

JAPAN AND TAIWAN – A STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE?¹

Csaba Barnabas Horváth

Associate Research Fellow, Pázmány Péter Catholic University
Modern East Asia research Group
e-mail: kluolang@hotmail.com

Abstract. My paper attempts to analyze how the geopolitical strategic interests of Japan and Taiwan impact each other. I argue that the growing concerns of the Taiwanese population over the increasing influence of China and the ongoing “normalization” i.e., remilitarization and increasing global and regional activism of Japan, are trends that point towards a convergence of interests between the two countries. If Taiwan (especially after the recent DPP takeover) tries to assure its sovereignty by standing up to China, then it will badly need as many regional allies as possible. On the other hand, the continuing de facto sovereignty of Taiwan is a de facto vital geopolitical interest of Japan, not only in the scope of its disputes with China on the East China Sea, but also in the scope of sea lanes vital to its economy. Viewed in terms of geopolitics, Taiwan provides a buffer for Japan between its southwestern islands, and China as well as an obstacle for China in its reach towards the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Taiwan also serves as a barrier between China and the open Pacific Ocean as part of the so called “first island chain”. Given this significance, the possibility of China taking over Taiwan would mean a strategic catastrophe for Japan regarding its strategic maritime rivalry with China on the East China Sea. China controlling Taiwan would also put the PLA Navy in direct access to the sea lanes connecting Japan with the straits of Malacca, vital for Japanese imports of fuel from the Middle East. At the same time, the increasing maritime and air capabilities of the Japanese armed forces are theoretically making Japan increasingly able to assist Taiwan, if Japan ever chooses to do so. Also the increasing activism of Japan as a regional actor puts it in need of regional allies, and in this regard, unlike the reluctance of South Korea, Taiwanese public opinion is highly supportive of cooperation between the two countries. Thus Japan and Taiwan appear to be two countries with an increasing convergence of geopolitical interests, resulting from both their badly needed but limited access to regional allies and supportive public opinion.

Key words: geopolitics, normalization of Japan, cross strait relations, the constitution of Japan

¹ This paper was produced with the help of the Visegrad-Taiwan Scholarship program of the International Visegrad Fund.

INTRODUCTION

This paper will analyze how the recent trend of Japan becoming a “normal country” impacts the security of Taiwan and prospects for Taiwan in cross-strait relations from a realist perspective. To varying degrees, Japan has pursued the issue of “normalization”, which means the de facto and de jure easing of restrictions, that Japan’s constitution puts’ on its armed forces. The Japanese constitution includes these restrictions due to the fact that it was written soon after the Second World War. To compensate for these restrictions, the USA was seen as the guarantor of Japan’s security during the decades of the Cold War. Successive Japanese governments in the last few decades, however, feeling that the guarantees provided by the USA for Japanese security may not be adequate in a changed geopolitical context, started to pursue the goal of “normalization”. This would mean for Japan to achieve both de jure and de facto capabilities for its own security, and to follow its own foreign policy agenda. Thus, to become a regional middle power in its own right, perhaps of the same kind as industrialized states of a similar size such as the UK or France. Regarding the security of Taiwan, this is an extremely important trend, since Japan and Taiwan not only traditionally share exceptionally good relations, but they have a common military adversary, China. In the last few years, this situation is even more emphasized by the fact that the most severe territorial dispute between China and Japan, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (and the East China Sea as a broader theater), rose in a geographical location extremely close to the Taiwan Strait.

THE BROADER GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT: THE USA-JAPAN-INDIA
STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE AND INCREASING TENSIONS BETWEEN
CHINA AND ITS GREAT POWER NEIGHBORS

A global geopolitical trend increasing the strategic significance of Taiwan can be the apparently increasing strategic rivalry between China and the USA, China and India, and China and Japan, and the corresponding strategic convergence between these three strategic rivals of China. A more strained strategic environment naturally increases the strategic significance of small countries between the great players. In this matter, a key trend is the apparent convergence between the USA, India, and Japan seeking to contain China. As the world’s second most populous country and the third largest economy (after China), the significance of India and Japan is apparent. The relations of both countries with China, however, are linked in a way that makes them cooperate with the USA in security policies. The global significance of these two countries makes this a key obstacle for China.

