

China's "Nine Gates" and Security Policy in the Indo-Pacific Challenges for Japan*

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Abstract

China has been conducting forays through nine straits into the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is imperative for China to secure free use of these routes and gain the ability to prevent rival powers from using them. Of the nine straits that China is aiming to use, five lie within Japanese territorial waters, and the Self-Defense Forces are constantly carrying out monitoring and surveillance in these areas. The remaining four straits lie in the territorial waters of other nations, and since China's anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities are improving rapidly, keeping all nine straits constantly under surveillance, and closing them in the event of a contingency is now impossible. Challenges Therefore, in addition to strengthening its defense of the southwestern region and boosting the Self-Defense Forces' presence in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, Japan is also responding to Chinese forays by seeking to establish the rule of law in the seas and by helping capacity building in littoral states, based on the ideas set out in the free and open Indo-Pacific.

Introduction

On December 27, 2010, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper carried an analytical article under the headline "Oyogi-deru kyoryū: Kokonotsu no mon" (A Mighty Dragon Swims Out: China's Nine Gates), arguing that China was aiming to expand into the Indian and Pacific Oceans through a series of nine "exit gates." In the Pacific, these were a route from the Sea of Japan through the Sōya (or La Perouse) Strait, one from the East China Sea through the Miyako Strait and the southwestern Nansei Islands, and another from the Taiwan Strait through the Bashi Channel. In the Indian Ocean, the routes ran from the South China Sea through the Strait of Malacca, Sunda Strait, and Lombok Strait. The article quoted a Chinese military source who said it was imperative for China to secure free use of these routes and gain the ability to prevent rival powers from using them, since the routes were "kept under constant surveillance in times of peace, and could be closed in the event of a contingency."¹

In fact, China has been conducting forays through these nine straits into the Indo-Pacific since it first sent its navy into the Indian Ocean to help suppress piracy off the coast of Somalia in 2008. China's navy routinely carries out exercises and intelligence gathering in the East China Sea, and in the South China Sea China has carried out extensive reclamation projects on islands and shoals that are gradually being fitted for military purposes. At the same time, it regularly sends ships,

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¹ "Oyogi-deru kyoryū: Kokonotsu no mon" (A Mighty Dragon Swims Out: China's Nine Gates), *Asahi Shimbun*, December 27, 2010.

including submarines, into the Indian Ocean. China already possesses what is effectively an overseas base in Djibouti, and is generally assumed to be looking to build further overseas bases in the island nations of the Indian and Pacific Oceans as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. China also continues to carry out actions aimed at changing the status quo in the East China Sea and South China Sea, through a hybrid strategy using government ships and civilian fishing vessels. This maritime expansion is an issue of shared concern for littoral countries throughout the Indo-Pacific region. It is also a major challenge for Japan, from the perspective both of defending its territory and securing the safety of its sea lanes.

This paper considers the measures that Japan should take to respond more effectively to China's expansion into the Indian and Pacific Oceans through these nine straits, and the policies it should take to maintain the stability of its sea lanes and the international order based on the law of the sea. First, it reviews the current situation with regard to China's forays into the Indian and Pacific Oceans through these nine straits, then evaluates Japan's maritime security policy in the Indo-Pacific region. Lastly, it considers some of the ways in which Japan can respond more effectively to China's maritime intrusions and attempts to expand its influence.

1. China's Forays into the Indian and Pacific Oceans

In recent years, the naval branch of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been increasingly active in maritime regions of the Indo-Pacific.

In the East China Sea, the PLA now routinely carries out intelligence gathering and exercises by air and sea, and is carrying out forays into the Pacific Ocean with increasing frequency. The point most often used as an "exit point" on these forays is the Miyako Strait. In December 2016 and June 2019, a Chinese carrier passed through the Miyako Strait with a fleet of accompanying warships, and in January 2018 submarines were confirmed to have navigated submerged through the Miyako Strait into the East China Sea, demonstrating that the navy has increased its blue water operational capability. Additionally, Chinese warships are known to have passed through the Ōsumi Strait and Tokara Strait, confirming that the Chinese navy now uses various straits among the southwestern Nansei Islands as ways out into Pacific. In the skies, reconnaissance aircraft, fighters, bombers, and electronic warfare aircraft have also flown above the Miyako Strait into the Pacific.² In August 2017, six bombers flew through the Miyako Strait before approaching close to the Kii Peninsula. The US Department of Defense evaluates these flights as demonstrating that China has the capability to attack facilities belonging to the US Armed Forces and Japanese Self-Defense Forces on Honshu.³

