliance as a key deterrent against the threats posed by China's rise. In addition, Japanese leaders consider that **the country's strategic independence can only be preserved if the current international order supported by the United States is maintained, and a long-term US political and military presence is ensured** in the Asia-Pacific region. To do this, Tokyo is increasing initiatives to keep Washington engaged in Asia, particularly by building a network of security partners.

The revision of the bilateral Defense Cooperation Guidelines in April 2015 is designed to allow the alliance to adapt to the new security environment in Asia. They incorporate the significant security reforms undertaken by Prime Minister Abe and confirm a greater contribution by Japan. The alliance is permanently activated, from peacetime to wartime, and has a permanent coordination mechanism. The allies have further agreed to extend their cooperation in the space and cyber domains, in non-combat defense missions, in development assistance and the promotion of liberal norms, particularly in the commercial field. Finally, the alliance is "globalizing" itself as it seeks to develop a network of security partners and as Japan is now more willing to support, albeit conditionally, US operations outside Asia.

The successive reforms have helped to adapt the security partnership, which is of a fundamentally asymmetrical nature (the United States defending Japan and in return Tokyo hosting the US forces on its territory), to changes in the global geostrategic context. **However nowadays, the high strategic uncertainty in Asia, the multi-faceted challenges posed by China's emergence, and the economic and political constraints in Japan and the United States make the definition of a new strategy particularly complex.**

This study aims to provide a strategic and forward-looking analysis of the Japan-US alliance by 2030, by more specifically examining Japan's role and place. **First, it presents the latest developments in the Japan-US security relationship** by analyzing the 2015 bilateral Defense Guidelines and security reforms implemented in Japan since 2012. The analysis continues with **the presentation of the main strategic schools of thought in Japan and of the positioning of Japanese actors with regard to the alliance.** A further analysis of these actors' strategic outlooks helps to identify areas of uncertainty, differences, and frictions likely to affect the alliance.

Three scenarios of evolution by 2030 are prepared on this basis. A baseline scenario (based on the extrapolation of the current trends observed in the relationship) is accompanied by two contrasted scenarios that present more extreme developments. The choice of scenarios and pathways presented are made on the degree of their probability of occurrence.

- Baseline scenario 1 – The alliance persists and cooperates with a range of partners
- Contrasted scenario 2 – The alliance weakens
- Contrasted scenario 3 – The alliance changes

The study has been designed to be read in extenso, but also in parts, according to the reader's interest. As such, each large section makes up a coherent whole.

State of the alliance

History and dynamics of the alliance

The Japan-US alliance is a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship that sees the United States protecting Japan in the event of an attack. The alliance allows for a major American military presence to be maintained in Japan on favorable terms, and these forces help to defend US interests in the region, which are gaining in importance with Asia's economic boom. **Japan entered into the alliance for well understood interests – the alliance should permit the country's strategic independence and prosperity – and will stay in it on these same terms.**

Throughout the early postwar period, a fear of entrapment dominated Japanese thinking on the alliance, while Washington was pressing Tokyo to rearm. The anti-militarist regulations and norms established by Japanese authorities between 1950-1970 continue to curb military cooperation today.

However, **with each disengagement or perceived disengagement of the United States in the region, Japan has granted concessions to its ally, and rearmed.** During these key episodes (1969-1978, 1991-1999, 2009-2015), a dual geostrategic development (end of the Vietnam war, but Soviet advance in Asia; end of the Cold War, but the re-emergence of the North Korean threat; gradual US withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, but Chinese political and military assertiveness in Asia) raises concerns both about a US strategic retreat and a failure by Washington to meet this new challenge.

As such, the fear of abandonment became a dominant feature in Japan and has resulted in leaders making major changes to the country's defense posture (progressive military normalization).

Ultimately, despite its original imbalance and the significant limitations on Japanese military engagement, the alliance has so far managed to adapt successfully to changes in the international context.

From the 2000s, it can be said that strategic convergence has been increasing, with a political willingness in Japan to accelerate the country's normalization and defend itself while remaining in the framework of the alliance (particularly with the "de facto globalization" of the alliance established by J. Koizumi in 2001 and 2003, sending the SDF to the Indian Ocean and Iraq), and a US willingness to support this development while remaining present in the East Asian region.

This trend has been peaking since 2010-2012: faced with Chinese political and military assertiveness, Japan has taken unprecedented measures to reform its policy and governance on security and defense. **For the first time, it is Tokyo that is taking the initiative** in revising the bilateral Guidelines, reversing the traditional dynamics of the alliance – the fear of entrapment is nowadays shared to a certain extent by the two allies.

The motives for the alliance: Priority to the Chinese challenge

*"The U.S.-Japan alliance, missing a strategic anchor since the end of the Cold War, may have found a new guiding rationale in shaping the environment for China's rise."*²

An alliance is a type of association between states, which recognizes common interests and shares a minimum basis in terms of threat perception. On this basis, the two states agree to cooperate in dealing with the threats and defend and promote their mutual interests.

Dealing with China's rise: The major challenge for the alliance

If the previous Guidelines in 1997 were a response to the North Korean ballistic and nuclear threat, **those adopted in 2015 are obviously intended to meet the challenges posed by China.**

Growing concerns about the rise of China – its large and growing defense budget combined with a strategic lack of transparency and maritime expansion in the region, as well as its desire for political influence

2. E. Chanlett-Avery, I. E. Rinehart, "The US-Japan Alliance", *CRS Report, Congressional Research Service*, Washington D.C., 12 December 2013, p.2.

on the world stage – are identified by Japan and the United States **as the focal point of common interest in the alliance today**.³

For Japan, the Chinese threat has been felt very directly and tangibly since 2009, and more specifically since the Senkaku islands' crisis in September 2012.⁴ Since this latest incident China has been regularly sending fishing boats and vessels from the Maritime Surveillance Agencies, Coast Guard (created in 2013), and even the military in the waters adjacent to the islands. **For Tokyo, Beijing is seeking to weaken its control over the sea, air, and land relative to these territories** not only to threaten territorial integrity (the Senkaku islands and their associated Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the East China Sea), but also to pre-empt the exploitation of energy and ocean resources in the region. Therefore, managing the rise of China is the greatest challenge for Japan, and the main concern for its population.

Since 2010, Japan has therefore been adapting its defense posture in response to these "grey zone" situations – between war and peace, "grey zones" refer to recurring, sub- or paramilitary frictions around territorial interests and sovereignty issues – with the **establishment of "a dynamic and integrated defense"** based on constant mobilization of forces, particularly for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) activities and a redeployment of its troops to the South-West islands (Nansei) facing China⁵: "Japan is keenly building its capacity on the Nansei islands to set up not a great wall, but a kind of wall, to check up Chinese moves that go back and forth."⁶ Nowadays, strategic thinking has changed: considering that these tensions "tend to be prolonged over time, raising concerns about their possible development in more serious situations"⁷, Tokyo is focusing on the issue of **controlling a possible military escalation following an incident**.

Of concern for the allies is not only a direct threat from China focusing on Japanese territory, but more broadly a **progressive maritime expansion that would see Beijing controlling the vast majority of Asian waters**, threatening freedom of navigation while opening for itself a path to the Pacific Ocean (beyond the "first island chain" running from the Kuril islands to the Philippines). Since 2009, Beijing has been indeed

3. Authors' interviews with US and Japanese officials and experts, May and July 2015.

4. In September 2012, the Noda government announced the purchase of three of the Senkaku islands from their private owner, in order to prevent their purchase by the nationalist Mayor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara. Beijing, which calls the islands the Diaoyu and claims them as sovereign Chinese territory, reacted harshly, considering that Japan had broken the *status quo* in the East China Sea.

5. National Defense Program Guidelines (hereinafter NDPG) 2010, Tokyo, 17 December 2010 and NDPG 2013, 17 December 2013.

6. Interview with a senior civil servant, Ministry of Defense, Tokyo, July 2015.

7. NDPG 2013, p. 2.

arguing the defense of its "core interests" (involving its territorial integrity and encompassing the East and South China Sea) to justify its increasing assertiveness. In November 2013, Beijing announced the unilateral establishment of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over a large swath of the East China Sea, and in 2015, it was discovered that Beijing has been constructing artificial islands on reclaimed reefs in the South China Sea and building infrastructure with potentially military purposes, which could facilitate the establishment of an ADIZ over this region as well.

At the same time, Chinese advances in terms of long-range precision strikes and the development of anti-ship cruise or ballistic missiles (particularly the DF-21D, presented as "a carrier killer" missile) reinforces concerns with regard to an **anti-access and area-denial strategy** (A2/AD).⁸ Additionally, the development of nuclear strike capabilities, and particularly its naval component (Jin class nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarines (type 094) and *Tang* (type 096), in development) is accompanied by **new space** (anti-satellite missile test in 2007 and missile defense tests in July 2014)⁹ or **cyber capabilities**.¹⁰ **These weapons enable China to significantly impede critical US platforms from aiding Japan in a crisis.** They are also strong arguments for deterring US intervention in the region, and, as such, raise concerns in Tokyo of a possible decoupling of US interests from its own.

Indeed, US strategists lack a clear and effective approach to counter these new Chinese capabilities. The alternatives considered are varied, and include: the research and development of a new technological breakthrough that would allow the United States to eventually maintain technological supremacy (3rd Offset Strategy)¹¹; a rather aggressive strategy of responses and escalations (Air-Sea Battle); or a range of other options that include the dispersal of US forces outside the conventional Chinese strike zone (for example in Guam or Australia). Nonetheless, the capacity-building of its allies – and Japan in particular – to counterbalance China is a key pillar of US strategy in the region.

The security challenges posed to the allies by China **therefore combine a progressive threat of expansion** ("creeping expansion") by sea and **the establishment of anti-access measures** (A2/AD). The nature of Chinese maritime expansion, based on *faits accomplis* and

8. R. O'Rourke, "China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities-Background and Issues for Congress", *Congressional Research Service*, 21 September 2015.

9. M. Gruss, "U.S. State Department: China Tested Anti-satellite Weapon", *Space News*, 28 July 2014.

10. "China Military Seeks to Bring Cyber Warfare Units Under One Roof", *Bloomberg*, 23 October 2015.

11. Speech by Bob Work (Deputy Secretary of Defense), "The Third Offset Strategy and its Implications for Partners and Allies", Willard Hotel, Washington D.C., 28 January 2015.

opportunistic advances (or "probing"), **is testing the alliance's political credibility and deterrent capability**.¹²

In response to the threats posed by Chinese power, the allies are adopting a **dynamic defense posture**, based on stronger coordination and intense cooperation in peacetime, as well as in a crisis or open conflict (see the details below): "**The synchronization of Japan and US threat assessments is clearly shown in the notion of 'dynamic defense cooperation'**, which is agreed in the November 2011 Defense Summit Meeting".¹³

Beyond the strict military challenge, Chinese expansion also poses a political and strategic challenge for the allies. By causing problems over the Senkaku islands for Japan, Beijing also sought to test the strength of the alliance, while doubts emerged about the willingness of the Obama administration to intervene in areas where US interests were not directly threatened. Beijing's proposal to forge a "new type of great power relations" with Washington based on the recognition and respect of Chinese core interests in the Asia-Pacific is similarly intended to **destabilize the alliance** and has caused serious concerns in Japan. Finally, China is presented nowadays by Japan, and increasingly by the United States, as a **revisionist power** whose attempts to change the *status quo* by force "are inconsistent with the existing order in terms of international law."¹⁴ More fundamentally, Tokyo and Washington fear that the rise of a new *hegemon* may be reflected, firstly, by a change in the norms, values, and international institutions that have favored their prosperity and influence since 1945, and secondly, by inevitable frictions or even a conflict, as predicted by realist theorists. As expressed in the April 2015 US-Japan Joint Vision Statement: "State actions that undermine respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity by attempting to unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion pose challenges to the international order. Such threats put at risk much that we have built."¹⁵

12. S. Takahashi, "Rebuilding deterrence. Post-2015 defense guidelines challenges facing the US-Japan alliance", *Project 2049 Institute*, May 2015, p.2.

13. S. Takahashi, "Upgrading the Japan-US Defense Guidelines: Toward a New Phase of Operational Coordination", *Futuregram 13-005*, Project 2049 Institute, 2013, p.8.

14. *National Security Strategy* (hereinafter NSS), Tokyo, 17 December 2013, p.12.

15. "US-Japan Joint Vision Statement", The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 28 April 2015.

North Korea: An immediate military threat and a long-term political threat

North Korea is described as **"a serious and imminent threat" for Japan**.¹⁶ The **development of its ballistic arsenal and possible miniaturized nuclear warheads**, coupled with **an aggressive rhetoric and behavior** are the main concerns of the Japanese authorities, who fear an attack on their territory. The United States also fears strikes on its national territory or on its forces based in Asia.¹⁷ More generally, Washington fears a **strategy of nuclear blackmail** that may be aimed at striking its weak points in the region (endangering its forward bases and its Asian allies). Such an escalation strategy (conventional attack on Korea, and then on Japan, a limited nuclear attack on Korea, and then on Japan, and finally on US soil) is a real challenge to the credibility of US engagement in the region, and requires a coordinated response by Washington and its Asian allies in order to maintain cohesion.¹⁸

Beyond this, the threat of **destabilization of the Korean peninsula** leading to open conflict involving US forces in the first instance, but also the Self-Defense Forces in support, is a major risk for the allies. In the longer term, **a collapse of the North Korean regime and a Korean reunification also bear risks** for Japan and the alliance, in particular if Seoul decides to move closer to Beijing and distance itself from Washington. **Therefore, the North Korean threat is multi-faceted, but above all highly unpredictable.**

The complete lack of transparency surrounding Pyongyang's military capabilities and its strategic intentions have resulted in the allies making it a priority: since the 1997 Guidelines, which assessed the full measure of the North Korean threat, **Tokyo and Washington have been continuing their cooperation in the implementation and development of a theatre missile defense shield** designed to thwart North Korean strikes. The allies are working on the development of the SM3 Block II A¹⁹, and Washington installed a second X-band radar in Kyoto prefecture in 2014. Tokyo will have two new destroyers equipped with the Aegis weapons guidance system, and Washington is sending two new Aegis destroyers to

16. *Defense of Japan 2014 and 2015*, annual report on Japanese defense published by the Ministry of Defense.

17. *Military and Security Developments Involving the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, annual report to the American Congress by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2012-2014.

18. See B. Roberts, "On the Strategic Value of Ballistic Missile Defense", *Proliferation Papers*, n°50, Ifri, June 2014, available at: www.ifri.org.

19. On 6 June 2015, the allies tested the SM3 Block II-A missile that has been developed jointly since 2006 by Raytheon and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. This type of missile can be deployed on land or at sea and works with the Aegis system. It is intended to destroy short- and medium-range ballistic threats. It should actually be deployed in 2018.

Yokosuka by 2017.²⁰ Hence, the response to the North Korean threat served as a catalyst for greater operational coordination between the allies for deploying the missile defense system.²¹ The adoption of the latest defense reforms by Japan should also allow Tokyo to intercept North Korean missiles targeting US interests, defend US vessels evacuating Japanese nationals, conduct underwater demining operations, and with Seoul's consent, send the SDF to evacuate Japanese nationals in case of a crisis in the Korean peninsula.

The US military bases in Japan are essential to ensuring continuous deployment of US forces to the Korean peninsula in a major crisis. In addition, Washington would like to promote a certain degree of coordination with Seoul and Tokyo to ensure full coverage of a missile defense system and to protect US forces.

The alliance as a provider of "public goods"

The alliance is not only a response to direct threats, but it is also presented as **a provider of public goods for the region and the world**. New areas of cooperation (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), maritime capacity building in third countries, creating new international norms in the trade sector (TPP), development assistance) help to **promote and defend the allies' core interests**, that is to say maintaining a stable and liberal balance of power, **through the defense of progressive norms** (political freedom, freedom of navigation, market economy regulated by ambitious, high-level standards), **the promotion of an attractive societal model** (*soft power*) **and support for like-minded partners** (maritime capacity building assistance in Southeast Asian countries, for example).

Strengthening "soft power", or the alliance's power of attraction is seen as a strategic necessity while China relentlessly progresses in terms of modernization and acquisition of military capabilities.

Coordination with third countries therefore becomes vital (trilateral cooperation between the United States and its various allies and partners in the area and multilateral HA/DR exercises, etc.). These activities also help to reinforce the legitimacy of the alliance by showing that strengthening the alliance acts as a factor of stability for the region, and not a destabilizing factor heightening rivalries and provoking an arms race. Liberal norms and values are also becoming a vital part of the rhetoric

20. The first vessel, the USS Benfold, arrived in Japan this summer. See E. Slavin, "2 Ballistic Missile Defense-Equipped Ships Moving to Yokosuka", *Stars and Stripes*, 16 October 2014.

21. S. Takahashi, "Ballistic Missile Defense in Japan: Deterrence and Military Transformation", *Asie.Visions, n°59/Proliferation Papers, n°44*, Ifri, December 2012, available at: www.ifri.org.

about strengthening the alliance and contribute in a normative approach to counterbalance what is seen as revisionist attempts by Beijing to reform the international system.²² **The rationale for the alliance has thus been given a strategic or even "quasi civilizational"²³ nature.**

The Chinese threat, not only military but also normative, therefore appears today as the alliance's primary target, before the North Korean ballistic and nuclear threat. As such, the new Guidelines aim to adapt the alliance to the new world security environment and provide it with a long-term anchor.

The latest changes in the alliance: interoperability and coordination, expansion, globalization, and triangulation

The latest developments in the alliance are formalized by the Guidelines for Defense Cooperation²⁴, revised in April 2015 for the first time at Japan's initiative, and consisting of a **decompartmentalization of the alliance's activities** in four main directions²⁵: **in terms of conflict phases, thematic and geographical fields of action, and cooperation partners.** This decompartmentalization requires **greater coordination** between the partners, combined with **greater interoperability of troops** and supposes a **rebalancing of roles in favor of Japan**, which can now use its right to collective self-defense in some specific cases.

The revision of the Defense Cooperation Guidelines at Japan's initiative

For the first time, the revision of the Defense Cooperation Guidelines has come at Japan's initiative. Consequently, changes in the alliance, which were traditionally based on US defense and regional environment policy (with Japan in a reactive position), are

22. "Together we have helped to build a strong rules-based international order, based on a commitment to rules, norms and institutions that are the foundation of global affairs and our way of life[...]", *US-Japan Joint Vision Statement*, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 28 April 2015.

23. C. Wirth, "Securing Japan in the 'West': The US-Japan Alliance and Identity Politics in the Asian Century", *Geopolitics*, vol.20, n°2, 2015, p.289.

24. *The Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation*, 27 April 2015 – *op. cit.*, available at: www.mod.go.jp.

25. K. Jimbo, "In Search of a Seamless Security Posture: US-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines and National Security Legislation", *CSCAP Regional Security Outlook 2016*, Paragon Printers Australasia, Canberra, October 2015, p.13-16.

nowadays driven by Japan, its perceived threats and its defense policy.

