

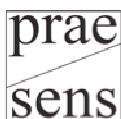
# Sino-Japanese Relations and the Potential for Militarised Conflict in the Twenty-First Century

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## Abstract

*The People's Republic of China and Japan have been at odds with each other for over a century. Their modern relationship was shaped by imperialism, territorial disputes, and two wars. With the end of the bipolar power structure of the Cold War, both nations are vying for regional leadership. The unresolved territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands (Senkaku shotō 尖閣諸島/Diàoyúdǎo jí qí fùshǔ dǎoyǔ 钓鱼岛及其附属岛屿) in the East China Sea serves as a constant catalyst for clashes between both powers and seems to be pushing towards a violent eruption. Thus, this paper assesses the risk of an interstate war between China and Japan in the twenty-first century. By employing the Steps to War theory, each step nations usually take before engaging in war, it will be analysed in order to see how far the brewing Sino-Japanese conflict has developed. This paper aims at answering the questions of the current risk of war, whether there is a palpable shift towards conflict escalation during the twenty-first century, and if so, identifying the main drivers for this development and ascertaining whether threats to stability are currently increasing or decreasing.*

**Keywords:** Japan, People's Republic of China, Territorial Dispute, Sino-Japanese Rivalry, Arms Race



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## Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, China and Japan have both tried to re-establish themselves on the international stage and compete for regional leadership. This re-emergence of an old rivalry is partially fuelled by unresolved historical issues related to the Japanese war crimes during World War II, an equally unsettled territorial dispute, and conflicting interpretations of international laws. The aim of this paper is to assess the risk of a war outbreak between the two nations. For this purpose, the Steps to War theory, a theory generated to analyse and explain the development towards war, will be utilised, in an attempt to illustrate what steps China and Japan have taken on the path towards an armed conflict so far. This paper poses the following three research questions: Is or was there a palpable shift towards armed conflict between Japan and China since the end of the Cold War, especially during the twenty-first century? How high is the current risk of military escalation? Who are the main agents for such developments, and are threats to Sino-Japanese security relations currently increasing or decreasing? By answering these research questions, the paper will not only provide a better understanding of the Sino-Japanese relationship focusing on security and disputes, but through generalising its findings, it will determine areas of high risk and lay a groundwork upon which further research for conflict prevention can be based.

The paper is structured on two main blocks: the theoretical approach and the empirical analysis of the Sino-Japanese relationship—both building upon the five Steps to War theory. The steps are introduced in separate chapters in the theoretical segment, but also form the integral composition of the empirical analysis. Lastly, the findings of the analysis are reviewed before answering the research questions in the conclusion.

## Theoretical Approach: The Steps to War

The Steps to War by John A. Vasquez (1993), and later on in cooperation with Paul D. Senese (Senese and Vasquez 2005; 2008), is a theory that seeks to explain the development and outbreak of international wars through the empirical analysis of historical occurrences of interstate wars. In the broadest sense, the Steps to War theory explains the onset of international conflicts as a pattern of steps that creates an additive dynamic that increases the likelihood of war outbreaks.

Early research on the development and onset of World War II in Europe delineated a path of territorial disputes and power politics including military build-ups, alliance formation, and repeated crises that would ultimately trigger the war outbreak after arms races and hardliner politics (Vasquez 1996: 163; Vasquez 2009: chapter 7). In a 2005 paper, Vasquez and Senese tested a series of propositions

selected from Vasquez' previous research on wars between 1816 and 1992, an additional series of territorial disputes, politically relevant alliances, a history of militarised disputes, and an ongoing arms race (Senese and Vasquez 2005: 610). The quantitative analysis showed that the propositions were corresponded to the pre-Cold War period, while alliances and arms races were found to be insignificant drivers for war during 1946–1992. Senese and Vasquez stated that, with a resurgence of non-nuclear disputes and the disappearance of a bipolar alliance structure, arms races and alliances will most likely return to their pre-Cold War influence. Valeriano and Marin (2010: 6) used and developed the Steps to War theory further, by testing similar hypotheses as Senese and Vasquez but with a smaller sample size and the inclusion of hardliners in power. They confirmed Senese and Vasquez' theory, while also finding hardliners in power to be a major influence on interstate war onset (*ibid.*: 11–12, 17). While initially used for large sample size quantitative analysis, the Steps to War have also been used in case studies, starting with Vasquez' (1996) analysis of World War II. Valeriano and Gibler (2006) focused on three interstate wars in Africa, and Maness and Valeriano (2012) used them as a theory to assess escalation risk, analysing the relationship between Russia and three former USSR-members: Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine. They implemented a risk barometer and identified the growing risk of escalation between Russia and Ukraine, pinpointing the problematic situation in the Crimean Peninsula and the Ukrainian shift towards Europe as main catalysts for a future conflict (*ibid.*: 147–148). Russia's annexation of Crimea in the aftermath of the 2014 Ukrainian revolution and its involvement in the Ukrainian civil war proved them right.

The number of sources available to describe the various facets of Sino-Japanese relations over time are vast. Burns (2000) concentrates on the economic partnership between the two countries, and the political motivations guiding them in these endeavours. With the new millennium Ohashi (2004) focused more on the consequences of China's economic rise; Alvstam, Ström, and Yoshino (2009) emphasised the economic interdependence of both states; Okane-Heijmans (2007) included the influence of Japan's imperial past into its economic diplomacy; and Wu (2013) described the link between Sino-Japanese economics and the territorial dispute. Other works concentrate on the dominating social issue of the Sino-Japanese relationship, such as the textbook controversy (Bael, Nozaki, and Yang 2001), or war memory, official apologies, and social politics by Seraphim (2008). Research on interstate war and conflict development is a widely discussed and researched topic that encompasses various fields of study. The Steps to War theory builds upon earlier research by Vasquez (1993; 1995; 1996), developed by Senese and Vasquez (2005; 2008), and extended by Valeriano and Marin (2010), focusing mostly on comparative analyses of moderate to high quantities of interstate conflicts and wars. Another branch of research using the Steps to War theory focuses on conflicts with one or a small number of participants to examine crises development and risk factors

for specific countries, pioneered by Valeriano and Gibler (2006) and Maness and Valeriano (2012). Due to the design of the Steps to War theory, each step involves a distinctive field of study with various different aspects. Publications on the Senkaku/Diàoyú territorial dispute focus on conflict development, strategic and economic importance, and legal issues, with prominent research done by Drifte (2008a; 2008b; 2013; 2014), Fravel (2007; 2010; 2015), Hagström (2005; 2012), and Manicom (2008a; 2008b; 2014). Alliance-related research is mostly done by national institutes and government entities. Interstate rivalry studies concern either separation of different rivalry degrees, or analyse Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) like Palmer et al. (2015) or Wiegand (2007; 2009; 2011). The field of arms race research has long been dominated by theoretical discourses concerning arms race onsets, with empirical research for China and Japan being mostly focused on current naval modernisation—prominently by Patalano (2008; 2014a; 2014b), Patalano and Manicom (2014), Hughes (2004; 2005; 2009a; 2009b)—and Chinese military build-ups, mostly by Cordesman (2014) and Cordesman, Hess, and Yarosh (2013). Hardliner behaviour studies are comparatively rare, being mainly political analyses of the political leadership.

## Research Design and Methodology

The paper will be structured following the research design of Maness and Valeriano (2012), separately analysing each step of the Steps to War theory and combining the results of each step in an additive fashion to produce a *Simple Risk Barometer for War* (Senese and Vasquez 2008: 272). The fifth step, Hardliners and Accommodationist in power, is added in accordance to Maness and Valeriano's approach.

The results of the risk barometer will serve as a point of reference to answer the question on the progress of the development towards war. The information gathered over the course of the analysis will help to identify the main drivers and issues for the development.

Table 1 Simple Risk Barometer for War

Factors Promoting War	Risk Level
Five Steps to War	5
Four Steps to War	4
Three Steps to War	3
Two Steps to War	2

One Step to War	1
No Steps (No Territorial MIDs, no Power Politics)	0

Source: Senese and Vasquez 2008: 272

Concerning methodology, the paper mainly relies on the critical assessment of published peer-reviewed journals and monographs, as well as governmental publications to supply facts, historic information, and official positions or data on policy and strategy. For the quantitative dimension of this paper, statistical data will mostly be retrieved from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) military expenditure index and from the Correlates of War Project (COW) MID dataset, supplemented by online news sources for information about recent events.

## Steps to War: Criteria and Definitions

### Territorial Dispute

Territorial disputes are seen as one of the most potent catalysts for interstate crises, and usually emerge from two governments disagreeing over national or colonial borders, or from one nation disputing another nation's right to exercise sovereignty over their country or colony. Other relevant and contributing factors are '[...] natural resource endowment, the religious and ethnic composition of its population, or its military-strategic location' (Huth 2000: 86). Reasons for dispute onsets are classified in five categories:

- Rejection of current borders by at least one side.
- A lack of historic documents and treaties to delimit a clear boundary line.
- Territorial occupation and unwillingness to withdraw.
- Refusal to recognise a country's sovereignty over a certain area.
- Refusal to accept the independence of another nation.

The outbreak of a territorial dispute is marked by the first official governmental statement that challenges another country's sovereign control, if this claim is rejected. A territorial dispute can be ended by occupation by the challenger with the target's official compliance, an official statement renouncing the claim or settling for a compromise, or if the challenger abides by a ruling of the International Court of Justice or other international arbitration (Huth 1996: 19-23).

## Alliance

The definition of alliances follows the three main criteria established by the COW databank, which are usually used in other case studies: (1) At least two allies must be qualified system members; (2) with either a defence pact, a non-aggression pact or an entente; (3) furthermore, the dates of the alliance must be identifiable through a formal, written agreement including alliance members and obligations (Gibler and Sarkees 2004: 212). Along those three criteria, Senese and Vasquez utilise the concept of *politically relevant alliances* to emphasise alliances able to influence a given conflict. To that purpose, alliance members are categorised as major or minor states, with the latter only being politically relevant to major or other minor states if they can influence the conflict development towards war by either being situated in the disputed region, or are bordering one of the initial conflict parties. Alliances with major states are always seen as relevant (2008: 66-68). Due to military and political involvement in Sino-Japanese relations, major states relevant to this paper are the United States, Russia/Soviet Union, China (Gochman and Maoz 1984: 595) and, since 1990, Japan (Krause and Singer 2001: 15).

