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Japan's Maritime Security Strategy in Response to Chinese Military Power

The Protection of the SLOC

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I wholeheartedly thank all those who supported me during the writing of this thesis.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

A2/AD: Anti-Access / Area Denial

AAW: Anti-Air Warfare

ACM: (Japan-US) Alliance Coordination Mechanism

ADIZ: Air Defense Identification Zone

AEW(&C): Airborne Early Warning (and Control)

AIP: Air-Independent Propulsion

ASBM: Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile

ASCM: Anti-Ship Cruise Missile

ASUW: Anti-Surface Warfare

ASW: Anti-Submarine Warfare

BMD: Ballistic Missile Defense

C3I: Command, Control, Communication, Intelligence

C4: Command, Control, Communication, Computers

C4ISR: Command, Control, Communication, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance

CATOBAR: catapult- assisted take-off / barrier arrested recovery

CPGS: Conventional Prompt Global Strike

DB: Diplomatic Bluebook (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

DDG: Guided-Missile Destroyer

DDH: Helicopter Destroyer

DoD. Department of Defense (United States)

DPRK: Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)

EEZ: Exclusive Economic Zone

FY: Fiscal Year

IR: International Relations

ISR: Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance

JCG: Japanese Coast Guard

(J)MSDF: (Japanese) Maritime Self-Defense Forces

(J)SDF: (Japan's) Self-Defense Forces

LACM: Land-Attack Cruise Missile

LNG: Liquefied Natural Gas

MoD / MOD: Ministry of Defense (Japan)

MOFA: Minister of Foreign Affairs (Japan)

MTDP: Medium Term Defense Program

NDPO: National Defense Program Outlines

NSC: National Security Council (Japan)

NSC: National Security Strategy

nm: nautical mile(s)

ODA: Official Development Assistance

OTH-T: Over-The-Horizon Targeting

PLA: People's Liberation Army

PLAAF: People's Liberation Army Air Force

PLAN: People's Liberation Army Navy

PM: Prime Minister

PRC: People's Republic of China

QDR: Quadrennial Defense Review (United States)

RoK: Republic of Korea (South Korea)

SAM: Surface-to-Air Missile

SLOC: Sea Lines Of Communication

SRBM: Short-Range Ballistic Missile

STOVL: Short Take Off and Vertical Landing

UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

US(A): United States (of America)

USAF: United States Air Force

USMC: United States Marine Corps

USN: United States Navy

USSR: Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

VTOL: Vertical Take Off and Landing

WP: White Paper (Japanese Ministry of Defense)

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the evolution of Japan's maritime security strategy in response to the rise of China by adopting a Defensive Realist framework. In particular, the focus is on the protection of the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC), since their vital importance for both Tokyo and Beijing make them a central factor in the bilateral security dynamic. As such, this topic is relevant to fully comprehend the relations between the two powers and the complex geostrategic environment of the Asia-Pacific.

More specifically, it will be seen that Japan's security strategy has changed to cope with the growing power of the PRC. For decades, Tokyo adopted a low-profile stance on security matters, largely relying on the United States to ensure its safety. However, a combination of factors has pushed it to gradually change its posture since the end of the Cold War, and the emergence of Beijing as a great power has been one of the main drivers of this process. Notably, China's growing aero-naval capabilities prompted Japan to adopt a more proactive stance and to focus on maritime security, which therefore constitutes today a major element of its broader security strategy. I argue that, in regard to China, Japan's strategy has moved from engagement (80s and 90s) to hedging (2000s) and finally to balancing (in the last few years).

In this context, Defensive Realism is an appropriate theoretical framework to examine a country with strong constitutional restrains on defense policy as Japan, and to evaluate the security dynamic between it and the PRC; as it postulates that countries reinforce their military capabilities and form alliances with exclusively defensive purposes, namely to ensure their safety from possible aggressions from other states; but this can trigger a security dilemma that risks to ultimately reduce their security. Moreover, the ordinary Defensive Realist model will be integrated by the Components of Power theory, which affirms that states react only to face what they consider as *major* threats to one or more of their *vital* interests. It will be seen that this has largely been the case of Japan, as it strengthened its aero-naval capabilities and closed its security ties with the US in response to China's increasing power and assertiveness at sea, which represent a potential major menace to its vital interest of protecting the SLOC.

In regard to methodology, I examined the issue by considering various political, military and economic factors; with a particular attention to material capabilities. To support my claims, I analyzed the case of the East China Sea (ECS). The territorial and maritime

dispute over the Senkaku / Diaoyu and to the passage of the SLOC through its waters make of it the main area of strategic friction between Japan and China, and therefore a valuable case-study for the purpose of this thesis.

Operationally, I have used secondary sources like academic books and articles as the main source of information; but I have also employed some primary sources, mainly publications of the Japanese government such as the latest Defense White Paper or Diplomatic Bluebook. In this regard, the most important publications I used are:

- On IR theory and Defensive Realism: David (2006), Nau (2015); Tang (2010).
- On Japan's international relations and foreign policy: Berger *et al* (2007); Hook *et al* (2011); Kawashima (2005).
- On Japan-PRC(-US) relations: Atanassova-Cornelis *et al.* (2015); Emmers ((2012), Inoguchi & Ikenberry (2013); Kennedy & Pant (2015).
- On China's military build-up: Ida & Yamaguchi (2016); Office of Naval Intelligence (2015).
- On Japan's security policy, notably in its maritime dimension: Grønning, (2014); Hardy (2014); Kliman (2006); Lai (2009); Patalano (2011, 2013, 2014 a & b); Pyle (2007); Sajima & Tachikawa (2009); Samuels (2007); Sato & Limaye (2006); Takahashi (2016); Yoshihara (2014).

Naturally, this method presents its limits: being based on literature, it lacks the benefits of research on the field such as the possibility to interview government officials; also, the examination of more case-studies instead of a single one would have allowed to reach more comprehensive conclusions. Still, the applied method led to satisfying results.

On this basis, I have structured my work on four Chapters.

Chapter I provides an overview of Defensive Realism and specifies how it was operationalized and integrated with the Components of Power theory to study the specific case examined in this thesis.

Chapter II describes the evolution of Japan's security strategy (in particular its maritime dimension) from 1945 until about 2006. It shows the situation during the Cold War, the emergence of new security concerns during the 90s and gradual shift of Tokyo's stance toward hedging.

Chapter III examines the evolution of Japan-China relations. After providing an overview

of Beijing's military build-up, it presents Tokyo's strategy to cope with it; arguing that its strategy has moved toward balancing on the basis of two pillars: improving its own defense capabilities and reinforcing the Alliance with Washington.

Chapter IV analyzes the case of the ECS. It shows the operational implementation of Japan's maritime security strategy to prove that it is actually balancing China on the base of the two aforementioned pillars.

Finally, the conclusion resumes the findings of the thesis and provides a final assessment of Japan's maritime security strategy on the basis of Defensive Realism.

Chapter I

Theoretical Approach: Defensive Realism

It is appropriate to start by providing a definition of Defensive Realism, to describe its main concepts and assumptions and to highlight their relevance.

I.1 – The Basic Principles of Realism

Defensive Realism is a branch of the broader Realist school of International Relations theory. The fundamental assumptions of the Realist perspective are the following[1].

Firstly, the basic units of the international system are the *states*, which are considered as unitary and rational actors. States enjoy *sovereignty*: a concept indicating "that they are not subordinate to a higher power either inside or outside their borders"[2], so there is no authority that can legitimately exert its power over a state and interfere in its domestic affairs. On the one hand, this mean that states have the monopoly of force on their citizens and territory, but on the other hand this also means that the international system is inherently *anarchic*, because "there is no leader or center of authority that monopolizes coercive power and has the legitimacy to use it"[3]. As a consequence, states have no other choice than relying on *self-help*, a concept indicating that they "have no one to rely on to defend their security except themselves"[4]. Therefore, the most immediate and vital interest of a state is simply to survive, and consequently to maintain their *security;* which can be defined "as the state of a subject that considers itself as not being threatened by

[1]See Nau 2015, 37; David 2006, 57.
[2]Nau 2015, 39.
[3]Nau 2015, 38.
[4]Nau 2015, 38.

this or that danger, or that thinks to have the means to respond if that danger were to become real"[5]. In the international system, "states are more concerned with their *relative* gains rather than absolute gains"[6], and attempt to ensure their existence by using *power*. However, their very quest for power can result counterproductive, because "one state's attempt to increase its own security […] can inadvertently threaten other states and make them less secure, and thereby provoke them to augment their power"[7]. This action-reaction process, known as *security dilemma*, ultimately worsens the security for all states and reduces the stability of the international order.

These are the basic concepts of the Realist theory. But whereas scholars agree on such fundamental elements, there is no similar consensus on their implications; as a consequence, there are multiple Realist schools that differ from one another. Before providing an overview of the various schools, it is necessary to better define some of the aforementioned concepts, due to their particular significance.

I.1.1 – The State and its Characteristics

States, the basic actors of the international system, are political entities that possess three core elements: a territory, a population, and a government[8]. They are characterized for having sovereignty[9], which implies that they benefit of "*self-determination* at home and *nonintervention abroad*"[10]. The former concept is strictly intertwined with the monopoly of force, a notion indicating that states are the only actors who can legitimately exert force inside their own territory[11]. The latter notion basically means that states agree "not to intervene in the domestic jurisdictions of other states" [12]. These fundamental characteristics have deep consequences on the international level, as states consider the preservation of their territory, population, and resources as essential objectives to ensure their own survival[13]. But Realists claim that as long as there is no other authority superior to the state (as sovereignty implies), then the international system is marked by anarchy, which can be defined as "the decentralized distribution of power in the international

[5]David 2006, 45; quoting D. David's *Dictionnaire de stratégie* (2000; 500). Translated from French by me.
[6]Acharya 2008, 60. Emphasis added.
[7]Paul 2016, 44.
[8]See David 2006, 72.
[9]Nau 2015, 39.
[10]Nau 2015, 39; emphasis in original.
[11]David 2006, 72.
[12]Nau 2015, 39.
[13]David 2006, 72-73.

system"[14]. A very important consequence is that ultimately states base their safety on self-help, meaning that they must rely on their own power to ensure their survival against other states; which results in the security dilemma.
In reality, states have different characteristics in terms of geography, resources, polity, power and others [15]. Realist scholars are perfectly aware of this, but they all agree on the basic features of states that have been outlined above.

I.1.2 – Power

Another essential concept of any Realist theory is power. The international system is anarchic because power is decentralized. Consequently, states must rely on their own power to ensure their safety; but accumulating power risks to trigger the security dilemma. power is one of the most important concepts for Realism yet one of the most debated by scholars. As a matter of fact, this concept and its consequences on state behavior are at the heart of the different variants of realism.

Generally, power is defined as "getting others to do what they would not otherwise do"[16]. Differently from persuasion, power does that "by coercion"[17]. However, it is difficult (probably impossible) to determine how someone would have acted if power had not been applied to it. Realist scholars "solve" this typical problem of counterfactual nature by measuring power in material terms rather than considering it as a final outcome. So, power is normally defined as "the material capabilities of a country"[18]; a broad definition encompassing various aspects such as geography, population, natural resources, political features, economy and military strength[19]. The last two elements are particularly relevant, as power is often "defined primarily in economic and military terms"[20]; but all of them are closely intertwined and important for any Realist analysis.
Power also assumes more specific forms. In the context of this thesis, the concept of seapower (or maritime power) is of particular relevance. It can be defined as "that form of national strength which enables its possessor to send his armies and commerce across those stretches of sea and ocean which lie between his country or the countries of his

[14]Nau 2015, 38.
[15]David 2006, 76.
[16]Nau 2015, 39.
[17]Nau 2015, 39.
[18]Nau 2015, 39.
[19]See David 2006, 84.
[20]Acharya 2008, 60.

allies, and those territories to which he needs access in war, and to prevent his enemy from doing the same"[21].
As such, they will be used to assess the power of the states to be examined in this thesis; a particular attention will be given to military capabilities, but without neglecting the other elements.

A central point in Realist thought is that "[r]ealists emphasize the *relative* distribution of power"[22]. In short, it is useless to measure power in absolute terms, and the power of a state should always be evaluated in relation with that of other states. The reason lies in the very definition of power that was provided above: if it consists in the capacity of "getting *others* to do what they would not otherwise do"[23], it is natural that the power a state holds can be measured and evaluated only in relation to the power that *other* states have, since the ability of the first state to coerce the second depends not only on the material capabilities of the former, but also on those of the latter.

Related to this, there is the issue of the distribution of power among states and how they react to changes in it. This is an essential argument in all realist theories, and one of the main points differentiating one school from the other. While Realist scholars generally agree on the basic concepts of the theory, they debate on the distribution of power in the international system, on its consequences, and on which distribution is the most stable (differently said, which one is less likely to spark an inter-state conflict).

In fact, the international order can assume different forms of *polarity*, depending on how power is distributed. Polarity can be described as "the number of states […] holding significant power in the international system"[24]. In short, there can essentially be three cases: unipolarity, where a single power (a hegemon) "[…] is more powerful than all the others"[25]; bipolarity, in which power is essentially held by two peer competitors; and then multipolarity, when power is distributed among many different centers.

For what concerns the behavior of states when facing a shift in relative power, there are

[21]Patalano 2014a, 404; quoting H. Richmond, *Statesmen and Sea Power* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1947), ix.
[22]Nau 2015, 213. Emphasis added.
[23]Nau 2015, 39. Emphasis added.
[24]Nau 2015, 43.
[25]Nau 2015, 43.

essentially two broad theories.

The first is the Power Transition theory. According to it, the system loses stability and wars are more likely in case of "movement *toward* equilibrium"[26]. In these conditions, the dominant position of a declining hegemonic state is challenged by a rising one; and the two will clash for supremacy, with the former attempting to maintain its predominance and the latter trying to become the new hegemon. In short, Power Transition "sees hegemony as stabilizing and war most likely when a rising power challenges a previously dominant one and the balance of power approaches equilibrium"[27].

The second theory is Power Balancing, which "sees wars arising from movements *away* from equilibrium"[28]. This school is based on the concept of "Balance of Power", a situation in which exists "a rough equilibrium among states"[29]. But the term also designates a strategic approach (often called "balancing") "by which states counterbalance to ensure no single state dominates the system"[30], with the aim to preserve this equilibrium. As such, Power Balancing "sees hegemony as destabilizing and war as most likely when a dominant power emerges to threaten the equilibrium of power among states"[31].

There is still an important point to address about power, namely its measurement. In particular, with specific reference to the Balance of Power theory, Lobell argues that this theory "is wrong about how states measure power and capabilities, forecast power trends, and assess threats"[32]. He advocates for a "Components of power theory"[33] to fix the ordinary Balance of Power model by adding two specifications. The first is essentially of qualitative nature, and claims that "states assess power trends based on *specific components* of power and whether they threaten *vital* geostrategic interests"[34]. The second fix is of quantitative nature and is closely linked with the first; and demands to determine whether the specific form of power of a state represent a "*major* danger"[35]. Differently said, states are not worried about the power of other countries in its broad form, but only on the *specific* forms that can not only threaten an essential interest to their existence, but

[26]Nau 2015, 201. Emphasis in original.
[27]Nau 2015, 43.
[28]Nau 2015, 203. Emphasis in original.
[29]Nau 2015, 42.
[30]Nau 2015, 42.
[31]Nau 2015, 43.
[32]Paul 2016, 47.
[33]Paul 2016, 47.
[34]Paul 2016, 48. Emphasis added.
[35]Paul 2016, 50. Emphasis added.

also surpass the threshold to be considered as a *major* threat to it. So, it is possible that a state does not react to the growing power of another because the increase occurs in a form that does not threaten its vital interests and / or it is not enough to be considered a serious threat. This addition to the ordinary Balance of Power theory will be retained in this thesis. Given that it aims to assess Japan's reaction to China's seapower, which may threaten Tokyo's essential interests in maritime security, this theoretical ratification represents a useful and powerful analytical tool.

In sum, power and its distribution play a paramount role in Realist thought, because the relative power that a state possesses, which is the power it has in relation with the power held by other states, influences the international stance of that state and its strategy.

I.1.3 – The Main Schools of Realism

At this point, it is possible to provide an overview of the main Realist schools[36]:

- Classical Realism is "[…] centered on capabilities and the struggle for survival of states in a purely anarchic context"[37]. It "[…] usually relies exclusively on state-level variables to explain state behavior"[38], so basically on the power a state holds and on its interests opposed to other countries. Among its main representatives there are Morgenthau and Gilpin.

- Neorealism (or Structural Realism) focuses on the structural features of the international system, in other terms on the distribution of (military) power. This is what *determines* the stability of the system and the presence or absence of conflict. The role of human and domestic factors is downplayed[39]. It also exists a "cooperative" variant of this school which, while sharing the assumptions on the determinant role of structural elements, claims that cooperation among states is possible and it can allow to reduce insecurity, risk and mutual distrust. This is made possible by establishing cooperative security mechanisms. Some of the main exponents of this school are Bull, Grieco, Mearsheimer and Waltz.

[36]For more details, see David 2006, 56 to 59.
[37]David 2006, 57. Translated from French by me.
[38]Tang 2010, 12.
[39]See also Acharya 2008, 60; Tang 2010, 12.

- Neoclassical Realism explains the behavior of states by taking into account state-level domestic factors as well as systemic-level structural ones. The state is thus no longer considered as a unitary and rational actor. Material capabilities allow states to exert power, but only the domestic features explain how it is used in practice and with what aim. In sum, this school attempts to conciliate Classical Realism and Neorealism[40]. Notable scholars of this variant are Schweller, Taliaferro, Wohlforth and Zakaria.

Along with these three prominent schools, there are many others. They include all the forms of Realism that try to explain the state behavior by focusing on individual-level elements such as the human nature or the specific psychological traits of decision-makers; but also theories such as "Ethno-realism" or Constructivist Realism, that focus respectively on the behavior in condition of anarchy and on power as a constructed concept. However, all these theories are somehow "unorthodox" forms of Realism; and they are of little relevance for the purpose of this thesis.

I.2 – Defensive Realism

Notably, Defensive Realism does not appear in the review of the main Realist theories; nor does its counterpart, Offensive Realism.

To answer this puzzling absence, it is necessary to further examine what are the differences between the various Realist schools. In doing so, Tang's work represents a very good reference. As he notes, the reason is simply that the above classification is based on the level of analysis applied in each case[41]. Moreover, he points out that those theories are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are *complementary* to each other[42].

However, the difference between Defensive and Offensive Realism exists and is important, to the point that he calls it "The Fundamental Bifurcation"[43]. The motive behind this emphatic expression is that, as he points out, these two approaches "are two *competing* theoretical paradigms" and that "*even if they focus on the same level of analysis, [they] reach fundamentally divergent interpretations* of international politics"[44]. But before drawing his conclusions on what is the actual difference between these two

[40]See Tang 2010, 12.
[41]Tang 2010, 13.
[42]Tang 2010, 13-14. Emphasis added.
[43]Tang 2010, 13.
[44]Tang 2010, 14; for both quotes. Emphasis added in both.

approaches, Tang examines the limits of the existing conceptions of Defensive and Offensive Realism; therefore, before describing how he defines the first, it is necessary to illustrate how it is usually presented. Among the others, a good and recent example is provided by Lobell. As he notes, "[f]or defensive realists, anarchy encourages states to adopt defensive, moderate, and restrained behavior in most instances"; as a result, "aggression is rare"[45]. States are conceived as intrinsically defensive and uninterested in expansion, and "*security-seeking* states are common"[46]. So, one of the most problematic issues is the security dilemma, defined as a "tragedy of anarchy"[47] resulting in "an unintended hostility spiral among states that harbor no aggressive or revisionist intent[48]". However, there is the possibility for states satisfied with the status quo to implement a range of measures to build confidence and reduce or even solve the security dilemma and its deleterious consequences.

So, Tang develops his analysis by outlining what elements do *not* represent a true difference between Defensive and Offensive Realism[49]; then, he examines the "Real Fault Lines"[50] between the two; in particular, he finds three fundamental differences[51].

First, contrarily to Offensive theories, Defensive schools believe that "states have at least the common interest in avoiding costly competition […] and cooperation between them becomes possible and profitable for their security"[52].

The second difference lies in the issue of relative power maximization. While Offensive theories believe that doing so it is always the best option, Defensive Realism considers that this strategy can be counterproductive. The reason is found in two linked phenomena: one is that if a country continuously increases its power, then other states will balance it and any gain will result useless; the other is that, by doing so, it risks worsening the security dilemma and undermine its own safety instead of improving it.

