

# Introduction

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East Asia in 2019

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## 1. Termination of the INF Treaty and its Impacts

The Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty) was terminated on August 2, 2019. Furthermore, although the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) is set to expire in 2021, negotiations to extend the treaty are not anticipated. The significance of these treaties lied in restraining a nuclear arms competition, bringing about transparency and predictability based on a strict verification regime. In reality, nuclear weapons and missile technologies proliferated, and the security environment transformed significantly. Debates have emerged that the arms control framework should be expanded to include countries other than the United States and Russia, and that negotiations should cover not only the issues around the definition of strategic/tactical nuclear weapons and caps on the number of nuclear weapons but also the treatment of new strategic arms and missile defenses. The international community places high expectations on US-Russia nuclear arms control for compliance with Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which stipulates negotiations in good faith on nuclear disarmament. Negotiations on a successor treaty, which has been declared as being aimed at the “21st-century model of arms control,” have attracted international attention.

Meanwhile, both the United States and Russia are officially developing intermediate-range missiles, especially after the INF Treaty expired, raising the possibility of a missile arms race in East Asia. Such an arms race could fundamentally alter international relations in Northeast Asia, including US-Russia, China-Russia, and Japan-Russia relations, and have major impacts on the East Asian strategic environment.

## 2. Hong Kong Rocked by Street Protests and the Xi Jinping Administration

China and the United States held ministerial trade negotiations intermittently and

reached a Phase One agreement in December. In January 2020, both governments signed the Phase One agreement document and showed compromises on trade. Nevertheless, it is unforeseeable whether the Phase Two trade negotiations will lead to an agreement. The reason is that the two countries are not simply disputing conditions for remedying the trade imbalance; they are competing for overall national strength, including science and technological prowess. Pressed to make hard choices, President Xi Jinping of China is likely preparing for a long battle with the United States. Against this backdrop, President Xi has made ongoing efforts to enhance the military's loyalty toward him, strengthening his power base by appointing confidants to his circle and tightening his grip on the Communist Party of China (CPC).

For the Xi administration in 2019, chaos from the Hong Kong mass protests turned into an unexpectedly large issue. The Hong Kong police have taken stringent measures to suppress the people's protests aimed at repealing the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill, which was submitted to the Legislative Council in February 2019. As such, it has been difficult to bring the situation to normalcy. This effect had a considerable impact on the Taiwanese presidential election. Kuomintang (KMT) swept to victory in the local elections held in Taiwan in late November 2018, and it was believed that the presidential election would turn out in its favor. However, the Taiwanese masses saw the situation in Hong Kong and felt a sense of crisis toward Taiwan's future. This in turn resulted in the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) turning the table. In the presidential election on January 11, 2020, President Tsai Ing-wen was reelected with the most ever votes in the history of the election. The DPP also kept its majority in the Legislative Yuan.

### 3. A Shaky Korean Peninsula over the “Recurring Crisis”

After the second summit meeting between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) ended without a joint statement, the DPRK resumed missile launches to make a point to the United States: it was capable of reintroducing a state of nuclear-missile crisis. Pyongyang also sought to establish bilateral alignment with China, hinting that Beijing would join the peace regime

talks concerning the future US force presence. This was just over a year after the DPRK and the Republic of Korea (ROK) signed the Panmunjom Declaration that suggested the peace regime talks might be held without China. The DPRK takes actions fully cognizant of the strategic effects generated by nuclear weapon fears on the United States and the ROK and of China's threat perception of the US forces. In tandem with such actions, the DPRK has undertaken steps to avoid domestic emergence of a force that would substitute Kim Jong Un, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK (Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea). Namely, it has reaffirmed the ideology that governmental institutions are constituents of the ruling power, denying them of political neutrality on the grounds of "bureaucratism," and that people belong to "Kim Il Sung's nation and Kim Jong Il's Korea."

The ROK's Moon Jae-in administration took the position that mutual trust and dialogue between the two Koreas are essential for establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula. In the wake of the second US-DPRK Summit that ended with no outcomes, the Moon Jae-in administration announced provision of humanitarian assistance to the DPRK through international organizations and offered to host President Trump's meeting with Chairman Kim Jong Un at Panmunjom. Despite these efforts, no progress was made in inter-Korean relations.

Japan-ROK relations deteriorated amidst the emergence of issues, including the incident of an ROK naval vessel directing its fire-control radar at a Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) patrol aircraft and the ROK government's negative action related to the hoisting of the MSDF flag at an international fleet review. Regarding the Japan-ROK General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), the ROK government notified its termination to the government of Japan in August 2019 but announced in November that the ROK government would suspend the expiry of the agreement.

## 4. Japan's Pursuit of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific"

In recent years, Japan has undertaken whole-of-government initiatives toward maintaining and bolstering an open maritime order based on the rule of law and freedom of navigation under the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) concept.

The Ministry of Defense (MOD)/the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have also been promoting various initiatives toward realizing FOIP as shown by the National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2019 and beyond (2019 NDPG). The 2019 NDPG stressed: “in line with the vision of free and open Indo-Pacific, Japan will strategically promote multifaceted and multilayered security cooperation, taking into account characteristics and situation specific to each region and country.”

Maintaining and strengthening the international order based on principles such as the rule of law and freedom of navigation are the main objectives of FOIP. FOIP is certainly not a new concept, but rather a goal that Japan has consistently pursued since the Cold War era. At the same time, under the influence of India’s rapid economic growth and China’s maritime advances beginning in the latter half of the 2000s, FOIP has been characterized by unprecedented focus on maritime security and strengthening cooperation with democratic countries with ocean borders.

Based on the above perspective, in recent years the MOD/SDF, notably the MSDF, have been expanding their presence and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, the MOD/SDF are strengthening initiatives to provide capacity building assistance to other countries in the region as well as multilateral security cooperation. Nevertheless, amidst the ongoing severe financial situation and personnel shortages, the feasibility of further project expansion poses as an issue.

With increasingly tight budget and personnel constraints going forward, it is becoming more important to develop a whole-of-department approach as well as to strengthen cooperation with other ministries and agencies in order to promote defense exchanges and cooperation. Additionally, to review each project and set an order of priority for these projects, it is essential to have a long-term strategy for defense exchanges and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Considering the placement of the ROK and China in FOIP is also an important pending issue.