Redefining **the alliance should help it to adapt to the new regional** (Chinese and North Korean threats) **and global security context** (rise in the terrorist threat with Islamic State²⁶, new cyber and space battle fields), **but also draw on lessons from recent experiences** (responses to natural disasters²⁷ and operation Tomodachi²⁸ after the triple catastrophe on 11 March 2011, which highlighted the lack of operational coordination). Finally, the new Guidelines had **to reflect Japan's political willingness to remove some practical and legal obstacles to deepening the alliance.**

Nevertheless, the proposed revision of the Guidelines by the Noda government (DPJ) in April 2012, only received a lukewarm response from the US authorities. **It was Shinzo Abe's coming to power and his decision to revise the interpretation of the Constitution** in order to use the right of collective self-defense²⁹ **that sparked the United States' interest.** Indeed, Washington feared being drawn into a conflict between China and Japan. Abe clarified that Japan would be in charge of grey zone situations, and would only marginally involve US forces. The second phase of the discussions saw **Tokyo attempt to moderate US expectations about Japan's expanding military role in the alliance.**³⁰

The main complication during the discussions was, on the Japanese side, setting out and synchronizing these negotiations with the passage of the new defense legislation at the national level. The lengthy political debate on Japanese defense reform was originally behind the delay in publishing the Guidelines (which were slated to be released at the end of 2014), and the reversal of the initial timing (the Guidelines were originally scheduled to be announced only *after* the adoption of the legislation in Japan).

26. In recent years, Japan has found itself directly affected by terrorist threats: the attacks at In-Amenas (Algeria) in 2012 claimed the lives of ten Japanese nationals; a Japanese mercenary and a journalist were beheaded by Daesh in January 2015; and five Japanese tourists died during the attack on the Bardo Museum (Tunisia) in March 2015.

27. In particular, the coordinated response of the allies with Australia and India in the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004 and relief given to the Philippines after typhoon Haiyan in 2013.

28. Operation Tomodachi ("friend" in Japanese) mobilised more than 16 000 US soldiers and equipment to refurbish infrastructure and carry out rescue missions in cooperation with the self-defense forces.

29. On 1 July 2014, the Prime Minister's Cabinet formally adopted a new political interpretation of Article 9: from now on, Japan will be able to use its right to collective self-defense in a limited and controlled manner (a possible list of actions will be proposed), which aims to give assistance to an ally or partner who is attacked.

30. Interview with an analyst, Ministry of Defense, Tokyo, July 2015.

Finally, the negotiations showed **differences in approach between the allies, differences which remain so far manageable**. For example, Washington emphasized Japan's international contribution to global challenges, while Tokyo was focused on the guarantees of US engagement in Asia.³¹ The United States has also been reluctant to revise operational planning, particularly in establishing a plan with regard to a crisis about the Senkaku Islands in order to avoid offending China.³²

Nonetheless, **the Guidelines are considered a great success on both the Japanese and American sides**, as they are **the expression of the convergence of two strong dynamics**: firstly, the US pivot in Asia and repeated US demands for a greater burden sharing on the part of Tokyo, and secondly, Abe's political willingness to accelerate the military normalization of the country.

Interoperability and coordination: Activating the alliance from peacetime to wartime

The keyword of the April 2015 Guidelines is "**seamless security posture**": the objective is to be able to respond to grey zone situations between peace and war.³³ **Above all, it is a question of adapting the alliance to the challenges posed by Chinese political and military assertiveness.**

50 shades of grey: Responding to Chinese maritime

Given the risks posed by Chinese maritime expansion, emphasis is placed on permanent intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance activities (**ISR** – via the use of drones, radar, early warning aircraft, but also space surveillance) and the **multiplication of joint exercises and patrols** to send political signals on the one hand, and to boost the level of troop interoperability and responsiveness on the other. **Japan has reasserted its primary responsibility** in response to grey zone situations, and in addition, **flexible deterrent options** (FDOs) will enable the allies to prevent provocations and control a possible military escalation by joint deployment of units.³⁴

- ***Grey zone situations primarily Japan's responsibility***

In responding to Chinese incursions, **it is the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) which is in the forefront** and conducts surveillance and

31. Comments of a US expert involved in the negotiation of the Guidelines, Paris, May 2015.

32. Interview with a researcher specialised in maritime issues, Tokyo, 24 April 2014.

33. *The Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation*, 27 April 2015, p.4.

34. T. Kotani, "The Maritime Security Implications of the New U.S.-Japan Guidelines", *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, CSIS, 30 April 2015.

policing missions. To increase its effectiveness in carrying out this mission, the JCG has established a dedicated unit for the surveillance of the Senkaku Islands, with the acquisition of six new large-class patrol vessels (PL) and the assigning of 435 new personnel.³⁵ The use of force is only allowed in cases of self-defense and emergency evacuation. With the new security legislation, the **Self-Defense Forces will be able, on a single phone call** from the Prime Minister's Cabinet, to **take over from the JCG** in case of difficulties. However, the question of coordination between the police forces, coast guard, and self-defense forces was not regulated by the latest defense legislation.³⁶

When the SDF intervenes, US forces may be deployed to send a political signal ("*show of presence*"), intervene in rear-area support, and then act through their offensive capabilities if the situation worsens and Article 5 of the Security Treaty is activated. However, the intervention of US forces in a case of friction in a grey zone is sensitive and complex: it amounts to allowing foreign armed forces intervene in police operations in Japan and making the US army and Japanese security forces cooperate with each other.³⁷

- ***Preventing Chinese expansion in the South China Sea***

While the United States has been conducting freedom of navigation patrols in the South China Sea since 17 October 2015, and calls for joint patrols were issued by both the US authorities³⁸ and Japanese analysts³⁹, **the most likely prospects are those of a geographical division of labor between Japanese and US forces**. The SDF taking more responsibility and increasing its capabilities in the East China Sea (P-1 new generation patrol vessels, DDH aircraft-carriers, and drones) **would enable the US to focus on the South China Sea**.

However, **the patrols and ISR missions conducted regularly by the Japanese during rotations to the Gulf of Aden would be continued**, giving rise to information-sharing with the US ally: "Japan

35. N. Arakawa and W. Colson, "The Japan Coastguards: Resourcing and Responsibility", *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, CSIS, 1 April 2015.

36. For this reason, the two opposition parties, the Democratic Party and Japan Innovation Party, submitted a draft law to supplement the government text: "DPJ and JIP Cosponsor Territorial Security Act", 8 July 2015, available at: www.dpj.or.jp and "Oshima Explains Gist of Territorial Security Act to the Diet" on the same day, available at: www.dpj.or.jp.

37. "This is a sensitive issue because a US involvement in a case of sub-war frictions means US forces meddle with police operations. It was the case in pre-1960 security treaty. 1960 revision was welcome in terms of reinforcing Japanese sovereignty." Interview with a researcher specialised in strategic matters, Tokyo, July 2015.

38. T. Kelly and N. Kubo, "US Would Welcome Japan Air Patrols in South China Sea", *Reuters*, 30 January 2015.

39. T. Kotani, "The Case for Japan's Patrol in the South China Sea", *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, CSIS, 29 July 2015.

already sends destroyers every 3 months to rotate in Djibouti. As they go by, they stop by Singapore; they pass through the South China Sea and already are conducting some surveillance activities at that time. [...] The Japanese forces are reinforcing their ISR activities in the East China Sea so that the US can shift and focus more to the South China Sea. Also, Japan and the US are able to share all intelligence right now."⁴⁰

We can also see **intensification in joint training with more realistic scenarios**, including on US soil, to send a political message, strengthen interoperability, and train new units in the Japanese forces. For example, the new amphibious unit of the Ground SDF has benefited from joint training with the Marines since 2007. Japanese forces have been taking part in exercise Dawn Blitz, conducted in California since 2013, with the goal of defending remote islands.⁴¹ In dealing with China, the deployment of submarine units (Tokyo has increased its fleet from 18 to 22) and rapid amphibious units is regarded as a critical advantage.

The forward presence of the United States in Japan nowadays appears as even more strategically important to deter Chinese attempts at maritime expansion: "In this context, U.S. military presence in Japan reinforces JSDF efforts to close the 'windows', and enhance 'dynamic U.S.-Japan defense cooperation', through co-location of SDF and U.S. forces, joint and combined exercises, and combined ISR activities."⁴²

Countering the Chinese anti-access strategy

- *Towards an counter-denial strategy*

The beginning of **coordinated air and sea capabilities between the allies** can be seen in a tactic that some Japanese analysts describe as "**Allied Air-Sea Battle**."⁴³ This has mainly to do with a compatible, tailored, and seamless response to the Chinese A2/AD measures. However, as the Japanese side would not take part in the offensive dimension of a possible ASB tactic, other Japanese analysts prefer to describe this approach as "**war-at-sea**"⁴⁴, based on an interdiction strategy better

40. Interview with a researcher specialised in maritime issues, Tokyo, July 2015.

41. D. Blitz 2015; October 2015, on the Japanese Ministry of Defense's website, available at: www.mod.go.jp.

42. S. Takahashi, 2013, *op.cit.*, p.6.

43. "While air-sea battle remains undefined in the context of defense cooperation, it is explicitly clear as a countermeasure to overcome A2/AD threats in air and maritime domains"; S. Takahashi, "Counter A2/AD in Japan-US Defense Cooperation: Toward 'Allied Air-Sea Battle'", *Futuregram* 12-003, Project 2049, 18 April 2012, p.9.

44. "The war-at-sea strategy envisions limited naval warfare without striking on land. Like offshore control, the war-at-sea strategy aims to deter Chinese aggression. If deterrence fails, the war-at-sea strategy denies Chinese use of the waters inside the first island chain by using

suited to the US capabilities and restrictions and more likely to avoid the risk of military escalation. This strategy involves a resilient posture of prepositioned forces, a capability to thwart Chinese maneuvers in the region and to counter Chinese interdiction capabilities, as well as enhancing the allies' geographical and capability advantages (in Japan's case: strategic depth in the East, submarine capabilities, anti-submarine warfare (ASW), mining and demining, missile defense, among others). The Japanese dynamic defense posture therefore converges well with the US approach: **"The concept of a [Japanese] dynamic joint defense force makes strategic sense. In essence, it is a Japanese version of an A2/AD strategy along the Nansei Islands.** The demonstration of an enhanced defense posture would send a deterrent message to Beijing. It also fits into the war-at-sea strategy to deter Chinese aggression."⁴⁵

The allies are therefore adopting a sophisticated conventional posture to respond to the Chinese anti-access/access denial measures, coordinating their ISR capabilities. Information-sharing is one of the keys of this system: on the Japanese side, two new destroyers equipped with the latest Aegis system, as well as 4 E-2D early warning aircraft work with the US navy's cooperative engagement and detection system (*Cooperative Engagement Capability – CEC*) supported by the *Naval Integrated Fire Control-Counter Air* (NIFC-CA) system.⁴⁶ This enables the E-2D aircraft to detect enemy missiles beyond the radar range of a US destroyer, and to communicate information about the missile's trajectory to US vessels. The limited use of collective self-defense by Japan now makes possible this **in-depth coordination for detection, surveillance and defensive interception of possible threats.** These capabilities support, on the US side, the development of long-range and force deployment equipment (aircraft carriers, fighters, and long-range bombers).

- *Increasing the resilience of troops and equipment*

Simultaneously addressing the two challenges posed by China (maritime expansion and A2/AD capabilities) **poses a problem regarding the protection of forward-deployed forces:** they are needed to deter expansion and are directly threatened by the A2/AD capabilities. This is why, although the 2+2 Joint Declaration of 27 April 2015 reiterates the importance of a permanent US forward presence, the

submarines, small guided-missile combat ships, and interdiction along the first island chain. If China strikes U.S. allies and partners, the U.S. military would retaliate with ASB". T Kotani, "U.S.-Japan Allied Maritime Strategy: Balancing the Rise of Maritime China", *Strategic Japan*, CSIS, April 2014, p.9.

45. T. Kotani, *op. cit.*, April 2014, p.13.

46. P. Kallender-Umezu, "Japan Likely to Bolster Naval Missile Defense", *DefenseNews*, 11 July 2015.

Guidelines provide for **measures to strengthen the protection of US bases and forces, and to ensure their "resilience" in case of strike** – including through the missile defense shield.⁴⁷ The joint use of bases, as well as access to public infrastructure (the Nansei Islands have more than 16 usable public facilities), should enable greater flexibility. **A tactical dispersal** is also provided for in case of imminent crisis, hence **the importance of optimal coordination between the allies**: effective information-sharing between the Japanese and US should allow for a repositioning of US forces to cope with a possible strike.

Institutionalized coordination: ACM and BPM

The Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM), whose introduction was announced on 3 November 2015⁴⁸, should act as the backbone for operational cooperation and make it more effective through intensive information sharing about the situation (*situational awareness*) for all the stages from peacetime, to grey zone situations, and then open conflict. Finally, the permanent coordination mechanism should enable an effective organization of the responses made by various governmental agencies, in **a holistic "all of government" approach** (in addition the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism – in charge of the coast guard – will be mobilized).

The ACM will include a primary level for the development of coordinated operational responses (*Office for coordinated bilateral defense operations*) between the SDF and the US forces in Japan, and a second level will help to coordinate the different corps (air, sea, and land).⁴⁹ Additionally, this mechanism should allow for **sustained and regular political consultation** on evolving threats and how to address them.⁵⁰ Through this, it should help to build trust between the allies, although Japan continues to doubt the US engagement. The permanent coordination mechanism is therefore seen as **a mutual reassurance tool** for the allies.

This new institution should support the continued rapprochement of the operational coordination functions by the exchange of personnel and the joint use of bases. However, force interoperability is restricted organizationally by **the lack of integrated command and control**

47. The missile defense shield therefore remains important beyond the response needed for the North Korean threat, it is becoming an integral part of cooperation in peacetime. S. Takahashi, *op. cit.*, *Project 2049 Institute*, 2013, p.8.

48. Y. Tajima, "Defense coordination extended to peacetime", *Nikkei Asian Review*, 4 November 2015.

49. Y. Tajima, *op. cit.*

50. M. Auslin, "The Future of the US-Japan Alliance", *Commentary Magazine*, American Enterprise Institute, 28 April 2015.

structures: "The integration of USFJ and Japanese forces is limited because Japanese forces cannot have a US commander. It is better to have a good operational cooperation together."⁵¹

At the same time, bilateral planning should be strengthened in the same way: by including all the relevant parties in the implementation of a **Bilateral Planning Mechanism (BPM)**. The **BPM** will be responsible for updating and identifying operational and logistical requirements for a smooth execution of joint operations.

Expansion: extending the alliance's areas of cooperation

The new battlefields: Space and cyberspace

In an attempt to stay one step ahead in the technological lead over the Chinese armed forces, the allies have focused on space and cyber cooperation, which are critical in terms of ISR capabilities and crucial for resistance and resilience. **These capabilities** (space surveillance program – *space situational awareness* (SSA) – and maritime surveillance program – *maritime domain awareness* (MDA) – **form the strategic core of bilateral cooperation for the future.**⁵²

This cooperation is implemented on the experience of joint missile defense developed since 2003 and the Japanese space policy reforms since 2008, opening up the possibility of investing in space for military purposes. In January 2015, **Tokyo updated its space policy**⁵³ **to integrate it more closely with its security policy**, citing China as a destabilizing factor. Hence, Tokyo plans to launch more than 45 satellites and space probes by 2025, including 8 information-gathering satellites (IGS). In addition, Tokyo will place 7 high-precision geo-positioning satellites in space by 2023 (*Quasi-Zenith Satellite System* – QZSS). Thus, Japan will develop its own satellite network, strengthening its SSA and MDA capabilities and focusing on the development of its industry.

The dual nature of space activities also allows Japan to justify its investments more easily (+18.5% in budget for 2015). Furthermore, these will not be restricted by the standard policy (admittedly very weak nowadays) that the defense budget should not exceed 1% of GDP.

51. Interview with a Japanese military advisor to the NSS, Tokyo, July 2015.

52. Y. Kuo, "The rise of China and East Asian regional Security – The Japan-China relations", presentation given in 2015 to the Asia Pacific Security Forum, Ifri, Paris, 15 September 2015 and J. L. Schoff, *op. cit.*, March 2015.

53. P. Kallender-Umezu, "Japan begins national security space buildup", *Defense news*, 13 April 2015.

The April 2015 Guidelines provide for the development of bilateral cooperation for SSA and MDA activities, mainly through two consultation bodies: the *Comprehensive Dialogue on Space* and the *Space Security Dialogue*. This cooperation could enable the **United States to strengthen the resilience of its space capabilities** and turn to the Japanese satellite system in case of need.⁵⁴ While bilateral space cooperation has traditionally been one-directional, linking **information-sharing from US radars and satellites** to Japan, since 2013 the cooperation has become mutual: now one of the Japanese space agencies (*Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency-JAEA*) is also providing SSA information to the United States.

The development of space cooperation, accompanying capacity-building in terms of cyber security, should allow the allies to **strengthen the resilience of their C4ISR functions** (*Computerized Command, Control, Communications-Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance*), which are critical in the surveillance and response to threats: "In fact the foundations of power are changing. It is not so much a matter of hardware but of software. Of course China is very big, but it could be a paper tiger in terms of outreach. What counts is software, plug in/plug out capability, flexibly and operability to be made as global norms."⁵⁵

Spheres of action for *smart power*: The example of maritime capacity building

Among many defense cooperation areas less focused on combat (peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), among others), the alliance is strengthening its coordination in terms of **maritime capacity building, an activity that brings three main objectives in line**: expanding the alliance's soft power via **the strategic use of development assistance**, maintaining **maritime security** and developing **relationships with "like-minded" partners**.

Since 2012, the allies have been seeking to coordinate their marine capacity-building activities in Southeast Asian countries to **maintain a favorable balance of power and to ensure political, logistical or even military support** (access to bases among others) from these countries.⁵⁶

54. "The U.S. is decentralizing its satellite systems so they can maintain some ability to function in the event of an attack. As part of that process, it plans to turn to Japan's network of 'quasi-zenith satellites' and its own global positioning system, the sources said."; "Japan, US to share info on space in revising defense guidelines", *The Japan Times*, 12 April 2015.

55. Interview with a researcher specialised in strategic matters, Tokyo, July 2015.

56. "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo, 27 April 2012, available at: www.mofa.go.jp.

Japan has already been using its development assistance strategically to help its partners in Southeast Asia strengthen their maritime capacity building since the 2000s⁵⁷ and **two recent developments will enable it to intensify its contributions**⁵⁸: firstly, the end of the prohibition on arms exports in 2014, and secondly the adoption in April 2015 of the new Development Assistance Charter, which allows state aid to finance foreign armed forces solely for non-military activities. Hence, **Japan can provide all the equipment for ISR operations**: the radar, communication systems and reconnaissance aircraft. The development assistance complements the **military assistance program** (managed by the *Capacity Building Assistance (CBA) Office* at the Ministry of Defense), which was established by Tokyo in 2012 to contribute to regional stability and to strengthen strategic partnerships and Japanese diplomatic and military influence, mainly through human resource training and technical support activities.⁵⁹

On the US side, the strategic reinvestment in Southeast Asia forms an important part of the "pivot", with the aim of strengthening alliances and building security partnerships with countries sharing its interests, and by means of expanding assistance related to connectivity and maritime security and intensifying joint exercises.⁶⁰

For the time being, **real coordination between the allies is still difficult to achieve**, several ministries and agencies are involved in the management of programs swinging between development assistance and military assistance. The Japanese and US contributions should ultimately become complementary: for example, Tokyo can fund the Philippines' refurbishment of infrastructure which could be used regularly by the US forces.

57. Tokyo helped to train the Philippine coast guard from 2002 to 2007 and in 2006 provided Indonesia with three patrol vessels to help it fight piracy and terrorism. More recently, the Japanese contributions intensified particularly with the announcement in 2012 of the transfer of ten second-hand patrol vessels to the Philippine coast guard, and in 2014, of six fishing boats turned into patrol vessels to Vietnam. See C. Pajon, "Japan's 'Smart' Strategic Engagement in Southeast Asia", *The ASAN Forum*, vol.1, n°4, 6 December 2013.

58. The National Security Strategy and the 2013 Defense Guidelines also point in this direction.

59. *Defense of Japan 2015*, Ministry of Defense, Tokyo, 2015, p. 276 and further. Since 2012, countries that have benefited from the program are: Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.