These incursions by the PLA into the Pacific are related to increasing Chinese pressure on Taiwan since the government led by Tsai Ing-wen came to office in 2016. The PLA has carried out frequent flights around Taiwan with bombers and fighters, and there have also been increasingly frequent forays from the Bashi Channel through the Miyako Strait into the East China Sea, and from the Miyako Strait into the Bashi Channel.⁴ There have also been circumnavigations through the waters surrounding Taiwan by Chinese warships, including aircraft carriers. For example, in December 2016 a Chinese carrier passed through the Miyako Strait then navigated through the Bashi Channel and entered the South China Sea, before passing through the Strait of Taiwan and sailing toward the East China Sea.⁵ In April 2018, a Chinese carrier navigated from the South China Sea through the Bashi Channel into the Pacific, and from the Miyako Strait into the

² Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, September 2019, pp. 70–73.

³ US Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018*, May 16, 2018, p. 119.

⁴ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 73.

⁵ Ministry of National Defense of Taiwan, *National Defense Report 2017*, December 2017, p. 44.

East China Sea.⁶ In June 2019, a carrier navigated from the East China Sea through the Miyako Strait, then passed through the Bashi Channel into the South China Sea and through the Strait of Taiwan, according to a report by Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense.⁷

The PLA is also moving its ships and aircraft with increasing frequency from the East China Sea through the Tsushima Strait into the Sea of Japan. Incursions by ships into the Sea of Japan are nothing new, but in August 2016 and January 2017, navy ships and aircraft carried out naval exercises in the Sea of Japan. Since 2017, bombers, fighters, and reconnaissance planes of the Chinese air force have flown over the Tsushima Strait and entered the airspace above the Sea of Japan, and the frequency of these incursions is increasing rapidly. The navy has also increased its forays through the Tsugaru Strait and Sōya Strait into the Sea of Japan and the Pacific.⁸ In July 2019, Chinese and Russian bombers carried out joint patrols, in which planes passed from the East China Sea over the Tsushima Strait.⁹

China is moving ahead with militarization in the South China Sea, where it has territorial disputes with several neighboring countries. In the Paracel Islands, we know that China has been extending existing runways and deploying surface-to-air missiles to the region, and there have been confirmed take-offs and landings of fighter and bomber aircraft. Since 2014, China has undertaken large-scale land reclamation projects at seven locations in the Spratly Islands. It is known that China has constructed major runway facilities here, deployed surface-to-air and surface-to-ship missiles, and installed radar jamming equipment, as well as constructing port facilities, helipads, and radar and communications facilities.¹⁰ Although there have not yet been confirmed take-offs or landings of fighters or bombers on the Spratly Islands, there have been confirmed sightings of "combat air patrols" by bombers in the South China Sea.¹¹ If China converted the Spratly Islands to use as a base for bombers, it would gain the ability to operate into the Indian Ocean.¹² China has also deployed strategic nuclear submarines to Hainan Island,¹³ and is believed to have carried out numerous submarine operations in the South China Sea.

The PLA is also active in the Indian Ocean, from the perspective of what it calls "far sea defense" (*yuanyang huwei*). It has been involved in anti-piracy measures in the Gulf of Aden since 2008. In 2017, China opened a de facto overseas base in Djibouti, which it is actively using for logistics support. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, China is actively working on developing ports throughout the region, including Kyaukphyu in Myanmar, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, and Gwadar in Pakistan, and has taken a 99-year leasehold on Hambantota from Sri Lanka, after that country defaulted on loan repayments. It is likely that China regards these ports as

⁶ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 72; Joint Staff Press Release, "Chūgoku kaigun kantei no dōkō ni tsuite" (Regarding movements of ships belonging to the Chinese Navy), April 21, 2018, https://www.mod.go.jp/js/Press/press2018/press_pdf/p20180421_01.pdf.

⁷ "Chūgoku kūbo ga Taiwan issū: shunō kaidan-mae ni Bei kensei ka" (Chinese carrier circles Taiwan: Possibly signaling a warning shot to the US on the eve of summit), *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, June 25, 2019. <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO46556010V20C19A6910M00/>.

⁸ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, pp. 73–74.

