

Prospects for Maritime Security in East Asia in the Wake of the U.S. Presidential Election
—The view from geopolitical and geoeconomic perspectives—

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1. Introduction

2020 was a remarkable year for maritime security in East Asia, not just because it was the year of the U.S. presidential election, a major event that will have a significant impact on security not only in East Asia but for oceans around the world, but because it was the year Prime Minister Shinzo Abe resigned as prime minister of Japan in September 2020. He served for 2,822 consecutive days and a total of 3,188 days in office, and advocated initiatives such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad, which will be discussed later), that had a significant impact on the maritime security of East Asia.

However, despite no concession of defeat being made, U.S. media reports indicate it is almost certain the Biden will win the election. What does the change in leadership of the United States, a super power, mean for maritime security in East Asia and Japan?

This paper analyzes East Asian maritime security in the wake of the U.S. presidential election on the assumption that Joseph Biden will be the next president of the United States from the perspective of geopolitics, a traditional framework for analyzing security which includes the oceans, and geoeconomics, which has emerged in the 21st century, and will try to outlook from the start the future. Due to the nature of the special reports that the Ocean Policy Research Institute, The Sasakawa Peace Foundation provides, this paper cites secondary materials while taking into consideration the content of the article and other aspects.

2. The impact on East Asian maritime security

(1) The geopolitical perspective

Geopolitics is a useful framework for analyzing security that is not limited to oceans. Certainly, in recent years, a field of study called critical geopolitics has emerged, which limits the scope of application of traditional geopolitics.¹ However, geopolitics can be said to be a universal framework in the sense that it uses geography, an element that cannot be moved artificially, in its political analysis. Therefore, the geopolitical framework can be effectively used not only in the field of politics but in various other research areas, such as economics and sociology. While the positioning of geopolitics today varies and presents ambiguous aspects, considering geopolitics essential positioning, which is a bridge between geography and politics, geopolitics can be defined as “the analysis, evaluation, and recommendations on the spatial development of political trends, using the empirical data of related industries and demographics, that emphasizes physical geographic factors

¹ For example, Dodds, K. J. & Sidaway, J. D., 1994, Locating Critical Geopolitics, *Society and Space*, Volume 12 Issue 5, pp.515–524.

such as oceans, continents, mountains, rivers, and soils.”² So, what perspective does this geopolitical framework offer to the maritime security of East Asia?

Karl Ernst Haushofer, one of the founders of geopolitics, had already foreseen the rise of China in the Western Pacific region and its enormous impact on Japan in 1938, based on geographical and economic conditions.³ In the East China Sea, a Chinese fishing boat collided with a Japan Coast Guard patrol boat off the coast of the Senkaku Islands in 2010, and since September 2012, there have been regular intrusions by Chinese government vessels affiliated with maritime enforcement agencies into the territorial waters of Japan around the Senkaku Islands. While the construction of artificial islands by China and their militarization continues in the South China Sea, this hardline stance stems from the July 12, 2016 decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands which ruled that there was no legal basis under international law for the People’s Republic of China’s claim to so-called historical rights symbolized by the nine-dash line, and that it violated international law. China’s stance has been basically unchanged despite the ruling. Given this situation, Haushofer’s geopolitical insight more than 80 years ago was right on the mark.

Moreover, it was Halford John Mackinder who used a geopolitical framework to discuss security in the structure of maritime nation vs. continental nation. At the core of Mackinder’s geopolitical vision is the “Heartland” thesis.⁴ The Heartland is the interior region of the Eurasian continent that has a strategic security advantage. The essence of his argument is that who rules East Europe commands the Heartland, who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island which includes Eurasian and Africa continent, and who rules the World-Island commands the world. As symbolized by this claim, Mackinder advocates the strategic advantage of continental nation, but at the same time considers how maritime nation should deal with this advantage. The resulting arrangement is a dichotomy of maritime nation vs. continental nation.

It was Nicholas J. Spykman who used the results of Mackinder’s analysis of the geopolitical dichotomy to focus more on maritime security. Spykman argues that the Rimland includes Far East Russia, China, Southeast Asia extending through India, the Middle East, and the European coast. He points out that because China and other countries located in the Rimland behave like an amphibian, as they glare both the land and the sea, they have no choice but to move southward and fight island nations such as Japan and Britain, as well as land powers represented by the former Soviet Union in Heartland.⁵

