

DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES

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and military expenditure in East Asia
(early 21st century)**

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December 2018

RPSPP Discussion Paper No.35

RPSPP

RITSUMEIKAN : POLICY SCIENCE & PUBLIC POLICY

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**The intensity of security dilemma and military expenditure in East Asia
(early 21st century)**

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1. Introduction

Several incidents have pushed East and Southeast Asia towards an insecure and unpredictable security situation: aircraft fighting between China and Japan, clashes between Vietnamese, Philippines, and Chinese maritime vessels in the South China Sea, aggressive actions from North Korea, and military expansions by each country in the region. The security dilemma in East and Southeast Asia has also become more intense due to expanded military spending and many disputes in the region.

Charles Glaser stated in Theory of International Politics that it is understandable if a state wants to increase their security by raising their combatants; however, increasing military power can lead to insecurity due to perceived aggression from other countries in the region. Glaser points out those arms races can be avoided if nations cooperate and only raise their defense power without any harmful intention. The key feature that differentiates competitive conflicts in arms races with peaceful intentions is the balance of offense and defense, i.e., Glaser's offense-defense balance (ODB).¹

¹ Charles L., Glaser, Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), subsequent references cited in text.

It can be difficult to classify the offensive and defensive power. Therefore, I would like to introduce Robert Jervis's offense-defense theory to distinguish.² Jervis explained that the offensive and defensive powers can be differentiated by the intention and behavior, and it is the intention to 'keep-status quo' and to 'challenge-status quo'. So, the state with the intention to change the status quo is qualified as offensive power, while the state tries to keep status quo will be qualified as defensive power.

Jervis also requires distinguishing offensive and defensive power to evaluate the intensity of the security dilemma across four scenarios.³

Careful analysis of data from the East China Sea dispute and the South China Sea dispute shows that most countries' offensive and defensive powers are nearly indistinguishable. According to Jervis's 4 scenarios, we can see that the security dilemma in East Asia before East and South China Sea disputes fall on a 4th scenario and, while the security dilemma after disputes get complicated in the 21st century fall on a 2nd scenario.

Therefore, the existing security dilemma in East and Southeast Asia has shifted from not intense (in a scenario 4) to intense (in a scenario 2) during the 2000s³ which influence by the conflict in the region.

The actions of the Chinese and Japanese governments could be the main reason of the tensions rising between the neighboring countries—especially from 1993-2013 when China increased military budget by 576%.⁴

² Jervis, Robert. Cooperation under the security dilemma. Center for Arms Control and International Security, University of California, Los Angeles - 1977

³ Jervis, Robert, 211.

⁴ Liff, A. P., & Ikenberry, G. J. (2014). Racing toward Tragedy?: China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma. *International Security*, 39(2), 53.

The rapid increase in Chinese military expenditure in the 2010s led other countries in East Asia to increase their military budget as well especially since 2016.⁵ This situation has markedly increased the security dilemma and tensions in the East China Sea and the South China Sea disputes. Global military data from 2016 and information about the situations and tensions show that the security dilemma shifted from the fourth scenario to the second scenario. This means that the security dilemma became ‘intense’ during the 21st century and has possibility to shift to ‘very intense’ state in the future.

2. Security dilemma

It is important to understand the security dilemma in East Asia including how the military expenditure and security of each country has affected. Thus, it is important to define the idea and concept of “security dilemma” and its intensity.

In 1951, John H. Herz invented the security dilemma spiral model in his book *Political Realism and Political Idealism*. This theory can explain the concept of security dilemma in deep detail; however, Robert Jervis’s offense-defense theory is the best option to help us categorize the intensity level of the security dilemma. This is because it easily translates to the current situation in the East China Sea and South China Sea disputes.

I used historical studies and data on military expansion to explain the situation East and Southeast Asia, which are rapidly increasing their military expenditure in the 21st century. I also used the theoretical frameworks related to John H. Herz’s security

⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). World military expenditure 2016, 3-4.

dilemma theory such as Robert Jervis's offense–defense theory and alliance dilemmas. Next, I compared these theories with the situation in East Asia to support my argument that increased military spending in China led its neighbors to feel insecure and ultimately caused a security dilemma.

2.1. Security dilemma theory

It is important to understand the security dilemma in East Asia and how it led to other conflicts, e.g. the East China Sea and South China Sea disputes in 21st century. To do this, we need to better understand the idea and concept of “security dilemma.”

The security dilemma theory was articulated in 1950 by John H. Herz in his book *Political Realism and Political Idealism*. Herz describes “security dilemma” as “a structural notion in which the self-help attempts of states to look after their security needs tend, regardless of intention, to lead to rising insecurity for others as each interprets its own measures as defensive and measures of others as potentially threatening”.⁶

The Eurasia Review defines security dilemma as “the perpetuation of a vicious cycle of insecurity”.⁷ Herz questioned how a dilemma could happen when every country merely claims to build security only for their safety and not for attacking others. He argued that it is because of disputes and tensions.⁷

This is the exact same situation as in the Cold War when the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. competed against each other in the arms race, the space race, athletics, and so

⁶ Herz, John. 1951 *Political realism and political idealism: a study in theories and realities*. University of Chicago Press, 157.

