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MARITIME STRATEGY  
SERIES

## Going Anti-Access at Sea *How Japan Can Turn the Tables on China*

By Toshi Yoshihara



Center for a  
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## About this Series

Maritime tensions in the East and South China Seas have raised significant questions about the long-term peace and stability that has enabled Asia's economic rise over the last several decades. While these disputes are longstanding, recent years have seen attempts to unilaterally change the status quo through tailored coercion that falls short of war. These activities do not appear to be abating despite growing international concern. While policy efforts to alleviate tensions must include engagement and binding, a comprehensive approach must include countering coercive moves by imposing costs on bad behavior. This series aims to explore various types and facets of strategies to deter, deny and impose costs on provocative behavior in maritime Asia. Hopefully these papers will, jointly and severally, generate new thinking on how to both maintain security and build order across the Indo-Pacific region.

### Cover Image

A Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force *Hayabusa*-class guided-missile patrol boat fires an SSM-1B missile. The potential roles of these and similar craft are discussed on pages 7-8.

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## Going Anti-Access at Sea

### *How Japan Can Turn the Tables on China*

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## INTRODUCTION

By Toshi Yoshihara

During the past two decades, China has built up an array of military forces designed to complicate and even preclude American and allied operations across large swaths of maritime Asia. Known in Pentagon jargon as an “anti-access/area denial” strategy or among Chinese strategists as “counterintervention,” Beijing’s approach seeks to hold the United States and its allies at bay in the event that China fights in a major regional conflict, such as a war over Taiwan.

China’s growing capacity to keep out third parties poses a dual challenge to Japan and to the U.S.-Japan alliance. In wartime, Chinese naval, air and missile forces would contest allied use of the seas, airspace and bases in the western Pacific, including those along the Japanese archipelago. In peacetime, those same forces serve as a backstop to China’s paramilitary maritime law enforcement vessels, which have been dispatched to apply unremitting pressure on rival claimants in the East and South China Seas.

Japan thus finds itself squeezed between China’s latent military prowess that backs up Chinese coercion over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute and China’s ability to disrupt access to the global commons should conventional deterrence fail. Given U.S. security commitments to Japan and to the region, meeting China’s twin military challenge is as much an alliance priority as it is a Japanese concern. It is essential for Japan, in partnership with the United States, to counter Beijing’s anti-access capabilities.

This paper proposes a cost-imposing strategy by Japan that would constrain China, preserve allied options and help keep the peace in East Asia. The strategy plays to Japanese strengths, exploits Chinese vulnerabilities and blunts the most dangerous components of China’s counter intervention plan. The specific Japanese measures, taken in conjunction with U.S. forces, would shift more risk to China’s military operations, dim the prospects for rapid Chinese success on the battlefield and thus shore up allied deterrence.

## I. CHINA ECLIPSING JAPAN

Chinese sea power, both military and paramilitary in character, has acquired more mass and improved in quality. While Japan has maintained its edge in technology and human capital, it has had trouble keeping up with China's numbers. As a result, the growing power gap is having a telling effect on Japan's ability to defend its maritime prerogatives in the East China Sea. The professionalism of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) and Coast Guard notwithstanding, increased Chinese pressure in the seas and airspace surrounding the Senkaku Islands has left Japan strained and searching for a suitable remedy short of acknowledging a dispute.

The modernization of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), the centerpiece of Beijing's seaward turn, shows just how far China has come. Between 2000 and 2010, China's fleet of modern attack submarines increased more than sixfold, from five to 31 boats.<sup>1</sup> The PLAN put to sea its first aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*, acquired from Ukraine, and four *Sovremenny*-class guided-missile destroyers procured from Russia, along with at least 10 new classes of indigenously built destroyers, frigates, corvettes and fast-attack craft. The latter ship types – such as the Type 052D *Luyang*-III destroyer, the Type 054A *Jiangkai*-II frigate, the Type 056 *Jiangdao* corvette and the Type 022 *Houbei* fast-attack craft – have all entered serial production, adding mass and balance to the fleet. Notably, the Type 052D guided-missile destroyer is reportedly comparable to Japan's top-of-the-line *Kongo*- and *Atago*-class destroyers.