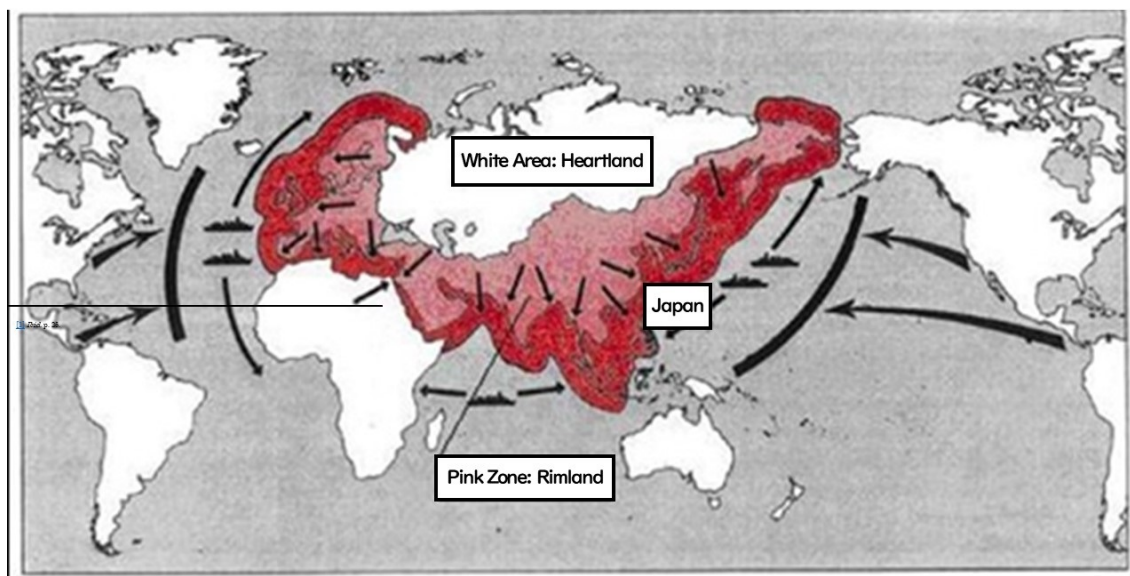
2 Maeda, Nobuhito (2019), “The Iberian Peninsula and the North Africa from a Geopolitical Point of View: Refugees and the Straits of Gibraltar,” *Global Communication Studies*, No. 7, p. 113-121.

3 Haushofer, K. E., 1938, *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans ; Studien über die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Geographie und Geschichte, mit 42 Karten und Tafeln, III. ergänzte Auflage*, Heidelberg-Berlin (Japan Pacific Islands eds. (1942), *Taiheiyō chiseigaku*, Iwanami Shoten)

4 Mackinder, Halford John (trans. Yasunobu Somura, 2008), *Makkindā no chiseigaku—demokurashī no risō to genjitsu* (Democratic Ideals and Reality, Harashobo).

5 Spykman, Nicholas (trans. Masashi Okuyama, 2008), *Heiwa no chiseigaku* (The Geography of the Peace), Fusoshobo Shuppan.

Figure 1. The future geopolitical security environment predicted by Spykman¹⁶



China's aggressive maritime expansion, which geopolitical authors such as Haushofer, Mackinder, and Spykman pointed out as a possible situation that could happen in the future, is also consistent with the "strategic frontier" concept that appears in China's security discussions.

A strategic frontier is synonymous with a geographical boundary, typically known as borders. This concept was first revealed in an article entitled "Pursuing a Rational Three-Dimensional Strategic Frontier"⁷ written by Xu Guangyu of the People's Liberation Army. He later published an article entitled "Let's change the concept of China's strategic space,"⁸ in 2009 that gave an additional explanation about strategic frontiers.

To summarize Xu Guangyu's two arguments, geographical boundaries indicate the borders of an actual state officially recognized under international law, while the strategic frontier is not limited to a physical territory, territorial waters, or airspace, and changes with fluctuations in military power and the overall power of the state behind it. If the strategic frontier of a state is smaller than its geographical boundary for a long time due to inferior military power, the geographical boundary recedes to the strategic frontier, resulting in loss of territory. On the contrary, however, if the strategic frontier expands and is effectively controlled for a long period of time, the geographical boundary expands *ex post facto*. In other words, the notion of a strategic frontier refers to the front line of the security dominance space that moves flexibly, and believes that it is possible to expand the border in the future by expanding the strategic frontier beyond current boundary. It is not clear that the strategic frontier is China's thinking at the national policy-level, but it is certain that the strategic frontier attitude itself is at least in the realm of traditional geopolitics.

Thus, geopolitics, which analyzes security that encompasses the oceans, essentially against the

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 25.

⁷ Xu Guangyu (1987) "Pursuit of a Reasonable Three-Dimensional Strategy for National Defense Development Strategy No. 9," People's Liberation Army Daily, January 2, 1987.

⁸ Xu Guangyu (2009) "The Need to Change China's Concept of Strategic Space," Global Times, October 30, 2009.

backdrop of universal geographical factors, may fall into a classic category of the era, but it predictively identifies the actual maritime security situation of China's rise in security and its active expansion into the East China and South China Sea, so it can be deemed to still be highly effective and useful as an analysis framework. Because it functions as a universal analytical framework, unless the composition of sea powers and the land powers changes significantly from a geopolitical point of view, there will be no fundamental change in China's rise and expansionist intentions.

In fact, even after President Trump took office in January 2017, China has been unrelenting in its aggressive stance, not only dispatching Coast Guard vessels to the waters around the Senkaku Islands and invading Japanese territorial waters and the contiguous waters in the East China Sea, but it also transferred command of the Chinese Coast Guard, which had simply been an administrative agency until now, to the Central Military Commission. Similarly, in the South China Sea, while the international community does not recognize China's claim of sovereignty over the reefs of the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands, and its construction of artificial islands, China is not flinching from continuing to make them military bases. On July 13, 2020, the U.S. broke from its usual stance when U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a statement about China's maritime expansion that said China's claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea were completely unlawful,⁹ but China vehemently denounced the comment and shows no signs of halting its activities in the South China Sea.