The last point derives from the previous two and focuses on the difference between seeking power and security. For Offensive schools, obtaining the first also means improving the second. However, Defensive Realism considers that states can cooperate and that power maximization is not always the best strategy to ensure their safety (on the contrary, it can undermine it due to the security dilemma). Therefore, maximizing power

[45]Paul 2016, 43.
[46]Paul 2016, 45. Emphasis added.
[47] Paul 2016, 44.
[48]Paul 2016, 45.
[49] See Tang 15 to 19.
[50]Tang 2010, 19.
[51]See Tang 2010 19 to 23.
[52]Tang 2010, 20-21.

does not always equal to granting security.

These differences are summarized in what Tang calls "The Fundamental Fault Line: Preferences over *Strategies*"[53]. The distinction between the two theories lies in what they consider to be the dominating strategy of states; consequently, Tang proceeds in labeling states as Defensive or Offensive Realist according to the *strategy* they implement[54]. For what concerns Defensive Realism, the preferred strategy for a state is to adopt a defensive behavior, by the moment that "a state that relentlessly pursues relative power will be perceived by other states as a threat and end up being balanced"[55]; so, "offensive behaviors will often be self-defeating"[56]. Therefore, due to the prevalence of balancing when states face the security dilemma, maximizing relative power is not automatically the best form of self-help nor the optimal solution for granting security.

I.2.1 – Defensive Realist States

On the basis of the difference between Defensive and Offensive Realism, Tang identifies the behavior of states according to each theory[57]. Somehow tautologically, he affirms that "[a] defensive realist states is a state guided by defensive realism"; and notes that this results in a defensive behavior[58]. As such, such a country "does not seek security by intentionally harming others, *unless under extreme circumstances*"[59].

Such considerations allow to outline the "Operational Code" guiding the behavior of a state in the two cases[60]. This is done by comparing them "in the two principal issue areas of international politics: war and peace, conflict and cooperation"[61]. This will allow to finally define the nature of Defensive Realism and will provide a powerful analytic tool to determine whether a state behaves according to its principles, and consequently if it is a Defensive Realist State.

Defensive Realism believes that, in relation to war and peace, states attempt to ensure their own safety through defensive, moderate and restrained stances; and not through by constantly maximizing relative power at the expense of others or by threatening them.

[53]Tang 2010, 29. Emphasis added.
[54]Tang 2010, 31. See also chapter 4.
[55]Tang 2010, 30.
[56]Tang 2010, 30.
[57]See Tang 2010, 31.
[58]Tang 2010, 31.
[59]Tang 2010, 31. Emphasis in original.
[60]See Tang 2010, 99 to 127.
[61]Tang 2010, 99; see also Table 4.1 at p. 111.

War is naturally possible, due to the aggressiveness of Offensive Realist States and to misunderstanding arising from the security dilemma; however, it can be avoided. More specifically, two defensive realist states can solve the dilemma by reciprocally showing their goodwill and by pursuing cooperation. When a defensive realist state has to deal with an Offensive Realist one, the situation is more difficult and the first can avoid war only by "converting" the second to Defensive Realism or by maintaining a strong deterrence posture.

To examine the precise content of the approach to war and peace, there are several points characterizing Defensive Realism[62]:

- A state does not expand because it would be balanced by others, thus ending up being ultimately defeated
- Gains from conquest would be undermined by the danger of overextension; the security dilemma can be alleviated but not entirely solved, so states prefer to practice moderation, self-restrain and ultimately seek cooperation with others
- Arms races are to be avoided (unless when facing a clear menace) because they would worsen the security dilemma, thus reducing security, and in any case every military build-up should focus on defensive hardware
- Alliances are "almost exclusively for defensive purpose"[63]
- Preventive wars are avoided "*unless under extreme circumstances*"[64] and states aim at avoiding war through deterrence
- States avoid maximizing the damage inflicted to opponents in order to favor reconciliation
- A state "can even take unilateral actions to reduce international tensions"[65]

For what concerns conflict and cooperation[66], Defensive Realism asserts that despite the anarchic and uncertain nature of the international system, conflicts can be solved through cooperation. The reason is that (Defensive Realist) states share the common interest in avoiding war, and therefore they have an incentive in seeking cooperation, which can be "potentially profitable or even optimal"[67]. As such, states can achieve cooperation by signaling their goodwill; and this is a beneficial strategy even when facing a state whose

[62]See Tang 2010, 109-110.
[63]Tang 2010, 110.
[64]Tang 2010, 110. Emphasis in original.
[65]Tang 2010, 110.
[66]See Tang 2010, 112-117.
[67]Tang 2010, 113.

intentions are unknown, since it allows to evaluate its willingness to collaborate and then to take the most appropriate measures on the basis of its response[68].

I.2.2 – The Operational Code of a Defensive Realist State

Tang then describes what he defines as "The General Operational Code of Defensive Realism"[69]. According to him, the first thing a Defensive Realist State has to do is to identify what type of country it has to deal with; in other words, it has to understand if the other state is another Defensive Realist or if it is an Offensive one instead. Tang asserts that "[t]his process […] is of paramount importance"[70] because on this basis it will decide which strategy to adopt. In fact, if he mistakenly identifies a state as an Offensive Realist it will employ too much deterrence and not enough assurance / cooperation, whereas if it is wrong in considering a state as a fellow Defensive Realist it will end up committing the opposite error. Tang therefore suggests two criteria thanks to which it is possible to discern the nature of another state.

The first is to determine if this state "recognizes the prevalence of balancing behavior and the existence of the security dilemma"[71] and accordingly acts with moderation. If the state in exam is indeed a Defensive Realist, it will understand that accumulating more and more power is not the solution to the security dilemma and that aggression will be neutralized by counterbalancing; therefore, it will opt for a more moderate and conciliatory policy. On the contrary, if the state is an offensive one it will proceed in its quest for power maximization.

The second condition to verify "is whether a state exercises self-restrain and is willing to be constrained by other countries"[72]. Again, if the answer is affirmative it means the state is Defensive; in the opposite case, it is an Offensive Realist that will relentlessly seek to maximize its relative power without accepting any constrain. This "acceptance of self-restrain" is important, since it applies to Japan's case with its constitutional restrictions and the alliance with the US.

Operationally, this "test" is done by "signaling benign intentions" and by "extending an invitation to cooperate to the other state"[73]. At that point, "[i]f the other state reciprocates, then it is *more likely* to be a like-minded defensive realist state. If the other state responds

[68]See Tang 2010, 113 to 117; and Chapter 2 (notably figure 2.2 at p. 44).
[69]Tang 2010, 117. See pages 117 to 126.
[70]Tang 2010, 117.
[71]Tang 2010, 118.
[72]Tang 2010, 119.
[73]For both quotes, Tang 2010, 119.

by taking advantage of the goodwill of the defensive realist state, then the other state is *more likely* to be an offensive realist state"[74].

In short, a Defensive Realist State "tries to read other states' behaviors *constantly* in order to *update* its assessment of other states' true intentions and then *adjust* its strategies accordingly"[75]. This is of significant relevance, by the moment that one way to assess if Japan acts in conformity with Defensive Realism and has changed its maritime security strategy in response to China's growing naval power is to verify if it has actually attempted to explore Beijing's willingness to cooperate and has effectively modified its posture accordingly; and it will be seen that it is indeed the case.

After having made this assessment, the Defensive State can decide what strategy to implement. Tang examines two aspects of it (military and political), and makes a distinction based on whether it faces an Offensive or a Defensive country[76].

In the first scenario, the state applies a strategy that is militarily based on balancing. It does so in two ways: one is by strengthening itself and adopting "a robust deterrence and defense posture"; the other is by attempting to form an alliance "to defensively balance the threat"[77]. For what concerns the political component of its strategy, as observed above the Defensive State will attempt to "convert" its offensive rival into a fellow Defensive Country; which is linked to the aforementioned reassurance measures aimed at establishing cooperation with the counterpart.

In the second case, a Defensive State faces a like-minded country. In this scenario, the military dimension of the strategy aims at reducing the security dilemma and reassure the other by exerting self-restrain and / or by accepting to be restrained by others; as well as by working to actively collaborate for the mutual benefit. Politically, the objective is to solidify the relationship with the other state so to avoid it turning into an Offensive one; this is achieved by continuing to practice moderation and restrain as well as promoting cooperation.

[74]Tang 2010, 119. Emphasis added.
[75]Tang 2010, 119. Emphasis added.
[76]See Tang 2010, 120 to 124 and Table 4.2 at p. 126.
[77]Both quotes are from Tang, 2010, 120.

I.2.3 – The Operational Definition of Defensive Realism

At this point, there are finally all the necessary elements to present the operational characteristics that will be used to apply Defensive Realism to the concrete case of the shift in Japan's maritime security strategy following China's growing naval power.

As such, the features of Defensive Realism to be employed in this thesis are the following:

- The fundamental actor of the international system is the state, that is considered as a unitary and rational actor that acts on the basis of its interests; the first of which is to ensure its own survival. However, in line with Neoclassical Realism, the domestic factors that have an influence on foreign policy will also be taken into account. As a matter of fact, this is particularly important in the case of Japan, since it is marked by peculiar domestic restrictions (Art. 9 of the Constitution, public opinion...) that have an important impact on its foreign / security policy.
- The international system is essentially anarchic. As a result, states ultimately have to rely on self-help to preserve their primary interest of survival.
- To preserve their security, states need power; which is essentially defined in terms of material capabilities. Power is to be considered as relative; as a result, it has to be assessed in relation to the power of other states. Moreover, this view will be integrated with the "Components of Power" theory, which claims that power has to be evaluated in its specific components; meaning to verify qualitatively if the power of a state threatens a *vital* interest of another, and quantitatively if it constitutes a *major* menace.
- Under these circumstances, the simple maximization of relative power is not always the best strategy, given it would spark a security dilemma that would ultimately undermine the security of the state. Consequently, (Defensive Realist) states prefer to practice moderation and self-restrain, and offensive behavior is considered counterproductive.
- Cooperation among states is possible, on the basis of the common interest to avoid war. States can sign alliances, that are (usually) for exclusively defensive purposes.
- Operationally, a Defensive State must first of all determine what type of country it is dealing with. This is done by sending a sign of good intentions and an invitation to collaborate. The strategy that is finally adopted by the state depends on this assessment. If it faces a like-minded country, it will try to show its goodwill so to establish a mutually beneficial cooperation. When it deals with an Offensive State, it will adopt a balancing strategy by reinforcing its military capabilities and

by seeking allies so to deter an attack; at the same time, it will attempt to "convert" the other and transform it into a Defensive State.

This framework will be used to verify if Japan is behaving according to Defensive Realism and the Components of Power theory. The expectation is to find that Tokyo preferred a cooperative policy toward China and was not concerned by it when Beijing did not represent a potential major threat to any vital Japanese interest; and that following the recent growth of Beijing's power (particularly in the naval domain) Japan reacted by shifting toward a balancing strategy aimed at protecting its vital interest in the specific issue of maritime security either by strengthening its own capabilities and by reinforcing the alliance with the US, but always by practicing moderation and self-restrain. This thesis will show that it has indeed been the case.

Chapter II
The Evolution of Japan's Maritime Security Strategy 1945-2006

Before analyzing the evolution of Japan's maritime security strategy, especially concerning the protection of the SLOC, it is important to explain what they are, their geographic extension, their economic significance and finally their importance for Japan's national security.

II.1 – The SLOC: Definition, Geographic Dimension, Economic Significance and Security Implications

The term SLOC is an acronym standing for Sea Lines Of Communication. Essentially, they are the maritime routes employed for a range of activities including trade, transportation and energy supply.

Since it is an archipelago, "[t]he importance of oceans to Japan is self-evident from its geographical location"[78]. Its total land area is of 377,835 km^2, whereas the area of its territorial sea and internal waters is of 430,000 km^2; in practice, this means that Japan owns more water than land. Again, its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)[79] is of 4,050,000

[78]Cicin-Sain *et al.* 2015, 283.
[79]Japan's EEZ partially overlaps with that claimed by other countries; see Cicin-Sain *et al.* 2015, 283.

km^2 and the total length of its coastline is of 35,000 km[80]. Even from a demographic viewpoint Japan is a maritime country. Out of a total population of 127 million (on 1st May 2014), half of it lives on the coast, and coastal cities and communities cover the 30% of the country's land[81].

Consequently, Japan has no choice but to rely on maritime (and secondarily to air) routes to interact with the rest of the world; therefore, the SLOC have an essential importance for it, and the most important ones are those connecting it with Europe and the Middle East. There are also other routes heading northwards or eastwards throughout the Pacific Ocean, however they are less relevant both for Japan and for the aim of this thesis; as such, the focus will be on the former. So, the SLOC stretch out for thousands of nautical

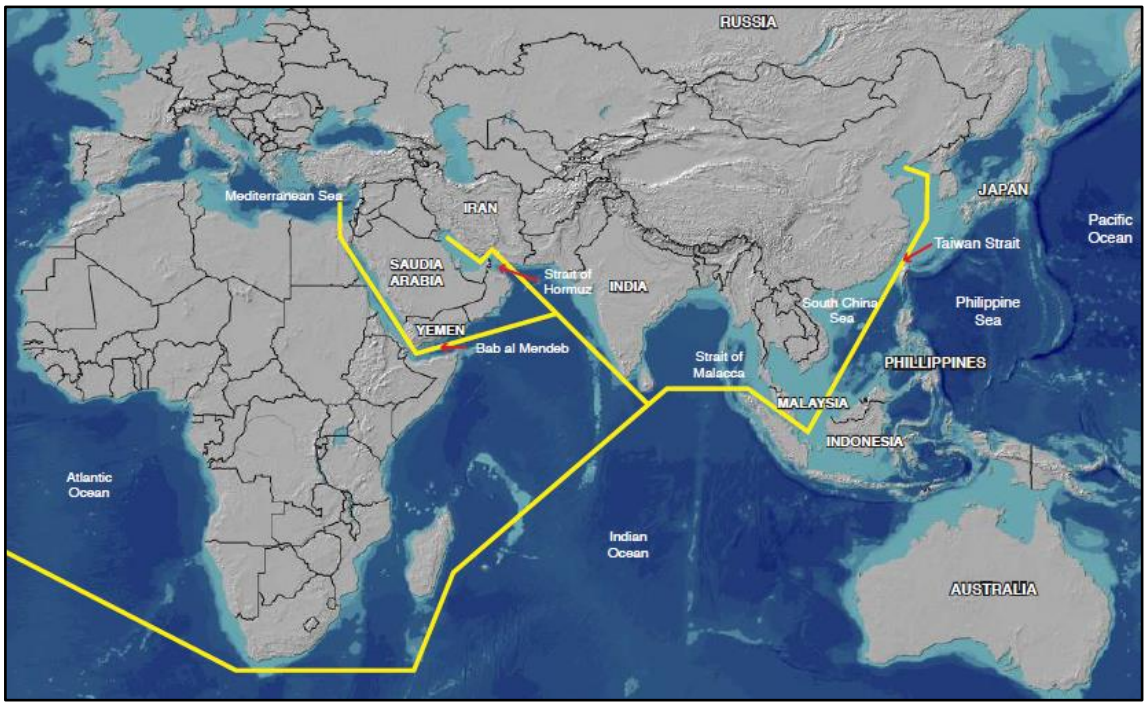

Image 1. The SLOC. Source: ONI 2015, 10.

miles across the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific; and this is a very long route that is exposed to various possible dangers: "Japanese shipping is potentially faced with choke points in the Gulf of Hormuz, piracy in Southeast Asian waters, and potential flashpoints over the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait"[82]. To this, it is possible to add another choke point (the Malacca Strait) and another disputed group of islands (the Senkaku / Diaoyu in the ECS).

Japan's nature as an archipelago makes it heavily reliant on the sea for its contacts with

[80]Cicin-Sain *et al.* 2015, 283.
[81]Cicin-Sain *et al.* 2015, 283.
[82]Lai 2009, 118.

the rest of the world. This is especially true for economic exchanges. As a matter of fact, in 2009 Japan imported 80% of its energy[83] and 99% of its oil[84]; more than 80% of which comes from the Middle East. It also imports massive amounts of coal and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), and the shutdown of nuclear reactors after Fukushima's disaster in 2011 has made even more clear how the country is dependent on energy imports[85]. Moreover, "Japan also depends on the oceans for its international trade. In 2013, sea transportation accounted for 99,7 per cent of the total of 963 million tons, and 76,6 per cent in value of exports and imports"[86].

Therefore, the maritime security of such energy and trade routes is important to "help sustain economic growth" in Japan and the rest of the region[87]. In fact, the SLOC are central not only for Japan but for other North-East Asian nations as well, most notably for China. If before 2000 Japan was the largest oil consumer in Asia[88], then consumption in Asia started rising due to the fast economic growth[89]. The most dramatic change was that China was becoming the major oil consumer[90], and it actually surpassed Japan in 2003[91]. And in this context, "[m]ost of the oil imports of China and Japan have been shipped on sea"[92].

Due to geographic factors and to their extreme economic importance, the SLOC have significant security implications for Japan, and protecting them is a priority for Japan's national security; as well as "an opportunity to play a larger political role and […] foster closer ties in maritime affairs"[93]. In fact, the "sea lanes of East Asia" are included among "areas vital to Japan's national interest"[94]. To include the pivotal role of the US in this domain, it is noted that "[t]he United States and Japan share a great many vital interest" which include to "[p]reserve the safety of the sea-lanes of communication"[95]. And Tokyo itself recognizes it: in this regard, it is significant that in the *Basic Plan on Ocean Policy* released in 2013, its most recent main legislative act on maritime regulation, one of the

[83]Lai 2009, 11 and 115.
[84]Lai 2009, 11.
[85]Atanassova-Cornelis *et al.* 2015, 15.
[86]Cicin-Sain *et al.* 2015, 284.
[87]See Lai 2009, 14.
[88]Lai 2009, 2.
[89]Lai 2009, 5-6.
[90]Lai 2009, 9.
[91]Lai 2009, 3.
[92]Lai 2009, 8.
[93]Lai 2009, 129.
[94]Kliman 2006, 158.
[95]Samuels 2007, 152.

"basic directions of policy measures" is that of "securing maritime security and safety"[96]; which is considered (especially in relation to oil tankers) as a "matter of life and death"[97]. Consequently, "Japan's military missions revolve primarily around providing defense for the nation's territory and for helping to defend sea lanes and airspace extending out as far as approximately 1,000 nautical miles from Tokyo"[98]. This mission became important toward the end of the Cold War and continued after its end.

As seen, the PRC surpassed Japan as the major oil consumer in Asia. Consequently, "China's dependence on oil imports has also given rise to its growing concerns with maritime security", and the country started opposing the traditional role played by the US and Japan in that domain[99]; therefore, "China's quest for oil security might destabilize international security"[100]. It is important to note that, in principle, Tokyo and Beijing should cooperate in protecting the SLOC on the basis of their common interest in ensuring the free flow of oil and trade; but it has not been the case. As a matter of fact, (energy-related) maritime security is a typical example of public good that should be the object of collective efforts; however, the "enhanced security of one nation […] may be viewed by its neighbors as insecurity"[101]. Both Japan and China have intensified their efforts for oil routes security[102], but not in a cooperative manner; on the contrary, each country reacted with suspicion to the initiatives of the other. In fact, "Japan feels uneasy towards China"[103] since its "phenomenal rise poses a challenge to Japan's maritime and energy security"[104]; but at the same time "Japan's proactive projection of its forces abroad and its active involvement has aroused suspicion from China"[105]. Moreover, the territorial disputes in the ECS "could disrupt and hamper international trade and destabilize the region"[106].

Such affirmations are still valid today (probably, even more). Japan has a paramount interest in maintaining maritime security and in protecting the SLOC, and this (among other issues) is a cause of tensions with Beijing. But what is actually interesting is the change in Japan's approach. In 2009 Tokyo was essentially adopting a hedging policy relying on a "largely nonmilitary and multifaceted approach" essentially based on

[96]Cicin-Sain *et al.* 2015, 290.
[97]Lai 2009, 11 and 115; the author himself is quoting another scholar.
[98]Berger *et al.* 2007, 99.
[99]Lai 2009, 10.
[100]Lai 2009, 7.
[101]Lai 2009, 14.
[102]Lai 2009, 7.
[103]Lai 2009, 14.
[104]Lai 2009, 123.
[105]Lai 2009, 21.
[106]Lai 2009, 21.

strengthening the alliance with the US while seeking cooperation with China[107]. Even if some elements of this approach still persist, Japan has gradually shifted toward a balancing strategy centered on improving the capabilities of its armed forces and on closing security ties with the US and other regional powers.

