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**The Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute:
An analysis of Japan and China's security and defense policies
using explicit Bayesian process tracing**

THESES (PhD)

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Chapter 1: Introduction, themes and thematic framework of the Dissertation

An important element of today's global foreign and security policy challenges is the growing geopolitical importance of East Asia. The relative economic, social, and political weight of the region is becoming increasingly dominant, while at the same time there are growing sources of tension. Examples include the conflict between China and Taiwan and the South China Sea rivalry. The aim of this dissertation is to explore the mechanisms of escalation in this context, with the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute as the chosen case study.

Within the theoretical framework of escalation and deterrence, the research seeks to answer why the island dispute did not escalate to the level of military conflict. In this context, the analysis puts forward four alternative hypotheses - synthesizing ideas from the literature - and uses explicit Bayesian process tracing as a research methodology to establish their potential to explain the situation. In doing so, it draws on qualitative information sets as well as relevant statistical databases and the results of independently conducted measurements to quantify military equipment fleets and capability systems. The research aims to identify the factors stabilizing the tension envelope and to understand regional conflicts in a changing security environment.

Research questions and hypotheses:

The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of China and Japan's security and defense policies after 1989. In this context, the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute emerges as a prominent point of conflict and the thesis presents its background and development. I have formulated the research question the following way:

- **Why didn't the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute escalate to the level of a military force conflict with territorial acquisition between 1996 and 2022, even with considerable grey-zone confrontation?**

In academic and policy discourse, there are several approaches to presenting causal mechanisms for tensions and escalation potential. These may partly explain some elements of the research question, but no explicitly targeted academic research has been carried out so far, neither in Hungarian nor in the international literature, to consider the various possible

explanations. The research puts forward four hypotheses, synthesizing some remarks put forward in Hungarian and international literature:

- **H₁: China faces a military deterrent in the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. The scale of Japan's defensive capabilities, when weighed against the balance of forces, prevents China from developing the superiority of force necessary for offensive operations to capture and hold the islands.¹**
- **H₂: China is not affected by military deterrence in the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. In Chinese calculations, the international economic and diplomatic consequences of a possible local military conflict are of primary importance.²**
- **H₃: China faces a military deterrent in the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. However, it is not Japan's defense capabilities, but the US defense guarantee.³**
- **H₄: China is not affected by military deterrence in the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. However, the occupation of the islands is a lower priority than an invasion of Taiwan, so the Chinese leadership is likely to make military action on this issue contingent on a conflict in Taiwan .⁴**

The timeframe of the analysis is from 1996 to 2022, a period in which the island dispute and the security developments in the region have changed considerably. The research methodology of the thesis is based on the method of explicit Bayesian process tracing. This expresses the explanatory potential of hypotheses as mathematical probability values ("P"). Bayesian process tracing builds on the Bayesian foundations of inferential statistics. It

¹ That the military strength of the other party in the dispute is a deterrent seems a logical response at the level of an abstract abstraction, devoid of knowledge of capabilities. A search for the word deterrence (抑止) in the publications of the Japanese Ministry of Defense yields more than 7,000 hits, most of them either strategic documents or treatises on military theory dealing with China and Japan's deterrence capabilities and any necessary changes (see, for example, 平田英俊, 山下愛仁. "包括的抑止戦略の必要性と防衛力整備のあり方について." *エア・アンド・スペース・パワー研究* 7 (2021): 74-91.

² A common topos in the theoretical framework of international studies and security studies is the escalation-reducing nature of economic mechanisms. The second most frequently cited factor in the relevant domestic academic literature in relation to mitigating escalation of territorial disputes in China is

³ In the relevant literature, the most frequently cited factor in mitigating the escalation of territorial disputes in China is

⁴ In the Japanese security policy community, this idea is an existing and, for some experts, convincing argument. Its logic is essentially based on the fact that it outlines a sequence, that after the seizure of Taiwan, it expects China to launch further offensives, with the first target being the Senkaku Islands, followed by Okinawa, and thus disabling Japan as a regional challenger and ally hosting US bases. The most frequently quoted Japanese security policy expert on this position is Onoda Osamu v.ezd. (ny.), see 小野田 治. [地政学的要衝研究会 - 中国は台湾を武力侵攻するか](#); also in this conclusion, security policy experts who have also published in English, after analysing Chinese social media and available strategic discourse, Zeng, Jennifer. [Unifying Taiwan Begins with the Senkakus](#)

interprets the probability of each hypothesis by expressing a prior probability "expectation" (P_{prior}) and updating this prior probability with the results of the research ($P_{\text{E|I}}$). Using Bayes' theorem the prior probability is weighed against the probability value based on examining the evidence found during the research/experiment.⁵ With this calculation, the combined probability – P_{priors} and $P_{\text{E|I}}$ – is expressed as the "posterior" distribution of explanatory potential amongst the competing hypotheses ($P_{\text{posterior}}$).

Structural overview of the thesis

To consider the explanatory power of the hypotheses, I will implement the necessary findings in the framework of four larger logical units. The first chapter of the dissertation contains the introduction and the justification of the topic. The second chapter presents the scientific problem, the research question, the hypotheses, and the methodology of the analysis carried out in the research. The third chapter reviews the research problem itself, Sino-Japanese relations, the theoretical narratives of escalation in the East Asian region, and the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. In the fourth chapter, I detail the evolution of the PRC's defense policy from the beginning of the post-bipolar era to the present. I discuss China's declared threat perceptions, as well as changes in the capabilities of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in recent decades. I then summarize regional responses to China's changing military capabilities and conclude by situating the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands issue within the overall context of China's geostrategic aspirations.

In the fifth chapter, I describe the evolution of Japan's security and defense policy from 1989 to the present, along the lines of the previous aspects. I also discuss the basic principles and threat perceptions of Japanese security policy. I will then describe the evolution of the capabilities of the Japan Self-Defense Forces over the past three decades or so, along similar lines. I will also discuss Japan-US defense cooperation and Japan's strategic deterrence objectives for the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.

In chapter six, I examine the relative advocacy capacities of China and Japan along four different perspectives. First, the macro of $Gdp \times GDP/capita$ as outlined by Beckley's 2018 methodology. Then, I present power metrics expressing composite capabilities (CINC, Lowy

⁵ Thomas Bayes was an 18th century British mathematician and Protestant clergyman. His work contributed significantly to the foundations of statistical mathematics, and his best-known thesis is the "Bayes theorem" ($P(A | B) = P(B | A) \times P(A) : P(B)$), i.e. the probability of an event (A) given prior knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the event (B).

index, GFPI). Then I will describe methods for expressing specifically naval capability systems in indicators. Finally, I will compare the balance of power between Japan and China by comparing the ratios of a common indicator of naval strike capability, the "*Battle Force Missile*" indicator.

In the last chapter, I carry out an explicit Bayesian analysis. For this purpose, I organize the background knowledge ("*Inference*" $I - I_{1n}$) and findings/"evidence" ("*Evidence*" $E - E_{1n}$) necessary for the implementation of the methodology in a list-like manner from Chapters 3-6. In a matrix, I examine the proportion and weight of evidence supporting each hypothesis, indicating which hypothesis is likely to have the highest explanatory power for deterrence mechanisms.

Literature overview

The dissertation examines the international relations, history and theoretical narratives of East Asian international relations based on the international and Hungarian literature on international studies and security policy. The sources, in addition to academic monographs and journal articles, include official government publications, defense white papers and *The Military Balance* Yearbooks of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, which provided the database for the quantitative analysis.

The relevant international academic and policy literature has long addressed important aspects of both Chinese and Japanese defense policy. The domestic literature has mainly focused on the topic since the second half of the 2010s. In addition to clarifying the research questions, the paper also seeks to make a knowledge-summarizing effort on a topic that has been relatively less researched in Hungarian.

Chapter 2: Theoretical and methodological framework

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis. I review the theoretical underpinnings of regional security complexes and present the regional security sub-complex of Northeast Asia. I summarize the main findings of the academic literature on the concepts of escalation and deterrence. Finally, I will present the research methodology used in this study, explicit Bayesian process tracing, describing the proprietary protocol developed for this research.

The East Asian regional security complex, theoretical frameworks of escalation and deterrence

East Asia is now an important focal point for the global economy and geopolitics. The region is a significant part of the world's productive capacity and one of the largest territorial centers of the global demographic distribution. China and Japan are the economic and technological leaders of the region. Security tensions here, particularly rivalries between Chinese and regional powers, not only affect the region but also have implications for global stability. The US military presence plays a key role in the stability of the region and the "hub and spoke" alliance system is linked to both the Northeast Asian and Southeast Asian security complexes. East Asia is a region rife with territorial disputes, in particular the South China Sea and the East China Sea Island disputes pose significant escalation risks. Relations between Taiwan and China have long been a source of tension and have escalated significantly in recent years. The divisions on the Korean peninsula and North Korea's nuclear weapons program pose significant challenges to stability in the region, and the United States has an important role to play in regional security. In addition, there are several other challenges in East Asia, such as religious-ethnic tensions, political instability, environmental problems, economic challenges, and demographic issues, which are further factors affecting the security and stability of the region.

Two important concepts of strategic theory, *escalation*, and *deterrence*, are relevant to this thesis. Both are characterized by the fact that they arise mainly, but not exclusively, in the context of great power confrontation and nuclear weapons issues. Escalation in the present context refers to the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute and refers to the acquisition of territory by military means and a potential conflict arising from it. As *this did not take place* during the period under review, the research aims to explore the possible reasons for this.