⁷ Rabena, Aaron Jed. "The Security Dilemma In East Asia." *Eurasia review*. March 23, 2015.

on. Especially in the manufacturing of nuclear weapons, both countries competed, and this ultimately resulted in dramatic nuclear weapons expenditures on both sides.

Hence, if we compare security dilemma theory with the situation in East Asia, then we find that East Asia is facing a security dilemma with greater potential to elevate security tensions. Information on world military expansion in 2017 can better explain the East Asian security dilemma.

2.2. Offense-Defense Theory

The security dilemma occurred not only due to the state military competition but also due to a lack of competition and harmony between nations. Glaser mentioned that if a state leader increased the nation's security while choosing the cooperative security, then the competition and dilemma could be avoid. However, the intensity of the security dilemma could increase or decrease based on the balance of offense-defense power.

We can differentiate the offensive power and defensive power by looking into their intention, for state that tries to 'keep-status quo' will be defined as defense and for state tries 'challenge-status quo' will be defined as offense.⁸

While we have to make a mark on distinguishing feature of offensive power and defensive power is more about the policies and weapons of defense can be distinguish from offense.⁹ Jervis has mentioned about the offense-defense balance by saying that offense has advantage when the situation is easier for them to take the territorial and has power over the defensive side. While it would be consider defense has advantaged when it is easier to protect than to destroy and take.¹⁰

⁸ Jervis, Robert. Cooperation under the security dilemma. Center for Arms Control and International Security, University of California, Los Angeles - 1977, 206.

⁹ Jervis, Robert, 186.

¹⁰ Jervis, Robert, 187.

Robert Jervis created the model to evaluate the intensity of a security dilemma via four scenarios. These four scenarios are listed above from the most intense to the least intense. These four scenarios—together with the world military expenditure data including in East Asia—suggests that the security dilemma in the 21st century in East and Southeast Asia is rising.¹¹

1. The first scenario occurs when offensive and defensive behaviors are indistinguishable, and the offense has advantage. In this case, the security dilemma is very intense and the security environment is doubly dangerous.¹¹

2. This second scenario occurs when offensive and defensive behaviors are indistinguishable but defense has advantage. The security dilemma in this scenario is intense, and the security environment is quite dangerous.¹²

3. The third scenario is when offensive and defensive behaviors are distinguishable, and the offense has advantage. In this case, the security dilemma is not as intense; however, security issues do exist.¹³

4. The last situation is when offensive and defensive behaviors are distinguishable, but the defense has advantage. The security dilemma has little or no intensity in this scenario, and the security environment is certainly safe.¹⁴

One key facet is the statement, “the offensive and defensive behaviors are indistinguishable”. Here, Glaser later explained that the statement means the defensive and offensive weapons do not differ from each other.¹⁵ More important, about the

¹¹ Jervis, Robert, 211.

¹² Jervis, Robert, 212.

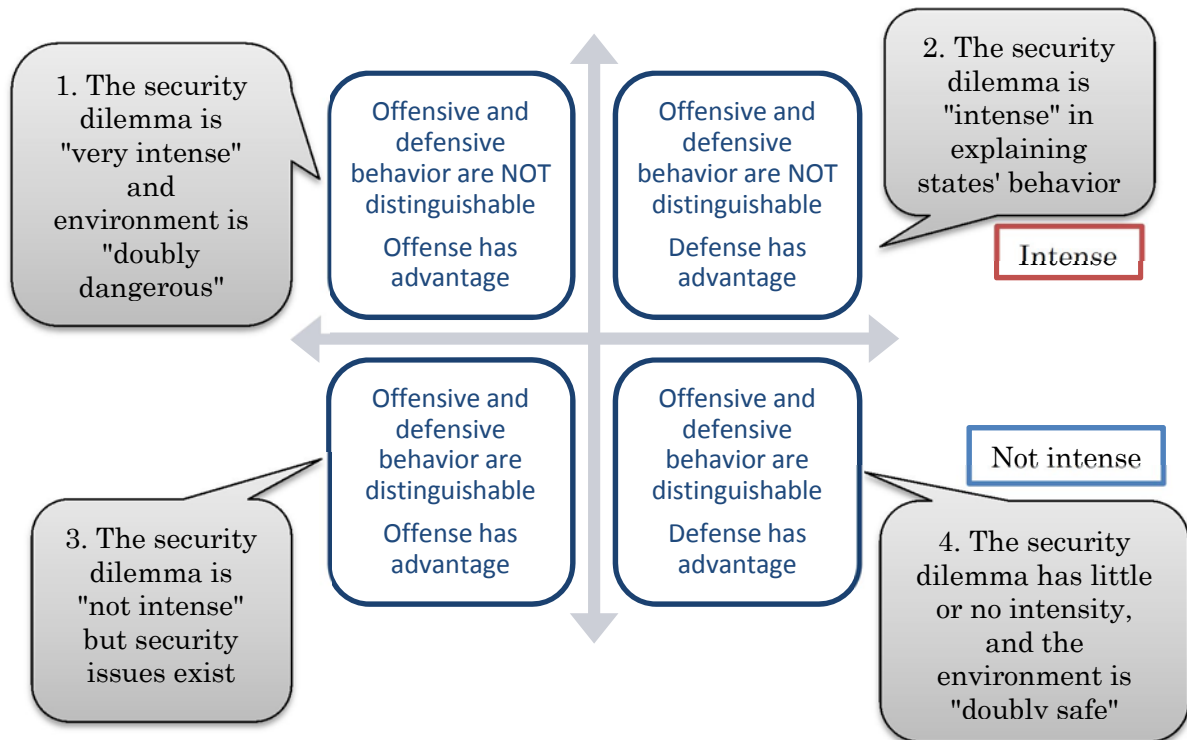
¹³ Jervis, Robert, 213.

