

# Strategic Flexibility to Deter in the Asia-Pacific

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The recent military resurgence of both China and Russia, along with the United States' so-called rebalance to the Asia-Pacific and declining military budgets, suggests the need and opportunity to reevaluate US military policy for the region. Increased air and maritime shows of force, China's declaration of an unusually expansive air defense identification zone (ADIZ) in November 2013, its continued improvements to island infrastructure in the South China Sea over the past year, and Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, all point toward active and intentional policies to project regional strength by the two nations despite US political and military efforts to deter them.<sup>1</sup> With the United States focused on wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan over the past two decades and in Syria today, China now presses “its territorial claims more aggressively, [with] Russia interfering more brazenly.”<sup>2</sup> In today’s volatile security environment—particularly in the Asia-Pacific—the United States should continue to move away from pre-Cold War models of bilateral defense agreements supported by relatively large footprints of permanent forward military presence in favor of an expeditionary defense posture featuring “strategic flexibility.” Such a posture would enhance regional deterrence by reducing predictability and providing political leaders a greater range of responsive options.<sup>3</sup> In-theater military capabilities of sufficient quantity, quality, responsiveness, and survivability—free from requirements to respond to a specific threat from a specific location—comprise the key elements of a proposed US defense posture of strategic flexibility. To help achieve this posture in a period of budget austerity, the United States should pursue a trilateral defense relationship with its two most capable military allies in the region—Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK)—and consider modifications in the regional force structure that offer persistent presence but without precondition.

### Flexible Deterrence for Today: Dissuasion

“Deterrence” in this case is slightly nuanced from the purely deterministic version established by Thomas Schelling in his seminal work, *Arms and Influence*.<sup>4</sup> He posited that deterrence—a posture to prevent an adversary action—acted as the more “defensive” counterpart to “compellence,” a posture to reverse an action already taken. Both of these postures reside beneath the larger concept of “coercion” (i.e., leveraging an actor psychologically to pursue a course of action he would not otherwise choose, backed by the threat or use of force). This form of deterrence follows an “if-then” deterministic logic; if an adversary elects to embark upon a specific action, then a specific result will occur. This posture, while often effective, actually limits response options for policy makers, essentially requiring the establishment of a “red line” that, if crossed, will necessitate follow-through on the threat of force to preserve overall credibility. Deterrence here refers more to the deterrent effect of a range of policy options supported by the breadth of the nation’s instruments of power and “unguided by an overt deterrence policy”; some define this deterrent effect as dissuasion, as does this article, although in the Department of Defense’s (DOD) joint doctrine, this concept is closest to strategic deterrence.<sup>5</sup> This more associative form of policy “suggests a response may follow to varying degree . . . [and follows an] ‘if . . . maybe’ form of flexible policy. . . . We associate by movement, posture, procurement, or inference that if another nation takes any unfavorable action, then we might take some *unspecified* action in response. . . . We set our policy, go about our business, and retain the flexibility to act in response to the choices of the other party” (emphasis added).<sup>6</sup>

This more flexible and associative form of deterrence—or dissuasion—also encompasses the positive policy aspect of assurance. In addition to the deterrent effect on an adversary’s action, dissuasion can “share a corresponding positive policy purpose . . . attracting and assuring allies against the ranks of the potential aggressor.” This

article views dissuasion as encompassing both a deterrent and an assuring effect, and as “these two objectives of policy work together toward our national security,” they can yield tremendous effects in the Asia-Pacific, especially when synchronized with key allies like Japan and the ROK.<sup>7</sup>

Assuring allies has risen in importance for the United States of late because partners and potential adversaries increasingly believe that America may be unwilling—or perhaps economically unable—to engage in extended military operations. The highly publicized sequestration fights in the US Congress, President Obama's decision not to act following Syria's crossing of his chemical-weapons-use red line, a perceived weak response to the annexation of Ukrainian sovereign territory by Russian forces, and the rapid rise and expansion of the Islamic State have all contributed to this belief. “These [perceived] retreats plant a nagging suspicion among friends and foes that on the big day America simply might not turn up.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, President Obama succeeded in securing \$1 billion from Congress in 2014 under the European Reassurance Initiative, a mechanism to reassure European and NATO allies through increased exercise scope and scale, as well as joint military presence. This funding continues into the next fiscal year at a minimum, but it does not apply to the Asia-Pacific, where a resurgent and assertive China projects unclear intentions, the North Korean Kim regime remains ever-belligerent, and Russia's eastern front continues to display elevated military activity. The fact that “in 2013 Asia outspent Europe on arms for the first time—a sign that countries calculate that they will have to stand up for themselves” and are no longer assured that the United States will come to their aid—suggests that America may have misprioritized its reassurance funding and unintentionally added to the heightened nervousness of the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>9</sup>