In the context of deterrence, we can distinguish between *deterrence by punishment* and *deterrence by denial*. The aim of this dissertation is to explore to what extent either retributive or success-denying deterrence mechanisms may have played a role in the absence of escalation.

The methodology used in the research

The main objective of this thesis is to examine the escalation of the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute, with a special focus on the role of deterrence factors. Based on the available

knowledge, these islands are of high geopolitical importance for China, with natural resources, symbolic importance, and strategic location. It can also be argued that China has made claims to occupy the islands but has not done so during the period under review. Deterrence factors have effectively dissuaded China from military intervention.

In the analysis, I formulated hypotheses (H_1, H_2, H_3, H_4) that could be interpreted as answers to the research question, synthesizing the partial explanations most commonly found in the literature. Based on their representation in the literature, I expressed the prior hypothesized explanatory power (probability, P) of the hypotheses H_1-H_4 , thus generating the values of P_{prior} .

To explore the problem, I have examined two case studies, China's security and defense policy from 1989 to 2022 and Japan's security and defense policy over the same period. In the third stage, I identified the quantifiable capabilities of the two sides in terms of economic potential, composite power metric indicators, naval aggregate indicator, and naval firepower. Since not all these indicators were available in databases, I used the known data to make the necessary measurements for the indicators.

From these case studies, as well as from the power metric measurements and aggregations, I have highlighted the insights that may be relevant to one or more of the hypotheses. Where these merely confirm the relevance of a hypothesis but do not support/disprove any, I have expressed them as "inferences" ("I") values, following the protocols of the methodological literature. Where they can be considered as logically supporting/refuting the hypotheses, I expressed them as "*evidence*" ("E") according to the protocols of the methodological literature. Using a scaling of the literature protocols most applicable to the research, I expressed the explanatory power of each E item in relation to the four hypotheses as quantified values adapted to the research question. I then summed these values to express the distribution of explanatory power between each hypothesis in the study (P). $E|I$

Bayesian process fitting incorporates these results into the Bayes theorem. The multiplication of the P_{prior} and $P_{E|I}$ values, and the ratio of each hypothesis to the other hypotheses, yields the final $P_{\text{posterior}}$ probability distributions:

$$\frac{P_{\text{posterior}H1}}{P_{\text{posterior}H2} + P_{\text{posterior}H3} + P_{\text{posterior}H4}} = \frac{P_{\text{prior}H1}}{P_{\text{prior}H2} + P_{\text{prior}H3} + P_{\text{prior}H4}} \times \frac{P(H1|EI)}{P(H2|EI) + P(H3|EI) + P(H4|EI)}$$

$$\frac{P_{\text{posterior}H2}}{P_{\text{posterior}H1} + P_{\text{posterior}H3} + P_{\text{posterior}H4}} = \frac{P_{\text{prior}H2}}{P_{\text{prior}H1} + P_{\text{prior}H3} + P_{\text{prior}H4}} \times \frac{P(H2|EI)}{P(H1|EI) + P(H3|EI) + P(H4|EI)}$$

$$\frac{P_{\text{posterior}H3}}{P_{\text{posterior}H1} + P_{\text{posterior}H2} + P_{\text{posterior}H4}} = \frac{P_{\text{prior}H3}}{P_{\text{prior}H1} + P_{\text{prior}H2} + P_{\text{prior}H4}} \times \frac{P(H3|EI)}{P(H1|EI) + P(H2|EI) + P(H4|EI)}$$

$$\frac{P_{\text{posterior}H4}}{P_{\text{posterior}H1} + P_{\text{posterior}H2} + P_{\text{posterior}H3}} = \frac{P_{\text{prior}H4}}{P_{\text{prior}H1} + P_{\text{prior}H2} + P_{\text{prior}H3}} \times \frac{P(H4|EI)}{P(H1|EI) + P(H2|EI) + P(H3|EI)}$$

Chapter 3: The research problem

In this section of the thesis, I present the problem under research. I will give a historical overview and describe the current developments in Japan-China relations. I will then examine key issues of regional and great power escalation, placing the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute within this framework. Finally, I detail the chronology and processes of the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute and the incidents surrounding it.

Dynamics of the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute

The Senkaku/Diaoyu islands consists of five uninhabited islands and three major reefs, located between Okinawa and Taiwan. It is currently under the *de facto* sovereignty of Japan. At the heart of the dispute are Chinese - and Taiwanese - claims based on historical references, while Japan claims that the islands were uninhabited before the Japanese Empire claimed them. Since the 2010s, the dispute has been exacerbated by events that have challenged Japanese sovereignty, such as the demonstrative presence of Taiwanese and Chinese activists around the islands, clashes between fishing boats, and even the imposition of a Chinese airspace control zone. Tensions have escalated to the point where diplomatic crises between Japan and China, trade disputes between the two countries, and the Japanese side has alleged that Chinese naval units have targeted Japanese units in international waters with their fire control locators - which Japan now considers a military attack.

The United States has reaffirmed its alliance commitment to Japan in the island dispute, under which the US side would even participate as a belligerent in any escalation.

Japanese authorities and self-defense forces are actively monitoring and controlling the area around the islands to avoid potential incidents. The case could also have global economic implications, as both China and Japan are important trading partners in the world economy.

The latest significant development in the island dispute at the time of writing is that in January 2021, China implemented a law amendment authorising the Chinese coastguard to

use armed coercion against trespassers in Chinese waters. This change has significant escalatory potential in the Senkaku Islands, although to our knowledge it has not yet been applied.

Chapter 4: The security and defense policy of the People's Republic of China 1989-2022

In Chapter 4 of this thesis, I will conduct a case study review of China. I present the main security policy principles of the People's Republic of China. I will then present qualitatively (historical overview) and quantitatively the main features of Chinese defense policy between 1989 and 2022. I will explore the regional responses to Chinese force development in recent years. Finally, I examine the relevance of the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute for Chinese security and defense policy.

China's security policy principles, threat perceptions and strategic ambitions

In its strategic documents, China consistently communicates the principle of "active defense" in its defense policy. The narratives of its doctrines are based on self-defense. Deterrence and prevention of war also play an important role in the Chinese leadership's pseudo-defense policy, especially in terms of regional stability.

Military - mainly naval - force projection in China is on a steady development path, both in terms of capabilities and state communication on defense policy. The strategy of "deterrence" through the development of military missile forces and the accumulation of a fleet of assets is a typical trend of the 1990s. In the 2000s, this was followed by the formulation of an "active defense" strategy, preparations for winning local conflicts and naval warfare. In addition, China has emphasized the importance of information warfare and joint military cooperation in its defense documents.

China's global interests include increasing its military power in the Pacific, especially to secure sea routes. However, the narratives of its strategic documents remain committed to the strategic principles of 'active defense', avoiding unconventional conflict and relying instead on the growth of power in the region resulting from its economic development. The

consideration of forces and the likely future deployment of forces in the Pacific is at the core of the long-term strategy, in the sense of Chinese strategic communication, preferably without relying on unilateral military confrontation.

Changes in Chinese defense capabilities

In this chapter, I describe the qualitative and quantitative changes in China's defense policy between 1989 and 2022. During this period, China has made extensive defense developments that have transformed the structure of its armed forces, making the force, which was only a territorial defense force at the beginning of the post-bipolar era, a force with significant force generation potential.

In this case study, I have compiled several datasets from the Military Balance databases that show qualitative and quantitative changes in the Chinese armed forces. The most important of these are the figures below:

