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# China and Japan

Possible partners, strategic competitors or  
soon-to-be enemies?

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A note on names: throughout the text, Japanese, Chinese and Korean names are presented in the conventional style, in which the family name precedes the given or personal name.

## *Abstract*

La scrittura di questa tesi rappresenta il completamento di un percorso di studi durante il quale ho avuto la possibilità di approfondire lo studio delle relazioni internazionali in Asia Orientale. Come intuibile dal titolo, questo elaborato intende concentrarsi sul rapporto tra la Repubblica Popolare Cinese e il Giappone, con una particolare attenzione agli aspetti legati alla sicurezza e alla difesa degli interessi nazionali. L'analisi è stata limitata al triennio 2012-2015, in quanto si è ritenuto che l'avvicendamento politico alla testa di entrambi gli stati ha costituito un punto di svolta sia nelle politiche interne, sia nel modo in cui Cina e Giappone si relazionano l'un l'altro.

Nel mese di novembre 2012, si è tenuto a Pechino il XVIII Congresso nazionale del Partito Comunista Cinese, dove Xi Jinping è stato eletto segretario generale e capo della Commissione Militare Centrale del Partito. Queste due nomine lo hanno di fatto designato come futuro presidente della Repubblica Popolare, carica a cui ha avuto accesso il 14 marzo 2013. In Giappone si sono tenute le elezioni parlamentari, che hanno visto la vittoria del Partito Liberal-Democratico e conseguentemente l'ascesa di Abe Shinzō alla carica di primo ministro. Sin dai primi giorni dei rispettivi mandati, i due leader hanno imposto le rispettive visioni alle politiche dei due paesi, tramite una serie di riforme che, oltre a modificare l'assetto istituzionale interno, hanno contribuito a inasprire il già teso rapporto tra Cina e Giappone.

Far risalire le cause della rivalità Sino-Giappone esclusivamente a ciò che è accaduto alla fine del 2012 sarebbe tuttavia un errore. Da anni, se non decenni, è possibile rintracciare nelle dinamiche interne dei due stati e nei loro rapporti segnali di un possibile scontro, o quantomeno di una possibile tensione. Questa tensione non è tuttavia un prodotto esclusivo del sistema regionale, ma deriva dai cambiamenti avvenuti all'interno del panorama politico internazionale.

La principale causa è la mutazione avvenuta in quelli che potrebbero essere definiti i rapporti di forza, o meglio il peso internazionale, dei due stati nei decenni passati. Questo deriva da due processi che si sono sviluppati nella seconda metà del novecento: la fine del bipolarismo e la crescita della Cina fino a diventare il secondo paese al mondo in termini di Prodotto Interno Lordo.

La dissoluzione dell'Unione Sovietica ha alterato la struttura del sistema politico internazionale, passato dall'essere diviso in due blocchi dominati da altrettante superpotenze ad essere dominato da uno stato egemone: gli Stati Uniti d'America. Dopo il 1991, molti analisti si sono interrogati se l'ascesa degli USA a potenza egemone, con la conseguente vittoria di un modello liberale rappresentato dagli stati occidentali, rappresentasse il conseguimento di un modello politico definitivo. Francis Fukuyama in questo senso ha parlato addirittura di "fine della storia". Tuttavia, già un decennio dopo i limiti di questa teoria apparvero evidenti. Il modello liberale occidentale, rappresentato dagli Stati Uniti, venne messo in discussione da due tra gli eventi che hanno caratterizzato negativamente gli anni zero del nuovo millennio: l'attentato terroristico al World Trade Center di New York nel 2001 e la crisi finanziaria globale che si è originata negli USA nel 2008 prima di espandersi nel resto del mondo. Questi due eventi e le loro conseguenze, come le guerre intraprese in medio oriente o la perdita di fiducia nel sistema finanziario americano, hanno compromesso la figura degli Stati Uniti come leader globale.

Alla crisi del modello impostosi dopo la Guerra Fredda si deve aggiungere la comparsa di un nuovo modello: la Cina. Considerato il proprio peso demografico ed economico, la Repubblica Popolare Cinese ha cercato sempre di più di imporsi come nuovo possibile modello. Questo atteggiamento è stato riscontrabile soprattutto durante gli anni della presidenza di Hu Jintao, il predecessore di Xi. In quegli anni la Cina ha sempre favorito un approccio alle questioni internazionali che prediligesse la stabilità necessaria al proprio sviluppo ed evitasse inutili azioni eclatanti o conflitti, accentuando la propria differenza con gli approcci statunitensi. È tuttavia innegabile che la crescita cinese rappresenta una sfida allo status quo creatosi in seguito alla fine della Guerra Fredda, una sfida a cui gli USA, ma soprattutto il Giappone, per ragioni storiche e geopolitiche, non possono restare indifferenti.

Un aspetto della crescita cinese particolarmente importante per comprendere l'evolversi del rapporto Sino-Giapponese è la crescita militare. Nonostante militarmente la Cina non abbia ancora raggiunto gli stessi livelli di forza che può vantare in campo economico, questo elemento si è dimostrato di capitale importanza. Negli ultimi anni le spese militari cinesi sono costantemente cresciute di almeno un 10% annuo. Il principale obiettivo della Repubblica Popolare in questo ambito è la modernizzazione dell'intero settore militare: passare quindi da un esercito basato sui grandi numeri, ma di fatto mal equipaggiato e mal addestrato, a una forza

numericamente più esigua ma qualitativamente superiore. Si è quindi resa necessaria la ristrutturazione, o in alcuni casi la creazione *ex novo*, di una adeguata base industriale in grado di provvedere ai bisogni dell'Esercito di Liberazione Popolare. Allo scopo di modernizzare questo settore si è cercato di riformare il settore della difesa cercando di privilegiare due aspetti: lo sviluppo di tecnologie *dual-use*, ossia utilizzabili sia in ambito militare che civili, e un'integrazione a livello industriale dei settori civile e militare. È possibile identificare numerosi momenti in cui l'Esercito di Liberazione Popolare ha subito umiliazioni o si è ritrovato a dover prendere atto della propria inadeguatezza. Da queste "lezioni", quasi tutte localizzate dopo l'anno 1990, la Repubblica Popolare ha compreso come il proprio principale antagonista, gli USA, avesse intrapreso una vera e propria rivoluzione tecnologica applicata alla strategia militare. Negli anni, l'Esercito di Liberazione Popolare ha quindi principalmente tentato di colmare il *gap* tecnologico con gli USA, concentrando su tecnologie di identificazione e riconoscimento, e su nuovi armamenti in grado di inibire le capacità di dispiego di forze militari da parte di altri stati in prossimità dei propri confini, specialmente in prossimità dei propri confini marittimi.

L'aumento della spesa militare cinese non è da considerarsi l'unico aspetto della crescita della Repubblica Popolare sul palcoscenico regionale. Un altro importante aspetto, intimamente legato al rapporto con il Giappone, è l'aumento di intensità delle dispute territoriali con i vari stati presenti nel Mar Cinese Meridionale e Orientale. Per quanto riguarda questa tesi, l'analisi si concentra sul Mar Cinese Orientale, nello specifico sulla disputa territoriale che riguarda l'Arcipelago Senkaku/Diaoyu, conteso al Giappone. Storicamente la contesa viene fatta risalire dalla Cina alla mancata restituzione delle isole da parte del Giappone dopo la sconfitta di quest'ultimo nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale, in accordo con le Dichiarazioni del Cairo e di Potsdam, rispettivamente del 1943 e 1945. Lo stato giapponese da parte sua ha sempre negato ogni legame delle due dichiarazioni con le isole, avendo sempre considerato le Senkaku disabitate prima della loro annessione nel 1895. La disputa dopo un periodo di sostanziale abbandono da parte di ambo le parti, negli ultimi anni si andata esacerbando sempre di più, fino al punto in cui la Repubblica Popolare Cinese ha imposto su una porzione del Mar della Cina Orientale una zona di identificazione per la difesa aerea, comprendente anche lo spazio aereo sopra le isole. È possibile dare una lettura politica della disputa: negli anni è stato notato un aumento incrementale delle provocazioni cinesi, allo scopo di portare il Giappone a riconoscere l'esistenza

di una disputa, il che sarebbe considerato dal Partito Comunista un elemento essenziale per risolvere favorevole del problema. Il Giappone, d'altra parte, considera questa crescente assertività come il maggior indicatore di un progetto di egemonia regionale cinese.

In questo senso è stata anche analizzata la politica estera cinese, dove è stata riscontrata la presenza di più dottrine nel corso degli anni, o meglio di una dottrina che nel tempo si è adattata alle mutazioni della posizione cinese nello scacchiere internazionale. Si è assistito quindi, a un passaggio da un atteggiamento più prudente, in modo da non causare tensioni che potessero mettere a repentaglio la crescita economica, a un atteggiamento più spregiudicato, atto a proteggere gli interessi essenziali dello stato, anche ponendosi in contrasto con altri soggetti internazionali.

Dopo aver esaminato la posizione della Cina, l'analisi della tesi si sposta sul Giappone. Il secondo avvento di Abe si è rivelato per l'arcipelago un periodo pregno di riforme. Le più importanti, sia per il loro significato in politica interna, sia per il loro impatto sui rapporti con la Cina, sono state quelle che hanno riguardato la sicurezza dello stato, e quindi la sua Costituzione. Questi due temi sono intimamente legati a causa del IX articolo della Costituzione giapponese, in cui è presente la rinuncia alla guerra e al mantenimento di forze potenzialmente militari. Questo articolo è stato negli anni il fulcro di numerose battaglie politiche, combattute in nome di un Giappone più "normale", in grado di esercitare il diritto all'autodifesa ma soprattutto l'autodifesa collettiva, ossia poter aiutare militari alleati in contesti di guerra. Abe è riuscito, dopo un travagliato percorso che negli ultimi settant'anni ha visto opposte le due anime, revisionista e internazionalista, del proprio partito, a far approvare una legge che modificasse l'interpretazione del IX articolo e quindi abilitasse le forze di autodifesa giapponesi a difendere forze alleate. Questa mossa, invisita da buona parte della popolazione, è stata accolta di buon grado dagli USA in quanto l'apporto Giapponese è considerato fondamentale per contenere l'espansione Cinese, mentre è stata ovviamente giudicata negativamente da Pechino.

Il rapporto Sino-Giapponese è inoltre influenzato da quello che potrebbe essere definito come il "fardello della storia". Relazionandosi con il passato, sia la Cina che il Giappone, incontrano problemi che hanno spesso portato le élite politiche e le popolazioni dei due paesi a pubbliche manifestazioni di intolleranza reciproca. Il problema deriva dal rapporto del Giappone con il proprio passato, incapace di

riconoscerlo o di affrontarlo senza resistere a derive revisioniste e nazionalistiche. Queste sono perlopiù incentrate sul rifiuto dell'idea che i giapponesi abbiano il perpetuo obbligo morale di porgere scuse alle popolazioni dei paesi aggrediti durante e prima il Seconda Guerra Mondiale. I cinesi d'altro canto facendo anch'essi leva su una spinta nazionalistica interna, in parte favorita dal Partito Comunista, hanno spesso rimesso al mittente ogni scusa definendola insufficiente. È inoltre probabile che questa situazione sia stata sfruttata da alcuni politici revisionisti giapponesi in modo da imporre un nuovo pensiero politico dominante incentrato su un rifiuto dell'altro, in questo caso una Cina nazionalista e provocatoria, per supportare un progetto di riarmo altrimenti inaccettabile nel pacifico Giappone postbellico.

In ultima analisi, è quindi possibile evidenziare diversi processi presenti in Asia Orientale negli ultimi anni. Il primo è senza dubbio un'evidente crescita della Repubblica Popolare Cinese, sia sul piano economico che militare. A questa crescita, vista come una minaccia allo *status quo*, si contrappone un processo di contenimento messo in atto dagli Stati Uniti e i suoi alleati, primo tra tutti il Giappone. Gli USA si sono impegnati nel cosiddetto *pivot*, un ribilanciamento delle loro forze militari verso l'Asia Pacifica. Nel quadro di questo progetto è prevista da parte degli alleati asiatici degli Stati Uniti una più profonda adesione alle manovre e ai costi militari, il che spiega la necessità delle riforme giapponesi. Queste dinamiche hanno anche dato luogo a una corsa agli armamenti nella regione, testimoniata dal pressoché continuo aumento delle spese militari degli stati dell'Asia Pacifica negli ultimi anni. Per concludere si è tentato di identificare in quali aree è più alta la probabilità di un'*escalation*. Esse sono il Mar Cinese Meridionale, le isole Senkaku/Diaoyu, Taiwan e la Penisola Coreana. Va comunque ricordato che per diverse ragioni, tra le quali spiccano la sempre crescente interdipendenza economica tra Cina, Giappone, Stati Uniti e altri paesi dell'Asia Orientale e la ancora relativa debolezza cinese in confronto all'apparato bellico americano, la possibilità di un conflitto aperto è alquanto remota.

## ***Introduction***

This thesis represents the conclusion of an academic itinerary, during which I had the chance to immerse myself in the, for me at the time, undiscovered world of international relations.

At the end of 2012, as I started to move my first steps in this new field, I had the feeling that the status of international relations was on the verge of an important change, especially as far as the focus of my course, East Asia, was concerned.

I chose to concentrate my studies on this area and, as my understanding of the trends and processes at work in that region deepened, it became clear to me that many confrontations that took place during the last century, often expression of ancient rivalries, did not, as here in Europe, stop with the end of the second world conflict. Rather, the enmities continued. Sometimes attenuated by the very structure of post conflict world order, sometimes set aside to give of more pressing priorities, but never forgotten. It is with the end of the second millennium and the beginning of the third one that these underground forces were able to gain a new momentum, in conjunction with the weakening of the previous softening forces. This work, however, is not intended to be an historical analysis nor a social study, but it is my goal to present the status of the Sino-Japanese relation, with a strong focus on the defense and security field, circumscribing the analysis to the 2012-2015 period.

This timeframe has been chosen in light of the political turnover that took place at the head of the two states, which set into motion a series of changes that had a direct effect over the relation between the two countries.

This introductory section will serve the purpose of explaining my choices and to give an overview of the whole thesis structure.

Nowadays, China is not only the country with the biggest GDP in the region<sup>1</sup>, but its extraordinary growth has the potential to become a model for economic development worldwide. Japan, on the other hand, is the second biggest economy in the region<sup>2</sup> and has showed an impressive growth during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, also

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<sup>1</sup> Data on GDP retrieved at:  
[http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?order=wbapi\\_data\\_value\\_2014+wbapi\\_data\\_value+wbapi\\_data\\_value-last&sort=desc](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_2014+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=desc)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

thanks to the support of the United State of America, of which has also become one of the closest allies, probably the closest, as far as East Asia is concerned. As it will be better explained in the first chapter, the emergence and consolidation of a new power, in this case the PRC, poses a challenge to the already existing US-led world order, of which Japan is a fervent supporter. It might be said that Japan in some ways represents the international order that emerged after WWII, while the rise of the PRC projects Asia into a new phase. This transition is already taking place, as seen when Japan has been replaced in 2010 as the second largest economy in the world by China.

The decision to focus on defense and security in analyzing this tumultuous relationship has been elaborated during my last year of studies, consequently to the realization that this will probably be one of the main fields of battle in deciding the next regional hegemonic power. This conviction of mine also stems from the fact that in order to aim for leadership, a country has to be able to impose its will with military measures, should all other options fail. There are other reasons too, which become evident as the focus of analysis is widened: as we will see in the third chapter, East Asia is now showing signs of a possible arms race, as almost every country is increasing its military spending in response to perceived threats, that in many cases have a strong connection with the PRC's rise. Furthermore, as will be highlighted in the first chapter, the military field remains the only one where the US retains an undisputed superiority on every other nation. So, it seems logical that China would attempt to at least erode part of this hegemony, given its aspirations to impose itself as a "great power". Japan is on the front line in this competition, given its status inside the structure of US allegiances in the region. What is really interesting, to me at least, is that the growing Chinese assertiveness is inducing a change in the nature of the US-Japan alliance, which for decades has been the cornerstone of regional security. The American pressures on Japan to participate more actively in the security field and the recently passed security bills in Japan, which defined an historical change in the country's approach to the matter, are with no doubt examples of these mutations.

The timeframe has been chosen for a specific reason: during the last months of 2012, the People's Republic of China and Japan have witnessed a change in their political leadership, that have been crucial in shaping the security and political environment of the east Asian region in the following years.

The leaders that came to power during those days greatly distinguished themselves from their predecessors. They set a new course in the international relations of their respective countries. They are the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, and the Prime Minister of Japan, Abe Shinzō.

Xi was elected General Secretary and Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Chinese Communist Party at the beginning of November 2012, after the 18<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Holding these two positions, appointed him as the next president of the People's Republic.<sup>3</sup>

In the three years since he ascended to power, Xi has been able to centralize more power on himself than any of his predecessors since Deng Xiaoping. Xi succeeded in securing his power after the transition through a series of reforms and adjustments, out of which the most important ones are the anti-corruption campaign announced at the end of 2012,<sup>4</sup> and the creation of the National Security Commission (NSC) one year later.<sup>5</sup>

The anti-corruption campaign absolved a double function; on the one hand it reduced the widespread if not almost structural corruption, assuring at the same time a strong popular support for the new leadership. On the other hand, this campaign gave Xi the opportunity to remove possible political adversaries,<sup>6</sup> even at the highest levels.<sup>7</sup>

The institution of the National Security Commission took place at the end of 2013. This new body has been designed in order to plan and carry out national security strategies and national security policies, to study and solve national security issues and to construct a national security legal system.<sup>8</sup> The NSC has, therefore, the task to

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<sup>3</sup> Blanchard, B. & Wee, S.-L. (2012, November 15). China names conservative, older leadership, *Reuters*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/16/us-china-congress-idUSBRE8AD1GF20121116>>

<sup>4</sup> BBC. (2012, November 20). *China media: Xi Jinping's anti-corruption call*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-20405106>>

<sup>5</sup> Perleznov, J. (2013, November 13). New Chinese Panel Said to Oversee Domestic Security and Foreign Policy, *The New York Times*. Retrieved at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/14/world/asia/national-security-committee-china.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/14/world/asia/national-security-committee-china.html?_r=0)>

<sup>6</sup> Tiezzi, S. (2014, April 17). What's Behind Xi's Anti-Corruption Campaign?, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/whats-behind-xis-anti-corruption-campaign/>>

<sup>7</sup> The Economist. (2014, December 13). *Tiger in the net. Zhou Yongkang may well have been corrupt. His real problem was losing a power struggle*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.economist.com/news/china/21636086-zhou-yongkang-may-well-have-been-corrupt-his-real-problem-was-losing-power-struggle-tiger>>

<sup>8</sup> Fu Y. (2014, May 8). What will China's National Commission actually do?, *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved at: <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/08/what-will-chinas-national-security-commission-actually-do>>

aggregate information coming from various sources and then transmit them to the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Hence, the new commission's authority over the army is greater than the one wielded by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This is an unprecedented fact in China, even though Xi Jinping holds the position of Chairman in both of them, which gives him an enormous personal power, with few restrictions.<sup>9</sup>

Xi made clear since the beginning of his presidency that while he wished not to go against the already existing so-called peaceful development policy, China would have never sacrificed its own core interests in implementing both its national and foreign policies.<sup>10</sup> The core interests might be considered the drivers of Chinese foreign policy and, to some extent, of the internal one too. These goals and interests are considered as non-negotiable by Beijing. Historically, this definition has been used to refer to the Taiwan issue, but, recently this expression has started to be used when referring to the regions of Xinjiang and Tibet,<sup>11</sup> and probably involves the South China Sea as well.<sup>12</sup> This new approach caused a sensible shift in China's foreign policy.

Beijing has been undertaking an increasing number of straightforward actions. In some cases this ended with a hard statement, such as in 2013 with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear test and with the ongoing maritime disputes with the Philippines.<sup>13</sup> In other cases China's assertiveness culminated in actions that unilaterally challenged the status quo, as with the institution of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea (ECS) that includes the contested Senkaku/Diaoyu archipelago in 2013,<sup>14</sup> or with the more recent

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<sup>9</sup> Tiezzi S. (2014, April 16). China's national security commission holds first meeting, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/chinas-national-security-commission-holds-first-meeting/>>

<sup>10</sup> Chunyan, Z., Yunbi, Z. & Xiang, L. (2013, January 30). Xi vows no surrender on 'legitimate rights, core interests', *People's Daily*. Retrieved at: <<http://en.people.cn/90785/8113337.html>>

<sup>11</sup> The New York Times. (2013, May 11). *China's evolving 'core interest'*. Retrieved at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/12/opinion/sunday/chinas-evolving-coreinterests.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/12/opinion/sunday/chinas-evolving-coreinterests.html?_r=1)>

<sup>12</sup> Stares P. B. (2013, July 29). Is the South China Sea, like Taiwan, a core national interest now for China?, *Council on Foreign Relation*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.cfr.org/china/south-china-sea-like-taiwan-core-national-interest-nowchina/p31159/>>

<sup>13</sup> Zhang, J. (2015). China's new foreign policy under Xi Jinping: towards 'Peaceful Rise 2.0'?. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 1-15.

<sup>14</sup> Dujarric R. (2013, December 7). China's ADIZ and the Japan-US response, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2013/12/chinas-adiz-and-the-japan-us-response/>>

construction of islands able to host military aircrafts in the Spratly Archipelago.<sup>15</sup> This action was carried out in order to extend the Chinese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and strengthen the PRC's territorial claims in the region.

Hence, Xi Jinping's advent caused a change in Chinese foreign policy that resulted in bolder and more assertive actions, which, as a downside, seemed to cause the neighboring country to look suspiciously on the PRC behavior, especially in the South and East China Sea.

In Japan, Abe Shinzō won the general elections held on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012, becoming Prime Minister for the second time, after his short mandate in 2006. Abe is a right wing nationalist, belonging to the so-called "anti-mainstream" faction within the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), as did his political role model, his own grandfather, Kishi Nobusuke.<sup>16</sup>

Since his election, Abe never concealed his commitment to not letting Japan become a "Tier-two country".<sup>17</sup> This desire can be easily linked to the threat that Japanese leaders saw in the rise of the China and its economy, especially in the first decade of the new millennium, where the GDP quintupled during the presidency of Xi's predecessor, Hu Jintao.<sup>18</sup>

Abe started a series of reforms and policy measures that tried to enhance Japan's strength both internally and externally, most notably the state's economy and its security apparatus.

On the economic side Abe launched a series of ambitious economics reforms also known as "Abenomics".

Another important part of Abe's plan to strengthen Japanese economy has been joining the Trans Pacific Partnership. The TPP is a free trade agreement that includes Japan and other eleven Pacific Rim states, including the United States of America. The agreement was reached after five years of negotiation on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015.<sup>19</sup> For

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<sup>15</sup> Rogers A. (2015, April 17). China Building Runway in Disputed South China Sea Islands, *Time*. Retrieved at: <<http://time.com/3826713/china-building-airstrip-disputed-south-china-sea-islands/>>

<sup>16</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2013, February 22). "Japan is Back", *Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe at the Center for Strategic and International Studies*. Retrieved at: <[http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us\\_20130222en.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us_20130222en.html)>

<sup>18</sup> Data retrieved at: <[http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?Code=NY.GDP.MKTP.CD&id=af3ce82b&report\\_name=Popular\\_indicators&populartype=series&ispopular=y](http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?Code=NY.GDP.MKTP.CD&id=af3ce82b&report_name=Popular_indicators&populartype=series&ispopular=y)>

<sup>19</sup> Parameswaran, P. (2015, October 5). Confirmed: Final TPP Deal Reached in Atlanta, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/confirmed-final-tpp-deal-reached/>>

Japan, the importance of this agreement lies in the advantage that would be obtained by the manufactory sector in export and production activities, as the Japan Business Federation (*Keidanren*) has pointed out multiple times.<sup>20</sup>

These economic policies are in no way cut off from the international context. On many occasions Abe made clear that he believes that stability can only be achieved through economic integration and common prosperity, as remarked in the special address given at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland in January 2014.<sup>21</sup> That time Abe insisted on the importance of the Asian pacific region, which will be the “engine driving the world economy forward” emphasizing that peace and prosperity can be only achieved through “freedom of movement for people and goods”; to maintain this freedom, efforts in the field of security must be undertaken.

Security has been the other major driver of Japan’s reforms in the last three years. Abe has always considered of capital importance giving Japan the ability to rely on collective self-defense (CSD), the so-called “proactive pacifism”. Without dwelling excessively on the matter, as it will be examined in depth in the next chapters, it is for now sufficient to say that Abe never made a secret of his ambition to reform the Japanese Constitution, specifically article 9. This article forbids the use of military force and the possession an army<sup>22</sup>, so it is Abe’s intention to change it in order to give to the Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDF) the opportunity to engage in combat not only to defend themselves but also to defend others.

On September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015, despite public opposition, a security reform bill has been passed by the Diet, enabling CSD through a reinterpretation of the constitution.<sup>23</sup>

On the international stage the security reform is the policy that had the biggest impact, both in media resonance and political responses. Unsurprisingly, the bill’s harshest opponent is China, due to historical but also strategic reasons, as this

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<sup>20</sup> Pollmann, M. (2014, July 23). The TPP and Japanese Agriculture, *The Diplomat*.

Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/the-tpp-and-japanese-agriculture/>>

<sup>21</sup> Abe, S. (2014, January 22). *A New Vision from a New Japan, World Economic Forum 2014 Annual Meeting, Speech by Prime Minister Abe*.

Retrieved at: <[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/statement/201401/22speech\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201401/22speech_e.html)>

<sup>22</sup> English translation of the Japanese Constitution retrieved at:

<[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html)>

<sup>23</sup> McCurry, J. (2015, September 18). Japanese soldiers could fight abroad again after security bill passed, *The Guardian*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/18/japanese-soldiers-could-fight-abroad-again-after-security-bill-passed>>

expansion of Japanese security is seen as a containment maneuver.<sup>24</sup> The USA, on the contrary, welcomed this reform, as it meets the long awaited demands for a change in the US-Japan alliance enabling each partner to protect the other, something that under the post-WWII legal framework only the US could do.<sup>25</sup>

Hence, in this work I will analyze the action of three states: Japan, China and to a lesser extent the United States, whose involvement will be examined mainly in relation to Japan.

The thesis will be divided in a three-part structure. The first chapter focuses on the current security environment in North East Asia. It will start with an analysis of the regional multipolar order that has been emerging in the last decades, then there will be an assessment of China's military rise and current capabilities, coupled with an observation of the changes occurred in the PRC foreign policy doctrine. Afterwards, the analysis will turn to the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute, as I consider it the epitome of the unfolding of most issues concerning the two countries during the last years. Then, the chapter will end with a section devoted to the security reforms and constitutional debate in Japan.

The second chapter inquires the origins and growth of the mutual distrust fostered by China and Japan. It is, I think, quite important to understand whether the shadow of World War Two is an independent variable, or if it is just a suffix of this long-lasting rivalry; and in the latter's case, to what extent is it a tool in political discourse?

Lastly, the ending chapter considers the possible future scenarios in the area, observing the ongoing geopolitical tendencies at work, such as a potential arms race, identifying possible flashpoints for conflict and a plausible role of the other actors in the region.

As a concluding note, I need to add in all fairness that besides the reasons that I enunciated so far for this thesis, there is another one, maybe the most important.

I also chose the subject of this work out of my long-standing affection for the countries in exam, which was born years ago in other fields: the study of languages,

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<sup>24</sup> The Economist. (2015, September 24). *Abe's 'stain'*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21667981-chinas-angry-reaction-japans-new-security-laws-echoed-home-abes-stain>>

<sup>25</sup> Sieg, L. (2015, September 17). Japan takes key step to passage of security bills despite protests, *Reuters*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/17/us-japan-security-idUSKCN0RH08V20150917>>

martial arts and philosophy. I also sincerely hope that my enthusiasm for the issue, which I consider intellectually challenging and of great importance given its contemporaneity, can be perceived from these pages.

## ***1. The current security environment***

As stated before, the goal of this work is to inquire the nature of the international relations between China and Japan, focusing on security issues.

Given the recent developments in East Asia, the subject is of great relevance, as it influences not only these two countries, but the whole region. A change of the current status quo, or even a confrontation between the two Great Powers, could have a profound impact on the whole Asia-Pacific region; in fact, a Sino-Japanese confrontation could be considered a marker of a more structural change in regional leadership.

Therefore, I think that a detailed description of the interactions and historical frictions between these two countries, as well as an analysis of the internal instances behind the behavior they showed on the international arena is of capital importance. Nevertheless, doing so without a good comprehension of the international structure in which these circumstances took place, would not allow a complete understanding of the importance of these phenomena.

This work will not exclusively focus on the PRC and Japan themselves, but will also describe the current state of the regional security environment in the region, and how it developed throughout the post-Cold War years. Hence, at least for the first part of this chapter, the perspective will be widened beyond East Asia.

During the course of last century, and especially over the last decade, Asia witnessed a great deal of change: its importance and economic weight has risen to the point that the new century has been named “the Asian century” in contrast to the old so-called “American century”.<sup>26</sup> The reasons are simple: Asia is the most populous continent on earth, the Asia Pacific region has experienced the highest economic growth level in the last half century and the volume of its regional economy is rapidly increasing.

Unfortunately, the economic rise also has negative outcomes. States in rapid expansion tend to be seen as a threat by their neighbors, so the rise of China has been often perceived by the other East Asian states, first and foremost Japan, as source of

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<sup>26</sup> Tharoor, I. (2012, February 23). Does the 21st Century Need to Be an ‘American Century’?, *Time*. Retrieved at: <<http://world.time.com/2012/02/23/does-the-21st-century-need-to-be-an-american-century/>>

instability and a challenge to the status quo.<sup>27</sup> Security has therefore become a field of great relevance when considering the Asian Pacific region, as recent staggering increase of military spending have highlighted.<sup>28</sup>

Before analyzing the main factors involved in current Sino-Japanese relations, a premise is necessary: the current situation and the shift of the international attention towards East Asia are the consequences of a more global processes at work since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Thus, it is of capital importance to underline how the current situation surfaced and how it is included in the international structure. This section will highlight how the rise of China, seen as a consequence of the birth of a new multipolar international structure, can be seen as a challenge to the post-Cold War status quo, and how the US and Japan, the established powers, reacted to it.

### 1.1 The budding regional multipolar system

In recent history, the event with the greatest impact on international relations is without a doubt the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991; referring to its great propulsive effect on international relations, it has even been considered “the closest thing to a ‘big bang’ in international politics in living memory”.<sup>29</sup> When the Berlin Wall was brought down in 1989, divisions that had bound many countries to the opposing superpowers for almost half a century echoed its collapse. In the end, the United States remained the world’s sole superpower.

During those euphoric days, many scholars celebrated the birth of a new unipolar world, ruled by American hegemony. It is particularly worth remembering the thesis proposed by Francis Fukuyama, who viewed the emergence of the United State as the lone ruling superpower as “the end of history”.<sup>30</sup> In order to explain his theory, Fukuyama borrowed the concept of history devised by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel considered history as a dialectical process with a beginning, middle and, of course, an end. Ideas have been the moving engine of history across the

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<sup>27</sup> Pugliese, G. (2015). Japan 2014: Between a China Question and a China Obsession. Torri M. & Mocchi N. (Eds.). *Engaging China/Containing China: Asia in 2014*, 25,43-98.

<sup>28</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). (2015). Chapter Six: Asia, *The Military Balance*, 115(1), 207-302.