¹⁴ Jervis, Robert, 214.

¹⁵ Charles L., Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

‘advantage’ in this case means offensive have more advantage if it is easier to attack and move forward in the situation while defensive has advantage when situation is easier to protect and to hold.

Figure 1 Model of Four Worlds, Offense-Defense theory. Robert Jervis (1977).



The key to apply this model with situation East and Southeast Asia in the 21st century is the ability to distinguish between offensive and defensive actions.

These four scenarios can be considered during analysis of the offense and defense missions in the region including the East China Sea disputes between Japan, China and Taiwan as well as South China Sea disputes between ASEAN countries and China.

Chinese government has desired to change the status quo to claim the waters in East and South East China Sea, in this case we put China as offensive power. However, in the early 1900s, the Chinese People's Liberation Army had limited capacity in

offensive power. Hence, it is safe to say the offense and defensive behavior are distinguishable in this phase and since it is very difficult for China to change any status quo so the defense has advantage in this case.

That make the early state of disputes fall in to a 4th scenario, which the security dilemma has a little or non-intensity and safe environment.

The situation has changed in the 21st century. There are many incidences in East and South China Sea disputes, the confronting of sea power, the changing of military policies in some countries, and the increasing of security expenditure.

Upon analyzing this situation, we assumed that the offensive and defensive behaviors in the East China Sea disputes are indistinguishable, because the types of fighter jets and ships that Japan and China used in 2013-2017,¹⁶ as well as in South China Sea. At this point it is still difficult for China to absolutely destroy the other's army and claim the territorial completely, so the defense still has advantage.

However, the offensive and defensive behaviors in East Asia cannot be distinguished after the disputes in China Sea in the 21st century, even though the defense has advantage. So, the situation has fallen to a 2nd scenario, with the intense security dilemma.

Thus, we can conclude that the current situation in East Asia shifted from a fourth scenario to a second scenario, which is from safety state and not intense security dilemma to the situation of intense security dilemma.

¹⁶ RJIF. "QUIET DETERRENCE: Building Japan's New National Security Strategy." Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation. July 2014.

3. Sea disputes in the East and Southeast regions

The previous section explained the security dilemma theory and offense-defense theory to help clearly describe the concept of arms racing in the East and Southeast Asian regions. In this section, the brief history of conflict events is described in through the main disputes, threats, and tensions in the region.

3.1. The East China Sea dispute

There have been disputes between China and Japan over the extent of their respective exclusive economic zones in the East China Sea, which is an important economic zone that contains gas fields (e.g., the Chunxiao gas field).¹⁷ No country wants to pull back and forfeit such a valuable resource.

The East China Sea dispute began in 1895. However, Japan seriously accused China of unilaterally drilling in 2008 just after they had signed an agreement on developing a “mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests”.¹⁸ The accusation was considered to be even more serious, since it happened right after both countries had decided to achieve peaceful coexistence under a joint statement; however, not long after the statement, the conflict arose once again after China began

¹⁷ Rabena, Aaron Jed. "The Security Dilemma in East Asia." Eurasia review.

¹⁸ Nye, Joseph & Welch, David. 2014. Understanding global conflict & cooperation: intro to theory & history. Pearson Education, 289.

unilaterally drilling in the exclusive economic zones in the East China Sea. Another triggering event happened in 2010, when Japan detained the captain of a Chinese fisherman ship from the waters around the islands for 2 weeks. This angered China, and led to China stopping the export of rare earth to Japan, which is still its policy.¹⁹

After the Japanese security bill officially went into effect, in March 2016, Japan increased its military expenditures regarding the situation in the East China Sea dispute, which had been ongoing between Japan and China over territories in the East China Sea.²⁰ The Japanese government had received a warning from the Chinese government, which had registered the 2015 Japanese military legislation as an act of disrespect toward the constitution; this further increased the conflict between Japan and China.