⁹ Joint Staff Press Release, "Chūgoku-ki oyobi Roshia-ki no Higashi Shina Kai oyobi Nihonkai ni okeru hikō ni tsuite" (Regarding flights by Chinese and Russian planes in the East China Sea and Sea of Japan), July 23, 2019, https://www.mod.go.jp/js/Press/press2019/press_pdf/p20190723_01.pdf.

¹⁰ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, pp. 75–77.

¹¹ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 77.

¹² US Office of the Secretary of Defense, op. cit., p. 62.

¹³ US Office of the Secretary of Defense, op. cit., p. 66.

potential future military bases.¹⁴ A Chinese submarine presence in the Indian Ocean has also been confirmed, and Chinese submarines are known to have entered several ports in the region, including Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2014 and Karachi, Pakistan in 2017.¹⁵ Information is lacking on what route the Chinese Navy is using to enter the Indian Ocean, but surface shipping at least is believed to pass through the Strait of Malacca. However, the Strait of Malacca is too shallow to be suitable for submarines, and it is likely that its submarines use either the Lombok or the Sunda Strait.

China's forays sometimes contravene existing international laws and rules, and represent a threat to the freedom of navigation and freedom of the skies. Official government vessels belonging to the Chinese Coast Guard linger in waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands on an almost daily basis, and incursions into Japanese territorial waters happen on average around three times a month.¹⁶ These incursions into Japanese territorial waters by government vessels cannot be regarded as "innocent passage." Similarly, navigation in the waters adjacent to the Senkaku Islands by Chinese reconnaissance vessels, combat ships, and submerged submarines, are provocative acts that serve to increase tensions, even if they do not count as breaches of international law. The Air Defense Identification Zone that China has set up in the skies over the East China Sea is an attempt to place all aircraft passing through the zone under the control of the Chinese authorities; this could therefore easily impinge on freedom of overflight and other freedoms of the sky.¹⁷ Indeed, there have already been incidents in which the warning and surveillance activities of the Self-Defense Forces and the US Armed Forces have been obstructed.¹⁸ In June 2016, when a Chinese intelligence-gathering vessel passed through the Tokara Strait in Japanese territorial waters, China argued that it regarded the strait as one commonly "used by international navigation," and asserted its right to pass through the waters by right of transit passage, which involves a higher degree of freedom than innocent passage.¹⁹ In July 2016, an arbitral tribunal constituted under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea handed down an award denying China's "historical rights" in the South China Sea according to its "nine-dashed line." China refused to recognize the award, undermining the international order based on the law of the sea.²⁰

¹⁴ See, for example, Nicholas Szechenyi, ed., "China's Maritime Silk Road: Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region," CSIS, March 2018, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180404_Szechenyi_ChinaMaritimeSilkRoad.pdf.

¹⁵ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, pp. 77–78.

¹⁶ On the activities of Chinese government ships around the Senkaku Islands, see "Senkaku shotō shūhen kaiiki ni okeru Chūgoku kōsen-tō no dōkō to wagakuni no taisho" (Movements of Chinese government ships in the waters around the Senkaku Islands and Japan's response), on the website of the Japan Coast Guard, <https://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/mission/senkaku/senkaku.html>.

¹⁷ Website of the Japanese Ministry for Foreign Affairs, "Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the announcement on the 'East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone' by the Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China," November 24, 2013. https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000098.html.

¹⁸ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 72.

¹⁹ Nagai Ōki, "Kagoshima-oki no Tokara kaikyō, Chūgoku no 'Kokusai Kaikyō' shuchō ga hidane: Nihon seifu wa 'mitomerarezu,' Gunkan haken no keizoku o keikai" (China's claims that the Tokara Strait off Kagoshima is open to "international navigation" creates sparks. Government of Japan refuses to recognize China's claims, and remains on guard against continued dispatch of Chinese warships to the area), *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, digital edition, June 21, 2016, https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXLASFS20H6A_Q6A620C1PP8000/.

²⁰ Kotani Tetsuo, "The South China Sea Arbitration: No, It's Not a PCA Ruling," *Maritime Issues*, November 17, 2016, <http://www.maritimeissues.com/south-china-sea-arbitration-ruling/the-south-china-sea-arbitration-no-its-not-a-pca-ruling.html>.