<sup>29</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p. 64

<sup>30</sup> Fukuyama, F. (1989). The end of history?. *The national interest*, 3-18.

centuries. The word ideas referring to worldviews, which can also be depicted with another term: ideologies. Essentially, Fukuyama sees human history as the ultimate consequence of ideas that take various forms, since they are not always explicit or coherently exposed, spanning from political doctrines to tradition or religion.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Fukuyama has witnessed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the ascent of a dominating ideology, that eventually remained the only viable model: the modern liberal state. This model has been challenged by fascism and communism; the former found its demise at the end of World War Two, while the latter had been partially abandoned by China during the economic reform process started by Deng Xiaoping and by the Soviet Union at its dissolution.

The absence of a viable and convincing alternative to the western liberal model of state therefore marked the end of history.

Almost 25 years later, however, we can say that Fukuyama made a few mistakes in formulating his most famous theory.

The end of the cold war did not end the advancement of history, it is more correct to say that the world experienced a period of unipolar American hegemony, but, as some scholars already understood in 1990, this will probably be remembered as a phase, before the emergence of a new multipolar model.<sup>32 33</sup>

The decade that followed the end of the Cold War was marked by two events that can be considered the first rifts on American undisputed global hegemony: the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the global financial crisis that hit the US in 2008 and then Europe. These occurrences, especially the first, are clear evidences that, as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wrote in his latest book, the “optimistic assumption that the spread of democracy and free market would automatically create a just, peaceful and inclusive world” could be challenged.<sup>34</sup>

The images of 9/11 will remain in the mind of everyone who witnessed those tragic events that day. For the first time, the United States faced a mainland attack of huge proportions. The attack triggered a series of reaction that led to a fruitless set of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The power displayed by the US military apparatus has been

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Krauthammer, C. (1990). The unipolar moment. *Foreign Affairs*, 70(1), 23-33.

<sup>33</sup> Krauthammer, C. (2002). The unipolar moment revisited. *The National Interest*, 70(Winter 2002/2003), 5-18.

<sup>34</sup> Kissinger, H. (2014). *World order: reflections on the character of nations and the course of history*. Penguin UK. p. 364

so overwhelming that many noted how the war on terror served as a further reminder of American power, which wields an asymmetry never achieved by any previous hegemonic power.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the bellicose actions, at times in blatant disregard to international law, carried out by the United States in fighting the wars of Afghanistan and Iraq, ended up squandering the United States' soft power capital: military action in Afghanistan and, especially, Iraq fueled international grassroots protests and discredited the notion of the US as a benign hegemonic superpower.<sup>36</sup>

Following the blow to Washington's international standing, the financial crisis hit another other pillar of US hegemony, its economic might.

It is still debated to what extent the debt contracted to finance the war on terror had a role in destabilizing the American fiscal situation,<sup>37</sup> however the sub-prime crisis had a profound impact on the US economy and informed world-wide perceptions of the same. This destabilization is due to the fact that the crisis originated from the internal distortions and lack of control of the American financial system<sup>38</sup> and ultimately raised doubts on the prestige of the United States as a responsible economic power. This last element is of capital importance, because even if the military power of the United States remains unchanged and unmatched, and the economy strong and advanced, US power is being eroded in relative terms: the distribution of economic power after the crisis, directly translated into a less politically prominent United States vis-à-vis other international players.<sup>39</sup>

Twenty years after the end of the Cold War, the United States found itself in a weakened position compared to the end of the 1980s, resulting from the phenomena previously described. On a global scale, however, the biggest challenge to the unipolar order is coming not from inside the United States, but from other countries that are rapidly emerging as new economic powers on the international stage, and, as said before, over time economic might translated into political power.

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<sup>35</sup> Krauthammer, C. (2002). The unipolar moment revisited. *The National Interest*, 70(Winter 2002/2003), 5-18.

<sup>36</sup> Fukuyama, F. (2011, January 17). US democracy has little to teach China. *Financial Times*.

<sup>37</sup> Bilmes, L. J., & Stiglitz, J. E. (2010, September 5). The true cost of the Iraq War: \$3 trillion and beyond. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/03/AR2010090302200.html>>

<sup>38</sup> Barber, L. (2011, September 5). The end of US hegemony: Legacy of 9/11. *Financial Times*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f6acf1a6-d54d-11e0-bd7e-00144feab49a.html#axzz3psrGPPsc>>

<sup>39</sup> Kirshner, J. (2014). *American Power after the Financial Crisis*. Cornell University Press.

Among these rising powers there is a group of countries that has been monitored for a long time; in a paper published by Goldman Sachs in 2001 they were nicknamed BRICs, from the initials of the groups' members (Brazil, Russia, India and China) to which has been later added South Africa.<sup>40</sup>

A rising power needs a flourishing economy and the ability to convert that economic strength into political power.<sup>41</sup> The size of the economy is important, and sometimes it's an element even hard to ignore, as in the case of China and India, but to be considered a rising power a state must possess other features. One, such as the case of Brazil or Turkey, is its relevance in regional politics: the ability to propose itself as regional leader due to diplomatic influence or the ability to be seen by other states as a possible model. Other two elements are the projection of soft power and, last but not least, the ability to pose a challenge to the already existing and established powers.<sup>42</sup>

In analyzing this shift towards multi-polarity, a clarification has to be made: none of the factors that will ultimately contribute to this process, such as resources allocations, population trends, economic growth, military power projection and cultural projection is to be considered on its own, since they all contribute to it at the same time. Of course, the predominant power will not vanish abruptly, but will experience growing difficulties in imposing its will on a global scale as the others eventually fill in the gap.<sup>43</sup>

A significant shift in the balance power is usually sufficient to undermine the existing order, as a rising power might intend to challenge the rules of system it did not design.<sup>44</sup>

Currently there is one country that might do so. According to a study published by the US National Intelligence Council in 2008 "China is poised to have more impact

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<sup>40</sup> O'Neill, J. (2001). Building better global economic BRICs, Global Economics Paper. Retrieved at: <<http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/archive/archive-pdfs/build-better-brics.pdf>>

<sup>41</sup> Tank, P. (2012). *The concept of "Rising Power"*. The Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) Policy Brief.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> National Intelligence Council (NIC). (2008). *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*. National Intelligence Council. Retrieved at: <[http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Reports%20and%20Pubs/2025\\_Global\\_Trends\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Reports%20and%20Pubs/2025_Global_Trends_Final_Report.pdf)>

<sup>44</sup> Kissinger, H. (2014). *World order: reflections on the character of nations and the course of history*. Penguin UK.

on the world over the next 20 years than any other country”,<sup>45</sup> and considering the requisites a rising power must wield, it is clearly understandable why China is commonly referred as the quintessential rising power.

The size of the PRC’s economy cannot go under-noticed, but what is really striking is its amazing growth during the last decades. China decided to gradually “open up” the country to the international world in 1978 and in 2010 China surpassed Japan and became the second largest economy in the world and the biggest in Asia.<sup>46</sup>

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the international standing of the PRC changed: China is not the rising power it used to be in 2001, the international community now looks at it as a possible future hegemonic power, that might even challenge the United States in a near future.<sup>47</sup>

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China’s GDP grew six times.<sup>48</sup> This period has been almost entirely covered by the presidency of Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping predecessor. Hu was the first leader who did not fight in the revolution.<sup>49</sup> The growing economic power made him realize the need to address China’s responsibilities in the international community: for the first time, the PRC’s foreign policy would not be based on future strategies or potential objectives, but rooted on potential power. A new course was then set: China would pursue peaceful development orientated towards the maintenance of stability and the avoidance of sensational actions on the international arena in favor of good relations and peace. This strategy also included attaining raw materials to sustain growth.<sup>50</sup>

This policy turned out to be a winning choice: over time China’s role in regional integration grew, as did its international standing, a fact highlighted by the important role China played in the second Korean nuclear crisis and in the advancement of the Six-Party Talks in 2003.<sup>51</sup>

China’s influence has been growing to the point that over the years many countries,

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<sup>45</sup> National Intelligence Council (NIC). (2008). *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*. National Intelligence Council. p. vi

<sup>46</sup> Monahan, A. (2011, February 14). China Overtakes Japan as World’s No. 2 Economy. *The Wall Street Journal*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703361904576142832741439402>>

<sup>47</sup> Carter, B. (2014, December 16). Is China's economy really the largest in the world?. BBC. Retrieved at: <<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30483762>>

<sup>48</sup> Data retrieved at

<[http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?Code=NY.GDP.MKTP.CD&id=af3ce82b&report\\_name=Popular\\_indicators&populartype=series&ispopular=y](http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?Code=NY.GDP.MKTP.CD&id=af3ce82b&report_name=Popular_indicators&populartype=series&ispopular=y)>

<sup>49</sup> Kissinger, H. (2011). *On China*. Penguin. p. 488

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Park, J. S. (2005). Inside multilateralism: The six - party talks. *Washington Quarterly*, 28(4), 73-91.

among which even former rivals, started to turn to China looking for regional leadership.<sup>52</sup>

Along with this economic and political power, China has been also cultivating soft power. As already seen, the United States jeopardized its international appeal with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and China has been employing a great deal of economic and political resources to show itself as a possible alternative to US hegemony. In order to differentiate itself from the United States, the PRC's approach is aimed at giving a benevolent image through a policy based on non-intervention. In many cases China has been willing to separate economic partnerships from humanitarian concerns when dealing with authoritarian partners.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, the challenge posed to the status quo is the evident aspect of China's rise. Despite the declarations of goodwill linked to the peaceful rise policy, over the years China had a very strong posture over many issues. The tread has intensified since the advent of Xi Jinping, but assertiveness has been growing in some areas of PRC foreign policy for a long time. This subject will be discussed later on in this chapter, when dealing with the crescent tensions in the East China Sea and when examining the different Chinese foreign policy doctrines of the last fifteen years. Now the very core of the Chinese military modernization will be examined, that is to say how the Chinese defense industrial base came to be what it is today and the structure of the PLA.

## 1.2 China's military rise

As seen before, the PRC has become a prominent economic power on the international stage. This economic prowess, however, is not matched by the PRC power in the military field: there is an evident mismatch between the Chinese economic and military power. While the former has reached by now a global status, the latter has not. Using a famous expression coined by David Shambaugh, China is a partial power.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2006). Asia in transition: The evolving regional order. *Current history: A journal of contemporary world affairs*, (690), 153-159.

<sup>53</sup> Lee, S. W. (2011). The theory and reality of soft power: Practical approaches in East Asia. *Public diplomacy and soft power in East Asia*. ed. Sook Jong Lee and Jan Melissen, 139-163.

<sup>54</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press.

Nevertheless, things are changing; supported by economic growth, China is rapidly modernizing its military, as shown by the PRC security spending, which has been growing at a double-digit rate between 2003 and 2010.<sup>55</sup>

Scholars, consider the official figures provided by the PRC on its military just a fraction of the actual spending. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Centre (SIPRI), the declared defense budget consists of the sum of three distinct categories: maintenance and training, personnel, and equipment. The SIPRI data, which will be used in this analysis, add to these categories other elements such as research and development (R&D), the spending for the People's Armed Police, those on arms export, military constructions and the funds granted for pensions and demobilization to soldiers. The resulting estimates are about 55% higher than the official central and local defense budget;<sup>56</sup> it has to be noted that given the opaqueness of the official figures, there is no general consensus on common data and almost every research institute has its own estimate.

In developing its military sector the PRC avoided to follow the example of the Soviet Union, since the Chinese leaders considered the amount of defense spending on its state budget one of the main reasons for its collapse.<sup>57</sup> Thus, China has been allocating on average 2% of its GDP for military spending, remaining close to the 7% of its total government spending in the most recent years. It has to be noted that while the share of GDP destined to defense spending has not been growing, the overall GDP has, so the actual amount of money has continuously increasing. In this sense it is possible to affirm that the military build up is a reflex of the economic growth: in the last years the military spending showed a constant double digit increase, only partially and momentarily restrained by the global economic crisis.<sup>58</sup>

The PRC military spending surpassed Japan's in 2004 in absolute terms, and then double it in 2010 (SIPRI); currently China is the biggest spender in the Asia Pacific

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<sup>55</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). (2015). Chapter Six: Asia, *The Military Balance*, 115(1), 207-302.

<sup>56</sup> Perlo-Freeman, S. (2014). Deciphering China's latest defence budget figures. *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* (SIPRI).

Retrieved at: <<http://www.sipri.org/media/newsletter/essay/perlo-freeman-mar-2013>>

<sup>57</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>58</sup> All data concerning military expenditures have been retrieved at the SIPRI military expenditures database: <[http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex\\_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database)>

region and has the second largest defense budget globally, behind the United States, amounting to 12% of total spending of the 15 biggest spenders in 2014.<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, in order to have a more complete view of the Chinese military rise, the structure of the Chinese defense industry needs to be analyzed. It is also useful to compare once again the PRC with the US in this aspect.

As already said, the United States is, as far as military power is concerned, an unrivaled power. This status has been achieved thanks to its gargantuan military budget, which according to SIPRI in 2014 has been little less than \$610 billion, but also thanks to the composition of the US defense industrial base. Inside the American economic and financial landscape, the military sector has always been of vital importance. Since the immediate post-WWII period, the US administration has been encouraging the expansion of this sector to the point that during the 1950s it has become one of the leading sectors of the American economy. The industry has grown over the following decades and eventually had to face a major reconstruction at the end of the Cold War. In the 1990s, right after the election of President Bill Clinton, the US government exhorted the leading defense firms to downsize the industry, in order to avoid problems that might be caused by a reduced customer demand due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The industry today rests on the five groups that survived the downsizing, and currently are the biggest contractors of the American Department of Defense (DoD): Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon.<sup>60</sup>

Since the 1950s, it became evident how R&D had to be considered of capital importance for a healthy development of the industry. Investments on military R&D were higher than those of non-military sectors and the technology obtained was often reused in commercial applications. In the 1970s the trend began to change, and commercial R&D outpaced the military one. Nowadays, despite the increase in government R&D funds, commercial firms still invest more. This is a problem for the US government, the equipment, and therefore military, advantage held by the US is reducing, as will the technological gap, if other nations have access to equipment produced by non-defense firms available on the market. This shows that a central government military and defense apparatus cannot disregard heavy and continuous

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<sup>59</sup> Perlo-Freeman, S., Fleurant, A., Wezeman, P. D. & Wezeman S. T. (2015). Trends in world military expenditures, *SIPRI Fact Sheet*.

<sup>60</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). (2005). *The defence industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Thinking global...or thinking American?*

investments in R&D, in order to become competitive with other states, or to retain its superiority.<sup>61</sup>

The PRC has well understood this, as proven by the series of reforms undertaken in the recent years and by the amount of resources spent on its defense industrial base.

Historically, the Chinese military industry has been weak, outdated and heavily dependent on the acquisition of foreign weapons, mostly from Russia.<sup>62</sup> Overreliance on foreign acquisition is certainly a problem for the PRC. In order to overcome it, the leaders have considered the acquisition of an indigenous defense industry of primary importance.

The development of this industry has been following different directions.

First of all the industry should focus on the creation of dual use technology that could have a both a civil value and a military application. The production of weapons has to be fragmented. The R&D investments should focus on the creation of major research facilities and the training of highly qualified personnel. In this sense the regulatory and legal framework has to be accustomed to a living and vibrant domestic defense industry. Technology has to be integrated with the one acquired from abroad in order to improve defense production capabilities.<sup>63</sup> Given the significance that the PLA has for the CCP, the creation of an indigenous defense industry is of capital importance. Currently the PLA has a double goal in that should enable it to fill in the gap with the existing powers. One is the improvement of its logistical chain, that has to be achieved through reform and industrial modernization, and is strictly linked to the configuration of the industry defense. The other objective is to develop and master Command, Control, Communication, Computerization, Information, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) capacities.<sup>64</sup>

The Chinese defense industry has chronically faced problems deriving from the structure of the Chinese state economy. The defense sector has always been

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<sup>61</sup> Watts, B. D. (2008). *The US Defense Industrial Base: Past, Present, and Future*. Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment.

Retrieved at

<[http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20081015.\\_The\\_US\\_Defense\\_In/R.20081015.\\_The\\_US\\_Defense\\_In.pdf](http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20081015._The_US_Defense_In/R.20081015._The_US_Defense_In.pdf)>

<sup>62</sup> Hagt, E. (2010). Emerging grand strategy for China's defense industry reform. *The PLA at home and abroad: assessing the operational capabilities oh China's Military*, 481-551.

<sup>63</sup> Mochizuki, M., Brown, M. L., Giarra, P. S., Paal, D. H., Odell, R. E., Lu, R., Palmer, O., Swaine, M. D., & Ren, X. (2013). *China's Military & the US-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>64</sup> Hagt, E. (2010). Emerging grand strategy for China's defense industry reform. *The PLA at home and abroad: assessing the operational capabilities oh China's Military*, 481-551.

composed by SOEs; therefore the lack of a competitive environment has always been considered one of the major restraints to development. In order to solve this problem the Chinese defense industry has to be reformed and reform must be based on innovation and competition.

Innovation can be achieved only through a huge process of reform of the industrial structure. The whole system lack internal integration to the point that usually there is near zero communication at every level of the production chain. First of all the government requirements are often not precise and leave the producer with no guidance; there is a low level of communication between the development and the operationalizing process. Finally, the system does not incentive innovation. This important lack has been retraced to the vary nature of the system. Although China has decided decades ago to open up its economy to the international markets, and therefore international competition, almost all of the defense research sector, a vital part of a healthy defense industry, did not experience any market pressure thanks to the protectionism of the PRC.<sup>65</sup>

This problems are all deriving from past choices and the PRC has started to address them successfully only in the last two decades.

During Mao Zedong's era, the regime emulated the Soviet model and tried to create a self-sufficient industrial base, totally under state control,<sup>66</sup> with factories placed in the inland areas in order to minimize any risk coming from a possible land invasion.<sup>67</sup> Despite the little improvement showed in the following decades, due to isolation form the Soviet Union and the West, and the sanctions imposed by the latter, China managed to achieve a few advancements such as its first nuclear weapon test in 1964 and the achievement of operational Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) in 1971. This period was also dotted with frequent clashes; such as the border confrontation with India in 1962, with the Soviet Union in 1969; China also aided

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<sup>65</sup> Puig, E. (2013). Breaking down the defence industry bunker. *The reform of China's defence economy*. European Council on Foreign Relations, 3-4.

<sup>66</sup> Mochizuki, M., Brown, M. L., Giarra, P. S., Paal, D. H., Odell, R. E., Lu, R., Palmer, O., Swaine, M. D., & Ren, X. (2013). *China's Military & the US-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>67</sup> Chase, M. S., Engstrom, J., Cheung, T. M., Gunness, K. A., Harold, S. W., Puska, S., & Berkowitz, S. K. (2015). *China's Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)*.

North Vietnam against France and the US and then fought its own conflict with a reunited Vietnam in 1979.<sup>68</sup>

The regime reorganization after Mao's death set an important change for the future development of the industry. Thanks to Deng Xiaoping's reforms, during the 1980s and the 1990s, the defense sector, as the Chinese economy as a whole, experienced economic reform and opening up to market dynamics. These changes had various effects: on the one hand, access to international markets meant access to western technology, capital, investment and military assistance; on the other hand, the PRC decreased its military spending causing state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to suffer budget cuts to which the PLA leaders did not adjust easily.<sup>69</sup> The events following the Tiananmen massacre in June 1989, constrained the military industry even more, as the US and the European countries imposed an embargo on the PRC military acquisition, turning Russia into China's main seller. Civil-Military Integration (CMI) is of capital importance for the evolution of the Chinese defense industry. In 2003, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> plenum of the CCP's 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, it was placed among China's strategic goals for economic development. Then, the concept was reaffirmed when in October 2012, at the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress CMI was promoted as a core component of the Chinese military development strategy, and then elevated to national strategic priority in the 12<sup>th</sup> five-year plan, which has covered the 2011-2015 period. CMI's role is to develop through integration and coordination the growth of both the defense and civilian technology economies.<sup>70</sup> The PRC is pursuing CMI for various reasons: for a start the separate development of commercial, civilian and military R&D and production streams would not be economically feasible, and access to the market would enable firms to increase capital through stock sale and direct investments. Secondly, the use of civil human resources and talent can give a better response to the needs of a modern, high-tech PLA for innovation. Finally, there is a strategic rationale: if the defense industry operates in a Civil-Military hybrid framework, it has better chances to acquire and insert foreign technology into the Chinese Science & Technology system (S&T). If the S&T system were completely military, other

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Mochizuki, M., Brown, M. L., Giarra, P. S., Paal, D. H., Odell, R. E., Lu, R., Palmer, O., Swaine, M. D., & Ren, X. (2013). *China's Military & the US-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>70</sup> Hagt, E. (2010). Emerging grand strategy for China's defense industry reform. *The PLA at home and abroad: assessing the operational capabilities oh China's Military*, 481-551.

countries might decide to limit exports of high-tech products vital for the evolution of the Chinese R&D. China has a greater interest in the import and domestic production of the so-called dual-use technology than in the exclusively military one.

In order to enhance CMI, at the end of the 1990s the Chinese industrial base faced a period of massive internal reconstruction.<sup>71</sup> Before the 9<sup>th</sup> National People's congress in March 1998, almost every aspect of the production of weapons, from production planning to investments, R&D and production tests, was managed by the Commission for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (COSTIND), while the purchase was carried out by various logistic offices. Given the inefficiency of the system, it was restructured: a new department was created within the Central Military Commission (CMC), the General Armaments Department (GAD) to which were transferred procurements functions from the COSTIND, now become a regulatory and managing body of the defense industry under the authority of the State Council.<sup>72</sup> GAD also held a key role in identifying new technologies and planning R&D programs. Dividing the tasks between the newly formed GAD and the COSTIND did not create real market competition, but improved organization, the overall health of the system and diminished corruption. Nonetheless, in order to advance toward CMI further reform was needed.

The current structure of the Chinese defense industry is the result of the reform announced at the 11<sup>th</sup> National people's Congress in 2008. The most important change was without a doubt the institution of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), born from the unification of COSTIND, the State Council Informatization Office, the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, the Informatization responsibilities previously held by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the former Ministry of Information Industries. COSTIND has been renamed State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND). The new ministry was created in order to serve the double purpose of conceiving and coordinate industrial policies and to unite

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<sup>71</sup> Finkelstein, D. M. (1999). China's national military strategy *The People's Liberation Army in the Information Age* (Vol. 145). Rand Corporation. 99-145.

<sup>72</sup> Lafferty, B. (2013). Challenges in Military-Civilian Integration. *The reform of China's defence economy*. European Council on Foreign Relations, 11-13.

the military and civilian information industries, since the latter was more developed than the former.<sup>73</sup>

China seems now more than ever close to achieving CMI, but MIIT is not the only responsible for the whole military sector. There are two other bodies with the power to influence the development of the industry, they are the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), created in 2003 with the task of oversee and consolidate SOEs' asset restructuring and the aforementioned NDRC which has similar tasks.<sup>74</sup> In concomitance with these structures, MIIT and SASTIND on the one hand, and SASAC and NDRC on the other, there are ten Defense Industry Enterprise Groups (DIEGs), created in 1999 in order to have them work as conglomerates. They are: China Aviation Industry Corporation, China State Shipbuilding Corp., China Aerospace Science & Technology Corp., China National Nuclear Corp., China National Engineering and Construction Corp., China North Industry Corp., China State Shipbuilding Industry Corp., China Electronic Technology Group Corp., China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp.<sup>75</sup>

Nowadays, the PRC is certainly set on the right path to achieve CMI, but issues still remain. The biggest problem is that it is not clear who or what is in charge in overseeing CMI.<sup>76</sup> There is the MIIT, but its role is more orientated toward coordination rather than managing or policy setting. This problem may be address with a new series of reform.

Despite these lingering issues, the defense industry has a clear understanding of what are the fields in which investments are needed in order to modernize both the armed forces and the industry itself, and this will probably be the most important tool in assessing success or failure of CMI.

The development of dual-use technology is one of the most important ones, for which there is even an office within the MIIT, the Dual-Use Promotion Office.<sup>77</sup> This office was created to identify possible convergence areas of civilian and military interest,

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<sup>73</sup> Hagt, E. (2010). Emerging grand strategy for China's defense industry reform. *The PLA at home and abroad: assessing the operational capabilities oh China's Military*, 481-551.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Reuters (2012, September 17). *FACTBOX - China's top 10 defence companies*. Retrieved at: <<http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/09/17/china-defence-idINDEE88G03E20120917>>

<sup>76</sup> Lafferty, B. (2013). Challenges in Military-Civilian Integration. *The reform of China's defence economy*. European Council on Foreign Relations, 11-13.

<sup>77</sup> Hagt, E. (2010). Emerging grand strategy for China's defense industry reform. *The PLA at home and abroad: assessing the operational capabilities oh China's Military*, 481-551.

which is one of the key aspects of CMI. Dual-use technology is also vital in the development of C4ISR capacities, which are vital for data mining and real time sharing of vital information on the battlefield, and are considered essential in order to reduce the technological and military gap with the US. Other sectors of great importance in shifting the existent balance of power are Information Technology, essential in ensuring communication of combat forces and permit to digitize weapon systems, and Space assets, nowadays of fundamental importance for intelligence, delivery system, communications and navigation.

The undergoing modernizing process of the Chinese defense industry however is only one of the sides of the Chinese military modernization. The process is following a double track; weapons and vehicles upgrade is mirrored by an improvement of the PLA through the formation of highly specialized and professional soldiers and civil staff.<sup>78</sup> This transformation has two distinctive drivers; the most obvious is the pursuit of comprehensive power. As said before China's power is partially developed, since some areas, such as the state's economy, are more advanced than the others, like its military power. For these reason the Chinese leaders deem of capital importance the achievement of a modern military apparatus.

The other driver is the Taiwan issue. The most important short-term objective of the PLA is preparing and training in order to avoid the independence of the island.<sup>79</sup>

There are various possible scenarios in which the PRC may consider a military action against the island, and those include Taiwan's declaration of independence, its acquisition of nuclear weapons or an external intervention in the issue. In March 2005, the National's People's Congress even passed an "Anti-Secession Law" which allows China to use "non peaceful means" in case of Taiwan's secession or if any possible peaceful reunification would become permanently out of reach.<sup>80</sup>

The Chinese military rise is considered to be started in the 1990s, stimulated by various drivers, but can be traced back even further.

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<sup>78</sup> Mochizuki, M., Brown, M. L., Giarra, P. S., Paal, D. H., Odell, R. E., Lu, R., Palmer, O., Swaine, M. D., & Ren, X. (2013). *China's Military & the US-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>79</sup> Ministry of Defense. (2014). *Defense of Japan 2014*. Urban Connections.

<sup>80</sup> Department of Defense. (2015). *Annual report to congress, Military and security developments involving the People's Republic of China*.

Retrieved at:

<[http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2015\\_China\\_Military\\_Power\\_Report.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2015_China_Military_Power_Report.pdf)>

The first lesson that the PRC leaders had to painfully learn regarding its military was during the Sino-Vietnam War. In 1979, in just one month Chinese troops suffered more than 40,000 losses at the hand of what was considered a weaker enemy. The inability to coordinate air strike with ground forces, the outdated equipment and the crippled state of the PLA after the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, made the leaders rethink their approach to warfare.<sup>81</sup>

Besides this first shock, all the other drivers that sustained the Chinese military growth stem from events that took place between 1991 and 2001.

The first, which has been the one that came with the most shocking experience, was the first Gulf war. Witnessing the magnitude of the US attack in Iraq deeply struck the Chinese strategic planners. During the conflict the US army showed its ability to conduct stealth long range air strike, using electronic, computer satellite and intelligence to enhance its precision. The PLA assumed that the US must have had undertaken a massive “revolution in military affairs”.<sup>82</sup> The fact that the US was able to undertake military actions of that effectiveness at such a distance from the mainland, when the PLA was unable to undertake even small military actions just across the Chinese borders, was a great shock. Additionally, against the NATO coalition the Iraqi army tried to apply the very same strategy the PLA was intending to use in case of an invasion: in case of attack from a foreign army, the PLA would react employing guerrilla warfare, which implies waiting for the invasion, develop a strategy to cut the enemy supply line and then launch a counterattack. When the Iraqi troops attempted to do so, the Americans overwhelmed them thanks to their superior technology.<sup>83</sup>

The Taiwan Strait crises that took place in 1995 and 1996 has been another important moment for Chinese military advancement. The missile tests conducted in proximity of the island in order to threaten Taiwan and manipulate the course of the upcoming elections in March 1996 did not have the desired outcome and eventually turned back on China. Responding to the PRC’s threats, the US deployed two aircraft carriers battle groups, one of which even sailed through the strait. Witnessing the US navy readiness and its wide range of equipment, the PRC once again realized that its own

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<sup>81</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Heginbotham, E., Nixon, M., Morgan, F. E., Heim, J. L., Hagen, J., Li, S., ... & Morris, L. J. (2015). *The US-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996–2017*. Rand Corporation.

arsenal, consisting almost exclusively of Ballistic missile was not an effective instrument of threat, compared to the wide variety of air, ground, maritime and electronic capabilities owned by the US. This was a powerful stimulus for the PLA to upgrade its assets in order to eliminate its weaknesses and obtain a more complete set of military capability. After the crisis the Chinese defense budget began to grow at rather high rate: between 1996 and 2015 the annual growth, inflation-adjusted, has been on average of 11% per year.<sup>84</sup>

In 1999 came another useful experience. During the NATO bombing of former Yugoslavia, on May 7<sup>th</sup> a US an American B-2 Spirit bomber hit with five JDAM guided bombs the People's Republic of China's Embassy in Belgrade. The attack caused three Chinese victims and raised tensions between the two countries. The fact that concerned the PLA officials the most was, however, the total impossibility for them to prevent the incident. The bombing clearly showed them that an American long-range bomber stationed in Missouri could effortlessly carry out the destruction of a precise building in another continent without being noticed. This highlighted the importance of stealth and precision-guided munitions, as well as reconnaissance capabilities.<sup>85</sup> Of course it is not possible, at least for now, to know if the bombing has been accidental or not, however the outcome over the Chinese leaders was the same.

Finally, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq carried out by the US and their allies in 2001 emphasized once more the importance of air support. Furthermore, the deployment of counterinsurgency and special operation forces showed the willingness of the United States to put large numbers of boots on the ground and consequently risk for possible casualties.

At this point appears rather clear that the PLA has been constantly looking up at the United States' armed forces as a basis for comparison when it comes to military modernization. Hence, the PLA most pressing priorities are acquiring power projection capabilities outside national borders in order to be able to successfully deploy troops in adjacent regions.

It is not possible at this point not to consider Taiwan as one of the major drivers of this growth. The reunification of Taiwan with Mainland China in essential in

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press.

accomplishing the “One China Principle”, and the geographical position of the island would provide the PRC with a direct access to the Pacific Ocean.

The lesson learned during the crisis in 1996, will prove to be of significant importance, should the PRC were to decide to carry out the reunification through military means.

When the army leaders understood that the possession of ballistic missiles alone would not be a viable strike capability, they decided to wider the their strategy.

In order to successfully prosecute a conflict over Taiwan, the PLA recognized the need to adopt a more comprehensive approach to the issue. In an eventual military seizure of the island various approaches have been identified, all of which at some degree interconnectable, so that they might be employed in a conjunction with each other: a conventional missile attack campaign, a joint blockade campaign, a joint island landing campaign and an anti-air raid campaign.<sup>86</sup> To successfully carry out these operations the PLA would need to become able to operate on various levels. First, it would have to develop the ability to strikes high value targets in Taiwan with precision, in order to jeopardize Taiwan’s command and control capabilities, then it would need to take control of the airspace over the island and the strait, an action essential before an amphibious assault or the airdrop of troops, and at the same time ground Taiwanese Air Force using cruise and ballistic missile saturating airfields; finally, the PRC would need to contain American carrier bases strike groups and harass the US logistical supply lines, while at the same time prevent a Taiwanese or American attack on mainland China.