However, by adopting a policy of strategic flexibility, based on a theoretical foundation of dissuasion, the United States can both deter its adversaries and assure its allies in the Asia-Pacific. Furthermore, when that policy is coupled to a strong US-Japan-ROK defense agreement and a force structure less tied to precise responses to specific threats, the dissuasive effects of strategic flexibility only increase.

## A Resurgent China

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949, China's national security strategy and corresponding willingness to use force have been a function of its perceived economic and military strength relative to that of the United States and the [former] Soviet Union / Russia. In its first three decades—while its relative economic and military strength trailed significantly that of the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)—the PRC pursued and executed a policy of “active defense” under Chairman Mao.<sup>10</sup> Deterring invasion represented the PRC's primary goal, but China also displayed a willingness to use force to defend its territory and sovereignty from encroaching powers, thus demonstrating credibility and resolve. During this period, the PRC also strictly limited its use of force in order to minimize the likelihood of inadvertent and expensive escalation.<sup>11</sup>

After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, Deng Xiaoping assumed power in the PRC, beginning three decades of economic reform and growth by leveraging urbanization, flexible pricing, and foreign investment relatively free of bureaucratic regulations within special economic zones. Along with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, this burgeoning wealth enabled China to invest more in its military, increasing spending annually by at least 10 percent since 1989.<sup>12</sup> Despite this growth, China still lagged the United States in both economic and military power, prompting Deng to adopt “韜光養晦 (tāo-guāng-yāng-huì)” as the PRC’s policy.<sup>13</sup> This Chinese idiom translates to “conceal one’s strengths and bide one’s time”—using military force to deter or as a last resort. The PRC began to use force to obtain natural resources and secure sea lines of communications in the South and East China Seas.<sup>14</sup>

Since 2000 China’s economic rise has continued. In 1990 the PRC’s nominal gross domestic product (GDP) was tenth in the world. By 2000 it ranked sixth, and by 2009 the PRC’s GDP trailed only that of the United States.<sup>15</sup> GDP per capita continues to grow stably, creating an attractive and increasingly indispensable PRC market for its regional neighbors.<sup>16</sup> Trends like these have allowed the PRC today to assert itself regionally, grow closer to attaining regional hegemony, and possibly overcome its “century of humiliation . . . with a focus on regional dominance.”<sup>17</sup> Although some individuals cite China’s very recent economic slowdown as cause for optimism, the PRC still increased its military spending 7.6 percent in 2016.<sup>18</sup> This figure represented the lowest increase in Chinese military spending in six years and the first single-digit increase since 2010, but it follows over two decades of double-digit increases and occurs simultaneously with reductions in defense spending across the Western world. A modicum of optimism may be present in these figures, but the momentum behind Chinese military spending has far from flagged.

Today, China pursues its maritime and territorial goals in the East and South China Seas by claiming “protection of their maritime rights,” and as its military capabilities increase, the PRC will coerce nations like Japan and the ROK with threats of military force to influence or resolve disputes in its favor.<sup>19</sup> Some observers contend that China intends to carry out a “short, sharp war” with Japan to seize the Senkaku (known as the Diaoyu in China) Islands.<sup>20</sup> Japan sees China’s reemergence in the Asia-Pacific as a direct threat both to its claim to the Senkakus and its overall security.<sup>21</sup> This perception increases the possibility of regional armed conflict that some people consider inevitable and led Japan to “consider revising its pacifist constitution.”<sup>22</sup> China’s establishment of the controversial ADIZ in the East China Sea continues the trend, and its investment in the construction of seven new islands within the South China Sea adds to the tension. Supposedly crafted to improve “the living and working conditions of those stationed on the outposts” near the contested Spratly Islands, the new islands comprise over 3,200 new acres of power projection capability for China, encompassing state-of-the-art ports, airfields, and even basketball and tennis courts.<sup>23</sup> Multiple encroachments by China’s Coast Guard into Japanese waters continue unabated, the PRC seeming intent on controlling its surrounding waters and limiting US Navy (USN) dominance in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans.<sup>24</sup> Even though the United States continues to pressure China diplomatically and militarily to “resolve maritime disputes . . . based on international legal principles” and an ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) code of conduct,

