

TENETS OF A REGIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

Considerations for the Indo-Pacific

By Jonathan W. Greenert



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**TENETS OF A REGIONAL
DEFENSE STRATEGY**
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Jonathan W. Greenert

A report by

**THE JOHN M. SHALIKASHVILI CHAIR
IN NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES**

THE NATIONAL BUREAU *of* ASIAN RESEARCH

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides U.S. policymakers with an assessment of the impact of seven key players in the Indo-Pacific, framed around five security concerns, and draws implications for U.S. campaign plans based on an analysis of the unique factors associated with each of the key regional countries.

MAIN FINDINGS

Of the security concerns in the Indo-Pacific, the challenges are particularly acute in five current hotspots: the Korean Peninsula, the East China Sea, the South China Sea, the India-Pakistan border, and the Taiwan Strait. As the U.S. refines campaign plans in accordance with the National Security Strategy and the classified National Defense Strategy, it is essential that commanders and planners understand the diverse impact of the influence associated with the key players. This diversity is rooted in different levels of national power, approaches to strategic culture, and understandings of national security strategies.

IMPLICATIONS

- The diversity among the key regional players requires a careful reckoning of each player's formation of national power, as well as the likelihood and means of using that national power.
- As planners assess the diversity in the region, they should embrace that the regional security situation remains complex. Despite potentially transformational political developments on the Korean Peninsula, North Korea is the most pressing national security issue requiring urgent reconciliation on the part of the U.S. and its allies.
- The capacity for accumulating power and President Xi Jinping's somewhat revisionist "China dream" goals make China the greatest long-term security challenge. The country continues to build military and economic power, which it is increasingly willing to use in defense of interests farther afield, driven by economic needs and a populace calling for China to take its proper place in the world.
- Long-standing U.S. allies South Korea and Japan are developing important military capabilities to deal with regional security challenges, but they still require strong reassurance from within and deeper military engagement with the U.S.
- Indian and Indonesian domestic strategies of autonomy and nonalignment hamper deeper integration with the U.S. The national power possessed by India and Indonesia is more potential than actual, but nonetheless very real and worthy of attention.
- As Taiwan faces increased pressure from China, multidimensional U.S. support for Taiwan's democracy must continue to include a deepening trade relationship and focused diplomatic support, in addition to security assurances and provisions of advanced weapons.

As the U.S. administration develops plans for implementing the National Security Strategy released in December 2017 and the derivative National Defense Strategy issued in January 2018, this report from the John M. Shalikashvili Chair in National Security Studies at the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) aims to provide insight on fundamental factors of the regional security environment in the Indo-Pacific (see **Figure 1** for a map of the region).¹ The new U.S. National Security Strategy identifies the Indo-Pacific as a region of critical strategic importance in which “a geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order is taking place.”² Indeed, the ongoing competition between the United States and China frames any understanding of the regional security issues. Yet the Indo-Pacific is much more than a Sino-U.S. competition, and regional realities reflect great complexity and dynamism. In remarks on July 30 outlining the administration’s economic vision, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called the region “one of the greatest engines...of the future global economy” and underscored the U.S. commitment to maintaining a “free and open” Indo-Pacific.³

FIGURE 1 The Indo-Pacific



¹ This report defines the Indo-Pacific as the area ranging from the South and Western Asian countries along the Indian Ocean to Oceania in the southeast and Japan and Russia in the northeast.

² White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., December 2017), 45, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSSFinal-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

³ Michael R. Pompeo, “Remarks on ‘America’s Indo-Pacific Economic Vision’” (remarks at the Indo-Pacific Business Forum, Washington, D.C., July 30, 2018), <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/07/284722.htm>.

This report⁴ considers the following questions: What are the key regional states? What is their involvement with the central security challenges of the region, and what is their propensity to use their unique national power to shape outcomes in those challenges? What trends emerging from these countries should be considered and studied when crafting policy and strategy? How can an understanding of the sources of power, interests, and strategy of the key players in the region affect the United States' planning for likely major crises or contingencies? This report analyzes the sources of power, interests, strategic cultural dispositions, and national strategies of seven states in the Indo-Pacific: China, Russia, Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), India, Indonesia, and Taiwan. As the U.S. administration develops the campaign plans to implement the aforementioned strategies, it is essential to understand the basic policy of each player, how and why a country develops its national strategy, what ideational elements (or strategic culture) shapes that strategy, and how each nation could react to U.S. policy.

This assessment draws its analysis from a three-year study conducted by NBR's Strategic Asia Program of the foundations of power, the strategic cultures, and the security strategies of key countries in the Indo-Pacific. The findings of this study were published in the last three volumes of NBR's flagship *Strategic Asia* series, as well as in several stand-alone reports.⁵

This report assumes that the United States will seek to maintain its current level of influence in the Indo-Pacific. It further assumes that the long-standing U.S. global grand strategy—to confront challengers to the U.S.-led liberal international order, both unilaterally and through a network of like-minded allies and partners, in order to retain a balance of power that favors the United States—remains logically sound in the 21st century, even as it needs to be tailored to new circumstances.

In particular, China is increasingly seen as a potential peer competitor of the United States that could fundamentally challenge U.S. interests in the western Pacific. Indeed, a summary of the Pentagon's National Defense Strategy argues that "China is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage."⁶ In this regard, it represents a scope of challenge that the United States has not had to contend with since the Soviet Union in the Cold War. However, China differs from the Soviet Union in important ways. Most salient, it is on track to become the world's largest economy and is already the largest U.S. trading partner. The hard-charging Chinese economy underwrites growing hard-power capabilities that increasingly rival those of the United States in quantity and quality, at least in certain niche areas. Moreover, China has applied its power and influence in ways anathema to U.S. strategic interests. How Washington chooses to handle the Sino-U.S. competition may be the most consequential strategic decision of the first half of the 21st century.

⁴ I wish to acknowledge the important contributions of two key NBR staff in the preparation of this report. Mike Dyer was a tireless researcher who turned ideas into prose in very effective ways. Andy Nguyen provides invaluable support for the office of the Shalikhshvili Chair, seamlessly integrating it across NBR's many programs. My deep appreciation to both colleagues.

⁵ Ashley J. Tellis, Alison Szalwinski, and Michael Wills, eds., *Strategic Asia 2015–16: Foundations of National Power in the Asia-Pacific* (Seattle: NBR, 2015); Ashley J. Tellis, Alison Szalwinski, and Michael Wills, eds., *Strategic Asia 2016–17: Understanding Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific* (Seattle: NBR, 2016); Ashley J. Tellis, Alison Szalwinski, and Michael Wills, eds., *Strategic Asia 2017–18: Power, Ideas, and Military Strategy in the Asia-Pacific* (Seattle: NBR, 2017); David Gitter and Robert Sutter, "Taiwan's Strong but Stifled Foundations of National Power," NBR, Special Report, no. 54, January 2016; Steven M. Goldstein, "Taiwan: Asia's Orphan?" NBR, Special Report, no. 62, December 2016; and David An, "Reconstructing Taiwan's Military Strategy," NBR, Special Report, no. 69, February 2018.

⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, "Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge," January 2018, <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

Besides this strategic competition between the United States and China, economic integration may be the greatest factor shaping the future of the Indo-Pacific. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which after the United States withdrew morphed into the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) comprising the remaining eleven countries and led by Japan, lowers tariffs and establishes new trade rules for countries representing over 13% of global GDP.⁷ The Chinese-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership has been viewed as a counter to the TPP.

No doubt U.S. policy—defense, diplomatic, and economic—toward all the key countries will play a large role in shaping any resolution of U.S.-China competition against the backdrop of broad regional economic integration. Yet there is an emerging perception in the Indo-Pacific that the United States is in decline.⁸ Whether ephemeral or not, these impressions matter. Nonetheless, in terms of presence, alliance relationships, and underlying support for regional stability, the United States remains as committed as ever before.

These two trends—(1) Sino-U.S. strategic competition fueled by China’s growing ambition and capabilities and (2) increasing regional economic integration, intertwined with evolving U.S. presence—form an important backdrop to the major security challenges in the Indo-Pacific, including North Korea, the sovereignty dispute over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, territorial disputes and Chinese expansionism in the South China Sea, the latent crisis on the India-Pakistan border, and tensions in the Taiwan Strait. This report does not purport to solve these security challenges; rather, it seeks to provide clarity on the way forward by applying the key elements of the Strategic Asia Program’s assessment of China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, India, Indonesia, and Taiwan to better understand the unique situation of each challenge.

The report proceeds in four sections:

- Section one examines the national power, the strategic cultures, and the security strategies of these seven countries.
- Section two provides a brief overview of the aforementioned security challenges.
- Section three examines the U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific.
- Section four draws implications from the analysis presented in section one for U.S. planners to consider in addressing the region’s security challenges.

The report concludes that overall U.S. presence (military, diplomatic, technological, economic, and social) in the Indo-Pacific remains essential for regional stability in the immediate future.⁹ U.S. presence is the external factor that best addresses the sources of power, interests, strategic cultural dispositions, and national strategies of the Indo-Pacific’s critical players in ways that enhance regional stability. Indeed, the United States provides the intangible security value that tilts the balance in each of the five security challenges away from conflict and toward stability. However, U.S. presence must be deftly melded to be in sync with the unique characteristics of the

⁷ Charlotte Greenfield and Colin Packham, “Final Version of Trans-Pacific Trade Deal Released, Rules Pushed by U.S. on Ice,” Reuters, February 21, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-trade-tpp/final-version-of-trans-pacific-trade-deal-released-rules-pushed-by-u-s-on-ice-idUSKCN1G50AP>.

⁸ Five of the six states examined in the *Strategic Asia* volumes believe that the best years of the United States are behind it, with India being the one exception. For further discussion, see Simon Jackman and Gordon Flake, “Survey on America’s Role in the Indo-Pacific 2017,” United States Studies Centre, May 31, 2017, <https://www.ussc.edu.au/analysis/the-asian-research-network-survey-on-americas-role-in-the-indo-pacific>.

⁹ The U.S. social presence includes the activities of NGOs, scholarly and educational exchanges, tourism, and even business development activities, all of which serve to remind and reassure regional players.

major regional players, lest it be hollow and counterproductive to achieving desired outcomes. Over the longer term, China's increasingly powerful military and economy are factors requiring urgent adjustments to U.S. strategy, enhancement of partnerships and alliances, and demonstrated commitment to a long-term presence in the region.

Examining the Key Players of the Indo-Pacific

This section surveys the findings of the Strategic Asia Program's three-phase study of national power in the Indo-Pacific for seven key regional actors: China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, India, Indonesia, and Taiwan. National power is defined here as a state's ability to shape its strategic environment to achieve national goals despite opposition from other actors. This understanding encompasses three distinct conceptions of power: as resources (material as well as human and technological resources), ability (the capacity to convert resources into national performance), and outcomes (the capacity to achieve national goals in international relations).¹⁰ **Table 1** compares the national resources of all seven countries. The subsequent analysis draws on the research findings of the Strategic Asia Program to assess each state's national power, strategic culture, and national strategy for addressing major security challenges.¹¹

China

National power. China's ability to mobilize its abundant resource base is considerable. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has nearly 90 million members and uncontested control over the state government.¹² However, the durability of its control is not beyond question, leading the party to become more autocratic in recent years to consolidate power. The CCP is now seeking more control over the economy—for example, by reversing course on the privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs)—with negative implications for productivity and efficiency as SOEs are notoriously less efficient and productive than joint ventures or private enterprises.