It is significant to note from now that the aforementioned changes are consistent with Defensive Realism. First of all, it was seen that the protection of the SLOC represents exactly that kind of national interest that is essential for the survival of Japan. As such, it has to adopt a specific strategy to ensure their protection. In the past, when no state could pose a *major* threat to this vital interest, for Tokyo it was sufficient to rely on the US and to use diplomatic means to keep positive relations with other states. The absence of a balancing strategy was simply due to the fact that no country posed a major threat to its maritime security; in short, there was no one to balance.
However, the rise of China (especially in the last decade) has changed the situation. In particular, its growing naval power is considered as a potential threat by Japan. Significantly, as indicated by the Component of Power theory, Tokyo is not much concerned about Beijing's increasing relative power in global terms; rather, it is worried about its power in a specific domain (the maritime one) that can represent a *major* threat to one of its *vital* interests. It will be shown that, in accordance with Defensive Realism as defined in Chapter I, Japan has initially attempted to signal its willingness to cooperate with the PRC in order to determine its intentions (or its "nature" as a Defensive or Offensive Realist State). But cooperation resulted to be fruitless and, as a state in an anarchic environment having to rely on self-help, Japan decided to move to a balancing strategy based on increasing its relative (naval) power, on reinforcing the alliance with Washington and on seeking closer security relations with other partners. And always in adherence to Defensive Realism, this situation represents a typical example of security dilemma where the growth in the relative power of one side causes concerns in the other, thus sparking a spiral of suspicion and undermining the stability of the region.

II.2 – Japan's (Maritime) Security Strategy During the Cold War

To properly evaluate the changes in Japan's security strategy, in particular in the maritime domain, it is necessary to examine its evolution throughout time; starting from the Cold War period.

[107]Lai 2009, 11.

Following the defeat in WWII, Japan was occupied by Allied (mostly American) forces, whose objective was to dismantle the old system, democratize and demilitarize the country, and ensure it would no longer pursue an expansionist[108]. This resulted in a new Constitution, which included the "Pacifist Clause" of Art. 9. According to it, Japan renounced to war as a mean to solve international disputes, pledged not to develop any war potential ever again, and denied its right of belligerency[109].

However, because of mounting tension with the USSR, Washington swiftly adopted a containment policy against Moscow and its allies. Thus, the objectives of the occupation changed into fostering Japan's recovery to make it a bastion against communism in Asia[110]. In this context, Yoshida Shigeru had a pivotal role, since he led Japan as Prime Minister for much of that period[111]. He wanted to reestablish Japan's sovereignty and put an end to the occupation, but he was aware that it was not possible by reviving militarism. However, he understood the new reality of the Cold War and the opportunities it offered; and exploited them. He decided to focus on the economy, and resisted Washington's pressures for rearm. Since the US had to maintain a strong military presence in Japan to contain communism in Asia, Yoshida knew the country could rely on the Americans for protection. In 1951, the Peace Treaty[112] was signed, and with it the Japan-United States Security Treaty[113] which committed Washington to defend Tokyo. As the Americans did not allow Japan to simply "free ride" on military matters, Japan had to accept to re-establish some form of military (resulting in the creation of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces in 1954[114]). But it remained attached to the pacifist terms of the Constitution, as the JSDF could only protect Japan from an invasion and could not be sent abroad nor participate in any collective self-defense operation[115]. Freed of high defense spending, Japan could concentrate on boosting the economy. Tokyo maintained this strategy, known as "Yoshida Doctrine", during all the Cold War; and its influence persists today.

This policy was based on three axes: developing the economy; keeping a low international profile to avoid any military involvement and minimize defense expenditures; and relying

[108]Pyle 2007, 220.
[109] Sajima & Tachikawa 2009, 65.
[110]Pyle 2007, 218-219; See 221 to 225.
[111]Pyle 2007, 226. He was also Foreign Minister during much of that time.
[112]Sajima & Tachikawa 2009, 66. Notably, they did not include the USSR nor China (see Atanassova-Cornelis *et al.*, 2015, 9). Peace with the latter (represented by Taiwan) was signed separately.
[113]Sajima & Tachikawa 2009, 66; Pyle 2007, 234. The Treaty was substituted in 1960; see Kawashima 2005, 26-27.
[114] Pyle 2007, 236; Sajima & Tachikawa 2009, 65; Kawashima 2005, 27.
[115] Pyle 2007, 236.

on the US for national defense[116]. The first aspect was the main one, and became the world's second largest economy in 1972[117]. Diplomatically, Tokyo promoted peace[118]; and it recognized the PRC following the Sino-American rapprochement[119].

For what concerns defense, the main threat to Japan's security was the USSR, and the JSDF were essentially equipped and organized to counter a possible Soviet invasion in cooperation with the US. Tokyo renounced to possess nuclear weapons in 1967 by adopting the Three Non-Nuclear Principles[120]; while the Three Principles of Arms Export put strict limitations to the transfer of defense-related equipment[121]. The practice of limiting the defense spending to 1% of the GDP became official with the National Defense Program Outline of 1976[122]. This document also included a significant statement: "[t]he level of the defence force should be standardised so that its defence structure, *when a new posture is required by a serious change in military circumstances*, can be smoothly adapted to cope with such a situation"[123]. Concerning maritime security, it identified "the defence of sea-lanes as one of the guiding principle for the military build-up"[124]. Following Washington's criticism against free riding, Tokyo committed to protect the SLOC up to 1000 nautical miles from its territory[125]; also because "Japan had greatly increased its dependence on sea lines of communication", especially to import energy and food. Still, beyond that limit, Japan had to rely on the US Navy[126].

Usually, it is said that Japan's Cold War security policy did not match the expectations of (Defensive) Realism; but in reality its stance was quite consistent with the theory.

While it is true that it did not seek *military* power, it has to be reminded that power can assume different forms, including the economic one; and Tokyo definitely sought that. And economic power can be the base to develop military power as well; in fact, the Japanese "believed that if they maintained a strong technological and industrial base, Japan could be transformed in a military power *should that become necessary in the*

[116]Pyle 2007, 242.
[117]Pyle 2007, 261.
[118]Sato & Limaye 2006, 33.
[119]*S*ajima & Tachikawa 2009, 2 and 33; Kawashima 2005, 2.
[120]Pyle 2007, 251.
[121]Pyle 2007, 254.
[122]Pyle 2007, 254; Kawashima 2005, 30. Still, due to its economic prosperity, Japan's defense budget was one of the largest in the world in absolute terms, and the JSDF possessed advanced military hardware
[123]Sajima & Tachikawa 2009, 72. Emphasis added; once more it will be seen that this element is relevant in Defensive Realism terms. The British orthography was not left as in the original.
[124]Patalano 2014a, 405.
[125]Kawashima 2005, 31.
[126]Sajima & Tachikawa 2009, 76.

future"[127]. As such, "Japanese realism was as strong as ever. It was simply being exercised in a different fashion"[128].

Moreover, as a "Defensive" state would, Japan practiced moderation and self-restrain (as its attachment to Art. 9 shows) and it preferred cooperation over confrontation. Following the theory, a state can cope with a menace by reinforcing its armed forces and by developing alliances: Japan decided to opt mostly for the second and to relied on the US for its defense; especially against the main threat, the USSR. This was partly because it wanted to focus on the economic growth, and partly because it was aware that it could not match the Soviets alone; all while knowing the US would not abandon Japan as it was essential to contain communism. With the threat from Moscow "neutralized" in this way, Tokyo had no reason to increase its military capabilities. For what concerns the SLOC, in this period no country posed a major threat to this vital interest; therefore, in accordance with the Components of Power theory, it did not arm itself to protect them.
However, self-help was never completely ruled out: official documents (such as the 1976 NDPO) indicated that Japan wanted to practice self-restrain and avoid a military buildup, but that it was disposed to modify this stance if the situation had changed; which is in accordance with Defensive Realism.

II.3 – Japan's (Maritime) Security Strategy After the Cold War

The end of the Cold War marked a transformation in East Asia's security environment, which mixed elements of change and continuity.
In general terms, the period was characterized by the end of bipolarity and the disappearance of the Soviet menace. This left the US as the only superpower; Washington did not quit the region and kept about 300,000 troops there[129]. However, uncertainty continued to exist, as new (potential) threats emerged. China was still focused on domestic consolidation and development, but was about to start its rise; whereas Japan was heading toward a period of economic stagnation and internal political trouble. But with the end of the bipolar confrontation, several issues that had been put aside in the previous decades re-emerged (many of which involved the PRC); and new threats such as North Korea appeared.
For what concerns Japan in the specific, the 90s represented a decade of significant

[127] Pyle 2007, 259. Emphasis added.
[128] Pyle 2007, 256.
[129] Pyle 2007, 282.

transformation. In security matters, its main guarantee (the alliance with the US) continued to exist despite the fall of the USSR. The reason is that, after all, the alliance was not strictly anti-Soviet, and both countries had an interest in keeping it: for Washington it was a way to maintain its presence in the Asia-Pacific, while for Tokyo it was a safety assurance in the context of a changing international environment. As a matter of fact, Japan's security situation was marked by uncertainty, in the form of two essential and related elements: the fear of being abandoned by the Americans, and the sense of vulnerability caused by the emergence of new threats; both made more worrisome by the slowdown of the Japanese economy.

As a result, Japan modified its security policy in response to this broader context and to the crises that marked the decade just after the Cold War.

The first important shock arrived in 1991, when the Gulf War broke out. Despite its dependence on Middle Eastern oil and the international legitimacy of the US-led intervention[130], Japan (due to its constitutional restrains) failed to give a significant contribution to the coalition, limiting itself to a financial support of 13 billion USD[131]; and it received strong criticism because of it. This event made Tokyo aware of the fact that economic means were no longer sufficient, so it approved a new legislation to ease the limitations on the dispatch of its armed forces, more specifically to allow the participation of Japanese troops in peacekeeping operations (but strictly with non-combat tasks). This marked the first step in the gradual departure from the Yoshida doctrine.

Only a few years later, a new threat emerged. In 1993, North Korea decided to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, thus opening the complicated issue of its nuclear program. Japan questioned itself on how it could act in the case of a conflict in Korea, especially because failing to provide assistance in a similar eventuality would have probably been fatal for the alliance with the US. As a result, in 1995 Tokyo adopted a new version of the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG[132]), which gave the JSDF a more important international role.

The Taiwan Strait crisis of 1996 raised Japan's concern over China. Despite the danger of finding itself involved in a conflict over Taiwan or Korea alongside the US, Japan decided to reinforce the alliance with Washington; and the two powers agreed on revising

[130] The intervention had been authorized by the UN Security Council.
[131] Berger *et al.* 2007, 5. When the war ended, Japan also sent some minesweeping ships; see Kawashima 2005, 34.
[132] Also known as NDPO (National Defense Program Outlines).

the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation. The new text saw Tokyo taking a more active role in the alliance in order to be able to support American operations in the area; in this way, it wanted to show its willingness to back Washington's initiatives so to avoid the risk of abandonment (and consequently of facing the new menaces alone). Finally, Pyongyang's test of a ballistic missile in 1998 prompted Japan to start cooperating with the US on Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD).

However, "[i]t was not until the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, […] that a new grand strategy began to take shape"[133]. This event had a significant impact on Japanese security policy: first because (together with the 1995 sarin attack in Tokyo's subway) it raised the attention over non-state threats such as terrorism, but most importantly because Japan had to take measures to support the global "War on Terror" launched by the US. During the term of Koizumi as Prime Minister (2001-2006), Japan supported the Americans in both Afghanistan and Iraq; but always limiting itself to non-combat activities. Along this line, a new NDPG document was adopted in 2004 to expand the international role of the JSDF; in terms of both geographical extent and capabilities. Notably, it insisted on the centrality of the alliance with the US, but it also stated that the JSDF represented the ultimate guarantee of Japan's security; thereby calling for an improvement of its capacities, including at sea[134]. More specifically, in that period (even if the overall defense budget was unchanged) Japan deployed tankers for air refueling, Aegis-equipped destroyers, helicopter destroyers, surveillance satellites and BMD systems; and it acquired intelligence and long-range transport assets. These procurements ameliorated its force projection abilities, even if they remain relatively limited. Joint training and intelligence gathering with the US were also strengthened, and some limitations on arms export were lifted. Another significant aspect was the strengthening of the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG), which became more and more

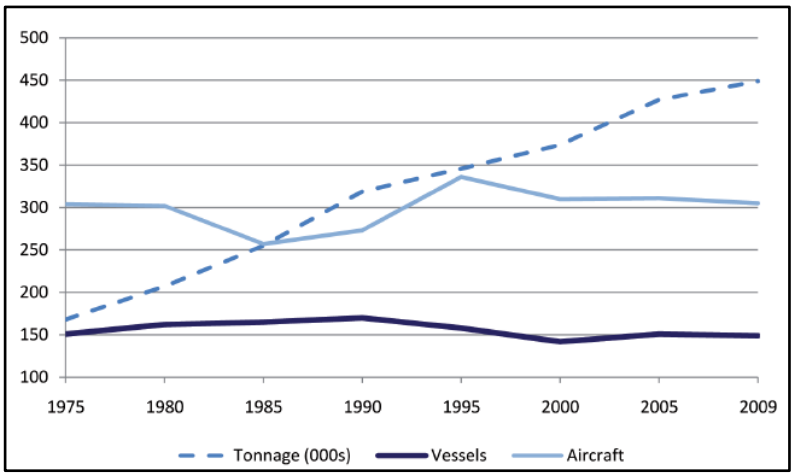

Image 2. The growth of the MSDF. Source: Patalano 2011, 84.

[133] Pyle 2007, 280.
[134] Sajima & Tachikawa 2009, 83.

military-like: its budget was raised in 2005, and it arrived to count 89 ships of more than 500 tons, including 56 over 1000 tons. It is notable that the JCG is also tasked with "securing the safety of the Sea-lanes"[135], and it is argued that this allowed Tokyo to reinforce its naval power outside the regular defense budget.

Moreover, during Koizumi's term, Art. 9 was reinterpreted so to allow the exercise of self-defense in case of attack on American forces in Japan or even abroad, provided this represented a threat to Japan itself[136]. He also expanded the role of the JSDF to include counter-terrorism missions and to allow more contributions to peacekeeping operations. Still, important limitations remained, such as the one on collective self-defense.

So, "during the Koizumi years, Japanese security has been enhanced across the board"[137], and Tokyo made notable steps toward "normalization". Still, significant restrictions continued to exist for various (and interlinked) reasons: anti-militarism was still strong, neighboring countries would have opposed a more active stance because of Japan's imperialistic past, and after all it was still possible to rely on Washington for protection. In any case, the more active military stance that Tokyo adopted was meant to give a more significant contribution to international security and not to maximize national power[138].

Then, it is necessary to keep in mind that Japan still preferred to pursue its foreign policy goals through non-military means and multilateralism (also as a way to hedge against the risk of abandonment by the US). However, due to its economic slowdown, to its past and to the transformations in the regional security environment, its ability to act in multilateral fora was limited. Moreover, the need to preserve the Japan-US alliance led Tokyo to ultimately prioritize the bilateral relationship with Washington over multilateral initiatives; as a matter of fact, multilateralism was intended to complement and not to substitute the relationship with the US.

In short, it appears that the Yoshida doctrine was not completely abandoned after the end of the Cold War; instead, it was updated: some of its elements persisted, but significant changes were also introduced[139].

The gradual changes in Japan's security policy in the 90s and early 2000s have multiple explanations. The domestic situation was more favorable to taking an increasingly active international stance: the new political context saw a weaker pacifist opposition, the

[135] Samuels 2007, 78; quoting the White Paper released by the JCG. See also p. 77 to 80.
[136] Kliman 2006, 25.
[137] Samuels 2007, 182.
[138] Berger *et al.* 2007, 261.
[139] Samuels 2007, 107.

younger generations were less attached to the strict constitutional restrains on security matters, and nationalism re-emerged; Koizumi's leadership was also an important factor. But it was the series of crisis and shocks of the period that pushed Japan to modify its position, as they made clear that new menaces were appearing; notably China and North Korea. On the one hand, the concern over the emerging threats provided Tokyo with an opportunity to reform its defense policy so to effectively counter them. On the other hand, this also posed Japan the problem of keeping its alliance with the US. If Tokyo had not adopted a more supportive behavior toward Washington, it would have faced the risk of abandonment, thus losing the benefits of American protection, which represented a strong guarantee of security. So, Japan opted to close its defense ties with the US by enlarging its role in security affairs even if it meant running another risk, namely that of being entangled in a war involving American forces in the region; and this was not a negligible eventuality, especially during the Bush administration (because of its tendency to unilateralism). But since the US protection was too valuable, Tokyo accepted the risk, also because it was not able to manage the emerging threats alone. Moreover, it was an opportunity to improve its national defense capabilities and consequently to gain more autonomy in the long term. As far as Washington is concerned, preserving the alliance was useful due to the possibility to maintain its bases in Japan, which would also have been a useful ally in the eventuality of a conflict in the Asia-Pacific. In short, "[f]rom the mid-1990s onward, Tokyo and Washington took incremental, yet meaningful, steps to enhance bilateral defense cooperation"[140] on the basis of their common interests (including concern over the PRC and the DPRK) and on shared values and partners.

Regarding the emerging threats, as noted they were essentially Pyongyang and Beijing, but the latter gradually became the major problem for Tokyo and Washington. The resulting dynamic had an ambivalent yet significant impact on Japan's security policy.

The missile threat from North Korea prompted Japan and the US to take initiatives (notably the cooperation on BMD), but it also resulted useful in justifying measures that could be aimed at countering China. In particular, the PRC feared that US forces and BMD assets in Japan could be used to protect Taiwan; so, it started looking with suspicion at the Japan-US alliance. For Tokyo, this posed a dilemma: on the one hand, it was aware of China's rise in economic and military terms, and considered it a threat; on the other hand, it also knew that strengthening its military and the alliance with Washington risked to appear as a menace in Beijing and to spark an arms race. At the same time, the

[140] Berger *et al.* 2007, 11.

relationship with the US was also problematic, as reinforcing it meant a greater risk of entanglement in conflicts involving American forces, but the alliance was also necessary to deal with the emerging Chinese (and North Korean) threats and to ensure Japan's safety. In brief, the situation was a typical example of security dilemma.

So, it is possible to draw some conclusions on Tokyo's defense policy after the Cold War. It was a context characterized by the emergence of new menaces, which included not only the PRC and the DPRK; but also the US, as Japan had to face both the risk of entanglement and that of abandonment. Ultimately, the latter was considered the most dangerous one, as Tokyo finally decided to reinforce its security cooperation with the Americans: thereby, it is clear that "Washington has remained a key driver of Tokyo's strategic evolution"[141].

The previous considerations make it clear that Japan's strategy in this period was essentially based on hedging: "Japan is reacting to these uncertainties by embracing the United States closely while developing capabilities of its own *to hedge against the risks of a rapidly changing security environment*"[142]. The Japanese hedged not only against the threat represented by China and North Korea, but also against the possibility of an American retreat from the region. Its objective was therefore to limit the risks it might have to face in the future; and it did so by strengthening its own capabilities and by closing ties with its partners, mainly (but not exclusively) the US. Notably, this is the kind of behavior that a Defensive Realist State would adopt when dealing with an emerging potential threat; which shows the consistency of Tokyo's security policy with Defensive Realism. In short, it can be stated that "the interaction of systemic changes and subsystemic variables has led Japan to progressively unlearn normative security behavior in favor of realpolitik. The post-Cold War international system is resocializing Japan along realist lines"[143].

[141] Kliman 2006, 168.
[142] Samuels 2007, 85. Emphasis added.
[143] Kliman 2006, 159.

Chapter III

Japan's Response to the (Potential) Chinese Threat at Sea, 2006-2016

III.1 – The Evolution of Japan's China Policy

As it was seen in the previous chapter, Japan's international stance during the Cold War was based on the Yoshida doctrine, which basically consisted in focusing on economic growth while relying on the US as a security provider. Being Washington's main ally in the Asia-Pacific and a central part of its containment strategy, Tokyo could not normalize its relations with Beijing. Yoshida followed America's policy and recognized the nationalist government in Taipei, even if he hoped for developing economic ties with the mainland by separating politics and business[144]. However, the bipolar confrontation and the political turmoil in China did not allow to establish economic ties with it.

The situation dramatically changed following the Sino-American rapprochement in 1972. The event was a shock in Japan, as the US unilaterally decided to reopen the dialogue with the PRC without even informing its ally; and the Japanese feared something analogue could happen again in the future. At the same time, the event allowed Japan to restore its ties with China, and the process was completed in 1978 when relations were normalized and the Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed. In that context, both countries agreed to peacefully solve their disputes, to avoid using force, and not to seek hegemony; the US-Japan alliance was not mentioned, indicating that the Chinese had implicitly accepted it. As a result, Japan and the US formed a virtual alliance with China to counter the USSR.

In the following period the Sino-Japanese relations became quite positive. Tokyo pursued an *engagement* policy toward Beijing, providing it with significant financial aid through the Official Development Assistance (ODA) program and creating important economic ties between the two countries. The aim was to pursue Japan's own economic interests while building friendly relations with the PRC and integrating it in the regional order, which was considered the best way to ensure stability in the area. Tokyo was conciliatory on many issues, including history and the repression of the Tiananmen protests in 1989[145].