## Rivalry

Senese and Vasquez (2008) use the concept of an *enduring rivalry* as defined by Diehl and Goertz (2001) to analyse rivalries in the Steps to War theory. Three main criteria need to be fulfilled to speak of an enduring rivalry: spatial consistency, duration, and military competitiveness. Enduring rivalries are assumed to develop between spatial consistent dyadic actors, usually states, although security complexes—alliance networks such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact—can also become enduring rivals (Diehl and Goertz 2001: 19-20). The duration of a rivalry is categorised into sporadic or isolated rivalries, proto-rivalries, and enduring rivalries. Lastly, military competitiveness is measured by the occurrences of MIDs in a dyadic relationship, armed conflicts short of war, as Diehl and Goertz note that rivalries are denoted by militarisation since neither (friendly) competition nor persistent issues warrant talk of a true rivalry (ibid.: 19-24). MIDs are broadly defined as ‘[...] a set of interactions between or among states involving threats to use military force, displays of military force, or actual uses of military force. [...] [T]hese acts must be explicit, overt, nonaccidental, and government sanctioned’ (Gochman and Maoz 1984: 587). Each of the three different kinds of MIDs have several subcategories:

- Threat to use force (use force; blockade; occupy territory; declare war; use nuclear weapons).
- Display of force (alert; mobilisation; show of troops/ships/planes; fortify border; nuclear alert; border violation).

- Use of force (blockade; occupation of territory; seizure; clash; raid; declaration of war; use of CBR Weapons) (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996: 171-173).

With all those parameters in place, Diehl and Goertz define enduring rivalries as ‘[...] any of those rivalries that involve six disputes or more *and* last for at least 20 years’ (2001: 44). In comparison, isolated or sporadic rivalries last one to three years with one or two MIDs, while proto-rivalries are all those who fall short of the enduring rivalry threshold (*ibid.*: 42-45).

## Arms Race

There are numerous definitions of arms races and an extended scholarly discourse on the effectiveness of arms races as deterrents, but one of the most important steps before considering an arms race is to determine if the situation in question is an arms race or a mutual military build-up. While earlier research, focused mainly on expenditure, found a 90 per cent risk of escalation for arms races (Wallace 1979: 14-15), Diehl (1983: 201) found only a 25 per cent risk of escalation in mutual military build-ups. The distinguishing difference is usually the existence of a strategic rivalry relationship in case of an arms race, in which mutual military build-ups are typically lacking (Gibler, Rider, and Hutchison 2005: 134). Such a strategic rivalry needs both nations to see each other as “[...] (a) competitors, (b) the source of actual or latent threats that pose some possibility of becoming militarized, and (c) enemies” (Thompson 2001: 560). Susan Sample (1997: 9) employs a definition focused on military expenditure growth rates and acceleration—with similar concepts used by Valeriano and Marin (2010), Wallace (1979), and Gibler, Rider, and Hutchison (2005)—while Gray (1971: 41) concentrates more on competition of military quality and quantity, conscious antagonism, and intentional structuring and positioning of forces. While the focus on expenditure growth and acceleration seems sufficient for the Steps to War, it seems prudent to formulate criteria combined from these different definitions, as the scope of the research question includes facets of the Sino-Japanese military relationship and modernisation that go beyond military spending. Thus the criteria are:

- Two or more parties conscious of their rivalry.
- Focusing and reacting in their arms build-up on the other’s actions.
- Competition in terms of quality or quantity.
- Increase in quality or quantity.
- Rapid and accelerating increase of military expenditure.

Noticeably, arms race definitions lack temporal components, which is most likely due to the inclusion of rivalry behaviour that relies on a time frame, or because many definitions are used to analyse already concluded historical conflicts—in which case dispute outbreaks can be used as temporal markers.

## Hardliners and Accommodationists in Power

As domestic prerequisites for war, Vasquez (2009) separates politicians and dominant figures into two opposing camps, essentially, a faction favouring war and a faction opposing war: hardliners and accommodationists, respectively. He based his definitions on parts of Margaret Hermann's (1980) work that examined beliefs, motives, decision style, and interpersonal style, although Vasquez solely focuses on beliefs:

[A]ccommodationists can be defined as individuals who have a personal predisposition (due to the beliefs they hold) that finds the use of force, especially war, repugnant, and advocates a foreign policy that will avoid war through compromise, negotiation, and the creation of rules and norms for non-violent conflict resolution.

[H]ard-liners can be defined as individuals who have a personal predisposition (due to their beliefs) to adopt a foreign policy that is adamant in not compromising its goals and who argue in favor of the efficacy and legitimacy of threats and force. (Vasquez 2009: 220)

Additionally, Valeriano and Marin (2010: 25) code hardliners as using power politics in pre-war diplomacy, coercion, even in face of possible defeat and—having a history of initiating war—will pursue war to the detriment of their own people. Accommodationists in turn see war as an irrational option, which is to be avoided at all costs through treaties and international arbitration. Threats are not met with force but with embargos, blockades, and, possibly, passive resistance.

## The Sino-Japanese Relations – Step by Step Analysis

The Sino-Japanese relationship is driven by a plethora of influences beyond the scope of military disputes and the strategic issue. After the normalisation of Sino-Japanese relations in 1972, Japan dominated the economic ties, exporting technology while importing Chinese raw material. By 1999, the People's Republic of China (PRC) had become the second most important trading partner. Over time, Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) became a more important economic factor (Burns 2000: 43-45), linked to China's emerging economic rise. Despite any definitive proof, this ascension was blamed for the phase of stagnation after the burst of the Japanese economic bubble, sparking animosity on an economic level (Ohashi 2004: 182-183). Since the new millennium, both governments wanted to mend their strained economic relationship, but public attention remained on controversial historical topics, inducing a split between economic and popular desires and further hampering any positive developments (Okano-Heijmans 2007: 10-11). The importance of bilateral trade has nonetheless remained high, with China surpassing the United States (US) as Japan's most important trading partner during the earlier



2000s. With the PRC's relentless economic rise—overtaking Japan in terms of total trade turnover in 2004—and the continuous flow of Japanese FDI into China, interdependency grew correspondingly (Alvstam, Ström, and Yoshino 2009: 200).

The main socio-historical issues affecting bilateral relations are controversies concerning official apologies for Japan's wartime atrocities, which are closely linked to politician's visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine (*Yasukuni jinja* 靖国神社), where all Japanese war victims, including convicted war criminals, are enshrined (Seraphim 2008: 270-285). Furthermore, the issue of Japanese history textbooks published by nationalists, in an attempt to whitewash Japanese war crimes and filled with revisionist statements, have caused continuous discord and outrage (Bael, Nozaki, and Yang 2001: 178-182).

After the tumultuous year of 2016, a considerable level of uncertainty towards the position of the US remains, for both China and Japan. For China, comments from President-elect Trump seem to hint towards a quick cool-down of relations as the future US leader continuously antagonises the PRC. While this course might seem beneficial for Japan-US relations, comments on potential new costs, withdrawals of US troops, and nuclear weapons contributed to the uncertainty of the Japanese leadership concerning the US-Japan alliance. Nevertheless, President Trump and Prime Minister Abe Shinzō 安倍晋三 (b. 1954) appear to share, apart from a conservative constituency, several political ambitions for Japan to take over a more active military role, which would benefit close cooperation between the two leaders (Holland and Takenaka 2016).

## Step 1: Territorial Dispute

While the small and barren Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands hold no economic, strategic, or social value, they are certainly important when seen in the bigger scope of the East China Sea. Economically, ownership of the islands entails not only access to rich fishing waters—important due to the rising consumption in both countries (Beck 2010: 74-75)—but also to possible natural gas deposits in the area. The important Chūnxiǎo/Shirakaba gas fields (*Chūnxiǎo yóuqìtián* 春晓油气田/*Shirakaba gasuden* 白樺ガス田) are located right along the median line of the disputed Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), so that ownership of the islands would strengthen or weaken Japan's claim on parts of the natural gas deposits (Drifte 2008b: 17).

Strategically, control of the islands is especially important for submarine operations. Control of the waters would allow People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) submarines to navigate undetected through the shallow waters of the East China Sea before passing through the channel between the Miyako Islands (*Miyako rettō* 宮古列島) and Okinawa into the Pacific (Akimoto 2013). The area is also Japan's most important surveillance and submarine patrol zone, main operation zone for Japanese ballistic missile defence (BMD) (Patalano 2008: 867, 886; 2014a: 417-419), and

seen as essential for sea lines of communication (SLOC) security (Beck 2010: 81). The strategic importance is emphasised by the unilateral establishment of China's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea, including the airspace over the disputed islands (Swaine 2014: 1-10).

The social value is comparatively low, although it is seen as relevant to Chinese territorial integrity and Japanese colonial aggression (Hagström 2005: 173-174), or as an issue of national honour, Japanese victim-mentality, and resistance to Chinese pressure and military assertiveness (Beck 2010: 147, 167-168, 175-176).

Thus, when put into the context of larger territorial issues, the ownership of the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands certainly holds strategic and economic advantages in the view of Chinese and Japanese politicians and strategists, which justifies the continuous quarrels over the islands.

The Senkaku/Diàoyú dispute arose after two oceanic surveys in 1968 and 1969 suggested potentially high deposits of natural gas and mineral oil in the ocean floor around the islands. Japan had claimed the islands as part of still US-controlled Okinawa Prefecture (*Okinawa-ken* 沖縄県), which had started a diplomatic dispute with Taiwan (Kawashima 2013: 129). In December 1971, the same year the PRC replaced Taiwan in the United Nations and took over the Chinese seat in the Security Council, the PRC voiced its own claims on the islands and subsequently pushed Taiwanese claims to the background (Shaw 1999: 15). The Sino-Japanese feud began in earnest when in 1978 a flotilla of partially armed Chinese fishing vessels entered Japanese territorial waters in protest claiming the islands. The situation was soon downplayed and labelled an 'accident' to enable the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in the same year, and leading to the later disputed decision to formally 'shelve' the issue. Another shelving agreement ended discord after Japan dropped its plans to recognise a small lighthouse on the islands as official navigational marker (Shaw 1999: 16, 18). Nonetheless, relations worsened while tension increased after the ratification of the United Nations (UN) Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) by the Japanese government in June 1996 (Kawasaki-Urabe and Forbes 1997: 92). The establishment of an EEZ as specified by the Convention became a regional issue, due to the overlapping of the 200 nautical mile zones of Japan and China, and the controversial lighthouse caused another series of protests (Shaw 1999: 19) that resulted in a Chinese military show of force (Wiegand 2011: 102). These particular tensions and protests were preliminarily mitigated through diplomatic channels in 1997 (Shaw 1999: 20-21).