As the above examples show, China is strengthening its anti access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities in the East China Sea and South China Sea, and is acting with increasing confidence and brazenness based on its own unique interpretations of international law, even when at peace. In the case of a crisis involving Taiwan, it is reasonable to assume that China now has considerable ability to delay access to the US military and other forces. In the Indian Ocean, the establishment of bases for maintaining long-term military operations is an issue for the future. In the immediate term, China is likely to continue with the development of port facilities already underway in littoral states of the Indian Ocean, while expanding operations using submarines, with their high degree of invulnerability.

Additionally, China has started to include the South Pacific in its Belt and Road Initiative, and is increasing its influence through aid to the island nations of the Pacific. China is involved in the development of four ports that observers suggest offer a high potential for military use in the future: at Suva, Fiji; at Anewa Bay and Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea; and at Luganville, Vanuatu.²¹ If these ports do come to be used by the PLA, that might lead to an increase in forays from South China Sea via the Sulu Sea and Celebes Sea in the Western Pacific, where monitoring and surveillance by littoral states and US Armed Forces are more difficult.

2. Evaluation of Japan's Maritime Security Policy

What steps is Japan taking in response to China's forays onto the high seas through these nine straits?

Firstly, Japan is strengthening its defensive capability around its southwestern Nansei Islands, to defend against forays from the East China Sea into the Pacific. The 2010 revisions to the National Defense Program Guidelines shifted the basic emphasis of Japan's defensive posture from the north to a new posture with an emphasis on defending against a potential threat from the southwest. The 2013 edition of the Guidelines defined Japan's objective as being to defend the southwestern islands using a dynamic joint defense force. The plan prioritizes strengthening Japan's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities in the air and seas around Japan, and developing the ability to rapidly deploy land-based units while maintaining maritime and air superiority. At the same time, steps were taken to increase fighter strength and deploy an airborne early warning squadron at Naha, as well as introducing stand-off missiles, increasing submarine strength, and establishing an amphibious rapid deployment brigade and rapid deployment units for defense of remote islands, as well as deployment to the southwestern region of airborne early-warning units and surface-to-ship and surface-to-air guided missiles.²²

These measures effectively boosted Japan's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities against PLA activities on sea and in the air around Japan. For example, units from the Air Self-Defense Force scrambled on 999 occasions through FY2018; of these, a total of 638 were in response to Chinese planes.²³ However, the rapid increase in scrambling incidents has meant that Air SDF pilots are no longer able to secure sufficient training time to prepare for an emergency contingency. Also, Chinese aircraft flying from the Bashi Channel toward the southwestern Nansei Islands, or along the Pacific coast of Japan, can be difficult to detect

²¹ Yatsuzuka Masaaki, "Chūgoku no Taiheiyō tōshokoku e no shinshutsu to 'Ittai ichiro' kōsō (China's expansion into the island nations of the Pacific and the Belt and Road Initiative), *NIDS Commentary*, No. 73, May 25, 2018, <http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/publication/commentary/pdf/commentary073.pdf>.

²² Government of Japan, "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2014 and beyond," December 2013, pp. 17–24.

²³ Joint Staff Press Release, "Statistics on scrambles through fiscal year 2018," April 12, 2019, https://www.mod.go.jp/js/Press/press2019/press_pdf/p20190412_06.pdf.

by ground-based radar, and this area is becoming something of an air defense blind spot.²⁴ Additionally, China is rapidly modernizing its aircraft, ships, and submarines, and the quality of the guided missiles carried by these units is also improving. It is therefore thought that a response to an emergency contingency is becoming more difficult.

To respond to the overall improvement in China's military strength, the 2018 revisions to the National Defense Program Guidelines defined the nation's defense objectives as being to build a "Multi-Domain Defense Force" capable of executing cross-domain operations, not only on land and sea and in the air but also in the new domains of space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum. The thinking is that combining capabilities across domains generates synergy; therefore, even when inferiority exists in the air or at sea, this inferiority can be overcome and defense objectives accomplished. To this end, the guidelines included such measures as increasing the numbers and capabilities of fighters, introducing units of hyper-velocity gliding projectiles for defense of remote islands, strengthening monitoring and surveillance along the Pacific through unmanned aerial systems, refurbishing the destroyer *Izumo* to allow operations of short-takeoff-and-vertical-landing (STOVL) aircraft, building integrated air and missile defense capability, establishing a new squadron specializing in space domain missions, establishing a cyber defense unit, and establishing a new unit to enhance defense capability in the use of the electromagnetic spectrum.²⁵