Since 1991, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has reformed and expanded its forces with the goal of creating a modern military capable of winning “local wars under informatized conditions.”¹³ To meet this goal, the CCP has increased military spending by double digits year-over-year and now has the second-largest defense budget in the world.¹⁴ Although the PLA continues to serve the CCP, rather than the Chinese state, and has great autonomy in military decision-making, its contribution to overall national security policy has declined in recent years. Two problems that could hamper the PLA's performance in a conflict with an advanced military competitor such as the United States are the lack of warfighting experience and the stovepiping of command-and-control systems.¹⁵

¹⁰ For further discussion, see Ashley J. Tellis, “Assessing National Power in Asia,” in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2015–16*, 4–5.

¹¹ The country assessments cite the relevant pages from the *Strategic Asia* volumes and related reports, which are based on a thorough examination of primary texts, including government documents and statements, as well as foreign-language and English-language secondary literature.

¹² Eleanor Albert and Beina Xu, “The Chinese Communist Party,” Council on Foreign Relations, Backgrounder, March 14, 2018.

¹³ Elsa B. Kania, “When Will the PLA Finally Update Its Doctrine?” *Diplomat*, June 6, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/when-will-the-pla-finally-update-its-doctrine>.

¹⁴ Nadège Rolland, “China's National Power: A Colossus with Iron or Clay Feet?” in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2015–16*, 45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Strategic culture. China exhibits a clear preference for using hard power when it perceives the power balance to be in its favor, but otherwise it prefers to rely on soft power and the attraction of Chinese culture. Because of the CCP’s strong political imperative to be viewed as virtuous due to an ingrained Confucian ethic that “political authority grows out of virtue,” Chinese realism is “compelled to exist within a justificatory framework of moralistic virtuocracy.”¹⁶ The party is thus very sensitive to attacks on its image or China’s status. The CCP’s narrative of recent Chinese history is that the Communist Party alone rectified a century of humiliation at the hands of foreign invaders, first Western and then Japanese. This historical narrative shapes a worldview

TABLE 1 National resources of Indo-Pacific countries compared

	China	Russia	Japan	South Korea	India	Indonesia	Taiwan
<i>Natural resources</i>							
Energy imports (%)	15.0	-83.7	93.0	81.4	34.3	-103.1	98.0
<i>Human resources</i>							
Population (million)	1,386	144	127	51	1,339	264	24
Population over 65 (%)	11	14	27	14	6	5	14
Education spending (% of GDP)	4.3	3.8	3.6	5.1	3.8	3.6	4.9
Internet connectivity (% of population)	53	73	93	93	30	25	88
<i>Economic resources</i>							
GDP (\$ trillion)	12.2	1.6	4.9	1.5	2.6	1.0	0.6
Growth (%)	6.9	-1.5	1.7	3.1	6.6	5.1	2.6
GNI per capita (\$)	16,760	24,893	45,470	38,260	7,060	11,900	26,212
R&D spending (% of GDP)	2.1	1.1	3.3	4.2	0.6	0.1	3.1

SOURCE: World Bank, World Development Indicators, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&country=CHN,RUS,IND,IDN,KOR,JPN>; Taiwan, National Statistics, <https://eng.stat.gov.tw/mp.asp?mp=5>; and Josh Horwitz, “Taiwan, at the Heart of the World’s Tech Supply Chain, Has a Serious Electricity Problem,” Quartz, August 17, 2017.

NOTE: Figures for GNI per capita are based on purchasing power parity. Education spending for Taiwan is the percentage of GNP.

¹⁶ Christopher A. Ford, “Realpolitik with Chinese Characteristics: Chinese Strategic Culture and the Modern Communist Party-State,” in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2016–17*, 47.

that prioritizes national sovereignty and territorial integrity, both as a way of avoiding a repeat of foreign aggression and also as a marker of CCP *bona fides*.¹⁷ The result is that China is less willing to show flexibility on the world stage and more prone to use force when it views foreign policy goals through this lens. Thus, ideological grievances share equal importance with conventional geopolitical concerns.

Security strategy. China faces mounting external and internal pressures as a result of its rise. Externally, the country faces the prospect of coalition bandwagoning against it as other countries worry about a “China threat” and draw closer to the United States as a consequence. Countervailing forces have grown in opposition to Chinese assertiveness as the country has modernized both the hard and soft aspects of its military. China also seeks to reformulate its relations with the United States in line with its aspirations to be a great power.

China’s internal situation is closely linked with the country’s perceptions of its external strategic environment. As the Chinese population grows in wealth and education, an emerging middle class has greater expectations for the political system’s ability to deliver public goods, and this raises the possibility of domestic instability if the party proves unresponsive to the people’s desires. Elites are increasingly taking into account public opinion and must weigh China’s actions in the international environment against domestic perceptions. The Chinese public now demands not only continued growth but growth that is also environmentally sustainable and equal.¹⁸

In deliberating about an appropriate national defense strategy, China has five distinct options: (1) internal security, (2) external defense, (3) regional power projection, (4) regional hegemony, and (5) development of a globally relevant military.¹⁹ An internal security strategy would leave China vulnerable to external threats, while Chinese elites have determined that an external defense strategy is insufficient given China’s revisionist goals. Conversely, a too aggressive strategy risks undermining the regional stability that the party needs to maintain economic growth and ensure internal stability.

Given these considerations, China is currently pursuing a security strategy that stresses internal stability and has a narrow regional focus on East Asia rather than a global focus or even a broad regional focus on the Indian Ocean.²⁰ A regional power-projection strategy emphasizes shorter-distance airlift capabilities (helicopters, shorter-leg supply aircraft, regional bases and airstrips, and frigates rather than aircraft carriers), which is precisely what the PLA has done. China is able to pursue this strategy because it possesses capabilities in excess of what is necessary to suppress dissent at home and deny attacks on the mainland from adversaries like the United States. If trends in the country’s accumulation of power continue, one can expect China to embrace a more ambitious strategy in the future. However, Chinese strategic culture, particularly its aversion to interfering in the domestic politics of foreign countries and its self-image as an anti-hegemonic state, may limit the desire to become a more globally active military power.²¹

¹⁷ Oriana Skylar Mastro, “Ideas, National Power, and the Shaping of China’s National Military Strategy,” in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2017–18*, 19–43.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 24–25.

²¹ For further discussion of the reasons that China is unlikely to pursue a global military strategy in the near term, see *ibid.*, 40–41.

Russia

National power. While Putin has greatly increased the government's capacity to mobilize society compared with the early 1990s, he has not addressed Russia's long-term economic and demographic problems. The Russian economy is actually less diversified than the Soviet Union's economy was, and there is little in the short term that the government can do to reverse the country's demographic decline.²² As a result, Russia is still weaker than it was before the fall of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, even with these constraints, Russia's military actions in both Ukraine and Syria demonstrate that the country can still wield military power beyond its borders. In particular, the war in Syria is a reminder that its ability to project power is not completely fettered by economic weakness.²³ Indeed, the investments that Russia has made over the last decade in its military have appeared to halt the decline in combat effectiveness.

Strategic culture. Russia's accumulation of vast territory and its self-image as the inheritor of the Byzantine empire have nurtured a national identity of exceptionalism. Russia views itself as distinct from both Europe and Asia, with some commentators even maintaining that the country "is not situated between two continents but is itself a continent."²⁴ Given its vast territory, Russia has historically relied on a large army to defend it from both internal and external threats. This tendency has only been reinforced by recent trends. As economic and diplomatic power have not rebounded to the same extent as Russian military power, the use of military force has become more likely.²⁵ These facts, along with the perception of threats from all directions, including the United States and Europe in the west and China in the east, have hardened the view that only an authoritarian and well-armed state can protect Russian interests.

Security strategy. Russia faces three major security challenges: the United States and the West more broadly, Sunni jihadists, and China. Given these three threats, Russia has several strategic options open to it. For one, it could seek rapprochement with the West in order to cooperate on addressing the threats from Islamic extremism and China. Russia could also pursue economic and political reforms to strengthen its position internationally. However, because of the threat to regime survival, Putin sees the West, and in particular the United States, as Russia's chief security challenge and de-emphasizes the threats from Sunni jihadists and China.²⁶

Putin's preoccupation with the United States and the West thus precludes any strategy toward them other than one rooted in antagonism. Specifically, Russia relies on a strategy of subversion to deal with this perceived threat, "including through support for politicians and parties that are pro-Russian as well as anti-NATO and anti-EU."²⁷ Although Putin is reluctant to use force where Russian troops would be brought into conflict with NATO troops, he has been more willing to use force in Russia's near abroad against non-NATO countries to achieve limited aims. Yet, despite this proclivity to emphasize military power in its national strategy and to adopt offensive doctrines, Russia's grand strategy is still defensive in nature. The country no longer has an ideology to export and only seeks to defend itself from what it is prone to see as Western encroachment. To the extent that Putin uses his armed forces, even in aggressive or coercive ways, the intent is much more

²² Andrew C. Kuchins, "Russian Power Rising and Falling Simultaneously," in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2015–16*, 134–35, 146.

²³ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁴ Isabelle Facon, "Russian Strategic Culture in the 21st Century: Redefining the West-East Balance," in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2016–17*, 72–73.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 80–83.

²⁶ Mark Katz, "Putin and Russia's Strategic Priorities," in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2017–18*, 50–53.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

about redressing wrongs and perceived territorial losses than about making new conquests for a revitalized Russian empire.²⁸

Japan

National power. Japan has the world's third-largest economy, a well-educated and innovative workforce, and a highly capable military force. However, despite these advantages, its economy is struggling to grow, while its population is rapidly aging.²⁹ In addition to these economic and demographic limitations, domestic views on the utility of military force make applying hard power in support of national interests very difficult for Japanese leaders.³⁰ As a result of a general aversion to risk and the time it takes to decide on policy, the Japanese government has often muddled through instead of adopting new and necessary policies to address challenges. Yet this trend may be reversing. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's efforts at achieving economic reform—the so-called Abenomics plans for fiscal stimulus, monetary easing, and structural reforms—contrast sharply with two decades of declining economic performance.³¹ Moreover, as part of its defense reforms, the Abe administration created the new National Security Council to streamline the bureaucracy and decision-making process.

Strategic culture. Japanese strategic culture is bifurcated between those vying for Japan to “normalize” and adopt a stronger military posture and pacifists rejecting any role for force in foreign policy.³² The Japanese public's view of the country's role in the world complicates the Abe administration's ability to contend with the threats it sees in the Indo-Pacific. For many citizens, their country's pacifist nature is key to its postwar identity. Public opinion greatly restrains what the Abe administration can do with defense reform. Much of the population does not believe in the utility of force, especially in sending Japanese troops to fight wars beyond the country's borders.³³ Despite such resistance, Abe has been successful in reinterpreting Japan's constitution to allow for “collective self-defense” and for increased defense budgets. The goal of this effort is to persuade the public to think of Japan as a normal country capable of defending its territory from external security challenges.³⁴

Security strategy. On the domestic front, even though the Abe administration wants to normalize Japan's foreign policy to allow the country the right to collective self-defense, the overwhelming majority of Japanese society remains opposed to reforming the constitution. Japan is still precluded from military conflict abroad by Article 9 of its constitution, and the Japan Self-Defense Forces are not battle-tested. Internationally, Japan sees China as posing the greatest long-term threat and representing a potential existential challenge.³⁵ North Korea also presents a clear and growing danger, with the potential to cause significant loss of life, but does not present an existential threat to Japan's democracy.³⁶ Last, alliance management with the

²⁸ Katz, “Putin and Russia's Strategic Priorities,” 68–69.