In this scenario are of particular importance the capabilities that as we have seen are intended to prevent any engagement from the US, such as intermediate and medium range Ballistic Missiles, cruise missiles and cyber capabilities, these are reunited under the label Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD)<sup>87</sup> capabilities and are considered

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<sup>86</sup> Chase, M. S., Engstrom, J., Cheung, T. M., Gunness, K. A., Harold, S. W., Puska, S., & Berkowitz, S. K. (2015). *China’s Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA)*.

<sup>87</sup> Department of Defense . (2015). *Annual report to congress, Military and security developments involving the People’s Republic of China*.

Retrieved at:

<[http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2015\\_China\\_Military\\_Power\\_Report.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2015_China_Military_Power_Report.pdf)>

of capital importance to challenge the US operability and project the growing PLA power in the region.<sup>88</sup>

Nowadays the modernization of the PLA is far from reaching a conclusion, nevertheless it has experienced significant changes, evolving from the massive, outdated and mainly infantry centric force is used to be just a few decades ago.

The PLA understood that the reconstruction of the army towards a smaller, but more “professional”, armed force is essential to modernize; these changes as testified by the statements by Xi Jinping during the celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII are still in progress.<sup>89</sup> Downsizing and professionalizing the armed forces have to be added to the other improvements already seen in this chapter: developing of C4ISR capabilities, improvement of logistic chains and R&D and modernization of the industrial base orientated toward CMI and dual-use technology. There is also another element of great importance, which is training: the PLA is developing more realistic and complex training for its troops.<sup>90</sup>

All of China military capabilities can be divided in different groups: the ground forces, air forces, naval forces, missile force, space-based capabilities and cyber forces.

The PRC possesses<sup>91</sup> the world’s largest military forces, 2.333 million, of which the ground forces amount to 1.6 million units, without taking into account the reserve forces and the People’s Armed Police (PAP). Since the 1980s and for the following decades the PLA has undergone a continuous downsizing and modernizing process that has deeply changed the structure and the mode of deployment of its troops. The PRC has reformed the army with the purpose of enhancing its readiness, operability combat-arm capability and jointness. The army is divided in 18 Group Armies (GA) of variable size, between 30,000 and 50,000 soldiers, separated in China’s 7 military regions. The GAs are in turn divided in smaller divisions (10,000-20,000) and brigades (5,000-6,000). Five of seven military regions also possess ground forces

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<sup>88</sup> Chase, M. S., Engstrom, J., Cheung, T. M., Gunness, K. A., Harold, S. W., Puska, S., & Berkowitz, S. K. (2015). *China’s Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA)*.

<sup>89</sup> Tiezzi, S. (2015, September 8). The Real Reason China Is Cutting 300,000 Troops, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/the-real-reason-china-is-cutting-300000-troops/>>

<sup>90</sup> Austin, G. (2015, August 11). China’s Military Trains for Taiwan Invasion With Mock-Ups. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/08/chinas-military-trains-for-taiwan-invasion-with-mock-ups/>>

<sup>91</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). (2015). Chapter Six: Asia, *The Military Balance*, 115(1), 207-302.

Rapid Reaction Units (RRUs), groups of 35,000 soldiers able to be deployed anywhere in the PRC within 48 hours. However, the PLA will have to further improve their number, at least one per region, and their deployment capacity, which, as of today, is limited to China. The RRUs have never been dispatched outside the PRC's borders, probably due to the absence of long-range transport capacity, as showed in 2011 when 35000 Chinese civilian had to be repatriated during the conflict in Libya and the PLA was forced to lease commercial ships and airplanes to compensate its deficiencies.<sup>92</sup>

The ground forces' equipment covers the whole spectrum of tools necessary for a modern military force, but once again, numbers do not give an exact representation of the real situation. For example more than two thirds of its tanks are outdated.<sup>93</sup>

The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) has been showing since the beginning of the century significant improvements, however, given its previous state, it is still at an underdeveloped stage, even in relation to other capabilities of the PLA.<sup>94</sup> Currently the PLAAF has 2,239 combat capable aircrafts, but the majority consists of outdated J-7 and J-8 fighters, second and third-generation models, which would be completely unusable in a conflict vis-à-vis modern fourth or fifth generation fighters. The remaining 25% of the total PLAAF aircrafts possess features comparable to the modern fighters in possession of western countries. The most modern ones are the Russian Su-27 and Su-30, roughly 70 each, and the indigenous J-10 and J-11, respectively about 190 and 200 units. The latter, produced in China but essentially a Russian Su-27, has two versions, the J-11 designed for air to combat, and the J-11B upgraded with surface attack capabilities. The J-10, on the other hand, has been completely designed and produced in the PRC. The PLAAF also possess more than 600 bombers; among these there are about 120 JH-7 and more than 100 H-6 long-range strategic bombers, produced in China and based on a Soviet blueprint. 10 H-6 bombers have been converted into in-flight refueling tankers, capable of refueling the J-8 and the J-10. In order to provide for the remaining models the PLA has been trying to purchase from Russia 10 Il-78 tankers suitable to carry out aerial refueling

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<sup>92</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>93</sup> Chase, M. S., Engstrom, J., Cheung, T. M., Guinness, K. A., Harold, S. W., Puska, S., & Berkowitz, S. K. (2015). *China's Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)*.

<sup>94</sup> Mochizuki, M., Brown, M. L., Giarra, P. S., Paal, D. H., Odell, R. E., Lu, R., Palmer, O., Swaine, M. D., & Ren, X. (2013). *China's Military & the US-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. p. 52

operations with the Su-27/30 and the J-11s; currently the PLAAF possess at least one Il-78 bought from Ukraine.<sup>95</sup>

China has also recently acquired from Russia 24 SU-35 fighters jets, many speculate however that the PLA is going to study the engine of the jets in order to solve problems of the developing J-31 and J-20.<sup>96</sup> This is probably the biggest issue concerning the PLAAF: the Chinese aircraft industry does not seem capable of developing its own completely indigenous technology. As has been also been proved by the fact that the J-31 is probably based on the American Lockheed Martin F-35, whose blueprints were stolen by Chinese hackers in 2009.<sup>97</sup> As far as naval aviation is concerned, the PLA Navy (PLAN) owns 24 Su-30MK2, which are long range fighters produced in Russia, mainly assigned to defending Feidong Airbase in Zhejiang Province.<sup>98</sup>

As we have seen, despite the ongoing modernization, the PRC is still far behind countries like the US or Japan. The main issue for the PLAAF is with no doubt the persistence of outdated aircraft that in a modern conflict would not be of any utility; to this end, as said before, the Chinese industrial base is undertaking the development of new fifth generations stealth fighters the J-20 and the J-31. The first, probably based on a Russian project<sup>99</sup> is being devised for surface attacks, while the second will be lighter and probably based on an aircraft carrier. There are however various problems in developing these new fighters, spanning from difficulties in devising a performing engine to lack of training of the pilots. Another problem is the inability to perform in-flight refueling operations; if this problem were not to be solved China's only long-range bomber, the H-6 would be devoid of a fighter escort, while

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<sup>95</sup> Pilger, M. (2014, November 18). First modern tanker observed at Chinese airbase. *US-China economic and security review commission staff bulletin*.

Retrieved at:

<[http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/StaffBulletin\\_First%20Modern%20Tanker%20Observed%20at%20Chinese%20Airbase\\_0.pdf](http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/StaffBulletin_First%20Modern%20Tanker%20Observed%20at%20Chinese%20Airbase_0.pdf)>

<sup>96</sup> Gady, F.S. (2015, November 20). Confirmed: China Buys 24 Advanced Fighter Jets From Russia, *The Diplomat*.

Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/confirmed-china-buys-24-advanced-fighter-jets-from-russia/>>

<sup>97</sup> Gady, F.S. (2015, November 10). China Displays New 5<sup>th</sup> Generation Stealth Fighter, *The Diplomat*.

Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/china-displays-new-5th-generation-stealth-fighter/>>

<sup>98</sup> Mochizuki, M., Brown, M. L., Giarra, P. S., Paal, D. H., Odell, R. E., Lu, R., Palmer, O., Swaine, M. D., & Ren, X. (2013). *China's Military & the US-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. p. 53

<sup>99</sup> Mochizuki, M., Brown, M. L., Giarra, P. S., Paal, D. H., Odell, R. E., Lu, R., Palmer, O., Swaine, M. D., & Ren, X. (2013). *China's Military & the US-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

conducting strike missions. The inability to perform this task can also be ascribed to the general lack of preparation of the pilots, which may also affect combat readiness.<sup>100</sup> It is interesting to notice the heavy dependence on the Russian exports. The PLAN is, within the PLA, the sector that has made the greatest advancements in the last decades. The PRC has achieved important results especially concerning anti-ship cruise missile inventory, Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile (ASBM), mine warfare capability and has vigorously upgraded its submarine fleet.<sup>101</sup> The choice of privileging the PLAN has three main reasons: it is of primary importance in order to address the Taiwan Issue, it suits the need of the PRC of a blue water navy<sup>102</sup> and responds to the attributes of the Chinese shipbuilding industry.<sup>103</sup> The Chinese undersea fleet is probably the best asset owned by the PLAN at the moment. As for the air force, a notable part of the fleet, which counts 70 vessels, is made up of outdated models such as the Ming class model. The remaining are more modern and efficient; there are 12 Russian Kilo-class diesel-electric attack submarines, 16 Chinese Song class 039 and 8 or more Yuan class diesel-electric submarines. The PLA also possess several nuclear powered submarines: 2 Shang class 093, 3 Han class 091 attack submarines and 4 nuclear powered submarines carrying submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM): 3 Jin class 094 and one Xia class 092. These submarines have a significant strategic importance. The Jin 094 class can carry 12 JL-2 SLBM, which can be equipped with a nuclear warhead and have a range of 12,000 kilometers; the Xia class has 12 JL-1 SLBM which have a smaller strike range. The sheer existence of these submarines gives the PRC of a credible undersea nuclear deterrence.<sup>104</sup> The acquisition of this long desired asset has the potential to change the balance of power in the region.

The PLAN naval capabilities are continuously improving; in 2010, 26% of the total PLAN surface force was considered modern by the US DoD, while in 2000 it was the

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<sup>100</sup> Chase, M. S., Engstrom, J., Cheung, T. M., Gunness, K. A., Harold, S. W., Puska, S., & Berkowitz, S. K. (2015). *China's Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)*.

<sup>101</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>102</sup> The term "Blue water navy" refers to maritime force able to operate across the deep waters of an open sea, or ocean, while the term "Green waters" refers to operations that take place within 200 nautical miles from shore.

<sup>103</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press. p.288

<sup>104</sup> Holmes, J. R. & Yoshihara, T. (2008). China's New Undersea Nuclear Deterrent: Strategy, Doctrine, and Capabilities. *Joint Force Quarterly*, Vol. 50, 31-38  
Retrieved at: <<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a517972.pdf>>

10%.<sup>105</sup> Today, the fleet consists in 17 destroyers of which 4 Hangzhou class, 2 Luyang class, 5 Luyang class II, one Luyang class III, one Luhai and 2 Luhu destroyers and 54 frigates of various types. There are also more than 220 patrol and costal combatant craft, 53 mine warfare vessels, 238 landing ships and crafts and 211 ships devised for logistics and support tasks.

The Chinese navy also possesses an aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, a Soviet Kuznetsov-class. It was purchased by Ukraine in 1998 for \$20 million, it was commissioned in 2012, but many think that it will be mainly used for training and R&D while developing an indigenous aircraft carrier in the next years.<sup>106</sup>

The PLAN operations have close ties with the Chinese economy. Historically, it has been operating within the so-called first island chain, which incorporates the Kuril Islands, the Japanese archipelago, the Ryūkyū archipelago, Taiwan, the northern Philippines and Borneo. Recently, the navy has started to operate even outside the second island chain, that encompasses a portion of the ocean until the Mariana Islands, Indonesia and East Timor. While doing so the PLAN is also strengthening its presence in the Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs), which in the past decades have been controlled mainly by the US Navy. Control and protection of the SLOCs is a key element of China's naval doctrine, given their importance in the country's economy and energy supply: more than 90% of the PRC's merchandise trade and 95% of its oil and gas imports is by sea. Shipbuilding is also important, being in terms of dead weight tonnage the biggest in the world.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Mochizuki, M., Brown, M. L., Giarra, P. S., Paal, D. H., Odell, R. E., Lu, R., Palmer, O., Swaine, M. D., & Ren, X. (2013). *China's Military & the US-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

<sup>106</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.



Aside from the maritime energy supply, the PRC naval doctrine on a short-term period is being shaped to respond to two needs. One is the creation of a maritime offensive force that could be successfully deployed in a conflict over Taiwan; the other is the formation of a defensive force, able to negate access and operability to hostile forces within the first island chain. It is straightforward that Taiwan is an important element of the Chinese future military and political agenda, given its centrality in many aspects of the PRC's military planning. Both of the targets have been achieved mainly thanks to technological improvements; one of the most important concerning the so called Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2AD) technologies is the DF-12D ASBM, which is able to reach high speeds and has a range of 1,500 kilometers. This technology has been considered by the US itself a significant advancement made by China in aircraft carrier battle groups deterrence.<sup>109</sup> Another important advancement has been the acquisition of fleet air defense, considered essential to protect blue water operations; this advancement has been made possible by the installation of the HQ-9 surface-to-air missile (SAM) system on Luyang II and

<sup>108</sup> Map retrieved from <<http://www.economist.com/node/13527979>>

<sup>109</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press.

III destroyers, a planar radar combined with vertically launched air defense missiles.<sup>110</sup>

Despite the recent improvements, the PLAN has several flaws, of which it is fully aware and to whom is trying to find a solution. Logistic support is essential in assuring power projection, so it is one of the fields of greatest importance for the development of future operations. The acquisition of overseas ports is essential in order to protect SLOCs and to expand the range of the PLAN actions. Replenishing operations are also vital for future aircraft carrier operation, so the PLAN acquired two more Qiandaohu-class type 093 oilers, in addition to the existing four.

Training is also of capital importance, especially with new informatics systems on the newest destroyers and the recently acquired aircraft carrier; it has also been acknowledged the lack of combat training. The one that is probably the weakest of the PLAN's capabilities is antisubmarine warfare (ASW); the problem has been ignored for a long time, since the navy leaders preferred to prioritize the development of A2/AD systems. Recently, however, new measures have been implemented, such as the deployment of modern 056types corvettes wielding long-range antisubmarine capabilities and maritime patrol aircrafts. Training has also been improved.<sup>111</sup>

It is rather blatant that despite the various improvements undertaken, these three domains of the PLA have not yet achieved global reach. The following areas are considered the ones where the PLA the most impressive results during its process of modernization.

The missile force, also known as People's Liberation Army Second Artillery Force (PLASAF), is considered the PLA's biggest success as far modernization is concerned. Numerically, the PRC possess the third largest missile force worldwide, after the USA and Russia,<sup>112</sup> and covers the full spectrum of missile force. Currently the PLASAF deploys 458 strategic missiles, of which 66 are Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), 6 are Intermediate Ballistic Missiles (IRBM), 134 Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBM), 252 Short-Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBM) and 54 Land-Attack Cruise Missile (LACM) in addition to the SLBM deployed on submarines. The analysis of the PLASAF is tightly linked to nuclear deterrence. In

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<sup>110</sup> Chase, M. S., Engstrom, J., Cheung, T. M., Gunness, K. A., Harold, S. W., Puska, S., & Berkowitz, S. K. (2015). *China's Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)*.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press.

this field as well the PLA has made great advancements; among the missiles aforementioned, only the SLBM and the ICBM can carry nuclear warheads, hence the acquisition of submarines able to deploy JL-2 missiles and of the road-mobile DF-31 and DF-31A has improved the PRC nuclear capabilities. It has also to be said that the PLA has been trying to implement its nuclear assets in a qualitative rather than quantitative way: one example could be the intention of to improve and eventually replace liquid-fueled, silo based DF-4 and DF-5 ICBM with newer and road mobile and solid-fueled DF-31 and DF-31A, which also have a larger striking range.<sup>113</sup> The advance of a moving nuclear arsenal is quite evident, since it has a bigger chance of survive a first strike attack and thus have a more credible second-strike capability; this topic is tightly linked to the recent Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea, since a tighter control of the SCS would be indispensable in order to protect the Chinese submarines from eventual ASW and assure a functional sea based nuclear deterrence capability.<sup>114</sup>

Nevertheless, the security environment around the PRC is becoming more and more complex. The United States is with no doubt China's first nuclear competitor, but there are other players in the region such as India. Additionally, despite the ongoing debate concerning its pacifist identity, Japan has been recently improving its ballistic missile defense apparatus with the aid of the US.<sup>115</sup>

In order to improve its communication and command capabilities, the PRC concentrated its effort in creating a modern infrastructure of space-based capabilities. Currently there are 68 Chinese satellites in orbit, of which 5 dual use communications satellites, 17 used for navigation, position, timing and remote sensing, 31 with information, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) tasks and 18 used for signals intelligence (SIGINT) and electronic-signals intelligence (ELINT). The possession of space-based capabilities is essential for C4ISR, and while currently China's are limited, especially if compared to the US, the PLA's modernization in this field has

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<sup>113</sup> Chase, M. S., Engstrom, J., Cheung, T. M., Gunness, K. A., Harold, S. W., Puska, S., & Berkowitz, S. K. (2015). *China's Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)*.

<sup>114</sup> Duchâtel, M. & Kazakova, E. (2015). Tensions in the South China Sea: the nuclear dimension *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.sipri.org/media/newsletter/essay/july-aug-15-south-china-sea>>

<sup>115</sup> Gady, F.S. (2015, August 10). U.S. Approves \$1.5 Billion Ballistic Missile Defense Deal With Japan, *The Diplomat*.

Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/08/u-s-approves-1-5-billion-ballistic-missile-defense-deal-with-japan/>>

been quite rapid, since it took place mostly in the last few years. The role assigned to these capabilities is double: on the one hand aims to provide essential C4ISR, navigation and positioning, and meteorological information in military operations but also is conceived to prevent other states to use the same space assets, an ability which is seriously concerning the United States. The PRC is also facing a few problems: one could be the overreliance on space assets, if other state founded a way of neutralizing them; for example the US development program can be traced back to the cold war. Another problem is technical: to launch heavier SIGINT and ELINT satellites, like the ones owned by the United States, the PRC has to develop newer and more robust launch rockets.<sup>116</sup> Aside from the military applications, the space domain is perhaps the best example of how military modernization based on dual-use technology can improve the overall prestige of a country. The 2006 China National Space Administration White Paper, outlined a vast range of ambitious goal: manned spaces missions like the construction of a crewed space station, moon exploration and even the establishment of a crewed lunar base; the creation of an autonomous satellite communication network and an independent satellite navigation and position system.<sup>117</sup>

As for the Cyber capabilities, the PRC has been able to achieve global projection in this domain. Cyber attacks could be used to damage C4ISR systems, to hit sensible information, both in the military and civilian field, since the constant data integration of almost all systems, from operations involving jet fighters to data sharing on the battlefield heavily rely on the targeted systems. Consequently, there are operations, known as defensive Information Warfare (IW), carried out in order to protect China's own sensible data and computer systems. This kind of attacks is difficult to avoid, given the omnipresence of computers and computerized systems in modern society and it is also difficult to trace the true source of the attack, as well as the nationality of the attackers.

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<sup>116</sup> Mochizuki, M., Brown, M. L., Giarra, P. S., Paal, D. H., Odell, R. E., Lu, R., Palmer, O., Swaine, M. D., & Ren, X. (2013). *China's Military & the US-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>117</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press.

### 1.3 Territorial disputes

As seen in the previous parts of this chapter, the economic, political and military power of the PRC is rapidly increasing. Therefore, it might seem quite natural for the PRC to start extending its newly acquired power on its immediate neighborhood. As of today, the PRC is involved in a great number of territorial disputes, mainly located in the East China Sea (ECS) and South China Sea (SCS). The claims concern in the SCS two archipelagos, the Spratly islands and the Paracel islands, where China has been confronting various neighboring states. In the Spratly archipelago, tensions arose in 2014, in part because of the direct involvement of the US Navy.<sup>118</sup> This work will not consider the Chinese claims in the SCS, as they would not be relevant, if not perhaps in a very marginal way, in analyzing the increasing frictions between the PRC and Japan.

In the ECS, on the other hand, the Chinese claims over the archipelago known as Senkaku in Japanese and Diaoyu in Mandarin, are a clear example of how the crescent Chinese power clashes with the established status quo in the region. The Senkaku/Diaoyu archipelago, which is also claimed by the Republic of China (ROC), is located southwest of the Nansei Islands and consists of five islets and three rocks with an area of about 6 km<sup>2</sup>. The islands were first claimed by Japan as *terra nullis*<sup>119</sup> in 1895 and have been administered by it ever since. The recognition of the islands as *terra nullis* is important because this is the element around which the whole Japanese claims revolve.<sup>120</sup> From a Chinese perspective, after the end of WWII, Japan was compelled to return every island “seized or occupied since the beginning of the first World War in 1914”,<sup>121</sup> according to the 1943 Cairo Declaration and 1945 Potsdam Declaration. The restitution had also to be applied to all the other territories taken from China, such as Manchuria and Taiwan. Thus, if Japan had acquired the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands as a consequence of the Shimonoseki Treaty in 1895, it would certainly have had to give them back to China. On this point, the two countries

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<sup>118</sup> Panda, A. (2015, November 9). Amid Tensions, US, China Assert South China Sea Positions, *The Diplomat*.

Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/amid-tensions-us-china-assert-south-china-sea-positions/>>

<sup>119</sup> The Latin term *Terra Nullis* is applied to any portion of land that does not belong to any country.

<sup>120</sup> Choong, W. (2014). The Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. *Adelphi Papers*, 54(445), 59-92.

<sup>121</sup> Full text of the Cairo Declaration available at:

<[http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryō/01/002\\_46/002\\_46tx.html](http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryō/01/002_46/002_46tx.html)>

versions diverge: Japan claims that the acquisition of the islands had been in January 1895, while the PRC affirms that they became Japanese only in April 1895, along with Taiwan, as a consequence of the Shimonoseki Treaty.<sup>122</sup> The fact that Japan almost continuously administered the islands throughout the following century is certainly a point in favor of Japan. Other elements that support the Japanese claim can be found in the 1951 San Francisco Treaty, whose signing officially ratified peace between Japan and the Allied Powers. Here, Japan consented to an US trusteeship on the Nansei Archipelago south of the 29<sup>th</sup> parallel north, the Ryukyu and the Daito Islands; essentially placing them and their territorial waters under complete administrative, legislative and jurisdictional American control. However, during the peace treaty conference, Japan was recognized to maintain “residual sovereignty” over the islands, which meant that the US promised not to cede the archipelago to a third part, before the planned return of the islands to Japan.<sup>123</sup> The treaty refers to the islands that had to be ceded to China, which are Taiwan, the Pescadores, the Spratly and the Paracel Islands, but there is no mention of the Senkaku/Diaoyu archipelago, as they were later incorporated to the Ryūkyū Islands. During the American administration, following a series of studies conducted by UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) was discovered the possible existence of considerable reserves of oil and gas under the continental shelf between Taiwan and Japan, hence right under the contested archipelago. Unsurprisingly, the discovery reignited the interest and claims by Beijing and Taipei. Furthermore, more problems arose in 1971, when, after the taking over of the PRC of the seat at the United Nations that once belonged to the ROC, the United States enunciated a new policy. This new policy, declared the US neutrality over the matter concerning the islands. This position was however denied by a series of events that followed. In 1972, the Ryūkyū Islands returned under Japanese administration and with them the Senkaku, additionally Tokyo allowed to the United States the use of two of the islets as firing ranges.<sup>124</sup>

In the same year, as consequence of a broader phenomenon that included the entrance of the PRC in the United Nation and the historical visit of US President Richard Nixon to China, Japan and the PRC started a process to normalize their diplomatic

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<sup>122</sup> Pugliese, G. (2015). Japan 2014: Between a China Question and a China Obsession. Torri M. & Mocchi N. (Eds.) *Engaging China/Containing China: Asia in 2014*, 25,43-98.

<sup>123</sup> Choong, W. (2014). The Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. *Adelphi Papers*, 54(445), 59-92.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

relations. The process culminated in the joint communiqué signed in September 1972 by Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei.<sup>125</sup> During Tanaka's visit, in a meeting with the Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, on a specific request coming from Tanaka concerning the territorial issues, the two parts agreed to shelve the problem with an "unspoken understanding". Both sides reaffirmed their intentions of complying with this tacit agreement once again, during the negotiations in October 1978 in Tokyo in occasion of the visit of Deng Xiaoping for the review of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship. However, the fact that such agreement ever existed has been always denied by the Japanese government.<sup>126</sup> Until the end of the Cold War the situation remained unchanged, but in the first years of the new millennium, the Sino-Japanese relations faced a new period of tensions and the territorial disputes gained a new momentum. It has to be specified that the new situation concerning the archipelago derives from a revived interest in the oil and gas extraction and the Chinese submarines territorial trespassing, but also from other factors unrelated to the dispute, such as the growing Japanese nationalism and the visits to the Yasukuni shrine made by PM Koizumi Jun'ichirō.<sup>127</sup> Exploiting the opportunity for international collaboration envisioned by Hu Jintao in his Peaceful Rise policy, the Japanese administration in 2008 reached out to the PRC and successfully proposed the institution of the Japan-China Strategic Mutually Beneficial Relationship (SMBR) through which the Japanese pushed for a joint-development of gas fields in the ECS.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, the agreement could not improve any further the bilateral relations, as at the end of that same year, a Chinese vessel entered Japanese territorial waters. The two events that turned an eventual positive outcome of the issue from difficult to impossible happened both in this decade. In September 2010, a Chinese trawler that was operating in proximity of the islands was blocked after it rammed two Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) vessels. The whole crew of the trawler was arrested with the initial intention of pressing charges against the captain under Japanese

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<sup>125</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge.

<sup>126</sup> Pugliese, G. (2015). Japan 2014: Between a China Question and a China Obsession. Torri M. & Mocchi N. (Eds.) *Engaging China/Containing China: Asia in 2014*, 25,43-98.

<sup>127</sup> Faiola, A. (2006, August 15). Koizumi Stirs Anger With War Shrine Visit, *Washington Post*. Retrieved at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/14/AR2006081401425.html>>

<sup>128</sup> Pugliese, G. (2015). Japan 2014: Between a China Question and a China Obsession. Torri M. & Mocchi N. (Eds.) *Engaging China/Containing China: Asia in 2014*, 25,43-98.

law.<sup>129</sup> This was an unprecedented fact: before any trespasser would have been blocked and quickly sent back to China, but this time the crew has been released after six days and the captain a week later with no formal indictment.<sup>130</sup> That was the result of Chinese retaliation. In fact, Beijing reacted to the arrest and initial detention with economic tools, such as the suspension of rare earth exports and cancellation of important meetings. What happened in 2012 had perhaps an even stronger impact on the already compromised relations: in September the Japanese government announced its intention of acquiring three islands of the archipelago from their private owners. The move was dictated by the necessity of preventing the purchase of those islands by Ishihara Shintarō, the at the time governor of Tokyo, a notorious right wing politician who could have used the islands to gain political advantage and radicalize the dispute.<sup>131</sup> The Japanese government did so in order to soothe the Chinese uproar caused by the former-governor announcement. It is needless to say that the nationalization of the islands did not have the desired outcome; it was instead seen by Beijing and its public opinion as a move by Tokyo to strengthen its grip on the contested territory. After the purchase, which Hu Jintao publically labeled as “illegal” and “invalid”,<sup>132</sup> the Chinese trespassings in Japanese waters and airspace surrounding the island begun to be conducted almost on regular basis. It could be said that the Chinese attempts to delegitimize or at least erode the Japanese control of the territory culminated in the institution on November 23, 2013 of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), which covers part of the East China Sea and includes the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.<sup>133</sup> The PRC justified it as an “act of self defense”<sup>134</sup> demanding that any aircraft entering it notified its presence in advance, threatening repercussions in case of non-compliance. In any case, the imposition of the ADIZ was carried out by the Chinese government unilaterally and had strong repercussions in the international environment. Japan, the Republic of Korea, the US and Australia formally gave voice to their complaints against one-sided changes of the status quo. A few days later the ADIZ institution, the US dispatched from Guam two unarmed B-

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<sup>129</sup> Dickie, M. & Hillie, K. (2010, September 8). Japan’s arrest of captain angers Beijing, *Financial Times*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/a09e651a-bb04-11df-9e1d-00144feab49a.html#axzz3yqQDCmqA>>

<sup>130</sup> Choong, W. (2014). The Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. *Adelphi Papers*, 54(445), 59-92.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p.79

<sup>133</sup> Dujarric R. (2013, December 07). China’s ADIZ and the Japan-US response, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2013/12/chinas-adiz-and-the-japan-us-response/>>

<sup>134</sup> Choong, W. (2014). The Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. *Adelphi Papers*, 54(445), 59-92. p. 81

52 bombers into the area, in order to test China's resolve, or maybe call their bluff, given the absence of incidents,<sup>135</sup> and to reassure Japan of Washington's commitment to the defense of the Senkaku Islands under the provisions of the US-Japan alliance.

Since the immediate post-war period, it is quite evident that the stances taken by the countries in dealing with the issue have been influenced by the Cold War dynamics at first, and then by the already described growing regional multipolar environment. This, of course, does not reject the importance of internal dynamics, but aims to show how the external and internal instances are interconnected.

