

JEFFREY W. HORNING

Ground-Based Intermediate-Range Missiles in the Indo-Pacific

Assessing the Positions of U.S. Allies



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About This Report

This research was part of a larger project that assessed the warfighting benefits and limitations, as well as the strategic opportunities and risks, of the United States fielding ground-based intermediate-range missiles (GBIRMs) in the Pacific. This report analyzes the likelihood of U.S. treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific region—Australia, Japan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand—hosting U.S. conventionally armed GBIRMs. I argue that, across all five U.S. allies, the likely receptivity to hosting such systems is very low as long as current domestic political conditions and regional security trends hold.

The report also examines four possible alternatives to permanent basing of these missile systems on the territories of U.S. allies: (1) co-development and/or sales of GBIRMs to an ally for it to command and control as its own, (2) U.S. deployment of GBIRMs to an allied territory in a crisis situation, (3) peacetime rotational deployment, and (4) deployment on Guam or one of the Compact of Free Association states. With each of these alternatives facing drawbacks, I recommend a variation of the first alternative—should the United States continue to pursue GBIRMs for this region. Specifically, instead of a focus on immediate deployment of U.S. GBIRMs, the option most likely to succeed would be to help Japan in its efforts to develop and deploy an arsenal of anti-ship standoff missile capabilities.

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Thank you to all.

Summary

Issue

This report analyzes the likelihood of U.S. treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific region—Australia, Japan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Thailand—hosting U.S. conventionally armed ground-based intermediate-range missiles (GBIRMs). I argue that, across all five U.S. allies, the likely receptivity to hosting such systems is very low as long as current domestic political conditions and regional security trends hold.

Approach

The research for this report draws from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including government documents, public speeches and interviews, subject-matter expert analysis, and media reporting. With the exception of the information related to Japan, for any document or speech in which English was not the primary language, I relied on an English translation. For information related to Japan, I used both Japanese language primary sources and translated English sources. When using Japanese and Korean names in this report, I use the format utilized in these countries; specifically, last name followed by first name. The majority of the research and analysis contained herein is current up to late 2020, with some exceptions.

Conclusions

- Finding an ally willing to host GBIRMs is more challenging than finding allies willing to host other types of U.S. military forces, such as air bases.
- Despite Thailand being the oldest U.S. regional partner, the continuing presence of a military-backed government, coupled with the fact that this government shows a propensity to pursue closer ties with China, prevents the United States from strengthening military relations. As long as these factors remain, the United States would not want to have Thailand host GBIRMs—and, were the United States to ask, Thailand would be highly unlikely to accept.
- The U.S. alliance with the Philippines is in a state of flux, although it is improving. While the Philippine public and elites generally support the United States and the alliance, President Rodrigo Duterte has pursued policies that negatively affect ties. Specifically, Duterte has advocated closer ties with Beijing while pursuing policies that weaken core pillars of the U.S.-Philippine alliance. As long as future Philippine leaders continue similar policies, including opposition to a permanent U.S. military presence, the Philippines is extremely unlikely to accept the deployment of U.S. GBIRMs.

- Although the alliance between the United States and the ROK was forged during the Korean War, the ROK also retains a close relationship with China. Chinese opposition to the ROK hosting a U.S. defensive missile system, the ROK government's susceptibility to Chinese pressure, and a general deterioration of U.S.-ROK relations suggest that it is highly unlikely that the ROK would consent to host U.S. GBIRMs.
- The U.S. alliance with Australia is strong. Australia also remains economically close to China, but their bilateral ties have been fraying. Although Australia's strong historical ties with the United States and developments in 2021 that indicate an expansion of U.S. access and presence make it impossible to rule out the possibility of Australia being willing to host U.S. GBIRMs, Australia's historical reluctance to host permanent foreign bases, combined with the geographical distance of Australia from continental Asia, makes this possibility unlikely, even as Australia agrees to an increase in U.S. rotational presence.
- Because of Japan's willingness to strengthen its alliance with the United States and pursue efforts to bolster its own defense capabilities vis-à-vis China, Japan is the regional ally that appears most likely to host U.S. GBIRMs. That possibility, however, remains low, heavily caveated by the challenge of accepting any increase in U.S. presence and deploying weapons that are explicitly offensive in nature.
- A U.S. strategy that relies heavily on an ally agreeing to permanently host GBIRMs during peacetime would face serious risks of failure due to an inability to find a willing partner.

Recommendations

The report also examines four possible alternatives to permanent basing of these missile systems on the territories of U.S. allies: (1) U.S. co-development of GBIRMs with and/or sales of GBIRMs to an ally for it to command and control as its own, (2) U.S. deployment of GBIRMs to an allied territory in a crisis situation, (3) peacetime rotational deployment, and (4) deployment on Guam or one of the Compact of Free Association states. Because each of these alternatives faces drawbacks, the report recommends a variation of the first alternative—should the United States continue to pursue GBIRMs for this region.

Specifically, instead of a focus on deployment of U.S. GBIRMs, the option most likely to succeed would be to help Japan in its efforts to develop and deploy an arsenal of ground-based, anti-ship standoff missile capabilities. Although this option is not a U.S. GBIRM, it should be seen as a first step in a longer-term U.S. strategy in which, over time, the United States might be able to encourage Japan to procure, either on its own or together with the United States, anti-ship cruise missiles with longer ranges. Although these missiles still would not be capable of deep strikes into China, if they were deployed on Japan's southwestern islands or even Kyūshū, they would be able to cover ship movements in the Taiwan Strait, the East China Sea, and some of China's east coast, thereby extending the range at which Chinese assets could be held at war-planning risk and potentially contributing to a maritime interdiction mission in the Taiwan Strait.

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Introduction

When the United States withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty on August 2, 2019, it opened for itself the opportunity to develop and deploy ground-based cruise and ballistic missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 km—what this report calls *ground-based intermediate-range missiles* (GBIRMs)—to bolster its military balance with Russia and China.¹ But the U.S. withdrawal also sparked a debate regarding where the United States could deploy such missiles once they are developed. In the Indo-Pacific, this became a critical topic because China was never a signatory to the INF Treaty, enabling it to develop and field a wide array of capabilities that the United States and Russia were prohibited from fielding, including the DF-26, the world’s longest-range conventionally armed ballistic missile.² Many Chinese missiles use solid fuel—offering numerous operational benefits over liquid-fueled systems—and use road-mobile launchers, making them more difficult to find.³

Considering this threat, then—U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said that the United States is hoping to develop and deploy a new conventionally armed GBIRM to the Indo-Pacific “sooner, rather than later.”⁴ The strategic logic that underlies this thinking did not change with the transition of administrations in Washington. Nor does the uncertainty of how U.S. allies would respond to Washington’s overtures to host GBIRMs within their countries. There are several reasons why U.S. allies could deny access to and use of their territories, including fears that hosting such systems could intensify a regional arms race with China; the

¹ Other research has discussed the postulated operational advantages and limits of GBIRMs. See, for example, Jacob Cohn, Timothy A. Walton, Adam Lemon, and Toshi Yoshihara, *Leveling the Playing Field: Reintroducing U.S. Theater-Range Missiles in a Post-INF World*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019; and Jacob L. Heim, *Missiles for Asia? The Need for Operational Analysis of U.S. Theater Ballistic Missiles in the Pacific*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-945-A, 2016. This report focuses on the prospects for U.S. treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific region agreeing to host such missiles.

² Missile Defense Project, “Missiles of China,” webpage, *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, last updated April 12, 2021a.

³ Jacob L. Heim, “The Iranian Missile Threat to Air Bases: A Distant Second to China’s Conventional Deterrent,” *Air & Space Power Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 4, July–August 2015, pp. 36–37.

⁴ Joe Gould, “With INF Treaty Dead, Esper Seeks New Missiles in the Pacific. Is Capitol Hill on Board?” *Defense News*, August 7, 2019; and Jesse Johnson, “U.S. Looks to Deploy New Missiles to Asia, Defense Chief Says amid Tensions with China,” *Japan Times*, August 4, 2019.

risk of the deployment being seen as provocative, sparking harsh reactions from Beijing; and fears of entrapment in a conflict between the United States and China that does not directly involve the ally.⁵ There are also potential reasons why U.S. allies might agree to host. Most important among them is that the forward deployment of such systems—which are harder than air and naval systems to move out of theater—could reassure anxious allies at the front line of great power competition, since such deployment would be seen as a concrete reflection of U.S. security commitment that increases U.S. warfighting options and improves the survivability of U.S. conventional capabilities.

This report argues that, although operational considerations are important, there are significant and unavoidable political realities associated with deploying U.S. GBIRMs onto allied lands that policymakers must consider. I find that, across all U.S. allies, the likely receptivity to hosting such systems is very low as long as current domestic political conditions and regional security trends hold. Specifically, it is highly unlikely that Thailand, the Philippines, or the Republic of Korea (ROK) would agree to host U.S. GBIRMs, and there is a small likelihood that Australia or Japan would do so, although the possibility that an agreement might be struck with Tokyo is only slightly greater. This assessment reveals that finding an ally willing to host GBIRMs is more challenging than finding allies willing to host other types of U.S. military forces, such as air bases.⁶

Because finding a host for U.S. GBIRMs is unlikely, this report ends with an examination of four possible alternatives to permanent basing on allied territories: (1) U.S. co-development of GBIRMs with and/or sales of GBIRMs to an ally for it to command and control as its own, (2) U.S. deployment of the missiles to an allied territory in a crisis situation, (3) peacetime rotational deployment, and (4) deployment on Guam or one of the Compact of Free Association states. Each of these alternatives faces drawbacks, so the report concludes by recommending a variation of the first alternative—should the United States continue to pursue GBIRMs for the Indo-Pacific region. Instead of a focus on deployment of U.S. GBIRMs, the option most likely to succeed would be to help Japan in its efforts to develop and deploy an arsenal of ground-based anti-ship standoff missile capabilities. This incremental approach would nevertheless help hold Chinese maritime power-projection platforms at risk, and it would impose war-planning costs on Chinese forces. Once these ground-based platforms are deployed, the United States can work with Japan to gradually expand their ranges over time.

⁵ Cohn et al., 2019, p. 30.

⁶ For example, the ROK and Japan already host permanent U.S. Air Force operating bases.

Cases

This chapter examines all five regional U.S. allies to understand political conditions and assess the likelihood that these states might agree to host GBIRMs. It begins with a brief look at Thailand, followed by a deep dive into the remaining U.S. allies (Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and the ROK). Thailand is not engaged at the same level of analysis as other U.S. allies because of the lingering effects of a coup and the subsequent deterioration of ties. Importantly, the majority of the research and analysis contained in this chapter is current up to late 2020, with some minor exceptions where more-recent events have been referenced as areas of possible change.

Thailand

Thailand is the oldest U.S. regional partner, having established diplomatic relations with the United States in 1818 and signed a Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1833, marking the first U.S. treaty with a country in the Indo-Pacific region. In 1954, Thailand became a formal treaty ally via the 1954 Manila Pact that formed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. Despite the dissolution of the organization in 1977, the Manila Pact remains in force. This pact, together with the Thanat-Rusk communiqué of 1962 and the 2012 Joint Vision Statement for the Thai-U.S. Defense Alliance, constitutes the basis of U.S. security commitments to Thailand.¹

On May 22, 2014, however, a military junta ousted the democratically elected government, effectively freezing relations and resulting in the United States scaling back its military engagement. As required by U.S. law, Washington suspended more than \$4.7 million of security-related assistance and took other measures, including the cancellation of high-level engagements, exercises, and training programs with the military and police.² The only excep-

¹ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, “U.S. Relations with Thailand,” bilateral relations fact sheet, May 4, 2021; and “Text of Thailand-US Joint Vision Statement,” *Bangkok Post*, November 16, 2012.

² The \$4.7 million was composed of Foreign Military Financing and funding for the International Military Education and Training Programme. For example, the United States canceled the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training naval exercise, underway during the coup, and the planned Hanuman Guardian army exercise. Scot Marciel, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs,

tions were the Cobra Gold exercise, nonmilitary aid, and humanitarian programs. Over time, engagement has been restored.³ Yet there are two reasons why Thailand hosting GBIRMs remains highly unlikely.

First, since the coup, Thailand has not held fair elections resulting in a democratically elected government. Instead, the forces behind the coup remain in power, with a pro-military government pushing the country further down the road of authoritarianism.⁴ Observers recognize the February 2019 elections as anything but fair, and the government continues to weaken Thailand's democratic institutions.⁵ The continuing presence of the military-backed government in Bangkok prevents the United States from strengthening U.S.-Thai military relations.⁶ As long as this remains true, requesting this regime to host U.S. GBIRMs is highly unlikely.

Second, the Thai government has shown a propensity to pursue closer ties with China, particularly since the coup.⁷ Research reveals that Thai military officers and officials view Chinese influence on Thailand's security policies as now equal to that of the United States.⁸ Some analysts have argued that this is because Thailand views China as benign rather than a revisionist power or a military threat.⁹ Others have found that Thailand sees itself as reliant on China for protection against military threats.¹⁰ How much influence these views have on defense decisions remains an ongoing debate, but Thailand has not only purchased arms from China, such as submarines and tanks, but also allowed the People's Liberation Army Navy to access the Sattahip Naval Base (a port of call often used by the United States) and

"Thailand: A Democracy at Risk," testimony presented before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Washington, D.C., June 24, 2014.

³ In 2017, senior officials began meeting, culminating in October 2017, when President Trump hosted the coup leader and current prime minister, Prayut Chan-ocha. In February 2018, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., met with his counterpart and other senior officials in Thailand, marking the first visit by a U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since the coup. This was followed by two visits by then-Secretary of Defense James Mattis. Finally, in November 2019, their defense establishments signed a vision statement outlining areas for defense cooperation.

⁴ Zomber Peter, "2019 a False Dawn for Democracy in Thailand, Analysts Say," Voice of America, December 28, 2019.

⁵ Zachary Abuza, "Thailand's Stolen Election," *The Diplomat*, June 1, 2019.

⁶ Rattaphol Onsanit and Wasamon Audjarint, "In Thailand, US Threads Between Military Interest and Democratic Ideals," Voice of America, March 16, 2020.