In the case of Japan, what forms an especially difficult issue for Beijing and Tokyo is the double question of Japan’s alignment with the USA and remilitarization. Right now Japan is in a close security alliance with the USA, thus as long as

this alliance exists, any kind of Sino-Japanese cooperation seems to be impossible. The lack of sufficient defense capabilities however, makes Japan unable to give up its alliance with the USA, even if it were willing to do so. Achieving sufficient defense capabilities on its own, however, would require Japan to revise its ‘peace constitution’ and go through a process of significant remilitarization. Right now, Japan is already seemingly on such a remilitarization track. This, however, seems to be unacceptable for China. So, this paradox seems to be a key obstacle to a meaningful Sino-Japanese compromise.

China and India share a decades-long history of strategic rivalry, due to border disputes and mutual geostrategic mistrust, dating from at least to the 1960s. The alliance between China and Pakistan (that started as a result of this situation) further complicates the issue.^{2 3 4} This involves China in the bitter feud between India and Pakistan, therefore even if India and China were to solve their other disputes, this still poses a serious obstacle for any meaningful compromise between them. China and India are somewhat trapped in this trilateral issue. For India, a compromise with China would be meaningless if China continues cooperation with Pakistan. For China, on the other hand, abandoning Pakistan would be a suicidal move if there is no solid guarantee for a long lasting change in India’s doctrine. Thus, this situation seems to be a serious obstacle for both China and India to take the first step in ending their decades long rivalry, even if they wanted to do so. This not only traps Pakistan in alliance with China, but according to the “enemy of my enemy” logic, leaves India with no other choice than cooperation with the USA (and Japan), something that is apparent today.

Long term cooperation between the USA and India, however, can be key obstacle for China on the global level. The very same economic trends that are constantly expanding China’s share of the global economy are also fueling the growth of India.^{5 6} Thus, for China, a USA-India duo is likely to be as much an obstacle to future global influence as it is today. Pakistan’s trapped alliance with China does not seem to be a sufficient counterbalance to this phenomenon, due to the clear difference in size between India and Pakistan.

As we can see, a meaningful Sino-Japanese or Sino-Indian compromise seems to be extremely difficult to reach due to factors beyond the control of the players, so the situation makes it easy for the USA to work with both India and Japan against China. The coinciding interests of the three countries culminated in

² I. B. Kardon, *China and Pakistan: Emerging Strains in the Entente Cordiale*. The Project 2049 Institute, Arlington, Virginia, March 25, 2011.

³ M. D. Swaine, *China and the “AfPak” Issue*, China Leadership Monitor, 2010, (31).

⁴ R. A. Siddiqi and Yang Jain, *About an ‘All-Weather’ Relationship: security foundations of Sino-Pakistan relations since 9/11*, „Journal of Contemporary China” 2011, 20(71), pp. 563–579.

⁵ M. Malik: *India Balances China*, „Asian Politics and Policy” 2012 (4/3).

⁶ A. Virmani, *A Tripolar Century: USA, China and India*, Working Paper no. 160, Indian Council on International Economic Relations, 2005.

2008 with the formation of the quadrilateral security dialogue between the USA, India, Japan, and the regional 'Anglo-Saxon' state, Australia.

The cooperation has not been formalized on a quadrilateral basis due to protests from China, but the four countries established a network of bilateral agreements, linking any two of them with each other. Besides the decades-long security pacts the USA and Japan and the USA and Australia, new ones were formed between each two of the four. India and the USA signed a bilateral framework agreement defining their security cooperation as early as 2005. India and Japan signed their security pact in 2008,^{7 8} while Australia and India signed theirs in 2009. Thus, we can see a network of bilateral security pacts between these four countries.

This cooperation is an alliance between the USA and two of China's three neighbors which have a great power identity on their own. If this cooperation lasts in the long term, it poses a significant obstacle for China in its competition with the USA, even if it manages to become the single strongest power on Earth.