The claims of the ROC and the PRC are quite similar, given the fact that both states claim to be the rightful and sole representative of China: their claim on the island is based on two arguments. First, they totally negate that the islands were *terra nullis* in 1985, but part of the ancient Chinese empire and used use by Chinese fishermen for shelter. Secondly, the PRC affirms that the islands were ceded to Japan as part of the war booty established under the Shimonoseki Treaty, hence the islands should have been given back with Taiwan in 1945, which also invalidates the subsequent American administration. Japan's claim simply rests on the *terra nullis* principle, along with the fact that the islands were not Chinese territory and were annexed separately from Taiwan and the Pescadores. It is also relevant that Japan managed to administrate the islands from their acquisition until its defeat at the hands of the allied powers in 1945. The main difference observable between the Cold War period and its aftermath is that during the former none of the contesting states undertook any concrete actions near the islands. The issue was certainly there, but given the international environment of that time, the battle has been fought with words rather than bold gestures. The states were more incline to address the situation in a muffled way, avoiding any unnecessary tension. The decision to impose on the island the famous "residual sovereignty", for example, might have been a calculated move from the US. It consolidated the allegiance with Japan, whose importance for the US rests in the fact that many of the islands in the southern part of the archipelago hold a strategic military relevance; in this sense the assurance of the sovereignty reversal over the Ryukyu islands would soften Japan's position concerning the American

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<sup>135</sup> Keck, Z. (2013, November 27). US Bombers Challenge China's Air Defense Identification Zone, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/us-bombers-challenge-chinas-air-defense-identification-zone/>>

bases. This move served additional internal purposes: the “residual sovereignty” over the islands could be used to mitigate any anti-American feelings in Japanese society, which, especially in Okinawa, are still alive today. Concerning fact that Japan would be allowed to retain a certain degree of “possession” over the islands, it is interesting the stance taken by the ROC, as it is a clear example of how priorities differed during the Cold War. Taipei was not against the placement of the Nansei islands under American trusteeship *per se*, as the American presence in the area would be a strong deterrent against Taiwan’s most immediate threat, the newly born PRC. The ROC complaints were aimed at the notion tailored for the islands, as it was considered against the Potsdam and Cairo declaration. The US, in what has been a far-fetched attempt of not being involved in a quarrel between its two main allies in the area, declared its extraneity, leaving the issue to be settled between the states directly involved.<sup>136</sup> After the alternation at the UN, Beijing took over from where Taipei left in pressing for recognition of the islands as Chinese. The US kept affirming that that it had no claim over the islands and even said that a return to the Japanese administration would not invalidate any future claim. This however convinced no one: the sheer fact that the US chose to return the islands to Japan was clearly not a neutral behavior. The so-called shelving agreement reached by Japan and the PRC between 1972 and 1978 is another important moment. When the two states decided to temporarily set aside the issue, they did so answering once again more pressing concerns originating from the bipolar world order, since both countries wanted to weaken the Soviet influence in the region. Additionally, China had no interest in jeopardizing its long awaited recognition on a global scale and, more importantly, had every interest in pursuing commercial ties with a more economically advanced country like Japan. Furthermore, it had received from Japan recognition of the existence of a territorial dispute, even if in an unofficial form. Japan, on the other hand, did not wish to compromise its relationship with an economically appealing neighbor, and would have had more time to invigorate its claim, through the continuous control over the Senkaku/Diaoyu. With the end of the Cold War, it is possible to witness a significant change both in the intensity and openness of the confrontation. The absence of the Soviet threat removed in both countries what represented the most compelling concern in terms of security and foreign policy,

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<sup>136</sup> Choong, W. (2014). The Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. *Adelphi Papers*, 54(445), 59-92.

hampering any possible action outside of the two-block paradigm in favor of global stability. From 1991, on the contrary, every country felt freer to pursue its own interest without constraints. The first signs of this new era of bolder actions can be found in the decision by China in 1992 to explicitly include, as part of its territory, the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in its Law on Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, causing Japan's protests. The provocative behavior of many Japanese politicians, most notably inside the government, did not help either. Admittedly, actions such as the institution of the Japan-China SMBR show at least the willingness to attempt to develop some sort of peaceful cooperation. Unfortunately, the institution failed under the weight of respective claims and accusations. It has been observed that even this action, behind the selfless façade of improving cooperation, answered to national drivers. The acceptance of the SMBR from China was a victory for Japan, as it recognized the Japanese claims over the division of the EEZs and, for China, was a way to advance the Peaceful Rise policy. It is possible to analyze the successive happening as a contribution to the overall worsening of the relations over the issue. Right after the agreement over the SMBR, China contradicted the showed and self-proclaimed goodwill with various trespassings that intensified together with its increasing assertiveness. Japan failed two important tests during the mismanagement of the 2010 incident and the island acquisition in 2012. The importance of these failures stems from the fact that, at the time, the Japanese government was held by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which historically has always had a more compliant stance towards the PRC than the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).<sup>137</sup> Thus, the decisions taken by the cabinets of Kan Naoto first, and then Noda Yoshihiko, had an even harder impact. It has also not to be forgotten that the purchase of the islands took place at a quite delicate moment in China: the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CCP, where the transition of power from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping took place. After the 2012, China decided to abandon any caution, and increased the frequency of trespassing to an almost regular basis in order to force Japan to admit the existence of the issue.

After having outlined the facts and analyzed the political rationales behind them, it is possible to draw some conclusions over the Senkaku/Diaoyu territorial dispute.

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<sup>137</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge.

It is quite simple to affirm that the issue, which has been present for 70 years, has showed a constant degenerative trend. Until the “restitution” of the islands in 1972 the issue has been in some ways protected by the de-facto US control imposed on the Nansei Islands; then, almost every two decades it is possible to highlight a defining moment that brought the dispute to a higher level of intensity. About twenty years after the restitution of the islands, a period during which the issue had been buried under a tacit understanding, the shock of the end of the cold war brought it back to life. From the 1992 Chinese law that rekindled the tensions until the 2012 acquisition, we have witnessed a surge in violations of what Japan considers its airspace and territorial waters that culminated with the 2010 incident.

The institution of the ADIZ, less than a year after the purchase of the islands, can be unquestionably read a change of the status quo, and is probably one of the boldest moves undertaken by China in a long time. It also had profound consequences: most notably it compromised the long and careful process undertaken by the China in order to assuage the neighboring countries and build trust. So, the CCP leaders’ returns from this action must have been important. It is my opinion that the PRC deemed the time was ripe for testing the reactions to a new level of assertiveness. This hypothesis may be confirmed by the fact that, after the B-52s flight, the US in some ways accepted the new ADIZ by making their carriers and their commercial flight comply with the new rules.<sup>138</sup> A similar challenge to the status quo has been later carried out with the construction of islands in the Spratly archipelago.<sup>139</sup> This strategy might have a good outcome for China, since the new ADIZ not only expanded its operability in the surrounding waters, one of the PLAN’s short term goals, but also will probably force Japan to formally recognize the issue. On a more broad and long term prospective, however, this kind of actions is in my opinion not desirable. The possibility of unilateral change will only increase anxiety and unpredictability in the East Asia regional system, and accelerate dangerous trends connected to an arms race. Some of these consequences are already in action: Japan has changed the interpretation of its constitution and, as already said, the engagement of the US Navy in the Spratly issue has increased in the last months of 2015.

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<sup>138</sup> Choong, W. (2014). The Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. *Adelphi Papers*, 54(445), 59-92.

<sup>139</sup> Rogers A. (2015, April 17). China Building Runway in Disputed South China Sea Islands, *Time*. Retrieved at: <<http://time.com/3826713/china-building-airstrip-disputed-south-china-sea-islands/>>

#### 1.4 The PRC foreign policy doctrine and the latest changes in the PLA

The PRC disposes of modern military capabilities, enabling it to project its military power in the immediate maritime proximity. This acquisition and the intention to further modernize its military apparatus clearly raise concerns regarding the use of this newly gained military might. Observing the events unfolded in the East and South China Seas, as well as the stance taken by the CCP leaders in the last years, it appears rather blatantly that the PRC's behavior has become more assertive. This shift is usually traced back to 2012, in concomitance with the succession at the head of the CCP. Given the PRC's economic, political and demographic weight, this new course has a great impact. Considering the aim of this work, it assumes an even stronger significance, since the countries that will face the greatest consequences of this new assertiveness are Japan, and by virtue of their alliance, the United States. It is possible to trace the growing trend of assertiveness showed by the PRC in the management of various regional issues, as for example the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. Eventually, reducing this change to a mere consequence of the leadership turnover would be simplistic; it is therefore necessary to take into account the foreign policy doctrine of the PRC and its evolution through time.

A foreign policy doctrine essentially consists in a series of principles upon which the behavior of a state in the international environment is based. Usually, a doctrine is named after the statesman who first put it into practice, as in the case of the Monroe or Yoshida doctrines. Brief expressions can also be used, as in the PRC's case. It is important to take into consideration not only the current state of the Chinese foreign policy doctrine, but also the process through which it came to be, since it could be argued that the current policies are the product of a process developed through many years, which has been greatly affected by the political and economic environment outside the PRC as well. As it will be clear at the end of this chapter, there is a reciprocal interaction between the regional international structure and the foreign policy doctrines of its states, among which China, followed by Japan, is the one with the greatest influence. So, this analysis has to go beyond the present state of Chinese foreign policy, and start in the past. A constant reference to the international environment is also required, since the changes undertaken over the years can be read as responses to the mutations of the chaotic international arena. The word "chaotic" is used purposefully, as this analysis rests on a fundamental assumption borrowed from

a realist approach to international relations: nation-states are unitary elements, pursuing self-interest in an anarchic international structure dominated by insecurity.<sup>140</sup>

The origin of modern Chinese foreign policy dates back to the beginning of the 1990s, when China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping envisioned the doctrine that would shape the PRC's foreign policy for almost two decades. According to Deng, China should maintain a low profile, or using a more famous expression on the ultimate purpose of the doctrine, "keeping a low profile and hiding one's brightness"<sup>141</sup>.

It could be argued that Deng's choice of keeping a low profile (KLP) has been dictated by the particular condition of the PRC at that time, in conjunction with the structure of the international environment. During those years, the international community took a quite hostile stance towards China, in response to the events of Tiananmen. Additionally, the internal debate originated from the protests was threatening to put a halt to the economic reform process started by Deng almost fifteen years before. After the famous tour he took in southern China in 1992, during which managed to once again win support for the economic reforms,<sup>142</sup> Deng understood that the PRC would require time in order to become economically and militarily relevant in comparison to the western countries. Hence, starting from the relations with the immediate neighbors, China had to momentarily avoid any confrontation that might hinder economic development. The PRC did so in favor of a more stable international environment, while gaining strength to finally become once again the regional power it used to be, before the advent of western powers in Asia. The strategy paid off: despite the arms embargo imposed after Tiananmen and still effective today, and the enmity of most of the international community, the PRC became an attractive economic partner even for the most advanced countries. Ironically, the first country to reestablish stable relations with China was Japan<sup>143</sup>. The keeping a low profile (KLP) doctrine resisted unchanged after Deng's withdrawal and death, until it experienced a change during the presidency of Hu

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<sup>140</sup> Collins, A. (2013). *Contemporary security studies*. Oxford university press. p.14

<sup>141</sup> Deng, Y. (2013, April 23). How to understand China's Foreign Policy, *Foreign Policy*.

Retrieved at: <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/23/how-to-understand-chinas-foreign-policy/>>

<sup>142</sup> Wong, J. & Yongnian, Z. (2001). *The nanxun legacy and China's development in the post Deng era*, Singapore University Press, p.4

<sup>143</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge. p.172

Jintao. The necessity to do so was dictated by the changes in the international community and in the PRC that had taken place in the twenty years from the institution of KLP. During the 2000s, which coincided almost entirely with Hu Jintao's office, China developed at an amazing rate: the GDP grew enormously, making the country's GDP the second biggest in the world in 2010.<sup>144</sup> In western countries and Japan, this growth has been followed with a sense of discomfort, if not distrust, that eventually gave birth to a "China threat theory"<sup>145</sup>, especially in the United States. It is rather blatant that the Chinese leadership could not accept such reactions, thus the matter had to be addressed. The self-reflecting process undertaken by the PRC has been of such depth and complexity that there have been "few, if any, other major or aspiring power" to do so<sup>146</sup>. This process resulted in the foreign policy doctrine known as "Peaceful Rise". This expression was first used at the end of 2005, when it appeared in an article on *Foreign Policy* written by Zheng Bijian, a leading CCP political advisor. The article serves almost as a policy declaration: if it were to be reduced to one word, that would be "transcendence". Zheng assured that China harbored no desire to follow the bloody path taken by previous rising powers such as pre-WWI Germany or pre-WWII Japan. In his vision, China should follow a threefold strategy, which he calls of the "three transcendences". The new PRC policies should "transcend the old model of industrialization", proposing a new one, "transcend the traditional ways for great powers to emerge" and "transcend outdated modes of social control" in order to create a harmonious socialist society<sup>147</sup>. The task is evidently quite ambitious: as noted in the first part of this chapter, China wants to show itself as a viable alternative to the social and economic models that preceded it, showing itself to the world as the new developing model. Many of the concepts first expressed by Zheng were later reaffirmed by Hu himself at a United Nation General Assembly speech, where he declared that China would pursue its objectives within the UN framework and, most importantly, peacefully.<sup>148</sup> The name of the doctrine was then modified, since the term "rise" might have been too aggressive and has then

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<sup>144</sup> Data on GDP retrieved at:

<[http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?order=wbapi\\_data\\_value\\_2014+wbapi\\_data\\_value+wbapi\\_data\\_value-last&sort=desc](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_2014+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=desc)>

<sup>145</sup> Meyer, C. (2011). *China or Japan: which will lead Asia?*. Hurst & Co. p.130

<sup>146</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2011). Coping with a conflicted China. *The Washington Quarterly*, 34(1), 7-27.

p.8

<sup>147</sup> Zheng, B. (2005). China's "peaceful rise" to great-power status. *Foreign Affairs*, 84(5), 18.

<sup>148</sup> Kissinger, H. (2011). *On China*. Penguin.

been substituted with the word “development”, which also reiterated the idea of a “developing China”, a country much in need of time and assistance.<sup>149</sup> The expression became officially part of the Chinese political discourse at the end of 2005, after the publication of a white paper by the State Council Information Office, stating: “peaceful development is a sincere hope and unremitting pursuit of the Chinese people”. These intentions stemmed from the acknowledgment of China’s unique status of largest developing country and, at the time, world’s third largest importer. Furthermore, given the size of its population, the resolve of the Chinese government in creating a path towards peace and social development was declared “unshakable”.<sup>150</sup>

This new doctrine can be seen as an extension of the one that preceded it: they have many common features, of which the most prominent is undoubtedly the need for stability in order to grow,<sup>151</sup> but diverge on the premises, since the status of China has changed, and that has been acknowledged by Hu. The growth experienced in the 2000s, alongside with its material consequences on the population, propelled a change in the Chinese self-perception and in the international community’s attitude.

The figurative zenith of this process was the year 2008, when two important events took place. One was the economic crisis that hit the US and the EU, the other were the Beijing Olympics. The former, in addition to the well-known consequences, greatly affected the perception of western power and economic models in China. If before the crisis many in the PRC advocated to follow the same economic path taken by western countries, after 2008 the tide turned, imposing on Chinese scholars the need to find a new model for economic development.<sup>152</sup> The Olympics, on the other hand, were used by the Chinese government as a great propaganda instrument: with the eyes of the world fixed on Beijing, time was ripe for a worldwide declaration of China being ready to become once again the “middle kingdom” it used to be before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the 2000s, a series of changes both in the PRC and

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<sup>149</sup> Shambaugh, D. (2013). *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford University Press p. 21

<sup>150</sup> China.org.cn (2005, December, 22). *White Paper on Peaceful Development Road Published*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.china.org.cn/english/2005/Dec/152669.htm>>

<sup>151</sup> Saunders, P., & Scobell, A. (2015). *PLA Influence on China's National Security Policymaking*. Stanford University Press.

<sup>152</sup> Kissinger, H. (2011). *On China*. Penguin.

outside the country started to question “Peaceful Rise” as the best way to serve the CCP interests.<sup>153</sup>

After that great display of power and self-confidence, united with the sense of distress experience by western countries during the incipient economic crisis, the international community started to vigorously pressure the PRC to become a more responsible power: an assumption of responsibility that would have been in clear contrast with KLP. A second element questioning the goodness of KLP has been the strategy adopted in 2010 by the Obama administration of rebalancing its forces towards Asia, an action evidently intended to counterbalance the PRC’s growing power in the region. The challenge raised to the Chinese foreign policy doctrine by the US pivot is quite simple, yet crucially important: if KLP was supposed to lower the level of threat felt by other countries regarding China, why is the United States trying to harness the PRC expansion in the region?<sup>154</sup> As a third challenge to KLP, there has been the resurgence of territorial disputes, both in the East China Sea (ECS) with Japan, and in the South China Sea (SCS) with Vietnam and the Philippines, which have caused international tensions and certainly not favored a stable environment.

It is evident that these challenges had to be address, if the CCP wanted to maintain the doctrine. Hence, the troubled period across the first two decades of the new millennium saw an increase of both defenses and new challenges to KLP, which ultimately concurred, alongside the mutation of the international structure, to a significant change in the PRC’s foreign policy doctrine.

One of the most passionate defenders of “Peaceful Development”, and therefore KLP, has been former state counselor Dai Bingguo, who on December 6, 2010 wrote what can be considered both a defense and a policy declaration for “Peaceful Development”. The article, through its various sections, reaffirms and supports the doctrine, emphasizing the significance of external relations, since “China cannot develop in isolation of the world”.<sup>155</sup> There is one element worth noticing, as it can

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<sup>153</sup> Xuetong, Y. (2014). From keeping a low profile to striving for achievement. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 7(2), 153-184.

<sup>154</sup> Xuetong, Y. (2014). From keeping a low profile to striving for achievement. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 7(2), 153-184. p. 156

<sup>155</sup> Dai, B. (2010, December 6). *Adhere To The Path Of Peaceful Development*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People’s Republic of China.

Retrieved at: <<http://china.usc.edu/dai-bingguo-%E2%80%9CAdhere-path-peaceful-development%E2%80%9D-dec-6-2010>>

provide an explanation for the assertiveness shown later on. Dai's article stresses on the importance of China's core interests. Interestingly, the concept is tightly connected, at least in this article, to the military aspects of China's rise and to the Taiwan issue. The core interests are, as the name hints, at the very base of the PRC's policies and in Dai's view "no development path should be chosen at the expense of major national interests, core interests in particular".<sup>156</sup> There is even more accuracy in identifying them: they are the preservation of the PRC's political system, namely the CCP, the social system and socialism with Chinese characteristics, then there is the protection of national integrity and the commitment in carrying out the PRC's social and economic development.<sup>157</sup> This expression is not new to Chinese foreign policy. It dates back to January 2003, when it was used in a report of a meeting occurred between Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan and US Secretary of State Colin Powell, concerning Taiwan. From that year the term started to be used almost on a regular basis in official Chinese sources,<sup>158</sup> until in November 2009 gained worldwide attention for being included in the US-China Joint Statement after Barack Obama's visit in Beijing.<sup>159</sup> Early on, in the same year, there has been the first public definition of the concept, conceived by Dai Bingguo, which is the same included in the aforementioned 2010 article.

The "core interest" concept is of capital importance in understanding the evolution of the Chinese foreign policy doctrine in the last years, since it constitutes the biggest element of continuity between Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping. Furthermore it has been connected to many of the issues where the PRC's actions have been noted to become more and more assertive over the years, such as territorial disputes.

Hence, it is necessary to understand not only the nature of the PRC's core interests, but also their patterns of use. As for the former, it has already been seen in this paragraph, while the latter is a complex matter. Since its first use, the term has been related to the Taiwan issue, so it could be assumed that "core interest" is a concept used when addressing territorial issue, and its more recent employment in connection

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Swaine, M. D. (2011). China's Assertive Behavior: Part One: On 'Core Interests', *China Leadership Monitor*, 34(22), 1-25. p.3

<sup>159</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2009, November 17) *U.S.-China Joint Statement*. Retrieved at: <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>>

to the provinces of Tibet and Xingjian might support this hypothesis<sup>160</sup>. Nevertheless, considering what Dai Bingguo said in 2009 when officially outlining the concept,<sup>161</sup> it can be easily seen that it does not address only territorial issue, as this is only one among other defining aspects of the core interests notion. Thus, “core interest” is a political tool. This expression is used as a label when the PRC wants to show its resolve over an issue and exacerbate dialogue assuming a unilateral stance. As noted by Micheal Swaine, even if the phrase “non-negotiable” has never officially been used, Chinese officials “have certainly employed similar terms on many occasions”.<sup>162</sup> This stance is more easily traceable in territorial issues due to their impact on the international community. This kind of behavior can certainly be considered assertive, and the fact that it has been shown years before Xi Jinping ascent to power is an indicator of a certain degree of continuity. Core interests were once again mentioned in 2013 by Xi during his visit in California. On that occasion he tried to promote a new concept for Sino-American relations, the so-called “Great Powers Relationship”, according to which the US and the PRC should avoid conflict and confrontation and respect each other’s political systems and core interests.<sup>163</sup> This new concept has never been neither formally adopted nor completely rejected by the US administration, given the American conviction of supremacy of acts over words.<sup>164</sup> Later on, however, this conviction has been proven wrong, since accrediting China as a great power might imply not only formally recognizing its dominance in the region, but also define it as a possible next hegemonic power, hence the use of this formula has been discouraged.<sup>165</sup> The sheer fact that such a proposition has been made indicated that the Chinese foreign policy doctrine has experienced a change. By the time Xi Jinping came to power, KLP and Peaceful rise had achieved their goals, so they had to make way to a new strategy, which has been presented

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<sup>160</sup> The New York Times (2013, May 11). *China’s evolving ‘core interest’*. Retrieved at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/12/opinion/sunday/chinas-evolving-core-interests.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/12/opinion/sunday/chinas-evolving-core-interests.html?_r=1)>

<sup>161</sup> People’s Daily Online. (2009, July 29). *Senior Chinese official calls on U.S. to respect China’s core national interests*. Retrieved at: <<http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/90883/6713167.html>>

<sup>162</sup> Swaine, M. D. (2011). China’s Assertive Behavior: Part One: On ‘Core Interests’, *China Leadership Monitor*, 34(22), 1-25. p.7

<sup>163</sup> Zhang, J. (2015). China’s new foreign policy under Xi Jinping: towards ‘Peaceful Rise 2.0’?. *Global Change, Peace & Security: formerly Pacifica Review: Peace, Security & Global Change*, 27(1), 5-19.

<sup>164</sup> Erickson, A. S. & Liff, A. P. (2014, October 9). Not-So-Empty Talk The Danger of China’s “New Type of Great-Power Relations” Slogan, *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved at: <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-10-09/not-so-empty-talk>>

<sup>165</sup> Chen, D. (2014, November 8). Defining a ‘New Type of Major Power Relations’”, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2014/11/defining-a-new-type-of-major-power-relations/>>

during a speech at the foreign affairs conference of the CCP, on October 24, 2013. The new doctrine, called “Striving for Achievement” (SFA),<sup>166</sup> can be seen as the natural continuation of KLP, as the latter was only aimed at nurturing economic development, while the former has a more comprehensive goal: reestablishing Chinese preeminence in the region and letting other countries benefit from the PRC’s growth. The independent variable in SFA has been identified in “national rejuvenation”, which is an essential component in the new top national goal envisioned by Xi: the Chinese Dream.<sup>167</sup> As in many cases concerning Chinese politics, it is hard to give a clear reading concerning the exact meaning of this phrase. What is certain is that Chinese Dream postulates the advancement of China on the front stage of the international community. This change presupposes a new level of self-perception and self-confidence. Peaceful Rise was necessary because the PRC wanted to avoid confrontation, so focused on the economy. SFA, on the other hand, prioritizes political dignity over economic interests. According to Yan Xuetong, this change is once again dictated by the reaction of the international community to the Chinese Rise.<sup>168</sup> In a realistic model, a rising power is perceived as a threat by the constituted order, the faster the rise the bigger the threat. A strategy that avoids international responsibility, as the one opted by the KLP-driven China after 2008, gives the image of a selfish and even more threatening state. According to moral realism, only security cooperation can dissipate neighboring states’ fears, so, in order to present itself as a possible credible strategic partner, the PRC has undertaken several assertive actions in the area.

Given the relative novelty of SFA, it is probably still too early to draw any conclusions from its implementation; nonetheless, it is certainly possible to highlight the challenges that the new doctrine is facing. For a start, the CCP’s leadership will need to find a way to balance the two drivers of Chinese foreign policy, that is to say, maintaining a stable environment while at the same time not sacrificing core national interest on the path towards peaceful development. This is particularly problematic concerning territorial disputes: China imposed on them the core interest label, but by doing so it has hardened its position, causing frictions with its neighboring states. Keeping the focus of the analysis on the external regional environment, the situation

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<sup>166</sup> Xuetong, Y. (2014). From keeping a low profile to striving for achievement. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 7(2), 153-184.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid p.164

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

faced by Xi is in many ways much more complicated than the one faced by his predecessor. As already said, China's rise has not gone under noticed, so the established regional powers are actively responding. In this sense, the main challenge to the PRC is posed by the so-called US pivot: many Chinese analysts even think that as a consequence of the rebalancing strategy, the regional countries might try to draw the US attention by taking a more assertive stance towards the PRC.<sup>169</sup> Considered under this perspective, the recent Japanese security reforms could probably be a confirmation of this presumed encirclement. Another problem, the one that may be the most difficult to overcome, might be PRC's own lack of power in carrying out its new foreign policy. It has been noted that the only effective tool at China's disposal in foreign policy might be the economic one. As of today China lacks the soft power and the strategic capabilities to obtain strategic credibility, which is considered essential to achieve national rejuvenation.<sup>170</sup> As seen concerning the PRC's military rise, there have been great improvements on this latter field. It should come with no surprise then, that all the major efforts undertaken by the PRC on the international stage in the last years, with the exception of the island-buildings in the SCS, involve massive economic and trade agreements, such as the creation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Route Economic Belt and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The first one, announced in May 2014 by Xinhua News Agency, consists in the creation of a land and a maritime route that will eventually connect Europe, Asia and Africa.<sup>171</sup> The land route will start in central China, in Xi'an, pass through Iran and Syria and arrive in Europe from Turkey, it would then continue through the Balkans from Greece, before arriving in Germany and finally ending its course in Venice, Italy.<sup>172</sup> The maritime route will start in Fujian province, then it will go through various ports in Southeast China before passing through the Malacca Strait, heading to India. From there, it will arrive in Kenya, namely its capital, Nairobi, and then through the Red Sea to Athens before ending in Venice, where it will meet its land

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<sup>169</sup> Swaine, M. D. (2011). China's Assertive Behavior: Part One: On 'Core Interests', *China Leadership Monitor*, 34(22), 1-25.

<sup>170</sup> Xuetong, Y. (2014). From keeping a low profile to striving for achievement. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 7(2), 153-184.

<sup>171</sup> Tiezzi, S. (2015, March 30). Where Is China's Silk Road Actually Going?, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/where-is-chinas-silk-road-actually-going/>>

<sup>172</sup> Tiezzi, S. (2014, May 9). China's 'New Silk Road' Vision Revealed, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/chinas-new-silk-road-vision-revealed/>>

counterpart.<sup>173</sup> The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has been announced in 2014, aiming to fund the aforementioned projects.<sup>174</sup> Both these projects are quite ambitious: the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route Economic Belt will prove to be an extremely expensive plan, spanning in three continents and connecting them not only through commerce but also politically: for a project of this kind the existence of Free Trade Agreements and financial integration between the states is absolutely necessary.<sup>175</sup>

The strategy of the PRC in undertaking these massive projects seems clear: on one hand the creation of the Maritime Belt and Silk Road improves the already considerable weight of the PRC as a worldwide economic partner, able to fund infrastructure development not only in Asia, but also in other regions such as Kenya and Eastern Europe. The AIIB, on the other hand, projects China outside Asia: the creation of such a financial institution has been seen as an attempt to give an alternative to the already existing (and US-led) world financial institutions. This might be just a speculation, since the AIIB is a regional institution, not able to operate on a global scale. However, the fact that China has embarked on such an ambitious project, and especially that some of the most important US allies in Europe decided to join it,<sup>176</sup> is an important signal in showing how the PRC has become more conscious of its international role and how it is starting to shape its foreign policy according to it. If China were to solve these issues, SFA might be the right path to achieve the regional, and perhaps global, status it has longed for. What is certain is that, as developments in Japan in the last years showed, the established powers will resist vigorously this rise.

In this analysis of the Chinese foreign policy doctrine, there has been one actor inside the PRC whose actions have not been taken into consideration: the People's Liberation Army.

Assessing the actual weight held by the army in the Chinese foreign policy decision making process is no easy task, especially taking into account the opacity of the whole Chinese political system. Nevertheless, with the information available it is

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Tiezzi, S. (2015, March 30). Where Is China's Silk Road Actually Going?, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/where-is-chinas-silk-road-actually-going/>>

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Kai J. (2015, March 20). The AIIB: China's just getting started, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/the-aiib-chinas-just-getting-started/>>

possible to understand, at least at a general level, how the PLA is able to influence the decision-making body and to what extent this element affects the PRC's foreign policy doctrine.

It is interesting to understand the depth of the PLA influence because of the impact that this process might have on Sino-Japanese relations, especially concerning the military tensions in the area and the territorial disputes in the ECS. Just taking into consideration the origins of the PLA, it could be possible to start formulating a few assumptions concerning the role and the influence of the army in the greater political context. It is common knowledge that the PRC has been the result of a revolutionary process, during which the PLA was formed as a revolutionary guerrilla army. Thus, it could be easy to think that, given the role played in bringing the CCP to power, the PLA might retain a certain degree of influence over the civilian leadership. It does not, or to be more specific, not anymore. The influence of the PLA has been reducing significantly over the last few years; at the same time, it is possible to find other factors that have been shaping the identity of the PLA in a more compact interest group. This last point is particularly significant: it has not to be forgotten that, despite the attention dedicated in this work, the PLA remains only one interest group among many others that are constantly attempting to influence the outcome of the decision making process inside the PRC.

