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The Regional Security Environment of Japan

Introduction

Since the end of World War II to the present day, East Asia has proven to be a region of enormous political and economic changes of a global nature. Until the 1990s, these were marked primarily by the dynamic economic growth of Japan, a country which, after losing the war, became the third economic superpower in the world (after the US and the USSR). Since the turn of the 21st century, the position of the regional leader with great political and economic ambitions has been taken by the People's Republic of China (China). Since 2010, unprecedented economic development, which has made this country the second economic superpower in the world, and the accompanying open rivalry with the US, which, by the end of the mid-21st century will lead to China assuming the position of the world economic leader, have accelerated the process of political expansion on a global scale. The consistently implemented strategy aims to make the Middle Kingdom a global superpower with modern armed forces, whose military potential is second only to that of the US. The above circumstances determine a permanent weakening of Japan's position in the region and a fundamental disturbance of the current *status quo* in the regional security environment, which is particularly distressing from the Japanese interests' point of view.

This paper analyses the actual situation of Japan's regional security environment with a special focus on the rapid rise of China's military power in the Asia Pacific Region, a potential conflict over the disputed territories (Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands), and the development of nuclear and modern ballistic missile programmes by North Korea. Additionally, some general remarks will be made about relations with Russia

in the light of the development of military facilities in the Japanese Northern Territories. All in all, the paper aims to identify and answer the question of what have been the main driving forces for changing Japan's security policy.

The redefinition of Japan's security policy in the third decade of the 21st century is the main objective of the article. Since the second decade of the 21st century, Japan has taken extensive measures to redefine its national security policy. These actions have both organisational and institutional character, as well as consist in strengthening the country's defence capabilities and increasing its involvement in political and territorial problems of the countries in the region. This was reflected in the formulation of a new doctrine by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe; this policy is known as 'active measures for peace' (or 'active pacifism')¹ and includes extensive plans for rebuilding, modernization and technological leap in modernization of the Japan Self-Defence Forces (Japanese: *Jieitai*). An institutional expression of Japan's new approach to international policy and national security issues was the establishment of the National Security Council (NSC) on 4 December 2013. The NSC, with its secretariat, constitutes the central organizational structure for the country's foreign policy activities. It approved Japan's first post-war National Security Strategy (NSS)² as early as 14 December 2013. It provided the basis for defining the latest threats, challenges and directions for the country's defence activities. These were included in two documents accepted by the NSS and the Japanese government on 18 December 2018, namely: *National Defence Programme Guidelines for FY 2019 and beyond* and *Medium-Term Defence Programme (2019–2023)*.³

This analysis is based on qualitative research. The desk research of academic sources developed by academic organisations, think tanks and available online sources is supported by an analysis of official documents, including national defence policies, strategies and reports.

Military rise of China and a potential conflict for disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands

Above all, this is evidenced by the 11-fold increase in China's defence expenditure over the 2000-2019 period, from \$22.9 billion to \$261.1 billion. China was second only to the US defence spending (\$731.8 billion) in 2019, outpacing Russia's spending 4 times (\$65.1 billion) and Japan's defence budget more than 5 times (\$47.6 billion).⁴

¹ Prime Minister of Japan, *National Security Strategy*, 17 December 2013, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf [accessed: 15.01.2021].

² *Ibidem*.

³ Ministry of Defence of Japan, *National Defence Programme Guidelines for FY 2019 and beyond*, 18 December 2018, https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11591426/www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/20181218_e.pdf [accessed: 16.01.2021]; Ministry of Defence of Japan, *Medium Term Defence Programme (FY 2019-FY 2023)*, 18 December 2018, https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11591426/www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/chuki_seibi31-35_e.pdf [accessed: 16.01.2021].

⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Trends in world military expenditure 2019*, April 2020, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex> [accessed: 12.01.2021].

