

# North Korea and Japan's National Security Against a Backdrop of Changing US Strategy toward China

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## Introduction

In 2010, two barbarous acts by North Korea shocked the world: the sinking of the South Korean patrol vessel ROKS *Cheonan* in March and the shelling of the South Korean island Yeonpyeong-do on November 23. The latter was particularly startling in that it was the first attack on land since the Korean War armistice of 1953 and resulted in the deaths of four people, including civilians.

In response, the United States took steps to reinforce the US-South Korea and US-Japan alliances by holding joint military exercises with South Korea in July, August, and November and with Japan in December. In fact, these steps went so far as to include a call by US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Michael Mullen for joint US-Japan-South Korea exercises. The result has been a stronger sense of urgency in the three countries' relationship than ever before. Two directions in Washington's thinking can be inferred from this series of actions by the US military. The first is that the US is preparing for North Korea's collapse as the current leadership in Pyongyang nears its end. And the second is that it is preparing for dealings with China.

Regardless of whether North Korea makes a "soft landing" (i.e., experiences a peaceful transfer of power) or "hard landing" (collapses as a result of armed action), China's policy will be significantly affected. Likewise, looking at the medium- to long-term future, the United States' Asian strategy will be significantly affected by what happens in China, and US national interests will be similarly affected in turn. In other words, it is possible that changes in the Obama Administration's China strategy could lead to a major change in the strategic balance within the US-China power struggle in East Asia. While the Bush Administration sought to achieve US preeminence by spreading democracy, it is anticipated that the Obama Administration will become more inward-looking by placing US national interests first, and as a result the international system will become less and less polarized.

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As US scales back its power, in relative terms, while China expands its power, it is imperative that we analyze the Obama Administration's China strategy as it pertains to North Korean collapse as well as this strategy's potential impact on Japan.

## 1. The Obama Administration's "first half" China strategy and the Korean Peninsula

Glenn Snyder defines "alliance" as a "formal association of states for the use (or nonuse) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership." In other words, an alliance will not develop if a shared "threat" in the form of "states that are outside the membership" is lacking. Accordingly, the *raison d'être* for the US-Japan alliance will become diluted if the shared "threat" to both countries is lost.

Following the Cold War, the "shared threat" of the US-Japan alliance—i.e., the Soviet Union—was gone. Even the US's national security community suffered an "identity crisis" until it could find a new "threat." Likewise, the US-Japan alliance began to drift for a time after the shared threat was lost. Because the Clinton Administration stressed economic rather than military affairs, it adjusted its Asia policy to place more emphasis on China and less on Japan. As a result, the US-Japan alliance was left temporarily adrift and became unstable. Japan's options at this time were presented in "The Modality of the Security and Defense Capability of Japan: The Outlook for the 21st Century" (the "Higuchi Report"), which was issued as a multilateral security policy by the Advisory Group on Defense Issues, a private advisory body to Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa<sup>2</sup>.

Later, however, the US set a national defense strategy (the Bottom Up Review) that established two "rogue states"—Iraq and North Korea—as threats. And the East Asian Strategic Review (EASR), which reconfirmed the US-Japan alliance as an important keystone in Asia, was released. These developments paved the way toward normalization of the two allies' relationship<sup>3</sup>.

And then came the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. With the

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<sup>2</sup> Advisory Group on Defense Issues, "The Modality of the Security and Defense Capability of Japan: The Outlook for the 21st Century", (<http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/JPSC/19940812.O1J.html>).

<sup>3</sup> Takashi Kawakami, *Beikoku no Zenpo Tenkai to Nichi-Bei Domei*, Dobunkan, April 2004, p 90.

Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) of 2001, the Bush Administration shifted its national defense strategy from a threat-based orientation to a capability-based one. QDR 2001 describes an “arc of instability”—specifically the Asian littoral from East Asia and the Sea of Japan to Southwest Asia and the Bay of Bengal—as the region most susceptible to future conflict and military rivalry and identifies China as a potential enemy. Later, QDR 2006 also mentioned China as a country at a “strategic crossroad” and went to so far as to highlight China’s having the “greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States.” More specifically, the United States was setting a course toward engaging with China while simultaneously “hedging” it onto the right path (Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage), with the goal of making China a “responsible stakeholder” (Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick) in the international community. In other words, the US sought to make China a country that is acceptable to the international community by building a military “hedge” and then “hedging” China into taking the desired course. The thinking was that if a military hedge did not exist, China would likely play power games based on military might and end up challenging US supremacy. Thus, the military hedge was seen as a means for deterring such behavior.