²⁹ Michael Auslin, “Japan's National Power in a Shifting Global Balance,” Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2015–16*, 62, 66.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 62, 86.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 62, 74–75.

³² Alexis Dudden, “Two Strategic Cultures, Two Japans,” Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2016–17*, 103–4.

³³ *Ibid.*, 92, 108.

³⁴ Auslin, “Japan's National Power in a Shifting Global Balance,” 82–83.

³⁵ Christopher W. Hughes, “Japan's Grand Strategic Shift: From the Yoshida Doctrine to an Abe Doctrine?” in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2017–18*, 76.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

United States, as its power and attention wax and wane, is another major strategic challenge. Japan remembers well the “Nixon shock” of U.S. recognition of China, as well as the “Japan passing” period during the Clinton administration, and worries that the United States could rapidly change its policy and make decisions detrimental to its ally.³⁷

Japan has entertained four main national security strategies: Neutralism (the prohibition of self-defense altogether); Japanese revisionism (full remilitarization and the re-entry to great-power politics); multilateralism (the reliance on multilateral organizations and regional diplomacy to prevent aggression); and the Yoshida Doctrine (partial rearmament and alignment with the United States).³⁸ Neutralism and revisionism were both rejected at the outset of the Cold War by pragmatists in the Liberal Democratic Party, while multilateralism only became a viable option toward the end of the Cold War due to the weakness of the United Nations. Thus, the Yoshida Doctrine has been the most feasible option available to Japan for most of its recent history.

This national security strategy relies on U.S. security guarantees and eschews a large-scale military buildup that would alienate Japan’s pacifist wing. But as the security environment has worsened and domestic politics have changed, the Yoshida Doctrine has slowly morphed into the Abe Doctrine, which advocates maintaining a strategic partnership with the United States, loosening constitutional limitations on the use of force, building up the military, and letting Japan emerge as a normal military power.³⁹

Republic of Korea

National power. Although the ROK’s resource base and capabilities are robust, the country’s economy is heavily dependent on imports for energy and strategic minerals. Despite these constraints, South Korea has grown into the fourth-largest economy in Asia and is now considered a high-income country. Likewise, the ROK military has developed into one of Asia’s most capable forces, fielding well-trained personnel and modern equipment.⁴⁰ South Korea’s continued ability to convert resources into power will depend on the government’s success in shifting its development model from one based on state-driven exports to a deregulated economy based on services.⁴¹ Military reforms will also be critical. The Ministry of Defense intends to decrease the numbers of required troops, both to make up for future shortfalls in manpower and to free up the budget for South Korea’s modernization efforts in three areas: network-centric warfare; command and control and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); and precision-strike munitions.⁴²

Strategic culture. South Korean strategic culture emphasizes autonomy and a reliance on military capabilities and force for security. Security and autonomy are often in tension, however. South Korea guarantees its security with the U.S.-ROK alliance, which limits but does not eliminate the country’s autonomy.⁴³ For example, while South Korea approved deploying Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) after much debate, and to the consternation of China,

³⁷ Hughes, “Japan’s Grand Strategic Shift,” 77.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 81–85.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 96–102.

⁴⁰ Chung Min Lee, “Challenges to South Korean Power in the Early 21st Century,” in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2015–16*, 91.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 112–14.

⁴³ David C. Kang and Jiun Bang, “The Pursuit of Autonomy and South Korea’s Atypical Strategic Culture,” in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2016–17*, 126–27.

it also chose to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, to the frustration of the United States, underscoring that Seoul is not always in lockstep with Washington.⁴⁴

Security strategy. The rapid development by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) of its nuclear and missile programs and the uncertain future of the Kim regime keep the ROK military focused on the threat from the North.⁴⁵ In addition, South Korea must contend with an assertive China, which has already demonstrated its willingness to use economic coercion against unfavorable decisions. China has a more capable military, and there is the possibility that it could threaten South Korea's sea lines of communication or become involved in a North Korean contingency.⁴⁶ The ROK must deal with both threats at a time of greater political uncertainty at home and in its alliance with the United States.⁴⁷

The apparent rapid rapprochement between the United States and the DPRK has been facilitated by deft political maneuvering by President Moon Jae-in. With approval ratings hovering near 80%, Moon has leveraged the intense desire of the vast majority of South Korean citizens for a Korean Peninsula "whole and free."⁴⁸ This passion, always present but inflamed by the prospect of real change this time, could become its own independent variable, deeply complicating decision-making by ROK leaders should progress on a U.S.-DPRK deal falter.

Despite this increasingly complex strategic environment, South Korea's first priority in the event of conflict remains unchanged: to defend its territorial and political integrity.⁴⁹ Given the seriousness and proximity of the North Korean threat, South Korea has enjoyed little flexibility in its strategic options, and the U.S.-ROK alliance has remained the *sine qua non* of its defense strategy since the Korean War armistice. New challenges, however, require adjustments to this dominant strategy moving forward.

In light of the changing character of the North Korean threat, South Korea has recently adopted a more aggressive security strategy. Its strategic posture has changed from one focused on absorbing an invasion and swiftly counterattacking to "a proactive deterrence posture that entails a preemptive attack, or, at a minimum, simultaneous and massive counterattacks throughout North Korea."⁵⁰ This new posture includes two elements: (1) a focus on building up counter-asymmetrical capabilities such as ISR, and (2) a tailored "4D" strategy (detect, disrupt, destroy, and defend) to counter the ballistic missile threat from North Korea.⁵¹ At the operational level, this strategy is supported by two new defense programs: Korea Air and Missile Defense (a robust, domestically developed missile defense system); and Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation, which would preemptively strike North Korea in a crisis or swiftly punish it in the event of nuclear escalation.⁵²

⁴⁴ Kang and Bang, "The Pursuit of Autonomy and South Korea's Atypical Strategic Culture," 127–28. Many South Koreans preferred enhancing the Korea Air and Missile Defense shield over deploying THAAD, which is further evidence of a strategic culture that prioritizes autonomy.

⁴⁵ Chung Min Lee, "South Korea's Grand Strategy in Transition: Coping with Existential Threats and New Political Forces," in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2017–18*, 108–11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 112–13.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 111–12.

⁴⁸ Thomas Maresca, "South Korea's Moon Jae-in Is More Popular Than Ever," *USA Today*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/05/10/south-korea-moon-jae-approval-rating-popularity-north-korea/597557002>.

⁴⁹ Lee, "South Korea's Grand Strategy in Transition," 106.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 126–27.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 123.

India

National power. India has one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, possessing ample natural and human resources. It has the world's second-largest population (1.3 billion people), a robust working-age population (66% of total population), and no looming aging problem.⁵³ However, its ability to convert these resources into power is hampered by a lack of elite cohesion and political dysfunction, despite broad elite consensus in major policy areas.⁵⁴ When the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) decisively won the elections in 2014, it was the first time India had a single-party government since the 1980s.⁵⁵ Whereas partisan divisions have usually translated into a lack of political attention to defense matters and constraints on the government's ability to adequately resource the military, this situation has improved since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power. India is now among the top five countries in the world in defense spending.⁵⁶

Strategic culture. The dominant strategic culture, Nehruvianism, emphasizes India's greatness as a civilizational state. It takes an "instrumental view of the utility of military force, overlaid by a set of moral arguments derived from both Indian and Western sources about the limits that ought to be imposed on its use and the detrimental political and economic effects of investing too heavily in a state's armed forces."⁵⁷ This limited view of military force makes India more likely to adopt strategies of restraint and also puts constraints on its willingness to join military partnerships and alliances.⁵⁸

Security strategy. Externally, India's two main strategic challenges are Pakistan and China. Pakistan is India's primary external threat due to the long-standing territorial dispute over Kashmir and Pakistan's support for terrorist groups active within India.⁵⁹ Although the threat from China has been seen as more theoretical, recently it is commanding more attention in Indian strategic planning. In particular, India worries that assertive Chinese patrolling in the still undemarcated border region along the Line of Actual Control (which is over four thousand kilometers long) might be a prelude to actual combat. India is also concerned that in any contingency on its western border with Pakistan, China might open up a second front in the northeast, splitting the Indian forces in ways that would benefit Pakistan.⁶⁰ Domestically, the primary threats that India faces are insurgency, terrorism, and communal violence. The army has historically been deployed to Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, and the northeast to quell unrest. Pakistan's support for terrorist groups further complicates this problem and links domestic threats with India's international strategic environment.⁶¹

Upon independence from Great Britain in 1947, India had three broad strategic options: (1) alignment with the Western or Communist bloc, (2) neutralism (spurning a global role), and (3) nonalignment (playing an active role in the international system and taking a leadership

⁵³ *The World Factbook 2018* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2018), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>.

⁵⁴ Rajesh Rajagopalan, "India's Unrealized Power," in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2015-16*, 174.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁵⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

⁵⁷ Ian Hall, "The Persistence of Nehruvianism in India's Strategic Culture," in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2016-17*, 148.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 149-50.

⁵⁹ John H. Gill, "Challenges for India's Military Strategy: Matching Capabilities to Ambitions?" in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2017-18*, 143-44.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 143, 166.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 144.

role with developing states, but avoiding joining the Western or Soviet bloc).⁶² Both alignment and neutralism were inconsistent with India's self-image as the inheritor of a great and ancient civilization. Instead, Jawaharlal Nehru chose the grand strategy of nonalignment, which was "intended to grant India an active role in the international system, employing that system to advance India's interests and, over time, placing India in a leadership position among developing states in the Non-Aligned Movement."⁶³ While the Communist and Western blocs no longer exist, the impulse toward nonalignment is still strong and takes the form of strategic autonomy today.

Given the many security challenges that India faces, a wide range of military strategies are available to it. On the low end of the spectrum, India could have chosen a security strategy of "people's war" and composed a military based on light infantry and guerrilla warfare. On the high end of the spectrum, the country could have rebuilt its military from scratch to enable a strategy reliant on mechanized forces and modern military hardware. Instead, it settled on an intermediary path.⁶⁴ To address major security challenges under a grand strategy of nonalignment or strategic autonomy, India adopted a military strategy founded on "static frontier defense by large infantry formations backed up by limited mobile reserves to regain any territory lost to an invader and to seize pieces of the enemy's country for use as bargaining chips in the negotiations that were expected to ensue at the end of conflict."⁶⁵ This strategy naturally privileges land power at the expense of sea power, leading India to overlook potential maritime threats.⁶⁶

Indonesia

National power. Indonesia is rich in resources, except for rare earths, and has a young labor force.⁶⁷ It is hampered, however, by an archipelagic geography that makes national cohesion very difficult. To manage the many fault lines dividing its population, the central government chose to weaken itself and decentralize power and resources to the five hundred regional districts.⁶⁸ Indonesia's hard power is further hamstrung by a strategic culture that prefers to look inward instead of balancing to meet perceived threats abroad.⁶⁹ Following several decades of regional peace and stability, the military is focused predominantly on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency at the expense of investing in higher-end capabilities to protect Indonesia's sovereignty and territory.⁷⁰ As a result, the Indonesian National Armed Forces are still dominated by the army, while the navy has largely gone underdeveloped for decades. Fewer than half of the navy's ships are seaworthy, and the rest are old.⁷¹

Strategic culture. Indonesian strategic culture consists of three main elements: the identity as an archipelagic nation that comprises hundreds of different ethnicities and is the successor to ancient kingdoms, the narrative of the struggle for independence, and the narrative that to be

⁶² Gill, "Challenges for India's Military Strategy," 144–45.