The unprecedented rate of growth in China's military spending, aimed at creating a world-class military force, is causing Japan a growing concern about its security. According to Japanese politicians, the rise of China's military power is systematically upsetting the *status quo* in the East Asian region, fundamentally changing the regional security environment, including notably Japan.⁵ Its most glaring manifestation is the rise of tension over the disputed Senkaku (Chinese: *Diaoyu*) Islands located in the southern part of the East China Sea. It is manifested, among other things, by the growing activity of the Chinese air and naval forces in the region, increasingly violating airspace and territorial waters. The rising number of provocative incidents in the disputed area of the so-called 'grey zone' is regarded as the most serious threat to Japanese sovereignty. The second, no less serious, threat to Japan's security is North Korea's implementation of its nuclear programme and the development of modern missile technologies, which North Korea in its military doctrine directs against South Korea, the US and Japan.

China's taking over and strengthening its position as an economic leader in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as an exceptionally high level of political activity, combined with integration initiatives, including the so-called 'Belt and Road Initiative'⁶ implemented since 2015, is accompanied by a dynamic increase in military expenditure, aimed at making the Middle Kingdom one of the world's leading military powers by the mid-21st century. An explicit testimony to the enormous pace of building modern, world-class armed forces in China, treated as one of the priorities of the government, is the fact that in the 2010–2019 period, the expenditures for this purpose increased by as much as 1128% (from 22.9 billion to 261.1 billion dollars). It should be noted that in the same period, Japan's defence spending oscillated around 46.0 billion annually. In its superpower strategy, China places particular emphasis on the development of its air and naval forces, as evidenced by, among other things, an increase in the number of modern fighters from 90 to 1080, and destroyers and frigates from 15 to 67 over the 2001–2020 period. A symbolic

⁵ Conf.: A. Whyte, *Interpreting the Rise of China*, February 2013, <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/02/13/interpreting-the-rise-of-china> [accessed: 13.05.2020].

⁶ The Belt and Road Initiative is a Chinese concept, implemented since 2015, of long-term international infrastructural, economic, political, scientific, research, and socio-cultural development and international cooperation of countries located within the so-called development corridors (land routes: China-Asian countries and sea routes: countries in the region of the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea). China is the crucial logistics and business centre from which development corridors run. This multifaceted integration project is supported by numerous government agencies and a group of Chinese and Asian banks. It places great emphasis on such areas as joint implementation of large-scale projects and extensive economic, scientific, and research cooperation. A notable example of the Belt and Road Initiative success is the fact that in 2020, 140 countries signed a memorandum of understanding with China on research and development cooperation. In practice, the Belt and Road Initiative is a testament to China's global expansion, which will make the country a new type of global power. Mainly based on: OECD, *China's Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade. Investment and Financial Landscape*, 3 September 2018, OECD Business and Financial Outlook 2018, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/finance-and-investment/oecd-business-and-finance-outlook-2018/the-belt-and-road-initiative-in-the-global-trade-investment-and-finance-landscape_bus_fin_out-2018-6-en [accessed: 4.01.2021].

and, at the same time, significant manifestation of China's military ambitions is the fact that since the second decade of the 21st century, the country has been building a fleet of aircraft carriers. They are represented by the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier – in service since 2012, and *Shandong* – a domestically built aircraft carrier, put into service in 2019. It should be stressed that two other aircraft carriers, including the first nuclear-powered one, are under construction at the Shanghai shipyard.⁷

Taking advantage of the latest technological achievements, China is making efforts to get the upper hand in such areas as cyberspace defence and operational activities in space. The above examples, coupled with the opinions of international experts that by 2030 China's military expenditure might surpass that of the US⁸, prove that the Chinese government's determination to build a modern global military force seems to be fully realistic. China's increasingly strong military position in the East Asian region raises concerns about the prospects of maintaining the current relative *status quo* not only in Japan, but also in a number of Asian-Pacific states and the US. Most notable in this regard is the increased activity of the Chinese navy and air force in the waters and airspace of the East China Sea, the South China Sea, the Sea of Japan, and even the Western Pacific.