In the twenty-first century, the crises went beyond the mostly civilian protests and diplomatic issues, as China's growing assertiveness led to an influx of PRC maritime surveillance ships in the disputed area, while provocations from Japanese right-wing groups caused more landing attempts. An unsuccessful prior notification system failed to prevent naval intrusions or clashes between protesters and Japan Coast Guard (JCG) vessels (Pan 2007: 75-76; O'Shea 2012: 18; Koo 2009: 225),

and the PLAN deployed nuclear submarines in 2004 and a small flotilla in 2005 in and around the disputed area (Wiegand 2009: 187-189; 2011: 105). The conflict escalated when in 2010 a Chinese fishing trawler repeatedly rammed JCG vessels, which was subsequently stopped and its crew were arrested, causing major diplomatic strains and Chinese economic pressure until all crewmembers were released (Hagström 2012: 272-275). In 2012, Japan officially acquired three previously privately owned islands of the Senkaku/Diàoyú island group to prevent Ishihara Shintarō 石原慎太郎 (b. 1932), the nationalistic governor of Tōkyō, to buy them in an act of provocation. Nonetheless, the PRC strongly opposed the 'nationalisation' and naval and aerial incursions into the disputed area skyrocketed after September 2012 (Drifte 2013: 37-41, 49). The situation was aggravated the following year, with a shift from coast guard and surveillance ships to military vessels, and numerous fighter scrambles due to airspace violations, resulting in near collisions; in one instance, a Chinese frigate locked on a Japan Marine Self Defence Force (JMSDF) vessel. Tensions eased up in late 2014, when bilateral talks resumed and a crisis hotline was established (Martin 2013; Cole 2013; Rapp-Hooper 2013; Richards 2014a and 2014b). A new crisis erupted in 2016, when between June and August similar advances by naval vessels, coastguard, and fishing boats took place; a near dogfight broke out between patrolling fighter jets, and China conducted two massive military drills aimed at a 'cruel and short' war in the East China Sea (Tatsumi 2016; Panda 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; Gady 2016b, 2016c).

In terms of their legal claims on the disputed islands, both nations present three main arguments, mostly in direct contradiction to the positions of the other party. Japan claims that the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands were incorporated into Japanese sovereign territory in 1895, after governmental surveys conducted since 1885 had determined that the island group was neither inhabited nor bore any markers of signs of sovereignty, and was therefore regarded as *terra nullius* (MoFA Japan n.d. a). The island group is also not considered a part of Taiwan and its adjacent islands, a claim made to separate the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands from territorial acquisitions connected to the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 (Shaw 1999: 24). Therefore, the San Francisco Peace Treaty would not affect ownership of the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands, as Japan does not regard them as having been obtained from China through territorial concessions or wartime gains. Lastly, it is argued that the PRC and the ROC did voice disagreement over Japanese ownership of the islands only after the discovery of natural resources in the area, while the islands had previously also been marked as Japanese possessions in Chinese maps (MoFA Japan n.d. a; Tatsumi 2013: 108-110). The PRC disagrees with Japan's assertion that the disputed islands had been *terra nullius* in 1895, and claims that the island group had been a navigational marker and fishing ground used by Chinese fishermen for centuries (Pan 2007: 77). Furthermore, the PRC maintains that Japan was aware that the islands belonged to China, citing a letter from a former Japanese foreign minister who called for caution

previous to the incorporation of the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands, as the proximity to the Chinese borders could provoke troubles. Thus, it is argued that the incorporation of the islands was a calculated move at a time when China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War was certain. Therefore, the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands are regarded as part of the territory ceded to Japan after this defeat with the Treaty of Shimonoseki, since the island group is seen as an outlying part of Taiwan and its surrounding smaller islands, which should be returned to China as a result of the Japanese defeat in World War II (Ramos-Mrosovsky 2008: 926-928).

Beyond the question of sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands, are the disputes over the EEZs and the continental shelf in the East China Sea. In 1982, the UNCLOS introduced the EEZs and defined them as zones '[...] beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea [...] [in] which the rights and jurisdiction of the coastal State and the rights and freedoms of other States are governed by the relevant provisions of this Convention' (UN 1982: 43). An EEZ can reach a maximum of 200 nautical miles from the coastal baseline; maritime features not able to support human habitation and economic life are not able to generate or influence an EEZ. Although this would most likely exclude the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands from influencing the East China Sea EEZ, Japan usually regards the islands as capable of generating their own EEZ (Harry 2013: 666). Given that the East China Sea is not large enough to accommodate two 200 nautical miles wide EEZs, the Chinese and Japanese zones are overlapping. Although the International Court of Justice and several international treaties usually employ an equidistant or median line solution in similar situations, UNCLOS does not provide a solution to resolve this problem. While Japan accepts an equidistant border for the EEZ (Ramos-Mrosovsky 2008: 911-913), the PRC claims a more extensive area, because continental shelves—the natural prolongation of land territories—would allow for a 350-nautical-mile EEZ (UN 1982: 53). In the Chinese view, this continental shelf ends at the Okinawa Trough (*Okinawa torofu* 沖縄トラフ), with the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands on China's side. Japan rejects this claim regarding the Okinawa Trough as a mere depression, while the shelf continues to the Ryūkyū Islands (*Ryūkyū shotō* 琉球諸島); thus, sharing the same continental shelf would call for an equidistant borderline (Ramos-Mrosovsky 2008: 912-913).

## Step 2: Alliance

The US-Japan military alliance was formed after the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, and the US committed to station troops at military bases and to defend Japan, as Japan was barred from fielding its own military (Lillian Goldman Law Library 2008). Over time, and due to US pressure, Japan has taken a more active role as the abilities of the Japan Self Defence Force (JSDF) had gradually increased (Hughes 2004: 21-23, 97). US-Japanese cooperation decreased during the

early 90s, due to economic difficulties following the regional changes after the Cold War (Fukuyama and Oh 1993: 21-22), but a revision of the security treaty and defence guidelines mended the split, emphasised the importance of the alliance, and increased cooperation possibilities. Japan also expanded the operational range of the JSDF beyond the Japanese islands, as there was no geographical limitation to Japanese security interests (Hughes 2004: 98-100; Dian 2013: 4-5). This exemplifies an interesting triangular connection between the US, Japan, and China, as US pressure for Japan to assume a stronger position and even closer military cooperation was most likely fuelled by China's military rise. As Hughes (2004: 146-147) argues, Japan has locked itself into the US alliance and made itself indispensable, as combined US and Japanese forces remain an insurmountable counterweight to Chinese regional military ambitions. While a Chinese threat to US regional superiority might have resulted in US pressure for Japan to assume a bigger role in their alliance and to slowly start remilitarisation, the same developments will most likely serve as catalyst for continued Chinese military modernisation and build-ups. North Korean nuclear ambitions and China's growing military power, in connection with SLOC security and the territorial dispute, are the main security concerns of the defensive alliance in the twenty-first century (Koga 2009: 8). Since the invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq, Japan has reassessed its defensive strategy to facilitate closer cooperation with the US (Armitage and Nye 2007: 19), culminating in the 2015 reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow for collective self-defence (Bendini 2015: 16-17; Borah 2015). Although seen as a major step for the alliance, restrictions mandate a bare minimum of military force and underscore non-violent conflict solutions (Cossa and Glosserman 2014: 7-8). That same year, the *Guidelines for Japan-US Defence Cooperation* were finalised, focusing on flexibility, expansion of peace keeping operations (PKO), JSDF assistance to US forces under attack, multilateral cooperation, and assuming regional leadership in non-traditional security operations (Liff 2015: 87-88). In 2010, the US announced that the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands would be defended under US treaty obligations, after having avoided to adopt a definitive position on the question of ownership for decades (Manyin 2013: 5); in 2014, President Barack Obama reaffirmed this commitment (Singh 2014).

Japan and Australia share a similar position in the strategic milieu of the Asia Pacific region and are both integral members of the American hub-and-spokes alliance system, developed to counter Soviet advances into East Asia (Ikenberry 2004: 354-356). First attempts to form a Australia-Japan security alliance failed due to Japan's constitutional restriction in the mid-1990s (Terada 2010: 8), but the Australian-Japanese security relationship has moved more towards institutionalisation during recent years (Ishihara 2014: 97), as a number of agreements improving border and SLOC security, counter-terrorism (MoFA Japan 2007), and the promotion of peace in the South China Sea have been signed (Sahashi 2013: 12). While China's military growth is one of the key factors for these developments (Davies

2014: 83-84), there are distinctive factors currently blocking the development of an Australian-Japanese defensive alliance. Australia does not wish to become entangled in Japan's territorial dispute in the East China Sea, nor is antagonising the PRC in Australia's economic interest, as China has become its biggest trading partner (Ishihara 2014: 113).