China also planned to increase its military spending to 7 percent by 2017.²¹ China has increased its military expenditure annually and in 2016 had the second largest military budget in the world.²² The Chinese government has claimed that it needs to increase military spending because the situation in the East China Sea dispute has intensified, and the Japanese security bill made it worse.²³ In addition, the South China Sea dispute has also increased tensions in the region.

3.2. ASEAN and the South China Sea dispute

There are six nations fighting for complete rights over territories in the South China Sea: China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei. The South

¹⁹ Dingli, Shen. "China's Maritime Disputes." Council Foreign Relations.

²⁰ Breene, Keith. "South China Sea tensions: what you need to know" Weforum.

²¹ BBC. "China to Increase Military Spending by 7% in 2017." March 4, 2017.

²² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). "World military expenditure data report. (2017)."

²³ Johnson, Jesse. "Japan's Fighter Jet Scrambles Set New Record in 2016 amid Surging Chinese Military Activity." Japan Times. April 14, 2017.

China Sea dispute has been ongoing for many years. None of the nations that have claimed territorial rights over the South China Sea have enough power to compete with the Chinese military, which is the most powerful army in the region. Without outside meddling, such as when Japan and the U.S. indirectly supported Vietnam and the Philippines and used diplomacy to develop military ships and planes, operations in the region will be difficult. Even though the U.S. said that it has not taken a side in the South China Sea dispute, it has already sent military ships and aircrafts to operate in the problematic area.²⁴

The triggering event happened in 2012; there were a number of crashes between Vietnamese, Philippines, and Chinese maritime vessels over the control of the waters of the South China Sea.²⁵

The situation in the South China Sea is similar to the case of the East China Sea, which is an important economic zone that contains gas fields. This has led to high tensions and prolonged disputes regarding the South China Sea. RJIF claimed that in the South China Sea dispute, China was very aggressive when it claimed territorial rights over the sea, and no countries in Southeast Asia were able to retaliate.²⁶ The Philippines and Vietnam both have had a difficult time regarding the South China Sea dispute because both are inferior to China in economic and military power. China, by far, has the most powerful military in Northeast Asia as well as among all of East Asia.²³

²⁴ BBC. "Why Is the South China Sea Contentious?" July 12, 2016.

²⁵ Nye, Joseph & Welch, David. 2014. *Understanding global conflict & cooperation: intro to theory & history*. Pearson Education, 281

²⁶ RJIF. "QUIET DETERRENCE: Building Japan's New National Security Strategy." Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation. July 2014.

4. Military expenditure data

This section provides information on world military expenditures using data from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which is an international independent institution based in Sweden. SIPRI provides data on armaments on a global scale, and it is highly respected among researchers as a reliability resource.

In addition, the military data for the East China Sea dispute and the South China Sea dispute are believed to be the key events of the East and Southeast Asia security dilemma in the 21st century.

4.1. Military expenditure by country, 2016

This part focuses only on the military expenditures of Japan, China, the U.S., North Korea, South Korea, and the Philippines, as these countries either directly relate to the South China Sea dispute and the East China Sea dispute or are affected by East Asia's security dilemma.

Table 1 Military expenditure by country, in constant (2014) USD (millions), 2007-2015

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
US	635921	682967	737747	757992	748646	706082	650081	609914	595472
CH	<i>103716</i>	<i>113527</i>	<i>137401</i>	<i>144383</i>	<i>155898</i>	<i>169321</i>	<i>182930</i>	<i>199651</i>	<i>214485</i>
JPN	45954	45515	46364	46527	47161	46584	46380	45867	46346
N. Kor
S. Kor	29546	31479	33458	33730	34201	35070	36175	37286	38640
Phil	2839	2840	2731	2869	2916	2957	3362	3103	<i>3893</i>

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Worldwide Military Expenditures, 2016," https://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database

Notes: Figures are in millions of USD, at constant 2014 prices and exchange rates.

Numbers in Italic are SIPRI estimates.

“..” represents unavailable data.

Figure 2 Military expenditure by country (2006-2015)