⁶³ Ibid., 145.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 146–47.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 146.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 144.

⁶⁷ Vikram Nehru, "Indonesia: The Reluctant Giant," Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2015–16*, 194.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 191.

⁶⁹ Yohanes Sulaiman, "Indonesia's Strategic Culture: The Legacy of Independence," in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2016–17*, 187.

⁷⁰ Nehru, "Indonesia: The Reluctant Giant," 213–14.

⁷¹ Ibid., 217–18.

“free and active” Indonesia must chart an independent foreign policy.⁷² This strategic culture causes the country to underbalance against threats and view any stronger power in the region as a potential threat to national unity and internal stability. Far from favoring an alliance with the United States, Indonesia has at times viewed it as a potential threat and China as a potential balancer.⁷³ This inward-looking culture also keeps the country from domestically developing the military capabilities necessary to project power and defend its interests or territory. As a result, Indonesia has relied primarily on diplomacy and its leadership role within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to secure its interests.⁷⁴

Security strategy. For much of its recent history, Indonesia’s major strategic challenges were internal or transnational. Thus, ensuring social cohesion among its diverse population and over seventeen thousand islands and defending itself from transnational threats like terrorism, climate change, and drug trafficking that might undermine cohesion have taken precedence over traditional security threats.⁷⁵ It was only in 2009, after China’s nine-dash line in the South China Sea approached Indonesia’s exclusive economic zone around Natuna Island, that Jakarta became more concerned with its external environment.⁷⁶ Although Indonesia is not a claimant to the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, China’s disregard for aspects of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and refusal to acknowledge the 2016 tribunal ruling undermine Indonesian security, reliant as the country is on the strength of international law to enforce its territorial claims.

Upon independence, Indonesia had three strategic options available to it: (1) nonalignment without a concerted mobilization of national power, (2) nonalignment with mobilization of national power, and (3) alignment with a foreign power.⁷⁷ As noted above, with few external threats and a strategic outlook focused inward, the country eschewed developing the modern military capabilities that would enable it to address the potential security challenge posed by China. Due to its preferences for strategic autonomy and fear of foreign hegemony in Southeast Asia, Indonesia also refrained from allying or partnering with foreign powers.

These preferences, though rational at the time, have limited Indonesia’s current strategic options. Instead of alignment with a foreign country or mobilization of national power, Jakarta continues to chart an independent foreign policy and retains a defense strategy of *hankamrata* or “total people’s war,” which dates back to the fight for independence.⁷⁸ In order to defend a geographically dispersed, unintegrated archipelago without either a large military structure or assistance from an external ally, this doctrine relies on unconventional warfare using guerrilla forces and mobilized citizens.

Taiwan

National power. Taiwan emerged as an economic power in the 1970s, and much of its success has been made possible through trade and the leveraging of regional and global production chains.

⁷² Sulaiman, “Indonesia’s Strategic Culture,” 170.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 190–81.

⁷⁵ Ann Marie Murphy, “Power, Ideas, and Politics,” in Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2017–18*, 179.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 176, 185.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 180–85.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 187–89.

Like many islands, Taiwan has limited mineral resources and has extracted nearly all of the available coal and metals through mining. The country is dependent on imports for around 98% of its traditional energy.⁷⁹ This has necessitated an economic shift to producing high value-added materials involved in global commerce, notably led by chipmaker HTC and electronics firm Hon Hai Precision, also known as Foxconn. During the Cold War, Taiwan enjoyed economic prosperity despite a lack of economic ties to the mainland, but over the last few decades it has grown increasingly reliant on the People's Republic of China (PRC) for its continued growth. The PRC and Hong Kong are now the destination for 40% of Taiwan's exports, while Taiwan's own firms have extensive investments in the mainland and over one million of the country's citizens live and work on the other side of the Taiwan Strait.⁸⁰

Taiwan's effective mobilization of these resources has been limited by a strong political divide between its two main parties, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and Kuomintang (KMT).⁸¹ The DPP, led by current president Tsai Ing-wen, has been less willing to seek accommodation with the mainland, while the KMT in recent years has sought closer economic and social ties. This shifting domestic political landscape has limited the potential for continuity in how Taiwan utilizes its resources.

Strategic culture. Taiwan's contemporary strategic culture is defined by the sense of international abandonment that followed the United States' recognition of the PRC as the government of mainland China in 1979 and establishment of diplomatic relations.⁸² This contributed to the emergence of a Taiwan-centric identity, which Steven Goldstein observes "intensified, rather than ameliorated, the sense of abandonment...forcing Taiwan's leaders to manage policy on the basis of a strategic culture profoundly influenced by the island's isolation in the international system."⁸³ Although this new identity, which has continued to grow over the last three decades, emphasizes Taiwan's sovereignty and separateness from the mainland, the island's international status has diminished as countries and international organizations increasingly sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan under pressure from the PRC.

Security strategy. Taiwan faces one security concern that dominates national and regional discussions: the looming threat of Chinese influence and control. The PRC is making military advancements faster than Taiwan can formulate new defenses. The geographic aspects of the island that have helped deter aggression remain, but the PLA is deploying ever-more sophisticated weapons systems and capabilities. While Washington's commitment to sell defense capabilities to Taipei has angered Beijing, arms sales alone are insufficient to make Taiwan's military competitive with the PLA. The country's annual defense spending is only \$10 billion, far below Chinese spending levels of around \$170 billion.⁸⁴ As China fields increasingly advanced naval and air

⁷⁹ Gitter and Sutter, "Taiwan's Strong but Stifled Foundations of National Power," 5. See also U.S. Energy Information Agency (EIA), "Taiwan," December 2016, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.cfm?iso=TWN>.

⁸⁰ Gitter and Sutter, "Taiwan's Strong but Stifled Foundations of National Power," 3, 6.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸² Goldstein, "Taiwan: Asia's Orphan?" 3, 6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3, 7–9.

⁸⁴ Jess Macy Yu and Greg Torode, "Taiwan Plans to Invest in Advanced Arms as China Flexes Its Muscles," Reuters, January 11, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-defence-spending/taiwan-plans-to-invest-in-advanced-arms-as-china-flexes-its-muscles-idUSKBN1F00PC>; and Christopher Bodeen, "What We Know about China's Increased Defense Spending in 2018," Associated Press, March 5, 2018, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/global/asia-pacific/2018/03/05/what-we-know-about-chinas-increased-defense-spending-in-2018>.

forces, including its first aircraft carriers, sophisticated S-400 missile systems, and fifth-generation fighter jets, Taiwan will struggle to defend itself in the event of armed conflict.⁸⁵

The PRC also poses a threat to Taiwan through nontraditional means, including cyberattacks, surveillance, and diplomatic pressure.⁸⁶ Beijing has worked tirelessly to limit Taiwan's engagement with other countries, institutions, and companies. As a result of such pressure, Taiwan has seen the number of foreign countries with which it has diplomatic ties reduced dramatically, while international institutions such as the World Health Organization have moved to exclude it out of deference to the PRC. These developments, combined with the strategic ambiguity of U.S. commitments, have left Taiwan internationally isolated.

Facing a numerically superior adversary, Taiwan must rely on asymmetrical strategies and forward deterrence to discourage aggression from China.⁸⁷ A guerrilla war against an occupying PLA force is unrealistic, so Taiwan must focus on stopping an attack before it reaches that point. Its defense strategy has five goals: (1) safeguarding the nation, (2) cultivating a professional military, (3) ending reliance on outside forces for defense, (4) protecting the well-being of its population, and (5) strengthening regional stability. To achieve these goals, the Ministry of National Defense has increasingly highlighted the role of "multi-domain deterrence," putting resources into air, sea, land, and longer-range capabilities to repel the enemy at multiple levels before an invasion takes hold of the island.⁸⁸ The air force would serve as the first line of defense against long-range and aerial attacks, while the navy would provide a second-line defense to prevent a Chinese blockade, and the army would be tasked with preventing an invading force from gaining territory after it lands.⁸⁹

President Tsai has pushed for higher spending on defense, looking to achieve a 20% increase in the defense budget by 2025.⁹⁰ Taiwan has also sought to diversify its security forces by bolstering the domestic defense industry while pursuing arms deals with the United States. It may further explore the possibility of working with other democratic countries in the region (namely Australia, Japan, and South Korea) to improve its diesel-fueled naval capabilities.⁹¹

Five U.S. Security Concerns in the Indo-Pacific

This second section summarizes five critical security concerns that the United States faces today: North Korea, the sovereignty dispute in the East China Sea, Chinese expansion and territorial disputes in the South China Sea, India-Pakistan conflict, and tensions in the Taiwan Strait between China and Taiwan.

North Korea

Representing the third generation of the Kim family regime, Kim Jong-un has consolidated power and developed the nuclear weapons and missile capabilities that his father and grandfather

⁸⁵ An, "Reconstructing Taiwan's Military Strategy," 8–9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 8–10.

⁹⁰ Yu and Torode, "Taiwan Plans to Invest in Advanced Arms." See also An, "Reconstructing Taiwan's Military Strategy," 17.

⁹¹ An, "Reconstructing Taiwan's Military Strategy," 19.

had long desired. The DPRK reportedly pursues its nuclear weapons and missile programs to ensure regime survival and eventually to bring about coercive unification of the Korean Peninsula. North Korea has used its emerging nuclear threat, provocative conventional actions against South Korea, and ballistic missile tests near Japan as gambits to extract concessions from neighboring countries and the United States, while seeking to borrow time to enable further development of a nuclear capability. North Korean accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1985, the Safeguards Agreement in 1992 for International Atomic Energy Agency inspections, the 1994 Agreed Framework, and the six-party talks from 2003 to 2009 have all failed to halt the development of the country's nuclear and missile capabilities.

Since 2013, a series of tests have rapidly advanced North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs to the point that the regime feels that its "powerful treasured sword" is within its grasp. Having watched the destruction of non-nuclear regimes in Iraq and Libya, Kim Jong-un has ignored UN resolutions and international pressure and accelerated the development of both programs, with four of North Korea's six nuclear tests having occurred under his rule.

In September 2017, the country tested a hydrogen bomb with an estimated yield of 100–120 kilotons, and in November 2017 it tested an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that could be equipped with a nuclear warhead and is capable of reaching the contiguous United States.⁹² Following these developments, in his 2018 New Year's Day address, Kim declared that the nation's nuclear force was complete, and a few months later he stated that further tests were no longer needed.⁹³

Regional threats. North Korea poses a clear existential threat to two key U.S. allies in Northeast Asia. South Korea has lived with hundreds of North Korean artillery batteries aimed at Seoul and with frequent threatening rhetoric from Pyongyang since the armistice ended the Korean War in 1953. Japan, hated for wartime atrocities and seen as a proxy for U.S. influence in the region, has been within range of North Korean strikes since at least 1998 and has endured threats to "sink" the island nation.⁹⁴ Multiple North Korean missiles have flown near or over Japan, most recently in August and September 2017, lending gravity to the risk felt by Japanese citizens.