It is possible to identify two elements that have contributed to the reduction of the PLA's influence. One has been inevitable: the PLA senior officers could not maintain the informal access to the CCP leadership acquired through the shared experiences of the revolution, simply because, as time went by, both PRC and PLA senior figures started to retire and eventually pass away.<sup>177</sup> At the times of the so-called first and second leadership generations, to which both Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping belonged, the divisions between civil and military leadership was more blurred, in part due to the aforementioned role played by the political leaders in the war, but also because of the international security environment. The threats posed by the US alone at first, and then by the Soviet Union after the deterioration of the Sino-Soviet relations, often required a relevant role of the military in the decision making process. The second element, which in some ways is complementary to the first, is the division caused by the reforms carried out by Deng Xiaoping during the 1980s. With

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<sup>177</sup> Saunders, P. & Scobell, A. (2015). *PLA Influence on China's National Security Policymaking*. Stanford University Press. p.60

these reforms, Deng wanted to improve the expertise and professionalize the CCP and the PLA, by setting new sets of rules and prerequisites.<sup>178</sup> The new focus on professionalization caused a shift in the two blocks, ending the degree of permeability experienced in the immediate post-revolutionary period: the CCP would seek educated bureaucrats with technical and managerial backgrounds, and the PLA would be a more professional military force. The reforms also included policy concerning term limits and retirement norms in both fields in order to facilitate a bottom-up leadership turnover in due time. The process triggered in the PLA with these reforms can be theoretically described using Samuel Huntington's classic "*The soldier and the state*". According to Huntington, there are two kinds of possible control of the state over the military: an objective civilian control and a subjective one. The latter is achieved "civilizing the military", until there is no solution of continuity between the state and the military, which is also an active element of the political system. The former can be attained with a separation of the military from the state, with different responsibilities and expertise. In this situation the state needs to have control mechanisms able to ensure a response of the military to civilian orders.<sup>179</sup> Thus, the PRC managed to shift from subjective to objective civilian control, which resulted in narrowing the influence of the PLA in the decision making process, but additionally might have in some ways improved the PLA's autonomy, as it could be less easy for a completely civilian leadership to meddle with the military decision-making process. Since then, it has been possible to find in the PLA many of the distinguishing features typical of an interest group. These characteristics are different, but can all ultimately be considered outcomes of the reforms of the 1980s. They are: professionalization, a growing coherence of corporate interests, an increase of the specified scientific feature of the mission, a monopoly of functional expertise and information in the national security system and enhanced capacity to articulate and defend institutional goals and equities to shape public debate and influence policy.<sup>180</sup>

In addition to these features, there have been four trends that contributed to reshape civil-military relation within the PRC.<sup>181</sup> The first one is the gradual erosion of belief

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Huntington, S. P. (1981). *The soldier and the state: The theory and politics of civil-military relations*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>180</sup> Saunders, P. & Scobell, A. (2015). *PLA Influence on China's National Security Policymaking*. Stanford University Press. p.60

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p.3-5

in Marxist ideology by the elite. The second is the growing professionalism of the PLA; the third is the consequent military and civil elites' growing separation. Finally there is a more practical trend, which is the reduction of PLA's political representation in the CCP's bodies with decision-making tasks. All of these trends can be traced back to the reforms envisioned by Deng during the 1980s, but are also symptoms of more ample changes within Chinese society. In this sense the decline of Marxism is a glaring example. Ever since the institution of socialist regime in 1949, Chinese society, along with the whole world, changed dramatically: to the delight of many in western countries, Marxism failed in Russia and the fact that China has been able to become once again a regional power only after adopting part of capitalistic models seemed a further proof of this failure. Hence, even if the ruling party still proudly refers to itself as Communist, within the PRC, Marxist theories are not seen as they used to be half a century ago. This might seem a mere theoretical consequence of the economic reforms, but it is not: originally Marxism has been a key component of the set of values during the revolution, which were transmitted to the PLA and contributed enormously to shape its identity and to strengthen the subjective control exercised by the party on it. With the weakening of Marxism the reduction of control had to be fought, so the CCP replaced Marxism with nationalism; this change may cause a divide between civilians and military, since using nationalism as the sole criterion for judging the government may be hazardous: unlike Marxism, nationalism does not imply uncritical acceptance. Concerning professionalism and the division of the elites, in addition to what has already been said, it has to be noted that the detachment of the PLA from the political ruling elite and the emphasis put on military education has contributed to the creation of corporate identity within the PLA, which might be the basis for independent thinking over foreign policy issues, especially whenever contingencies and military measures are concerned. As for the reduction of representation, it has been noted that this seems to be "part of a deliberate effort engineered by Deng Xiaoping [...] to establish an effective collective leadership".<sup>182</sup> It can be seen how, after the 1980s reforms, the system now considers a whole set of checks and balances in order to avoid an excessive centralization of power, especially in the hands of the party secretary general. As a result of this new structure, the PLA has not been represented in the

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid. p.58

Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) since 1997, when late Admiral Liu Hanqing, one of the most influential post-Mao era military figures, was part of the PBSC led by Jiang Zemin.<sup>183</sup> The exclusion of the army from the PSBC may also be intended to limit the PLA's influence on strictly non-military issues. Nowadays, the PLA's representation inside the PRC decision-making bodies is quite limited: in the CCP Central Committee 41 of 205 seats belong to the military, while in the Politburo, which has 25 seats, the PLA is represented by the two CMC vice-chairmen, Army General Fan Changlong and Air Force General Xu Qiliang.<sup>184</sup> Therefore, the loss of a vote inside the PBSC, which is the PRC top decision-making body, is without a doubt a loss for the PLA, which is now connected to the top leadership only through Xi Jinping, who also serves as CMC chairman. In light of this, it is important to consider the nature of the relation between the PLA and Xi Jinping, given his multiple role of CMC Chairman, Party Secretary and PBSC member. In comparison to his predecessors, Xi has surely stronger ties with the military: he has served in the PLA from 1979 to 1982, and his father, Xi Zhongxun, had been the founder of a red army base which proved of great importance during the end of the Long March in 1935.<sup>185</sup> While three years is not a long enough period to form an effective network, the family related military connections could have been of some use for Xi, but the key in understanding his relationship with the PLA lies elsewhere. For a star, since his appointment to chairman, Xi could consolidate his power within the CMC with no major resistance: unlike his predecessor, Hu Jintao chose to quietly step down and not to remain a cumbersome presence. Coincidentally eight of twelve members of the Commission retired, which allowed Xi to choose the substitutes. Since the beginning of Xi's presidency, many actions appeared to be appreciated by the military, while for others the reactions has not been positive. Initially Xi seemed to be currying the favor with the PLA: the military budget kept growing at a double-digit rate and various senior officers were promoted. Xi also made various inspections on military facilities and linked its Chinese rejuvenation rhetoric to the "dream of a strong military";<sup>186</sup> his harder stance on maritime dispute was also met with favor. On the other hand, measures like the anti-corruption campaign were not embraced with the same enthusiasm. As his predecessors, Xi initially curried favor with the military, but he is

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid. p.5

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid. p.134

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. p.128-129

ultimately able to impose his will if required; a clear example has been the expulsion from the party of General Xu Caihou, a former CMC member and vice-chairman, and his prosecution for accepting a bribe. Proceeding with the anti-corruption campaign can also be aimed at strengthening Xi's authority over the PLA in order to ultimately restructure it. The project, which will promote joint command and control and, in the end will also strengthen the control of the party over the PLA, has been formally announced at the end of 2015, so it is probable that Xi's authority has been deemed strong enough to carry on the reforms.<sup>187</sup>

The ways at the PLA's disposal in order to advance its own preferences and agenda are therefore rather limited. Top political power has been out of reach, since the generational replacement brought to power leaders who did not participate in the revolution, and therefore had not the possibility to create personal connections within the PLA. A symbol of this change is in 1997 the retirement of Liu Hauqing, who was first appointed as one of the CMC vice-chairman by Deng to "aid" Jiang Zemin in military matters.

Nowadays the PLA might extend some influence over the Politburo, but even if the CMC Vice-chairmen who sit there would be able to succeed despite their number, almost every major decision is today taken within the PBSC, where the PLA can make proposals or express its opinion only through Xi himself. The importance of the PLA resides in its military nature, but if the sole representation process were to be considered, the PLA would then be no different from any other interest group present in the Politburo or in the Leading Small Groups (LGSs), resorting to lobby and personal connections to advance its interest. As said before, part of this is due to the constant professionalization of the PLA, but this process might also have positive outcomes. While the PSBC has decisive authority over almost all crucial aspects of Chinese foreign policy, it is not possible for the Party to control and coordinate every aspect of the military activities. This is of great importance especially as far as specific military tests and operations outside China's borders are concerned; these, particularly the latter, might have a role in jeopardizing top level crisis management. Thus, it is possible that the Central National Security Commission (CNSC or NSC) was created in 2013 in order to address these problems.

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<sup>187</sup> Tiezzi, S. (2015, December 1). China's Plan for a New, Improved Military. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/chinas-plan-for-a-new-improved-military/>>

To conclude, the little evidence obtainable on this topic tell that the PLA is able to extend limited influence over foreign policy issues and national security, but it has never carried out outspoken actions against the Party nor evidence suggest that there has been a case where the party adjusted its behavior to the military, rather the other way around.

### 1.5 The security reforms and constitutional debate in Japan

“Japan is back”. A few months after his elections, Abe Shinzō’s choose to end a speech in Washington, D.C on February 22, 2013<sup>188</sup> with these words, showing the ambition that characterized his second mandate as prime minister. Abe’s election came at a particular moment for Japan, where internal politics was characterized by uncertainty: since Abe’s resignation ended prematurely his first mandate in 2007, Japan has had seven other prime ministers, each of which lasted in office approximately one year. Three of these prime ministers, Hatoyama Yukio, Kan Naoto and Noda Yoshihiko were part of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which managed to sweep the LDP from power after 13 years. The state had been affected by chronic low growth as a consequence of the fiscal and economic crisis produced by the collapse of a speculative bubble in 1989 and had to face the economic problems imposed by a rapidly aging population. The archipelago also experienced one of his direst moments with the earthquake and tsunami that took place in the Tōhoku region on March 11, 2011; to that has to be added the consequent nuclear accident involving the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

In addition to the internal situation, there are elements coming from the international environment that have to be taken into consideration. China is the elephant in the room: the economic and military rise of the PRC, as well as the territorial issues that as said before are connected to it, have been a major source of anxiety for Japan. The fear of losing the status of number one country in East Asia, but more importantly the possibility of being disregarded by the United States in favor of a new privileged interlocutor in Asia, biased both internal and external politics. Oversimplifying, it could be said that the balance of power and the international structure in Asia was on

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<sup>188</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2013, February 22). *"Japan is Back", Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe at the Center for Strategic and International Studies*. Retrieved at: <[http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us\\_20130222en.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us_20130222en.html)>

the edge of a change, and the Japanese people were afraid to lose the important role their state has had in post WWII Asia. In that same speech, Abe Shinzō affirmed that he would not to let Japan become a tier two nation, and it might be argued that all his political deeds since his elections were drawn towards that goal.

It is too early to affirm whether or not the policies proposed and passed in the last three years succeeded, but it is certainly possible to analyze the trajectory they took, as well as the political and ideological consequences and reasons involved. It could be argued that, compared to the aforesaid problems that have been affecting Japan, enthusiastic statements like the ones present in the 2013 speech might seem somewhat populist and trivial; this is true, as it will shown in the next chapter it is possible to trace a certain extent of populism in Abe's political actions. Nevertheless, there is also another implication: the will to preserve the position and influence had for various decades, and doing so by adapting the state to both the internal and external arising issues. It has also to be remembered that the problems confronted by Abe's government are the result of decades-long processes, and often involve other international actors besides Japan.

This work will not consider the totality of the policies adopted since the beginning of Abe's second mandate, it will rather focus on the aspects connected to the aim of this thesis: the security and military aspects of the Sino-Japanese relationship.

The Japanese government has undertaken a twofold strategy in order to respond to China's rise: internally, it aims to strengthen the economy and externally it is trying to improve Japan's position in the regional environment, by forging new alliances or strengthening the old ones, in particular the one with the US. There are two fields that transversally touch both aspects of this strategy: national security and national economy. In the course of the paragraph the former will be obviously privileged, but it is important to understand how they are connected to each other, and how the government is trying to reform them.

As briefly outlined in the introductory chapter, reinvigorating the economy has been one of the first policies planned by Abe after his election. Given the fluctuating results recorded, it is still too early to say if Abenomics has been a success. The monetary easing and the fiscal stimulus, the first two "arrows" of Abenomics as Abe himself called them, succeeded in partially revitalizing the economy, but these preliminary successes could turn into futile ones if the government were not able to finally address Japan's most needed reforms: the structural ones. Abe himself

recognized this<sup>189</sup> and less than a month later even the IMF urged to put reforms on a faster track<sup>190</sup>

The institute's warnings were under noticed by public opinion, probably because of the more controversial security reforms that has been discussed in the 2015 summer, but if the structural reforms were not to be passed, the consequences might be unfortunate for Japan. The slow wage growth and the depressed demand, linked to external factors like the current low oil prices which lower goods prices, might cause deflation, frustrating the attempt to raise inflation to 2%, which has been the driving motive behind the monetary easing. Weak domestic demand could also slow growth. Later last year, in September, Abe announced a new phase of Abenomics, aiming to raise GDP of 20% by 2020;<sup>191</sup> the reactions were conflicting, some saw this new announcement as a confirmation of the problems encountered by the "original" Abenomics, while others intended it as the natural continuation of economic reform. As of the beginning of 2016, the economy showed signs of contraction but eventually avoided stagnation,<sup>192</sup> still not being able, however, to totally reverse deflation.<sup>193</sup>

Thus, the path towards the objectives set at the beginning of the ambitious reform process seems quite an upward one. Nevertheless, 2016 might turn out to be an important year for the Abe administration, given a few promising signs. One is certainly the increased tax revenue recorded in 2015, which will allow to cover two thirds of FY 2016's spending.<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, the structural reforms were met with favor, showing that, even if there is still much work to be done, some policies

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<sup>189</sup> Abe, S. (2014, June 29). My 'third arrow' will fell Japan's economic demons, *Financial Times*.

Retrieved at:

<<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/beb5c8-fb8c-11e3-9a03-00144feab7de.html#axzz3wIMVYyQJ>>

<sup>190</sup> Donnan, S. & Inagaki, K. (2015, July 23). IMF warns Japan to step up reforms, *Financial Times*.

Retrieved at:

<<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/7b5331da-3130-11e5-91ac-a5e17d9b4cff.html#axzz3wIMVYyQJ>>

<sup>191</sup> Fensom, A. (2015, September 30). Abenomics 2.0: A Reform Reboot For Japan?, *The Diplomat*.

Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/abenomics-2-0-a-reform-reboot-for-japan/>>

<sup>192</sup> Obe, M. (2015, December 8). Japan Avoids Second Recession of Abenomics Era. *The Wall Street Journal*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/japan-chalks-up-modest-growth-to-avoid-recession-1449535189>>

<sup>193</sup> Harding, R. (2016, January 4). Japan to exit deflation, predicts Abe. *Financial Times*.

Retrieved at:

<<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d79a1d06-b2a8-11e5-8358-9a82b43f6b2f.html#axzz3wIMVYyQJ>>

<sup>194</sup> Obe, M. (2015, December 23). Japan Budget Picture Improves Due to Increased Tax Revenue. *The Wall Street Journal*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/japan-budget-picture-improves-due-to-increased-tax-revenue-1450923843>>

actually had an important impact on the interest groups present in Japanese society, the agricultural sector and corporate governance above all.<sup>195</sup>

At this point it could be argued that the series of economic problems affecting Japan, and the consequent series of reforms intended to tackle them, have little if no relation to the security measures that Japan is implementing. On the contrary, they do.<sup>196</sup>

Japan strategic weight and the consequent security measures are connected to the economic power improvement in two ways. A stronger economy translates in a more advanced military sector, able to both foster innovation and acquire foreign military technology. Additionally, on the diplomatic side, trade agreements and economic helps often translate in effective bargaining capital in the international arena.

In this sense, Japan's most pressing problems are economic stagnation, its high debt to GDP ratio and its ageing population. Abenomics is intended to target all of them. Economic stagnation has seriously hampered growth for the last 20 years and, as explained before, is the main target of Abe's reforms. Fiscal reform is intended to stabilize the debt by 2020, a goal that is to be achieved through economic growth and increased tax revenue.<sup>197</sup> Lastly, the demographic decline problem can only be addressed with a long-term policy response: this problem derives from Japan's low birth rate in addition to its ongoing aging population; if the current trend continues, by 2030 the Japanese population will be composed by a 30% people aged 65 or more, which will be 40% by 2050. This is a huge problem for the overall Japanese economy, as a shrinking working-age population places a double constrain of the state: on the one hand as the working population reduces, so does the government's tax base, a process which also raises the cost of labor. On the other hand, as the elderly population increases, so do the costs imposed on the social welfare, which has to provide government pensions and public healthcare. In this regard, demographic trends have been compared to a guillotine when related to the archipelago strategic

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<sup>195</sup> Harding, R. & Lewis, L. (2015, September 9). The third arrow of Abenomics: a scorecard. *Financial Times*.

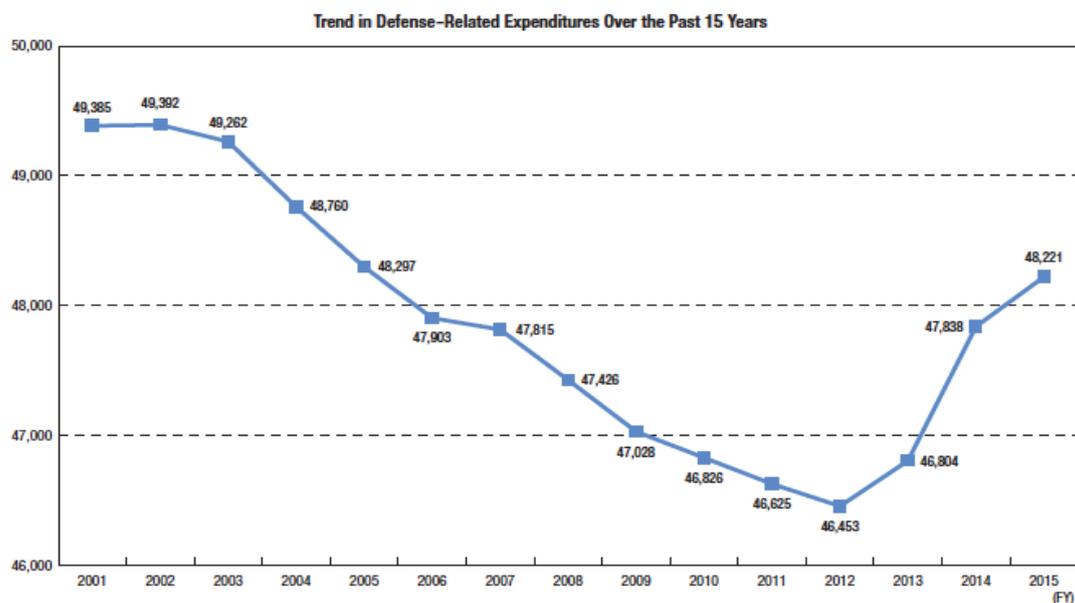
Retrieved at: <<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/ee40a73c-521d-11e5-8642-453585f2cfd.html#axzz3wIMVYyQJ>>

<sup>196</sup> Brendan, T. (2011). Asia's century and the problem of Japan's centrality, *International Affairs*, 87(4), 871–885.

<sup>197</sup> Ito, T. (2015, June 17). Japan Government Takes On Its Deficit-Ridden Finances, *The Wall Street Journal*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/japan-government-takes-on-its-deficit-ridden-finances-1434569402>>

choices.<sup>198</sup> It has happened in the past, when budget constrains hampered the implementation of defense and security plans.<sup>199</sup> As shown in the underlying figure,<sup>200</sup> the trend has been reversed after Abe took office.



Notwithstanding the fact that the increase of defense expenditures and Abenomics took place approximately in the same period, it is unlikely that the former is a consequence of the latter. When the expenditures increase took place, Abenomics was at a too early stage to be effective enough to allow that kind of budget implementation. It is however possible that the defense spending increase has been part of a more comprehensive plan, taking also into consideration that after this first measures, Abe moved to implement policies intended to reform the structure of Japanese labor market. One of the most important has been the so called “Womenomics”, a series of measures aiming to promote a more gender balanced working population, and at the same time get rid of many practices deeply rooted in Japanese labor market, as almost compulsory overtime, which proved to prevent a raise in birth rates.<sup>201</sup> Another important measure implemented in the last years has been the relaxation of the ban on arms exports. This new measure, which can be considered the real link between economy and security, has been mentioned for the

<sup>198</sup> Brendan, T. (2011). Asia’s century and the problem of Japan’s centrality, *International Affairs*, 87(4), 871–885. P.874

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ministry of Defense. (2015). *Defense of Japan 2015*. Appendix Reference 4.

Retrieved at: <[http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2015/DOJ2015\\_appendix\\_web.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2015/DOJ2015_appendix_web.pdf)>

<sup>201</sup> Yashiro, N. (2014, October 22). Why ‘womenomics’ is the way forward for Japan. *Eastasiaforum*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/10/22/why-womenomics-is-the-way-forward-for-japan/>>

first time in Japan's first National Security Strategy (NSS) published on December 17, 2013.<sup>202</sup> The reform consists in a revision of the Three Principles on Arms Exports established by the Diet in 1967. The principles did not allow any export of weapons towards countries of the now extinct communist block, to country under an embargo imposed by the UN Security Council and to any country involved, or even likely to be involved, in an international conflict.<sup>203</sup> The new guidelines, announced in April 2014, allow Japan to export weapons and to participate in joint arms development and production. All these new possibilities for Japan are implied not to go against Japan's defence ultimate goal: international peace. The fact that this term is quite vague and open to interpretation leaves Japan with ample leeway.<sup>204</sup> These new measures were met with cautious reactions by the Republic of Korea and China,<sup>205</sup> even if it could be observed that this new course of actions' reasons are more economic than military.

The main driver has been the fiscal situation of the Japanese defense industry. As outlined in Japan's National Defense Programs Guidelines, published on December 17, 2013, R&D is to be based on a medium to long-term perspective, mainly due to "the severe fiscal situation".<sup>206</sup> Hence, in order to foster a competitive indigenous technological base, Japan modified the policy concerning arms export. Furthermore, as a mean to optimize policy and decision making process, the government created the Acquisition, Technology and Logistic Agency (ATLA) on October, 1, 2015.<sup>207</sup> This new agency has been established within the Ministry of Defense (MoD), with a limited personnel, 1,800 employees, but quite an important budget: ¥2 trillion,

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<sup>202</sup> Prime Minister's Office (2013, December 17). *National Security Strategy*.

Retrieved at:

<[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/documents/2013/\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf)>

<sup>203</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (n.d.) *Japan's Policies on the Control of Arms Exports*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/policy/>>

<sup>204</sup> Tiezzi S. (2014, April 4). Japan Loosens Restrictions on Arms Exports As China Looks On. *The Diplomat*.

Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/japan-loosens-restrictions-on-arms-exports-as-china-looks-on/>>

<sup>205</sup> Fackler, M. (2014, April 1). Japan Ends Decades-Long Ban on Export of Weapons. *The New York Times*.

Retrieved at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/02/world/asia/japan-ends-half-century-ban-on-weapons-exports.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/02/world/asia/japan-ends-half-century-ban-on-weapons-exports.html?_r=0)>

<sup>206</sup> Ministry of Defense. (2013, December 17). *National Defense Program Guidelines*. p.28

Retrieved at: <[http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217\\_e2.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf)>

<sup>207</sup> The Japan Times. (2015, October 1). *Defense Ministry launches new equipment management agency*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/01/national/politics-diplomacy/defense-ministry-launches-new-equipment-management-agency/#.Vo1gC5PhCRs>>

roughly \$16.3 billion, which amounts to a third of the entire MoD's total budget.<sup>208</sup> ATLA has to absolve five core missions: improve the efficiency the MoD's acquisition programs, strengthen international cooperation in the defense equipment field, carry out cost effective R&D, enhance the Japanese military industrial base, seek better cost-saving measures.<sup>209</sup> There are also two more pressing issues that need to be addressed by ATLA. First, Japan lacks the know-how necessary for transferring its own defense technology to any possible future country, by virtue of the fact that the archipelago has been, up until now, a technology receiver. Second, guidelines concerning which technologies retain the most strategic value and cannot be exported need to be established.<sup>210</sup> As seen so far, the Abe administration put a major effort in reinvigorating the economy by addressing long lasting conundrums present in the Japanese society and labor market, such as women employment and arms export. This last element presents many points of contact with the other well know part of Abe's political agenda, the security reforms. They share the same a common political basis: in the NSS the new rules concerning arms exports are linked to two concept, which will be of capital importance in understanding the path that led to Abe's security reforms: the "new security environment" and the "Proactive Contribution to Peace"<sup>211</sup>.

The reader should at this point be aware of the meaning of "new security environment" concept: this phrase is a testimony that the Japanese government has come to acknowledge that the regional balance of power, but also the very nature of the global security environment, have changed and therefore Japan needs to address the issue. This challenge has been widely recognized in the 2013 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), observing that nowadays, due to growing multi-polarization, an issue in a single country may end up destabilizing the whole region. It is also recognized the existence of so-called "grey zone" situations: situations which are neither totally peaceful nor contingencies over "territorial, sovereignty and maritime economic interests". Other possible elements of destabilization are

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<sup>208</sup> Pryor, C. (2015, November 24). Japan's New Approach to Defense Technology. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/japans-new-approach-to-defense-technology/>>

<sup>209</sup> Tatsumi, Y. (2015, October 2). Japan Wants to Streamline Its Defense Industry. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/japan-wants-to-streamline-its-defense-industry/>>

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Prime Minister's office (2013, December 17). *National Security Strategy*. p.19

Retrieved at:

<[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/documents/2013/\\_\\_\\_icsFiles/afiedfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/___icsFiles/afiedfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf)>

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) proliferation, terrorism and piracy.<sup>212</sup> In this environment it is possible to identify two elements that might be considered a threat by Japan: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and China.

The provocative behavior of the highly militarized North Korea is a major source of concern: its nuclear program, coupled with the development of ballistic missiles is considered by Japan a "serious and imminent threat". Japan's perception of China is, as said before, biased by uncertainty. According to Japan, the PRC should be a more responsible international player, but actions such as the intrusion in Japan's airspace and territorial waters, as well as the creation of the ECS ADIZ, do little to ease Japan's concerns. The same can be said for China's growing defense spending and lack of transparency.<sup>213</sup>

The "Proactive Contribution to Peace" is a response to the new challenges brought by the new environment. This term has been used various times by Abe Shinzō on official speeches, as in the addresses to the UN General Assembly<sup>214</sup> and to the joint meeting of the US Congress<sup>215</sup>. It made its appearance of the 2013 NSS, where it is described as the active role played by Japan in order to assure a peaceful and stable international community. Japan's Proactive Contribution to Peace is based on five objectives: strengthening diplomacy at the UN, strengthening the Rule of Law, leading international efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation, promoting international cooperation, promoting international cooperation against terrorism and strengthening cooperation based on universal values to resolve global issues.<sup>216</sup> In order to strengthen diplomacy at the UN, Japan will put effort into partaking in various UN-led actions, such as Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) or humanitarian relief. Strengthening the Rule of Law has been emphasized particularly on three fields: cyberspace, outer space and on the seas. As highlighted during the speech given by Abe at the World Economic Forum 2014 in Davos, he considers the

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<sup>212</sup> Ministry of Defense. (2013, December 17). *National Defense Program Guidelines*. p.1  
Retrieved at: <[http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217\\_e2.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf)>

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Abe, S. (2015, September 29). *Address by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe at the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations*.

Retrieved at: <[http://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/unp\\_a/page4e\\_000321.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/unp_a/page4e_000321.html)>

<sup>215</sup> Abe, S. (2015, April 29). *"Toward an Alliance of Hope" - Address to a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe*.

Retrieved at: <[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97\\_abe/statement/201504/uscongress.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201504/uscongress.html)>

<sup>216</sup> Prime Minister's office (2013, December 17). *National Security Strategy*.

Retrieved from:

<[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/documents/2013/\\_icsFiles/afiedfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afiedfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf)>

maintenance of the Rule of Law essential for the free movement of goods and people, which he deems “the foundation for prosperity”<sup>217</sup>. Given Japan’s sad record of being the only country which ever suffered an atomic bombings, disarmament and non-proliferation are considered highly important goals. Japan will spend every effort in countering the threat posed by the North Korean nuclear program, implementing resolutions and control measure on dual-use technology. International cooperation involves the dispatch of SDF personnel on international peace cooperation assignments and participation to PKO. International cooperation against terrorism is to be undertaken via intelligence cooperation and data sharing, as well as reinforcing the existing legal framework. Cooperation based on universal values refers to the resolution of development and international issues of various nature that may jeopardize international stability; a few examples are food related issue, poverty and climate change.

Thus, the new environment and the responses envisioned by the Japanese government necessitated various reforms to be implemented. This proved to be no easy task: the military and security field is a quite complex aspect of the Japanese internal political discourse, whose roots are deeply connected with fundamental aspects of post-war Japan, such as pacifism and the alliance with the United States. However, despite these problems, the reforms in the field of national security are the ones for which Abe will be probably remembered, as they were advocated by parts of the Liberal Democratic Party for many years. It has been an historical change, since under the new legal framework, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) is authorized to carry out collective self-defense (CSD), that is to engage enemies in order to protect not only themselves, but also allied troops; this carries an important meaning for the status of Japan in the regional environment. The security reforms carried out in Japan in the last years, of which CSD has been just the most visible part, need to be contextualized in a more comprehensive framework. The one element around which the whole reform process revolved has been the Japanese constitution, or rather its 9<sup>th</sup> article. When taking into consideration this particular article, it is not possible to ignore the fierce political debate it caused since the immediate post-war period, and how the changes in Japanese foreign policy affected this debate.

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<sup>217</sup> Abe, S. (2014, January 22). *A New Vision from a New Japan, World Economic Forum 2014 Annual Meeting, Speech by Prime Minister Abe*. Retrieved from: <[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/statement/201401/22speech\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201401/22speech_e.html)>

The postwar Japanese Constitution was promulgated on November 3, 1946 and then enacted on May 3, 1947. This constitutional chart was in fact drafted in English by the personnel of the American General Headquarters (GHQ) in Tokyo, and as noted by John Dower, “although it bore the unmistakable imprint of the conqueror and shocked Japan’s conservatives elites [...] it tapped into popular aspirations for peace and democracy in quite remarkable ways”.<sup>218</sup> The decision to impose a constitution came from the highest authority present in Japan during the occupation: the Supreme Command of Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur. At the beginning of February 1946, during the writing process, he also provided a memo with the three essential principles that the new constitution should have contained. This “indication” has been seen as the “abandonment of the very concept of constitutional revision”.<sup>219</sup> In the second point present in the memo, it is possible to find the first trace of Japan’s renunciation to war as a sovereign right; it is also stated that “no Japanese Army, Navy or Air Force will be ever authorized”<sup>220</sup>. The memo could be considered the core of the draft, which has been presented to the Japanese government on February 13,<sup>221</sup> and after a troubled path, has been formally submitted to the Diet, by the emperor himself on June 21.<sup>222</sup> The renunciation to war was present both in the preamble and in article 9, and, interestingly, even in its first version has been source of uncertainty and confusion. The original proposer, prime minister Shidehara Kijūrō considered it as a declaration of non-violence, despite the fact that the first wording of the article was considered dangerous for the stability of the Japanese state, as it ambiguously left little room for self-defense. Still, some as Shidehara’s successor, former Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshida Shigeru, who would then become a fundamental figure of post-war Japan, were convinced that the article prohibited not only belligerency, but also self-defense, as in the past too often a war had been justified by defense purposes. During the deliberation, the article’s wording was partially modified, following the proposal of the chairman of the subcommittee on constitutional revision, Ashida Hitoshi, and read as follows:

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<sup>218</sup> Dower, J. W. (2000). *Embracing defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II*. W.W. Norton & Company. p.347

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* p.370

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* p.361

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.* p.371

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* p.387

*“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.*

*In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”*<sup>223</sup>

The first paragraph is essentially taken from the Kellogg-Briand Pact, signed in Paris in 1928, where the signatory states agreed to abandon war as tool “for the solution of international controversies”<sup>224</sup>, while the second paragraph, sometimes called the Ashida amendment,<sup>225</sup> is the product of the process described before. Despite the rewording, the ambiguity of the second part of the article appeared rather blatantly, producing a rift in the Japanese government that today still lingers in the whole Japanese internal political discourse. Since 1947, the Ashida amendment has been used to argue that Japan is not compelled to renounce to rearm *tout court*, but it can do so for self-defense purposes. Some, as Ashida himself and Minister of State Kanamori Tokujiro, were more inclined to favor this interpretation, while Prime Minister Yoshida, was leaning towards a total renounce of every possible war potential.

Yet, today Japan has what can certainly be identified as a “war potential”: the Self Defense Forces, formed in 1954 during Yoshida’s cabinet and preceded by the National Police Reserve, established in 1950 in accord with the US, in order to substitute the occupation troops diverted to fight in Korea. To understand how in 68 years Japan went from setting strong boundaries in order to renounce to any mean to wage war to having full-fledged military, it has to be taken into consideration not only the process that led to various reinterpretations of article 9, but also the internal and external drivers that affected the Japanese political discourse over the years.

From this longer perspective, as it will hopefully clear at the end of the paragraph, and without detracting anything from Abe’s achievement, the achievement of CSD

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<sup>223</sup> English translation of the Japanese Constitution retrieved at:

<[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html)>

<sup>224</sup> Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928).