This is particularly visible in China's demonstrative military presence in the southern part of the East China Sea, including the eight uninhabited and disputed Senkaku (Chinese: *Diaoyu*) Islands, which have been an integral part of Japan since 1895.⁹ The islands remain the main object of territorial dispute between China and Japan, which has taken the form of a sharp conflict since 1971. In recent years, this has become clear with the escalation of provocative and destabilizing actions of various kinds on the part of China. These include, for instance, China's designation of new boundaries of the so-called East China Sea Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ: Air Defence Identification Zone) on 23 November 2013. It covered, in the context of Japanese interests, the areas of the Senkaku Islands and their vicinity, overlapping in a number of cases with parts of zones previously designated by Taiwan and South Korea.¹⁰

⁷ M. Szopa, *Drugi chiński lotniskowiec w służbie*, 19 December 2019, <https://www.defence24.pl/drugi-chinski-lotniskowiec-w-sluzbie> [accessed: 11.01.2021].

⁸ E. Ioanes, *China's military power may surpass the US's faster than you think, thanks to 6 shrewd strategies*, 26 August 2019, Insider, <https://www.businessinsider.com/chinas-military-power-surpass-the-us-faster-than-you-think-2019-8?IR=T> [accessed: 13.05.2021].

⁹ Senkaku Shoto (Chinese: *Diaoyu*) is a group of eight currently uninhabited islets with a total area of 5.53 km² (the largest: Uotsuri 3.81 km², Kuba 0.91 km², Minamikojima 0.40 km²), located in the southern part of the East China Sea (450 km west of Okinawa, 330 km south of mainland China, and 170 km to the north). Since 14 January 1895, partly inhabited by Japanese settlers engaged in fishing and processing skipjack tuna, were incorporated into Japan. Between 1945 and 1972, the islands were under the administration of the US occupation authorities, in 1972 returned under the administration of Japan. In the early 1970s, official territorial claims were made by China and Taiwan, originally prompted by the fact of determining the potential existence of oil and gas deposits in the adjacent shelf within the designated Exclusive Economic Zone. Their strategic location in terms of maritime and military transport was also acknowledged. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Senkaku Islands*, 2015, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/index.html> [accessed: 30.05.2021].

¹⁰ Japan delimited the boundaries of the ADIZ in 1969, which coincides with the boundaries of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). According to the Convention on the Law of the Sea, it extends

The years 2012–2013 also mark the beginning of a blatant and strong increase in violations by Chinese military aircraft and naval vessels of Japanese airspace and territorial waters, with particular intensity in the Senkaku Islands zone.

The number of violations of Japan's ADIZ by Chinese aircraft surged between 2009 and 2019 from 38 to 675, i.e., by a whopping 1676.3%. This was accompanied by a tremendous increase in trespassing by Chinese maritime forces on Japan's territorial waters from 79 days in 2012 to 282 days in 2019, involving 407 and 1097 vessels, respectively.¹¹ For example, on 30 March 2019, 4 Chinese bombers, together with 2 fighters and an electronic intelligence aircraft, flew from the East China Sea between Okinawa and Miyako-jima Island to the Pacific Ocean, returning by the above route that day to the base in China. Furthermore, on 10 June 2019, 6 Chinese ships, including the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier, sailed from the East China Sea between Okinawa and Miyako-jima Island to the Pacific.¹² China's provocative actions of this kind always result in the announcement of a state of full alert and specific actions by Japanese units. The provocative violations of Japan's airspace and territorial waters are both a demonstration of China's military power and precisely planned tactical tasks aimed, among other things, at providing electronic intelligence on the tactics and efficiency of actions taken by the Japanese and the US military units stationed in Japan. It should be stressed that this area of airspace and sea waters, located within the Japanese ADIZ zone and EEZ, is treated by China as the primary air and sea route for the transport of air and maritime forces from the area of the Yellow Sea and East China Sea to the Pacific Ocean. It is, therefore, of great strategic importance since it currently remains under full Japanese control.

The unregulated legal status of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, together with the surrounding waters of the East China Sea (within the borders of the Japanese EEZ), and under the conditions of increased activity of the Chinese air and sea forces is perceived by the Japanese government as treading a fine line between war and peace. Some members of the government are considering a scenario involving the landing of Chinese special forces troops on Senkaku/Diaoyu, disguised as fishermen, which would lead to a military confrontation between the two countries and the US.¹³ According to the Chinese authorities, it is Japan's unfounded territorial claims to the disputed islands along with the adjacent area of the East China Sea, as well as the US military presence in the region, that pose the main threat to regional security. The latter is particularly inconvenient for the implementation

370 km from the country's land areas, covering a total area of 4,479.6 thousand km²; M.J. Mazarr, et al., 'Deterring China's Gray Zone Aggression Against the Senkaku Islands. What Deters and Why: Applying a Framework to Assess Deterrence of Grey Zone Aggression', 2021, RAND Corporation, 2021, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3142.html [accessed: 30.05.2021].