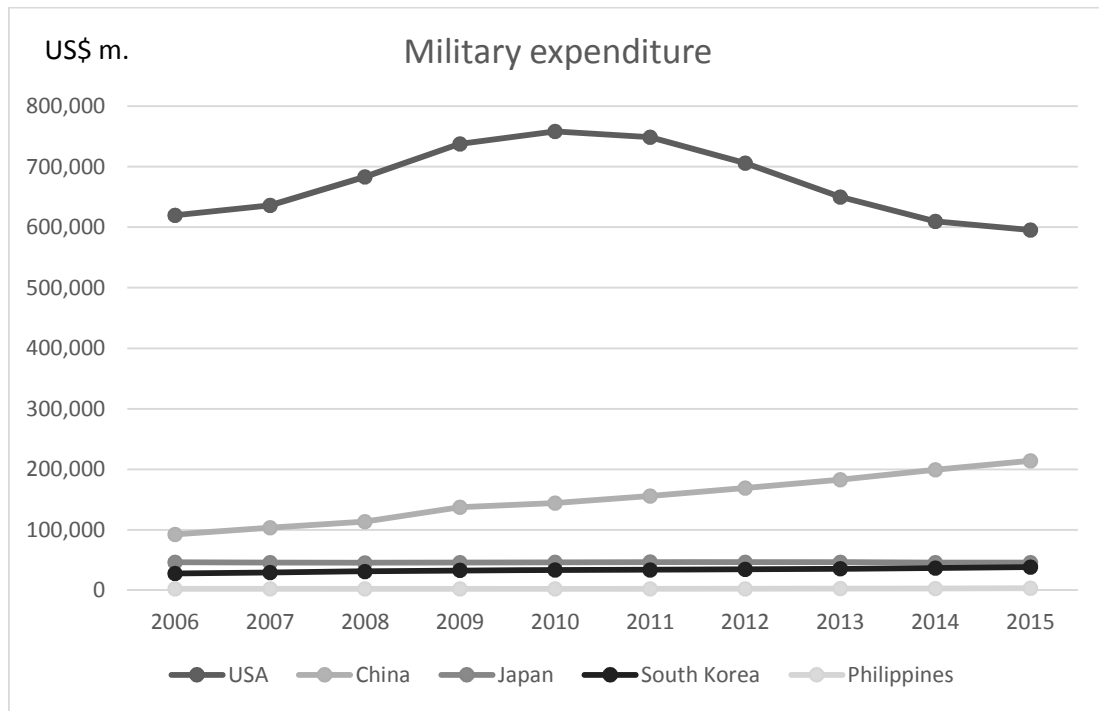


Table 2 and Figure 2 display the military spending of the six countries that are affected by the security dilemma in East Asia or are directly related to the South China Sea and East China Sea disputes. As we can see in Figure 2, there was a rapid increase in U.S. military expenditures during 2006-2010. However, the U.S. abruptly decreased their spending on military after 2010 and continuously decreased it in 2013 after Prime Minister Abe suggested a reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. The U.S. additionally cut its military expenditure in 2015.²⁷

²⁷ Friedman, Benjamin H. "A Plan to Cut Military Spending." Downsizing the Federal Government. August 1, 2017.

Figure 3 Military expenditure by country (East Asia)