Other regional powers, especially China and Russia, also face threats from a destabilized Korean Peninsula. A refugee crisis flowing into China, the need to secure nuclear material in North Korea in the event that the Kim regime collapses, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are among the most serious threats facing Northeast Asia and the rest of the Indo-Pacific.

Threats to the United States. North Korea's nuclear and missile programs represent a rare situation in which a vocal critic of the United States appears to possess the will and ability to strike not just U.S. allies and military installations abroad but the U.S. homeland. The contiguous United States is now within theoretical range of North Korea's Hwasong-14 and Hwasong-15 ICBMs.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula also represents a threat to U.S. leadership in the region. Japanese and South Korean defense strategies against North Korean belligerence have

⁹² Elizabeth Shim, "Experts: North Korea Exploded 100-Kiloton Bomb, Risking Disaster," UPI, September 5, 2017, <https://www.upi.com/Experts-North-Korea-exploded-100-kiloton-bomb-risking-disaster/4751504617635>; and Mark Landler, Choe Sang-Hun, and Helene Cooper, "North Korea Fires a Ballistic Missile, in a Further Challenge to Trump," *New York Times*, November 28, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/28/world/asia/north-korea-missile-test.html>.

⁹³ Sophie Jeong, Will Ripley, and Euan McKirdy, "Kim Jong Un: North Korea No Longer Needs Nuclear Tests," CNN, April 22, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/20/asia/north-korea-closes-nuclear-site/index.html>.

⁹⁴ Jack Kim and Kiyoshi Takenaka, "North Korea Threatens to 'Sink' Japan, Reduce U.S. to 'Ashes and Darkness,'" Reuters, September 14, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles/north-korea-threatens-to-sink-japan-reduce-u-s-to-ashes-and-darkness-idUSKCN1BP0F3>.

long depended on U.S. nuclear deterrence. Unfavorable contingencies, including a deal between Pyongyang and Washington that leaves North Korea with reduced-range weapons of mass destruction, could undermine confidence in Tokyo and Seoul, leading to an arms race, and would have cascading effects on the legitimacy of U.S. commitments.

Observers are paying close attention to next steps after the historic summit in Singapore. Whatever the outcomes, the long-standing nature of the challenge, the unchanging commitment of North Korea to have a nuclear deterrent, the complexity of the roles and interests of the regional players (South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia), and the new dimension of a threat to the U.S. homeland all serve to underscore the gravity of the challenge and point to enduring factors that will continue to animate the activities of regional defense planners.

East China Sea

A second major U.S. security concern is the East China Sea, in which the long-standing territorial dispute between Japan and China over sovereignty of the uninhabited Senkaku Islands (known as the Diaoyu Islands in China) has escalated in recent years. The two countries have a long history of animosity, and China disputes the circumstances under which Japan established administrative control of the islands after World War II. The dispute also involves Taiwan, which calls the island chain the Diaoyutai Islands and has claims similar to those held by mainland China.

The dispute was exacerbated by the nationalization of the islands by Tokyo in 2013. Their proximity to mainland China, Taiwan, and Okinawa further heightens the risk of escalation. In addition, China and Japan are dependent on energy imports to sustain their national power. The prospect of an estimated 200 million barrels of oil reserves under the East China Sea is too important for either state to forgo its claims to the islands and raises the stakes of the dispute.⁹⁵

China has thus far sought to advance its interests vis-à-vis the East China Sea without provoking outright military conflict with either Japan or the United States. Its approach is to put maximum pressure on Japan via incursions into the territorial seas around the Senkaku Islands by PLA Navy vessels⁹⁶ in an effort to show the loss of Japanese administrative control of the islands, thereby rendering the U.S.-Japan security treaty commitments inapplicable to the situation. Japan has remained vigilant, if cautious, lest inadvertent escalation occur.

Regional threats. U.S. statements have reassured Japan to some degree but have proved insufficient at guaranteeing long-term stability in the East China Sea. China controls the initiative by putting pressure on Japan via intrusive patrols and incursions by Chinese vessels, and these have kept Japan in a state of heightened concern. Although conflict does not seem imminent, and the establishment of a communications protocol between Beijing and Tokyo in May 2018 may reduce the possibility of inadvertent escalation, the situation could simmer with low-level tension for a long time. That said, a unilateral move by China at some point to change the status quo in the East China Sea would likely result in a strong response by Japan, which could very quickly escalate into a regional conflict that draws in the United States. No other regional players are likely to be

⁹⁵ EIA, "East China Sea," September 17, 2014, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/regions-topics.php?RegionTopicID=ECS>.

⁹⁶ In June 2018, China's coast guard, a major player in the East China Sea, switched subordination from the State Oceanic Administration to the People's Armed Police Force and, ultimately, the command of the Central Military Commission. This change allows for smoother coordination with the PLA Navy.

drawn into the situation, but all regional actors would feel the fallout from a crisis, especially in economic and trade terms.

Threats to the United States. The United States has asserted that as long as Japan has administrative control, the islands are covered by the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty (in particular, Article V, which addresses armed attacks by a third party).⁹⁷ An escalation of tensions that resulted in armed conflict would test this commitment, with implications for the alliance as well as continued access to U.S. bases in Okinawa and elsewhere in Japan.

South China Sea

A third U.S. security concern is the South China Sea. Competitive interests in the South China Sea were stoked after a 1969 study concluded that the area contained significant energy resources. With approximately 11 billion barrels of oil reserves and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves, it contains resources that could provide greater energy security for those countries with the means to exploit them.⁹⁸ Perhaps of greater significance, competing territorial claims in the South China Sea, including China's adherence to the inchoate claims of its nine-dash line and the commitment by President Xi Jinping to not "yield an inch" of historic Chinese territory, have raised the stakes. The Spratly Islands are the most widely contested, with China, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam having all built on features claimed by at least one other country.⁹⁹

China's military power, when combined with the resources of the Chinese state, dwarfs that of any one of the other claimants. While multiple parties have built on features in the South China Sea in the past, China's activities over the last several years have easily outpaced those of other countries. It has constructed multiple runways and radar systems and has deployed military aircraft and missiles on artificial islands created by dredging around rocks and reefs. In May 2018, China landed a long-range bomber aircraft, the H-6K with a combat radius of 1,000 nautical miles, for the first time on a location at Woody Island.

China has sought to pressure individual actors into bilateral arrangements, in the process avoiding multilateral solutions. Efforts to resolve disputes using international law have not proved successful thus far in deterring Chinese activities. The most notable example occurred in July 2016 when the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague under UNCLOS ruled that China's nine-dash line does not confer historical rights to its claims in the South China Sea. Beijing, however, refused to recognize the legitimacy of the case, did not participate in the hearing, and has rejected the tribunal's ruling.

Threats to the region. The complex web of overlapping claims in the South China Sea makes it difficult for any side to anticipate how a conflict would play out as multiple parties seek to secure interests, assets, and resources. China has exploited that reality and leveraged its own overwhelming power to gradually change the status quo in the region while avoiding actions that would lead to war. At the same time, China has prevented ASEAN from acting as a bloc to counter its plans by only engaging with regional states on a bilateral basis.

⁹⁷ Phil Stewart and Kiyoshi Takenaka, "In Japan, U.S. Defense Chief Reaffirms Commitment to Security Treaty," Reuters, February 3, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-usa-mattis-idUSKBN15111K>.

⁹⁸ EIA, "South China Sea," February 7, 2013, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/regions-topics.php?RegionTopicID=SCS>.

⁹⁹ For more information on the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, including an interactive map showing claims, features, incidents, and other relevant details, see the website of the Maritime Awareness Project, a joint initiative by NBR and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA, <http://maritimeawarenessproject.org/about>.

The Strait of Malacca, the shipping chokepoint near Singapore that controls access to the South China Sea from the Indian Ocean, is a vital sea lane. A significant portion of the region's energy and other trade transits the strait. Instability in these waters thus would have dramatic economic and trade impacts across the Indo-Pacific.

Threats to the United States. China seeks the capability to deny freedom of maneuver to U.S. and allied forces within the first island chain in the event of a contingency in the region. Its construction activities in the South China Sea thus pose a challenge to the United States' ongoing presence in the Indo-Pacific. More fundamentally, regional countries have perceived the United States' slow and politicized response to Chinese activities as having been insufficient to address the challenge. Indeed, there is evidence that Chinese leaders were prepared for a more robust reaction from the United States and might have recalibrated their activities as a consequence. When there was no such response, the island-building campaign continued apace.¹⁰⁰

The United States has said that it takes no position on conflicting claims, nor is it in a position to enforce international law or the tribunal ruling.¹⁰¹ While conflict seems unlikely in the near term, the changing status quo calls into question the United States' commitment both to its allies, especially the Philippines, and to a "free and open" Indo-Pacific.

India-Pakistan Conflict

India and Pakistan share a border extending around 1,800 miles, parts of which remain in dispute over 70 years following its demarcation by the departing British colonial power. The two countries have fought four wars (1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999) and engaged in a series of smaller conflicts. With the exception of the 1971 war (which concerned the territory of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh), these confrontations have stemmed from disputes over the territory of Kashmir. In the same region, China claims the territory of Aksai Chin and has negotiated a border between itself and Pakistan, though India does not recognize this agreement.

Tensions are exacerbated by geopolitical and domestic factors in both countries. India has sought to capitalize on its potential to become a great power, based on vast material resources and a large population. The establishment of India as a regional power has created a growing imbalance with Pakistan in economic, institutional, and military capabilities, which has driven Islamabad to work to subvert India's ascendancy. In addition to limiting India's rise on the world stage, Pakistan has sought to revise the status quo in Kashmir. It has tried to accomplish this through nuclear coercion, limited conventional conflict, and the use of terrorist groups to wage proxy wars within India's borders. The army has enjoyed a powerful role in Pakistan by exploiting perceptions of India as an enemy and existential threat, further reducing the incentive for Pakistani leaders to de-escalate conflict.

Threats to the region. An escalation of the simmering competition between these two nuclear powers would have uncertain impacts on regional stability—not just among countries in the subcontinent, but also likely involving the great powers of Russia, China, and the United States. Another limited conflict could further embolden nonstate actors, including Islamist groups in Pakistan and rebel groups in India, and blur borders with Afghanistan and China. China has

¹⁰⁰ In my interactions as U.S. chief of naval operations with the PLA Navy commander, Admiral Wu Shengli, Admiral Wu made clear that he thought the United States would have a more forceful reaction when China began its island-building.

¹⁰¹ "U.S. Has 'Frank' Exchange on South China Sea during Trump Visit," Reuters, November 9, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-trump-asia-china-southchinesea/u-s-has-frank-exchange-on-south-china-sea-during-trump-visit-idUSKBN1D910E?il=0>.

long trumpeted its “all-weather friendship” with Pakistan and may use a conflict to secure its own disputed territory with India, increase its influence in Nepal and even Bhutan, or defend its assets along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. A refugee crisis involving the massive populations of the two countries would also pose a potential humanitarian crisis for nearby countries. In terms of economic impact, open conflict between India and Pakistan near the Arabian Sea could disrupt oil and other trade to the rest of the Indo-Pacific, destabilizing economies and governments worldwide.