Only 20 years have elapsed since China began to construct and import modern front-line fighting ships. This is an impressive feat by any standard. Moreover, the inputs of naval power are inherently long-lasting. High-end vessels, such as the Type 052Ds, are built to stay in service for 20 to 30 years. A ship commissioned in 2015 could in

theory remain in active service until midcentury. Provided that the PLAN is a good steward of its capital-intensive assets, supplying regular maintenance and repairs, China promises to maintain a sizable presence in the East and South China Seas for decades to come.

As China's rapidly modernizing navy extends its reach, it has become commonplace for Chinese naval flotillas to sail through Japanese-held narrow seas and cruise along Japan's eastern coast. Beginning as sporadic forays into the Pacific in 2008, these expeditions now take place regularly year-round.<sup>2</sup> The voyages have no doubt helped the PLAN acquire tactical and technical proficiency on the high seas. Moreover, the Chinese navy has steadily expanded the scope of its peacetime operations. Notably, in July 2013, a surface action group steamed through the Soya Strait (the first time Chinese units had conducted such a transit), circumnavigated Japan and circled back to port by way of the international strait between Okinawa and Miyako Islands.

Chinese military aircraft, including fighters, have also ramped up flight operations over the East China Sea.<sup>3</sup> In November 2013, Beijing unilaterally declared an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea that requires all foreign aircraft entering the zone to submit flight plans to Chinese aviation authorities. The Chinese zone pointedly overlaps with the Japanese ADIZ, including over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Given that China is committed to making these increased activities the new status quo, frequent run-ins between Chinese and Japanese forces within the relatively confined spaces of East Asian seas will likely be the norm in the coming years.

The shifting maritime balance and China's assertiveness at sea are not the only indicators of Japan's eroding military position. Perhaps most worrisome is that the Japanese archipelago falls within range of a large and growing family

of Chinese ballistic and cruise missiles. This missile arsenal is at the heart of Beijing's strategy to deter U.S. and allied intervention over such potential flashpoints as a cross-strait conflagration. The missiles would bar regional bases to U.S. reinforcements while putting at risk military forces already in the theater. China would in effect erect a no-go zone across large parts of maritime Asia, severely hampering allied freedom of movement.

Military planners of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) have almost certainly directed their crosshairs on Japan, home to some of the largest naval and air bases in the world. For a high-intensity conventional military campaign to obtain its maximum effectiveness, the PLA would need to inflict substantial damage to Japanese and American airfields and naval facilities that are critical to allied air superiority and sea control, the operational prerequisites for thwarting Chinese war aims. As such, missile salvos designed to knock out Kadena Air Base, Iwakuni Air Station, Sasebo naval base and Yokosuka naval base would substantially aid the PLA's opening moves.<sup>4</sup>

While successful attacks on bases in Japan would by no means constitute a war winner for Beijing, they would almost certainly complicate U.S. fleet and air logistics, magnifying the tyranny of distance inherent to operations in the vast Pacific. At the very least, crippling the region's basing infrastructure could help the PLA slow down or hold at bay American and allied forces operating along the approaches to the Chinese mainland.

To make matters worse, Tokyo's current defense posture permits China to impose disproportionate costs on Japan. The Maritime Self-Defense Force's anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities – a long-standing core competency of the service – illustrate this dilemma. Japan boasts one of the largest and most formidable fixed-wing ASW forces in the world, only second in number to the United States. But these squadrons, such as those

based at Naha Airport in Okinawa, would be highly vulnerable to destruction on the ground by a PLA missile raid. Chinese missile barrages could also cut runways, precluding aircraft from taking to the air, at least during the initial stages of a conflict.

The MSDF has invested in ever larger helicopter carriers, including the *Hyuga* and the *Izumo*, to boost its capacity to sustain high-tempo rotary-wing ASW operations. Such high-value capital ships that are in port and at pier-side would be especially enticing targets in a Chinese missile strike. These high-signature vessels could also be targeted by China's anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs).<sup>5</sup> As former fleet commander of the MSDF Admiral Makoto Yamazaki warned, "If the ASBMs are simply programmed to track large ships, then the large 22DDH [the *Hyuga* helicopter carrier] would be an attractive target second only to the US aircraft carrier in the Japan-US fleet conducting joint operations."<sup>6</sup>

More generally, the ASW competition will likely advantage China over time. The PLAN's submarine fleet has been growing larger, quieter and more lethal in the past decade, constituting one of the most vibrant dimensions of China's naval modernization. In the cat-and-mouse game between a submarine and an ASW unit, the physics of the undersea environment stack the contest decidedly against the latter. Submarine hunting places extraordinary demands on human skill and on equipment. Such defensive measures are expensive, are difficult to perform and cede the initiative to Beijing. This offense-defense imbalance thus confers a built-in advantage upon China. This is but one area where the MSDF's pocket of excellence will suffer diminishing returns in the coming years. The potential for Japan's existing forces to depreciate in operational value suggests that Tokyo needs to compete more effectively.