Japan's cooperation with other regional neighbours is mostly focused on improving relationships with potential adversaries of the PRC. In 2007, Japan created the *Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement* to counteract Chinese influence in Southeast Asia, and provided support to the Philippine Coast Guard (Cruz de Castro 2009: 709-713). With the intensification of the South China Sea Dispute (SCSD), Japan created the *Japan-Philippines Strategic Partnership* in 2012 and promised to provide the Philippines with patrol vessels for coast guard duty (Trajano 2013). Nonetheless, it is unlikely that the Japan-Philippines relationship could evolve into a fully-fledged and institutionalised defensive alliance, as the PRC's reaction is expected to be too severe (Sahashi 2013: 18). During the early 2000s, Japan also began to form a closer relationship with India. The main reason was India's ability to guarantee safety for Japanese SLOC running through the Indian Ocean (ibid.: 14-15). In 2008, the *Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India*, focusing on future military drills and fighting terror and piracy in the Indian Ocean, was signed (MoFA Japan 2008). In 2014, the Indo-Japanese relationship was further expanded in regard to maritime security, and a relaxation of Japan's ban on arms trading enabled India to order Japanese maritime surveillance aircrafts (Panda 2014a; Panda 2014b; MEA India 2014). Although both countries see their new relationship as a strategic cooperation focused only on certain issues, the PRC is concerned about a potential encirclement by a future alliance (Khan 2011: 23). Although an alliance between Japan and South Korea would seem obvious, prior attempts to establish important security agreements were rejected by the South Korean Congress, as an unresolved territorial dispute and historical issues remain the main obstacles for closer relations (Sahashi 2013: 15-17).

Since the end of the Cold War, China has established a network of bilateral relationships (Gill 2010: 1) but retained its animosity towards military alliances, which are regarded as remnants of bloc politics. While seeing itself as independent and strong, Chinese national mentality rejects becoming entangled in conflicts of smaller powers (Chu 1999: 5-7). Still, the PRC has a military alliance with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), stemming from the early 1960s, when increased isolation and strained relations with the USSR drove China and North Korea together (Chen 2003: 3-7). In 1961, Chinese and North Korean officials signed the *Sino-North Korean Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty*, assuring each other of immediate support in case of any attack on either nation, which is automatically renewed every 20 years and it can only be dissolved by mutual approval

(Harrison 2002: 322). Over time, the Sino-North Korean relationship has weakened since China's turn towards the West, but friendly relations were mostly upheld, as North Korea also serves as buffer state between the PRC and the US and its allies (Chen 2003: 9). Still, concern that DPRK's nuclear tests could exacerbate Japanese military normalisation and modernisation led to short-lived economic sanctions by China (Xu and Bajoria 2014). Reportedly, in 2002 the PRC tried to revise the article guaranteeing immediate military assistance, but was rejected by the DPRK, although the PRC would most likely act upon its obligation only after careful consideration even without a revision (Glaser and Billingsley 2012: 7-8).

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was created in the aftermath of the Cold War to reduce potential friction and border disputes between Russia, former Soviet states, and the PRC. It is formed by six core member states, that is, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and with four observer states, namely Mongolia, Iran, Pakistan, and India. The latter two are slated to complete their accession and become SCO-member states in 2017 (Sajjanhar 2016). In 1996, the relationship was formalised through various treaties regulating troop reduction and establishing annual meetings. From 2001 onward, the SCO has shifted its focus in containing the 'three evils': terrorism, separatism, and extremism; in 2004 also started to concentrate on economic cooperation (de Haas 2007: 7-10, 15-16). Due to its stance on military alliances, the PRC has rejected the inclusion of forces of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)—a military alliance system made up of former Soviet states—into SCO military exercises and war games (Frost 2009: 101-102). Although small concessions had been made following CSTO pressure, the 2001 *Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation* contains no military obligations for either nation and focuses mostly on an economic partnership, making it unlikely that the SCO will develop into a NATO-like system for Central Asia (Mitchell 2007: 142, 144-145). The only military use of the SCO for China was that the treaties ensured a demilitarisation of previously heavily defended border regions and enabled the PLA to refocus towards the East and South China Sea with their territorial disputes (de Haas 2007: 35). The SCO also facilitated arms trade and military technology transfer from Russia during a time of Western arms embargos. Sino-Russian relations became strained in 2007 after Chinese reverse engineering and increased capacities of the Chinese defence industry had lessened the dependence on Russian imports (Brækhus and Øverland 2007: 52-54). In recent years, the escalation of various territorial disputes has revived the Sino-Russian relations, and the 2014 SCO military drills held in China saw a sudden increase in manpower and equipment quantity after years of decline, seen as a Sino-Russian show of force (Kucera 2014). President Xí Jìnpíng 习近平 (b. 1953) also increased efforts to create an Asian security structure that excluded the US—the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia

(CICA) group—which includes Russia and Iran, but Japan and the US only hold observer status. It is still doubtful that the group will ever evolve into a security alliance (*The Japan Times* 2014a) although it shows a small shift in Chinese strategy.

### Step 3: Rivalry

Regarding spatial consistency, it is obvious that Japan and China both qualify as state-level actors in an international system. The previously discussed Sino-Japanese relationship concerning the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands presents ample evidence for the consistency of the territorial dispute. While both countries have some sort of security alliance, the influence and dominance of the US-Japan alliance, and the US influence in the region, are related to the question of whether a potential rivalry could be seen as dyadic or if the rivalry would be between China and the US-Japan alliance. Since the main sources of the potential rivalry are the disputed Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands and the unresolved question of the East China Sea EEZ—and both issues relate more to national security and economic policies rather than US strategic interests—it can be argued that a possible rivalry will be of Sino-Japanese origin. Furthermore, the US have sought to avoid any definitive comment on the issue of ownership of the islands, and only recently reaffirmed their commitment to defend Japan as per their treaty (Manyin 2013: 5). The continued avoidance of an explicit and open position on the territorial issue serves as another indication that a potential rivalry would be a Sino-Japanese affair. In order to establish a timeframe in which the duration of the rivalry can reach the minimal necessary extent to qualify as an enduring one, this analysis will focus on the post-Cold War period and the early twenty-first century up to 2016. The dispute between Japan and China started much earlier and experienced several flare-ups during the Cold War, but the signing of the 1978 *Treaty of Peace and Friendship* together with the informal shelving agreement provided for a decade without major incidents connected to the dormant territorial disputes. The re-ignition of the dispute in the 1990s, and the continuous deterioration of the situation, coupled with the rise of China as a regional power, is a fitting starting point to measure for a rivalry relationship. To assess the military competitiveness, all potential instances of militarised confrontation between the PRC and Japan during the selected timeframe will be analysed. As main sources, the MID dataset (v.4.1) from the COW databank and an extensive list of Sino-Japanese military encounters from Krista E. Wiegand (2009) will be used.

The 1990s started with an MID in 1991, when mostly unidentified ships stopped, searched, or fired against Japanese fishing vessels in the area around the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands (Wiegand 2009: 179). Two Chinese fighter aircrafts in August 1995, and two PLAN submarines in 1996, entered the airspace and waters of the disputed islands in two *displays of force* (Palmer et al. 2015). The year of 1996



saw two more MIDs, when in September the PLA deployed PLAN vessels near the disputed islands to conduct joint military drills with air and ground forces in a display of force, and a minor incident in October, when PLAN vessels conducted naval surveillance around the disputed islands (Wiegand 2007: 13; 2009: 179)—which could be viewed as another display of force challenging Japan's *de facto* control. A last display of force occurred in May and July 1999, when on both occasions a group of PLAN vessels entered the waters of the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands, conducting military manoeuvres before being confronted by JMSDF vessels (Wiegand 2007: 13; Palmer et al. 2015).

The MIDs of the twenty-first century started with a string of incidents between July 2003 and March 2004 that commenced with government-backed Chinese activists attempting to land on the disputed islands, but were deterred by JCG vessels (Wiegand 2009: 179). The MID escalated to an alleged attack from Japanese ships and planes on two Chinese fishing vessels near the disputed islands (Palmer et al. 2015), although reported as attacks by Japanese warships in Chinese media (Ferguson 2004; *ChinaDaily* 2004), it seems more likely that JCG vessels were employing water cannons against the fishing boats. In March 2004 the MID ended when Chinese protesters were detained after landing on the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands but were released shortly after (Koo 2009: 255), thus classifying the MID as seizure according to the COW dataset (Palmer et al. 2015). In late 2004, several PLAN vessels and governmental research ships operated in the waters surrounding the islands in a possible display of force (Wiegand 2009: 179). In November of the same year, a nuclear powered *Han*-class attack submarine (09I *xíng héqióntǐng* 09I 型核潜艇) of the PLAN was spotted inside Japanese territorial waters off Ishigaki Island (*Ishigaki-jima* 石垣島), triggering a large-scale warning for the JMSDF. The submarine was shadowed until it left Japanese waters a few hours later and the incident was labelled an accident by the PRC due to a technical error (Wiegand 2009: 179; Martin 2013). Following a *border violation* by the PRC, the Japanese reaction was coded as *alert*. The PLAN showing their ability to venture undeterred into Japanese territorial waters, even with only one submarine, can be seen as a *display of force* through a *show of ships*. Somewhat similar MIDs continued to occur; in September 2005, a flotilla of PLAN vessels including a Russian-build destroyer were deployed to the Chūnxiǎo gas fields as a reaction to rising tensions over exploration rights (Kim 2012: 299), which was coded as *display of force* (Palmer et al. 2015). Two months later, another Chinese vessel was spotted violating Japanese waters in the same area (*ibid.*), which can be considered a *border violation*. In April 2007, a group of PLAN destroyers passed through Taiwanese and Japanese territorial waters without clear intentions or links to any particular issue, but regarded as simple display of Chinese naval prowess and a *display of force* (*ibid.*).