China remains content to operate outside established international protocols, interacting with individual countries bilaterally to realize its aims whenever possible.<sup>25</sup>

The PRC's bilateral approach also undermines the United States' bilateral alliances in the region. For example, the PRC opposed Japan's announcement of "collective self-defense" in a joint statement with the ROK in July 2014, and in February 2015 the PRC advised the ROK against the deployment of US-sponsored Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile capabilities in Korea. As China's economic and military might continues to grow, so does its ability to actively influence the internal affairs of its regional neighbors. As the ROK and the Republic of China find themselves increasingly unable to resist China's immediate economic and military influence, other US partners in the Asia-Pacific region may also yield to China's growing hegemony.<sup>26</sup> To avoid a domino theory of a different kind, the United States must rethink its bilateral alliances in the Asia-Pacific region.

### **Rethinking Asia-Pacific Bilateral Relationships**

Article V of the US-Japan Treaty, signed in January 1960, represents a Cold War-era pact for both nations to "support each other if attacked."<sup>27</sup> Today, Japan remains the primary beneficiary of this dated agreement, which originally focused on counterbalancing the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup> However, with China's reemergence and North Korea's unpredictability, the US-Japan relationship has found renewed relevance in shaping the Asia-Pacific environment.<sup>29</sup> Although the Japanese interpretation of collective self-defense is a welcome enabler to increased bilateral interoperability and engagement, Japan must exercise caution to avoid inflaming Sino-Japanese relations. Despite subtle but direct appeals to Japanese leaders to tone down their rhetoric and provocative actions toward China, US leadership has experienced only mild success in this area. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, despite US vice president Joe Biden's tactful suggestion to demur, offers a noteworthy example.<sup>30</sup> Understandably, the United States avoids criticizing Japanese leaders, believing that China will continue its intimidation tactics if there is "any hint of daylight between [the] Americans and Japanese."<sup>31</sup> But any unilateral Japanese military response to Chinese provocation will put US credibility in jeopardy. Should the United States fail to support Japan, international trust in the reliability of American promises and power will erode further, motivating other nations to "bandwagon with China and accommodate its interests."<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, a swift US military response in the East or South China Sea, in accordance with its mutual defense treaty with Japan, places America at an inherent disadvantage. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy would enjoy "the luxury of concentrating all of its forces and effort" on the confrontation, but the United States would employ only "a fraction" of its armed forces, given other commitments around the globe; "it stands to reason that PLA forces could be strongest where it counts [in the East and South China Seas], even if they remain weaker overall" when compared to the entirety of American military strength.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the dated US-Japan defense treaty actually limits rather than expands mutually beneficial military response options—it must be rewritten as agreed to during the October 2013 Security Consultative Committee

meeting.<sup>34</sup> This important relationship can endure without an American blank check to fund it and can evolve to support a US policy of Asia-Pacific strategic flexibility founded in dissuasion.

The US-ROK alliance, dating to the 1953 Korean Armistice, would also benefit from a thoughtful revision. The same logic applies to a unilateral action by China, North Korea, or the ROK potentially forcing the United States into a high-stakes confrontation to preserve its credibility—a confrontation that it might otherwise choose to avoid. In this case, though, the ROK's economic self-sufficiency may be the key to uncouple America from its confining treaty with Seoul. The ROK and the United States have already agreed upon ensuring continued ROK economic growth as a means of funding the military improvements necessary to assume a greater role in its own defense. In an April 2014 joint ROK-US news conference, President Park Geun-hye called the ROK-US Free Trade Agreement, along with the mutual defense treaty, the “two major linchpins” of the alliance and the keys to the ROK's entry into the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).<sup>35</sup> TPP membership not only would increase the ROK's financial opportunities but also “could increase cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.”<sup>36</sup> The potential financial gains resulting from ROK participation in the TPP would provide increased funds to absorb more of that country's defense burden—a US request—specifically in the areas of air and naval war-fighting capabilities. By bolstering the ROK's economic growth as a way of funding required military improvements, America may create the negotiating space necessary to reshape its alliance with the ROK to achieve true strategic flexibility.

