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The US-Japan Alliance and China's Rise: Alliance Strategy and Reassurance, Deterrence, and Compellence

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Abstract

Do changes in US alliance strategy toward Japan affect the US’ ability to succeed in reassuring, deterring, and compelling a rising China? This study contends that when the US pursues a distancing strategy toward from Japan, Japan adopts hedging strategies that may undercut US reassurance, deterrence, and compelling China. When the US pursues increased coordination with Japan, however, Japan increases its support for US policy toward China. Stronger Japanese support for US policy, in turn, strengthens the US’ ability to reassure, deter, and compel China. In making this argument, this study speaks to ongoing policy debates over the US-Japan alliance and supplements the existing scholarship on alliance dynamics by highlighting the independent causal significance of strategy. To evaluate this argument and its alternatives, this study conducts an analysis of changes in the US’ alliance strategy following the end of the Cold War, examining its association with Japanese support for US policy and US success in deterring, reassuring, and compelling China in three key policy domains: The East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and the Korean Peninsula. The study concludes with suggestions for US strategy and policy in the Asia-Pacific.
THE US-JAPAN ALLIANCE AND CHINA’S RISE
Alliance Strategy and Reassurance, Deterrence, and Compellence

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Question ........................................... 1
1.2 Argument .......................................................... 3
1.3 Methodology and Outline ....................................... 4

## CHAPTER II: THE HISTORY OF THE US-JAPAN-CHINA RELATIONSHIP

2.1 Overview .......................................................... 6
2.2 An Asian Cold War .............................................. 6
   - Crisis: The Korean War ......................................... 6
   - Strategic Changes: Allying for Containment ............... 9
   - The New Equilibrium: Sino-Allied Hostility ............... 10
2.3 The Anti-Soviet Entente ........................................ 14
   - Crisis: The Nixon Shocks ...................................... 14
   - Strategic Changes: Rapprochement to Alignment .......... 16
   - The Erosion of the Equilibrium: The End of the Cold War .......... 23

## CHAPTER III: A STRATEGIC THEORY OF ALLIANCE COORDINATION

3.1 Introduction ....................................................... 24
3.2 US Influence Attempts: Reassuring, Deterring, and Compelling China .......... 24
   - Reassurance Success and Failure: Avoiding Unnecessary Spirals .......... 24
   - Deterrence Success and Failure: Preserving the Status Quo .............. 26
   - Compellence Success and Failure: Achieving Cooperation ............. 27
   - Are These Tasks Contradictory? .................................. 28
3.3 The Existing Literature on Reassurance, Deterrence, and Compellence .......... 29
   - The Balance of Interests ........................................ 29
   - Offense-Defense Balance ........................................ 29
   - Strategic Culture ................................................. 30
   - Domestic Political Pressure .................................... 31
   - Regime-Type and Audience Costs ................................ 32
   - Reputation ......................................................... 32
3.4 A Strategic Theory of Alliance Coordination .......................... 33
   - Alliance Strategy ................................................ 34
4.5 2013-2016: New Commitments ................................................................. 77
  Background ......................................................................................... 77
  US Alliance Strategy: Strong Coordination .................................. 77
  Japanese Policy .................................................................................. 80
  Deterrence and Reassurance toward China .................................. 82
4.6 A Temporary Return to Escalation in 2016 .................................................. 83
4.7 Findings: Alliance Strategy and Alternative Explanations ...................... 84
  Other Explanatory Variables ............................................................... 88
CHAPTER V: THE TAIWAN STRAIT – NAVIGATING “DUAL DETERRENCE” .... 90
  5.1 Introduction .................................................................................. 90
    History ............................................................................................. 90
    Interests .......................................................................................... 92
    US Influence Attempts and the Logic of Strategic Coordination ........ 94
  5.2 1991-1996: Independent Action .......................................................... 95
    Background ...................................................................................... 95
    US Alliance Strategy: Limited Coordination ................................ 97
    Japanese Policy ................................................................................. 100
    Reassurance and Deterrence toward China .................................... 104
  5.3 1996-2001: Areas Surrounding Japan ..................................................... 107
    Background ...................................................................................... 107
    US Alliance Strategy: Moderate Coordination ............................... 108
    Japanese Policy ............................................................................... 112
    Deterrence and Reassurance toward China ...................................... 119
  5.4 2001-2008: The Common Strategic Objectives .................................... 122
    Background ...................................................................................... 122
    US Alliance Strategy: Strong Coordination .................................... 123
    Japanese Policy ............................................................................... 125
    Deterrence and Reassurance toward China ...................................... 128
  5.5 Post-2008: Stability Overdetermined ...................................................... 131
  5.6 Findings: Alliance Strategy and Alternative Explanations ..................... 131
  Other Explanatory Variables ............................................................... 133
CHAPTER VI: THE KOREAN PENINSULA – PARTING “LIPS AND TEETH” .... 135
6.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 135
  History ............................................................................................................................................. 136
  Interests ........................................................................................................................................... 137
  US Influence Attempts and the Logic of Strategic Coordination .................................................. 138

  Background ...................................................................................................................................... 139
  US Strategy: Limited Coordination ................................................................................................. 140
  Japanese Policy ................................................................................................................................. 145
  Compelling China ............................................................................................................................ 149

  Background ...................................................................................................................................... 151
  US Strategy: Moderate Coordination .............................................................................................. 151
  Japanese Policy .................................................................................................................................. 156
  Compelling China ............................................................................................................................ 160

6.4 2003-2006: The Six-Party Approach ............................................................................................. 162
  Background ...................................................................................................................................... 162
  US Strategy: Strong Coordination ................................................................................................. 163
  Japanese Policy ................................................................................................................................. 168
  Compelling China ............................................................................................................................ 171

6.5 2006-2009: Independent Diplomacy ............................................................................................. 174
  Background ...................................................................................................................................... 174
  US Strategy: Limited Coordination ................................................................................................. 175
  Japanese Policy .................................................................................................................................. 177
  Compelling China ............................................................................................................................ 180

6.6 2009-2016: Patient Coordination ................................................................................................ 182
  Background ...................................................................................................................................... 182
  US Strategy: Strong Coordination ................................................................................................. 182
  Japanese Policy .................................................................................................................................. 186
  Compelling China ............................................................................................................................ 190

6.7 Findings: Alliance Strategy and Alternative Explanations ........................................................... 192
  Other Explanatory Variables ........................................................................................................... 195

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE US .......... 196
7.1 Summary of the Findings ........................................................................................................ 196

7.2 Theoretical Implications ....................................................................................................... 197
   Strategy and Alliance Coordination ....................................................................................... 197
   Future Research: Beyond the US-Japan Alliance ................................................................. 198

7.3 Policy Implications and Recommendations ......................................................................... 200
   General ................................................................................................................................. 200
   East China Sea ...................................................................................................................... 203
   Taiwan ................................................................................................................................. 206
   Korea .................................................................................................................................. 207

7.4 Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 207

Bibliography ............................................................................................................................. 209

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Synopsis of ECS Cases ............................................................................................. 50
Figure 2: Chinese Domestic Political Developments ............................................................... 87
Figure 3: Events Affecting US Reputation ............................................................................... 88
Figure 4: Synopsis of Taiwan Cases ........................................................................................ 90
Figure 5: Synopsis of Korean Cases ......................................................................................... 135
Figure 6: Synopsis of Cases .................................................................................................... 197
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Question

The US faces three critical strategic tasks in managing relations with China in the Asia-Pacific: reassuring China to prevent an unnecessary escalatory spiral, deterring unwanted Chinese behavior, and compelling cooperation. But its success in managing these tasks has varied over time and across issues. What accounts for this variation?

In order to explain these shifts, this study considers the influence of changes in the US’ approach to managing the US-Japan alliance, one of the most significant and capable US partnerships in the Asia-Pacific. US strategy toward Japan varies along a continuum between two ideal types – distancing and coordination. Although many policymakers and scholars suggest that these strategies have a significant influence on US reassurance, deterrence, and compellence toward China, there is no consensus on what that influence is. Each approach has its own competing rationale. Distancing strategies curtail commitment and consultation to avoid emboldening Japan and to better manage relations with China.¹ Their proponents suggest that a strong US commitment is costly and allows Japan to free-ride off of US largesse, failing to assume its fair share of the burden for the allies’ common defense. Similarly, US coordination

risks encouraging an overconfident Japan to adopt a hardline stance toward China, potentially undercutting US reassurance toward China and entrapping the US in an unnecessary escalatory spiral. It also suggests that even if Japan is not emboldened, a more cohesive, and therefore more militarily powerful – alliance risks undermining US reassurance toward China and triggering a counterbalancing backlash. As such, a distancing strategy will serve to better manage relations with Japan and China.

Coordination strategies, on the other hand, strengthen US commitment and consultation to Japan. Advocates of this approach claim it allows the US to secure Japanese support for US policy toward China.2 Japan’s support, in turn, strengthens the US’ threats and promises toward China, improving the US’ prospects for success in reassurance, deterrence, and compellence toward China. If the US distances itself from Japan, however, Japan hedges against abandonment and is less supportive of US policy, which in turn undercuts US’ reassurance, deterrence, and compellence toward China.

This dissertation investigates the following research question based on the preceding debate: How do changes in US alliance strategy toward Japan affect the US’ ability to succeed in reassuring, deterring, and compelling an increasingly powerfully China? In examining this question, this study considers whether changes in US strategy can explain the variation in the US’ success in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China. Just as importantly, it adjudicates

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between the contending perspectives on US strategy outlined above in order to provide guidance for future US strategy in the region.

1.2 Argument

This study finds that the advocates of US coordination with Japan have the better argument. While the logic of distancing is intuitive, it has not been accompanied by the benefits for Japanese policy or Sino-US relations touted by its proponents. When the US has actively distanced itself from Japan, subsequent Japanese hedging has undercut the US ability to reassure, deter, or compel China. When the US has strengthened its coordination with Japan, however, Japan has been more supportive of US policy, improving the US’ ability to reassure, deter, and compel China.

This study makes several important contributions to the existing literature. First, it provides a theoretical grounding for US coordination strategies toward Japan. Existing scholarship has yet to explore the core assumptions and cause-and-effect propositions undergirding arguments in favor of closer US-Japan coordination in policy toward China. This study helps to address this gap by developing a strategic theory of alliance coordination that explains how amplified US commitment and consultation with Japan strengthens the US ability to reassure, deter, and compel China by better securing Japanese support for US policy.

Second, this study provides the first empirical evaluation of the effects of coordination and distancing strategies toward Japan in post-Cold War Asia. Although the desirability of these two ideal type strategies is the subject of a heated debate in the US foreign policy community, policy scholars have not yet conducted an empirical assessment of these strategies’ consequences for Sino-US relations. Few authors have sought to trace systematically whether shifts toward closer
coordination or greater distancing have been accompanied by the benefits or risks predicted by these strategies’ proponents and detractors. This study fills this lacuna, providing the first analysis of the consequences of shifts in US strategy toward Japan for the US ability to manage relations with China.

1.3 Methodology and Outline

To evaluate this argument and its alternatives, this study conducts an analysis of post-Cold War US alliance strategy, examining its possible implications in three key domains: The East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and the Korean Peninsula. The history of US-Japan-China interaction within each domain is subdivided into cases defined by clear shifts in the independent variable. Specifically, a new case begins when there is a major change in US strategy that either upgrades or downgrades coordination with Japan on the issue at stake. The study then examines the association between changes in the independent variable and subsequent shifts in the dependent variable.

The study also incorporates a “process tracing” research design, looking within each case for evidence of its hypothesized intervening variables and causal processes. Specifically, it examines whether there is evidence that Japanese policy elites viewed shifts in US strategy in the ways predicted by the theory. Similarly, it looks for observations that indicate whether Chinese policy elites viewed shifts in US strategy and subsequent adjustments to Japanese support for US policy in the ways predicted by the theory.

This study proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 chronicles the development of the trilateral relationship from the end of the second World War through 2017. In doing so, it provides vital historical context for the case studies in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 3 develops a detailed

2.1 Overview

From the end of the Second World War onward, US relations with Japan and China have undergone a series of transformations. These transformations have been, to some extent, cyclical. Existing, stable equilibria in trilateral relations slowly deteriorate, creating fissures that eventually manifest in crises. These crises then prompt the development of new strategies and, subsequently, novel trilateral equilibria. At each junction, strategy has played a significant role in the development and erosion of these equilibria. This chapter provides a brief overview of these shifts to provide the general context and background for the study’s case studies in Chapters 4-6.

2.2 An Asian Cold War

The end of the Second World War saw the temporary establishment of a relatively unstable equilibrium between the US, Japan, and China. The founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 led to a dramatic shift in Chinese strategy that would throw trilateral relations into crisis, cumulating in a US-China war in the Korean Peninsula. This crisis drove the three countries to make significant adjustments to their strategies; these adjustments would bring about a new trilateral equilibrium: A Cold War between the US and Japan on the one hand and China and its new Soviet ally on the other.

Crisis: The Korean War

Japan’s unconditional surrender to the US brought about the conclusion of the Pacific War and the occupation of Japan by US forces. Under General MacArthur, the US sought to overhaul Japan’s internal character to neutralize its ability to threaten US interests in the Asia-
Pacific in the future. This strategy was primarily pursued through political reform aimed at democratizing, liberalizing, and demilitarizing Japan.¹

Japanese leaders, meanwhile, began to contemplate how to structure relations with the US and the region more broadly. Newly-elected Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru developed a strategic vision for Japan known as the Yoshida Doctrine. Yoshida embraced demilitarization while prioritizing peaceful economic development through neo-mercantilist trade and industrial policy.²

At the same time, the Truman administration made a conscious choice to avoid entanglement in continental Asia. The US pursued a policy of limited involvement in the Chinese Civil War. Although the US refrained from developing relations with the communist rebellion under Mao Zedong, it chose to offer only indirect support to Chiang Kai-Shek’s nationalist government.³ US involvement would instead remain primarily focused on restructuring Japan. As Mao’s forces gained territory and Chiang’s nationalists were forced to withdraw to Taipei in 1949, US strategists chose not to prepare for or commit to the defense of Formosa.⁴ Despite this ambivalence toward Chiang, the US also declined to recognize the new communist state – the People’s Republic of China (PRC) – declared by the triumphant Mao in Beijing.

³ Green, By More Than Providence, 253-264.
⁴ Green, By More Than Providence, 262.
But this set of strategies did not long endure; the establishment of the People’s Republic began a major shift in trilateral relations. As Mao consolidated his power in China, he aimed to secure the revolution and restore Chinese national power and prestige. To do this, Mao pursued a two-prong strategy: first, China would “lean to one side” by allying with the Soviet Union. At the same time, China would establish itself as a vanguard of the global communist revolution, opposing and rolling back US “imperialism” and influence in Asia. When Kim Il-Sun, leader of communist North Korea, sought support from China in 1950 for his attempt to reunify Korea by force under communist rule, Mao was willing to offer tacit approval and material support. This decision, along with Soviet Premier Josef Stalin’s consent, gave Kim the confidence he needed to launch an invasion of the South, with dramatic consequences for relations between the US, Japan, and China in the coming decade.

North Korea’s invasion of the South in 1950 threw trilateral relations into turmoil. Despite US Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s earlier exclusion of the Korean Peninsula from the US’ Strategic Defense Perimeter, President Truman determined it was necessary to commit ground forces to defend the South to avoid damage to the US’ reputation for resolve and to prevent a unified communist peninsula that could threaten Japanese security and economic interests. Already, Truman’s approach to the trilateral relationship was changing. China appeared more threatening and the defense of Japan more of an imperative than it had previously. These

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7 Christensen, *Worse Than a Monolith*, 60.
concerns were only reinforced when Chinese military forces crossed the Yalu River to drive UN forces back to the 38th parallel.

*Strategic Changes: Allying for Containment*

As the war escalated with the direct involvement of both US and Chinese forces, the US, Japan, and China each determined a new strategy was required. Presidents Truman and then Eisenhower sought to contain further expansion by communist China by supporting Chiang and the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan. Similarly, US strategists sought to secure Japan against Chinese and Soviet influence and to cultivate Japan as a counterweight to communist power in Asia by re-focusing efforts on economic development while binding Japan to the US through a military alliance.8 Demilitarization was no longer a priority.

Yoshida also had to consider what the crisis in Korea meant for Japanese strategy toward China and Japan. The US’ new strategy created an opportunity to bolster Japanese economic growth and security with the assistance of the US without remilitarization. Taking full advantage of this opening, Japanese strategists sought a stronger military guarantee from the US and increased economic assistance; in exchange, they offered the US access to bases and a dominant role in setting the allies’ foreign policy agenda.9 Yoshida also agreed to recognize Chiang and the ROC in 1952 and to refrain from formal ties with Mao and the PRC, contributing to US’ led containment of the PRC despite Yoshida’s initial interest in engaging the PRC.10

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Mao too adjusted China’s strategy. The US intervention in Korea, cultivation of Japan as an ally, and containment of PRC attempts to seize Taiwan confirmed for Mao that the US was a hostile imperialist power that would threaten the fledgling Chinese communist state. He deemed the US-Japan alliance to be directly “targeted at China.”\footnote{“Record of the Third Conversation between Comrade Liao Chengzhi and Ishibashi Tanzan,” Wilson Center Digital Archive, accessed January 20, 2018, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134184.pdf?v=9305b93c71e7f2cb2463cda63653d474.} Mao sought to confront this threat by leaning still farther to one side, seeking stronger military and economic assistance from the Soviet Union.

*The New Equilibrium: Sino-Allied Hostility*

These new strategies created a new and relatively stable equilibrium in trilateral relations: a relationship of asymmetric dependence between the US and Japan and of mutual hostility between the allies and communist China. The US and Japan cooperated to form a stronger, albeit unequal, alliance partnership. This partnership manifested itself in the San Francisco Treaty in 1951, the US-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security agreed upon in 1952, and the US-Japan Mutual Security Assistance Agreement in 1954. Japan agreed to offer modest increases in its defense capabilities, reorganizing its National Police Reserves into the Self Defense Forces, and offered the US significant freedom to access and operate out of bases in Japan.\footnote{Pyle, *Japan Rising*, 230.} The US, in return, took a leading role in the allies’ mutual defense, offering Japan military assistance and stationing forces in Japan to “contribute to the maintenance of
international peace and security in the Far East and to the security of Japan against armed attack from without.”

China and the US, meanwhile, faced off in a series of confrontations over Taiwan after the conclusion of their war in Korea in 1953. Mao launched a series of limited engagements to seize control of the Kinmen and Matsu Islands and deliberately drive a wedge between Taipei and Washington over the defense of this territory. These actions led to only limited territorial gains and had the effect of driving Taipei and Washington still closer together, resulting in the 1954 Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty.

Sino-Japanese relations were somewhat more positive than Sino-American ties, but the PRC remained uncompromising in its hostility toward the new US-Japan alliance. As Chinese official Liao Chengzhi would argue in discussions with former Japanese Prime Minister Ishibashi, “If the prerequisite for further negotiations is to accept the numerous American military bases in Japan, then it is indeed impossible to talk.” Nonetheless, the two countries did engage in limited trade throughout the 1950s.

*The Erosion of the Equilibrium: The Sino-Soviet Split and the Vietnam War*

By the late 1950s, fissures had begun to emerge in the status quo that would eventually open the way for changes in strategy that would trigger the radical reformation of the trilateral

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15 “Record of the Third Conversation,” Wilson Center Digital Archive.
equilibrium. Two developments were especially corrosive: the growing Sino-Soviet split and emerging US-Japan alliance disputes.

Relations between China and its Soviet ally grew steadily more antagonistic following the Second Taiwan Strait crisis 1958 when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev declined to support Mao in a crisis over the Kinmen and Matsu Islands with Taiwan and the US. Disagreements over ideology, leadership, and strategy increasingly put China and the Soviets at odds. By 1961, relations had grown so strained that the Chinese Communist Party denounced the Soviets as traitors to the communist cause. This dispute had the effect of gradually shifting China’s strategic priorities and threat perceptions. While the US has once loomed large in Chinese strategic thought as the most pressing threat to Chinese security, Mao increasingly identified the Soviet Union as China’s primary opponent.

Even the common struggle in supporting the North Vietnamese during the Vietnam War against the US and mounting instability on the Korean Peninsula were not enough to mend faltering ties between the two communist powers. By the late 1960s, the two former allies were involved in a major crisis driven by a series of border skirmishes between Soviet and Chinese forces. China’s top military leaders concluded that “the Soviet revisionists intend to wage a war of aggression against China” as soon as circumstances permitted. This strategic reassessment in China would eventually pave the way for Nixon to pursue rapprochement with the US’ longstanding adversary in Beijing.

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US disagreements with Japan over sovereignty and burden-sharing steadily increased following the establishment of their new alliance. These spats were already evident in the contentious negotiations over the 1960 revised Security Treaty between the US and Japan. Japan’s new prime minister, Kishi Nobusuke, demanded a more explicit security guarantee but also an end to the inequality inherent in the first treaty. The US administration, on the other hand, pressured Japan to assume a more active role for its own security. As NSC 6008 would argue, the US increasingly sought to “encourage Japan to develop and maintain armed forces capable of assuming increasing responsibility for the defense of the Japan area and thereby, together with U.S. forces, of coping with and deterring Communist aggression in the Pacific.”\textsuperscript{17} The revised treaty text reflected this: Japan would now be obligated to build a capacity “to resist armed attack” and to contribute to its own defense should Japanese territory be attacked.\textsuperscript{18} Massive student demonstrations in the wake of the treaty, however, highlighted the strong opposition to this US pressure and Japan’s acquiescence.

When the Johnson administration escalated US involvement in Vietnam, these disputes grew still more intense. Although the administration’s efforts to contain communism in Indochina were partially designed to secure access to markets and resources for Japan, the war was intensely unpopular with the Japanese public. The Japanese government refused to offer direct military assistance (the Republic of Korea, in sharp contrast, provided several divisions). Japanese leaders were also discontent with the US’ use of Japanese airbases in the conflict and


called for the US to return the Ryukyu Islands to Japanese sovereignty. US statesmen grew increasingly impatient with Japan’s complaints and weary with carrying the bulk of the burden for the alliance’s common defense. US Secretary of State Dean Rusk commented that “We have taken over a quarter of a million casualties since 1945-most of them in the Far East with Japan as a major beneficiary. So far as I know Japan has not lost a single man in confronting those who are the major threat to Japan itself.”

2.3 The Anti-Soviet Entente

In the late 1960s, President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger fundamentally reoriented US foreign policy in Asia. Grappling with the US’ declining relative power, faltering economic hegemony, and strategic setbacks in Indochina, the Nixon administration engineered a new strategy designed to lighten the US’ burden in Asia and shift more responsibility to local partners – including Japan but particularly China – for securing Asia against the Soviet Union. The US adjusted its strategy toward both China and Japan relatively abruptly, pushing for rapprochement with China to contain Soviet revisionism and a more balanced relationship with Japan. These changes triggered an immediate crisis, commonly referred to as the Nixon Shocks. It would take time and adjustments in strategy by all three states to bring the relations back into a stable equilibrium – one founded on an entente in common opposition to Soviet influence in Asia.

Crisis: The Nixon Shocks

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Nixon’s new strategy, best articulated in his informal remarks in Guam, aimed to reduce the US’ direct commitments in continental Asia.\(^\text{20}\) The US now sought to pass off the burden of both the conflict in Vietnam and the burden of containing Soviet aggression more broadly to local partners. In the trilateral context, Nixon sought to do this through rapprochement with China and a more equal alliance with Japan. First, Nixon believed that rapprochement with China would help the US withdraw from the conflict in Vietnam. As Nixon expressed in a meeting with Zhou Enlai, “we would hope… that [China] would at least not do what the Soviets appear to be doing, that [China] would not encourage the North Vietnamese to refuse to negotiate.”\(^\text{21}\) Second, Nixon hoped to leverage the Chinese as a counterweight to Soviet influence in Asia-Pacific. As the Sino-Soviet split escalated, China appeared an increasingly attractive partner for this endeavor. Third, Nixon hoped that by offering Japan the return of the Ryukyu Islands he could spur the US’ increasingly prosperous ally to assume more responsibility for its own defense and possibly for the region more broadly.