The situation started to change when the Cold War ended. With the common Soviet threat gone and the conclusion of the bipolar confrontation, many issues (re-)emerged. Japan entered a long period of economic stagnation and political trouble, while China was

[144] Kawashima 2005, 97.

[145] In this case, for example, it imposed sanctions on China but lifted them soon.

rapidly developing its economy and launching a modernization of its military. The PRC gradually became more and more assertive: in 1992 it adopted laws supporting its claims over the Senkaku and the ECS, opening the ongoing territorial dispute with Japan over these territories; it started activities in the SCS; it performed a nuclear test in 1995; and most importantly it conducted vast military exercises during the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1996, to dissuade the island to formally declare its independence. This event was particularly significant, as it "reinforced for them [the Japanese] the continuing need *to hedge* against any future Chinese military threat by strengthening the US military presence in the region"[146]. Consequently, Japan started to consider China as a major threat to its security and to worry about the possibility of being involved (due to its alliance with the US) in a contingency over Taiwan. Moreover, being largely dependent on maritime trade, Tokyo was afraid of Beijing's capability to threaten the SLOC; especially if China were to seize control over Taiwan. Other issues emerged as well, such as the controversies over history, economic frictions and the rise of nationalism in both countries. Finally, but not less importantly, the US started to consider the PRC as a strategic competitor as well. So, in spite of growing economic interdependence, the Sino-Japanese relations gradually worsened.

As a consequence, and in a general context of uncertainty (due to the economic slowdown, the North Korean threat, etc.) Tokyo strengthened its defense ties with Washington. The two partners revised the Cooperation Guidelines in 1997, but since their geographical definition allowed to apply them to a conflict around Taiwan, Beijing was concerned by the document and started considering the US-Japan alliance as a mean to counter its rise. The US-Japan-China triangle is therefore essential, as "[r]elations among the three countries are of key strategic importance because they are at the heart of the balance of power in Asia"[147]. Again, when the American-Japanese cooperation on BMD started in the wake of North Korea's ballistic missile test in 1998, China was upset as it felt that the system could be used to protect Taiwan. In short, it is possible to affirm that "[b]y the late 1990s, Japan's policy had shifted to a *mixed approach of both engaging and balancing* against China"[148]. Essentially, Tokyo was hedging against the risk that Beijing could become a major military power in the region; and it did so by closing ties with the US and by expanding its own military capabilities; all while still attempting to engage China,

[146] Pyle 2007, 246. Emphasis added.
[147] Pyle 2007, 311.
[148] Berger *et al.* 2007, 251. Emphasis added.

as its rise "presents an opportunity, a challenge, and a threat for Japan"[149]. This approach was consistent with Defensive Realism, since it shows that Japan was trying to assessing the behavior of the PRC and to signal its preference for cooperation, all while taking measures in the case Beijing would prove to be hostile.

This process continued in the early 2000s, during Koizumi's term as PM. By then, Japan had abandoned the "friendship diplomacy", opting instead for a more Realist approach centered on finding "an equilibrium in Sino-Japanese relations based on common interests and mutual respect of differences"[150]; all while attempting to integrate China in the regional order and to develop mutually beneficial economic ties. But bilateral relations deteriorated because of the 2002 consulate incident[151], the visits to Yasukuni and the quarrels over history. An important document in that context was the 2004 NDPG, by which Japan adopted a more active security role and where China's military development was mentioned as a source of concern[152]. The following year, Japan's foreign ministry referred to the PRC as a threat for the first time[153]. As a matter of fact, Beijing's military modernization was proceeding at a fast pace: its defense budget was rising; it deployed 4th generation fighters, tanker aircraft, submarines, and many missiles; and planned the procurement of AWACS and aircraft carriers. Even though only a relatively small part of the PLA was being upgraded, its global capabilities had improved and were rapidly growing. This worried the Japanese, also because China's ability to disrupt the SLOC was increasing and the risk of entanglement in a Sino-American conflict was becoming higher. In practice, and despite the significant economic interdependence, it was a typical case of security dilemma, alimented by the fact that "China and Japan, after all, are two large, powerful states that aspire to leadership and influence over the same geographic region"[154]. China felt more powerful and self-confident, and consequently its demands became grater as it grew stronger; but at the same time, it also became more suspicious toward Japan and the US. As far as Tokyo is concerned, it tried to find an equilibrium between opposed exigencies: protecting itself from the growing threat of the PRC without provoking it and initiating an arms race; reinforcing the Japan-US security cooperation, all without upsetting Beijing and while maintaining autonomy, so to avoid abandonment

[149] Inoguchi & Ikenberry 2013, 214.
[150] Berger *et al.* 2007, 241.
[151] Chinese police entered in Japan's consulate in Shenyang to prevent the escape of a North Korean defector. See Samuels 2007, 139.
[152] Pyle 2007, 334.
[153] Samuels 2007, 139.
[154] Sato & Limaye 2006, 86.

as well as entanglement. In short, "[e]ach side, claiming to be acting in its own defense, is building military capabilities to allow operations far from its littorals – thereby threatening the other"[155].

Again, Japan's strategy was essentially a hedging one, focused on taking measures against the growing risks of conflict but without abandoning dialogue: "Japan has shifted policy related to China from liberalist view to a realist view: from friendship diplomacy to *engagement and balancing* policy"[156]. As a matter of fact, by then Tokyo had moved its attention from the north to the south; differently said, from the old Soviet threat to the new Chinese one. Accordingly, even if maintained the defense budget at the previous level, it operated a relocation of resources and a transformation of the JSDF: it reduced the number of tanks and focused on fast-deployment units instead; it upgraded its fighter units in Okinawa by equipping them with F-15Js; it boosted its anti-submarine capabilities; it conducted joint training with American forces. It was clear that now the objective was to protect the SLOC as well as the offshore islands and the maritime resources in the ECS from Chinese threats in the aero-naval domain[157].

In the second half of the 2000s, Koizumi's successors worked to improve relations with Beijing, but due to the persistence of tension-generating factors (lack of transparency in China's military buildup, territorial disputes, the Japan-US alliance, history, the DPRK, etc.) they did not manage to restore positive bilateral ties. Instead, various incidents continued to hamper the Sino-Japanese relations: in 2006, a Chinese *Song*-class submarine surfaced close to the American aircraft carrier *USS Kitty Hawk* in the ECS; and in several occasions

Image 3. Japan's strategic environment. Source: Patalano 2014, 418.

[155] Samuels 2007, 167.
[156] Inoguchi & Ikenberry 2013, 242. Emphasis added.
[157] See Samuels 2007, 167 to 171.

(2005, 2008 and 2010) Beijing's naval formations navigated in the ECS waters or next the Japanese coasts. In 2008, Japan stopped its ODA to China[158]; a significant move, as it shows that the engagement elements in Tokyo's China policy have actually been reduced. But the major incident took place in 2010, when the Japanese arrested the captain of a Chinese trawler in the waters around the Senkaku. The PRC reacted vigorously, by protesting and by putting an embargo on rare earths exports to Japan (a serious act, since they are essential materials for the Japanese industry). The captain was ultimately released, but the episode reinforced Tokyo's concern over its neighbor. As a result, in the new NDPG published in that year the military modernization of China was defined as "an 'issue of concerns for regional and global society'"[159]. Always in 2010, Japan obtained from the US the guarantee that the Security Treaty covers the Senkaku[160].

In conclusion, Japan's policy toward China in the 2000s was essentially based on hedging. Without neglecting engagement, Tokyo took a series of measures to deal with the risk posed by the growing aero-naval power of Beijing, consisting in both improving its own military capabilities and in reinforcing the alliance with Washington. But, in accordance with Defensive Realism, as long as the years passed and that cooperation with China seemed less feasible and productive, the engagement component was gradually reduced in favor of a more balancing-based approach. In short, with each passing year, "Japan has come to put more emphasis on a policy of *balancing* against and constraining a rising China", even if efforts to engage it continued[161].

III.2 – China's Military Buildup in the Aero-Naval Domain

Before examining the current developments of Japan's strategy to cope with the growing Chinese seapower, it is necessary to examine the Beijing's military buildup and the changes of its maritime strategy.

China has undertaken an important effort to modernize its military, including its air and naval forces. In the first decades of the PRC, the strategic concept was that of "coastal defense", which meant that the main task of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) was to protect China's shores from an amphibious invasion[162]. The concept changed during the 80s, when it evolved to "offshore defense". This new notion had a wider geographic scope, as it was meant to dissuade a foreign intervention in a regional conflict,

[158] Inoguchi & Ikenberry 2013, 234.
[159] Hook *et al.* 2011, 241.
[160] Hook *et al.* 2011, 248.
[161] Berger *et al.* 2007, 19. Emphasis added.
[162] ONI 2015, 7.

and extended beyond the First Island Chain[163]. In the 90s, China observed how the Americans conducted their military operations around the globe, and realized it had to improve the warfighting capabilities of the PLA to match the exigencies of contemporary warfare. The reform was centered on "informatization" (incorporating information technologies in military operations) and "non-contact warfare" (employing long-range precision weapons against the enemy)[164]. Finally, in recent years a growing attention has been given to "open sea defense"[165], indicating the ability to deploy a blue-water navy capable of operating far away from the mainland; and Beijing has in fact increased its "global" presence in recent years[166]. In FY 2015, the declared defense budget was of about $140 billion[167].

This effort is aimed at obtaining the capability to preserve China's interest; among the others, intervening in a contingency over Taiwan, supporting its territorial / maritime claims, ensuring nuclear deterrence and protecting the SLOC[168]. This last aspect is particularly relevant, as maritime routes are essential for Beijing's export-based economy: more than 90% of its trade volume (representing more than 65% in value) is transported by sea, and the country is also dependent on the SLOC for oil imports[169].

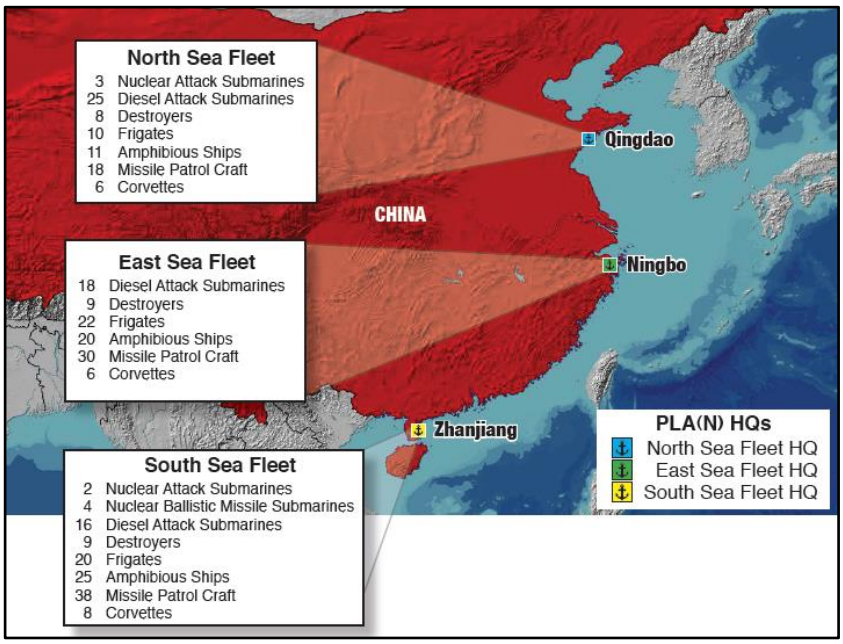

Image 4. China's main naval bases. Source: ONI 2015, 14.

It is appropriate to start the examination of China's military buildup from the naval forces, or PLAN; which are distributed on three main Fleets: The North, East and South Sea Fleets[170]. In this regard, "[t]he PLA(N) currently

[163] See ONI 2015, 7.
[164] ONI 2015, 8.
[165] NIDS 2016, 7.
[166] See NIDS 2016, 11-12.
[167] NIDS 2016, 2.
[168] For more details, see NIDS 2016, 8-9; ONI 2015, 9 to 11.
[169] ONI 2015, 11.
[170] For the details of their composition, see ONI 2015, 14.

possesses more than 300 surface combatants, submarines, amphibious ships, and missile-armed patrol craft. Although the overall order-of-battle has remained relatively constant in recent years, the PLA(N) is rapidly retiring legacy combatants in favor of larger, multi-mission ships, equipped with advanced antiship, antiair, and antisubmarine weapons and sensors"[171]. In general, China focused its naval modernization efforts on improving its ASUW and AAW capabilities[172]. As such, it concentrated on introducing more effective anti-air and OTH-T[173] systems on its ships. It also worked to develop indigenous units, and it should be noted in this regard that the last important procurement from abroad was the acquisition of some *Sovremennyy II*-class DDGs from Russia in 2006[174]. As of 2015, the PLAN surface fleet counted 26 destroyers (21 considered modern, as the *Luyang II* and *Luyang III* classes), 52 frigates (35 modern, as the *Jiangkai II* class), 56 amphibious ships (such as the *Yuzhao* class) and others[175]. For what concerns ASW[176], China has made efforts which resulted in considerable progress, but this is a domain where its capabilities are still considered lacking[177].

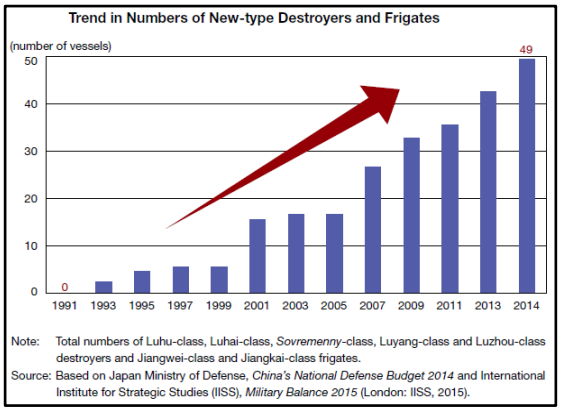

Image 5. Source: NIDS 2016, 14.

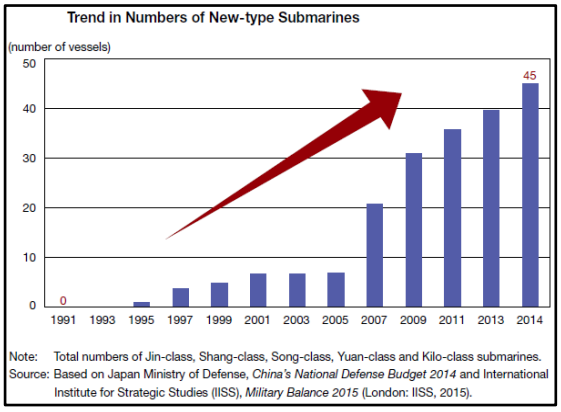

Image 6. Source: NIDS 2016, 15.

In regard to submarines, by 2015 they consisted of "five nuclear attack submarines, four nuclear ballistic missile submarines, and 57 diesel attack submarines"[178]. The most important classes are the *Song*, *Ming*, *Yuan* (equipped with AIP systems[179]) and the Russian-made *Kilo*; all of which have diesel-electric propulsion. Notably, this preponderance of conventionally-powered units indicates a submarine force "optimized

[171] ONI 2015, 13.
[172] Respectively, Anti-Surface Warfare and Anti-Air Warfare.
[173] Over-The-Horizon Targeting
[174] ONI 2015, 13. DDG stands for guided-missile destroyer.
[175] ONI 2015, 15; NIDS 2016, 15.
[176] Anti-Submarine Warfare.
[177] ONI 2015, 14.
[178] ONI 2015, 19.
[179] ONI 2015, 19. AIP stands for Air-Independent Propulsion, and indicates a technology that allows conventional submarines to stay submerged for longer periods, thus reducing the risk of detection.

for regional missions that concentrate on ASUW near major SLOCs"[180]. Regarding nuclear-propelled submarines, the attack ones are used for long-range ISR[181] missions, while ballistic missiles units (as the new *Jin* class / Type 094) are part of the nuclear deterrence force[182].

The Navy's air component has been upgraded as well[183]; in terms of helicopters, drones and fixed-wing aircraft (including 4th generation fighters such as the Su-30MK2, the J-10 and J-11; attack planes like the JH-7 and bombers as the H-6).; this allowed to increase the ability to perform a wide array of missions including maritime patrol, ISR, ASW and maritime strike.

The deployment of the conventional-propelled aircraft carrier *Liaoning*, set to operate J-15 fighters, is of particular importance. Its limitations should be noted: it is smaller than an American *Nimitz*-class (so it can host less aircraft), its sky-jump configuration force to launch planes with a limited payload, its operative range is inferior to that of a nuclear-powered ship and by now it does not dispose of support aircraft (tankers, AEW&C[184]) for the embarked air wing. Still, it is an important asset for the PLAN which will allow it to make practice in carrier operations in the optic of introducing more carriers in the future.

Other notable developments include mine and counter-mine warfare (which is important for protecting or disrupting the SLOC) and in C4ISR capabilities[185] needed to ensure the situational awareness in case of a maritime conflict. The PLAN has also conducted extensive training and efforts to develop joint-operations skills; in particular for fighting "informationized local wars", including at sea[186]. The coast guard has been strengthened as well[187].

In regard to the Air Force (PLAAF)[188], China has been working to increase its capabilities to conduct both defensive and offensive missions and to expand the range of its operations; which includes supporting national interests at sea[189].

In more practical terms, it has retired many obsolete aircraft to build a more modern air

[180] ONI 2015, 19.
[181] Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance.
[182] ONI 2015, 19. ISR means Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance.
[183] For more details, see ONI 2015, 20 to 22.
[184] Airborne Early Warning and Control.
[185] See ONI 2015, 23 to 25. CRISR stands for Command, Control, Communication, Computer, and ISR.
[186] For more details, see NIDS 2016, chapter 4.
[187] See ONI 2015, 27 to 32 and 44 to 46.
[188] People's Liberation Army Air Force. For more details, see NIDS 2016, chapter 2.
[189] NIDS 2016, 26.

force; which in 2016 counted about 2620 combat planes, still in reduction[190]. The bomber fleet is being upgraded to the more advanced H-6K, new assets such as four AEW&C aircraft and many drones have been introduced, and progress was also made in air refueling (even though the number of tankers is still insufficient).

Another branch of the Chinese military that has to be considered is the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF), which controls the arsenal of strategic missiles; it is tasked with nuclear deterrence and retaliation as well as with conducting precision conventional strikes[191]. The latter aspect is relevant, as such assets are one of the essential components in China's A2/AD strategy[192] meant to hamper the entry and operations of US naval forces in the seas close to its coasts: as a matter of fact, "the development of China's potential to conduct precision strikes with conventional missiles has attracted the concern of the United States as an anti-access and area denial (A2AD) measure. That is to say, the capability to conduct precision strikes on the other party's command and communication structure, bases, carrier strike groups and similar targets could mean that China would be able to block another party's force projection into East Asia"[193]. Among the various ballistic missiles, the most notable one is the so-called "carrier-killer" DF-21D, as it would be capable to target, hit and sink a moving aircraft carrier. Even if its actual capabilities are uncertain, it remains an asset to be considered seriously. A number of long-range cruise missiles have been deployed as well.

Finally, it should be noted that Beijing has also modernized its land forces, and has developed cyberwarfare and anti-satellites capabilities. For what concerns the first, they are not directly relevant when examining the Sino-Japanese power relation: since Japan is an archipelago, ground forces are largely useless if China does not achieve the aero-naval supremacy, which therefore represents the actual key element. About cyberwarfare and anti-satellite weapons, again they do not directly affect the balance of power at sea, as they are meant to disrupt C4ISR capabilities; still, similar assets can have a dramatic impact, given their potential to hamper the ability of US forces to operate effectively.

In conclusion, these developments demonstrate that China's military power has actually

[190] NIDS 2016, 26.
[191] For more details, see NIDS 2016, chapter 3.
[192] Anti-Access / Area Denial.
[193] NIDS 2016, 47.

been growing considerably in the past decade, notably in the aero-naval domain. According to Defensive Realism and to the Component of Power theory, Beijing has become a more and more serious threat for Tokyo. As a matter of fact, the PRC has increased its coercive means exactly in the sphere of maritime power, which is the one that concerns Japan the most, due to its vital interest in preserving the freedom of navigation along the SLOC and to its territorial disputes in the ECS with China itself. Considering the military buildup and the growing assertiveness of the PRC, Japan feels threatened and acts to counter the menace; both by increasing its own seapower and by closing ties with other countries, notably the US. In other terms, the growing military power of the PRC explains why Japan has gradually shifted its approach to China toward balancing, especially in regard to maritime security.