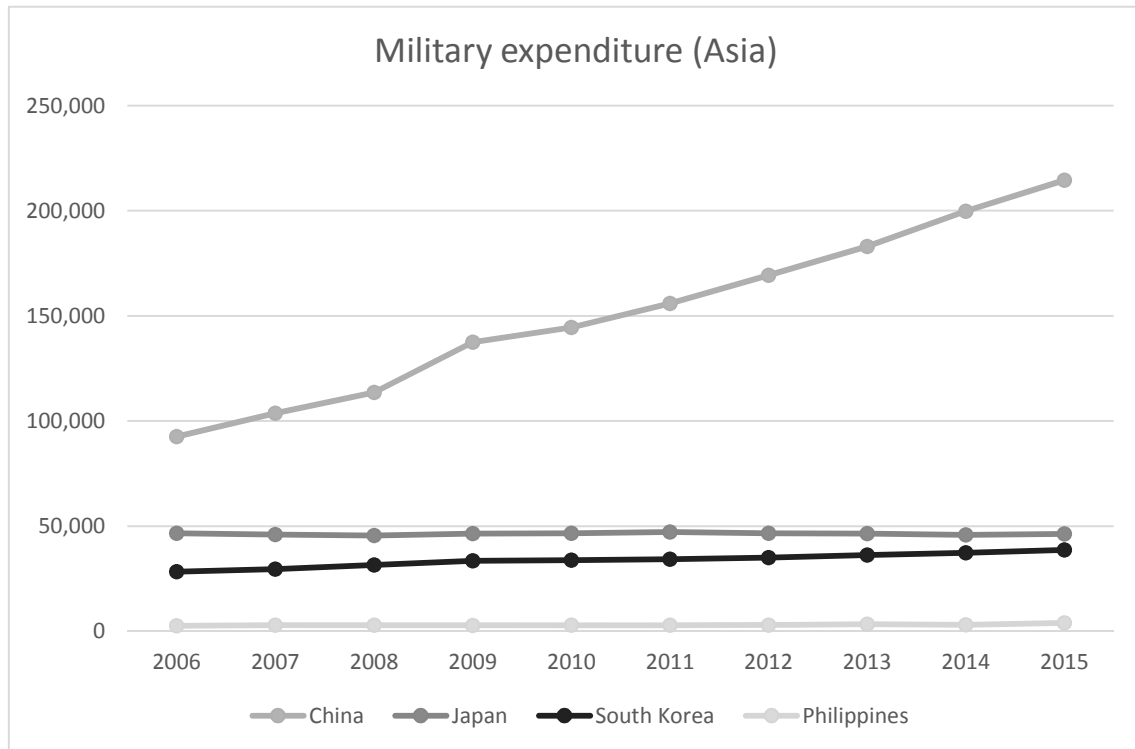


Figure 3 shows an overview of military expenditures, focusing only on Asia. It shows the annual increase in China's military expenditure. In general, China has seen a quite stable increase in military spending; however, the most steep incline of the chart for China depicts a focus on 2008-2009 events, which corresponds to a few important events in the East and South China Sea disputes, as described in section 3.1 (triggering events in the East China Sea) and the decline of U.S. troops in Asia.

The graph shows that the military expenditures of Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines both increased and decreased in the years between 2006 and 2015. Japan had a slight increase of military spending in 2015, after the Japanese government passed military legislation.

The data did not support the argument as Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines did not rapidly increase their military spending from 2006 to 2015. However, we cannot conclude, based on the data, that the other countries in Asia were not alarmed at either the Chinese military overpowering the region or the 2015 Japanese security bill. We can only determine that from 2006 to 2015, China rapidly increased its military spending. South Korea shows a small military spending increase, while Japan and the Philippines have slight ups and downs, and military expenditure increases with varying patterns. Therefore, we cannot assume anything only using the data from 2006 to 2015.

4.2 Military expenditure in the disputes

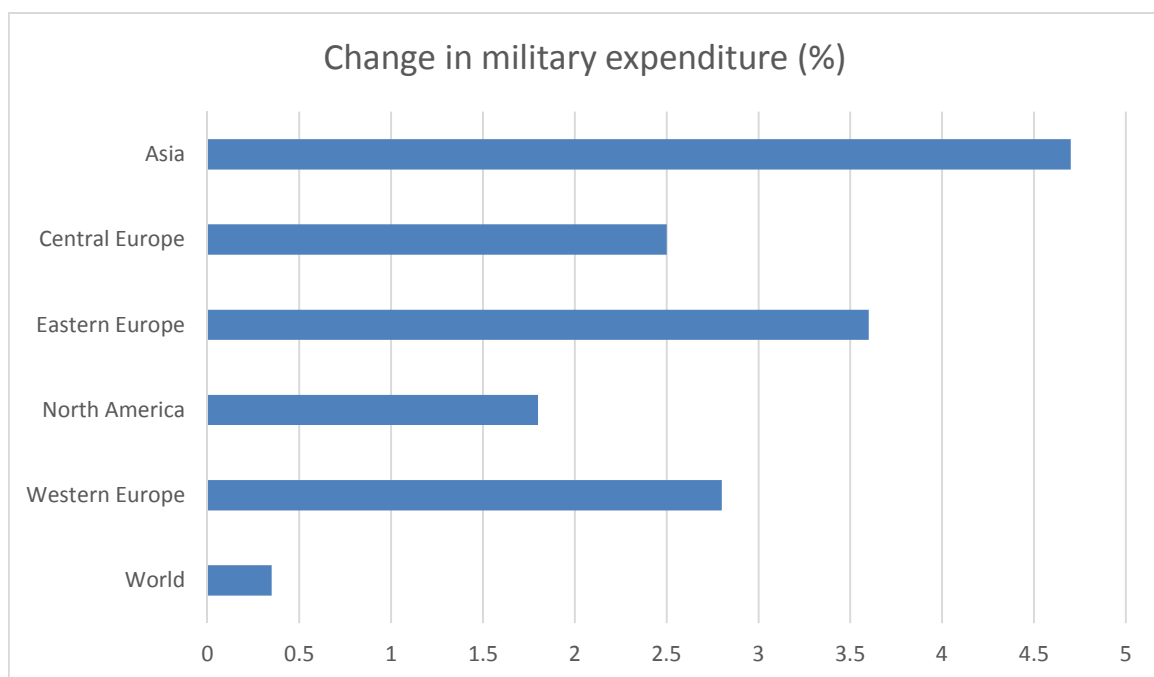
Military spending in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines varied from 2006 to 2015 and rapidly increased along with that of other countries in East Asia in 2016, the same time that the Japanese security bill officially went into effect.²⁸ SIPRI mentioned that the military spending of these countries rose because of the conflict and tension in Asia during previous years.

The military spending of China has continuously increased by year. China spends more on its military than any other Asian country and more than four times that of India, which has the second highest military expenditure in the region.

²⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), “Changes in Military Expenditure, 2015-16.”