60. In December 2013, Washington announced for example new assistance dedicated to maritime capacity-building activities for Southeast Asia with a total of \$32.5 million (in 2014-2015, the total assistance for this segment increased to \$156 million). In addition, US forces are organising CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training) capacity-building exercises with several navies in the region (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand).

The TPP as a strategic instrument for defining norms⁶¹

In the commercial sector, even if China is now a major economic partner for each of them, the United States and Japan have committed to developing a very ambitious mega free-trade agreement (the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP).⁶² Japan only joined the negotiations in 2013, but this step considerably changed the nature and significance of TPP, if only because the bloc of 12 participating countries represent **40% of world GDP** (as opposed to 34% without Japan). For the allies, the TPP is an opportunity to develop their trade relationship; indeed no bilateral free-trade agreement had yet existed between them. It will also serve to develop production networks with other member countries.

Apart from the economic interests, **the TPP, which was signed on 4 February 2016 in Auckland but is still undergoing ratification processes** in a number of capitals, including Washington, also reflects a willingness to strengthen the common interests of the two partners, particularly vis-à-vis China. Given the level of entry requirements imposed by the TPP, China is currently not able to join. From now on, two interpretations can be provided: either the TPP is a way of isolating China, or it is a tool to pressure Beijing to accelerate structural reforms.

However, the TPP becomes especially important in terms of **defining the rules of the game in international trade**. In addition, the agreement cannot be dissociated from the other mega-agreement currently being negotiated by the United States with the European Union (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership – TTIP). The strategic interaction between these two agreements is absolutely critical to consider, since it will redefine the governance of all world trade.

As such, the TPP can be justifiably interpreted as an undertaking for defining norms, which differentiates it from other intended projects in the region. **The normative dimension of the TPP and its strategic value in relation to China have also been clearly expressed** by US and Japanese leaders during their meeting in April 2015. With President Obama stating: "If we don't write the rules, China will write the rules out in

61. F. Nicolas, Director of the Center for Asian Studie, Ifri, contributed to this part. The author wishes to thank her.

62. The TPP is the extension of an agreement that came into effect in 2006 between four small Pacific countries (Brunei, Chile, Singapore and New Zealand), the so-called "P4" agreement, whose goal was to facilitate and develop trade within the group, but also to form a sufficiently attractive project for other countries to get involved in. The United States, Malaysia, Australia, Peru and Vietnam officially joined the negotiations in 2010. Then, it was Canada and Mexico's turn at the turn at the end of 2011, and finally Japan in spring 2013.

that region." ⁶³ Prime Minister Abe, for his part, emphasized during his speech to the US Congress: "The TPP goes far beyond just economic benefits. It is also about our security. Long-term, its strategic value is awesome. We should never forget that." ⁶⁴ A few weeks earlier, the US Defense Secretary, Ashton Carter, also stated that "passing the TPP is as important to me as another aircraft carrier." ⁶⁵ The Japanese Minister of State for Economic Revitalization, Akira Amari, who negotiated the agreement, had also repeatedly emphasized that the **TPP is a way to anchor the United States in the region** and to prevent, through its presence, Chinese armament efforts destabilizing the region.

This strategic dimension is well understood by China: **some Chinese analysts have even described the TPP as an "economic NATO"**, considering that it was explicitly intended to isolate China.⁶⁶ In return, Chinese initiatives such as reviving the FTAAP, the "One Belt, One Road" project or even the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank – AIIB (which Japan and the United States have refused to join to date) **could be analyzed as attempts to address US activism and regain control of the agenda in terms of regional integration.**

Although the TTP agreement has been signed, it has still not been ratified and its implementation could prove more complex than expected. Ratification by the US Congress is in some ways a test of the importance attached to the alliance's economic dimension.

Globalization: A global field of operations for the alliance?

Japanese support for US operations worldwide

The 2015 Guidelines remain clearly **focused on the defense of Japanese territory**, but at the same time, also take international issues into consideration. **The globalization of the alliance is not a new idea.**⁶⁷ The joint declaration by Koizumi and George W. Bush in 2006

63. G. F. Seib, "Obama Presses Case for Asia Trade Deal, Warns Failure Would Benefit China", *The New York Times*, 27 April 2015.

64. "Toward an Alliance of Hope" – Address to a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Washington D.C., 29 April 2015.

65. D. J. Lynch, "Asia-Pacific Trade Deal as Important as a New Carrier to Carter", *Bloomberg*, 6 April 2015.

66. G. Rachman, "China is sailing into a sea of troubles", *The Financial Times*, 9 November 2015.

67. In the 2000s, Japan sent its troops to the Indian Ocean for refuelling operations, supporting NATO forces operating in Afghanistan (2001-2010) and sent the SDF into Iraq to help with the country's reconstruction (2003-2006). Tokyo has been participating in the international efforts to fight against piracy in the Gulf of Aden since 2009, operating from a base in Djibouti (2011). Japan has also participated in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) since 2003.

confirmed **the *de facto* existence of a "global alliance"**.⁶⁸ However, since 1997 the SDF has been permitted by law to provide rear-area support to US forces, intervening only "in situations in areas surrounding Japan" (that is to say in the Korean peninsula).

The new defense legislation adopted in September 2015 removed the "geographical" clause. Now, these operations are no longer determined by a specific geographical region, **but by their significance with regard to Japan's security. The vagueness of this provision has raised strong controversy:** some fear that Washington may have overly high expectations for Japanese interventions, which will in all likelihood remain confined to Asia. Furthermore, one of the possible scenarios for the limited use of collective self-defense by Japan anticipates that **Tokyo performs demining activities in the Strait of Hormuz** in the case of a crisis in the Middle East resulting in a blockade of oil shipments to the archipelago, and therefore threatening its survival. This proposal was heavily criticized during debates in the Diet in summer 2015.

The provisions of the 2015 defense legislation

The exercise of collective self-defense – the possibility for Japanese forces to assist an ally – is subject to three conditions: an armed attack against a foreign country with close relations with Japan resulting in **a threat to the archipelago's survival**; there is **no other way than using force** to help the threatened country; finally the use of force is kept **to the required minimum**. Therefore it is not a blank check.

A **positive list of actions that Japan might undertake in this context** includes: the interception of a ballistic missile heading towards US territory or US interests in Asia; the defense of US forces or "close partners of Japan" attacked in Asia; and conducting underwater demining operations in Northeast Asia in case of a crisis in the Korean peninsula, or even in the Strait of Hormuz if a regional crisis led to a blockade of oil exports to the country.

The other provisions of the legislative packet should facilitate and extend SDF missions abroad. The "**International Peace Support Law**" simplifies the deployment procedure of the SDF for logistical support and supply of ammunition to multi-national forces and friendly forces engaged in peacekeeping and international security operations,

68. *The Japan-U.S. Alliance of the New Century*, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary Washington D.C., 29 June 2006.

in accordance with a UN Security Council resolution. Moreover, contrary to previous legislation, with the requirement for the SDF to act in "non-combat zones" so as their actions are not associated with the use of force, this law allows for the SDF to act in all fields, except for the on-going combat zone. **Additionally, the logistical support of the SDF for combat operations of US forces**, previously limited to "situations in areas surrounding Japan" (the Korean peninsula), **is no longer determined by a particular geographical area**. The **law on cooperation in terms of peacekeeping operations will also be revised**, allowing the SDF to use force to protect friendly forces operating under the same mandate or to carry out their missions, and to intervene in logistical and humanitarian missions outside UN mandates.

The "global nature" of the alliance and its modes of action

The joint statement of 28 April 2015, which described the strategic vision for the alliance, clearly emphasized its global nature (occurrence of the word "global": 16/1219 words), and listed a patchwork of 15 issues and world challenges to be addressed by the allies.⁶⁹ At the same time, the Guidelines only granted limited space to international cooperation activities (3 pages out of 24 in the English version). So **it can be argued that the intentions seem to be more important than concrete activities, for the time being at least**.

Still, in the general sense Tokyo and Washington are diplomatically aligned on many international issues. The **fight against terrorism**, mentioned particularly in the statement of 28 April, and the **promotion of values and ambitious trade norms** through the conclusion of the TPP are two significant areas for bilateral cooperation.

More than a globalization, a real regionalization of the alliance is observed through the implementation of triangular partnerships with third parties.

69. Listed in order: climate change, economic growth, energy security, sustainable development, human security, extremism, nuclear proliferation, international trade, health issues, space and cyber issues, disaster relief operations, human rights, girls' education and UN peacekeeping operations. See *US-Japan Joint Vision Statement*, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 28 April 2015.

Triangulation: Developing security cooperation with partners

Tokyo and Washington share a strong objective: to make the alliance system change from a **"hub-and-spoke", focused around the United States, to that of a network or a "web"**.⁷⁰ **The development of triangular strategic cooperation**, focused around the US, Japan, and a third country (United States + Japan + N) **should form the basis for the construction of the "web"**.

For Japan, it is firstly a question of **strengthening the system of alliances** and pro-US partnerships, by building strategic relationships with countries that share its interests and are facilitating a permanent US presence in Asia. However, it is also a matter of diversifying its security partners, and hence **guarding itself against a possible US strategic retreat**. The 2010 Defense Guidelines (NDPG) already provided for the strengthening of relations with US allies in Asia: South Korea and Australia, which share "common values as well as clear security interests" with Japan, but also with ASEAN countries, "Japan's traditional partners", and India, which shares Japan's interest of protecting the shipping routes between Africa and East Asia.⁷¹ In December 2012, Shinzo Abe also called for the establishment of a **"security diamond"**, a quasi-coalition of democracies that would be based on Australia, India, Japan and the United States to protect the maritime areas extending from the area of the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific.⁷²

Washington, for its part, has been seeking since the mid-2000s to promote cooperation between its Asian allies (Tokyo and Seoul to deal with Pyongyang, and Tokyo and Canberra on maritime security, for example). In a context of budgetary restriction, but also in the context of an evolving Chinese threat, the United States wishes **to entrust a greater share of the burden to its allies and encourage their coordination**. It is also a question of **ensuring the cooperation of the security partners**, ready to receive their forces in the region from time to time, but also capable of guaranteeing minimum interoperability and logistical support with the US forces and with each other.

On this basis, the allies are committed to a triangulation process, promoting cooperation with like-minded partners. Depending on the capabilities and closeness of the relationship in question, the cooperation should cover more or less sophisticated and strategic areas

70. The web forms a more interdependent whole than a portfolio of separate alliances, but is less uniform than an actual network. See P. M. Cronin (ed.), "The Emerging Asia Power Web – The Rise of Bilateral Intra-Asian Security Ties", *Center for a New American Security*, June 2013.

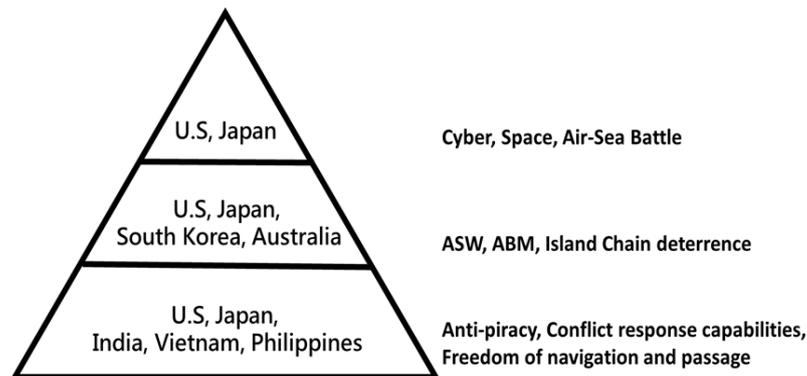
71. NDPG 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 8-9.

72. S. Abe, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond", Project Syndicate, 27 December 2012.

(see the diagram below). Anti-submarine warfare (ASW), missile capabilities (BMD), and maritime deterrence measures can be developed with Korea and Australia. Anti-piracy operations, freedom of navigation operations, and operational capacity building can be developed with India, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

This remains theoretical, in reality, the development of cooperation often comes up against political difficulties or issues related to the differentiated military capability of the countries in question. In any case, **the identified objective is to enhance information-sharing between partners to achieve a common situational awareness.**

Organizational diagram of missions and partnerships



Source: Yujen Kuo, "China-Japan relations", presentation at Ifri, Paris, 15 September 2015.

The cases of South Korea and Australia are presented here. For the sake of completeness, it should be stated that triangular cooperation with India on the one hand, and the Philippines and Vietnam on the other also have strong potential for expansion.

South Korea – Still the odd man?

In principle, the bases for bilateral security cooperation between Japan and South Korea, and a trilateral partnership with Washington are sound (shared values and interests, common challenge to confront North Korea), however, up to now two factors have strongly limited its expansion: the political, historical, and territorial tensions between Tokyo and Seoul; and China's reaction to a possible formalization of this cooperation. In this context, two experts of the Japan-Korea relations concluded in 2015 that

the most likely scenario is one of *de facto* strengthening of trilateral cooperation without institutionalization.⁷³

Political tensions between Tokyo and Seoul still remain, despite the progress made at the end of 2015. In the Japanese National Security Strategy, South Korea is at the forefront of the countries with which Japan should strengthen its security relationships (ahead of Australia, ASEAN countries, and India)⁷⁴, yet political and strategic relations were frozen from the visit by the former President, Lee Myung Back, to the disputed Takeshima/Dokdo Islands in August 2012 up until the autumn of 2015. The security reforms in Japan and the recent deepening of the alliance are additional concerns for Seoul: **"There is a 'Korea fatigue' in Japan: a feeling that Korea is challenging Japan too much on everything. Also, Korea is not happy about the strengthening of the US-Japan alliance. It sees that Abe, the US, the Japanese government are determined to advance the relation, but at the same time, the US-ROK alliance is lagging behind."**⁷⁵

Washington has exercised strong pressure on its two allies to normalize their relationship. This resulted in the signature of a **framework agreement for sharing information**⁷⁶ about North Korea between the three countries in December 2014. Remarkably, at the end of December 2015 the two neighbors agreed to **"irreversibly" settle** one of the historic quarrels that have divided them, namely the acknowledgement of Japan's responsibility in recruiting nearly 200,000 sex slaves, mainly Korean, during the war.⁷⁷ A formal apology by Tokyo and the payment of reparations to the Korean survivors should enable **this dispute to be resolved** and strategic cooperation to develop. Taking advantage of a **new North Korean nuclear test (6 January 2016)** followed by a **ballistic missile launch (7 February 2016)**, intelligence cooperation is progressing, with Seoul stating that it will transmit information related to North Korean ballistic missile activities to Washington in real-time on the channel used by the US and Japanese forces as part of their missile defense shield.⁷⁸ Korea is also more open regarding possible installation of a THAAD anti-ballistic missile battery controlled by the Americans on its territory.⁷⁹ **These advances lead us to think that Seoul could**

73. B Glosserman and S. A. Snyder, *The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash. East Asian Security and the United States*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2015, p.136-154.

74. *National Security Strategy*, Tokyo, 17 December 2013, p.23.

75. Interview with a researcher specialised in strategic matters, Tokyo, July 2015.

76. "S. Korea, Japan Launch Military Intelligence Sharing under Trilateral Deal with U.S.", *Yonhap News*, 25 June 2015.

77. "South Korea, Japan Agree to 'Irreversibly' Resolve Comfort Women Issue", *Nikkei Shimbun*, 28 December 2015.

78. H. Minegishi, "South Korea to Feed US, Japan Real-time Intel on North", *Nikkei Asian Review*, 23 January 2016.

79. S. Tiezzi, "South Korea Eyes THAAD, China Urges 'Caution'", *The Diplomat*, 30 January 2016.

change its strategic position to eventually join a US integrated missile defense system with Japan.⁸⁰

However, it is still too early to definitively assert this shift. Seoul still has to sign an ACSA (Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement) and a GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement) with Tokyo, which has been overdue since 2012, and which would enable the two countries to exchange some equipment in the field and further cooperate in terms of intelligence.

China's reaction will be critical to measure if a trilateral Japan-US-Korean defense relationship, crucial when dealing with Pyongyang, **could develop** on the question of interoperability with US forces, BMD (Aegis system and early warning), anti-submarine and anti-mining warfare, and the evacuation of non-combatants in case of a crisis in the Korean peninsula.

Australia – The beginning of an institutionalized security triangle?

The US-Japan-Australia relationship is the most developed version of a trilateral security partnership, Tokyo considering that it maintains a "quasi-alliance" with Canberra⁸¹, and trilateral cooperation benefiting from well-established institutions: the *Trilateral Strategic Dialogue* (2006) and the *Security and Defense Cooperation Forum* (SDCF) (2007). What also singles out this triangle is the priority given to the **promotion and defense of the current international order and liberal norms and values**, rather than establishing a joint strategy against a particular threat.⁸²

Japan and Australia have gradually strengthened their strategic and security relationship (particularly for HA/DR capacity and maritime security), through organizing high-level dialogues (2+2 since 2007) and joint exercises (Trident exercises in 2009, 2010 and 2012 – the latter taking place in the East China Sea on a submarine warfare scenario). Both countries are nowadays **the most important security partner for each other after the US.**⁸³

Recently, several developments have resulted in the trilateral cooperation gaining depth: the **US pivot**, which encourages cooperation between security partners, and which gives a

80. Similarly, there is a good chance that Korea may join the TPP.

81. The two countries concluded a strategic partnership in 2007, signed an ACSA agreement in 2010 and a GSOMIA agreement for the protection of military intelligence in 2012.

82. K. Jimbo, Y. Tatsumi and W. T. Tow, "Final Thoughts", in Y. Tatsumi (ed.), *US-Japan-Australia Security Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges*, The Stimson Center, April 2015, p.100.

83. Y. Tatsumi, "Introduction", in Y. Tatsumi (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.81.

greater role to Australia with the announcement of the deployment of 2,500 Marines to Darwin; and **the security reforms in Japan**, which will allow the SDF to cooperate better with Australian forces in peacekeeping operations and possibly participating in their defense as part of collective self-defense.⁸⁴ In addition, **Tokyo and Canberra have been negotiating a SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement)** since July 2014, which should facilitate more sophisticated joint training on Japanese soil.⁸⁵ **A third opportunity is the opening up of defense industrial cooperation.** Tokyo and Canberra already maintain very close links with the US defense industry and their **level of interoperability of equipment is therefore very high.** Japan and Australia have been identified as the two maintenance bases for **F-35s** in the Asia-Pacific. **However, the tender for 12 new-generation submarines that Canberra wishes to acquire has been seen by many as a test case.** Initially closed, the tender was finally opened to three proposals, including those from Japan, France and Germany. Washington, which could provide the related combat system, supported the Japanese proposal, but it was ultimately the French DCNS that secured the contract.⁸⁶ This decision is a disappointment for the Japanese side but should not hinder the long-term expansion of the strategic partnership with Canberra.

The **area of preferred cooperation is currently maritime security**: the partners are working on improving their interoperability through **joint exercises** (Pacific Bond in 2013, Cope North Guam and Southern Jackaroo in 2014), including anti-submarine warfare operations, but also **coordinating in terms of maritime capacity building in countries in Southeast Asia.** The changing maritime strategies have created cooperation and coordination opportunities between the three countries: Japan is seeking to maintain a favorable balance of power, the United States wishes to secure its access to the area and strengthen its partners' capacities, while Australia is defending a rather normative view of freedom of navigation that both its partners share.⁸⁷

The main obstacle to the development of the relationship is China's reaction. Canberra and Washington are particularly anxious not to appear as participating in an "anti-Chinese" coalition. Additionally, **Australia does not wish to restrict its strategic options**, and remains reluctant to any further formalization of

84. T. S. Wilkins, "From Strategic Partnership to Strategic Alliance? Australia-Japan Security Ties and the Asia-Pacific", *Asia Policy*, n°20, July 2015, p.91; "SDF 'should protect Australian forces'", *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, 15 April 2015.