This stubborn attitude of China to advance into the ocean is believed to be influenced by the strategic frontier bolstered by the geopolitical background and geopolitical ideas mentioned earlier. The more power as a state China has, the more it will try to expand its strategic frontier. If so, even if Biden is the next U.S. president, maritime security in East Asia will continue to face China's expansionist pressure, albeit in strong and weak waves. The active maritime expansion activities by China we are currently witnessing in the East China Sea and South China Sea, unique to the Xi Jinping administration should not be dismissed as a temporary trend.

Geopolitics thus reveals that China's expansionist maritime advances to be the fundamentals of East Asian maritime security. However, the actual trends in the international community are swayed by various variables based on these fundamentals. One of the variables are the alliances and friendships between states. In fact, major security conflicts such as World War II and the Cold War were not just one-on-one combat between great powers. In reality, they were intertwined with various forms of alliances and friendships, and national strategies were built on them.

Geopolitics also offers various suggestions for understanding this variable. For example, Spykman suggested, for example, that U.S. security policy should be an alliance between the U.S. and Rimland states, and that any alliances between Rimland countries without the U.S. should be blocked.¹⁰ He argues that building and maintaining alliances and friendly relations with other countries is a vital concern, even though the United States is a superpower. Surveying the maritime security situation in

9 Pompeo, M. R., 2020, "Communist China and the Free World's Future", U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE website, July 23, 2020.

<https://www.state.gov/communist-china-and-the-free-worlds-future/> (Accessed December 3, 2020)

10 Spykman, Nicholas (trans. Masahi Okuyama) 2008.

East Asia also shows that bilateral alliances and friendly relations centered around the United States, including the Japan-U.S. alliance, are intertwined like a mesh.

As described above, geopolitics is based on a two-layer structure in which the variable of alliances and friendships affects the fundamentals based on geographical conditions. Thus, this paper focuses on East Asian alliances and friendships, especially the Quad, and considers this as one variable in the analysis of maritime security to add to the discussion so far.

The Quad is one framework that draws attention as an alliance and friendship that has a significant impact on maritime security of East Asia. The Quad is the framework for dialogue between Japan, the United States, Australia, and India, advocated by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and subsequently established with the participation of U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, Australian Prime Minister John Howard, and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. However, the impetus for this framework was Prime Minister Abe's speech, "Confluence of the Two Seas,"¹¹ delivered at the Indian Parliament on August 22, 2007. Years later, Prime Minister Abe, who returned to the position of prime minister in December 2012 after stepping down earlier, immediately announced to the world the "security diamond initiative," which can be seen as the prototype to the Quad.¹² The initiative aimed to connect Japan, India, Australia, and the United States (Hawaii) in a diamond shape to protect sea lanes in the Indo-Pacific and the rule of law through the proactive work of the four maritime democracies.

After the inauguration of President Trump, the president and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expanded the security diamond initiative to the "Indo-Pacific." This included, in particular, a telephone conversation between Prime Minister Abe and President Trump on October 31, 2017 that advanced a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific region," and reaffirmed the importance of exerting maximum pressure on North Korea¹³ through close coordination between Japan and the United States together with the international community. Additionally, the reaffirmation of the importance of the Indo-Pacific¹⁴ at the Japan-U.S. summit meeting on November 6 was an opportunity to revive the Quad, which had fallen by the wayside due to the circumstances of both country's relations with China.¹⁵

There are various assessments of the Quad centered on Japan and the United States, such as the criticism that the four countries that make up the Quad already maintain extremely close and comprehensive trade and economic relations with China, and are not thinking of excluding China in

11 Abe Shinzo (2007), "Confluence of the Two Seas," August 22, 2007, speech at the Parliament of the Republic of India. https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/enzetsu/19/eabe_0822.html (Accessed December 2, 2020)

12 Shinzo A., 2012, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond", Project Syndicate, December 27, 2012. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe?barrier=accesspaylog>. (Accessed December 2, 2020)

13 Sankei News, "Toranpu-shi to Abe shushō no nichibei shunō denwa kaidan no naiyō o kōhyō — "indotaiheiyō" no jūyōsei kakunin" ("Trump and Abe Affirm the Importance of the Indo-Pacific in U.S.-Japan Summit Telephone Meeting"), November 1, 2017. <https://www.sankei.com/world/news/171101/wor1711010023-n1.html> (Accessed December 3, 2020)

14 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Japan-U.S. Working Lunch and Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting," November 6, 2017. https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/na/na1/us/page4_003422.html (Accessed December 3, 2020)

15 The press release below from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a helpful reference on efforts surrounding the Quad.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Australia-India-Japan-U.S. Consultations on the Indo-Pacific," November 12, 2017. https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/press4_005249.html (Accessed December 3, 2020)

any way.¹⁶ Some are also skeptical about whether the Quad will act as a serious deterrent to China. Professor James Holmes of the U.S. Naval War College argues that Japan and the United States need to firmly convey to China that it must fight not only with Japan but also with the United States.¹⁷ His statement comes against the backdrop of the limitations of a multilateral framework in which national circumstances, such as the Quad, intervene in a complex manner, and is evidence that it is important to maintain and demonstrate a strong stance and power based on the traditional Japan-U.S. alliance in parallel with the Quad.