III.3 – Japan's Defense Policy in General Terms: The Two Axes of its Security Strategy

It is now possible to examine what kind of defense strategy Japan is now implementing, in particular to ensure its maritime security and the protection of the SLOC.

The core features characterizing Tokyo's defense policy in broad terms are illustrated in its main governmental documents concerning national defense; especially the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) of 2013, the Medium Term Defense Program (MTDP) for FY 2014-2018, the Guidelines for Japan-US Cooperation (Guidelines) of 2015, the White Paper (WP) of 2016, and the Diplomatic Bluebook (DB) of the same year. In order to better understand their importance, it is appropriate to provide a brief overview of these documents.

The main governmental organ tasked with formulating defense policy (in cooperation with other agencies) is the National Security Council (NSC), which "deliberates important matters with regard to national security such as the National Security Strategy (NSS)"[194]. The latter "defines approaches that Japan should follow based on a long-term view of its national interests"[195], and it was approved by the NSC and the Cabinet in late 2013 in substitution to the Basic Policy on National Defense. The NDPG was established on its basis: it is a document that "defines basic policies for Japan's future defense, the role of its defense capabilities, and objectives for specific SDF equipment"; and that "was formulated with a medium-to long-term outlook"[196]. For what concerns the MTDP, it

[194]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 3, 1.
[195]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 3, 1.
[196]Both quotes are from WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 3, 1.

"specifies a maximum budget and the amount of mainstay defense equipment to be acquired over the subsequent five-year period in order to achieve the defense capability targets defined in the NDPG"[197]. Finally, the WP and the DB are annual publications by the Japanese government meant to express its views and positions on various issues related to defense and foreign policy.

On the basis of the aforementioned documents, it is possible to outline the broad terms of Japan's defense strategy so to be able to evaluate how it is practically applied to maintain maritime security in the ECS, and notably to protect the SLOC.

Now, it is significant that among "Japan's National Interests and National Security Objectives" indicated by the NSS there is to "[s]trengthen the *deterrence* necessary for maintaining Japan's peace and security and for ensuring its survival"[198]. This shows that Japan is acting accordingly to Defensive Realism: its main objective is to grant its own security / survival by applying a strategy based on deterrence, so to avoid conflict. This basic concept inspires the general architecture of Tokyo's security strategy.

Japan also appears to be perfectly aware of potential threats coming from its surrounding environment and of the fact that it has ultimately to rely on self-help to ensure its security: "[t]he reality of the current international community suggests that it is not necessarily possible to prevent invasions from the outside by employing only nonmilitary means […]. *Defense capabilities are the nation's ultimate guarantee of security*" [199]. So, "*[r]ecognizing that a country's security depends first and foremost on its independent efforts, Japan will make full-scale efforts on its own initiative to prevent various situations and will seamlessly respond to them as the situation evolves*"[200]. But "[a]s the security challenges and destabilizing factors are diverse and wide-ranging, it is difficult for a single country to deal with them on its own"[201]; so, Japan will cooperate "with its ally, partners and other countries concerned"[202].

These statements alone could be sufficient to explain Japan's security strategy, as they already contain the two pillars of its defense policy: improving its own military capabilities and closing security ties with the US (and other partners). Moreover, they confirm again that Japan is behaving in perfect accordance with Defensive Realism.

[197]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 3, 1.
[198]Both quotes are from WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 3, 2. Emphasis added.
[199]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 1, 1. Emphasis added.
[200]NDPG 2013, 6. Emphasis added.
[201] NDPG 2013, 5.
[202] NDPG 2013, 6.

Tokyo is aware of the fact that it has to operate in an anarchic international environment, where safety ultimately depends on self-help. Since its main objective is to preserve its own existence, it has to maximize security. As such, it strengthens its defense capabilities, in other terms its power, so to deter an attack (thus showing its preference to avoid war) and to defend itself in case of aggression. At the same time, it attempts to complement its own capabilities and improve its security by cooperating with allies. The combination of these two elements constitutes a *balancing* strategy which, in line with the Components of Power theory, is meant to cope with a *major* threat (as China) to one of its *vital* interests (as the protection of the SLOC). Still, cooperating with other countries is possible; indicating a willingness to avoid war and a preference for solving disputes by dialogue. In fact, before moving toward balancing, Japan actually attempted to collaborate with China; and dialogue with the PRC has not been ruled out yet.

More specifically, "Japan is striving to develop appropriate defense capabilities […] to defend the territorial land, sea, and airspace of Japan. At the same time, it is strengthening the Japan–U.S. Alliance […]. *The peace and security of Japan is ensured through developing seamless defense measures by coupling Japan's own defense capabilities with the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements*"[203]. The two factors combined are said to "constitute the cornerstone for Japan's national security"[204]. These last statements summarize Tokyo's stance in defense matters and explicitly mention the two pillars upon which it bases its strategy.

All of this is being done under the policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace"[205], which consists in a series of diplomatic and defense initiatives meant to stabilize the Asia-Pacific and thus to ensure Japan's safety. On this basis, Tokyo "will efficiently build a highly effective and joint defense force *in line with the basic principles of maintaining an exclusively defense-oriented policy,* [and] *not becoming a military power that poses a threat to other countries*"[206]. This "means that Japan will not possess and maintain a military capability […] beyond the minimum necessary for self-defense"[207]; as such, "[t]he possession of armaments deemed to be offensive weapons […] is not permissible under any circumstance" and thus "the SDF is not allowed to possess intercontinental

[203]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 1, 1. Emphasis added.
[204]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 2, Section 1, 4.
[205]NDPG 2013, 5.
[206]NDPG 2013, 5-6.
[207]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 2, 4.

ballistic missiles (ICBM), long-range strategic bombers, or attack aircraft carriers"[208]. This indicates how Japan, in consistence with Defensive Realism, is openly practicing moderation and self-restrain to reduce the security dilemma.

In the context of incertitude caused by China's growing aero-naval power, Japan felt "necessary to develop a domestic legislation *to enable seamless responses to any situations*"[209]. This is a reference to the reinterpretation of the Constitution promoted by Abe's government in 2014 to allow the country to exert (under certain conditions) the right to collective self-defense. As a matter of fact, this was previously considered illegitimate, and only a *direct* armed attack on Japan could justify the use of force. Now, "in light of the situation in which the security environment surrounding Japan has been fundamentally transformed and continuously evolving by shifts in the global power balance, […] even an armed attack occurring against a *foreign* country could actually threaten Japan's survival"[210]. This means that "when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result *threatens Japan's survival* […], and when *there is no other* appropriate means available to repel the attack […], use of force *to the minimum extent necessary* should be interpreted to be permitted under the Constitution as measures for self-defense"[211]. Clearly, the legislation is mainly conceived to enable Tokyo to protect US assets in the region; accordingly, it is stated that it "strengthens the Japan-U.S. Alliance and enhances the deterrence of Japan, and thus enables Japan to prevent conflicts beforehand"[212].
The issue of Art. 9 reinterpretation demonstrates again how Japan is practicing self-restrain despite its concerns over China's rise, but at the same time it shows its determination to ensure its national security through self-help and alliances; all in adherence to Defensive Realism.

At this point, it is possible to conclude by describing the general nature of the two pillars of Japan's defense policy: strengthening its military and closing its security ties with the US.
For what concerns the first one, it essentially consists in expanding the capabilities of the JSDF, as they are "the ultimate guarantee of national security, and represent Japan's will

[208]Both quotes are from WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 2, 1.
[209]DB 2016, 157-158. Emphasis added.
[210]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 2, 2. Emphasis added.
[211]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 2, 2. Emphasis added.
[212]DB 2016, 159.

and ability to deter threats from directly reaching Japan and defeat them if threats should reach Japan"[213].

To ensure its security, "Japan will build a Dynamic Joint Defense Force" which should be "effective" and capable of "conducting a diverse range of activities […] and adapting to situations as they demand"[214]. This is necessary because of an increase of "the number and the duration of situations […] which require the SDF's commitment" which include "gray-zone" situations, defined as "neither pure peacetime nor contingencies over sovereignty of the territory or vested interests,"[215]. Since "the qualitative and quantitative capabilities of the defense force […] were not necessarily sufficient"[216], Tokyo opted to reshape its military. This is significant, as it presupposes a balancing logic: in response to a changing environment (marked by China's rise), Japan felt that its relative power was in decline; consequently, it decided to improve its military capabilities so to maintain the balance of power and the international status quo.

The intent of this military build-up is to "develop a highly effective joint defense force and make efforts to employ it with a high level of flexibility and readiness based on joint operations"[217], and its ultimate strategic objective is the "enhancement of deterrence and response capability"[218]. Once more, the focus on deterrence is coherent with Defensive Realism.

In regard to the alliance with Washington, based on the Security Treaty, the latest WP states that "[a]s the security environment surrounding Japan becomes increasingly severer, it has become more important than ever for Japan's security to strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance"[219]. Notably this will be done "while strengthening Japan's own capabilities as a premise for these efforts"[220].

This shows the fundamental reasons behind Tokyo's intents about the alliance. Given that the international scene is becoming more and more tense, Japan declared its willingness to readapt the Alliance to the shifting balance of power of the new context. It also seeks a reaffirmation of America's commitment in the region, which reveals a certain fear of abandonment in Japan. In turn, along with the transformations in the regional power distribution, the need to keep the US engaged motivates Tokyo's military build-up; as the

[213]NDPG 2013, 7.
[214]NDPG 2013, 8.
[215]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 1, 1.
[216]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 1, 1.
[217]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 1, 4.
[218]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 1, 1.
[219]NDPG 2013, 8.
[220]NDPG 2013, 9.

increase of its power capabilities is meant to reduce criticism of free-riding and is thus a pre-requisite to closer security ties with the US. This shows again that Japan is indeed acting in line with a Defensive Realist logic.

On this basis, the Guidelines have been revised in 2015. It is notable that with the new document "Japan and the U.S. are further enhancing their deterrence and response capabilities" and are expanding their cooperation in various domains, including maritime security[221].

However, the Alliance is not the only partnership that Japan is undertaking in security matters, even if it is by far the most important. Japan also wants to promote cooperation with other countries such as South Korea, Australia, India, Russia, various ASEAN members, and also China[222]. In this context, it is worth mentioning Japan's attitude to the PRC: "[a]s Chinese activities have a significant impact on regional security, *Japan will promote security dialogue and exchanges with China* in order to enhance mutual understanding and will develop confidence-building measures to prevent unexpected situations"[223]. Among others, some relevant initiatives include the first Japan-China security dialogue in about four years (held in January 2015) and notably the engagement of both parties to establish a "Maritime and Air Communication mechanism between Japan-China defense authorities" meant to "avoid unexpected situations"[224]. Still, the NDPG also states that "*Japan will maintain a calm and firm stance in dealing with the rapid expansion and intensification of Chinese activities on the sea and in the air surrounding Japan*"[225]. Such observations are important as they prove that Tokyo still prefers to avoid a conflict with Beijing, even while applying a policy more and more based on balancing; and is thus seeking to establish forms of peaceful dialogue, while expressing its resolution in dealing with threats coming from the PRC. Notably, this approach corresponds exactly to the operational code of a Defensive Realist State.

[221]DB 2016, 159.
[222]See NDPG 2013, 10 to 13; and DB 2016, 165 to 167.
[223] NDPG 2013, 11. Emphasis added.
[224] DB 2016, 44 and 46. For more details, see pages 23-24, 42 to 49, 166-167.
[225]NDPG 2013, 11. Emphasis added.

Chapter IV

Case-Study: The East China Sea

Having presented the causes of Japan's concern over the increasing seapower and assertiveness of China, it is now possible to examine the ECS case to prove how Tokyo has reacted by shifting toward a balancing strategy.

IV.1 – The Strategic Importance of the ECS for Japan's Maritime Security and its Relevance as a Case-Study

Before evaluating the measures that Japan has undertaken to ensure its maritime security and protect the SLOC in the ECS, it is necessary to explain why it is strategically relevant for the country and thus why it is meaningful as a case-study.

IV.1.1 – The ECS as a Maritime Region

First of all, the very geographic boundaries of the ECS make it important, since it is delimited by Japanese territories to the east and south and by the Chinese mainland to the

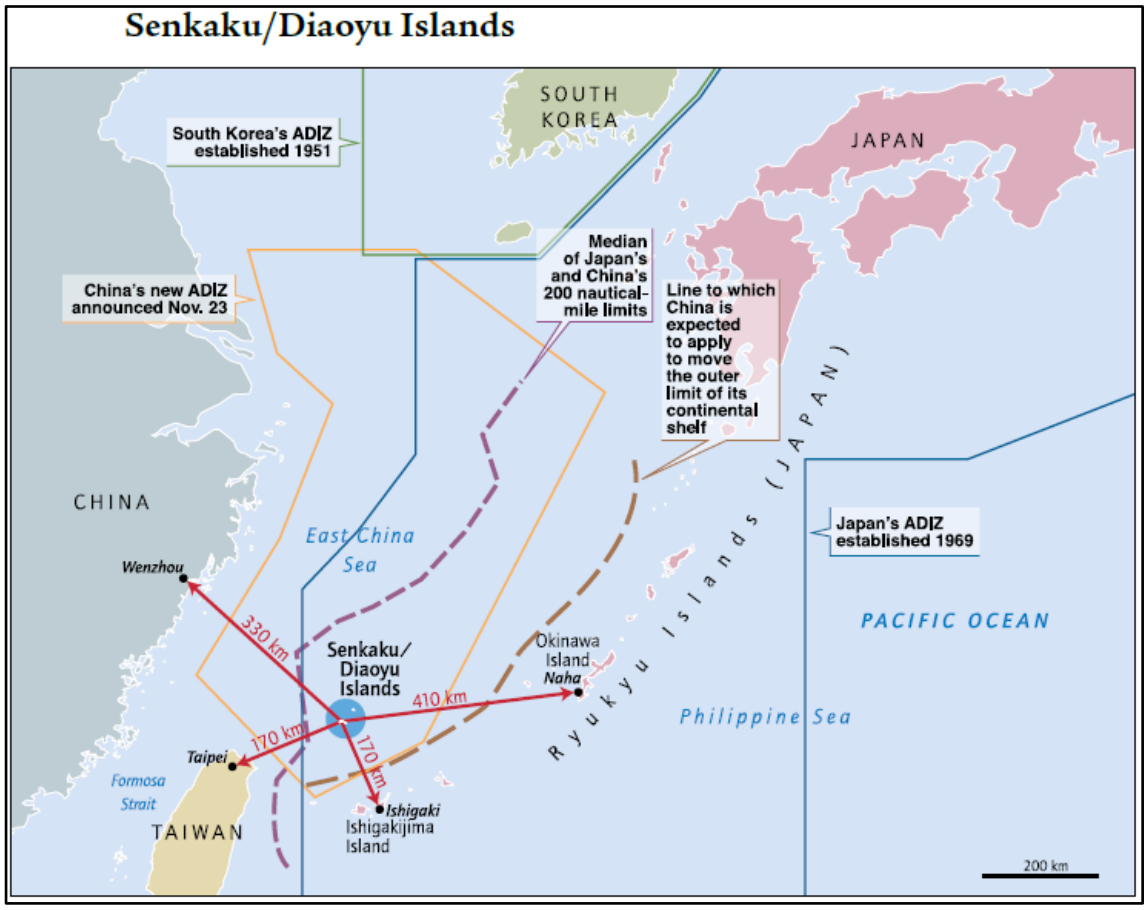

Image 7. The ECS and the Senkaku. Source: Atanassova-Cornelis et al. 2015, 9.

west. So, both powers have direct access to it; moreover, they have a long-standing

dispute in the area over the Senkaku / Diaoyu islands, as well as diatribes over the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the continental shelf (CS), and overlapping Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ). To this, it is appropriate to add the eventuality of a contingency over Taiwan: given that the island lies in the south-western corner of the ECS, an armed conflict for its control may seriously disrupt the stability of the area and the flow of goods along the SLOC. As a result, it is natural that this maritime region is the main zone of strategic friction between China and Japan.

For such reasons, this sea is of essential strategic importance for both countries (especially for Japan), as it represents the access to the SLOC. Both countries are heavily dependent on waterways for the supply of food, energy (oil, LNG, coal) and for trade. As such, the maritime routes of the ECS "have been essential to the industrial growth of regional economies"[226]; and a significant share of the world's trade traffic passes through its waters and ports. In particular, the Ryukyu Islands represent an important geographic feature in this regard, since they are located near the "critical sea lines of communication connecting the Yellow and East China seas to the open waters of the Pacific"[227].

In this context, it is important to remind that since the 80s Tokyo has committed to protect the SLOC in a zone stretching up to 1000 nm from its coasts, and this includes the totality of the ECS.

But "[t]he ECS is also a significant resource in itself"[228]. Various surveys since 1969 have confirmed the presence of rich deposits of oil and natural gas, even though the exact entity of these reserves is uncertain and estimates vary considerably"[229]. Anyway, this make that sea particularly valuable for two energy consumers like Tokyo and Beijing, whose economy depends on the flow of hydrocarbons from abroad.

Finally, it should be reminded that it is also a major fishing area: given that "[f]isheries are critical to the food security (and fishing industries) of both countries"[230], the dispute over the EEZ has caused further disagreement between Japan and China.

IV.1.2 – The Senkaku / Diaoyu Issue

Moreover, the two powers are engaged in the territorial dispute over the Senkaku / Diaoyu, which is essential to fully understand the situation and make clear the importance of the

[226]Patalano 2014b 36.
[227]Yoshihara 2014, 6.
[228]Patalano 2014b, 36.
[229]See Patalano 2014b, 36-37; Atanassova-Cornelis *et al.* 2015, 16; Emmers 2010, 57.
[230]Atanassova-Cornelis *et al.* 2015, 17. Parentheses in original.

ECS for Tokyo. As such, it is necessary to examine the issue, since it is the main driver of the Sino-Japanese competition in the area.

The dispute "revolves around a series of small and unoccupied islands" known as Senkaku in Japan and as Diaoyu in China[231]. They have a total extension of just 7 km^2, and are located "approximately 120 nautical miles northeast of Taiwan, 200 nautical miles east of China and 200 nautical miles southwest of Okinawa"[232]. Despite their little significance *per se*, they are important due to their value as points from which to advance maritime claims, to the natural resources believed to be in their surroundings, and to their location near the SLOC. Moreover, they have a strong symbolic value for the claimants. The combination of these elements has made them "a fragile and volatile maritime territorial dispute"[233].

To be more precise, the controversy has a double aspect: one about the sovereignty over the islands, so on determining who has the ownership over them; and one about "the demarcation of their maritime borders and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)"[234]; which basically codifies the customary norms of international law concerning the sea and that both countries ratified in 1996[235]. To fully comprehend the nature of the dispute and its implications, it is necessary to examine the historical roots of each one's claims and then to analyze these two matters separately.

For what concerns sovereignty, the Senkaku are currently administrated by Japan, but the PRC contests it.

For China, the islands have been historically part of its territory since they were discovered during the Ming Dynasty (1386-1644) and Chinese fisherman started using them as bases for their activities. For the PRC this situation lasted for centuries, until they were ceded to Japan (as part of Taiwan) in the Shimonoseki Treaty of 1895 that ended the First Sino-Japanese War. Then, according to Beijing's interpretation, when Japan renounced to all its claims on Taiwan under the provisions of the 1951 San Francisco

[231]Emmers 2010, 47. For brevity, they will be simply called Senkaku throughout this work. It should also be noted that Taipei is a claimant as well; however, for the purpose of this thesis, only Tokyo's and Beijing's position will be examined.
[232]Emmers 2010, 47.
[233]Emmers 2010, 47.
[234]Patalano 2014b, 37. Parentheses in original.
[235] See http://www.un.org/depts/los/reference_files/chronological_lists_of_ratifications.htm

Peace Treaty, the Senkaku were automatically returned to China (since they were "included" in Taiwan)[236]. However, the PRC did not advance any claims until 1970.

In practice, the islands were administered by the US during the whole 1951-1971 period. As a matter of fact, when the 1951 Peace Treaty was signed with Japan, the Americans retained Okinawa due to security concerns; and with it the Senkaku, that were ultimately returned to Japan only with the Okinawa Revision Treaty of 1971. But these were the years of the Sino-American rapprochement, and the PRC showed its dissatisfaction. Since this risked compromising the normalization of relations with Beijing (as well as the security ties with Taiwan[237]), the US assumed an ambiguous position. Despite having "implicitly associated the islands with Okinawa"[238] for two decades, the US declared that the Revision Treaty had given back to Japan only the "administrative rights"[239] over the Senkaku. In this way, the Americans "avoided the controversial question of sovereignty"[240] over the islands. Still, the US considers them as covered by the 1960 Security Treaty, "which requires them [the US] to defend all territories under Japanese administration in case of attack"[241].