85. Y. Fukui, "Japan Moves to Make Australia 'Quasi-Ally' in National Security", *The Asahi Shimbun*, 10 November 2014.

86. See F.-S. Gady, "Why Japan Lost the Bid to Build Australian Subs", *The Diplomat*, 27 April 2016.

87. K. Jimbo, *op. cit.*, p.70.

its security relationship with Japan. **For this reason, it is likely that the informal dimension of the trilateral security relationship will continue to limit cooperation to peacetime activities without the use of force.**⁸⁸

Do the Guidelines enhance deterrence?

The future of extended nuclear deterrence

In principle, the provisions related to the extended US nuclear deterrent in Japan have not changed. However, while China is modernizing its nuclear arsenal and delivery vehicles, the trend since the *Nuclear Posture Review* in 2010 has been to reduce the US arsenal – particularly some components in the "deployable" nuclear arsenal such as the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile/Nuclear (TLAM/N). In reaction, **the Japanese are worried about a weakening credibility of extended deterrence and the consequences of a possible strategic stability between Beijing and Washington:** "If the U.S. officially accepts the existence of mutual vulnerability between the two countries it may cause deterioration of the regional security environment through the ‘**stability-instability-paradox**’."⁸⁹ In this case, China feels it has a credible deterrent against the United States and could be encouraged to continue its maritime expansion in the region. As such, **some Japanese strategists are concerned about an increase in transparency on US nuclear capabilities**, considering that it is instead more important to continue with a certain "strategic ambiguity."

To address these fears regarding the weakening of the extended nuclear deterrent, **Washington has implemented three types of approaches:** better political and strategic coordination with allies, with the implementation of the Extended Deterrence Dialogue (from 2010 with Tokyo); stronger integration of conventional defense strategies; and a deepening of security relationships between allies and partners to ensure privileged access to intelligence and technology and therefore strengthening the overall deterrence.⁹⁰

The conventional component of extended deterrence

US strategic thinking has been oriented towards a **conventionalization of extended deterrence** for several decades. Giving greater importance

88. K. Jimbo, Y. Tatsumi and W. T. Tow, "Final Thoughts", in Y. Tatsumi (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.101.

89. S. Takahashi, *op. cit.*, 2015, p. 5.

90. B. Glosserman and S. Snyder, *op. cit.*, p.164.

to conventional capabilities allows strategic flexibility to be increased by diversifying its response and reprisal options, and by this, helps to strengthen the credibility of US deterrence.

It constitutes an integrated response, combining:

1/**strong political partnerships** with allies

2/preserving a favorable **balance of conventional forces**

3/**conventional strike capabilities** (including rapid strategic strike capabilities (*conventional prompt strike*, still in development and partly operational by 2025)⁹¹

4/**missile defense** (crucial for placing responsibility for the escalation on the adversary, and if necessary, ensuring force resilience) and

5/**resilience measures** related to space and to cyberspace⁹². The sophisticated defense posture against A2/AD and integrating the air and naval forces adopted by the United States and Japan ultimately strengthens extended deterrence.

Japan understands that in a context of limited conflict, **maintaining superiority of the alliance's conventional forces is essential** to avoiding an escalation that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons – a difficult option to be considered by Washington, which could opt for appeasement at the expense of Japanese interests⁹³. As such, the joint statement of 27 April, "confirms the strategic importance **of deploying the most modern and sophisticated US capabilities to Japan**"⁹⁴, like the P-8 patrol vessels to Kadena (Okinawa), Global Hawk drones to Misawa, the amphibious transport vessel USS Green Bay to Sasebo, F-35Bs from 2017 to Iwakuni, the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan to Yokosuka and other vessels equipped with the Aegis system from 2017.

These capabilities, the maintenance of pre-positioned US forces, the strengthened coordination between the allies at several levels, and the joint commitment to increase interoperability of forces through the use of the most sophisticated equipment and systems, are **all elements that contribute to strengthen the alliance's deterrence capacity**.

To a certain extent, the latest Guidelines appear as **a double reassurance exercise**: Japan has committed to addressing front-line

91. C. Brustlein, "Conventionalizing Deterrence? US Prompt Strike programs and Their Limits", *Proliferation Papers*, n°52, Ifri, January 2015, available at: www.ifri.org.

92. B. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.20.

93. J. L. Shoff, "Changing perceptions of extended deterrence in Japan", in T.Yoshihara, J. R. Holmes, *Strategy in the Second Nuclear Age: Power, Ambition, and the Ultimate Weapon*, Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 2012, p.109.

94. Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee: A Stronger Alliance for a Dynamic Security Environment, Washington D.C., Office of the Spokesperson, 27 April 2015.

grey zone crisis situations, hence relieving its American ally, which was loathe to take sides in these sensitive territorial issues. The archipelago is also strengthening its defense, even considering adopting a limited offensive capability⁹⁵, and taking on a larger share of the security "burden". **In return, Tokyo has obtained very concrete security assurances on behalf of its ally**, rooted in an ever deeper and extended cooperation and strengthened interoperability.

Yet the deepening of the alliance and its rebalancing are not absolute achievements. The political willingness of the allies to implement this cooperation framework and to continue to maintain mutual trust in a more threatening, unstable and uncertain security environment will be crucial for the longevity of the alliance: **"The Guidelines are a toolbox; much depends on the political will of the leadership in both countries."**⁹⁶

95. "We don't have a system to conduct strike, but it will be possible in the future (in the next 5 years)...". Interview with a senior civil servant, Ministry of Defense, Tokyo, July 2015.

96. Interview with a senior civil servant, Ministry of Defense, Tokyo, July 2015.

Japan and the alliance: Making necessity a virtue

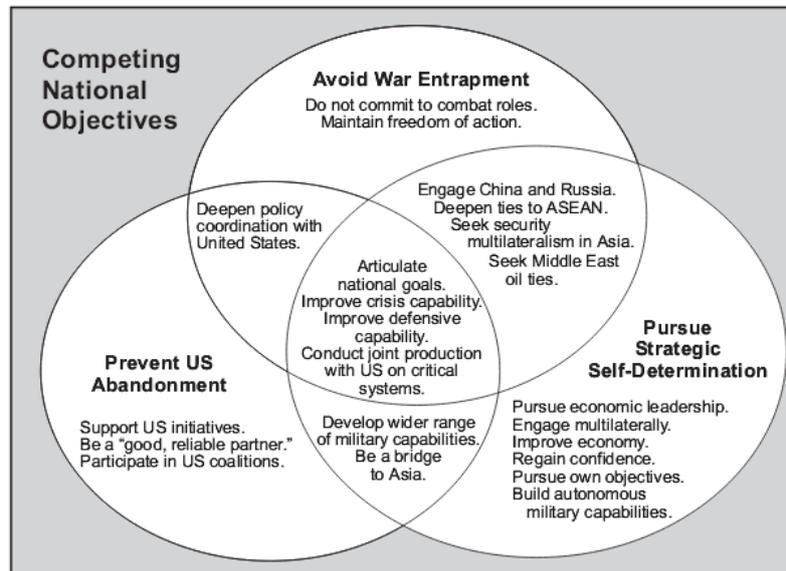
The Japan-US alliance at the heart of Japanese strategic debate

The debate on Japanese defense policy is one of the crucial factors shaping the alliance and its development. In 2004, William Rapp identified **three national objectives to be reconciled** in the 21st century for Japan⁹⁷ (see the diagram below). The first objective, shared by the older generation of actors and the pacifists, is **to avoid being dragged into a war** (avoid *entrapment*). The second, that of the younger and more realistic actors, is to **prevent abandonment by the United States** by granting concessions to its ally, particularly by rearming, expanding SDF missions and a broader engagement on its part (to avoid *abandonment*). The third, supported by the nationalist forces, is **to pursue a self-determination strategy** by increasing the conditions of the country's strategic independence economically, politically, and militarily (to increase strategic independence).

The key interests identified by the author more than a decade ago today represent the core of the security reforms promoted by the Abe administration. The three categories of options presented at the intersection of the three major national objectives represent avenues to **hedge against the risks of each strategic choice**, namely: **the risk of friction related to a difference in expectations between the allies** (abandonment and entrapment), **the risk of excessive dependency on the United States and isolation with regard to Asia**, **the risk of frictions and conflict in Asia related to Japanese rearmament**.

97. W. E. Rapp, "Past its prime? The future of the US-Japan alliance", *Parameters*, Summer 2004, p.104-106.

Japan's three national security objectives according to William Rapp



Japanese security policy is therefore formed by a variable mix of these three objectives. The content of the mix depends on developments in Japan's geo-strategic environment and the ideological affinities of the authorities and institutions in power.

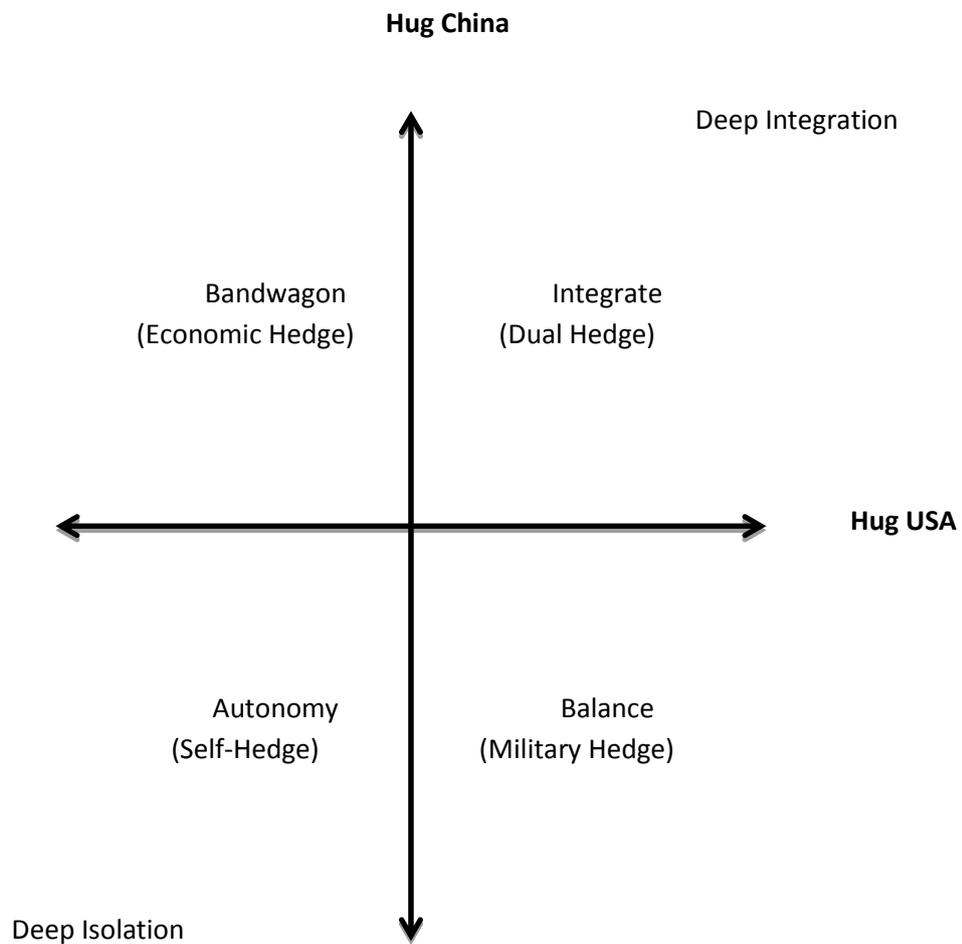
Japan's positioning with regard to the United States and China and its adaptation to changes in the balance of power between the decline and rise of the two superpowers forms the key challenge for Japanese strategists. Richard Samuels and Narushige Michishita⁹⁸ consider that analyzing Japan's cross relationships with the United States and China in this way provides an accurate understanding of the different schools of thought on the Japanese security posture.⁹⁹ By documenting, updating and explaining this model, we will focus on identifying the actors who share the same convictions and underline the nuances (see the table on page 60). However, it must be

98. N. Michishita and R. Samuels, "Hugging and hedging-Japanese grand strategy in the twenty-first century", in H. R. Nau and D. M. Ollapally (eds.), *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.146-180.

99. This distinction between four categories (which may appear under slightly different names) was made by several experts on Japanese security policy in the 1980s like: K. Pyle, "The Future of Japanese Nationality: An Essay in Contemporary History", *Journal of Japanese Studies* vol.8, n°2, Summer 1982, p.242-263; M. Mochizuki, "Japan's Search for Strategy", *International Security*, vol.8, n°30, 1984, p.152-179. These categories are summarised and explained by Richard Samuels (2007 and 2012) and Keiko Hirata in "Who Shapes the National Security Debates? Divergent Interpretations of Japan's Security Role", *Asia Affairs: An American Review* 35, n°3, autumn 2008, p.123-151, and more recently in Glosserman and Snyder, 2015, *op. cit.*

emphasized that the boundaries are porous between allegiances, and that the same type of actor (political party or institution) hosts a diversity of opinions that may be very heterogeneous.

**Analysis model of the Japanese strategic schools of thought,
according to Michishita and Samuels¹⁰⁰**



Four large schools of thought can be identified, **presented in ascending order of influence today.**

100. N. Michishita and R. Samuels, *op. cit.*, p.167.

- *The autonomists*

The "neither China nor the United States" **autonomists** defend the core value of independence in the discourse on Japanese security. **Ultra-conservative "Gaullist" supporters of a full rearmament and nuclearization of Japan** on the one hand, and **pacifists from the socialist and communist parties** on the other hand, share this autonomist position, and **together advocate for an abandonment of the Japan-US alliance**. They consider Japan's strategic subordination vis-à-vis Washington as an affront to national dignity.

Represented by a **loud minority** of colorful personalities, such as the former mayor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara, the former Chief-of-Staff of the Air Self-Defense Force (SDF), Toshio Tamogami, or the revisionist Manga cartoonist, Yoshinori Kobayashi and the journalist Yoshiko Sakurai, the ultra-conservative autonomist movement remains marginal. However, it **benefits from sympathy from nationalist conservatives** in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its influence is growing as the security environment is deteriorating and doubts have emerged about the strength of the US engagement. Finally, some aspects of this independence rhetoric, particularly the **need to reduce or even eliminate the US military presence** on Japanese soil is, *in principle*, widely shared by the entire political class. Hence, the LDP in its 1955 policy platform committed to eventually reduce the number of US soldiers in Japan.

The pacifist component of this movement has steadily lost ground since the Socialist Party was scuttled in 1994, acknowledging the legitimacy of the SDF and the alliance (the Communist Party followed in its footsteps in October 2015). Within the ruling coalition, Komeito – the democratic Buddhist party with a pacifist tendency - compromised with the LDP. Finally, the deterioration in the security environment has helped to change public opinion towards a more realistic position in terms of use of the military to defend the country. However, the pacifist tendency could regain power thanks to the heated discussions on the recent security legislation, which has polarized discontent.

- *The supporters of the Chinese option*

The supporters of the Chinese option consider **China** not as a threat or a risk, but **as a huge economic opportunity**. A rapprochement with its Chinese neighbor would also allow them to rebalance the Japanese position outside of the "western camp" and the United States, for which the archipelago has sometimes had to sacrifice a part of its national interests, or even its **Asian identity**. Starting with the principle that **Japan's future lies in its reintegration with its Asian neighbors**, this group promotes a **historic reconciliation with China to form a basis for establishing an East Asian community**. *As a minimum*, China's

supporters argue that it is not possible for Japan to survive without cooperating with its powerful neighbor and that they may see rather positive developments of the regime in the future (gradual democratization and steady growth).

Many of its supporters are traditionally found **within the Japanese business community**, which maintains strong economic and trade ties with China, and promotes some rapprochement with China for these reasons. An important figure is **Uchirô Niwa**, the first member of the business community to have been appointed as Ambassador to China from 2010 to 2012. Representatives from this group are also found **in the "left"** Social Democrat and Communist **parties**, as well as in the ranks of the Democratic Party of Japan, like the former Prime Minister **Yukio Hatoyama**, who promoted the establishment of an East Asian community like the European community, supported by the Japanese-Chinese partnership. **Ichiro Ozawa** may also to a certain extent be connected to this school of thought, although he has called for a rebalancing of Japan's relationships with China and the United States "in the form of an equilateral triangle."

After Junichiro Koizumi's term of office in Japan, which led to increased tensions with China, attempts to renew cordial and genuine relations, including with pro-China Hatoyama's government in 2009-2010, were all unsuccessful. **From 2010-2012**, when China literally dismissed Tokyo's outstretched hand by declaring a *casus belli* over the Senkaku Islands, **this group advocating the Chinese option consequently found itself outnumbered in the face of an assertive China that largely discredited their rhetoric**. The business environment also became complicated in China (increased labor costs and the consequences of the anti-corruption fight), and **the large Japanese industry associations also started to diversify their investments and adopt a more subtle rhetoric on rapprochement with Beijing**.¹⁰¹

- *The supporters of integration: Embracing both large powers with the right balance*

Supporters of the **"integration" school** seek to **embrace both China for economic reasons and the United States for political and security reasons**, while hedging against the risks of an overly close relationship with one or the other (*hedging* strategy). This difficult equation – how to keep the right distance with each one of these critical partners – requires **a multi-level strategy and constant adjustments**.

101. S. Smith, *Intimate Rivals. Japanese domestic politics and a rising China*, A Council on Foreign Relations Book, New York, Columbia University Press, 2015, p.256.

Naturally, members of this group are found to a certain extent among the proponents of the US option, less commonly among the supporters of the Chinese option. **This very pragmatic approach** has the advantage of minimizing the risks and maximizing Japan's interests. It seems to be **gaining ground nowadays** as Japan's strategic culture is committed to making the best use of the opportunities in its environment.¹⁰²

This strategy encompasses various approaches. **For the Professor Yoshihide Soeya**¹⁰³ at Keio University, **Japan must fully assume its status as a middle power** and, while maintaining its alliance with the United States, which is essential for regional stability, should seek to build partnerships with countries such as South Korea, the ASEAN countries, or Australia to assert its interests relative to the US and Chinese powers and propose a political integration project in Asia as an alternative to the Chinese project. **The norm of multilateralism and internationalism** should also take precedence over that of nationalism. Although the current Japanese political rhetoric discredits the concept of middle power for the archipelago by iterating that Japan's objective is to remain a leading country¹⁰⁴, examination of the fundamental features of the economy and Japanese demographics unquestionably advocate a declining trend in the country.

A similar approach is advocated by **Hitoshi Tanaka**¹⁰⁵, who **emphasizes the importance of functional, multilateral and multi-level cooperation in Asia to ensure the region's stability**. It is based on several components: on the Japanese side, continued military reinforcement while facing up to its history to avoid misinterpretations of this policy; on the US side, a strong, multi-dimensional engagement in Asia (*hard power*, but also the TPP and regional organizations) while trying to alleviate the local burden of bases, particularly in Okinawa, to make it a real, long-term "resident power" in Asia; this commitment should be accompanied by the implementation of trust-building mechanisms between Japan, China, Korea, and the United States about the Japanese security policy and communication and crisis management on the one

102. T. U. Berger, M. M. Mochizuki and J. Tsuchiyama (eds), *Japan in International Politics – The Foreign Policies of an Adaptive State*, Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2007.

