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Nuclear Jeopardy:
The Dangers of Japanese Proliferation

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Nuclear Jeopardy: The Dangers of Japanese Proliferation

Evaluator

Mike M. Mochizuki, Ph.D.

Professor at the Elliott School of International Affairs

Faculty Advisor

Robert J. Pekkanen, Ph.D.

Professor at the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies

Project Directors

Ethan Acevedo

Roger Clemens

Kay Reed

Editors

Amy Bishop-Smith

Claire Paiemont

Authors

Ethan Acevedo | Amy Bishop-Smith | Roger Clemens

Claire Paiemont | Kay Reed

with

Yuyue Che

Tommy Chen

Chun-I Chiang

Jeffrey Chiou

Ina Chong

Noah Kim

Lucas Kleyn

Yuki Kudo

Ryan Murphy

Leonard Tanne

Nuqu Xiong

Jennifer Zhang

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary (pg. 1–4)

Chapter I: Foreign Relations and Nuclear Fallout

- **Introduction** (pg. 5)
- **Section I**: Japan and the United States (pg. 5–11)
- **Section II**: Japan and the People's Republic of China (pg. 12–17)
- **Section III**: Japan and the Republic of China (pg. 18–25)
- **Section IV**: Japan and the Korean Peninsula (pg. 26–32)
- **Section V**: Japan and the Russian Federation (pg. 33–40)

Chapter II: Economic Costs of Nuclear Proliferation (pg. 41–46)

Chapter III: Attendant Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation (pg. 47–52)

Chapter IV: Composition of Japanese Anti-Nuclear Identity

- **Introduction** (pg. 53)
- **Section I**: The Atomic Bombings and Nuclear Accidents (pg. 53–58)
- **Section II**: Article 9 and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles (pg. 59–63)

Executive Conclusion (pg. 64)

References (pg. 65–77)

Executive Summary

With consideration for the serious ramifications of nuclear proliferation — which include harming key diplomatic and economic partners, igniting conflict with foreign adversaries, hindering one's own economy and energy supply, originating a sudden rise of international proliferation, and provoking domestic and international scrutiny that sows suspicion over the ethics and priorities of the country — any effort to proliferate from Japan has the probability of creating a more dangerous situation than proliferation would ever possibly solve.

One current international objective of the United Nations is the reduction in use and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons as evident by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) from 1970 and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) from 2021. In part, this objective is highlighted by the United Nations with such frequency because the dangerous nature of nuclear weapons — which is not unknown to Japan, the first and only country to suffer the direct and brutal impacts of nuclear bombings — goes beyond the casualties and infrastructural damage and instead extends to even their creation and storage, which are risky undertakings on their own. The implications of proliferating and obtaining weaponry of this caliber are clear: possession of the power to cause mass casualties and infrastructural damage to cities and the intent and comfortability with using them. For Japan, such an extreme reversal in its conduct on the international stage would undoubtedly cause a global disturbance.

In acknowledgement of arguments for the proliferation of Japan, we recognize the existence of foreign nations frequently regarded as threats to Japan – often due to territorial disputes such as the Senkaku Islands (尖閣諸島) with the People's Republic of China (PRC, "China") and the Republic of China (ROC, "Taiwan") or the Northern Territories (北方領土) with the Russian Federation ("Russia"). Additional threats include the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, "North Korea") and its usage of intimidation tactics such as missile testing in the Sea of Japan and North Pacific Ocean – waters surrounding not only Japan but its ally, the Republic of Korea (ROK, "South Korea").

Fortunately, the current international environment at this time does not legitimize the nuclear proliferation of Japan when weighed against the credibility of foreign threats and the overall significance of these conflicts as discussed in further depth in Chapter I Section II–V. In studying these foreign conflicts, our findings indicate that they do not constitute the escalation of

national security initiatives to the extent of proliferation, especially in the instance of territorial conflicts. The probability of proliferation aggravating these current threats is immense, and therefore, proliferating would be contradictory to Japan's objectives of establishing stability and democracy in East Asia.

In Chapter I Section I, we assert the notion that the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and subsequent alliance of forces are sufficient for the prolonged defense of Japan. In conjunction with the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), the American military can adequately address the current international and regional threat environment and any future adjustments to those environments. Additionally, the American nuclear umbrella is robust enough to defend Japan should it require the usage of nuclear weapons, creating a situation where Japanese proliferation would be unnecessary in light of the other consequences facing Japan should it proliferate.

To further address the non-diplomatic consequences of Japanese proliferation, Chapter II discusses the economic consequences of proliferation domestically and internationally as well as the opportunity costs of proliferation. We emphasize the probability of sanctions — a particularly challenging obstacle for Japan, who is heavily reliant on the importation of natural resources and other materials — and decreased foreign investment opportunities and the subsequent repercussions these consequences would have on the Japanese economy. This establishes that Japanese proliferation is not only dangerous for foreign diplomacy and security purposes but is difficult due to the opportunity cost to its nuclear energy supply and the potential sanctions on importation of other energy sources such as petroleum.

In an effort to acknowledge the international ramifications of Japan proliferating from a non-diplomatic standpoint, Chapter III details the "domino effect," where one country's proliferation results in a chain reaction of several other countries' subsequent proliferation. This would jeopardize not only Japan's professed claim of increasing non-proliferation movements but also the United Nations' efforts to increase non-proliferation and disarmament internationally. This would likely have the adverse effect of causing mass proliferation worldwide as even the most pacifist and anti-nuclear societies obtain nuclear weapons. This would pose a much greater risk to Japan than the initially projected regional threats of China, North Korea, and Russia and would damage regional and global security.

However, if Japan chooses to ignore the previous concerns, Chapter IV addresses the prominence of the Japanese anti-nuclear identity and the domestic barriers the Japanese

government would encounter when trying to proliferate. Section I acknowledges Japanese society's lengthy history with nuclear accidents, highlighting the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Daigo Fukuryu Maru incident, and the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster as they relate to a growing anti-nuclear sentiment among the Japanese public. It further serves to assess the contradictory relationship between the Japanese public and nuclear energy, negating the argument that public support for nuclear energy indicates public support for proliferation.

Section II outlines the current interpretations of Article 9 and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, including their restrictions and the validity of certain claims put forth by the Japanese government — most specifically that there is a capacity for so-called "defensive nuclear weapons" under Article 9, which we argue there is not. We further detail the subsequent challenges the Japanese government would face in proliferating due to the Japanese public's current interest in maintaining Article 9 and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles in their current state and the national referendum requirement necessary for the formal amendment process. Therefore, we suggest that an attempt at proliferation is unlikely if it is fully democratic and constitutional.

Thus, there are several challenges to Japanese proliferation that create a situation where such an action is dangerous, expensive, undemocratic, and unconstitutional, and proliferation would violate Japan's pacifism — a cornerstone of Japanese society and politics. Therefore, we conclude this summary with our policy recommendations to the Japanese government, which are written in further detail throughout *Nuclear Jeopardy: The Dangers of Japanese Proliferation* and written succinctly as follows:

- **Japan does not proliferate** or seek to proliferate in the now or in the near future.
- Japan continues its agreements in conjunction with the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance and remains under the American nuclear umbrella.
- Japan continues its efforts to ease tensions with China through maintaining open channels of communication, semi-regular face-to-face meetings, and exploring opportunities for future economic cooperation.
- Japan pursues joint economic ventures with China beyond basic trade to reduce the risk for conflict and bring the two countries closer together.
- Japan continues its diplomatic and economic relations with Taiwan including the creation

of the two Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company factories in Japan and the establishment of necessary free trade routes with China and Taiwan to reduce the current economic tensions in the South and East China Seas.

- ↳ Japan continues its current course of action with the United States in the instance of an invasion of Taiwan by China, supporting the United States as necessary.
- ↳ Japan resumes conversations with North Korea to normalize the relationship between the two countries and resumes separate conversations with North Korea to address the abduction issue.
- ↳ Japan continues its diplomatic and economic relations with South Korea, acting as a consistent and reliable ally in East Asia to increase trust with the other country.
- ↳ Japan continues to build a strong trilateral alliance with the United States and South Korea to increase security and stability in East Asia.
- ↳ Japan pursues conversations with Russia to normalize the relationship in a muted capacity accounting for the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War to gradually lead toward further conversations about the Northern Territories.
- ↳ Japan pursues greater energy security through simultaneous efforts to divert the energy supply to more diverse sources and continuing economic relations with Russia to receive a fraction of its supply from said country.
- ↳ Japan remains in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to maintain regional and global security and pursue its objective of international non-proliferation.
- ↳ Japan does not proliferate under the current version of the Constitution of Japan as we argue that nuclear proliferation violates the defense standards put forth by Article 9 and the 2014 reinterpretation and any effort to proliferate would be unconstitutional.
- ↳ Therefore, if Japan pursues proliferation in the near or distant future — which we advise against — then the Japanese government should pursue a formal amendment to the Constitution of Japan, which requires a national referendum. If the Japanese public does not approve of this motion, then the Japanese government should not seek to proliferate.

Chapter I: Foreign Relations and Nuclear Fallout

The effects of Japanese nuclear proliferation have a high probability of placing an immense strain on its bilateral and trilateral relations. With regard to the relations between Japan and its allies the United States, the Republic of China (ROC), and the Republic of Korea (ROK), there would be a comprehensive wave of diplomatic disconcertion. Similarly, yet to a greater degree, for countries with which Japan's relations are currently flawed — the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and the Russian Federation — proliferation may serve as the mechanism of complete severance from Japan. Although the possession of nuclear weapons could appear to be an effective tool of foreign influence, there are alternatives that have the possibility of accomplishing the same goal, and — due to the risk associated with Japanese nuclear proliferation — they should be utilized.

Section I: Japan and the United States of America

Introduction

Japanese nuclear proliferation threatens to disrupt Japan's most critical diplomatic, military and economic relationships with the United States. To maintain its camaraderie with the United States and ensure its own security moving forward, Japan should continue to rebuke nuclear weapons and disavow any domestic support for proliferation. Through its extended nuclear umbrella, the United States plays a paramount role in guaranteeing Japanese security and remains committed to that end. Recently, the United States reaffirmed the provisions of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and that it will back Japan with its nuclear arsenal in the event of an attack on Japanese territory, including the Senkaku Islands. (Wong 2023). The nuclear umbrella is fully operational and its effective counter-strike capabilities make it a credible deterrent to any possible military incursion by Japan's regional rivals China, Russia, and North Korea.

Furthermore, beyond providing invaluable security assurances, the United States is a vital trade partner to Japan, receiving 18% of all Japanese exports in 2021 (JETRO 2021 (A)). Japan-U.S. trade is a cornerstone of their relationship and is a crucial leverage point that keeps the two nations on good terms. As China continues to increase its economic independence and regional hegemonic power, continued economic cooperation between Japan and the United States is paramount for Japanese security. Japanese proliferation would reflect a lack of

confidence in the United States and could compromise their economic and military relationship. Any deterioration in Japan-U.S. relations could pose an existential threat to Japan if the United States were to withdraw its nuclear umbrella guarantee. Moving forward, Japan's best and safest course of action is to maintain its close ties with the United States by not pursuing nuclear weapons. Thus, Japanese nuclear proliferation would be an unnecessary security measure that is disproportionate to its current defense challenges and would strain its most critical relationship.

The U.S. Nuclear Umbrella and Japanese Security

Since 1967, the United States' extended nuclear umbrella has guaranteed Japanese security and made Japanese nuclear proliferation unnecessary. The nuclear umbrella has been and continues to be a credible deterrent to any expansionist military action by Japan's regional antagonists China, Russia, and North Korea. Current U.S. security policy states that the United States will "supplement" and "provide appropriate support" to Japan's Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in the event of an attack on Japanese territory. While Japan is primarily responsible for its own defense, the United States has the authority to mobilize its counter-strike assets to retaliate on behalf of Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2015). Additionally, Japanese and U.S. military officials have held extensive discussions detailing specific delegation protocols and contingency plans. Thus, the United States' forward-deployed forces in Japan are part of a well-coordinated, joint military effort that can be used to effectively repel any attack on Japanese soil. These forces represent a major obstacle and legitimate deterrent to any ill-intentioned military action by Japan's neighbors. The comprehensive security cooperation outlined in this treaty alone challenges the idea that Japanese nuclear proliferation is necessary for its national defense.

Beyond its 2015 policy, the United States has reaffirmed its commitment to Japanese security through two recent declarations at the September 14th, 2022 meeting between U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin and Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada and the January 11th, 2023 U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee conference. During the September meeting, Secretary Austin guaranteed the "full range of U.S. protections for Japan," including its nuclear capabilities (Garamone 2022). This year's January meeting produced a final joint statement, where "the United States restated its unwavering commitment" to defend Japan "under Article V of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty" using nuclear weapons if necessary (U.S.

Department of Defense 2023). These most recent declarations in conjunction with the current joint security policy reflect the Biden administration's resolve to protect Japan in the face of rising regional threats and to strengthen U.S.-Japan military cooperation. Therefore, in the event of a military conflict, Japan can rely on the United States to intervene on its behalf. With the nuclear backing of the United States, there is no conceivable scenario in which Japan would need to produce its own nuclear weapons, making nuclear proliferation a needless and unrealistic security measure.

Critics of the U.S. nuclear umbrella question its efficacy as a deterrent, but the United States has worked diligently to both bolster the credibility of its extended deterrence by regularly reaffirming its strategic interest in Japan and by maintaining a highly capable armed forces presence. The United States' well-maintained nuclear delivery system and counter-strike assets allow it to reliably fulfill its security promises to Japan. The quality of U.S. military assets in East Asia and high level of military preparedness makes the U.S. commitment to Japanese security a credible deterrent. Currently, the U.S. Nuclear Triad maintains a variety of fast and efficient means of nuclear delivery, consisting of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), sea-based submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and air-based long-range strategic bombers. As of 2023, the U.S. Air Force alone has three different strategic bombers (the B-1, B-2, and B-52) that are capable of delivering long-range nuclear strikes. Additionally, nearly all active fighter aircraft can carry the B-61 tactical nuclear bomb (Kristensen and Korda 2020). Through its Air Force assets alone, the U.S. military possesses a myriad of means to effectively deliver nuclear weapons of different sizes.

This exhaustive list makes the U.S. military highly versatile and allows it to adapt to a wide-range of possible conflict scenarios in East Asia. Therefore, the U.S. Nuclear Triad's comprehensive nature makes it extremely likely that the United States could unilaterally and successfully execute a retaliatory counter-strike on Japan's behalf. Its current material counter-strike capability again demonstrates its responsibility for Japanese security and is consistent with its intention of being able to respond effectively to an attack on Japanese territory. Consequently, Japanese proliferation would be a redundant security measure. Japanese nuclear weapons would not present any additional deterrence beyond what the United States already provides and would only serve to escalate Indo-Pacific tension.

