

Abstract

This paper analyses the role of the joint Sino-Russian air patrols that took place annually since 2019 in the East China Sea and Sea of Japan. Asia-Pacific as a region shaped by the strategic competition of the United States (U.S.) and China is set to experience a shift in the regional order through an emerging Sino-Russian military partnership, which has managed to destabilize the American security architecture through its most recent air patrols. These joint air patrols fly not only routes over three highly relevant strategic locations but have also caused further friction between the U.S.' most important allies in the region: South Korea and Japan, over the defence of an unsettled territorial dispute of Dokdo/Takeshima, whose airspace was violated in the first joint air patrol. Through four case studies which capture variations in the warplanes, flight path and duration of the joint air patrols, and a lack of a coordinated response from both South Korea and Japan, a rift between the U.S.' most important allies in the region, that is being exploited by a rising Sino-Russian military partnership can be detected. This paper contributes to the research on the emerging Sino-Russian military alliance, the continuous Sino-U.S. strategic competition and the relevance of the disputed territory of Dokdo/Takeshima.