Retrieved at: <[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/kbpact.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kbpact.asp)>

<sup>225</sup> Dower, J. W. (2000). *Embracing defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II*. W.W. Norton & Company. p 396

can almost be considered a foreseeable outcome. It could be said that the importance of the debate revolving around that particular article of the constitution is not, and has not been, just based on a sometimes-populist political goal, such as some form of national prestige. Article 9 may have been an imposition by an occupying foreign power, but in the years it has grown to be a fundamental part of how the Japanese people perceive themselves. As noted by John Dower, for a defeated and shattered population, well aware of the whole world's scorn towards them, embracing a constitution characterized by the innovative renunciation to war was a way to retain a "positive sense of uniqueness in defeat".<sup>226</sup> Hence, every different interpretation adopted over the years may be considered an indicator of change in the Japanese state's self-perception, with consequences for the security role of the archipelago in the regional and international structure. Additionally, in carrying out this analysis, there is one element that has not to be overlooked: the Security Treaty between the United States and Japan.<sup>227</sup> The treaty was signed in San Francisco on September 8, 1951 and is commonly considered the cornerstone of US security in the Asian Pacific region. It came into force on April 28 of the next year, sanctioning the end of the Allied Occupation. The security treaty could be considered "unequal".<sup>228</sup> It was designed in order to respond to three different concerns: elude a possible future remilitarization, ensure a stable future with no need of future interventions, and avoid a separate peace with communist countries which could have harbored the possibility of them exploiting Japan's industrial resources. The signing of the San Francisco Treaty is considered a pivotal moment in assessing the fate of Japan after WWII, to the point that some consider it and not the Constitution, the defining element in assessing Japan's security role.<sup>229</sup> Prime Minister Yoshida found himself in a very precarious situation: it was rather clear that the United States did not trust Japan at the time, nonetheless the two countries were more close than ever, to the point that Japan could even become a proxy target in the future confrontation between the two superpowers already looming at the horizon, a threat from which Japan certainly

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<sup>226</sup> Dower, J. W. (2000). *Embracing defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II*. WW Norton & Company. p 398

<sup>227</sup> Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan. (1951, September 8). Retrieved at: <[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/japan001.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/japan001.asp)>

<sup>228</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p 39

<sup>229</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge. p.127

could not defend on its own. He, also knew that the United States needed to control Japan in order to oppose the Soviet influence in East Asia. Understandably, within the Japanese political arena not everyone reacted to the newly imposed constraints on Japan's policy in the same way. It is possible to define three groups: the left and the two soul of what shortly afterwards would have become the LDP, the so-called mainstream and anti-mainstream conservatives. The left became a legitimate political force for the first time after the end of the war; the group consisted in intellectuals, labor activist, socialist and more generally leftist politicians who would ultimately unite under the notion of a peaceful country as the supreme value, being adverse to the use of force as a tool in international relations; they would gather in the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), a significant political subject in the 1950s supporting article 9 in its most binding interpretation, and therefore opposing rearmament and the security treaty. During the Cold War, the socialist's opposition had a noteworthy role in uniting the conservatives, forming a divide that lasted until the end of two-block paradigm.

The anti-mainstream was a group of revisionist politicians animated by traditional nationalist view, supporting the vision of a united Japan, emphasizing sacrifice for national order, the imperial authority and other traditional Confucians value. They fiercely opposed pacifism, and so asked for a revision of Article 9. Concerning national security, among them it was common thought that Japan should able to autonomously defend itself. For these reasons, once the intentions of the US in favor or rearmament were made public, they supported a more symmetrical treaty with the same security commitment on both sides, in order to gradually push for remilitarization. In order to achieve this objective, the anti-mainstream formed an alliance with the industrials to constantly pressure the government, which was led by the so-called mainstream conservatives.

This group, led by Yoshida Shigeru, was constituted by liberal internationalists, largely coming from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). As the anti-mainstream they believed in the importance of the imperial house, and their work was aimed at enhancing Japan's importance in the international stage. However, they differed on the means to do so. The internationalist mainstream considered economic and technological might the base for national power, not military spending. In this sense the treaty was considered an opportunity to enter the immense US economic market, and gain access to its technology. The division is retraceable in many aspects

of national security. The revisionist opposed the constitution, since they considered it an American imposition; article 9 was the main target of their critics, as they often asked for its revision. The mainstream, on the contrary, considered it useful as it could be used to avoid excessive demands from the US, such as rearmament or military involvement. Another debated issue has been the use of defense production to facilitate economic restoration. As said before, the production, and therefore possession, of war potential was banned by the constitutional chart; however, once the occasion presented this particular has been overlooked. This has been the case during the Korean War, when the US changed its Asian Security policy and used the archipelago as its industrial and military production base in the region. To understand the impact of this decision on the Japanese economy, it is sufficient to say that, after the US allowed arms production in Japan in 1952, sales rose from ¥7 million to ¥ 15 billion in 1954.<sup>230</sup> The revisionist supported this process and wished for it to become a central element of Japanese technology production; they also found an ally in the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). On the other hand, the internationalist mainstream with the support of the Ministry of Finance (MOF), believed that national resources had to be used in more stable sectors. Eventually, the Diet passed an Arms Manufactory Law in 1953 sanctioning that arms manufactures would not benefit of special assistance from the government, imposing serious constraints on arms production. It is also worth signaling that the two sides had different supporters within the state structure: the revisionist sided with the former military officers, while the internationalist had the support of the bureaucrats. The fact that membership of the Security Council was exclusive for ministries, and that military officers could not have access to the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) clearly was in favor of the mainstream.

Having outlined the characteristic of the political environment in which he had to move, becomes then clear how the stability achieved by Yoshida Shigeru has not been an effortless accomplishment. With a display of brilliant political skill, Yoshida managed to handle the various constraints he was facing, and even managed to employ them as tools to reassure all parties concerned, until eventually impose his ideas on Japan's foreign policy. The biggest concerns of the external and internal opposition, the pacifist and the revisionist and the industrials, were respectively the

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<sup>230</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p.33

fear of being dragged in a future US conflict and the desire to reestablish the Japanese military. Yoshida managed to reassure the leftist opposition guaranteeing that article 9 would be safeguarded, as it also constituted an important tool in the hands of the government to hedge against US pressure to remilitarize. The right wing politicians were included in the ruling party, and in this case the mainstream has been able to contain any extremist drift, while the industrial lobby would be assuaged by the fact that the fund not spent for defense could be redirected towards other profitable investments, and that a peaceful and not militarized Japan would be a more attractive trading partner for foreign investors.<sup>231</sup>

As for the relation with the United States, Yoshida acknowledge the weakness of his position. He clearly understood that due to both the existence of the binding pacifist clause in the constitution and the strong bond with the US constituted by the security treaty, Japan had little room to maneuver in the international stage, but he also managed to take advantage of this. The United States had a preeminent influence over the archipelago, and proceeded to use it as an “unsinkable aircraft carrier”, but at the same time, it had to sustain the cost of defending Japan, lifting the fragile Japanese economy of the burden. Yoshida mercantilist strategy revolved around this brilliant intuition, exchanging control over security, while at the same time freeing up resources that could be then employed to enrich what the conservative mainstream considered the basis for national might: the state’s economic power. The alliance had a fundamental role in doing so, granting access to the US market. This “cheap ride” has been the basis of the Yoshida Doctrine, which has been the corner stone of Japanese foreign policy until the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, the wealth and security derived from these choices assured to the mainstream of the LDP to retain power, almost uninterruptedly, until the early 2000s.

Even if the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been characterized by what could be called the Yoshida Doctrine, the stance of the Japanese government over the state’s security has undergone various mutations. The interpretation of article 9 is within the jurisdiction of the Cabinet; it usually delegated the issue to the Cabinet Legislative Bureau (CLB), which is subjected to the authority of the Cabinet. The CLB holds a great authority within the Japanese executive. Reestablished in 1952 by Yoshida Shigeru, it is formally an advisory organ, but has over time acquired supervisory

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<sup>231</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p.41

power over other agencies and even ministries. The senior personnel of the Bureau is composed by legal specialists from various ministries, with a dominance of the Ministries of Finance and Justice. The CLB has a fundamental role in civil-military relations: it has to coordinate with various agencies in reviewing policies proposals and issuing governmental interpretation. It also had an essential role in ensuring control of the bureaucracy over the military. When in 1954 the JDA, now MoD, was created, Yoshida ensured that the CLB director in charge of writing the draft would include internal bureaus in the JDA, as well as civil supervision over the military; officials from various ministries would then routinely supervise the JDA's actions. The fact that the JDA at the time was not a proper ministry, but part of the Prime Minister Office, gave further assurances of a tight bureaucratic control.

Hence, in 1952, when the Yoshida Cabinet required an interpretation of the concept of "war potential" that would allow to retain a certain degree of military capabilities and to use them in case of direct attack, the CLB obliged. It was declared that, in order to determine what a war potential is, it had to be taken into consideration not only one country, but also the "temporal and spatial environment of the country in question".<sup>232</sup> It exactly was the government needed: a relative concept that could be bent towards the most desirable end according to necessity. When in May 1954 the lower House of Representatives passed the act that established the JDA and the SDF, on the former were placed some constraints, mostly thanks to the efforts of the JSP<sup>233</sup>, but there was no need to reform the constitution. This act did nothing but to reinforce the conviction in Japanese politicians that Japan renounce to war did not, and could not, imply a renounce to self-defense.<sup>234</sup> The Japanese stance on self-defense became increasingly loose with Yoshida's successors. Noteworthy is the case of Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke, probably the most notable member of the conservative anti-mainstream at the time, who was also the grandfather and undeniable, if controversial political model<sup>235</sup> of Abe Shinzō. In 1957 Kishi declared that nuclear weapons could be used in defence of Japan, and therefore their possession was not

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<sup>232</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p.46

<sup>233</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge. p.129

<sup>234</sup> Choong, W. (2015). Defence and Japan's Constitutional Debate, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 57(2), 173-192.

<sup>235</sup> Pugliese, G. (2014). Giappone: il ritorno di Abe, *Asia Maior 2013, Il drago cinese e l'aquila americana sullo scacchiere asiatico*. EMIL, 409-444

illegal.<sup>236</sup> In 1960, during Kishi's premiership, the Security Treaty has been revised. Within the Diet this moment was met with mixed feelings, the revisionists like Kishi were awaiting the opportunity to obtain a more equal treaty, while the left pushed for its abolition. During the negotiations Kishi obtained that the US would commit to protect Japan, but at the same time the US negotiators obtained the expansion of the scope of the treaty beyond the archipelago. Kishi also achieved the removal of an article that allowed the US to use force to stop "riots and disturbances" in Japan. It has also been revealed that secret arrangements were made to bring nuclear weapons in Japan, to be deployed in the event of a conflict in the Korean Peninsula. During the revision process, the public opinion made clear its opposition to the treaty with wide popular protest, and Kishi public image has been jeopardized by his strong reactions to critics. After Kishi's experience and until the early 2000s, the mainstream and anti-mainstream managed to coexist inside the LDP, but the government would be mostly under the control of the mercantilist internationalists. It is from within this faction that were expressed the successive policies measures that could be considered a completion of the pacifist architecture supporting the Yoshida Doctrine. The eight year long administration of Satō Eisaku, from 1964 to 1972, has been a period full of changes for Japan and the alliance. To him it is owed the 1967 ban on arms export to communist countries. In 1969 he managed to negotiate the return of Okinawa under Japanese control, under the same condition of the main islands, but in exchange he had to agree to join the US in the eventuality of the defense of Korea and Taiwan.<sup>237</sup> However, Satō's most notable achievement, for which he also won the Nobel Peace Prize, has been the institution of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles. Under these principles Japan could not produce, possess or permit the introduction of nuclear weapons in the country.<sup>238</sup> Nevertheless, as said before secret arrangements were made to let nuclear-armed ships enter Japanese ports and so elude the third principle, sacrificed on the altar of security.<sup>239</sup> Miki Takeo's short administration, spanning from 1974 to 1976 saw, in addition to an extension of the arms export ban

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<sup>236</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge. p.131

<sup>237</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p.43

<sup>238</sup> Eisaku, S. (1967, December 11). *Statement by Prime Minister Eisaku Sato at the Budget Committee in the House of Representative*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/nnp/>>

<sup>239</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge p.133

to all countries,<sup>240</sup> the introduction of another “pillar” of Japanese pacifism: the limit of military spending to the 1% of GDP.<sup>241</sup> With the recent reinterpretation of article 9, the military budget cap and the non-nuclear principles remain probably the most important constraints on Japanese remilitarization. In the 1980s, as the world was approaching the end of the Cold War, the Yoshida Doctrine started to falter. During his mandate, which lasted from 1982 to 1987, Nakasone Yasuhiro launched the most vocal challenge to anti-militarism since Kishi Nobusuke. Being a nationalist member of the anti-mainstream, Nakasone wanted for Japan a stronger military, that could be achieved only by weakening the constraints imposed by the mainstream in the previous years. He also had to face the mounting anti-Japan sentiments in the US, a consequence of the privileged access to US technology that Japan exploited to become an economic power since the reconstruction. As far as security was concerned, Nakasone weakened the constraints over arms export, allowing them towards the US, facilitating American access to Japanese technology; he also abolished the 1% cap on defense spending, in what has been considered a challenge to the peaceful identity of the nation. It has yet to be noticed that, despite the removal of the legal binding, in the following years the share of GDP allocated to defense spending never rose above 1% anyway,<sup>242</sup> signaling how the norm had become entrenched in the Japanese politics and popular consensus.

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new era, not only for Japanese security, but for the whole world of international relations. With the threat posed by the Soviet Union gone, it also disappeared the main reason behind the US-Japan alliance, with a massive change of the balance of power. If it were to be found a turning point in the path that brought Japan from the establishment of the constitution to the 2015 security reform, that would be with no doubt the end of the Cold War. Since 1989 the Yoshida Doctrine saw a progressive weakening as the internal political environment changed drastically. The successors of the anti-mainstream faction of the LDP managed to rise to power, imposing a sensible shift in the state’s security posture, while at the same time facing new trends and demands coming from

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<sup>240</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge p.134

<sup>241</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p.56

<sup>242</sup> All data concerning military expenditures retrieved at:  
<[http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex\\_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database)>

the mutated international environment. It is possible to highlight two defining moments in the immediate post Cold wars years that served as drives in propelling Japan towards a new security approach: the 1990-1991 Gulf War and the 1993-1994 Nuclear crisis.

The former is remembered as a humiliating failure by the Japanese establishment. At the end of 1990, when the Diet had to choose whether or not send troops to the Persian Gulf, the LDP faced a crisis that resulted in a split. The clash has been once again between the revisionist, led by Ozawa Ichirō and the mainstream of Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki. Ozawa demanded the dispatch of troops, affirming that this action would be in accordance with Japan's responsibilities to the UN-led international community. The PM opposed the idea, using the CLB response of unconstitutionality as a legal basis, since the CLB had recognized the possibility of violence during the mission. In response to this, Ozawa and his supporters left the party. Since the CLB would not allow any Japanese participation to the mission, not even the transportation of refugees, the SDF did not partake in any way to it; the only exceptions, if they can be called that way, were minesweeping operations in the waters of the Gulf, after the end of hostilities. The Japanese contribution to the UN coalition during the Gulf War has been limited to financial aid: \$13 billion of expenses were covered by the Japanese tax payers, but the effort met cold reactions, to the point that the support was not even officially acknowledged by the Kuwaiti government.<sup>243</sup> The failure of the "checkbook diplomacy", as it would be named later, provided a new momentum to the debate around CSD, and strengthened the anti-mainstream conviction that a change was necessary. The CLB had previously stated that Japan held the right of self-defense as recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations<sup>244</sup>, but it could not exercise it due to the constitutional constraints.<sup>245</sup> During Operation Desert Storm, the CLB Director General, in fact, conceded the existence of a difference between the use of force and the use of arms, but it was yet not enough for the SDF to be involved in PKO.<sup>246</sup> If the Gulf war tested

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<sup>243</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p.66

<sup>244</sup> Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice. (1945). Retrieved from: <<https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf>>

<sup>245</sup> Rinehart, I. E. (2013). Collective self-defense and US-Japan security cooperation. *East-West Center Working Papers, Politics, Governance, and Security Series, No. 24*. p.2

<sup>246</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p.66

the Japanese security as a whole, the Korean nuclear crisis has put under exam the status of the US-Japan alliance. The crisis unfolded after the discovery of a secret North Korean nuclear program by the US. After various confrontation a framework was signed by DPRK, ROK, the US and Japan, with North Korea blocking its program in exchange of foreign technology. The importance of this crisis for the alliance rests in the fact that Japan was not prepared to militarily support the United States in case of a contingency in the Korean Peninsula. The Pyongyang regime provided what militarists in Japan, especially in the LDP and the JDA, were waiting for: a credible and close threat to Japan that would advance their cause.

These two tests, both failed, forced the Japanese to face their inadequacy *vis-à-vis* the new security environment. The USSR might have been gone, but that did not mean the end of all concerns; on the contrary, as the last 25 years showed, as the complexity of the new multipolar international structure increases, so does, or at least should do, a country's security response. Hence, after these first two crises there have been various reforms. In 1992 the International Peacekeeping Cooperation Law (PKO Law) was passed, enabling overseas dispatch of the JSDF.<sup>247</sup> Furthermore, in 1997, the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation were revised for the first time since their original introduction in 1978.<sup>248</sup> After the revision, it has been agreed that Japan would provide support to the US in the case of military operations conducted in the "areas surrounding Japan".<sup>249</sup>

The most important change that took place in Japan at the end of the 1990s was not, however, driven by external factors, but internal ones. This change took place within the LDP, as a new generation rose to power, defining the Japanese political landscape as it is today. Demography and social changes played a fundamental role in the change: by the end of the century, most of the Japanese population came to consider the SDF positively, not the "necessary evil" it used to be in the 1960s.<sup>250</sup> Additionally, a generational turnover was taking place both in the population, which contributed to the change of perception towards the military, and inside the political class. In what has been one of the most significant changes since the end of the

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<sup>247</sup> Choong, W. (2015). Defence and Japan's Constitutional Debate, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 57(2), 173-192 p.179

<sup>248</sup> Ministry of Defense. (1997, September 23). *The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation*. Retrieved from: <[http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/anpo/19970923.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/19970923.html)>

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p.71

occupation, a new generation of anti-mainstream politicians managed to take control of the LDP party. Among those men there were the two Prime Ministers that had the most profound impact on internal politics in the last 30 years: Koizumi Jun'ichirō and Abe Shinzō. Under this new wave of politicians, the Prime Minister's Office gained more power than it ever had, even being able to impose political will on the bureaucracy; this goal has been achieved mainly through three major changes carried out in 2001. The first one has been the strengthening of the Prime Minister's exclusive power, enhancing his agenda setting power, giving him the capacity to submit proposals directly to the Cabinet without consulting any ministry first, mainly concerning financial measures and security. The others were the structural reform of the Cabinet Secretariat and the Establishment of the Cabinet Office: the first becoming an important advisory body, while in the latter were incorporated many agencies, most notably the JDA.<sup>251</sup> Civilian-military relations were also altered: a more strict political control was imposed on the CLB and the role of the JDA, now part of the Cabinet Office, was expanded at the expense of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), assigning a deputy cabinet secretary post each. In this sense, the rise of the JDA to a ministerial status in 2006, when Abe Shinzō turned it into the MoD, can be seen as an expected continuation of this process. Thus, the Japanese premiership has never been so presidential. The developments that followed the 9/11 attacks showed how, under the new structure, the Premier had the tools to quickly respond in event of a crisis. Koizumi established the Iraq Response Teams within the Cabinet Secretary, in order to devise a way to deploy SDF troops. When the group established that under the existing legal framework the SDF would not be allowed to participate to PKO, a new law was swiftly enacted. Using as legal basis UN resolution 1483,<sup>252</sup> SDF operations could be conducted in non-combat zones. This new approach did not necessitate any change of the constitution. Eventually 6,000 Ground Self-Defense Forces (GSDF) personnel were dispatched in Iraq, in what is considered a turning point for the legitimacy of SDF operations outside Japan. It is also important to consider that, despite the assurance of the presence of Japanese troops exclusively in non-combat zones, the instability of the region carried the risk

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid. p.74

<sup>252</sup> SC Res 1483.(2003, May 22). UNSCOR, UN Doc S/RES/1483  
Retrieved at: <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/368/53/PDF/N0336853.pdf?OpenElement>>

of involvement in combat situations.<sup>253</sup> Another significant change has been the one undertaken by the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG); it was supported by the conviction inside the government that the JCG needed to be reformed to fulfill its role of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) patrolling and order maintenance in the waters surrounding Japan. Nevertheless, after the reform, the JCG is becoming something more similar to a fourth branch of the JSDF: expanding the role, and the budget, of the JCG is a political expedient to increase military capabilities without recognizing them as such, since the Japanese government cannot directly expand the military budget, it assigns military tasks to the JCG and rises its budget.<sup>254</sup>

Hence, by the end of Koizumi's mandate in 2006, it could be observed that paradoxically what used to be known during the Cold War as the anti-mainstream within the LDP, managed to turn the tide and become the new mainstream. The struggle has always been closely connected to military issues, so the crowning of this achievement is with no doubt the success of the Koizumi administration in finally putting the JSDF boots on the ground. This major accomplishment has been achieved despite strong popular criticism; additionally, even if the whole pacifist tradition had not been completely removed, the conservatives displayed a conscious and successful use of the bureaucracy, something that has been a defining trait of the internationalists for decades.<sup>255</sup> In 2004, Japan's defense doctrine was also changed. In the National Defense Program Guidelines there is for the first time the adoption of threat-based defense doctrine. The document represents an innovation as, for the first time, refers to North Korea and China as destabilizing factors that need to be closely monitored.<sup>256</sup> Additionally, it is present a comprehensive list of five new threats that the JSDF need to address in the mutated security environment. It includes: ballistic missile attacks; guerrilla and special operations force attacks; invasion of Japan's offshore islands; patrol and surveillance in the sea and airspace surrounding Japan, and response to the violation of Japan's airspace and the intrusion of armed special-purpose ships and other similar vessels; response to large-scale and/or special type

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<sup>253</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge p.146

<sup>254</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p.79

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.* p.98

<sup>256</sup> Mochizuki, M., Brown, M. L., Giarra, P. S., Paal, D. H., Odell, R. E., Lu, R., Palmer, O., Swaine, M. D., & Ren, X. (2013). *China's Military & the US-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. p.110

(nuclear, biological, chemical, and radiological) disasters.<sup>257</sup> In order to address the first of these threats, the Koizumi administration also committed to the development of Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) program. In carrying out this plan the Japanese government had to face various challenges. BMD is an interesting part of the process that concerned Japanese security in the last years, precisely because it encompasses many aspects of the changes undertaken by Japan, since it needed to be recognized as constitutional. When in 2003 its institution was announced by the government, the Chief Cabinet Secretary declared that it would “not raise any problem with regard to the issue of the right of collective self-defense”.<sup>258</sup> This statement, however, has been contradicted by various facts: in order to operate, BMD has to be integrated with US capabilities to the point that the independency of the system is compromised. Furthermore, in order to have a credible and efficient response, the system has to rely on US information sharing and space-based sensors.<sup>259</sup> The government repeatedly affirmed that information sharing is considered a routine operation, so does not infringe the ban on CSD, but there is a concrete possibility that over time US politicians may start to demand a more equal division of duties. To solve this problem, among many others, in 2007 Abe Shinzō established a blue ribbon panel chaired by former Japanese ambassador to the US Yanai Shunji to reconsider the right of CSD. Concerning BMD, the commission concluded that in case of a missile attack directed towards the United States, Japan had the faculty to intervene, as it would be considered an exercise of self-defense under the JSDF Law relating to BMD, given the fact that it might not always be clear whether the attack is directed towards Japan or the US. Additionally, not intervening would destabilize the foundation of the US-Japan alliance and the related US deterrence posture.<sup>260</sup> Another important aspect that with the implementation of BMD saw a change has been the military use of space. As in many other aspects of Japanese security, the concept was first subjected to a total ban, with a Diet resolution passed in 1969, which limited the use of space to “peaceful purposes”. The ban would then be partially relaxed in the 1980s, allowing military communications, but it is after the

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<sup>257</sup> Ministry of Defense. (2004, December 10). *National Defense Program Guidelines, FY 2005*.

Retrieved at: <[http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/d\\_policy/pdf/national\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/national_guidelines.pdf)>

<sup>258</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. (2003, December 19). *Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary*. Retrieved from: <[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/tyokan/2003/1219danwa\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/tyokan/2003/1219danwa_e.html)>

<sup>259</sup> Hughes, C. W. (2013). Japan, ballistic missile defence and remilitarization. *Space Policy*, 29(2), 128-134. p.130

<sup>260</sup> Ibid. p.131

test launches performed by North Korea from the end of the 1990s to the 2010s that the legislation has been challenged with more intensity. The system still has a heavy reliance on the US system, as far data sharing and satellite surveillance integrated in the *Aegis* system is concerned. From the legal point of view, the most significant changes happened in 2008, when the Basic Law for Space Activities was attuned to the constitution, thus permitting to use space capabilities for defensive purposes. The ban was then totally lifted with the 2012 Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency Law, finally allowing Japan to participate in military space programs. Hence, BMD showed that an issue, if supported by pressing threat concerns such as the DPRK tests or the close presence of the PLA Second Artillery Corps, could become a driver in pushing forwards security reforms; most assuredly, BMD has established a strong precedent for CSD.

The Yanai commission can be considered an ideal thread of connection between the first and the second mandate of Abe Shinzō. As said before, the report issued by the commission was not limited to BMD, as it was intended to inquire the right of CSD in four cases: defense of US naval vessels on the high sea; interception of ballistic missile that might be on its way to the United States; use of weapons in international PKO; logistics support for the operations of other countries participating in the same UN PKO and other activities.<sup>261</sup> The report concluded that in order to carry out these operations, even if BMD could be theoretically carried out as an act of self-defense, Japan needed to lift the ban on CSD.<sup>262</sup> The Yanai report was strongly criticized, as many accused Abe of attempting to change the Constitution with no public debate. After 2007, following Abe's resignation, Japan's internal politics entered a troubled phase, characterized by uncertainty and ruled mainly by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which, until it came to power in 2009, has been the biggest opposing party. As Abe came back to power in 2012, he immediately resumed the process started five years before with the institution of the Yanai commission, considering security one of his top priorities. When confronting the problem of CSD, the Prime Minister of Japan has the possibility to take three roads: constitutional amendment, a new CLB interpretation of Article 9, or changing the CSD policy through the

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<sup>261</sup> The Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security (2008, June 24). *Report of the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security*.

Retrieved at: <<https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/anzenhosyou/report.pdf>>

<sup>262</sup> Rinehart, I. E. (2013). Collective self-defense and US-Japan security cooperation. *East-West Center Working Papers, Politics, Governance, and Security Series, No. 24 p.3*

legislative procedure.<sup>263</sup> It was chosen to undertake the last one, since the first requires strong numbers in both chambers, a very strong leadership and the willingness to antagonize public support, something Abe could not and was not ready to do; the CLB interpretation, while quite easy to achieve, given the now extensive control of the Cabinet, carries the risks of being easily reverted by a future Prime Minister for the very same reason.

The security reforms started in 2013, supported by the majority of the LDP in both houses, with the institution of the National Security Council (NSC). The Cabinet approved the draft bill on June 7, 2013 while the legislation was passed on November 27 of the same year.<sup>264</sup> The new NSC is designed to ultimately facilitate the decision making progress, especially as far as intelligence gathering and crisis management are involved; to achieve this, the role of the Cabinet and the PM in national security policy making is reinforced, and the intelligence system, which before involved various agencies and ministries, has now to be coordinated by the NSC.<sup>265</sup> In the same year, the Cabinet adopted the new National Security Strategy (NSS), the new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) and a Medium Term Defense Program. In 2014 there has been an acceleration in the process; on July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Cabinet issued a document, which is a politic declaration concerning the future of Japan's security legislation. In this document is stated the necessity to permit the use of force in case of attack, not exclusively against Japan but also against an ally.<sup>266</sup> For a mere reason of political opportunity there is no direct mention to CSD, since the term might not be well received by LDP's junior coalition partner, the pacifist Kōmeitō Party.<sup>267</sup> Despite this expedient, the document sets three clear conditions under which the use of force should be allowed, all of which need to be fulfilled: when there is a "clear danger to [...] people's right to life liberty and pursuit of happiness", "when there is no other appropriate means available to repel the attack and ensure Japan's survival and protect its people" and finally when the use of force

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid. p.4

<sup>264</sup> Maslow, S. (2013, December 3). Japan's Evolving Security Architecture. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2013/12/japans-evolving-security-architecture/>>

<sup>265</sup> Toshiya, T. (2013, July 16). Abe and a Japanese National Security Council, *Eastasiaforum*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/07/16/abe-and-a-japanese-national-security-council/>>

<sup>266</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. (2014, July 1). *Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People*. Retrieved at: <[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/decisions/2014/\\_icsFiles/afiedfile/2014/07/03/anpohosei\\_eng.pdf](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/decisions/2014/_icsFiles/afiedfile/2014/07/03/anpohosei_eng.pdf)>

<sup>267</sup> Choong, W. (2015). Defence and Japan's Constitutional Debate, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 57(2), 173-192. p.184

is kept “to the minimum extent necessary”.<sup>268</sup> In November 2014, Abe proceeded to call for elections in order to strengthen its numbers in the lower house, where the LDP-Kōmeitō acquired overwhelming numbers after the vote.<sup>269</sup> After the expected major victory, the Prime Minister then set into motion what are considered his most notable accomplishments in 2015: the revision of the US-Japan Defense Guidelines and the legislation that allowed Japan to exercise CSD. The new guidelines were published on April 27, 2015;<sup>270</sup> interestingly, the document focuses mainly on the threats that might hit Japan and how to address them, but it does not provide details concerning global and security cooperation. This should have been expected, since the Japanese legislation, while more flexible than in the past, still allows the use of force under very limited circumstances.<sup>271</sup> Furthermore, the Guidelines recognize the growing importance of space and cyberspace as the fields where cooperation will be expanded in the near future. For the first time, it is also promoted bilateral equipment cooperation, as a result of the reforms concerning arms exports carried out in 2014 that were discussed in the first part of this paragraph.

Collective Self-Defense has been enabled by a package of bills first approved by the Cabinet in May 2015, and then definitively enacted by the Diet in September.<sup>272</sup> The reforms are composed by two bills; the first is a series of security laws that removes the restrictions imposed on the SDF to carry out CSD. The second bill changes the legal conditions necessary for SDF dispatch: before the reform, the Diet had to pass a temporary law for each operation, while under the new framework, this faculty is passed to the Government, which has anyway to obtain the approval of the

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<sup>268</sup> The Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. (2014, July 1). *Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People*. Retrieved at: <[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/decisions/2014/\\_icsFiles/afiedfile/2014/07/03/anpohosei\\_eng.pdf](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/decisions/2014/_icsFiles/afiedfile/2014/07/03/anpohosei_eng.pdf)>

<sup>269</sup> Harris, P. (2014, December 28). LDP Hegemony and the Future of Japanese Foreign Policy. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2014/12/ldp-hegemony-and-the-future-of-japanese-foreign-policy/>>

<sup>270</sup> Ministry of Defense (2015, April 27). The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation. Retrieved at: <[http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/anpo/shishin\\_20150427e.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/shishin_20150427e.html)>

<sup>271</sup> Tatsumi, Y. (2015, April, 29). 4 Takeaways From the New US-Japan Defense Guidelines. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/4-takeaways-from-the-new-us-japan-defense-guidelines/>>

<sup>272</sup> Borah, R. (2015, September 19). Japan's Controversial Security Bills Pass in the Upper House. Now What?. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/japans-controversial-security-bills-pass-in-the-upper-house-now-what/>>

legislature.<sup>273</sup>

The approval of the reform was met by strong critics both inside and outside the Diet, but its importance for Japanese history is undeniable. It is possible to consider the lifting of the ban on CSD as the end of process started right after the end of WWII.

Thus, can this be considered the end of the Yoshida Doctrine? As usual, it is not possible to give a simple clear-cut answer.