Threats to the United States. An India-Pakistan conflict could put pressure on the United States to resolve the crisis short of general war, while absolutely avoiding nuclear exchange. The primary concerns for Washington would be to limit terrorist activity in the region and prevent nuclear proliferation from a weakened regime in Islamabad. Despite its nascent strategic partnership with India, the United States continues to supply the Pakistani government with aid to maintain the stability of the region and the safety of the country’s nuclear arsenal. In the event of a conflict between India and Pakistan, Washington would be in the difficult position of having to navigate complicated relationships with both countries. The United States would also be wary of Chinese opportunism in the event of a crisis, should Beijing seek to use the instability to enhance its own influence in the region.

Taiwan Strait

The tensions between the PRC and Taiwan date to the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. Beijing regards the island as a renegade province that is part of China, while Taiwan has developed into a self-governing democracy with its own economy (the world’s nineteenth-largest in terms of purchasing power parity), currency, military, and diplomatic relations. The strait separating Taiwan from the Chinese mainland is only 81 miles wide at its narrowest point and has been the site of at least three crises between the two sides. Mainland military forces shelled islands in the strait in 1954–55 and 1958, and more recently the PRC conducted a series of missile tests in 1995–96.

New strains emerged in 2016, when Taiwan elected Tsai Ing-wen president. The DPP has long held ambitions for independence, which threaten Beijing’s claims to the island as part of China. In response, the PRC has moved to isolate Taiwan diplomatically and further reduce the small number of countries that still recognize it, while pressuring international organizations and businesses to denote Taiwan as a Chinese territory. The PLA has also enhanced its air and naval operations around the island, adding to the pressure that the Tsai government feels.

The United States has played a role in cross-strait relations since the end of the civil war, helping deter Chinese invasion and buttressing the development of Taiwan’s economy and democracy. Even after transferring official diplomatic ties to Beijing in 1979, Washington has continued to trade and have unofficial relations with Taipei. Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act in 1979 soon after the United States normalized ties with the PRC. The act stipulates that the United States will “consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means...a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States.” It also states that the United States “will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.” This approach has served as the foundation of the security commitment that has now guided U.S. relations with Taiwan for nearly 40 years. Arms sales to Taiwan raise the ire of the

PRC, which views such transactions as interfering with Chinese sovereignty and as inconsistent with U.S. commitments in the Shanghai Communiqué, despite serious changes in China's own posture against Taiwan.

Threats to the region. A military conflict would have disastrous effects on the carefully calibrated power balance in Asia, but it is unlikely that other regional countries would deploy forces.¹⁰² Even as tensions rose, the region would carefully monitor the U.S. reaction to a conflict to gauge its support for the democratic government of Taiwan. Conflict in the Taiwan Strait would also have a significant impact on trade. Taiwan is the fifteenth-largest exporter in the world, with roughly 60% of that trade going outside mainland China and Hong Kong.¹⁰³ A blockade of the strait or other limitations on Taiwan's ability to produce exports would hinder supply chains across the region.

Threats to the United States. The strategic ambiguity of Washington's commitment to Taipei makes it difficult to predict how much the United States would pledge in manpower and resources to ensure an outcome favorable to U.S. interests in a cross-strait crisis. In the past, the United States has committed naval forces to the Taiwan Strait to deter escalation into conflict. However, as China's anti-access/area-denial capabilities grow, so too do the challenges for traditional U.S. responses. If the United States fully commits to a defense of Taiwan, much of the Pacific Fleet may be required to stop the modernizing PLA Navy, and the risk of vertical escalation into a confrontation between China and the United States could become alarmingly real.

Conversely, U.S. credibility would be at stake if a cross-strait confrontation occurred without significant U.S. intervention. The failure to assist Taiwan in a crisis could heighten fears of abandonment in Japan, South Korea, and other U.S. allies, which may spark regional arms races and mark the end of the United States' preeminence in the region.

The U.S. Presence in the Indo-Pacific: Past, Present, and Near Future

This section provides a brief overview of the history of U.S. deployments to the Indo-Pacific, the current disposition of U.S. forces, and what is planned for the near future. In addition, it outlines key dimensions of the other aspects of U.S. presence, including economic and social activities.

Despite the Obama administration's "rebalance" to the region, the United States' presence is not significantly larger than it was prior to the rebalance. Force levels are of course not the only element of national power. As the country assessments show, political will, national performance (the effectiveness with which a state converts resources into power), strategic culture, and grand strategy also matter. U.S. diplomatic, informational, and economic strategies are essential to the successful resolution of regional security challenges and achievement of national goals. Nevertheless, the number of forward-deployed military personnel remains a tangible, if incomplete, measure of the U.S. strategic commitment.

The United States has been a Pacific power since the late nineteenth century when Spain ceded the Philippines to it as part of the Treaty of Paris formally ending the Spanish-American War. The number of U.S. troops in the region grew exponentially during World War II, and this presence was sustained for the occupation of Japan (1945–52), which overlapped with the Korean War (1950–53). The treaties with Japan (1951) and South Korea (1953) ensured the ongoing presence

¹⁰² While the United States has close military alliances with advanced militaries in Japan, the ROK, and Australia, and these countries have regularly fought together with the United States, it remains ambiguous if any other country would join operations in defense of Taiwan.

¹⁰³ *The World Factbook 2018*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2050.html#tw>.

of U.S. troops to support the defense of both countries. Today, roughly half of U.S. forces that are forward-deployed in the Indo-Pacific are in Japan and South Korea as a result of these defense treaties and the commitments they entail.¹⁰⁴ The United States has three other treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific: the Philippines (1951), Thailand (1954), and Australia (1951). U.S. troops were permanently stationed in the Philippines after World War II under the 1947 Military Bases Agreement, with Subic Bay Naval Station and Clark Air Base together hosting more than 60,000 troops at the peak of deployments. The facilities were closed and returned to the Philippines by late 1992. U.S. forces were also stationed in Thailand, with around 50,000 military personnel there at the height of the Vietnam War.¹⁰⁵ Although the United States has not permanently stationed troops in Thailand since 1970, Thai facilities, including Utapao Airfield, have been essential to U.S. force projection in the region. From a World War II high of 150,000, U.S. forces in Australia declined rapidly after the war. The deployment of marines in Darwin, even if no more than 2,500 at one time, marks a significant increase over the postwar period.

The number of U.S. forces forward-deployed in the Indo-Pacific has decreased since 1973 when the United States withdrew from South Vietnam. Whereas in 1973 the United States had about 280,000 troops deployed throughout the Indo-Pacific, in 2016 only 125,000 troops were deployed in the region—less than half of the force size in 1973 (see **Figure 2**).¹⁰⁶ Although from 2011 to 2014 the number of personnel stationed in the Indo-Pacific rose by several thousand troops (in response to the rebalance policy), by 2016 the force level was lower than before the Obama administration came to power.

Nonetheless, the United States retains considerable manpower and strength in the Indo-Pacific in terms of total numbers of military and civilian personnel, aircraft, and ships assigned to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), including forces assigned to INDOPACOM that are stationed in the United States (see **Figure 3**).¹⁰⁷ Overall force levels in the Indo-Pacific are expected to remain largely constant in the near future, with only slight changes in the basing of personnel. For example, INDOPACOM plans to move 2,500 marines to Guam by 2021 and another 2,500 by 2026, but will decrease the number hosted in Okinawa.¹⁰⁸ The U.S. Navy anticipates that 60% of its ships will be based in the Pacific, and the U.S. Air Force will send its most advanced systems (e.g., the F-22 and F-35) to the region.¹⁰⁹

In addition, the United States has sold some of its most advanced platforms to regional allies and partners. For example, it is expected to send Japan F-35B joint strike fighters, in addition to the F-35A fighters already on hand; advanced ISR platforms such as the P-8 Poseidon; and ballistic missile defense platforms. India has purchased as much as \$15 billion of U.S. weapons, including

¹⁰⁴ In 2016, the United States stationed just under 39,000 personnel in Japan and nearly 25,000 in South Korea out of a total of around 125,000 in the Indo-Pacific. U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center, “DOD Personnel, Workforce Reports and Publications,” 1973–2017, available at https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp_reports.jsp.

¹⁰⁵ Emma Chanlett-Avery, Ben Dolven, and Wil Mackey, “Thailand: Background and U.S. Relations,” Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, RL32593, July 29, 2015, 6, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL32593.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ These figures do not include U.S. personnel stationed in the continental United States. U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center, “DOD Personnel, Workforce Reports and Publications.”

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, “United States Pacific Command at a Glance,” https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/2015/0415_asia-pacific-rebalance/pacomInfo_web.jpg.

¹⁰⁸ Gaynor Dumat-Ol Daleno, “2,500 Marines to Move to Proposed Base in Guam by 2021,” *Marine Corps Times*, May 18, 2016, <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2016/05/18/2500-marines-to-move-to-proposed-base-in-guam-by-2021>.

¹⁰⁹ David Alexander, “U.S. Will Put More Warships in Asia: Panetta,” Reuters, June 2, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asia-security/u-s-will-put-more-warships-in-asia-panetta-idUSBRE85100Y20120603>.

P-8, C-130, and C-17 aircraft as well as Apache and Chinook helicopters and howitzers.¹¹⁰ Australia likewise purchased around \$10 billion in U.S. arms between 2012–13 and 2016–17, including F-35s, MH-60 helicopters, and ammunition.¹¹¹

The facts about force structure deployments and the sale of advanced arms, as well as the ongoing presence of U.S. joint forces conducting exercises, belie the claims of some that the U.S. commitment to the Indo-Pacific is waning and that the United States is retrenching from its regional commitments. Quite the contrary, the U.S. joint forces are active and engaged. Perhaps the best indicator of U.S. presence is that the U.S. Navy’s Seventh Fleet ships conduct more than seven hundred port calls throughout the region annually.

Yet it would be a fundamental error to judge the likelihood of achieving U.S. goals in the Indo-Pacific solely on the basis of planned U.S. force posture and in-region military capabilities.

FIGURE 2 U.S. troop deployments to the Indo-Pacific, 1973–2016



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center, “DOD Personnel, Workforce Reports and Publications,” 1973–2017, available at https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp_reports.jsp.

NOTE: Figures do not include forces stationed in California or Washington State.