However, Japan dismisses China's version. It states the Senkaku were occupied as *terra nullius*[242], before the Shimonoseki Treaty, which consequently did not include them. Furthermore, they were not mentioned neither in it nor in the 1951 Peace Treaty; so, neither document applies to the Senkaku. The islands were simply occupied by the US as part of Okinawa, and then given back to Japan in the 1971 Revision Treaty, which explicitly mentions them in its text. As a result, "Japan has been in physical control of the Senkaku/Diao yus since 1972"[243] and it actually denies the very existence of a sovereignty dispute over the islands: the DB 2016 clearly states that "[t]he Senkaku Islands are indisputably an inherent part of the territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international law. Indeed, the Senkaku Islands are under the valid control of Japan. Consequently, *there exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands*[244]".

[236]It should be reminded that China was not a part of the Treaty, neither as the PRC nor the RoC. See Atanassova-Cornelis *et al.* 2015, 9.
[237] It should be reminded that Taiwan is also a claimant.
[238]Emmers 2010, 50.
[239]Emmers 2010, 50.
[240]Emmers 2010, 50.
[241]Patalano 2014b, 38. Parentheses added.
[242]A juridical term indicating a land belonging to no one.
[243]Emmers 2010, 48.
[244]DB 2016, 45. Emphasis added.

In regard to the maritime boundaries, it is first necessary to briefly explain what are the relevant provision of UNCLOS[245]. According to it, *islands* generate "a 12-nautical-mile

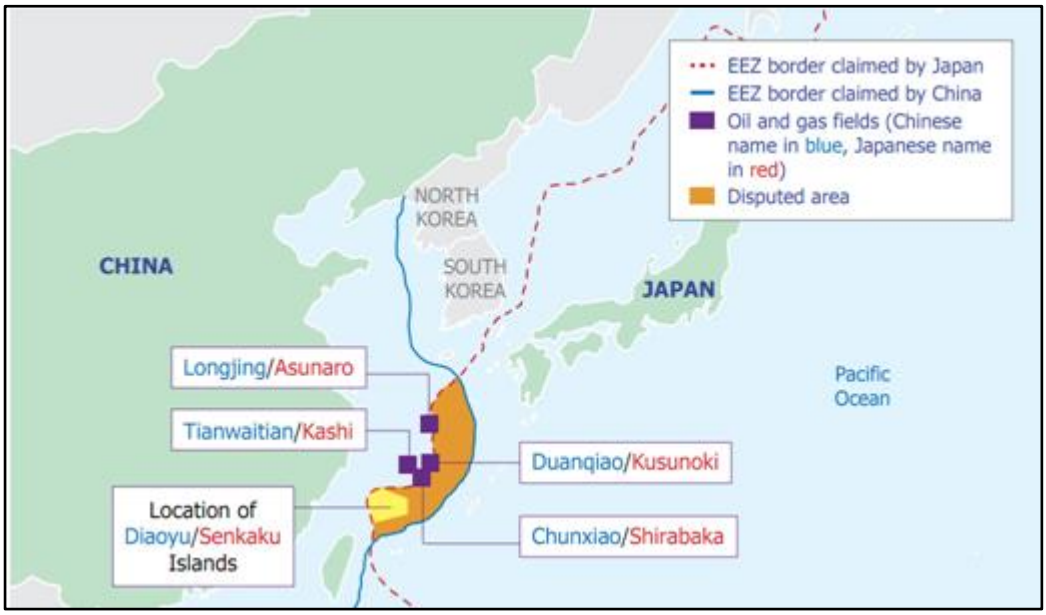

Image 8. The ECS maritime disputes. Source: https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=8270

territorial sea, a 12-nautical-mile contiguous zone, a 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone, and a continental shelf up to 350 nautical-miles"[246]. At the same time UNCLOS says that *rocks* "have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf"[247]; but the exact definition of "rock" can be interpreted in different ways.

The problem lies in the fact that "the distance between China and Japan is approximately 360 nm at its widest"[248], so the respective EEZ would overlap.

As a consequence, the maritime boundary has to be decided with a bilateral agreement, also because the UNCLOS does not provide specific indications on how to resolve cases of conflicting claims. Another important element is the presence of the Okinawa Trough in the continental shelf of the ECS, which undoubtedly "marks the end of the natural prolongation of the Asian land mass"[249]. However, "such geological features are not always taken into consideration in delimiting maritime borders"[250]. The way to interpret UNCLOS, the nature of the Senkaku and the presence of the Okinawa Trough are at the base of the different claims of Tokyo and Beijing.

[245]The full text of UNCLOS can be found here: http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf
[246]Emmers 2010, 50.
[247]Emmers 2010, 50. The author quotes Article 121, Paragraph 3 of UNCLOS.
[248]Patalano 2014b, 40.
[249]Emmers 2010, 50.
[250]Emmers 2010, 50.

Given that it considers the Senkaku as *islands*, "Tokyo extends its claims to the East China Sea by using the islands as its base points and takes the Okinawa Trough as a merely accidental depression in the East China Sea's continental shelf. As a result, it advocates that a median-line division be used to determine the maritime boundary between itself and China"[251].

However, China refuses this approach by saying that the Senkaku are *rocks*, that consequently do not generate a baseline and do not allow to advance any claim on the EEZ or CS. Beijing argues that the CS "is a natural extension of its own continental territory"[252] and suggests to use the Okinawa Trough as the maritime boundary. Since the Trough is definitely closer to Japan's territory and consequently is located east of the median line proposed by Tokyo, in this way the PRC would exert its control over most of the ECS.

Naturally, the two aspects of the dispute are related. As a matter of fact, since the Senkaku are located west of the Okinawa Trough, if its sovereignty over the islands were not recognized, Japan would not be able to advance any claim on the CS in their surroundings. On the contrary, if Tokyo were considered the legitimate owner of the Senkaku, it would be able to do so. In short, "[s]overeignty over the islands is therefore imperative to Japan's larger seabed claims"[253].

And the matter of maritime sovereignty is an important one, because it determines the possibility of a state to economically exploit the important resources of the ECS, namely hydrocarbons and fish. More specifically, the Okinawa Trough is believed to be particularly rich in petroleum. These elements, combined with the heavy reliance on energy import of both countries, help to understand the strategic importance of the dispute. In this context, it is not surprising that the controversy arose for the first time only in 1970, when the PRC advanced the first claims on the Senkaku; just after that the initial surveys of the late 60s demonstrated the presence of hydrocarbons in the ECS for the first time. Before, neither China nor Japan cared about the islands. In short, the two countries acted to secure access to strategic resources of essential value for their safety.

The historical development of the issue supports the statements about Japan's concern over the rise of China that were made in the previous chapter.

[251]Emmers 2010, 51.
[252]Emmers 2010, 51.
[253]Emmers 2010, 51.

The Senkaku have been *de facto* controlled by Japan since 1972. In the same year, the Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations were normalized, so the PRC did not insist on the matter to avoid compromising the re-established relations with Tokyo (despite having advanced its first claims just two years before). As a result, the situation remained crystallized for decades.

However, the problem reappeared in the 90s, especially when Beijing adopted a law in 1992 that included the Senkaku "as part of the territorial space"[254] of China and "asserted its right to use military force against perceived violators"[255]. The ratification of UNCLOS in 1996 did not calm the tensions; on the contrary, it gave states "previously unavailable legal ammunition"[256] to support their claims. Since then, the PRC increased its activities around the islands, and a series of incidents took place. The situation reached the lowest point during Koizumi's term as PM of Japan in the early 2000s, in the broader context of worsening Sino-Japanese relations.

When he left office in 2006, relations started to improve, arriving at the apex when China and Japan reached an agreement for the joint development of the ECS in 2008. However, it was never put in practice; also because tension became high again following the 2010 incident (already mentioned in Chapter III). Despite the resolution of that crisis, the controversy emerged again only two years later. Three of the islands were in fact privately owned, but in 2012 the governor of Tokyo (a nationalist) proclaimed its intention to buy them. To avoid this, the Japanese government intervened by nationalizing the islands instead; but this move caused outrage in China, that considered this as an attempt by Japan to strengthen its claims, and bilateral relations were seriously damaged. Since then, the PRC has become even more assertive with the aim "to force the Japanese government to recognize the existence of a territorial dispute and erode its administrative control over the islets"[257]. Notably, the first entrance in late 2012 of Chinese ships in the territorial waters of the islands, the sending of patrol airplanes later in the same year, and the expansion of China's ADIZ over the ECS in 2013 (in a way that implicitly considers the islands as part of the PRC) are all moves along that line. In the following years and still today, the repeated passage of Chinese vessels and aircraft near the Senkaku is a signal of Beijing's firm intent to put pressure on Tokyo over the issue.

[254]Patalano 2014b, 39.
[255]Emmers 2010, 52.
[256]Patalano 2013, 51.
[257]Atanassova-Cornelis *et al.* 2015, 10.

Needless to say, such incidents risk to cause a dangerous escalation. However, both Tokyo and Beijing have attempted to avoid it and to stabilize the situation through attempts of dialogue and cooperation aimed at keeping good bilateral relations. The fact that both countries have preferred to employ law-enforcement agencies rather than military units is "a sign of political intention to keep any escalation outside the military dimension", even if "the deployment of coast guards and navies in the China Seas is not mutually exclusive"[258]. But in general, "economic integration and regional dependency for development have worked as constrains on the conflict"[259].

Finally, the islands are also considered to have implications in strictly security terms: "[i]f they are owned by Japan, the US-Japan alliance will be able to block Chinese naval vessels in the ESC and hence squeeze the People's Liberation Army (PLA) maritime space by restricting its access to the Western Pacific"[260]. Conversely, if the PRC managed to obtain control of the Senkaku, it would strengthen the effectiveness of its A2/AD strategy and its maritime security. Moreover, the Senkaku are located very close to the SLOC transit area. As a result, the power that controls them would be able to exert a more effective protection of the shipping lanes; while also threatening the maritime traffic of the rival. That said, the strategic significance of the Senkaku in the specific should not be overestimated. Despite their strategic location, they are too small to host permanent and significant military installations; as well as to place on their soil relevant military hardware. As a result, their value for controlling the access to the ECS and the flow of maritime traffic is limited.

IV.1.3 – The Security Dimension of the ECS

This overview of the strategic importance of the Senkaku leads to more general considerations on the security relevance of the ECS.

As a matter of fact, in the case of a Sino-Japanese armed conflict, the part capable to achieve naval superiority in the ECS would possess a significant strategic advantage. Controlling it would allow to cut the flow of energy (and food) to the adversary and more in general to disrupt its maritime trade; as well as to directly threaten its territory, namely the main island of Kyushu in Japan and China's eastern coast, which includes important cities like Shanghai and Hangzhou.

[258]Both quotes are from Patalano 2013, 53. He is referring to both the ECS and the SCS.
[259]Emmers 2010, 55.
[260]Atanassova-Cornelis *et al.* 2015, 19.

Image 9. China's defense lines. Source: Atanassova et al. 2015, 21.

Moreover, the ECS is essential for any US intervention; and the possibility to ensure / deny it is therefore crucial. On the hand one, Japan still relies on America's naval might to protect its maritime environment; on the other hand, Beijing's maritime defense is based on an A2/AD strategy aimed at interdicting the access of US forces and at making their operations difficult into two sea areas delimited by the First and Second Island Chains.

The Ryukyu (included in the First Chain) are particularly relevant, since "PLA naval forces must pass through the narrow seas separating the Ryukyus in order to threaten U.S. forces converging on the combat theater or to menace Taiwan's vulnerable east coast"[261]. So, losing control over the ECS would seriously compromise China's defense strategy. In short, in case of a conflict against Japan (or a contingency over Taiwan), for the PRC it would be essential to control the ECS to deter and interdict the arrival of American forces, whereas Japan would have to maintain its control to keep the access open for the US Navy. On this basis, it is not surprising that both countries have significant military assets located along its coasts. The East Sea Fleet based in Ningbo is China's main naval force in the region, but the North Sea Fleet located in the Qingdao base along the coasts of the Yellow Sea could easily come in to support the former. For what concerns Japan, it has moved significant forces to the south to operate in the ECS. Moreover, the US possesses

[261] Yoshihara 2014, 6.

relevant military assets in the area as well, most notably those based in Okinawa; to which it is possible to add the 7th Fleet docked in mainland Japan and potentially other units based in the Pacific.
The consistent military presence of the three states therefore demonstrates the strategic significance of the ECS.

This overview shows that the ECS is strategically important for Japan and China due to security as well as territorial and economic reasons; to the point that it represents "the epicenter of the Sino-Japanese maritime rivalry"[262].
As a consequence, the ECS is an extremely valuable case-study to examine Japan's maritime security strategy and its efforts to protect the SLOC; as well as to prove its shift toward balancing in reaction to China's growing power and assertiveness at sea.

IV.2 – Japan's Strategy to Ensure Maritime Security in the ECS: Defensive Realism Applied

By now, it has been observed that Japan is concerned about China's military build-up, and it has been outlined how Tokyo has changed its defense policy to cope with it; in a way that is consistent with Defensive Realism integrated with the Components of Power theory. More specifically, observing that Beijing is accumulating power in a domain that potentially poses a *major* threat to one of its *vital* national interest, Japan has at first evaluated China's attitude by attempting to cooperate. Having seen that this was not possible, it gradually shifted to a balancing-based strategy centered on two pillars, namely on strengthening its own military capabilities and on closing defense ties with the US (and other partners).

In fact, Japan's main focus has changed in both geographic and operational terms. For what concerns the former, the attention has moved to the ECS, while in relation to the latter the aero-naval dimension has become the main concern: as a matter of fact, "[t]he shift back to maritime and air superiority has been accompanied by the dismantling of Japan's Cold War posture, under which heavy armour and artillery was deployed to its northeastern areas to prevent a Soviet invasion through Hokkaido, and the reinforcing of its defences in the southwestern Nansei [Ryukyu] island chain"[263]. This is the major

[262]Yoshihara 2014, 6.
[263]Hardy 2014, 8.

transformation in Japan's strategy in recent years; as Patalano noted, "[t]he geographic shift from the archipelago's northeast to the southwest articulated in the NDPG 2010 and confirmed in 2013 represented the biggest change in Japan's defence posture"[264]. This pivotal strategic change is recognized by the Japanese authorities themselves: the two most recent documents on the national defense strategy (the 2013 NDPG and the MTDP for FY 2014-2018) clearly state that "*the SDF will prioritize the development of capacities to ensure maritime supremacy and air superiority, which is the prerequisite for effective deterrence and response to various situations, including defense posture buildup in Japan's southwestern region*"[265].

On this basis, it is possible to examine what operational measures Tokyo is taking in each of the two axes of its defense policy to ensure maritime security in the ECS and the safety of the SLOC; in order to demonstrate that its strategy has actually moved toward balancing.

IV.2.1 – The first pillar: Strengthening the JSDF

To improve its own defense capabilities, Japan has been taking a series of measures encompassing the procurement of new platforms and weapon systems, the redeployment of combat units, training and exercises, the reorganization of the military, and the development of new doctrines. All these elements are closely intertwined, and when combined together they allow to understand the maritime security strategy that Japan is implementing in the ECS.

Operationally, the latest MTDP says that Japan is developing "a Dynamic Joint Defense Force […] to conduct a diverse range of activities based on joint operations […], adapting to situations as they demand"[266]. The document goes on saying that "[t]he defense forces will seamlessly and dynamically fulfill its responsibilities *including providing an effective deterrence* and response to a variety of security situations"[267]. These consist in "a focus on enhancement of joint operability, [in which] the SDF will place particular emphasis on Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), intelligence, transport, and C3I capabilities. In addition, *defense forces will enhance their capabilities to respond to an attack on remote islands*, ballistic missile attacks", as well as other types of threats[268]. To

[264]Quoted in Hardy 2014, 8.
[265]MTDP 2013, 2; NDPG 2013, 17. Emphasis added.
[266]MTDP 2013, 1.
[267]MTDP 2013, 1-2. Emphasis added.
[268]MTDP 2013, 2; emphasis added. C3I stands for Command, Control, Communication, Intelligence. The

achieve this objective, "the SDF will prioritize the development of capacities to ensure *maritime supremacy and air superiority*, which is the prerequisite for *effective deterrence* and response to various situations, *including defense posture buildup in Japan's southwestern region*. Furthermore, the SDF will emphasize the establishment of rapid deployment capabilities"[269]. In short, Tokyo's strategy is based on developing the means to obtain aero-naval superiority so to be able to conduct a series of operations that will allow it to preserve its maritime (and national) security through deterrence; or to effectively respond in the case of a contingency.

In this context, it is worth noting the defense spending and the reallocation of resources. Defense-related expenditures have been growing in the last few years, including in FY 2016[270]. It is also significant that funding for air and maritime forces is increasing at the expense of ground forces[271], whose equipment will be reduced (for example, from the previous 700 tanks and 600 howitzers to 300 units for each category[272]) so to transfer funds to procurements for the MSDF and ASDF; even if the total number of GSDF personnel is set to remain unchanged (159.000 men in total, including 8000 reservists)[273]. This is another proof that Japan is prioritizing the aero-naval domain and the kind of operations it would have to conduct in the ECS, which shows that Tokyo is preparing for the type of warfare and the theater where the Chinese potential threat is more pressing. In practice, Japan is developing a comprehensive inter-operational approach to be able to perform a range of inter-related missions in the ECS; with the aim to grant its maritime security and the safety of the SLOC, and consequently to preserve its broader national security. Moreover, this highlights once more that it focuses on deterrence. All of this demonstrates that its behavior is consistent with Defensive Realism and the Components of Power theory, as Japan acts to preserve its *vital* interests from a *major* threat while still adopting a defensive stance based on deterrence, indicating its willingness to avoid war.

Firstly, it is better to start from C4ISR operations. They are important as they are essential to conduct joint operations: as a matter of fact, developing a robust situational awareness

document also mentions outer space and cyberspace threats, as well as disaster relief and international peace cooperation; but due to their little relevance for the purpose of this thesis, these points will not be examined.

[269]MTDP 2013, 2. Emphasis added.

[270]WP 2016, Part 2, Chapter 2, Section 4, 1 to 3; Hardy 2014, 8.

[271]Hardy 2014, 7.

[272]Hardy 2014, 9; NDPG 2013, 31.

[273]NDPG 2013, 31. The acronyms indicate respectively the Maritime, Air and Ground Self-Defense Forces.

and early warning posture as well as the capabilities to coordinate a reaction is critical to cope with any potential threat and to "respond quickly to various contingencies in areas surrounding Japan"[274]; as in the case of the ECS. It is significant to note that "[t]hrough such activities, Japan will clearly express its resolve not to tolerate the change of the status quo by force, thereby preventing various situations from occurring"[275]. Once more, this clearly shows how Tokyo is focusing on preserving the regional power balance and on avoiding conflict through deterrence, which is consistent with Defensive Realism.

In regard to C4, Japan is taking measures to favor inter-arms cooperation and protect itself from cyber-attacks[276]. For what concerns ISR, it is deploying different assets from the different branches of the JSDF. These include the airborne early warning (AEW) E-2C plane as well as the E-767 with additional control capabilities (AEW&C) of the ASDF; notably, the former is being used to create an additional air warning squadron deployed at Naha airbase in Okinawa. This brings the total of Japan's AEW squadrons to three, along which there will also be 28 warning squadrons[277]. In the future, the RQ-4 Global Hawk high-altitude drones (to be specifically used for the detection of ballistic missiles) could be added as well[278]. These are completed with "radar sites at 28 locations nationwide"[279]; and it is significant to mention the intent to prepare "a deployment structure for mobile air defense radar on remote islands in the southwestern region"[280]. The MSDF contribute with guard posts as well as with long-range patrol aircraft and various vessels.

The ground forces have several coast surveillance units, one of which is based on Yonaguni island[281], "which is the country's westernmost land mass and the closest of the Nansei [Ryukyu] islands to the Senkakus"[282]. Finally, Japan also employs satellites to perform such activities[283].

[274]WP 2016, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, 2.
[275]NDPG 2013, 13.
[276]See WP 2016, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, 14; MTDP 2013, 10, 13; NDPG 2013, 19.
[277]NDPG 2013, 31.
[278]Grønning 2014, 6.
[279]WP 2016, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, 1.
[280]MTDP 2013, 7.
[281]WP 2013, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, 6.
[282]Hardy 2014, 11.
[283]WP 2016, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, 14; MTDP 2013, 12; NDPG 2013, 20.

As seen above, achieving air superiority is one of the prerequisites to ensure deterrence and conduct effective joint military operations in the case of a contingency. Moreover, intrusions of Chinese aircraft in Japan's airspace (especially in the surroundings of the Senkaku) is one of the main causes of tensions between the two powers in the ECS, and PLAA planes may well pose a threat to the SLOC and in general to Tokyo's maritime security.