Japan-U.S. Shared Security Interests

Japanese nuclear proliferation would represent a significant departure from mutual Japan-U.S. security interests and undermine their alliance. As articulated by the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, both states share key security interests and view their continued cooperation as imperative to ensuring Indo-Pacific stability (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2015). Additionally, the aforementioned Japan-U.S. defense meetings yielded an "unprecedented alignment of [Japan-U.S.] vision, priorities, and goals" (U.S. Department of Defense 2023). Although the 2015 guidelines define their objectives moving forward, Japan and the United States have engaged in extensive bilateral planning for over two decades. Much of this planning involves preparation for the increasing possibility of military conflict in the Indo-Pacific (Bisley 2008). The massive U.S. deployment in Japan is a primary indicator of this preparation and of the expected scale of a potential conflict. Currently, the U.S. military has around 54,000 personnel stationed in Japan, including units from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps (Chanlett-Avery et al. 2023; U.S. Forces Japan, n.d.). Among its assets include the United States' best fighter jets — F/A-18s, F-16s, F-15s, and F-35s — deployed across three air bases in Iwakuni, Kadeda, and Misawa, and the 7th Fleet, which includes the USS Ronald Reagan — an aircraft carrier capable of carrying about 90 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters (U.S. Forces Japan, n.d.).

Additionally, joint Japan-U.S. defense leadership has outlined the specific areas for improvement, including "[deepening] Japan's counter-strike capabilities" and "integrated air and missile defense… anti-submarine warfare… [and] logistics and mobility." Further, while the U.S. has "reaffirmed the critical importance" of a credible and resilient "U.S. extended deterrence," there has not been any discussion of a nuclear-armed Japan (U.S. Department of Defense 2023). This illustrates that the two states view nuclear proliferation as unnecessary to Indo-Pacific security. On nuclear weapons, the Japanese government must proceed with the utmost precaution and favor non-proliferation, especially since both Japan and the United States have determined that Japanese proliferation is not part of their current strategy. Furthermore, if Japan were to pursue nuclear weapons, especially without U.S. approval, it could diminish the efficacy of their military cooperation and diplomatic relationship.

Japanese nuclear proliferation would constitute a complete reversal of Japan's own stated security goals and lead to a diminished perception of their alliance with the U.S. One of the

forefront joint Japan-U.S. interests is to maintain the status quo in the Indo-Pacific, while making incremental improvements to trilateral cooperation with Australia (U.S. Department of Defense 2023). Japanese proliferation would be completely antithetical to that current objective. A nuclear-armed Japan would significantly alter the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific and dramatically increase Japan's perceived threat level among its neighbors. Furthermore, while the Japan-U.S. alliance is robust, Japan could easily jeopardize this relationship if it chose to pursue nuclear weapons. Japanese proliferation would contradict the 2022 U.S.-Japan Joint Statement on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which states that their ultimate goal is the "total elimination" of nuclear weapons in the long-term (U.S. Department of State 2022 (B)). Such a dramatic reversal would reflect poorly on both Japan and the United States and cast doubt on the compatibility of their interests moving forward.

Additionally, Japanese proliferation would likely create the perception that Japan lacks confidence in the United States as a reliable security partner. China, Russia, and North Korea would likely view a misalignment of this degree as a major weakness in the Japan-U.S. alliance and would consider U.S. security assurances to be less credible. Consequently, U.S. extended nuclear deterrence would be less effective and Japan would be unequivocally less safe (Jervis 1982). Thus, the Japanese government should avoid nuclear proliferation because it works against its goals of maintaining the status quo and would not provide any benefit toward improving Japanese security.

Japan-U.S. Economic Relationship

Japanese nuclear proliferation could compromise its essential trade relationship with the United States, which would threaten its economic autonomy and by extension, its security. The Japanese economy is highly dependent on American consumption of its exports, particularly automobiles and auto-parts. Any substantial decrease in those exports could severely hamper the Japanese economy since auto-related goods account for 19.4% of Japan's total exports while exports comprise 18% of Japan's GDP (Ministry of Finance of Japan 2023; OECD 2021). In 2021, the United States was Japan's second largest trade partner after China while Japan was the United States' fifth largest trade relationship respectively (JETRO 2021 (A)). Additionally, the United States receives a massive 18% of Japan's total exports while providing 10% of Japan's total imports. Although the United States is a substantial export target for Japan, Japanese

exports only accounted for 5% of U.S. imports and Japanese consumption of American goods was only 4% of American exports (Chanlett-Avery et al. 2023). The United States is one of the primary consumers of Japanese goods and its consumption outpaces any reciprocal Japanese consumption of American goods. Consequently, American consumption comprises a significant share of Japanese GDP and underscores how dependent the Japanese economy is on the United States. Furthermore, Japan accounts for a declining share of U.S. imports due to shifts in the global supply chain and the transference of manufacturing to developing countries like China (Chanlett-Avery et al. 2023). Japanese economic dependency on the United States is further cemented by the fact that a large portion of U.S. imports to Japan are liquefied natural gas, which Japan is heavily reliant on for its energy demands (International Trade Administration, n.d.). Without U.S. oil imports, the Japanese economy would suffer immensely, especially considering that the global oil supply is unusually volatile as a consequence of the Russo-Ukrainian War.

While these figures show that Japan and the United States are interdependent, it is clear that Japan — with its smaller and stagnant economy — relies much more on the United States. Moving forward, Japan's reliance on the United States will only continue to increase as Japan's share of global exports decreases. Thus, while the United States would want to avoid a total trade severance with Japan, it could diversify and rely on other partners if necessary. Therefore, Japan should not proliferate because it would threaten its mutually beneficial trade relationship with the United States.

Conclusion

If Japan were to pursue nuclear weapons, it could jeopardize its critical relationship with the United States, and ultimately create a situation where Japan is less safe. In light of the extended nuclear umbrella's credible deterrence, Japan should simply continue to engage in regular communication with the United States and maintain updated guidelines for security cooperation. Japan-U.S. bilateral security operations are the most critical factor for sustaining the status quo in the Indo-Pacific and preventing a revisionist state from taking unilateral military action. Consequently, Japanese proliferation would be totally antithetical to maintaining the status quo because nuclear weapons would radically change the real power distribution of the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, nuclear proliferation would be an enormous deviation from their joint plans and shared vision for regional security. While Japan and the United States have a good

rapport, a shift of this degree would be unquestionably damaging to their relationship and would significantly undermine the perception of their alliance. Additionally, any deterioration in Japan-U.S. diplomatic relations is likely to spillover to their economic relationship, which would be devastating for the Japanese economy. To conclude, Japan should adamantly avoid nuclear proliferation and instead pursue ever-improving bilateral cooperation with the United States, its most critical ally.

Section II: Japan and the People's Republic of China

Introduction

Despite China's rising military and economic capability, its ascension and regional hegemony does not pose the existential threat needed to warrant Japanese nuclear proliferation. Pursuing nuclear weapons would only serve to incense China, escalate regional tensions, and diminish Japanese security. Japan and China have a long history of violent conflict and their relations have only recently been stabilized. From 2017 to 2019, and again in February 2023, Japan and China have had several in-person meetings to discuss prominent issues and future cooperation in an attempt to resume regular talks and alleviate tension (Ming 2021; Murakami 2023). The February meeting covered China's relationship with Russia, Japan's military expansion and the Cross-Strait conflict. While none of these meetings with China have yielded any resolution to their outstanding problems, it appears both states understand the value of de-escalation. Nonetheless, rising nationalist sentiment and the legacy of their historical antagonism continues to hamper progress. Thus, considering the fragile nature of Japan-China relations and the prospects for improvement, Japan should not proliferate to maintain progress with China and to prevent endangering the Japanese public.

Moreover, despite their historical and contemporary grievances, Japan and China have been core trade partners for decades, and their economic interdependence continues to grow. Both states are major mutual exporters and importers and any substantial reduction in trade would be extremely costly to both, but especially Japan. Japanese nuclear proliferation would draw China's ire and move it to fervent retaliation, which would likely include severe military and economic measures to punish Japan. The Japanese pursuit of nuclear weapons would likely commit irreparable damage to their economic relationship. Therefore, Japan should not proliferate in order to maintain its fruitful economic relationship with China.

Japan-China Diplomatic Relationship

China's rapid ascension to world power status and the expansion of its military has provoked Japan to pursue its own security improvements. However, although China's increasing material capability has elevated the threat environment for Japan, it does not constitute a

legitimate threat to Japanese autonomy. Thus, Japan should not proliferate in response to a rising China.

The primary item of contention between Japan and China is the sovereignty and dominion of the Senkaku Islands. Although the Senkaku Islands are symbolically important to both Japan and China, their strategic value is such that risking full-scale military conflict for control over them is unfathomable (Deans 2000, 120). While both Japan and China have maintained their respective claims to the Senkaku Islands, much of this messaging is likely political posturing to project an image of strength. Currently, Japan and China are engaged in a great power rivalry for material domination over the Indo-Pacific. Officials from both states have utilized historical grievances to bolster public support for an increased regional presence and for their respective regimes. Consequently, neither state will relinquish its claims over the Islands out of fear of international embarrassment and a reduction in political legitimacy. China is especially vulnerable, since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) relies heavily on the symbolic weight of the Islands and on anti-Japanese sentiment (Deans 2000).

Thus, the Senkaku Islands dispute is likely to remain, and should remain, an unresolved situation until both states can find a path towards de-escalation without angering one or the other. Furthermore, although possession of the Senkaku Islands provides some strategic advantage, any such benefit is marginal at best, especially when compared to the overall security picture and the severe ramifications of nuclear proliferation. The United States has also already made an explicit guarantee that the Senkaku Islands are covered under its extended nuclear umbrella (as referenced in Chapter I: Section I), further underscoring the redundancy of Japanese nuclear weapons (Wong 2023). Consequently, Japan should not pursue a nuclear weapons program to defend its administration of the Senkaku Islands and should instead seek security through an improved relationship with China.

Despite their differences, both nations have much to gain from healthy bilateral cooperation, as echoed by Yamada Shigeo, Japan’s Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs (Murakami 2023). Fortunately, it appears Japan and China understand the necessity of facilitating resolutions moving forward. Although Japan-China relations have been tenuous since the 2010 Senkaku boat collision incident, both states’ recent efforts to pursue diplomacy is an encouraging step forward (Ming 2021). The fallout of the incident was extremely damaging; however, Japan-China relations have "been on a slow, steady upswing" since 2017 when

then-Prime Minister Abe asked Toshihiro Nikai, the Secretary-General of the LDP, to hand a personal letter to President Xi Jinping (Ming 2021, 838). Abe's subsequent personal visits in 2018 and 2019 prompted Xi to arrange his own visit to Japan in 2020, but those plans were postponed due to COVID-19. However, Japan and China have recently resumed face-to-face meetings to discuss Japan's latest military spending, China's ties with Russia, and ways to ameliorate tension (Murakami 2023). Although these efforts have been marginal and have not successfully resolved any outstanding issues, the mutual willingness to begin a dialogue is helpful for easing tensions. Japanese nuclear proliferation would undoubtedly lead to a complete collapse in current relations and pose a near insurmountable obstacle to future cooperation. Any deterioration between two states already in a great power competition for material dominance would make Japan substantially less safe and more at risk for violent conflict. Japan should continue to actively pursue an improved diplomatic relationship with China, and if possible, seek more avenues for bilateral cooperation. Striving for future cooperation with China would be far better for Japanese security than proliferation and could help bring about new opportunities.

However, mutual disdain between the Japanese and Chinese public still proves to be a major barrier to further cooperation and to implementing policies that can decrease tension. As a result of state-media initiatives to emphasize China's ongoing territorial disputes and the horrors of Japanese imperialism, the Chinese public mostly disapproves of Japan (Burcu 2022). In 2016, only "14% of the Chinese [said] they [had] a positive view of Japan," a significant decrease from 21% in 2006 (Stokes 2016). Japanese public opinion has undergone a similar transformation. Since the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, the Japanese public has had an unfavorable view of China, and that negative perception has continued to intensify in the years after (Ming 2021, 834). From 1980 to 1997, there was a precipitous drop from 79% to 46% of Japanese who had "'warm feelings'" for China (Deans 2000, 125). In 2016, "only 11% of Japanese expressed a favorable opinion of China" (Stokes 2016). Public opinion numbers have continued to decline, reinvigorated by anti-Chinese rhetoric. Throughout the last few decades, right-wing, revisionist leaders have ascended in Japanese politics, best exemplified by Abe Shinzo's time as Japan's longest-serving Prime Minister (Ming 2021, 837). An increasingly nationalistic elite class and electorate could pose a considerable obstacle to easing Japan-China hostilities, especially since Japan may need to make concessions about its past atrocities for a foothold in future negotiations. However, this may also be a difficult hurdle to overcome since more politicians

have been appealing to nationalism and using anti-Chinese sentiment to their advantage, further handicapping the government's ability to cooperate with China (Ming 2021, 834). Additionally, the Japanese media is extremely critical of any policy involving China and their heavy scrutiny often prevents the government from pursuing diplomatic action, even if it would be beneficial to improving Japan-China relations. The Japanese government will have to proceed carefully with China, but it must avoid allowing the media to hamper critical foreign affairs policy.

Fortunately for Japan, recent evidence suggests that the Chinese public is growing more fond of it. In 2021, Japanese media reported that Chinese opinion on Japan was improving due in part to major Chinese tourism to Japan and because of Japan's support for China during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ming 2021, 843). As such, Japan has a valuable opportunity to expand its cooperation with China and to make long-lasting improvements to their relationship. The Japanese government should take advantage of recent improvements in Chinese public opinion of Japan and of the Chinese government's willingness to pursue diplomacy to alleviate their long-standing tension.

Japan-China Economic Relationship

China is Japan's largest trade partner and their economic relationship lays the foundation for East Asian trade. Japanese nuclear proliferation would likely prompt China to cease any form of economic interaction, save for a few vital Japanese imports like integrated circuits, damaging that critical foundation. China has consistently shown it will not hesitate to retaliate with harsh measures to any real or perceived challenges to its sovereignty — whether they are political, economic or territorial. For instance, instead of capitulating to the 2018 Trump trade tariffs, China retaliated with its own tariffs on U.S. agriculture, demonstrating its resolve in the face of the world's most powerful country (Regmi 2019, 1). Thus, the Chinese response to something as incendiary as Japanese proliferation would likely be immediate and maximized. China should be expected to apply enormous pressure on Japan by suspending all diplomatic and economic relations and by targeting valuable Japanese exports, investments, and firms in China. The full extent of such retaliatory action could single-handedly cripple the Japanese economy.