## II. ANTI-ACCESS WITH JAPANESE CHARACTERISTICS

One way for Japan to reverse the worsening terms of the competition is to adopt an anti-access strategy of its own. If deterrence fails, the strategy would deny Chinese use of the commons, which is essential to achieving Beijing's military objectives in any offshore conflict. The strategy seeks especially to put at risk China's naval and air assets operating in or near the East China Sea, the epicenter of the Sino-Japanese maritime rivalry. It would impose high costs on an attempted Chinese bid to seize the initiative with a rapid first move, possibly involving pre-emptive strikes. The strategy aims to increase the likelihood that Beijing would be forced into a stalemate, buying time for the United States to rush reinforcements into the combat theater. It would serve as one component of a larger Japanese and allied military strategy to restore command of the Asian commons. Ultimately, the strategy would cast doubt on the efficacy of a Chinese military campaign against Japan and the United States, disinclining China to act in the first place.

Fortunately, Japan is still well-positioned to level the playing field. Indeed, Tokyo has already begun taking steps to: 1) make the most of its unique maritime geography, 2) invest in warfighting missions where it enjoys a competitive lead; 3) strengthen the wherewithal to absorb punishment; and 4) explore joint campaign plans to strengthen U.S.-Japan allied operations. Taken together, these measures can impose costs on China's anti-access strategy.<sup>7</sup>

### Japan as Gatekeeper

Perhaps above all, Japan's maritime geography gives it natural advantages over China. The Ryukyu or Southwestern Islands, a chain stretching from Japan's Kyushu Island to Taiwan, stand out. The islands straddle critical sea lines of communication connecting the Yellow and East China seas to the open waters of the Pacific. PLA

naval forces must pass through the narrow seas separating the Ryukyus in order to threaten U.S. forces converging on the combat theater or to menace Taiwan's vulnerable east coast.

While the Ryukyus fall well inside the PLA's anti-access zone, the archipelago's strategic location offers Japan a chance to turn the tables on China. By deploying anti-access and area-denial units along the islands, Japanese defenders could slam shut an important outlet for Chinese surface, submarine and air forces into the Pacific high seas. Japan would in effect be denying critical access to China. Hemming Chinese forces behind the island chain would permit the safer passage of U.S. reinforcements flowing into the theater of operations, allowing American naval and air power to more rapidly reach the combat zone. In general, the more that Japan can do to defend and sanitize the approaches to the Chinese seaboard, the more that the United States can focus on offensive operations. Such a division of labor would only strengthen alliance cohesion.

### Submarine Warfare

The 2010 plan to increase the MSDF's world-class submarine fleet from 16 to 22 boats suggests that Tokyo is counting on its own anti-access option. This welcome decision leverages a traditional area of excellence while reinforcing the U.S.-Japan alliance's superiority in the undersea domain. During the late stages of the Cold War, the MSDF's diesel-electric boats helped bottle up Soviet submarines in the Sea of Japan by blocking key chokepoints along the Japanese archipelago. These nautical gatekeepers also ensured that the same thoroughfares would stay open for U.S. offensive naval operations in the Far East. Since the end of the superpower competition, the maritime service has kept up its edge in this sphere.

The MSDF's submarine force could replicate its Cold War experiences by threatening to close off Chinese access to the western Pacific. In wartime,



for example, Japanese boats could render the PLAN's passage through the narrow seas along the Ryukyus a very hazardous, if not lethal, undertaking. An undersea campaign would exploit the Chinese navy's long-standing weaknesses in anti-submarine warfare, a shortcoming that will take time and resources to fix. Indeed, Japan's ASW challenges noted above would likely pale in comparison. Given China's deeply embedded fears of being denied access to the global commons, holding Chinese naval forces at greater risk beneath the waves might compel Beijing to think twice about using force.<sup>8</sup>