THE SECOND LEVEL OF THE GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT: JAPAN'S INCREASING MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND THE TAIWAN STRAIT

Within the broader frames of this "great game" Taiwan apparently lies between China and Japan. In order to see how the rivalry between Japan and China can influence Taiwan's situation, we have to take an overview of two things: the existing military potential of Japan to intervene in case of a conflict in the Taiwan strait and the nature of and trends in Japan-Taiwan relations. We will first take an overview of the increasing military capabilities of Japan.

In addition to the constitutional process pursued by the Abe government to make Japan a "normal country" again, i.e., one with full freedom to develop and deploy its armed forces, and to become engaged in international security alliances and coalitions, another aspect of this process is the less-discussed but nonetheless impressive development in the last ten to fifteen years of the capabilities of Japan's armed forces, the Japan Self Defense Force. In the year 2000, Japan introduced a new reconnaissance aircraft, the Boeing E-767 AWACS airplane, considerably increasing its surveillance capabilities.⁹ Before 2006, the largest ships in the Japanese navy were the Shirane class destroyers, a 5200 ton vessel. Japan introduced the Hyuga class helicopter-carrier of 13500 tons in 2006,¹⁰ and

⁷ T. Wilkins, *Japan's alliance diversification: a comparative analysis of the Indian and Australian strategic partnerships*, „International Relations of the Asia-Pacific" 2011, (11), pp. 115–155.

⁸ J. M. Paul, *India-Japan Security Cooperation: A New Era of partnership in Asia*, „Maritime Affairs" 2012 (8/1), pp. 31–50.

⁹ E-767 Airborne Warning and Control System – Globalsecurity.org. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/aircraft/e-767.htm>

¹⁰ JMSDF Hyuga Class Destroyer – Naval Technology <http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/hyuga-class/>.

in 2013 the Izumo class helicopter carrier of 19500 tons,¹¹ the latter having similar size as the light aircraft carriers of Britain and France.¹² In 2003 Japan introduced its own reconnaissance satellite program, with two satellites at first increasing to four satellites currently. Also in 2003, Japan introduced Aegis-destroyers. There were four at first but now there are six,¹³ and Japan plans to increase the number to eight in the near future.¹⁴ Besides the USA, Japan is the only country that equipped its Aegis destroyers with a ballistic missile defense system, and Japan also acquired land based PAC-3 ballistic missile defense system in 2003.¹⁵ Japan plans to increase the number of its submarines from 16 to 22 in the near future.¹⁶ The number of fourth and fifth generation jet fighter aircraft used by Japan was 216 in 2013, roughly similar to the fleets of Taiwan (265), France (243), Israel (243), Saudi-Arabia (229), Germany (199), South Korea (189), Egypt (184), the UK (179), and Turkey (179). This group of these countries, with between 170 and 270 fourth and fifth generation jet fighters each, was only surpassed that year by the quartet of the USA(2322), Russia(855), China(610) and India(336).¹⁷ This number is about to increase further, since, in 2011 Japan made a deal for the purchase of 42 fifth generation F-35 jet fighter aircraft to replace its 80 third generation F-4 jets (the latter being third generation aircraft, are not included in the numbers listed above).¹⁸ In July 2014 Japan announced the possible purchase of even more F-35 aircraft, to replace not only its F-4 fighters, but even a large number of its fourth generation F15s.¹⁹ To summarize, we can conclude, that the JSDF significantly increased its naval and air capabilities in the last decade, and in several aspects, it already has the capabilities of a de facto regional middle power.

The balance between the Chinese and Japanese navies is quite complex. China has 27 guided missile destroyers, while Japan has only 8. On the other hand, six of Japan's eight guided missile destroyers are equipped with the highly advanced Aegis Combat System, while China's comparable system (Kunming class destroyers) is still under development right now. If we examine larger ships, Japan has four, while

¹¹ *Japan's war potential and the case of the Izumo 'destroyer'*-East Asia Forum, 5 September 2013. <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/09/05/japans-war-potential-and-the-case-of-the-izumo-destroyer/> last downloaded 7. April 2015.

¹² *Japan to Build New Helicopter Destroyer*. Naval-Technology.com 2009 <http://www.naval-technology.com/news/news70595.html> last downloaded 7. last downloaded April 2015.

¹³ Sh. A. Khan, *Japan's New Defence Guidelines: An Analysis*, „Strategic Analysis” 2011 (35/3), pp. 391–395.