103. For example, Y. Soeya, "Japanese Middle-Power Diplomacy", *East Asia Forum*, 22 November 2012.

104. "Japan is not, and will never be, a Tier-two country. That is the core message I am here to make. And I reiterate this by saying, I am back, and so shall Japan be." *Japan is Back*, Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, speech given to the CSIS, Washington D.C., 2 February 2013. With this statement, Abe responded to the point raised by the Armitage-Nye report, namely Japan's ability and willingness to remain a leading nation to contribute to a strong and more balanced alliance, *The US-Japan alliance – Anchoring stability in Asia*, A report of the CSIS Japan Chair, CSIS, August 2012.

105. Hitoshi Tanaka is a former diplomat and advisor to Prime Minister Koizumi. Nowadays he is a researcher at the Japan Center for International Exchange. He is also Chairman of the Institute for International Strategy at the Japan Research Institute.

hand, and trilateral security cooperation frameworks with Korea, Australia, India, and the countries of Southeast Asia on the other. Finally, this approach implies mutual engagement with China based on their joint interests.¹⁰⁶ In any event, the continuity of the alliance is an indisputable prerequisite for this approach: "A strong US-Japan alliance is important for Japan to have a proactive and independent stance in East Asia."¹⁰⁷

Among the major figures in this movement are **Katsuya Okada** (former Democratic Prime Minister), and among other individuals from the Democratic Party, but also figures from the LDP are **Toshihiro Nikai** (Chair of the LDP's General Council), and **Yasuo Fukuda** (former LDP Prime Minister). On the experts' side, are **Hitoshi Tanaka** (diplomat, former advisor to Prime Minister Koizumi, and nowadays head of his think tank), **Yoshihide Soeya** (Keio University) and **Takashi Shiraishi** (President of IDE-JETRO [Institute of Developing Economies-Japan External Trade Organization], and Vice-President of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), among others.

- *Supporters of the US option*

Finally, **supporters of the US option**, favoring a close relationship with the United States and a distancing from China are **motivated by defending liberal values, and above all, united by a threatening vision of the Chinese neighbor**. Analysis of the development of Chinese power and the possibility of cordial and genuine cooperation are pessimistic: **the policy of engagement is considered as a failure** and should nowadays give way to a policy of deterrence and *hedging*¹⁰⁸: "We have already failed to accommodate China."¹⁰⁹

At the same time, American **superiority over China** economically, politically, and militarily **is taken for granted at least until 2030**, the date when the Chinese catch-up militarily is predicted. Indeed, if the results of the Pew Research Center's investigation conducted last June are examined, Japan appears as one of the few countries (with the Philippines and Vietnam) that believe China will not replace the United States. "In terms of military capability, US will continue to overwhelm China in the next 20 years."¹¹⁰

106. H. Tanaka, "The Next Step for the US-Japan Alliance", *East Asia Insights*, vol.10 n°2, July 2015.

107. Interview with Hitoshi Tanaka, Japan Center for International Exchanges (JCIE) and Japan Research Institute, Tokyo, April 2013.

108. C. Pajon, "Le Japon d'Abe face à la Chine de Xi : de la paix froide à la guerre chaude ?", *Politique Étrangère*, vol. 79, n°3, Autumn 2014, available at: www.cairn.info.

109. Interview with a researcher specialised in maritime issues, Tokyo, July 2015.

110. Interview with a senior civil servant, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tokyo, July 2015.

In this context, **the deepening of the alliance (to deter China) and the maintenance of the liberal international order (to shape China's behavior) are considered as the best – in the present context, in reality, the only – option to ensure Japan's strategic independence in the medium term** – even if it means making concessions to the United States (still more acceptable and less risky than doing this vis-à-vis China). "Basically, in 2030, the US will still be predominant, with a network of partners, while China is likely to be isolated, and still pushing regularly its interests. [...] The strengthening of the alliance is the only option given the high level of unpredictability of the future regional environment."¹¹¹

However, **the perception of relative American decline and persistent doubts about the United States' military engagement** in Asia and for Japan's defense **explain actions taken** by members of this group (namely, military normalization, rebalancing of the alliance and establishing a network of strategic partners) **intended to both strengthen the current alliance system, but also to guard against its failure** or its retrenchment via its own defense capacity-building, maintaining a defense industry base, and diversifying its security partners.

The concern about a possible strategic retreat by the United States led Tokyo to offer its ally a maximum number of incentives to ensure its engagement on the archipelago's behalf: a greater sharing of the burden (clarification of Japan's responsibility to intervene in grey zone situations, increase in the defense budget, and its own capacity-building); better security guarantees (collective self-defense, measures to increase the resilience of troops and US facilities in Japan, opening up civilian air and port platforms in emergencies); logistic military support for US operations without geographical restriction (globalization of the alliance); coordination with close strategic partners of the United States; and support for the promotion of the free trade mega-agreements (TPP): "So the role of Japan is *to engage the US as far as possible*, by offering a lot of incentives [...] These incentives are based on this message from Japan to the US: 'You should never think that you could make a departure from this part of the world'."¹¹²

However, **while the alliance is rebalancing militarily in favor of Japan, Tokyo should also be able to assert its interests**, even if they are not consistent with those of its ally. This is the case particularly for Japan's Arab policy, which continues to favor Palestine over Israel, and a special relationship with Iran and Russia.

111. Interview with a researcher specialised in strategic matters, Tokyo, July 2015.

112. Interview with an advisor to the Prime Minister's Cabinet, Tokyo, July 2015.

- *Representatives of the pro-US trend*

Among the representatives of this historically majority trend, which since 2010 has gained influence in response to repeated friction with China, are many leading figures from the LDP like current Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe**, the former Minister of Defense, **Shigeru Ishiba**, but also the former DPJ Minister for Foreign Affairs, **Seiji Maehara**. On behalf of the think tanks and experts, there are many individuals such as **Kunihiko Miyake** (former diplomat, Canon Institute for Global Studies-CIGS), **Shinichi Kitaoka** (GRIPS-today President of JICA, the Japanese development assistance agency), along with already internationally recognized and influential experts on strategic issues, such as **Yuichi Hosoya** (Keio University) defending the US option as obvious. **These key experts have been associated**, in advisory committees that play a strategic advisory role for the authorities, **with strategic thinking by the government.**

Among the supporters of the US option, two main affiliations are observed. The "**neo-conservative nationalists**", among whom are Shinzo Abe, Taro Aso, Yoshihide Suga (Chief Cabinet Secretary), Shotaro Yachi (Head of the National Security Council), or Tomomi Inada (Chairperson of the LDP's Policy Research Council), **are characterized by the ideological dimension of their approach (some share nationalist and revisionist beliefs).**

The "realists" meanwhile attach less importance to the ideology, which according to them results in an overly confrontational approach with China. **They call for pragmatic and functional relations with China** while advocating a military normalization and a strengthening of the alliance. Among them are notably Shigeru Ishiba (former Minister of Defense), Sadakazu Tanigaki (General Secretary of the LDP) and Masahiko Kōmura (Vice-President of the LDP).

The predominance of one or the other strategic schools of thought is firstly determined by the international and regional context: **Chinese and American behaviors remain key elements that explain the country's tactical choices.**¹¹³ The international environment is characterized by very high instability and uncertainty, and **the Japanese leaders are seeking to firstly ensure a greater flexibility in their foreign policy and to have as many options as possible**, including changing their institutions. This trend is found in the United States where the content of Washington's Asia policy is based to a large extent on the response to Chinese behavior: the US position ranges from a so-called "China-first" approach (favoring a strategic relationship with China before

113. "We note how ideas and local politics have often acted as filters and tools rather than as drivers, of policy", Michishita and Samuels, *op. cit.*, p.175.

the allies' interests when China is accommodating) to a so-called "Allies-first" policy (where relationships with the Allies determine the relationship with China when Beijing is more aggressive).

Main features of the four Japanese strategic schools of thought

(inspired by Michishita and Samuels' model,
data updated, organized and developed by the author)

| | Autonomists | Rapprochement with China | Hug China and the United States | Rapprochement with the United States |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Values | Independence | Economic prosperity | Maximizing Japan's interests | Liberal values and realist pragmatism |
| Objectives | Japan's total strategic independence | Enjoy economic dividends from a cordial, or even close relationship with China – Ultimately form a Chinese-Japanese condominium | - Take advantage of Chinese economic opportunities and US security guarantees - Develop multilateral security cooperation | - Deter Chinese aggression - Remain aligned with the United States - Enable Japan's revitalization |
| Methods | Either full rearmament, including nuclearization (ultra-nationalist) or disarmament (constitutional pacifists) | - Maintaining the alliance in a limited format (without bases) - Heavy investments in China - Supporting a change to the Bretton Woods system | - Maintaining an balanced alliance in order to be able to engage in Asia as well - Cooperation with other middle powers in Asia to provide an alternative regional integration project | - A strengthened and expanded alliance - Establish a network of security partners - The promotion of liberal norms (particularly in trade) |
| Risks | Isolation and vulnerability | A Chinese betrayal, which could become threatening | US betrayal, which may move closer to China | US betrayal in order to move closer to China or a US strategic retreat |
| Some representatives | Shintaro Ishihara, Toshio Tamogami, Kazuo Shii (Communist Party) | Yukio Hatoyama, Ichiro Ozawa, Uchirô Niwa, part of the business community | Katsuya Okada, Toshihiro Nikai, Yasuo Fukuda, Hitoshi Tanaka, Yoshihide Soeya, Takashi Shiraishi | Shinzo Abe, Shigeru Ishiba, Seiji Maehara, Taro Aso, Shinichi Kitaoka |
| Current importance | Noisy ultra-conservative fringe, marginalized but influential in the LDP - Pacifists in the minority | Currently a minority group since 2012, but has strong political and economic connections | Heterogeneous group that partially overlaps supporters of the US and Chinese option, therefore potentially powerful with strong connections and gaining ground | Political and current intellectual majority (more than 50%) |
| Factors promoting their rise | Decrease in deterrence or US strategic retreat, OR a more conciliatory China | A more conciliatory China, or even a China on the path to democratization ; decline or retreat of the United States | The maintenance of a strong alliance and a China whose aggressiveness remains under control | Chinese military and diplomatic assertiveness Greater US involvement in Asia |

The continuity of the alliance: Views of the Japanese actors

The administration and the executive power

The centrality of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet

The Secretariat of the Prime Minister's Cabinet now plays a major role, not only in terms of coordinating security policy, but also in crisis management and more recently in formulating and promoting the national security strategy with the introduction of the **National Security Council (NSC)**¹¹⁴ and the National Security **Secretariat (NSS)** by Shinzo Abe in December 2013.

Though these institutions – still in the process of settling in – appear relatively sound, **the Prime Minister's personality, as well as that of his advisors and officials at the NSS will be critical** to ensure future optimal operation of the design and coordination system and promotion of an ambitious foreign and security policy.¹¹⁵ Political instability like Japan has previously experienced or economic difficulties would challenge the importance and the role of the NSC.¹¹⁶ "The Abe administration has a very strong power to coordinate the various agencies right now because of the institution of the NSS, and the political will and strong power of PM Abe. The importance share is 50-50."¹¹⁷

Gradually, the decision-making core on strategic issues is therefore passing from the hands of bureaucrats to the hands of politicians.¹¹⁸ This implies that security decisions will be more ambitious, but also more versatile.

Several contacts have hence confirmed **the importance of the political willingness used by the Prime Minister**. Nowadays, the situation seems to be almost perfect as **Shinzo Abe is presented as a strong man**. At the same time, he is also **an individual strongly influenced by his family legacy**¹¹⁹, and is determined to be part of the country's history. **The long-term vision that he supports for the**

114. Based on the US and British models, the National Security Council aims to formulate strategic guidelines for the country, to ensure their co-ordinated implementation by the various bodies involved and to provide a quick and efficient response in a crisis.

115. Interview with a senior civil servant in the NSS, Tokyo, July 2015.

116. *Ibid.*

117. Interview with a senior civil servant, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tokyo, July 2015.

118. Y. Tatsumi and A. Oros, *Global Security Watch – Japan*, Praeger, California, 2010, p.18.

119. His grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi was accused of Class A war crimes. Released by the US occupying authorities, he became Prime Minister from 1956 to 1960 and worked for the renewal of the Japanese-US Security Treaty. Thus, he was very unpopular for this reason and resigned.

country, and which is faithfully reflected in the National Security Strategy (NSS), **is not always shown as achievable** (Japan as a leading nation while the economy and demographics are consistent with a decline) or as desirable, **but primarily a strong personal aspiration for the nation. Hence, it is likely that his successor may alter this national strategy to adapt it to his/her own vision, challenging the continuity of the Abe legacy.**¹²⁰ His supporters always emphasize that Abe's security policy - including the use of collective self-defense - is the reflection of interpartisan agreement.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense: Moving towards rebalancing in favor of the military?

Traditionally, it is the North American Affairs Bureau¹²¹ of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), which plays the leading role, not only in the relationship with the United States, but in formulating security policy focused on the alliance. The Defense Agency (which would become the Ministry of Defense only in 2007), for its part, has for a long time only had a limited role in supervising the SDF and managing the grievances of the local communities hosting Japanese or US military bases.¹²² **One of the consequences of the alliance's post-2001 expansion is the increasing power of the Defense Agency in formulating and implementing the national strategy and in coordination with the United States.** Since becoming a Ministry in 2007, the Agency has been able protect its interests on an equal footing with MOFA.

The Ministry of Defense (MOD) is nowadays experimenting with a new series of reforms to reassess the role of the military within the Ministry, rationalizing defense capacity building, including the establishment of a new armaments acquisition agency, facilitating joint operations and improving policy planning and public communication skills.¹²³ From these various measures, the decisions to eliminate barriers between uniformed and civilian personnel by introducing military personnel in the Internal Bureau (a completely civilian body, predominantly within the Ministry) and civilian personnel in the general staffs of the armed services (which regained the upper hand on operational policy – previously managed by the Internal Bureau), and to

120. Y. Tatsumi, "Can Japan's National Security Strategy Outlive Abe?", *East Asia Forum*, 18 November 2014.

121. Made up of the Division on the Japan-US security treaty and the Division in charge of SOFA (Status of Force Agreement).

122. Y. Tatsumi and A. Oros, *op. cit.*, p.19.

123. *Defense of Japan 2014*, Ministry of Defense, Tokyo, 2014, p.369-371.

allow the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff to advise the Minister directly, have created the most commotion.¹²⁴

The political parties: Heterogeneous parties on Japan's security strategy

The centrality of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet in the country's security policy acutely raises the question of Shinzo Abe's succession. Yet, **the political scene in Japan is rather bleak**. In February 2016, an opinion poll¹²⁵ indicated popular support of only 34% for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in power (Komeito is at 5%), and as for the opposition, the Democratic Party (DPJ) obtained 7% support, and the Communist Party 4%, which does not indicate strong support for any one of these parties. In fact, electoral visibility is increasingly low in Japan. While the opposition remains weak and fragmented, the LDP emerges as the only credible party. **In the winter of 2016, Shinzo Abe remained uncontested in his party**, while his protégés (Tomomi Inada) and his competitors (Shigeru Ishiba and Fumio Kishida) are starting to gird themselves for battle in preparation for the upcoming elections.¹²⁶

The approaches to Japan's security strategy and its relationship with the alliance do not cut across political boundaries. Overall, it can be said that within the **Liberal Democratic Party, a catch-all centre-right party**, in government almost continuously from 1955 to 2009, and then again from the end of 2012, there is consensus around supporting the alliance, but division over Asia policy (there are revisionist neo-conservative nationalists in the party, but also realists closer to China). Conversely, within the **DPJ, the centre-left party** in government from 2009-2012 and encompassing former members of the LDP as well as the Socialist Party, there is consensus on the need to cooperate and integrate in Asia, but division on the relationship with the alliance. Despite these differences, we can say with some certainty that **the security policy as set out by the 2010 Defense Guidelines (written by a DPJ administration), and marginally modified by those of 2013 (under an LDP administration), is nowadays the subject of cross-partisan agreement.**

124. "SDF Officers Tussle with Civil Servants for Bigger Role in Drafting Next Three-Year Operation Plan", *The Japan Times*, 22 February 2016.

125. "Support Rate For Abe Cabinet Rises To 51% Feb 2016", *Japan Bullet*, 1 February 2016.

126. "Post-Abe' race already under way within LDP", *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, 22 September 2015.

The broad characteristics of the main political parties¹²⁷ with regard to the defense posture and the new security legislation – particularly on the use of collective self-defense – appear in the table below.

Positioning of the main Japanese political parties on Japanese defense policy and the 2015 security legislation

| | Political position | Security and defense policy | Constitutional review? | Position in the debate on collective self-defense |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| LDP | Centre right | Consensus on the alliance and division on Asia policy | Supported a review since 1955, particularly of Article 9 for military normalization | Has proposed and supported defense legislation, including controlled use of collective self-defense. |
| New Komeito | Buddhist Democrat (coalition partner of the LDP) | - Attached to constitutional pacifism - Acts as a curb to LDP initiatives | Opposed to revision of Article 9 | - Acted as a curb, caused of delay in adoption of the reform. - Imposed mandatory prior agreement by the Diet for any deployment of the SDF abroad. |
| DPJ | Centre left (very heterogeneous) | Consensus on Asia policy, but debate about the terms of the alliance (particularly about Japanese support for US operations outside of Asia) | Opposed to revision of Article 9 | - Formal opposition to the Diet, but some members supported the reform (Akihisa Nagashima and Goshi Hosono) - Defends the principles of "restraint afar, realism nearby, and active involvement in humanitarian reconstruction." ¹²⁸ |
| JIP (Japan Innovation Party) | "Liberal" right party - very weakened at the end of August 2015 after its two founders left | For a strengthening of the alliance, but maintaining a defensive defense posture | Opposed to revision of Article 9 | - Opposed to the use of collective self-defense. - Allows for the use of force only in the event of an imminent armed attack against the country. ¹²⁹ |

127. In the summer of 2015, the parties which played a significant role in the debate on the new defense legislation, or the LDP, the DPJ, Komeito and the Japan Innovation Party (JIP).

128. "The Opposition Stance on Security Policy", Interview with DPJ Legislator Nagashima Akihisa, *Nippon.com*, 3 July 2015 and *Anzenhoshō hōsei ni kansuru minshutō no kangaekata*, (Minshuto's point of view on the security legislation'), 29 July 2015, available at: www.dpi.or.jp.

129. "Ruling, opposition parties need constructive debate on security bills", *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, 24 August 2015.

The laborious and very long parliamentary debates (more than 200 hours of discussion in both chambers since May) **on the security legislation**, during the spring and summer of 2015, focused on specific points of law without discussing the overall Japanese strategy in its security environment, and **represents a missed opportunity to hold a real discussion on the national strategy.**¹³⁰

The debates therefore had the effect of exacerbating the opposition, and doubtlessly helped to awaken a pacifist trend in the population and particularly the youth – even if it is uncertain that this trend is manifested politically. **The "forced passage" of this legislation could therefore have the opposite effect of that expected in the medium term: difficulty for the Japanese authorities cornered into prudent behavior and defensive about the security policy, and a more divided public opinion on the nature of cooperation within the alliance.**¹³¹

Public opinion: Realist, pro-US, but committed to civilian power

Another crucial actor in Japan, **public opinion** matters in that it can defeat a government and is necessary for a revision of the Constitution, which requires a public referendum to be held.