In any case, against the backdrop of China's unabated maritime expansion, there is also discussion that re-evaluates¹⁸ the role of the Quad created by Japan, the United States, India, and Australia, who are important stakeholders in East Asia. An eye needs to be kept on trends in alliances and friendly relations between states represented by the Japan-U.S. alliance and the Quad. It will be particularly interesting to see how much Biden will commit to the alliance and friendships that President Trump showed reticence toward.

As mentioned above, the Japan-U.S. alliance, the Quad and other alliances and friendly relations, have a certain impact on the fundamentals of East Asian maritime security in which China is unwavering in its aggressive advance, and they indirectly determine just how aggressive China's advance into the ocean will be. Without any alliances or friendships, China would stick to a geopolitical strategy, and steadily expand and entrench its strategic frontier. Dealing with this situation on a country-by-country basis is no longer effective and can sometimes lead to situations that are impossible to deal with. Unless the United States regains interest in East Asian maritime security, the East China Sea and South China Sea could quickly become "Chinese lakes."¹⁹

U.S. security experts, including former Secretary of Defense James Mattis, recognize the importance of such friendships and alliances. They argue that the next administration is fully aware that the existence of the allies that President Trump has neglected have ensured America's security, and that it should uphold the principle of cooperative security that has contributed to the interests of the United States over the past decades.²⁰ After all, one factor that greatly influences East Asian maritime security in the wake the U.S. presidential election is alliances and friendships, and the Biden administration will continue to maintain frameworks such as the Japan-U.S. alliance and the Quad as a deterrent. Furthermore, whether these alliances will play a more effective role than ever

16 Bhaskar, C. U., 2017, "Democratic alliance of the US, India, Japan and Australia wants to work with China - not contain it", South China Morning Post, November 2, 2017.

<http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2118054/democratic-alliance-us-india-japan-and-australia-wants-work> (Accessed December 3, 2020)

17 Holmes, J., 2020, "Has China's Navy Caught Up (and Surpassed) Japan?", The National Interest, May 23, 2020. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/has-chinas-navy-caught-and-surpassed-japan-157216> (Accessed December 1, 2020)

18 For example, Panda, R., 2020, "Rethinking the "Quad" Security Concept in the Face of a Rising China ", China Brief, October 30, 2020. <https://jamestown.org/program/rethinking-the-quad-security-concept-in-the-face-of-a-rising-china> (Accessed December 3, 2020)

19 Helprin, M., 2019, "The U.S. Is Ceding the Pacific to China", Wall Street Journal, March 3, 2019.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-u-s-is-ceding-the-pacific-to-china-11551649516> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

20 Schake, K., Mattis, J., Ellis, J., & Felter, J., 2020, "Defense In Depth Why U.S. Security Depends on Alliances—Now More Than Ever", Foreign Affairs, November 23, 2020.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-11-23/defense-depth> (Accessed December 7, 2020)

before will be one of the most important points in predicting the future of East Asian maritime security.

(2) The geoeconomic perspective

This paper has discussed geopolitics up to this point, but I would like now to add a new analysis from a geoeconomic perspective.

Like geopolitics, geoeconomics has various definitions, but here, I refer to geopolitics as “a political and diplomatic method that seeks to realize geopolitical benefits by economic means.”²¹ That is, while conventional geopolitical security treats power, such as state power and military power, as an element, geoeconomic security regards economic means as power. Geoeconomics authority Edward Luttwak cites the state’s policies supporting industrial R&D and import/export policies, such as tariffs, as weapons of geoeconomics.²² In other words, expanding the influence of one’s own economy through strategic economic policies and inflicting damage on another state’s economy through tariffs are orthodox means in geoeconomics.

By strategically exercising these economic weapons, China, which has emerged from a geopolitical point of view, is probably typical of a state that is trying to secure the benefits it is aiming for. The launch and promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative is the most prominent specific measure of China’s strategic economic policy. In his speech at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan on September 7, 2013, Xi Jinping proposed the Silk Road Economic Belt, or “one belt” concept, and then for the first time, proposed the “one road” concept together with plans for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in a speech to the Indonesian parliament later that year on October 3. The Belt and Road Initiative is a combination of these two ideas. The Belt and Road Initiative is the largest international infrastructure investment plan in history,²³ and China is said to be aiming to complete it by 2049, in time for the 100th anniversary of the nation’s founding.

Four years after Xi Jinping announced the initiative, the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in Beijing in May 2017, which was attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni Silveri, and many other heads of state. Japan and the United States also sent delegations. The Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in April 2019 in Beijing as before, with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the leaders of 37 countries, and government delegations from more than 150 countries, including Japan, in attendance. However, the United States, which sent a delegation to the previous forum, did not attend this time because of President Trump’s harsh criticism of the Belt and Road Initiative. Through these forums, the Belt and Road Initiative has grown into a global economic framework that goes beyond the framework of a Chinese economic investment plan.

21 Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation (2017), *Gendainihon no chiseigaku—13 no risuku to ji keigaku no jidai* (Geopolitics in Contemporary Japan-13 Risks and the Age of Geoeconomics), Chukoshinsho, p. 4.