Similar to how Japan relies on American consumption, Japan is reliant on China to consume its export goods, but to an even greater extent. In 2020, Japanese exports to China were worth $133 billion, accounting for a staggering 21% of Japan's total exports. $8.69 billion of

those exports were auto-related goods, a major industry in Japan that makes up a significant portion of the Japanese economy (OEC 2020 (A)). By simply targeting Japanese exports, China could apply significant coercive pressure on Japan, underscoring the perils of pursuing nuclear weapons. Additionally, Japan's FDI outflow to China amounted to almost $10.2 billion in 2021 while China's FDI outflow to Japan was merely $762 million in 2021 (Statista 2022). Although China has close to a billion dollars invested in Japan, it is evident that Japan has much more to lose than China in the event of a conflict. These figures, coupled with Japan's nonexistent economic growth, demonstrate how reliant Japan is on the returns from its foreign investments. If Japan were to proliferate, China would likely order the seizure of all Japanese-owned industries and companies in China and prevent any capital outflow back to Japan. Lastly, in addition to China's substantial direct economic footprint on Japan, Chinese tourism in 2019 alone was worth $16.5 billion and is estimated to grow to $24 billion when post-COVID Chinese tourism returns (Nippon 2020; Jacob 2023). The latter figure would be equal to 0.5% of Japan's total GDP, demonstrating how extensive Chinese economic influence is in Japan.

Furthermore, beyond debilitating their direct trade relationship, China could jeopardize Japan's position in multilateral trade agreements like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). China could leverage its position in the RCEP to pit other Indo-Pacific countries against Japan over the proliferation issue, which will undoubtedly be controversial. For instance, China could declare its intention to pull out of the RCEP, thereby nullifying the agreement's favorable tariff policies for trade with China, unless the other member states agree to take certain coercive action against Japan. Consequently, Japan could become akin to a pariah state, especially among states with close ties to China. Therefore, in addition to severing its relationship with China, nuclear proliferation may have the unintended effect of isolating Japan from its other neighbors.

Alternative Policy

With the security, diplomatic, and economic ramifications of Japanese nuclear proliferation in consideration, we argue that Japan can reinforce its own security much more effectively by both utilizing several existing avenues of cooperation with China and striving to create new ones. For instance, Japan should continue its deliberate efforts to ease tensions with China through maintaining open channels of communication and regular face-to-face meetings.

By furthering dialogue, both Japan and China can be assured that there is mutual understanding of where their respective boundaries lie and where there is common ground. Furthermore, through such efforts, Japan and China can cooperate to find shared interests in spite of their serious disagreements over security and territorial disputes. Additionally, Japan should continue to explore more opportunities for economic cooperation with China. While their inclusion in the RCEP and Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is a strong start, there is more room for growth.

Conclusion

Nuclear proliferation would commit near irreparable harm to Japan's relationship with China and bring regional tensions to the brink of full-scale military conflict. Japan and China are currently engaged in a great power conflict. Both states are wary of each other's material capabilities and are moving to secure their interests in the region. However, despite this rivalry, some degree of cooperation prevails. Japan-China relations have been steadily improving since 2017, even if the relationship primarily still exists over a "fragile foundation" (Ming 2021, 839). Both Japan and China understand that continued talks and bilateral cooperation is in their respective best interest; however, the exact form and the conditions of this future relationship are unclear and need to be defined. Japan and China will have to establish common ground if they wish to improve Indo-Pacific security. This is especially imperative for Japan, since its stagnating economy is becoming increasingly reliant on China and its other trade partners. Instead of seeking nuclear weapons, Japan should double down and improve upon its existing diplomatic and economic relationship with China.

Section III: Japan and the Republic of China

Introduction

Japanese proliferation is likely to increase Cross-Strait tensions, and the uncertainty of Chinese action against Taiwan poses a significant risk to Japan due to its economic and geographic importance. A diminished security situation for Taiwan inherently jeopardizes the Japanese position in East Asia, and recent announcements from Prime Minister Kishida and President Biden exemplify the countries' unified front in countering actions made by China that challenge the current status quo, such as an invasion of Taiwan. With other deterrence and defense strategies available to Japan, proliferation becomes both hazardous and unnecessary for accomplishing Japanese objectives in East Asia.

Japan-Taiwan Diplomatic Relationship

Diplomacy between Japan and Taiwan is essential to furthering the Japanese mission of democracy and security in the East Asia region, and nuclear proliferation is detrimental to maintaining the diplomatic ties between the two countries.

In recent years, Japan and Taiwan's shared concerns over regional stability and the unilateral provocative actions of the Chinese military have facilitated a strengthening union. Prime Ministers Abe and Kishida both expressed resilient support for Taiwan in recent statements. In 2021, former Prime Minister Abe stated that "a Taiwan emergency is a Japanese emergency, and therefore an emergency for the Japan-U.S. alliance," and that "a stronger Taiwan, a thriving Taiwan, and a Taiwan that guarantees freedom and human rights are also in Japan's interests" (Blanchard 2021). Likewise, Prime Minister Kishida mentioned concern for Taiwan on numerous occasions. Japan has thus continuously sought greater ties with Taiwan through diplomatic gestures intended to strengthen Taiwan's situation in East Asia — an effort that Japanese proliferation would contradict.

Originally excluded from the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the Taiwanese government submitted an application to join the regional trade agreement in September 2021. Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) stated that "joining CPTPP will strengthen Taiwan's key global strategic and economic and trade status, and further integrate [Taiwan] with the world." Meanwhile, Japanese Economy Minister

Nishimura Yasutoshi (西村康稔) echoed the importance of the inclusion of Taiwan in the CPTPP and their right to be included — contradictory to the skepticism expressed at China's application to join the CPTPP days prior (Komiya 2021). Japanese and Taiwanese interests align in the interest of Taiwan joining the CPTPP, and Japan has continued to advocate for the approval of Taiwan's application. Advocating for Taiwan's involvement in the CPTPP while simultaneously demonstrating restraint towards China's involvement was a risky display of approval for Taiwan from Japan, and this has subsequently strengthened their ties with one another in an action that postures Japan against China.

Another key issue for diplomacy between Japan and Taiwan has been the Japanese support of Taiwanese global health efforts. Due to China's influence over the United Nations (UN) and subsequently the World Health Organization (WHO), Taiwan has been refused involvement with WHO, causing the agency to routinely deny information to the country on the COVID-19 virus (Lloyd-Damnjanovic 2020, 1–2). Taiwan thus became reliant on friendly countries interested in sharing information with them such as Japan, who became a key supplier of COVID-19 vaccines. Presidential Office Spokesman Xavier Chang (張惇涵) issued a statement on behalf of President Tsai Ing-wen of gratitude for Japan's donation of more than 4.2 million COVID-19 vaccines circa October 2021, citing the action as a "testament to the enduring virtuous cycle of mutual support between [Japan and Taiwan]" (Office of the President Republic of China 2021). This demonstration on behalf of the Japanese government bore witness to the growing allegiance Japan has to the well-being of Taiwan and its citizens. Japan has become a key diplomatic partner for Taiwan in the face of its exclusion from international agencies, and it is recommended that Japanese advocacy for Taiwan continues.

However, Japanese proliferation would likely threaten Taiwanese security and undo Japan's movements to include Taiwan in key agreements intended to bolster Taiwanese strength and security in East Asia. While the diplomatic partnership between Japan and Taiwan has significantly benefited the latter, the Japanese government will benefit in the long-term from the increased security against the threat of Chinese military action by building its diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

Japan-Taiwan Economic Relationship

In addition to their prolific diplomatic relationship, Japan and Taiwan have boasted strong economic alliances since the Japanese colonial rule over the island of Taiwan, which has been bolstered primarily by the modern-day Taiwanese semiconductor industry. Semiconductors have become a major geopolitical concern and one of the most critical elements in global value chains given their essential role in the production of electronics and weaponry. However, due to the high entry barriers that inherently come with the semiconductor industry, attempts from new entrants have been rather unsuccessful, and Taiwan has continued to reign over the semiconductor industry. In 2021, Taiwanese semiconductor firms produced 63% of the worldwide supply of semiconductors and 90% of the worldwide supply of advanced integrated circuits (Roussilhe 2022, 1–2). Since Japan's economy is heavily reliant on manufacturing electronics and vehicles — both of which require semiconductors — the Japanese economy is subsequently reliant on the Taiwanese semiconductor industry as is Japan's ally, the United States.

Situations such as these are the reason for the so-called Taiwanese "Silicon Shield," a geopolitical strategy where the international reliance on Taiwanese semiconductors creates additional protections for Taiwan against invasion from the Chinese military (Roussilhe et al. 2022, 9). A counter strategy to reduce the reliance on Taiwanese semiconductors is to host Taiwanese manufacturing of semiconductors on Japanese soil, which simultaneously stimulates the Japanese manufacturing industry. The Japanese government has announced its intention to subsidize the creation of a Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) manufacturing plant on Kyushu Island; TSMC CEO C.C. Wei (魏重庆) mentioned in January that TSMC is considering a second manufacturing plant in Japan (*Reuters* 2023 (B)). Advanced Japanese semiconductor manufacturing has been primarily dormant in the country in favor of importing Taiwanese semiconductors, so these recent movements to revitalize this key global industry should strengthen the Japanese economy and reduce its reliance on receiving imported semiconductors directly from Taiwan.

This reduction of reliance on Taiwanese semiconductors should subsequently reduce the effects of the "Silicon Shield" and therefore reduce the Japanese obligation to defend the Taiwanese semiconductor industry in the case of invasion from China. In this instance, there is no necessity for Japan to proliferate in order to defend its economic interests overseas. Instead

the Japanese government should continue to partake in harm reduction strategies with the intention of minimizing the economic impact of an invasion of Taiwan.

Cross-Strait Conflict

As the Chinese military's threats against Taiwan escalate in the Cross-Strait conflict, Japan's obligation to its key ally, the United States, and its diplomatic and economic partner, Taiwan, creates a situation where Japanese inaction becomes inexcusable. However, nuclear proliferation is in stark contrast to the current strategy set forth by Japan and the United States for counteracting Chinese forces in the Taiwan Strait and would likely create a dangerous situation for both Japan and Taiwan by drawing anger from China. Instead Japan should prioritize maintaining the military alliance with the United States for its handling of the Cross-Strait conflict to minimize the security threat to Japan, which therefore prolongs the maintenance of the strategic position of Taiwan in East Asia and any potential invasion of Taiwan by Chinese forces.

The ongoing Cross-Strait conflict between Taiwan and China has seen rising tensions since the latter's ally Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. In particular, tensions rose in August 2022 following the visit of then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who met with pro-independence President Tsai Ing-wen. The Taiwanese government reported that 11 Dongfeng missiles were fired around Taiwanese territories including the first Chinese missile to fly over the main island of Taiwan (Lendon 2022). Other notable occurrences include December 26th, 2022 when 71 Chinese aircraft flew near Taiwan, of which 43 Chinese aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait into Taiwan's unofficial air defense zone (Cheung and Yeung 2022); and January 9th, 2022 when another 28 Chinese aircraft crossed into the air defense zone on January 9th, 2023 (Cheung and Lendon 2023). Tensions increased once again on February 1st, 2023 when Taiwan activated fighter jets and missile systems in response to another 34 Chinese aircraft crossing into Taiwan's unofficial air defense zone (*AP News* 2023).

Seen as a massive escalation of tensions and demonstration of anger over the strengthening of Taiwanese relations internationally, the Chinese government's actions in the Taiwan Strait have threatened to further destabilize East Asia. Since then, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) — the Chinese military — has regularly performed live fire exercises near Taiwan and the disputed Senkaku Islands on a near daily basis. This consistent escalation of Chinese

threat and intimidation in the Taiwan Strait poses a significant risk to Japanese security due to the geographic location of the island of Taiwan.

The crucial location of Taiwan makes it a natural gateway to Southeast Asian, Oceanian, and Middle Eastern countries, and security over Taiwan through the maintenance of the Republic of China government yields a critical foothold for Japan in East Asia – particularly in terms of access to trade routes and national security. Japan requires access to the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait for the ease of transporting products to and from key economic partners such as Australia, Saudi Arabia, and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). A significant portion of Japanese oil imports originates from the Middle East, requiring passage through the South or East China Seas; this importation of oil is vital to Japan retaining oil security (Blazevic 2010, 150).

If China possessed total control over Taiwan and subsequently the Taiwan Strait, China would have the strategic advantage of forcing shipping to and from Japan into less efficient trade routes. Additionally, Chinese control over the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea might cause China to pursue further aggressive action into the East China Sea, which has a much closer proximity to Japan and the disputed Senkaku Islands. This would have significant negative implications for Japanese security, hence the need for preventative measures on behalf of the Japanese government.

Beyond the economic consequences of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, this closer proximity to Japanese territories implicate the likely involvement of Chinese air strikes on American military bases in Southwestern Japan, and if successful, the island of Taiwan and its surrounding island chains would likely host Chinese nuclear weaponry (Lee 2022, 162). A situation such as this one would significantly alter the capabilities of Japanese and American forces in East Asia, contributing to Japan's need to strengthen its defense measures with the United States without rising to the risky decision of nuclear proliferation.

As mentioned at length in Section I, Japan is aligned militarily with the United States under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and is subsequently under the American nuclear umbrella, a guarantee that the United States will defend Japan in the case of foreign conflict. However, with the 2014 reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, the Japanese government has vowed to utilize its Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) to defend its allies — particularly the United States (Liff 2017, 141–142). Both countries have mentioned that security in East Asia

is of major concern, and both countries have shared interest in maintaining the Republic of China government in Taiwan, implying the involvement of both the United States and Japan should China invade Taiwan. As early as February 2005, former Prime Minister Abe stated:

> It would be wrong for us to send a signal to China that the United States and Japan will watch and tolerate China's military invasion of Taiwan. If the situation surrounding Japan threatens our security, Japan can provide U.S. forces with support. (Faiola 2005)

Since then, Japanese policymakers including Deputy Prime Minister Asō Tarō (麻生太郎) have routinely referred to any escalation of Taiwan Strait tensions that require involvement from the United States as likely entailing Japanese participation (Smith 2022, 75). As pressure on Japan to balance the efforts of the U.S.-Japan military alliance increases, it has become widely understood that the current expectation is that the JSDF becomes involved in American conflicts in East Asia.