However, from the beginning, the Obama Administration had elected to scale back its engagement with Asia, and it called on China to help achieve a kind of co-supremacy with the US in Asia. As a result, the US and China became so close during the first half of President Obama’s administration as to be called a “Group of Two” (G2) (C. Fred Bergsten, Director of the Institute for International Economics). Accordingly, just as they did under the Clinton Administration, the US and Japan began to drift apart. And at this time, the administration of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama embarked on a course toward even-handed diplomacy with China.

On September 24, 2009, US Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg proposed a new concept—called “strategic reassurance”—as a means of bringing the US and China even closer together<sup>4</sup>. “Strategic reassurance” refers to the mutual reconfirmation that the US would welcome China’s arrival, but in return ask China to acknowledge the peace and security of other nations (“global commons”). Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg presented “strategic reassurance” as a prescription for avoiding a security dilemma between the two countries. Steinberg also mentioned the ancient Greek historian Thucydides, who espoused that if

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<sup>4</sup> James Steinberg, Deputy Secretary of State, Administration’s Vision of the U.S.-China Relationship, Keynote Address, September 24, 2009.

Country A expands its power so that it will not be threatened by Country B, then Country B will also expand its power in order to ensure its self-defense. If this occurs, the security of both Country A and Country B will suffer<sup>5</sup>. Steinberg noted that discussion of such a security dilemma was taking place not only within the US but in also China as well. His concept was thus a call to move away from a “zero sum” rivalry with China to a “win-win” (plus sum) relationship.

Shortly after taking office, President Obama attempted a more appeasing approach in its North Korea policy. However, on April 5, 2009, immediately after the President’s Prague speech in which he called for a “world without nuclear weapons,” North Korea conducted a missile test that proved decisive in causing the Obama Administration to rethink this policy. Then, on May 25, North Korea conducted a nuclear test, and on July 4 it pushed forward with a series of missile tests. Later, on August 4, North Korea received former President Bill Clinton in Pyongyang for talks toward releasing two American women journalists who had been captured near the China-North Korea border in mid-March. At this time, the North Korean leadership requested bilateral negotiations with the United States. However, the Obama Administration responded to these developments by hardening its stance vis-à-vis North Korea. It stated that it would not participate in bilateral discussions, and demanded that any talks must take place within the Six-Party Talks framework.

Since then, the US’s consistent diplomatic stance has been to deal not with North Korea but rather with China. The US has made repeated requests to Beijing, which has influence with North Korea, to bring Pyongyang to the Six-Party Talks. The US seeks to demand that Pyongyang abandon its nuclear weapons program in a complete and verifiable manner within the Six-Party Talks, and then to provide Pyongyang with energy and economic assistance, normalize US-North Korea relations, and enter into a lasting peace accord to replace the Korean War Armistice Agreement.

## **2. The Obama Administration’s “second half” China strategy and the Korean Peninsula: From “engagement” to “hedging”**

As the Obama Administration shifts toward a more hard line stance vis-à-vis North Korea, its policy with regard to China has also shifted. There has been

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts*, New York: Pearson Longman, 2007, p 15.

debate in the United States about the impact that Steinberg's call for "strategic reassurance" will have. According to Dan Blumenthal of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (and a former senior director in the US Secretary of Defense's Office of International Security Affairs), China scholars in Washington are divided about whether Steinberg's signals will raise tensions with China or alleviate them, and whether or not strategic reassurance should be replaced with a "responsible stakeholder" approach. One school of thought says strategic reassurance is a new policy that will expel China's frustrations and pave the way for the US and China to move forward as full partners. And the other school claims it is a policy that places importance on China's reassuring the US about the true intentions behind its military buildup<sup>6</sup>.