⁷ Xian Hong Say, "Growing Sino-Thai Relations and the Challenge to US Foreign Policy," Future Directions International, August 7, 2019.

⁸ John Blaxland and Greg Raymond, *Tipping the Balance in Southeast Asia? Thailand, the United States and China*, Canberra, Australia: Australian National University, November 2017.

⁹ Zachary Abuza, "America Should Be Realistic About Its Alliance with Thailand," War on the Rocks, January 2, 2020.

¹⁰ Blaxland and Raymond, 2017, p. 12.

exercised with China on an annual basis.¹¹ These closer ties represent a major reason why the United States “should not harbor any illusions that Thailand will be an active partner on China-related challenges.”¹²

Taken together, these factors provide a strong reason to conclude that the United States would not want to have Thailand host GBIRMs—and, were the United States to ask, Thailand would be highly unlikely to accept.

The Philippines

The U.S. alliance with the Philippines is in a state of flux. While the Philippine public and elites generally support the United States and the alliance itself, current President Rodrigo Duterte has pursued policies that negatively affect ties. Specifically, since his election in May 2016, Duterte has advocated closer ties with Beijing while concurrently pursuing policies that weaken core pillars of the U.S.-Philippine alliance. Although Duterte has backtracked somewhat on these approaches, leading to some improvement in U.S.-Philippine ties, as long as future Philippine leaders continue similar policies, including opposition to a permanent U.S. military presence, the Philippines is extremely unlikely to accept the deployment of U.S. GBIRMs.¹³

Bilateral Relations

Despite enjoying a mutual defense treaty since 1951, the Philippines has not had a large U.S. presence since the United States withdrew its forces in 1991. As of September 2020, for example, the total number of U.S. military personnel stood at 185.¹⁴

The alliance served an important purpose in the Cold War, as the Philippines proved critical to the U.S. war effort in Vietnam because of its proximity to the theater of operations. Bilateral relations were not always smooth, however, because the Philippines challenged U.S. peacetime access to its bases.¹⁵ By the late 1980s, a rise of anti-U.S. sentiment began to complicate the relationship because Philippine citizens saw the U.S. military presence as a vestige

¹¹ Abuza, 2020; and Marwaan Macan-Markar, “Thailand and China: Brothers in Arms,” *Nikkei Asia*, February 2, 2017.

¹² Brian Harding, “Moving the U.S.-Thailand Alliance Forward,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 7, 2018.

¹³ Duterte’s term ends in June 2022. As of this writing, it is unclear whether someone who shares his views will succeed him when the election is held in May.

¹⁴ Total: 185 (U.S. Army: 12; U.S. Navy: 9; U.S. Marine Corps: 154; and U.S. Air Force: 10). Defense Manpower Data Center, “Military and Civilian Personnel by Service/Agency by State/Country (Updated Quarterly): September 2020,” undated.

¹⁵ Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Jennifer Kavanagh, *Access Granted: Political Challenges to the U.S. Overseas Military Presence, 1945–2014*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1339-AF, 2016.

of colonialism and an affront to Philippine sovereignty. In 1991, together with the closing of Clark Air Force Base after a volcanic eruption, the Philippine Senate voted against renewal of the lease for Subic Bay Naval Station, which led to the end of the permanent U.S. military presence.¹⁶ The alliance continued, however, and, on February 10, 1998, the allies signed a Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) that allowed their forces to conduct joint exercises in the Philippines.¹⁷ Starting in 2002, U.S. special operations forces were deployed to the Philippines to train and advise Philippine forces to eradicate terrorism cells.¹⁸

Near the end of this operation, on April 28, 2014, Manila and Washington entered into a ten-year Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). Seen as a means to modernize and strengthen the alliance, EDCA operationalizes the VFA by providing for an increased rotational presence of U.S. troops, planes, and ships in the Philippines and access to Philippine military bases.¹⁹ EDCA also allows the United States to construct facilities and allows its troops to access and pre-position defense equipment, but only on five agreed-upon Philippine military bases.²⁰ Just getting EDCA confirmed as constitutional in the Philippines, however, took two years, following two years of negotiations.²¹ Government workers and cause-oriented groups opposed it as unconstitutional, erroneously arguing, among other items, that EDCA would permit the United States to establish military bases anywhere in the Philippines and would lead to a permanent U.S. troop presence (which is prohibited by the

¹⁶ David E. Sanger, "Philippines Orders U.S. to Leave Strategic Navy Base at Subic Bay," *New York Times*, December 28, 1991; and Philip Shenon, "Philippine Senate Votes to Reject U.S. Base Renewal," *New York Times*, September 16, 1991.

¹⁷ It was made effective on May 27, 1999, following Philippine Senate concurrence. Like a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), the VFA contains rules for the entry and departure of U.S. personnel sent to the Philippines (including guidelines for criminal behavior), the movement of military vessels and aircraft, and the import and export of equipment and supplies. Government of the United States of America and Government of the Republic of the Philippines, Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the United States of America Regarding the Treatment of United States Armed Forces Visiting the Philippines, Manila, Philippines, February 10, 1998.

¹⁸ The Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) stayed active in the country until 2015. At its height, JSOTF-P reportedly had up to 600 U.S. military personnel in the country. Sam LaGrone, "U.S. Officially Ends Special Operations Task Force in the Philippines, Some Advisors May Remain," USNI News, February 27, 2015.

¹⁹ Michael Bueza, "Explainer: Visiting Forces Agreement," Rappler, January 31, 2020.

²⁰ These are Cesar Basa Air Base and Fort Magsaysay (both in Luzon); Antonio Bautista Air Base (Palawan); Mactan-Benito Ebuen Air Base (Visayas); and Lumbia Air Base (Mindanao).

²¹ Renato Cruz de Castro, "Philippine Supreme Court Approves EDCA: Unlocking the Door for the Return of U.S. Strategic Footprint in Southeast Asia," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, February 1, 2016; and "What You Need to Know About EDCA," CNN Philippines, last updated April 14, 2016.

1987 constitution).²² Despite the opposition, the Philippines Supreme Court approved EDCA in January 2016.²³

Despite the Mutual Defense Treaty, the VFA, and EDCA, the 2016 election of Duterte brought unforeseen challenges to the alliance that have strained bilateral ties. As noted above, as long as someone like Duterte is president or advocates for similar policies, the possibility of the United States deploying GBIRMs to the Philippines would be remote. After assuming office, Duterte moved to distance the Philippines from the United States. For example, unlike his predecessors, he has conducted less consultation with the United States on defense and foreign affairs issues.²⁴ He also has spent much time insulting the United States and, in January 2020, threatened to end the VFA.²⁵ In February 2020, he followed through on his threat, signing a notice to terminate it.²⁶ In June, however, he suspended his decision to abrogate the agreement, extending the renegotiation period and thereby keeping the VFA intact (he did so again two more times before the VFA was restored).²⁷ Although Washington welcomed the move, it demonstrated the alliance's ongoing challenges. The VFA's termination was unlikely to have any direct legal consequences for the Mutual Defense Treaty and EDCA, but it would have made operationalizing those agreements difficult because the VFA is needed for U.S. forces to be in the Philippines.

Duterte has also worked to recalibrate and strengthen relations with China and Russia. In September 2016, he announced that he would "open alliances" with China and Russia.²⁸ The next month, Duterte not only threatened to end EDCA but also announced his "separation from the United States" and a realignment of relations to align the Philippines with China and Russia "against the world."²⁹ Duterte has also shown his willingness to pursue rapprochement with Beijing despite an ongoing territorial dispute. In addition to signing deals

²² Julliane Love de Jesus, "Protest Greets Start of Balikatan War Games," *Inquirer.net*, May 5, 2014; and Tetch Torres-Tupas, "Gov't Workers, Militant Groups Urge SC to Declare EDCA Unconstitutional," *Inquirer.net*, June 27, 2014. The constitutional provision referenced in text is Article XVIII, Sec. 25.

²³ EDCA will continue to be in force after ten years unless terminated by the United States or the Philippines.

²⁴ Lucio Blanco Pitlo III, "Philippine Security Relations with the United States and Japan Under Duterte: Bending, Not Breaking," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, October 10, 2017.

²⁵ Sofia Tomacruz, "After U.S. Cancels Bato's Visa, Duterte Threatens to Scrap Visiting Forces Agreement," *Rappler*, January 23, 2020a.

²⁶ With it signed, the VFA was set to terminate six months after the United States received written notification. Sofia Tomacruz, "Philippines Sends VFA Notice of Termination to U.S.," *Rappler*, February 11, 2020b.

²⁷ Federico D. Pascual, Jr., "Duterte Suspends VFA Termination," *Philstar.com*, June 4, 2020. Duterte extended it for another six months in November 2020, a month before the expiry of the six-month window. He extended it for a third time in June 2021. "Philippines Extends Suspension of VFA Abrogation for Another Six Months," *CNN Philippines*, last updated November 12, 2020; and Sofia Tomacruz, "Duterte Again Extends VFA for Another 6 Months," *Rappler*, June 14, 2021.

²⁸ Manuel Mogato and Enrico dela Cruz, "Philippines' Duterte Wants to 'Open Alliances' with Russia, China," *Reuters*, September 26, 2016.

²⁹ "Philippines' Duterte Says Will Not Sever US Ties," *Yahoo News*, October 22, 2016.

with Beijing worth \$24 billion, he backed a joint oil and gas exploration deal in the South China Sea.³⁰ He even blamed the United States for this situation, insisting that Washington “. . . practically drove me into the waiting arms of the Chinese government. You were the ones responsible Then I went to Russia.”³¹ This is a reference to Manila seeking closer ties with Beijing and Moscow after Washington refused to sell it 26,000 assault rifles because of human rights violations.³²

China and Russia have taken advantage of the situation. For example, the shortfall in assault rifles was partly filled by a Chinese donation of ammunition, 6,000 assault rifles, and hundreds of sniper rifles, followed by another donation of grenade launchers and four small patrol boats.³³ Russia has also stepped into the breach, donating 5,000 assault rifles and helmets, 20 trucks, and almost one million rounds of ammunition and, in a subsequent deal, 12 helicopters.³⁴ There have also been reports of Manila being interested in purchasing grenade launchers from Moscow, but, because the purchase would mean that the Philippines is violating existing U.S. sanctions on Russia, the sale does not appear to have occurred.³⁵

Despite these challenges, the alliance with the United States remains intact. Ongoing Chinese provocations against the Philippines and its interests have soured their bilateral ties, causing Duterte to make an about-face with China.³⁶ At the same time, China’s behavior has brought U.S.-Philippine ties closer together again. This has been buttressed by strong proponents in Manila’s political and military establishments and the Philippine public.³⁷ Polling shows that, in 2019, 80 percent of Philippine citizens expressed a favorable view of the United

³⁰ Richard Javad Heydarian, “The Perils of a Philippine-China Joint Development Agreement in South China Sea,” Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, April 27, 2018; Pia Ranada, “Duterte Bringing Home \$24B Worth of Deals from China,” Rappler, October 21, 2016; and Raissa Robles, “China Promised Duterte US\$9 Billion. He’s Had Only US\$924 Million in Loans and Grants. Why?” *South China Morning Post*, October 26, 2019.

³¹ Rodrigo Roa Duterte, “Speech During the Mass Oath Taking of the Newly Elected Officers of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (FFCCII),” Manila, Philippines, August 6, 2019.

³² Jack Moore, “Philippines: U.S. Stops Sale of 26,000 Assault Rifles amid Duterte Drug War Concerns,” *Newsweek*, November 1, 2016.

³³ Manuel Mogato, “China Gives Guns to Philippines to Show It’s a Friend, Not a Foe,” Reuters, October 5, 2017a; and Manuel Mogato, “China Donates Four Small Boats and Grenade Launchers to Philippines,” Reuters, July 29, 2018b.

³⁴ Manuel Mogato, “Philippines, Russia Sign Two Military Deals,” Reuters, October 25, 2017b; and “Philippines Has Ordered 12 Helicopters from Russia,” CNN Philippines, January 24, 2020.

³⁵ Manuel Mogato, “Exclusive: Philippines Could Breach U.S. Sanctions If Russia Arms Deal Proceeds,” Reuters, July 18, 2018a.

³⁶ Derek Grossman, “China Has Lost the Philippines Despite Duterte’s Best Efforts,” *Foreign Policy*, May 3, 2021.

³⁷ Eleanor Albert, “The U.S.-Philippines Defense Alliance,” Council on Foreign Relations, October 21, 2016.

States while 42 percent expressed a similar view of China.³⁸ Similarly, 64 percent said that they saw the United States as their “most dependable ally” in the future, in contrast to 9 percent who said they saw China this way.³⁹ Although this 64 percent is a majority, it represents a 19-point drop since 2014, likely reflecting the tumultuous ties after Duterte became president.⁴⁰ Conversely, 62 percent of Philippine citizens said they viewed China as the greatest future threat to the Philippines.⁴¹ Most significantly, in 2017, 75 percent said they thought that “having U.S. military personnel based in the Philippines is a good thing,” compared with the 20 percent who did not.⁴² This is supported by the Philippine elite. Shortly after Duterte moved to terminate the VFA, two senior Philippine military officers said that his decision was very unpopular among the military, echoing reports of members of Duterte’s own cabinet and the Philippine Senate.⁴³

Comments on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Treaty or Hosting U.S. GBIRMs

Despite the pro-U.S. sentiment and the recent trend of improving U.S.-Philippine ties, as long as Manila views regional dynamics like the Duterte administration has, it is extremely unlikely that Manila would host U.S. GBIRMs. When the United States withdrew from the INF Treaty—despite stating that it was interested in developing only conventionally armed GBIRMs—Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana lamented the U.S. move as potentially “. . . trigger[ing] a nuclear arms race around the world.”⁴⁴ He also signaled the reluctance of the Philippines to host U.S. GBIRMs for fear of making the Philippines a target of China, saying, “Should there be a shooting war and nuclear weapons would be used, I think the Philippines would be a fair target for anybody who’s against the United States.”⁴⁵ Although not directly referring to GBIRMs, Lorenzana has also expressed his fear of U.S. actions dragging the Philippines into war with China. In speaking about U.S. naval activities in the South China Sea, Lorenzana said, “It is not the lack of reassurance that worries me. . . . It is being

³⁸ Pew Research Center, “Views of the United States Are Generally Positive in the Asia-Pacific,” February 25, 2020.