This change in strategy and Nixon’s initial outreach to China triggered a major disruption in relations often referred to as the “Nixon Shocks.” Mao’s advisors had contemplated alignment with the US in the past to deal with the Soviet threat: “To a large extent, the Soviet revisionists’ decision to launch a war of aggression against China depends on the attitude of the U.S. imperialists… The Soviet revisionists are scared by the prospect that we might ally ourselves


with the U.S. imperialists to confront them.”

But they were apparently surprised by Kissinger’s initial overtures during his secret visit via Karachi; the changes, challenges, and opportunities presented by Nixon’s initial opening moves toward China led to a massive debate and a major rethink in Chinese strategy that would contribute to the development of a fundamentally new trilateral equilibrium.

Japan was similarly found itself caught off guard and in crisis over the future direction of its foreign policy. Nixon had not consulted with Japan on his decision to visit China; indeed, Japan was only informed a few hours before Nixon’s address. Tokyo panicked, fearing that Washington was changing course and would abandon its longstanding ally for a partnership with Beijing. Although Nixon met with the Japanese imperial family shortly afterward and consulted with Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato at the beginning of 1972, Japanese officials remarked that “we feel we have been left behind.”

Strategic Changes: Rapprochement to Alignment

Rapprochement moved slowly but steadily forward in the early 1970s. In 1971 Kissinger traveled to Beijing via Karachi in secret to meet with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and pave the way for a later visit by Nixon. Nixon traveled to China in 1972, meeting with Mao and Zhou and issuing the 1972 Shanghai Communique. The communique articulated the basis of the incipient partnership between the countries: it emphasized non-aggression, movement toward normalization of relations, mutual adherence to the “one China” policy, and most importantly,

22 Chen et al., “Our Views About the Current Situation.”

joint opposition to “hegemonism” (Chinese parlance for Soviet influence in the region).  

Although the communique did not normalize relations or switch US recognition from the ROC to the PRC, it was a groundbreaking step forward in Sino-American relations.

The initial successes – but also challenges – of rapprochement paved the way for a decisive shift in US foreign policy toward both China and Japan that would endure for the remainder of the Cold War. Nixon’s successes with China reinforced the logic of drawing the Chinese into the US orbit to help contain Soviet influence in Asia. Presidents Henry Ford, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan would expand upon this strategy, carefully broadening US economic and military cooperation with the PRC with an eye toward countering the Soviet Union. Nixon’s challenges in reassuring Japan, however, highlighted the fact that closer coordination with and assurances toward Japan were necessary complements to rapprochement with China. Japan was willing to do more, as US strategists hoped – but the US had to remain sensitive to Japanese concerns about US resolve and loyalty.

Emerging weakened from a decade of isolation during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, many in Beijing similarly saw an opportunity for a new strategy. The debate in China over whether to lean toward the US or go it alone ended violently; Lin Biao, Mao’s hardline second-in-command and the chief proponent of an independent foreign policy, was killed off. Zhou Enlai, Chinese Premier and the leading advocate of rapprochement with the US, emerged victorious. The conclusion of this debate marked a sea-change in Chinese strategy that

would endure past Mao’s death and throughout the tenure of China’s new top leader: Deng
Xiaoping. China would pursue a partnership with the US to defend against Soviet power.

But what about the US alliance and Sino-Japanese relations? Beijing initially expressed
concern over the US-Japan alliance and the potential for Japanese remilitarization and
imperialism, despite Japan’s diminutive Self-Defense Forces and continued adherence to Article
9 of its constitution. But, as Nixon would tell Mao, “The U.S. can get out of Japanese waters, but
others will fish there.” In other words, the alliance was needed to keep Japan out of the Soviet
sphere of influence and to restrain Japanese militarism. At first, China’s leaders appeared
skeptical of this logic at best; Zhou questioned whether the US could restrain Japan. As
rapprochement progressed, however, China would adopt Nixon’s logic and come to accept the
US-Japan alliance as a force for stability and security in the region. By 1973, Kissinger was
astonished by a “major turnabout” in how China saw its alliance with Japan.

Japan reacted to the Nixon Shocks with major strategic shifts of its own. First, beginning
with Prime Minister Sato in the early 1970s, Japan sought to engage in rapprochement of its own
with China. Japan took a more aggressive approach to normalization, seeking to get ahead of the
US in repairing relations with China. Although the underlying justification for Sino-Japanese
cooperation was primarily anti-Soviet, Japan also sought to exploit new economic opportunities
in China by bolstering commercial ties. At the same time, Japanese leadership aimed to reinforce

Document 106.


27 Michael Schaller, “The United States, Japan, and China at Fifty,” in *Partnership: The United States and
ties with the US; stunned by the Nixon Shocks and wary of abandonment, Japanese Prime Ministers Takeo Fukuda and Yasuhiro Nakasone would each seek to reinforce US commitment to the alliance by expanding Japan’s contributions to the allies’ mutual security.

*The New Equilibrium: The Anti-Soviet Entente*

These new strategies shaped a novel trilateral equilibrium in the region, one built around mutual security cooperation designed to curtail Soviet influence in Asia. The character of each bilateral relationship reflected this overriding strategic objective.

Nixon and Mao built on the momentum established by Nixon’s visit in 1972 to strengthen bilateral cooperation to their mutual advantage. Although Nixon was unable to leverage rapprochement with China to end the Vietnam War on favorable terms, China did reduce its support for communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia. More importantly, the US and China strengthened coordination against Soviet aggression. The US set up a liaison office in Beijing and gave Chinese officials extensive intelligence briefings on Soviet capabilities. Relations continued to strengthen even after Nixon’s resignation, although Ford’s political challenges prevented him from normalizing relations.

The Carter administration and Mao’s successor Deng Xiaoping picked up where Nixon and Mao had left off, strengthening the US’ fledgling relationship with Beijing. At the urging of US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, the new administration sought to reinforce the anti-Soviet aim of the new alignment. This included offering China access to European

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29 Mann, *About Face.*
defense industries and advanced US non-lethal military technology, setting up new cooperative initiatives in signals intelligence, and normalizing relations in the Second Sino-US Communique at the end of 1978.

Despite its hardline anti-communist rhetoric, the Reagan administration proved similarly pragmatic in its approach to China. Reagan issued the controversial Third Sino-US Communique in 1982 announcing that the US planned to reduce its weapons sales to Beijing’s rivals in Taipei. Just as significantly, the administration also vastly expanded China’s access to US military technology and weaponry, including advanced aircraft and munitions. As the Cold War ended and China felt increasingly secure from potential Soviet adventurism, however, fault lines simmered beneath the surface of the burgeoning Sino-American security partnership. Mutual mistrust remained problematic even as the two states shared intelligence, while discord over human rights (under Carter) and ideology (under Reagan) created distance between Beijing and Washington. The end of the Cold War and the Tiananmen Square killings would bring both issues to the fore by the end of the decade.

As Sino-US rapprochement developed, the US and Japan set about reinforcing their alliance and balancing their obligations. Nixon and Ford both undertook a concerted diplomatic effort to reinforce alliance ties; it was not until the early years of the Carter administration, however, that US-Japan ties found firm footing again. In 1978, the allies released new Defense Guidelines. The guidelines offered a recommitment by both parties to the alliance as the centerpiece of their regional security efforts while strengthening interoperability, clarifying the division of roles in the defense of Japan, developing new institutions for coordination (namely the Joint Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation), and upgrading Japan’s commitment to its own
defense and sea lane security.\textsuperscript{30} The result: a new relationship featuring a stronger US commitment and a more balanced partnership with a greater burden assumed by Japan.

The Reagan and Nakasone administrations further reinforced this new relationship throughout the 1980s. Reagan and his second Secretary of State George Schultz prioritized a close alliance with Japan as a means of elevating US power in Asia and sought to acquire greater Japanese contributions to regional security. Nakasone – a staunch neoconservative who assumed office in 1982 – similarly emphasized both closer alliance ties and a more robust, assertive role for Japan in regional and global affairs.\textsuperscript{31} Both Reagan and Nakasone’s strategies – and the close personal relationship they cultivated – complemented the Carter administration’s earlier efforts to both recommit to and rebalance the US-Japan alliance. Japan increased its defense expenditure and Nakasone touted Japan as an “unsinkable aircraft carrier” for its US ally; both endeavored to deepen defense cooperation throughout the 1980s.

It is important to note, however, that throughout this period trade imbalances remained contentious. By the late 1980s, the US began to view Japan’s protectionist policies and trade surplus as a significant hurdle for bilateral relations. These concerns presaged what would become a major stumbling block in the 1990s after the end of the Cold War, laying the groundwork for another period of turmoil and disruption in the US-Japan leg of the trilateral relationship.

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Sino-Japanese relations similarly underwent substantial changes after the Nixon Shocks. By 1972, after the initial turmoil of the Nixon’s visit to China began to subside and new strategic thinking began to take hold in both capitals, Sino-Japanese relations began to develop in a more positive direction. Sato’s successor, Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, agreed to Chinese preconditions, rallied support within his own government, and received the blessing of the US, resulting in talks which ultimately normalized relations. Tokyo went one step further than its American allies, switching its recognition from the ROC to the PRC (to the consternation of some in Washington). This rapprochement also succeeded in (temporarily) setting aside the contentious Senkaku island dispute.

This strategic shift was so successful that by the mid-1970s, China was more eager than Japan to forge security ties with Tokyo and promote an active and powerful Japanese foreign policy. Despite these positive developments, efforts to upgrade relations stalled in the mid-1980s; declining fears of Soviet aggrandizement in Beijing began to undercut this critical staple of the trilateral equilibrium. Following the Shanghai Communique in 1972, China increasingly perceived the US-Japan alliance – and Japan itself – as a strategic asset in its rivalry with the Soviet Union. In 1975, Beijing initiated negotiations over a “Peace and Friendship Treaty” designed to draw Japan into closer alignment against Soviet influence in East Asia. The Chinese pushed Japan to agree to coordinate to oppose Soviet “hegemonism” in the region.32

Although Japan was hesitant to take a hard line against the Soviet Union, it agreed to a qualified version of the anti-hegemony clause in 1978. Deng Xiaoping himself visited Japan to

32 June Dreyer, Middle Kingdom and the Empire of the Rising Sun (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 163-164.
sign the treaty and used this opportunity to endorse Japan’s Self Defense Force (JSDF) and the US-Japan alliance as positive forces in the Asia-Pacific. Later statements by Chinese leaders echoed these sentiments; several Chinese leaders even called on Japan to strengthen its military capabilities, a far cry from Zhou Enlai’s apprehension over hypothetical Japanese remilitarization in the early 1970s.

*The Erosion of the Equilibrium: The End of the Cold War*

Declining Soviet power and the eventual end of the Cold War triggered another major shift in trilateral relations. The demise of the Soviet threat, the Gulf War, political turnover, and the escalation of US-Japan trade disputes contributed to shifts in each countries’ strategy. These shifting strategies ushered in a period of flux and disruption in trilateral relations that would last for the better part of a decade.
CHAPTER III: A STRATEGIC THEORY OF ALLIANCE COORDINATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of this study’s key concepts and theory. First, it discusses the outcomes this study seeks to explain: success or failure in US efforts to reassure, deter, and compel China. Second, it surveys the existing literature on reassurance, deterrence, coercive bargaining, and US-Japan-China trilateral relations. Third, it articulates the study’s main argument, highlighting how it builds upon this literature. It explains how greater US coordination with Japan strengthens the US’ efforts to reassure, deter, and compel China. Fourth, the chapter reviews this study’s qualitative methodology.

3.2 US Influence Attempts: Reassuring, Deterring, and Compelling China

This study seeks to explain variation in the extent to which the US has been successful in influencing China. In particular, it considers the outcomes of three types of US influence attempts: reassuring China to avoid escalatory spirals, deterring unwanted Chinese behavior, and compelling China to secure its cooperation. Each of these influence attempts is critical to US interests in the Asia-Pacific; each requires careful management in order to maximize the chances of success for the US.

Reassurance Success and Failure: Avoiding Unnecessary Spirals

The first outcome this study investigates is the extent to which the US succeeds in reassuring China to prevent escalatory spirals. The US generally attempts to reassure China in circumstances where the US has an interest in maintaining the status quo, but China remains uncertain of the intentions of the US and its allies. If China grows to fear that the US or its allies
intend to use military coercion to alter the status quo in a way that harms Chinese interests, it may adopt an increasingly confrontational policy designed to counter the anticipated US challenge. This could spark a costly escalatory spiral between the US and China that would raise the risk of conflict and leave both parties worse off.¹

To prevent an escalatory spiral, the US may attempt to reassure China. Successful reassurance depends on the US’ ability to persuade China the benefits of continuing to refrain from escalation outweigh the risks. This, in turn, depends on costly US assurances and restraint. The US must be able to assure China that it will not challenge the status quo and undercut core Chinese interests. The US must also demonstrate restraint, refraining from actions or military deployments that directly threaten China’s interests in the status quo. Assurance and restraint are not enough, however; both face credibility problems. China may fear that the US is simply misrepresenting its preferences.² As such, US restraint and assurances must be costly in order to be credible; in other words, they must involve measures that a bluffing state would be unwilling to take.

The extent to which reassurance is successful can be evaluated by considering the extent to which China refrains from confrontational escalation in response to a perceived US threat to


the status quo. The more China engages in confrontational escalation, the less successful
to support previous reassurance has been.

_Deterrence Success and Failure: Preserving the Status Quo_

The second outcome that this study investigates is the extent to which the US succeeds in
deterring China. US deterrence attempts generally occur in a context in which the US has an
interest in maintaining an element of the status quo that China actively seeks to alter. If China
doubts that the US has the capabilities or resolve to defend the status quo, it may seek to use
military coercion to challenge the status quo. This undesirable behavior, in turn, would require
the US to either reciprocate Chinese military coercion, raising the risks of war, or acquiesce to
China’s challenge, forfeiting its interests in the status quo.

To avoid these possibilities, the US may attempt to deter China from using military
coercion to challenge the status quo. To do this, it must convince China that the costs of
pursuing military coercion to change the status quo outweigh the benefits. To do this, the US
must demonstrate that it has the resolve and the military capabilities to a) impose substantial
costs on China and b) resist Chinese pressure to acquiesce to changes in the status quo should
China engage in military coercion. Just as with reassurance, deterrence is rendered particularly
difficult given the credibility problem discussed above. China is uncertain about US resolve and
capabilities and understands that the US may have incentives to bluff about its resolve and

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3 For a consideration of this deterrence model and the challenges of deterrence failure, see: Thomas
Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); Patrick Morgan, *Deterrence*
(Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977); Paul K Huth, “Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical Findings and
capabilities. As such, US deterrence hinges on the US ability to send costly signals of its resolve and capabilities.

Deterrence success can be assessed by considering the extent to which China refrains from challenging the status quo via military coercion and the extent to which the US and its allies refuse to acquiesce to changes in the status quo. The greater Chinese efforts to coercively alter the status quo and the more the US or its allies acquiesce to that pressure, the less successful deterrence has been.

_compellence Success and Failure: Achieving Cooperation_

The third outcome that this study investigates is the extent to which the US succeeds in compelling China to secure its cooperation. In certain circumstances, the US has an interest in changing a component of the status quo that China prefers but requires China’s cooperation to do so. If China believes that it stands to gain more from refraining from cooperation and maintaining the status quo, the US will struggle to accomplish its objectives.

To succeed, the US must engage in compellence (also commonly referred to in the theoretical literature as “coercive diplomacy”) with China to compel it to change its behavior. In particular, the US must be able to persuade China that the benefits of compliance and costs of noncompliance make the former preferable to the latter. To do this, it must demonstrate its resolve and capability to impose significant punishments on China for continued intransigence. It must also convey its willingness and ability to deliver inducements to China should it cooperate.

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As with reassurance and deterrence, this is made more complex by the credibility problem. To succeed in compellence, US must be able to issue costly signals to China about its resolve and capabilities to punish and its willingness and ability to deliver its promised rewards.

Compellence success can be evaluated by considering the extent to which China shifts its behavior to comply with US efforts to alter the status quo. The greater China’s contribution to this cooperative endeavor, the more successful compellence has been. The more China inhibits US efforts, the less successful compellence will have been.

*Are These Tasks Contradictory?*

Some theorists and strategists contend that these three forms of influence are contradictory or mutually exclusive. This perspective points out that US efforts to enhance its threats and capabilities to deter or compel a target will cause the target to discount the US’ reassurances.  

5 Similarly, efforts to assure a target will lead the target to doubt the strength and credibility of the US’ threats.  

6 This study contends, however, that these tasks entail trade-offs but are ultimately complementary. As Thomas Christensen argues: “Finding the proper mix of toughness and reassurance is the art of coercive diplomacy. Deterrence models and spiral models should generally go hand in hand.”  

7 The empirical evidence below seems to fit well with this position. There have been times at which the US has simultaneously faced failures in both deterrence and reassurance. At other times, the US has fared relatively well in both regards.

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3.3 The Existing Literature on Reassurance, Deterrence, and Compellence

There is a diverse and extensive literature on the factors that affect the success of influence attempts. Broadly speaking, scholars within this literature emphasize the causal importance of several key variables: interests, technology and geography, strategic culture, domestic politics, regime-type, and reputation. This section reviews these perspectives on determinants of successful reassurance, deterrence, and compellence.

The Balance of Interests

A large literature contends that the strength of a state’s interests at stake affect that state’s ability to influence others. In deterrence theory, scholars have posited that the “balance of interests” between a state and its target affects that state’s prospects for successful deterrence. The stronger a state’s interests relative to its target’s, the more the target will perceive the state as resolute, and the more successful the state will be in deterrence. A similar logic has been applied in the scholarship on compellence. If a state’s relative interests at stake are superior to its target’s, that state will be better able to convince the target of its resolve; as such, the state will be more successful in compelling that target to comply with its objectives.

Offense-Defense Balance

An additional set of arguments emphasizes the character of military technology and/or geography for influence attempts. These arguments contend the configuration of geography and

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military technology affect two key variables: the offense-defense balance and offense-defense distinguishability. The former refers to the relative efficacy/affordability of offensive and defensive military operations. The latter refers to whether states can differentiate between offensive and defensive force structures. Theories of reassurance argue that when the offense-defense balance favors offensive action, reassurance is difficult. The influencing state may simply be unable or unwilling to act with restraint given the ineffectiveness of defensive strategies. Target states will similarly be less likely to act with restraint, preferring preventive escalation to stave off potential threats irrespective of the influencer’s reassurances.9 When defensive action is easy, however, target states will be better able to act with restraint without fearing exploitation; consequently, they will be easier to reassure.

Similarly, theorists contend that when offensive and defensive force structures are indistinguishable, reassurance is difficult. States that are satisfied with maintaining the status quo will be unable to signal their benign intentions to targets by developing distinguishably defensive forces. Any improvements to a states’ arsenal may be seen as potentially bolstering its ability to coercively alter the status quo. As such, reassurance will be less likely to succeed and escalatory spirals will be more problematic.

**Strategic Culture**

Several authors also argue that strategic culture plays a significant role in reassurance and deterrence. Strategic culture refers to “concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in

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interstate political affairs” that “establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences.”

Some theories of reassurance contend that significant disparities between two states strategic cultures can render reassurance more difficult and escalatory spirals more likely. Similarly, some deterrence theorists argue that contrasting strategic cultures can undercut deterrence by leading to misperceptions about resolve and capabilities.

**Domestic Political Pressure**

Scholars also contend that the domestic politics of a target state shape influence attempts. In particular, the political situation that a target faces at home may condition how receptive it is to reassurance, deterrence, and compellence. Domestic nationalism and hostility toward a rival state could force a target state to reject that rival state’s reassurances. Within the deterrence literature, scholars have argued that intense domestic political pressure within a target state may cause it to overlook, discount, or ignore the costs of initiating a challenge to the status quo, increasing the chances of deterrence failure. Domestic political pressures may also disrupt

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compellence by constraining a target state’s ability to comply with the influencer’s demands or providing incentives for the target state to defy the influencing state.\(^\text{14}\)

**Regime-Type and Audience Costs**

Several accounts argue that the regime-type of the influencing state may play a critical role in the success of influence attempts. A number of scholars claim that the transparency inherent in democratic governments precludes deception about their interests, resolve, and capability.\(^\text{15}\) This facilitates reassurance, deterrence, and compellence success for a democracy (providing it is not bluffing). A similar argument suggests that democracies are superior at influencing target states because their leaders’ threats, inducements, and reassurances are credible because the public will hold them accountable for dishonesty.\(^\text{16}\) This, in turn, improves democracies’ chances of successful reassurance, deterrence, and compellence.

**Reputation**

Finally, a large body of scholarship considers the role of reputation in influence attempts. Within this literature, scholars contend that a target state will consider the influencer’s past


\(^{15}\text{Andrew Kydd, “Sheep in Sheep’s clothing: Why security seekers do not fight each other,” Security Studies 7, no. 1 (1997).}\)

actions around the world when assessing the credibility of its restraint, promises, threats, and capabilities. Theorists of deterrence and coercive bargaining pay considerable attention to reputation for resolve.\textsuperscript{17} Reputation for resolve refers to an influencer’s past willingness to uphold its commitments even when it suffers costs for doing so. Theorists of reassurance also consider reputation for integrity – an influencer’s past willingness to honor its promises. According to this perspective, states that have a track record of violating their pledges and vows will have less success in subsequent influence attempts.\textsuperscript{18}

This literature, while providing a useful starting point, cannot completely account for the variation in US success in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China. As will be shown below, many of these factors have remained constant throughout the post-Cold War era despite significant fluctuation in the success of US influence attempts. Those that have varied are not associated with US reassurance, deterrence, and compellence outcomes in the way suggested by extant scholarship. As such, this study contends that scholars must consider the role of US alliance strategy in shaping influence attempts toward China. This chapter turns now to this study’s main argument and theoretical contribution: a strategic theory of alliance coordination that explains how changes in this strategy may affect US efforts to reassure, deter, and compel China.

### 3.4 A Strategic Theory of Alliance Coordination

\textsuperscript{17} Schelling, \textit{Arms and Influence}; Frank Harvey and John Mitton, \textit{Fighting for Credibility: US Reputation and International Politics} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016). Critics of this literature include: Mercer, \textit{Reputation and International Politics}; Press, \textit{Calculating Credibility}.

\textsuperscript{18} Andrew Kydd, \textit{Trust and Mistrust in International Relations} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
This section lays out a theory of alliance strategy that serves as the basis for this paper’s main theoretical argument.\textsuperscript{19} It explains the ways in which the US moves to distance itself from Japan undermine the US influence attempts toward China. It also highlights how the US’ efforts to improve coordination with Japan improve the success of the US’ reassurance, deterrence, and compellence toward China.

\textit{Alliance Strategy}

Broadly speaking, US alliance strategy varies between two ideal types: distancing and coordination. These strategies are distinguished by the extent of the US’ commitment to and consultation with its ally. A coordination strategy features strong and well-specified commitments to an ally and extensive consultation with an ally. A distancing strategy, in contrast, features weak and vague commitments and limited consultation.

Commitment here refers to the extent and specificity of the US’ obligation to and investment in its ally’s security. A coordination strategy features relatively strong and specific (but not unlimited) commitments. The US must be willing to sink significant military assets into securing the ally. It must also make its obligations to the ally clear to both the ally itself and potential adversaries. Distancing strategies, meanwhile, generally involve weak and vague commitments that are easy to renege upon and which offer little support for the ally.

Consultation here refers to the quality, quantity, and tempo of the US’ efforts to share information and synchronize policy with its ally. A coordination strategy should include regular use of institutionalized dialogue and information-sharing mechanisms while also utilizing ad-hoc sessions as necessary. It will ensure that it engages in consultation from the working level up to the level of heads of state and that these consultations focus substantive discussions of key alliance strategy rather than minutiae. Furthermore, the US must utilize its consultations to attempt to bring its own policy and its ally’s policy toward China into harmony, seeking out its ally’s understanding and support. A distancing strategy puts less of a priority on keeping its ally apprised; in fact, at times it may strategically withhold useful information from its ally. It will also not prioritize the synchronization of allied policy toward China.

States may pursue different approaches to alliance strategy across different issue areas. On some policy issues, a state may pursue close coordination with its ally, while on other policy issues it pursues greater distancing. For example, the US might coordinate closely with Japan in managing Sino-Taiwan stability but distance itself from Japan in compellence toward China over the Korean peninsula.