### Mine Warfare

Tokyo already possesses a large inventory of mines to threaten Chinese surface combatants and submarines attempting to reach the Pacific along the Ryukyus. Well-laid sea mines could also lock out PLAN units operating east of the island barrier, preventing their return to home ports for refueling and for rearming. Japan's defense white papers explicitly refer to "mine deployment warfare" against enemy vessels transiting the nation's main straits.<sup>9</sup> This option is entirely feasible. Mines are relatively easy to produce in quantity and far less expensive than the capital-intensive vessels they are designed to sink. Japan's sophisticated mines are built specifically to target warships and submarines passing through narrow seas.<sup>10</sup> The MSDF boasts the *Uraga*-class minesweeping tender and submarines that can be armed to lay mines. Further, the maritime service's fixed-wing aircraft, such as the P-3C and its successor, the P-1, are equipped to deliver mines by air.

As in ASW, the PLAN has fared poorly in mine countermeasures. Minesweeping, as the Japanese themselves can attest, is grueling and laborious, requiring advanced equipment, high technical proficiency, endurance and patience. Moreover, defeating the Japanese mine threat would be very challenging to China in times of hostilities. Chinese minesweeping units and associated escorts

would have to cross several hundred kilometers of hotly contested waters and airspace to reach the Ryukyus. Unless the PLA obtains sea control and air superiority over the East China Sea – both doubtful prospects, especially near defended Japanese territories – China would be very hard-pressed to neutralize mines effectively and at acceptable risk.

### Flotilla Defense

The MSDF could wage guerrilla warfare at sea.<sup>11</sup> Swarms of stealthy, speedy, missile-armed craft could assail Chinese surface action groups in transit. Deception, concealment, ambush and rapid concentration of force would characterize Japanese hit-and-run tactics, making Japan's maritime service a lethal yet exceptionally elusive antagonist for the PLA. The *Hayabusa*-class guided-missile patrol boat illustrates the potential of a light maritime strike force. Armed with long-range anti-ship cruise missiles and boasting speeds of more than 40 knots, this relatively inexpensive fast-attack craft packs a punch. Japan could develop similar – but even stealthier and more seaworthy – vessels to form a nimble sea-denial fleet that raises the costs of Chinese aggression.

Geography again favors the MSDF. Fast-attack boats hugging the Ryukyus' Pacific-facing coastlines would use the islands' topographic features to screen their movements, complicating PLA detection, tracking and targeting efforts while awaiting the right moment to launch surprise attacks. Such in-shore tactics would partly compensate for the limited on-board self-defense weaponry of these vessels against air attacks. Chinese reconnaissance units would likely have trouble detecting lurking Japanese boats firing over-the-horizon missiles behind the island barrier in time to alert warships to undertake defensive and evasive maneuvers.

Moreover, the Ryukyus offer some infrastructure that would help Tokyo tap its potential for sea

denial. Civilian harbors, such as Naha and Ishigaki ports, could support the small crews and modest logistical needs of the fast-attack missile boats. While making use of existing ports, the MSDF could scatter vessels and support infrastructure in concealed locations such as caves and hardened manmade shelters around the islands. From there a distributed fleet could conduct saturation strikes along multiple vectors at Chinese assets from the near and far sides of the island, remaining mobile and unpredictable. Dispersed fuel and ammunition stockpiles and the wartime authority to requisition supplies from the civilian sector would enhance the fleet's resilience.

A credible threat to close off the Ryukyus with submarines, mines and fast-attack craft would exploit a critical Chinese vulnerability that cannot be quickly remedied. As noted above, the prospects of an impenetrable island chain would play on China's nightmare scenario that the PLAN could be shut out of the most direct routes to the high seas, lending Japan a psychological edge.

### **Shore-Based Maritime Strike**

In addition to mounting a defense in or near the narrow seas, the Ryukyu Islands themselves could support Japanese anti-access forces. For example, truck-mounted anti-ship and anti-air missile units dispersed across the archipelago would erect a formidable barrier. In wartime, effective blocking operations would tempt PLA commanders to nullify these gatekeepers. Such exertions, however, would tie down significant portions of China's warfighting capacity while depleting manpower and materiel. Because the islands hold little innate value to Beijing the Chinese leadership might decide that escalation was not worth the effort.