Starting with 2010, the MIDs arguably increased in their intensity. On 8 April of that year, a PLAN anti-submarine helicopter buzzed JMSDF destroyer Suzunami

(Goeikan “Suzunami” 護衛艦「すずなみ」) ignoring warnings and calls and only stopped when critically close to the ship. On 21 April, another PLAN helicopter made repeated flybys over JMSDF destroyer Asayuki (Goeikan “Asayuki” 護衛艦「あさゆき」), which was monitoring a PLAN flotilla of destroyers, frigates, and submarines passing through the Miyako Strait (Miyako kaikyū 宮古海峡) to conduct military drills close to Okinawa Prefecture (Ryall 2010; Palmer et al. 2015). From September to November 2010, following the already mentioned ‘2010 Trawler Incident’ and its aftermath, a Chinese fishing boat in the waters around the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands attempted ramming manoeuvres against JCG vessels and was subsequently seized and the crew arrested. As a reaction, the PRC increased their naval patrols area around the island group and sent vessels into the disputed waters (Drifte 2013: 33-34), thus reacting to the Japanese *seizure* with another *display of force* (Palmer et al. 2015). After Japan had officially appropriated the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands, the JCG reported 17 intrusions from different Chinese maritime agencies into Japanese territorial waters and, on 13 December, the Japan Air Self Defence Force (JASDF) scrambled fighters after a maritime surveillance plane entered the airspace over the islands (Fujita 2012; Przystup 2013: 114; Tatsumi 2013: 118), and on January 19 the JASDF scrambled again against People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) fighters (International Crisis Group 2013: 46). The same month saw PLAN vessels aim and firelock on a JMSDF helicopter and on the destroyer Yūdachi (Goeikan “Yūdachi” 護衛艦「ゆうだち」) (Tatsumi 2013: 119). Over the years, the number of vessels from different maritime agencies intruding into the waters around the disputed islands further increased and submarines were detected patrolling at the limit of Japan’s territorial waters (Martin 2013). Overall airspace violation by PLAAF fighters, bombers, and drones likewise increased (Cole 2013; Rapp-Hooper 2013), and two Chinese fighters nearly collided with two Japanese surveillance planes during Sino-Russian military exercises in the overlapping area of the Chinese and Japanese ADIZ (Richards 2014a). Those actions can clearly be seen as Chinese responses to the Japanese acquisition, challenging Japan’s effective control of the islands. This prolonged MID contained *border violations*, *displays of force* and, in case of the aiming and fire-locking on Japanese ships and planes, (unspoken) *threats to use force*. The year 2015 saw a cooling down of the crisis, with only minor incursions and patrols, and only in December an armed coast guard vessel entered disputed waters around the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands (Tiezzi 2015). The most recent crisis, of summer 2016, started in June with a PLAN frigate venturing closer than ever to the territorial waters of the disputed islands (Tatsumi 2016) and the PRC alleged that Japanese planes aimed on a Chinese aircraft (Gady 2016b), followed by a massive flotilla of fishing boats and coast guard vessels in early August (Panda 2016b). In the same month, the PLAN conducted two large-scale military drills in the East China Sea and the Sea of Japan in

preparation for a ‘cruel and short’ war, although officially did not aim on any specific target (Gady 2016c; Panda 2016c)—a clear *display of force*.

## Step 4: Arms Race

### *Military Modernisation*

While the Cold War was winding down, the PLA began an unprecedented troop reduction, due to a relaxation of the Sino-Russian border tensions (Gill 1998: 17). When the US were identified as potential adversary to the PRC regional interests in the aftermath of the Cold War, the PLA was gradually shifted and restructured to gain the abilities to not only guarantee China’s sovereignty, but also to enforce territorial claims and deter US capabilities, as well as to allow the PRC to play a role in a new regional security structure (Dutta 1998: 94, 96). During the 1990s, the strategic scope of the PRC began to switch from the traditional land-based approach towards the sea. The first Gulf War, and especially the 1996 Taiwan Crisis, had demonstrated the superiority of US Navy vessels, and subsequently the PLAN began to supplement their forces with Soviet-build vessels to start a swift modernisation process (Chin 2007: 30). Chinese strategic planning adopted the concepts of the First and Second Island Chain: for the former, roughly the islands and archipelagos running from the Aleutians to the Philippines, and for the latter from Japan to the small island of Guam. These enclosing lines dotted with American or US-allied bases delimited the operational scope of the PLAN, and served as a reminder of US containment strategies—an enduring threat—that warranted increased naval modernisation (Yoshihara 2012: 294–298). Contextual and direct drivers controlled military modernisation in the early 21st century. The former were Taiwanese striving for independence, worsening relations with Taiwan and Japan, Chinese ambitions as global power, growing energy demand, the DPRK nuclear program, and, lastly, the repositioning of the US and its regional allies. The latter were money, technology, politics, and doctrine. Budgetary changes led to easier modernisation and resource use, and the adaption of military doctrine to new high-tech equipment enabled concentration on new frontiers, such as cyber warfare. The influx of foreign military technology further improved the capabilities of the military-industrial complex through reverse engineering, subsequently reducing reliance on Russian military-imports (Shambaugh 2005: 68–78, 82, 84–87). The *New Historic Mission*, the PLA’s doctrine for the 21st century, remained mostly focused on traditional issues, chiefly cross-strait relations, with the anticipation of instability on the Korean peninsula. In the South China Sea Dispute, the US and Japan were categorised as long-term strategic concerns, with issues such as collective self-defence being criticised in the 2004 and 2006 defence white papers. Overall the PLA became more

involved in foreign policy, but strategic planning did not anticipate minor or major conflicts between 2004 and 2010 (Godwin 2010: 59-64, 82-84, 86-87). The US-Japan alliance became more prominent in the defence white papers of 2010 and 2012, becoming involved in four major national defence objectives: safeguarding national sovereignty; maintaining social harmony and stability; accelerating defence modernisation; and preserving world peace (Swaine et al. 2013: 35-36). Furthermore, the 2010 white paper reiterated that China upholds its belief in valuing peace and resolve disputes through peaceful means—in regard to war, China would only attack after being attacked (MoD China 2011: chapter 2). Nonetheless, it had been noted that in Chinese doctrine every threat to national sovereignty of the PRC is seen as an attack, thus Taiwan declaring independence, or even political violation and non-military actions, could constitute an aggression that could lead to pre-emptive “defensive” attacks by the PRC (Diakidis 2009: 10-11; Swaine et al. 2013: 37).

While Japanese strategic planning during the Cold War was mostly focused on the USSR—as one of the most important US-allies in the region—the DPRK became the primary strategic threat during the 1990s. When North Korea launched a *Nodong-1* 노동 1 호 missile into the Sea of Japan (East Sea) in 1993, Japan’s susceptibility to missile strikes became explicitly clear. Subsequently, Japan became even more entangled in the situation as part of the first US-DPRK nuclear crisis, although politicians were hesitant to commit to provide logistic support to US troops. Further North Korean missile tests led to the “*Taep’odong* 대포동 shock” of 1998 and the second nuclear crisis of 2002–2003, once more exposing Japan’s vulnerability to missile attacks (Hughes 2004: 43-44). Likewise, the PRC developed into more of a perceived threat during the 1990s. Especially the qualitative military build-up following the end of the Cold War, the potential threats to the vital Japanese SLOC, and the more assertive behaviour—mostly related to the issue of Taiwanese independence—were turned into drivers for strategic planning. The 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait crisis increased Japanese fears of entanglement into a conflict between the PRC and the US, with its troops stationed on Okinawa and throughout Japan, acting on behalf of Taiwan (Hughes 2004: 44-46; 2005: 109). To combat the changing security environment as well as the missing clarity of the US-Japanese alliance, Japan began a series of security policy change-cycles. To improve alliance-intern cooperation, the *US-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation* were revised in 1997 to allow for logistical support, and Japan also began to increase its involvement in PKOs and, thereby, also the cooperation with other international actors (Hughes 2005: 112-114). The global war on terror brought about a second cycle of security policy change; US pressure for closer cooperation and talks about constitutional revision and “normalisation” began to grow, with a first proposal for constitutional revision being brought before the National Diet in 2005, although it was ultimately dismissed (Hughes 2008: 114-116). At this time, the Araki Report and the

*New Defense Policy Guidelines* (NDPG) began to underscore the military modernisation of the PRC and, veiled by a neutral tone, its destabilising influence on regional security. It was proposed to begin to develop the JSDF into a modernised and flexible force capable of rapid response, joint operations, and with a stronger focus on increased expeditionary capabilities and improved interoperability (Hughes 2008: 118-120).

Concurrently, motivated by the DPRK nuclear ambitions and the fear of missile attacks, Japan began to jointly develop and purchase ballistic missile defence (BMD) systems for land and sea, with and from the US. North Korean missile tests in 2006 only affirmed the Japanese concerns and sped-up the deployment of additional BMD batteries (Takahashi 2012: 10-11). Additionally, these BMD capabilities could also be used to deter Chinese missiles in case of an escalation in Taiwan. Hughes (2009a: 305) has argued that the DPRK had, over time, been turned into a proxy threat for Japan, acting as convenient disguise for a shift in defence posture aimed more directly against a rising China. The threat posed by the DPRK had been “super-sized” to overcome constitutional restrictions and enable cooperation in BMD with the US, as well as to justify conventional modernisation of the JSDF, citing the deterrence of North Korea as the main purpose and avoiding publically to name the PRC as a threat (Hughes 2009a: 308, 311). Following the PRC and DPRK, Russian opposition to US-Japan BMD in East Asia—together with a resurgence of assertive behaviour and the persisting territorial dispute over the Southern Kuril Islands (Northern Territories)—put Russia on the third place of potential security risks and drivers for military modernisation (Hughes 2009b: 4).