22 Luttwak, E., 1999, *Turbo-capitalism : winners and losers in the global economy*, Harper Collins Publishers.

23 LeVine, S., 2017, “China building biggest infrastructure project in history”, Axios website, May 16, 2017. <https://www.axios.com/china-building-biggest-infrastructure-project-in-history-1513302322-1362758a-23fa-4d6d-9464-e2e98679c3fe.html> (Accessed December 7, 2020)

The AIIB, officially launched in a ceremony held on January 16, 2016,²⁴ plays a central role in the Belt and Road Initiative, and is comprised of 57 founding member countries. The number of AIIB member countries increased steadily since its launch, and had 70 countries and regions as of March 23, 2017, exceeding the 67 member countries and regions of the Asian Development Bank (ADB).²⁵ By July 2019, its membership grew to more than 100 countries and regions. The AIIB loaned approximately \$1.7 billion for nine projects in 2016 (three of which were independent projects), approximately \$2.5 billion for 15 projects in 2017 (three of which were independent projects), and an estimated \$3.3 billion for 11 projects in 2018 (five of which were independent projects).²⁶ In other words, the approximately \$7.5 billion dollars it loaned in the three years between 2016 to 2018 can be seen as lower-than-planned amounts when compared to its \$100 billion capitalization at its founding and the ambitious pronouncements of AIIB executives wanting to loan \$10 billion every year in the next few years.²⁷ In recent years, the annual amount loaned by the ADB has been around \$20 billion,²⁸ and it is thought that investment demand has not declined. Nonetheless, we need to frankly acknowledge China's capacity and effort to develop in a short period of time the Belt and Road Initiative into a global economic framework and to launch an international development financial institution in the AIIB.

An example of a strategic investment based on the Belt and Road Initiative is the Port of Hambantota in southern Sri Lanka. The port was reportedly handed over to a Chinese state-owned enterprise on January 1, 2018, and the Chinese flag was raised on the port authority building.²⁹ This transfer was based on a 2017 agreement between Sri Lankan state-owned enterprises and Chinese state-owned enterprises in which Sri Lanka would transfer 70% of the shares of the port management company to China for 99 years. According to the agreement, China paid Sri Lanka \$1.12 billion, but most of the construction costs of the port were covered by approximately \$1.3 billion in high-interest loans from China. This agreement was done because of Sri Lanka inevitable reasons, as Sri Lanka was struggling to make payments. Also, China has recently been constructing a large factory near the Port of Hambantota,³⁰ and it is believed that the port will be used as a foothold to strengthen its

24 Nihon Keizai Shimbun (2015), "*Ajia tōshi gin, sōsetsu menbā 57-kakoku ni*" (Asia Investment Bank to Have 57 Founding Member Countries), April 15, 2015)

https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXLASGM15H4O_V10C15A4MM0000 (Accessed December 8, 2020)

25 Sankei Shimbun (2019), "*Sanka shōnin no kuni chiiki ga 100 ni ajia tōshi gin, eikyō-ryoku kakudai*" (Approved Countries and Regions of Asian Investment Banks Grows to 100, Expanding its Influence), July 13, 2020.

<https://www.sankei.com/world/news/190713/wor1907130024-n1.html> (Accessed December 8, 2020)

26 Data for investment totals are from the AIIB website, <https://www.aiib.org/en/index.html> (Accessed December 7, 2020).

27 Wang, Zi-ping (2017) "*AIIB no un'ei to 'ittai ichiro' kōsō no kenkyū*" (Research on the operation of the AIIB and the Belt and Road Initiative), Keizai to kei'ei, Vol. 47, No. 1-2, p. 35.

28 Asakawa, Masatsugu (2020), "*Ajiakaihatsuginkō no gaiyō to shingata koronauirusu (COVID 19) kiki e no taiō*" (Overview of the Asian Development Bank and response to the novel coronavirus (COVID19) crisis), Asian Development Bank.

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/page/576566/adb-president-presentation-nikkei-sdg-forum-05-22v.pdf> (Accessed December 8, 2020)

29 Sankei Shimbun (2018), "*Suriranka no minato ni Chūgoku hata 99-nenkan jōto 'ittai ichiro' saimu omoku 'shakkin no kata' ni ubawa reru*" (Chinese flag to fly in Sri Lanka port-- 99-year lease is heavy price of the Belt and Road and stolen as collateral), January 15, 2018.

<https://www.sankei.com/world/news/180115/wor1801150016-n1.html> (Accessed December 8, 2020)

30 Jiji Press (2020), "*Suriranka, shuyō-kō fukin ni Chūgoku shusshi no kōjō 300 oku-en kibo*" (30 billion yen, China-funded factory near major port in Sri Lanka), December 19, 2020.

influence on Sri Lanka.

From the above points, the Belt and Road Initiative will continue to underpin China's geoeconomic strength as a strategic economic policy. Of course, if China continues to extend what it did at the Port of Hambantota in Sri Lanka to other Belt and Road Initiative countries, neighboring countries may become more wary about any investment plans brought by China. However, China will make use of the influence by utilizing various means, and many neighboring countries do not necessarily have a strong sense of crisis in that respect,³¹ so the Belt and Road Initiative will continue to serve as a source of geoeconomic power for China. If we think about Belt and Road Initiative as China's geoeconomic strength, a key point will be whether the United States can strategically implement economic policies in East Asia that can rival the Belt and Road Initiative. In the wake of President Trump,³² who was clearly suspicious of the Belt and Road Initiative, the level of Biden's opposition to the Belt and Road Initiative will be one of the major focuses in analyzing future East Asian maritime security.