¹⁴ F.-S. Gady, *This is Japan's Best Strategy to Defeat China at Sea*, „The Diplomat” 2015, 20 February, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/this-is-japans-best-strategy-to-defeat-china-at-sea/>.

¹⁵ E. Atanassova-Cornelis, *The Political and Security Dimension of Japan-China Relations: Strategic Mistrust and Fragile Stability*, Pacific Focus 2011 (XXVI/2), pp. 165–187.

¹⁶ Sh. A. Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 391–395.

¹⁷ Calculation of number of aircraft in the named category based on: C. Hoyle, *World Air Forces 2013*, Flightglobal Insite, Quadrant House, The Quadrant, Sutton, Surrey 2013.

¹⁸ US Lockheed Martin F-35 chosen as Japan fighter jet – BBC News, 20th December 2011. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16259895>.

¹⁹ Ministry of Defense, 2014 <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/pressconf/2014/07/140709.html>.

China has only one. But at the same time, the four Japanese warships of this size are all only helicopter carriers, while the single Chinese ship of this size is a real aircraft carrier. Before Japan commissioned the Hyuga and Izumo class helicopter carriers of 13500 and 19500 tons in 2009 and 2013, its largest warships were of the Shirane class of just 5200 tons, merely the size of large destroyers.^{20 21} Thus, while China's navy has a superiority in the absolute number of ships, the introduction of the Hyuga and Izumo classes and the introduction of the Aegis Combat System in the Japanese MSDF meant a huge advance in Japanese in capabilities, even if China meanwhile introduced its first, but so far single aircraft carrier.

One more factor that could suggest room for a significant increase in Japanese military capabilities is the fact that Japan spends as little as 1% of its GDP on defense. In contrast, in 2013 China spent 2.1% of GDP on defense, the USA 3.8%, South Korea 2.6%. Even if we take somewhat less militarized, industrialized, first world democratic island nations as a comparison, we can see rates considerably higher than Japan: In Australia it was 1.6%, and in the UK it was 1.8% in 2013.²² This suggests that if constitutional restrictions are lifted, and if in the Japanese government decides to redefine the country's entire defense concept, then Japan would have room to significantly increase its military spending. In such a hypothetical scenario, a future Japan spending as much of its GDP on defense as Australia would still not be a too militarized country, even though its defense budget would be 60% higher than currently. If we look at Japan's already existing arsenal of advanced submarines, helicopter-carriers of the size of light aircraft carriers, fourth and fifth generation jet fighters, already existing ballistic missile defense system, its Aegis-destroyers and its reconnaissance satellites, we can assume that such a Japan, spending 60% more on its military than it does today, would indeed be a regional power that no one could ignore. For example, a 60% increase in the number of the fourth and fifth generation jet fighter aircraft would raise Japan to the rank of the fourth or fifth in the world, in parity with India, and surpassed only by the USA, China and Russia.

This is important for the security of Taiwan because any meaningful PRC military action against Taiwan would require it to use its naval capabilities. And this, the PLA-Navy, is exactly what Japan is trying to counter by developing its own forces. So the further the remilitarization of Japan proceeds, the more the JSDF will have capabilities to counter exactly what would be needed for a military action against Taiwan. This in turn means that Japan is becoming more and more capable to deter China from an invasion of Taiwan, if it is willing to do so. And as we will see below, Japan has every reason to be willing to do so.

²⁰ *JMSDF Ships*, Globalsecurity.org <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/japan/ship.htm>.

²¹ *Chinese Warships*, Globalsecurity.org <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/navy.htm>.

²² *Military expenditure (% of GDP)*, The World Bank <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>.