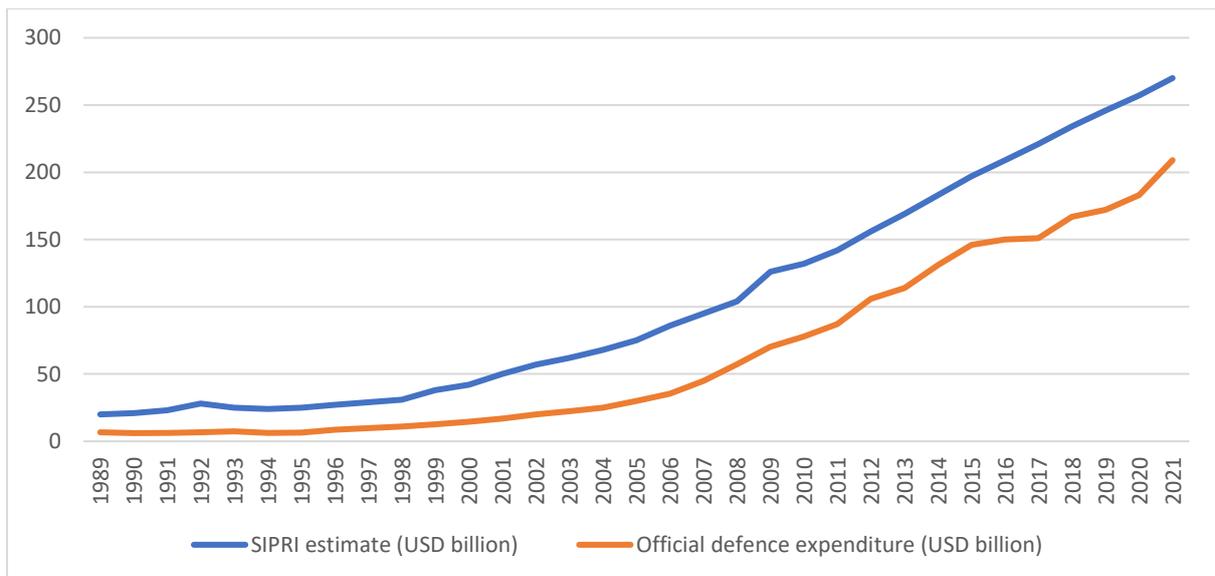
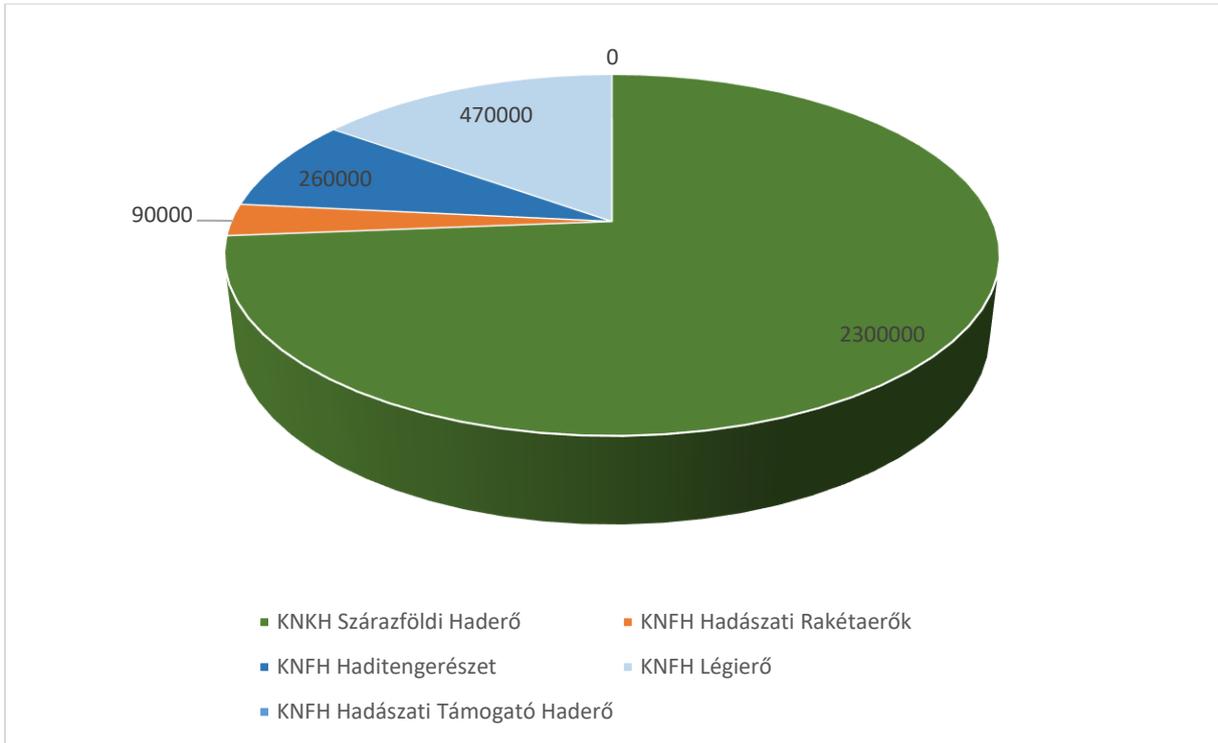
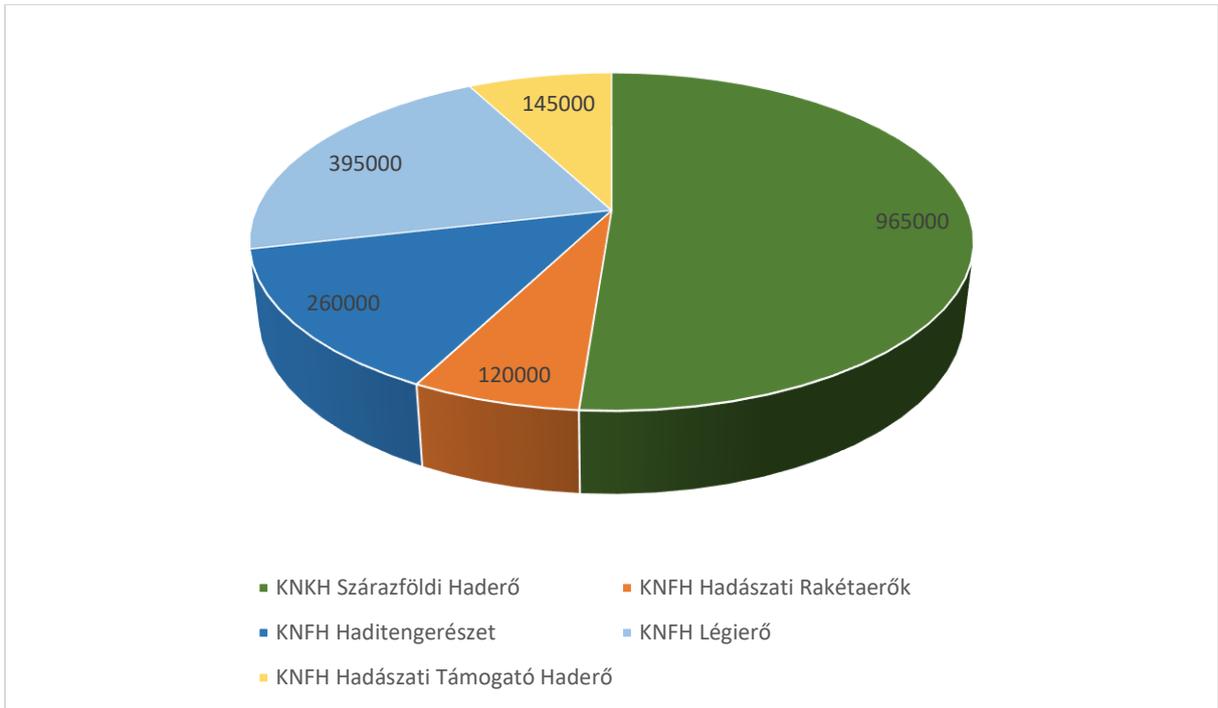


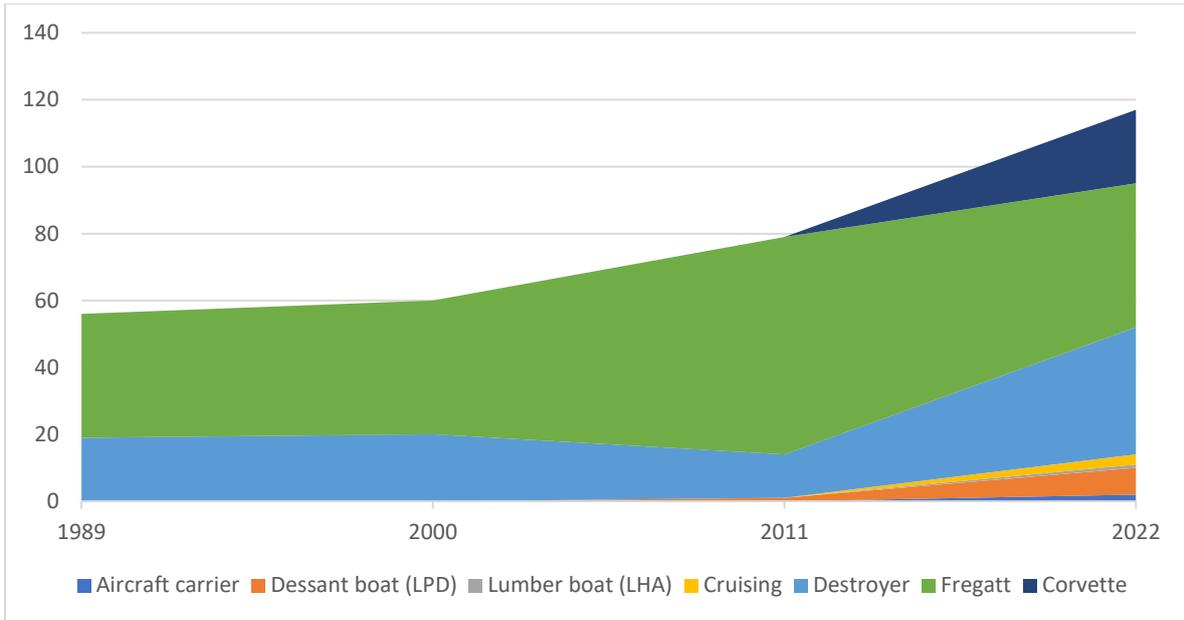
FIGURE 3: PRC DEFENSE EXPENDITURE 1989-2021, BASED ON OFFICIALLY REPORTED DATA AND SIPRI ESTIMATES; OWN ED., DATA SOURCE: SIPRI