³⁹ Pew Research Center, “Many See U.S. as Their Country’s Top Ally,” December 4, 2019b.

⁴⁰ Pew Research Center, “In Many Countries, Fewer Now See U.S. as a Top Ally,” December 4, 2019a.

⁴¹ Laura Silver, “U.S. Is Seen as a Top Ally in Many Countries—But Others View It as a Threat,” Pew Research Center, December 5, 2019.

⁴² Jacob Poushter and Caldwell Bishop, “People in the Philippines Still Favor U.S. over China, but Gap Is Narrowing,” Pew Research Center, September 21, 2017.

⁴³ J. C. Gotinga, “Military Members Disagree with VFA Termination—Senior Officers,” Rappler, February 11, 2020.

⁴⁴ John Reed and Kathrin Hille, “Philippines Warns of China Threat After US Nuclear Pact Exit,” *Financial Times*, February 20, 2019.

⁴⁵ Reed and Hille, 2019.

involved in a war that we do not seek and do not want.”⁴⁶ Given that any agreement by the Philippines to host U.S. GBIRMs would provoke a strong response from China, Lorenzana’s sentiment is also applicable to hosting such capabilities, since their usage could potentially involve the Philippines in a conflict of which it is not a direct participant.

Duterte has also expressed reluctance. He has stated not only his refusal to host a permanent U.S. presence but also his refusal to host U.S. GBIRMs. Referencing troops, Duterte said, “. . . you have my solemn promise that I will never allow any foreign troops. . . . I will never allow them in my land.”⁴⁷ Then, shifting to GBIRMs, he said, “That can never happen. That will never happen because I will not allow it. . . . it’s also a violation of the Constitution.”⁴⁸ The exact violation he is citing is unclear, as the presence of foreign bases and troops is prohibited as are nuclear weapons. But given that Duterte said, “You cannot place nuclear arms in the Philippines,” he may have been referring to nuclear-armed GBIRMs, even though—as mentioned earlier—the U.S. Department of Defense has emphasized that it is considering only *conventionally armed* GBIRMs.⁴⁹ Should Duterte’s successors express similar concerns of becoming an unwanted participant in a war with China or a reluctance to host a permanent U.S. presence out of concerns of potentially violating the constitution, the introduction of U.S. GBIRMs into the Philippines is highly unlikely.

The Republic of Korea

Although the alliance between the United States and the ROK was forged during the Korean War, the ROK also retains a close relationship with China to help manage and resolve continuing North Korean security challenges. The ROK also shares close economic ties with China. Because of experiences of Chinese opposition to the ROK hosting a U.S. defensive missile system and the ROK government’s past susceptibility to Chinese pressure, combined with a general deterioration of U.S.-ROK relations, it is highly unlikely that the ROK would consent to host U.S. GBIRMs.

Bilateral Relations

The United States and the ROK have been allies since signing the Mutual Defense Treaty in 1953.⁵⁰ The terms by which the United States is granted facilities and areas are contained in

⁴⁶ Jason Gutierrez, “Philippine Official, Fearing War with China, Seeks Review of U.S. Treaty,” *New York Times*, March 5, 2019.

⁴⁷ Duterte, 2019, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Duterte, 2019, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Duterte, 2019, p. 4.

⁵⁰ United States and Republic of Korea, Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea, Washington, D.C., October 1, 1953.

a SOFA and subsequent revisions and additions.⁵¹ As of late 2020, the ROK hosts 68 installations and 26,416 permanently stationed U.S. military personnel.⁵² This consists primarily of U.S. Army units, although other services are represented, such as the Seventh Air Force. Not counted is an additional rotational heavy brigade combat team manned with 4,000 personnel.

Although periodic flare-ups stress the alliance following accidents or incidents by U.S. personnel, such as a 2002 accident in which a U.S. armored vehicle struck and killed two 14-year-old Korean schoolgirls, the most-consistent challenges have been debates over when wartime operational control will transfer from the United States to the ROK and the allies' separate approaches to North Korea. In recent years, the Trump administration's approach to the alliance caused considerable stress that increased bilateral tensions. For example, continuing attacks that he had begun prior to becoming President, Trump was dismissive about the alliance's value and complained about the cost of protecting the ROK, saying such things as, "... we're protecting South Korea with 28,000 soldiers. . . . They pay us peanuts."⁵³ Such statements aggravated ROK fears of U.S. troop reductions and U.S. abandonment and raised questions over U.S. commitment. These fears were further aggravated by Trump's approach to negotiations of the bilateral Special Measures Agreement, which outlines the ROK's burden-sharing costs of the alliance. The Trump administration's demand of a 400-percent increase in ROK contributions was seen as exorbitant, angering the ROK.⁵⁴ Although the Biden administration's approach has provided some relief to Seoul's angst regarding Trump's criticism of the ROK and transactional approach, underlying issues continue to cause tension that would make a U.S. request for the ROK to host GBIRMs difficult. In addition to ongoing disagreements over the transfer of operational control, there are lingering fears in the ROK that a Biden administration will return to the pre-Trump status quo approach with North Korea that minimizes the ROK's role, and the allies will likely continue to differ in their strategic approaches to China.⁵⁵ On top of that, the Trump administration's actions scarred bilateral ties beyond any one administration because they served to call into question among

⁵¹ United States of America and the Republic of Korea, Facilities and Areas and the Status of United States Armed Forces in Korea, Seoul, Korea, July 9, 1966; United States Forces Korea, "SOFA Documents," webpage, undated.

⁵² Total: 26,416 (U.S. Army: 18,066; U.S. Navy: 333; U.S. Air Force: 7,792; U.S. Marines: 223). Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020.

⁵³ "Presidential Candidate Donald Trump at Liberty University," video, C-SPAN, January 18, 2016.

⁵⁴ Daniel R. DePetrus, "SMA Negotiations: Why Trump's Demand of \$5 Billion from South Korea Is Wrong," *National Interest*, November 21, 2019; Clint Work, "Beyond North Korea: Fractures in the US-South Korea Alliance," *The Diplomat*, February 11, 2020a; and Yoon Sukjoon, "US Interests Are Not Served by Making a Scapegoat of South Korea," *The Diplomat*, January 29, 2020.

⁵⁵ Doug Bandow, "South Korea Is Charting an Independent Course on China," CATO Institute, July 27, 2020; John Feffer, "[Column] Time to Rethink the US-ROK Alliance," *The Hankyoreh*, last updated June 29, 2020; Kim Soo, "U.S.-ROK OPCON Transition: The Element of Timing," Council on Foreign Relations, March 31, 2020; Work, 2020a; and Clint Work, "Alternative Futures for the US-ROK Alliance: Will Things Fall Apart?" 38 North, May 2020b.

some in the ROK's political establishment whether Seoul can still rely on the United States for its security.⁵⁶

Collectively, these issues have resulted in a highly unfavorable environment for the United States to request that the ROK host its GBIRMs. This does not mean, however, that Koreans are anti-American. Polls show that, in 2019, 77 percent of Koreans expressed a favorable view of the United States while 34 percent expressed a similar view of China.⁵⁷ Additionally, 74 percent said that they saw the United States as their “most dependable ally” in the future, in contrast to 4 percent who said they saw China this way.⁵⁸ Importantly, this 74 percent represents an 11-point gain from 2007.⁵⁹ Conversely, 32 percent of Koreans said they viewed China as the ROK's greatest future threat.⁶⁰

Comments on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty or Hosting U.S. GBIRMs

Despite the strong public support, when the United States signaled its desire to withdraw from the INF Treaty, Seoul signaled displeasure. For example, an ROK Ministry of National Defense spokesman said that Seoul “did not have any official discussions with the U.S. on the possible introduction of intermediate missiles (on South Korean soil). We have not internally reviewed the issue and have no plan to do so.”⁶¹ This aligns with a separate report that the ROK Ministry of National Defense questioned the possibility of the United States deploying more missiles.⁶² Similarly, President Moon Jae-in's chief of staff said that the ROK has “never discussed [hosting GBIRMs with the United States], nor reviewed it nor plans to do so,” adding, “Our position will never change,’ even if the U.S. demands it.”⁶³ Yoon Suk-yeol, who will succeed Moon in May 2022, has not publicly commented on how he stands on hosting GBIRMs.

Because some of the ranges of GBIRMs would be far beyond what is needed to reach North Korean targets, hosting U.S. GBIRMs could be seen by China as demonstrating the ROK's willingness to host offensive weapons aimed at China. This could make any administration in Seoul reluctant if it values good relations with China and seeks to minimize

⁵⁶ Sue Mi Terry, “The Unraveling of the U.S.–South Korean Alliance,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 3, 2020.

⁵⁷ Pew Research Center, 2020.

⁵⁸ Pew Research Center, 2019b.

⁵⁹ Pew Research Center, 2019a.

⁶⁰ Silver, 2019.

⁶¹ Oh Seok-min, “(2nd LD) No Discussions on U.S. Missile Deployment in S. Korea: Ministry,” Yonhap News Agency, August 5, 2019.

⁶² “[Editorial] U.S. Mentions Deploying Missiles to Asia a Day After Withdrawing from the INF Treaty,” *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, August 5, 2019.

⁶³ “(Editorial from Korea Herald on Aug. 9): Act Wisely: S. Korea Must Not Hurt U.S. Alliance in Seeking National Interests from Security Issues,” Yonhap News Agency, August 9, 2019.

tensions with Beijing on military decisions.⁶⁴ This is unlikely to change in the years ahead, making continued ROK reluctance to host U.S. GBIRMs likely, particularly because the ROK is eager to avoid a repeat of Chinese blowback stemming from a 2016 decision to allow the United States to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system. Although THAAD was meant to counter the North Korean missile threat, China opposed it, viewing its radar as part of a U.S. agenda to look into China to track the flights of its land-based nuclear deterrent force.⁶⁵ Beijing claimed that, if linked to other ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems, THAAD had the potential to degrade the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force's ability to carry out a nuclear second strike against the United States.⁶⁶ China retaliated against the ROK economically. Although its actions did not crush the ROK economy, it sent a powerful message.⁶⁷ Eager to resolve the crisis and get Beijing to accept one THAAD system, Seoul gave Beijing three assurances, called the "three no's." These promises were to not (1) deploy additional THAAD systems; (2) participate in a U.S.-led missile defense system; and (3) join a trilateral alliance with the United States and Japan.⁶⁸

Although the ROK kept THAAD, and Moon's successor Yoon Suk-yeol has indicated his willingness to walk back the three-no's, the episode revealed the susceptibility of the ROK to Chinese pressure toward a *defensive* U.S. missile system. Despite incoming president Yoon signaling a desire to purchase an additional THAAD system, given that U.S. GBIRMs are offensive weapons and that their placement in the ROK would most likely be to target Chinese territory, particularly given their range, such placement would be certain to draw an even harsher response from Beijing. If true, the ROK is extremely unlikely to accept any U.S. requests to host GBIRMs, particularly if U.S.-ROK relations are poor.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Michael E. O'Hanlon and Jung H. Pak, "America Should Not Ask South Korea to Host Intermediate-Range Missiles," Brookings Institution, September 5, 2019.

⁶⁵ O'Hanlon and Pak, 2019.

⁶⁶ Ankit Panda, "China and South Korea: Examining the Resolution of the THAAD Impasse," *The Diplomat*, November 13, 2017.

⁶⁷ For example, among other things, not only did China fine and shut down 79 of 99 supermarkets owned by the Korean conglomerate Lotte after the company provided a golf course for the THAAD deployment, it boycotted Korean tourism to the loss of \$6.8 billion and cost the ROK's economy at least \$7.5 billion in 2017 (Echo Huang, "China Inflicted a World of Pain on South Korea in 2017," Quartz, December 21, 2017; Jane Perlez, Mark Landler, and Choe Sang-Hun, "China Blinks on South Korea, Making Nice After a Year of Hostilities," *New York Times*, November 1, 2017; and Rachel Premack, "A Row with China over U.S. Missiles Is Devastating South Korea's Tourism Industry," *Time*, April 11, 2017).

⁶⁸ Andray Abrahamian and Daekwon Son, "Moving On: China Resolves THAAD Dispute with South Korea," 38 North, November 9, 2017.

⁶⁹ Brad Glosserman, "Seoul Draws Wrong THAAD Lessons," *Japan Times*, January 27, 2020.

Australia

The U.S. alliance with Australia is strong. Australians pride themselves on being the only Pacific ally to have fought with the United States in every major U.S. military action over the past 100 years, beginning with the Battle of Hamel in July 1918.⁷⁰ Australia also remains economically close to China, although those bilateral ties have been fraying recently. Although strong historical ties with the United States and developments in 2021 that indicate an expansion of U.S. access and presence make it impossible to rule out the possibility of Australia being willing to host U.S. GBIRMs, a historical reluctance to host permanent foreign bases, combined with the geographical distance of Australia from continental Asia, makes this possibility unlikely. This is unlikely to change in the coming decade, even as Australia agrees to an increase in U.S. rotational presence.

Bilateral Relations

After World War II, Australia and New Zealand advocated for a treaty with the United States.⁷¹ In 1951, they signed the Security Treaty Between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America (ANZUS).⁷² Despite beginning as a trilateral treaty, it effectively became a bilateral alliance between the United States and Australia in 1986 after New Zealand declared it was a nuclear-free zone, thereafter refusing to allow U.S. nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered vessels to visit its ports.⁷³ Although Washington and Wellington made amends in 2010, ANZUS essentially remains a bilateral alliance with Canberra.⁷⁴

In 1963, the United States signed a SOFA with Australia, although this agreement never resulted in a large U.S. permanent presence.⁷⁵ In September 2020, U.S. military presence

⁷⁰ Australia in the United States, “Australia-US Defence Relationship,” webpage, undated a.

⁷¹ They had two anxieties that they thought a security treaty would address. One was the spread of communism in the Pacific and the possibility that the United States and European allies would focus on Europe to the detriment of the Pacific. The second was wariness of the United States rearming Japan. National Museum of Australia, “ANZUS Treaty,” webpage, undated.