JAPANESE PUBLIC OPINION AND THE REVISION OF THE “PEACE CONSTITUTION” OF JAPAN

While the military capabilities of Japan are progressively increasing, we must also take into consideration Japanese public opinion on the issue. This attitude, as of now, seems to be ambivalent. An extensive opinion poll taken by Asahi Shinbun in 2014 showed that only 29% of the Japanese public supported amending Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, while 64% opposed it. The reinforcement of the armed forces was somewhat more popular, with 40% supporting reinforcement, 49% in favor of maintaining the current level, and 7% favoring reduction. The poll also showed that the vast majority of the Japanese public still views the security treaty between Japan and the USA as a cornerstone of Japan’s security, with 79% supporting its maintenance and only 11% opposing it. At the same time the poll also makes clear the concerns of the Japanese public regarding Chinese assertiveness. 79% of the respondents viewed the rise of China as something that brought a negative change to the region, while only 12% viewed it in a positive way. At the same time 48% of the Japanese public identified the military power of China as one of the most serious threats to peace in East Asia. Also, when having to name the country that poses the biggest threat to Japan, 55% of the respondents chose China, a number almost twice of the 29% score reached by North Korea.²³

However, there seem to be growing approval for Abe’s policies. By early 2016, 37.5% of the Japanese public supported amending Article 9 of the Constitution, (a solid increase from 29% in 2014) and 50.3% opposed it (a significant decrease from 64% in 2014). At the same time only 38% wished for Abe to reverse course on the issue.²⁴

While a majority of the Japanese public is against amending the constitution and collective self-defence, a majority is also increasingly concerned about deteriorating relations with China. So an interesting question is which of these two concerns would be stronger in case of a PRC invasion of Taiwan. In such an event, the concern over the increasing assertiveness of China would collide with the concern over Japan’s involvement in collective security. The concerns over China’s assertiveness would require Japan to intervene, since tolerating a forceful unification of Taiwan with the mainland would not only significantly enhance China’s strategic position in the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean but could also be interpreted as unstated approval of China’s increasing assertiveness, and perhaps even as unstated approval for its leading role in the region. On the other hand, the concerns over Japan’s involvement with war efforts overseas and col-

²³ *Asahi Shimbun Special Public Opinion Poll (04/07/14)*, Asahi Shinbun, April 7 2014, <http://mansfielddn.org/program/research-education-and-communication/asian-opinion-poll-database/asahi-shimbun-special-public-opinion-poll-040714/>.

²⁴ E. Chen, *The surrender of Japan’s Peace Constitution*, „Philippine Daily Inquirer” 2016, 10 April, <http://opinion.inquirer.net/94224/the-surrender-of-japans-peace-constitution>.

lective security in a broader sense would demand that Japan stay out of such a conflict. It's an unpredictable question, which one of these two concerns would end up to be the stronger one in case of a real situation.

What would further complicate Japan's situation in such a case would be the issue of US bases there. If the USA intervenes on the side of Taiwan, then its bases in Japan could be vital for such operations. That would, however, raise the risk of China striking US bases on Japanese soil, what would constitute an attack on Japan, thus dragging it and the JSDF into the conflict. Japan could only guarantee avoiding such a scenario by preventing the use of US bases on its soil, something that would jeopardize the security treaty between the two countries, the treaty that the vast majority of the Japanese public also views as the cornerstone of the country's security.

TRENDS IN JAPAN-TAIWAN RELATIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

The security of Taiwan is obviously a core strategic interest of Japan. First, Taiwan serves as a strategic buffer between Japan's southwestern islands and China. Therefore, a takeover of Taiwan by the PRC would increase Japan's vulnerability with PRC bases appearing right next to its southwestern islands.

Second, as part of the first island chain, Taiwan is crucial regarding the access of the PLA Navy's access to the Pacific. This issue is also crucial for Japan, since this is a decisive factor in the PLA Navy's capabilities to maneuver off the eastern coasts of Japan. This factor can become even more significant with the spread of A2/AD weapon systems. If Japan deploys A2/AD systems to the Ryukyu Islands, and Taiwan also sets up such on its soil, then that would literally seal off the open Pacific from the PLA Navy. Thus the strategic significance of Taiwan is likely to increase in the coming years.²⁵ Third, Taiwan lies nearby sea lanes that are crucial for Japan's economy, the sea lanes linking Japan to the Malacca Straits.²⁶ Fourth, among Japan's neighbors, in general, Taiwan is the country with the friendliest attitude towards Japan, true for both its political elite and its public, in contrast to South Korea, for example, where although strategic interests would support cooperation with Japan, public opinion does not due to emotions on historical issues. The case in Taiwan is nothing like that and Taiwanese public opinion in general is quite friendly towards Japan.²⁷ Therefore, if

²⁵ Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments involving the People's Republic of China 2013 – A Report to Congress Pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000.