Japanese defense planners have seemingly embraced this logic. The 2013 *National Defense Program Guidelines* calls on the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) to "maintain surface-to-ship guided missile units in order to prevent invasion of

Japan's remote islands while [invading forces are] still at sea."<sup>12</sup> Two years earlier, the GSDF deployed several units armed with Type 88 anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) to Amami Oshima, near the northern end of the Ryukyus. In November 2013, the GSDF put ashore Type 88 missiles on Miyako Island as a part of a larger military exercise. These unprecedented shows of force were no doubt directed at Beijing as Chinese naval flotillas frequently transit the strait between Miyako and Okinawa Islands.

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The GSDF's truck-launched Type 88 ASCM makes for an ideal weapon on the Southwestern Islands. With a range of 110 miles, Type 88s can strike warships at sea from sites well inland. Well-placed ASCM batteries could cover all Ryukyu narrow seas while converting the eastern edge of the East China Sea into a no-go area for Chinese surface forces. The GSDF has begun acquiring the Type 12 ASCM, the successor to the Type 88.<sup>13</sup> Boasting greater reach, precision and enhanced survivability, these new missile units promise to render transiting straits or nearby waters even more perilous for Chinese mariners. Able to "shoot and scoot," these mobile platforms can disperse and

move by night or under cover to escape counterstrikes. Tunnels, hardened shelters, disguised storage sites and decoys on the Ryukyus would undermine the PLA's capacity to identify, target and destroy missile units.

Any attempt to eliminate the Japanese ASCM threat would require the PLA to open a geographic front about 600 miles wide. A Chinese suppression campaign involving air power and ballistic- and cruise-missile strikes would accelerate the rate at which the PLA consumed finite stocks of munitions, airframes and airmen. The result would likely prove disappointing, similar to coalition forces' fruitless "Scud hunt" during the 1990-91 war against Iraq. Amphibious assault, the surest way to dislodge the island defenders, would also represent the riskiest way, with Japanese and U.S. forces playing havoc with landing forces.

Abundant, survivable, inexpensive weaponry such as the Type 88, the Type 12 and other mobile air-defense units could coax China into exhausting more costly and scarce offensive weapons for meager territorial gain and uncertain prospects of a breakthrough into Pacific waters. Relatively modest investments in such forces could spread Chinese forces thin – furnishing Japan much-needed breathing space.

Beyond the tactical benefits, strategic dividends would accrue to Japan. Possessing the option to surge anti-ship and anti-air missile units onto the Ryukyus at short notice would demonstrate Japanese resolve while substantially bolstering Tokyo's capacity to act effectively in times of crisis. Japan's blocking forces would presumably limit their lethal ranges to PLA units operating in the commons and over Japanese territory. Such geospatial restraint would reduce the likelihood of escalation and dovetails with Tokyo's defensively oriented posture, bolstering its diplomatic narrative on the world stage.

## Hardening

Resilience is central to Japanese strategy. Accordingly, Japan is turning to the mundane, but no less important, task of shoring up the vast basing infrastructure across the Japanese islands. For example, hardening important facilities and expanding underground storage sites would strengthen Japan's capacity to withstand Chinese missile strikes. The ability to rapidly repair infrastructure damage from missile attacks, such as cut runways, would also enable the U.S.-Japan alliance to recover from China's first blow and sustain subsequent military operations. Notably, the 2013 *National Defense Program Guidelines* directs the Self-Defense Force (SDF) to "improve survivability, including the recovery capabilities of military camps and bases."<sup>14</sup> The allied capacity to endure punishing bombardment would go far to deny Beijing the quick, decisive victory that it evidently believes is possible with an overwhelming missile strike.

## Dispersal

Japan is also diversifying the risk to its bases. At present, the concentration of allied assets in a few locations substantially simplifies Chinese targeting. The PLA only needs to throw the weight of its missile barrages against a handful of large bases across Japan to achieve its anti-access aims. To thwart China's strategy, alternate airfields and ports could be made available to U.S. and Japanese forces. The 2013 *National Defense Program Guidelines* pledges to "undertake necessary deliberations concerning civilian airports and ports ... in order to ensure that such facilities can be used as part of the operational infrastructure of the SDF."<sup>15</sup> Civilian airports, commercial shipyards and piers across the Japanese home islands could be conscripted for use in wartime. These facilities could be equipped to handle the unique and demanding needs of warships and fighter aircraft.