In January 2023, President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida announced their vow to strengthen the U.S.-Japan military alliance to react appropriately to "actions inconsistent with the rules-based international order by China" — a restructuring the United States Department of Defense officials said was "partially aimed at addressing China's growing military activity and presence, including around the island of Taiwan" (Wong 2023). The issue of security in East Asia — particularly in regards to maintaining Taiwanese democracy — is a source of unity for Japan and the United States, further implying that the Japanese military would not require its own nuclear weapons to combat Chinese forces in Taiwan or the nearby Senkaku Islands.

Deterrence strategies such as the recent posturing of the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Taiwan military alliances and the utilization of the American nuclear umbrella are sufficient for handling the escalation of the Cross-Strait conflict and the persistent Chinese threat to Taiwan. With the assurance of the American nuclear umbrella and an American response to an invasion of Taiwan, Japanese proliferation is only a risky escalation of tensions in East Asia. It is not only unnecessary for a Japanese reaction to an invasion of Taiwan but contrarily could also serve as a reason for one. Instead, the Japanese government should address the Cross-Strait conflict using the deterrence strategies already put forth by the U.S.-Japan alliance as discussed in this section.

Alternative Policy

Instability within the Taiwan Strait is economically dangerous regionally and internationally, especially for the trilateral economic relationship between Japan, China, and Taiwan (Blazevic 2010, 161). One such strategy to overcome current issues with Taiwan and the ongoing Cross-Strait conflict is "reassurance as deterrence." The mechanisms of this strategy are described by Jason J. Blazevic as:

> Deterrence can take a form inclusive of defensive realism and neoliberalism known as coercive bargaining, which promotes balancing and accommodation. Such bargaining consists of a mix of credible threats and credible reassurances entailing [...] a protection of core interests [...]. (Blazevic 2010, 162)

In the context of Taiwan, reassurance as deterrence should include Japanese involvement in transparent diplomacy and relations, the establishment of trade routes, and the increased recognition of vital bilateral and trilateral perspectives in the Taiwan Strait to placate current governmental tensions.

Within the broader scope of the Cross-Strait conflict, Japan should continue its efforts to diversify the manufacturing of semiconductors away from Taiwan by subsidizing TSMC manufacturing plants in Japan, which simultaneously serves to stimulate the Japanese economy and secure the otherwise at-risk semiconductor industry that is reliant on Taiwanese security. Japan should continue its current military posturing alongside the United States, implicating military action as a deterrence against a Chinese invasion of Taiwan and utilizing the American nuclear threat to dissuade Chinese use of nuclear weapons.

A key effort in deterring any further escalation of Chinese force in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea is avoiding the angle of an "inevitable," "unavoidable" invasion, which risks sparking a preemptive strike from Chinese forces on American military bases in Japan (Smith 2022, 91–92). Japan should exercise extreme caution in its verbiage utilized in statements made about the Cross-Strait conflict, and similarly, Japan should not act beyond the current status quo by sporadically undertaking nuclear weapons through proliferation.

Conclusion

A survey of Taiwanese citizens found that Japan was considered the most favorable country in Taiwan with 60% of Taiwanese citizens saying that Japan was their favorite foreign country in March 2022 (*Japan Times* 2022). By maintaining the healthy diplomatic and economic relations that Japan has cultivated with Taiwan, a more favorable perspective of Japan is likely to continue among Taiwanese citizens and its major firms, allowing the Japanese government the opportunity to establish a second key democratic ally in the region alongside the Republic of Korea (ROK). In accordance with American military presence, this will bolster Japanese and Taiwanese security and risk management. The Japanese objective of countering threats to itself and democracy in East Asia is accomplished more successfully through strategies that highlight risk management and harm reduction, whereas Japanese nuclear proliferation serves as encouragement of escalation in East Asia particularly on behalf of Chinese military forces. As put forth earlier in Section II, Japanese proliferation is considered unfavorable by China, and China is likely to partake in countermeasures in reaction to Japanese proliferation including increasing the Cross-Strait tensions via the invasion of Taiwanese territories. An invasion of Taiwan would jeopardize Japanese domestic, regional, and international security due to the disturbance to the semiconductor industry and the subsequent control of the Taiwan Strait by Chinese forces. Therefore, we advise for the security of Japan and its diplomatic and economic interests in Taiwan that Japan does not seek to proliferate at this time and maintains its current strategies alongside the United States in its handling of the Cross-Strait conflict.

Section IV: Japan and the Korean Peninsula

Introduction

Currently, North Korean militancy does not represent an existential threat to Japanese security and does not justify Japanese proliferation. Further, Japanese proliferation would harm its already tenuous relationship with South Korea and limit future cooperation between the two countries. Due to the record of Japanese colonialism on the Korean peninsula and resultant lingering tensions from unresolved historical issues, Japanese proliferation would further harm its relationship with North and South Korea. As countries that bear national grievances from Japanese imperial aggression, a Japanese increase in militarism via nuclearization would accelerate further upset in its relationships with North and South Korea. For the pursuit of a stable East Asian security environment, Japan should not seek to develop a nuclear weapons program.

Japan and North Korea

The relationship between Japan and North Korea is largely characterized by the issue of the North Korean abduction of Japanese nationals during the 1970s and 1980s. 17 Japanese individuals have been identified by the Japanese government as abducted to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) territory by agents of its government, although more unidentified victims may exist. In contrast, the DPRK alleges only 13 abductions took place. In late 2002, it returned five abductees to Japan, claiming that the remaining eight individuals had since passed away (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d. (A)). The validity of this claim is uncertain, and the Japanese government continues to pursue clarity on the issue to ensure the safe return of as many Japanese nationals as possible. It has established the position that normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea is impossible without prior resolvement of the abduction issue.

North Korean nuclear capabilities and persistent missile tests have also become a flashpoint in Japan–DPRK relations as North Korea has expanded its nuclear arsenal. Since 2016, North Korea's nuclear development and subsequent missile launches have become major points of concern for Japanese national security, particularly when considering their increased frequency. Since the beginning of 2022, North Korea has launched over 95 ballistic and other

missiles (Choe 2023). In January and February of 2023, the DPRK fired four nuclear-capable strategic cruise missiles, three short range ballistic missiles, and one ICBM. The nuclear-capable strategic missiles were able to fly for almost three hours and hit targets in waters between North Korea and Japan (Choe 2023). Due to the protection of Japan under the US nuclear umbrella, it is argued that North Korean nuclear weapons do not present an existential threat to Japan, but missile tests sound alarms regarding domestic security regardless. The current Japanese strategy for approaching relations with North Korea is based on normalizing country relations while resolving the abduction issue. Little progress has been made on either front in the continued wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Russian invasion of Ukraine, and increased frequency of DPRK missile testing. Despite the lack of progress, establishing an effective strategy for handling relations with North Korea is essential to ensuring the stability of Japan's future in the East Asian region — within which nuclear proliferation would serve as a destabilizer. It is argued that Japanese nuclear proliferation would push relations further in a negative direction, signaling a high perceived threat in East Asia that would include North Korea in its assessment.

North Korea's relationship with China adds necessity to a normalized Japan-DPRK relationship from a geopolitical perspective. In 2022, PRC-DPRK trade reached $1.03 billion, recovering 226% from the previous COVID-impacted year (*Reuters* 2023 (A)). This indicates the strength of the PRC-DPRK relationship, which is particularly important to note in light of the speculation surrounding a possible invasion of Taiwan by China. Should the PRC pursue military expansion into the Taiwan Strait, a normalized relationship with North Korea could aid in efforts to maintain stability in the region (Hiraiwa 2020, 4). To reiterate, Japanese nuclearization would serve as a destabilizing force in the East Asian region — one that the DPRK could perceive as a targeted response to its own nuclear capabilities.

Alternative Policy for North Korea

Japan's current stance on approaching talks with the DPRK combines the objective of normalizing relations with that of resolving the abduction issue via the return of any remaining abductees to Japan. However, such overlap impedes progress on either initiative, and it is recommended that Japan works to separate the resolution of each issue to the most reasonable extent possible. Prime Minister Kishida held a press conference with the families of abductees on March 1st where he stated that Japan "will not oppose humanitarian assistance [to North Korea]

if the immediate and simultaneous return of all the abductees is realized" (Prime Minister's Office 2023). Such an offer indicates that perhaps efforts to begin the separation of normalization from the abduction issue have begun, but further intentional departure of one from the other is recommended. In addition, public opinion in Japan reflects more concern for the resolution of the abduction issue than for the danger of North Korean nuclear weapons (Cabinet Office 内閣府 2023). It is clear that progress on the abduction issue is desired domestically, which separation from the general normalization of relations could achieve. It is also important to note that a resolution to the abduction issue may open doors towards normalization talks, allowing Japan to more effectively work towards its objectives regarding relations with the DPRK.

Japan and South Korea

The Japan-South Korea relationship has remained unstable since Japanese colonial rule formally ended after World War II, and ongoing tensions concerning Japan's imperial past have precluded a sustainable alliance between the two countries. However, recent concerns over North Korean missile testing have compelled Japan and South Korea to develop a closer security alliance, which includes trilateral cooperation with the U.S. Economic ties between the two nations are currently recovering from a period of hostility stemming from disagreement over compensation for Japanese Imperial transgressions.

The use of 'comfort women' is a colonial legacy that continues to affect many Koreans' sentiment towards Japan. The term 'comfort women' refers to the hundreds of thousands of Korean women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese imperial army before and during World War II (Soh 1996). The subject of comfort women has been the center of attention for many of South Korea and Japan's recent conflicts, as the two countries disagree on the proper way to acknowledge and make amends for the issue. The Japanese state did not admit to its involvement in the management and supervision of the "comfort stations" until mid-1992 (Soh 1996). Moreover, until 1993 Japan maintained its position that the former comfort women had engaged in prostitution voluntarily. Disagreement over proper compensation for the victims continues to create tension between Japan and North and South Korea. The use of Korean comfort women by Japanese soldiers remains a historical wound for Korean people.

Relations between the two countries were normalized in 1965 when they reached UN Agreement No. 8473 on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property Claims and Economic

Cooperation (United Nations 1965). However, since the agreement, the relationship has been characterized by both periods of close ties as well as rising tensions. After the LDP's victory in the 2005 Japanese general election, the party campaigned to reverse the negative views of Imperial Japan, which contributed to rising tensions with South Korea. By 2018, relations between the two countries reached their lowest point yet when the South Korean Supreme Court ordered two large Japanese companies to compensate the surviving victims of forced labor (Aum 2022). This challenged the prior understanding that the 1965 agreement had settled all claims "completely and finally" (Aum 2022). The Supreme Court proceeded to order the sale of seized assets from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries which was interpreted as an act of "economic war" by Japanese officials (*Economist* 2019). At the same time, South Korea withdrew from efforts to resolve the wartime "comfort women" issue.

Bilateral hostilities such as these play into the hands of China and North Korea by weakening the perceived security and diplomatic alliance between Japan and South Korea, thus reducing the effectiveness of this deterrence strategy. In light of the recent increase in North Korean missile testing, demonstration of unity and cooperation between Japan and South Korea is becoming a more urgent priority.

Indeed, in recent years, mutual security concerns over North Korean nuclear power have emboldened the two nations to strengthen security ties. Newly elected President of South Korea, Yoon Suk-yeol, has discussed the significance of security cooperation between Japan and South Korea with an increase in military spending, pointing out that the two countries are "facing a common threat" (Nakamura 2022). This is a significant development considering South Korea has previously expressed concerns about Japan's expanding military forces.

Additionally, further development of security cooperation requires a stable relationship with the United States. In September 2022, the three nations formally recognized the need for greater trilateral coordination in the *Joint Statement on the U.S. – Japan – the Republic of Korea Trilateral Foreign Ministerial Meeting.* This meeting reflected the increasing importance of a trilateral alliance for the "security and prosperity of the citizens, the region, and the world." (U.S. Department of States 2022 (A)). Two months later, the three nations restated the importance of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region in the *Phnom Penh Statement.* Much of this increased cooperation between the three states can be attributed to a growing threat from North Korea, which is addressed in the *Phnom Penh Statement*:

> The Leaders strongly condemn DPRK's unprecedented number of ballistic missile launches this year, including multiple ICBM launches, as well as a flurry of conventional military action that pose a grave threat to the peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. They reaffirm their commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. (White House 2022)

Furthermore, the *Phnom Penh Statement* expressed that the leaders "intend to share DPRK missile warning data in real time to improve each country's ability to detect and assess the threat posed by incoming missiles, a major step for deterrence, peace and stability" (White House 2022). Increased cooperation and security developments between the U.S., South Korea, and Japan alleviates the North Korean nuclear threat and provides assurance that Japanese nuclear proliferation is not necessary and could be potentially harmful to the current regional security environment.

Proliferation could also have a negative impact on the economic partnership between South Korea and Japan. South Korea is Japan's fourth largest trading partner and an important market for Japan, as both countries depend on each other for key goods and services. In 2020, Japan exported $42.9B worth of goods to South Korea. The main exports were photo lab equipment, integrated circuits, and machinery (OEC 2020 (B)). In the same year, South Korea exported $25.1B worth of goods to Japan, with the main exports being refined petroleum and silver (OEC 2020 (B)). The flow of goods and services between Japan and South Korea are essential to global technological value chains. Therefore, when trade between these two countries is disrupted the world economy suffers.

In the past, tensions between South Korea and Japan have led to the rapid deterioration of economic cooperation. In 2018, after the South Korean Supreme Court ordered compensation for forced laborers, Japan "retaliated by imposing export controls on chemicals used by South Korean semiconductor manufacturers and removing South Korea from its 'white list' of preferred trading partners" (Aum 2022). This initiated a trade war in which South Korea responded by removing Japan from its own "white list" and threatening to terminate a bilateral military information sharing agreement.

This incident is evidence that even seemingly small developments between South Korea and Japan can have a significant impact on trade and security cooperation. Thus, it is unquestionable that a development as assertive as nuclear proliferation would have major consequences for this bilateral relationship. Japanese proliferation could jeopardize its trade partnership with South Korea which would result in a significant loss of export revenue for both countries. It would also negatively impact the global electronic market, as South Korea depends on Japanese materials to create technological products that are purchased by countries all over the world. Additionally, export controls, such as those used by Japan in 2018 and 2019, would harm the South Korean semiconductor manufacturing chain which is an exceptionally important global industry.