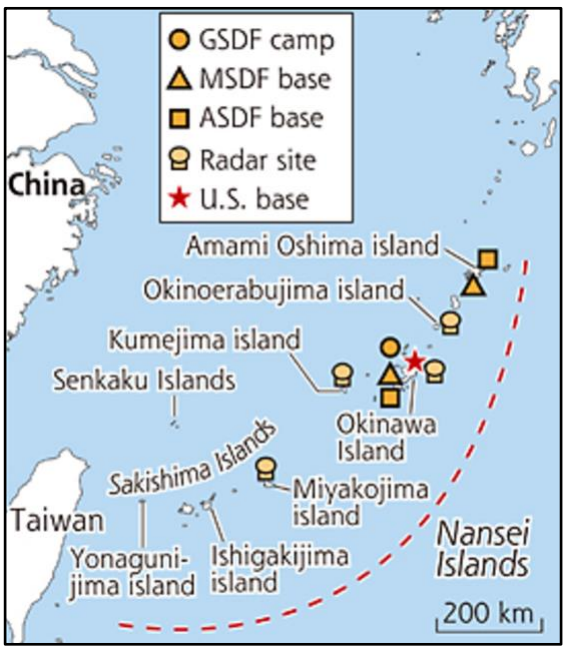

Image 10. Source: http://apjjf.org/2011/9/1/Gavan-McCormack/3464/article.html

In addition to the aforementioned land radars and EAW assets, necessary to maintain a constant situational awareness, Japan is expanding and improving its fighter units. Having reorganized one reconnaissance squadron into a fighter one, the ASDF now deploys 13 fighter squadrons, for a total of 280 aircraft[284]. Notably, it increased the number of fighter squadrons at Naha from one to two[285], along with the EAW unit mentioned above. This is a further signal of Japan's intention to strengthen its defense posture in the ECS in response to China. In terms of procurement, it is upgrading its existing fleet of F-15Js and F-2s, and more importantly it is going to introduce up to 42 F-35As to replace its aging F-4EJs Kai Phantom[286]; with the first four exemplars scheduled to be delivered in 2017[287]. It should be noted that despite having advanced stealth and networking features, the F-35A is not the ideal choice to substitute the F-4EJ as an interceptor, and it is also more expensive than other alternatives; in fact, it was essentially selected for political reasons. Apart from this, Japan is also "doubling its aerial-refuelling capability to two squadrons - possibly via upgrades to Lockheed Martin C-130H transport aircraft"[288]. These units "will enable fighter aircraft units and air warning units, etc. to carry out various operations sustainably in the air space surrounding Japan"[289]. Finally, "[t]he MTDP instructs the ASDF to […] strengthen the fleet's self-

[284]Hardy 2014, 8; NDPG 2013, 31.
[285]MTDP 2013, 5, 7; Grønning 2014, 6.
[286]Hardy 2014, 8; MTDP 2013, 7. Notably, all these aircraft were the result of co-production with the US. The F-2 is based on the design of the F-16.
[287]Grønning 2014, 6.
[288]Hardy 2014, 8; see also NDPG 2013, 31.
[289]NDPG 2013, 23.

protection and electronic warfare capabilities, and upgrade the Patriot surface to air missile (SAM) system in order to strengthen the SDF's air defense and rapid response capability in the southwestern region against the PLAAF's rapidly growing fourth-generation fighter capabilities"[290]. Notably, the Patriot is being upgraded to become more effective against incoming missiles, a response to China's progress in that domain.

The other prerequisite to ensure deterrence and to perform joint operations (which are particularly important in the ECS) is to achieve naval supremacy; which is of primary relevance when discussing about maritime security and the protection of the SLOC.
Tokyo has undertaken a reorganization and relocation of its forces to face possible contingencies in the ECS, starting with the MSDF assets. In relation to operations to retake remote islands, the last MTDP states that "[i]n defense of the seas surrounding Japan *and to ensure the security of maritime traffic*, the SDF will effectively conduct various activities including holding persistent ISR and anti-submarine operations; procuring Aegis-equipped destroyers (DDG), destroyer (DD), submarines, fixed-wing patrol aircraft (P-1) and patrol helicopters (SH-60K); and conducting service-extension activities on existing destroyers, submarines, fixed-wing patrol aircraft (P-3C) and patrol helicopters (SH-60J) […]. At the same time, it will introduce new compact-type hull destroyers with multifunctional capabilities"[291]. An almost identical formula is used in regard to "strengthen the posture to conduct persistent ISR"[292]; indicating the intention to employ these means for such activities as well, as seen above.
In practice, Japan intends to increase the number of its surface vessels (destroyers and frigates) from 47 to 54. This includes two more Aegis-equipped destroyers with ABM purposes (for a total of 8 units)[293]. Apart from commissioning more warships, the plans also include to introduce the new improved *Akizuki* class (the first unit "is expected to be completed around 2017"[294]) that is "designed to provide escort to the Aegis-equipped BMD-tasked destroyers while bringing ASW, anti-air warfare, and anti-surface warfare capabilities to the destroyer flotillas"[295]. In regard to these operative units, the MSDF "will retain four flotillas mainly consisting of one helicopter destroyer (DDH), and two Aegis-equipped destroyers (DDG). Five divisions will consist of other destroyers as well.

[290]Grønning 2014, 6.
[291]MTDP 2013, 8. Emphasis added.
[292] MTDP 2013, 6.
[293] Hardy 2014, 11; NDPG 2013, 31. The Aegis is an advanced US-made BMD system.
[294] Hardy 2014, 13.
[295] Hardy 2014, 13-14.

Necessary measures to increase the number of submarines will also be continued"[296]. These four flotillas will include a total of eight divisions[297]. The reorganization will allow "more of these assets to be deployed to the East China Sea"[298].

As noted, Tokyo also plans to expand its submarine fleet from 16 to 22 units (bringing the divisions from 5 to 6), a move that aims both at reinforcing its already advanced ASW capabilities in response to the PLAN growing submarine force[299] and at providing the MSDF with strategic assets that are not threatened by Chinese ASBMs[300]. For what concerns airplanes, in the same anti-submarine logic, Japan plans "to purchase 10 Kawasaki P-1 maritime patrol aircraft, 26 Sikorsky-Mitsubishi SH-60K patrol helicopters"[301] and to extend the service life of existing P-3Cs and SH-60Js; as noted above. The total squadrons of patrol aircraft will be 9[302].

But more importantly, in recent years Japan has been deploying several of what it defines as "helicopter destroyers" (DDH). By the end of 2016, these consist of two *Hyuga*-class and one larger and more advanced *Izumo*-class, with another one to be commissioned soon. Now, these ships represent an important yet controversial point. In reality, they are "helicopter carriers optimised for ASW operations"[303]; and the unusual designation is essentially due to the constraints imposed by Japan's Constitution on the possession of offensive assets[304]. Sometimes, vessels of this kind are considered "as a *de facto* aircraft carrier that could potentially be used to launch short takeoff fighter aircraft, although no such plans have been publically entertained by Japanese defense planners to date"[305]. While it is true that these assets could theoretically perform such operations, it is unlikely this will actually happen due to constitutional restrains as well as technical limitations[306]. For what concerns the *Hyuga*-class ships, they are small and their design is less susceptible of being modified to host fixed-wing aircraft. Regarding the *Izumo*-class units (the largest class of warship built by Japan since WWII), the first problem is that "the ship's basic design lacks the size of catapult assisted take-off barrier arrested recovery

[296] MTDP 2013, 5. Emphasis added.
[297] A division is a tactical unit smaller than a flotilla.
[298] Grønning 2014, 5.
[299] Hardy 2014, 13.
[300] Grønning 2014, 13.
[301] Hardy 2014, 11.
[302] NDPG 2013, 31.
[303] Hardy 2014, 13.
[304] See http://cimsec.org/japans-izumo-class-helicopter-destroyer-aircraft-carrier-disguise/24130
[305] Grønning 2014, 5.
[306] For the source of the following assessments on the *Izumo*-class (and *Hyuga*-class) and for more details, see http://cimsec.org/japans-izumo-class-helicopter-destroyer-aircraft-carrier-disguise/24130

(CATOBAR) carriers"[307]. This means it can only operate VTOL or STOVL[308] aircraft. Now, the F-35B (the STOVL version of the aircraft) would represent the best solution, also because Japan is involved in the F-35 program and is going to introduce the F-35A for the JASDF. But in practice, Tokyo has showed no intention to acquire the F-35B. Another problem comes from the fact that the *Izumo*-class ships are not equipped with the special heat-resistant coating necessary to withstand the extremely high temperatures generated by the engines of aircraft taking off and landing vertically. As a result, its "offensive" capabilities are limited; but it cannot be excluded that future upgrades and the procurement of F-35Bs will transform them in light aircraft carriers. In any case, it should be noted that *Izumo*-class units also possess consistent capabilities to support amphibious assault operations, as they "have the capacity to embark up to 400 marines and approximately 50 light vehicles"[309]. In conclusion, these "helicopter destroyers" are valuable assets primarily conceived to conduct amphibious assaults and to perform ASW operations thanks to the helicopters they carry on board (up to 14 for the *Izumo*), but they have the potential to evolve into actual light aircraft carriers in the future.

Finally, Tokyo has also given importance to mine warfare operations, in terms of both laying and sweeping mines at sea. In this regard, it "already possesses a large inventory of mines" and the "MSDF boasts the *Uraga*-class minesweeping tender and submarines that can be armed to lay mines"; in addition, the P-3Cs and P-1s aircraft can deliver sea mines as well[310], and the MSDF are also planning to buy "five more AgustaWestland MCH101 minesweeping and transport helicopters"[311].

This focus on ASW and minesweeping assets is particularly relevant, since it clearly shows Japan's concern over the protection of the SLOC. As a matter of fact, submarines and sea mines represent a major threat to free shipping due to their stealthy nature. Given that the continuity of maritime traffic is a vital national interest for Tokyo, it essential for it to develop means to counter this menace; in perfect accordance with the Components of Power theory.

IV.2.1.1 – The Operational Capabilities of the JSDF

Having examined the prerequisites of Japan's seapower, it is possible to describe what kind of joint operations the JSDF is expected to conduct to ensure deterrence and respond

[307] See http://cimsec.org/japans-izumo-class-helicopter-destroyer-aircraft-carrier-disguise/24130
[308] Respectively, Vertical Take Off and Landing and Short Take Off and Vertical Landing.
[309] See http://cimsec.org/japans-izumo-class-helicopter-destroyer-aircraft-carrier-disguise/24130
[310] The two quotes and the information on the aircraft were taken from Yoshihara 2014, 7.
[311] Hardy 2014, 11.

in the case of a contingency in the ECS.

The first one consists in countering missile attacks, in particular those conducted using ballistic missiles. This aspect is relevant because "[w]hile Japanese authorities maintain that its BMD efforts are developed to defend against North Korean missiles, the very same system has the potential to defend against Chinese missiles, including People's Liberation Army (PLA) Second Artillery Corps' large and rapidly modernizing inventories of short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), land-attack cruise missiles (LACMs), and anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) capable of targeting most of Japan's territory"[312]. Chinese missiles represent a significant threat for Tokyo; as they could be employed to attack Japan's territory and military assets, to disrupt the SLOC (by targeting ships navigating in the ECS), and finally to implement an A2/AD strategy to interdict a US intervention in the area. In this regard, the most significant and discussed menace is represented by the DF-21D.

To respond to this kind of threat, Japan "has steadily built up its own multi-tier defense system against ballistic missile attacks, by such means as installing ballistic missile defense capability to the Aegis-equipped destroyers and deploying the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3)"[313], which "can be used both for response to cruise missiles and aircraft and for BMD"[314]. As a result, "Japan's BMD is an effective multi-tier defense system with the upper tier interception by Aegis-equipped destroyers [armed with SM-3 missiles] and the lower tier by Patriot PAC-3, both interconnected and coordinated by the Japan Aerospace Defense Ground Environment (JADGE)"[315]. In regard to the former, Tokyo plans to acquire two more vessels (for a total of 8 units)[316]. Finally, measures have been taken to ensure early warning, by the means of fixed radars as well as assets like the possible introduction of RQ-4 Global Hawk, whose "infrared sensor technology would significantly strengthen Japan's BMD system by tracking low-altitude incoming missiles otherwise out of sight of Japan's ground- and sea-based BMD radars"[317].

Another core mission of the JSDF is to retake remote islands, a definition that may apply

[312] Grønning 2014, 6. It should be reminded that the PLA Second Artillery Corp has been renamed "PLA Rocket Force" on 1st January 2016.
[313] WP 2016, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, 7.
[314] MTDP 2013, 7 and 11.
[315] WP 2016, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, 7.
[316] Hardy 2014, 11; NDPG 2013, 31.
[317] Grønning 2014, 6.

to the Senkaku and to the Ryukyu as well. Apart from being a way to ensure Japan's territorial integrity (and claims, in the case of the Senkaku) this is a relevant task in relation to maritime security: the power controlling the islands in the ECS can deploy valuable military assets on their soil to threaten the SLOC of the adversary and to close / open the access for US forces. As a result, for Japan it is vital to protect and if necessary bring them back under its control; otherwise, its vital shipping lines would be threatened and the access to the ECS would be lost, making a US intervention more difficult. It is significant to note Tokyo's determination in this regard: "[i]n responding to an attack on remote islands, Japan will intercept and defeat any invasion, […] [m]oreover, should any remote islands be invaded, Japan will recapture them"[318].

In order to accomplish this mission, "the GSDF will transform two divisions and two brigades respectively into two rapid deployment divisions and two rapid deployment brigades that are furnished with advanced mobility and ISR capabilities", as well as establishing a coast observation unit[319]. According to the 2013 NDPG, the number of regional divisions and brigades is being reduced to create more rapid deployment units, namely 3 divisions and 4 brigades[320]. Their transport will likely be assured by the 3 air transport squadrons of the ASDF [321]. But to actually be able to retake the islands, it is necessary to possess the capability to conduct amphibious operations (which in turn requires the obtainment of aero-naval superiority). To this end, the GSDF will establish "an "Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (provisional name)" equipped with a full function for amphibious operations"[322]; thus showing that Japan is establishing "a small Marine Corps-style force"[323]. Other measures to protect the remote islands include the deployment of "an area security unit in charge of the initial responses" as well as the transfer of a second fighter squadron to Naha[324]. Finally, due to the need to obtain air and maritime superiority as a precondition to amphibious operation, all the assets described above in that regard (destroyers, fighters, etc.) are also extremely valuable.

In terms of procurement, the JSDF are acquiring specific platforms. In particular, "in order to secure capabilities for swift and large-scale transportation and deployment of units, initiatives are underway to enhance rapid deployment capabilities through: the

[318] NDPG 2013, 14.
[319] MTDP 2013, 4.
[320] NDPG 2013, 31.
[321] NDPG 2013, 31.
[322] WP 2016, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, 6.
[323] Grønning 2014, 5.
[324] The quote and the information both come from WP 2016, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, 6.

improvement of Osumi class transport LST (Landing Ship, Tank); […] and the introduction of V-22 Ospreys"[325]. The latter can also operate from the *Osumi*-class units[326], thus "enhancing their amphibious assault capability"[327].

Moreover, "[t]he Osumi-class upgrades also include applying heat-resistant paint to the flight deck, which could make it possible for US Marine Corps F-35Bs to land and take off from the vessels"[328]; even if by now Japan has shown no intention to buy that version of the aircraft.

For what concerns the amphibious rapid deployment brigade, "[t]he MoD plans to equip it with 52 amphibious assault vehicles, which are likely to be based on the US Marine Corps' BAE Systems AAV7A1"[329]. Finally, in regard to other "generic" rapid deployment units, Japan plans to continue the procurement of transport planes (C-2) and helicopters (CH-47JA) and to consider the substitution of the UH-1J[330]. The already mentioned tilt-rotor V-22 is another vehicle to be used in this regard. To increase their mobility on land, there are plans to equip these units with "[m]obile combat vehicles transportable by airlift[331]"; which may include the procurement of 99 Maneuver Combat Vehicles (MCVs)[332].

Lastly, the reorganization and the new procurements of the JSDF can also be interpreted as Tokyo's efforts to implement its own A2/AD strategy; although this is never explicitly mentioned in the relevant documents on its defense policy. In this way, Japan aims to "impose high costs on an attempted Chinese bid to seize the initiative with a rapid first move, possibly involving pre-emptive strikes. The strategy's goal is to increase the likelihood of forcing Beijing into a stalemate, buying time for the United States to rush reinforcements into the combat theater"[333]. In this regard, "Tokyo has already begun taking steps to: 1) make the most of its unique maritime geography, 2) invest in warfighting missions where it enjoys a competitive lead; 3) strengthen the wherewithal to absorb punishment; and 4) explore joint campaign plans to strengthen U.S.-Japan allied

[325] WP 2016, Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, 6.
[326] http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/japan/osumi.htm
Officially, the *Osumi*-class units are classified as LST. But as they can carry helicopters, sometimes they are labelled as LHD (Landing Helicopter Dock). Finally, due to its inability to deploy vehicles directly on shore, they are often considered as a LSD (Landing Ship, Dock).
[327] Hardy 2014, 13.
[328] Hardy 2014, 12.
[329] Hardy 2014, 10.
[330] MTDP 2013, 8.
[331] MTDP 2013, 9.
[332] Hardy 2014, 11.
[333] Yoshihara 2014, 6.

operations. Taken together, these measures can impose costs on China's anti-access strategy"[334].

In practice, this means exploiting Japan's geographic position as the "gatekeeper" of the ECS (due to its control over the Ryukyu) to deny the PLAN access to the open ocean. In this logic, submarines and mine-deploying assets would allow Tokyo to block the narrow straits through which the Chinese vessels would have to pass. This strategy would be even more effective considering the PLAN's longstanding deficiencies in ASW and minesweeping operations. Additionally, the islands could become the bases to launch hit-and-run strikes by using "[s]warms of stealthy, speedy, missile-armed craft"[335] such as the *Hayabusa*-class. Moreover, "Japan also appears to be contemplating offensive missile capabilities to serve the purpose of deterrence"[336]: as a matter of fact, the latest NDPG states that "The GSDF will maintain surface-to-ship guided missile units in order to prevent invasion of Japan's remote islands"[337]; and the MTDP has similar indications[338]. As such, the 5 anti-ship missile regiments[339] of the GSDF are deploying ASCMs with shoot-and-scoot capabilities like the Type 88 and the more recent Type 12 with enhanced range, precision and survivability as means to deny Chinese warships the ability to operate in the ECS. Finally, to further limit the possibility of counterstrikes against missile batteries, Japan is deploying SAM (Surface-to-Air Missile) units[340], is improving the infrastructures on the Ryukyu, and is distributing its forces in different bases[341].

Once more, this demonstrates that Japan has adopted a defense strategy based on deterrence, in accordance with Defensive Realism. But such considerations on the A2/AD capabilities of the JSDF show another crucial aspect, namely the importance to slow down eventual Chinese actions so to allow the arrival of US forces. This allows to pass to the examination of the alliance with Washington, which is the second axis of Tokyo's security strategy.

[334] Yoshihara 2014, 6.
[335] Yoshihara 2014, 7.
[336] Grønning,2014, 6.
[337] NDPG 2013, 22.
[338] See MTDP 2013, 8, 10, 33.
[339] NDPG 2013, 31.
[340] A total of 7 groups / regiments for the GSDF and 6 groups for the ASDF; see NDPG 2013, 31. To this, it is possible to add the MSDF vessels with anti-air capabilities.
[341] For the source on Japan's A2/AD strategy and more details on it, see Yoshihara, 2014, 6 to 10.

IV.2.2 – The Second Pillar: The Role of the US in Japan's Maritime Security Strategy

As seen above, the 2015 Guidelines are the most important and recent document regarding the Japan-US alliance. Even though they are not binding, they still organize the defense cooperation between the two countries on the basis of the Security Treaty.

The fundamental collaboration is granted by the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM), which aims to "strengthen policy and operational coordination related to activities conducted by the Self-Defense Forces and the United States Armed Forces"[342]. The document contains provisions to favor enhanced operational coordination and bilateral planning[343], as well as more practical measures. In particular, to ensure Japan's security in the case of a contingency, the two powers will use the ACM to evaluate the situation, share information and take the necessary measures[344]; whereas in peacetime, the objective is essentially "to strengthen the deterrence and capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance"[345]. This commitment to deterrence is notable, as it is the typical stance of a Defensive Realist State that uses it to avoid war, also (as in this case) by closing ties with its allies.

Operationally, the two powers will work together in various activities such as ISR, BMD, training, logistic support, and most notably in maritime security. In this regard, "[t]he two governments will cooperate closely with each other on measures to maintain maritime order based upon international law, *including freedom of navigation*"[346]. The same engagement exists in the case of "Responses to Emerging Threats to Japan's Peace and Security"[347], as "the two governments will cooperate closely to enhance maritime security"[348]. The document then examines the eventuality of an actual armed attack on Japan. At first, it considers the *anticipation* of an attack, in which case the two parties will share information and coordinate their efforts to deter the aggression and de-escalate the situation. If the attack actually takes place, then "Japan and the United States will cooperate to repel promptly the attack and deter any further attacks"[349].