When he devised his foreign policy doctrine, Yoshida Shigeru was well aware that Japan's behavior would, for the years to come, be mainly the result of its regional environment. At that time, the most pressing threats were the USSR, in the vicinity of the Japanese northern border, and the eventuality of US entanglement, or, to a lesser extent, abandonment. During the post-war reconstruction, the Japanese leadership knew that the country could not sustain both growth and the strong military posture required to be the "unsinkable aircraft carrier" desired by the US. Yoshida then made the conscious choice of "subcontracting" security to the United States, but with the tacit knowledge that in a probably not too long distant future, one or more of the conditions that contributed to the delicate balance of the Cold War would disappear, forcing Japan to face its own security issues.

This is what happened after 1989: the soviet threat vanished, while other regional threats rose, and, at the same time, the world seemed to move towards a multipolar structure, where the US would not have the same weight as before. Japan, in the meantime, did not have to focus on economic growth anymore, having become one of the most advanced economies in the world, so as noted by Yoshida in his memories, "as Japan's capacity expands, so also must its responsibilities".<sup>274</sup>

Abe's political views might not be shared, but after a detailed analysis of the internal drives present in Japan's internal policy since the end of WWII, it could be argued with a fair amount of certainty that the process that led the country to gradually "normalize" its military and security apparatus could not be avoided.

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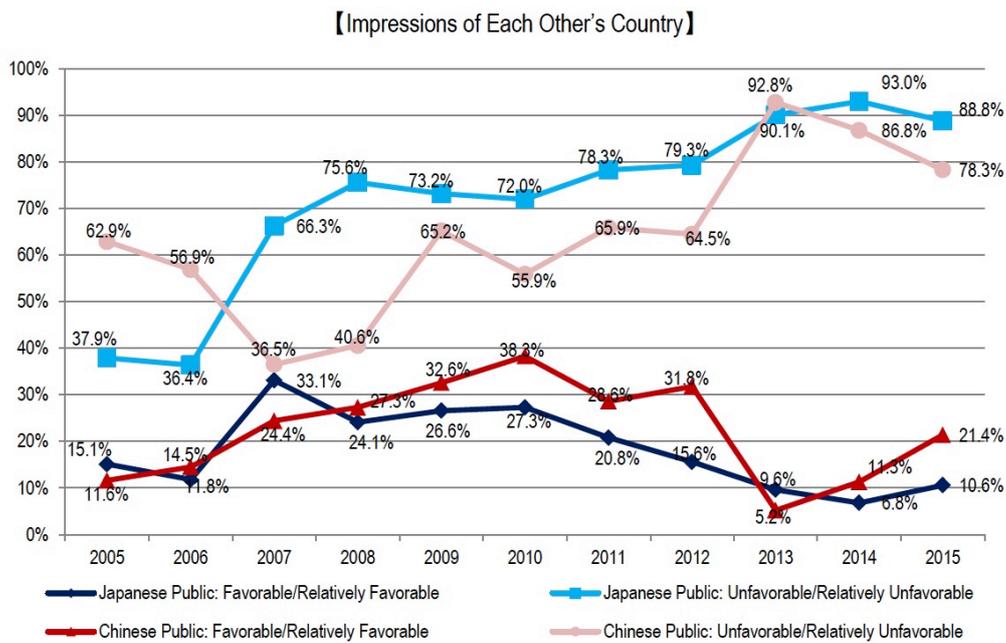
<sup>273</sup> Panda, A. (2015, May 15). Japan's Global SDF Will Need These Two Laws. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/japans-global-sdf-will-need-these-two-laws/>>

<sup>274</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press. p.58

## 2. The origins of mutual distrust

### 2.1 The long shadow of WWII in East Asia

As it should be clear at this point, the PRC and Japan do not have a positive view of each other. In October 2015, the Genron NPO and China Daily published their annual public opinion poll, concerning the impressions of the two countries regarding each other. The poll highlights how, over the last years, the mutual impressions of China and Japan have worsened. As it can be seen in the chart below,<sup>275</sup> 88.8% of the Japanese public impression is “unfavorable” to China; here, in turn, 78.3% of the population does not hold a favorable opinion of Japan.



It is also interesting to note the reasons provided by the interviewed concerning their answers. The majority of the Japanese adduced the “criticism [moved by Chinese people to the behavior] of Japan over historical issues” as the cause of their opinion, which has replaced “incompatibility of the behavior of the PRC with the international

<sup>275</sup> The Genron NPO. (2015, October 22). *11th Japan-China Joint Opinion Poll Analysis Report on the Comparative Data*. p.3  
Retrieved at: <[http://www.genron-npo.net/pdf/2015forum\\_en.pdf](http://www.genron-npo.net/pdf/2015forum_en.pdf)>

rules”, 2014’s top answer. On the Chinese side, the most common motive for the provided “unfavorable” opinion has been “Japan’s lack of proper apology and remorse over the history of invasion of China”.<sup>276</sup> The effects of the standoff over the territorial dispute in the East China Sea (ECS) can be traced in Chinese answers. The “Japanese purchase of the Diaoyu islands for the nation and fueling the confrontation” is the second most common answer. Nonetheless the so-called “burdens of history” constitute an obstacle for peaceful relations between China and Japan.<sup>277</sup>

The main aspect of this issue is its parallel quality. On one hand, the Japanese think that past apologies constitute a satisfactory answer to the problem, while on the other hand, the Chinese think otherwise. In order to better understand the issue, it would be useful to briefly recall the events, and focus on the historical legacy up to present day politics. During the occupation of Korea, Manchuria and China that took place in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Imperial Japan was responsible for terrible war crimes. Particularly infamous were the December 1937 massacre, known prosaically as the Rape of Nanjing, the atrocious human experiments conducted by the Unit 731 in occupied Manchuria and the issue of the so called “comfort women”, some of whom were coerced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Army. Many “comfort women” were Japanese, but the recruitment involved women hailing from all the territories occupied by the Japanese army.

Obviously, the issues do not involve only the PRC, but since this work is focused on the Sino-Japanese relations, the analysis will focus mainly on the interaction of these two countries. Concerning this relation, the Nanjing Massacre is probably the event that has had the heaviest impact. Without denying the tragic significance of the events, it could be said that the most significant aspect of the Massacre, as far as the relations between the two states are concerned, is its interpretation and how each part has depicted it and used it for political purposes over the years.

After the end of WWII, various perpetrators of the massacre were tried for their crimes by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, in what has become known as the Tokyo Trials. In the trial twenty-three defendants out of twenty-five were found guilty and subsequently condemned with imprisonment and death

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid. p.4

<sup>277</sup> The Genron NPO. (2015, October 22). *11th Japan-China Joint Opinion Poll Analysis Report on the Comparative Data*.

Retrieved at: <[http://www.genron-npo.net/pdf/2015forum\\_en.pdf](http://www.genron-npo.net/pdf/2015forum_en.pdf)>

penalties. Among these men, only one, general Matsui Iwane was sentenced to death in relation to the Nanking Massacre, for “negative responsibility”, since he had not prevented his troops to carry out the massacre.<sup>278</sup>

The events have two different views in the two countries. The most debated element is the death toll: the Chinese government estimate concerning the deaths in the Nanking Massacre does not go below the 300,000 figures, while in Japan is possible to distinguish various stances. They span from “several thousands” to figures slightly below 200,000 victims. In Japan there are even minority voices who question the truthfulness of the massacre as a whole.<sup>279</sup> This trend is also traceable in more insidious fields, like semantics. Japanese progressive historians, for example, tend to refer to the events of Nanjing as a “massacre” (*gyakusatsu*, 虐殺), or “great massacre” (*daigyakusatsu*, 大虐殺), while rightist prefer the word “incident” (*jiken*, 事件). The formers unequivocally acknowledge the existence of that dreadful act, while differing on its intensity. The latter, instead, by using the word “incident” not only minimizes its importance, but also removes a fundamental aspect from the issue, the willingness of the Japanese troops of carrying out the action.<sup>280</sup> In a similar manner, in 1982 the Japanese Ministry of Education (MoE), now Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), has been in the middle of a scandal because of various revisions applied to history schoolbooks, altering the nature of the Japanese wartime actions. The Ministry was accused by various left-wing politicians, scholars and members of the public opinion, as well as by the governments of China, both Koreas and Thailand of having substituted the word “aggression” (*shinryaku*, 侵略, literally translated as invasion) with the more neutral “advance” (*shinshutsu*, 進出) or (*shinkō*, 進行).<sup>281</sup>

It is important, at this point, to assess a fundamental part of this analysis: whether the “burden of history” has been a driver of the tense relations between the PRC and Japan, or if the constant, politically charged, re-ignition of the history issue is a consequence of the geopolitical rivalry between the two states. An interesting

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<sup>278</sup> Dower, J. W. (2000). *Embracing defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II*. WW Norton & Company. p.459

<sup>279</sup> Gustafsson, K. (2011). *Narratives and Bilateral Relations. Rethinking the “History Issue” in Sino-Japanese Relations*. Universitetservice US-AB. Stockholm. p.154  
Retrieved at: <<http://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:414566/FULLTEXT01.pdf>>

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge. p.171

evidence in favor of the second hypothesis is that prior to the 1990s, China has never showed the passionate protests observable nowadays concerning the various visits made by the Japanese prime ministers to the Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>282</sup>

Considering the entirety of the Sino-Japanese post-war relations, there is an evident mutation of the mutual perception in concomitance with the end of the Cold War. It is possible to trace a consecutive chilling of the relations in the 1980s, until the almost mutually acknowledged distrust present today.

As noted when taking into consideration the East China Sea maritime issues, in the first decades after 1945 both states worked in order to improve their relations, a process based mainly on economic interests, which culminated in the 1972 meeting between PM Tanaka Kakuei and Chairman Mao Zedong, followed by a joint communiqué establishing full diplomatic relations.<sup>283</sup> The signing of a proper Treaty of Peace and Friendship followed in 1978.

The first problems started to surface in 1982, with the aforementioned “textbook controversy”, but the first full-blown Chinese protests aimed at a high-ranking Japanese governmental figure occurred in 1985. On August 15 of that year, on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII, prime minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, who two years before acknowledged in the Diet the aggressive nature of Japan’s war on China,<sup>284</sup> paid an official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. The consequent harsh Chinese protests stemmed from the fact that within the Shintō Shrine are celebrated the souls of the Japanese war dead, including various convicted Class A criminals sentenced to death during the Tokyo Trials. Nakasone managed to placate the protestors by declaring that he would not repeat the visit the next year. However, it is probable that more pressing internal matters were behind the decision: Nakasone could have avoided any other provocative nationalist acts in order not to lose the support of centrist factions in the Diet, including those within the LDP.

At the beginning of the 1990s, there were two important moments in which Japan started to deal with his past. The first one was on the occasion of the Kōno Statement in 1993. After having denied for years, the Japanese government through the declaration of Chief Cabinet Secretary Kōno Yōhei acknowledged the existence of

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<sup>282</sup> Pugliese, G. (2009). *The Resurgence of Nationalism in China and Japan: A Comparative Analysis*. p.210

<sup>283</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge. p.169

<sup>284</sup> Ibid. p.171

“comfort women during WWII”.<sup>285</sup> This expression has been used to refer to women obliged to be sexual slaves for the Japanese Imperial Army in the occupied territories. The second moment has been in 1995, when prime minister Murayama Tomiichi issued a groundbreaking statement during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the war.<sup>286</sup> Murayama, who has also been the first socialist prime minister after Japanese internal politics crystallized in the so-called 1955 system, expressed in his statement “deep remorse” and “heartfelt apology.” The Murayama Statement, as it became known afterwards, has become essential in the Japanese historical discourse: after this declaration, every prime minister has had the moral duty of citing the statement. It has been the case for Hashimoto Ryūtarō during his visit in Beijing in 1997 and also for Koizumi Jun’ichirō when he visited the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Memorial Hall in Beijing in 2001.<sup>287</sup>

It is however possible that Koizumi tried to win the favor of Chinese public opinion with those words, since his declaration in Beijing followed his visit to the controversial Yasukuni shrine. Nakasone and Koizumi were among the most nationalist post-war prime ministers and part of the conservative faction of the LDP; the consequences of their visits to the Yasukuni shrine are useful in understanding how the Japanese changed after the end of the Cold War, a further confirmation of the problems encountered by the Yoshida Doctrine. Nakasone was forced to refrain from visiting the Shrine more than one time, fearing political repercussions. Koizumi, on the other hand, has been free to visit the shrine six times. This is a reflection of the change within the LDP, where conservatives were able to seize power. This process, of which Nakasone can be seen as one the initiators, caused a shift to the right on many issues in Japanese politics, something that has been clearly received abroad too. It should come with no surprise then, that in the 2000s the relations with both Seoul and Beijing worsened considerably, since almost every sensible issue has been affected by the internal shift of the LDP.<sup>288</sup> Abe Shinzō can also be considered part of

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<sup>285</sup> Kōno, Y. (1993, August 4). *Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the result of the study on the issue of "comfort women"*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html>>

<sup>286</sup> Murayama, T. (1995, August 15). *Statement by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama "On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the war's end"*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html>>

<sup>287</sup> Gustafsson, K. (2015). Identity and recognition: remembering and forgetting the post-war in Sino-Japanese relations. *The Pacific Review*, 28(1). p.124

<sup>288</sup> Berger, T. U. (2014). Abe’s perilous patriotism: why Japan’s new nationalism still creates problems for the region and the US-Japan alliance. *A Japan Chair Platform Special Edition*. Center for Strategic

this process. Despite being part of the same faction of Koizumi, during the two years of his first mandate, he undeniably attempted, and to some degree even succeeded, to relax the tension between the two countries. Not long after his election, he chose Beijing as the destination of his first official trip as prime minister, and while there he had a bilateral meeting with Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao. The meeting, and the contacts that followed, focused mainly on the ECS issues, North Korea and on the resolution of the historical controversies; to this end it was even decided to create a specific commission, the Joint History Commission.<sup>289</sup> Notably, during his first mandate Abe did not visit the Yasukuni Shrine, even though he came to regret that decision later on.<sup>290</sup>

In the period between Abe's first and second mandate, the general status of the Sino-Japanese relations worsened. This could be ascribed to the exacerbation of the confrontation concerning the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, despite the good expectation harbored by the Chinese government towards the DPJ administration that emerged from the 2009 elections.

Since the first months of Abe's second mandate, it has been evident that he would not be as cautious as he had been years before. Almost one year after his election, in December 2013, he visited Yasukuni. It was the first visit of a prime minister since Koizumi's last visit in 2006. The relations with China were already incredibly tense due to the declaration of the ECS ADIZ at the beginning of that same month. In response to the visit, the Chinese Foreign Minister summoned the Japanese ambassador.<sup>291</sup>

During Abe's second mandate, the most important moment in relation to the history issue has certainly been the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII. On this occasion the prime minister was expected to issue a statement, and many inside and outside the country were eager to listen what Abe would say. The statement was not a disappointment, in the sense that Abe's vague choice of words enabled both criticisms and appraisals. The statement can be analyzed from two different points of

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& International Studies. p.11

<sup>289</sup> Hook, G. D., Gilson, J., Hughes, C. W. & Dobson, H. (2011). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (Vol. 44). Routledge. p.179

<sup>290</sup> International Crisis Group. (2014). Old Scores and New Grudges: Evolving Sino-Japanese Tensions. *Asia Report*, (258). p.5

<sup>291</sup> People's Daily Online. (2013, December 27). *China scathes Abe's Yasukuni visit*. Retrieved at: <<http://en.people.cn/90883/8496810.html>>

view: one that focuses on the words Abe actually used, and one that focuses on the words Abe omitted to use.

As for the former, Abe recalled four concepts from the 50<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries' statements given respectively by Murayama and Koizumi.<sup>292</sup> The words used are “aggression” (*shinryaku*, 侵略), “colonial domination” (*shokuminchishihai*, 植民地支配), “deep remorse” (*tsūsetsunahansei*, 痛切な反省) and “apology” (*owabi*, お詫び).<sup>293</sup> Abe also insisted that the Japanese population has the responsibility to pass on the past to the future generations.

Hence, it would seem from these words that he managed to deliver a satisfactory statement, recognizing the past and not curtailing any historical responsibility. In all truthfulness, considering the statement under the second perspective, he did not. The statement contains no direct mention of Japanese colonialism and no direct mention of the condition of the “comfort women”. The most controversial part of the statement is the passage mentioning that nowadays more than 80% of the Japanese population is born after the war, followed by a phrase where he said “we must not let our children, grandchildren, and even further generations to come, who have nothing to do with that war, be predestined to apologize”. This thought is coherent with Abe’s past declaration, as in the book he wrote in 2007, which could be considered some sort of political manifesto, he expressed various times the wish for Japan to go beyond the “masochistic” view on history adopted after the war.<sup>294</sup> In fact, if the whole statement is considered, it has to be noted that Abe limited himself to quoting past statements, without offering any new apology.

This last element is probably the most revealing part on Abe’s personal view over the “burden of history”, where his revisionist stance becomes evident. It is quite difficult to find an historical comparison in this situation, perhaps the only possible one is with how Germany dealt with its own past after WWII. Juxtaposing the two issues, the differences are stinking: seventy years after the end of the war, while Abe insisted in not forcing the younger generations to continue apologizing, Angela Merkel at the death camp of Dachau, near Munich, declared: “They all admonish us to never forget.

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<sup>292</sup> Smith, S. A. (2015, August 15). Abe Focuses on Japan’s ‘Lessons Learned’. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/08/abe-focuses-on-japans-lessons-learned/>>

<sup>293</sup> Abe, S. (2015, August 14). *Statement by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe*.

Retrieved at: <[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97\\_abe/statement/201508/0814statement.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201508/0814statement.html)>

<sup>294</sup> Pugliese, G. (2009). *The Resurgence of Nationalism in China and Japan: A Comparative Analysis* p.220

No, we will never forget. We'll not forget for the sake of the victims, for our own sake, and for the sake of future generations".<sup>295</sup> If Abe's message could have implied that history in some ways made its course, Merkel' statement aims to reiterate the apology forever.

At the same time, the entity of the war crimes and the troubled apologies between Germany and Greece, and other occupied territories, such as Italy, demonstrate that Japan is far from the model "impenitent state."

At any rate, as it could be expected the Abe Statement received mixed responses, especially from the key players involved in the region: South Korea, the US and, of course, China.

The United States appreciated the statement, considering it a sincere gesture of contrition from Japan, coupled with the ill-concealed hope that South Korea would accept the statement.<sup>296</sup> It is unquestionable that among the Washington's deepest desires there is a solid relation between its two most important allies in Asia.

The Republic of Korea did not raise any questions on what could certainly be considered a watered-down apology, as it did mention the injuries inflicted to "the dignity and honor of many women", but did not go into further detail.<sup>297</sup> It has also to be noted that, later in 2015, Japan and South Korea reached an important deal, with the promising prospect of putting an end to the "comfort women" issue.

China, on the contrary, has been voicing criticism to Japan, as the Abe statement has been seen as not entirely sincere. The lack of explicit references to Japan's wrongdoings and the reference of past statements led the Chinese government to label the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary declaration as "evasive".<sup>298</sup>

As seen in the past pages, it almost seems that, as far as history is concerned, the seventy years that separates today from the end of WWII did not bring many substantial changes to the relations between the various states in North-East Asia. It is however quite difficult to assess one single instance that has been hindering the

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<sup>295</sup> Uyanik, A. (2015, May 3). Merkel says Germans can never forget death camp horrors. *Reuters*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ww2-anniversary-merkel-dachau-idUSKBN0NO0DM20150503>>

<sup>296</sup> The Japan Times. (2015, August 16). *U.S. lauds Abe WWII anniversary statement*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/16/national/politics-diplomacy/u-s-lauds-abe-wwii-anniversary-statement/#.VqZBblPhCRt>>

<sup>297</sup> Abe, S. (2015, August 14). *Statement by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe*. Retrieved at: <[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97\\_abe/statement/201508/0814statement.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201508/0814statement.html)>

<sup>298</sup> The Japan Times. (2015, August 15). *China slams Abe's WWII statement, calls it 'evasive'*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/15/national/politics-diplomacy/beijing-mum-abes-wwii-statement-xinhua-english-commentary-hits-retrogression/#.VqZKpVPhCRs>>

conciliatory process, if there has ever been one. As it will be seen in the next paragraph, within the state actors in regional environment exist various drivers, and each and every one of them has to some extent contributed to advance its own agenda, making overcoming the “history burden” more difficult.

## 2.2 Behind words: nationalism, propaganda and international interests.

It is possible to trace various phenomena within the states under exam that have been affecting the settling of the historical disputes across the decades.

As already said in the previous paragraph, the fact that certain actions, such as the Yasukuni visits, have not always received the same responses during the years might be a first hint of the existence of these other causes. This is quite important, as it demotes the “history burden” from trigger to epiphenomenon in this issue. It is therefore possible to think that the history issue, given its weight and importance within the national communities, could have been used as a tool in order to advance other goals. Enumerating a list of all the situations where the history issue has been used as a lever to uphold a certain part’s agenda would only translate in a useless exercise, while the focus needs to be shifted on the mechanics used to do so and on what aspects of society tend to be more influenced by this issue.

Nationalism is one of the main drivers behind the animosity between the PRC and Japan, albeit it presents itself with different characteristics in the PRC and in Japan.

In the PRC, it is nowadays possible to find a more spontaneous and “grass root” form of nationalism compared to Japan, but the state has traditionally played a large role.<sup>299</sup>

The origin of this feeling can be found in the 1980s, during the period of economic reforms envisioned by Deng Xiaoping. This topic has already briefly faced in the previous chapter, when dealing with the internal changes of the PLA: when the Chinese leaders decided to start the reform process and open up the Chinese economy to the world, the communist ideology supported by the CCP started to be questioned. In order to avoid an emptying of values within the Chinese society, the CCP leaders decided to support a new nationalist narrative.<sup>300</sup> This new narrative, which

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<sup>299</sup> Pugliese, G. (2009). *The Resurgence of Nationalism in China and Japan: A Comparative Analysis* p.221

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. 213

magnified China as a great power, insisting on the victory against fascisms in WWII, ended up creating a peculiar form of political pressure on the Chinese Leaders.

Public support is considered vital for the CCP, thus there has been occasions where the Chinese leaders have not been willing to go against the populist public opinion. An example could be the protests after Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni in the mid-2000s.<sup>301</sup>

Japanese nationalism is different. It is possible to trace a clear distinction between two different social blocks when examining this issue: the ruling political elite and the population. The two sentiments are connected, but in order to understand the correlation between them, it is essential a premise. Karl Gustafsson ascribes Japanese nationalism and anti-Chinese sentiment to the lack of recognition of the Japanese peaceful identity by the PRC.<sup>302</sup>

The constructing process of Japanese post-war identity is rooted in the post war memory. The role of the US in the construction of the new collective peaceful identity is undeniable. This construction process, which has mostly been used by the Americans in the immediate post-war as a punishment and a mean to ensure Japanese demilitarization after its imperialistic expansion has been so strong that certain aspects of it have been institutionalized and are by now considered implicit aspects of Japanese politics, as the 1% cap on the military budget or the three non-nuclear principles. The Kōno and the Murayama statements could in some ways be considered part of this process. This process finds its confirmation not only in the statements of the politicians but also in the achievements of Japan after 1945. The Japanese population takes great pride in affirming that it managed to become the second largest economy in the world while always observing pacifism. Japan is also a leading Official Development Assistance (ODA) donor country, as emphasized by a pamphlet published by the MOFA in 2005.<sup>303</sup>

The creation of a new identity implies at least two aspects: it results in the creation of an "other" to which counter itself, and necessitate the recognition of the new identity. In the Japanese case the other is the old, imperial Japan, to which it countered the new pacifist self.

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid. 216

<sup>302</sup> Gustafsson, K. (2015). Identity and recognition: remembering and forgetting the post-war in Sino-Japanese relations. *The Pacific Review*, 28(1).

<sup>303</sup> Ibid. p.125

As for recognition, that is where the problems lie. The lack of recognition of this new pacifist identity from China, because of the nationalistic education promoted by the CCP that tends to highlight the victory over the Japanese invaders, has had serious consequences on Japan. The Japanese saw this act as an undermining of the achievements in the decades that followed the defeat in the war, and in turn attacked China considering it “anti-Japanese” and “undemocratic”.<sup>304</sup> According to Gustafsson, this identity mismatch of the Japanese society has been seen as an opportunity by the revisionists within the LDP to impose a new identity. The absence of a formal recognition of the post-war pacifist Japanese identity from China has been presented by revisionists as the proof of its inadequacy. Thus, it is not by chance that many of the political battles fought by what had once been known as the LDP’s anti-mainstream have a high symbolic meaning. Following the banner of normalization, they fought to remove every self-imposed norm that over time became part of the treasured Japanese pacifist identity.

It not possible to say that every provocative action undertaken by revisionist Japanese politician had the ultimate goal of undermining the Japanese pacifist self-perception by antagonizing China. It is however undeniable that some Japanese commentators have seen the rise of nationalism as a “healthy nationalism”, that could remove the “mistaken pacifism”<sup>305</sup>.

Despite the analysis of this paragraph, the current Japanese situation is not as dire as it might seem. More than seventy years of pacifism cannot be set aside in a few years, and an increasing part of the Japanese population seems to be certain that “as the relations between the two countries develop, the historical issue will be gradually resolved”.<sup>306</sup> It is even possible to find a strongly pacifist party within the Japanese governing coalition.

Furthermore, there are also external drivers to be considered. Japan’s most pressing security concerns are the containment of China and North Korea. Both issues need to be faced with the support of international partners. A glaring example has been the agreement reached on the “comfort women” issue. Despite the many praises received, the deal was not the best possible outcome: it just has to be considered that none of

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid. p.134

<sup>305</sup> Ibid. p.133

<sup>306</sup> The Genron NPO. (2015, October 22). *11th Japan-China Joint Opinion Poll Analysis Report on the Comparative Data*. p.29

Retrieved at: <[http://www.genron-npo.net/pdf/2015forum\\_en.pdf](http://www.genron-npo.net/pdf/2015forum_en.pdf)>

the women has been part of the negotiation and that many of the victims rejected it.<sup>307</sup> It is not hard to comprehend the real motives behind the deal, with North Korea behaving more provocatively than ever, a solid Japan-ROK relation is essential, so the deal could be a good way to relax tension and favor cooperation.<sup>308</sup> The US has played a mediatory role in it. External drivers could also have a role in normalizing relations with China: as stated various times, given their economic interdependence the two countries have always valued economic development more than nationalism driven provocative politics.

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<sup>307</sup> Tiezzi, S. (2015, December 30). South Korea's 'Comfort Women' Reject Deal With Japan. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/south-koreas-comfort-women-reject-deal-with-japan/>>

<sup>308</sup> Easton, Y.(2015, December 31). The Comfort Women Agreement: A Win for Traditional Diplomacy. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/the-comfort-women-agreement-a-win-for-traditional-diplomacy/>>

### ***3. Future Scenarios***

Having outlined both the current status of East Asia's security environment and how the past is still affecting Sino-Japanese relations, it is possible to attempt to give a reading how future events might unfold in the region.

Nowadays it is possible to trace various trends unfolding in the Asia-Pacific region. From a security perspective, the most concerning ones are without a doubt the increase in defense spending, the increasing tensions resulting from territorial disputes and a surge in nationalistic and populist rhetoric. As illustrated in the previous chapters, it is possible to trace these trends back to the shifting moment that the international regional structure is experiencing.

The rise of China has been perceived in many ways as a challenge to the established international structure, and many of its actions, from the military upgrade of the PLA to the various attempts of imposing itself as a credible regional power through actions like the AIIB, had a primary role in fueling the discomfort of several of its neighbors. Obviously, among the PRC's actions, the one that has been observed with most concerns has been the increase in military spending and the consequent military modernization. Analyzing data on military spending, it becomes quite evident that the PRC is not the only country in the region that has increased its military spending; on the contrary, almost every country in East Asia has been increasing its military spending in the last years.<sup>309</sup>

This fact led many to reflect upon the existence of an arms race in East Asia.<sup>310</sup> An arms race can be described as the process through which two or more states compete in order to gain superiority in the development and accumulation of weapons, largely for defensive reasons. This concept is closely connected to another element of pivotal importance in understanding the current regional security environment in East Asia: the security dilemma, which is created when a state deploys military forces in order to increase its own security. However, since the capabilities acquired can also be used for offensive purposes, the state in question reduces at the same time the other states'

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<sup>309</sup> All data concerning military expenditures have been retrieved at the SIPRI military expenditures database: <[http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex\\_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database)>

<sup>310</sup> Kang, D. C. (2014, May 14). A Looming Arms Race in East Asia?. *The National Interest*. Retrieved at: <<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/looming-arms-race-east-asia-10461>>

abilities to defend themselves, hence their security decreases.<sup>311</sup> This then triggers a dangerous competition between the states, where every part is constantly trying to avoid insecurity and military disadvantage by improving its own capabilities, but in doing so every part incentivizes the others actors to do the same.

In approaching a security dilemma, the states are expected to act according a realist model. The realist theory considers a state as a rational and independent actor in the chaotic international environment, seeking nothing but self-interest. Usually, the military build up is not balanced; it might be possible that the process favors attack more than defense capabilities, so this process could result in leaving both states more vulnerable. Growing insecurity can also push states to pursue more dangerous paths to regain the security lost.

The arms race is thus considered a disturbing process, a challenge to a pre-existing status quo; it might even be thought that conflict would be the only possible outcome. However, historical records suggest differently. War is the result of two elements: capabilities and intentions, and the arms race is only involved in the former. Various examples could be taken. Probably, the best suited ones in assessing the weight held by intentions are two: the nuclear arms race between the US and the USSR that took place during the Cold War, and the Anglo-German naval build-up preceding WWI. In the first case, the arms race did not result in a conflict. This is probably due to the fact that both sides were aware of not being capable of avoiding a fatal retaliation after the first nuclear strike. Yet, in order to increase their security, they still embarked on the process anyway. Hence, the sheer possession of the means to wage war did not directly translate into an attack.

As for the second example, while it is true that the naval build-up was followed by a conflict, this was not a direct result of it. It would be impossible to deny that after its unifications, Imperial Germany did not find itself in a position much alike that of the PRC today: a late blooming power,<sup>312</sup> in an established status quo that ended up challenging; as illustrated by its foreign minister at that time, in 1897 Germany was looking for “its place in the sun”. Nonetheless, WWI has been the product of a long process, where the main causes were mostly the alliance structure based on bilateral relations in Europe, a surge of nationalistic impulses inside the countries and a long

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<sup>311</sup> Collins, A. (2013). *Contemporary security studies*. Oxford University Press. p.20

<sup>312</sup> Chong, J. I., & Hall, T. H. (2014). The lessons of 1914 for East Asia today: Missing the trees for the forest. *International Security*, 39(1). p.11

series of minor crises preceding the outburst of a conflict. The naval build up certainly gave to the newcomer Germany and to the hegemonic Great Britain the means to face each other, but the means alone without the motives embedded in the international structure, and the homicide of the Archduke, did not spark any conflict.<sup>313</sup>

Put very simply, war is not, and has never been, caused by weapons, but by the people wielding them.