## A US-Japan-ROK Trilateral Partnership

In line with the US national security strategy, it is time for the United States to diversify its “security relationships in Asia as well as [its] defense posture and presence” in the region.<sup>37</sup> This statement suggests that the latitude to explore mutually beneficial defense solutions for the region must extend beyond the current bilateral relationships that both define and confine US response options in the Asia-Pacific.

Given the deep and confrontational shared history between Japan and Korea, some commentators would contend that a trilateral relationship between these two nations and the United States is impossible. However, despite centuries-old tensions, founded in Japanese colonial rule and military occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945, as well as contemporary disputes over territorial claims, both nations have shown indications for closer political and military cooperation, including the recent “comfort women” agreement between Prime Minister Abe and President Park.<sup>38</sup> This progress is critical since “the failure of Korea and Japan to deal with their past imperils not only their own security but [also] America's.”<sup>39</sup> Numerous issues remain obstacles to compromise, but the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands dispute remains the oldest and one of the most contentious, involving terrain that “Koreans view as a symbol of liberation from Japanese colonial rule.”<sup>40</sup> This dispute must be resolved, for if left unattended, “it will affect bilateral relations, including security cooperation” to counterbalance China and an unstable North Korea.<sup>41</sup> The United States may be in the best position to facilitate an acceptable resolution, given its

deep influence with both nations. Selling a trilateral approach to regional security, however, calls for “a new kind of statesmanship . . . to heal such entrenched divisions,” starting with US presidential leadership to “encourage such bridge-building” by bringing Prime Minister Abe and President Park together for meaningful talks.<sup>42</sup> Admittedly, this endeavor is daunting because “strategic and military cooperation between the two neighbors is almost nonexistent, and what little there is usually takes place out of public sight.”<sup>43</sup>

Brad Glosserman, executive director of the Honolulu-based Pacific Forum Center for Strategic and International Studies, offers some recommendations to consider. In addition to a “joint [Korea-Japan] declaration’ . . . [of] renewed ties,” he recommends a pledge to maintain a peaceful neighborhood and respond jointly to new security threats; a Japanese declaration supporting the reunification of the Korean Peninsula under the Seoul government; an outline of shared values and interests, including maritime security threats and bilateral trade issues; and an ROK acknowledgement of Japan’s contributions to regional security and its future security role.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, McDaniel Wicker at the Wilson Center contends that, inter alia, a commitment among the three nations to meet in a “2 + 2 + 2” forum that comprises their respective defense and foreign ministers might yield increased alignment among the mutual political and military concerns of the United States, Japan, and the ROK.<sup>45</sup> These recommendations represent concrete steps toward the establishment of a flexible US-Japan-ROK trilateral defense agreement, as well as bridge-building measures to resolve persistent Japan-ROK disputes—a critical prerequisite to any US policy to shape and share the burden of security in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>46</sup> Together with mutual concern about a rising China, there is reason for optimism regarding a US-Japan-ROK political partnership.

Any such formal relationship, though, must begin with the already-strengthening military ties among the three nations. Stemming from their respective bilateral relationships with the United States, both Japan and the ROK possess modern military capabilities that integrate well. In the maritime realm, both the Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) and Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) tout mature, robust blue-water fleets. Although naturally concentrated on defense of their respective homelands, both the ROKN and JMSDF have proven their capability to operate with and within USN action groups through participation in regular exercises and global operations, including counterpiracy, humanitarian relief, and more. Demonstrating the potential for deeper military cooperation and coordinated action among the three countries, the USS *George Washington* carrier strike group participated in a June 2012 trilateral naval exercise with ROKN and JMSDF units in the East China Sea, emphasizing disaster relief and maritime security.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the ROKN and JMSDF have been characterized as “destined to cooperate” due to their shared interests in defense against North Korea and China, particularly in the area of antisubmarine warfare and in common trade and access challenges.<sup>48</sup> Trilateral commitment to protocols for dealing with incidents at sea and in the air is another area for potential cooperation.<sup>49</sup> Some people suggest the development of a US-PRC agreement similar to the Incidents-at-Sea Agreement that the United States established with the former Soviet Union during the Cold War era. However, such an agreement may be unnecessary, given existing modern international protocols that

were largely not in force at the time of the signing.<sup>50</sup> Instead, a US-Japan-ROK partnership would assist the international community in holding the PRC accountable under existing protocols, adding regional legitimacy to calls for adjudication of incidents by responsible international governing bodies.