⁷² United States, Australia, and New Zealand, Security Treaty Between the United States, Australia, and New Zealand (ANZUS), San Francisco, Calif., September 1, 1951.

⁷³ On September 17, 1986, the United States officially suspended its treaty obligations toward New Zealand. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, “The Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS Treaty), 1951,” webpage, undated.

⁷⁴ National Museum of Australia, undated.

⁷⁵ Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and Government of the United States of America, Agreement Between the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Government of the United States of America Concerning the Status of United States Forces in Australia, and Protocol, Canberra, Australia, May 9, 1963.

stood at 1,085 people, although not all of this presence was permanent.⁷⁶ The one permanent U.S. facility is the joint intelligence facility at Pine Gap.⁷⁷ Beyond Pine Gap, the United States uses existing Australian military facilities: two air bases (Royal Australian Air Force [RAAF] Base Tindal and Darwin International Airport), two naval bases (in Darwin and on the Cocos Islands), and several training sites and shooting ranges throughout Australia.⁷⁸ According to Australia security commentator Euan Graham, Australia is reluctant to give up its territory for foreign military use; Pine Gap, however, is accepted because it is “. . . rooted in an equitable burden-sharing arrangement” that allows Canberra to argue that “the national interest is served and sovereignty maintained.”⁷⁹ That is why, when the allies agreed in 2011 to deploy U.S. marines on a regular rotation through Darwin, some criticized it as a radical departure.⁸⁰ Since their deployment began—under a separate Force Posture Agreement⁸¹—it has taken just under a decade to achieve the goal of a 2,500-person air-ground task force stationed there for six months of the year (although the number of people has fallen well below that, as noted on the previous page).⁸² These marines have a High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System, MV-22B Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, attack helicopters, and an advanced TPS-80 radar system. Considering these assets, some feel that it is not that far of a stretch that U.S. GBIRMs could also be deployed someday, and news that the United States is planning to invest in military infrastructure for various facilities near Darwin helps fan these types of arguments.⁸³ Further support for this line of thinking is provided by the 2021 Joint Statement on Australia-

⁷⁶ Total: 1,085 (U.S. Army: 22; U.S. Navy: 63; U.S. Marine Corps: 921; U.S. Air Force: 79; U.S. Coast Guard: 2). Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020. Despite an agreement to allow a 2,500-person rotational Marine presence, the low U.S. Marine Corps number reflects a reduction that was caused by coronavirus realities.

⁷⁷ The United States also shares a satellite station at the Australian Defense Satellite Communications Station at Kojarena.

⁷⁸ Paolo Mauri, “The United States Will Have a New Base in Australia to Oppose China,” *InsideOver*, August 6, 2019.

⁷⁹ Euan Graham, “Does Australia Need a Massive U.S. Naval Base?” *The Strategist*, December 17, 2019b.

⁸⁰ Nick Deane, “US Troops Are Now in Darwin. But Questions Remain as to Why,” *The Guardian*, April 26, 2018.

⁸¹ Government of Australia and Government of the United States of America, *The Force Posture Agreement Between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United States of America*, Sydney, Australia, August 12, 2014.

⁸² Gina Harkins, “There Are Now 2,500 US Marines in Australia After Years of Buildup,” *Military.com*, July 25, 2019b.

⁸³ Jack Derwin, “The US Military Is Planning a Secretive New \$305 Million Naval Expansion in Australia But No One Wants to Talk About It,” *Business Insider*, July 30, 2019; Colin Packham, “Australia Says US Will Build More Military Facilities There as Soon as Congress Gives the Navy \$211 Million to Do It,” *Business Insider*, July 30, 2019; Seth Robson, “US Military Presence in Northern Australia Will Grow, Former Defense Official Says,” *Stars and Stripes*, October 21, 2019; and Shawn Snow, “The US Military Has Big Plans for Australia—And That Might Be a Big Problem for China,” *Business Insider*, July 17, 2019.

U.S. Ministerial Consultations, which includes major force posture initiatives that look to expand U.S. military access and presence in Australia.⁸⁴

U.S.-Australian relations are also strong among the public; the alliance is euphemistically referred to by Australians as 100 years of “mateship.”⁸⁵ Polls show, for example, that the vast majority of Australians value the alliance.⁸⁶ In 2019, 50 percent of Australians expressed a favorable view of the United States while 36 percent expressed a similar view of China.⁸⁷ Additionally, 38 percent of Australians said that they saw the United States as Australia’s “most dependable” future ally, in contrast to the 6 percent who said they saw China this way.⁸⁸ Conversely, 40 percent of Australians said that they viewed China as the country that poses the greatest future threat to Australia, a plurality among respondents.⁸⁹

Australia’s relationship with China is complex, and, until recently, Australia was apparently unwilling to take actions that appeared provocative against China because it sought to balance U.S.-Chinese relations.⁹⁰ This desire to balance ties was rooted in Australia’s dependence on the United States for its security and on China for economic trade, given that China is Australia’s largest trading partner. Whatever balance was sought in the past, however, no longer appears to be the case; Australia’s relationship with China has soured severely in recent years. Concerns in Australia over too much domestic Chinese investment, opposition to Chinese treatment of Hong Kong and ethnic Uighurs, and Chinese influence campaigns—all occurring against a backdrop of Chinese authorities arresting ethnically Chinese Australians in China on suspicions of espionage and Australia accusing China of attempting to plant a spy in Canberra—have collectively led to a rapid deterioration of ties.⁹¹ China’s increasingly

⁸⁴ Office of the Spokesperson, U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement on Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) 2021,” media note, September 16, 2021; and U.S. Department of Defense, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne, and Australian Defence Minister Peter Dutton at a Joint Press Availability,” transcript, September 16, 2021.

⁸⁵ Australia in the United States, “Mateship,” webpage, undated b.

⁸⁶ These polls show that, since 2005, over 70 percent of Australians have viewed the alliance as “very important” or “fairly important.” Only in 2017 did the figure dip below 70 percent, to 63 percent. Lowy Institute, “Importance of the US Alliance,” Lowy Institute Poll 2019, 2019a.

⁸⁷ Pew Research Center, 2020.

⁸⁸ The low result for the United States is explained by another 17 percent of Australians who said that they viewed the United Kingdom as the most dependable. Pew Research Center, 2019b.

⁸⁹ Silver, 2019.

⁹⁰ Matthew Knott, “Independence Actually: Marise Payne’s Unmistakable Message to the US,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 29, 2020.

⁹¹ Dan Conifer, “How a Dead Liberal Party Member Put a Fresh Spotlight on Beijing’s Foreign Interference Efforts,” ABC News, November 25, 2019; Euan Graham, “Responding to China’s Not-So-Secret Influence Campaign,” *The Interpreter*, March 20, 2019a; Erin Handley, “‘Deeply Disturbing’ Footage Surfaces of Blindfolded Uyghurs at Train Station in Xinjiang,” ABC News, last updated September 23, 2019; and Christina Zhou, “China-Australia Relations Became ‘Complex’ in 2019 with Spy Claims and Human Rights Abuses,” ABC News, January 7, 2020.

provocative behavior against its neighbors and refusal to open up about the origins of the coronavirus have only hardened Australia's views on China.⁹² The sentiment created by such incidents is difficult to reverse.

Despite Australia's positive alliance ties with the United States and deteriorating relations with China, a request to host U.S. GBIRMs would likely cause difficulties for Canberra—although the creation of the Australia–United Kingdom–United States (AUKUS) pact and the September 2021 announcement of Canberra and Washington endorsing major force posture initiatives to expand U.S. access and presence in Australia seem to indicate rapidly changing boundaries of what is acceptable in Australia. The traditional thinking in Australia, captured by Hugh White, one of the country's leading defense analysts, is that an agreement by Australia to host U.S. GBIRMs would force it to make “a truly momentous choice”; agreeing to host the missiles would lead to a crisis in relations with China, and refusing them would be tantamount to abandoning the United States.⁹³ Although White's argument was premised on hosting nuclear missiles, his logic applies to conventional missiles as well, as hosting missiles with ranges capable of reaching China would pose a similar dilemma to Australia. However, as noted above, developments in 2021 indicate that the boundaries of what is acceptable are changing, meaning that Canberra might no longer see this choice as a challenge. Domestically, however, that might not be the case. Polls still indicate potential reluctance among the public. Although polls have not examined Australians' views on hosting these types of missiles, related polls indicate that views are likely unsupportive. Despite the souring in ties with China, Australians are hesitant to get involved in operations against China. In 2019, not only were 54 percent of Australians against using Australian forces should China invade Taiwan and the United States intervene, but 62 percent opposed using Australian forces in a scenario in which China initiated conflict with one of its neighbors.⁹⁴ Although the polls did not reference the use or hosting of U.S. GBIRMs, they suggest that Australians would strongly oppose using force against China from Australian shores, which GBIRM missiles would represent.

Comments on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty or Hosting U.S. GBIRMs

Although Canberra has not explicitly denied its willingness to host U.S. GBIRMs, it is not clear that it would if it were asked. In August 2019, then–U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hinted at the possibility of Australia hosting post-INF ground-based missiles.⁹⁵ Yet senior Australian officials, including the prime minister, did not provide a cohesive message in

⁹² Michael Schuman, “China Discovers the Limits of Its Power,” *The Atlantic*, July 28, 2021.

⁹³ Hugh White, “U.S. Could Ask Australia to Host Nuclear Missiles,” *RealClearDefense*, January 18, 2019.

⁹⁴ Lowy Institute, “Use of Australian Military Forces,” Lowy Institute Poll 2019, 2019b.

⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo with Peta Credlin of Sky News,” interview, August 5, 2019.

response.⁹⁶ Although some analysts argued that these comments were explicit rejections or suggested “an underlying nervousness about hosting ‘permanent’ US strike capabilities,”⁹⁷ another interpretation is that the comments referred to whether Australia was asked or whether hosting GBIRMs was being considered, not whether Australia would be willing to do so in the future; thus, the comments were inconclusive with regard to its willingness to host.⁹⁸ After all, given the closeness of alliance ties and recent downward trends in Sino-Australian relations, Australia might be willing to host.⁹⁹ The creation of AUKUS and the force posture initiatives announced in September 2021 support this assessment.

Opponents of hosting U.S. GBIRMs would argue that the main threat that Australia faces from China is not a direct military attack, but the cyber operations and intelligence operations run against the government and academia to disrupt or buy influence. This was the government’s position in its 2016 defense white paper, which stated that there is “no more than a remote prospect of a military attack by another country on Australian territory in the foreseeable future.”¹⁰⁰ Another reason, reflecting more of the traditional arguments heard in Australia, is that Australia is simply too dependent on the Chinese economy, which would be adversely affected should Australia host U.S. long-range missiles that could target China.¹⁰¹

The counterargument is that Australia is still at risk given the fact that U.S. forces are operating in Australia.¹⁰² Australia’s strategic and operational environment is characterized by large maritime domains in which short-range platforms will struggle to deliver effects against an adversary’s long-range capabilities, making it difficult for Australia to deter China or defend its maritime approaches.¹⁰³ Because of this, proponents of hosting U.S. strike capabilities argue that Australia’s best means to counter these threats is with long-range strike

⁹⁶ Foreign Minister Marise Payne “appeared to leave open the possibility,” saying, “The presence of the US and its military forces in this region has been a force for stability for decades, and Australia has consistently welcomed that force and presence” (Jane Norman, “Defence Minister Says US Hasn’t Asked to Base Missiles in Australia to Counter China’s Strategic Ambitions,” ABC News, last updated August 4, 2019). In an apparent attempt to counter Payne’s comments, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said, “It’s not been asked of us, not being considered, not been put to us. I think I can rule a line under that” (“Australia Rules Out Hosting US Missiles,” Military.com, August 5, 2019).

⁹⁷ Graham, 2019b.

⁹⁸ Franz-Stefan Gady, “Australia, South Korea Say No to Deployment of US INF-Range Missiles on Their Soil,” *The Diplomat*, August 6, 2019; and Trevor Marshallsea, “Australia Says It Won’t Be Hosting US Missile Site,” *Military Times*, August 5, 2019.

⁹⁹ Pranay Vaddi, “Leaving the INF Treaty Won’t Help Trump Counter China,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 31, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Department of Defence (Australia), *2016 Defence White Paper*, Canberra, Australia, 2016, p. 15.

¹⁰¹ Michael Peck, “100 Billion Reasons Why: Why Australia Said No to American Missiles Aimed at China,” *National Interest*, August 18, 2019.

¹⁰² Andrew Tillett, “Australia’s New Missile Diplomacy,” *Financial Review*, August 6, 2019.

¹⁰³ Malcolm Davis, “Closing Australia’s Long-Range Strike Gap Requires a Robust Space Capability,” *The Strategist*, November 7, 2019.

capabilities.¹⁰⁴ Australia's distance from China would mean such missiles would face less risk from Chinese long-range strike capabilities, and, because Australia is a continent, it has advantages for operating and hiding missiles that other allies lack.¹⁰⁵ Assuming, then, that the 2021 bilateral agreements on access and presence indicate a willingness to host a permanent U.S. missile presence in the future, given the physical distance between Australia and many potential targets in and around the Chinese mainland, the United States would likely need to build and deploy intercontinental ballistic missiles—not GBIRMs—to cover these targets from Australia and be operationally relevant.¹⁰⁶ Not only is this outside the scope of a discussion of GBIRMs, it would create arms control challenges because the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty limits the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles that the United States can field. Taken together, despite developments in 2021 that indicate an expansion of U.S. access and presence, a historical reluctance to host permanent foreign bases combined with the geographical distance of Australia from continental Asia makes the possibility of Australia accepting U.S. GBIRMs unlikely.

Japan

Despite strong alliance ties, Washington's move to withdraw from the INF Treaty was opposed in Tokyo. A former diplomat warned that it might cause Japan to become a “principal battlefield in a new Cold War.”¹⁰⁷ Because of Japan's willingness to strengthen the alliance and pursue efforts to bolster its own defense capabilities vis-à-vis China, however, Japan is the regional ally that appears most likely to host U.S. GBIRMs. That possibility, however, remains low, heavily caveated by the challenge of accepting any increase in U.S. presence and deploying weapons that are explicitly offensive in nature. That is unlikely to change in the years ahead.