It is important to note that "[t]he Self-Defense Forces will have the primary responsibility to conduct defensive operations in Japan and its surrounding waters and airspace, as well as its air and maritime approaches. The United States will coordinate closely with Japan

[342] Guidelines 2015, 3.
[343] Guidelines 2015, 3-4.
[344] Guidelines 2015, 4-5.
[345] Guidelines 2015, 5.
[346] Guidelines 2015, 6. Emphasis added.
[347] Guidelines 2015, 7.
[348] Guidelines 2015, 8.
[349] Guidelines 2015, 10.

and provide appropriate support"[350]. This provision, apart from showing the importance of maritime security, also helps to understand the recent shift in Tokyo's broader security strategy: for a number of reasons (fear of US abandonment, American opposition to free-riding practices by allies, etc.) Japan openly acknowledges to have the primary responsibility for its own national defense. As such, in the context of a growing threat from neighboring countries (notably China), it is enhancing its military capabilities while also reinforcing the alliance with Washington. This confirms again Japan's attitude as a Defensive Realist State that ultimately relies on self-help, while still attempting to maximize its security through alliances.

Anyway, in the eventuality of an attack on Japan the ACM would be pivotal to coordinate the defense of the country, and "[t]he United States will employ forward-deployed forces, including those stationed in Japan, and introduce reinforcements from elsewhere, as required"[351]. This makes once more clear why it is paramount for Tokyo to ensure aero-naval supremacy over the ECS; as this maritime region is essential for any US intervention in the case of a contingency. Moreover, it is remarkable that "[t]he Self-Defense Forces and the United States Armed Forces will conduct bilateral operations to defend waters surrounding Japan *and to secure the safety of sea lines of communication*"[352]. Another notable point is that, in describing the activities the JSDF would perform (notably "coastal defense, anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, mine warfare, anti-air warfare, and air interdiction"[353]), the Guidelines also mention that Japan and the US "will cooperate *in the interdiction of shipping activities providing support to adversaries* involved in the armed attack"[354]. Since China is also heavily reliant on the SLOC, this provision can be interpreted as another way to bolster deterrence "against" the PRC.

Then, the Guidelines deal with the eventuality of an attack on Japan's soil; again, the JSDF would have the primary role in repelling the aggression (including on islands), and the US would have a support role. Finally, the document considers the case of cross-domain operations and actions to defend a third party (collective self-defense, now possible under certain conditions due to the reinterpretation of the Constitution by Abe's government in 2014).

[350] Guidelines 2015, 10-11.
[351] Guidelines 2015, 11.
[352] Guidelines 2015, 12. Emphasis added.
[353] Guidelines 2015, 12.
[354] Guidelines 2015, 12. Emphasis added.

IV.2.2.1 – The Operational Capabilities of America's Seapower

Having outlined the general content of the Japan-US defense cooperation, it is possible to examine how Washington can materially contribute to Tokyo's security, notably in the maritime domain.

It is well known that the US have been the (maritime) security provider in the Asia-Pacific since the end of WWII. As such, "[t]he United States, a Pacific nation, continues to play an important role in ensuring the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region by placing the Pacific Command, a joint command […] in the region. The Pacific Command is a command with regional responsibilities for the largest geographical area, and its component commands include U.S. Forces Japan and U.S. Forces Korea"[355]. It has at its dependencies units from all the four branches of the US military. The Navy deploys the US Pacific Fleet, which counts about 200 ships. It includes the 7th Fleet responsible for the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean; that "consists of an aircraft carrier, amphibious ships, and Aegis cruisers and destroyers"[356] and has its main bases in Japan and Guam. In addition, there is also the 3rd Fleet (West Pacific and Bering Strait).

Then, "The U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific deploys one Marine Expeditionary Force each in the U.S. mainland and Japan. Of this force, about 16,000 personnel are in the 3rd Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, which are equipped with F/A-18 fighters and other aircraft, in Japan. In addition, maritime pre-positioning ships loaded with heavy equipment and others are deployed in the Western Pacific"[357].

For what concerns the USAF, it has the 5th Air Force (consisting of three wings equipped with F-16 and C-130 aircraft) stationed in Japan; and it is possible to add the two F-16 wings of the 7th Air Force in South Korea.

Finally, the US Army has assets in the Hawaii islands (25th Infantry Division), in the RoK (8th Army) and Alaska, as well as personnel detachments in many countries including Japan[358].

This overview is sufficient to show the importance of American military forces in the region. Apart from being the result of a longstanding commitment, this is also the consequence of President Obama's "rebalance" to the Asia-Pacific, which is based on a more intense focus on the area in both diplomatic and military terms. In regard to the second aspect, this policy was confirmed in the latest US Quadrennial Defense Review

[355] WP 2016, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, 11.
[356] WP 2016, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, 11.
[357] WP 2016, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, 11.
[358] In general, the above information regarding the forces of the US Pacific Command were taken from WP 2016, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, 11-12.

(QDR), which "states that the centerpiece of the DoD [Department of Defense] commitment to the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region is to update and enhance security initiatives with its allies in the region, including Japan. Additionally, the QDR notes that by 2020, the U.S. Forces would station 60% of the assets of the Navy and Air Force in the Asia-Pacific region"[359].

In this context, it is clear that one of Washington's major strategic concerns in recent years has been the rise of the PRC. This is one of the main reasons because of which "the United States also promotes the Third Offset Strategy […] to develop military technologies in new fields to maintain and increase the superiority of the U.S. Forces, deeming that its military superiority is gradually eroding in light of recent trends, including China and other countries' enhanced "Anti-Access/Area-Denial" ("A2/AD") capabilities"[360]. This strategy is meant "to strengthen deterrence using conventional assets against great powers, taking Russia and China into account"[361]. Notably, as a mean to defeat the A2/AD capabilities of the PRC (and other countries), the US "is studying the concept of a Conventional Prompt Global Strike (CPGS), [which] is designed to cripple the A2 capabilities of an adversary and promptly strike a target anywhere in the world using non-nuclear long-range precision guided missiles that hit targets with high accuracy"[362]. As a result, this new strategy should ensure that "the U.S. Forces could defeat a regional adversary in a large-scale multi-phased campaign, and deny the objectives of—or imposing unacceptable costs on—another aggressor in another region[363]".

So, the alliance with the Washington is still so important for Tokyo because it is a powerful way to balance Beijing. As a result, it is clear why "Japan has taken concrete policy measures to strengthen Japan–US defense cooperation"[364]. To provide some relevant examples, "Japan has been making steady efforts to develop the BMD system while continuing cooperation with the U.S., including the steady implementation of joint development of the Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) Block IIA"[365]. They have also cooperated in developing the F-35, and the fact that Japan has chosen it to replace the F-4EJ "was most likely highly influenced by alliance politics and motivated by a Japanese desire to strengthen bilateral defense relations"[366] (as the F-35A is not optimized for the role of

[359] WP 2016, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, 5.
[360] WP 2016, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, 2.
[361] WP 2016, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, 7.
[362] WP 2016, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, 9 (the second quote is from note 20 on that page).
[363] WP 2016, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, 3.
[364] Grønning 2014, 7.
[365] DB 2016, 160.
[366] Grønning 2014, 7. Japan's MoD denies these allegations.

interceptor the F-4EJ had). Again, the US has deployed P-8 patrol planes to Kadena air base in Okinawa[367] (thus reinforcing ISR and ASW capabilities); American aircraft should be moved from Atsugi to Iwakuni in 2017[368], bringing it closer to the ECS; and the two countries keep on conducting military exercises together so to improve the ability to conduct joint operations and to increase Japan's expertise in amphibious assaults[369]. Further measures include collaboration in cyberspace, outer space and information security; promoting trilateral cooperation (notably with powers like the RoK, Australia or India); discussing Japan's financial contribution to the maintenance of American forces under the Host Nation Support obligations; and others[370].

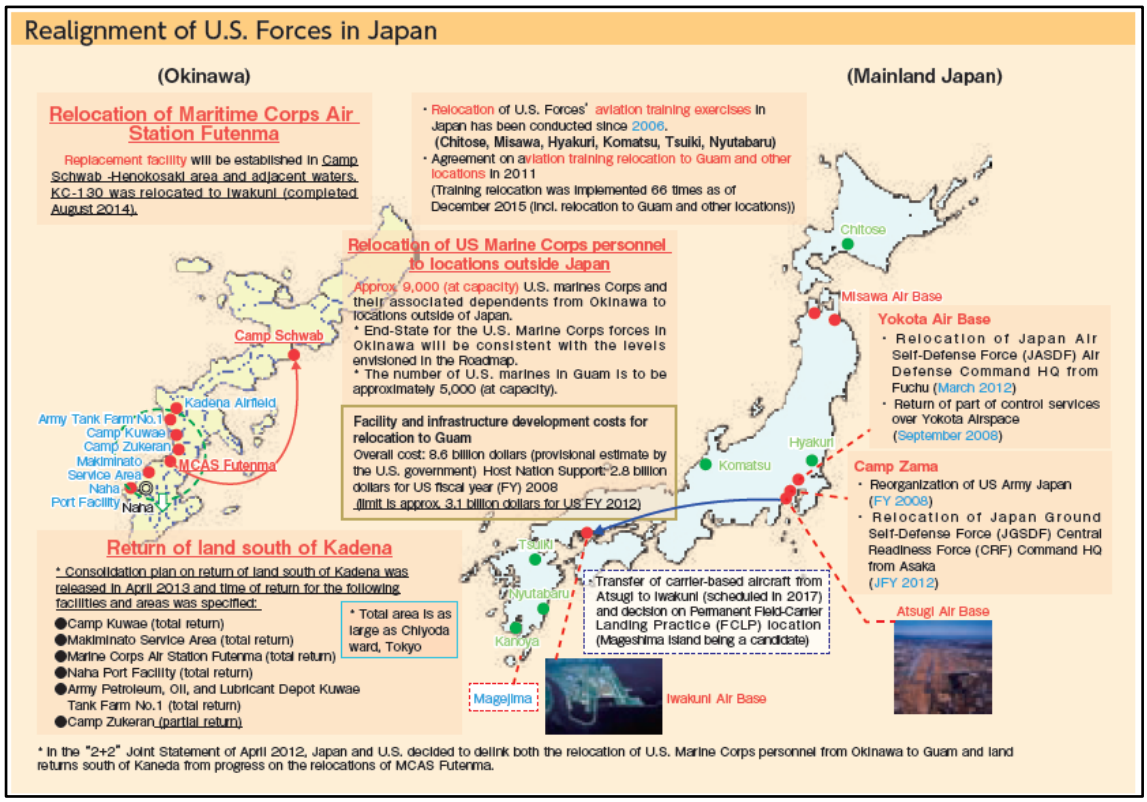

Image 11. Source: DB 2016, 162.

These elements make it clear why the US plays such an important role in Japan's security strategy. Apart from having been Tokyo's ally for decades, Washington is equally concerned by Beijing's growing (aero-naval) power and is determined to ensure the safety of the SLOC and freedom of navigation. As they share common interests, Japan and the US cooperate on the basis of a defensive alliance. Moreover, there is a strategic complementarity in the interests of the two powers: on the one hand, the Alliance justifies

[367] WP 2016, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1, 6.
[368] DB 2016, 162.
[369] Some examples are the *Keen Sword* and *Dawn Blitz* exercises; see Grønning 2014, 8-9.
[370] For more details, see DB 2016, 160 to 166.

America's presence in the Asia-Pacific; on the other hand, it represents for Japan an additional and extremely valuable guarantee for its national security. As such, the Alliance is an integral component of its strategy to maximize security, since American military assets are a formidable mean to balance Beijing and preserve Tokyo's vital interest in maritime security. In fact, the (increasing) presence of US forces and their efforts to counter the A2/AD strategy of the PRC complete and reinforce Japan's own capabilities to obtain aero-naval superiority and to perform ASW, amphibious, BMD, and other types of operations that are essential to ensure maritime security in the ECS, which also means protecting the SLOC passing through it. Finally, it should be reminded that Washington is responsible for protecting the SLOC in other areas located beyond Japan's range (such as the SCS, the Indian Ocean, etc.).

This shows that the two axes of Japan's security strategy are mutually complementary: the Alliance allows Tokyo not to rely only on self-help, and at the same time strengthening its own defense capabilities enables Japan to gain strategic autonomy (also as an insurance to a hypothetical American withdrawal), to reduce accusations of free-riding, and provides it with the means to resist until the arrival of US forces in the case of a contingency; thus permitting the Alliance to work.

IV.3 – Final Remarks on Japan's Maritime Security Strategy: An Example of Defensive Realism

This study on the implementation of Japan's maritime security strategy in the ECS (and in particular on the protection of the SLOC) has demonstrated that Tokyo is behaving in accordance with Defensive Realism integrated by the Components of Power theory.

Having to cope with the rise of China and its growing seapower, which poses a potential yet major threat to one of its vital interests, Japan reacted to maintain the existing equilibrium to preserve its security. As such, it based its defense posture on two pillars: improving its own military capabilities in the aero-naval domain, and reinforcing the security ties with the US. The emphasis on the southwestern region and the ECS, on maritime security and the SLOC, on obtaining the aero-naval superiority, on Beijing's military build-up and assertiveness, and on the importance of cooperating with Washington prove that Tokyo is behaving in line with the aforementioned theoretical framework and that it is applying a more balancing-based defense policy.

As a final proof, it is possible to present Grønning's point of view, since it fully endorses the findings of this study: "*Japan's shifting military priorities represent a traditional or*

hard counterbalancing response to perceived Chinese aggressiveness in the maritime domain and the shifting distribution of capabilities in China's favor. Japan's balancing has manifested itself both internally through a comprehensive revision of the JSDF's force posture and military capabilities and externally through efforts to strengthen the Japan–US alliance framework and more generally the US military presence in the region"[371]. This final statement confirms in the clearest way that Japan is acting in conformity with Defensive Realism and the Components of Power theory, and that its maritime security strategy has moved toward balancing in response to China's growing seapower.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to apply a Defensive Realist framework to examine the evolution of Japan's maritime security strategy as a reaction to the rise of China, notably for what concerns the protection of the SLOC.

After having defined the adopted theoretical perspective (Defensive Realism integrated by the Components of Power theory), the work proceeded to the actual examination of Japan's security strategy, in particular in the maritime domain.

It was seen that, during the Cold War, a Soviet invasion of the Japanese islands was considered as the main threat; as such, Tokyo showed little concern over Beijing and over maritime security. On the basis of the Yoshida Doctrine, Japan's main objective in that period was to boost economic development, and it preferred to rely on the US as a security provider. However, things started changing after the end of the bipolar confrontation: new potential threats started to emerge during the 90s, including China. Thus, Japan gradually moved toward a more active role in security matters, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the US. In the meanwhile, Beijing's fast economic growth was accompanied by a military modernization program and more assertiveness in international affairs. In particular, Tokyo was worried of its neighbor's growing aero-naval capabilities, which could pose a threat to its maritime security and to the safety of the SLOC. As a result, Japan gradually moved its strategy toward hedging. It means that, while still attempting to cooperate with the PRC, it also started adopting measures to improve its security to cope with a potential Chinese threat.

After examining the evolution of Sino-Japanese bilateral relations, the attention passed

[371] Grønning 2014, 15. Emphasis added.

on the military build-up of Beijing (notably in aero-naval terms) so to explain the origin of Tokyo's concern. Its defense policy was then analyzed, and this showed that it has shifted toward balancing to face the maritime threat posed by China, on the basis of two pillars: improving the capabilities of the JSDF and closing defense ties with the US.
Finally, the examination of the ECS case-study showed how Japan's maritime security policy is actually being implemented to cope with the aero-naval menace from China, thus proving the shift of Tokyo's strategy toward balancing.

At this point, it is possible to conclude with a final remark on how Japan's maritime security strategy is consistent with Defensive Realism and the Components of Power theory.
Tokyo is deeply aware of the prominent factors characterizing its strategic environment; most notably of its dependence on the SLOC and maritime safety (which therefore represent an essential national interest), and the recent shifts in the regional power balance. As anarchy dominates the international order, Japan is aware that it must rely first and foremost on its own forces to protect its interests. The emphasis on the primary role of the JSDF as the guarantee of its national security in defense-related documents proves that Tokyo is conscious of the importance of self-help. But ensuring security does not only mean to preserve its territorial integrity and sovereignty, but also to protect any vital national interest that is essential for the existence of the state.
Maritime security is certainly one of such interests for Japan, as it depends on the SLOC for energy and food supply, and more in general for its economic prosperity. Thus, protecting them is a vital interest for Tokyo. Again, this is demonstrated by the emphasis on its reliance on maritime trade and on its interest in preserving the freedom of navigation. As such, Japan is attentive to the regional balance of power, as any change can lead to the emergence of threats to its security and cause instability. In recent years, the rise of the PRC has provoked a shift in the regional power balance; as result, Japan has shifted its security strategy to cope with the emerging threat.
It is important to note that, consistently with the Components of Power theory, the primary cause of Tokyo's concern in relation to Beijing is the latter's growing power in the specific aero-naval domain, as it poses a potential yet *major* threat to Japan's *vital* interest in maritime security and the safety of the SLOC. Once more, the proof lies in the insistence on China's rise in Japanese governmental publications, especially on its provocative actions in the ECS and on the threat this poses on Japan's maritime security.

So, as the distribution of relative power is turning in Beijing's favor, Tokyo is shifting to balancing to preserve the *status quo*. In accordance with Defensive Realism, its strategy is based on two pillars, namely on improving its own military capabilities and on reinforcing its security ties with the US. This is proven by Japanese defense-related documents, which mention the two components multiple times.

However, despite its concern over the PRC and the resulting balancing strategy, Japan clearly prefers to avoid conflict. In adherence with Defensive Realism, its initial stance toward China was collaborative. But as Beijing's assertiveness and relative power started to grow (especially in the aero-naval domain, thus posing a major threat to Tokyo's vital interest in preserving the SLOC), the latter changed its attitude as it felt that cooperation was no longer possible and that dialogue was not an effective mean to solve the existing disputes. Still, Japan shows to prefer a peaceful resolution of the tensions: while expressing its firm determination to respond to any contingency and while acquiring the means to do so, it still attempts to establish confidence-building measures with the PRC. Again, this supports the claim that Japan is a Defensive Realist State that considers war as the very last option to protect its interests. In line with these observations, Japan appears perfectly aware of the risks to trigger a security dilemma. So, while empowering its military and proclaiming its resolution in facing aggressive acts, it constantly emphasizes that it is doing that for strictly self-defense purposes and that it wants to remain a peace-loving nation according to the principles of its Constitution. This clearly indicates that Japan is practicing self-restrain and moderation; and once more, this is coherent the adopted theoretical framework.

In sum, the analysis of Japan's defense policy, and in particular of its maritime security strategy applied to the ECS, indicates that the country has actually modified its stance in response to China's growing relative power in the aero-naval domain. This demonstrates that Japan, while still preferring to reduce tensions and avoid conflict, has actually shifted to a balancing-based strategy centered on improving its own military power and on fostering the alliance with the US; which is in perfect adherence with Defensive Realism and the Components of Power theory. But as the situation continues to evolve, further research will be needed to assess the future changes in its maritime security strategy.

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Summary
The thesis examines the evolution of Japan's maritime security strategy by applying a defensive realist theoretical framework. More specifically, it analyzes the efforts of Japan to ensure the protection of the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) in relation to China's growing seapower. It is argued that, as the PRC becomes more powerful and assertive at sea, Japan is shifting to a balancing strategy to counter it.
The thesis starts with an Introduction that explains its objectives and the methodology that was adopted. This is followed by Chapter I, which describes the theoretical approach used to analyze the issue. Then, Chapter II shows how Tokyo's maritime security strategy changed in the 1945-2006 period. Chapter III initially presents the transformations in Sino-Japanese relations; then it describes the aero-naval military buildup of China; and lastly it examines Japan's defense policy to prove its shift toward balancing by examining its two pillars (namely reinforcing the JSDF and strengthening the alliance with the US). Finally, Chapter IV analyzes the empirical case of the East China Sea, initially by showing its strategic relevance and by presenting the dispute over the Senkaku / Diaoyu, and then by describing how Japan is practically acting to protect the SLOC in the region in a way consistent with balancing.
The thesis ends with a Conclusion that summarizes the previous findings and demonstrates that Japan's maritime security strategy has moved toward balancing, in accordance with the defensive realist framework.

Keywords
Japan, China, SLOC, Maritime Security, Defensive Realism