Alternative Policy for South Korea

Much of the hope for improved relations between Japan and South Korea lies in the South Korean people's attitudes towards Japan. A poll conducted in 2021 indicates that older people have stronger anti-Japanese sentiment which is expected considering that older generations are typically more familiar with the history of suffering under Japanese colonialism (Kim 2021). Although older generations are likely to continue possessing anti-Japanese sentiment for historical reasons, younger South Koreans are far more receptive to the idea of supporting a stronger relationship with Japan. Therefore, promoting positive interactions with South Korea is essential for Japan to win over younger generations of South Koreans, who will then be more likely to vote for presidents who are more favorable to Japan. The ability of Japan to strengthen contemporary ties with South Korea by maintaining a positive diplomatic relationship and appealing to younger generations is an alternative to pursuing proliferation. Furthermore, by issuing apologies and demonstrating an effort to amend prior atrocities committed against Koreans, Japan would continue to improve South Korea's attitude towards Japan. Lastly, Japan's choice not to proliferate would demonstrate reliability and support a strong non-nuclear alliance between Japan and South Korea amid growing tensions in East Asia. A strong Japan-South Korea security alliance is an effective deterrent to nuclear threats from North Korea and other potential aggressors such as China or Russia.

A strong relationship with South Korea will also increase the effectiveness of trilateral security cooperation between the United States, Japan, and South Korea which is essential for

maintaining material defense in the event of a nuclear attack. Japan should continue to participate in trilateral security cooperation as an alternative to pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

Conclusion

The history of Japanese colonialism on the Korean peninsula and the various lingering tensions between Japan and North and South Korea indicate that Japanese proliferation would harm its relationship with both countries. The current status of Japan's relationship with North Korea illustrates that Japanese nuclear proliferation is not only unwarranted based on the threat level presented, but would also have serious ramifications for the achievement of Japan's objectives regarding the countries' future relations. Cooperation with South Korea would be critically damaged by Japanese proliferation, and the already strained relationship between the two countries would see no improvement — instead likely deteriorating. To aid in the development and preservation of a stable East Asian security environment, Japan should not pursue nuclear proliferation.

Section V: Japan and the Russian Federation

Introduction

In its current state, the Russian Federation does not pose a significant threat to warrant Japanese proliferation, and the adverse effects that could arise from Japan's proliferation would vastly outweigh its nominal security benefits. In particular, Japanese proliferation would likely prompt Russia to look toward its limited allies and strengthen its ties with states such as China (PRC) to the detriment of the Japanese security environment, initiate the reduction of its exports to Japan of which imported energy plays a significant role, and hinder the resolution of its territorial disputes with Japan, which as an aggregate would escalate regional and global tensions.

Russia-China Relations

Due to the geopolitical volatility present in East Asia, Japan's proliferation would likely angle the Russian Federation and the PRC into a closer alliance. Although Russia and PRC have not shown any intention to form a *de jure* coalition against Japan, Japan must be aware of this possibility when assessing its course of action with Russia. That being said, the ability to maintain positive Russo-Japanese relations would serve as a safeguard against complete Sino-Russian cooperation, and it — as a whole — would contribute to the maintenance of peaceful conditions in East Asia. In an attempt to actualize said conditions, it would be counterintuitive to proliferate as it would likely serve to solidify a Sino-Russian coalition against Japan.

Russia's conflictual presence in the modern geopolitical environment — characterized by its invasions of Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014 and 2022) — and the international community's response to such a disposition have prompted it to strengthen its economic ties with a diversified set of partners. Due to Russia's increasingly limited options in the West, it has looked toward alternative partners such as the PRC to account for its loss in economic and political market share. Although both countries currently exist in a perceivably *de facto* strategic alliance, the evolution of this relationship has brought them to the threshold of a decisive, *de jure* agreement.

Empirically, Russia's military actions in 2022 and the accompanying sanctions forced it to shift a portion of its trade volume to Chinese markets, which appeared in the robust $140 billion trade turnover between Russia and PRC during the same year (Asia News Monitor 2022).[1] Although trade may persist between countries even in the event of international sanctions, a tangible example of the two countries' expanding economic interconnectedness is Russia's growing reliance on the Chinese alternative to the international banking network Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT). Regarding Russia's use of the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS), a report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies argues that increased transactional cooperation has been mutually beneficial for the two countries. It has introduced Russia to a diversified means of transaction and reduced Western dominance over international transactional systems (Eichengreen 2022). Reciprocally, Russia has assisted in establishing CIPS as an alternative to Western transaction networks by providing its expansive domestic market to the PRC. The economic relationship between the PRC and Russia, in addition to its preexisting strength, has been progressively tightening, and — in the event of geopolitical agitation from Japan's proliferation — it would be both intuitive and comparatively seamless for the two countries to comprehensively normalize their economic and financial relationship, thus shifting the economic power balance in the region.

Among the expansion of the PRC and Russian Federation's economic relationship, both countries' military relationships have also been strengthened in recent years. In August 2021, Russia and PRC conducted joint military drills in northern China, and — despite having collaborated similarly since the early 2000s — this drill was one of the largest yet with over 10,000 troops (Balmforth and Kiselyova 2021). In October 2021 — two months following the land drills — the two states conducted joint naval drills off the coast of Japan, thus showing Russia's willingness to leverage its relationship with the PRC for the purpose of posturing (Osborn 2021). As a result of the drills, a greater strain has been placed on the already faltering Russo-Japanese relations. To serve as a further irritant, Russia has actively condemned Japan's military collaboration with the United States and has tended to utilize heavy-handed threats in an attempt to influence the extent of the countries' relations (Siripala 2022). With Russia's

[1] According to both Russian and Chinese officials, this trade turnover is slated to increase by approximately $40 billion in 2023.

continuous engagement with the PRC and strict opposition to Japan's current military relationships, Japan's proliferation would likely serve to push its existingly delicate diplomatic relationship with Russia into a state of severe disorder and be the deciding factor in the formalization of Sino-Russian relations.

The Hazards of Russo-Japanese Economic Disruption on Energy

Today, with Russia being one of the largest natural resources suppliers to Japan, any disturbance in Russo-Japanese relations has the potential to generate an energy crisis in Japan. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Okita Saburo synthesizes the consequential magnitude of Japanese dependence on energy imports:

> When these supplies of foreign [natural] resources are obtained smoothly, the Japanese economy progresses favorably; however, once imports are interrupted, the impact on the Japanese economy is immediate and severe. (Okita 1974, 714)

Despite Japan's explicit opposition to the Russian invasion of Ukraine through its membership in the international sections regime, the trade in energy commodities between the Russian Federation and Japan did not cease, and Japan maintains a considerable reliance on Russian energy. When aggregating data from multiple sources, the Russian share of Japanese imports of liquid natural gas (LNG) lies within a range of 8.5 percent to 10 percent (Kumagai 2022; Humpert 2023; Obayashi 2022; Balmer 2023). Based on proprietary calculations using the most recent spot values of LNG, this summates to an annual range of approximately $6.8 billion to $8 billion (St. Louis FED 2023; Kumagai and Odaka 2022; Nippon 2021).[2] Given the magnitude of these trade figures, it is possible to ascertain the critical role that Russia plays in ensuring Japan's energy security. In conjunction with Japan's reliance on Russian energy imports, Japan — at this time — has not yet withdrawn from the joint oil and gas projects between the two countries on Sakhalin, and Russia maintains complete control over Japanese ownership in the projects (Golubkova and Obayashi 2023).[3] With Japan's continued participation in these projects in spite of their precarity, its reliance on Russia as an energy supplier is further underscored. In the event

[2] A range of ¥929 billion to ¥1 trillion using the USD-Yen exchange rate on 2 March 2022.
[3] With regard to the Sakhalin-1 and Sakhalin-2 projects, the Russian arms of the projects have control over shares of ownership, thus the Japanese shareholders are at the whim of the Russian decisions.

of Japanese proliferation, the Russian Federation would likely leverage Japan's reliance on Russian energy through extensive cuts in energy exports in an attempt to both damage the internal conditions of Japan and reduce its threat potential.

The Northern Territories

The Northern Territories dispute has been a prominent factor shaping Russo-Japanese relations since World War II. As such, Japanese proliferation would be detrimental to the settlement of the dispute, and — due to the islands' geographical proximity to Japan — it would likely cause an increase in Russia's nuclear and military capabilities in the region.

Since World War II, there have been multiple instances in which the dispute has been renegotiated. Following its near settlement in 1956 in which the Soviet Union offered to return two of the four islands to Japan, the dispute over the islands has remained in an alternating state of negotiation, thus creating adverse conditions for productive negotiations. The Japanese state's position on the Northern Territories can be most aptly summarized by the following quote from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

> [The] return of the Northern Territories has been the ardent wish of the people of Japan, and a deep-rooted movement among the general public for the return of the islands has developed national-wide. With this strong support from the people of Japan, the Government of Japan, under a consistent policy, has persistently called on the Soviet Union, and subsequently the Russian Federation, to conclude a peace treaty between the two countries, contingent on the resolution of the Northern Territories issue. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2020)

As a complement to the government's observation of the public stance surrounding the return of the Northern Territories, the actual public opinion supporting the return of the Northern Territories — specifically the return of the Shikotan and Habomai Islets — reached 46% in 2018 (*Nikkei Asia* 2018). However, this figure is likely to have been augmented following the decline in Japanese public opinion of Russia since the start of the war in Ukraine (Johnston 2023). Continuous diplomatic efforts have been undertaken by various administrations since the inception of the dispute, and a multitude of strategies have been employed. Most recently,

according to a report from the Foreign Policy Research Institute, "[Former PM Abe] sought to push forward peace-treaty negotiations using economic incentives" (Chang 2022). However, after Russia responded to Japanese sanctions by barring travel to the islands and bolstering their conventional military emplacements, Kishida reaffirmed the *de facto* "four-island return" stance, thus further confounding current diplomatic discourse over the islands (Barrash 2022). Despite Japan's firm stance on the return of the islands, the Japanese government has maintained that peace talks are the preferable means of reacquiring the islands. However, it is unlikely that these peace talks would take place until Russia concludes the conflict in Ukraine and reestablishes normalized diplomatic ties with the West, as the West's objectives have guided Japan's rapprochement strategy and diplomatic warfare against Russia. As Russo-Japanese relations already exist in a suboptimal state for negotiations over the Northern Territories, proliferation could further hinder negotiations as well as potentially elicit a military response from the Russian Federation.

Alternative Policy

Although Russo-Japanese relations currently exist at a unique conjuncture, it is possible for Japan to simultaneously establish a normalized relationship with the Russian Federation, uphold its foreign policy goals, and bolster its security without the use of nuclear proliferation. For Japan, this would be possible through restructuring *de facto* alliances in the region, recognizing and addressing the weak state of its energy economy, and reevaluating the strategic importance of its territorial disputes.

Despite Russia and the PRC's growing relationship, the asymmetries between Russian and Chinese economic and diplomatic positions demonstrate its limited extent. Through the maintenance (or normalization) of Russo-Japanese relations and exploitation of the constrained Sino-Russian relationship, there would be an effective barrier between the complete alignment of the PRC and Russia. In addition to the PRC and Russia plan-based misalignments, the PRC's potential to provide substantial economic and military support to Russia greatly outweighs Russia's capabilities in terms of building a mutually contributory coalition, thus resulting in the PRC's limited gain from an exclusive relationship with Russia. When compared to the maintenance of commercial and — by and large — diplomatic relationships with more strategic partners, as the current conditions permit, the Russian Federation does not hold as much

importance; therefore, it is possible for Japan to constructively interact with Russia through the use of trade and economic relations in order to drive a greater wedge between Russia and PRC.

In addition to the PRC and Russia's economic imbalances, the two countries have many inconsistencies in their foreign policy. In spite of the benefits stemming from Chinese institutional decoupling from the West, like CIPS, an expansive connection to global markets still takes precedence as they grant the PRC the most expansive market reach. When trade diversification is cross-examined with the effects of an exclusive allyship with the Russian Federation, it is estimated that the secondary sanctions imposed on the PRC would outweigh the advantages of solely cooperating with Russia economically or, as an example, supporting Russia in its war efforts. In practice, this has been demonstrated in recent Chinese responses to secondary sanctions from Belgium due to the PRC's increased trade with Russia (Kaczmarski 2022). With regard to Russo-Japanese relations, the reluctance of the PRC to fully commit itself to Russia due to its tangible ramifications can be used by Japan to foster a similar — albeit more muted — relationship with Russia. This, in turn, would — at least to a certain extent — equalize the diplomatic relations in East Asia and partially eliminate the danger associated with unbalanced regional alliances.

Regarding Japan's dependence on Russian energy imports, there are two, comprehensive strategies: diversify or double-down. Given Japan's close relationship with the United States both economically and diplomatically, the second option could entirely upend and redefine the relationship between the US and Japan, and — much like the PRC — the gains from a sole relationship with Russia is outweighed by its relationships with more strategic partners. While following the first strategy would not entail a complete severance from Russian energy imports, it would cause Japan to reorganize its sources of energy.[4] The reorganization, given advances in energy technology, could come from primary nonrenewable energy suppliers or through domestic advances in renewable energy. Currently, Japan sources approximately 10.3 percent of its energy through renewables (excluding hydroelectric energy) and 37.1 percent through natural gas (with 90 percent of the LNG being sourced from imports), and — given that Russia makes up approximately nine percent of Japan's LNG imports — a roughly three percent increase in renewable energy sources or a shift in energy import suppliers could eliminate a majority of the

[4] A complete severance of Russian energy imports by Japan may cause increased tensions between the two countries. Therefore, in the process of diversifying its sources of energy, Japan must still retain somewhat favorable trade relations with Russia.

need for Russian energy imports (Kumagai 2022; Humpert 2023; Obayashi 2022; Balmer 2023; Nippon 2021; IEA 2022). As an example, Japan's capacity for wind power is mostly located on land, and — if earthquake-resistant turbines were to be constructed—Japan would be able to utilize its coastlines as energy generators (Sasaki and Watanabe 2021). Although shifting Japanese energy reliance to other sources has greater implications than simple trade diversion and because partially sustained economic relations with Russia are of the utmost importance, a combination of both approaches would be an appropriate course of action, and — by demonstrating its array of energy options — it would allow Japan a greater degree of diplomatic leverage without the detriments associated with the expansion of force.