¹¹ Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Defense of Japan 2020 (Annual White Paper)*, 2021, https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/wp2020/pdf/index.html [accessed: 15.01.2021].

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 566–567.

¹³ A. Sakaki, *Japan's Security Policy: A Shift in Direction under Abe?*, SWP Research Paper, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, March 2015, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2015_RP02_skk.pdf [accessed: 13.10.2020].

of Chinese plans to strengthen the political and military position of the Middle Kingdom in the region.¹⁴

One of the most recent instances confirming the fact of limiting China's military and provocative activity was the US's immediate reaction to the violation of Taiwan's ADIZ zone by a Chinese military aircraft on 23–24 January 2021. It consisted in the US Navy directing a group of warships to the South China Sea, led by the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* aircraft carrier, with the simultaneous appeal of the US State Department to China for dialogue with Taiwan and refraining from aggressive actions in the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁵

The increasingly more realistic vision of the Asia-Pacific region with the growing position or even dominance of China is a direct threat to the security of Japan. On the other hand, Japan's military actions of 1894–1910 and 1931–1944, aimed at creating the Empire of the Pacific or Greater Nippon and tragic in their consequences, are still vivid.¹⁶ They are also, with varying intensity, used by China to create anti-Japanese sentiments countries in the region.

North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes

As regards Japan's increasing security threat, the steady development of nuclear technology and the high rate of successful implementation of North Korea's missile programme are of growing concern. The former is mainly related to the reduction in the size of nuclear warheads with which ballistic missiles of various ranges can be armed.

As part of its missile programme which has been underway since 2016, North Korea has launched more than 70 missiles of numerous types. The degree and scale of commitment to this project is evidenced by the fact that in the year 2019 alone, North Korea launched 14 solid-fuelled medium- and long-range ballistic missiles flying at lower altitudes compared to conventional ballistic missiles in seven tests (from May to October). Among them was the 'Hwansong-15' which, with a low trajectory, can reach targets up to 13,000 km away. Like other types of this group of missiles, they are capable of reaching targets anywhere on the Japanese islands and the American military bases in Guam. Tests on the latest model of submarine-launched ballistic missile called 'Pukguksong-3' with a range of 1900–2000 km were also successful. The last test of this missile in October 2019, which completed a controlled flight in the waters of the Sea of Japan (at the height of Shimane Prefecture), was to make Japan aware of the new capabilities and scale of the threat from North Korea.¹⁷

Japanese experts agree that one of the integral objectives of North Korea's missile programme development is also a desire to cripple Japan's missile defence

¹⁴ Compare: Hui-Yi Katherine Tseng, China's Territorial Disputes with Japan, *The Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies* 2014, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 71–95, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26664006?seq=1> [accessed: 13.05.2020].

¹⁵ Radio TOK FM news on January 24, 2021.

¹⁶ R. Mydel, *Japonia*, PWN, Warszawa 1983.

¹⁷ Ministry of Defence of Japan, *National Defence Program...*, *op. cit.* and *idem*, *Defence of Japan 2020...*, *op. cit.*

system. A real sense of threat is growing in this regard under the circumstances of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces having to declare a state of alert not only in terms of military readiness but also among the civilian population in various regions of the country. Thus, for example, the test flight of a missile launched on 28 August 2017, whose trajectory passed over the Tsugaru Strait (the strait between the island of Hokkaido and the northern part of the island of Honshu), and which reached this region of Japan in the 9th minute of its flight, only to fall in the waters of the Pacific Ocean, about 1,250 km east of Hokkaido, caused not only the declaration of an anti-missile alert, but also the suspension of the movement of more than a dozen super-fast trains of the Hokkaido Shinkansen line in the northern part of the island of Honshu.¹⁸