Deeply marked by the period of militarist expansion and the country's defeat, **the Japanese population is committed to the pacific Constitution of 1947.** It has two concerns in terms of defense policy: the government's ability to control the military and the value of armed force.¹³²

Paul Midford¹³³ shows that **Japanese public opinion has become increasingly realist**, in the sense that it recognizes the value of military capability able to respond to the threats that have multiplied in the post-Cold War period for Japan. In particular, the increase in friction with China both on the sea and in the air since 2010 has embedded the image of a particularly real "Chinese threat" in public opinion, which is reflected by the very low levels of esteem for the Chinese neighbor in opinion polls in recent years.¹³⁴

130. Y. Tatsumi, "Japan Avoiding Reality in Security Debate", *Canon Institute for Global Studies*, 3 August 2015.

131. *Ibid.*

132. P. Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security. From Pacifism to Realism?*, Stanford University Press, 2011, p. 12.

133. "Japanese Public Opinion and the War on Terrorism: Implication for Japan's Security Strategy", *Policy Studies* n°27, East-West Center, Washington, 2006.

134. In recent years, the reciprocal animosity has been increasing to reach new heights: an opinion poll showed that in 2014 over 93% of Japanese and 86% of Chinese have a negative image

However, military intervention remains an exceptional means in the eyes of the Japanese; interventions are justified to accomplish humanitarian and rescue missions, or to support the reconstruction or development process, but always in a strict framework, and outside of Asia, with a higher international legitimacy – generally guaranteed by a United Nations Security Council resolution.¹³⁵ This explains why the Japanese population has been deeply divided¹³⁶ by the latest security reforms, in particular about the use of collective self-defense and the possibility of deploying the SDF outside Asia. **Therefore, it remains an obstacle to the pursuit of ambitious reforms.**

Furthermore, the alliance enjoys a good image in public opinion, and its value for Japan's peace and security is acknowledged by 83% of Japanese.¹³⁷ In addition, an opinion poll conducted by the Pew Global Institute in February 2015 showed that Americans and Japanese trusted each other, distrusted China, but remained divided on the issue of an increased military role for Japan in Asia. Hence, the Japanese rather gave overwhelming support to diplomatic, political, and economic cooperation than to a new military strengthening of the alliance.¹³⁸

Finally public opinion in Okinawa is a special case, because of the pressure exercised by the overwhelming US military presence: 70% of US bases in Japan are in fact concentrated on an island representing 0.6% of Japanese territory. The population is overall more pacifist than that of the rest of Japan and has been massively (80%) and continuously supporting the reduction or even removal of US bases from the territory since 1982.¹³⁹

of their neighbour. The 10th Japan-China Public Opinion Poll, 9 September 2014, The Genron NPO, available at: www.genron-npo.net.

135. Choosing from different SDF missions: disaster relief interventions are cited at 82% of people interviewed, ahead of the country's defense at 74%. Peace-keeping operations are cited at 42%, anti-piracy operations at 22% as defense diplomacy.

136. Kiyoshi Takenaka, "Huge protest in Tokyo rails against PM Abe's security bills", *Reuters*, 30 August 2015.

137. *Jieitai-Jieimondai ni kansuru yoronchōsa, Yoronchōsa hōkokusho, Naikakufu daijinkanbōseifu hōkukushitsu yoronchōsa kanbo*, (Opinion polls on defense and the self-defense forces in January 2015 – Prime Minister's Cabinet, Information Office, Opinion Poll Section), available at : <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp>.

138. "Abe naikaku 'iji' 51%, 'fuiji' 32%" [51% support for and 32% distrust of the Abe government], *NHK Newsweb*, 11 May 2015, available at: www3.nhk.or.jp [consulted on 15 May].

139. K. Kono et T. Kobayashi, *Okinawa and Security: 40 Years after reversion – From a Survey of Okinawa Residents and a Nationwide Survey*, NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, Public Opinion Research, April 2013.

Economic actors: The United States, a card to play faced with a less vital China

The economic sector can raise reservations vis-à-vis the United States: historically, the relationship has been characterized by intense trade disputes, and the impression that the strategic relationship has sometimes been imposed at the expense of Japanese economic interests (the Nixon shock in 1985 and the United States' opposition to the Japanese suggestion of an Asian Monetary Fund in 1997). However, the US ally remains a leading economic partner: 2nd trading partner and 2nd investor in Japan (in 2014), and it is also a prospective supplier of low-cost energy with shale gas and the sponsor of free-trade mega-agreements (TPP).

Additionally, although Japan's economic interests in China remain high, the Japanese discovered during the crises of 2010 and 2012 that Beijing is not afraid of using economic and trade sanctions to establish its diplomatic objectives.¹⁴⁰ **This new deterioration in the business environment for Japanese companies** (the other elements being higher labor costs, issues related to intellectual property rights, and the slow-down in Chinese growth) **led to some of them reducing their operations in China and for a large majority, accelerating a diversification of investments**, particularly to countries in Southeast Asia.¹⁴¹ Hence in 2014, Japanese investments in China slumped by 38% and a decrease of 16% was also observed for the first half of 2015¹⁴² – a movement that has confirmed a more medium-term trend since the mid-2000s. **As such, the influence of the business community on Japan's policy with regard to China has decreased in recent years:** "During the tough period between China and Japan, when Prime Minister Koizumi visited the Yasukuni shrine [2001-2005], there was an important industrial pressure on the Cabinet office to resume good ties with China. **But today, there is very little pressure from the business community.** [...] the Japanese companies invest more in Vietnam, Indonesia or India, these are alternatives, friendly countries."¹⁴³ **Additionally, the Keidanren (Japanese Business Federation) has been particularly proactive about the Japan-US relationship and the TPP, supporting the government's approach.**

140. See S. R. Nagy, "Territorial disputes, trade and diplomacy. Examining the repercussions of the Sino-Japanese territorial dispute for bilateral trade", *China Perspectives*, n°2013/4, p.49-57.

141. *Ibid.*

142. T. Abe, "Japanese investment in China falls 16% in first half", *The Nikkei Asian Review*, 21 July 2015.

143. Interview with an advisor to the Prime Minister's Cabinet, Tokyo, July 2015.

The defense industry – towards expanded cooperation with the United States

The Japanese defense industrial base is not competitive. It has been constrained by the anti-militarist norms that limited its development: exports were prohibited until 2014 and the industry was only aimed at producing for the self-defense forces, whose equipment was subject to restrictions (no weapons considered as "offensive"). **It is also largely dependent on the United States**, the only partner it could co-develop certain technologies related to missile defense with, and Japan's sole ally, which entailed a minimum basis of technical interoperability. The Japanese defense industry produces US equipment under license such as the F-4 Phantom and F-15 Eagle fighter jets and the LCAC air-cushioned landing vehicle (*air cushion amphibious hovercraft*). **Japan will also be one of two maintenance bases in the Pacific (with Australia) for F-35s** provided by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.¹⁴⁴ Japanese defense technologies and equipment are therefore generally of a good standard, but very expensive.

Yet, the increasing limitation of national resources available for the defense budget firstly, and the increasingly crucial place of high technology components in military operations makes **the issue of equipment acquisition policy crucial for Japan's future and the future of the alliance.**¹⁴⁵

The "Three principles on the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology"¹⁴⁶ from April 2014 nowadays allow for Japanese industry to export its defense technologies and weapons under certain conditions. Abandoning the principle of prohibiting arms exports is primarily intended to **reduce the cost of acquiring equipment for the SFD and to acquire new technologies**, while enabling **the continuance or even expansion of the defense industrial and technological base (DITB)** by opening up new markets. It is also a more political approach to **strengthening national and regional security by equipping some friendly countries with maritime capacity** (particularly Southeast Asia), by **encouraging industrial defense cooperation with the US**, and by **developing defense cooperation with new partners, including Europeans.**¹⁴⁷

144. M. Malenic, "Australia, Japan to Provide F-35 Heavy Maintenance in Asia-Pacific", *HIS Jane's Defense Weekly*, 17 December 2014.

145. M. D. Swaine *et alii.*, *China's Military and the US-Japan Alliance in 2030, A strategic Net Assessment*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013, p.143.

146. "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology", Press Release, Ministry of Defense, Tokyo, 1 April 2014, available at: www.mod.go.jp.

147. J. L. Schoff, "Navigating a New US-Japan Defense Technology Frontier", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 6 March 2015, p. 2.

It seems that the Japanese defense industry continues to favor US-centric partnerships, despite attempts to open up. The main reason is **the strategic importance of the relationship with the US ally**, the only one with which Japanese industry has entered into wide-scale cooperation. This relationship has established work routines with the Japanese actors. Furthermore, the **concern with maintaining a high interoperability** with US troops is an argument often advanced by the Japanese actors to warrant a US rather than European preference when a trade-off has to be done.¹⁴⁸ Finally, Tokyo is seeking to increase joint operations with its ally and improve information-sharing to reduce related costs, raise operational efficiency (particularly surveillance) and increase the credibility of deterrence.

Beyond this, political concerns are still leading Tokyo to favor its US partner: "Japan is forced to provide credible pledges to the United States regularly. For example, by cooperating on equipment (F35, amphibious equipment, Ospreys). [...] This type of factor maintains the dependency relationship. Additionally, Japanese industry is comfortably installed in its position of sub-contractor for US companies."¹⁴⁹

In fact, the Japanese acquisition program includes many orders in the United States, which overstretches the Japanese defense budget. The very modest increase in the defense budget decided by Shinzo Abe in 2013 (+5% by 2020) is largely compensated for by the Yen's weakness, which increases the cost of acquiring equipment abroad. Since 2013, 17% of the defense budget is dedicated to purchasing equipment, 24% to its maintenance, and 3% to research and development. To deal with budgetary constraints, the Ministry of Defense should gradually turn to new technologies, and particularly drones, which are effective and less expensive.

The current acquisition plan provides for spending 23.97 trillion yen (\$ 199.5 billion) on equipment by 2017. The reduction in ground equipment should be noted (heavy tanks are reduced from 740 to 300 units and are replaced by light combat vehicles - MCV), the introduction of an amphibious force (*Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade*) equipped with 52 AAV-7 vehicles, 17 Osprey MV-22 helicopters and CH-47JA transport helicopters. This new unit is involved in the central focus of Japanese strategy: strengthening the surveillance of its sea and air territory and its intervention capabilities in its remote islands. To ensure intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) activities, Japan is

148. Toru Hotchi, director of the Defense Ministry's Equipment Policy Division: "Equipment that is not used by the U.S. is not going to be a viable business." quoted by Eugene Hoshiko, "Japan defense export hopes dimmed by latecomer status", AP, 13 May 2015.

149. Interview with an expert on the issue, Tokyo, July 2015.

acquiring 5 destroyers, 5 new submarines, 23 P-1 patrol aircraft and SH-60K patrol helicopters, as well as 4 early warning aircraft (*Tactical airborne early warning and control* (AEW&C) by 2019), 28 F-35A fighter jets, 3 tanker and transport aircraft, and 3 Global Hawk drones. Finally, the second helicopter-carrier, Izumo, should take part in this effort.¹⁵⁰ Two new cruisers equipped with the improved Aegis system, capable of intercepting both high and low altitude anti-ship missiles, will strengthen and complement existing missile defense systems (in 2020). The communication system between the Japanese destroyers and aircraft should also improve coordination of the response. This system should allow for better protection of Japanese vessels, but also US vessels in a collective self-defense scenario.¹⁵¹

150. It can carry 7 anti-submarine warfare helicopters (SH-60K (ASW) or mine countermeasure helicopters (AgustaWestland MCM-101), or even could potentially carry 7 F-35 modified combat fighter jets (F-35B STOVL variant joint strike fighters) and up to 400 men.

151. "Japan plans Aegis-fleet upgrade to defend US ships", *Nikkei Asian Review*, 15 June 2015.

Defense Equipment Acquisition Program for the period 2013 - 2018

| Service | Equipment | Quantity |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Ground Self Defense Force | Mobile Combat Vehicles | 99 |
| | Armored Vehicles | 24 |
| | Amphibious Vehicles | 52 |
| | Tilt-Rotor Aircraft | 17 |
| | Transport Helicopters (CH 47JA) | 6 |
| | Surface-to-Ship Guided Missiles | 9 companies |
| | Mid Range Surface to Air Guided Missiles | 5 companies |
| | Tanks | 44 |
| | Howitzers (except mortars) | 31 |
| Maritime Self Defense Force | Destroyers (Aegis-Equipped Destroyers) | 5 (2) |
| | Submarines | 5 |
| | Other ships | 5 |
| | Total (Tonnage) | 15 (approx. 52,000t) |
| | Fixed-Wing Patrol Aircraft (P-1) | 23 |
| | Patrol Helicopters (SH-60K) | 23 |
| | Multipurpose Helicopters (Ship Based) | 9 |
| Air Self Defense Force | New Airborne Early Warning (Control) Aircraft | 4 |
| | Fighters (F-35A) | 28 |
| | Fighter Modernization (F-15) | 26 |
| | New Aerial Refueling/Transport Aircraft | 3 |
| | Transport Aircraft (C-2) | 10 |
| Joint Units | Upgrade of PATRIOT Surface to Air Guided Missiles (PAC-3 MSE) | 2 groups & education units |
| | Unmanned Aerial Vehicles | 3 |

Note: Acquisition of ship based unmanned aerial vehicles will be allowed within the number of Patrol Helicopters (SH-60K) specified above.

For these various reasons, cooperation in terms of defense equipment between Japan and the United States will be extended in the coming years. However, many obstacles, both bureaucratic and political remain to be overcome in order to allow for a real expansion of the relationship¹⁵². Finally, frictions could appear as Japan also wishes to develop its own equipment and technical specifications.¹⁵³

152. An agreement on the reciprocal acquisition of defense equipment still remains to be concluded to facilitate transactions. See J. L. Schoff, *op. cit.*, March 2015, p.4-5.

153. This is the case, for example, of the Quasi-Zenith Satellite (QZSS) positioning system intended to supplement the US GPS signal for Japan. Progress on this issue was hindered by the United States, which saw competition with its own system. MHI is currently developing the first Japanese stealth fighter, the ATD-X shinshin.

Frictions and differences with the United States

Although the alliance is strengthened by the new Guidelines, some misunderstandings, differences, and frictions persist as a result of differing, sometimes incompatible expectations from the Japanese and American sides. This may have an impact on the Japan-US partnership in the mid and long term.

The expectations gap

The expectations gap between Japan and the United States sometimes results from a misunderstanding of the partner's domestic context, in particular, significant constraints that continue to be exerted on Japanese security policy. It can also emerge from **a different prioritization of threats**: the potential for a high-intensity conflict with China or North Korea, renewed Russian activism, as well as global threats – terrorist or instability in the Middle East – are the most feared threats by the United States; a low-intensity conflict with China or possible strikes by North Korea are those feared most by Japan.

This difference with regard to expectations related to the perceived threat – **Tokyo is focusing on regional threats while Washington is faced with more global threats** and requires the support of its allies to counter these risks – had already been noted in the early 2000s, when Japan actively seemed to take part in counter-terrorism operations. For Christopher Hughes, Tokyo may have simply seen **an opportunity to develop certain skills of the SDF** in this engagement and their experience abroad. Moreover, these decisions may not be the sign of a strong commitment to the cause itself, but would fall under **a concern of ensuring US support in Asia**: "Its principal alliance concern was to avoid any form of abandonment by the US in the case of dealing with security threats closer to home, rather than sharing the vision of the 'war on terror'."¹⁵⁴ **This type of response on Japan's part may send a signal that is misinterpreted on the US side**: that Japan is an ally ready to support its US partner beyond Asia, on very sensitive issues. Indeed, the equation is more complex. Nevertheless, a certain reluctance by Japan to subsequently commit may create frustration from its ally. Washington, focusing on the spirit of the alliance, rather than the letter of

154. C. W. Hughes, "Not quite the "Great Britain of the Far East": Japan's security, the US-Japan alliance and the "war on terror" in East Asia", The University of Warwick, 2007, p.15.

written commitments, generally expects Tokyo to be more involved in maintaining security in crucial regions for both countries.¹⁵⁵

Hence, following the adoption of the Guidelines in April 2015 and the new security legislation in September, **the United State would have particularly high expectations with regard to Japanese military contributions both in the region and beyond Asia, to build a truly "global" alliance**, like that which it maintains with the UK.¹⁵⁶ In the South China Sea, for example, several US admirals voiced their hope in 2015 of seeing the Self-Defense Forces conduct freedom of navigation operations, or even joint patrols with US forces in the region.¹⁵⁷ Although the Japanese authorities expressed their support of the freedom of navigation operations conducted by the United States in the autumn of 2015, Tokyo did not indicate that it would take part. Outside the region, some US officials have the hope of seeing Japanese troops provide logistical support to anti-terrorist operations in the Middle East.

However, the limitations on international operations by Japanese Self-Defense Forces outside of Asia remain very important legally and politically. For these reasons, Japanese officials are required to clarify the content of the security reforms to their US counterparts to moderate their expectations and avoid disappointment. Despite this, **fears continue of major frustration on Washington's part**, which would eventually lead to an erosion of mutual trust and cohesion. "Beyond Japanologists, the US is expecting too much of Japan with the new legislation: because this [the legislation] is a very limited version of collective self-defense. This could create some frictions, and they [the US] could be very disappointed with Japan soon. Even if the US asks Japan to go to the Middle East, Tokyo will say that it is not relevant: there is an over-expectation problem. For Japanese people, the UN is still a source of legitimacy. US-led operations are very different."¹⁵⁸

One way to reduce this difference is to increase the political and strategic consultations and dialogues. Another way for Japan to better convey its interests with the US government is to **promote the training of experts combining skills related to strategy and Japanese issues.**

155. W. E. Rapp, "Past its Prime? The Future of the US-Japan Alliance", *Parameters*, Summer 2004, p.106.

156. "Toward an Alliance on a Global Scale: Japan's Rising Roles in Peace, Security", *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, 5 May 2015.

157. See Yoichi Kato, Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command: "U.S. reserves right to withdraw RIMPAC invitation to China", *The Asahi Shimbun*, 15 June 2015. See also comments by Vice-Admiral Robert Thomas, Commander of the U.S. 7th Fleet in, Tim Kelly and Nobuhiro Kubo, "U.S. would welcome Japan air patrols in the South China Sea", *Reuters*, 30 January 2015.

158. Interview with a researcher specialised in Japan-US relations, Tokyo, July 2015.

In return, Japanese expectations may also be too high in terms of US political and military commitment for supporting them in Asia. **Japanese analysts and officials expressed significant frustration in 2014**, as Barack Obama was reluctant to openly support Abe's approach on the constitutional reinterpretation to allow the use of collective self-defense, that the TPP negotiations were trampled on, and that the US authorities had expressed disappointment after Abe's visit to the Yasukuni shrine in December 2013.¹⁵⁹ Hence, many highlighted a **"crisis of confidence" – cyclical in nature – in the alliance**. Moreover, these criticisms show that **speech has been given free rein in Japan vis-à-vis its ally**: even diplomats no longer hesitate to express their discontent with Washington, while the trend is assertion of the national interests. While the recent reforms are intended to rebalance the alliance, this rebalancing will likely be reflected in part by a **greater outspokenness on the Japanese side**. The more favorable position of Tokyo vis-à-vis Moscow, despite US disapproval, is an example of this.

Militarily, the vagueness of US doctrine and operational concepts in Asia (Air-Sea battle, JAM-GC, war-at-sea, offshore balancing, etc.) **have led to increasing concerns among the Japanese about the degree of US engagement in the region**.¹⁶⁰ This concern is also reflected in the issue of the credibility of extended nuclear deterrence since Obama's the Prague speech in 2009. **When negotiating the Guidelines, Japan was anxious to include references to nuclear deterrence at the start of the document, but the United States preferred to walk them back later in the text.**

159. At the same time, a mixed reception in Washington, of the Chinese proposal of a "new relations between major powers" made Japan concerned about a US strategic retreat, or even a possibility of a "grand bargain" with China which would be directly contrary to its interests.