The question remains: how do US strategies toward an ally affect the US’ influence attempts toward China? What is the effect of changes in US strategy on its ally’s strategy, and how in turn does that affect the US’ relations with China?

The Consequences of Distancing Strategies

At the core of this theory is a set of expectations about how an ally will behave when it fears abandonment by the US. If the US appears only partially committed to an alliance – unwilling to sink its resources and reputation into protecting its ally – its ally will fear
abandonment more acutely. Similarly, limited consultations will leave the ally with less information about the US’ plans and goals; the ally will subsequently be less certain as to how the US will respond should the ally require assistance.

This theory expects that a fearful, insecure ally will respond by “hedging,” a strategy that seeks to independently reduce the threat posed to the ally’s security by China (or other third parties). The ally may choose to pursue hedging primarily by balancing more aggressively against China. In order to do this, the ally will seek to demonstrate its resolve to defend itself by adopting a more confrontational stance toward China. It may also choose to enhance its independent military capabilities, but it will have little interest in using these capabilities to support the US’ influence attempts toward China; instead, it will utilize the capabilities to advance a more independent foreign policy. Alternatively, the ally may hedge by accommodating China. In this case, the ally may make unilateral concessions in an attempt to appease China. It will also attempt to minimize its involvements in disputes involving China. At times, the ally may adopt a mixed strategy of balancing and accommodation; alternatively, it may fluctuate between the two strategies as it seeks to determine which will prove most successful.

Hedging behavior will create significant problems for the US’ influence attempts toward China. A hedging ally could adopt a confrontational policy that undercuts the US’ efforts to prevent an escalatory spiral. China may come to believe that the ally is acting on behalf of the US, in which case it will discount the US’ assurances and restraint. Even if China does not believe that the US is guiding the ally’s hedging behavior, an escalatory spiral between the ally

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and China creates a heightened risk of war that would entangle the US. An ally that is pursuing accommodative hedging may offer little resistance to China’s attempts to alter the status quo, undercutting the US’ deterrence efforts. Even if the ally pursues a balancing strategy that emphasizes a more confrontational approach toward China, it will be unlikely to contribute its resources to support the US’ deterrence efforts beyond the ally’s own territory. Similarly, a hedging ally will be unlikely to contribute to the US’ efforts in compellence. An ally engaged in accommodative hedging might reinforce China’s incentives to resist changes to the status quo. Alternatively, an ally engaged in balancing might complicate compellence by withdrawing support for the US’ inducements toward China.

A strategy that reduces alliance coordination should also have direct effects on the US’ influence attempts to deter or compel China. If the US reduces its commitment to its ally, it may signal to China that the US’ resolve has diminished. China may come to doubt the US’ resolve to impose costs in deterrence or sustain punishments in compellence.\(^{21}\)

The Consequences of Coordination Strategies

The theory of alliance coordination suggests that alliance coordination strategies should decrease an ally’s fear of abandonment and thereby curtail allied hedging. A strong commitment serves as a form of allied reassurance, helping to persuade the ally that the US does not intend to abandon it. Consultation also gives ally access to information about the US’ expectations, intentions, and plans with respect to both the alliance and China. This information should reduce the ally’s immediate fears of being abandoned or exploited by the US. Additionally, the ally

should feel more secure knowing that if the US’ intentions change in the future then the ally will have forewarning, mitigating the chances of strategic surprise and subsequent abandonment.

This theory suggests that a more confident ally will not face the same incentives to hedge and adopt an independent policy. Instead, the ally will be more likely to see its partnership with the US as a reliable and trustworthy method for managing relations with China. Confident that the US will help advance the ally’s interests as well as its own, the ally will be more likely to strengthen its support for the US’ efforts to reassure, deter, and compel China.

A coordination strategy may also give the US greater leverage over its ally. These advantages can help offset the increased risk of Japanese emboldenment and/or free-riding brought about by a strengthened US commitment and a more confident Japan.22 A stronger commitment could encourage a more confident ally to either behave more provocatively toward China or to under-commit resources to its own security. Coordination strategies give the US the ability to offset these risks in several ways. First, strengthened coordination can serve as powerful inducements to encourage an ally to strengthen its support for and commitment to the US. Second, once a commitment has been upgraded, an ally will also face continuing incentives to stay in the US’ good graces, knowing that it might risk losing a valuable partner if it deviates too markedly from the US. Finally, increased coordination gives the US greater direct access to Japanese security decision-making and planning – access that would be altogether absent were

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the US to distance itself from its ally. Without this access, the US ability to directly influence Japanese security policy would diminish significantly.

A more supportive ally should, in turn, improve the US’ ability to succeed in reassurance, deterrence, and compellence toward China. In reassurance, the ally will be less likely to engage in balancing hedging against China and instead should support the US’ policy of restraint. In deterrence, the ally will be confident enough to provide additional military capabilities to support the US and will be less likely to bow to pressure from China. Finally, the ally will be incentivized to support the US’ compellence toward China, contributing to both punishments and inducements.

Just as significantly, a strategy of alliance coordination should have direct effects on the US’ influence attempts toward China. By investing more in its alliance, the US can send a costly signal of its resolve to both defend its ally and to uphold its commitments more broadly. This should improve its prospects in deterrence and compellence.

3.5 Alternative Propositions: A Strategic Theory of Alliance Distancing

This section lays out several alternatives to the paper’s main argument, articulating the arguments in favor of the US distancing itself from its ally. There are three main alternative theories.

**Alternative I: Control Through Distancing**

The first alternative theory suggests that distancing strategies are more effective than coordination strategies as a means of securing allied support for US policy. This perspective contends that an ally that fears abandonment will engage in “binding” rather than “hedging”
behavior; the ally will seek to tie itself more closely to the US to minimize its chances of abandonment. 23 The ally will attempt to make itself invaluable to the US, supporting the US’ policy closely and agreeing to share more of the burden for allied defense. The ally will also tread carefully in relations with China, pursuing restraint and refraining from provocative policies that might provoke a confrontation and unnecessarily strain its already weakened partnership with the US. 24

As a result of these shifts in the ally’s policy, this alternative theory suggests that a distancing strategy will result in more successful US influence attempts toward China. In reassurance, a more restrained ally will complement the US’ promises and signals of restraint toward China. In deterrence, a more supportive ally will amplify the US’ capabilities by contributing its own military assets. Similarly, in compellence, a supportive ally can amplify punishments and contribute to inducements targeting China, raising the chances that the US will be able to compel China to comply.

Conversely, this theory expects that coordination strategies will be counterproductive. If the US offers a more robust and well-specified commitment, the ally will grow confident in the alliance as a guarantor of its security. Similarly, regular consultation will serve to reinforce this confidence, the ally will become more certain of exactly when and how the US will be willing to offer it support. This confidence and certainty may have pernicious results. A confident ally will feel little need to endear itself to the US by providing support for its policies; instead, it will


adopt an independent policy whenever it sees fit to do so, irrespective of the US’ interests. Similarly, the ally will have incentives to free-ride of the US’ strong commitment, moving budgetary resources from guns to butter while relying on the US as a security guarantor. Finally, the ally may be emboldened to pursue a more confrontational policy toward China, confident that the US will support it even if it behaves provocatively. The US, having sacrificed the leverage provided by a distancing strategy, will have little ability to constrain these tendencies.

These policies could undercut the US’ ability to compel China. Most significantly, an emboldened ally could set off an escalatory spiral with China, disrupting the US’ efforts to reassure China. Furthermore, the ally’s free-riding and independent policy will do little to strengthen the US’ deterrence or compellence efforts. The ally might complicate the US’ deterrence or compellence still further by withdrawing support it had previously offered.

*Alternative II: Hedging as a Desirable Allied Policy*

A second alternative suggests that neither coordination nor distancing is likely to strengthen allied support for US policy. Instead, the former produces free-riding or emboldenment (as expected by alternative I) while the latter leads to hedging (as anticipated by the theory of strategic coordination).25 Hedging, according to this perspective, manifests primarily as balancing rather than bandwagoning; the ally cannot afford to risk that China will be accommodated by bandwagoning and has little choice to balance against it by enhancing its

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military capabilities and forging new partnerships. This perspective contends, however, that distancing strategies and hedging behavior are desirable for the US’ purposes. This is, in part, because the only alternative allied policies that this theory assumes are possible are free-riding or emboldenment.

Allied hedging in the form of balancing offers clear advantages to free-riding and emboldenment for US reassurance, deterrence, and compellence. In reassurance, the ally will not be emboldened to threaten China beyond what is necessary to accomplish deterrence and compellence; it is unlikely to incite conflict without strong support from the US. If the ally does provoke conflict with China, the US’ distancing strategy will be sufficient to convince China that the US is not responsible for this provocation and therefore China will not retaliate in a way that adversely affects US interests. The US will therefore not have to struggle with the obstacles created for reassurance by emboldenment. In deterrence and compellence, the ally’s balancing will have several effects. First, in areas where the US and Japan share objectives, Japan’s balancing behavior will have a cumulative effect even in the absence of close coordination with the US. Knowing that it will need to overcome both US capabilities and more powerful Japanese capabilities, China will be more likely to back down in deterrence or compellence scenarios. Second, even when the allies do not share common objectives, China’s capabilities and resolve to resist US pressure in bilateral disputes will be diminished by the need to also address a more capable and assertive Japan in other disputes.

Alternative III: The Direct Risks of Coordination

A third alternative theory focuses instead on the direct consequences of coordination or distancing for US influence attempts toward China. While the theory of strategic coordination
discussed above contends that US coordination strategies benefit US deterrence and compellence directly by signaling US resolve, this alternative theory suggests that these benefits are outweighed by significant accompanying costs. A close alliance could function as an unnecessary constraint, tying down the US like Gulliver in Lilliput.\textsuperscript{26} Strong commitments require significant costs to maintain, sapping resources that could be used directly by the US to accomplish its objectives. Commitments to allies may also restrict the US’ from making certain concessions to China. Finally, careful alliance consultation is time-consuming and often entails significant compromise between the US and the ally. As such it could slow and weaken the US’ ability to respond to emerging challenges to reassurance, deterrence, and compellence.

Just as problematically, alliance coordination could also directly undercut the US’ reassurance efforts toward China. An attempt by the US to upgrade its military cooperation with an ally could be seen by China as an indication of aggressive intentions.\textsuperscript{27} This might lead the target state to discount the US’ demonstrations of restraint. Conversely, by sacrificing upgraded military cooperation with its ally, the US may send a costly signal of restraint to China. Consequently, a decision to downgrade rather than amplify an alliance could improve the US’ prospects for reassuring China.

### 3.6 Methodology

Based on these theories, this paper tests several hypotheses.


Main Hypothesis

H1 – When the US increases coordination with Japan, China will perceive the US as more resolved, and the US will be more successful in deterring and compelling China. When the US decreases coordination with Japan, China will perceive the US as less resolute, and the US will be less successful in deterring and compelling China.

H2a – When the US increases coordination with Japan, Japan will provide more support for US policy toward China. When the US decreases coordination with Japan, Japan will hedge and provide less support for US policy toward China.

H2b – When Japan provides more support for US policy toward China, the US will be more successful in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China. When Japan hedges and decreases its support for US policy toward China, the US will be less successful in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China.

Alternative Hypotheses

H3 – When the US increases coordination with Japan, Japan will be emboldened and/or freeride and provide less support for US policy toward China. When the US decreases coordination with Japan, Japan will provide more support for US policy toward China.

H4a – When the US increases coordination with Japan, Japan will be emboldened and/or free ride. When the US decreases coordination with Japan, Japan will hedge against abandonment. Either way, Japan will not support US policy toward China.
H4b – When Japan hedges, the US will be more successful in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China. When Japan is emboldened and/or free rides, the US will be less successful in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China.

H5 – When the US increases coordination with Japan, the US will face greater constraints on its ability to influence China and China will grow more concerned about US threats to its core interests, and the US will be less successful in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China.

When the US decreases coordination with Japan, the US will face fewer constraints on its ability to influence China and China will be less concerned about US threats to its core interests, and the US will be more successful in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China.

Case Selection

To evaluate these hypotheses, this study examines changes in the US’ alliance strategy toward Japan in post-Cold War Asia, focusing on its implications for US influence attempts toward China in three significant security challenges: The East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and the Korean Peninsula.

The history of US-Japan-China interaction within each domain is subdivided into cases defined by clear shifts in the key independent variables. Major changes in US strategy demarcate these cases. The study uses these cases to examine the association between changes in the independent variable – US strategy – and subsequent shifts in the dependent variable. This provides a limited but useful test of the theories and hypotheses articulated above.28

28 There is a rich literature on the strengths and limitations of comparative case study research. See: Arend Lijphert, “The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research,” Comparative Political Studies 8, no. 2 (1975); Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the
By focusing on changes in the same countries’ relationships over time, this study allows for a comparison of “most similar cases” with the associated advantages for causal inference.29 These cases control for a wide range of otherwise confounding variables, including the balance of interests, strategic culture, offense-defense balance, and regime-type. As such, these factors can be ruled out as alternative explanations for variation in the dependent variable. While the cases do vary in terms of several other potential causal factors – US reputation and Chinese domestic political pressure – the dependent variable is not associated these alternative causal factors in the way suggested by the existing literature. As such case study analysis also approximates a “folk Bayesian” research design.30

Operationalization

In each case, this study will code the extent to which the US pursued a coordination strategy toward Japan both in general and at the issue-specific level. This involves considering the extent and specificity of the US’ obligation to and investment in its ally’s security both in general and with respect to the issue area in question for each case. More specifically, the study will assess the quantity and quality of US forces in Japan; did the US increase, decrease, or maintain its

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30 Slater and Ziblatt, “Controlled Comparison.”
military capabilities in Japan during the period of time in question. It will consider how the relative emphasis the US gave to economic and security relations with Japan in the case, relying on public statements and policymakers’ recollections. The study will similarly gauge the extent to which the US emphasized its overall alliance commitment to Japan in government statements – did the US government issue regular, high-level statements affirming its commitment to Japan? Furthermore, the study considers the specific capabilities that the US deployed (or withheld) that affected Japanese security with respect to specific issue areas. Additionally, the study will utilize US government documents and statements to weigh how specific, explicit, and extensive the US’ commitments to Japan’s specific security concerns were in a particular issue area. Did the US issue new or more comprehensive commitments, maintain commitments, or walk back earlier commitments in the case in question?

This dissertation also measures coordination by considering the quality, quantity, and tempo of the US’ efforts to share information with its ally. It analyzes the extent to which allied consultations focused on alliance security (as opposed to trade or other issues). The study considers the quantity and quality of the mechanisms for consultations utilized by the allies, examining whether the US expands, maintains, or downsizes its institutions for communication and coordinating with Japan. It also investigates which officials were involved in formal (and informal) consultations, looking for instances in which new officials were brought in regularly to discussions with Japan. Furthermore, the study gauges how frequently the allies report having discussed the specific issue area under consideration in their consultations. Relatedly, it also assesses how extensively the allies commit publicly to discussing that specific issue area in the future talks.
Similarly, in each case the dissertation must measure the extent to which Japan supports or deviates from US policy in the issue area in question. More specifically, it considers the formal commitments that Japan issues or avoids in government statements and documents. Just as importantly, it weighs the military capabilities and financial resources that Japan contributes or withholds in support of US policy. Similarly, it assesses the cooperative initiatives and projects that Japan agrees to support and those that it rejects. Finally, it examines how closely Japan aligns with the US in its diplomatic statements with respect to the issue area. Does Japan stand with the US, or does it instead adopt a divergent stance focused on appeasing or challenging China?

Finally, the dissertation considers the extent to which the US succeeds in influencing – reassuring, deterring, and/or compelling – China. Reassurance is measured by considering the extent to which China escalates a dispute in response to a perceived US threat to alter the status quo. In particular, what military capabilities does it utilize, how does it utilize them, and how frequently does it utilize them? What threats does China make and how explicit and assertive are these threats? Similarly, the study measures deterrence by examining the extent to which China utilizes military coercion to challenge the status quo. What measures does China take, what capabilities does it employ, and what is the severity and frequency of its threats to use force? Finally, compellence success is measured by considering how much China contributes to cooperating with the US in changing the status quo. What financial resources does China offer, and how closely does it align with the US diplomatically on the issue at hand?

This study considers these indicators of US coordination, Japanese support, and influence success and then codes each variable as “limited,” “moderate,” or “high.” This coding is relative. It is determined by considering the full range of variation across the cases in a particular issue
area. The cases with the greatest coordination, strongest Japanese support, and most successful influence attempts are coded as “high.” The cases with the least coordination, weakest Japanese support, and least successful influence attempts are coded as “limited.” Those cases which fall between are coded as “moderate.”

Data Sources

This study relies on both primary and secondary sources to measure these variables. In measuring US, Japanese, and Chinese policy, it makes ample use of primary sources: official government statements, documents, white papers, and other publications discussing both states’ strategies and perspectives. The study also utilizes a range of secondary sources, including both contemporary news media and histories published after the fact, to document the specific actions taken by the US, Japan, and China. When appropriate, this study also draws on interviews and statements given by governmental officials contained within these secondary sources. It is important to note that there are limitations to this approach; the secondary source may misrepresent these statements and interviews or utilize portions of them out of context.

To gauge Chinese policy perspectives, this study also utilizes the views of policy scholars and think tank scholars contained within secondary sources. This creates an additional challenge. While Chinese think tank scholars and policy scholars are members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and generally have ties to the Chinese policy community, they are advisors rather than policymakers and therefore do not speak authoritatively for the CCP or the Chinese government writ large. Their views are a rough approximation of some of the leading policy perspectives within the CCP and government, rather than a definitive statement of the government’s perceptions.
CHAPTER IV: THE EAST CHINA SEA – MANAGING TROUBLED WATERS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the influence of US alliance strategy toward Japan on its ability to manage deterrence and reassurance toward China in the East China Sea (ECS) and Senkaku Island disputes. It examines the evolution of the US approach from distancing in the late Bush 41 and early Clinton administrations into a close coordination during the second term of the Obama administration. It considers whether these changes have been associated with shifts in Japanese support for US policy and the success of US influence attempts, as predicted by the theory of strategic coordination. This chapter finds that these cases provide some support for H1 and H2, although the dramatic downturn in US success in deterring and reassuring China from 2009-2013 was not preceded by a major shift in US strategy toward Japan.

Figure 1: Synopsis of ECS Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Alliance Coordination</th>
<th>Japanese Support</th>
<th>Influence Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECS 1991-1996</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECS 1996-2009</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECS 2009-2013</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECS 2013-2016</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

History

The Sino-Japanese dispute over the Senkaku Islands has its roots in divergent interpretations of history. The Chinese account claims that its ownership of the islands dates to at
least the 16th century. This claim is based in part on ancient maps and text suggest that the islands were part of Chinese territory and Taiwan. Japan, according to the Chinese account, seized the Senkakus as part of Taiwan through the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 following China’s defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War. China insists that Japan has no right to the islands given the Allied Cairo Declaration in 1943 requiring that Japan return the territory it took from China by force.

The Japanese government, however, argues that there is no evidence that China ever physically occupied or utilized the islands. Instead, the Senkakus were *terra nullius* in 1895 when Japan first established a presence on the islands. The islands were not mentioned in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, according to the Japanese account, and were therefore not taken unjustly by force; the Cairo Declaration has no bearing on the Senkakus. On these grounds, Japan claims the islands are an indisputable part of its territory. Indeed, Japan refuses to acknowledge the existence of a dispute with China (and Taiwan) over the islands.

Despite the historical roots of Chinese and Japanese claims to the Senkakus, the dispute over the islands first emerged in 1971. The US had occupied the Senkakus during World War II and maintained control over them – along Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands more broadly – for

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3 See, for instance: The Japan Times, “Japan maintains there is no territorial row over Senkakus,” November 11, 2014.
much of the Cold War. In 1971, as the US prepared to return the Ryukyus and the Senkakus to Japan, Beijing issued a formal claim to the islands. The US, attempting to navigate rapprochement with Beijing and its commitments to Tokyo, elected to give “administrative control” to Japan but refrained from taking a stance on the sovereignty of the islands.\footnote{Mark Manyin, \textit{The Senkakus (Diaoyu/Diaoyutai) Dispute: US Treaty Obligations} (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016).} Japan resumed its control of the islands despite Beijing’s protests. Although Tokyo and Beijing disagreed on the issue of sovereignty, the two states’ common interest in economic cooperation and countering Soviet influence in Asia allowed them to shelve the budding dispute when they normalized relations in 1972.\footnote{In bilateral talks in 1978, Deng Xiaoping reportedly argued that the two countries should let future generations determine how to resolve the territorial dispute. See: Christopher Hughes, \textit{Japan’s Security Agenda} (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004).} This tentative truce lasted until the end of the Cold War when the demise of the Soviet threat triggered the dramatic re-emergence of the bilateral dispute.

The broader dispute over the ECS emerged in the 1990s as UNCLOS came into effect. Japan and China each claim overlapping exclusive economic zones (EEZs).\footnote{Ronald O’Rourke, \textit{Maritime Territorial and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Disputes Involving China: Issues for Congress} (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017).} China’s EEZ claim is based on its continental shelf. Japan’s EEZ claim, in contrast, is based on a median line division between the Chinese and Japanese territorial waters.

\textit{Interests}

Each of the three great powers has a stake in the future of the Senkaku Islands and the ECS more broadly. The US’ takes no side in disputes over the sovereignty of the Senkakus or the validity of each states’ EEZ claims. The US does, however, have a reputational interest at stake
given Japan’s current administrative control over the Senkakus. If the US were to allow Japan to be coerced into relinquishing the islands to China, it would likely damage Japan’s confidence in the US commitment to Japanese security more generally. The Senkakus also form part of the first island chain, a series of islands running from Japan to the Malay archipelago which curtail the Chinese Navy’s (PLAN) ability to access the West Pacific, and therefore have strategic significance for US efforts to keep Chinese maritime power in check.⁷

Japan and China each have significant interests in the Senkakus and ECS. Japan worries that Chinese control over the Senkakus could better allow the PLAN to threaten Japanese sea lanes.⁸ China aspires to expand its maritime influence and break out of the first island chain. Japan and China both have an interest in accessing the potential untapped (albeit limited) seabed resources in the ECS, including modest oil and gas fields.⁹ There are also potentially lucrative fishing grounds in the ECS that both states would prefer to control.¹⁰

Just as significantly, however, the islands have political significance. Japanese and Chinese citizens, particularly nationalists, care intensely about control over this territory. For Japan, the Senkakus have become a symbol of national pride. The islands were occupied by the US as part of the Ryukyu Islands for two decades; their restoration to Japan signified at least a

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partial return to independence and normalcy as a nation. For China, the Senkakus are part of the territory that was stripped from China by Japan and other imperial powers during its “Century of Humiliation.” Its continued separation from the PRC is a constant reminder of past humiliation and China’s need to strive for national reunification.

**US Influence Attempts and the Logic of Strategic Coordination**

In the context of the ECS dispute, the US has attempted to balance reassurance and deterrence toward China. On the one hand, the US seeks to reassure China that the US and its Japan will not fundamentally alter the status quo in the ECS by developing or militarizing the Senkaku Islands. On the other hand, the US seeks to deter China from challenging Japan’s administrative control of the Senkaku Islands through military coercion.

The logic of strategic coordination suggests that US alliance strategy will play a critical role in its attempts to influence China. When the US distances itself from the dispute, it will cause acute fears of abandonment in Japan. If Japan fears abandonment too intensely, it may hedge by either adopting a confrontational or accommodative stance toward China. This behavior will undercut US reassurance and deterrence toward China.

US coordination with Japan toward the Senkakus, in contrast, should allow the US to better reassure and deter China. When Japan is relatively confident in the US commitment to the defense of the Senkakus, it should not face the same incentives to adopt an independent hedging

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strategy toward China. Instead, it will work more closely with the US in managing the dispute. Consequently, the US will be more successful in efforts to deter and reassure China.

4.2 1991-1996: Strategic Ambiguity

Background

The end of the Cold War in 1991 and the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1994 drove maritime disputes like the Senkakus back to the front of Chinese and Japanese agendas. In 1992, China abandoned its past policy of shelving the dispute by passing its 1992 Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone. This law provided a legal basis for the Chinese government to both access resources in the Senkakus and use force to protect the islands. As Chinese vessels began encroaching on the Senkakus and surrounding water with increasing frequency, tensions mounted with Japan.