¹⁰⁴ Marcus Hellyer, “Is the B-21 Bomber a Viable Option for Australia?” *The Strategist*, November 6, 2019; Stephen Kuper, “Time for Teeth: Strategic Policy Expert Calls for Aussie Long-Range Missiles,” *Defence Connect*, February 24, 2020; and Peter Layton, “Australia's Chinese Ballistic Missile Problem,” *The Interpreter*, April 26, 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Peck, 2019.

¹⁰⁶ Vaddi, 2019.

¹⁰⁷ Mori Eisuke [森永輔], “Will the Scrapping of the INF Treaty Put Pressure on Japan to Review Its Three Non-Nuclear Principles?” [INF条約破棄が非核三原則見直しを日本に迫る?], *Nikkei Bijinesu* [日経ビジネス], October 26, 2018; and Amaki Naoto [天木直人], “With the U.S.-Russia INF Treaty Scrapped, the Day Japan Becomes the Main Battlefield in a ‘New Cold War’” [米ロINF条約破棄で現実味 日本が”新冷戦”の主戦場になる日], *Nikkan Gendai Digital* [日刊ゲンダイDigital], February 4, 2019.

Bilateral Relations

The United States and Japan have been allies since the signing, in 1951, of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, which was revised in 1960.¹⁰⁸ The terms by which the United States was granted facilities and areas in Japan are contained in a SOFA.¹⁰⁹ In addition to enabling joint exercises and other forms of military training, the SOFA has enabled Japan to host U.S. forces, which in late 2020 stood at 78 facilities home to roughly 54,000 U.S. forward deployed military personnel.¹¹⁰ These forces include sizable U.S. units, such as the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet, the U.S. Marines Corps' III Marine Expeditionary Force, and the U.S. Air Force's 18th Wing.

As host to the largest number of U.S. personnel among all U.S. regional allies, Japan retains close bilateral relations with the United States. This closeness is reflected in public support. In 2019, for example, polls showed that 68 percent of Japanese expressed a favorable view of the United States while 14 percent expressed a similar view of China.¹¹¹ Additionally, 63 percent of Japanese said that they saw the United States as Japan's "most dependable ally" in the future, in contrast to 1 percent who said they saw China this way.¹¹² Conversely, 50 percent of Japanese said they viewed China as the country that poses the greatest future threat to Japan.¹¹³

As close as the allies might be, the U.S. Marine Corps presence in Okinawa has served as a constant source of friction. Despite being Japan's smallest prefecture, Okinawa is home to 70.3 percent of U.S. forces in Japan.¹¹⁴ This has led to complaints regarding noise, pollution, and crime, including violent crime. The most heinous crime occurred in 1995 when three U.S. servicemen raped a 12-year-old girl. The incident led to massive protests and a bilateral agreement, called the Special Action Committee on Okinawa, to realign, consolidate, and reduce U.S. facilities and adjust operational procedures in Okinawa. U.S. military presence on Okinawa remains a sensitive issue. Even today, efforts remain focused on how to reduce or move U.S. personnel off Okinawa or out of heavily populated areas, with the most well known

¹⁰⁸ Japan and the United States of America, Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America, Washington, D.C., January 19, 1960c.

¹⁰⁹ Japan and the United States of America, Agreement Under Article VI of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America, Regarding Facilities and Areas and the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan, Washington, D.C., January 19, 1960a.

¹¹⁰ Ministry of Defense (Japan), "Areas of U.S. Forces Japan's Facilities, Zones (Exclusive Use Facilities)" [在日米軍施設・区域(専用施設)面積], last updated January 1, 2019b. Total: 53,732 (U.S. Army: 2,511; U.S. Navy: 19,886; U.S. Air Force: 12,640; U.S. Marine Corps: 18,676; U.S. Coast Guard: 19). Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020.

¹¹¹ Pew Research Center, 2020.

¹¹² Pew Research Center, 2019b.

¹¹³ Silver, 2019.

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Defense (Japan), 2019b.

being efforts to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. Attempts to introduce U.S. forces anywhere in Okinawa prefecture would, therefore, likely face stiff challenges.

Amid these moves to achieve a lighter U.S. footprint in Japan, the alliance nevertheless has been getting stronger. In 2015, for the first time since 1997, the allies revised guidelines for defense cooperation—a document that sets out their roles and missions—thereby ensuring that the alliance is well postured to meet the emerging security challenges of the 21st century.¹¹⁵ This occurred concurrently with Japanese efforts to loosen several legal restrictions in the defense realm, including a relaxation on restrictions from exercising its right to collective self-defense. Importantly, Japan has been investing in capabilities designed to counter China. This includes moving its ground forces toward lighter and more-mobile forces, developing amphibious capabilities, building out its presence on islands closer to China, and procuring new types of capabilities, including standoff missile capabilities.¹¹⁶ The collective result has been a stronger Japan and a more robust alliance.

Despite these trends, the alliance was questioned by President Trump, leading to concerns in Tokyo about the strength of the U.S. security commitment. For example, as candidate, Trump said of Japan, “. . . if we’re attacked, they do not have to come to our defense, if they’re attacked, we have to come totally to their defense. . . . that’s a real problem.”¹¹⁷ As President, he continued this critique. For example, in 2019, Trump argued, “. . . if Japan is attacked, we will fight World War III. . . . But if we’re attacked, Japan doesn’t have to help us at all. They can watch it on a Sony television, the attack.”¹¹⁸ Such comments as these hurt ties. In addition, as with the ROK, Trump’s requests for Japan to increase its alliance contributions further exacerbated tensions. During initial negotiations over the Special Measures Agreement that was set to expire at the end of March 2021, then–National Security Advisor John Bolton asked Japan to quintuple its contributions, which Japanese officials called “unrealistic.”¹¹⁹ Reiterating Japan’s opposition, then–Defense Minister Kōno Tarō commented on Japan’s contributions, saying, “The current burden ratio is very appropriate.”¹²⁰ Although the efforts by then–Prime Minister Abe Shinzō to maintain friendly relations with Trump helped mitigate damage to alliance ties,¹²¹ Trump’s treatment of Japan nevertheless caused the Japanese

¹¹⁵ Japan and the United States of America, *The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation*, April 27, 2015.

¹¹⁶ Jeffrey W. Hornung, *Japan’s Potential Contributions in an East China Sea Contingency*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-A314-1, 2020b.

¹¹⁷ “Transcript: Donald Trump Expounds on His Foreign Policy Views,” *New York Times*, March 26, 2016.

¹¹⁸ Gina Harkins, “Trump: If Japan Is Attacked, They Can Watch on Sony TVs While US Fights World War III,” *Military.com*, June 28, 2019a.

¹¹⁹ “Washington Asked Tokyo to Quintuple Payment for U.S. Forces in Japan,” *Kyodo News*, November 16, 2019.

¹²⁰ “Japan-US Host Nation Support Talks to Start Early Autumn: Kono,” *Arab News*, January 21, 2020.

¹²¹ “Resolved: Abe’s Investment in His Relationship with President Trump Has Advanced Japanese Interests,” *Debating Japan*, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 30, 2020.

public to view the United States less favorably and gave rise to some Japanese questioning U.S. commitment to Japan's defense.

The Biden administration has avoided the transactional approach of the Trump administration, but other issues could pose problems for a U.S. request that Japan host U.S. GBIRMs. Early on, some Japanese officials feared that the Biden administration would not take a tough approach on China.¹²² Although these concerns appear to have subsided, there is a lingering stereotype among Japanese officials that nothing great happens to Japan under a Democratic administration while Republicans tend to have a closer affinity for the alliance.¹²³ The fallout of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan has not calmed these anxieties, as it has given rise to questions about the Biden administration's ability to execute effective foreign policy and consider allies' interests and has increased doubts about U.S. overseas commitments.¹²⁴ Even if the Biden administration is able to overcome these issues and ease Japanese anxieties, it would still face challenges with requesting that Japan host GBIRMs because such a request would run counter to the efforts of the past 30 years to reduce the U.S. footprint.

Perhaps more than other U.S. allies' relations with China, Tokyo's relations with Beijing are frequently marked by overt tension. The factors behind this are numerous and include historical grievances. In recent years, however, the countries' dispute over the Senkaku Islands (which are under Japan's administrative control but claimed by China) has become a primary factor. Over the past decade in particular, China has actively worked to challenge Japan's control of the islands and test its will to respond through a near-constant deployment of coast guard and paramilitary assets near the islands and increased military activity in the region.¹²⁵ Although relations are managed, tensions nevertheless remain, prompting Japan to continue to maintain strong alliance ties with the United States.

¹²² Y. A., "The Virtues of a Confrontational China Strategy," *American Interest*, April 10, 2020.

¹²³ Jimbo Ken [神保謙], "The Trump Administration and the Japan-U.S. Alliance" [トランプ政権と日米同盟], *Diplomacy* [外交], Vol. 63, September–October 2020, p. 29; and William Sposato, "Some in Japan Are Already Missing Trump," *Foreign Policy*, November 5, 2020.

¹²⁴ Hyakutake Kōichirō [百武弘一朗], "Japan Has a Sense of Crisis in the 'Failure of the Liberal Camp' and Afghanistan's Collapse After 20 Years of Effort" [「自由主義陣営の完敗」に日本は危機意識を持って 20 年の努力の果てのアフガン瓦解], FNN, August 18, 2021; Nakayama Toshihiro [中山俊宏], "Afghanistan Withdrawal: Biden's 'America First' Is a Hard Reset of 'The Longest War'" [アフガン崩壊: 「最も長い戦争」を強制リセットしたバイデンの「アメリカ・ファースト」], *Foresight*, August 21, 2021; and Shinoda Hideaki [篠田英朗], "What Will Japan Do? The Meaning in Afghanistan's 'America's Defeat' and 'Gloating' China" [日本はどうする? アフガニスタンでの「米国敗北」と「ほくそ笑む」中国が意味するもの], *Gendai Bijinesu* [現代ビジネス], August 21, 2021.

¹²⁵ Edmund J. Burke, Timothy R. Heath, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Logan Ma, Lyle J. Morris, and Michael S. Chase, *China's Military Activities in the East China Sea: Implications for Japan's Air Self-Defense Force*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2574-AF, 2018; and Lyle J. Morris, Michael J. Mazarr, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Stephanie Pezard, Anika Binnendijk, and Marta Kepe, *Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone: Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2942-OSD, 2019.

Comments on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty or Hosting U.S. GBIRMs

Despite Japan being a close U.S. ally, there are reasons to believe Japan would oppose hosting U.S. GBIRMs. From the start, Japanese officials were vocal in their opposition to the U.S. INF Treaty withdrawal, with the foreign minister calling it “extremely regrettable” and the chief cabinet secretary and foreign press secretary calling it “undesirable.”¹²⁶ Even then–Prime Minister Abe, while saying he understood U.S. thinking, noted that the treaty’s termination was “not a situation that is desirable.”¹²⁷

Despite these negative comments, Japan relies heavily on the U.S. nuclear umbrella and U.S. deterrence capabilities. After the United States withdrew from the treaty, then–Defense Minister Kōno spoke about the idea of hosting U.S. GBIRMs, saying, “The US doesn’t have non-nuclear missiles that can be deployed yet. Maybe they’re in the phase of development.”¹²⁸ This suggested that Japan might host U.S. GBIRMs should nonnuclear missiles be developed. Kōno admitted, however, that his government and that of the United States had not yet talked about the idea.¹²⁹ Should his comment indicate reluctance to host U.S. GBIRMs, the reluctance likely would stem from two possibilities: political awareness that introducing new U.S. presence into Japan would be difficult or a misunderstanding that U.S. GBIRMs are only nuclear-armed. For the latter point, commentators have pointed out that Washington has not indicated whether specific facilities and systems overseas are to be explicitly non-nuclear.¹³⁰ This could pose a problem for Japan given its history with nuclear weapons and its Three Non-Nuclear Principles.¹³¹ Even if the United States refrained from deploying nuclear capabilities, if the Japanese public believed that such capabilities were nuclear capable or left open the door to such capabilities, it would be politically difficult to obtain local consent to host these capabilities, particularly if China (or Russia) engaged in information operation campaigns to push this idea.

¹²⁶ “INF Expiration ‘Undesirable but Understand America’s Concerns’” [INF失効「望ましくないが米の問題意識は理解」], NHK Seiji Magajin [NHK政治マガジン], August 2, 2019; Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), “Foreign Minister Kōno Conference Record” [河野外務大臣会見記録], October 23, 2019a; and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), “Press Secretary Ōsuga Conference Record” [大菅外務報道官会見記録], December 5, 2019b.

¹²⁷ “INF Treaty Expiration, PM ‘Undesirable’” [INF廃棄条約失効 首相「望ましくない」], *Chugoku Shinbun* [中国新聞], August 7, 2019.

¹²⁸ Robin Harding and Lionel Barber, “Japan Sounds Warning on China’s Growing Military Might,” *Financial Times*, October 31, 2019.

¹²⁹ Harding and Barber, 2019.

¹³⁰ Ankit Panda, “New Ground-Launched Missiles for the U.S.-Japan Alliance?” *The Diplomat*, January 25, 2020.

¹³¹ The three principles, by which all governments have abided since their introduction in 1967, state that Japan will not possess, not produce, and not permit the introduction of nuclear weapons in Japan.

Evidence that supports the notion that local realities and fears of “not in my backyard” might complicate the Japanese government’s efforts to introduce U.S. GBIRMs is found in recent efforts by Tokyo to deploy the Aegis Ashore BMD system. In 2017, Tokyo began looking to secure two sites to deploy a Japanese-owned and -operated system in two prefectures. While negotiations with local communities in western Yamaguchi were relatively drama-free (although opposition existed), those with northern Akita were not. Instead, because of issues stemming from the proximity of the proposed site to the community and defense ministry representatives showing the prefectural government flawed survey data over the planned deployment site, the government faced stiff opposition.¹³² Because of the strong opposition by the local community, in early May 2020, the government gave up on the Akita candidate site and moved to select a different site.¹³³ One month later, Japan’s Minister of Defense announced suspension of both sites, citing cost and technological concerns, but reports indicated that local opposition may also have been a factor.¹³⁴ Japan’s National Security Council approved the decision two weeks later.¹³⁵

Given the closeness of the alliance and Japan’s reliance on U.S. deterrent capabilities and dependency on U.S. security commitments, it is impossible to completely rule out Japan’s refusal of a U.S. request to host GBIRMs, particularly as Chinese provocations continue. Yet the Aegis Ashore episode is instructive for thinking about how Japan might react because it showed how Tokyo was susceptible to domestic pressure. If a Japanese-owned and -operated *defensive* missile system provoked domestic resistance, then attempts to permanently host a U.S.-owned and -operated *offensive* system would likely face greater resistance.¹³⁶ Given Japan’s strong norms of defense and possible opposition to increasing the number of permanently deployed U.S. forces in Japan, introducing U.S. GBIRMs that are clearly offensive in nature is likely to face stronger public opposition than that seen in the Aegis Ashore experience.