Territorial disputes, unlike the previous issues, play into an entirely different dynamic of statesmanship. Japan's leverage over the state of the Northern Territories is vastly limited as Russia has official control over them. As a result of Japan's limited leverage, PM Kishida has removed any semblance of nuance regarding Japan's stance on Russia's possession of the Northern Territories and maintained that the they are are "inherent territories of Japan…[and have been] under illegal occupation [by the Russian Federation]" (Okuyama 2022). In light of Kishida's blatant remarks, it is clear that negotiations over the Northern Territories are highly improbable given the current geopolitical environment surrounding Russia. Therefore, as a strategy of regaining the Northern Territories, proliferation would do little more than to serve as a justification for Russian force multiplication on the Northern Territories, thus creating a direct threat to Japan. Although Japan currently does not have the ability to change the sovereign alignment of the Northern Territories, nuclear proliferation would entirely remove any possibility of Japan reclaiming even the Shikotan and Habomai islets in the future. Therefore, as a long-term strategy, it would be wise to gradually improve Russo-Japanese relations until it is possible to resume the formulation of the treaty.

Conclusion

Japan's current relations with the Russian Federation require careful deliberation in order to prevent regional escalation. Given the factors at play, Japan must be wary of the provisional state of the alliance between the PRC and Russia and strategic in manufacturing a wedge between the two countries, recognize and address the importance of Russian energy imports, and acknowledge the current barriers to the negotiations over the Northern Territories while forging a

long-term diplomatic strategy. Through proliferating, Japan's ability to resolve these areas of contention would be vastly limited, and, counterintuitively, its security environment — the very issue that nuclearization seeks to address — would worsen to an exponential degree.

Chapter II: Economic Costs of Nuclear Proliferation

Introduction

If Japan were to pursue a nuclear weapons program, it would face serious economic consequences from both domestic and international forces. In turn, this would serve to eliminate its economic gains and jeopardize its favorable standing in the global economy. On the domestic front, it would be extremely costly to create and maintain a nuclear weapons program, thus proliferation would divert funding away from other pressing domestic issues such as energy and infrastructure. Specifically, removing funding from nuclear energy — a key component of Japan's energy strategy — would likely undo the country's progress in creating a comprehensive nuclear energy infrastructure. Furthermore, the international community would likely react to Japan's proliferation with severe economic sanctions, and, as a country heavily reliant on the importation of goods (specifically energy commodities), Japan's economy and energy supply would suffer from these increased costs. Additionally, foreign investment, a critical component of Japan's financial account, would also likely decline. Therefore, the economic consequences of Japanese proliferation are significant and negate any benefit received from proliferating.

Domestic Costs of Proliferation

The construction of a single nuclear warhead can cost billions of dollars, and the costs of maintaining a nuclear arsenal would be even higher. For Japan, the costs of building nuclear weapons would be especially significant given its limited resources. To give a comparable estimate, a South Korean government analysis estimated that it cost North Korea between $1.1 billion and $3.2 billion to develop its nuclear weapons program (Pearson and Park 2016). However, accurate estimates are difficult to obtain given the secrecy surrounding the program, and the exact figures for Japan would be determined by the size of the project. To provide an approximating estimate, it is possible to estimate Japan's potential nuclear stockpile through a comparison in American and Japanese military expenditures. For the fiscal year of 2023, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has allocated $773 billion, and the JSDF has allocated approximately $52 billion (U.S. Department of Defense 2022; Tian & Liang 2023). Utilizing the two budgets as a proportion (6.7%) of military sizes and the most recent estimated size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal (5,428), Japan would likely end up compiling 300–400 nuclear warheads in

its arsenal (Kristensen & Korda 2022). If Japan were to utilize the modernized W87-1 nuclear warheads ($14.8 billion per warhead as of 2020) for their arsenal, it could cost anywhere from $4.4 trillion to $5.9 trillion (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2020). Even if Japan were to confine the size of its arsenal to that of the DPRK (20 warheads), it would still cost approximately $300 billion (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2020; Kristensen & Korda 2022). To account for these costs, there would need to be a significant increase in Japanese defense spending in Japan, which was already increased from 1% to 2% by the Kishida administration in 2022 (Kajimoto and Yamaguchi 2022).

In addition to the direct costs of building and maintaining a nuclear weapons program, there are indirect costs associated with increased defense spending. Given that military spending directly diminishes the spending power of the government, spending a greater amount of money on defense would likely cause a decreased availability of funding for other important government infrastructure and social welfare projects.

This includes the opportunity cost of developing a nuclear weapons program instead of allocating resources to sustainable nuclear energy. The cost of establishing a nuclear weapons regime would be twofold: the implicit cost of building new facilities, and the opportunity cost of the energy capacity lost due to the transfer to the procurement of nuclear weapons. Developing nuclear energy has been a priority of Japan's for a long time — given its limited natural resources and high energy needs. However, investing in nuclear weapons would divert resources from the development of sustainable energy solutions. As sustainable energy becomes an international priority to slow the effects of climate change, it is important that Japan continue to devote resources to the nuclear energy sector to further the domestic and global initiative for sustainable energy practice, and to divert these resources to a nuclear weapons program would significantly hinder Japan's ability to accomplish those objectives.

Therefore, the estimated direct and opportunity costs of proliferation are too costly for Japan given the other significant consequences of proliferating. Serving as a hindrance to other federal programming, a Japanese nuclear weapons program would significantly detract from its current nuclear energy program and the overall national energy supply.

The Effect on Trade

The impact of trade sanctions can be severe, especially on countries that rely heavily on imports as is the case with Japan. If Japan were to pursue a nuclear weapons program, it would face serious economic consequences from its trade partners, which has the potential to be devastating for Japan's economy. Trade sanctions such as tariffs, quotas, and embargoes would lead to increased costs for Japanese businesses, resulting in increased prices for Japanese consumers. Consequently, a decline in purchasing power and a reduction in overall consumer spending would be likely, which, in turn, could cause a decrease in economic growth and an increase in unemployment. Export revenue would decrease, and imports would be significantly more expensive — if accessible at all in the case of embargos. The Japanese current account balance would deteriorate resulting in a loss of the account surplus it has dedicated itself to maintaining for years. This would be particularly damaging to the Japanese economy, where the country's account surplus has been a symbol of "export might" and a "source of confidence in the safe-haven yen" (Kajimoto 2023).

Similarly, Japanese proliferation would likely jeopardize existing trade agreements. The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are key trade partnerships for Japan that might otherwise be negatively impacted by proliferation. The CPTPP, a trade agreement between 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, aims to boost economic integration and growth. Japan's membership in the agreement provides the country with access to a large and dynamic market, and serves as a strategic tool to counterbalance China's influence in the region. In November of 2019, Japan exported just over 800 million yen worth of goods to CPTPP member countries (Jaramillo 2020).

Similarly, Japan's partnership with ASEAN, a regional intergovernmental organization, aims to strengthen economic ties and promote peace and stability in Southeast Asia. Japan's participation in the CPTPP and ASEAN has significant implications for the country's economy. The agreements provide Japan with opportunities to promote its businesses, technology, and culture in the region. Japan's membership in the CPTPP, in particular, has the potential to stimulate economic growth and innovation by lowering tariffs, harmonizing regulations, and facilitating the flow of goods and services. The CPTPP eliminates an estimated 95% of tariffs for

trade of goods between CPTPP countries, which contributes to reduced business costs allowing consumers to benefit from lower prices. (US-ASEAN 2021).

If Japan were to adopt nuclear weapons this could result in their removal from the treaties, or alternatively, the treaty members might form a new agreement without Japan. Thus, Japan would no longer benefit from lower tariffs and regulations. This would increase transaction and business costs, stunting economic growth. Japan would lose access to important regional markets and its exported goods would become less competitive.

The deterioration of trade relationships would also have a negative effect on the Japanese energy industry. As mentioned in Chapter I Section V of the report, Japan is heavily reliant on imported oil, particularly from Russia, who provided 8% of Japan's oil imports in 2020 (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2020). Japan's dependence on imported oil is primarily due to a lack of domestic natural resources with only a few small oil fields in the country. If Japan were to pursue a nuclear weapons program, it would jeopardize its relationship with key trade partners such as Russia. This could cause Russia to implement export quotas that would make it difficult for Japan to import the oil it needs. Oil imports are critical inputs for many sectors of the Japanese economy including transportation, industry, and agriculture. According to the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation (JOGMEC), crude oil and natural gas together account for more than 60% of Japan's primary energy consumption (JOGMEC 2021). Therefore, any disruption in this import supply chain could have serious consequences for the country's economic well-being. The price of oil in Japan would sky rocket, generating inflation. Worse still, shortages of oil caused by embargoes could lead to an energy crisis. Due to the Japanese reliance on imported oil, trade sanctions and embargoes on Japan would destabilize the Japanese energy supply and likely cause an energy crisis. This was exemplified by the Arab oil embargo of 1973 — during which Arab countries implemented oil export restrictions on pro-Israeli governments, causing oil prices to jump from $2 per barrel to $11 per barrel (Schneider, n.d.). This caused an economic recession in Japan, marking the end of a period of rapid growth in the Japanese economy. Thus, it is clear that trade sanctions on oil imports to Japan could have disastrous effects on the Japanese economy, and Japanese proliferation would likely cause such sanctions to occur due to the international backlash inherent in backing out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and obtaining nuclear weapons.

Decreased Foreign Investment

Furthermore, Japanese proliferation could negatively affect its investment relationships with foreign companies. Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) primarily occurs as capital outflows from Japan to other large industrial nations. However, it is difficult to predict how Japanese FDI outflows would be affected by proliferation. Japanese FDI inflows are smaller than outflows, but still account for an important source of capital in Japan's economy. According to the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), FDI inflows to Japan totaled ¥7.1 trillion in 2020 — a 61.8% increase from the previous year (JETRO 2021 (B)). FDI is an essential source of capital for Japan's economic development, particularly in the manufacturing and service sectors.

Companies worldwide may be hesitant to invest in Japan if they feel that the country is becoming more militarized and could pose a threat to regional or international security. Decreased FDI would lead to a decline in Japan's balance of payments, which is the sum of the country's financial account, capital account, and current account. A decline in Japan's balance of payments would likely lead to a depreciation of the yen, which would make imported goods more expensive and lead to higher inflation. Additionally, a decrease in foreign direct investment would limit Japan's access to capital and could make it more difficult for the country to finance its economic development. Japan would have to rely more heavily on domestic savings to finance investment, which could lead to higher interest rates and lower economic growth.

Conclusion

Japanese proliferation would have both explicit and implicit economic consequences. The sheer cost of developing and sustaining a nuclear weapons program would drain Japan’s current fiscal budget. Furthermore, Japan would likely suffer from a deterioration of its trade partnerships and agreements such as the CPTPP and the ASEAN, causing an increase in the cost of goods for businesses and consumers. Trade sanctions in the form of tariffs, quotas and embargoes would leave Japan scrambling to find substitutes for its key importation of oil, exacerbating the energy crisis in tandem with the opportunity cost of diverting resources away from Japan’s nuclear energy program and into proliferation. In the instance where Japan proliferates, there would be a simultaneous struggle of increased federal spending on the military budget to account for acquiring and maintaining a nuclear arsenal and of increased costs related

to tariffs and embargoes that increase the overall cost of goods in diverse sectors. Therefore, the economic costs of Japanese proliferation drastically outweigh any potential benefits. Accordingly, it is not recommended that Japan pursue a nuclear weapons program.

Chapter III: Attendant Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation

Introduction

Following the conclusion of World War II, Japan has managed to establish itself as a pacifist leader after an extensive history of belligerence.[56] As a result of its internationally-renowned reputation as a pacifist, non-nuclear state, Japanese nuclear proliferation would spur a worldwide reevaluation of the international threat environment and Japan's idiosyncratic position within it. During the process of reevaluating the international threat environment, global frameworks of non-proliferation — such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — would likely be overturned as membership deteriorates. Without a physical framework of non-proliferation and the associated symbolic loss of Japan as a non-nuclear power, the probable outcome would be a "domino effect" of widespread nuclearization that would contribute to an increasingly volatile global security landscape and ideologically strengthen unorthodox acts of proliferation.

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) may not be a domestic, legally-binding agreement, but Japan has been a devoted proponent of and adherent to its core values; therefore, as a consequence of Japan's potential proliferation, the NPT would lose a foundational member, thus reducing the efficacy of the treaty itself.

Despite Japan's contemporary dedication to the NPT, the Diet's ratification was delayed until 8 July 1976 — six years following the signing of the treaty — after a series of intense debates over Japan's right to have a 'free-hand on nuclear devices' (Endicott 1977, 278). The ability of Japan to remove its 'free-hand on nuclear devices' and democratically decide its fate regarding such a contentious subject in and of itself demonstrates its true commitment to both the NPT as an entity and the general concept of non-proliferation itself. If Japan were to have faltered ideologically, it is logical to assume that they may have either protracted or prevented the domestic ratification of the NPT altogether. Additionally, with — at the time — such a

[5] This topic is further discussed in both sections of Chapter IV.
[6] The belligerence mentioned existed predominantly during the first half of the 20th century.

diverse diet (both in the Upper and Lower Houses), partisan compromise indicated the visible importance of nuclear non-proliferation to Japan (Endicott 1977, 275–76).

Although the NPT is adhered to by a majority of the world's countries, it contains an article, Article X, which specifies that each party of the NPT maintains its sovereign right to withdraw from the treaty at any time given irregular circumstances (United Nations, n.d.). Essentially, this article renders the treaty non-binding, and its legitimacy is upheld by the membership of its constituents. Japan, as a visible proponent of non-proliferation and a non-nuclear state, serves as one of the major anchors for the non-nuclear constituents of the NPT. If Japan were to sever its commitment to the NPT as a previous proponent of non-proliferation, it would concurrently be severing its commitment to non-proliferation as a whole.

Violation of Japanese Pacifism and The Ideological Ramifications of Proliferation

Even when possessing nuclear potential, Japan has maintained a steadfast commitment to pacifism — a decision that would further exacerbate the global response to Japan's hypocrisy in the event of its proliferation. In 1963, the US Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, reckoned that 20 nations had the ability to develop nuclear weapons by the early 1970s — Japan included (Davenport 2019, 2–3). McNamara's estimate involving Japan, later researched in 1994, was proven correct. As uncovered and subsequently reported by the *Asahi Shimbun*, Japanese scholars — recruited by the Cabinet Research Office — had confirmed that Japan was entirely capable of constructing nuclear weapons during the 1960s; however, it was also uncovered that the construction was rendered improbable due to "political and other reasons" (Kurosaki 2017, 47).[7] Unlike many countries intent on developing robust nuclear programs and not possessing the appropriate resources to do so, Japan holds the opposite set of traits. Its ability to proliferate — in and of itself — should be a cause for concern in the international community, yet Japan mitigates this concern through its practice of restraint and its national commitment to serve as a model for the rest of the world's non-proliferation efforts.