In 1996, the Japan Youth League (JYL) – a private group of right-wing activists – escalated the simmering dispute by repeatedly landing on the Senkakus. The JYL traveled to and from the privately-held islands, established a small lighthouse in July, built a war memorial in August, and repaired the lighthouse in September. The Japanese government chose to neither support nor oppose (or impede) the JYL’s activities. With each trip, Beijing grew increasingly

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irate. Activists in Taiwan and Hong Kong took up the Chinese cause, sending boats and flotillas in an attempt to land on the islands.\textsuperscript{15} By the peak of the crisis in September, the Chinese military had threatened military action and was conducting major military exercises on its northeast coast.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{US Alliance Strategy: Limited Coordination}

The US’ strategy toward Japan during this period prioritized distancing over strategic coordination. Trade disputes, Japanese political turnover, and the lack of Japanese participation in the Gulf War predisposed US policymakers to prioritize strategies that did not lean too heavily on Japan. The alliance underwent a period of drift with US strategists questioning the utility of the alliance relationship for US interests. In April 1996, however, the US alliance strategy underwent a decisive shift: The Joint Statement reflected a renewed and reinforced US commitment to its security partnership with Japan. Despite this increase in general coordination, however, US strategic coordination with Japan on the Senkaku dispute remained decidedly limited.

Throughout this period of the time, the US sought to keep its distance from the Senkaku Island dispute. US policymakers saw the spats as overblown and a distraction from more pressing regional matters.\textsuperscript{17} They had little fear that the feud would escalate significantly.\textsuperscript{18} Most

\textsuperscript{15} Vivian Lee, “Mainland group may swell numbers,” \textit{South China Morning Post}, October 5, 1996.

\textsuperscript{16} Stephen Hutcheon, “China faces military muscle to warn Japan on claim to islands,” \textit{The Age}, September 25, 1996.

\textsuperscript{17} Youichi Funabashi, \textit{Alliance Adrift} (New York: CFR Press, 1999); Green, \textit{Reluctant Realism}.

\textsuperscript{18} Funabashi, \textit{Alliance Adrift}; Green, \textit{Reluctant Realism}. 
importantly, US policymakers were aware of the resurgence of the nationalist far-right in Japanese politics and were keen to avoid emboldening this faction within Japan by appearing too supportive of Japan in territorial disputes with China. Distancing seemed a prudent course of action. Even after the 1996 Joint Statement, the US sought to downplay (and in some cases, diminish) its obligations to the defense of the Senkakus. The US had tacitly committed the defense of the Senkaku Islands under Article 5 of the Security Treaty after the reversion of the Ryukyu Islands to Japan’s administrative control in 1971: “Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes” [italics added]. But a significant amount of ambiguity remained; after the reversion, the US government never publicly specified that the Senkakus – as part of the Ryukyus – would be covered by Article 5.

By the 1990s, with tensions rising over the islands for the first time since the 1970s, the US was reluctant to change this stance and instead sought to distance itself from its ally over the Senkakus. US Ambassador to Japan Walter Mondale controversially stated in public interview in 1995 that “American forces would not be compelled by the treaty to intervene in a dispute” that involved the Senkakus. In private, the administration initially downgraded the US’ commitment: A leading US scholar of Japan, Michael Green, writes that when Japan’s Ministry

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of Foreign Affairs pressed the US on its commitment, “the State Department responded that the US-Japan alliance did not apply in this case.” Publicly, the US emphasized its neutrality on the sovereignty of the disputed islands and either dismissed the US commitment to the Senkakus or declined to comment on it. Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord refused to comment on a hypothetical Senkaku contingency. State Department Deputy Spokesman Glyn Davies later announced that “We’re simply going to confine ourselves to calling on both sides to resist the temptation to provoke each other… From the US standpoint, though we understand it has great emotional content, it’s not the kind of issue that’s worth elevating beyond a war of words, where we are not.” State Department Spokesperson Nick Burns refused to clarify the US commitment in a press briefing on October 3: “[an attack on the Senkakus] would be a hypothetical situation, of course, and my policy is not to comment on hypotheses… we are confident that they can resolve this issue through peaceful means.” Overall, the US commitment to Japan’s security in the Senkakus was not particularly strong or clear leading up to and during the 1996 crisis.

Similarly, US consultation with Japan on the Senkakus was relatively limited. Prior to 1996, there is little evidence that the allies discussed the security of the Senkakus or how to manage the issue with China. By 1996, allied dialogue was largely focused on updating the US-Japan defense guidelines and containing regional contingencies in places like the Korean

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21 Green, *Reluctant Realism*, 87.


peninsula; the US did not prioritize the Senkakus in their consultations with Japan.\textsuperscript{25} Overall, the US sought to stay above the fray, arguing that the two parties ought to resolve the dispute independently.

\textit{Japanese Policy}

From 1991 to 1996, Japan feared abandonment and engaged in hedging behavior. The US decision to limit its commitments to the Senkakus contributed directly to Japanese fears of abandonment. One Japanese diplomat reportedly fretted: “This is so different from their former statements. It’s terrible.”\textsuperscript{26} A high-ranking Japanese Defense Agency official would later argue that this distance “created incredibly strong distrust toward America.”\textsuperscript{27}

Japan acted upon its concerns by adopting a more confrontational position on the Senkakus than it had in the past. Green argues “the stiffening of Japan’s position on the Senkakus” was both the “result of its inability to control the Right wing” and its growing concern “about the growing nationalism it perceived in China, including Beijing’s 1992 claim that force could be used to defend the islands.”\textsuperscript{28} While Japan had prevented activists from traveling to the Senkakus only five years earlier, exercising restraint, its response to developments in 1996 was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Funabashi, \textit{Alliance Adrift}, 403.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid..411.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Green, \textit{Reluctant Realism}, 86.
\end{itemize}
far less accommodative toward Beijing.\textsuperscript{29} The government refused to restrain the JYL in response to Beijing’s protests. Instead, it justified their conduct: Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku argued publicly “I personally don’t think we should say this and that about something being constructed legitimately with permission from the Japanese landlord.”\textsuperscript{30} An unidentified government official similarly stated that the “We neither support nor oppose the [JYL’s] activities.”\textsuperscript{31} Ultimately, the allies adopted different stances on the islands. The US adopted signaled that it hoped the states would come to a peaceful resolution but said little else. Japan took a far less restrained approach.

\textit{Reassurance and Deterrence toward China}

The US distancing strategy was accompanied by significant Chinese escalation. Early on, during the initial drift in allied relations during the late Bush and early Clinton administrations, China passed new legislation authorizing it to use force to secure the Senkakus and other Chinese territorial claims, a clear departure from the tacit consensus to shelve the dispute from the 1970s. Around the same time, Chinese ships began firing warning shots at Japanese vessels near the Senkakus – as many as 12 incidents were reported in 1991.\textsuperscript{32} In 1995, China escalated further, sending PLAF fighters near the islands for the first time, prompting Japan’s air force to

\textsuperscript{29} Green, \textit{Reluctant Realism}, 85-86.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 86.


\textsuperscript{32} “China’s neighbors anxious over islands,” \textit{Baltimore Sun}, July 26, 1992.
scramble interceptors. Chinese research vessels also began regularly plying waters claimed by Japan.

In the mid-1990s, Japan’s confrontational approach seems to have convinced Chinese leaders that they needed to escalate still more forcefully to assert China’s territorial claims to defend against Japanese revisionism. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman announced that “the building of facilities on the islands by some Japanese without authorization constitutes a serious encroachment on China's territorial sovereignty. We are greatly concerned about this.” The Chinese ambassador to Japan similarly declared that “despite repeated requests by China, Japan has been letting these right-wing groups do whatever they want. Chinese people are outraged.” The People’s Daily framed Japan’s tolerance of the JYL as a “challenge to China” - a deliberate provocation to test Beijing’s resolve. At the same time, China also seems to have latched on to evidence that the US was ambivalent about the islands. Even today, some

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34 James Manicom, Bridging Troubled Waters: China, Japan, and Maritime Order in the East China Sea (Georgetown University Press, 2014), 93.


36 Kevin Murphy, “Japan told to control right wingers,” The Globe and Mail, September 12, 1996.

Chinese analysts reference Mondale’s equivocation over the defense of the Senkakus in 1995 as evidence of US irresolution.  

China acted on these perceptions, escalating in response to the JYL landings in 1996. The PLAN dispatched two submarines to the Senkaku Islands in July. The Chinese military also conducted major wargames in September off its northeast coast that included simulated blockades and amphibious assaults on nearby islands. Several Chinese military officials publicly threatened military action, as did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4.3 1996-2009: The Armitage Doctrine

Background

The 1996 crisis petered out at the end of the year, ushering in a long period of stability in the ECS. The following year saw China and Japan develop a joint fisheries agreement to help facilitate the use of resources in the ECS. Although the Senkaku dispute occasionally remerged – most notably in 2004 when activists attempted to take matters into their own hands – Beijing and Tokyo did their best to constrain these groups from disrupting their bilateral relations.

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40 Kristof, “An Asian Mini-Tempest.”

41 Green, Reluctant Realism, 86.

42 Manicom, Bridging Troubled Waters, 81.
Indeed, by 2007, Japan and China seemed on the brink of even closer cooperation in the ECS, having concluded a new arrangement for energy exploration.

**US Alliance Strategy: Moderate Coordination**

From 1996 to 2009, US alliance strategy toward Japan emphasized greater coordination both in general and with respect to the Senkakus and ECS. Most significantly, the US offered an amplified commitment to the Senkakus and engaged in greater policy consultation and information-sharing. The US refrained from going much farther than this; it did not guarantee that it would oppose all Chinese provocations toward the Senkakus – only a direct armed attack. It also pointedly declined to discuss what measures it would be willing to undertake to support Japan’s defense of the Senkakus.

The US had already begun to shift its general strategy toward its ally in early 1996 with the Clinton-Hashimoto Joint Statement; as the Senkaku crisis escalated further in October, US policymakers determined that further change was required. The US articulated what would come to be known as “the Armitage Doctrine,” named after Richard Armitage who would become Deputy Secretary of State under President Bush. The US would now explicitly commit to the defense of the Senkakus under Article 5 of the Security Treaty but remain neutral on all other issues including sovereignty. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia and the Pacific Kurt Campbell worked closely with legal advisors and counterparts in the Japanese government to reinforce and clarify the US position on the Senkakus. This effort cumulated in Campbell’s private affirmations to the Japanese government that the US was committed to the defense of the
islands in late October. This private commitment was followed up with a public commitment by Campbell at the end of November that put the US reputation more clearly on the line over the disputed territory.

“The US-Japan Security Treaty applies to this area. If Japan was involved in a conflict in which Japanese forces or Japanese personnel came under attack, then the United States would be obligated to support.”

Secretary of Defense Perry similarly issued a private affirmation of the US commitment in December as the crisis ended. The US reconfirmed this commitment as necessary in the coming years. In 2004, amid a series of limited provocations by China, Department of State Spokesman Adam Ereli – of his own prompting – confirmed that the US was committed to the Senkakus under the 1960 Security Treaty.

The US backed up this verbal commitment with increased military coordination with Japan. In 2005, the US began training with Japanese forces in California to practice the defense of islands against hostile forces. These training exercises were repeated with a larger force in of

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These measures served as both a signal of US commitment toward Japan and its resolve toward China.

The US similarly began to consult more extensively with Japan on relations with China both in general and in the ECS in particular. Broadly speaking, the allies developed and reinforced existing mechanisms for dialogue and information sharing with the conclusion of the Defense Guideline revisions in 1997. More narrowly, Campbell’s initial push to clarify US commitments involved extensive consultation on the Senkaku issue: Campbell stated publicly that he had a “very close dialogue with our Japanese interlocutors” on the situation in the Senkakus. The 1997 Defense Guidelines committed the US to “conduct bilateral work, including bilateral defense planning in case of an armed attack against Japan, and mutual cooperation planning in situations in areas surrounding Japan.” This included planning to address seaborne invasions, guerilla incursions, and threats to sea lanes and nearby waters – all directly relevant to the security of the Senkakus and the ECS. The US pledged to work with Japan to “make every effort, including diplomatic efforts, to prevent further deterioration” of tensions in these areas that could result in an armed attack on Japan.

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48 Yomiuri Shimbun, “US confirms security treaty covers Senkakus.”


The US also took advantage of the new defense guidelines to share key information with Japan on developments in near the Senkakus and the ECS. In November 2004, the allies reportedly helped share intelligence to monitor a Chinese Han-class nuclear submarine as it moved by the Senkakus and Okinawa and into Japanese territorial waters; the US shared data from P3-C surveillance craft that allowed Japan to monitor the boat’s progress.51

*Japanese Policy*

After the expanded US commitment – both to the Senkakus and to the alliance more generally – Japan’s fears of abandonment declined significantly. The anxiety over the dependability of the US in the event of a crisis with China over the Senkakus that was so noticeably present throughout 1996 was noticeably absent after Campbell’s commitment. In an address before the Japanese Diet in November after Campbell’s private assurances, the Japanese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed confidence in the US, stating that "the United States is aware of the obligation" to defend the Senkakus.52

After Campbell’s assurances, Japan took a far more restrained stance toward the Senkakus. First, it curtailed its own nationalist activists. While Japan had felt pressured to refrain from opposing the JYL actions in the Senkakus in 1996, it was able to curtail nationalist groups more successfully from 1997-2009 without worrying about signaling irresolution or incurring undue political costs. Japan’s Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary called a 1997 landing by Japanese nationalists “extremely regrettable” and claimed that it violated the Japanese government’s


Second, Japan took a firm but reasonable approach to dealing with Chinese nationalist activists attempting to land on the islands. Most notably, in 2004 the Japanese government intervened to prevent Japanese police from pressing charges against Chinese nationalist activists that had landed on the Senkakus. Instead, it returned the nationalists to China in a deft display of restraint. After this incident, the Japanese Diet attempted to pass a security resolution to retaliate for the landings. Instead of bowing to pressure in the Diet, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi’s “office heavily advised the Diet on the issue of the Senkaku security resolution… to keep it as unprovocative as possible.”\footnote{“Joint Statement of the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, accessed August 20, 2017, https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/scc/joint0502.html.}

As a result, the allies acted in closer unison on the Senkakus. Japan, by exercising restraint, drew closer to the US’ policy of calling for the two sides to resolve the issue peacefully through dialogue. The US, meanwhile, adopted a stronger stance and assisted in sending joint
deterrence signals covering the islands. In 2005, the allies’ Security Consultative Committee (SCC) Joint Statement referred to “the security of maritime traffic” as a common security objective, signaling their determination to resist Chinese provocations in the ECS.

_Deterrence and Reassurance toward China_

China was somewhat more reassured by Japan’s efforts to restrain its nationalists during this period. Following the 1997 incident, for instance, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted appreciatively that the Japanese government had expressed the view that the landings contravened Japan’s policy.\(^{58}\) China similarly seems to have recognized the growing US commitment to its ally’s control over the Senkakus. The “United States and Japan joined hand [sic] in establishing a firm military alliance in East Asia” the CCP-run Global Times noted, “[this] further complicates China’s position in handling the issues such as Diaoyu Islands… [a] spokesman with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan claimed recently [that the] US will perform its duty in assisting the defense [sic] once Diaoyu Islands are attacked.”\(^{59}\) A top Chinese scholar remarked that the 2006 exercises demonstrated that “the United States and Japan are on high alert towards improvements in China’s overall national strength and rising military power” and that “the Clinton administration indicated that it will firmly stand by the side of its Japanese ally, and this policy is continued by the Bush administration.”\(^{60}\)

\(^{58}\) Manicom, _Bridging Troubled Waters_, 52.

\(^{59}\) “Global Times Article Notes PRC Attitude on U-Japan Military Alliance,” _Renmin Ribao_, April 13, 2004.

\(^{60}\) The Chinese scholar, Zhu Feng, also worries that the moves will undermine regional stability and damage relations with China – although these concerns do not seem to have been borne out. “Chinese scholars view implications of US-Japan joint drill over Diaoyu Islands,” _BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific_, January 3, 2007.
China’s behavior reflected these perceptions. China refrained from any significant escalation during this period; although it issued diplomatic protests and engaged in periodic intrusions into airspace and waters claimed by Japan, China tried to manage the dispute in a relatively restrained fashion. During the 2004 incident, China issued diplomatic protests but refrained from any militarized threats. A Chinese source stated that "the Chinese government wanted to avoid complicating the issue or getting mired in it."\textsuperscript{61} After the conclusion of the 2004 incident and the return of the Chinese activists, Tokyo asked Beijing to ensure that protesters did not engage in similar activity in the future. Shortly afterward, a Chinese nationalist group planning to travel to the Senkakus announced that they would be postponing their trip.\textsuperscript{62} Some analysts have reported that Tokyo and Beijing each issued private assurances after the crisis: Tokyo stated that they would promptly return any Chinese activists trying to access the islands, while Beijing pledged to keep Chinese activists from leaving the mainland.\textsuperscript{63}

During this period, China also engaged in some limited cooperation in the ECS. In 2001, China agreed to a “notification system” obliging it to inform Japan when PLAN vessels moved into Japan’s EEZ.\textsuperscript{64} In 2007, China agreed to discuss economic cooperation in the ECS with

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} Irene Wang and Alice Yan, “Capital fetes seven Diaoyu ‘heroes’; the landing is called a patriotic triumph but a second mission has been delayed,” \textit{South China Morning Post}, March 29, 2004.
\end{itemize}
Japan; this led to a Sino-Japanese agreement in 2008 to explore the potential natural gas reserves in the contested ECS.

Despite this restraint, China endeavored to incrementally circumvent the strengthened US-Japan deterrent during this period of time using a “salami slicing” strategy.\(^{65}\) Rather than asserting its claims through the dramatic escalation of a bilateral incident and risking allied retaliation, Beijing used a series of small steps to attempt to erode Japan’s administrative control of the islands and demonstrate China’s “effective control” of the contested waters.\(^{66}\) This included a growing number of aerial intrusions, the Han-class submarine incursion, and probes by Chinese research and survey ships.

**4.4 2009-2013: Tensions Return**

*Background*

After several years of increasing Chinese assertiveness in maritime territorial disputes in both the East and South China Seas, tensions boiled over when an inebriated Chinese captain rammed his fishing trawler into a Japanese Coast Guard vessel near the Senkakus. The new, inexperienced DPJ government under Prime Minister Kan Naoto in Japan mishandled the trawler incident; it detained and indicted the captain, inciting a massive backlash from Beijing.\(^{67}\)

\(^{65}\) For a discussion of this strategy, see: Schelling, *Arms and Influence*.

\(^{66}\) Choong alleges that this behavior began as early as 2004. Choong, *The Ties That Divide*.

intense economic and diplomatic pressure, Japan was coerced into accommodating Beijing by returning the captain.\textsuperscript{68}

This standoff ushered in a period of heightened tension; China began aggressively increasing the frequency and severity of its challenges to Japanese control of the Senkakus. This cumulated in a backlash from the Japanese right: Ishihara Shintaro, the governor of Tokyo and a fervent nationalist, pledged to purchase the Senkakus from their private owners in 2012. The Japanese government, now under a new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government led by Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko, preemptively purchased the islands to prevent Ishihara from damaging both Sino-Japanese relations and the DPJ’s already-tarnished nationalist credentials. Beijing saw the move as boldfaced revisionism, however, and responded with massive escalation. It would take a new US strategy, beginning in early 2013, to help ease the rapidly mounting tensions.

\textit{US Alliance Strategy: Moderate Coordination}

From 2009 to 2013, the Obama administration largely continued the Clinton and Bush administration’s strategy of limited strategic coordination with Japan over the Senkaku Islands. The US continued to adhere to the Armitage Doctrine of committing to the defense of the Senkakus under Article 5 but remaining decidedly neutral on all other issues pertaining to the islands. In 2009, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Philip Crowley clarified that “if you ask today would the treaty apply to the Senkaku Islands, the answer is yes.”\textsuperscript{69} During both

\textsuperscript{68} Green et al., \textit{Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia}, 91-94.

the 2010 incident and the 2012 crisis, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reemphasized this commitment, stating repeatedly in private and public that the Senkakus were covered by Article 5 and that the US remained otherwise neutral. US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, and others similarly made it clear that the US was committed to Japan’s defense.

Nonetheless, a few unfortunate incidents caused minor damage to the US efforts to emphasize its commitment. As Green highlights:

“In December 2012, a senior U.S. military commander told the press that the United States was not going to go to war over “a rock in the middle of the Pacific Ocean,” and the commander of U.S. Pacific Forces asserted repeatedly—much to Tokyo’s consternation—that climate change was the greatest threat to Asian security, never mentioning China’s military pressure on maritime states like Japan.”

General policy consultation suffered under the Hatoyama administration in 2009 and 2010. A Brookings report concluded that “high-level communication between Washington and Tokyo became so strained that the Obama administration effectively barred any significant celebrations in 2010 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the US-Japan Security Treaty.” In 2010, the US was initially somewhat reluctant to get involved in the details of the dispute. Crowley argued that the US thought “this can be resolved by Japan and China,” presumably


without US involvement.\textsuperscript{72} NSC Senior Director for Asian Affairs Jeffrey Bader would similarly contend that the US would not manage the dispute: it “was not playing nor going to play a mediating role.”\textsuperscript{73} As the dispute escalated, however, the US moved to consult with both parties. In 2010, US officials met separately with their counterparts in Japan and China in an attempt to de-escalate tensions.\textsuperscript{74} Similarly, in 2012, the US advised Japan against nationalism and cautioned China against overreacting.\textsuperscript{75}

\textit{Japanese Policy}

Alliance management became challenging during this period. Growing tensions with China and concerns about US commitments drove Japan to hedge in 2010 and 2012, undercutting both allied deterrence and reassurance in the ECS. Although the US commitment to defend the Senkakus if they were under Japan’s administrative control and were attacked was clear, ambiguities remained about the scale and scope of the commitment.\textsuperscript{76} As Japanese policy

\textsuperscript{72} Green et al., \textit{Countering Coercion}, 78.


\textsuperscript{76} The US does not seem to have clarified the following points of concern: Would the US defend Japan from irregular activities and limited provocations in the waters surrounding the islands? Would the US defend the Senkakus if China gradually asserted effective control over the islands? What measures the US would employ to support Japan’s control of the Senkakus – how much was it willing to escalate, and how many resources would it willing to bring to bear?
scholar Sato Yoichiro opined, “there is a perception in Japan that the U.S. commitment is ambiguous.”\textsuperscript{77} This contributed to a growing fear of Chinese revisionism and strong belief that Japan needed to do something dramatic to demonstrate its resolve, or risk deterrence failure. When Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda moved to acquire the Senkaku, a major CSIS report claims that “it was well known within his inner circle that the underlying motivation was countering a perceived Chinese revanchist threat.”\textsuperscript{78} Ironically, this fear of China’s revisionism led to a policy that would trigger the largest escalation by China over the Senkaku dispute to date.

Kan’s decision to back down in the face of Chinese pressure in 2010 only intensified Japanese concerns. Even moderate Japanese parliamentarians and policy elites were critical of the release of the Chinese captain after the trawler incident.\textsuperscript{79} Many worried that the move had damaged Japan’s ability to assert its claims over the Senkakus.\textsuperscript{80} When the nationalization crisis loomed, “the leaders of both major parties believed that Japan had to send a signal of resolve to Beijing in order to ward off any potential attempt to seize the disputed islands.”\textsuperscript{81} The Noda administration had to find a way to signal strength; as such, Japan pursued a hedging strategy, ignoring US advice to avoid nationalizing the islands.


\textsuperscript{78} Green et al., \textit{Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia}, 135.

\textsuperscript{79} Green et al., \textit{Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia}, 92-94.

\textsuperscript{80} Green et al., \textit{Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia}, 92-94.

\textsuperscript{81} Green et al., \textit{Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia}, 147.
Deterrence and Reassurance toward China

China’s concerns about exploitation increased in 2012. These perceptions contributed directly to China’s decision to escalate the crisis dramatically and dangerously, damaging allied regional interests. China believed that both allies were attempting to revise the status quo and test Beijing’s resolve to defend its territorial claims. Choong reports that interviews with Chinese officials indicated that “to the Chinese, Japan’s rationale for nationalization… was a ruse. To them, the purchase was a Japanese ploy to present Beijing with a fait accompli.”