Creeping militarization of the Japanese Northern Territories by Russia

As a wide array of factors influence the Japanese assessment of the country's regional security environment, it is significant that nowadays the potential threat from the military presence of the Russian Federation (Russia) is not generally considered to be a serious one. It is also remarkable because it takes place at the time of the longest territorial dispute connected with the occupation of the Japanese islands located in the southern part of the Kurile archipelago by the Soviet troops between 28 August and 9 September 1945. Referred to by Japan as the Northern Territories, the area consists of a group of 14 islands and islets located northeast of the island of Hokkaido, covering a total area of 5003 km² and inhabited by approximately 17,300 people.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ch. Sang-Hun, D.E. Sanger, 'North Korea Fires Missile Over Japan', *The New York Times*, 28 August 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/world/asia/north-korea-missile.html> [accessed: 13.01.2021].

¹⁹ The Japanese Northern Territories (JNT) is a group of 14 islands and islets with a total area of 5003 km², inhabited by 17,300 people, located to the north-east of Hokkaido. Among the largest are Etorofu (3167 km² – 3.6 thous. inhabitants), Kunashiri (1489 km² – 7.4 thous.), and Shikotan (249 km² – 1.0 thous. inhabitants). Since 7 February 1855 it was part of the Japanese territory on the basis of the Treaty of Shimoda between Russia and Japan. In the period of 20 August–3 September 1945 it was annexed by the Soviet Union. Since 1951, due to the lack of formal territorial rights to the islands of the USSR and the failure to sign a peace treaty between Japan and the USSR–Russia, they are the subject of dispute under the Japanese name of the Northern Territories. At the same time, the Russian side has identified all territorial claims of Japan to the southern Kurile Islands (JNT) as unfounded – unchangeably for 70 years. It should be emphasized that in 1956, 2004 and 2006, the Russian side offered to return to Japan part of the annexed (occupied) islands (the so-called Little Kurile Arc including Shikotan Island and Hobomai Shoto Islands) in exchange for the renunciation of claims to the remaining islands. The Japanese side rejected these proposals, demanding the return of all the islands comprising the Northern Territories. Russia's recent declarations, however, leave no doubt as to the country's intentions: on 14 August 2019 in Moscow, during a meeting of the foreign ministers of the two countries, S. Lavrov stated that 'Russia's sovereignty over the islands is undisputable' and that 'they are an integral part of the territory of the Russian Federation': Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Northern Territories Issue*, 1 March 2011, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/territory/overview.html> [accessed: 13.01.2021].

They have been the subject of dispute and permanent diplomatic efforts of Japan for 76 years. In the context of diplomatic efforts and the involvement of Japanese prime ministers, today the strongest reactions in the form of diplomatic protests are caused by the 'creeping' militarization of the disputed islands, including the largest of them – Etorofu (Russian: *Iturup*). For instance, in 2014, Yasny military airport capable of receiving modern SU-35S multi-role fighters was put into operation.²⁰ Another case in point is the fact that in December 2020, the latest S-300V4 mobile surface-to-air missile defence system, designed to defend against ballistic missile attacks, was deployed there.²¹ The S-300V4s are complementary to the existing missile defence systems on Etorofu, which are designed to defend against ballistic missile attacks. They complement the Tor-M2 short-range anti-aircraft missile systems deployed there. This has always provoked strong diplomatic protests and forced a review of the defence strategy for part of Japan.

According to the data from *Defence of Japan 2020*, a Russian military aircraft breached Japan's airspace an average of about 300 times per year between 2010 and 2019, forcing Japan Air Self-Defence Force aircraft into the air. In 2019, there were 268 such incidents, which accounted for 28.7% of the total number of violations of Japan's ADIZ (out of a total of 947). It is important at this point to emphasize the fact of a marked decrease in the number of such incidents by the Russian Air Force, which peaked in 2014 (473 cases). This was accompanied by an increasing number of incidents involving aircraft of the Chinese Air Force, from 464 in 2014 to 675 in 2019.²²