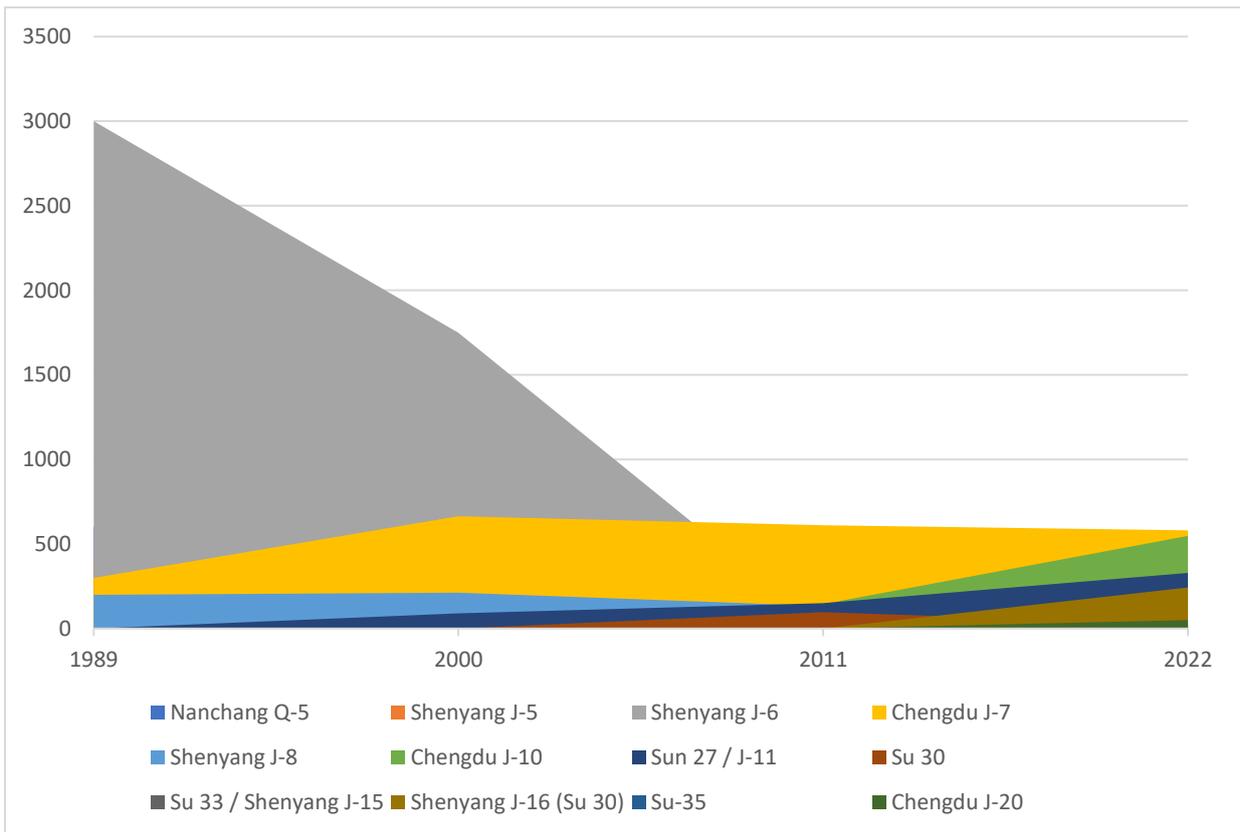
1 FIGURE 1: KNFH PERSONNEL BY ARMED FORCES 1989; OWN ED., DATA SOURCE: IISS MILITARY BALANCE 1989



2 FIGURE 1: KNFH PERSONNEL BY FORCE TYPE 2022; OWN ED., DATA SOURCE: IISS MILITARY BALANCE 2022



3FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF THE MAIN SURFACE NAVAL UNITS OF THE KNFH NAVY BY SHIP CLASS 1989, 2000, 2011, 2022; OWN EDITING, DATA SOURCE: IISS MILITARY BALANCE



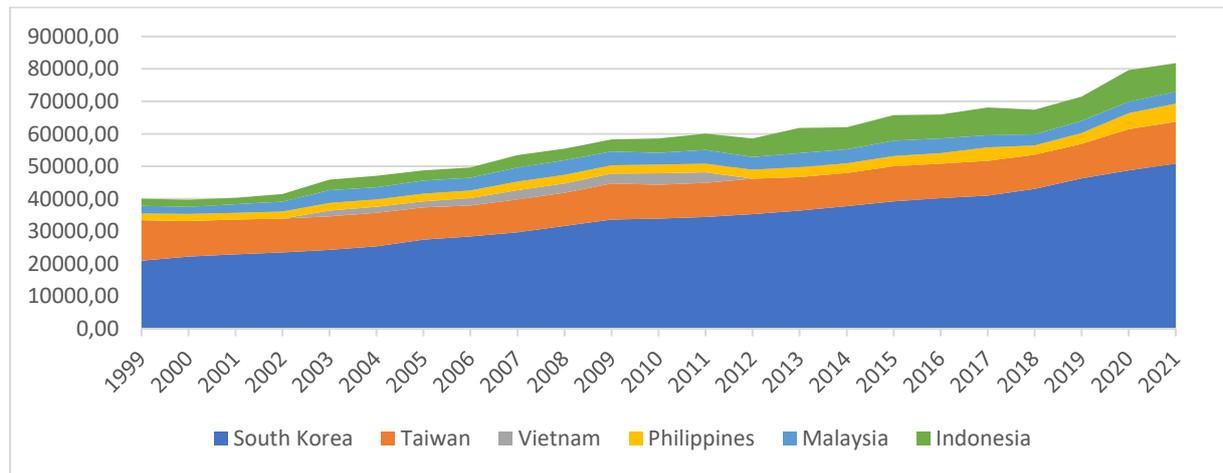
4FIGURE 1: THE FIGHTER AIRCRAFT FLEET OF THE KNFH (AIR FORCE AND NAVY COMBINED) 1989, 2000, 2011, 2022; OWN EDITING, DATA SOURCE: IISS MILITARY BALANCE

Regional responses to China's growing military capabilities

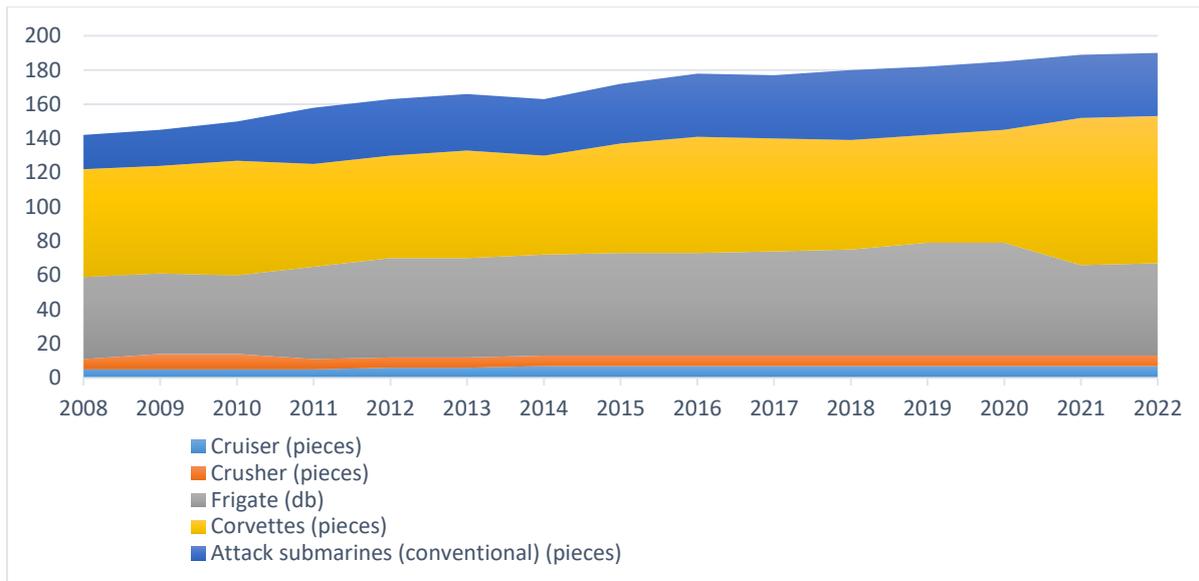
In this subsection, I will examine the regional responses to China's arms program in East Asia. For this, I have chosen as a sample country that have maritime territorial disputes with China and Taiwan, which perceives China as an existential threat.

Based on the Military Balance databases, I will examine whether there have been significant, reactive defense policy developments that, taken as a whole, could challenge the naval operational space in terms of Chinese ambitions. Overall, the data show that system-level regional development programs have led to an increase in China's military capabilities.

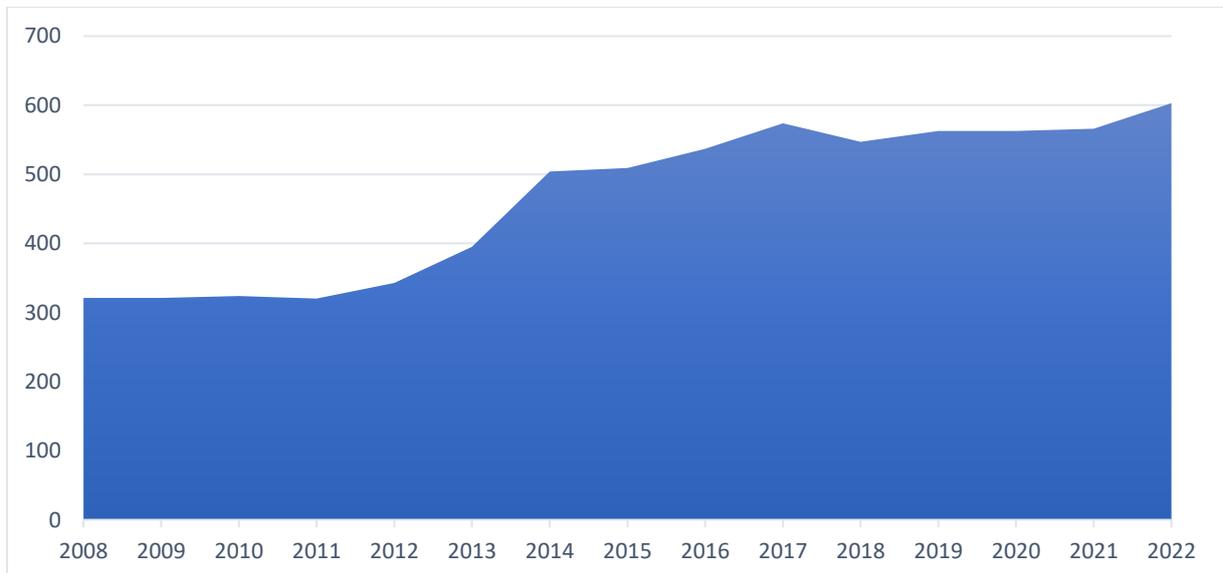
Based on the data, I have produced a number of summary graphs, the most important of which are:



5 DEFENSE EXPENDITURE 1999 - 2019 , USD MILLION; OWN ED., DATA SOURCE: SIPRI



6FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF MAJOR SURFACE COMBATANTS AND ATTACK SUBMARINES FROM 2008 TO 2022; OWN ED., DATA SOURCE: IISS MILITARY BALANCE



7FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF COASTGUARD UNITS IN THE COUNTRIES SURVEYED BETWEEN 2008 AND 2022, OWN EDITING, DATA SOURCE: IISS MILITARY BALANCE

The role of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in China's security policy

The Senkaku/Diaoyu islands are of particular importance to China's political leadership, as they are closely linked to the narrative of the legitimacy of Chinese political power, and their reclamation could symbolise the end of a century of humiliation - a "do-over". These territories are also strategically important, especially because of their proximity to Taiwan.