Ren Xiao, Director of a Chinese think tank in Fudan University, argues that “for China this was an unacceptable change to the status quo.” Despite the US’ disapproval of Japan’s policy, China feared that the US had – either unwittingly or intentionally – emboldened Japan to take these steps with its pivot to Asia strategy. One Chinese think tank researcher claims “Japan cannot rely enough on its own military power and offensive strategic guidelines to achieve its strategic objectives, and still needs the effective support and aid of its chief ally, the United States. In fact, the Japan-US alliance is precisely the strategic foundation of its so-called ‘nationalization’ of Diaoyu and the driving force for Japan in seeking its strategic sea power objective.” Japan’s purchase of the island undercut both Japanese and US reassurances toward China that the alliance would pursue stability rather than revisionism in the region.

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82 Choong, The Ties That Divide.


China also saw an opportunity to revise the status quo itself, degrading Japan’s control over the islands and challenging the gaps in the existing US commitment. Glaser writes that “it is also likely that at least some in China saw Japan’s action as presenting an opportunity to challenge the status quo of the islands dispute. China could assert its sovereignty claim and ratcheted up tensions over the islands without appearing as the provocateur.”^85 Xiao claims that “The objective is to bring about de facto joint jurisdiction and joint patrolling in the relevant waters to deny Japan’s unilateral ‘control’ of the islands. Beijing wants to force Japan to change its ‘no territorial dispute’ position.”^86

China escalated the dispute quickly and aggressively. In particular, China dramatically increased the number of Chinese ships intruding on the waters surrounding the Senkakus.^87 Vice-Chair of China’s Central Military Commission Xu Caihou “urged the army not to be slack and be prepared for any possible military combat.”^88 Chinese state-run media clamored for confrontation while the government allowed massive protests against Japanese businesses and consulates.^89 Several Chinese government plans flew over or near the disputed territory.^90 At one point, this triggered Japan to scramble F-15 fighters to intercept, prompting China to scramble its

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^86 Xiao, “A view from China.”

^87 Green et al., *Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia*, 137-145


own J-10 fighters.\textsuperscript{91} In January 2013, Chinese ships twice locked their fire-control radar onto Japanese assets – a helicopter and a frigate, prompting widespread regional alarm.\textsuperscript{92}

### 4.5 2013-2016: New Commitments

**Background**

Throughout 2013, Japan and China sparred over the ECS. 2013 saw the return of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to power in Japan under Prime Minister Abe Shinzo on a platform that included a robust assertion of Japanese sovereignty claims. It also saw China declare an Air Defense Identification Zone encompassing much of the ECS, including the Senkakus. By 2014, however, relations had begun to stabilize. Both Japan and China made efforts at rapprochement, cumulating in a beneficial but frosty meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Abe at that year’s APEC Leaders Summit.

**US Alliance Strategy: Strong Coordination**

The US noticeably strengthened its strategic coordination with Japan toward the ECS and Senkakus beginning in 2013. This included a stronger and more comprehensive commitment to the defense of the islands and the status quo. It also involved more extensive consultations on dynamics in the ECS.

\textsuperscript{91} Swaine, “Chinese Views,” 15-17.

\textsuperscript{92} Swaine, “Chinese Views,” 15-17.
The US amplified its commitment to Japan in the ECS to reassure Japan and deter China. US Secretary of State Clinton made the first move to do so on January 18, 2013, stating that the US was not only committed to defending the islands but that “we oppose any unilateral actions that would seek to undermine Japanese administration.”93 For the first time, the US had explicitly stated it was committed not only to defend the Senkakus from direct attack but also to preserve Japan’s administrative control against any unilateral challenges. Clinton’s successor, Secretary of State John Kerry, confirmed this new commitment the following Clinton’s departure, arguing that the US is committed to “oppose any unilateral or coercive action that would somehow aim at changing the status quo.”94 A year later, President Obama himself confirmed this obligation several times publicly. While the president’s statements were reiterations of existing policy, they still represented a dramatic increase in commitment: the president put his reputation directly on the line, rendering the commitment significantly costlier and consequently more credible.

Throughout 2014 and 2015, the US further solidified its commitment to Japan through the new Defense Guidelines revisions. These revisions were driven at least in part by the US’ desire to assure Japan that it was committed to defending against incremental revisionism – so-called “gray zone” threats like those in the ECS. The updated guidelines included a clear reference to a US commitment to deal with “gray zone” threats:

“Persistent and emerging threats can have a serious and immediate impact on Japan's peace and security. In this increasingly complex security environment,

93 Andrew Quinn, “Clinton assures Japan on islands, invites Abe to US in February,” Reuters, January 18, 2013.

94 “Kerry spells out policy on Senkaku Islands,” UPI, April 15, 2013.
the two governments will take measures to ensure Japan's peace and security in all phases, seamlessly, from peacetime to contingencies, including situations when an armed attack against Japan is not involved. In this context, the two governments also will promote further cooperation with partners.”

The US backed up these verbal commitments with strengthened military cooperation. The US Air Force began surveillance flights using advanced Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft over the contested islands in January 2013. It also deployed its new P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol craft to Japan later that year. These measures bolstered the US ability to support Japan’s intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance in the ECS and served as both a signal of US commitment to Japan and resolve toward China. At the same time, the US moved to modernize US Marine Corps (USMC) transportation in Okinawa, introducing the MV-22 Osprey to replace its aging CH-46 helicopters. These new assets reinforced the credibility of the US’ expanded commitments.

The US also strengthened its consultation with Japan. In 2013, after China declared its ADIZ, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel stated that “we are in close consultation with our allies and partners in the region, including Japan. We remain steadfast in our commitments.” Kerry similarly reported that “we are consulting with Japan and other affected parties throughout the


97 Cenciotti, “US Navy Deploys Newest Patrol Aircraft to Japan.”

The new defense guidelines in 2015 further strengthened and institutionalized consultation on “gray zone” threats to issues like the ECS. The guidelines pledged to “develop ways to implement the appropriate Alliance response” to contingencies “including flexible deterrent options, as well as actions aimed at de-escalation.” The US and Japan would now “coordinate strategic messaging through appropriate channels on issues that could potentially affect Japan's peace and security.” The guidelines also developed a “whole-of-government Alliance Coordination Mechanism” to “assess the situation” and “share information” when contingencies arise. They agreed to achieve “shared maritime domain awareness including by coordinating with relevant agencies, as necessary.” This amplified coordination was on display in 2016 when a Chinese warship intruded in Japanese waters in the ECS: a US defense official reported that “Japan has informed the U.S. and is in close communication with Washington.”

**Japanese Policy**

The strengthened alliance commitment and consultation improved Japan’s confidence in the US. Japanese officials were relieved by the new US commitment, describing Clinton’s initial

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104 “Japan confirms US cooperation,” Nikkei Asian Review.
articulation of the points as “extremely major and significant.””\textsuperscript{105} After Obama’s recommitment to the defense of the Senkakus, Abe stated that US-Japan ties were “rock solid” and that “I have total utmost faith in Obama.”\textsuperscript{106}

A more confident Japan felt less pressure to send aggressive signals of resolve, instead adopting a resolute but restrained approach to the dispute. Abe articulated this new approach best: “While Japan will not concede and will uphold our fundamental position that the Senkaku islands are an inherent territory of Japan, we intend to respond calmly so as not to provoke China.”\textsuperscript{107} In a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Abe laid out this vision for restraint coupled by resolve still more clearly: “We simply cannot tolerate any challenge now, or in the future. No nation should underestimate the firmness of our resolve. No one should ever doubt the robustness of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. At the same time, I have absolutely no intention of climbing up the escalation ladder. In fact, my government is investing more into people to people exchanges between Japan and China.”\textsuperscript{108} Perhaps most significantly, Japan took steps to mend ties with China, refusing to compromise on sovereignty but presenting proposals for mutual de-escalation and crisis management.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{105} Mizuho Aoki, “Obama assures Abe on Senkakus,” \textit{The Japan Times}, April 24, 2014.

\textsuperscript{106} Aoki, “Obama assures Abe.”

\textsuperscript{107} Andrew Quinn, “Clinton assures Japan on islands, invites Abe to US in February,” \textit{Reuters}, January 18, 2013.


At the same time, the US and Japan were able to issue stronger joint deterrence signals to help counteract China’s growing assertiveness. In 2013, Japan participated in the US Dawn Blitz military exercise designed to prepare for an amphibious assault on remote islands.\(^{110}\) The allies also joined with Australia to issue a particularly strong reaction to China’s ADIZ later that year, stating that they opposed “any coercive and unilateral actions that could change the status quo or increase tensions in the ECS.”\(^ {111}\) They also jointly defied the ADIZ later that month, sending a combined 12 reconnaissance and fighter craft through the ECS.\(^ {112}\) In 2014, Japan also participated in a major military exercise – Iron Fist 2014 – with US forces, again practicing operations on offshore islands.\(^ {113}\)

**Deterrence and Reassurance toward China**

By the end of 2013, according to top Sinologist Taylor Fravel, “the dispute appears to have stabilized.”\(^ {114}\) Fravel and fellows Sinologist Ian Alastair Johnson both argue that China intentionally reduced its operations in the ECS to signal its willingness to de-escalate the crisis in


\(^{114}\) Taylor Fravel, “China’s Assertiveness in the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands Dispute,” MIT Political Science Department Research Paper No. 016-19 (2016).
2013 and 2014.\textsuperscript{115} By 2014, China appeared to be deliberately reducing the tempo and scale of its operations around the Senkakus.\textsuperscript{116} Japan’s Defense Minister Akira Sato went so far as to argue that “China is starting to show signs of softening” which created an opportunity for detente.\textsuperscript{117} In September 2014, Japan and China resumed military contacts and began discussing a crisis-management mechanism to reduce the chances of escalation in the ECS.\textsuperscript{118} Both Japan and China also managed to reach an agreement on four points to facilitate the resumption of dialogue over the ECS before an APEC Leaders Summit meeting between Abe and Xi.\textsuperscript{119}

\textbf{4.6 A Temporary Return to Escalation in 2016}

The 2016 presidential campaign in the US seems to have caused uncertainty in Japan regarding US commitment and a sense of opportunism in China. The Trump campaign was highly critical of US allies, particularly Japan. Many in Japan worried that Trump’s success in the Republican primary highlighted a growing isolationist and protectionist strain in US foreign policy. Many in China welcomed the Trump administration’s rhetoric on US alliances; while Chinese elites were uncomfortable with Trump’s trade positions, some believed that Trump’s


\textsuperscript{117} Henderson, “Japan and China Agree.”

\textsuperscript{118} Henderson, “Japan and China Agree.”

\textsuperscript{119} Kristine Kwok, “China, Japan agree to resume high-level talks in bid to ease maritime tensions,” \textit{South China Morning Post}, November 7, 2014.
success reflected a desire by Americans to withdraw from its longstanding role as a regional security guarantor.

These views seem to have been matched with renewed escalation over the Senkakus. In June of 2016, China deployed a PLAN Jiangkai frigate to the waters near the Senkakus, significantly escalating the dispute by utilizing a naval vessel to assert its claim rather than a civilian coast-guard vessel. Furthermore, China deployed a massive flotilla to the ECS in August that included 230 maritime militia boats and 7 coast guard vessels. After assuming office in 2017, however, the new US administration has not acted on its campaign rhetoric about reducing US commitment to its regional allies or regional security more broadly. Instead, it has doubled down on many of coordination with Japan to both deter China in the ECS. This has included a renewed commitment to the defense of the Senkakus under the Security Treaty. Subsequently, China has so far refrained from escalating the dispute further.

4.7 Findings: Alliance Strategy and Alternative Explanations

Alliance Strategy

Strategic coordination appears to have had a positive effect on the US’ ability to reassure and deter China in the ECS. Across the cases, increases in US coordination (in 1996 and 2013) are associated with subsequent increases in Japanese policy support and more successful deterrence and reassurance toward China. Similarly, in 1991-1996, limited coordination was associated with Japanese fears of abandonment, less support for US policy toward China, and less successful deterrence and reassurance toward China. This provides some support for H1, H2a, and H2b.
It is important to note, however, that there are limits to the fit between the cases and these hypotheses. Most importantly, the sudden uptick in escalation from 2009-2013 occurred despite no corresponding shift in US strategy. Indeed, the first-movers in the dispute were China and Japan, with the US reacting to the escalation by subsequently changing its strategy in 2013 and 2014. There are a number of reasons for why this shift may have occurred. China, believing the 2008 financial crisis to be a harbinger of US decline, may have been emboldened to pursue its claims more forcefully. Similarly, the perceived distance between the US and Japan during the Hatoyama administration may also have convinced China that the alliance was drifting apart. Finally, the chaos and internal division of the DPJ administrations in Japan may have contributed to more erratic Japanese conduct toward the dispute, contributing unnecessarily to increased tensions with China.

The US experience in managing the Senkakus provides disconfirming evidence for the strategic arguments in favor of distancing. While some strategists contend that a coordination strategy toward Japan will only encourage it to escalate disputes with China, the opposite has largely proved true in practice. Indeed, the dispute has escalated the farthest and risked US entrapment the most when Japan believes that it cannot depend on a firm US commitment to its defense. As such, H3 and H4a are not supported by these cases. Furthermore, Japanese hedging behavior has not been associated with improved deterrence and reassurance outcomes for the US, contrary to the predictions of H4b. Finally, increases in US coordination with Japan do not seem to have imposed significant constraints on the US ability to deter or reassure China, contrary to the predictions of H5.

**Domestic Politics**
Chinese domestic politics may offer some compelling alternative explanations. In the early and mid-1990s, for instance, China felt vulnerable to pressure from nationalists at home as it sought to reincorporate Hong Kong, cope with Lee Teng-Hui’s vacation diplomacy, and manage the transition from an ailing Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin. This pressure was particularly acute given that activists in Hong Kong and Taiwan took a lead role in protesting Japan’s claims to the island and asserting Chinese sovereignty.

Again, during tensions from 2009-2013, China was preparing for and undergoing a major leadership transition. In fact, the 2012 crisis began just as the CCP was about to begin its 18th Party Congress. Seven of the nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee were replaced and seven of the ten members of the Central Military Commission (CMC) retired. Xi Jinping, the former Vice President, rose to General Secretary of the CCP, the President of the PRC, and the Chairman of the CMC. Xi himself reportedly directed the Chinese response to the 2012 Senkaku crisis and may have pushed for a hardline stance to bolster his nationalist credentials and consolidate his authority in the CCP.

Nevertheless, domestic politics cannot alone account for variation in Chinese escalation. Despite the presence of a major leadership transition from 2002-2004 (from Jiang to Hu Jintao) China did not undertake significant escalatory behavior. Indeed, Japan elected to lease the islands in 2002, the same year as the beginning of this transition, but China responded with admirable restraint. To account for this variation, it is necessary to look beyond China’s internal dynamics and consider the role of US strategy and allied policy – particularly the absence of a confrontational stance by Japan and the presence of a firm US commitment to the alliance.
Reputation

The variation observed in the cases above cannot be accounted for by shifts in US reputation for resolve. The US participated in several armed conflicts over the course of the period in time, the most significant including the operations in Iraq in 1991, Bosnia in 1995, Kosovo in 1998, Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq in 2003, and Libya in 2012. The US also notably refrained from becoming involved in armed conflict in 2013 in Syria. These decisions to become involved (or remain aloof) from armed conflict do not seem to be correlated with changes in US success in deterring China in the Senkakus.

Similarly, major shifts in the US’ reputation for upholding its international obligations and vows cannot account for variation in US success in reassuring China over the Senkakus. commitments to cooperation. The US effectively ended its participation in the Kyoto Protocol, withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and rejected the Rome Statute in the early years
of the Bush 43 administration. Despite these possible blows to the US’ reputation for honoring its promises abroad, reassurance toward China in the ECS was relatively successful.

*Figure 3: Events Affecting US Reputation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Gulf War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Bosnian Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Kosovo Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Kyoto Protocol Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Withdrawal from ABM Treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Rome Statute Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>War in Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Libyan Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Syrian Intervention Declined</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other Explanatory Variables*

Other potential causal variables – the balance of interests, strategic culture, offense-defense balance, and regime-type – remain constant across these cases and therefore cannot account for the variation in the dependent variable. The states’ key interests at stake in the ECS, cultures, and governmental types did not shift or evolve significantly during the post-Cold War period. The offense-defense balance has similarly not undergone fundamental shifts in the post-Cold War era. Most importantly, the states’ geographic positions remain unchanged. China has not broken out of the first island chain and consequently has not overcome the geographic barriers to its ability to project maritime power offensively. The US has not developed major new bases on the Asian continent that would strengthen its ability to wage offensive military operations on land against China. As such, the geographic impediments to easy offensive military operations remain intact and unaltered; the geography of the Asia-Pacific continues to
favor the defense. Overall, these variables cannot account for the shifts in US’ success in influencing China in the ECS.
CHAPTER V: THE TAIWAN STRAIT – NAVIGATING “DUAL DETERRENCE”

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the evolution of US strategy toward Japan with respect to Taiwan and assesses the consequences of this evolution for the US’ ability to deter and reassure China. It considers whether US coordination with Japan on this contentious issue has facilitated the US’ ability to prevent deterrence failure and escalatory spirals across the strait. In doing so, it finds that the US’ steady move toward greater coordination with Japan has amplified the US’ ability to secure Japan’s support and influence Beijing.

*Figure 4: Synopsis of Taiwan Cases*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Alliance Coordination</th>
<th>Japanese Support</th>
<th>Influence Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan 1991-1996</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan 1996-2001</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan 2001-2009</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*History*

Taiwan was a significant issue of contention in Sino-US-Japan relations long before the Cold War ended. The Qing Empire annexed Taiwan around the 17th century. In the mid-19th century, Taiwanese natives massacred the crews of an American ship, the *Rover*, and a Japanese ship, the *Mudan*, leading both states to send retaliatory military expeditions to the island. Following China’s defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, the Qing ceded Taiwan to
Japan as part of the Treaty of Shimonoseki.\textsuperscript{1} Japan’s surrender in the Second World War resulted in the return of the island to the control of Nationalist forces in 1945 in accordance with the Potsdam Declaration.\textsuperscript{2} In 1949, China’s long-standing Communist insurgency won a series of decisive victories and founded the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The Nationalist government and army withdrew to Taiwan and declared Taipei the wartime capital of the ROC. The US and Japan continued to recognize the ROC as the rightful government of China throughout much of the Cold War, with the US sending the Seventh Fleet to defend the Nationalists after the outbreak of the Korean War and developing a formal alliance with the ROC following the first Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1954.\textsuperscript{3}

During the late Cold War era, Taiwan remained a significant part of the Sino-American-Japanese triangle. In 1969, the US and Japan stated that “the maintenance of peace and security in the Taiwan area was… a most important factor for the security of Japan” in the Sato-Nixon communique.\textsuperscript{4} Shortly afterward, Nixon and Kissinger, during their talks aimed at rapprochement with China, guaranteed Mao and Zhou Enlai that the US would not allow Japan to resume control of Taiwan.\textsuperscript{5} Subsequently, the US and the PRC both committed to the “One

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\textsuperscript{3} Manthorpe, \textit{Forbidden Nation}.


China” principle in the 1972 Shanghai Communique – pledging to uphold the principle that there is only one China which includes Taiwan and the mainland – although the two sides remained divided on whether the ROC or the PRC was the legitimate government.\(^6\) Shortly afterward, encouraged by the US, Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei shifted recognition from the ROC to the PRC and reaffirmed the Potsdam Declaration in a joint Sino-Japanese communique.\(^7\) In 1979, Carter shifted recognition from the ROC to the PRC in a second Sino-US communique and in 1982 the Reagan administration issued a third joint Sino-US communique stating that the US intended to reduce its arms sales to Taiwan.\(^8\)

**Interests**

The US, Japan, and China each have significant interests at stake in Formosa. While the US now recognizes the PRC rather than the ROC and has abrogated its Mutual Defense Treaty, the Taiwan Relations Act maintains informal diplomatic relations between Taipei and the US.\(^9\) The Act also obliges the US “to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic


system, of the people on Taiwan.”¹⁰ Over the years, the US has been careful to keep the exact extent of its commitment to Taiwanese security relatively vague, following a policy of “strategic ambiguity” or “dual deterrence.”¹¹ But the US has clear reputational interests at stake. The loss of Taiwan would undoubtedly shake US allies’ faith in its power and commitment. The US also has a potential strategic interest in preventing China from controlling its “first island chain” to the detriment of US maritime hegemony (although this is subject to debate).¹² Finally, the democratic reforms headed up by ROC President Lee Teng-Hui have given the US a clear set of value-based interests - namely, protecting the economic and political liberties Taiwan’s citizenry now enjoys.

Japan, meanwhile, has a mix of strong strategic, economic, political, and historical interests at stake in Taiwan. First, Japan has strategic concerns about the control over sea lanes and proximity to Japanese military bases that control of Taiwan might provide for the PRC were it to reunify.¹³ Second, Japanese trade with and investment in Taiwan is substantial (although not nearly as much as trade and investment with the mainland).¹⁴ Third, numerous Japanese

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¹⁰ “Taiwan Relations Act.”


¹² Holmes, “Defend the First Island Chain.”


politicians have cultivated strong interpersonal ties with Taiwanese politicians – Lee Teng-Hui was close friends with numerous influential politicians, and ROC President Tsai Ing-Wen is a friend of Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. Finally, Japan has cultural ties with Taiwan dating back to its colonization of Taiwan in 1895.

China views the Taiwan problem as one of the utmost importance. On the one hand, Taiwan presents an “unsinkable aircraft carrier” for potentially unfriendly powers – including Taipei itself – in close proximity to China’s coast and key sea routes. The reacquisition of Taiwan would also go a long way toward allowing the PLAN to escape the so-called “first island chain” and access the West Pacific. On the other hand, the Taiwan question is deeply tied to China’s sovereignty and prestige. Beijing believes deeply that Taiwan is an indivisible part of Chinese territory and that China can only be restored to its former greatness after it completes national reunification. Perhaps more importantly, the Chinese people believe this and would be unlikely to continue to support China’s leadership if it gave up its claim to Taiwan.

US Influence Attempts and the Logic of Strategic Coordination

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16 Auer and Kotani, “Reaffirming the Taiwan Clause.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Recent Japan-Taiwan Relations.”


19 Bush, Uncharted Strait; Steinberg and O’Hanlon, Strategic Reassurance and Resolve.

As with the ECS, the US has attempted to balance reassurance and deterrence toward China with respect to the Taiwan Strait. First, the US aims to deter the mainland from using military coercion against Taiwan, whether to interfere in Taiwanese elections or to compel a shift in Taiwan’s approach to relations with the mainland. Second, the US aims to reassure the mainland that the US will not exploit Chinese restraint and push for Taiwan to declare formal independence. As part of this strategy, the US frequently seeks to restrain Taipei to prevent it from provoking the mainland and setting of an escalatory spiral in the strait.

The theory of strategic coordination suggests that US coordination with Japan in the Taiwan Strait should strengthen the US’ ability to deter and reassure China in this domain. The more closely the US consults with Japan on Taiwan affairs and the stronger the US commitment to Japanese security in general, the more confident Japan will be in its alliance with the US. A more confident Japan will be more receptive to working with the US efforts in support of deterrence and reassurance toward China in the Taiwan Strait.

When US consultation and commitment is weaker, Japan will be more anxious that the US will ignore Japan’s security concerns both in the Taiwan Strait and more broadly. A fearful Japan will be more inclined to hedge against US abandonment by either taking a harder line on cross-strait relations to demonstrate its resolve or adopting a more accommodative policy toward China. Either way, Japan will be less willing to support US influence attempts toward China. This, in turn, will render it more difficult for the US to succeed in reassuring and deterring China.

5.2 1991-1996: Independent Action

Background
The 1990s saw crises and challenges throughout much of the Asia-Pacific, and the Taiwan Strait was no exception. Early on, Taipei and Beijing seemed to be making progress toward rapprochement, negotiating the 1992 Consensus to solidify the One China Principle. Controversy flared, however, when President George H.W. Bush elected to sell Taipei F-16’s. More importantly, significant changes were underway in Taipei that would have far-reaching consequences for cross-strait stability. Beginning in 1994, Lee Teng-Hui sought to promote Taiwan’s status in the international arena by bolstering informal ties with a range of nations, most notably the US, Japan, and the Southeast Asian states. At the same time, he aimed to liberalize and democratize Taiwan’s political system, ending martial law and holding the island’s first direct democratic presidential elections in March 1996.