However, China's response to the US's proposal for strategic reassurance was "no." When Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg and Jeffrey Bader (national security advisor to the President) visited China in March of 2010, Chinese government officials formally notified them that the South China Sea is part of China's "core interest."<sup>7</sup>

China's response had the result of derailing any further proposals regarding an engagement policy from the US and was seen as a clear challenge to existing US interests. Even before March 2010, US Defense Secretary Robert Gates sounded the alarm concerning China's hegemonic designs for effective control of the South China Sea at the IISS Asia Security Summit of June 2009, when he said that the US would "oppose the use of force and actions that hinder freedom of navigation." And after receiving China's negative response, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July 2010 that "the United States has a national interest in freedom of navigation" in the South China Sea and "supports a collaborative diplomatic process by all claimants for resolving the various territorial disputes."<sup>8</sup> With this statement in Hanoi, Secretary of State Clinton was simultaneously declaring that the US had significantly changed course in its China policy—from "engagement" to "hedging"—and announcing that

<sup>6</sup> Josh Rogin, "The End of the Concept of 'Strategic Reassurance'?" *Foreign Policy*, November 6, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Edward Wong, "Chinese Military Seeks to Extend its Naval Power," *The New York Times*, April 23, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Comments by Secretary Clinton in Hanoi, Vietnam, Discusses U.S.-Vietnam relations, ASEAN Forum, North Korea, July 23, 2010, <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/July/20100723164658su0.4912989.html>.

the US-China “Group of Two” era was over. The US’s shift toward a “hedging” defense strategy vis-à-vis China is clearly noted in QDR 2010 of February 2010. QDR 2010 expresses concerns regarding China’s anti-access/area denial (A2AD) capabilities and announces that the US is preparing an air-sea battle concept<sup>9</sup>.

In late July 2010, China responded to Secretary of State Clinton’s assertion in Hanoi that “it was in Washington’s national interest to see international settlement of disputes in the South China Sea” by holding large-scale military exercises in the South China Sea. These exercises mobilized main destroyers of the People’s Liberation Army Navy’s three fleets (the North Sea Fleet, East Sea Fleet, and South Sea Fleet) and were given television coverage. Above all else, it is considered likely that the exercises were held to declare China’s intent to invest military forces into the region, and to drive a wedge between the ASEAN countries and the US, which were strengthening their unity concerning South China Sea issues<sup>10</sup>. China was thus clearly demonstrating with action its response to overtures for co-supremacy (strategic reassurance) in Asia.

In response, the United States sent the aircraft carrier USS *George Washington* and Aegis destroyer USS *John S McCain* to Vietnam in August 2010 for joint military exercises in the South China Sea off the coast of Da Nang, Vietnam. This move was designed to back up Secretary of State Clinton’s announcement of stronger US engagement in the South China Sea. Through the exercises, the US was providing reassurance to Vietnam, the Philippines, and other countries that are involved in territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea (namely, over the Spratly Islands and Paracel Islands). Immediately following the exercises, the US disclosed “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2010” and expressed concerns about China’s military capability. It was from here that the US-China struggle for supremacy in Asia began<sup>11</sup>.

When seen in this strategic context, it can be concluded that the Asian tours made by Secretary of State Clinton and President Obama from October into November 2010 were the beginning of an American “roll back” strategy vis-à-vis China. From October 27 to 30, Secretary of State Clinton visited Hawaii, Guam, Vietnam, Hainan, Cambodia, Australia, and Samoa. And immediately

<sup>9</sup> Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, February 2010, p 31.

<sup>10</sup> “Spat over Spratlys,” *Financial Times*, August 3, 2010, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/970725de-9f32-11df-8732-001144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=rss#axzz18NTpSF36>.

<sup>11</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2010*.

afterwards, President Obama paid visits to India, Indonesia, South Korea and Japan from November 6 to 13. The Asian tours by the American Secretary of State and President were moves to form a “hedge coalition” with these countries against China to counterbalance Chinese expansionism<sup>12</sup>. At this point, the US was changing to a course of continued engagement in Asia and embarking on a “roll back” policy designed to immediately renew its previously flagging involvement and maintain US supremacy in Asia.