The "political reasons" mentioned by the *Asahi Shimbun* are inherent to the modern Japanese political structure. Explicitly outlined in the Constitution of Japan (and discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV), Article 9 serves as a direct legal barrier to Japanese proliferation. Additionally, further symbolic statements by influential political figures, such as former PM

[7] These 'other reasons' likely overlap with many topics present in this report.

Eisaku Sato's *Three Non-Nuclear Principles* and reiterations by former PMs Naoto Kan and Yoshihiko Noda have assured both domestic and foreign entities that proliferation countervails the very fabric of the modern Japanese society (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d. (B)).

In the event of Japanese proliferation, Japan would lose any semblance of legitimacy as a benchmark for the non-proliferation movement, and the durable restraint of Japan as a motivator for other countries' non-proliferation regimes would disappear. When a role model goes against the very idea that it supported and valued, it will both lose its adherents and disenfranchise the ideology itself. Japan is an exemplar of advocating for and upholding non-proliferation, and if it is not possible for Japan to remain in said position, it is unlikely that another, less qualified country will thereafter be able to inherit it. The environment that this would produce is that of ideological anarchy surrounding non-proliferation. With their benchmark defunct, countries would no longer feel obligated, even on an informal basis, to practice restraint with regard to the production of nuclear weapons.[8]

The East Asian Disequilibrium

With the NPT rapidly disintegrating and the ideology of non-proliferation in a state of disrepair, Japan's immediate neighbors would be the first to suffer from its proliferation. As it stands, Japan, South Korea (ROK), and Taiwan (ROC) do not possess nuclear weapons despite their neighbors, North Korea (DPRK) and China (PRC), possessing them. Rather, the nuclear umbrella under which Japan and the ROK exist provides a counterbalance to the nuclear capabilities of the DPRK and the PRC.[9] Japan's acquisition of nuclear weapons would entirely confound this delicate balance.

On the side of Japan's allies, the ROK and ROC may perceive a nuclearized Japan as a threat to their own sovereignties both directly and through the threat of nuclear escalation with their neighbors (the DPRK and PRC), and they may attempt to match Japan's proliferation with their own campaigns of nuclear procurement. Presently, the President of the Republic of Korea, Yoon Suk-yeol has already expressed his willingness to begin the development of nuclear weapons, and — due to this existing willingness to proliferate — Japan's proliferation would likely serve as the catalyst for the ROK's proprietary development of nuclear weapons (Herzog

[8] The effects of Japan's abandonment of treaties are explained in the previous subsection. This subsection, instead, should be viewed through the lens of the symbolic deterioration of non-proliferation.
[9] This is expanded in Chapter I, Section I

and Sukin 2023). Regarding the ROC, the situation would be less dire on account of President Tsai Ing-wen's staunchly anti-nuclear views; nevertheless, as non-proliferation loses its legitimacy and the ROC gains exposure to new regional threats, this attitude would likely change (*AP News* 2019). For Japan's nuclear neighbors, with whom relations exist in a precarious state, its nuclear proliferation may give reason for the procurement of increasingly powerful nuclear arsenals in an attempt to preempt a potential strike from Japan and 'rebalance' the nuclear ecosystem. With both effects in mind, an arms race among a nuclearized East Asia would occur at a minimum, and — in the worst case — the nuclear arms race originating in East Asia would spread sequentially from country to country in a centrifugal manner.

The Delusion of Nuclear Security: India and Pakistan

Despite its theoretical basis, a similar scenario to that which was previously mentioned has already materialized, and although historical events are not necessarily indicative of the future, they can provide an apt warning. If Japan were to consider proliferating with the pretense of bolstering security, a careful analysis of India and Pakistan may serve as an appropriate deterrent.

Upon splitting into two separate states, India and Pakistan have remained in a nearly constant state of conflict. Even prior to India's incipient nuclear test in 1974, the two states had already undergone three conventional conflicts (Hashim 2019). With the acquisition of nuclear weapons, it could have been reasonably assumed that conflicts — particularly conventional conflicts — between India and Pakistan would have ceased, yet periodic clashes in the Kashmir region continued to occur throughout the latter quarter of the 20th century (Hashim 2019). It is, however, possible to argue that conflict persisted due to the absence of nuclear weapons in Pakistan until 1998, which in theory would have eliminated the threat of conflict due to mutually assured destruction (MAD). From a normative viewpoint and with consideration of MAD, 1998 should have been the year in which conflict between India and Pakistan ceased, yet Pakistan's proliferation proved only to escalate conflict between the two states with the eruption of the Kargil conflict in the Kashmir region during the same year.

Japan may exist in a unique situation that currently bears little resemblance to that between India and Pakistan; however, if proliferation were to occur, it may find itself bridging said gap. In such an event, Japan would occupy the position of the first domino in a large series.

By attempting to improve its own security through nuclear sovereignty, a paradoxical effect would transpire. Much like Pakistan's response to India's proliferation, Japan's proliferation would inflame the regional security environment, and, as other countries become threatened by Japan's proliferation, they may seek to improve their security through the construction of their own arsenals, thus causing further inflammation. As demonstrated in India and Pakistan, human conflict — through the age of nuclear weapons — has persisted, and proliferation merely serves to augment the potential severity of armed conflict, not to deter it.

Japanese Proliferation and Revolutionary States: The Case of Iran

As previously stated, Japan's proliferation would likely lead to the sequential centrifugal formation of nuclear states, and — while East Asia was explicitly mentioned previously — proliferation is not limited to Japan's immediate vicinity; rather, due to the international scope of the non-proliferation regime through the NPT, the nuclear domino effect would have an international reach. While certain states may not pose a significant threat as a result of a limited nuclear arsenal or general nuclear abstention in the event of Japanese proliferation, other states may pose a unique threat, and a floated set of standards for nuclear etiquette could arise.

With the desertion of one of the NPT's core members, the legitimacy of non-proliferation would exist in a gray area, and the enforcement of the NPT's consequences for proliferation would largely rely on the international community's responses to acts of proliferation[10]. If Japan were to face international sanctions, it would suffer economically, yet it would still possess nuclear weapons. For revolutionary states — such as Iran — upon whom sanctions have already been placed, their non-nuclear status would be suboptimal. As it stands, the United States currently has extensive sanctions placed on Iran that span over numerous industries with merely a remote link to the Iranian nuclear energy program (Nada et al. 2023). While this may serve to reduce the scale of Iran's nuclear capabilities, it employs a great deal of American leverage. Since the United States has levied so many sanctions thus far, Iran's marginal loss from additional sanctions would be greatly reduced. That being said, Iran has already borne a large portion of international sanctions without possessing nuclear weapons; therefore, the United States and its other allies, in an effort to materially stunt Iran's nuclear program, would not be able to do so effectively as a result of their diminished level of influence. Combined with the

[10] This topic is discussed in greater detail within Subsection I.

hypocrisy of a supposedly pacifist nation's decision to proliferate, Iran — and other revolutionary states — would have both logical and ideological pretenses to pursue the development of nuclear weapons.

The domino effect, however, is not entirely confined to the revolutionary states themselves. Given the upended condition of non-proliferation as an ideology and the presence of the aforementioned 'gray area', any type of proliferation would not have the potential to be easily contested. Connected with the limited marginal loss from sanctions, revolutionary states would have little in the way of providing nuclear weapons to ideologically aligned terrorist states or organizations. Namely, Iran's continuous support of designated terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah could produce said issues in the event of Iran's reactive proliferation (Grace and Mandelbaum 2006).[11] As a major opponent of the Israeli state, a potential nuclear power, Hezbollah's acquisition of nuclear weapons from Iran would likely heighten regional tensions and lead to even more clashes in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Further clashes with Israel would introduce the possibility of American intervention as a result of Israel's diplomatic ties with the United States. Additionally, as terrorist states lack overt state affiliation, the danger of nuclear attacks with limited retaliatory potential would have a marked increase. As this danger increases, non-nuclear countries would have less of a reason to retain such bounded security capabilities, thus further augmenting the potential scale of proliferation.

Conclusion

Japan's proliferation would — as demonstrated — have consequences that could exceed initial projections. Resembling a sinking ship, the holes in the ideology of non-proliferation as a result of Japan's potential proliferation would greatly outnumber the states attempting to maintain it. Once this symbolic ship has sunk, there would be nothing preventing the complete ideological dissolution of an often underappreciated security measure, and the global geopolitical environment may enter an era of nuclear disarray.

[11] Neither this statement nor the following statements regarding Israel serves to legitimize or support either state. Proliferation among warring states, as a whole, is the issue.

Chapter IV: Composition of Japanese Anti-Nuclear Identity

Between the unfortunate history of Japanese nuclear incidents and Japan's professed ideals of pacifism and non-proliferation, Japan has established a profound anti-nuclear sentiment. In addressing the issue of proliferating, Japan must consider this sentiment among Japanese citizens and the subsequent barriers that creates for proliferation, furthering the notion that Japanese nuclear proliferation is not only unnecessary but challenging to accomplish democratically and constitutionally.

Section I: The Atomic Bombings and Nuclear Accidents

Introduction

The traumatic history of nuclear disasters in Japan has contributed to extensive anti-nuclear public sentiment. As the first and only country to have experienced the horrors of nuclear warfare firsthand, and burdened by a persisting, unfortunate familiarity with nuclear fallout, a unique and deep-seated perspective of anti-nuclearism has resulted among the Japanese people. The 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the 1954 Daigo Fukuryu Maru boating incident, and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear meltdown — combined with the anti-militarist sentiment woven into the Japanese culture following the end of World War II — have collectively influenced Japanese domestic politics and shaped discourse regarding the possibility of nuclearization. Living in the wake of these incidents, the Japanese public has continued to demonstrate strong opposition to nuclear proliferation. Therefore, as a democratic nation, Japan should not pursue the construction of a nuclear weapons program in any capacity to best represent the will of its people.

Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

It is estimated that between 150,000 and 220,000 Japanese people were killed as a result of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the majority of whom were civilians. Thousands more were injured, and the event, which remains the first and only wartime use of nuclear weapons throughout history, left a permanent scar on the Japanese psyche. The horrors of the bombings are undeniable: In addition to the sheer destructive force of the explosions, 2,760 to 3,870℃ fireballs, ignited in the sky mere tenths of a second after detonation, lit fires that

decimated both cities, leveling miles of infrastructure around the hypocenters of the blasts. In the months that followed, affected Japanese citizens continued to perish, both from the severity of their wounds and the then-novel acute radiation syndrome sustained through the attack. In total, some 30–40% of the population of both cities died. Japan's domestic identity, reputation on the world stage, and future regarding nuclear proliferation would henceforth undergo pivotal and redefining transformations toward anti-nuclearism.

Daigo Fukuryu Maru

A fervent anti-nuclear movement took root among the Japanese public following the 'Lucky Dragon' incident, occurring just short of a decade after the atomic bombings. The contamination of the tuna fishing boat, dubbed the *Daigo Fukuryu Maru* (第五福竜丸) or 'Lucky Dragon 5,' and its crew members by fallout from US nuclear testing in the Bikini Atoll caused great unrest among the Japanese public. It was feared not only that the vessel would supply them with irradiated fish, but that those onboard, who were directly exposed to the nuclear fallout, were contagious. Although this particular fear was unfounded past the crew's release from the hospital, the public hysteria mixed with general outrage over a repeated incident involving the US and its nuclear capabilities fueled the first tangible anti-nuclear movement in Japan. Port towns across the country began passing resolutions against atomic testing, which eventually morphed into a country-wide movement — that some argue was led largely by housewives — to ban the use of atomic bombs (Higuchi 2008).

Perhaps a unique sense of indignation, a uniting force among Japanese people but one that separated them from the rest of the world, resulted throughout the Japanese public; one that stemmed from their being the only people to have experienced such severe consequences of nuclear power more than once. It is theorized here that this nationwide indignation was strong enough to facilitate the first cohesive Japanese anti-nuclear movement. As for the 'Lucky Dragon 5' crew members, all 23 were diagnosed with acute radiation syndrome, and although most lived past 50 years old, the majority later died of various cancers (Oishi 2011). This unfortunate outcome of what was already an alarming incident served to fuel the anti-nuclear movement taking root in Japanese society.

Fukushima Nuclear Disaster

The Fukushima nuclear disaster received a Level 7 rating on the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES). This is the highest classification a nuclear event can receive, denoting the occurrence of a catastrophic accident – the only other incident in history with such a designation being the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine. Triggered by the devastating 2011 9.0-magnitude Tōhoku earthquake and resultant tsunami, the failure of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant resulted in the release of high levels of radioactive contamination over a period of several days. In the weeks that followed, radioactive isotopes traced back to Fukushima were found across the northern and southern hemispheres of the globe, and domestically, about 150,000 people were eventually evacuated from within the plant's expanding radioactive radius.

In addition to having far-reaching adverse objective consequences, harsh ideological ramifications of the incident were quick to emerge in its aftermath. The confidence of the Japanese public in the safety of nuclear energy was greatly damaged, reenergizing the 'Lucky Dragon' anti-nuclear movement by uniting "those who advanced an end to nuclear power plants and those who pushed for global nuclear disarmament" (Mochizuki 2022, 733). This loss of faith was not limited to the safety of nuclear power itself: overall trust in the "awareness and efforts" of officials involved with nuclear power and its safe implementation was halved less than a year after the meltdown (Iwai 2015, 179). It can thus be hypothesized that not only was the Japanese public unconvinced of the morality and safety of nuclear power, but they had come to feel victimized by their government and distrustful of its ability to adequately manage nuclear power. Such anti-nuclear sentiment has become woven into Japanese society through the collective trauma of these repeated disasters and places the idea of a Japanese nuclear weapons program in complete opposition to the will of the general public. Pursuing any form of nuclear proliferation would, as such, be an undemocratic endeavor.

Public Opinion and the Japanese Culture of Anti-Militarism

The effect of Japan's traumatic nuclear history is evident in public opinion polls, which demonstrate that a persistent majority of the population has remained in opposition to proliferation. A 2006 study following North Korea's first nuclear explosive test signaled that, despite their close and hostile neighbor demonstrating atomic weapon capabilities, 80% of the Japanese public supported the continued implementation of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles,

which is discussed at further length in Section II (Mochizuki 2007). A decade later, 74.7% of the public disagreed with the question of whether Japan should acquire nuclear weapons (Genron NPO 2017, 27). More recently, when asked about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and whether Japan should join the ranks of the document's signatories, 75% of participants answered positively (Baron, Gibbons, and Herzog 2020, 302). It is evident that the Japanese public is firm in its anti-nuclear stance, again indicating that any move by the Japanese government to advance a nuclear weapons program would be an undemocratic enterprise. It would also continue to bring public confidence in government handling of national security down and ostracize the will of the people from the actions of those in power — a trend that Japanese citizens have a pre-established, victimized history with.