Besides shared maritime defense, the air domain promises similar synergies among the three nations. The United States already enjoys a deep bilateral relationship with both Japan and the ROK regarding air-centric military exercises. The US-Japan Keen Sword series and the US-ROK collection of Ulchi Freedom Guardian, Foal Eagle, and Max Thunder all do well to integrate the respective air forces and ensure proficiency and interoperability across an ever-changing body of operators. But some recent air exercises have involved all three nations, a practice that should be extended to a greater degree into other war-fighting domains, in line with benefits already seen in Europe under the European Reassurance Initiative. Red Flag Alaska 13-3 took place in August 2013, encompassing approximately 60 aircraft and 2,600 personnel. It focused on humanitarian assistance training, air base opening, aeromedical evacuation, and air combat training, including air-to-air and air-to-ground events within a large-force employment exercise. For the first time since Red Flag Alaska's inception in 1976 (then known as Cope Thunder), both Seoul and Tokyo sent six F-15s each from their air forces to participate in the theater-level air war simulation. Both the Republic of Korea Air Force and the Japanese Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) had participated in Red Flag exercises before but never simultaneously.

Similarly, Asia-Pacific's Cope North exercise, active since 1978, continues to mature. Nearly 2,000 military members participated in Cope North 2015; the United States, Australia, Japan, the ROK, New Zealand, and the Philippines contributed operators, and members of the Singapore and Vietnam air forces observed. This 86th iteration of the exercise, held in February 2015 at Andersen AFB, Guam, concentrated on "interoperability and . . . combat readiness . . . [to] develop a synergistic disaster response capability between [*sic*] the countries involved."<sup>51</sup> US Air Force colonel David Mineau, the Cope North exercise director, recognized the importance of deeper multilateral ties "so we can learn from each other. . . . Coming together, we can hone our abilities by listening to each other, increasing our interoperability, and sharing techniques, tactics and procedures to make us more effective and to promote peace and stability in the region."<sup>52</sup>

During an air-based demonstration of military cooperation to protest jointly China's regional aggression, the ROK and Japan in December 2013 conducted a search-and-rescue military exercise in the vicinity of China's controversial ADIZ. The ROK and JASDF forces did not file flight plans, contrary to Chinese guidance for the ADIZ, following the example set by the United States at the ADIZ's inception.<sup>53</sup> In response to China's establishment of the "provocative" East China Sea ADIZ, the United States conducted an overflight of two B-52s. This act not only reinforced support for Japan but also served as a "demonstration of long-established international rights to freedom of navigation and transit through international airspace."<sup>54</sup> Finally, there are also efforts to pursue a trilateral missile defense system among the United States, Japan, and the ROK.<sup>55</sup> Overtly, to counter the increasing North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile threat, this initiative to erect an integrated and interoperable

missile defense system would also help check Chinese regional aggression by countering that nation's burgeoning cruise missile capabilities.

Unquestionably, "a contingency on the Korean Peninsula could affect Japan and . . . a contingency in Japan could affect South Korea. . . . Inadequate cooperation will not only help the adversary in a specific contingency but also serve a third party in the region. In the worst case it would greatly damage the national interests of both nations, as well as those of the United States."<sup>56</sup> However, a cohesive, interoperable, and strong trilateral relationship that could flexibly respond to any shared regional concern would provide a credible regional deterrent. Deepening and expanding these nascent US-Japan-ROK relationships to support and enable a trilateral defense arrangement are key ingredients to a US recipe for strategic flexibility and effective dissuasion.

### Force Structure: Increasing Survivability and Options

Strategic flexibility also requires agile, survivable forces that are not restricted to specific geographical locales or confined to respond to specific threats. Reevaluating the US force posture in the ROK, relying more upon persistent naval presence, and increasing the survivability of key Asia-Pacific locales are three ways the United States might shift its existing Asia-Pacific force structure in support of strategic flexibility.