Another source of concern for Japan is the developing military cooperation between China and Russia. It is worth pointing out that since 2012, Russia and China have been conducting regular naval exercise under the code name 'Joint Sea'. The first, organized by China, took place in the Yellow Sea ('Joint Sea 2012'). 7 Chinese warships (including 2 submarines) and 5 Russian vessels (including submarines) participated in the 'Joint Sea 2019' manoeuvres which lasted from 29 April to 4 May, started in the Yellow Sea and ended in the East China Sea.²³

Undeniably, a new development of the Sino-Russian military cooperation in the region are joint bomber patrol flights. Just one example of this is the fact that in June 2019, Russian Tu-95 long-range bombers made a patrol flight with two Chinese H-6 bombers on a route from the Sea of Japan to the East China Sea.²⁴

The rise of the economic and military potential of China, who, since the beginning of the 21st century, has made no secret of its great power ambitions, constitutes, from the perspective of Japanese interests, a fundamental threat to the country's security. China's territorial claims to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are commonly pointed to as

²⁰ *Russian fighter jets land on disputed island*, 26 March 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/26/c_137067150.htm [accessed: 9.01.2021].

²¹ *S-300V4 Deployed in Disputed Kuril Islands to Deter US Missiles*, 2 December 2020, <https://www.defenseworld.net/news/28438/S-300V4-Deployed-in-Disputed-Kuril-Islands> [accessed: 9.02.2021].

²² Ministry of Defence of Japan, *Defence of Japan 2020...*, *op. cit.*

²³ M. Paul, 'Partnership on the High Seas: China and Russia's Joint Naval Manoeuvre', *SWP Comment* 2019, no. 26, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2019C26_pau.pdf [accessed: 31.01.2021].

²⁴ Ministry of Defence of Japan, *Defence of Japan 2020...*, *op. cit.*

a source of possible military conflict between the two countries. They are the main area of the increasing provocative actions of the Chinese air force and navy.²⁵

Japan Self-Defence Forces and the Japan-US Security Arrangements as the pillars of Japan's defence

Given the above circumstances, a decision was made in 2012 to amend the 1951 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, revised in 1960, which confirms the Senkaku Islands belong to Japan and obliges the US to defend them.²⁶ In the National Security Strategy²⁷ presented by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2013, the need to rebuild, modernize and expand the 247,100-strong Japan Self-Defence Forces (Japanese: *Jieitai*) was strongly emphasized, mainly to prepare for a potential armed conflict with China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and to strengthen the Forces' presence in the whole area of the adjacent Japanese islands of Sakishima-Shoto. The aforementioned measures taken by Japan are a kind of a message and a warning to China, that a change in the existing *status quo* will not be allowed.

This position of Japan is confirmed by recent organizational activities within the Japan Self-Defence Forces.²⁸ These include, first and foremost, forming of the first in the history of post-war Japan Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (Japanese: *Suririkukidodan*) within the Japan Land Self-Defence Forces, which took place on 7 April 2018.²⁹ The brigade, which currently has 2,100 servicemen,

²⁵ *Idem*, *National Defense Programme Guidelines for FY 2019...*, *op. cit.*

²⁶ *Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and United States of America*, 19th January 1960, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/mutual_cooperation_treaty.pdf [accessed: 11.02.2021].

²⁷ Prime Minister of Japan, *National Security Strategy*, 17 December 2013, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf [accessed 3.02.2021].

²⁸ The Japan Self-Defence Forces (abbreviated: JSDF, Japanese: *Jieitai*) were created on 1 July 1954, after the post-World War II American occupation of the country ended. According to Article 9 of the new constitution of 3 November 1946, Japan is forbidden from using force as a means of settling matters involving other states and from having land, sea and air forces capable of waging war. JSDF are defensive in nature, remaining, as stated in the National Security Strategy (2013), the primary guarantor of security and protection against threats. JSDF currently consist of 247.1 thousand soldiers (active uniformed personnel) who are organized into 3 components: Japan Ground Self-Defence Force (JGSDF – 154.9 thousand), Japan Air Self-Defence Force (JASDF – 45.3 thousand) and Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF – 46.9 thousand servicemen). Despite the limitations arising from the provisions of the constitution, the Japanese armed forces are among the most modern militaries in the world in terms of weaponry and level of training. They are ranked fifth military force in the world after the US, Russia, China, and India (according to the *2021 Military Strength Ranking. Global Firepower*). Since 1 July 2014, the use of JSDF is possible under the so-called 'collective self-defence', i.e., in the event of an armed attack on a country that has close ties with Japan, which may threaten Japan's survival and the lives and freedom of its citizens. Ministry of Defence of Japan, *Defence of Japan 2020...*, *op. cit.*