¹³² “Flawed Data Shown to Akita Pref. over Aegis Ashore Deployment,” Nippon.com, June 6, 2019; Kawaguchi Shun, “Signature Campaign Opposing Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System Held in North Japan,” *The Mainichi*, December 16, 2019; and Isabel Reynolds and Nobuhiro Emi, “Fears over US Missile Shield in a Japan Suburb Hobble Abe’s Plan,” *Stars and Stripes*, September 7, 2019.

¹³³ “The MOD Has in Fact Abandoned the ‘Aegis Ashore’ Akita City Candidate Site” [「イージス・アショア」秋田市の候補地を事実上断念 防衛省], NHK, May 6, 2020.

¹³⁴ Japan was not confident that it could prevent the rocket boosters from the interceptors from hitting local communities after separation. In addition, although software modifications could have ensured correct booster separation, attempted modifications were not successful, meaning that the missile hardware likely would have had to have been redesigned, which would have been both costly and time-consuming. Ed Adamczyk, “Japan Suspends Land-Based Aegis Ashore Missile Defense Deployment,” United Press International, June 15, 2020; and Jeffrey W. Hornung, “Japan Is Canceling a U.S. Missile Defense System,” *Foreign Policy*, July 2, 2020a.

¹³⁵ “Japan Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System Deployment Scrapped: Kono,” Kyodo News, June 25, 2020.

¹³⁶ U.S. GBIRMs would be fundamentally different from current U.S. forces in Japan that can be used to support offensive or defensive operations; U.S. GBIRMs would not be multi-mission capable.

Even if Japan could overcome local opposition and agreed to host U.S. GBIRMs, the U.S. ability to use them would be dependent on Japanese politics. In a 1960 exchange of notes between Japanese Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke and U.S. Secretary of State Christian Herter about the implementation of Article VI of the security treaty (i.e., security of the Far East¹³⁷), the United States agreed to engage in “prior consultation” with Japan to employ its forces from its Japanese bases for combat operations not directly related to the defense of Japan.¹³⁸ Should the United States seek to launch U.S. GBIRMs deployed in Japan against a state with which Japan is not at war, the United States would have to engage in prior consultation with Japan before launching its missiles. The prior consultation process is undefined, but the goal is to obtain Japanese buy-in.¹³⁹ Although the United States could unilaterally launch these missiles without conducting prior consultation or by overriding Japanese opposition to their use, such an action could endanger the survival of the alliance, particularly if that action resulted in attacks on Japanese soil and deaths of Japanese civilians despite Japanese leadership not wanting to get involved in the conflict. Taken together, while Japan remains the regional ally that appears most likely to host U.S. GBIRMs, that possibility remains low, heavily caveated by the challenge of accepting any increase in U.S. presence and deploying weapons that are explicitly offensive in nature.

¹³⁷ Tokyo defines the “Far East” as including “the north of the Philippines, Japan, and its surrounding area which includes South Korea and the area governed by the Republic of China.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), “Far East Range (February 26, 1960, Unified Government Opinion)” [極東の範囲 (昭和35年2月26日政府統一見解)], Japan-U.S. Security Treaty System Q&A, undated.

¹³⁸ It reads: “. . . [m]ajor changes in the deployment into Japan of United States armed forces, major changes in their equipment, and the use of facilities and areas in Japan as bases for military combat operations to be undertaken from Japan other than those conducted under Article V of the said Treaty, shall be the subjects of prior consultation with the Government of Japan” (Japan and the United States of America, “Exchanged Notes, Regarding the Implementation of Article VI of Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America,” Washington, D.C., January 19, 1960b).

¹³⁹ It would likely involve top U.S. officials in Japan, such as the U.S. Ambassador and the Commander of U.S. Forces Japan, and officials in Washington holding discussions with their counterparts in Tokyo on the operational necessity, likely outcomes, and laying out of likely pros and cons of the operation.

Alternatives to Permanent U.S. GBIRM Basing on Allies' Land

Given that the likelihood of these allies—with the *possible* exception of Japan—agreeing to host such capabilities (once developed) is extremely low, the United States should look to other possible options. In this chapter, four of the most likely options are examined.

Co-Development or Foreign Military Sales: Allies Maintain Operational Control

One option would be for the United States to either (1) co-develop the capabilities with U.S. allies or (2) develop them on its own and sell the missiles to U.S. allies and then allow the allies to deploy and operate them. This would avoid contentious negotiations over hosting U.S. personnel and their missile systems. It would also be beneficial given that it would strengthen allies' capabilities. Any co-development or Foreign Military Sales (FMS) of GBIRMs, however, would involve negotiations between the parties and consideration of how the proposed systems would fit within export controls, such as the Missile Technology Control Regime.

A first step to determining an ally's potential willingness to accept this option requires insight into current missile capabilities (as of late 2019). The Philippines, for example, does not maintain any long-range missile capability.¹ Although Manila is set to procure two batteries of the medium-range ramjet supersonic BrahMos cruise missile for coastal defense missions from an Indian-Russian joint venture,² the missile's 290-km range will still be limited in its ability to hold Chinese assets at risk far from the Philippines.³ Manila has also shown itself to be extremely risk averse when it comes to China. As one observer noted,

¹ The Philippine Navy's first missile system (the Spike-Extended Range system) was installed on multi-purpose attack crafts in 2020 but has a range of only 8 km. Priam Nepomuceno, "Spike-ER Missile Launchers to Be Installed Early 2020," Philippine News Agency, October 4, 2019a.

² Priam Nepomuceno, "BrahMos Missiles Deal Seen in 2020: Lorenzana," Philippine News Agency, December 17, 2019b.

³ Masao Dahlgren, "Philippines to Order BrahMos Missile," *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 20, 2019.

“unless Manila’s bilateral relations with China significantly deteriorate, American missiles won’t be welcome, as Duterte no doubt noted South Korea’s scars from the Chinese tourist boycott and economic backlash” after the THAAD controversy.⁴ Therefore, agreeing to develop strike capabilities with the United States would likely be a similar step that future Philippine leaders would want to avoid.

The ROK is another possibility given that it maintains a robust arsenal of cruise and ballistic missiles.⁵ For example, the ROK possesses one ballistic missile with an 800-km range (Hyunmoo-2C) and several intermediate-range cruise missiles. Some of these systems are operational, such as the Hyunmoo-3B (1,000 km) and -3C (1,500 km) land-launched cruise missiles, while others are still reportedly in development, such as an improved Hyunmoo variant called the Hyunmoo-4, which will likely be supersonic and have a longer range.⁶ Although this arsenal suggests that the ROK might be open to co-developing or purchasing U.S. GBIRMs, the intention of the ROK’s missiles is to hold key targets all across North Korea at risk. Given how Seoul reacted to Chinese pressure against hosting THAAD, co-developing or purchasing missiles that exceed the ranges of its existing arsenal, which is meant to hold North Korea at risk, could be seen as having a separate objective, specifically striking China.⁷ Seoul is unlikely to want to be put in a position, again, of appearing to unnecessarily provoke China. For that reason, the ROK is likely not a viable candidate for this option.

Australia appears to be a promising option. Since 2009, Australia and the United States have been cooperating on the Hypersonic International Flight Research Experimentation program, one of the largest collaborative research programs between the allies that seeks to explore the fundamental science of hypersonics and the potential for next-generation aeronautical systems.⁸ This resulted in several tests of a hypersonic missile and an agreement in December 2020 to develop and test an air-launched hypersonic cruise missile.⁹ In February 2020, the United States approved Australia’s request to purchase up to 200 AGM-158C long-range anti-ship missiles and related equipment for its F-18 Super Hornet fighters, Canberra’s

⁴ Evan Karlik, “Where Will the US Base Intermediate-Range Missiles in the Pacific?” *The Diplomat*, August 30, 2019.

⁵ Missile Defense Project, “Missiles of South Korea,” *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, last updated August 10, 2021c.

⁶ Missile Defense Project, “Hyunmoo-3,” *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, last updated June 15, 2018; Missile Defense Project, “Haeseong III,” *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, last updated July 30, 2021b; and Bradley Perrett and Kim Minseok, “South Korea Test Flies SRBM with 2,000-Kg Warhead,” *Aviation Week*, May 11, 2020.

⁷ Although the ROK’s longer-range missiles cannot reach deep into China, they could reach Beijing.

⁸ Department of Defence (Australia), “HIFiRE Program,” webpage, undated.

⁹ Kyle Mizokami, “The U.S. and Australia Conducted a Secretive Hypersonic Missile Test,” *Popular Mechanics*, July 18, 2017; and Nigel Pittaway, “Australia, US Partner on Air-Launched Hypersonic Missile,” *Defense News*, November 30, 2020.

first purchase of such missiles.¹⁰ The ranges for these are believed to be in excess of 500 nautical miles.¹¹ And, in June 2020, Canberra announced that it will look to develop long-range missiles with ranges of potentially thousands of kilometers for both aircraft and ships and will invest in the development, testing, and evaluation of high-speed, long-range weapons.¹²

Although all of this suggests that Australia could be a viable candidate for co-development or FMS, as briefly touched upon in the previous chapter, its distance from China would be a prohibitive factor. Because any GBIRM system would be ground-launched, it would have to be placed in northern Australia. Basing such a system at RAAF Base Tindal, however, would reach only a small portion of southern China at a maximum range of 5,500 km.¹³ This limited reach is problematic because it is unclear what Chinese target sets these systems could cover.¹⁴ Although they could arguably reach some targets, the limited reach would mean a smaller percentage of critical targets on the Chinese mainland. This means that, although there might be co-development options with Australia, the operational utility of those missiles would be limited because they could reach—at most—only portions of southern China, leaving extensive areas of central and northern China in sanctuary.

Like Australia, Japan stands as a possible option given its history of bilateral work on joint research, co-development, and co-production of BMD systems. In the 1990s, Japan's decision to procure the BMD-capable Aegis system from the United States marked the first time a missile defense capability produced by the U.S. Missile Defense Agency was sold to an ally.¹⁵ The allies also agreed to allow Japan licensed production of PAC-3 interceptor missiles.¹⁶ In addition, the allies jointly developed the SM-3 Block IIA interceptors for Aegis-equipped destroyers, and, once these were developed, the United States allowed Japan to buy them via FMS: up to four in January 2018 and up to 73 in August 2019, for a total sale of almost \$3.5 billion.¹⁷

¹⁰ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "Australia—Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles (LRASMs)," news release, February 7, 2020.

¹¹ Xavier Vavasseur, "United States Approves Possible FMS of LRASM to Australia," *Naval News*, February 9, 2020.

¹² Andrew Tillett, "New Missiles for Defence in \$270b Arms Build-Up," *Financial Review*, June 30, 2020.

¹³ Cohn et al., 2019, p. 15.

¹⁴ Because the cost of a missile tends to scale with its range, this notional 5,500-km range Australian missile would be much more expensive than a 2,000-km missile, meaning that Australia likely would have considerably fewer 5,500-km missiles in its inventory than an ally developing or purchasing shorter-range missiles.

¹⁵ Rachel Hoff, "U.S.-Japan Missile Defense Cooperation: Increasing Security and Cutting Costs," American Action Forum, December 2, 2015; and Michael D. Swaine, Rachel M. Swanger, and Takashi Kawakami, *Japan and Ballistic Missile Defense*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1374-CAPP, 2001.

¹⁶ Hoff, 2015.

¹⁷ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "Japan—Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA Missiles," news release, January 9, 2018; and Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "Japan—Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA Missiles," news release, August 27, 2019.

Japan is also closer to China than Australia, thereby removing the main obstacle facing GBIRMs in Australia. Yet, although Japan's proximity and history of co-development suggests a possible way forward for the United States to deploy GBIRMs in Japan under Japanese command and control, Japan's efforts are restricted to *defensive* systems. Traditionally, Japan refrains from procuring *offensive* weapons (generally defined as any weapons that can be used to directly attack an opponent on its shores). Instead, guided by a policy of exclusive defense orientation (専守防衛), Japan has limited the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) capabilities to the "minimum necessary level" for self-defense; anything that exceeds this would be considered "war potential" prohibited by Article 9 of Japan's constitution. Historically, intercontinental ballistic missiles, intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs), long-range bombers, and aircraft carriers were identified by government officials as exceeding the minimum necessary level.¹⁸ It is unclear exactly when IRBMs dropped off the list of prohibited capabilities, but their inclusion in this list does not appear to have survived the end of the Cold War. One of the last examples appears to be in 1993, when then-Director General of the Defense Agency (today called the *Minister of Defense* and the *Ministry of Defense*, respectively) Nakanishi Keisuke said that Japan does not possess any of the four prohibited capabilities because of Japan's exclusive defense orientation.¹⁹

Because of Japan's exclusive defensive focus, however, it is reasonable to assume that, even if Japan agreed to this alternative, it could limit the range of GBIRMs to prevent them from being capable of performing deep strikes. Or it could confine GBIRM usage to specific situations, such as only against an enemy missile site in a counterstrike situation or when an attack on Japan is imminent. The theoretical legal basis for this thinking is rooted in a 1956 statement under the Hatoyama Ichirō administration that said that Japan is not obligated to "sit and wait to die" if an attack on Japan is imminent; rather, it is allowed to strike enemy bases preparing to strike Japan using the minimum level of force necessary if no other means is

¹⁸ Asagumo Shimbunsha Shuppan Gyōmu-bu, "Demarcation Between Offensive Weapons and Defensive Weapons" [攻撃的兵器、防御的兵器の区分], *Defense Handbook: 2017 Edition* [防衛ハンドブック:平成29年版], Tokyo, Japan: Asagumo Shimbunsha, 2017, pp. 666–669. For example, Diet testimony by the Defense Agency's Defense Bureau Director General Kubo Takuya in the Lower House Cabinet Affairs Committee on May 15, 1971 (Gyōmu-bu, 2017, p. 667), the Defense Agency's Defense Bureau Director General Itō Yasunari in the Lower House Budget Committee on February 13, 1978 (Gyōmu-bu, 2017, pp. 667–668), and the Defense Agency's Director General Kawara Tsutomu in the Upper House Budget Committee on April 6, 1988 (Gyōmu-bu, 2017, pp. 668–669) explicitly identify these four weapons as having expansive destructive power or being able to project power over long distances, thus exceeding the minimum necessary level for self-defense.