Figure 4 shows that Asia and Oceania were the regions that spent the most on military force in 2016. According to SIPRI, Asia and Oceania increased their military expenditures from 2015 to 2016 by 4.6 percent.²⁹ East Asia increased its military expenditure from 2015 to 2016 by 4.3 percent, and Southeast Asia by 5.1 percent. There was an enormous 74 percent change in military expenditure in East Asia between 2007 and 2016. SIPRI also indicated that the Asian region elevated its military spending because of the disputes over territorial rights during the 2010s, which raised tensions in the region. Therefore, most of the nations in East Asia expanded their military spending in large numbers from 2015 to 2016, which is the same year that the Japanese security bill officially came into effect.

Figure 4 World military expenditure in 2016



Note. From the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Changes in Military Expenditure, 2015-16.”

²⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), “Changes in Military Expenditure, 2015-16.”

Table 2 Military expenditure in Asia and Oceania (SIPRI, 2016).

	Spending, 2016 (USD, billions)	Change (%)	
		2015-2016	2007-2016
Asia and Oceania	450	4.6	64
Central and South Asia	73.3	6.4	51
East Asia	308	4.3	74
Southeast Asia	41.9	5.1	47

Note. From the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Changes in Military Expenditure, by Region, 2015-16.”

Table 3 The 15 countries with the highest military expenditure in 2016 (SIPRI, 2016)

Rank			Spending, 2016 (USD, billions)	Change, 2007- 2016 (%)	World share, 2016 (%)	Spending as a share of GDP (%)	
Country	2015	2016				2007	2016
USA	1	1	611	-4.8	36	3.8	3.3
China	2	2	[215]	118	[13]	[1.9]	[1.9]
Russia	4	3	69.2	87	4.1	[3.4]	5.3
Japan	8	8	46.1	2.5	2.7	0.9	1.0
South Korea	10	10	36.8	35	2.2	2.5	2.7

([] = SIPRI estimate, GDP = gross domestic product)

Note. From the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Changes in Military Expenditure, by Country, 2015-16.”

Figures 4 and Table 3 do not specify data for Japan’s, South Korea’s, and the Philippines’s military spending in 2016. However, if we look at Table 4, it is apparent that China, Japan, and South Korea are in the top 15 military spenders on the 2016 list. From 2007 to 2016, China increased its military spending by 118 percent. South Korea increased its military spending by 35 percent from 2007 to 2016, while Japan increased

expenditure by 2.5 percent. Japan may not seem to show much of an increase in military expenditure compared to China and Korea, but it is important to remember that the Japanese Constitution has limited the Japanese military in past years.³⁰ The constitution limited the power of the JSDF before its reinterpretation and the JSDF was only recently allowed to expand its military power and intervene overseas after 2015. Therefore, the 2.5 percent increase represents a significant amount.

By looking at the above data of Asia and Oceania military expenditures, which have been increasing through 2016, we can see that some countries in East Asia have continuously increased their military spending annually; the most notable example of this is China.

The data in this section can be used to support the intense analysis of the East and Southeast Asian region in the 21st century using the offense-defense theory, which was explained in section 2.2.

³⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), “Changes in Military Expenditure, 2015-16.”

5. Data analysis and perceptions

It is clear after we look at the data in chapter 4 (figure 2,3,4) that the other countries in East Asia and Southeast Asia started increasing their military budget after China significantly increased its. We can assume that if we can determine the key event for the expansion of military spending in China, we will be able to determine when the security dilemma in East Asia elevated from “not intense” to “intense”.

The main incident that activated the security dilemma in the region was the East China Sea event that started around 2008-2009. This was made up of disputes between China and Japan, both don't want to retreat and forfeit such valuable resources.

The East China Sea dispute began in 1972. The conflict seemed to cool down after China and Japan signed an agreement for peaceful coexistence in 2008.³¹ However, the conflict started again that very same year when China unilaterally began drilling in the exclusive economic zone of the Chunxiao gas field in the East China Sea. There was a subsequent Anti-China campaign in Hanoi in 2008,³² and the Philippines began to show more aggression toward the overpowering nature of China in the South China Sea areas.³³