The anti-nuclear ideology present in Japanese society today was able to establish such a strong presence among citizens because of a general culture of anti-militarism, the origins of which can be traced back to pre-WWII Japan. Under the Meiji Constitution, the Japanese army was given a position independent of any real form of checks and balances, allowing it to avoid both government and civilian control. An essential takeover of national politics by Japanese militarists, who orchestrated false military emergencies, carried out political assassinations, and attempted *coups d'etat*, occurred as a result. The unrestrained ability of militarists to puppeteer Japan's actions throughout WWII led to them becoming the main target of domestic postwar criticism by the public. Since citizens had no say in the rise of militarist power, it was easy for them to reflect on the hardship they had endured during the war and to feel that "they had been the victims of political forces beyond their control." Consequently, the concept of a military became that of an institution that was "innately inclined to take matters into its own hands, and [that acted] hostile towards human rights and democracy" (Berger 1993, 133–136). Such perception of the military was a large contributor in the establishment of anti-militarism as a cultural facet of Japanese society and has since shaped discourse about national security. Combined with repeated nuclear incidents and a resultant lack of trust in the government's ability to handle nuclear power, Japanese cultural anti-militarism poses an ideological and democratic barrier to nuclear proliferation. Pursuing the development of a nuclear weapons program in light of this widespread cultural history is undemocratic and not recommended.

Acknowledging Nuclear Energy

Discussing the possibility of Japanese nuclear proliferation warrants acknowledgement of Japan's nuclear energy sector and its recent resurgence in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. With its lack of natural resources and dependence on imports for the majority of its energy, the significance of a nuclear energy program for Japan cannot be overstated. Although most of Japan's 33 commercial nuclear energy plants remain closed after being taken out of operation following Fukushima, Prime Minister Kishida has announced his intention to push for their reopening in addition to the construction of new next-generation reactors (Oda 2023). Public opinion of nuclear energy has been negative since Fukushima, but with the individual costs of the global energy crisis weighing on citizens, opinion polls have begun to show a change in sentiment. An *Asahi Shimbun* survey conducted in early February revealed that 51% of respondents were in support of restarting nuclear energy plants, compared to 42% in opposition (Oda 2023). This is the first time since the Fukushima incident that supporters of nuclear energy production have outweighed its opponents (Oda 2023). Such a shift may raise concerns regarding the possibility of Japan using its energy plants for the purposes of nuclear hedging; and may spur arguments that a rise in public support for nuclear energy foreshadows a similar uptick in support for nuclear weapons. It is argued here that such concerns are unfounded.

The Japanese public constrains the development of a nuclear energy program into a nuclear weapons capability. As demonstrated by the polls, public opposition to nuclear weapons remains strong. This has impacted the objectives of policymakers as they weigh the most productive actions to pursue regarding the future of Japanese national security. Rather than attempting to begin the process of advocating for a nuclear weapons program, policymakers are instead focused on "strengthening conventional defense capabilities and tightening the alliance with the United States" (Mochizuki 2022, 723). Those involved in the nuclear energy program are also steering clear of any association with the possibility of nuclear weapons development; program stakeholders have stood as "veto players" against any theoretical move by the government to launch a nuclear weapons program off of the existing nuclear energy policies (Mochizuki 2022, 723). Public opposition to linking the nuclear energy program to the development of nuclear weapons was cemented soon after Fukushima: The anti-nuclear movement that resurged in the disaster's wake demanded a "double-zero" nuclear policy, calling for both the suspension of the development and use of nuclear energy and for a continued refusal

to pursue nuclear weapons. Eager to revive the resource to meet Japan's energy requirements and decrease greenhouse gas emissions, elites and stakeholders in the nuclear energy sector "could not even hint that nuclear energy was necessary to sustain a latent nuclear nuclear weapons capability" in order to regain public support (Mochizuki 2022, 733). The separation of nuclear energy from nuclear weapons proliferation is possible, and it is argued Japan's future will not involve the development of the latter based on the actions of those most involved in the nuclear energy sector, the opinion of the public, and the consequently undemocratic nature of any theoretical nuclear weapon development efforts.

Conclusion

Japanese nuclear proliferation would stand in direct opposition to the will of the general public, therefore making any effort to develop a nuclear weapons program undemocratic in nature. The unique anti-nuclear identity of Japanese citizens, shaped through repeated traumatic events involving nuclear power, has continued to persevere even as the global and East Asian security environments have grown increasingly unstable. Should the Japanese government pursue nuclearization, it would breach its posture as a democratic nation, critically damaging the already weak trust of its people in its ability to manage the future of Japan's national security.

Section II: Article 9 and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles

Introduction

Japan's current defense challenges are not substantial enough for Japan to seek nuclear proliferation to bolster its national security per the standards set forth by Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan and the subsequent 2014 reinterpretation. Thus, any acquisition of nuclear weapons would constitute a deliberate effort to increase Japan's offensive capabilities and violate Article 9's stipulation that nuclear proliferation can only be pursued for defensive purposes. To prevent such a violation, the Japanese government must pursue the formal constitutional amendment process. Furthermore, Japanese proliferation would tarnish its reputation and credibility internationally as it violates the self-imposed Three Non-Nuclear Principles intrinsic to Japanese nuclear identity.

Article 9

Under Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, the Japanese government pledges itself to pacifism — a central characteristic to Japanese identity after World War II. Per translations from the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet website, Article 9 is written as follows:

> 1. 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 a means of settling international disputes.
> 2. 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. (Umeda 2006, 2)

Historically, there have been divisions over whether defensive or offensive military action is permitted under Article 9; however, the current interpretation of Article 9 authorizes the Japanese government to use defensive military action under the guise of self-defense hence the name of the Japanese military — the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) (Umeda 2006, 3–4). The JSDF was founded in 1954 following the Korean War and the American military's inability to adequately defend Japan during that time (Umeda 2006, 14–15). Until now, Japan has

historically been militarily defended by the United States military under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty; the JSDF is therefore only intended to act in instances where the American military requires assistance. Otherwise, the existence of the JSDF would contradict Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. If the JSDF is exclusively reserved for self-defense (later broadened to include collective self-defense) and is supplementary to the American military, who has a robust nuclear weapons program, then the need for Japanese proliferation under the current restrictions of the Japanese military is nonexistent and is inconsistent with the intentions of the Japanese military per the Japanese Constitution.

On July 1st, 2014, the Cabinet of Japan under former Prime Minister Abe Shinzō (安倍晋三) announced its reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, extending the abilities of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) to include collective self-defense. The Japanese Diet concluded the approval process for the reinterpretation in September 2015 (Lee 2015, 389). A controversial policy decision from the Abe administration, this reinterpretation of Article 9 permits the involvement of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces in military conflicts involving its allies such as the United States. While the 2014 reinterpretation of Article 9 is essential to understanding the current restrictions of the Japanese Constitution, the Japanese military would not require its own nuclear weapons to partake in adequate collective self-defense strategies due to the breadth of the American nuclear umbrella. As discussed previously in Chapter I: Foreign Relations and Nuclear Fallout, the American nuclear umbrella is sufficient for handling current and future Japanese territorial disputes.

Another instance of ambiguity within Article 9 is the allowance of nuclear weapons – an issue contested since former Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke (岸信介) issued statements assuring the constitutionality of defensive nuclear weapons in 1957 and 1959 (Mochizuki 2022, 725; Liff 2017, 146). This stance was reaffirmed by the Abe administration in January 2007, stating the Constitution of Japan permitted the possession of nuclear weaponry if "kept to a minimum level necessary for self-defense" (*Reuters* 2007). With the 2014 reinterpretation of Article 9 came three designated conditions for Japanese military defense:

> 1. An armed attack against Japan occurs [or] an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan's survival

> and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.
> 2. There is no other appropriate means available to repel the attack and ensure Japan's survival and protect its people.
> 3. Minimum necessary force will be exercised. (Liff 2017, 160–161)

Per these three conditions that warrant defensive action from the JSDF, the current threat environment would not warrant Japanese proliferation to the standard of defensive capabilities. As of February 2023, Japanese proliferation must inherently come to the standard of offensive capabilities, which is disallowed under the Constitution of Japan. In any instance where the first standard is met, the obligations of the United States military and the subsequent existence of the American nuclear umbrella negate the second standard. Additionally, the use of nuclear weaponry can be considered maximum force potential — not existing within the framework of the third standard.

With consideration to the unconstitutionality of Japanese proliferation — irrespective of previous statements made by former Prime Ministers Kishi and Abe, who were recently refuted — any intention on behalf of the Japanese government to obtain nuclear weapons would require a formal amendment to the Constitution of Japan. However, amending Article 9 is difficult due to the arduous amendment process and the societal pressure from both domestic and international communities to maintain Japan's pacifism.

Under Article 96 of the Constitution of Japan, a formal amendment requires a two-thirds majority vote in the House of Representatives (*Shūgiin*) and the House of Councillors (*Sangiin*) of the Japanese National Diet (*Kokkai*) and a majority vote in a national referendum – a vote among Japanese voters (McElwain 2022, 29). Thus, the threshold for constitutional amendment is difficult to achieve, especially in the instance of Article 9, which the majority of Japanese voters want to maintain. Although a survey conducted by *Asahi Shimbun* (朝日新聞) in April 2022 found that a record high of 56% of Japanese voters felt a revision to the Constitution of Japan was necessary, 59% of respondents felt that it was not necessary to revise Article 9 at that time (Kitami 2022). For Japan, this institutionalized form of pacifism has been essential to Japanese identity domestically and internationally, and the Japanese pledge to not interact in

foreign conflict has been a reassurance to Japanese citizens who remember the violent militarism of the Empire of Japan (Ryu 2018, 656–657; Berger 1993, 134–136).

These sentiments will continue to create a difficult situation for the Japanese government if current or future administrations want to seek an amendment of Article 9, yet we suggest that the Japanese government continues to yield to them. We further suggest that any additional revisions to the Constitution of Japan are done through formal amendment rather than mere interpretation. If the Constitution of Japan can be "changed in accordance with policy preference [... then] the role of the Constitution to limit political power would almost evaporate" (Hasebe 2017, 129). Our conclusive recommendation to the Japanese government is thus that in the instance where Japan pursues proliferation, a formal amendment to the Constitution of Japan is required and the Japanese government should not issue additional reinterpretations to resist a national referendum.

Three Non-Nuclear Principles

In 1971, the Japanese Diet formally endorsed the Three Non-Nuclear Principles — no possession, production, or introduction of nuclear weapons. Former Prime Minister Satō Eisaku (佐藤栄作) initially introduced these ideals to the Japanese Diet in December 1967 and later in January 1968 (Kusunoki 2008, 37–38). Although this resolution is not legally binding for Japan, the Atomic Energy Basic Law, which forbids the possession and production of nuclear weapons, from December 1955 is (Mochizuki 2022, 725).

A 2014 survey conducted by *Asahi Shimbun* found that 82% of Japanese voters wanted the Three Non-Nuclear Principles to be maintained (Mochizuki 2022, 729). Later in March 2022, Prime Minister Kishida acknowledged former Prime Minister Abe's suggestions to conduct a nuclear sharing program with the United States by saying "[Nuclear sharing] is not consistent with one of the nation's three non-nuclear principles of not permitting nuclear weapons into Japan." Another *Asahi Shimbun* survey was conducted in response to Prime Minister Kishida's statements, which found that 54% of Japanese voters think that Japan should continue to adhere to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles even in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (*Asahi Shimbun* 2022).

The Three Non-Nuclear Principles — among other anti-nuclear policy decisions — have long since served to address the anti-nuclear sentiment of the Japanese public discussed in

Chapter IV Section I. For Japan, this anti-nuclear sentiment among its citizens and its previous proclamations of non-proliferation are major barriers to any attempt at Japanese proliferation that is democratic and constitutional. An abandonment of these statements to the extent of nuclear proliferation would likely result in decreased trust and credibility in the Japanese government.

Conclusion

Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan in conjunction with the Three Non-Nuclear Principles have become pillars of the Japanese pacifist identity domestically and internationally, and any attempts at nuclear proliferation on behalf of Japan would violate the terms established by both documents. Since Japan's foreign and security policies have been informed by its pacifist stance for almost 80 years, acquiring nuclear weapons harms the international perspectives of Japan and introduces questions of what Japanese priorities and motives are as a country and military figure. In such an instance, Japanese proliferation could jeopardize its safety by creating a situation where the country is seen as unpredictable. Proliferation is therefore inadvisable, and if the Japanese government should want to proliferate in the future, the usage of a formal amendment to the Constitution of Japan is seen as necessary due to the lack of necessity for defensive nuclear weapons.

Executive Conclusion

Although Japan — both as a state and as a people — is not realistically considering nuclear proliferation at this very moment, conditions, ideologies, and national dispositions are in a constant state of fluctuation. Therefore, this report serves as a reference to those who may find themselves in situations that require difficult decisions regarding nuclearization. As is maintained within the arguments present in this report, at any point, it would be tremendously unwise for Japan to go through with nuclear proliferation in any shape or form.

Japan's nuclearization would result in the severance of its bilateral relations on multiple fronts. On the front of Japan-U.S. relations, Japanese nuclear proliferation would likely result in the unraveling of the already effective U.S. nuclear umbrella over Japan, confound preexisting Japan-U.S. security interests, and potentially upend Japan-U.S. economic relations. With regard to its geographical neighbors, such as the Russian Federation, ROC, PRC, the ROK, and the DPRK, comparatively benign territorial conflicts would become inflamed, economic relations would grow unstable, and diplomatic relations — both between allies and opponents — would undergo a vast recomposition. On the domestic front of the Japanese economy, ranging from the opportunity cost — and the overall gross cost — of developing nuclear weapons to the impending decreases in FDI and possible trade, the damage done to the Japanese economy would be expansive. While Japanese proliferation would produce tangible and immediately visible costs, the ideological erosion of non-proliferation would be a probable symptom. On a global basis, Japanese proliferation would cause attendant consequences that would lead to the deterioration of multinational non-proliferation regimes and its accompanying security. Domestically, however, Japanese proliferation would produce an incredible amount of affliction, as it would oppose the very social, political, and ideological fabric of contemporary Japan.

In times of duress, nuclear proliferation may appear to be beneficial in terms of diplomatic leverage and security-based sovereignty, but the aforementioned projections of the results of nuclear proliferation present a much more grim picture. Nevertheless, this does not imply that a similar diplomatic leverage, if not security-based sovereignty, can't be attained through alternative measures, and — as has been demonstrated throughout this report — it is possible to be an effective statesman without the possession of nuclear weapons.

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