So far, we have looked at the Belt and Road Initiative as an economic policy of geoeconomics, but I now want to examine an import and export policy based on tariffs, which Luttwak sees as a weapon in geoeconomics. A prime example here are the series of tariffs levied between China and President Trump.

Before taking office, President Trump had identified trade imbalances with China as a problem during the 2016 presidential election campaign. Once in office, despite Xi Jinping visiting the United States for a summit meeting in April 2017, no specific improvements to the issue were hammered out, and China announced that its 2017 trade surplus with the U.S. had hit a record high of \$275.81 billion.³³

Given these circumstances, President Trump imposed a rapid succession of tariff measures on China from 2018. Initially, the tariffs were not necessarily focused only on China, but gradually the phrase "imported from China" was added as the target of the tariff measures. These measures had a significant impact on China, which exports a multitude of items to the United States and does the bulk of its business with them. In response to the tariff measures imposed by the Trump administration, China invoked retaliatory tariffs, and both countries engaging in tit-for-tat measures. The figure below outlines the tariffs implemented by both countries.

<https://www.jiji.com/jc/article?k=20201209040919> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

31 Rogin, J., 2019, "China's efforts to undermine democracy are expanding worldwide", Washington Post, June 27, 2019.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/06/27/chinas-efforts-undermine-democracy-are-expanding-worldwide> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

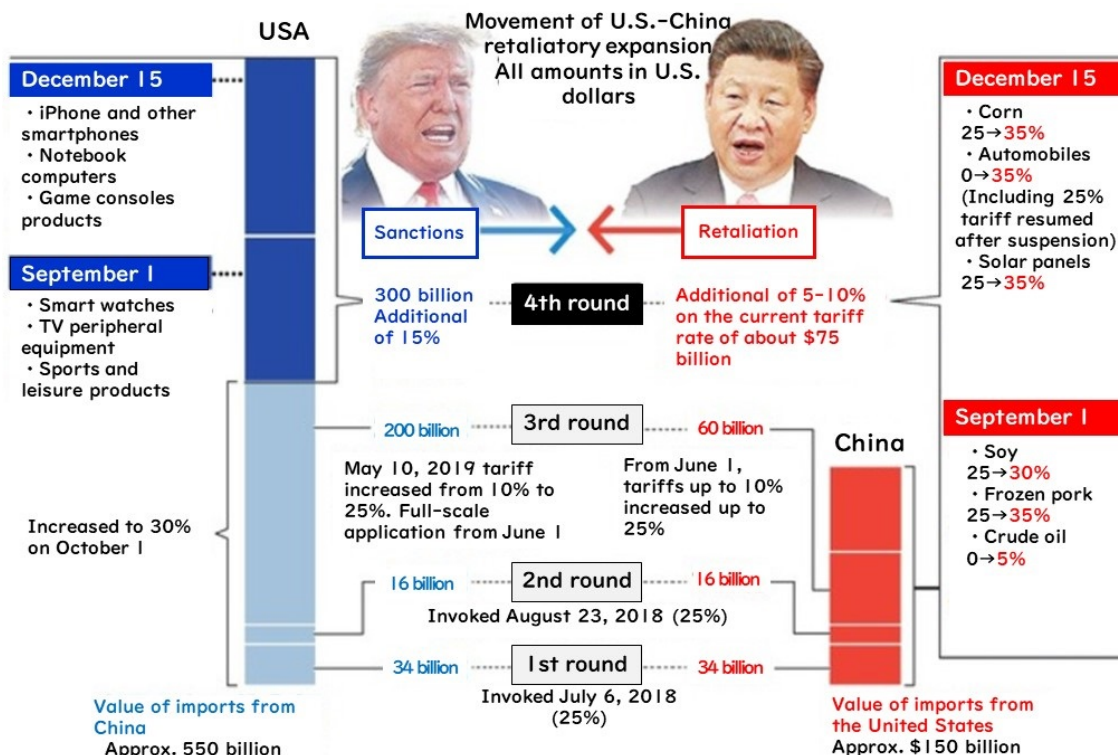
32 For example, Nihon Keizai Shimbun (2020), "*Amerika no Tai chu seisai, infura mo hyōteki 'ittai ichiro' kensei*" (U.S. sanctions against China target infrastructure to control Belt and Road Initiative), August 27, 2020.

<https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO63141650X20C20A8EA2000> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

33 Reuters (218), "*Chūgoku no taibei bōeki kuroji, 17-nen wa kako saikō no 2758 oku-doru = Zeikan tōkyoku*" (Customs authorities: China's trade surplus with the United States hits record high of \$275.8 billion in 2017), January 12, 2018.