### **3. The way forward for US-South Korea and US-Japan relations against the backdrop of new North Korean uranium enrichment facilities and the shelling of Yeonpyeong-do**

About the same time that President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton were visiting Asia, North Korea invited Dr. Siegfried Hecker, former director of Los Alamos National Laboratory, and Jack Pritchard, former special envoy for negotiations to North Korea, to Pyongyang in early November of 2010. North Korean officials showed them uranium enrichment facilities at the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center and claimed that they were operating 2,000 centrifuges. They also showed the Americans a construction site for a “light-water reactor” and suggested the possibility that they would enrich uranium from plutonium with it. These actions represented an attempt by Pyongyang to prod the US into negotiations.

On the other hand, during a speech he made while in South Korea on November 11, President Obama joined President Lee Myung-bak in calling on Pyongyang to restart the Six-Party Talks. The two leaders also jointly called for a “grand bargain” as a demonstration of earnestness in achieving denuclearization. The grand bargain would take the form of a commitment and action toward the abandonment all nuclear weapons. Of course, this initiative was proposed before the shelling of Yeonpyeong-do, and thus there were still hopes that Pyongyang would respond sincerely. However, such hopes were dashed when North Korea attacked the island.

It is thought that North Korea already possesses enough plutonium for several nuclear bombs, has succeeded in developing a small nuclear warhead, and possesses means of delivery. Thus, it is thought to be (or about to be) nuclear armed. As for the reasons behind Pyongyang's nuclear development, the first is thought to be to

<sup>12</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “A Hedge Strategy toward China,” *The Washington Post*, November 15, 2010.

ensure continuation of the regime (survival of the state). North Korea possesses nuclear weapons as a deterrent against the United States (as well as Japan and South Korea), and its weapons are thought to be modeled after those of China. If this view is accepted, then it becomes extremely unlikely that North Korea would give up any nuclear weapons that come into its possession. No other weapons can raise the nation's stature and ensure deterrence so cheaply. Secondly, North Korea is about to transfer power from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un, and thus it needs nuclear weapons to solidify an institutional foundation that demonstrates Kim Jong-un's prestige. And thirdly, it sees export of nuclear weapons parts, technologies, and delivery systems to other countries as an efficient means of earning foreign currency.

Against this backdrop, North Korea shelled Yeonpyeong-do on November 23, 2010, just as US special representative (to North Korea) Stephen Bosworth was visiting China. This attack killed two ROK marines and two civilians. In the immediate aftermath, the United States, as an ally of South Korea, strongly criticized Pyongyang, and President Obama himself stated that China must stand firm and "make clear to North Korea that there are a set of international rules that they need to abide by." Moreover, Japan and South Korea issued a joint statement calling on China to apply greater leverage on North Korea. Japan, the US, and South Korea were thus intensifying their demand that Beijing exercise its influence on Pyongyang in order to prevent further reckless behavior.

Nonetheless, China did not step in line by criticizing Pyongyang. Instead, it appealed to both Koreas to react calmly and proposed to these three members of the Six-Party Talks the holding of an emergency consultation. However, the US, together with South Korea and Japan, firmly rejected this proposal. North Korea's behavior was contemptible. After failing to take responsible measures following its sinking of the ROKS *Cheonan* on March 26, 2010, it then shelled Yeonpyeong-do. And even just prior to this attack, it announced it had new uranium enrichment facilities that are directly linked to nuclear development. Consequently, the Chinese proposal was rejected due to concerns that, unless Pyongyang changes its provocative stance and China extracts some action from Pyongyang toward abandoning its nuclear weapons and nuclear development, the consultation could, as things stand, end up being no more than a diplomatic public relations maneuver by China.

On the day after the shelling of Yeonpyeong-do, the United States sent a naval force centered on the aircraft carrier USS *George Washington* from Yokosuka



Naval Base to the Yellow Sea (*SeoHe* [West Sea], off the coast of North Korea) to conduct exercises. The purpose was to declare the US's unshakeable intention to defend South Korea, to make a show of force to North Korea, and to send a message to China. The West Sea is in China's backyard, and thus the exercises served as a message to China to hedge Pyongyang toward the correct course and to speed up negotiations that would get Pyongyang to observe international norms. On the other hand, however, they could also be seen as a part of a power struggle designed to check China's emerging military might and maintain American supremacy.