Moreover, Japan could make use of the ports and airports spanning the Ryukyus. Currently, eight

of the airfield runways are long enough to support fighters. Others may be extended and refitted to accommodate larger military aircraft. In crisis or conflict, allied air and naval forces could disperse across these sites stretching hundreds of miles. Such a wide distribution of forces would compel the PLA to commit to a multiplying number of potential targets while keeping China guessing about the threats to its air and naval units, thus adding to the fog of war. The more friction and uncertainty Japan can impose on China, the less confident Chinese defense planners would be about the prospects for military success and thus the more likely that Beijing would hesitate to use force.

In short, Japan is well-positioned and -equipped to draw lines on the map beyond which Chinese anti-access/area-denial forces can expect to encounter stiff, deadly resistance. Access and area denial works both ways. Chinese commanders will find the PLA's operational space squeezed in the littorals in wartime with its use of sea and air corridors strongly opposed. This in turn would open up more maneuver room for Japanese and American forces.

### III. RISKS AND COSTS OF A JAPANESE ANTI-ACCESS POSTURE

Despite the benefits to deterrence described above, adopting an anti-access strategy against China will not be an unalloyed good for Japan. It necessarily involves costs and risks, from defense budget trade-offs to longer-term policy considerations.

Going anti-access, for example, would bias Japan toward a more narrow-gauged force structure. ASCM units and fast-attack craft can only perform a single mission: sinking ships. By contrast, multirole destroyers and high-performance aircraft project the kinds of power essential to a maritime nation dependent on secure sea lanes and airspace far from Japanese shores. Moreover, they are the very tools that a normalizing Japan needs to fulfill its global responsibilities commensurate with its economic prowess. Unless Tokyo increases its defense budget to accommodate lesser-included capabilities, decisionmakers would need to balance the demands of a China-centered anti-access strategy and the longer-term goals of Japan's grand strategy. Japan cannot afford to retreat into a defensive crouch unbecoming a great power.

It is also important to re-emphasize that Japan's version of anti-access is not a silver bullet. This is no war winner. At best, Tokyo could force a stalemate on Beijing by foreclosing a range of military options. Nevertheless, deadlock may be good enough to buy time for the U.S.-Japan alliance to recover from the initial shock of battle and for American forces to rush reinforcements into the combat theater. However, as anti-access forces multiply and their effective ranges and lethality increase over time, military operations in the cramped East China Sea might become unacceptably risky for both China and Japan. A no-man's sea and airspace could thus separate the two rival powers. Whether such mutually assured denial would breed caution on either side remains to be seen.

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War is a two-way contest in which two living forces collide in an intensely interactive duel to impose one's will over the other. Action inevitably triggers reaction. Peacetime preparations for war are no different. Even if Tokyo successfully reorients itself toward a cost-imposing strategy, the story does not end there. China will undoubtedly respond vigorously to overcome Japan's anti-access challenge. Technological advances, doctrinal innovation and sheer mass could redefine the terms of the competition in Beijing's favor. Beyond the material dimensions of the competition, Japan must possess the political will to stay in the game over the long haul.

#### IV. COMING TO TERMS WITH RELATIVE DECLINE

From a military perspective, Tokyo is becoming the weaker party in the Sino-Japanese rivalry. Japan can no longer respond to every offensive Chinese capability with an exclusively defensive measure. Japanese tactical virtuosity in such high-end missions as anti-submarine warfare, countermine warfare, missile defense and air defense, while praiseworthy and necessary, is disproportionately expensive and difficult to perform while ceding the initiative to Beijing. Symmetrical counters are the preserve of powers possessing financial and technological leads over their adversaries. Tokyo enjoys no such margin of superiority.

Despite the unfavorable circumstances, Japan could complicate Chinese plans by employing many of the concepts sketched out in this study, including submarine warfare, mine warfare, swarming tactics at sea in major Japanese straits and shore-based defenses on the Ryukyus. Inexpensive weaponry and forces with light footprints would constitute an important component of this defensive strategy. Moreover, Tokyo already possesses these means – and the skills – to turn large parts of the East China Sea and the narrow seas along the Southwestern Islands into a lethal kill zone. It is notable that these countermoves mimic China's own anti-access strategy. Turning the tables on China would signal Japanese resolve, blunt the offensive edge of China's military power and keep the commons safer for American forces. Japan's capacity to foreclose Chinese military options alongside U.S. forces offers perhaps the surest way of deterring Chinese aggression before it happens.

#### ENDNOTES

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