²⁹ *Japanese Self-Defence Forces lunch 1st amphibious fighting unit*, 7 April 2018, Kyodo News, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2018/04/2f3bb80eb01b-japan-holds-kick-off-ceremony-for-1st-full-fledged-amphibious-force.html> [accessed: 23.02.2021].

is modelled on the US Marines and is tasked with conducting amphibious landing operations.

It is needs to be pointed out that 54,000 US military personnel are stationed on the Japanese islands in accordance with the provisions of the treaty.³⁰ It is also worth noting that the cost of their deployment, which, in 2020, amounted to approximately \$3.5 billion, is not included in Japan's defence budget of \$48.5 billion.³¹ American troops stationed in the country since the end of World War II constitute one of the most important pillars of Japan's defence strategy, playing a fundamental role in maintaining peace and security both in Japan and in the entire Asia-Pacific region.

Conclusions

The turn of the 21st century brought new qualitative changes in Japan's regional security. In the domestic and foreign policy of the government, in addition to economic or demographic problems associated with a highly advanced process of society's aging, a special place is occupied by growing threats to the security of the country. Apart from detailed identification and analysis of the types and scale of threats, numerous steps of political and practical nature are undertaken in order to maintain regional *status quo* in this regard. Consequently, new threats compel the Japanese government to verify the existing and form a new regional security policy of the country.

In politicians' opinions³⁰ reflected in the official government documents on defence policy, the economic and political expansion of China has a fundamental impact on the current state and prospects for security in the region. This expansion is accompanied by the construction of modern armed forces as one of the key elements aimed at making China a global power in the mid-21st century.

From the perspective of Japan's security, its greatest current threat is the considerable increase in provocative activity by the Chinese naval and air forces in the zone of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, located in the southern part of the East China Sea. Perceived by Tokyo as treading a fine line between war and peace, these actions greatly impact Japan's long-term defence policy. It is also a flashpoint in this part of East Asia from the perspective of the regional security environment of the countries in the region, due to the growing aspirations of the government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to declare independence. This has provoked fierce opposition from the People's Republic of China, reflected in the heightened activity of its armed forces in the free area of the Republic of China and Beijing firmly declaring that 'Taiwan is an integral part of China, and Taiwan's independence means war.'

The issue of control and protection of the sea waters of the Japanese Exclusive Economic Zone remains important for Japan's defence policy. With its 4,479,674 square kilometres, which is almost 12 times the size of Japan's land territory, and

³⁰ Ministry of Defence of Japan, *Defence of Japan 2020...*, *op. cit.*

³¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Host Nation Support (HNS)*, 8 March 2021, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/hns.html> [accessed: 14.02.2021].

with China's growing ambitions to become a superpower, it may become a place not only of potential, but also of real conflicts between these countries.

The second key factor which significantly influences Japan's regional security environment is the development of North Korea's nuclear technology and the implementation of the country's missile programme with particular emphasis on ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. The increase in their accuracy, variability of their trajectory and range, in view of the declared purpose of their use (against South Korea, Japan and the US bases in that part of the Asia-Pacific), constitute one of the most important challenges in Japan's defence policy and strategy.

It ought to be pointed out that the most serious territorial dispute between Japan and Russia over the occupied Northern Territories after World War II does not pose a real threat to Japan's security. Attempts to solve the dispute have been made solely through diplomatic efforts as the 'creeping' militarization of Etorofu does not have an offensive character.