Japan is also strengthening its cooperation with the United States. In the 2015 revisions to the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation, peacetime cooperation was expanded, and many new fields incorporated, including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, maritime security, training and exercises, and defense against ballistic missile attacks. In the event of an armed attack against Japan, new areas of cooperation were added, including repelling attacks against remote islands and cross-domain operations (including in the space and cyberspace domains). In defending attacks against islands, the Self-Defense Forces will have primary responsibility for preventing and repelling ground attacks, with the United States military supporting and supplementing the Self-Defense Forces' operations. To ensure the effectiveness of cooperation between the allies, a new alliance coordination mechanism was established to strengthen policy and operational coordination, along with an upgraded bilateral planning mechanism.²⁶

In the vital sea lanes of the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, Japan is mainly working to support capacity building in littoral countries and to establish a stronger presence in the region. In November 2016, Japanese Defense Minister Inada Tomomi released the Vientiane Vision, outlining principles for defense cooperation between Japan and ASEAN. These included consolidating order based on the rule of international law, strengthening maritime security, and support for capacity building in ASEAN in various fields. Based on this, a seminar on international law was held in June 2017 onboard a destroyer in the waters close to Singapore. Japan has also offered 10 patrol vessels and two large patrol vessels to the Philippines, as well as five TC-90 training aircraft.²⁷ Japan altered the TC-90 deal from a lease to a free transfer, and has also provided education for pilots in the Philippine Navy and support for maintenance staff in

²⁴ Interview by the author with Self-Defense Forces official, April 5, 2019.

²⁵ Government of Japan, "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2019 and beyond," December 2018, pp. 10–30.

²⁶ Ministry of Defense of Japan, "Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation," April 27, 2015, https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/ampo/shishin/shishin_20150427j.html.

²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan-Philippines Summit Meeting," October 26, 2016, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea2/ph/page3e_000608.html.

the country's navy and elsewhere.²⁸ The Self-Defense Forces do not participate in the freedom-of-navigation operations of the US military, but since 2017 the Maritime Self-Defense Force has sent ships including destroyers carrying helicopters into the Indo-Pacific, and has participated in exercises and friendship-building courtesy visits to ports in various countries around the region.²⁹ In September 2018, a submarine from the Maritime Self-Defense Force visited Cam Ranh port in Vietnam.³⁰ Additionally, the Self-Defense Forces have been involved in cooperation in capability building and exercises in the Indo-Pacific together with the armed forces of the United States, Australia, India, the United Kingdom, France, and other countries, including in island regions of the Pacific.

In response to the threat facing the international maritime order based on the law of the sea in the Indo-Pacific, the National Security Strategy adopted by the Japanese government in 2013 calls for “open and stable seas” based on international laws and conventions. To provide more concrete substance to this vision, at the Shangri-La Dialogue (Asian Security Summit) in May 2014, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo proposed the “three principles of rule of law,” namely: (i) making and clarifying claims based on international law, (ii) not using force or coercion in trying to drive claims, and (iii) seeking to settle disputes by peaceful means. In August 2016, Japan launched the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision, built around three main pillars, namely: 1. Promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and free trade; 2. Pursuit of economic prosperity (connectivity, and strengthening of economic cooperation through EPAs/FTAs and investment agreements), and 3. Commitment to peace and stability (establishing maritime law enforcement, humanitarian assistance, and emergency disaster relief).³¹ The FOIP has been endorsed by the United States, India, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, ASEAN, and other countries, confirming the importance of maintaining a law-based maritime order.

Challenges remain for Japan's maritime security policy, however. Firstly, the Bashi Channel remains a blind spot in the country's surveillance and reconnaissance. The ability to respond to the Chinese missile threat in the East China Sea and the Western Pacific is also a major issue. In the South China Sea, support for capability building must inevitably be limited to the non-traditional security sphere, but considering China's maritime activities in this area, strengthening the maritime domain awareness (MDA) capabilities of littoral states is a pressing task. Also crucial are measures to allow monitoring of Chinese submarine movements in the Lombok and Sunda Straits. There is also a need to consider a response to a possible high-end conflict in the South China Sea. Japan also needs to ensure that the PLA does not gain the ability to monopolize the port facilities that China is building in island nations in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In the long term, the main challenge will be to maintain the rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific, while working to change China's distinctive interpretation of international law.