As for the current arms race, it is important to understand the drivers behind the military build-up in Asia. As said before, insecurity is the engine that sets into motion military competition among states; in this case it is possible to find episodes of concerns almost in every actor in Asia Pacific. Even if in this work its role has not been analyzed in detail, the United States is the most prominent actor in the region, serving at the same time as security provider for some countries and as ultimate threat, or competitor, for others. Remaining true to the definition provided for the security dilemma concept of a series of anxiety-driven actions and counteractions, the massive US military presence could be considered the starting point of an expenditure spiral in the region. The importance of the US military presence in the region is given not only by the sheer numbers of military personnel deployed, but also by its multilayer relations with the countries in the Asia Pacific. The American presence can be considered multilevel, as it is made up of a series of bilateral alliances coupled with various trilateral and multilateral relations. As for the bilateral links, besides Japan, the US is connected to ROK by the mutual defense treaty signed in 1953,<sup>314</sup> to Australia and New Zealand by the 1952 Australia, New Zealand and US (ANZUS) Security treaty,<sup>315</sup> to the Philippines by the mutual defense security treaty signed in 1951<sup>316</sup> and followed by the Manila Declaration signed in 2011<sup>317</sup> which further enhanced cooperation, to Thailand by the 1833 Treaty of Amity and

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<sup>313</sup> Chong, J. I., & Hall, T. H. (2014). The lessons of 1914 for East Asia today: Missing the trees for the forest. *International Security*, 39(1).

<sup>314</sup> Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea. (1953, October 1). Retrieved at: <[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/kor001.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kor001.asp)>

<sup>315</sup> Security Treaty Between the United States, Australia, and New Zealand (ANZUS). (1951, September 1). Retrieved at: <[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/usmu002.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/usmu002.asp)>

<sup>316</sup> Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines. (1951 August 30). Retrieved at: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/phil001.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/phil001.asp)

<sup>317</sup> U.S. Department of State. (2011, November 16). *Signing of the Manila Declaration On Board the USS Fitzgerald in Manila Bay, Manila, Philippines*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/11/177226.htm>>

Commerce<sup>318</sup> and to Taiwan by the “Taiwan Relations Act”,<sup>319</sup> passed in the US in 1979, which provides military protection in case of a PRC attack. Furthermore, the US has established a series of trilateral relations, such as the one with South Korea and Japan, its two most important allies in the region, which had a fundamental role facing the threat posed by North Korea, the greatest source of instability for both countries.<sup>320</sup> Other relations are the aforementioned ANZUS and the US-Japan-Australia trilateral relation. The last one has become of relevant importance in the last years, since it has focused mainly on defense equipment cooperation, spanning from the F-35 development program to the Australian submarine acquisition.<sup>321</sup> The US is also strengthening its military presence in Asia: on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, at the Shangri-La Dialogue held in Singapore, former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta declared that the US would expand and strengthen its partnerships and alliances with the countries in the region. In another passage of his speech, he also added that by 2020 the US navy will “reposture its forces”, shifting from “50/50 percent split between the Pacific and the Atlantic to about a 60/40 split between those oceans”.<sup>322</sup> The US strategy to rebalance its forces towards Asia did not come as a surprising news in 2012. It is interesting to note that the US administration came to realize the importance that the Asian continent would have had in the years to come as early as 2002, when President G. W. Bush acknowledged the growing importance of Asia; consequently in 2006 during his second mandate he sought to establish a closer connection to India, an action considered by many a move to counterbalance China.<sup>323</sup> Despite these actions, it is undeniable that the greatest emphasis of Bush’s foreign policy was focused more on Middle East. During Barack Obama’s

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<sup>318</sup> Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Siam and the United States. (1833). Retrieved at: <<http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/relation/175usth/timeline-of-u/spotlight-on-treaty-of-amity.html>>

<sup>319</sup> Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, 22 U.S.C. § 3301 (2016).

Retrieved at: <<http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title22-section3301&num=0&edition=prelim>>

<sup>320</sup> Panda, A. (2015, May 28). US, South Korea, Japan Coordinate Trilaterally on North Korea. *The Diplomat*.

Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/us-south-korea-japan-coordinate-trilaterally-on-north-korea/>>

<sup>321</sup> Tatsumi, Y. (Ed.). (2015). *US-Japan-Australia Security Cooperation Prospects and Challenges*. Stimson.

Retrieved at: <[http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/US-Japan\\_Australia-WEB.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/US-Japan_Australia-WEB.pdf)>

<sup>322</sup> Panetta, L. (2012, June 2). *The US Rebalance Towards the Asia-Pacific*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri%20a%20dialogue/archive/sld12-43d9/first-plenary-session-2749/leon-panetta-d67b>>

<sup>323</sup> Emmott, B. (2009). *Rivals: How the power struggle between China, India, and Japan will shape our next decade*. Penguin.

administration the US foreign policy witnessed an apparent a shift. In an article that appeared on *Foreign Policy* in October 2011,<sup>324</sup> written by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, it is possible to find the first public evidence of the rebalance. The “pivot to Asia”, as it was known after Clinton’s article, has been kindly welcomed by the states allied to the US, which considered it a reassurance of the presence of the US security umbrella in an environment where the Chinese presence seemed more and more oppressive. It is also worth noticing that the US hopes to partially rely on its regional partners in securing its position in the Asian Pacific. As it has been remarked in various studies, after the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States will have to reduce its military budget due to fiscal constrains, but at the same time the implementation of the so-called pivot needs to be carried out. As noted by Tatsumi Yuki, since the DoD has obviously finite resources, “one dollar more spent in the Asia-Pacific region should mean at least one dollar less spent elsewhere”.<sup>325</sup> This will pose a problem for the DoD, as it is also resolute in affirming that the increased engagement in Asia will not result in a lesser US commitment anywhere else.<sup>326</sup>

This could be the reason behind the increasing interest shown by the US in the series of security reforms carried out by Abe Shinzō, and the support shown to the various partners concerning defense partnerships and security cooperation, as in the case of President Obama address to the Australian Parliament in 2011,<sup>327</sup> or at the joint press conference held at the White House in occasion of the visit of Abe Shinzō in Washington, D.C in 2015.<sup>328</sup>

The PRC, on the other hand, saw the increased US presence as a stimulus to enhance its military apparatus. The position held by Japan is torn between two opposite approaches, a soft and more inclusive one, conscious of the importance of the Chinese economy for the archipelago, and a more hard, anxiety-driven one, which advocates a competitive engagement. It is important to note that neither approach

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<sup>324</sup> Clinton, H. (2011, October 11). America’s Pacific Century. *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved at: <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>>

<sup>325</sup> Tatsumi, Y. (2013). *Opportunity out of necessity*. Stimson.p.30

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Obama, B. (2011, November 17). *Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament*. Retrieved at: <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>>

<sup>328</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2015, April 28). *Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan in Joint Press Conference*. Retrieved at: <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/28/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-abe-japan-joint-press-confere>>

excludes the other, as these two aspects can both be found in the past Japanese foreign policy, even though today's trend is more orientated towards a hard approach. There is a last aspect of the military build-up that has to be taken into consideration: nuclear weapons. In Asia, especially East Asia, there are various states with a nuclear arsenal. Setting aside India and Pakistan, as their impact on regional politics is not related to the objectives of this thesis, there are the PRC, the DPRK and the US. As illustrated in the first chapter, the PLA Second Artillery Corp is in possession of various intercontinental ballistic missiles, theoretically able to reach even the US mainland. The 2015 Pentagon annual report concerning China's military power indicates that the PLA has "multiple independently-targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV)-equipped Mod 3 (DF-5)"<sup>329</sup> ICBMs. A MIRV missile contains several warheads, and each one of them is capable to independently hit one target. This could be considered another consequence of the ongoing arms race, as the acquisition of MIRV technology could be seen as countermeasure adopted by China in response to the US-Japan BMD program, in order not to lose an important strategic option as a viable second-strike capability. It is almost needless to say that many in Japan have seen this move as an indicator of aggressive behavior.<sup>330</sup>

It is highly unlikely that Japan will develop a nuclear arsenal as a consequence of its competition with China. While it would certainly have the required technology to do so, pursuing the nuclear option would be completely unacceptable for the Japanese public opinion, thus Japan will probably continue to benefice of the nuclear umbrella provided by the United States. It is however interesting to note that in the past the possibility of "going nuclear" has been used by the Japanese government as a bargaining tool with the United States, well aware that an eventual nuclear Japan would have sparked a nuclear arms race in Asia, with a regional destabilization unacceptable for the United States.<sup>331</sup>

To a certain extend, this "political use" of nuclear weapons is also present in the behavior of North Korea. Usually, the DPRK is depicted as an irrational actor or "crazy" state, but this preconception that the Pyongyang regime is not a rational actor

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<sup>329</sup> Department of Defense. (2015). *Annual report to congress, Military and security developments involving the People's Republic of China*. p.8

<sup>330</sup> Kato, Y. (2015, May 28). U.S. House subcommittee chairman: China's upgraded nuclear missiles 'another indication of aggression'. *The Asahi Shimbun*. Retrieved at: <[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201505280079](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201505280079)>

<sup>331</sup> Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press.

has to be set aside: it is far too convenient to simply brand Kim Jong-Un's threats and declarations as the actions of a mad man, while they respond to a conscious political and diplomatic plan.<sup>332</sup> The North Korean nuclear plane responds to the same processes that can be found behind an armed race: insecurity and perceived threat. The ROK and the US presence in the region are considered imminent survival threats by Pyongyang. There is also a clear disparity between the two sides; the Korean People's Army (KPA), which permanently maintains a heavy presence in proximity of the demilitarized zone near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, is the fourth largest military in the world in terms of personnel, but is mostly supplied with severely outdated equipment.<sup>333</sup> South Korean military forces, on the other hand, have fewer numbers but have been able to exploiting the perks of the alliance with the US, namely joint trainings and operations, which resulted in better trained and equipped troops.<sup>334</sup> The disparity between the two armies can be found also in the performances of the two national economies, which inevitably translate into different military budgets: relying on conventional military expenditures, for North Korea would be almost impossible to match the ROK military capabilities. Therefore, pursuing nuclear capability has been by far the cheapest and most efficient option in terms cost-effective trade-off. It is sufficient to say that in 2012 the North Korean GDP amounted to only 0.04 of the South Korean one,<sup>335</sup> also, it has been estimated that until 2012, the total DPRK expenditures over its nuclear program and missile tests were about \$3.1 billions.<sup>336</sup> Considering the status of North Korean public finance, this may seem an absurdly huge sum, but it is still smaller compared to the amount of money that would be required to modernize the DPRK's overall military assets.<sup>337</sup>

To conclude, after having assessed the trends at work in the region it is possible to affirm that indeed there is an arms race underway in East Asia, driven by many factors. As in the case of the Anglo-German naval build-up, there is a growing new power, that, conscious of its capabilities within the new multipolar regional system, is

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<sup>332</sup> Youngwon, C. (2014). Method to the madness of Chairman Kim: The instrumental rationality of North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons, *International Journal* Vol. 69. p.6

<sup>333</sup> Department of Defense. (2013). *Military and Security Developments Involving the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*. pp. 8-9

<sup>334</sup> Ministry of Defense. (2014). *Defense of Japan 2014*, Urban connection. pp. 28-30.

<sup>335</sup> DPRK's 40 Billions against ROK's 1.62 Trillion (US\$).

Data retrieved from the Central Intelligence Agency, The world fact book.

<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/refmaps.html>>

<sup>336</sup> Youngwon, C. (2014). Method to the madness of Chairman Kim: The instrumental rationality of North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons, *International Journal* Vol. 69. p.21

<sup>337</sup> Youngwon, C. (2014). Method to the madness of Chairman Kim: The instrumental rationality of North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons, *International Journal* Vol. 69. p.22

undertaking a modernizing military process, in order to secure its position against the established hegemonic power, the US, which in turn is adding weight to its presence in the region, both due to its strategic importance and also not to lose the competitive advantage held for decades. This is the main driver to what the consequences of this two process have to be added; thus, it is possible to appreciate the causes of the Japanese security reform and defense budget increase, as a way to reinforce its alliance with the United States and to counter the Chinese threat. Similar conclusions can be drawn for Australia and South Korea. North Korea, albeit for a more immediate concern that is the self preservation of the regime, is pursuing its own military build-up, which, given the fact that involves nuclear weapons, is considered a threat to the whole system.

However, as said before, the fact that it is actually possible to recognize the existence of an arms race does not imply that the military build-up will necessarily result in an armed confrontation between the states in the region. Before answering to this question, it would be appropriate to illustrate the scenarios where the undergoing geopolitical tensions might turn into conflicts.

### 3.2 Possible flashpoints for conflict

East Asia had been characterized for the most part of the last decades by many territorial issues among various states; therefore, it would be quite probable that, should a conflict arise, this would be related to one of these disputes. The focus of this work, as repeated many times, is the relation between Japan and China so an analysis over possible contingencies should focus only on the strategic interests of these two countries, with perhaps an inclusion of their closets allies. Unfortunately, international relations are more complicated than that: if the analysis has to be comprehensive, it cannot avoid including situations that would indirectly place some constrains on one of the countries under consideration.

As far as Japanese and Chinese direct involvement is concerned, the Senkaku/Diaoyu archipelago is probably the area where tensions are more likely to escalate. As depicted in the first chapter, the archipelago has been the scene of actions from both sides that one after the other resulted in exacerbating dialogue. To the provocative actions also has to be added the military improvement. The most recent, and most bold, action has been the declaration of the Chinese ADIZ in the ECS, an action

through which China attempted to normalize its presence. It can be seen as the culmination of the series of low intensity actions that the PRC has been undertaking in the area almost on a routine basis. Usually these actions consist in activities known as “grey area”, that is events that are above crime-level but under the line of military conflict. These actions are carried out by the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG), the PLAN and even by the commercial fishing fleet, patrolling or trespassing in claimed waters.<sup>338</sup> The Japanese military is well aware of these actions, as well as of the fact that the PLAN is training in order to be able to operate within the first island chain, and as indicated in the Defense White Papers issued years 2014 and 2015, one of the main focuses of the JSDF’s training will be the defense of Japan’s remote islands. To do so, the SDF will focus on developing the necessary intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities as well as on the institution of “Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigades” within the GSDF. The trainings are being conducted with the US forces in order to develop mutual coordination procedures.<sup>339</sup> President Obama has also declared that the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands are included in the scope of the Japan-US security treaty.<sup>340</sup> This declaration on the one hand might stabilize the situation, as adding the military weight of the US might dissuade China from undertaking any serious actions, while, on the other hand, should a conflict erupt, it would automatically go beyond Asia, with terrible consequences.

Another possible flashpoint is Taiwan. The US affirmed on many occasions that it would not accept any unilateral endings of the Taiwan issue, and in that case Japan, especially the bases in Okinawa, would be of pivotal importance for the US Navy. The PRC also made clear that Taiwan is considered part of China and it is ready to move militarily on the island in seven cases: a formal declaration of independence, undefined moves towards Taiwan independence, internal unrest, Taiwan’s acquisition of nuclear weapons, indefinite delays in resumption on cross-strait dialogue on unification, foreign intervention on the island’s affairs and in case of a foreign military presence on Taiwan.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Department of Defense. (2015). *Annual report to congress, Military and security developments involving the People’s Republic of China*.

<sup>339</sup> Ministry of Defense. (2015). *Defense of Japan 2015*. p. 227-228

Retrieved at: < [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2015/DOJ2015\\_3-1-1\\_web.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2015/DOJ2015_3-1-1_web.pdf)>

<sup>340</sup> Ministry of Defense. (2014). *Defense of Japan 2014*, Urban connection. pp.489

<sup>341</sup> Department of Defense. (2014). *Annual report to congress, Military and security developments involving the People’s Republic of China* p. 57-58

The third flashpoint in North-East Asia could be the Korean Peninsula. The Pyongyang regime is obviously a primal threat for the Republic of Korea, and Japan has remarked on various occasions how the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) held by the DPRK pose a “serious and imminent threat”<sup>342</sup>. North Korea is not new to provocative actions, usually part of coercive diplomacy, as the various nuclear and missile test conducted in the last decades. However, it is more convenient for the US and its allies to wait for an eventual collapse of the regime, which is highly dependent on foreign economic aid than to seek a military solution. The main issue in case of contingency with the DPRK would be the risk of rapid escalation; given the poor state of its armed forces and the great dependence placed on asymmetric capabilities, the Pyongyang regime might resort to suicidal retaliation with non-conventional means. This hypothesis is, however, highly unlikely, as any regional actor, including North Korea’s closest ally, the PRC would have to deal with enormous consequent problems, foremost the high numbers of refugees, and thus has every incentive to avoid escalation.

Finally, the last potential flashpoint is the South China Sea (SCS). It has a strategic importance both for defense and economic reasons: it provides 10% of the global fish catch and its ship-borne trade amounts to \$5 trillions.<sup>343</sup> Moreover, the SCS is globally one of the most important energy supply routes, as about 80% of the gas and oil imports for Japan, China, Taiwan and South Korea are shipped through these waters. The PRC has overlapping claims in the South China Sea with Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. All of these countries’ claims also overlap among each other, making the issue even more complicated. The two main disputes in which the PRC is currently involved in the SCS concern two archipelagos, the Paracel and the Spratly islands. As for the dispute over the Paracel islands, it is between China and Vietnam. This dispute has proven to be one of the main drivers of Vietnamese defense expenditure in the last years,<sup>344</sup> and in 2014, after a Chinese State Owned Enterprise positioned in the area a drilling rig, the two countries found themselves

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<sup>342</sup> Ministry of Defense. (2015). *Defense of Japan 2015*. p.17

Retrieved at: <[http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2015/DOJ2015\\_1-1-2\\_web.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2015/DOJ2015_1-1-2_web.pdf)>

<sup>343</sup> Lague, D. (2012, May 25). Analysis: China's nine-dashed line in South China Sea, *Routers*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-sea-boundary-idUSBRE84O07520120525>>

<sup>344</sup> Vuving, A. L. (2014, November 26). Vietnam, the US, and Japan in the South China Sea, *The Diplomat*.

Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2014/11/vietnam-the-us-and-japan-in-the-south-china-sea/>>

incredibly close to escalation, as several ships were deployed by both states near the drilling site.<sup>345</sup>

The Spratly archipelago, with its rich resources of gas and oil, is claimed by China, Vietnam and the Philippines. Lately China has started to build artificial islands near this archipelago, attempting to advance its Exclusive Economic Zone and bolster its claims on the Spratly. This has been seen as a dangerous change in the existing status quo.<sup>346</sup> The construction of artificial islands, but more importantly the installation of what seem to be command, control and communications facilities and over-the-horizon radars,<sup>347</sup> has caused international concerns. In the last months of 2015, the US undertook Freedom of Navigation (FON) operations within 12 nautical miles of one Chinese reef in the archipelago.<sup>348</sup> This action has been read as a reaffirmation of the rule of law against excessive maritime claims, and has been gladly welcomed by many of the states contending China in the SCS.<sup>349</sup> Despite not being part of any territorial dispute in the SCS, it is possible that the MSDF will participate to the SOF operations, in order to strengthen the Japanese ties with the maritime south Asian countries, and with the US.<sup>350</sup>

After having considered both the arms race process and the possible flashpoints present in the region, conclusions must be drawn. It is possible to trace in the Asian Pacific various trends, and all of them seem to indicate the existence of a confrontation: China, as a rising power, is trying to impose its view in a pre-

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<sup>345</sup> Bower, E. Z. & Poling, G. B. (2014, May 7). China-Vietnam tensions high over drilling rig in disputed waters. *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. Retrieved at: <<http://csis.org/publication/critical-questions-china-vietnam-tensions-high-over-drilling-rig-disputed-waters>>

<sup>346</sup> Wong, E. and Ansfield, J. (2014, June 16). To Bolster Its Claims, China Plants Islands in Disputed Waters, *The New York Times*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/17/world/asia/spratly-archipelago-china-trying-to-bolster-its-claims-plants-islands-in-disputed-waters.html>>

<sup>347</sup> Lee, V. R. (2015, September 16). South China Sea: Satellite Imagery Shows China's Buildup on Fiery Cross Reef, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/south-china-sea-satellite-imagery-shows-chinas-buildup-on-fiery-cross-reef/>>

<sup>348</sup> Lin, K.C. & Villar Gertner A. (2015, November 18). Gunboat Diplomacy in the South China Sea, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/gunboat-diplomacy-in-the-south-china-sea/>>

<sup>349</sup> Odom, J. G. (2015, October 31). Why US FON Operations in the South China Sea Make Sense, *The Diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/why-us-fon-operations-in-the-south-china-sea-make-sense/>>

<sup>350</sup> Tatsumi Y. (2015, October 31). The South China Sea: A Test for Japan's 'Proactive Contribution to Peace', *The diplomat*. Retrieved at: <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/the-south-china-sea-a-test-for-japans-proactive-contribution-to-peace/>>

established environment, and, by doing so, it increases insecurity in the whole system. However, this does not mean that a conflict between the emerging and the established power is inevitable. In understanding this, it could be useful to resort one again to history. At the beginning of the chapter an analogy between the pre-WWI Europe and current East Asia has been drawn, mainly to illustrate the common features of the two arms races. Now the comparison can be used in order to find the differences between the two environments and understand why the same outcome is not probable.

First of all, the European scenario was characterized by what has been described as “a tangled mess of bilateral security agreements and understandings”.<sup>351</sup> This series of security commitments ensured that, once one of the states that subscribed them entered war, all of the other countries would be drawn into the conflict. The current situation in Asia may present a few similarities but it is ultimately different. As shown before, the security architecture of the region is based mainly on a multilayered framework composed of bilateral and multilateral agreements. Similarly to pre-WWI Europe various states committed to each other, for example Japan and Vietnam, and almost every country concerned by China has strengthened its ties with the US. However, the US has been clear in voicing its intentions of avoiding any risk of entanglement in other states’ disputes, as long as violence is not used. This intention has been clearly expressed by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton concerning both the South<sup>352</sup> and the East China Sea.<sup>353</sup> With this stance, the US seems to have in some ways set a bar, identified with unilateral changes of the status-quo and use of force, under which it would not intervene. This “flexibility” while avoiding total commitment, could also, paradoxically, on the medium term, increase a certain degree of instability by encouraging China to continue the so-called “grey-area” operations and low intensity provocations that in the past were met with nothing more than formal protests. The Asian countries, on the other hand, might become more assertive, reassured by the ultimate protection provided by the United States in case of contingencies. So, the regional structure described so far does not

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<sup>351</sup> Chong, J. I., & Hall, T. H. (2014). The lessons of 1914 for East Asia today: Missing the trees for the forest. *International Security*, 39(1) p.19

<sup>352</sup> Clinton, H. (2011, July 22). *The South China Sea. Press Statement*. Retrieved at: <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/07/168989.htm>>

<sup>353</sup> U.S. Department of State. (2013, January 18). *Remarks With Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida After Their Meeting* Retrieved at: <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2013/01/203050.htm>>

seem very capable to avoid conflict. This is because a capital element has been, until now, not considered: economic regional integration. At the beginning of the chapter it has been stated that war is composed of capabilities and intentions; economic integration is the element that turns intention away from conflict. According to the data provided by the US bureau of public affairs, the East Asia Pacific region accounts for more than one-quarter of the global GDP, and as far as the US economy is concerned, 26% of its exports are directed toward the region, amounting to almost \$1.2 trillion dollar in the two-way trade for the United States.<sup>354</sup> A great part of Chinese economy is connected with the region too; besides Hong Kong, the US and Japan are the first and the second economic partners of the PRC. This level of economic integration would ensure serious drawbacks in case of sanctions or the economic standstill that a military conflict would imply. The economic prowess of the PRC is a huge elements in favor of China, as many country might want to keep an ambivalent position between it and the US, in order not to jeopardize their economic ties with most important economy in the region.

Given these elements, diplomatic cooperation seems the best way to solve issues in the regions. Various actions in this direction have already been taken, as the 2013 fishing agreement signed by Taiwan and Japan or the 2014 boundary agreement between Indonesia and the Philippines.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> U.S. Department of State. (2013, December 16). *The East Asia-Pacific Rebalance: Expanding U.S. Engagement*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/pl/2013/218776.htm>>

<sup>355</sup> Chong, J. I., & Hall, T. H. (2014). The lessons of 1914 for East Asia today: Missing the trees for the forest. *International Security*, 39(1) p.42

## *Conclusions*

It is my hope that, approaching the conclusion of this thesis, one thing, among others, became clear. Given the intricate, and maybe sometimes dispersive, amount of information and processes that need to be taken into consideration when addressing a complex issue such as the status of Sino-Japanese relations, every event considered is the result of many instances. This should be evident just by considering the many fields touched by this work. Nonetheless, this work, in its own small way, provided perhaps some answers, but it is in my opinion important to bare in mind that complex questions never have simple answers.

In its totality, this thesis aimed to recognize and describe the various processes currently underway in East Asia, which are affecting the status and the direction of the security aspect of the Sino-Japanese relation. The simple description of the processes however is not acceptable, as they need to be contextualized; thus, it has been necessary to illustrate how the changes in the global international structure are affecting the regional - namely Asian - structure, since the former obviously has an impact on latter. A historical analysis of the drivers behind the general worsening of the current condition of the relation was also needed, in addition to a prediction of the possible future developments.

The PRC's rise since the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in concomitance with already existing trends of international politics, most notably the emergence of a multipolar international structure that in the next decades is poised to affirm itself globally, has been perceived as a huge change in East Asia. The states most concerned by China's growth, which has been both economic and military, have been two: Japan and the US. If military power and GDP are to be considered, the United States is by far the strongest country in the world, and since 1989 has been the undisputed global hegemonic power. Japan is not only the US's closest ally in the region, but also the most advanced country in Asia. At his point, it is possible to recognize three trends: the constant and strong economic growth of China, which had effects on every other aspects of the country, the relative decline of the United States, of which the subprime crisis has been perhaps the most evident aspect, and a constant weakening of Japan, haunted by the ghosts of the fiscal and economic crisis that hit

the country at the beginning of the 1990s, with an aging population and every day more and more concerned about China. The US and Japan obviously would not passively accept this situation, so they started to address the problem. The concerns were made even more severe by the fact that the PRC, having acknowledged its new capabilities and resources, seems to have crafted its own strategy in order to assess itself as the next regional power, and maybe, over time, even on “go global”. It is today possible to recognize a strategy devised in order to contain China. The US has been focusing on this strategy for years, trying to address China with various tools, both economically, as with the TPP, and militarily by improving the security ties with most of the states in the Asian Pacific region. Japan is vital in this last aspect: historically, the archipelago has been acting as the linchpin of US security in the region. To this end, the US has been pressuring the Japanese government in order to share the economic burden of defense, to increase collaboration with other regional actors such as Australia and South Korea, and to carry out a security reform that would allow Japanese troops to engage in combat situation with allied troops.

The reform process in Japan proved to be difficult due to historical internal disputes between the more hawkish revisionists and pacifists supported by a large part of the public opinion; in the end, however, Abe Shinzō managed to pass the reform, allowing the dispatch of the JSDF and probably securing himself a place in Japanese history. The reform has also been harshly criticized by external actors, mainly China and South Korea. This stance can be explained by looking at the past of the international relations between Japan and those countries: minor portions of the conservative Japanese elite have never completely been able to take a clear position over its imperialist past, when it invaded and carried out terrible crimes on the population of other Asian countries. As legacy of that past, nowadays Japan is entangled in various territorial disputes, as well as more serious diplomatic issues concerning the war time crimes that today a part of the political elite even refuses to recognize as such. This behavior is obviously problematic, at best, when dealing with allies such as the ROK, and quite destabilizing in the relations with the PRC, which in turn is experiencing a surge of nationalism.

The Chinese insistence on war-related nationalism and narratives of victimhood is aimed at domestic and international political gains. This intention has been made clear by the behavior of the PRC in early 2014, when it institutionalized and memorialized the anniversaries of its victory against Japan and the Nanjing Massacre.

There have also been various domestic actions, events and statements that contributed to strengthen domestic anti-Japanese sentiments. The Chinese government, both at a central and local level, took action in order to re-open historical wounds that previously were not part of the state-sanctioned narrative of the second Sino-Japanese war.<sup>356</sup> For instance, Nanjing City decided in early 2014 to preserve its old comfort station, which is also Asia's biggest. This act has been justified by the PRC's renewed sensibility to wartime sex labor issues, even though not all of the women should be identified as sex-slaves.<sup>357</sup> Chinese courts also adopted a new stance towards plaintiffs who had been or whose relatives had been forced laborers; in 2013 the Beijing district court started to hear charges that were unheeded for years.

On the international stage, China started to develop closer ties to the Republic of Korea, traditionally one of the most sensitive neighboring states on the historical issues. The eventuality of a stronger connection between the PRC and the ROK has not been welcomed by the US, which intervened in order to ease frictions between Tokyo and Seoul.<sup>358</sup>

Since Xi's advent, it is possible to observe an intensification of the political use of history. The outcome has not always been successful, as during Xi's visit in Germany in March 2014, when he has been denied visit to the Holocaust memorial site.<sup>359</sup> However, despite occasional failures, from an internal point of view, this strategy has been successful, since the Chinese persistence in depicting the Japanese government as revisionist inflamed the Chinese public opinion and consequently the standoff between the two countries.

This is the situation described. The question would now be, what is likely going to happen in the next two, five or ten years? That is difficult to say; it is however possible to illustrate general predictions based on the trends seen until today. One thing is almost certain: it is highly unlikely that the PRC will be able to substitute the United State as the only hegemonic power, at last within the next decade. Despite the

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<sup>356</sup> Mitter, R. (2013). *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

<sup>357</sup> Wakabayashi, B. T. (2003). Comfort Women: Beyond Litigious Feminism, *Monumenta Nipponica*, 58(2), Summer. pp.223-258.

<sup>358</sup> Escritt, T. (2014, March 25). Obama brings U.S. allies South Korea and Japan together for talks', *Reuters*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-korea-trilateral-idUSBREA2O1OT20140325>>/

<sup>359</sup> Boehler, P. (2014, March 5). Germany refuses Xi Jinping's request to visit Holocaust memorial sites during tour of Europe, *South China Morning Post*.

Retrieved at: <<http://www.scmp.com/news/china-insider/article/1440870/germany-turns-down-chinas-war-memorial-visit-request-presidents?page=all>>

astonishing growth and development sustained by the PRC, the US is still militarily superior, with more experienced troops and better equipment, and it is also politically and economically able to impose its will worldwide. It has not to be forgotten that the US military budget is almost equal of those of the next 9 top world spenders combined.<sup>360</sup> The US will also do whatever it can to contain China's advance. China will probably continue to modernize its military, focusing on Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) and Command, Control, Communication, Computerization, Information, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities and navy assets in order to be able, on the short-medium period, to militarily solve the Taiwan issue without external intervention, if need be. Japan's future is even more uncertain. Should Abe's economic reform hit the target, it might escape stagnation and low growth; on the security and military side, now that the constitutional constraints have been removed, the JSDF will become more similar to a "normal" armed force, able to be deployed and fight on various scenarios. The Italian army could be a good comparison in this sense, since it has been noted that the constitutional restraints on waging war in Japan are very similar to the Italian ones.<sup>361</sup> The SDF will probably focus on the ECS and SCS as well, in order to contain the Chinese maritime expansion. It is without question that such a containment task could be achieved only alongside the US. Nonetheless, it is essentially taken for granted that China will be the next regional hegemonic power in Asia, certainly not Japan.

These are only the most predictable trends, as many more are unfolding in the region. It is without question however that this century will be centered on Asia and that the Asian Pacific region in particular will become of pivotal importance, not only for Asia but also for the whole world.

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<sup>360</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). (2015). Chapter Two: Comparative defence statistics, *The Military Balance*, 115(1), 21-28. p.21

<sup>361</sup> Pugliese, G. (2015). Japan 2014: Between a China Question and a China Obsession. Torri M. & Mocchi N. (Eds.) *Engaging China/Containing China: Asia in 2014*, 25. p.59

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