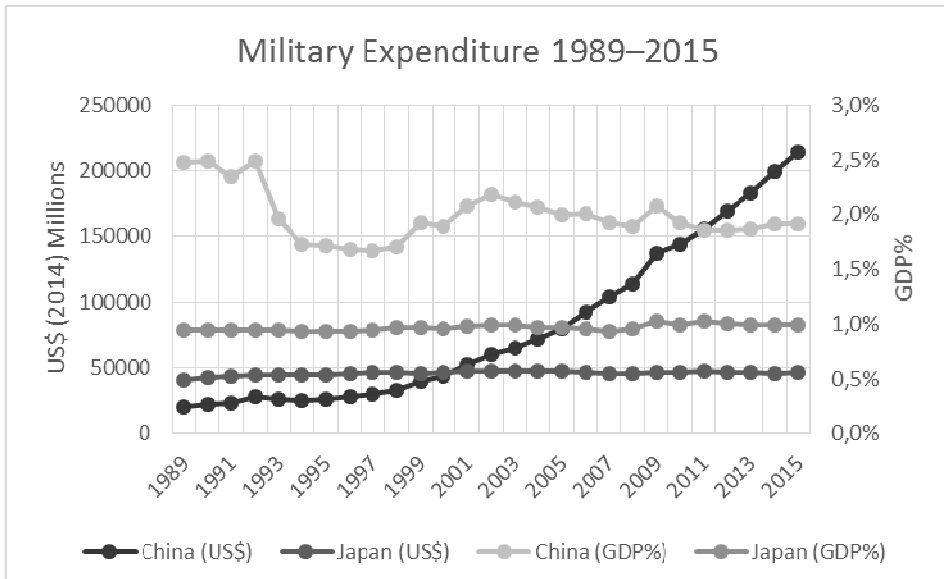
The third cycle of security policy change came with the revisions of the NDPG under Prime Minister Abe, and an emphasis on the further development of the JSDF into a *Dynamic Defence Force* focused on flexibility, advanced technology, and joint operations (MoD Japan 2012: 115). The 2013 NDPG included an increase in defence spending and also emphasised the concept of the Dynamic Defence Force with the JMSDF and JASDF as main focal points (NIDS 2014: 55-58). China’s growing power, military capabilities, and assertiveness—especially in the disputed waters of the East China Sea—had been officially noted in the defence white papers of 2013, 2014, and 2015, which called for close surveillance of the Chinese actions and described them as very worrying (MoD Japan 2013a: 3; 2014a: 4; 2015: 3). Lastly, the reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution has been one of the most important steps in changing the security policy. Since the turn of the millennium, the US had pushed for collective self-defence and to enable closer cooperation (Middlebrooks 2008: 24-25) and, in 2014, a cabinet decision against much internal resistance and external protest was taken (Glosserman 2014: 1). The cabinet decision was affirmed by both houses of the Japanese parliament in 2014 and 2015, and was included in the 2015 Security Bill (Chanlett-Avery et al. 2015: 19). The reinterpretation now enables Japan to directly support US troops, although a number

of conditions are limiting the scope of operations. Only close military allies qualify for support, and only if the life, liberty, or happiness of Japanese citizens is endangered. Furthermore, all other means of dealing with a crisis must be considered before resorting to the deployment of the JSDF. Though very restrictive, it has been noted that the loose definitions leave ample room for future individual reinterpretations (Glosserman 2014: 1). Overall, the permission of collective self-defence is one of the most important steps in Japan's return to being a "normal" state.

### *Military Expenditure*

The necessary data to assess Chinese and Japanese military expenditure growth is provided by the SIPRI military expenditure data, which includes personnel, maintenance, and operation costs, as well as procurement, R&D, military construction, and military aid. The data provided for China is an estimation by SIPRI (SIPRI 2014), as Chinese information on expenditure often lacks transparency and official figures most likely do not include arms import procurement and aid from foreign countries, expenses for paramilitary forces, expenses for nuclear forces, R&D, governmental subsidies, and PLA fundraising (Cordesman, Hess, and Yarosh 2013: 105-106). Figure 1 shows two diverging trends for the annual military expenditure of China and Japan during the last decades, as Japan's expenditure remains near-constant while Chinese expenditure starts at a much lower level post-Cold War, but it has increased continuously and surpassed Japanese spending in 2001. The growth is considerable but mostly gradual, with only one sudden steeper increase around 2009. When compared with the gross domestic product (GDP) percentage dedicated to defence, both countries show only slight variations. Japanese expenditure is capped at one per cent of the GDP, although there are some ways employed to work around this limit, for example by concentrating investments on the JCG, spreading costs for big procurements over several years, and thereby keeping expenditure under the one per cent limit (Hughes 2009b: 89).

Figure 32 Chinese and Japanese military expenditure



Source: SIPRI 2015

In comparison, Chinese military expenditure is not bound by any formal limitations, but still the military expenditure share of the GDP remained somewhat constant. Official policy considers military modernisation (and expenses) as linked to economic development, thus growth appears at the same rate as economic growth (Perlo-Freeman 2014). Looking at the data provided by SIPRI, there is no indication of an acceleration of military expenditure. Chinese expenditure has increased significantly, but without a visible influence on Japanese spending.

### *Qualitative and Quantitative Military Build-up*

Since the end of the Cold War, the People's Liberation Army Ground Force (PLAGF) was subjected to large-scale reductions in manpower and restructuring of organisational formations. Between 1985 and 2013, up to 50 per cent of personnel was reduced. At the same time, military hardware was upgraded, shifting from Soviet-built weapon systems to modern equipment. Since 2000, most focus was put on high-tech tanks and armoured personnel carriers, which were then stationed along the border with the Korean peninsula, across from Taiwan and around Beijing, in order to enable quick responses to most likely regional contingencies. Overall, the PLAGF is not yet a fully modern force, as most modernisation is contained to troops and equipment expected to be involved in a potential crisis or conflict with Taiwan

(Cordesman 2014: 195-215). The Japan Ground Self Defence Force (JGSDF) has not seen a lot of modernisation after the turn of the century. It was only gradually adapted to the new security environment, with reduced numbers of modern weapons platforms, transforming into an expeditionary force with capabilities for counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, and participation in PKOs (Middlebrooks 2008: 31; Hughes 2004: 79). In recent years, the JGSDF's role became concentrated on countering China's assertiveness in the East China Sea, and a marine regiment modelled after the US Marines was established to defend or retake Japanese islands (Mizokami 2012; 2013). Furthermore, there has been a shift towards Okinawa Prefecture, where a new coastal monitoring station on Yonaguni Island (*Yonaguni-jima* 与那国島), close to Taiwan, will observe Chinese movements (*The Japan Times* 2014b), and the planned deployment of mobile coastal batteries in Kyūshū 九州 and to Miyako Island as defence against continuous Chinese intrusions (LaGrone 2014).

Similar to the other Chinese military branches, during the 1990s, the PLAAF was subjected to a consistent reduction of material. Focus was put on multi-role aircraft to turn the PLAAF into a conventional modern air force (Cordesman 2014: 262, 264-267). With the trend going towards modernisation and downsizing, stealth capabilities have also become a focal point of the qualitative upgrades in recent years. Frontline aircrafts are usually a mix of indigenously produced and Russian fourth-generation fighters, but since 2011, China has revealed domestically developed stealth fighters expected to enter service before 2018. The new multi-role stealth fighters will exponentially increase power projection and regional precision strike capabilities. Additionally, the PLAAF has also begun to develop unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for low visibility surveillance and long-range strikes (DoD USA 2013: 66-67; Cordesman 2014: 276-278). After the Cold War, the JASDF also saw a reduction in overall numbers, but quality was increased. An example of the modernisation efforts was the 2011 decision to buy American-built F-35 Lightning II fifth-generation stealth fighters. (BBC 2011; GlobalSecurity.org 2014). Most recently it was announced that an additional, newly formed, JASDF fighter squadron will be stationed at Naha Airbase in Okinawa together with a new airborne early warning squadron (MoD Japan 2013b: 5-8), most likely as an answer to increased Chinese assertiveness and incursions into Japan's ADIZ over the East China Sea.

The PLAN had mostly served as a fortress fleet throughout the Cold War, guarding the Chinese coastline from amphibious assaults (Kotani 2013: 7). Like other branches, during the 1990s, the PLAN focused on quality over quantity, reducing the vast number of outdated patrol vessels and submarines in favour of a more robust, modern navy (O'Rourke 2014: 3). Between 1998 and 2012, the PLAN bought an unfinished Soviet-built aircraft carrier from Ukraine and turned it into China's first modern aircraft carrier, *Liáoníng* (*Liáoníng hào hángkōng mǔjiàn* 辽宁号航空母舰), with plans to build three indigenously designs carriers in the near future (O'Rourke 2014: 15-19). Although alarming for Japan, it is assumed that



*Liáoníng* is not directly related to the Sino-Japanese rivalry and dispute. Rather, its five main missions are: SLOC protection; overseas deployment to crisis locations; EEZ and territorial enforcement; disaster relief; and support of a potential invasion of Taiwan (Li and Weuve 2010: 26-27)—and likely power projection in the South China Sea as well. Beyond *Liáoníng*, the PLAN has put six different classes of new destroyers and four new classes of frigates into service, markedly improving the PLAN's anti-ship and anti-air warfare potential (O'Rourke 2014: 25-28). To increase subsurface capabilities, the PLAN bought twelve Soviet/Russian Kilo-class submarines since 1990, and furthermore developed four new classes of submarines of all varieties, conventional attack, nuclear attack, and nuclear ballistic missile submarines (ibid.: 8-15). Due to budgetary limitations and constitutional restrictions against offensive weaponry, JMSDF modernisation is only qualitative, as the quantitative structure of the naval forces has remained mostly linear. The most prominent modernisation was the introduction of two new classes of 'helicopter destroyers': the new *Hyūga*- (*Hyūgagata goeikan* ひゅうが型護衛艦) and *Izumo*-classes (*Izumogata goeikan* いずも型護衛艦) more closely resemble an (offensive) aircraft carrier than a conventional destroyer, which of course raised Chinese protests (Koda 2011: 46-47; Wallace 2013). The main mission of these ships is anti-submarine warfare and assistance in PKOs, as well as humanitarian relief efforts (Giarra 2012: 51). For surface combatants, Japan has reportedly sped-up its procurement of more vessels outfitted with an Aegis BMD system due to North Korean missile tests in 2014 (Keck 2014a). The NDPG announced an increase of the total number of destroyers from 47 to 54 ships, emphasising smaller, more mobile, and flexible vessels (MoD Japan 2014b: 148-155). Furthermore, in 2012 it was announced that the number of submarines would be raised from 18 to 22 in the future (Mizokami 2013; Giarra 2012: 51-52). An additional patrol area for submarines would also be created in the southwestern part of the waters of Okinawa Prefecture to better handle Chinese assertiveness close to the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands (MoD Japan 2012: 123).