The narratives of the Chinese media and political leadership reinforce the social engagement with the islands, which has also created growing pressure in Chinese public opinion for a vocal stance on the island dispute in recent decades.

Economic considerations also play a role, as the islands are rich in energy resources and important fishing waters. For China, energy imports and food supply are key, which can provide an economic incentive.

The logical process of the escalation potential of the islands was represented and analysed using a DAG diagram. This includes political intent, policy choice, international context, military capabilities, economic interests and social pressures, as well as deterrence factors. Based on these factors, calculations of success and risk in Chinese policy and strategy may play a crucial role in the escalation process.

5. Japan's security and defense policy 1989-2022:

In Chapter 5, I will provide a case study overview of Japan for the research. I present the foreign and security policy aspects of Japanese political developments and the most important features of the country's security policy. I will then examine Japan's defense policy from 1989 to 2022 and Japan-US alliance cooperation from a qualitative (historical overview) and quantitative perspective. Finally, I will discuss the role of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the island nation's security and defense policy.

Japan's security policy principles, threat perceptions and strategic ambitions

After the World War, Japan was dominated by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which formed coalitions of centrist and conservative political forces. In 1993, an opposition coalition government came to power for the first time, but in 1996 the LDP regained control of government. The Kōmeitō, linked to the Buddhist Sōka Gakkai, was a traditional coalition partner, while the left-wing Democratic Party (DPJ) was periodically the leading opposition force.

Japan's defense policy was mostly determined by the LDP-led governments, thanks to their essentially governmental "autocracy". Under DPJ rule, there was a re-evaluation of certain aspects and the possibility of a reinterpretation of the US alliance, but these remained

more at the rhetorical level, and negative public opinion led to the LDP regaining power in 2012.

Japan's defense policy is rooted in its geographical location and its trade dependence, as a country with scarce natural resources that relies on international trade and its sea routes for the supplies it needs, especially in energy. Consequently, Japan has a fundamental interest in access to the global commons. This strategic approach is enshrined in its National Security Strategy and Defense White Papers.

After the Second World War, Japan relied primarily on the US alliance for its defense under the Yoshida Doctrine, renouncing in its constitution the right to go to war and initially maintaining only the minimum military force necessary for self-defense.

Defense policy remained basically unchanged until the 1980s, but during this decade, particularly under the premiership of Nakasone Yasuhiro, US defense cooperation was strengthened, defense capabilities were significantly improved and constitutional change was mooted. In the post-Cold War period, the focus shifted to China's growing military potential, which significantly transformed Japan's defense policy and international engagement.

Japan also faces additional security challenges, such as North Korea's WMD programme, the territorial dispute with Russia, and challenges related to non-state actors, such as piracy along international transport routes. However, most of these do not commit significant defense capabilities. In recent decades, much of Japan's defense capabilities have been concentrated in the southern sector, with a particular focus on the defense of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.

Changes in Japanese defense capabilities

In this chapter I describe the qualitative and quantitative changes in Japan's defense policy between 1989 and 2022. During this period, the island nation sought to maintain the qualitative advantage of its small armed forces through continuous development, the introduction of new types and continuous modernisation. A significant shift in focus towards naval and air power and force generation is evident. By the 2020s, the focus of Japanese defense capabilities will shift to the southern areas of the island nation, with a specific focus on naval and amphibious operations. In Japanese defense documents, the concept of "response to attack against distant islands" is the term used to describe the set of operational concepts that the island nation uses to formulate its doctrines, which are largely interpreted as applying to the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

In this case study, I have compiled a number of datasets from the Military Balance databases that show qualitative and quantitative changes in the Chinese armed forces. The most important of these are the figures below:

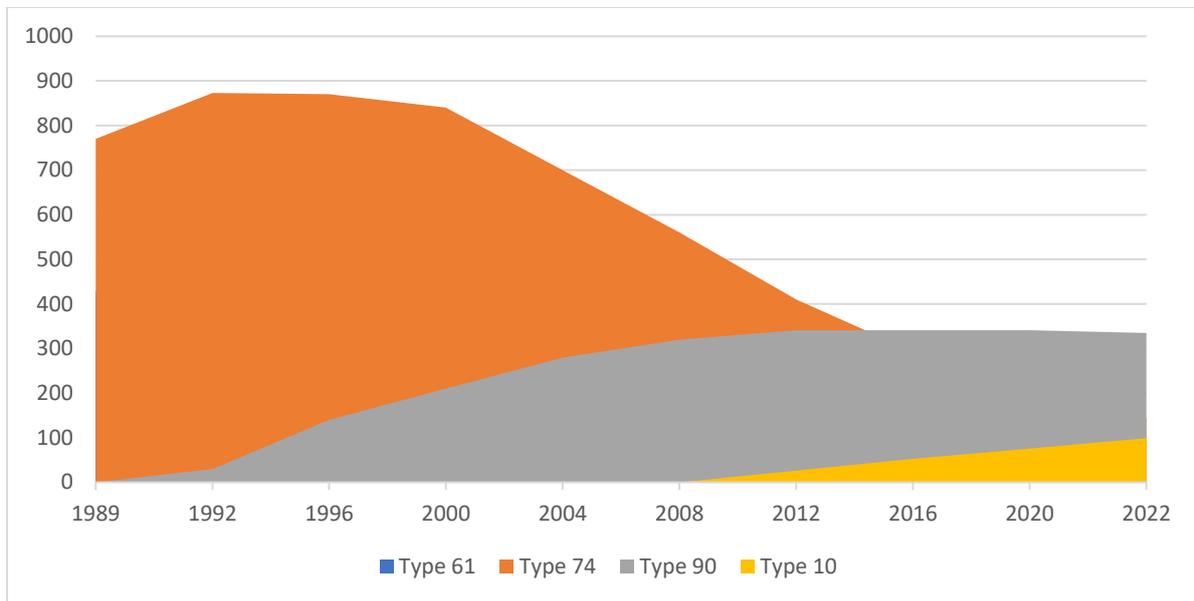


FIGURE 1: THE LAND SELF-DEFENSE FORCES' ARMoured VEHICLE FLEET (1989-2022); OWN EDITING, DATA SOURCE: IISS MILITARY BALANCE