²⁶ Interview with prof. Lin Hsien-sen, Department of east Asian Studies, National Taiwan Normal University, 18th March 2015., Taipei.

²⁷ Lam Peng-er: Japan-taiwan Relations: Between Affinity and Reality, *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 20:4, pp. 249–267, 2004.

Japan continues to pursue normalization and remilitarization, it has every reason to view Taiwan as its de facto number one regional ally. Thus, the more Japan becomes “normal”, the less it can afford to watch any Chinese military action against Taiwan without intervening.

The dynamics of relations between Japan and Taiwan changed somewhat in the last few years. During the decades of the Cold War, and even for quite some time after that, the pattern of relations between Japan and Taiwan was that it was Taiwan that was more eager to seek cooperation with Japan, and it was Japan that was cautious in its relations with Taiwan, not wanting to enrage China. This situation seems to have been reversed in the last few years. The first event to influence the change was the 2008 inauguration of the Ma administration in Taiwan, after which the Japanese establishment became concerned about Ma’s appeasing attitude towards China.²⁸ The second blow came with the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations after 2010, eventually completed by the inauguration of the Abe-government in 2012. As a result, we ended up in a situation, where it is Japan that follows a harder line with China and would seek Taiwan’s support, and it is Taiwan under the Ma administration, that is more cautious out of the fear of enraging China. So on behalf of Japan, we can see more willingness to support Taiwan than ever before.²⁹ After the DPP victory at the last Taiwanese general election, this willingness from Japan met a similar willingness from Taiwan, and such a combination could bring a watershed in Japan-Taiwan relations.

If we ask, where these trends might lead, the most likely outcome is that the status quo of the USA-Japan alliance will continue in the sense that Japan, despite becoming a “normal country,” would still remain a close ally of the USA, perhaps similar to the UK in Europe. In such a case, the likely scenario is simply Japan taking more responsibility within the alliance regarding support for Taiwan and other issues. The military capabilities of the JSDF are enabling it to take a larger role in deterring China from military action against Taiwan. And in that case, if such a thing still happened despite all this increased deterrence capacity, the JSDF would be much more capable and the Japanese government would be much more willing than ever before to take a major role in assisting the USA to help Taiwan.

Even in such circumstances, Japan could obviously only side with Taiwan if the USA did so as well. Besides practical reasons, this is also the case because acting without the USA would jeopardize the US-Japan security treaty. There seems to be, however, a shift in attitudes within the US-Japan alliance, with a normalizing Japan becoming increasingly concerned about regional affairs and the assertiveness of China. This could result a situation where the de facto

²⁸ Madoka Fukuda. *Japan-China-Taiwan Relations After Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement*, „Asia Pacific Bulletin”, 2014, (264), May 22.

²⁹ Interview with Dr. Lai I-chung, Vice President for Foreign Policy, Taiwan Think Tank, Taipei, 24th March 2015.

sovereignty of Taiwan becomes a greater priority for Japan than it is for the US. While Japan cannot act without the US, it can certainly attempt to put pressure on the US to intervene and act together.

CONCLUSION

As we can see, Japan and Taiwan have every reason to deepen their cooperation and Japan is not only becoming increasingly becoming able to do so, given its military capabilities and its changing foreign relations. Its increasing strategic competition with China and increasingly broad alliance building all point in the same direction. Japan's military capabilities are increasingly getting closer and closer to that of a de facto regional middle power and are developing exactly those capabilities that could deter China from military action against Taiwan or to assist Taiwan in such a situation. The security and de facto sovereignty of Taiwan seems to be a core strategic interest of Japan, since China taking over Taiwan would significantly increase the vulnerability of Japan vis-à-vis China. Taiwan is also extremely important for Japan, since it is the country in the region with the friendliest attitude towards Japan. If Japan indeed pursues the future role of a regional middle power, it will need to find countries willing to become its regional allies, and Taiwan is perhaps the most willing candidate for such a role, so its takeover by China would be a major loss for Japan. Of course, due to Japan's recognition of the One China Policy, a formal alliance between Japan and Taiwan is impossible, but as the example of the USA shows, there is room for informal cooperation in such circumstances. This aspect is even more interesting because, besides Taiwan, the country in the region with which Japan most increases strategic cooperation and which seems to be the most willing to cooperate with it is the Philippines.³⁰ Japan and the Philippines even signed a defense pact in early 2016, which was the first agreement of that kind between Japan and any country in Southeast Asia.³¹ What is particularly interesting about Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines is that they form the so called "first island chain," a geographic continuum reaching from Russia to Indonesia, and with the spread of A2/AD arms systems, they are able to literally keep the Chinese navy away from the Pacific Ocean. Besides being willing to align themselves with Japan (thus rare exceptions among the countries of East and Southeast Asia), Taiwan and the Philippines are also both island nations, making them practically suited for assistance by Japanese armed forces which have good capabilities in air and on sea but are very weak on the ground. The fall of Taiwan would break this geographic