Lee’s diplomatic and political efforts generated a firestorm of controversy in cross-strait relations. In 1995, when President Bill Clinton approved Lee’s request for a visa to visit his alumnus, Cornell University, China downgraded ties and began a series of missile tests that touched off a lasting crisis. In an attempt to influence the 1996 elections, China dramatically escalated the crisis with a major wargame based on Strait 961 – a war plan for the invasion of

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Taiwan.25 China’s escalation prompted a major US response: the largest deployment of American naval might in the West Pacific since the Vietnam War, with both the USS Independence and the USS Nimitz conducting maneuvers near Taiwan. Although the crisis concluded peacefully after the US deployment and Lee’s reelection, it capped a strained period in cross-strait relations and alerted the US and Japan to the growing risks to regional stability posed by the Taiwan problem.

US Alliance Strategy: Limited Coordination

In the early 1990s, the US did not seek to coordinate closely with Japan. Instead, the US distanced itself from its partner, trying to maximize its freedom of action in handling the emerging regional challenges. Frustrated with Japan’s intransigence on trade and political turmoil, and uncertain about the role the alliance would play in the post-Cold War international system, the US was hesitant to rely heavily on the alliance to manage relations toward Taiwan and China. As such, US alliance strategy was characterized by limited commitment and consultation both in general and toward the Taiwan Strait.

The US’ commitments to Japan’s security interests in the Taiwan Strait were vague and limited. The 1960 Security Treaty had declared that the allies had “a common concern in the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East” and would “consult together… at the request of either Party, whenever the security of Japan or international peace and security in the Far East is threatened.”26 The US did not communicate to Japan that it would protect

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26 “Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States of America and Japan.”
Japanese shipping interests in the Taiwan Strait or address Japanese concerns about Chinese access to airbases in Taiwan should reunification appear imminent.

Perhaps more importantly, the US’ broader commitment to Japan’s security had been called into question during this period. Although the US made no effort to downgrade its existing obligations to Japan’s defense under the Security Treaty, its policy toward Japan included a “benign neglect” of security cooperation that weakened US commitment. A strong commitment involves more than a passive obligation to the defense of an ally; a committed ally must reinforce and update its obligations while sinking resources – time, attention, money, and material – into its alliance to make those obligations credible. The US emphasis on trade diplomacy at the expense of a strong security relationship with Japan called its commitment to Japan’s defense into question. Although the key US strategic initiatives – the Nye Initiative and the subsequent East Asian Strategic Report – began to reverse this trend in 1994 and 1995, it took the Clinton-Hashimoto summit in 1996 and the Defense Guideline revisions in 1997 for the US to signal a break with the past and a turn toward a firmer commitment to the alliance.

The US did not make a concerted attempt to consult with Japan on cross-strait policy or in general during this period of inter-allied tensions. Until the 1995/1996 crisis, neither ally saw Taiwan as an immediate security concern. Instead, trade disputes, proliferation on the Korean peninsula, and basing concerns dominated the allies’ policy discussions. The US’ Nye Report and the subsequent working-level discussions on strengthening the alliance began the process of

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27 In particular, the Clinton administration’s emphasis on the US-Japan trade imbalance and the 1995 rape incident in Okinawa dominated US-Japan relations. See: Green, Reluctant Realism; Funabashi, Alliance Adrift; James Boys, Clinton’s Grand Strategy: US Foreign Policy in a Post-Cold War World (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).
considering the role of the alliance in regional contingencies, but these discussions did not focus on Taiwan prior to the outbreak of the 1995/1996 crisis.²⁸

Even when the threat became clear, during the height of the 1995/1996 crisis, coordination between the allies was minimal. There were reportedly few policy consultations between the allies during the crisis.²⁹ The US’ provision of military information on the crisis to Japan was reportedly limited and delayed until Ambassador Mondale lobbied Secretary Perry to transmit more intelligence.³⁰ The “Link 11 System” designed to exchange information between the JSDF and US forces was not utilized.³¹ Kurt Campbell would later lament that “we spent almost no time talking about Taiwan and China” in no small part because both states were preoccupied by a dispute over US bases in Okinawa.³²

The US also did not consult closely with Japan on its show of force during the later stages of the crisis. Although the US notified the Japanese government of its deployment of the USS Independence, which was based at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, it did not engage

²⁸ See: Ezra Vogel and Paul Giarra, “Renegotiating the Security Relationship,” in Case Studies in Japanese Negotiating Behavior, Michael Blaker, Paul Giarra, and Ezra Vogel eds. (Washington DC: USIP Press, 2002), 114. Vogel and Giarra state that “these bilateral sessions never ventured beyond the North Korean scenario to investigate other regional challenges such as that posed by the standoff between Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China. The terms of the discussion were set very narrowly, and the alliance never took the chance to proceed further, conceptually or tangibly.”

²⁹ Funabashi writes: “During the China-Taiwan showdown in the middle of March 1996, Japan and the United States conducted virtually no policy talks.” Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 398. Also see: Reinhard Drifte, Japan’s Security Relations with China since 1989: From balancing to bandwagoning? (New York City: Routledge, 2002).

³⁰ Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 392.

³¹ Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 398.

³² Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 72.
in prior consultation or detailed discussions of the Independence’s mission in the ECS. More problematically, when the US dispatched the USS Nimitz, it caught Japan unawares – the US did not notify the Japanese government in advance of the operation.

Of course, there were reasons for this lack of coordination. Japan was experiencing domestic political turmoil, with administrations turning over rapidly and several non-LDP political parties and figures rising to the fore for the first time since the end of the Second World War. With leaders rapidly rising and falling from power and the increased power of parties and factions with a less than favorable view of the US-Japan alliance, the US was hesitant to place too much trust in the alliance. When the crisis broke out, the US wanted to act quickly and decisively and understood that finding common ground with Japan would have been time-consuming and politically challenging given Japanese domestic politics.

Japanese Policy

This limited coordination was accompanied by Japanese fears of abandonment and hedging behavior. Throughout the crisis, the US was unable to reassure Japan of its intentions. Uncertain of US commitment to Taiwan, Japan, and regional stability more broadly, Japan became intensely concerned about abandonment. Subsequently, Japan refrained from supporting

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33 Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 391-392.
34 Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 391-392.
35 Clinton would later express with exasperation about the challenge of working with seven different Japanese PMs while in office. This leadership turnover made cooperation with Japan more difficult – and less attractive particularly in the midst of US-Japan trade disputes. Bill Powell, “Hatoyama Failed as PM but Set Japan on a New Course,” Time Magazine, June 2, 2010.
US policy during the crisis, adopting an accommodative stance toward China’s attempt to interfere in the Taiwanese elections through military coercion.

Without regular consultation with Japan on policy toward Taiwan, Japan had only limited access to information on US plans and objectives during the crisis. This generated significant uncertainty in Japan: how the US would respond, how far was the US willing to escalate the dispute, what did the US expect of Japan, and how much of a role was Japan expected to play? Japan’s leadership agonized over being left in the dark. Throughout the crisis, Hashimoto reportedly could not sleep. Japan also issued a formal complaint to the US government over its failure to notify Japan prior to the USS Nimitz deployment.

This uncertainty was accompanied by fears of abandonment in Japan. Abandonment concerns were particularly prevalent – would the US secure Japanese interests in Taiwan, or abandon Taiwan and consequently Japanese maritime security interests? If Japan were to support US policy toward Taiwan and incur the wrath of China, would the US in turn support and defend Japan? Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro felt strategically isolated: he worried about the dangers of “Japan making rash moves or statements on its own… where at present no other country but Japan and the United States [had] expressed concern [about the crisis.]” Japanese strategists increasingly fretted about the risks that Chinese threats to Taiwan created for Japan,

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36 For a discussion of the confusion over Japan’s role in the US Taiwan policy, see: Makoto Kito, “Taiwan crisis raises question: What kind of alliance do Japan, U.S. have?” Yomiuri Shimbun, March 27, 1996.

37 Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 386.

38 Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 391-392.

39 Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 394.
reflecting a heightened concern that the US might be unable or unwilling to defend Japanese interests in Taiwan.\textsuperscript{40} Hashimoto went so far as to develop a unilateral emergency response plan to evacuate Japanese citizens from Taiwan, hedging against the possibility that the US might fail to deter forcible reunification.\textsuperscript{41} More broadly, Japanese policy elites worried that limited consultation heralded a broader strategic shift by the US that would lead to Japan’s eventual abandonment.\textsuperscript{42} Although the US show of force during the crisis helped assuage worries that the US might be pivoting away from Asia in the aftermath of the Cold War, Japanese policymakers were increasingly uncertain about the future of the alliance.

Amidst these fears of abandonment, Japan adopted a conciliatory stance toward China during the crisis, trying to remain on the sidelines while the US deterred China. Hashimoto avoided condemning China’s behavior and instead expressed concern and called on both sides to exercise restraint. As China intensified its testing in 1996 in the lead up to the election, all Hashimoto would only remark that “this is an unfortunate direction” while the chief government spokesman labeled the incident “regrettable.”\textsuperscript{43} One official expressed his apprehension about Japan being called on to support the US in a conflict over Taiwan: "We don't like to even talk about the possibility of military conflict… Japan is very afraid of China. This is a taboo topic."\textsuperscript{44}


\textsuperscript{41} Funabashi, \textit{Alliance Adrift}, 387.

\textsuperscript{42} Funabashi summarizes Hashimoto’s viewpoint, expressed to him in an interview, as the following: “America eulogizes its alliance with Japan so much but won’t give us any information when the chips are down. Can you call that an alliance?” Funabashi, \textit{Alliance Adrift}, 391.


\textsuperscript{44} “In Japan, Flap Adds to Anxiety About US Ties,” \textit{The Los Angeles Times}, March 11, 1996.
Japan’s dilemma was perhaps best captured by one revealing question and answer session at a Ministry of Foreign Affairs press conference in May of 1996:

**Question:** You have not followed the United States’ lead in terms of speaking out forcefully. Does that mean that you, to some extent, disagree with the U.S. tactic here?

**Answer:** I did not say that our position is different from that of the United States, or that we disagree with the United States on this. However, our position is much more vulnerable than that of the United States, so what we can do and say is very limited.45

Japan, uncertain about US intentions and commitment, seems to have felt too exposed and vulnerable to stand with its ally in opposing Chinese coercion in the Taiwan Strait.

The US adopted a stance designed to showcase its resolve while Japan took a more conciliatory stance. In the early crisis, the US issued a series of strong warnings to China, emphasizing that it was prepared to defend Taiwan and that China’s military coercion was provocative and unacceptable. But throughout the crisis, Hashimoto avoided condemning China’s behavior.46 Japan did not participate in any US displays of resolve – it did not even send the JSDF to Okinawa to monitor the exercises that were threatening nearby fishermen.47 The US deterrent would have been more powerful if Japan had signaled to China that it would work closely with the US in the event of a major contingency in Formosa, rather than remaining aloof.


46 Although the GOJ was alarmed by the crisis, as discussed below, they downplayed its severity in public and in relations with Beijing. Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 394.

47 Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 394.
Without support from Japan in such a contingency, US capabilities would be limited to air power based at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam and on US Carrier Strike Groups (CSG). With the inclusion of Japanese support – including permission to use US air assets stationed in Kadena Airbase and Misawa Airbase, naval forces in CFAY, access to Okinawa’s many other airfields and ports, and possible logistical support from the JSDF – the US deterrent threat would have been much stronger. US military experts generally agree that Japanese support – at least in terms of permission to access bases – is critical to winning a conflict over Taiwan and “cannot be taken for granted.” As such, the lack of clarity regarding Japan’s role in the 1995-1996 crisis over Taiwan did little to strengthen US deterrence.

Reassurance and Deterrence toward China

In 1995 and 1996, China engaged in significant escalatory behavior driven by both fears of US revisionism and underestimations of US resolve. US reassurance, in particular, struggled from 1991 to 1996. On the one hand, Chinese policymakers worried that the US’ receptivity to Lee’s vacation diplomacy – cumulating in the controversial granting of a visa to Lee for a visit to

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48 Eric Heginbotham, Michael Nixon, Forrest Morgan, Jacob Heim, Jeff Hagen, Sheng Tao Li, Jeffrey Engstrom, Martin Libicki, Paul DeLuca, David Shaplak, David Frelinger, Burgess Laird, Kyle Brady, Lyle Morris. The US-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996-2017 (RAND: 2015). South Korea would likely have been unwilling to allow the US to use airpower stationed in its territory for a Taiwan contingency. It remains unlikely to provide this kind of support today


his alumnus, Cornell – might encourage Taiwanese intransigence or even formal independence despite China’s recent overtures to the Lee administration. These anxieties are highlighted in China’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Qian Qichen’s memoirs, where he argues that the US indulgence of Lee “encouraged the Taiwan authorities to pursue their policy of “two Chinas” and “One China, One Taiwan”; and reinforced the arrogance of the Taiwan authorities.” On the other hand, China worried that the US decision to grant Lee a visa was a probe of China’s resolve – an incremental revision designed to explore whether China would acquiesce or resist challenges to the cross-strait status quo. As Qian put it, “the American government wanted to test China’s tolerance regarding Taiwan.”

These concerns drove China to engage in significant military escalation in the summer of 1995. China shocked the region by pulling its ambassador from the US and initiating a series of provocative military exercises in the Taiwan Strait. The Chinese military conducted both maritime maneuvers and live-fire missile tests in close proximity to Taiwan, first in July and again in August. Air traffic and commercial fishing were interrupted and Taiwan’s stock market and currency dropped considerably. The resulting crisis destabilized cross-strait relations, created a risk of accidental conflict, and led to a significant setback in US-China, Sino-Japanese, and cross-strait relations.

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51 Ross, “The 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Confrontation.”
53 Qian, Ten Episodes, 245.
54 Mann, About Face, 328-329.
It is important to note, however, that this failure of reassurance cannot be attributed to the limited support Japan offered for US policy toward Taiwan. Japan itself did little to precipitate or escalate the crisis and did not undercut subsequent US efforts to reassure China and undo the damage caused by Lee’s visit. That said, Japan also did little to contribute to US reassurances toward China (as it would in 1996-2001 and 2001-2008).

After the outbreak of the crisis, China also seems to have doubted the US’ willingness to bear the costs required to confront China over Taiwan.\footnote{Several Chinese leaders allegedly claimed in a closed door conversation that the US would not intervene even if conflict broke out, saying “we’ve watched you in Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia, and you don’t have the will.” Barton Gellman, “US and China nearly came to blows in ’96,” \textit{The Washington Post}, June 21, 1998.} Subsequently, China escalated in what seems to have been an attempt to influence the Taiwanese elections and coerce Taipei into taking a conciliatory approach to cross-strait relations.\footnote{“Chinese Exercise Strait 961: 8-25 March 1996,” Office of Naval Intelligence, accessed March 12, 2017, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB19/docs/doc14.pdf.} In the fall and winter of 1995, China conducted larger and more provocative military tests in the lead up to Taiwan’s parliamentary and presidential elections. In November, China staged a major exercise in Fujian across the Taiwan Strait, prompting such alarm in the US that it began preparing contingency plans for a military engagement in the Strait. In December, exercises continued and a Chinese official even suggested privately that China was ready for a nuclear war with the US over Taiwan – a threat that constituted a significant escalation in and of itself. At the peak of the crisis in the spring of 1996, China conducted a major wargame based on Strait 961 – a war plan for the invasion of Taiwan.\footnote{“Chinese Exercise Strait 961: 8-25 March 1996,” Office of Naval Intelligence, accessed March 12, 2017, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB19/docs/doc14.pdf. Mann, \textit{About Face}, 335. This involved the massing of 150,000 Chinese troops in Fujian and further missile
tests that came still closer to targets in Taiwan. As Secretary of State Christopher argues, the crisis created a situation in which “a simple miscalculation or misstep could lead to unintended war.”

Overall, deterrence and reassurance toward China over Taiwan during this time were less than desirable. Although prudent US statecraft kept the crisis from escalating further in 1996, demonstrated US resolve to deter Chinese coercion of Taiwan, and brought the crisis to a close, the onset and early escalation of the crisis indicated deficiencies within the US’ regional strategy – including its alliance policy toward Japan.

5.3 1996-2001: Areas Surrounding Japan

**Background**

The late Clinton administration saw several major new developments in cross-strait relations. Following his reelection, Lee initially took a less confrontational approach to Taiwanese autonomy and toned down his rhetoric. But in 1999, Lee incurred the mainland’s wrath by claiming cross-strait relations constituted a special state-to-state relationship, suggesting that Taiwan constituted a sovereign state separate from the mainland. The statement prompted condemnation and a show of force from the mainland. The mainland exercised far

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58 Mann, *About Face*, 335.


more restraint than in the 1995-1996 crisis, however, and tensions did not escalate as they had previously. The incident did, however, lead the Clinton administration to deploy CSGs nearby and approve a large arms sale to Taipei.

Shortly afterward, in 2000, opposition candidate Chen Shui Bian was elected president on a platform that was even more assertive with respect to Taiwanese autonomy. Nevertheless, while Chen refused to affirm the 1992 Consensus he did not immediately press to revise the cross-strait status quo significantly. Instead, Chen issued the “Four Noes and One Without” committing to not declare independence, change the name of the country, adopt Lee’s “state-to-state” position, or promote a referendum on independence or reunification, and stating that he would maintain the National Unification Council; essentially, a pledge to maintain the status quo. Beijing’s response was “relatively muted” and relations remained stable.

US Alliance Strategy: Moderate Coordination

Chastened by the alliance’s travails during the Taiwan Strait crisis, the US placed a stronger emphasis on coordination with Japan both in general and with respect to Taiwan. The US amplified its coordination with Japan by increasing its commitment and consultation under the auspices of the alliance. Despite these dramatic improvements, however, the US did not commit fully to strategic coordination – gaps remained in US coordination with Japan toward

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63 Bush, Uncharted Strait, 185-186.

Taiwan, particularly with respect to the “Three Noes” and the applicability of the new defense guidelines.

Perhaps most importantly, the US strengthened its overall commitment to Japan and to regional stability. The US took full advantage of Clinton’s 1996 meeting with Hashimoto and the 1997 Defense Guideline revisions to signal its resolve to defend Japan and to protect Japanese interests in the surrounding region. In the 1996 Joint Statement, Clinton and Hashimoto clarified and reinforced their mutual commitment:

*The Prime Minister and the President underscored the importance of promoting stability in this region and dealing with the security challenges facing both countries. In this regard, the Prime Minister and the President reiterated the significant value of the Alliance between Japan and the United States. They reaffirmed that the Japan-U.S. security relationship, based on the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America, remains the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives, and for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region as we enter the twenty-first century.*

The US also pursued greater consultation with Japan following the Taiwan Strait Crisis. During the 1996 meeting between Hashimoto and Clinton, the US took its first steps toward tighter consultation with Japan on cross-strait challenges. Clinton stated after their meeting that

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“we discussed Taiwan and China extensively, as well as the recent tension in the Strait.” The allies’ Joint Statement on the Defense Guideline Review also put a new emphasis on consultation. In its first point on bilateral cooperation, the statement declared that the allies would “further enhance the exchange of information and views on the international situation, in particular the Asia-Pacific region” and “consult closely on defense policies and military postures.”

The revised Defense Guidelines also institutionalized closer alliance cooperation on challenges in “areas surrounding Japan.” Broadly speaking, the guidelines instituted a new bilateral coordination mechanism and reorganized the defense consultative committee to maximize its utility. Additionally, the US pledged to share intelligence on threats to regional stability: “when a situation in areas surrounding Japan is anticipated, the two Governments will intensify information and intelligence sharing and policy consultations, including efforts to reach a common assessment of the situation.” The US made effective use of consultations to discuss cross-strait relations when tensions rose in 1999 and 2000; US Secretary of Defense William Cohen and Japan Defense Agency (JDA) Director General Kawara Riki discussed the Taiwanese elections in their 2000 Defense Summit.

The US pledged to work more closely with Japan in support of regional stability. The Joint Statement announced that the alliance “agreed on the necessity to promote bilateral policy coordination, including studies on bilateral cooperation in dealing with situations that may

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emerge in the areas surrounding Japan and which will have an important influence on the peace and security of Japan.” Similarly, in the revised Defense Guidelines, the allies stated that, in a contingency in an area surrounding Japan, the two governments would “reach a common assessment of the state of each situation” which would then allow them to “effectively coordinate their activities.” Although the statement did not specify the Taiwan Strait as one of these areas, it implied that the Taiwan Straits could be the target of closer alliance cooperation as part of the upgraded alliance.

Still, gaps in coordination efforts remained problematic. Both allies saw the immediate need to consult with China to reassure it that the “areas” provision was not an attempt to target China for containment or to delay reunification. But the US did not coordinate the allies’ efforts at reassurance. When the allies briefed China, they did so separately. The US also did not coordinate with Japan on its “Three Noes” policy. This policy was first articulated by Clinton privately during the 1995/1996 crisis and was reiterated privately several times by Clinton, Perry, and Secretary of State Madeline Albright in communications with China. In 1998, Clinton publicly reiterated the policy in Shanghai. The “Three Noes” clarified that the US would not support Taiwanese independence, the “Two China’s” concept, and any Taiwanese participation

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71 Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 399.

in intergovernmental organizations for states.\(^\text{73}\) While the “Three Noes” were an excellent signal of US restraint toward the Taiwan question, Clinton did not visit or consult with Japan before or after his trip to Shanghai to reiterate this policy.\(^\text{74}\)

\textit{Japanese Policy}

Mixed levels of coordination in the US strategy toward Japan was accompanied by mixed results in terms of Japan’s support for US policy. The US was better able to alleviate Japanese fears of abandonment through consultation and commitment, giving Japan the confidence to stand more firmly with the US in opposing provocations originating from both sides of the strait. Nonetheless, there were still areas where coordination was relatively limited, Japan’s concerns about abandonment remained problematic, and the allies’ policies diverged.

After the Hashimoto-Clinton talks, the ACSA, and the defense guideline revisions, Japan was better informed of the US’ position on the Taiwan Strait and its expectations for Japan in the event of a Taiwan contingency. Japanese defense intellectuals were increasingly confident that the US would not remain passive if cross-strait tensions escalated; in 2000, for instance, one policy scholar emphasized that “the Japan-U.S. security treaty in particular remains the most credible cornerstone of security and deterrence in Asia” committed to maintaining the “status quo” which included the security “international waterways” through the Taiwan Strait.\(^\text{75}\) Yukio


\(^{75}\) “Pacific triangle has vital role in new millennium,” \textit{The Daily Yomiuri}, May 29, 2000.
Okamoto, a special advisor to Hashimoto, argued that the alliance upgrade “antagonizes no one” and encouraged “stability.”

Japan’s increased confidence and certainty was accompanied by increased support for the US in the Taiwan Strait. Clinton and Hashimoto’s 1996 Joint Statement on the Defense Guideline Review, coming shortly after the de-escalation of the Taiwan Strait crisis, contained an important first iteration of the allies’ new joint stance on the Taiwan problem. It included a veiled commitment to opposing forcible changes to the regional status quo coupled with a reassurance targeted at the mainland:

“The two leaders stressed the importance of peaceful resolution of problems in the region. They emphasized that it is extremely important for the stability and prosperity of the region that China play a positive and constructive role, and, in this context, stressed the interest of both countries in furthering cooperation with China.”76

Clinton laid out this position as it applied to Taiwan more clearly in his remarks after the Joint Statement. There was no mistaking the symbolic significance of Clinton’s speech aboard the USS Independence in Yokosuka touting the new coordination efforts. Clinton pointed out that the US carrier and a Japanese cruiser were “berthed side by side” and that US and Japanese troops were “work[ing] shoulder to shoulder, day in and day out.” He also argued that the USS Independence had “helped calm a rising storm” in the Taiwan Strait. The alliance was signaling that it would promote regional stability – including in the contentious waters around Formosa.

76 “Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security.”
The allies agreed that China and Taiwan needed to resolve their disputes peacefully, that this was an issue of common concern for the allies, and that the renewed alliance would help preserve peace and stability in this context.

“It is obvious that our partnership is designed to try to preserve the peace for all peoples in the region. I believe we can both agree that, while the US observes the so-called one China policy, we also observe the other aspects of the agreement we made many years ago, which include a commitment on the part of both parties to resolve all their differences in a peaceable manner. And we have encouraged them to pursue that. Therefore, we were concerned about those actions in the Taiwan Strait.”