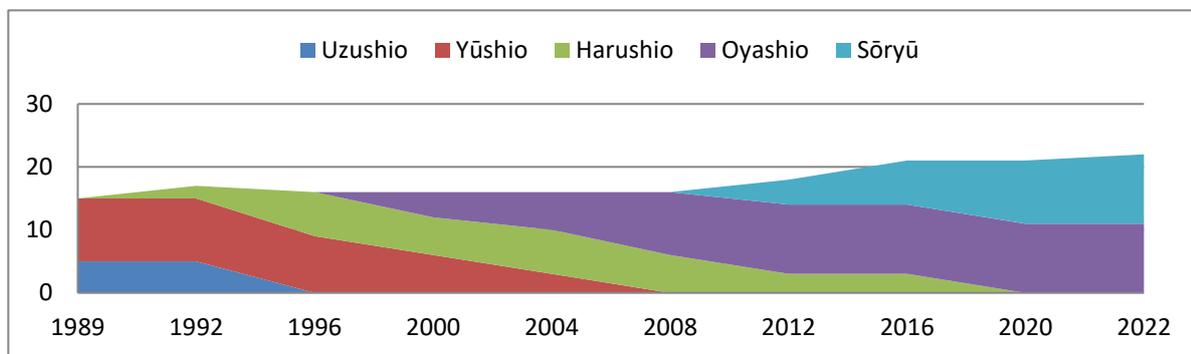
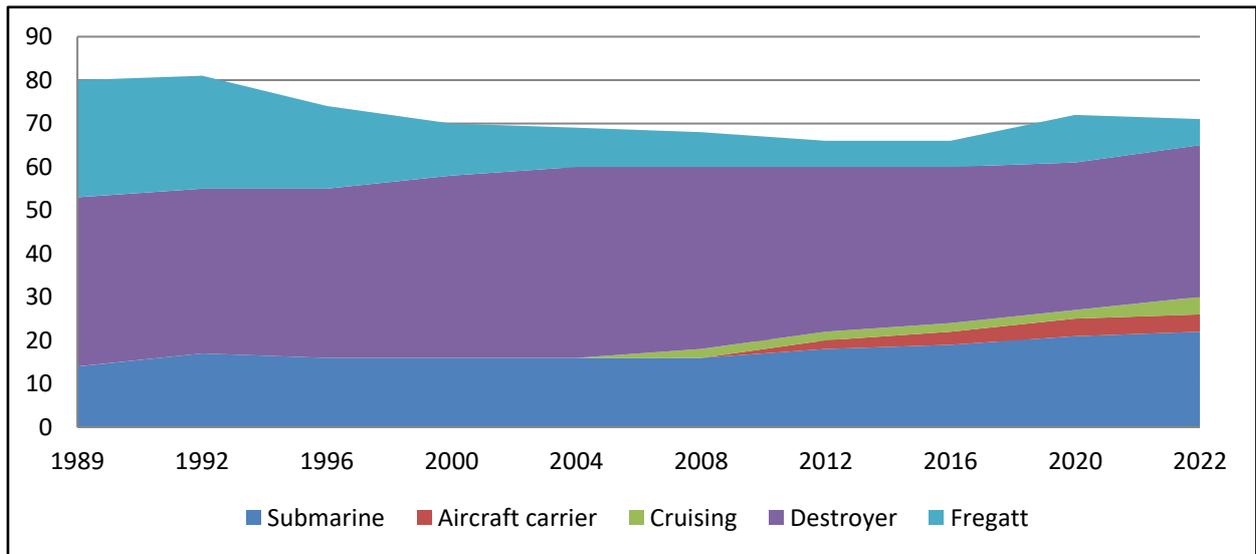
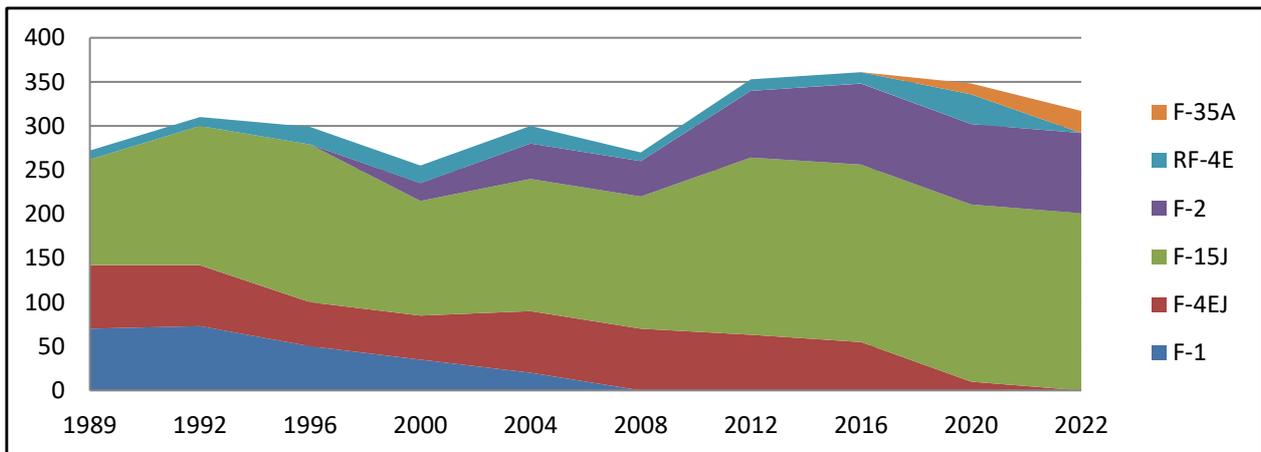


FIGURE 29: JAPANESE SUBMARINES BY TYPE (1989-2022); OWN EDITING, DATA SOURCE: IISS MILITARY BALANCE



9FIGURE 1: COMPOSITION OF THE MAIN UNITS OF THE JAPAN MARITIME SELF-DEFENSE FORCES (1989-2016); OWN ED., DATA SOURCE: IISS MILITARY BALANCE



10FIGURE 1: JAPAN'S FIGHTER AIRCRAFT FLEET (1989-2022); OWN EDITS, DATA SOURCE: IISS MILITARY BALANCE

The role of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in Japan's security policy

In addition to Japanese capabilities, the USFJ has a significant role to play in the defense of the Senkaku Islands and would likely respond to a possible Japanese attack on the

area. It is therefore important to consider USFJ forces in coordination with Japanese defense forces. Since the 2000s, Japan's political leadership has been increasingly engaged in defense policy reform in order to prepare for possible Chinese territorial incursions into the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Possible Chinese territorial acquisition scenarios include a "*fait accompli*" solution, the establishment of naval superiority and the prevention of Japanese counter-attack. In a potential conflict, naval capabilities are of utmost importance, in particular the establishment of naval superiority and the related indicators.

Chapter 6: Comparative analysis of power metrics

At this stage of the thesis, I carried out the quantitative analyses necessary for the research. I presented the relative power relations between Japan and China along macro indicators identified in the social sciences as having a high correlation of success. I then presented their quantifiable relative power relations along the composite indicators used in the literature (CINC, Lowy, GFPI). I examined naval operational capabilities based on the methodology of Crisher and Souva (2014). Finally, I compared the Navy's firepower indicators to the missile line-of-fire model's equation-coupled derived expression for the combat group missile indicators.

Power metrics along macro indicators

The distribution of power is an important indicator for international studies, and in many analyses it provides the basis for defining the world order (which, according to these studies, can be multipolar, bipolar or unipolar). However, the problem of measuring power is a major methodological challenge, and there is no standard method for expressing it in international studies. The most commonly used benchmark is GDP, which many researchers consider to be strongly linked to a country's prestige and advocacy capabilities. Thus GDP is the most widely used indicator for power relations analysis, but there are also attempts to use more complex indicators such as GDP, defense spending and other economic and social indicators for power metrics analysis.

In this paper, I used Michael Beckley's method, published in 2018, as an indicator of power expressed in economic terms. It measures the balance of power by multiplying GDP by GDP per capita. Research shows that this method has a much higher correlation between international conflicts and power positions. While a measure based on GDP alone or using

other indicators has been correlated at 50-60% or less for wars and conflicts over the last two centuries, Beckley's indicator (depending on the intensity of the conflict) has been correlated at 70-78%. In other words, in conflicts between two states (either war or lower intensity), the party with a significantly higher GDPxGDP/capita was the winner in ¾ of the cases.

The power relations between Japan and China along this indicator start with a significant Japanese superiority in the period under review, but this will be transformed into a parity with a marginal (purely nominal) Chinese superiority by the 2010s.

	SUM GDPxGDP/cap.	Japan %	China %
1997	158093452,7	99,52%	0,48%
2013	278051488	75,84%	24,16%
2021	421349085	47,97%	52,03%

TABLE 1: MACRO POWER METRICS FOR JAPAN AND CHINA BASED ON BECKLEY 2018 METHODOLOGY, OWN ED.

Composite and commonly used power metric indices

Alongside the academic discourse on power metrics based on GDP, we also find efforts to express international power in terms of complex indicators. Among these, I have selected three commonly used indicators for the countries of the East Asian region in the international studies and security policy literature: the Comprehensive Index of National Capabilities (CINC), the Lowy Institute Asia Power Index (Lowy), and the Global Firepower Index (GPF).

I examined the relative strengths of these indicators, but unlike other indicators, these were not available for the whole period covered by the research, so I could only use them partially to compare strengths over time.

Based on the available data on composite indicators, the Chinese power metric superiority can be considered significant, thus this data set supports hypotheses that do not assume direct deterrence mechanisms.

Naval power projection indicators

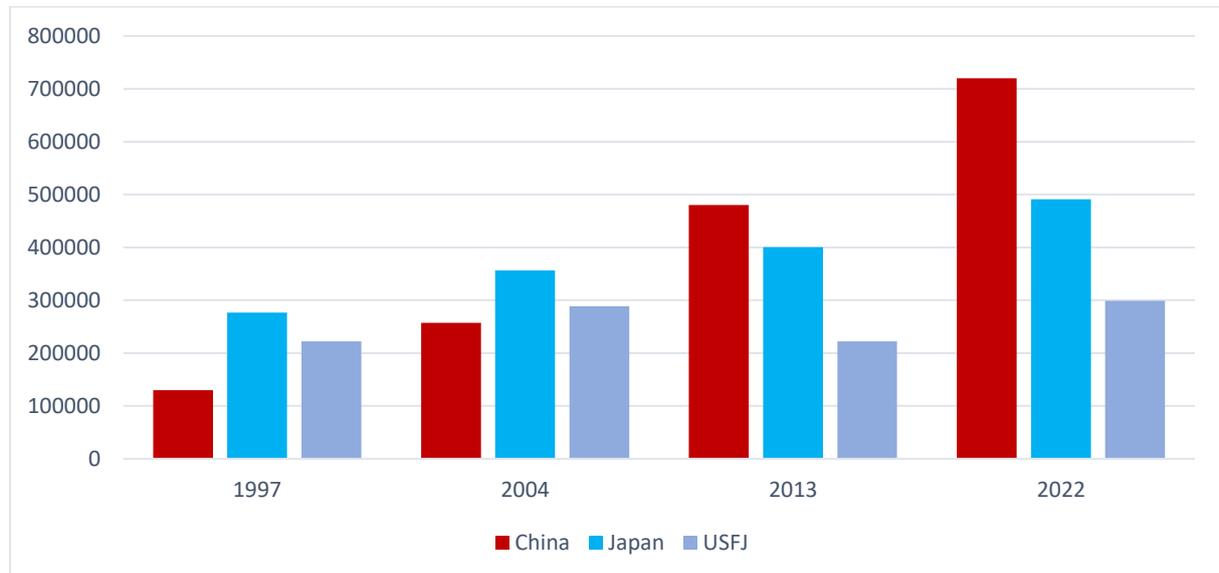
Access to sea lanes, maritime trade and the naval capabilities to provide it are critical to shaping international relations. Naval power is key to protecting trade routes, economic and strategic impact, and promoting global trade.