<https://jp.reuters.com/article/china-us-trade-record-high-idJPKBN1F10AS> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

Figure 2: Summary of tariffs by the United States and China³⁴



[1] Asahi Shimbun (2019) "Beikoku, taichū seisai kanzei dai 4-dan" o hatsudō chūgoku-gawa mo sokuji hōfuku" (U.S. implements 4th round of tariffs on China, China immediately retaliates), September 1, 2019. <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASM9143F9M91ULFA003.html> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

The exchange of sanctions and retaliations over tariff measures in both the United States and China continued to intensify in this manner, and in 2019, the U.S. and China found themselves in the unusual situation of imposing tariffs on almost all imports from each other's countries. As of December 1, 2020, the situation has not been fundamentally resolved. Furthermore, on September 15, 2020, the first instance of the Dispute Settlement Body of the World Trade Organization (WTO) released a report largely siding with the assertions of China stating that the U.S. tariff measures on Chinese products were unjustified.³⁵ Although the tariff measures in the United States target imports from China, there are concerns that under the modern global supply chain, U.S. measures will cause bad influence on the world economy.³⁶ Some have also criticized President Trump for talking up the results of the trade war against China he started,³⁷ but in reality had shown no effect. Given these various circumstances, it is doubtful that any hardline measures will lead to the expected result for

34 Asahi Shimbun (2019) "Beikoku, tainaka seisai kanz 'dai 4-dan' o hatsudō chūgoku-gawa mo sokuji hōfuku" (U.S. implements 4th round of tariffs on China, China immediately retaliates), September 1, 2019. <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASM9143F9M91ULFA003.html> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

35 WTO, 2020, UNITED STATES — TARIFF MEASURES ON CERTAIN GOODS FROM CHINA, WTO website, 15 September, 2020. https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/543r_e.pdf (Accessed December 9, 2020)

36 Nihon Keizai Shimbun (2019), "Amerika, 6 getsumatsu ni mo Tainaka kanzei dai 4-dan 3805 hinmoku ni saidai 25%" (Round of U.S. tariffs on China at the end of June up to 25% for 3,805 items), May 14, 2019. <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO44755640U9A510C1000000> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

37 Baker, D., 2019, "Confused Again: Trump Thinks His Trade War is Responsible for China's Economic Problems", Center for Economic and Policy Research, January 31, 2019. <http://cepr.net/blogs/beatthe press/trump is confused again thinks his trade war is responsible for china s economic problems> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

the United States in the future.³⁸

Biden has stated that he will not immediately cancel the tariff measures President Trump imposed on China,³⁹ so an eye must be kept on developments in the WTO and the impact on the world economy as this bilateral trade war is expected to continue for some time. However, while Biden’s statement is critical of President Trump’s policy toward China, it raises the concern that if he unconditionally lifts the tariffs that have been imposed, he will “look weak on China.”⁴⁰ In reality, what will happen in the future is uncertain, but given the efforts of the business community in the United States to eliminate tariffs,⁴¹ China would at least expect the changing of presidents from Trump to Biden as an opportunity for a breakthrough of the situation. At the same time, China may be confident that it has withstood the geoeconomic attack of additional tariffs measures from the world’s largest economy in the United States. In fact, the recent strength of China’s economy, which seems to have countered the slowdown of the global economy due to the spread of the novel coronavirus, has made China the sole winner in this.⁴² China’s strong economy can be seen as the source of power of the Chinese Communist Party, and it is possible that China will gain more geoeconomic influence in the turbulent global economy in the future.

3. Summary

The following is a summary of the analysis from the geopolitical and geoeconomic perspectives used by this paper to examine the prospects for maritime security in East Asia.

Table 3 Summary of analysis⁴³

| Perspective | | Future outlook |
|-------------|--|---|
| Geopolitics | Fundamentals derived from geographical factors | Is it possible to deal with a sense of crisis without seeing China’s advance into the ocean as a temporary event? |
| | Alliances and friendships between states | How committed is Biden to the U.S.-Japan alliance and the Quad? |

38 Economist, 2020, “The US-China trading relationship will be fraught for years to come”, Economist, May 9, 2019.

<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2019/05/11/the-us-china-trading-relationship-will-be-fraught-for-years-to-come> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

39 Friedman, T. L., 2020, “Biden Made Sure ‘Trump Is Not Going to Be President for Four More Years’ —Here’s what Joe Biden had to say about the future in our interview”, The New York Times, December 2, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/02/opinion/biden-interview-mcconnell-china-iran.html> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

40 Nihon Keizai Shimbun (2020), “*Baiden-shi, Tai chu kanzei ya bōeki gōi ‘sokuza ni minaosazu’* (Biden to not Immediately Review Tariffs and Trade Agreements with China), December 2, 2020.

<https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO66926570S0A201C2FF2000> (December 9, 2020)

41 Sankei Shimbun (2020), “*Tai chu kanzei, beisan gyōkai kara kaijo motomeru koe tsuyomaru shingata korona no chokugeki de kikyō*” (Impact of Novel Coronavirus Puts Business in Predicament as Calls Grow from American Industry to End Tariffs on China), March 22, 2020.

<https://www.sankei.com/economy/news/200322/ecn2003220007-n1.html> (Accessed December 9, 2020)

42 Sankei Shimbun (2020), “*Koronaka de tsuyomaru Chūgoku hitori-gachi keizai kibo, 2025 nen ni wa Beikoku no 9 wari bijinesu kaidoku*” (China Sole Winner in Corona Pandemic, Economy 90% of U.S. in 2025 [Business Analysis]), November 29, 2020.