The allies reiterated this stance repeatedly in private and public in 1999 and 2000, stressing that both agreed that the dispute needed to be solved peacefully through agreement, rather than unilaterally or through force.

Japanese and US officials also developed and had more success in maintaining a unified stance on the potential direct involvement of the allies in a Taiwan contingency. Just prior to the Joint Statement, the two allies concluded a critical Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) that helped spell out how Japan would provide logistical support for US forces during both peace and conflict, a critical step toward strengthening Japan’s commitment to allied operations. The new Defense Guidelines in 1997 further specified how the roles each ally would

77 Kan, *China/Taiwan – Key Statements.*
play in a coordinated response to a security threat in “areas surrounding Japan.” They clarified that “Japan will provide rear area support,” “additional facilities and areas,” and “activities such as intelligence gathering, surveillance, and minesweeping.” Japan further strengthened its commitment in 1999 with the passage of new defense legislation in Japan which authorized the government to carry out its new obligations.

The alliance stressed that it would not allow a situation to develop in the region that posed a threat to Japanese security – the US would intervene militarily if necessary, and Japan would provide rear-areas support. Japanese officials frequently emphasized this point – albeit without emphasizing that the Taiwan Strait was one area where a situation might arise that threatened Japanese security. Officials pointed out that “areas surrounding Japan” was a situational rather than geographic concept and – tellingly – generally refused to state that it excluded Taiwan, despite pressure from China. Some Japanese policymakers went so far as to include Taiwan explicitly in their conceptualization of “areas.” Indeed, Japan’s chief government spokesman claimed that Japan would support US military operations in the Taiwan


81 Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift*, 399-401. Soeya, “Taiwan in Japan’s Security Considerations.”
Strait should they prove necessary. Former government officials and security analysts in Japan echoed the view that the guidelines enabled Japan to align its policy with the US on Taiwan.

When the allies stood together on cross-strait policy, the strength of their deterrent was amplified considerably. First, the likelihood of Japanese permission for the US to use its bases in Japan (including Kadena airbase in Okinawa, critical to any potential contest over Taiwan) and Japanese bases and facilities (including airfields in Naga necessary for a major increase in local air capabilities) in the event of a conflict increased. Second, it increased the chances that the increasingly powerful JSDF would play a more active role in both crises and potential conflicts, sharing the burden and expanding the US’ capabilities. Throughout the late 1990s, this became particularly critical, given the unfavorable shifts in the cross-strait balance, including China’s quickening acquisition of asymmetric capabilities that would hamper US access to Taiwan.

More Japanese support for US policy toward China was also evident during the late 1990s. Defense scholar Michael Chase states that “private meetings took place among representatives from the United States, Taiwan, and Japan in which delicate messages were communicated to Taiwan” suggesting that the allies were working more closely together on

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84 For a discussion of the need for access, see: Heginbotham et al., *The US-China Military Scorecard*.

85 Heginbotham et al., *The US-China Military Scorecard*. 
signals to restrain Taipei.\textsuperscript{86} Alliance signaling was similarly unified during the mini-crisis in 1999 when Lee declared the existence of a “special state-to-state relationship” between Taiwan and the mainland. During the incident, both allies adopted the same stance: they reiterated their adherence to the “One China” policy to restrain Lee and reassure China. The two countries “effectively lined up against Taipei.”\textsuperscript{87} Diplomats throughout the region noted this synchronized show of restraint.\textsuperscript{88}

In the areas where the US refrained from coordinating with Japan – particularly with respect to the Three Noes – Japan remained less confident and certain with respect to US policy. Although Clinton explained that the Noes were not a break in US policy, some Japanese worried that the US was trading Taipei for Beijing, and in doing so was trading away Tokyo’s interests in Taipei and accommodating Beijing’s interests in Taipei.\textsuperscript{89} These concerns were only intensified by the fact that Clinton did not stop in Japan on his trip to the region – literally “passing” Japan – and announced that the US would seek a strategic partnership with China, raising fears in Japan that the alliance was being replaced by a Sino-US condominium as the lynchpin of regional security.\textsuperscript{90}


\textsuperscript{87} “Taipei offers talks to calm Beijing’s rage,” The Vancouver Sun, July 14, 1999.

\textsuperscript{88} “Signs of crisis being contained: diplomats,” Business Times, July 19, 1999


\textsuperscript{90} Curtis, “US Policy Toward Japan.”
Subsequently, Japan took a notably different stance on the Three Noes, refusing to follow the US lead. Japan refused to affirm the US’ “Three Noes” in a meeting with Jiang in Tokyo shortly after Clinton’s visit in 1998.  

When Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo visited Beijing in 1999, he again rejected China’s request that Japan support the “Three Noes.”

Other gaps continued to prove problematic in Japan’s support for US policy as well. Despite the firm stance taken by several officials and the nuanced, ambiguous stance taken by others, some Japanese officials publicly rejected the idea of US-Japan cooperation to secure peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait in outreach to China. One prominent Japanese lawmaker cast doubt on whether Japan would support US efforts in the Taiwan Strait, claiming instead that "our position is to avoid such a decision on such a sensitive issue.” In response to Chinese criticisms, several Japanese politicians denied that the Taiwan Strait was covered by the arrangement. In the most widely publicized incident, the LDP General Secretary Kato Koichi reportedly denied that Taiwan fell under the “areas” concept in discussions with the Chinese. The government walked back these denials, but again, in 1997, the director general of the JDA claimed that “no need to prepare for a Taiwan crisis in actual joint planning.”

It is also important to note that limits remained in the allies’ military policies toward the Strait. The US and Japan did not capitalize on their increased coordination to strengthen the US

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91 Green, *Reluctant Realism*, 97.


93 Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift*.

show of force in response to the 1999 incident. While the US deployed two CSG’s for passing exercises (PASSEX) in the South China Sea, Japan played no part in these exercises.

*Deterrence and Reassurance toward China*

During this period, Sino-Allied relations were more stable than they had been; although China engaged in some escalatory behavior, it was far more constrained than in 1995 and early 1996. China clearly perceived the amplified effect closer coordination had on the US-Japan alliance ability to deter it from using force to achieve reunification; the prospect of the alliance’s involvement in a Taiwan conflict became a regular concern in Chinese strategic debates.  

Perhaps most clearly, at the height of the 1999 feud, Chinese officials at their retreat in Beidaihe claimed they had considered, among other factors, “whether the US would intervene should a war break out, and whether Japan would activate its bilateral defense pact.”

Given that the ultimate conclusion of the leaders that they needed “to give peace a chance” stressing for the first time publicly that Beijing would “try its utmost to achieve reunification peacefully,” the ambiguous deterrent seems to have had its intended effect.

These perceptions likely influenced China’s behavior. From the spring of 1996 until Lee’s statement in July 1999, China engaged in no significant military coercion of the island despite Lee’s reelection. In the summer and fall of 1999, Chinese rhetoric grew bellicose but its

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97 Cheong, “Cross-strait dispute.”
actions were far more restrained than in 1996. It tested a long-range, nuclear-capable missile (within the mainland), mobilized a militia in Fujian, conducted a small set of exercises, increased air sorties in the strait, and held a major military parade. As Secretary of Defense Cohen pointed out at the time, “in the past they have turned to firing missiles. This time, they're firing words, a much better situation, certainly.” Tensions remained controlled and low-key. China was also much less openly aggressive in its attempt to influence the 2000 Taiwanese elections. While Beijing issued a provocative white paper and the usual slew of fiery rhetoric, it did not repeat the flagrant military coercion it had attempted in 1996.

Japan’s support also improved reassurance efforts and helped avoid a significant escalatory spiral during the 1999 mini-crisis provoked by Lee. The allies both rejected Lee’s attempt to alter the status quo and reassured China of their commitment to the One China policy. Contemporary analysts “attribute[d] the current more cool-headed reaction to the fact that strategic nations such as the US and Japan had been quick to reassure Beijing that they would abide by the "one China" policy despite the comments by Taipei.” Beijing itself claimed that one of the critical factors it considered during this incident was whether or not the US and Japan would support Taiwanese independence, and that their assessment contributed to their decision to de-escalate and pursue peace. Not long after combined US-Japan responses, Lee backed

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102 Cheong, “Cross-strait dispute.”
away from the remarks, arguing that his policy toward the mainland (including the 1992 consensus) had not changed.\(^\text{103}\)

Nonetheless, the gaps in US-Japan cooperation on Taiwan remained problematic. China, already inclined to be suspicious of Japan’s motives in Taiwan, expressed growing alarm and anger when Japan twice explicitly refused to back its ally’s stance on Taiwan.\(^\text{104}\) Following Japan’s refusals, China increasingly voiced concern that the US was emboldening Japan to expand its influence in the region – including in its former colony, Taiwan. This undercut broader US attempts to reassure China that the alliance upgrades were not designed to target China, perpetuate Taiwanese autonomy, or encourage Taiwanese independence. Indeed, from 1996-2000 China’s perception of the US-Japan alliance moved from ambivalence toward concern.

This is not to say that US and Japanese reassurances were completely unsuccessful. Some Chinese leaders appreciated that the guidelines, while undesirable, were not an effort to revise the status quo or contain China; as one Chinese policy advisor put it grudgingly, “although the “sprinklers” [a metaphor for the guidelines] were designed to be used in Japan, they now cover neighboring countries. That is better than setting fires in the region. But the feelings of the countries arbitrarily sprinkled with water must be taken into account” (emphasis added).\(^\text{105}\)


\(^{105}\) “New alliances will help Asia prosper,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 9, 1998.
Nevertheless, growing concerns in China that the alliance guidelines were designed to “start fires” indicates that stronger joint efforts at reassurance might have been required.

Overall, the US had more success in deterring and reassuring China over Taiwan from 1996-2001. Despite the reelection of Lee in 1996 and Chen in 2000, the US was more successful in restraining Taipei, reassuring Beijing that it would not support independence, and deterring Beijing from significantly escalating tensions. Although many factors, influenced these outcomes, the upgraded US-Japan alliance seems to have played a constructive role in advancing US interests. Nevertheless, challenges continued to plague cross-strait relations. Whether to overcome the stronger US-Japan deterrent or to hedge against US-Japan revisionism, in the late 1990’s China began a more aggressive arms build-up across the Taiwan Strait – including developing ballistic missiles that could be used to deter Japan from supporting US intervention in the strait.

5.4 2001-2008: The Common Strategic Objectives

Background

The 2000 elections in Taiwan issued in a new era of heightened tensions. Taiwan’s new President, Chen Shui-bian, quickly deviated from his “Four Noes and One Without” pledge to maintain the status quo in cross-strait policy. In 2001, meanwhile newly elected US President George W. Bush contemplated selling more advanced weaponry to Taipei, raising anxieties in
Beijing. Beijin pointedly expanded the scope of its annual exercises in 2001 and simulated an amphibious attack and combat against a carrier. These exercises prompted a return of US CSGs to the South China Sea in a tit-for-tat response. By 2003, Chen was contemplating a referendum on independence and relations were growing increasingly strained, although still not reaching the level of the 1995-1996 crisis.

Tensions remained high throughout 2004 and 2005 as Beijing developed an anti-secession law and intruded into Japanese waters with a nuclear sub while the US planned arms sales to Taipei. But the spat subsided in 2006 as China switched its approach to addressing cross-strait relations, taking a more conciliatory tone. By 2008, the two sides had made progress toward a more stable relationship. The election of President Ma Ying-Jeou in 2008, the head of the pro-China Kuomintang party, further cemented the stability of the status quo.

US Alliance Strategy: Strong Coordination

While the heightened coordination begun under the Clinton administration helped keep relations from deteriorating into a full-blown crisis reminiscent of the 1995-1996 crisis, rising hostility on both sides of the strait encouraged the allies to deepen their cooperation during the early 2000s. Closer coordination began to take shape in 2001 as President Bush took office looking to reinforce the previous administration’s efforts to strengthen the US-Japan alliance. The US maintained its upgraded commitment toward Japan’s security in general and regional stability more broadly but went further in strengthening consultation with Japan on cross-strait concerns.

106 “White House announces arms sales to Taiwan,” CNN, April 24, 2001.
The US maintained its commitment to the alliance and regional stability more broadly. Following in the footsteps of the Clinton administration, the new administration reaffirmed its commitments to Japan and the preservation of security in the Asia-Pacific. In an early meeting with between Bush and Japan’s new Prime Minister Koizumi in 2001 at the symbolically important Camp David “the President and Prime Minister reaffirmed that the U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region.”

The US pursued closer consultation on cross-strait relations with Japan. Early on, in a meeting with Japan’s Foreign Minister Kono Taro, US Secretary of State Colin Powell stressed that the allies needed to conduct “close talks” on the Taiwan Strait. Later in the year, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Japanese Defense Agency Chief Nakatani Gen discussed concerns over China’s military build-up across the Taiwan Strait – particularly its short-range ballistic missiles. In 2002, the allies began the Defense Policy Review Initiative as part of the Bush administration’s broader Global Posture Review, an initiative that focused on more closely coordinated regional strategy – including in the Taiwan Strait.

In 2005, their joint statement committed to “coordinate policies” toward the Taiwan Strait. The US and Japan quickly put this into practice. Shortly after the joint statement, the allies allegedly began working more closely on possible military contingencies in the Taiwan Strait.

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going beyond discussion and consultation and moving into the realm of joint planning.\textsuperscript{111} In the lead up to the 2005 Joint Statement, the allies consulted intensively on cross-strait affairs – particularly the threat to Taiwan presented in China’s proposed anti-secession law and the risks this created for allied interests. The 2005 Joint Statement reflected this stronger focus on coordination, committing the allies to “regular consultations” on their policy toward the Taiwan Strait. Finally, the US and Japan upgraded a regular, biannual strategic dialogue on alliance strategy – particularly as it pertained China’s rise and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait – from the vice-ministerial level to the ministerial level.\textsuperscript{112}

\textit{Japanese Policy}

The US appears to have been relatively successful in reassuring Japan that the alliance provided a productive way for Japan to manage its concerns in the Taiwan Strait. One policy academic argued that, in the case of Taiwan, “The more Japan and the United States collaborate, the less likely the chance for confrontation with China” (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{113} This increased confidence reduced Japan’s incentives to hedge and distance itself from the alliance and likely contributed to its decision to issue stronger signals toward Beijing and Taipei.

Throughout this period, Japan’s concerns of abandonment were relatively low. There is little evidence that Koizumi or his top advisors feared that the US would jettison Taiwan or Japanese interests in Taiwan or that US policy toward Taiwan reflected a limited commitment to


Japan’s defense. Indeed, Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura expressed sureness in the resolve of the US, referring confidently to the US’ “resolute but prudent determination to defend Taiwan.”

This greater confidence was accompanied by a more unified policy. With tensions mounting in the strait amid Chen’s attempted referendum in 2004 and Beijing’s preparation of an anti-secession law to intimidate Taipei, the allies adopted and maintained a stronger, clearer, and more unified front in deterrence and reassurance toward China. After four years of consultation, the allies formalized the alliance stance articulated by Clinton in 1996: supporting the peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues (and tacitly the use of military coercion to settle cross-strait disputes) and a responsible (rather than aggressive) regional role for China. They also strengthened their expression of concern in response to China’s buildup of ballistic missiles across the Taiwan Strait. These policies were most clearly stated in the 2005 SCC Joint Statement, where the allies declared that they would pursue “common strategic objectives” (CSO) that included:

- “Develop a cooperative relationship with China, welcoming the country to play a responsible and constructive role regionally as well as globally.
- Encourage the peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait through dialogue.

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- Encourage China to improve transparency of its military affairs.”

Allied policymakers sent stronger signals than in the past. Then LDP Secretary General Abe Shinzo made the alliance stance clear: “It would be wrong for us to send a signal to China that the United States and Japan will watch and tolerate China’s military invasion of Taiwan… if the situation surrounding Japan threatens our security, Japan can provide US force with support.” Another senior Japanese official claimed that “If [China] takes aggressive action [in the Taiwan Strait], Japan cannot just stand by and watch.”

In 2003, Japan passed several emergency laws building on the 1999 legislation to support the upgraded Defense Guidelines – including Japan’s ability to support US involvement in “areas surrounding Japan.” The allies also determined which ports and facilities in Japan would be made available for US use in the event of a regional contingency in Korea or Taiwan. Furthermore, they worked to develop the precise “division of security roles” in emergency contingencies, including Taiwan, increasing the deterrent threat facing Beijing should it engage in an unprovoked attack on Taipei. Japan’s 2004 National Defense Program Guidelines and

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117 Faiola, “Japan to Join US Policy.”


Mid-Term Defense Plan also strengthened Japan’s ability to participate in US contingency operations in the region – including in the Taiwan Strait.

The allies also adopted a unified and forceful stance to restrain Chen Shui-bian. Early on, in 2003, the greater coordination on Taiwan paid off when both allies issued complementary messages of restraint to Taipei while reiterating their support for the status quo.121 In 2005, the allies similarly used their joint statement to send signals of restraint. Notably, the statement pledged greater cooperation with China and tacitly committed to preventing Taipei from unilaterally altering the status quo and provoking a conflict with Beijing. Finally, in 2007, the allies again issued parallel reassurances to China and rebukes to Chen during Chen’s campaign to change the Taiwanese constitution and join the UN.122

Deterrence and Reassurance toward China

Chinese escalation was far more constrained from 2001-2008, despite the tension created by Chen’s politics. While tensions mounted from 2001-2005, they never escalated to the level of the 1995-1996 crisis, and by 2006, cross-strait tensions had begun to ease considerably.

China clearly recognized and appreciated the amplified deterrent presented by the 2005 allied statement. The People’s Daily, one of the mouthpieces of the party, stated that “the present statement is equal to saying that the Japanese government will join hands with US to cope with


122 “Japan’s Fukuda joins chorus opposing Taiwan referendum,” Reuters, December 9, 2007.
the Taiwan Straits situation militarily.” They claimed that the implications for US power were significant: “the US military disposition in…East Asia will be strengthened for developing preventive measures pointing at the issue of Taiwan.”

The US-Japan alliance’s unified stance toward Chen also strengthened reassurance efforts toward Beijing, helping to alleviate Chinese concerns about Taiwanese independence and paving the way for cross-strait rapprochement. Indeed, China expressed appreciation for the US efforts to restrain Chen in 2003. The emerging consensus was that the US and Japan were not interested in revising the status quo. Even those critical of the alliance’s growing involvement in cross-strait affairs acknowledged that “If a Taiwan Strait war is triggered by a Taiwan unilateral declaration of independence, it is believed that US intervention will be rather limited, while Japan will keep out.”

Even after the 2005 guidelines, rhetorical hyperbole partially obscured a more measured reaction among many Chinese foreign policy elites. The initial response was alarmed and offended. One official worried “The US-Japan joint statement will make pro-independence forces in Taiwan more reckless…” Nevertheless, Chinese policy elites seem to have appreciated the restraint undergirding the US-Japan signal. A leading scholar at the government-

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124 “Sino-Japanese relations under the “new US-Japan Security Alliance.””


run Taiwan Relations Institute recognized that the statement was largely in response to China’s work on its proposed anti-secession law in 2004, arguing that “It is an old practice that the United States exerts pressure against both sides of the Straits. This time they want to exert pressure against China by revising the Japan-US defensive cooperation guideline.” A defense intellectual at a Chinese military think tank went so far as to argue that “the common strategic goal for the United States and Japan tends to restrain China and also Taiwan. Maintaining the status quo in the Taiwan Strait and avoiding conflict remains in the common interest of the United States and Japan.”

China’s behavior reflected its appreciation for the amplified deterrent and restraining effects of the US-Japan alliance. It refrained from escalating its disputes with Taipei to the level of 1995-1996 throughout this era. Its military exercises in 2001 protesting US arms sales to Taipei were relatively restrained. Even at the height of antagonism across the strait, China’s reactions were verbal (condemnations and angry rhetoric) and legal (the anti-secession law), not military – as in 1999, China was using words, rather than missiles, to express its discontent. While these were serious developments, they did not lead US or Japanese officials to fear that there was an imminent danger of conflict across the strait.

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129 Zhang Tuosheng, China Foundation for International Strategic Studies, quoted in: Jiang Zhaoyong and Ma Haoliang, “Calmly Deal with Disputes and Seek Conciliation with Great Foresight,” *Ta Kung Pao*, August 2, 2005. He went on to argue that China “should also avoid an unrealistic exaggeration of Japan's negative influence on the Taiwan issue. This will not help improve Sino-Japan relations, nor will it help in making an accurate assessment of the situation in the Taiwan Strait.”
In fact, cross-strait relations began to ease in the mid-2000s, in part due to more restraint in both Taipei and Beijing. After the anti-secession law passed in 2005, Beijing began adopting a softer approach. Chinese President Hu Jintao issued his “four points” on Taiwan concurrently with the anti-secession law, emphasizing that China would favor measures to induce – rather than coerce – Taiwan into improving cross-strait ties. China also invited an opposition party delegation from Taiwan shortly afterward and expressing a willingness to discuss strengthening cross-strait ties.\footnote{As Richard Bush put it, “Japan-China tensions over Taiwan… relaxed somewhat [in 2005], even as they increased concerning the East China Sea. PRC president Hu Jintao made overtures to the leaders of the island’s opposition parties and took other initiatives that improved China’s image after the setback caused by the anti-secession law.” Bush, The Perils of Proximity, 38.}

5.5 Post-2008: Stability Overdetermined

Following the election of Ma Ying-jeou as President of Taiwan in 2008, cross-strait relations have remained relatively stable. Even the recent election of ROC President Tsai Ing-wen, a Democratic Progressive Party candidate like Chen, has not fundamentally disturbed peaceful cross-strait relations. The US and Japan have maintained a relatively significant level of coordination on cross-strait concerns, continuing to list peace in the strait as a CSO in SCC statements. But the absence of stability is no doubt in large part due to the perceptions and conduct of Beijing and Taipei; there have been few opportunities to test whether the US-Japan alliance itself has made a positive (or negative) contribution to cross-strait stability.

5.6 Findings: Alliance Strategy and Alternative Explanations

Alliance Strategy
These cases suggest that US alliance strategy may have played a role in shaping US success in deterring and reassuring China. When the US pursued a limited coordination from 1991-1996, allied policy was less unified and both deterrence and reassurance more problematic. When the US modified its approach and pursued greater alliance coordination from 1996-2001, Japan provided greater support for US policy and deterrence and reassurance toward China were more manageable. Finally, when the US adopted a policy of strong alliance coordination, Japan provided greater support for US policy, which in turn improved reassurance and deterrence toward China despite Chen’s radical political agenda. As such, these cases support H1, H2a, and H2b.

Just as significantly, these cases cast serious doubt on the arguments and policy recommendations proposed by alternative theories of alliance strategy. Despite the expectations of some policy scholars, the increase in the US efforts to coordinate its policy on Taiwan with Japan was not followed by an increase in Japanese free-riding off US support in the strait; instead, Japan matched the US commitment with greater support of its own, contradicting H3 and H4a. Japanese hedging behavior in the case of Taiwan often times manifested as bandwagoning and accommodation rather than balancing, undercutting US deterrence. As such, these cases do not support H4b. Similarly, stronger and more unified allied policy also did not precipitate significant escalation on China’s part, in contrast with the expectations of H5.

*Domestic Politics*

A popular alternative explanation holds that the party or politician in power in Taipei is the primary determinant of Chinese escalatory behavior; pro-independence politicians like Lee precipitate crises by their actions to assert Taiwanese autonomy, while accommodationist leaders
like Ma avoid taking steps to provoke the mainland. Again, there is significant merit to this argument; Ma’s accommodation of Beijing gave the mainland far fewer occasions to escalate. Nonetheless, this factor cannot account for all the variation in Chinese escalation by itself; it cannot explain the differences between the early 1990s, late 1990s, and 2000s when Chinese behavior varied significantly while pro-independence leaders – Lee and Chen – served as prime ministers.

Domestic political pressures in China provide another alternative explanation. In the early 1990s, China may have had more of an incentive to pursue a hardline policy in cross-strait relations given its internal political shifts (as well as the tension driven by Beijing’s attempts to reincorporate Hong Kong and Macau). Nevertheless, China did not escalate to a similar extent during the transition from Jiang to Hu in the early 2000s, suggesting that domestic political transitions cannot themselves account for the variation in the dependent variable.