The naval capabilities of a country thus largely determine its role as a great power. This includes the size, composition and effectiveness of its navy.

A country with a large and well-equipped navy is seen as a great power and influences the behaviour of other countries.

For this phase of the research, I used the 2014 study by Criser and Souve, the most cited curated scientific literature on the measurement of maritime skills. The study aimed to identify changes in maritime power based on long-term historical data. Naval power was defined by the number, size and armament of ships. Using Criser and Souva's methodology, I measured China's and Japan's naval capabilities and their changes in 1997, 2004, 2013, and 2022.

Based on this indicator, China will have an advantage over Japan by 2022, but it will not be 2:1, so it is difficult to consider it a significant advantage. Furthermore, if the USFJ forces are taken into account, the indicator for Japan has a slight advantage over China.



13FIGURE 1: TOTAL WATER DISPLACEMENT OF RELEVANT VESSELS IN FLEETS BASED ON CRISER AND SUOVA METHODOLOGY (TONNES) 1997-2022; OWN EDITING, DATA CALCULATED BY THE AUTHOR BASED ON THE IISS MILITARY BALANCE VESSEL INVENTORY AND KNOWN SPECIFICATIONS

Naval firepower: Battle Force Missile Indicators ("Battle Force Missile")

As a fourth step in the power metric measurements, I measured the capabilities of China and Japan, as well as the USFJ, using an indicator of measurable naval firepower used in international protocols. Missiles have become a key element in modern naval warfare, as they allow for the attack of targets at safe distances. The range and firepower of missiles has become an important factor in naval warfare and they are an almost exclusive strike capability in contemporary naval warfare. Accordingly, the most commonly used tool for modelling engagements between fleet groupings is the 'missile salvo equation/model', which attempts to determine the expected losses for two groupings, taking into account the launch capacity, air defense and endurance of each grouping.

$$B = \frac{\alpha A - b_3 B}{b_1}$$

or:

$$\Delta A = \frac{\beta B - a_3 A}{a_1}$$

where

- A and B: number of vessels in the two fleet groupings
- ΔA and ΔB : number of units expected to be disabled after enemy missile fire
- α and β : the impact measure of grouping A and B, i.e. the number of missiles that are expected to hit the target if the opponent's missile defense is not taken into account. This is not the same as the net launch capacity of the ship units, since a certain fraction of missiles and other assets can be assumed to fail or miss their targets. Thus, the values α and β are essentially the number of launched linefire missiles (a_1 and b_1) multiplied by the number of expected effective hits (the hit accuracies used by Hughes range from 0.68 to 0.91).
- a_3 and b_3 : missile defense capability of A and B grouping ships (mainly the number of interceptor missiles)
- a_1 and b_2 : The "staying power" of the units of grouping A and B, i.e. the number of hits after which they remain combat-ready. This is 1 for most

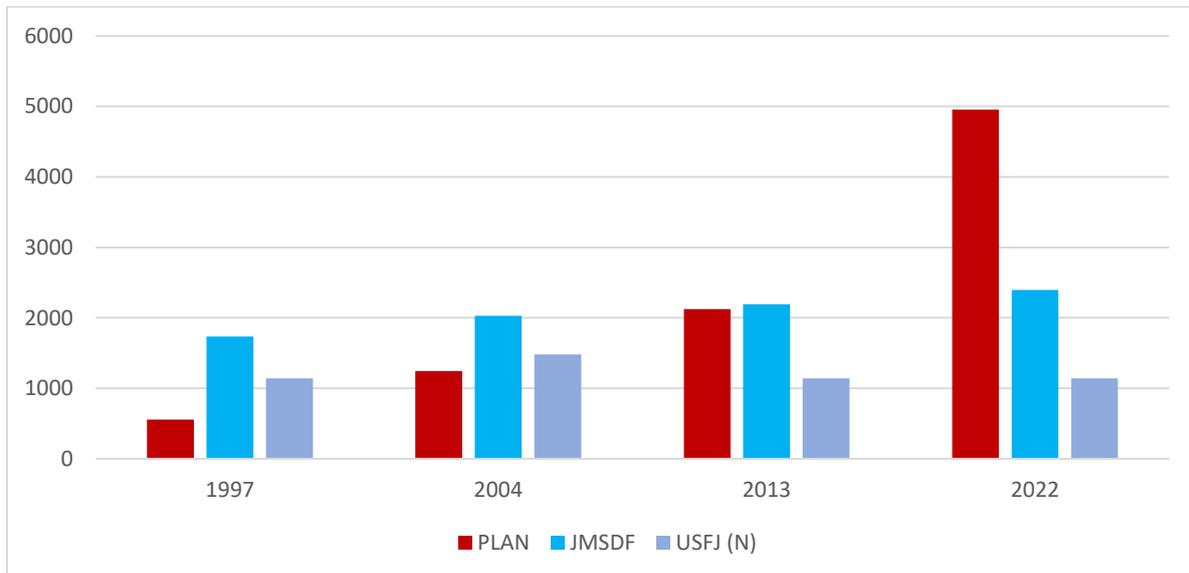
ship types, 2 for frigates and destroyers, and 3-4 for cruisers and larger ship types Hughes uses the following values in the volume

In this light, one of the most important factors that can be quantified in relation to naval forces is their missile launching capacity as a significant gross indicator of a fleet.

This is measured using the Battle Force Missile (BFM) indicator, which measures the naval missile launching capabilities of each fleet group, taking into account a number of factors such as the number of ship types and their missile launching capabilities.

Using databases previously compiled for the case study of defense policies, I measured the BFM indicators of the Chinese and Japanese and USFJ forces and compared their relative proportions.

According to the BFM indicator, by 2022 China has an advantage (previously it was at a significant disadvantage), but it will not reach or exceed a ratio of 2:1. If US support is added (USFJ) it is almost parity. If we assume that China is putting everything on the table against Japan, it is still 1:1, but if we take into account the distribution of Chinese strategic objectives, it is realistically more of a disadvantage for the Chinese side.



14FIGURE 1: FLEETS' BOM INDICATORS 1997-2022; OWN EDITING, DATA CALCULATED BY THE AUTHOR USING THE PATTON 2019 METHODOLOGY BASED ON THE IISS MILITARY BALANCE SHIP INVENTORY AND KNOWN SPECIFICATIONS

Chapter 7: Exploratory analysis of hypotheses on deterrence potential using explicit Bayesian analysis

In Chapter 7 of the thesis, I performed the analysis required for the research along the protocol laid out in subchapter 2/c, with explicit Bayesian process tracing. As a result, I

prioritized hypotheses H1-H4 based on their explanatory potential. The result of the research is that hypotheses H1 and H3 can be identified, as the explanatory power ($P_{\text{posterior}}$) expressed as the mathematical probability value after the calculation with the Bayesian equation was found to be the highest for these two hypotheses.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

In this dissertation, I have comprehensively examined the specificities of the regional security complex in East Asia, placing the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute in this context. The problematic areas of academic inquiry were the island dispute itself, the resulting grey-zone conflict, bilateral relations between China and Japan, the Japan-US alliance, and the interpretation of the lack of escalation.

In the course of the research, I aimed to compile a methodological framework that would synthesise the results of scientific explanations and policy analyses of a complex problem in a coherent and logically coherent way. These have made claims along a number of different dimensions as to why escalation to the level of a military conflict could not take place and what factors have a deterrent effect. The synthesis of these different approaches was made possible by Bayesian process tracing. The different explanations, each of which has some plausible logical basis, were synthesised in four hypotheses formulated in response to the research question .⁶

H1: China faces a military deterrent in the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. The scale of Japan's defensive capabilities, when weighed against the balance of forces, prevents China from developing the superiority of force necessary for offensive operations to capture and hold the islands

H2: China is not affected by military deterrence in the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. In Chinese calculations, the international economic and diplomatic consequences of a possible local military conflict are of primary importance

⁶ Why didn't the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute escalate to the level of a military force conflict with territorial acquisition between 1996 and 2022, even though it was a grey-zone confrontation? Or in other words: What role might the influence of potential deterrence factors have played in China's behaviour?

H3: China faces a military deterrent in the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. However, this is not Japanese defense capabilities, but the US defense guarantee.

H4: There is no military deterrent for China in the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. However, the occupation of the islands is a lower priority than an invasion of Taiwan, so the Chinese leadership is likely to make military action contingent on a conflict in Taiwan

By optimising the various protocols of Bayesian process tracing found in the international literature for the research question of this dissertation, it was possible to create an analytical framework in which the explanatory power of the qualitative and quantitative factors supporting the hypotheses could be compared for each hypothesis. It was not the aim of this thesis to provide a clear refutation of any of the hypotheses, as each of them could conceivably explain the research question. However, it is explicitly intended to explore the weighting that can be established between them.

Thanks to the Bayesian approach, the explanatory power of each hypothesis can be identified before the factors identified in the research are weighed up. The dissertation has divided this broadly evenly, with minor variations indicating which explanations are more common in the literature. This was followed by an exploration of the factors that could be identified in relation to the hypotheses, both through case study reviews of the problem and through various measures of power metrics relevant to a possible escalation.