160. M. D. Swaine *et alii.*, "China's Military and the US-Japan Alliance in 2030", *A strategic net assessment*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013, p.119-120.

Fears of abandonment and entrapment: The Persistence of a major alliance dilemma

The changing nature of the US and Japanese approaches vis-à-vis China ("reactive approaches") explains the persistence of strong fears, of US abandonment in favor of Beijing for the Japanese side, and the appearance, on the US side, of a fear of being entrapped in a course of Sino-Japanese rivalry when Tokyo and Beijing directly oppose each other politically and militarily.

The fear of entrapment

For the United States, nowadays, this fear is related to **the risk of being dragged into a conflict between China and Japan**, particularly over a territorial dispute that does not necessarily fall under Washington's key interests.

The establishment of the alliance's **new permanent coordination mechanism** helps to relatively bely this concern: it **may enable the United States to better control the development of events and Japanese behavior vis-à-vis China. On the Japanese side, it can respond to US fears by optimally sharing information** in a crisis: "We will share information as far as possible to prepare the US of a contingency case, so that the US is not surprised."¹⁶¹

This US fear of being dragged into a conflict with China – particularly one which may be provoked by Japan – also related to **a lack of understanding with regard to the nationalist line taken by several Japanese leaders**, including Shinzo Abe. Indeed, increasing Japanese nationalism and historical revisionism blurs the image of this admittedly very diligent ally, and may increase tensions with China and prevent the establishment of trilateral cooperation with South Korea. "There is a **'fog around Tokyo'**. The US supports Abe's commitment on defense issues, but his Yasukuni visit caused confusion."¹⁶²

The nationalist and revisionist dimension of Japanese diplomacy may in fact have strong contradictions: "turning the page on the post-war period", while continuing attempts to revise the history of the war, obtaining terms for Japan's strategic independence in the strengthening of its relationship with the United States among others.¹⁶³ Finally, in principle, there is a fundamental contradiction

161. Interview with an analyst, Ministry of Defense, Tokyo, July 2015.

162. Interview with a researcher specialised in strategic matters, Tokyo, April 2014.

163. C. W. Hughes, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy under the 'Abe Doctrine, New dynamism or New dead End?*, Palgrave Pivot, 2015, p.67-68.

between the rejection by the nationalists of the US legacy during the occupation and the strategic rapprochement of today.

This lack of understanding of some Japanese positions could therefore lead to real tensions between the allies, **if the US president were lacking in advisors knowledgeable about Japanese affairs** or capable of deciphering the reasons for this rhetoric and its effect on Asian neighbors.

The fear of abandonment

Faced with increasing Chinese power, the Japanese concern of a decoupling of US and Japanese interests in Asia is significant, with the temptation for Washington to strike a *grand bargain* with Beijing. Tokyo has **the image of an American political actor that is more versatile and ideological, and whose structural development is not favorable to Japanese interests**. A concern voiced by some in Japan focuses on **demographic changes under way in the United States** (decline in so-called WASPs – white, Anglo-Saxon and protestant – and rise of Hispanics and Asian-Americans)¹⁶⁴ that may result in either a lack of interest with regard to Asia (with a Hispanic-American president coming to office for example), or an Asia policy determined more importantly by the Asian-American electorate (mainly of Korean and Chinese origin): "In think tanks and MOFA, people begin to look at the future of the US with 2 concerns: 1/ the strategic retreat issue, 2/ the demography. [...] Beyond 2040, the share of white people will decline while Latino and Asian people will grow. These Asian-American (esp. Chinese or Korean) will have more impact on the US policymaking."¹⁶⁵

This concern, and more generally the worry related to an eventual US strategic retreat for political or economic reasons, **drives Tokyo to develop entrapment strategies vis-à-vis its ally, to ensure that US interests in Asia remain so important that a retreat or departure is not possible**.

The adoption of the law on collective self-defense was, for example, presented as a way for Japan to ensure US support. The use of collective self-defense by Japan is indeed a repeated request by the United States, particularly since the Armitage-Nye Report of 2000, which explicitly mentions its importance as a means of allowing the alliance to expand.

This approach carries within itself a risk of criticism on the part of Japanese public opinion, which may criticize the government for firstly

164. N. Schlabach, "Asian American Electorate to Double in Coming Decades", *Asia Matters for America*, 30 July 2015, available at: www.asiamattersforamerica.org.

165. Interview with a researcher specialised in Japan-US relations, Tokyo, July 2015.

wanting to please the United States, rather than defending the real national interests.

Tensions related to the US military presence in Japan

The heavy US military presence in Japan – around 54 000 personnel – poses two types of risk for the alliance. First, and this is the biggest problem, is **the disturbance of the bases to local residents**, particularly at Okinawa, which has a concentration of 70% of the US bases in Japan (in surface area). These disturbances are such that they present real safety problems for the population – personal assaults, accidents involving military equipment – and are **sources of acute crises for the allies**.

A second problem which arises with the development of Chinese and North Korean strike capabilities is the **issue of protecting US soldiers in Japan and the question of their eventual "dispersal"** over the broader Asia-Pacific theatre.

Okinawa's surface area represents 0.6% of Japan, and hosts around 23,000 US soldiers and 21,000 of their relatives, or nearly half of the troops posted to Japan on 90 bases. But, it is a special territory within Japan. Geographically closer to China, Okinawa has very different social culture from the rest of the country. **Its inhabitants often consider that they are victims of discrimination on the part of Tokyo:** Okinawa remained under US control until 1972 and must still bear a disproportionate share of hosting US bases. **These characteristics partly explain the structural and continuous opposition to the bases and the central government.**

In 1995, the rape of a Japanese schoolgirl by three US Marines caused significant demonstrations, and led Tokyo and Washington to decide on the gradual handover of several sites and to transfer the most problematic base, that of **Futenma**¹⁶⁶, in order to alleviate the disturbances suffered by the local communities. Futenma should be shut and replaced by a base to be built at Nago, in the Henoko Bay, in Northeast Okinawa. Nevertheless, strong local opposition to the project has prevented its implementation to date.

For Shinzo Abe, the question of transferring the Futenma base occupies a significant place in his objective of regaining confidence in the Japan-US alliance. **Abe has committed to accelerating the preparation process for construction. However, recent events**

166. The air base of Futenma is still nowadays right in the centre of a dense agglomeration of 95,000 people – Ginowan to the south of Okinawa.

have shown that the situation in Okinawa has hardened.¹⁶⁷ In 2015, a series of sometimes violent demonstrations took place.¹⁶⁸ **Yet, a failure to progress on construction of the Nago site could give the impression on the US side that the Japanese political system is not effective in resolving complex issues** that the alliance depends on. On the other hand, too vigorous a decision or action on Tokyo's or Washington's part to move the issue forward at a quicker pace could intensify local opposition.

The reasons for the US presence in Japan are clearly identified: it is a question of **the strategic location of the bases and the lower use and maintenance costs** for facilities that have high-level technical platforms. Since 2007, Japan has in fact been contributing to the costs of the US bases on its territory to the level of around 50-75%¹⁶⁹, or \$2 billion each year for the payment of electricity and the salaries of Japanese personnel, among other things. In December 2015, **the allies agreed to extend the contractual part of this financial support (Host Nation Support) at a similar level** for the next 5 years, while Tokyo initially had requested a sharp decrease in its contribution.¹⁷⁰ **The US military presence in Japan is in fact seen by Tokyo as a guarantee of security and US engagement.**

Moreover, in 2006, the roadmap for the redeployment of US forces in Japan includes **the departure of 8,000 Marines (and 9,000 of their relatives) from Okinawa for Guam, Australia, and California.** It is a question of dispersing the forces, and particularly the command units, movements made possible by technical advances from the Revolution in Military Affairs. However, this issue has only progressed slowly. Determined up to 2012 by the progress of the transfer of Futenma, it was subsequently constrained by US budgetary problems. **The adoption of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2015 allows for progress in building infrastructure in Guam,** which should accommodate Marines from Okinawa, and which is receiving funding from

167. At the end of 2013, the Cabinet obtained the agreement at the end of 2013, of the Governor of Okinawa, Hirokazu Nakaima, to start construction work in exchange for an annual economic recovery plan of 300 billion Yen (2.3 billion euros). Yet, in January 2014, the Mayor of Nago, who firmly opposed the new base, was re-elected. In November 2014, Takeshi Onaga was elected to the post of Governor of Okinawa and wanted to oppose the works in Henoko Bay for administrative purposes. The same year, the first Osprey aircraft were deployed in Okinawa, causing new concerns. In December 2014, all the elected representatives in the Diet from Okinawa were opposed to transferring the base.

168. M. Falker, "Shinzo Abe Faces Growing Wrath of Okinawans Over U.S. Base", *The New York Times*, 3 July 2015.

169. E. Chanlett-Avery (coord.), *Japan-US Relations: Issues for Congress*, CRS Report for Congress, Washington D.C., 3 June 2009, p.10.

170. "Japan to Keep Host-Nation Support for U.S. Forces Around Current Level", *The Japan Times*, 15 December 2015.

the Japanese government to the amount of \$3.1 billion, or 28% of \$8.7 billion of the overall cost. In exchange, Tokyo will be able to use these facilities to train its forces, like at Tinian.¹⁷¹ Despite this project, which should lead to a reduction in the burden on Okinawa, local opposition remains strong, especially as **the allies have reiterated the strategic importance of Okinawa and the bases in the medium term when the Guidelines were adopted.**

Importance of Okinawa's geopolitical placement for the alliance



Source: *Defense of Japan 2015.*

The continued presence of the US military in Japan, simply by its size, therefore constitutes a real challenge for the allies. The allies are aware of the potentially explosive nature of the

171. E. Chanlett-Avery (coord.), *op. cit.*, 2015, p.20.

situation, which could undermine the alliance, and have taken measures to reduce the burden on Okinawa.¹⁷² "If there is an accident of Osprey on an elementary school, this is the end of the alliance."¹⁷³ While a too overwhelming presence creates local frictions, **conversely, too large a dispersal of US forces would complicate the management of the alliance** and would be seen by Tokyo as the sign of a relative US disengagement.

The bases therefore seem essential for the continuity of the alliance for both parties: "There is no peace without military assistance from the US in the coming future and the US pivot is not possible without Japanese assistance and access to bases. Without US bases in Japan, the US couldn't pursue their policies."¹⁷⁴

The budgetary challenge

Besides these three major irritations within the alliance, the alliance is facing a major challenge: maintaining economic prosperity and political stability, which enable the necessary financial resources to be allocated to defense capabilities and the security partnership. The situation in Japan is seen as particularly critical in Washington, particularly since the 2012 Armitage-Nye Report, which singled out the **risk of the archipelago being downgraded.**

While the US outlook is less bleak, it requires **increasingly complex trade-offs**, which could constrain defense spending and more broadly the realization and maintenance of the rebalancing policy towards Asia. **A long-term solution for the budgetary issue in the United States is therefore a critical element for the credibility of the United States in Asia.**

These irritations, combined with the budgetary challenge may lead, under certain conditions, to a crisis of confidence and a loss of cohesion within the alliance. This is particularly true if the main threat that cements the security partnership is reduced and disappears, or to the contrary becomes critical. These irritations, particularly those related to the US military presence in the archipelago, may also lead to an acute crisis likely to weaken or question the terms of the alliance.

172. In order to relieve the local burden, besides the movement of 8,000 Marines, the Allies have agreed to move some equipment or training from Okinawa and a partial revision of the SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement).

173. Interview with a researcher specialised in strategic matters, Tokyo, July 2015.

174. Interview with a senior civil servant, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo, July 2015.

Scenarios to 2030

Based on a structural analysis of the alliance, three scenarios of evolution are presented for the rough horizon of 2030. The choice of scenarios has been made based on two assumptions:

■ Sino-centric scenarios

Our starting hypothesis is that **the alliance evolves largely in response to Chinese behavior**. As the last bilateral Guidelines show, adaptation of the strategy vis-à-vis China is nowadays the driving force of the alliance. **Therefore, the China factor is essential to explaining the alliance's cohesion, otherwise subjected more directly to internal turmoil**. The North Korean factor has not been neglected, but while it is clearly a significant political and military threat for the allies, it does not seem essential to their cohesion, nor likely to create strong political differences between them. Indeed, since the end of the 1990s the alliance has established a defense strategy against the regime in Pyongyang that has not fundamentally changed. This is why we have decided to base our scenarios with the Chinese factor. It should be emphasized that the causal links that we present between a Chinese economic slow-down and a change in foreign policy are essentially theoretical for the requirements of the scene-setting exercise: according to us, only a major deterioration in economic conditions would be likely to alter Beijing's confidence and could challenge China's institutional and military activism.

■ The likelihood of the scenarios occurring

The selection of progressions and scenarios was made on the degree of their probability of occurrence in our view. The most feasible evolution is the baseline scenario, which relies on the redefinition of the alliance in 2015 and a continued Chinese foreign policy alternating between assertion and enticement.

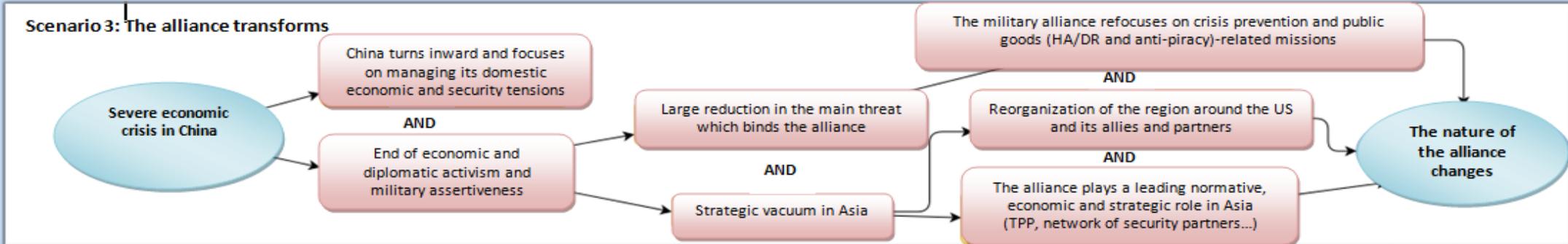
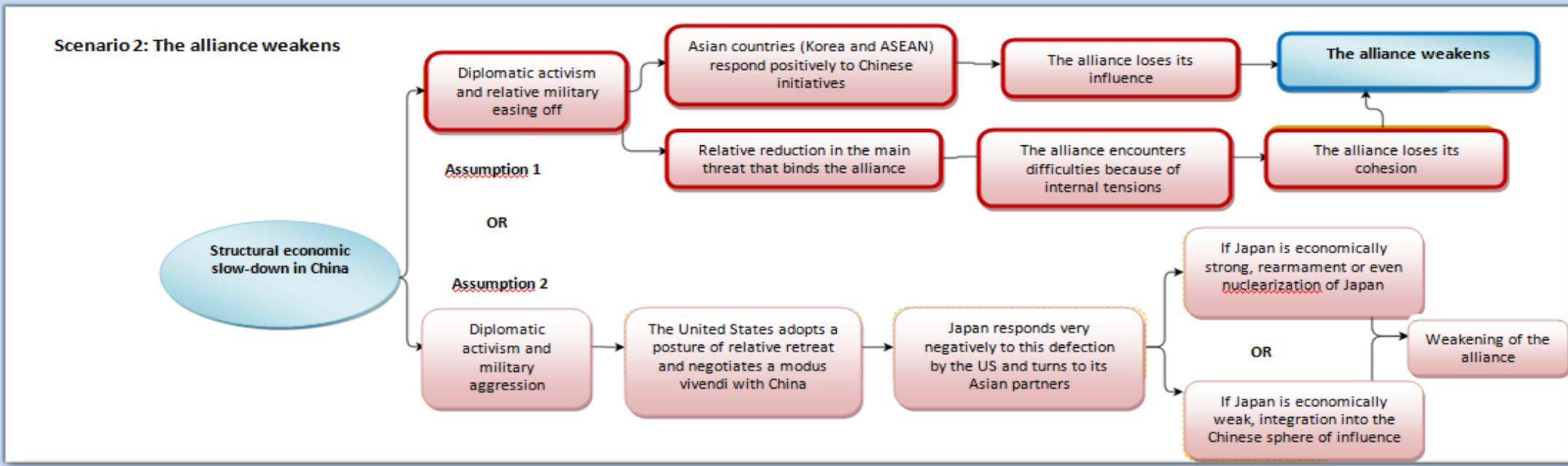
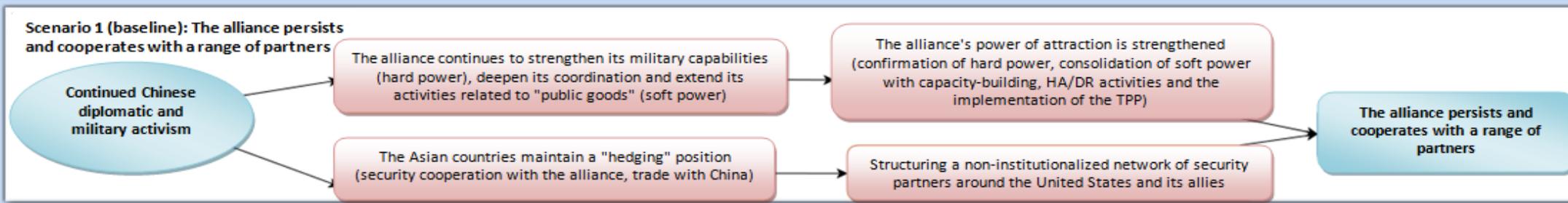
Hence for the scenario of a retrenchment of the alliance, we decided to develop the hypothesis of weakening due to the relative decline of the Chinese threat, some level of Japanese-US isolation in Asia, and of cohesion undermined by the irritations and frictions between the allies.

It should be emphasized that the majority of our contacts in Japan raised another hypothesis: that of an increasingly aggressive China combined with a strategic retreat or a failure of the United States to protect Japan. This possibility would result in a strategic break that would see Japan revise its Article 9 to equip itself with conventional armed forces with an offensive component, and if necessary, the acquisition of nuclear capabilities. Another outcome in the event where Japan may then be in a particularly unfavorable economic situation would see Tokyo joining the Chinese sphere of influence. In both cases, these developments would result in a weakening or even disappearance of the alliance.

Our knowledge of the workings of the Chinese political system and its diplomacy has led us to **discard the idea of increasing Chinese activism only in the military field.**¹⁷⁵ China is indeed aware that it has other channels to strengthen its influence in the region (economic, diplomatic, institutional, communication, etc.) and to reassure – to a certain extent – its neighbors about its political and military ambitions in the region. It is highly likely that China will reinforce its diplomatic and institutional activism in the coming years, as part of its "One Belt, One Road" initiative, and in line with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Indeed, under Xi Jinping, China is nowadays more clearly displaying its willingness to develop regional and global governance in all areas. Considering the official statements and observations in the field, **it is certain that China will extend its diplomatic and institutional activism in the region in the coming years.** However, uncertainties remain regarding the extent of the slowdown in Chinese growth and the level of aggression in areas of tension (particularly the South China Sea).

The following diagrams represent the three scenarios and are followed by a more detailed description.

¹⁷⁵ The author would like to thank Alice Ekman and Juliette Genevaz for their analysis in this respect.



Baseline scenario 1 – The alliance continues and cooperates with a range of partners

While China continues to blow hot and cold in Asia, the allies manage to strengthen their military capabilities and cooperation (hard power) but also their power of attraction (soft power). Although China remains an irresistible economic and trade partner for Asian countries, the alliance emerges as the driving force for multi-level regional security cooperation.