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Regionalne środowisko bezpieczeństwa Japonii *Streszczenie*

Z japońskiej perspektywy największym współczesnym zagrożeniem dla bezpieczeństwa państwa jest wzrost prowokacyjnych zachowań chińskich sił powietrznych i morskich w regionie spornych Wysp Senkaku/Diaoyu, położonych w południowej części Morza Wschodniochińskiego. Oceniane przez Tokio jako balansowanie na granicy pomiędzy pokojem a wojną, stanowią główną determinantę aktualnej oraz perspektywicznej polityki

obronnej Japonii. Drugim, nie mniej ważnym czynnikiem, mającym fundamentalny wpływ na regionalne środowisko bezpieczeństwa Japonii, jest rozwój technologii nuklearnej Korei Północnej oraz realizacja od 2016 r. programu raketowego tego kraju, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem rakiet balistycznych, zdolnych do przenoszenia głowic nuklearnych. Deklarowany cel ich wykorzystania przeciw Korei Południowej, Japonii oraz amerykańskim bazom wojskowym w tej części Azji i Pacyfiku stanowi jedno z najważniejszych wyzwań w polityce i strategii obronnej Japonii.

Słowa kluczowe: środowisko bezpieczeństwa, wydatki na obronność, Wyspy Sankaku/Daioyu, Japońskie Terytoria Północne

The Regional Security Environment Of Japan

Abstract

From the Japanese perspective, the greatest present-day threat to the country's security is the rise of provocative behaviour by the Chinese air and naval forces in the region of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, located in the southern part of the East China Sea. Deemed by Tokyo as treading a fine line between war and peace, it is the main determinant of Japan's current and future defence policy. The second, no less important, factor which has a fundamental impact on Japan's regional security environment is the development of North Korea's nuclear technology and the implementation, since 2016, of that country's missile programme, with particular emphasis on ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. The declared purpose of their use against South Korea, Japan, and US military bases in this part of the Asia-Pacific, constitutes one of the most significant challenges in Japan's defence policy and strategy.

Key words: security environment, defence expenditures, Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, Japan's Northern Territories

Das regionale Sicherheitsumfeld Japans

Zusammenfassung

Aus japanischer Sicht besteht die aktuell größte Gefahr für die Sicherheit des Landes im zunehmend provokativen Verhalten der chinesischen Luftwaffe und Marine in der Region der umstrittenen Senkaku/Diaoyu-Inseln im südlichen Teil des ostchinesischen Meers. Von Tokio als Gratwanderung zwischen Krieg und Frieden betrachtet, stellt dieser Aspekt die Determinante der aktuellen und zukünftigen japanischen Verteidigungspolitik dar. Der zweite, nicht weniger wichtige Faktor mit fundamentalen Auswirkungen auf das regionale Sicherheitsumfeld Japans ist die Entwicklung der nordkoreanischen Nuklear-technologie und die Implementierung des Raketenprogramms dieses Landes seit 2016. Dabei spielen ballistische Raketen, die mit nuklearen Sprengköpfen ausgerüstet werden können, die größte Rolle. Das erklärte Ziel, diese gegen Südkorea, Japan und US-amerikanische Militärstützpunkte in diesem Teil der asiatisch-pazifischen Region einzusetzen, stellt eine der wichtigsten Herausforderungen für die Verteidigungspolitik und -strategie Japans dar.

Schlüsselwörter: Sicherheitsumfeld, Verteidigungsausgaben, Senkaku/Diaoyu-Inseln, japanische Nordgebiete

Региональная среда безопасности Японии

Резюме

С точки зрения Японии, наибольшая угроза для безопасности государства – это рост провокационных действий военно-воздушных и морских сил Китая в регионе спорных островов Сенкаку/Дяюйдао, расположенных в южной части Восточно-Китайского моря. Такие действия Токио расценивает как балансирование на границе между миром и войной и они являются основным фактором, определяющим текущую и долгосрочную оборонную политику Японии. Вторым, не менее важным фактором, оказывающим фундаментальное влияние на региональную среду безопасности Японии, является развитие ядерных технологий Северной Кореи и реализация с 2016 г. ракетной программы этого государства, в том числе создание баллистических ракет, способных нести ядерные боеголовки. Заявления Северной Кореи, что они будут использованы против Южной Кореи, Японии и американских военных баз в этой части Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона – это один из важнейших вызовов оборонной политики и стратегии Японии.

Ключевые слова: среда безопасности, расходы на оборону, острова Сенкаку/Дяюйдао, японские Северные территории