In 2007 the ROK sought full operational control (OPCON) of its wartime forces from the United States. This request resulted in an agreement to transfer OPCON by April 2012.<sup>57</sup> Part of the agreement included ROK guarantees to fill gaps in its military technology and war-fighting capabilities that were most reinforced by the United States, particularly naval and air platforms but also "missile defense and state-of-the-art C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance)."<sup>58</sup> To date, however, the ROK has not managed to increase defense spending sufficiently to attain the necessary military upgrades as outlined in its *Defense Reform Plan 2020*, a fact that may indicate a general reluctance to complete the OPCON transfer, now delayed from December 2015 to an indefinite date.<sup>59</sup> The transfer of wartime OPCON to the ROK represents a key enabler to a US policy of strategic flexibility by allowing America to reduce its military footprint in the ROK or to use those forces in response to a military confrontation external to the Korean Peninsula. Attaining the military capabilities to support the US pursuit of a more strategically flexible force would also bring to the ROK the added benefit of facilitating the as-yet-unrealized "long desire to achieve 'Self-Reliant Defense.'"<sup>60</sup> Because the continued delay of OPCON transfer reduces US military flexibility to respond to other crises in the Asia-Pacific region, the United States should consider increased financial and political incentives for the ROK to expedite the transfer. Once the latter is complete, America and the ROK can then consider basing and force-structure options that might better strengthen a trilateral regional response in a meaningful way.

Increased naval presence in the Asia-Pacific offers another alternative to ground-based forces—one that should contribute to greater strategic flexibility. Already, "in addition to U.S.-based aircraft carriers and expeditionary strike groups conducting

rotational deployments to the region, there are 23 ships and submarines forward deployed to U.S. facilities throughout U.S. 7th Fleet. . . . C7F includes forces forward deployed to Japan and Guam,” according to the commander, US Seventh Fleet.<sup>61</sup> This sizeable and permanent “Forward Deployed Naval Force” in-theater reduces the response time demanded in a regional crisis and operates in concert with rotationally deployed units based in the continental United States.<sup>62</sup> Increasing this presence would avoid some of the limitations resident with air and ground forces operating from host nation bases. Depending upon the status-of-forces agreements (SOFA), host nations often impose limitations on the operations of US military units. For example, operations originating from the host nation may participate in its direct defense but may not permit lethal action against a third party. Even on a case-by-case basis, SOFAs can impose serious limitations on US freedom of movement while sea-based units, even if operating from US facilities in host nations, usually bring no such political constraints.<sup>63</sup>

Improving the survivability of key strategic locations vulnerable to PRC and North Korean ballistic missile and cruise missile threats would also contribute to strategic flexibility. As an example, sizeable US and Japanese Self Defense Force forces on Okinawa are not only necessary to respond to any regional military conflict but also extremely vulnerable to missile attack. To address this concern, the 18th Wing at Kadena Air Base on Okinawa initiated an annual “defense of Okinawa working group” in 2007. Since the initial session, which consisted only of US Air Force personnel, the group has met multiple times and grown to include over 120 joint US partners, as well as elements of the JASDF and Japanese Ground Self Defense Force. This body of subject-matter experts identifies employment gaps and then exercises jointly either to validate or reject island defense concepts. Now known as the Bilateral Defense of Okinawa Working Group (BDOWG), it examines issues such as integrated air and missile defense, distributed command and control in a contested environment, and dispersal options should defense of the island fail. By establishing “business rules” in advance of conflict, BDOWG participants have established airspace and timing agreements to deconflict missile defense shot options, erected various command and control alternatives related to loss of connectivity with higher echelons, and discovered that dispersing US military assets to increase survivability exerts significant negative effects upon the generation of combat sorties. BDOWG concepts have been used to inform emergent Pacific operation plans and have found their way to Air Combat Command’s Weapons and Tactics Conference to inform and potentially adapt similar relationships with international and joint partners in other theaters. Mechanisms like the BDOWG strengthen international military partnerships and address real-world military employment challenges to increase survivability, ultimately preserving combat options within a posture of Asia-Pacific strategic flexibility. This process can be easily replicated for other key Asia-Pacific sites and can include a larger range of allies and partners.