## Step 5: Hardliners and Accommodationists in Power

Abe Shinzō was born into an influential family of former politicians and prime ministers, and took over political leadership of Japan after the resignation of his mentor Koizumi Jun'ichirō 小泉純一郎 (b. 1942) in 2006. His first term in office was cut short when he stepped down prematurely, only to return in 2012, winning the election and ending the brief rule of the Democratic Party of Japan (Inoguchi 2014: 101-102). There is no consensus as to where to place Abe on the political spectrum, although he is sometimes referred to as a 'hawk' or hardliner. This is mostly due to his stance on Japan's military role and diplomatic and security issues with China, which places him in the nationalistic corner of Japanese politics (Saul

2013; Tisdall 2013). Furthermore, he has been connected with revisionist issues regarding the Pacific War, being member and director of right-wing committees and groups denouncing Japanese war crimes and sex slavery, as well as groups that intend to change history textbooks to propagate revisionist views of imperial Japanese history (Narusawa 2013). Before his first election as prime minister, Abe published his book entitled *Utsukushii kuni e* 美しい国へ (Towards a Beautiful Country), sharing his personal belief system and vision for Japan's future. In essence, he calls for the Japanese people to be proud of their history, culture, and heritage, and for the country to become truly sovereign so will not have to accept any humiliations from other nations. Further, he wants to strengthen the JSDF and the relationship with the US in order to defend the honour and territory of Japan (Inoguchi 2014: 105). Even with his conservative views and nationalistic rhetoric, Abe has mostly stayed clear of another contentious issue in regional diplomacy—visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, in which Japanese war victims, including convicted war criminals, are enshrined. Visits by important politicians have always sparked outrage and protest in China and South Korea, and Abe mostly refrained from official visits, although, during his second election campaign, he expressed his regret for not joining the pilgrimage to the shrine during his first term of office (Mochizuki and Parkinson Porter 2013: 35-36; Kuroki 2013: 210). Only early in his second term, in December 2013, did he make an appearance at the shrine, prompting Chinese and South Korean diplomatic protests (Yoshida and Aoki 2013). Since then, Abe again refrained from visiting in person, choosing to only send ritual offerings to the Yasukuni Shrine (Osaki 2016). Regarding military affairs and defence, Abe mostly followed the path laid out in his book, focusing on strengthening the JSDF in administrative terms, establishing a Ministry of Defence in 2007 and a National Security Council in 2013, and trying to prepare the JSDF to better deal with increased Chinese assertiveness, by pushing for the 2015 Article 9 reinterpretation that allowed for collective self-defence (Bendini 2015: 16-18; Borah 2015). While he is easily described as a nationalist due to defence policies in relative accordance with hardliner characteristics, in regard to diplomacy and foreign policy it becomes far less easy to classify Abe Shinzō. Early on he had exhibited an uncompromising and tough stance on North Korea, pushing for UN sanctions and involved in negotiations over abducted Japanese citizens (Stengel 2007: 56-57). On the other hand, Abe had been much less hawkish and more accommodating in his dealings with the PRC, actively trying to open dialogue with Xí Jīnpíng and making concessions in order to arrange for talks during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in 2014. Reportedly he acknowledged the existence of a territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands (Keck 2014b), although later reports indicated that Abe did not cave to Chinese demands nor acknowledged that China had a valid claim on the islands but both sides recognised their differing opinions (Keck 2014c).

Xí Jīnpíng was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party and Chairman of the Central Military Commission in November 2012, following the resignation of Hú Jǐntāo 胡锦涛 (b. 1942), and assumed the position of President of the PRC a few months later. The son of famous guerrilla fighters, Xí grew up with the elite of Chinese society, and while not serving in the PLA, climbed the political ladder to become Vice President of the PRC before assuming his current positions. Soon after being elected, Xí began pushing for reforms and an anti-corruption campaign up to the highest echelons of the government. His personal ideology and political ideas have been dubbed the 'Chinese Dream', which he began to promote while touring and visiting military bases all over China. Western media often describe Xí's 'Chinese Dream' as a version of the 'American Dream', an interpretation supported by Xí during his foreign visits, although only facets of this analogy are actually correct. Domestically differences are emphasised, mostly to seek prosperity for the whole nation as opposed to an individualistic approach, and to rely on China's own strength without exploiting other nations. Overall, the 'Chinese Dream' calls for a rejuvenation and strengthening of the PRC, economic growth, and increased living standards, but also for assuming the role of the foremost global power (Teufel-Dreyer 2013). Xí has been criticised, most notably by President Obama, for his increased nationalism. The result of this increased nationalism and striving for a global power role becomes clear in regard to China's conduct concerning territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas (Panda 2014c). The PLA leadership further developed Xí's 'Chinese Dream' into a 'Strong Army Dream' of modernisation, expansion, increasingly assertive operation, and blue water capabilities for the PLAN. Though not directly formulated by Xí himself, the Central Military Commission, under his leadership, rapidly absorbed the idea of a 'Strong Army Dream' (Miller 2013: 1-3). Since coming to power, he has also established the National Security Commission to consolidate his power early on. The Security Commission is tasked with handling domestic security and counter-terrorism, but is also a tool to streamline control of various governmental branches such as law enforcement or paramilitary forces, decreasing bureaucratic hurdles, and increasing Chinese ability to project power (Qin 2014: 1-3; Miyamoto 2013: 4-5). Apart from the continued military modernisation, one of the most impactful military-affairs-related decision was the unilateral establishment of the Chinese ADIZ in November 2013, which was approved by Xí's government after being previously denied in 2008. The operational scope of the PLAAF has been moved from territorial airspace towards the first island chain and even beyond. This development has been described as a simultaneous preparation for offensive and defensive operations (Yamaguchi 2014: 1-2). From the very beginning, Xí Jīnpíng's foreign policy has been focused on establishing the PRC as a nation that has left the mantle of a rising power behind. Now he seeks to confirm China's status as a global power, demanding parity with the US while naming Russia the PRC's most important strategic partner (Godement 2013:

6). Xí's foreign policy is exceedingly proactive, seeking to check the US pivot to East Asia while still remaining non-confrontational. Xí seeks an environment that respects national core interests but is advantageous to China and minimises regional US influence. These core interests naturally include territorial disputes and sovereignty questions, and while reiterating the mantra of peaceful development, Xí has also stressed that the PRC would never give in on issues concerning its core interests. The deterioration of the situation in the East and South China Seas are seen as a direct result of this new proactive and tough stance of the PRC (Yamaguchi 2014: 2-3). Diplomatically, Xí is also known for displaying tough and less accommodating positions, rejecting international arbitration in the South China Sea as demanded by the Philippines (Teufel-Dreyer 2013: 5; Tiezzi 2014), and refusing meetings with Abe Shinzō for two years. Nonetheless, it was noted that Xí adheres to the concept of 'peaceful development' and does not seek to turn the PRC into a globally disruptive power (Johnson 2014: 2).

## Findings and Conclusion

Even though the Japanese government holds the official position that there is no territorial dispute over the ownership of the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands, ample evidence suggests that a territorial dispute is in place, as the PRC is obviously not accepting and is actively challenging Japanese control over the islands. The initial dispute onset came after the PRC raised its claim in December 1971, after the discovery of natural gas and oil deposits. The dispute is driven by strong economic and strategic motives and mainly based on conflicting interpretations of legal proceedings and the imprecise wording of treaties dating back to the nineteenth century, and thus fulfils the first Step to War.

Both nations have one politically relevant alliance at this point in time, Japan allied to the US, whereas the PRC is allied to the DPRK. Beyond that, analysis has shown a trend of Japanese attempts to establish closer defence ties with most of its southern regional neighbours, especially with Australia. The main goal is SLOC security and a general containment of China's assertiveness. Nonetheless, all relationships are below-relevant alliance types, being mostly security partnerships focused on anti-piracy and operations and arms deals. There has also been a detectable shift of China towards military cooperation with Russia, but no official alliance has been established. Even though both countries alliances were formed decades before the onset of the current territorial dispute, the requirements for the second Step to War are fulfilled.

Table 2 Sino-Japanese MIDs (1991–2016)

Nr.	Date	Category	Subcategory
1	May–December 1991	Use of Force	Raid
2	August 1995	Display of Force	Show of planes, border violation
3	September 1996	Display of Force	Show of ships, troops, and planes
4	October 1996	Display of Force	Border violation
5	May–July 1999	Display of Force	Show of ships
6	July 2003–March 2004	Use of Force	Seizure
7	October 2004	Display of Force	Show of ships
8	November 2004	Display of Force	Show of ships, border violation, alert
9	February 2005	Display of Force	Show of ships
10	September 2005	Display of Force	Show of ships, border violation
11	April 2007	Display of Force	Show of ships
12	April 2010	Display of Force	Show of planes and ships
13	September 2010–November 2010	Display and Use of Force	Show of ships, seizure
14	September 2012–September 2014	Display and Threat of Force	Border violation, show of ships and planes, threat to use force
15	December 2015	Display of Force	Border violation, show of ships
16	June 2016–current	Display of Force and Threat of Force	Show of ships and planes, threat to use force

The analysis of the 25-year period from the end of the Cold War to 2016 has shown that there is an enduring Sino-Japanese rivalry, and therefore a third Step to War. Table 2 shows that there have been 16 MIDs between 1991 and 2016, surmounting the necessary duration of 20 years and the required six MIDs to classify the relationship as enduring rivalry. It is noteworthy that, while the number of MIDs is high, nearly all of them are restricted to displays of force, mostly provocative naval manoeuvres and intrusions. Threats of force are very rare and so is any actual use of force—mainly seizures of civilian protestors. While the intensity of the MIDs seems to increase, especially with the growing number of military vessels employed on both sides, the clashes nonetheless appear ritualised to a certain degree. Provocations are met with assertiveness and a short MID before diplomatic efforts calms the situation until the next MID a few years later—a repeated but usually restrained cycle of military posturing and sabre-rattling.