■ China: continuing *new normal* economics and diplomatic and military activism

Despite a relatively slow growth in the economy due to the change in the Chinese growth regime since the middle of the 2010s (*new normal* economics), China remains active. It responds to the economic slowdown by being more proactive on its major strategic projects of the Silk Roads (OBOR) and of funding infrastructure in Asia. It sees the opportunity to export its manufacturing over-capacities, create new markets for its products, and recycle its budget surplus while strengthening its political influence in the region, and even in Africa and Europe.

At the same time, **China remains uncompromising on what it considers its "core interests"**: it continues to patrol the East China Sea around the Senkaku Islands and very regularly carries out military exercises leading it to circumnavigate all Japanese territory. In the South China Sea, Beijing pre-positions coast guard forces and equipment on the artificial islands that it has created and announces the introduction of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the region, though it has difficulty enforcing it in practice. **Beijing takes care to remain below the military threshold that could serve as justification for a more direct engagement by US forces.** With regard to Taiwan, Beijing continues a policy of enticement aimed at public opinion, but is still firmly opposed to any attempt at independence by regularly reminding it that missiles remain positioned if necessary. The modernization of the Chinese armed forces and especially the development of its maritime, space, and cyber capabilities continues. **Hence, China continues to blow hot and cold in the region.**

■ **The alliance strengthens its capabilities and its military coordination and extends its soft power**

Based on the 2015 Guidelines, which adapt their partnership to increasing Chinese power, **the allies deploy sophisticated and powerful military capabilities enabling them to maintain sea and air superiority**, while the Chinese defense capabilities are rapidly modernizing. The introduction of the Permanent Coordination Mechanism allows the allies to intensify their dialogue and cooperation on what to do in the event of provocations by China or North Korea. On these issues, **the partners' cohesion is therefore satisfactory**. Operationally, the increase in joint training in Japan and in the United States allows Japanese and US forces to work better together: in particular, the Marines, infantry and air forces gradually catch up with the high level of interoperability achieved by the Maritime SDF and the Navy. The acquisition of new surveillance capabilities (particularly in space) and the bilateral coordination of ISR activities also enable the allies **to better control their environment and prepare an appropriate response in case of a crisis**.

At the same time, **the allies extend their cooperation to act not only against the threat, but also for the protection of the common good and liberal values**. Tokyo and Washington strengthen their coordination with regard to supplying military and development assistance intended to **develop maritime capacities in Southeast Asian countries** (constructing infrastructure, training crews, supplying equipment and communication systems, and joint training). The two allies are also drawing on their experience in terms of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations (**HA/DR**) to establish a regional training program and to promote cooperation in Asia. Finally, the **TPP, supported by Japan and the United States, becomes attractive for Asian countries**: their participation is combined with a public subsidy program funded by the allies to facilitate the structural reforms required to comply with the higher norms of the treaty.

Despite some budgetary and political difficulties, **Tokyo and Washington manage to maintain a strong engagement in the region**: firstly, Asia remains a major economic powerhouse for the two allies, and secondly, the reorganization of the broader international order occurs largely in Asia. Therefore, the aim is to influence the positioning of China in a more liberal and peaceful direction. Domestically, post-Shinzo Abe Japan is governed by a centrist coalition, calling for, in terms of foreign policy, a refocusing of the alliance in the Asian area and a more pragmatic Asian diplomacy differentiating economic and political cooperation. In Washington, Beijing's military activism strengthens the supporters of an "Allies First" approach towards Asia and maintaining a

strong presence of US forward-positioned forces in the region. **A high level of mobilization in the Asian theatre, where the changing geo-strategic context remains uncertain, is an important source of cohesion for the alliance.**

▀ **Asian countries maintain a hedging position and strengthen their relationships with the alliance**

The changing geostrategic context in Asia remains marked by high uncertainty. Relations between state actors in the region still remain governed by a certain distrust and the manner of cooperating in the region is still carried out on a fluid, complex, and informal basis. **Hedging will continue to characterize the strategic approaches of Asian countries.** Each one is therefore seeking to ensure as many possible options while protecting its interests, and even adopting contradictory policies. **China remains a compelling economic and commercial centre of attraction** and its geo-economic initiatives are well received when they do not involve concessions at a territorial level. Therefore, Beijing remains the leading economic partner for many countries in the region.

However at a political and military level, China remains a concern and countries in Southeast Asia benefit from the income provided by the allies to build their maritime capacities in order to better survey their territory and intervene in case of natural disasters. **For these reasons, the United States and its allies in the region** – firstly Japan, but also Australia – **are considered as the main providers of security.** Many countries – in the first instance the Philippines and Vietnam, but also Singapore and later India – strengthen their partnerships with the alliance, without this leading to the formation of a highly institutionalized relationship. Manila, for example, makes its bases available to the SDF and the US forces. Joint training on a different level – trilateral, mini-lateral, multi-lateral – is aimed at strengthening cohesion in this group (which India regularly participates in), while encouraging China to join these exercises more regularly. In this configuration, Seoul has even moved closer to Beijing after having recovered command of its troops in wartime. However, its alliance with Washington remains in place: Seoul is aware that the involvement of China and the United States is essential to addressing the North Korean challenge.

■ **The alliance continues to strengthen and cooperate with a range of partners**

The alliance's power of attraction is strengthened. Its *hard power* is confirmed even in conditions of China's military catch-up: the alliance maintains its superiority in terms of advanced technology and communication systems, and finally, its troops are better trained. **The alliance's *soft power* is also extended** in a general *hedging* context: the allies are helping to establish multi-layer regional security cooperation. Their relations with like-minded partners – Australia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore – is combining inclusive regional initiatives to improve the protection of shipping routes in the area and to strengthen HA/DR capacities. The implementation of the TPP also enables new members to be integrated and ambitious norms for economic governance to be promoted. **The balance of power is maintained.**

Contrasted scenario 2 – The alliance weakens

The reduction in the main threat cementing the alliance together – Chinese military aggression – further exposes the allies to domestic and bilateral irritations. It also leaves them relatively isolated, as the rest of Asia turns to Beijing, which is still deploying unrivalled diplomatic and institutional activism. Washington and Tokyo decide to revise their security cooperation downwards.

■ **Slowdown in Chinese economic growth, easing of its military posture, but continuation of its diplomatic activism in the region**

In 2030, the CCP has failed to successfully transition to a new growth regime which would rely more on domestic consumption. The Chinese economy continues to be driven by investment and many of the provinces are heavily indebted. The central government, however, no longer gives them financial guarantees, which results in a widening in inter-provincial inequalities. The government forms an emergency aid fund for the bankrupt provinces, without regaining control over all of them. Nonetheless, this restructuring of public finances results in **a slight decrease in the defense budget.**

Beijing has realized that its coercive policy in the China Seas has been counter-productive, by driving a number of Asian countries to establish or strengthen security partnerships with the United States. In 2022, a new Chinese leader comes to power. After Xi Jinping, his term of office consists of strengthening the bases of Chinese power, by working on reducing domestic socio-economic inequalities, which have been sources of constant tension and sporadic crises in recent years. **This context leads to an easing off in the Chinese political and military approach in the region.**

At the same time, Beijing continues its grand strategy aiming to find a central place in Asia and relying on diplomatic activism. Beijing is relying on its manufacturing over-capacities and its financial reserves to invest heavily in regional infrastructure and is involving its neighbors in its initiatives, whether it be the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), or its large "New Silk Road" (or One Belt, One Road – OBOR) project, which meets great success.

▀ **Asian countries respond positively to Chinese initiatives**

The majority of Asian countries, reassured by the policy of easing off that Beijing has been maintaining for several years in its immediate environment – particularly in the East China Sea, where the new *status quo* continues without Chinese provocations, and in the South China Sea, where Beijing has agreed to negotiate and implement a maritime *code of conduct* with the ASEAN countries, although it maintains its territorial claims – **have gradually moved closer to China, initially for economic reasons.** Despite its structural slowdown, China succeeds in maintaining a sufficiently high growth rate to emerge as the economic powerhouse of Asia.

China's diplomatic efforts have borne fruit. The signatories to the AIIB form a solid bloc against the United States and Japan, who by refusing to take part in it, are excluded from a new negotiating space. The countries in the region also participate in the OBOR project in order to reap dividends in terms of connectivity, trade, and finance. They find a greater benefit in it than in joining the TPP, whose application comes up against difficulties in some small countries – particularly Vietnam – to reform in order to come up to the level of the ambitious norms of the treaty. In practice, the TPP only actually involves the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Canada.

■ **The alliance is relatively isolated**

The United States' Asian allies do not develop alliances among themselves as they lack a central motivation (the "anti-Chinese" coalition is outdated) and the partners in Southeast Asia emphasize the importance of including China in any approach to networking or security cooperation in Asia. **The alliance is relatively isolated while Seoul has moved still closer to Beijing**, which has established a political and economic integration plan for North Korea in exchange for Seoul's decision to gradually reduce the number of US soldiers on its territory. Australia, although it cooperates economically within the TPP and continues its alliance with Washington, seeks to further integrate into Asia by relying on a more extensive dialogue and political consultation with Beijing.

■ **The alliance is placed in difficulty by domestic irritations**

The **main threat that the alliance restructured against in 2015** – China's threatening military expansion – **has reduced considerably** and even if the North Korean regime remains relatively unstable, it seems to be moving towards a "Chinese-style" development in its economy, carrying out with support from Beijing and Seoul what results in the easing of its military posture. **Tokyo and Washington are both faced with tight budgetary constraints**, worsened in Japan's case, by a declining population that burdens the country's general dynamism. Moreover, since the end of Shinzo Abe's term of office in 2018, **Japan has been plunged into a period of governmental instability** (a succession of LDP governments) leading to a much more modest foreign policy, continuing the alliance, while strengthening relationships with China like the rest of Asia. **In 2025**, the opposition, which has reformed around a core of politicians promoting the **full and complete reintegration of Japan in Asia** through a historic reconciliation with Beijing and Seoul, comes to power.

At the same time, the softening of the Chinese posture reinforces a **climate of relative calm in Sino-American relations**, the supporters of a "China First" approach to the region emphasizing the opportunities not to be missed economically as well as diplomatically. **The US administration also has difficulties justifying the maintenance of a continued military presence in an Asia**, whose geo-economic integration seems to temper political differences – especially as serious tensions continue to shake the Middle East. **Washington therefore increases pressure on its Japanese ally** for the latter to send troops in support of operations regularly conducted by US forces in this region.

These demands are regularly rebuffed by Tokyo, which restricts its alliance contributions to Northeast Asia.

The crash of a Marines' V-22 Osprey aircraft on an Okinawa campus resulting in a number of Japanese victims in 2028 shocks public opinion and forces the government to renegotiate the terms of the US military presence on its soil. **New Guidelines are adopted that enact the return to a minimal contribution by Japan to the alliance** (rear-area support in the case of a crisis in Korea) **and provide for the departure of most of the US forces:** the latter will be able to have access by rotation to the main bases of Kadena (Okinawa), Sasebo, Iwakuni, and Yokota. Some forces remain based at Yokosuka which continues to be used as a technical platform for the 7th Pacific fleet.

The alliance is relatively isolated and therefore makes cutbacks in terms of its military cooperation. It has not succeeded in globalizing or in adopting a regional integration model, which appears as too restrictive for the Asian countries. **An increasing rise in a new pan-Asiatic ideology** is very attractive for Japan as for India and Australia. The United States fails to settle its budgetary problems structurally and opts for a less engaged posture in Asia, turning towards more unstable theatres in the Middle East.

Contrasted scenario 3 – The alliance transforms

An unprecedented economic crisis leads China to turn inward to face its domestic problems. The alliance adapts to this situation in order to fill the strategic void left by the Chinese retreat. From a defensive alliance, it is transformed into a partnership for the prevention and management of crises in Asia.

■ China faces a severe economic crisis and turns inward

The inability of Chinese leaders to implement structural reform that would have enabled the country to engage in a new and longer-lasting growth regime has resulted in, if not a collapse, at least **a deep disruption of the economy**, with massive capital flight, domino bank collapses and a collapse in the value of the Yuan. In these conditions, the Chinese economy enters into a long period of stagnation.

The one-party regime proves weakened for two reasons: firstly, domestic disturbances such as terrorist acts by separatist groups based in Xinjiang and urban and rural protests related to environmental damage

and to expropriations are destabilizing the government; and secondly, the anti-corruption campaign by Xi Jinping has had a number of harmful effects: the bureaucracy has lost its appeal and the resentment of the purged cadres has aggregated to form a threat to the incumbent leaders. This political instability requires an army to re-establish order in support of the People's Armed Police (PAP) in case of crisis. The budget for domestic security exceeds the defense budget. **China must concentrate on its domestic difficulties, its confidence is shaken**, and it can no longer afford to support its ambitious initiatives in terms of foreign policy and defend its core interests.

■ **The Chinese retreat leaves a strategic vacuum in Asia that the alliance moves to fill**

The Chinese threat being *a priori* rejected, the alliance manages to refocus on its ancillary activities: promoting regional cooperation in terms of maritime security and HA/DR operations, contributing to maritime capacity-building in the region and **crisis prevention and management missions in Asia**, by combining with its partners in the region.

The alliance also helps to set up a range of institutions for regional cooperation in the political, economic, cultural (people-to-people exchanges and an Asian ERASMUS program) and security fields (fishing, underwater mineral exploitation rights, freedom and safety of navigation, fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction).

The alliance is therefore positioned as a real provider of the common goods, coordinating efforts to maintain regional stability and particularly **helping China, which is struggling with socio-economic and political difficulties**, in exchange for liberalization measures by the Chinese political system. Economically and commercially, gradual and assisted accession to the TTP also becomes an interesting option for the countries in the region, which see Chinese orders and credit vanish. **The United States' allies occupy a significant place in this configuration:** Japan, the main Asian go-between, coordinates economic and security cooperation, hence finding a role as a regional leader. Seoul is also closely linked to Washington and Tokyo, the only actors now capable of helping to stabilize a North Korean regime that sees its economic support from China suddenly dry up. The three countries succeed in negotiating an assistance program in return for a gradual and controlled disarmament by the government. Australia and Indonesia become preferred go-betweens to moderate and manage tensions in Southeast Asia.

The Japan-US alliance becomes the forefront of regional security cooperation, but also of economic integration. This position is particularly rewarding for Japan and enables the United States

to warrant its engagement in Asia. In this scenario, the main challenge remains the management of the situation in China, which, if it had profoundly destabilized the country, would be the source of significant risks for the region, or even beyond.

Conclusion

The Japan-US alliance seems nowadays to have taken measures to successfully adapt to the challenges of its time. **The allies' primary objective is to establish conditions for an increase in Chinese power that does not threaten their interests. To do this, the alliance is strengthening its deterrence capability on the one hand, and its power of attraction on the other (*soft power*).**

Militarily, the allies are introducing an "**integrated dynamic defense**" involving a permanent mobilization of forces and an improvement in interoperability to respond to new issues raised by the maritime expansion of China on the one hand (mainly the pre-conflict "grey zone situations"), and anti-access/area-denial measures (A2/AD) taken by Beijing on the other. **The alliance today can be mobilized in peacetime and wartime** (a permanent coordination mechanism should help with this). It is also investing in the acquisition of critical capabilities and skills (space, cyber, missile defense, and drones) in order to maintain for as long as possible its advantage over Chinese military capabilities (despite the rapid modernization of the latter), and to strengthen the credibility of extended deterrence, which also continues to be based on a nuclear component. These developments are taking advantage of the security reforms adopted in Japan in recent years, which allow the SDF to provide a greater role, particularly in the exercise of collective self-defense, and to rebalance the alliance to some extent.

Beyond military deterrence, the allies are also strengthening their power of attraction, by extending their cooperation in the fields of development assistance (particularly for maritime capacity-building in countries in the region), humanitarian and disaster relief operations (HA/DR) and promoting liberal norms, particularly in the commercial field (TPP). This expansion in bilateral cooperation allows for, on the one hand, structural links within the alliance to be strengthened, but also and above all, **the development of a web to be promoted, bringing together strategic partners in the region** in a counterbalance approach to China. Finally, this allows the allies to a certain extent to regain the initiative in Asia and to better set the agenda while seeking to integrate Beijing.

This approach based on *smart power* (combination of hard and soft power) is well adapted to the Chinese challenge, which mixes military assertion and economic and institutional activism in the region. It also fits into a rationale of efficiency and cost reduction in a tight budgetary

context, enabling all available resources (military, economic, financial, etc.) to be mobilized to work towards the same objective (*all of government approach*). This approach requires strong coordination between the governmental and bilateral actors, particularly within the permanent coordination mechanism.

Japan has become a source of proposition. While its political and military normalization is accelerating and the regional security environment is worsening, Tokyo is taking the initiative in revising the bilateral Guidelines. The United States must adapt to this new dynamic and particularly address the need for reassurance expressed by its ally.

In Japan, the largely prevailing doctrine nowadays is the controlled military normalization of the country, accompanied by the strengthening of the alliance, the only guarantee for maintaining Japanese strategic independence against China. However, there is no consensus on Prime Minister Abe's ideological approach – a pragmatic, realist policy that would combine a necessary strengthening of the alliance for the country's defense, functional cooperation with China and the pursuit of strategic partnerships with countries in the region – should dominate in the future. The mix between the deterrent and cooperative approach with China is a function of evolving Chinese behavior: a more aggressive China reinforces the arguments of supporters for a deterrent policy – this is the case nowadays. However, **a certain number of factors** (the maintenance of anti-militarist norms, a still largely pacifist public opinion, the future of the political leadership, economic stagnation and declining population) **advocate for a probably very limited use of options opened by the defense reforms and the bilateral Guidelines.** If most of the domestic actors in Japan are firmly attached to the alliance, they remain reluctant about any military contribution outside of East Asia. From this point of view, the expansion of cooperation in the fields of development assistance, maritime security, humanitarian assistance, or even the promotion of trade norms would be subject to greater support.

Also, **frictions could hamper the alliance,** particularly because of differing expectations between Washington, which wants to encourage a greater military contribution by Japan in Asia, but also outside the region, and Tokyo, which remains focused on Asian security issues immediately affecting its own interests, and which is seeking above all to ensure an on-going and credible political and military engagement on the part of its ally. Also, the tensions related to the conditions and the impact of the US military presence in Japan is a constant point of tension within the alliance, likely to lead to a serious crisis.

The scenarios and their lessons for the alliance

The main lesson drawn from the scenario exercise is that the challenge for the Japan-US alliance is not to strengthen its military deterrence, which in its current state, appears to be satisfactory, and which over time, will inevitably be challenged by the rapid modernization of the Chinese military. **The real challenge is rather to know how to handle a China that is mollified militarily, but active in terms of economic and institutional diplomacy. To do this, the allies should strengthen their power of attraction.** Firstly to **ensure the support and backing of security partners in Asia, who will not agree to enter into an "anti-Chinese quasi-coalition"**, but who are eager to strengthen their capacities and contribute positively to regional security cooperation. This regional support will make the difference in the eventuality of an open military crisis with China. **In addition, they are crucial to maintaining the alliance's influence** in the region and avoiding its isolation in the event that China eases off relatively in military terms, but continues an economic and institutional activism. **Finally, the continuation of this "positive cooperation" will help to maintain cohesion in the alliance**, even if the main threat forming its purpose has reduced. Thus, Japan and the United States should work to strengthen their cooperation and coordination in the security fields, defined in a broad sense (development assistance, maritime security, fight against piracy, HA/DR operations, fight against weapons proliferation, energy security, climate change and environmental protection, economic and trade norms, etc.) by seeking to work with like-minded partners in the region, but also by favoring the establishment of cooperation mechanisms and inclusive regional institutions likely to integrate the Chinese regime.