3. Issues that Japan Needs to Address for the Future

Before considering the responses Japan should take in the future, let's first recall what happened during the Cold War era. When Britain withdrew its troops from East of Suez at the end of the 1960s, it created a power vacuum in the Indian Ocean. The Soviet Union advanced into the Indian Ocean from the Pacific, threatening the sea lanes of the Western alliance. This prompted the

²⁸ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 364.

²⁹ Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, “Goeikan *Izumo*, *Sazanami* no chōki kōdō (2017)” (Longterm movements of the destroyers *Izumo* and *Sazanami*, 2017), no date, <https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/operation/cooperate/izumo-sazanami/>.

³⁰ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 362.

³¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Summary Page: “Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” December 20, 2018, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000430632.pdf>.

United States to widen the area of responsibility of its Pacific Command in 1972, to encompass the Indian Ocean as well as the Pacific.³² With the US Armed Forces expanding their duties to the Indian Ocean, Japan was pressed to strengthen its defensive capabilities in the Western Pacific. Japan boosted its monitoring, surveillance capabilities in the Sōya, Tsugaru, and Tsushima Straits, and strengthened its anti-submarine defensive capabilities and anti-warship attack capabilities, effectively keeping the Soviet Pacific Fleet pinned within the Sea of Japan, and thereby successfully contributing to securing the safety of the sea lanes.³³

Of the nine straits that China is aiming to use, five lie within Japanese territorial waters, and the Self-Defense Forces are constantly carrying out monitoring and surveillance in these areas. In this sense, the Cold War experience of having sealed the three straits to the Soviet Navy is still somewhat effective as a way of warding off Chinese incursions. However, the remaining four straits lie in the territorial waters of other nations, and since China's A2/AD capabilities are improving rapidly, keeping all nine straits constantly under surveillance, and closing them in the event of a contingency is now impossible for practical purposes. For this reason, in addition to strengthening its defense of the southwestern region and boosting the Self-Defense Forces' presence in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, Japan is also responding to Chinese forays by seeking to establish the rule of law in the seas and by helping capacity building in littoral states, based on the ideas set out in the FOIP.

The first challenge for Japan in the years to come will be to improve its monitoring and surveillance capabilities in the Bashi Channel. In particular, it is vital to be able to monitor the movements of Chinese aircraft coming from the South China Sea through the Bashi Channel and approaching the Nansei Islands of the southwestern region. For this, cooperation with the Philippines and Taiwan will be essential. In the Philippines, Japan is already giving assistance together with the United States to build MDA capacity, and cooperation is underway both within a bilateral Japan-Philippines and a trilateral Japan-US-Philippines framework.³⁴ On the other hand, security cooperation between Japan and Taiwan is politically sensitive, and the reality is that almost no progress has been made on this so far. However, it seems likely that the PLA will be increasingly active in the areas around Taiwan in the future, and it will be necessary to consider a framework for sharing intelligence at the very least, perhaps with the United States as intermediary. If this could be extended to exchanges between units of the Self-Defense Forces and the Taiwanese military, so much the better.

To respond to China's missile threat, Japan is looking to build a comprehensive missile defense. However, further measures will be necessary to respond to a saturated missile attack from China. In addition to increasing the resilience of existing facilities and dispersing them around the country, from the perspective of making the targeting of a Chinese missile attack more difficult, Japan should consider the joint development with the United States, which has withdrawn from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, of a new ground-based intermediate range missile and its deployment to Japan. Ground-based intermediate-range cruise missiles in particular, offer cheap means of delivery, and can easily be controlled remotely, making them suitable for meeting the threat from China's potential missile strength.

In the South China Sea, to boost the MDA capabilities of littoral states, Japan should help

³² Kotani Tetsuo, "Chūgoku to Taiheiyō-gun" (China and the Pacific Command), in Tsuchiya Motohiro, ed. *Amerika Taiheiyō-gun no kenkyū: Indo-Taiheiyō no anzen-hoshō* (Studies on the US Pacific Command: National Security in the India-Pacific) (Tokyo: Chikura Shobō, 2018), pp. 121–140.

³³ For more on this, see Kotani Tetsuo, "Shīrēn bōei: Nichibei dōmei ni okeru 'hito to hito no kyōryoku' no tenkai to sono genkai" (Sea Lane defense: person-to-person exchanges in the US-Japan Alliance, their development and limitations), in *Dōshisha Hōgaku* (Doshisha Law Review), Vol. 58, No. 4 (2006).