¹⁹ Instead, as demonstrated in 2018 testimony by then-Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori, who was providing examples of weapons that exceed the minimum necessary level for self-defense, officials now highlight only intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range strategic bombers, and aircraft carriers. Nakanishi Keisuke, Diet testimony, House of Councillors, Audit Committee, Tokyo, Japan: National Diet Library Online Archives Database, October 25, 1993; and Onodera Itsunori, Diet testimony, House of Councillors, Budget Committee, Tokyo, Japan: National Diet Library Online Archives Database, March 2, 2018.

available to avoid or prevent the attack.²⁰ This thinking is still evident in missile discussions today; proponents of strike capability focus on using missiles in a defensive capacity.²¹

What might be theoretically constitutional, however, currently might not be politically feasible. Japan's development of standoff missile capabilities demonstrates the continued strength of its exclusive defense orientation. This was evident in the message by then-Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori, who, in his announcement of Japan's procurement of standoff capabilities, reiterated that they did not contravene Japan's exclusive defense orientation because they would be used solely for island defense, emphasizing that Japan had no plans to obtain missiles to attack enemy bases.²² After the suspension of the Aegis Ashore system in June 2020, however, this "enemy base attack" capability became a main issue of debate in a broader discussion about Japan's deterrent capabilities.²³ As of this writing, the debate continues, with it looking likely that Japan will introduce some type of enemy base attack capability in the near future. The conclusion that should be drawn from this, however, is that although co-developing GBIRMs with Japan is an option, and having Japan independently deploy and operate them is possible, Japan may limit their range or usage to adhere to its exclusive defense orientation, thereby setting limits on the feasibility of this alternative for Japan despite its geographical proximity to China.

Rapid Deployment to Theater During a Crisis

A second option would be for the United States to deploy GBIRMs rapidly should a crisis erupt. If an ally is not party to the conflict with China, that ally is unlikely to accept missiles onto its territory because doing so could make it a *de facto* belligerent in China's eyes. No ally

²⁰ Funada Naka, Diet testimony, House of Representatives, Cabinet Committee, Tokyo, Japan: National Diet Library Online Archives Database, February 29, 1956.

²¹ Fujita Naotaka [藤田直央], "Enemy Base Attack Capability, 'Toward a Fast Response,' Q&A with LDP Committee Head" [敵基地攻撃能力「速やかな対応を」自民座長の一問一答], *Asahi Shimbun* [朝日新聞], March 29, 2017; "Japan Debates Pre-Emptive Strike Ability, Missile Defense Upgrade," Voice of America, September 2, 2017; Nishihara Masashi [西原正], "Japan Must Strengthen Its Missile Intercept and Attack Capabilities! Have We Fallen into a Pattern Responding to North Korea's Provocations?" [日本はミサイル迎撃・攻撃能力を強化せよ! 北朝鮮の挑発にパターン化してはいないか], *Sankei News* [産経ニュース], September 9, 2017; and Takahashi Kosuke, "Japan Needs Constitution Change to Have Capabilities to Strike Enemy Bases," Japan Forward, December 23, 2017.

²² "Capability Building Progresses Under the Pretext of 'Island Defense' with the Procurement of Cruise Missiles, Range Exceeds a Few Hundred Kilometers, 3 Times More than Current Equipment" [巡航ミサイル導入「島嶼防衛」名目で進む能力構築 射程数百キロ超で現有装備の3倍], *Sankei News* [産経ニュース], December 6, 2017; and "Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori Officially Announces Procurement of Cruise Missiles, 'It Won't Contravene Exclusive Defense Orientation'" [巡航ミサイル導入を正式発表「専守防衛に反しない」小野寺五典防衛相], *Sankei News* [産経ニュース], December 8, 2017.

²³ "Necessary to Debate and Clarify the Definition of Enemy Base Attack Capability, Etc., Defense Minister" [敵基地攻撃能力など 定義整理し議論必要 防衛相], NHK Seiji Magazin [NHK政治マガジン], June 25, 2020.

examined in this report is exempt from that logic, meaning that no U.S. ally is likely to accept hosting U.S. GBIRMs if it is not directly engaged in conflict with China. Should a conflict erupt, however, and that ally become the target of a Chinese attack, the calculus is likely to change in Washington's favor, allowing the United States to rapidly deploy GBIRMs onto the ally's territory as a means of active defense.

Although this option avoids the political difficulties associated with seeking permanent U.S. deployment and delays the decision point until the U.S. ally has the greatest incentive to agree, it carries significant operational drawbacks. First, moving missiles (and their associated systems) to the region after a conflict erupts removes many of the postulated benefits of permanently located U.S. GBIRMs. Instead of being able to perform quick responsive strikes at a conflict's first stage, the United States will have to wait until its missiles arrive to use them, which will be a function of how quickly the United States can deliver them. Next, in terms of survivability, having to unload the missiles and their systems at an ally's airfield or port during a crisis and then transport, assemble, and organize them leaves them vulnerable to attack at multiple points before they can be used. Given that allied airfields and ports are already threatened by Chinese missiles, rushing GBIRMs to the theater during a crisis negates any survivability advantage. Finally, from a crisis stability standpoint, having to rush these systems into an active combat theater that the enemy knows will be vulnerable for a limited period might create strong incentives for China to preemptively attack them before they can become fully functional.

Peacetime Rotational Deployments

Allies might have sensitivities regarding a new permanent presence of U.S. forces; a third option, which would minimize this concern, is peacetime rotational deployments of GBIRM systems. Like a permanent deployment, rotational deployment signals U.S. resolve and commitment to its allies and positions the United States to rapidly respond to regional events if something occurs when those U.S. missiles are on deployment in the region. The operational benefits end there.

Logistically, rotational deployment puts a heavy burden on the United States to move systems around the region on a regular basis. To ensure operational readiness for a potential conflict, this movement would need to be exercised, which would include loading and unloading equipment, munitions, or both at ports and airfields; transporting equipment between the home base and the operating base; and driving convoys on host nation roads. Although the rotational units would undoubtedly benefit from having to repeatedly go through the process of packing up their equipment in the United States, transporting it to its host country, unloading it, and then transporting it to its operating location, conducting this on a routine

basis is costly.²⁴ It also carries the potential to cause headaches for the host nation given the constant movement of troops, the associated possibilities of accidents, and the simple disruption of the daily lives of local residents during periods of rotation, any one of which could cause erosion in host nation support. Most importantly, if China knows these deployments are rotational, it could align its aggression with the off-rotation period to take advantage of the absence of U.S. GBIRMs.

Politically, rotational deployments are unlikely to make it easier for U.S. allies to host GBIRMs. Not only would the missiles and launchers require political negotiations on where the deployments would be based and for how long, they would raise the same potential fears that such deployments would cause friction with China. Therefore, from an ally's perspective, similar opposition to permanently deployed U.S. GBIRMs can be expected for rotationally deployed ones. Allies might also balk if they expect that rotationally deployed units will not have sufficient knowledge about the ally's culture and related customs and local laws. All of this would require a steep learning curve—which would likely include accidents and incidents—for the rotational troops that the host country might not have the patience to endure every time a new unit arrives. Finally, although the model of the six-month rotational deployment of the U.S. Marines in Darwin is desirable, that rotation works because the marines leave their necessary equipment while the personnel rotate. For U.S. GBIRMs, to avoid the optics of an introduction of a new permanent U.S. presence, it is unlikely that U.S. GBIRMs and the requisite equipment could be pre-positioned (with the possible exception of Australia). Instead, the missiles, personnel, and launchers and associated equipment likely would have to leave the host nations every time the rotations ended. Collectively, then, rotational deployment carries with it most of the challenges of a permanent deployment with fewer of the operational benefits.

Deployment on Guam or One of the Compact of Free Association States

It is understood that no U.S. ally is calling for U.S. GBIRMs to be deployed to its territory, and it is also understood that regional states are hesitant to host U.S. missiles because doing so could be seen “as signaling membership in an anti-Chinese coalition” or exposing oneself to Chinese retaliation in the event that missiles are fired at China during a war.²⁵ Therefore,

²⁴ A 2013 RAND study found that rotational costs depend on the frequency and duration of the deployment. For deployments to the same region for the same unit type, which would be the case here, higher deployment frequency combined with lower deployment duration greatly increases costs. See Chapter Eight in Michael J. Lostumbo, Michael J. McNerney, Eric Peltz, Derek Eaton, David R. Frelinger, Victoria A. Greenfield, John Halliday, Patrick Mills, Bruce R. Nardulli, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jerry M. Sollinger, and Stephen M. Worman, *Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-201-OSD, 2013.

²⁵ Heim, 2016, p. 10.

a final option that the United States has is deploying these systems on the U.S. territory of Guam or one of the three sovereign states in the Compact of Free Association (i.e., the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau), all of which offer the United States special military access opportunities because it is responsible for each state's defense and security. Per the Compact of Free Association agreement, the United States is granted permission to conduct "activities and operations necessary for the exercise of its authority and responsibility."²⁶ What is more, such states as Palau have openly asked for an expansion of U.S. military presence.²⁷

Because of the relationship that these islands have with the United States, the United States does not have to worry about the governments of these islands refusing to host GBIRM systems. This is not to say that deployment would be without opposition. In Guam, for example, there is already a sizable U.S. Navy and Air Force presence. In recent years, local opposition to efforts to relocate U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam has led to significant changes in the size and pace of the relocation.²⁸ Similarly, some of the local population in the Republic of the Marshall Islands opposes the island's current hosting of the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site on the Kwajalein Atoll. Should the United States seek to introduce GBIRMs on these islands, which would result in further increases in personnel and infrastructure, similar opposition could occur.

There is also a benefit of deploying these longer-range GBIRMs in that they offer a hedge against the risk of no ally agreeing to host GBIRM systems. Should the United States design the deployment of its GBIRMs such that it can have multiple basing options at longer distances, the United States will be able to hedge against the risk of all five of its treaty allies saying "no." However, this option is not without drawbacks. One issue is size. Although deploying missiles on these islands far from the First Island Chain would help the United States in terms of survivability because fewer Chinese missiles would be able to successfully reach them, the comparatively small areas of these islands would pose challenges to ensuring survivability through mobility alone.²⁹ Also, the key benefit of having GBIRMs closer to such states as China and North Korea is to be able to perform quick responsive strikes at the conflict's first stage by having these missiles fly shorter distances to reach such places as the Taiwan Strait. Basing missiles on Guam or the Compact of Free Association states *alone*, therefore, might put the United States at an operational disadvantage.³⁰ For example, the latest version of the

²⁶ Public Law 99-239, Compact of Free Association Act of 1985, 1986.

²⁷ Seth Robson, "Pacific Island Nation of Palau Offers to Host US Military Bases, Report Says," *Stars and Stripes*, September 9, 2020.

²⁸ Jeffrey W. Hornung, *The U.S. Military Laydown on Guam: Progress amid Challenges*, Washington, D.C.: Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA, 2017.

²⁹ Heim, 2016, p. 11.

³⁰ For example, the supersonic SM-6 missile has an estimated range of roughly 450 km. Current variants of the subsonic Tomahawk cruise missile possess a range of 1,600 km. Given that Guam and other Second Island Chain (or farther) bases would require roughly a 3,000-km missile to reach the Taiwan Strait, these

SM-6 (the SM-6 Block 1B) reportedly is an extended-range model with a larger booster that enables longer range and higher speeds, but it still would not reach the Taiwan Strait from Guam.³¹ A final drawback to relying only on these islands is that the larger, longer-range missiles required to reach relevant targets from these locations would be more expensive than the shorter-range missiles placed in a country like Japan or the Philippines. Holding all else equal, this would likely mean that the United States would end up with a smaller overall number of GBIRMs in its arsenal. Although having missiles on these islands would arguably be better than having none, should all U.S. allies refuse, the location might nonetheless prove both operationally and strategically unattractive as an option by itself.

Most Plausible Option: Help Japan Develop Standoff Missile Capabilities

A recent report advocating for U.S. GBIRMs argued that U.S. allies might “. . . welcome the deployment of [GBIRMs] given that they can enhance deterrence and provide a forward-operating capability that bolsters U.S. security commitments.”³² In a vacuum, that statement is likely true, but, as this report has shown, there are many political and practical considerations that overpower any benefit to enhanced deterrence that a permanent deployment of U.S. GBIRMs might bring. And, as argued in the previous section, none of the possible alternatives regarding U.S. allies is operationally attractive. Nor is deploying the GBIRMs onto Guam or one of the Compact of Free Association states alone an operationally attractive option. Therefore, should the United States continue to pursue GBIRMs for the Indo-Pacific region, the next best option, and the one recommended in this report, is a variation of the first alternative: co-development of missiles with and/or selling of missiles to Japan, with an initial focus on the ground-based standoff missiles that Japan is already developing.

Of all of the allies reviewed earlier, Japan is the most likely to agree. But, as shown, even with Japan, a decision to host U.S. GBIRM systems would be politically difficult, particularly because of the offensive nature of the systems. Even if Japan operated these systems, there could be limitations on their ranges and usage. Because a Japanese decision to pursue independent, long-range strike capabilities could generate tremendous domestic opposition and likely would generate regional instabilities given almost-certain Chinese (and North and South Korean) opposition, the United States is best served by co-developing, or selling via FMS, ground-based anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM) systems for Japan to operate. Although the capability would be acknowledged as an alliance initiative and would involve sensitive

would be operationally infeasible. Masao Dahlgren, “Army Selects SM-6, Tomahawk for Ground Launchers,” *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 9, 2020.