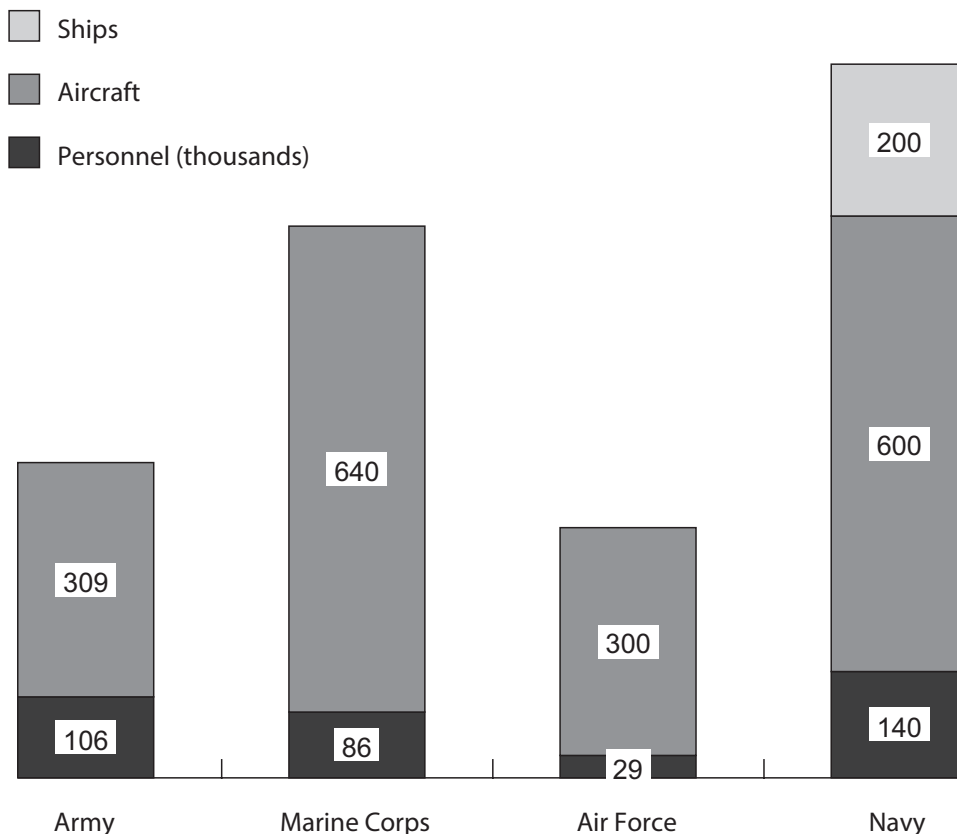
¹¹⁰ Anwar Iqbal, “U.S. Military Sales to India Go from Zero to \$15bn in Decade,” *Dawn*, September 12, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1357149>.

¹¹¹ Andrew Greene, “Australian Defence Force Spends over \$10 Billion on U.S. Arms in Four Years,” ABC (Australia), December 28, 2017, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-28/us-weapons-spend-tops-billion-dollar/9287170>.

The United States’ diplomatic, informational, and economic strategies must pair with military force posture to create a balanced solution to regional security challenges, and this is a challenge for which the United States is prepared and well-equipped. It provides presence in multidimensional ways across the Indo-Pacific, demonstrating a staggering array of assets that reflect the U.S. commitment to the region. For instance, the United States has more than 75 embassies, consulates, and diplomatic missions spanning the full breadth of the Indo-Pacific in places as diverse as the PRC and the Federated States of Micronesia—all well-placed to ensure an active and engaged diplomatic presence.

Despite withdrawing from the TPP in early 2017, the United States retains enormous economic, trading, and investment relationships with regional countries. U.S. total trade in goods with Asia was more than \$1.5 trillion in 2017, double that of U.S. total trade in goods with the European Union.¹¹² Whereas the U.S. trade in services is largest with the EU, most significant growth opportunities are resident in the emerging Asian economies.¹¹³ U.S. direct investment in Asia is

FIGURE 3 U.S. force level in the Pacific



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, “United States Pacific Command at a Glance,” https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/2015/0415_asia-pacific-rebalance/pacomInfo_web.jpg.

¹¹² U.S. Census Bureau, “Trade in Goods with Asia,” 2017, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c0016.html#2017>.

¹¹³ U.S. International Trade Commission, “Recent Trends in U.S. Services Trade: 2017 Annual Report,” May 2017, <https://www.usitc.gov/publications/332/pub4682.pdf>.

also growing rapidly and was nearly \$850 billion at the end of 2016. Although this figure is still far behind the \$3 trillion dollars of U.S. direct investment in Europe, it has quadrupled over the previous fifteen years.¹¹⁴ Nine of the top ten American Fortune 500 companies, representing more than \$2 trillion in market capitalization, have operations in Asia.¹¹⁵

U.S.-based NGOs that work across the Indo-Pacific have long histories, ranging in function from the promotion of health and education to civil-society development, among many other activities. The Peace Corps, for example, operates in fifteen countries across the Indo-Pacific and previously had a presence in nearly ten other countries. The U.S. presence is also enhanced by the large number of American students who study in the region. Over 15% of the more than 325,000 Americans studying abroad are in Asia and Oceania.¹¹⁶

Implications for the Five U.S. Security Concerns

The preceding sections analyzed the national power, strategic cultures, and resulting security strategies of seven key players in the Indo-Pacific and then discussed the origins and critical dimensions of five security concerns in the context of the U.S. presence in the region. This section applies the findings from the country studies to these five security challenges that the United States faces today: North Korea, the sovereignty dispute in the East China Sea, Chinese expansion and territorial disputes in the South China Sea, India-Pakistan conflict, and a potential crisis in the Taiwan Strait. The discussion highlights the most salient factors drawn from a consideration of each key country's sources of power, strategic challenges, and security strategy that the United States should weigh. The purpose of this section is not to solve these security challenges; rather, the intent is to provide planners with an appreciation of the roles of the seven key countries. Put succinctly, this section highlights factors that, if considered, will contribute to the formation of more coherent and effective campaign plans.

North Korea

Considerations regarding regional countries. This report judges the DPRK's nuclear weapons and missiles programs to be the most dangerous challenge to the stability of Northeast Asia and the greatest near-term threat to the security of the United States. In developing its own campaign plans in response, the United States would be wise to consider the most salient aspects of the key countries outlined below.

China is believed to have the most influence on North Korea due to their historical ties, their ongoing if moribund security treaty, and the PRC's role as the DPRK's largest trading partner. Beijing cares deeply about the security of its northeastern border, fearing that instability in the DPRK could yield large-scale refugee flows or that nuclear mishaps could result in environmental

¹¹⁴ "Direct Investment Position of the United States in Asia Pacific from 2000 to 2016," Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/188604/ united-states-direct-investments-in-the-asia-pacific-region-since-2000>; and "Direct Investment Position of the United States in Europe from 2000 to 2016," Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/188579/united-states-direct-investments-in-europe-since-2000>.

¹¹⁵ The companies are Walmart, Berkshire Hathaway, Apple, Exxon Mobil, McKesson, United HealthGroup, General Motors, Ford, and AT&T. Lucina Shen, "Here Are the Fortune 500's 10 Most Successful Companies," *Fortune*, June 7, 2017, <http://fortune.com/2017/06/07/fortune-500-companies-list-top>.

¹¹⁶ Institute of International Education (IIE), "Host Regions of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2004/05–2015/16," *Open Doors Report on U.S. Educational Exchange* (Washington, D.C.: IIE, 2017), available at <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/US-Study-Abroad/Host-Region>.

disaster, both of which would negatively affect China and its citizens. Moreover, China worries that unification of the Korean Peninsula would result in U.S. military forces on its border.

Yet despite China's potentially great leverage over North Korea, Pyongyang is resistant to Chinese pressure, creating a circumstance in which Beijing is as frustrated with North Korea as any other power. China's risk-averse strategic culture, however, leads it to seek the maintenance of the status quo as the most desirable outcome. Despite a grand strategy to project power throughout the western Pacific, with apparent longer-term aspirations to limit the United States' influence in the region and weaken the U.S. alliance system in the process, China still requires regional stability for its continued economic growth and domestic stability. Beijing is loath to bring all of its power to bear in influencing Pyongyang lest North Korea be destabilized in ways that diminish China's security on its northeastern border. It is thus not in China's interest to risk the collapse of the Kim regime in order to contain the North's development of nuclear weapons and ICBMs.

While at a quantitative disadvantage in terms of personnel, artillery, and missile systems, South Korea has outsized qualitative advantages in all aspects of military modernization vis-à-vis North Korea. However, South Korea's polity is deeply divided as to how to respond to North Korean threats and provocations, with significant parts of the population seeking unification at any cost, while others maintain deep distrust of the North. South Korea's preference for an autonomous foreign policy will complicate efforts to harmonize President Moon Jae-in's policy of engagement with North Korea with a U.S. policy of maximum pressure. South Korea can hardly contemplate general war with its northern neighbor, as this would constitute ethnic fratricide and put at risk the notion of a Korean Peninsula whole and free. Yet the ROK is postured to respond with robust conventional military power to North Korean provocations, raising the possibility that military responses might muddle political progress. Finally, South Korea worries about the financial costs it will bear in unification scenarios. However, there is evidence to suggest that improvements in North Korean infrastructure and lines of communication resulting from reduced security tensions could lead to dramatic economic gains for the peninsula and the region writ large.¹¹⁷

Japan is directly threatened by the DPRK but is constrained in its response by traditional postwar constitutional limitations and by U.S. influence. Japan's bifurcated strategic culture will be challenged to address North Korea rather than Japan's enduring adversary, China. Moreover, the unwieldy focus on Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korea—the abductees—demonstrates how domestic issues can hijack strategic deliberations and reveals the at times nonstrategic ways in which Japan operates. Although Japan cannot live under an uncapped North Korean missile and nuclear threat, it is loath to act unilaterally, preferring that the United States do the heavy lifting.

Russia, as a state that borders North Korea and has participated in past multilateral efforts to resolve the DPRK nuclear challenge (through the six-party process), has a stake in outcomes. Resolution of the security tensions would doubtless result in economic benefits for Russia, not least through an improved ability to transport energy to high-demand customers. But its strategic culture and security strategy position Russia more as a spoiler of U.S. and Western interests, perhaps in collaboration with China, than a constructive partner.

Implications for U.S. policymakers. China's dilemma vis-à-vis the DPRK—desiring denuclearization and enhanced stability but petrified of abandoning the status quo—creates opportunities for the United States. The disjunctive policy changes that Washington is capable of

¹¹⁷ See, for example, "Regional Economic Implications of DPRK Security Behavior: The 'Bold Switchover Concept,'" NBR, March 2006, http://www.nbr.org/downloads/pdfs/PSA/BS_Conf06_report.pdf.

making, including the risk of a sustained military campaign that would end North Korea's nuclear program and potentially put the regime at risk, make Beijing extremely uncomfortable and thus more susceptible to pressure. In view of the Abe administration's emerging security strategy, Washington must be aware of Tokyo's need for reassurance of the ongoing U.S. commitment to defend Japan. With regard to the ROK, Washington must be aware of Seoul's deep need both to strengthen alliance responses and to avoid a precipitous conflict that would divide the South Korean polity. The United States should also usefully consider strategies that take into account Russia's desire to complicate U.S.-sought outcomes.

East China Sea

Considerations regarding regional countries. The two major players in the East China Sea—China and Japan—exhibit contrasting approaches to the dispute. Japan's power is derived from its superior naval capabilities and the fact that it is in possession of administrative control over the islands. China's power derives from its ability to control the initiative in how it puts pressure on Japan, especially through the use of traditional non-PLA Navy assets such as its maritime militia and coast guard.¹¹⁸

While there is certainly historical distrust and animosity between both sides, Japan's strategic culture and national identity predicated on pacifism predispose it toward restraint. Chinese strategic culture, on the other hand, predisposes China toward restraint when confronted by strength but toward assertiveness when it perceives weakness or passivity in its adversary. Moreover, Beijing believes that Japanese control of the Senkaku Islands represents a historical humiliation that must be rectified, adding impetus to its efforts. It likely also believes that "non-war use of force" might put sufficient pressure on Tokyo over time to bring about Chinese sovereign control of the islands without a resort to general war.