³⁴ Interview by the author with US Armed Forces official, March 4, 2019.

these countries to acquire and deploy radar and patrol planes. For this, it would be preferable to cooperate not only with the United States but also with countries like Australia, the United Kingdom, and France. In addition, a maritime monitoring system using satellites is also being considered. This would make it possible to monitor not only the maritime areas around Japan but global maritime areas including the South China Sea in real time.³⁵ Rather than relying on satellites alone, this should be made into a more comprehensive system using a variety of sensors, including ocean buoys, and reconnaissance planes and unmanned patrol aircraft operated from littoral states. Japan should also cooperate with the United States, Australia, and India to boost the anti-submarine capabilities of littoral states, to make it easier to monitor Chinese submarines in the Lombok and Sunda Straits. Drills and exercises with Indonesia to improve operational ability against submarines would also be effective. To prepare for the contingency of a high-end conflict in the South China Sea, exercises should be carried out based on the assumption of US-Japan cooperation, with the SDF providing rear-area and other logistical support in the event of a “situation that will have an important influence on Japan’s peace and security.”

On China’s port developments in the island nations of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Japan should carry out strategic port visits in cooperation with the United States and other friendly nations, as well as providing economic assistance to littoral states that are in danger of falling into the “debt trap.” The Solomon Islands bent to Chinese pressure, breaking off diplomatic relations with Taipei and recognizing Beijing, but when a provincial government tried to lease an island to China for 75 years, the central government stepped in and rendered the deal invalid.³⁶ This example shows that there are countries receiving Chinese aid that fear the debt trap, and illustrates the need to assist vulnerable littoral nations. In cooperation with the United States and Australia, Japan should strengthen its presence in the Sulu and Celebes Seas that link China with the island nations of the Pacific, and at the same time should also strengthen its maritime security cooperation with nations like the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Finally, to maintain the maritime order based on the law of the sea, as well as working to establish the FOIP on a firm footing, it will be important not to accept any double standards from China regarding its interpretations of maritime law. In the East China and South China Seas, China limits the freedom of navigation and overflight rights of other nations through its own distinctive interpretations of international law, but in the Indian and Pacific Oceans enjoys navigation rights based on the law of the sea. The United States is carrying out freedom of navigation operations, and exercising its own rights within the bounds allowed by international law, and is thus resisting China’s excessive jurisdictional claims. Other maritime states including Australia, France, and the United Kingdom have also started to undertake similar operations. Japan has been increasing the presence of the Maritime Self-Defense Force in the South China Sea, but should also undertake operations in more sensitive maritime areas too. In particular, given that China is increasing its activities in the East China Sea based on its own claims there, Japan likewise needs to exercise its rights of navigation in the waters around the Paracels and Spratlys and also in the Taiwan Strait, to demonstrate clearly that it does not accept Chinese double standards, in the event of a Chinese intrusion into Japanese territorial waters or other unacceptable acts in waters adjacent to Japan.

³⁵ Headquarters for Ocean Policy, Cabinet Office, “Wagakuni no kaiyō jōkyō haaku no nōryoku kyōka ni muketa torikumi no gaiyō” (A summary of measures to strengthen Japan’s ability to gather intelligence on maritime conditions and developments), Minutes from the fifteenth meeting of the Headquarters for Ocean Policy, July 26, 2016, https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kaiyou/dai15/shiryu1_1.pdf.

³⁶ “Soromon-shotō no shima marugoto chintai, Chūgoku kigyō no keiyaku wa ‘mukō’ genchi seifu” (Local government in Solomon Islands declares contract to lease entire island to Chinese company “null and void”), *AFP*, October 25, 2019, <https://www.afpbb.com/articles/-/3251380>.

Conclusion

This paper discussed several issues that need to be addressed in response to Chinese forays into the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In the Pacific, China has come a considerable way to improving its A2/AD capacity, but in the Indian Ocean, China's navy is still relatively weak. However, China is aiming to complete its modernization of its armed forces by 2035, and looks to become the world's leading power by the middle of this century. Sooner or later, it will surely look to strengthen and augment its military power in the Indian Ocean too. For this reason, from a long-term perspective, it will be necessary to force China to divide its military spending between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, to prevent it from becoming too strong in either sphere. To this end, Japan needs to deepen strategic discussions with the United States, India, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, ASEAN, and other countries.