³¹ Sydney J. Freedberg, Jr., “Army Picks Tomahawk & SM-6 for Mid-Range Missiles,” *Breaking Defense*, November 6, 2020.

³² Cohn et al., 2019, p. ii.

bilateral discussions about warheads, targets, and concepts of operation that both sides would want to keep secret, it would be a Japanese-owned and -operated system.

Of all U.S. regional allies, Japan is chosen because of its proximity to China and U.S. alignment with efforts it is currently pursuing to bolster its missile capabilities vis-à-vis China. In 2016, Japan began establishing SDF facilities on four islands in the Nansei Shōtō, or southwest islands. The first was established in 2016 on Yonaguni and was followed by two more, on Amami-Ōshima and Miyako, in March 2019. Construction for a fourth one on Ishigaki is likely to be completed by March 2023. An important part of this SDF expansion is the deployment of ground-based surface-to-air missile (SAM) units and ASCM units on three of these islands (not Yonaguni).³³ For SAMs, the Ground Self-Defense Force is both deploying more Type-03 mid-range SAMs and upgrading these systems, which, compared with the Type-03 system's 50-km range and maximum engagement altitude of 10,000 meters, will have a maximum range of 100 km.³⁴ Furthermore, the Ground Self-Defense Force began deploying advanced Type-12 ASCM batteries on Amami-Ōshima starting in 2019 and on Miyako in 2020. Deployments on Ishigaki are scheduled to occur by 2023. With a maximum range of 200 km, these ASCMs can fire upon enemy ships approaching Japanese territory farther from shore.³⁵

In addition to these ground-based units, in recent years, Japan has begun pursuing other types of standoff missile capabilities. These include a Joint Strike Missile (medium-range anti-ship missile [ASM]) and a Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM; air-to-ground precision missile).³⁶ Although initially only the nomenclature JASSM was used, it was later clarified to be the JASSM-ER (Extended Range).³⁷ Media reports the ranges of these missiles to be between roughly 500 and 900 km, which is likely accurate.³⁸ Japan is also moving to develop an improved supersonic ASM called the ASM-3.³⁹ It is also developing several new

³³ "Japan Expanding GSDF's Presence on Southwestern Islands with New Bases and Missile Batteries," *Japan Times*, March 16, 2019; and Ministry of Defense (Japan), "Situation of the GSDF Establishing Locations in the Southwest Islands" [南西諸島における陸上自衛隊拠点整備の状況], document provided by Ministry of Defense (Japan), Fall 2019c.

³⁴ No decision has been made on where and by when the upgraded Type-03 will be deployed, but reports suggest Ishigaki, Miyako, and Amami-Ōshima, beginning in 2021. "Chu-SAM," *Land Warfare Platforms: Artillery & Air Defence*, Janes publication, May 21, 2019; and Dylan Malyasov, "Japan Deploying Type 3 Missile System in Okinawa Prefecture," *Defence Blog*, last updated August 24, 2016.

³⁵ "Type 88 (SSM-1); Type 12; Type 90 (SSM-1B); SSM-2," *Weapons: Naval*, Janes publication, June 21, 2018.

³⁶ Ministry of Defense (Japan), *Medium Term Defense Program (FY 2019—FY 2023)*, Tokyo, Japan, December 18, 2018b, p. 12. Japan initially did not use the nomenclature JASSM-ER (Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile—Extended Range) but has since clarified that it does mean JASSM-ER.

³⁷ Ministry of Defense (Japan), "Summary of the Minister of Defense's Press Conference" [防衛大臣記者会見概要], webpage, December 8, 2017.

³⁸ Ministry of Defense official, email correspondence, January 3, 2021.

³⁹ "Japan Plans to Develop Home-Made Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile to Counter Threat," *Japan Times*, March 24, 2019.

missiles, although the details on the system capabilities have not been made public. One is a hypersonic cruise missile.⁴⁰ Another is a vehicle-mounted hyper-velocity gliding projectile, with recent reports suggesting that it will be an anti-ship capability for defense of outlying islands, ready to deploy by 2026.⁴¹ And in December 2020, media reported that, in addition to the government extending the range of Japan's Type-12 ASCM from the current 200 km to 900 km, the range of a new ASCM under development is capable of 2,000 km.⁴²

These efforts demonstrate that Japan is making a dedicated effort to strengthen its missile capabilities within existing constitutional limitations. This has been possible because Japan has characterized these weapons as defensive weapons. For example, when speaking about standoff missile capabilities, then-Prime Minister Abe said, "It is inevitable for our country's defense and it matches with Article 9 of the constitution. They are not to be used to totally destroy the territory of another country; in other words, they are not offensive weapons and therefore do not contradict the government's interpretation."⁴³ Although the systems that Japan is deploying and developing are limited in their ability to strike deep into the Chinese mainland, their placement has the potential to hold Chinese assets operating in and above the East China Sea at war-planning risk, preventing movement beyond the First Island Chain during a conflict.

Importantly, because some of these efforts represent ground-based initiatives, matched with recent moves to extend missile ranges, Japan's efforts suggest the potential to host similar ground-launched systems with longer ranges in the future. Therefore, instead of focusing on missiles that can strike deep into China, the United States should focus on missiles with the operational purpose of controlling the sea by land for the defense of Japan and U.S. forces in Japan. ASCMs are politically easier to discuss than anti-surface or deep strike because they allow Japan to maintain its focus on defense, thereby reducing any possible legal challenges. There would still be political difficulty in getting local communities to acquiesce to an increase in ground-based systems, but, if these systems are able to be deployed within existing SDF base fence lines, the political hurdle to overcome would be significantly lower than it would be for a U.S.-operated GBIRM or even construction of a new SDF base.

⁴⁰ The fiscal year 2019 budget, for example, stipulates that money is to be spent on research on various "component technologies of SCRAM-jet engines using combustion in supersonic air flow" (Ministry of Defense [Japan], *Defense Programs and Budget of Japan: Summary of FY 2019 Budget* [我が国の防衛と予算：平成31年度予算の概要], Tokyo, Japan, 2019a, p. 12).

⁴¹ Liu Zhen, "Japan Is Working on a Hypersonic Anti-Ship Missile That May Be a Threat to Chinese Navy Activities," *South China Morning Post*, April 29, 2020; Ministry of Defense (Japan), *Defense Programs and Budget of Japan: Summary of FY 2018 Budget* [我が国の防衛と予算：平成30年度予算の概要], Tokyo, Japan, 2018a, p. 9; and Ministry of Defense (Japan), 2019a, p. 12.

⁴² "Toward the Development of a 'Domestically Produced Tomahawk,' New ASCM with 2,000-Km Range, Extension of the Type-12 to 1,500 Km" [「国産トマホーク」開発へ 射程2千キロの新型対艦弾 12式は1500キロに延伸], *Sankei News* [産経ニュース], December 29, 2020.

⁴³ Abe Shinzō, testimony, House of Representatives, Diet Plenary Session, Tokyo, Japan: National Diet Library Online Archives Database, May 16, 2019.

Importantly, co-development of ASCMs with and/or selling of these missiles to Japan, with an initial focus on the ground-based missiles that Japan is already developing, should be seen as a first step in a longer-term U.S. strategy. Immediate deployment of ground-based, *long-range* ASCMs in Japan is unlikely because of many of the sensitivities outlined earlier. Over time, however, it might be possible to expand the ranges of these missiles, as Tokyo recently did, although deep strike is unlikely. Once any public opposition to standoff missiles wears off and the public is no longer worried about these being offensive capabilities, it might be possible for the United States to encourage Japan to procure, either on its own or together with the United States, ASCMs with a much longer range.⁴⁴ Although these still would not be capable of deep strikes into China, if they were deployed somewhere in the Nansei Shotō or even Kyūshū, they would be able to cover ship movements in the Taiwan Strait, the East China Sea, and some of China's east coast, thereby extending the range at which Chinese assets could be held at war-planning risk and potentially contributing to a maritime interdiction mission in the Taiwan Strait. The United States could also work to improve Japan's over-the-horizon sensing and targeting capabilities, possibly eventually leading to U.S. sensor networks being able to feed targeting information to Japanese ASCMs.

Fielding Japan's longer-range ASCMs in the Nansei Shotō would entail a mix of costs and benefits. Because the Ground Self-Defense Force is building out its presence, including ASCMs and SAMs, it seems logical that these could be naturally folded into the arsenal with the least amount of resistance. One problem, however, might be physical space, given that these islands and associated bases are relatively small. A second problem would be defense. Because the bases themselves are small and on relatively small islands, there is not much real estate on which to shoot-and-scoot or deploy decoys in great numbers, putting a heavy onus on hardening missile sites and bolstering air and missile defenses.

Although the capabilities would be Japanese-owned and -controlled, they should be integrated with the United States in ways in which the current alliance BMD system is integrated. At a minimum, this should include a joint drafting of an operational plan detailing when, how, and toward what targets the missiles are to be used. Other options could include setting up a joint or combined fires command under Japanese operational control or setting up a joint command of multiple domains that includes both BMD and standoff missiles alongside the new domains of cyber and space. Practically speaking, integrating Japan's missiles with the United States would require high-speed data links for Japanese ASCMs that would enable the SDF to acquire accurate detection and targeting data from both U.S. and other SDF intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets in real time.

The conclusion reached here is that, because it is unlikely that any ally, including Japan, would accept U.S. GBIRMs on its territory, the most promising alternative is to encourage Japan to continue to develop and deploy its independent arsenal of ASCMs and to extend their ranges over time. The United States should co-develop and/or sell such ASCMs to Japan

⁴⁴ Takahashi Sugio and Eric Sayers, "America and Japan in a Post-INF World," War on the Rocks, March 8, 2019.

where needed. Although this is not *the* immediate solution for increasing U.S. deterrence in the region, it is an important part of the solution. At the same time that the United States pursues this option, it can continue to seek to base GBIRMs on Guam or the states in the Compact of Free Association. Although deploying longer-range GBIRMs to these islands carries survivability benefits because of the distance of these islands from the Chinese threat, these systems alone would not ensure the high volume and extremely prompt operational responses that would be most useful for a conflict with China. As articulated by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the United States wants to station precision-strike missiles along the First Island Chain, from Japan down to the Philippines.⁴⁵ U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's reasoning seems to be that GBIRMs in the First Island Chain would enable the United States to perform quick responsive strikes after a conflict erupted. Given this report's assessment, the prospects are poor for finding First Island Chain hosts for U.S. GBIRMs, which is why I recommend considering the less ambitious but more politically plausible focus on supporting the Japanese ASCMs.

Although Japanese ground-based ASCMs would initially have much shorter ranges than many proposed U.S. GBIRMs, they would still benefit the United States because there would be a need for the United States and its partners to find a mix of missiles—of various types and ranges and with air, sea, and land basing—that could deny easy victories to China by complicating its actions in the East China Sea. These missiles might not be capable of deep strikes into China, but they would nevertheless impose risks and war-planning costs while providing the alliance more options in a conflict. Moreover, they would help challenge—and potentially defeat—any anti-access/area-denial strategy that China might have in the East China Sea.

⁴⁵ Joe Gould, "Eyeing China, Indo-Pacific Command Seeks \$27 Billion Deterrence Fund," *Defense News*, March 1, 2021.

Conclusion

Although former U.S. Secretary of Defense Esper acknowledged that he had not asked any allies to host the U.S. GBIRMs, that no allies have declined, and that the process might take “a few years” and involve “a lot of dialogue” with U.S. partners, these GBIRMs, once developed, will have to be deployed somewhere.¹ Where these missiles go will require U.S. decision-makers to go beyond U.S. operational objectives to consider the political constraints facing their allies for any deployment plan to work. Importantly, there are very real political challenges associated with permanently deploying U.S. GBIRMs on treaty allies’ lands. Therefore, despite some U.S. allies hosting other types of U.S. military forces, such as air bases, hosting U.S. GBIRMs appears to be more challenging. A U.S. strategy that relies heavily on an ally agreeing to permanently host GBIRMs during peacetime would, therefore, face serious risks of failure due to an inability to find a willing partner.

Given the likelihood of U.S. allies—with the *possible* exception of Japan—refraining from hosting these U.S. capabilities, the United States must consider alternatives that might not be ideal but would nevertheless hold some parts of China or Chinese assets at risk. Supporting Japan in its efforts to develop and deploy ground-based ASCM standoff missile capabilities—with a long-term strategy to encourage an expansion of those ranges over time—is the most promising alternative.

¹ Gould, 2019.

Abbreviations

ANZUS	Security Treaty Between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America
ASCM	anti-ship cruise missile
ASM	anti-ship missile
AUKUS	Australia–United Kingdom–United States
BMD	ballistic missile defense
EDCA	Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
GBIRM	ground-based intermediate-range missile
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces
JASSM-ER	Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile—Extended Range
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
ROK	Republic of Korea
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SDF	Self-Defense Forces
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement

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When the United States withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019, it opened for itself the opportunity to develop and deploy ground-based missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 km—what this report calls *ground-based intermediate-range missiles* (GBIRMs).

But the U.S. withdrawal also sparked a debate regarding where the United States could deploy such missiles. This became a critical topic in the Indo-Pacific because China was never a signatory to the INF Treaty, enabling it to develop a wide array of capabilities that the United States was prohibited from fielding.

Considering this threat, the United States has been hoping to develop and deploy a new conventionally armed GBIRM to the Indo-Pacific, but how U.S. allies will respond to Washington's overtures to host GBIRMs is not clear.

The author analyzes the likelihood of U.S. treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific region—Australia, Japan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Thailand—hosting U.S. GBIRMs. Because these countries are unlikely to agree, the author also examines alternatives to permanently basing these missiles on allies' territories: (1) U.S. co-development of GBIRMs with and/or sales of GBIRMs to an ally for it to command and control, (2) U.S. deployment of GBIRMs to an allied territory in a crisis, (3) peacetime rotational deployment, and (4) deployment on Guam or one of the Compact of Free Association states. Because of drawbacks with each alternative, the author recommends a variation of the first: helping Japan develop an arsenal of ground-based anti-ship standoff missile capabilities.

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