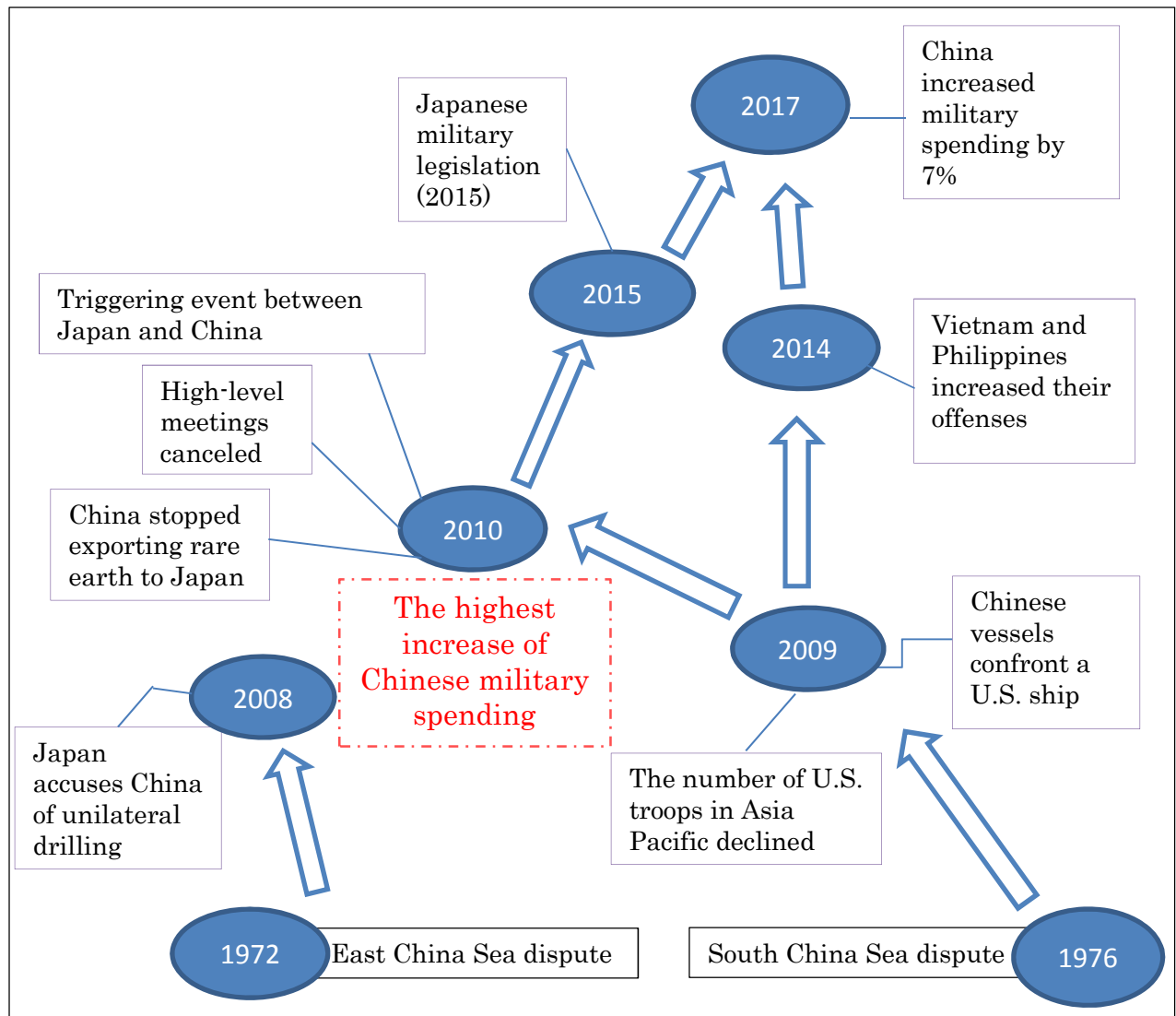
ASEAN also increased its ownership above waters after the decline of U.S. troops in the region, and Japan accumulated defensive and offensive powers in 2009-2010. When comparing table 2 with the data in figure 4, we can see that the rapid increase in Chinese military spending conforms to the related events of the East China Sea dispute.

³¹ Nye, Joseph & Welch, David. 2014. *Understanding global conflict & cooperation: intro to theory & history*. Pearson Education, 289-290.

³² Nye, Joseph & Welch, David, 282.

³³ Dingli, Shen. "China's Maritime Disputes." Council Foreign Relations. Accessed May 28, 2018.

Figure 5 Changes in security complex focusing on the East China Sea and South China
Sea disputes



Using world military expenditures, and focusing on East Asian militaries, we can measure the offense-defense balance; this shows that the countries in East Asia are increasing their military budget, which has escalated the security dilemma in East Asia.

China increased its aggressive actions after the U.S. decreased its number of troops in Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN.³⁴ The situation in the East and South China Sea intensified after those countries lost the protection of the U.S.

In addition, China has very stable economic interdependence since 1990s. In 2014, when the Philippines and Vietnam showed strong opposition to the conflict with China on the South China Sea dispute, even though both countries count China as their biggest trade partner, their opposition did not necessarily concern the Chinese government.³⁵

China insists on raising its military expenditures even though there is remonstrance from neighboring countries, because other countries in East and Southeast Asia lack commitment to China.³⁶ China is not as hostile to its neighboring countries because it knows that the U.S. and other countries cannot do much to stop their increase in arms.

³⁴ Price, Greg. "U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN ASIA: TROOPS STATIONED IN JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA AND BEYOND." *Newsweek*. April 26, 2017.

³⁵ Rosenfeld, Everett. "South China Sea: Is Beijing Making a New 'strategic Strait'?" *CNBC*, April 6, 2016.

³⁶ RJIF. "QUIET DETERRENCE: Building Japan's New National Security Strategy." *Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation*. July 2014.

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