What deserves attention here is that, since the shelling of Yeonpyeong-do, the US-South Korea relationship, the US-Japan relationship, and, by extension, the US-Japan-South Korea relationship have become notably stronger under Washington's leadership. For Japan, the crises on the Korean Peninsula have created a suitable environment for closing the previously widening distance between it and the US. At the same time, however, it cannot be denied that the Cold War structure of "China, North Korea, and Russia" versus "the US, South Korea, and Japan" is once again showing itself in East Asia.

#### **4. North Korea's nuclear capability and Japan's national security**

At the same time, North Korea is undergoing a transition in leadership from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un, and thus the country's political climate is extremely unstable. And as this transition progresses, just about anything can happen.

If, for example, the North Korean government were to collapse, how would the United States, South Korea, and China react? The US and South Korea have formulated OPLAN (operation plans) in preparation for emergency situations on the Korean Peninsula. Various OPLANs exist, including OPLAN 5026, 5027, 5029, and 5030, and US forces stationed in Japan would be mobilized in accordance with them. The OPLAN actually selected would differ depending on the situation in North Korea. For example, if the government in Pyongyang were to collapse, American forces would join with South Korean forces to immediately intervene in North Korea to stop the proliferation of its nuclear weapons (OPLAN 5029). However, if North Korea were to invade the South and attack US forces in Japan (or show indications of such an attack) as part of this operation, the United States might possibly launch first-strike attacks against the North (OPLAN 5027). If OPLAN 5027 were executed, the US's 5th Air Force (Misawa and Kadena) and 7th Fleet

(aircraft carrier USS *George Washington*) in Japan as well as fighters, bombers, and other assets stationed in Guam, Hawaii, South Korea, and the US mainland would make preemptive strikes against targets in North Korea (a minimum of 1,110 sites). Moreover, under OPLAN 5027-94, US Marine expeditionary forces would be inserted into the Korean Peninsula in a third phase of the operation. Of course, fighters, arms and ammunition, and other materiel would be stockpiled in US military bases in Japan, including Yokota, Kadana, and Futenma.

On the other hand, what would China do? If American or South Korean forces were to enter North Korea, it is extremely unlikely that China would simply stand by. In fact, it is possible that China would place forces in North Korea prior to any US or South Korean intervention. Accordingly, if the US or South Korea have any military intentions vis-à-vis the North, they will have to engage in dialogue with China beforehand.

According to information (an official cable) leaked by the WikiLeaks website, Chun Yung-woo, Second Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade (currently Senior Presidential Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security), mentioned during a meeting with US Ambassador to South Korea Kathleen Stevens that North Korea was already economically bankrupt and that he expects it to collapse politically in two or three years following Chairman Kim's death. He added that China would not be able to stop such a collapse should it occur. Moreover, he stated his view that China would probably accept a Seoul-led unified Korea that was not hostile to China in a "benign alliance" with the United States. On the other hand, the leak also revealed Chun's analysis that China would likely continue to reject measures to denuclearize North Korea so long as Pyongyang was not "on the brink of collapse."

Conversely, Victor Cha, former director for Asian affairs in the NSC, presents a different analysis. According to Cha, Beijing appears to have made the recent strategic decision that Korean unification would run contrary to China's national interests. Regardless of which analysis is correct, however, with its shelling of Yeonpyeong-do, Pyongyang may in the end find itself embattled from all sides.

## **5. The North Korean situation and Japan's national security**

As was mentioned above, against the background of the ROKS *Cheonan's* sinking in March and shelling of Yeonpyeong-do (November 23), the relationship

between President Lee Myung-bak and President Obama has become even stronger. In fact, President Obama calls South Korea a “cornerstone” of the Asia-Pacific region. South Korea possesses its own strategy, and it is strengthening the US-South Korea alliance by sending forces to Iraq and Afghanistan and allowing the US military to have deep involvement in South Korea.

On the other hand, the Obama Administration has had growing distrust with regard to Japan since the Democratic Party of Japan's rise to power. As a result, in Washington's view, Japan's status has been downgraded to “*one of the foundations of international security.*” In past times, the US-Japan alliance was so strong that it seemed ready to absorb the US-South Korean alliance; however, those days are long gone. Outcomes that can be drawn from this include the collision incident between Japan Coast Guard vessels and a Chinese fishing boat near the Senkaku Islands and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to the Northern Territories, both of which appear to be attempts to take advantage of the weakening US-Japan alliance.