To establish whether there is a Sino-Japanese arms race or a mutual military build-up, the respective drivers for strategic development were analysed, showing that both nations are still adapting to the post-Cold War environment and the twenty-first century. For short time threats, the DPRK presents the biggest concern to Japan, while the PRC with its growing assertiveness, persisting territorial disputes, and power projection is more of a long-term threat as a regional rival and potential danger to Japanese SLOC. For China, the perceived threat of the US stayed the main influence throughout the 1990s and up to the present. The main drivers are deterring American power projection and a contingency for Taiwanese independence. While both sides are becoming more aware of their antagonism, neither Japan nor China fully commits to officially identifying the other as a strategic opponent, although Japan has become more vocal in light of China's continuing assertiveness. Even so, Japan prefers to veil its strategic planning with topics such as threats from North Korean missiles. Regarding military expenditure, China's spending has markedly increased during the last decade, while Japan's defence budget has remained virtually unchanged. Nonetheless, the allocated GDP percentages have remained stable, and China's increased expenditure is therefore not worrisome but somewhat expected due to its economic rise. Furthermore, China is also lacking the characteristic acceleration in military spending seen during arms races. Lastly, in quality and quantity, both nations have seen drops in numbers mainly as a reaction to the changed security environment after the Cold War. With the quantitative reductions, quality is boosted wherever possible, mainly for stealth aircraft and navies. China's overall modernisation is mostly aimed at countering the US rather than Japan. In comparison, Japan's recent modernisation is more clearly aimed on deterring China, although the modernisation largely appears to be mostly part of a continuous renewal of equipment to keep up with the newest technologies, rather than to surpass the PLA. In conclusion, most of the arms race criteria are either inconclusive or not fulfilled with only Japan mentioning the PRC as a strategic concern and Chinese

modernisation being aimed at deterring the US, with expenditure remaining normal. Based on this analysis, it is clear that there is currently no arms race between Japan and China, thus leaving the fourth Step to War unfulfilled.

Xí Jīnpíng and Abe Shinzō share a number of personal characteristics, beliefs, and political positions. Both men are seen as strong political leaders and reformers with a vision to strengthen their counties and to place them on top of the regional and international hierarchy. Since their respective assumption of power, China and Japan have further increased their military modernisation. The PRC has increased its power projection and assertiveness, while Japan has begun to reinterpret its constitution, in a first step to become a 'normal' military power. Furthermore, both leaders have an image of being 'tough' diplomats, willing to risk negotiations to gain concessions. On the other hand, they have also been accommodating towards each other in efforts to alleviate tensions and to avoid too intense conflicts. Overall, Xí and Abe do neither fit into the hardliner nor the accommodationist categories. Both exhibit nationalistic tendencies and beliefs, and are uncompromising on territorial issues, while also being moderate in case of other diplomatic issues. As the framework leaves no third option to categorise the leaders, the last Step to War remains inconclusive.

Regarding a shift in military strategic positions, it has been shown that, at most focal points, there have been only partial changes with some developments being continuations of the geopolitical shift following the Cold War. Compared to the 1990s, the overall situation of the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands has not changed in the twenty-first century, but even so, Chinese assertiveness is steadily on the rise. The severity of confrontations around the disputed islands and throughout the East China Sea has certainly increased and gained a more militarised character, as exemplified by the growing number of PLAN and JMSDF vessels involved, unspoken threats through aiming on ships and planes, as well as near clashes during flybys and the establishment of the Chinese ADIZ, which is the most severe out of the smaller alterations of the strategic environment. The alliances of both countries have not changed for decades, but there has been a noticeable tendency of Japan to court potential future alliance partners, especially Australia and China's opponents in the SCSD. Likewise, the PRC has become more open to military cooperation with Russia. In terms of threat perception, expenditure, and military hardware, there have been several important changes. While adapting their military strategy to the new security situation of the twenty-first century, official perception of each other has also shifted, as Japan has identified China's growing assertiveness and military build-up as worrying and vowed close surveillance. Expenditure did increase in both countries, though only marginally in Japan, but remained at constant GDP percentages. Militaries in both nations were modernised, with emphasis on joint operations and high tech; especially the PLA has rapidly reduced quantity in favour of quality, and put a lot of effort into the PLAN, which is China's tool for military power

projection in the twenty-first century. Likewise, Japan has sought to constantly upgrade its hardware in order to deter Chinese advances and assertiveness.

Several drivers influencing the Sino-Japanese relationship and high-tension military situation have been identified. Most obviously, the economic advantages of controlling the Senkaku/Diàoyú Islands and their potential impact on the disputed EEZ delimitation in the East China Sea is a prime factor for the deterioration of bilateral relations. The strategic value of the islands is also closely tied to economic considerations while their social value is at most that of a political tool to strengthen nationalism. The enduring rivalry between both nations is, of course, another important driver, especially as the MIDs involve stronger military presences. The rivalry drives Japan's military position and development to a stronger degree than China's, as the PRC is driven more by Taiwan and US antagonism and containment policy. Furthermore, the ongoing SCSD has had a stronger impact on military development than the less-volatile East China Sea Dispute with Japan. For Japan, Chinese military modernisation appears as one of the biggest drivers behind its own military modernisation efforts, shifts in deployment, and new patrol areas. The threat from North Korean missiles is still a persistent influence, although it was theorised that the danger has been overstated to mask attempts to compensate for Chinese modernisation. Furthermore, Japan's military development is also driven by US wishes for more interoperability and closer cooperation with the JSDF.

Through the *Simple Risk Barometer*, it was determined that, with the three out of five steps that have been found to be in place, there is a notable risk of escalation between China and Japan; however, the fourth step, i.e. arms race, is not currently in place nor is the inconclusive last step of hardliners and accommodationists in power. Obviously, the onset of an arms race would be a major step towards war, and therefore one of the biggest risks. Even more so, at this point it appears that neither head of state is turning more towards their hardliner side and, thus, alienating and further antagonising their rival, whereas the formation of new relevant security alliances in the region are not the biggest threats to stability. Even a clear attempt to form a new, politically relevant alliance can put a major strain on rivalries as they spur the other nations defensive stance, increase the likelihood of the formation of new counter-alliances, and create a more constricted, volatile regional environment. However, it is also important to note that there is also a certain degree of ritualisation in the relationship between the two countries, especially surrounding the territorial dispute and MIDs, which have remained mostly non-violent even amidst rising intensity.

The current MID exhibits some of the most militarised actions during the last 25 years, and is indicative of the increased intensity, as even a small spark or accident during the growing displays of force might suffice to break through the ritualised sabre-rattling, turning the East China Sea into a much more volatile environment. At this current path it seems as if both nations are moving towards a point-of-no-return rather than a peaceful solution for their ongoing antagonism.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADIZ	Air Defence Identification Zone
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defence
CBR	Chemical, Biological, Radiological weapons
CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia
COW	Correlates of War Project
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
JASDF	Japan Air Self Defence Force
JCG	Japan Coast Guard
JGSDF	Japan Ground Self Defence Force
JMSDF	Japan Marine Self Defence Force
JSDF	Japan Self Defence Force
MIDs	Militarized Interstate Disputes
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDPG	New Defense Policy Guidelines
PKO	Peace Keeping Operations
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLAGF	People's Liberation Army Ground Force
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China (Taiwan)
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SCSD	South China Sea Dispute
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communication
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea
US	United States of America

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## GLOSSARY

<i>09I xíng héqiántǐng</i>	09I 型核潜艇	Chinese nuclear attack submarine class, NATO reporting name: <i>Han</i> -class
<i>Abe Shinzō</i>	安倍晋三	b. 1954, Japanese politician, prime minister (2006–2007 and 2012–current)
<i>Goeikan “Asayuki”</i>	護衛艦「あさゆき」	Japanese destroyer <i>Asayuki</i> , DD-132
<i>Chūnxǎo yóuqìtián</i>	春晓油气田	Natural gas fields in the East China Sea, close to EEZ median line
<i>Diàoyúdǎo jí qí fùshǔ yǎodǎo</i>	钓鱼岛及其附属岛屿	Small disputed island group in the East China Sea, controlled by Japan
<i>Hú Jǐntāo</i>	胡锦涛	b. 1942, Chinese politician, president of the PRC (2002–2012)
<i>Hyūgagata goeikan</i>	ひゅうが型護衛艦	<i>Hyūga</i> -class helicopter destroyer; Japanese flattop helicopter destroyer class
<i>Ishigaki-jima</i>	石垣島	Ishigaki Island; island in the south of Okinawa Prefecture
<i>Ishihara Shintarō</i>	石原慎太郎	b. 1932, Japanese politician, former governor of Tōkyō (1999–2012)
<i>Izumogata goeikan</i>	いずも型護衛艦	<i>Izumo</i> -class helicopter destroyer; Japanese flattop helicopter destroyer class
<i>Koizumi Jun'ichirō</i>	小泉純一郎	b. 1942, Japanese politician, prime minister (2001–2006)
<i>Kyūshū</i>	九州	Southernmost of the four Japanese main islands
<i>Liáoníng hào hángkōng mǔjiàn</i>	辽宁号航空母舰	Chinese aircraft carrier <i>Liáoníng</i> , CV-16
<i>Miyako rettō</i>	宮古列島	Miyako Islands; small island group, part of Okinawa Prefecture
<i>Miyako kaikyū</i>	宮古海峡	Miyako Strait; waterway between Miyako Island and Okinawa Island
<i>Nodong-1</i>	노동 1 호	North Korean medium range ballistic missile
<i>Okinawa-ken</i>	沖縄県	Okinawa Prefecture; prefecture encompassing the Ryūkyū Islands
<i>Okinawa torofu</i>	沖縄トラフ	Okinawa Trough; a seabed feature in the East China Sea, along the Ryūkyū Islands
<i>Ryūkyū shotō</i>	琉球諸島	Ryūkyū Islands; island group south of the four Japanese main islands, close to Taiwan
<i>Senkaku shotō</i>	尖閣諸島	Senkaku islands; small disputed island group in the East China Sea, controlled by Japan

<i>Shirakaba gasuden</i>	白樺ガス田	Shirakaba gas fields; natural gas fields in the East China Sea, close to EEZ median line
<i>Goeikan “Suzunami”</i> <i>Taep’odong</i>	護衛艦「すずなみ」 대포동	Japanese destroyer <i>Suzunami</i> , DD-114 North Korean intermediate range ballistic missile type
<i>Utsukushii kuni e</i>	美しい国へ	Abe Shinzō’s book <i>Towards a Beautiful Country</i>
<i>Xí Jìnpíng</i>	习近平	Chinese politician, president (2012–current)
<i>Yasukuni jinja</i>	靖国神社	Yasukuni Shrine; controversial Shintō shrine
<i>Yonaguni-jima</i>	与那国島	Yonaguni Island; southwestern most island of Okinawa prefecture
<i>Goeikan “Yūdachi”</i>	護衛艦「ゆうだち」	Japanese destroyer <i>Yūdachi</i> , DD-103