

Preface

The National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) celebrates its 70th anniversary this year. Our predecessor National Safety College was founded in 1952. The *East Asian Strategic Review (EASR)* commenced publication in 1996 as part of an effort to foster mutual understanding and build trust with neighbors and regional countries in the post-Cold War era, and this edition marks the 26th year of publication. Over these years, the strategic geography of “East Asia” has expanded, and Japan’s security challenges have become increasingly complex and diverse.

The world after the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) will be defined by an era of “great power competition.” Great power competition refers to a geo-strategic contest for influence among the great powers. At the same time, it is a contest between democratic values, such as freedom of expression and open economy and society, and authoritarian values, like state-led economic growth and public order. Unlike the Cold War period, however, we live in a globalized world where trade, investment, and private-sector production networks have made states interdependent. Today, if some states were to attempt to manipulate this economic interdependence to gain technological superiority and convert it into military superiority, it might be of great concern. Such an attempt would constitute a major challenge to the “free and open system” that has sustained our prosperity.

EASR analyzes aspects of the great power competition from the perspective of its actors—the United States, China, and Russia—and how countries in the region are caught in this competition. The first two chapters address the changes taking place in the era of great power competition in the Greater Middle East, where U.S. engagement has grown since 2001. Chapter 1, which focuses on Afghanistan, examines the intentions of stakeholders—the United States, China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and India. It sheds light on the negative aspects of great power politics that impede cooperation even against a shared terrorist

threat. Chapter 2 regarding the Middle East analyzes the 2020 normalization of relations between four Arab states and Israel through U.S. President Donald Trump's mediation. It explains that Arab diplomacy was conducted without any linkage to progress in Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations and marks a shift in conventional diplomacy.

Chapter 3 onwards analyzes key events in 2021 by country or region. Chapter 3 discusses how China, mindful of the competition with the United States, urges independent development of science and technology and is strengthening its strategic partnership with Russia. Chapter 4 compares North Korea, which continues to develop missiles by exploiting the cracks of the great power competition, and South Korea, which maintains a conciliatory policy toward North Korea detached from the great power competition. Chapter 5 looks at the situation in Myanmar and the South China Sea issue. It postulates that, despite the existence of the ASEAN regional framework, China's deep involvement makes it difficult to exert diplomatic pressure on the Armed Forces of Myanmar. Chapter 6 assesses Russia's perception of the international order as revealed by its new National Security Strategy. The issue of Ukraine forms the core of Russia's perceptions of traditional geo-strategic competition with the West. Chapter 7 analyzes strategic competition with China from the U.S. perspective and describes efforts to strengthen security cooperation for maintaining the international order. Chapter 8 presents Japan's options in the era of great power competition.

The scholarly analyses presented in *EASR* are solely those of individual researchers, and the views expressed do not necessarily represent the official position of the Government of Japan or the Ministry of Defense. *EASR*'s standing as an academic work is further made explicit by specifying the contributors and their responsible parts as well as providing citations at the end of each chapter.

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In the era of great power competition, it is our hope that *EASR* will cultivate awareness of the East Asian strategic environment and promote an intellectual discourse for further improving the security policy of Japan.

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March 2022