Implications for U.S. policymakers. Washington needs to be mindful that China is careful to advance its interests vis-à-vis the East China Sea without provoking outright military conflict with either Japan or the United States. But the absence of conflict should not be misconstrued as acceptance on Beijing's part of the status quo. China's approach is to put maximum pressure on Japan via incursions into the territorial seas around the Senkaku Islands by China Coast Guard and PLA Navy vessels in an effort to demonstrate that Japan may have lost "administrative control," thereby rendering the U.S.-Japan security treaty inapplicable to the islands. For its part, Japan understands that its challenge is to stand firm. But doing so is costly, and political will could flag in the face of challenging domestic political circumstances, or if Tokyo were to perceive a reduction in the U.S. commitment.

Thus, U.S. political statements affirming the inclusion of the Senkaku Islands under the treaty are absolutely necessary to reassure Japan and deter China from initiating general conflict. Yet, over the longer term, statements alone are insufficient to guarantee stability in the East China Sea. Bearing in mind China's aversion to starting a conflict whose outcome is uncertain, and recognizing Japan's ongoing need for reassurance, the United States ought to consider tangible ways to demonstrate its actual military support to its ally, including through robust bilateral exercises, enhanced air and maritime domain awareness programs, and regular monitoring of Chinese incursions, followed by public denouncements.

¹¹⁸ With the subordination of China's coast guard to the People's Armed Police, new patterns of activity might well ensue, but the fundamental point remains: the Chinese side retains a monopoly over escalation.

However, the United States should also bear in mind that demonstrating its commitment to Japan will result in a reaction from China. Beijing's position will harden to the extent that it believes that resolution of the sovereignty claims over the Senkaku Islands on unfavorable terms is becoming more likely. This perception would change China's security priorities from risk aversion to risk necessity because failure to act would put at risk national prestige. Given these features of Chinese strategic culture, campaign planners will want to seek an appropriate mix of diplomatic, informational, and economic measures to achieve a balance that reduces the possibility of conflict.

South China Sea

Considerations regarding regional countries. The territorial disputes in the East China Sea and the South China Sea are linked in that they are both within China's "near seas"—the region within the first island chain—and are covered by Beijing's nonspecific nine-dash-line claim. The other claimant states carefully watch China's efforts to dominate the region and make judgments about the U.S. response, or lack thereof. There is a glaring disparity in power between China and the other claimants, and China's perception of them as weak incentivizes risk-taking.

The ambivalence within Indonesian strategic culture about external threats has led the country to eschew the development of the military capabilities to contest the Chinese presence in the Natuna Sea. China's increasingly aggressive actions, however, may change Indonesian elites' assessment of this threat and compel them to take steps to enhance Indonesia's still-emerging national power.

While not a party to the disputes in the South China Sea, Japan retains a keen interest in linkages between Chinese behavior in the region and its own bilateral dispute with China over the Senkaku Islands. Japan refrains from direct confrontation with China in the South China Sea but is willing to be more engaged, including by conducting military exercises with the U.S. Navy as it transits the waters, if not actual freedom of navigation patrols.

India's national goal to increase its presence in the South China Sea—a component of its "Look East" policy—runs counter to the enduring desire for strategic autonomy, raising questions about the utility of India as a partner in enhancing regional stability in these waters. Taiwan's role in the territorial disputes is confounding because its policies and interests largely align with those of the PRC due to historical issues. Given the generally fraught relationship across the Taiwan Strait, leaders in Taiwan might too easily welcome agreement with China on sovereignty claims, in ways that could complicate deliberations.

Implications for U.S. policymakers. China's preferred approach is to apply pressure on individual actors to seek bilateral arrangements, in the process avoiding multilateral solutions. Planners ought to keep in mind that the degree to which the United States shows solidarity with individual nations remains an essential consideration; rigid rhetorical adherence to principles alone in the face of Chinese pressure is likely to be both unsatisfactory and insufficient. The United States has focused on whether China's actions in the South China Sea present a challenge to U.S. interests, and judging that they do not, it has elected not to enforce U.S. policy with military power. The United States might more fully consider the perspectives of its regional allies and partners and develop responses that bolster their positions vis-à-vis China, even without taking a position on sovereignty claims.

In particular, the United States might carefully consider an emerging role for Indonesia. Indonesia's influence within ASEAN and that organization's role in regional governance give

the country an advantage in shaping public opinion and applying diplomatic pressure on China. Moreover, despite a historical aversion to thinking about external threats from other nations, the emerging consciousness in Indonesia might be leveraged to promote a more robust response.

India-Pakistan Conflict

Considerations regarding regional states. The dispute over Kashmir and Pakistan's support for Islamist terrorists that infiltrate India via this region are layered onto historical enmity linked to the foundation of India and Pakistan as independent states at the end of the British Raj. The dominance of the army in the Indian military establishment is the product of India's continental approach to security as well as its enduring nonaligned posture. The army must ensure that it is well-prepared for land-based conflict to its northwest, and this focus on the ongoing competition with Pakistan makes the development of greater Indian power projection, including blue water naval forces, more difficult.

Although this security strategy of "static frontier defense" was thus designed to defend against the Pakistani threat, India's long-term potential adversary is China. A myopic near-term focus on Pakistan, compounded by impulses toward strategic autonomy, risks leaving India unprepared to address this challenge. Indian strategic culture is characterized by an inflexibility with regard to considering new threats and an unwillingness to work with partners in effective ways, suggesting that immediate resolution of tension with Pakistan is unlikely. At the same time, Pakistan's use of proxy actors to destabilize India, while posing tremendous near-term challenges, is not sustainable in the long term, not least because doing so avoids focusing on the broader developmental and security challenges that Pakistan faces going forward.

China's position as a key regional state that borders both countries makes it an important actor in this rivalry. Beijing is comfortable enabling its long-time security partner in ways that complicate Indian security decision-making. But wariness about the enhancement of Islamist actors in general, concerned as China is with its own domestic Islamist movements, bounds Chinese support of Pakistan. China's own border dispute with India is an additional complicating factor. While Beijing hardly seeks a revisiting of the 1962 war, it does not shrink from opportunities to poke India, especially given the low risk of horizontal escalation.

Although Russia is a long-time, if somewhat unreliable, security partner of India, it is not a central player in the border dispute with Pakistan. Nonetheless, Moscow's propensity to complicate matters for the United States cannot be overlooked as a factor. Japan, for its part, has productive relations with India and seeks greater security engagement via the quadrilateral arrangement that also includes the United States and Australia. However, the emerging Abe Doctrine is still constrained by the pacifist element of Japanese strategic culture, making active intervention unlikely.

Implications for U.S. policymakers. The simmering competition between India and Pakistan, as nuclear weapons states, threatens to involve the United States and puts pressure on it to help resolve tensions short of conventional war, much less a nuclear exchange. As U.S. campaign planners consider options for developing the emerging partnership with India, they should be mindful of India's grand strategy of nonalignment and studiously avoid the appearance of alliance commitments and responsibilities. A closer partnership could bring stability to India's relationship with Pakistan and strengthen India's position vis-à-vis China. At the same time, the need to maintain regional stability might also lead U.S. planners to consider diplomatic, informational,

and economic measures that reassure Pakistan that U.S. pressure on terrorist groups does not mean that the United States seeks to destabilize it.

Taiwan Strait

Considerations regarding regional countries. The PRC's dissatisfaction with a status quo that reflects de facto independence for Taiwan becomes unsustainable when Taipei avoids even occasional references to a pacifying rhetorical adherence to a "one-China formulation." While China's options to coerce or induce changes in Taiwan are many—including cultural attraction, economic integration, and economic coercion—overt threats that signal preparations for potential military action cannot be overlooked. Taiwan's approach is to diversify its external allies, of which its innovative New Southbound Policy is just the latest example. But regional states will likely avoid taking sides in a cross-strait conflict. Even Japan is quite cautious, and other U.S. allies and partners such as the ROK and India are unlikely participants. U.S. planners ought to be concerned about Russian actions on behalf of the PRC to complicate U.S. efforts. In the final analysis, the potential commitment of U.S. forces and resources in a crisis is what keeps China at bay.

Implications for U.S. policymakers. China's risk-averse military strategy means that raising the cost of Chinese intervention and then ably communicating that to Chinese leaders and to Taiwan's populace will continue to have an enormous deterrent value. But Washington must be aware that Beijing's patience is not endless. The PRC's articulation of its red lines, while somewhat an exercise in Chinese-style Kremlinology, remains important, even if U.S. interlocutors quickly bore of China's endless recitations of its Taiwan catechism. Close attention to Chinese statements remains an essential activity so that the United States can understand and interrupt changes in thinking before Beijing acts.

With regard to active preparations for combined military responses to Chinese challenges, the United States must judge accurately whether the relative gains enhance deterrence or incite China to take more risks. Although Chinese strategic culture is characterized by a reluctance to use hard power when the power balance is unfavorable, China is more prone to use force when it perceives that its territorial integrity is at stake. Prudent and low-profile application of new measures in terms of high-level contact and occasional military engagements such as ship visits can achieve real benefits, but their impacts on Beijing, as well as Taipei, must be continually assessed. At the same time, developments in Taiwan's defense planning that build on the island's natural geographic advantages while taking steps to make invasion a costly endeavor will also add to deterrence. Over the longer term, other U.S. partners in the region—such as Japan—might make contributions even as they avoid direct involvement in a crisis.

Conclusion

This report analyzes the sources of national power, interests, strategic cultural dispositions, and security strategies of seven states in the Indo-Pacific: China, Russia, Japan, the ROK, India, Indonesia, and Taiwan to inform the development of campaign plans that implement new U.S. strategy documents. As planners address U.S. security concerns in the Indo-Pacific, five current hotspots stand out: the Korean Peninsula, the East China Sea, the South China Sea, the India-Pakistan border, and the Taiwan Strait. The seven key players identified in this report will all have an impact on the overall situation in the Indo-Pacific and in particular on these five security

challenges. These countries have unique resources and strategic cultures, as well as a unique proclivity to use both in the execution of a national strategy focused on achieving a range of economic, diplomatic, and military objectives. This report does not seek to solve the five security challenges but rather seeks to illuminate how a nuanced understanding of key players in the region can help planners do their jobs more effectively and develop campaign plans that better achieve U.S. goals.

The report concludes that the U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific, consisting of a comprehensive set of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic activities, remains essential for regional stability in the immediate future. In his recent speech outlining the administration's economic vision for the region, Secretary of State Pompeo expressed an interest in using a whole-of-government approach, which is consistent with this finding.¹¹⁹ In each of the five hotspots, the United States' initiative remains the intangible factor that tilts the region away from conflict and toward stability. Moreover, the report's assessment of the critical players in the Indo-Pacific shows that U.S. presence is the external factor that best frames their sources of power, interests, strategic cultural dispositions, and security strategies in ways that enhance regional stability. Specifically, the United States' commitment to maintaining an enduring presence directly addresses the two long-term trends highlighted at the outset: (1) Sino-U.S. strategic competition fueled by China's growing ambition and capabilities and (2) expanding regional economic integration.

Over the longer term, however, China's increasingly powerful military and economy are factors requiring the United States to make fundamental adjustments to its national strategy, enhance its partnerships and alliances, and demonstrate its commitment to a long-term presence in the Indo-Pacific. Adopting firm, consistent, and proactive positions, and not simply reacting to the latest instances of Chinese adventurism, is essential. Unbounded competition might force precipitous decisions by regional partners, and even allies, who cannot change their geography, even if they desire to remain close to the United States.

¹¹⁹ Pompeo, "Remarks on 'America's Indo-Pacific Economic Vision.'"

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