<https://www.sankei.com/premium/news/201126/prm2011260007-n1.html> (Accessed November 29, 2020)

43 Table created by the author.

| | | |
|-------------|----------------------|--|
| Goeconomics | Investment policy | To what extent will China establish its economic zone through the Belt and Road Initiative? |
| | Import/export policy | Will Biden abolish the tariff measures in the face of the WTO's decision to recognize China's claim? |

First, from a geopolitical point of view, especially from the point of view of classical geopolitical theorists like Spykman, China's expansionist aims in East Asian maritime security and its associated pressure are inevitable, and this trend is virtually unchangeable. It needs to be seen as a permanent event, not as a temporary one. In alliances and friendships, one of the variables of geopolitics, the focus will be on the extent of Biden's commitment to the Japan-U.S. alliance and the Quad. How will the change in governments of Japan and the United States in 2020 affect the Japan-U.S. alliance and the Quad in the future? While President Trump had a hardline stance against China, he has advocated "America First" and has not always emphasized alliances and friendly relations, so Biden's diplomatic strategy going forward will be something to pay attention to. Moreover, an eye needs to be kept on how Prime Minister Suga, who continued to support former Prime Minister Abe's efforts that were instrumental in strengthening relations with the United States and the Quad countries in his role as Chief Cabinet Secretary, will perpetuate the Abe administration's diplomacy, which will have a major impact on maritime security, and whether it will be distinct from the previous government.

On the other hand, from the perspective of goeconomics, it is suggested that more attention should be paid to the strategic trends of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Belt and Road Initiative should not be understood as simply a global investment plan by Xi Jinping, but as a long-term strategy to increase China's goeconomic power. The assessment of the results of individual investment projects will become clear in the future, but at the very least, it is a fact that China launched the AIIB and is making considerable investments in neighboring countries. President Trump was wary of and opposed to the Belt and Road Initiative, but will Biden be the same? Attention needs to be paid as to whether Biden can adopt a diplomatic strategy that is conscious of a goeconomic balance. While the trade war between the United States and China has not ended yet, it seems that the Chinese economy has not been adversely affected at this point. How will Biden find a way out of this problem where President Trump's hardline measures were sometimes dictated by his personality? Biden must aim to recover the U.S. economy, which has been damaged by the spread of the novel coronavirus through its economic relations with China, while avoiding criticisms of him being weak on China. While it will be very tough-going for Biden, China could take the opportunity of President Trump's departure from government and use the economic benefits to try and destabilize the United States. China's goeconomic influence may relatively increase, while looking at China-U.S. relations in a short term. It will be vital to watch what kind of policy Japan will come up with under the leadership of Prime Minister Suga toward China as it has distanced itself from the Belt and Road Initiative and the trade war between the U.S. and China up until now.

Regardless of a geopolitical or goeconomic perspective, East Asian maritime security basically

consists of China's continued advance into the ocean, even after a change in government from Trump to Biden, despite its uncertainties situation. China's push will become even more active, supported by the firmness of its economy, which includes the Belt and Road Initiative, and the confidence gained from the trade war. It is the cooperative framework between states, such as the Japan-U.S. alliance and the Quad, that can counter this future, and the key to this is the next president, Joe Biden. Maritime security in East Asia shows no signs of stabilizing from both a geopolitical and geopolitical perspective, but despite this difficult situation, we long for and enjoy freedom of the seas, and must pursue sustainable development through the oceans.

The philosopher Sartre emphasized the importance of freedom in human society, while noting that at the same time responsibility comes with freedom.⁴⁴ Freedom is the principle of the seas. As such, all nations that enjoy freedom of the seas also bear complete responsibility. In order to fulfill that responsibility, countries around the world not only maintain maritime security in a heteronomous manner by establishing various legal systems represented by international law, but also must autonomously maintain maritime security under the banner of the value derived by our predecessors—freedom of the seas. Moving forward, we should expect to see discussions on maritime governance take these points into consideration.

4. Conclusion

This paper discussed that if Biden is elected the next president of the United States, as most expect, the balance of power between the United States and China would lead to the possibility that China will regain its dominance in the near future, especially from the perspective of geoeconomics. Japan would be greatly affected by this as an important stakeholder in East Asian maritime security and by its geographical proximity to China. In spite of this situation, the bulk of the reporting on the U.S. presidential election in Japan sensationally addresses the movements of both camps, and it appears that few reports have focused on the future impact on maritime security in East Asia. So, what should be Japan's approach to East Asian maritime security, where China's advance into the ocean is becoming normalized?

Based on this discussion, what Japan needs after the U.S. presidential election is a clear vision and leadership on maritime security that is unique to Japan, while basing on alliances and friendships, such as the Japan-U.S. alliance and the Quad. Geopolitics drives the force of China's expansion into the ocean, which is thought to be unchanged. Geoeconomics drives the possibility of China regaining influence in relations with the United States. How should we accept such a vision of the future dispassionately shown by geopolitics and geoeconomics, and how should we deal with it? It will require the continued pursuit of the wisdom without interruption to autonomously maintain the future of East Asian maritime security without disdain for China's strategic actions.⁴⁵ Let's hope this article will usher in that discussion.

44 Sartre, Jean-Paul (trans. Ibuki Takehiro, 1996), *Jitsuzon shugi to wa nanika* (Existentialism Is a Humanism), Jimbun Shoin.

45 For more details, see Sakamoto Shigeaki (2020), "*Anadotte wa naranai chūgoku—ima nihon no umi de nani ga okite iru no ka*" (China Must not be Underestimated-What is Happening in Japan's Oceans Now), Shinzansha.