In the case studies, I examined Japan's relations with China, the impact of the two countries' security and defense policies on each other, and the possible mechanisms of escalation and deterrence in the context of the island dispute. I have presented the evolution of China's defense policy in the light of quantitative changes in capabilities. Similarly, the evolution of Japan's defense policy, in terms of quantitative changes in its capabilities and its relations with the United States. These quantitative findings identified major trends in the parties' force developments over the past decades. Their qualitative findings highlighted key developments related to the island dispute and the broader regional escalation.

I applied a process tracing methodology to interpret the absence of escalation and developed a Bayesian process tracing analysis framework to interpret deterrence.

In the final stage of the analysis, I identified power metric indicators based on several different methodologies and compared them to examine the relative advocacy capabilities of China and Japan.

As a result of the analysis and as a conclusion of the dissertation, it can be concluded that the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute has a significant potential for escalation. Deterrence factors can be expressed as alternative hypotheses from China's perspective. Using the factors highlighted from the case studies, as well as the power metric analysis, it can be concluded that China has a dominant position for a number of factors. However, by analysing the major Japanese weapon systems and defense capabilities, I have highlighted that there is no significant Chinese advantage in the case of naval operational capabilities. This prevents Beijing's operational "assertiveness" because it lacks the significant superiority needed for a large-scale offensive operation. As a result of the Bayesian analysis, hypotheses H₁ and H₃ appear to be the most important explanations for the lack of escalation to date, i.e:

H₁ : China faces a military deterrent in the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. The scale of Japan's defensive capabilities, when weighed against the balance of forces, prevents China from developing the superiority of force necessary for offensive operations to capture and hold the islands.

H₃ : China faces a military deterrent in the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. However, it is not Japan's defense capabilities, but the US defense guarantee.

In the available literature, the island dispute - and the possible course of escalation - is mainly considered in terms of political factors and economic considerations, divorced from military operational aspects. Thus, there has been relatively little research that has drawn on operational capabilities and quantifiable factors of interest in addition to these. This dissertation also aims to remedy this under-representation in the literature by explicitly examining power metrics in the third part of the analytical section. It is important to note that the dissertation has made two necessary logical simplifications in the power metric analysis. First, it took total capabilities as the baseline for China. However, since the PRC faces a number of security challenges - also in the light of recent historical parallels - it is unlikely that Beijing would be able to use its full advocacy capacity in a conflict over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. However, there is no adequate way to quantify the capabilities that could potentially be used, so it remains necessary, but presumably distorting, to take the full capability system as a basis. The other logical necessity solution is to base the US operational support potentially provided to Japan in the power metric analysis solely on the data that the Military Balance Yearbooks show as the minimum USFJ identifiable capabilities (e.g., for the BFM indicator), i.e., I have taken into account forces that are stationed in Japan in

"peacetime". It is unlikely that this would be the maximum value of US operational support in a potential conflict. However, similar to the unknown ratios for the "deployability" of the Chinese capability system, there is no quantifiable benchmark to use for USFJ and additional US support. Thus, this is also necessary as a constraint, but distorts the assumed proportions of forces. However, even with these biases, the power metrics section has revealed insights that are useful to the research and relevant to each hypothesis.

Based on these findings, the first hypothesis (H1) seems to be the most convincing explanation for the lack of escalation after comparing the main findings. However, the framework laid out in relation to the research methodology was also intended to synthesise the findings of previous research with the findings of the analysis carried out in this dissertation. Therefore, the third hypothesis (H3), the strongest in terms of prior P distribution based on the literature representation, although slightly lower in the analysis, was sufficiently strong to be considered equivalent to H1, taking into account its prior explanatory potential.

In light of this, I believe it can be argued that, among the research methodology protocols used in curricular international security studies - as well as in international studies and military science - Bayesian process tracing is suitable for conducting mixed-methods research. It is particularly well suited to research questions where, even with limited information, the aim may be to establish weights between several different hypotheses. In particular, if further developments in the security policy problem area can be expected in the future, so that elements can be added to update the Bayesian formula in the future.

The research carried out in this dissertation examined the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute, escalation and deterrence from the 1990s to 2022. The most important result is that, if we take into account relevant operational capabilities in the context of a potential conflict, Japan's military capabilities and the resulting deterrence capability played as important a role in the absence of escalation as the US defense guarantee. It is important to note, however, that in 2023 and for the foreseeable future, the countries under review will be developing their military forces not only at the same pace as before, but at an even higher intensity. Research on the relative balance of forces is therefore likely to become even more important in the period ahead. This paper has done so in the context of a closed period, but it is hoped that, both by describing the historical context of the recent past and by providing a methodological example, the analysis will provide relevant input for further academic efforts in the near future.

New scientific results

Through the research conducted in this dissertation, using the research methodology protocols used in the international academic literature, I have demonstrated that Japan's military capabilities have significant deterrence potential in the island nation-China island dispute.

I have integrated the problems of the regional security complex in East Asia that have the potential for escalation into a single framework, prioritized the logical likelihood of escalation, and placed the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute within this framework. I have demonstrated that Japan's possession of the islands is so important that it would even engage in a military conflict against China over them.

I have reviewed the main theoretical frameworks for escalation and deterrence. In the domestic academic literature, I have not previously found a comprehensive study that highlights the theoretical paradigm of deterrence as well as the main trends in the contemporary literature on the problem. Thus, I have added new factors to the professional discourse on the topic for the domestic security literature.

I was the first in the international studies and in the literature of political science and military science to use explicit Bayesian process tracing as a research methodology in mixed qualitative and quantitative research. I have developed a research methodology protocol that is able to develop a weighting between several hypotheses that are assumed to be valid to some extent, following a systematic analysis, forming a scale adapted to the research to weigh the findings.

I have shown how hypotheses about security policy problems can be interpreted in terms of mathematical probability values. My research can be used as a recommendation on how to develop preliminary values (P_{prior}) based on previous research. I have developed a procedure for updating these prior hypotheses (P_{En}) and for expressing the most plausible explanatory power of each hypothesis in mathematical probability values ($P_{\text{posterior}}$) after considering both factors together.

In the course of the research, I explored the most important quantitative and qualitative trends in Chinese and Japanese defense policy in the period 1989-2022. I have also shown why the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands plays a key geostrategic role in the security

policies of both sides. In doing so, I have applied, for the first time in domestic military and security studies, a multi-level (macro, composite, naval gross, naval firepower) power metric analysis to express the relative power relations of two countries with conflicting interests.

In Hungary, I was the first to apply the "missile salvo equation" and the derived "Battle Force Missile" (BFM) to describe the relative power relations of two opposing countries. To do this, I independently made measurements of the BFM indicators of each fleet based on known data. These were used for the first time in the national literature for mixed-methods social science research.

I was the first among domestic academic papers to present Japan's deterrence potential in the naval operational space, which can be understood in its own right. I demonstrated that the island nation had sufficient operational capability in the period up to 2022 to confront the forces of the People's Liberation Army with a chance of success, even in a potential conflict arising from an island dispute with China. At the same time, it is important to stress that significant changes in Japan's defense policy are likely to be required in the 2020s to sustain this. It is conceivable, and there have been papers in the Japanese security literature suggesting this, that Japan may find it insufficient to merely deny operational success and may even feel the need to build up capability systems linked to deterrence retaliation mechanisms.

In order to interpret the logical mechanisms of escalation and deterrence, the research has developed a methodological framework that can be updated in the future as new data and knowledge are acquired along the existing framework. A possible next analysis can simply use the current $P_{\text{posterior}}$ values and convert them into P_{prior} values for its own analysis to continue investigating the problem. This research methodology could also be used to explore the problem of the potential conflict between China and Taiwan and the deterrence mechanisms involved.

Applicability of the research results

The thesis and its results can be used:

1. in research on regional security in military and security studies, can serve as a model for prioritising regional hotspots and targeting analytical capacities.
2. to broaden the knowledge of security policy research on East Asia and to study in more detail the two states with the largest naval capabilities in the region.
3. research on the mechanisms of deterrence. The typology used in this thesis can serve as a basis for exploring further aspects of deterrence, as retaliatory/denial approaches can be explored and expressed not only along the military dimension of security, but also along economic issues.
4. for mixed methods research in the social sciences. Explicit Bayesian process tracing can serve as a model for other research that seeks to synthesise qualitative and quantitative factors.
5. in naval operations and related power metric research. A broader application of the indicators used could add more nuance to the discourse on international powers in the domestic security policy discourse.
6. in security policy analysis and evaluation work, decision support research. Bayesian process tracing allows for a systematic evaluation of available knowledge in the process of considering and updating competing hypotheses and related premises. As it provides a framework that includes the possibility of continuous information updating, it can be used to monitor current, i.e. ongoing, problems and can be a particularly useful approach for related analyses.

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Academic and professional background

András Bartók completed his higher education at the Faculty of Humanities of the Károli Gáspár Reformed University, majoring in Oriental Languages and Cultures (BA, 2011) and Japanese Studies (MA 2015). Prior to his university studies, he worked as an interpreter for a Hungarian subsidiary of Hitachi Ltd. as well as a high school teacher and Japanese language teacher in language schools between 2014-2016. As a lecturer, he teaches courses on East Asia, geopolitics, research methodology, and is involved in the dissemination and teaching of wargame/wargame-based educational methodology and practices within the civilian faculty training.

His academic research focuses on security policy processes in East Asia, the defense policies of China, Japan, Taiwan and the states of the region, and issues of escalation and deterrence. His focus is on military dimensions of sectoral issues of security, using a qualitative and quantitative mixed-methods approach to the study of military capabilities. He has also published on EU-East Asia relations, regional institutional integration, demography and security policy nexus, and Hungarian public opinion research on East Asian countries.