## Conclusion

If a US policy of strategic flexibility based in dissuasion is to produce its desired effect, then policy makers must first recognize that “understanding [deterrence] means facing up to the fact that it is inherently imperfect. . . . It must be approached with care and used as part of a larger tool kit.”<sup>64</sup> In line with the DOD’s joint operating concept on deterrence, “effective deterrence involves far more than just DOD capabilities, operations, and activities. . . . It demands a national level effort involving extensive interagency (and in some cases, intra-alliance) integration and coordination.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, the policy proposed here requires commitment from all instruments of US national power, especially to bring to fruition the complex trilateral defense arrangement among the United States, Japan, and the ROK. Such a relationship would not only counter a resurgent China but also share the burden of the mutual defense of all three nations during a period of fiscal retraction. Moreover, it would enable the projection of US military power in the Asia-Pacific without entangling preconditions—a critical element to strategic flexibility as defined here. Beyond the trilateral arrangement, rethinking Asia-Pacific force structure to reduce reliance upon standing ground forces tied to a specific response, as well as pursuing constructive multilateral mechanisms to increase survivability and response options, would also contribute to a policy of strategic flexibility and effective regional dissuasion. It is important not to “discount . . . dissuasion[’s] . . . effect upon behavior, . . . perceptions of U.S. military power and of the likelihood that it would be employed. Possession of a very powerful military machine, and a solid reputation for being willing to use it, casts a shadow or shines a light . . . in many corners of the world. That shadow, or light, may have a distinct deterrent effect, even in the absence of explicit American efforts to deter.”<sup>66</sup> When complemented by its positive, assuring effects on allies and regional partners, dissuasion unhindered and empowered through a US Asia-Pacific defense posture of strategic flexibility can even prevent conflicts once considered inevitable. ☛

## Notes

1. The Japanese Air Self Defense Force scrambles in response to Chinese and Russian aircraft penetrating the Japanese ADIZ have risen each year from 158 in 2003 to 810 in 2013. Of these, scrambles in response to Chinese incursions represented 21.5 percent of the total in 2003, rising to 51.2 percent of the total by 2013.

2. “What Would America Fight For?,” *Economist*, 3 May 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21601508-nagging-doubt-eating-away-world-order-and-superpower-largely-ignoring-it-what?frsc= dg%7Cd>.

3. *Strategic flexibility* is the ability to project military power against anticipated, adaptive, or unexpected global threats without preconditions imposed by external entities. The concept of strategic flexibility emerged in numerous official US documents, including the 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, the 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, and the 2003 *Global Defense Posture Review*. The specific term *strategic flexibility* is more commonly associated with US forces in Korea. It was noted as a goal, albeit undefined, in the 35th US–Republic of Korea (ROK) Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué in 2003. In this context, strategic flexibility permits the United States to relocate troops stationed in the ROK to other regions or theaters, thus facilitating strategic flexibility. The latter requires sufficient agile, flexible, and expeditionary military forces, both at home and

abroad. These forward-stationed and deployed forces are multifunctional so they can be surged quickly to deal with unexpected threats.

4. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966).
5. Gen Norton A. Schwartz and Lt Col Timothy R. Kirk, "Policy and Purpose: The Economy of Deterrence," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 21. For a discussion of strategic deterrence, see Department of Defense, *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept*, version 2.0 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, December 2006), 56, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/concepts/joint\\_concepts/joc\\_deterrence.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/concepts/joint_concepts/joc_deterrence.pdf). This article's use of *dissuasion* mirrors that of Schwartz and Kirk (see above) and can be considered almost synonymous with strategic deterrence as defined in the DOD's *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept*.
6. Schwartz and Kirk, "Policy and Purpose," 18–19.
7. *Ibid.*, 17.
8. "What Would America Fight For?"
9. *Ibid.*
10. David C. Gompert and Phillip C. Saunders, *The Paradox of Power: Sino-American Strategic Restraint in an Age of Vulnerability* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011), 47.
11. As examples, the PRC separately constituted and deployed the People's Volunteer Army to combat US and Korean forces during the Korean conflict rather than simply using elements of the People's Liberation Army to avoid an "official" war with the United States and possible escalation. Similarly, during the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1954–55, and again in 1958, the PRC intentionally avoided the impression of invading the key islands of Kinmen and Matsu because such an act could be seen as a prelude to the invasion of Taiwan and inspire US military action in response. See 林賢參, "冷戦期における中国の武力行使の行動パターン—抑止論の観点から論ずる—," *問題と研究* 36, no.4 (July/August 2007): 105.
12. Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan, 2014*, white paper (Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Defense, 2014), 35, [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2014/DOJ2014\\_1-1-3\\_web\\_1031.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2014/DOJ2014_1-1-3_web_1031.pdf).
13. Ryoji Nakagawa, "The New Stage of Foreign Policy of China: Adaptation for International Order and Creation of New Order," *立命館国際地域研究*, no. 33 (March 2011): 30.
14. By extending its claims of sovereignty over resource-rich coastal areas incrementally during this period, using force in the Battle of the Paracel Islands in 1974, and again in the Spratly Islands in 1988, the PRC used its growing military to supplement the country's expanding economy.
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16. As examples, the ROK in 2013 experienced an export trade value of 26.1 percent to the PRC, more than double the same relationship with the United States. The ROK's export dependency is also extremely high, comprising about 43 percent of its GDP in 2013. Taiwan's situation is similar, with its export trade value to the PRC at 26.8 percent and its export dependency standing at 62.4 percent. See "韓国経済と日韓経済関係," [mofa.go.jp](http://www.mofa.go.jp), December 2014, [http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCMQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mofa.go.jp%2Fmofaj%2Ffiles%2F000005986.pdf&ei=Is7oVNY9CsWjNsrKg6AO&usg=AFQjCNFA5gHe2nJ-Y\\_31\\_eInbg8dIW5lpQ&sig2=7T81UGT02CQBrqLHWnSVZA](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCMQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mofa.go.jp%2Fmofaj%2Ffiles%2F000005986.pdf&ei=Is7oVNY9CsWjNsrKg6AO&usg=AFQjCNFA5gHe2nJ-Y_31_eInbg8dIW5lpQ&sig2=7T81UGT02CQBrqLHWnSVZA) (Hong Kong and Taiwan are not included in the figures); "經濟部: 中国大陆への経済的依存度は深まっていない," [taiwanembassy.org](http://www.taiwanembassy.org), 4 July 2014, <http://www.taiwanembassy.org/ct.asp?xItem=523896&ctNode=1453&mp=1> (Hong Kong is not included in the figures); and "世界の輸出依存度 国別ランキング・推移," [globalnote.jp](http://www.globalnote.jp), 1 December 2014, <http://www.globalnote.jp/post-4900.html>.
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18. "China's Defense Budget," [GlobalSecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/budget.htm), accessed 13 June 2016, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/budget.htm>.
19. US Naval Institute, "WEST 2014: What About China?," YouTube video, 1:18:01 (James Fanell, 22:19-minute mark of video), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWhwm4SJxTw&list=PLWX4R7nG6a8moOpTaK1Zs41qPmPzjhxmj&feature=c4-overview-vl>. See also Michael D. Swaine et al., *China's Mili-*

*tary and the U.S.-Japan Alliance in 2030: A Strategic Net Assessment* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013), 308.

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63. This is not to say that the host nations give the USN a “blank check.” There may be limitations on resupply in or return to port if the host nation does not concur with action taken by US forces. As in all cases, negotiations with the host nation will be critical to ensure freedom of action.

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**Col Tom Torkelson, USAF**

Colonel Torkelson (USAF; MA, University of Oklahoma; MS, Air Force Institute of Technology; MAAS, Air University) serves as the wing commander of the 100th Air Refueling Wing at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom. Prior to his current assignment, Colonel Torkelson served as vice-commander, 18th Wing, Kadena Air Base, Japan.



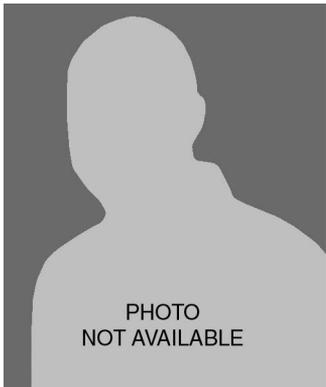
**COL Dan Kelley, USA**

Colonel Kelley (BA, Villanova University; MA, Deakin University [Australia]) is assigned to US Army Cadet Command. Previously, he served as the senior infantry trainer at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany.



**Col Yasumasa Hayashi, JASDF**

Colonel Hayashi (BE, National Defense Academy; MSDM, Graduate School of System Design and Management, Keio University) serves on the J-5 staff, in the Joint Staff, Ministry of Defense, Japan. He was commissioned through the Japanese National Defense Academy in 1992. Prior to his current assignment, Colonel Hayashi served as the submarine base commander of Miyako-Jima Sub Base.



**CAPT William McKinney, USN**

Captain McKinney (BS, US Naval Academy; MSE, Catholic University) commands the USS *Florida* (SSGN 728) (Gold), in Kings Bay, Georgia. Prior to his current assignment, he served as the chief of staff for the Operations Directorate at United States European Command.

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