Here, it can be said that Japan is faced with a national crisis. While maintaining its own strategy and strengthening the US-Japan alliance, Japan is also expected to contribute to regional peace and stability by having its own policies vis-à-vis China, Russia, and the Korean Peninsula.

Indeed, the new National Defense Program Guidelines that were issued in December of 2010 were formulated precisely from this perspective by taking the US's shift in its China policy into account. As was mentioned above, the US began implementing a “hedge” strategy toward China that contains at its center an air-sea battle concept. However, here, the vulnerability of US efforts in dealing with China's A2AD strategy from the “first island chain” to the “second island chain” has come to light. In particular, in October 2006, a Song Class submarine surfaced within torpedo range of the American aircraft carrier USS *Kitty Hawk*. If Chinese submarines become more active in the East China Sea, they may hamper the movements of US aircraft carriers in the Taiwan Strait, to say nothing of waters near Japan, in an emergency situation. Thus, reinforcement to address this US vulnerability through a Japanese “southwest hedge” strategy will become extremely important for the US-Japan alliance.

Consequently, Japan abandoned its Basic Defense Force Concept and incorporated into the guidelines a “Dynamic Defense Force” concept. This concept is supported by sophisticated technical and information capabilities that are based on military technology trends and oriented to have greater readiness,

mobility, flexibility, sustainability and versatility. Formulated in 1976 during US-Soviet Cold War, the Basic Defense Force Concept aimed to place the minimum required number of self-defense forces uniformly throughout the country. Thus, it is completely inadequate for today's world, where threats are becoming increasingly diversified and, in particular, island defense has become a primary concern.

On the other hand, the "Dynamic Defense Force" concept envisions stronger deterrence through continuous and strategic information-gathering, warning-and-surveillance activity, and reconnaissance on a routine basis. Moreover, it presents a mobile and adaptive footing that will permit the shifting of forces from the north to the southwest in response to an emergency situation. In order to make such a footing possible, Japan must reinforce the Japan Self-Defense Forces' capability for joint operation, equip the Maritime Self-Defense Force with high-speed transport vessels (HSV), and strengthen the Air Self-Defense Force's fleet of C-2 transport aircrafts. At the same time, it must give the JSDF adaptive response capability by pre-positioning equipment. Japan will also increase the number of its submarines from 16 to 22, and station a Ground Self-Defense Force coast observation unit on Yonaguni. On top of the above, Japan's right of collective defense must be recognized so that its defense of its islands can be fully built into US strategy and supplement the air-sea battle concept. The new National Defense Program Guidelines represent one of the first undertakings of the DPJ administration, and they are only just getting onto the starting block. How the guidelines are actually implemented will be a major question going forward.

Furthermore, it has become generally accepted that North Korea will have more reliable nuclear arms in the near future. In South Korea, there are moves underway toward asking the US to bring nuclear weapons into the country as reassurance of American extended deterrence. Likewise, Japan will also need to receive reassurance regarding the US's nuclear deterrence. If Pyongyang continues to obtain nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, and if it continues to threaten to "turn Japan into a sea of fire," then Japan will likely be forced to reconsider its opposition to American nuclear weapons on its soil or to engage in nuclear sharing so that the nation can survive. Such moves will also prove a major challenge for the DPJ administration.

## **Conclusion**

At a time when the United States is scaling back its comparative power while China expands its power, the Obama Administration's China strategy signals the arrival of an age of "tailored defense" (QDR 2010) to hedge China. Specifically, recognizing that it cannot hedge China on its own over the medium and long term, Washington will seek to form a new alliance with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the ASEAN countries toward this end. This strategy will affect Japan in that Tokyo's decision to enter (or not enter) the US-led alliance to "roll back" China will undoubtedly play a major role in determining Japan's future standing. Furthermore, regardless of how the US-China power struggle in Asia plays out, the question of whether or not Japan can respond to this power struggle will undoubtedly be a key test of its survivability in the 21st century.