³⁰ P. Parameswaran, *Japan Wins New Philippine Defense Deal*, „The Diplomat” 2015, 24th April, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/japan-wins-new-philippine-defense-deal/>.

³¹ F. S. Gady, *Japan and Philippines Sign Defense Agreement Amid Growing Tensions in South China Sea*, „The Diplomat”, 2016, March 1, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/03/japan-and-philippines-sign-defense-agreement-amid-growing-tensions-in-south-china-sea/>.

continuity, and thus jeopardize Japan's alliance building efforts with the Philippines as well. In the last few years, we could indeed see a rapprochement between Japan and Taiwan, in which the most important achievement has perhaps been the fishery agreement of 2013 that allowed them to avoid a possible maritime dispute,³² and the declaration in 2013 by Japan's ministry of defense that Chinese military action against Taiwan was a possible scenario that could start a military conflict between China and Japan.³³ The victory of the DPP candidate in the recent Taiwanese elections is likely to boost the relationship between Japan and Taiwan further.

Of course, on the other hand, we can point out several difficulties. Japan has an aging society, and its economy has been stagnating during the last two decades, factors which in the long term may make it more and more difficult for Japan to compete with China in developing its military. Taiwan and Japan so far do not have formal diplomatic relations, which could be a difficulty to deepening their relations in the future.³⁴

To summarize the issue, a final conclusion with respect to both supporting factors and obstacles in Japan-Taiwan relations, is that it seems to be obvious that Japan is becoming both more willing and more able to play a greater role in supporting Taiwan within the USA-led alliance system. Whether this could result in an increased strategic cooperation between the two countries in the future (or between three countries, involving the Philippines as well) is, however, something that we cannot tell at this moment.

JAPONIA I TAJWAN – STRATEGICZNA KONWERCENCJA

Abstrakt. Artykuł dotyczy współzależności strategicznych Japonii i Tajwanu. Są one konsekwencją z jednej strony wzrostu Chin, z drugiej coraz większej militarnej aktywności Japonii w regionie. Tajwan chcąc ochronić swój obecny status potrzebuje zbudowania silnej koalicji w regionie. Zachowanie status quo Tajwanu leży również w interesie Japonii, ze względu na jego położenie geopolityczne. Tajwan pełni rolę bariery pomiędzy Chinami a otwartym Pacyfikiem, będąc częścią tzw. pierwszego łańcuch wysp. Zatem przejęcie Tajwanu przez Chiny miałyby katastrofalne skutki dla Japonii, oraz zachwiałyby poważnie równowagę w regionie Azji i Pacyfiku.

Słowa kluczowe: geopolityka, stosunki w Cieśninie Tajwańskiej, konstytucja Japonii, Japonia, Tajwan, stosunki japońsko-tajwańskie

³² Huang Kwei-bo, *One Down, How Many to Go? The Taiwan-Japan Fishery Agreement, and Its Implications*, „Prospects & Perspectives” 2013 (8).

³³ M. Thim and M. Matsuoka, *The Odd Couple: Japan & Taiwan's Unlikely Friendship*, „The Diplomat” 2015, 15th May, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/the-odd-couple-japan-taiwans-unlikely-friendship/>.

³⁴ Interview with Dr. Arthur Ding, director, Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, 21th April, 2015.