Reputation

Changes in the US’ reputation do not appear to explain the variation in the extent of the US’ success or failure in deterring and reassuring China in the Taiwan Strait. The US engaged in numerous military interventions over the course of the cases in question, demonstrating a consistent reputation for resolve. As discussed previously, the US also withdrew from a number of international obligations in 2001-2002; this does not seem to have undercut its efforts at reassuring China about US intentions in the Taiwan Strait significantly.

Other Explanatory Variables
As in the ECS, the states’ balance of interests, strategic culture, and regime-type of the three states remained intact and unchanged in the Taiwan Strait following the end of the Cold War. Similarly, the geographic positions of the states remained unchanged. As such, these causes cannot account for the shifts in the dependent variable.
CHAPTER VI: THE KOREAN PENINSULA – PARTING “LIPS AND TEETH”

6.1 Introduction

This chapter evaluates the effects of US alliance strategy on allied efforts to convince China to increase diplomatic and economic pressure on North Korea. It investigates whether US coordination strategies increased Japan’s support for US policy on the Korean Peninsula and whether this improved the US’ ability to compel China to gain its support in efforts to pressure North Korea. As shown below, variation in both Japan’s support for US policy and Chinese cooperation with the US with respect to North Korea is relatively overdetermined; nevertheless, it appears that greater US coordination with Japan coincided with greater Japanese support for US policy and increased Chinese pressure toward North Korea. While these cases cannot provide a powerful confirmation of the strategic theory of alliance coordination, they provide more support for its plausibility and do not falsify its predictions.

*Figure 5: Synopsis of Korean Cases*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Alliance Coordination</th>
<th>Japanese Support</th>
<th>Influence Success</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korea 1991-1996</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea 1996-2003</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea 2003-2006</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea 2006-2009</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea 2009-2016</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
History

Korea has historically played a substantial role in trilateral relations between China, Japan, and the US. In the 13th century, the Yuan Chinese Empire seized control of Goryeo Korea and utilized it as a base of operations for two unsuccessful amphibious attacks on Japan; Koreans provided much of the manpower for building and manning the Chinese fleets involved in these campaigns. In the 16th century, the Japanese Empire attempted and failed to take Joseon Korea, a Ming tributary state, to secure a route to conquer Ming China. In 1895, the Japanese Empire defeated the Qing Chinese Empire in the First Sino-Japanese War and permanently ended Korea’s status as a Chinese tributary state. Japan followed this victory by pushing the Russian Empire out of Korea and Manchuria in the Russo-Japanese War and establishing Korea as a protectorate in 1905. Japan annexed Korea in 1910 and used it as a forward operating base for its subsequent expansion into Manchuria.

As the Second World War ended, allied forces pushed the Japanese Empire out of Korea. The allies subsequently established two occupation zones that would eventually become the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the north and the Republic of Korea in the south. North Korea’s invasion of South Korea in 1950 drove the US to upgrade its commitment to South Korea in large part due to concerns about Japanese security; this would lead to the outbreak of direct conflict between US and Chinese forces on the peninsula as China sought to secure North Korea as a buffer against US forces. The conflict in Korea, as discussed above, also led the US to change course in its relations with Japan, pursuing a formal alliance and favoring the economic reconstruction of Japan over disarmament.
In the 1960s and 70s, North Korea sought out assistance from the Soviets and Chinese to develop a nuclear weapons program. It was unable to convince either patron to provide the desired support. In the 1980s, the North moved ahead with a covert independent nuclear program, building the facilities necessary to reprocess plutonium and refine uranium into yellowcake. Although North Korea joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985, it declined to complete the required safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and continued covert work on its nuclear program.

**Interests**

The US, Japan, and China continue to have vital interests at stake in the Korean Peninsula. For the US, homeland security remains a top priority. As such, it seeks to curtail and reverse North Korea’s development of long-range ballistic missiles, production of nuclear weaponry, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile technology to other rogue actors. The US also has an interest in preventing its commitment to its allies in Tokyo and Seoul from being decoupled by North Korean nuclear compellence. Given US’ economic interests in Northeast Asia, the US seeks to avoid an unnecessary conflict on the peninsula that might destabilize the broader region. Because of these interests, the US has a second-order interest in securing Chinese support for US’ efforts to restrain and deter North Korea given China’s economic leverage over North Korea and potential to act as a spoiler.

Japan shares many of these interests; it aims to prevent the decoupling of the US’ commitment and reduce potential threats to Japanese territory posed by North Korean nuclear weaponry and proliferation. Japan is particularly concerned with short- and mid-range ballistic missiles given its proximity to the peninsula. Just as significantly, Japan has a political interest in
resolving the “abduction issue.” Several Japanese citizens were kidnapped covertly by North Korean operatives in the 1970s and 1980s. Japan seeks to determine the eventual fate of these abductees and hold North Korea accountable. Finally, Japan has an economic interest in maintaining regional stability and preventing an unnecessary war on the peninsula.

Chinese security is similarly affected by dynamics on the Korean Peninsula. Perhaps most importantly, China aims to maintain a favorable military balance on the peninsula. China seeks to prevent US troops north of the 38th parallel, major upgrades to US missile defenses, and the development of new offensive capabilities in Japan and South Korea. China also is interested in preserving regional stability more generally for the sake of its growing economy. Finally, China is concerned about the possibility of refugee flows from Korea in the event of a war or the collapse of the North Korean state. For much of the post-Cold War era, China has pursued these goals by intentionally limiting and offsetting the pressure on North Korea from the US, Japan, and other actors while also calling on the US and its allies to act with restraint. In doing so, it has sought to prevent the collapse of the North Korean regime, minimize the chances of war on the peninsula, and convince the US and allies to refrain from enhancing their regional capabilities.

**US Influence Attempts and the Logic of Strategic Coordination**

How can the theory of strategic coordination be applied in this context? The Korean peninsula involves six distinct actors, making strategic interaction far more complex than in the Taiwan Strait or ECS. The primary challenge in Sino-allied relations is compellence to convince China to cooperate changing the status quo, ratcheting up pressure on the North to curtail its proliferation and provocations. China is reticent to do this given its concerns about the stability of the North Korean regime. As such, the US must be able to convince China that the costs of
withholding cooperation and maintaining the status quo outweigh the risks of working with the US to pressure North Korea.

The theory of strategic coordination suggests the following: If the US can convince Japan to align its policy closely with the US on the Korean peninsula, the two partners should be better positioned to use coercive diplomacy to convince China to amplify its pressure on North Korea. When the US coordinates closely with Japan in general and on Japan’s concerns with respect to ballistic missiles and the abductee issue, Japan will be more confident and more willing to support US policy. The allies will consequently be better able to present a unified front in nonproliferation talks and the UN Security Council (UNSC), prepare militarily for a potential Korean contingency, and cooperate on missile defense. These measures improve the prospects for US compellence toward China by making continued noncompliance costlier for China.

If the US does not coordinate closely with Japan, particularly on its concerns about ballistic missiles and abductees, Japan will be more likely to hedge adopt an independent policy. This, in turn, will dilute allied pressure on China, rendering compellence less effective. China will subsequently be less likely to cooperate with the US in pressuring North Korea.


Background

The early 1990s saw substantial changes on the Korean Peninsula. The US withdrew its nuclear weapons from South Korea and North Korea reciprocated by concluding a long-postponed safeguards agreement with the IAEA as required by the NPT. North Korea and South
Korea also agreed to the South-North Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, pledging to refrain from developing or acquiring nuclear weaponry.

Despite these positive developments, tensions over North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs mounted quickly. North Korea continued to develop its missile capabilities and market them abroad, testing a Nodong-1 medium-range ballistic missile in the Sea of Japan in early 1993. North Korea also failed to comply fully with IAEA inspections and announced its intention to leave the NPT in 1993, triggering a crisis with the US. The crisis was temporarily resolved through bilateral talks with the US, with North Korea agreeing to remain in the NPT in exchange for US security assurances.

In 1994, North Korea again clashed with the IAEA over inspections and subsequently withdrew from the IAEA, prompting a second crisis. The US sought global sanctions against North Korea and threatened a blockade. Ultimately, the US and North Korea resolved the crisis throughout bilateral talks which cumulated in the 1994 Agreed Framework. This deal offered North Korea light water reactors and fuel shipments in exchange for North Korea freezing and gradually dismantling its nuclear weapons program. In 1995, the US, South Korea, and Japan formed the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) to finance the reactors.

**US Strategy: Limited Coordination**

US commitment to Japan both in general and with respect to Korean contingencies during this period was relatively limited. As discussed in the previous two chapters, the Bush 41 and early Clinton administrations put heavy emphasis on redressing economic imbalances in relations with Japan while neglecting to reinforce the security partnership. Political turmoil in Japan and the decline of Cold War-era threats only further compounded US ambivalence toward
the alliance. It was not until the outbreak of the first Korean nuclear crisis that US policymakers began to shift back toward viewing the US alliance commitment as a central component of US regional strategy.\(^1\) Even after the 1993 and 1994 crises, however, the US would not significantly upgrade its commitment to Japan until the 1996 Joint Statement between Hashimoto and Clinton.

US commitments to Japan’s specific interests at stake on the Korean peninsula were moderate at best. The US established early in the crisis that it was committed to a denuclearized Korean peninsula, keeping North Korea within the NPT and insisting on IAEA inspections, all of which were key Japanese concerns. But the US’ emphasis on other Japanese interests was less pronounced. While the US emphasized denuclearization first and foremost, Japan was equally concerned about the North’s growing missile capabilities. As Sanger reported in the New York Times, when the North suspended its withdrawal from the NPT after negotiations with the US, the news “was overshadowed by detailed, if still somewhat murky, accounts of [a North Korean] missile test” which had occurred in the Sea of Japan the week before and had left the Defense Ministry “very much shocked.”\(^2\) Japan had similar concerns with respect to Japanese abductees; from 1991 onward, the Government of Japan claims to have raised the abduction issue at every available opportunity.\(^3\) Indeed, early talks between Japan and North Korea broke down over both the nuclear issue and concerns over the fate of abductees.\(^4\)

\(^1\) Vogel and Giarra, “Renegotiating the Security Relationship,” 113-115


Throughout the 1993-1994 crisis and talks with North Korea, however, the US prioritized the nuclear issue over these other concerns. As US North Korea policy hands Joel Wit, Daniel Poneman, and Robert Gallucci concluded after the fact, the “serious concerns about missiles, conventional arms, human rights… paled in comparison with the dangers the United States would face if North Korea’s continuing plutonium program ran unchecked. And if the nuclear question were tied to the other issues… the likely effect would have been to overload the negotiations would have been resolved.” The Agreed Framework reflected this emphasis, curtailing North Korea’s nuclear program but not its ballistic missile development. From a bilateral perspective, this approach made a great deal of sense; it may have been simpler and easier to address one set of issues at a time in negotiations with the North. This strategy faced trade-offs, however, providing fewer incentives for Japan to align its policy with US policy toward China and North Korea.

The US’ early efforts to bolster Theater Missile Defense (TMD) cooperation with Japan in 1993 had the unfortunate effect of undermining rather than reinforcing US commitment due to the accompanying “Technology for Technology” (TFT) concept. TFT stipulated that any transfer of missile defense technology to Japan would be accompanied by the transfer of advanced Japanese commercial defense technology to the US. These overtures damaged rather than reinforced US commitment by indicating to the Japanese that the project aimed to exact

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economic concessions from Japan rather than to bolster mutual capabilities in the interests of allied defense.\(^6\)

The US consultation efforts toward Japan during this period were mixed. US officials engaged regularly with Japan throughout much of the Korean nuclear crisis. The US Defense Department and Japanese Defense Agency began working-level talks on Korean military contingencies in 1993 as the crisis loomed.\(^7\) US defense officials engaged in extensive wargaming with their Japanese counterparts as a way of clarifying US requirements and began developing a list of what the US would need from Japan were a war to break out on the Korean peninsula.\(^8\) The top JSDF officer and US Forces Japan (USFJ) commander contacted one another weekly throughout the crisis.\(^9\) As tensions reached their height in 1994, Perry met with the top Defense Agency official to discuss Japanese support for US interdiction operations and to assuage Japanese fears that Washington might act without first consulting Tokyo.\(^10\) The two sides prepared for the prerequisite “prior consultations” that would need to take place should military action prove necessary.\(^11\) 1994 also saw the establishment of the Defense Trilateral Talks, a trilateral policy dialogue at the deputy minister level between the US, Japan, and South Korea, in response to the North Korean threat.

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\(^7\) Vogel and Giarra, “Renegotiating the Security Relationship,” 110-112.

\(^8\) Vogel and Giarra, “Renegotiating the Security Relationship,” 110-112.

\(^9\) Wit et al., Going Critical, 178.

\(^10\) Wit et al., Going Critical, 179.

Similarly, the US engaged in diplomatic consultations with Japan during the nuclear crises. The US actively sought to secure Japan’s support for sanctions during the height of the crises in 1993 and 1994. It consulted with Japan on the development of a UNSC resolution in response to North Korea’s initial threat to withdraw from the NPT in 1993 and in discussions over potential UN sanctions toward the regime in 1994.\textsuperscript{12} Officials also reported that if they could not secure UN sanctions, “they would attempt to organize informal sanctions with Japan and South Korea.”\textsuperscript{13} The Japanese were also included in the 1995 KEDO Supply Agreement talks with North Korea.

Nonetheless, these military and diplomatic consultations faced serious limitations. In military discussions, neither side prioritized active coordination and planning. Ezra Vogel and Paul Giarra, two high-level participants in this process, recount:

\begin{quote}
“A conflict with North Korea would mean massive combat requirements: Japan would become a base for American logistics and almost certainly for operations… A detailed, carefully conceived, practical bilateral agreement would have to be negotiated in advance and physical preparations made for both logistics and operational support… no bilateral plans had been drawn up, even for the defense of Japan. The bilateral US-Japan alliance was totally unprepared for effective US-Japan action against North Korea, beyond what
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} Wit et al., \textit{Going Critical}, 196-197.

The need to avoid interfering with military coordination with South Korea also led the US to suspend its consultations and wargaming with the JSDF on Korean operations at the height of the 1994 crisis. Military intelligence-sharing was similarly less than ideal. A top JSDF General at the time, Tetsuya Nishimoto, would later complain that “around 1993 and 1994, Japan could not obtain spy satellite information or any direct information from the U.S. concerning nuclear facilities in North Korea.”

In diplomatic and political consultations, several gaps remained. US-North Korea talks in 1993 and 1994 were conducted bilaterally, leaving Japan (and South Korea) on the sidelines during negotiations. The US kept both allies informed of progress in the talks, but they were not integrated directly into the process as they would be later under the “Six-Party” approach. More broadly, the level of institutionalized consultation during this time paled in comparison to what would be implemented in the Clinton administration’s second term (after the Defense Guideline revisions) and expanded upon in the Bush and Obama administrations.

**Japanese Policy**

This limited coordination coincided with relatively limited Japanese support for US policy. Japan’s fears of abandonment left it a reluctant partner at best on sanctions diplomacy

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and pressure toward China. Most problematically, Japan was uncooperative with respect to prospective allied military action and TMD.

Japan also had significant concerns about US abandonment. The US TFT concept during early TMD negotiations had made Japanese officials “increasingly dubious about the level and longevity of US commitment to Japan’s’ security.”\(^\text{17}\) During the height of the Korean crisis, Japanese fears of “Japan passing” – US abandonment of Japan in favor of China – were particularly notable. Based on interviews with Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs Joseph Nye, journalist Richard McGregor reports that during the height of the crisis “the Japanese explained they were reluctant to issue a tough public statement about North Korea, because they were worried about the reaction in China.”\(^\text{18}\) He goes on to report:

“Over a drink later in Perry’s room in the Hotel Okura, the real nature of Japan’s anxieties—namely, the United States’ bypassing Japan for China—emerged. “They would say, Nye-san, we notice that China is getting very strong. How do we know that you won’t abandon us for China?” ... “It was clear they were very worried,” Nye said. “The immediate factor was North Korea. The real background was China.”\(^\text{19}\)

These fears coincided with relatively limited Japanese support for US policy. Japan complied with some important elements of US policy toward China and North Korea, joining the US in calling on China to use its leverage over Pyongyang. But on other components of US

\(^{17}\) Vogel and Giarra, “Renegotiating the Security Relationship,” 110-111.

\(^{18}\) McGregor, Asia’s Reckoning, 141.

\(^{19}\) McGregor, Asia’s Reckoning, 141.
policy, Japan’s support was less firm. While Japan ultimately voiced support for prospective US sanctions against North Korea, it spent much of the crisis trying to dilute rather than reinforce pressure on North Korea. In early 1994, “Japanese politicians [had] said almost nothing in public about the North Korean threat beyond making vague promises to act "within Japanese law" if the United Nations imposes sanctions.”\(^{20}\) In June of 1994, Japan stated that it would agree to UN sanctions, but the New York Times reported that “in private, officials say, Tokyo has been arguing against Washington's plan… Instead, Japan wants to issue another warning and vague threat of sanctions.”\(^{21}\) Japanese officials were particularly uncertain about assisting with US sanctions outside UN auspices.\(^{22}\) Sanctions were ultimately unnecessary, given the emergence of the Agreed Framework talks, so the question of how far Japan would go to back US strategy remained unanswered.

Japan’s support for US military options on the peninsula (including a potential blockade in support of proposed UN sanctions) was weaker still. Japanese bases would be central to any major US military operations – defensive or offensive – on the Korean peninsula. The JSDF could also play a significant role in supporting the US blockade by conducting minesweeping, reconnaissance, resupply, and other support operations. But, as Japan scholar Richard Samuels argues, “…Tokyo disappointed Washington during the 1993–94 Korean crisis by balking at the prospect of coordinated military operations.” During the height of the crisis, it became clear that


the Japanese government was reluctant to provide support for US military operations on the peninsula given the legal restrictions involved. As the commander of the JSDF pointed out to US officials, Japan was unable to provide support for a US blockade unless Japan was attacked or the UN authorized the operation.\textsuperscript{23} The New York Times reported that “Japanese officials have gone to some lengths to offer private assurances that if the North Korean situation worsens, laws and rules will quickly be changed. But American and some Japanese officials fear that the changes could come too late.”\textsuperscript{24} Vogel and Giarra state that Japanese promises of support were “cryptic and grudging,” coming “without any operational or logistics specifics identified or pledged, or planning envisioned, let alone conducted.”\textsuperscript{25} Winston Lord testified not long after the crisis that “Frankly… questions do remain about the extent of Japan's commitment to our common objective, especially if this should involve a showdown with Pyongyang.”\textsuperscript{26}

Japan also shied away from TMD cooperation with the US. Although the Bush and Clinton administrations both sought Japan’s support for regional missile defense, Japanese officials remained ambivalent about the program. Japan would not agree to cooperate in missile defense research with the US, let alone plans for the deployment and operation of allied missile defense systems. USMC Colonel Patrick O’Donogue points out that after the initial US offer in 1993, “several years of discussion produced no impetus to move talks beyond the exploratory

\textsuperscript{23} Green, \textit{Reluctant Realism}, 121.


\textsuperscript{25} Vogel and Giarra, “Renegotiating the Security Relationship,” 112.

phases." Japan appeared particularly concerned about China’s potential reaction to the program. In 1995, when China publicly criticized the potential for US-Japan TMD as destabilizing, Japan quickly emphasized that it had withheld judgment on any prospective cooperation.28

Compelling China

This limited Japanese support was accompanied by a notable lack of cooperation on China’s part in efforts to pressure North Korea. Despite the blow to China-North Korea relations caused by the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and South Korea in 1992, the old logic undergirding China’s stance toward its ally in Pyongyang remained in place. As Qian Qicheng put it in 1991, “we do not wish to see an international pressure” directed against North Korea.29

During the first Korean nuclear crisis, China provided only limited assistance in pressuring North Korea. This assistance came primarily in the form of its decision to abstain from – rather than vetoing – UNSC Resolution 825, a weakly worded call for North Korea to “reconsider” leaving the NPT and to “honor its non-proliferation obligations” in 1993.30


threatened to veto anything harsher than this. As Jiang put it in 1993, "China will exert positive influence on North Korea, but we will not put negative influence on that country."\textsuperscript{31}

Again, in 1994, Chinese officials publicly and privately opposed any sanctions on North Korea. “Pressure will not solve the problem,” according to Prime Minister Li Peng.\textsuperscript{32} When the US and other UNSC members recommended China join them in telling North Korea that continued noncompliance with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections would lead to UNSC involvement, China declined to participate.\textsuperscript{33} In response to US calls for an arms embargo and financial sanctions, the Foreign Ministry stated that “At this time, we do not favor the resort to means that might sharpen the confrontation.”\textsuperscript{34} The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson further clarified that “China in principle does not subscribe to the involvement of the Security Council in the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula or the resort to sanctions to solve it.” Jiang took a still stronger stance, arguing that global sanctions on North Korea would result in “serious consequences.”\textsuperscript{35}


\textsuperscript{35} “China says no to sanctions against Korea,” \textit{UPI}, June 10, 1994.

Background

Following the Agreed Framework negotiations, the US entered the “Four Party” talks with North Korea, South Korea, and China to attempt to develop a treaty formally ending the Korean War. The US also pursued direct bilateral negotiations with North Korea aimed at reducing tensions. While North Korea agreed to participate, it tested a mid-range ballistic missile (the Taepodong-1) over Japan in 1998. The Four Party talks began to deteriorate by 2000, with Pyongyang preferring to engage bilaterally with the US rather than multilaterally. These bilateral talks led to a North Korean moratorium on missile testing in 1999 and a visit by Secretary Albright to Pyongyang in 2000.

This progress remained tenuous, however. Although the North had suspended its plutonium enrichment at Yongbyon, US intelligence suspected that the North was covertly enriching uranium to circumvent the Agreed Framework. The Bush administration confronted the North with these allegations in 2002 and, in talks with Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, the North seems to have confirmed these suspicions. Relations deteriorated quickly; KEDO suspended fuel shipments to North Korea in 2002 and the North responded by restarting the Yongbyon facility and expelling inspectors. In early 2003, North Korea test-fired several cruise missiles into the Sea of Japan and withdrew from the NPT.

US Strategy: Moderate Coordination

From 1996 to 2003, the US sought to improve its coordination with Japan in general and with respect to the Korean peninsula. 1996 and 1997 saw the US-Japan Joint Statement and the
Defense Guideline Revisions which recommitted the US to the defense of Japan and broadened and deepened allied consultations. This period also saw the Clinton administration place substantially less emphasis on its trade deficit with Japan, pivoting away from its earlier approach to the alliance.

The US also committed more explicitly to confronting the North Korean ballistic missile threat to Japan. As the Interim Report on the Defense Guideline Review emphasized, the allies agreed to “take into account… new types of threats such as ballistic missile attacks.” The final guidelines made this commitment explicit:

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U.S. \text{ Forces and the Self-Defense Forces will cooperate and coordinate closely to respond to a ballistic missile attack. U.S. Forces will provide Japan with necessary intelligence, and consider, as necessary, the use of forces providing additional strike power.}\]

The US demonstrated its strengthened commitment to Japan’s ballistic missile concerns by pressuring North Korea on its missile development and testing in a series of bilateral missile talks from 1996 to 2000. While these talks failed in stopping the North’s controversial launch over Japan in 1998, they eventually persuaded North Korea to establish a moratorium on missile tests in 1999.

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The US was also willing to adjust its approach to missile defense cooperation with Japan away from its earlier TFT approach. As a 2001 RAND report argues:

“By the mid-1990s, the U.S. rationale for Japanese participation in the planned [ballistic missile defense (BMD)] program had shifted... Coinciding with the effort to strengthen the U.S.-Japan security alliance and revise the guidelines for U.S.-Japan defense cooperation, the TMD program was recast as primarily an alliance maintenance issue and an effort to strengthen Japanese security.”38

The US also put more emphasis on Japan’s concerns about abductees. The Clinton administration’s 1999 review of policy toward North Korea under William Perry – known as the “Perry Process” – stressed that “the U.S. strongly supports [Japan’s] concerns” about North Korea’s abductions.39 In 2000, the US went still further, adding the abduction issue to the agenda of its bilateral talks with North Korea.40 During Albright’s visit to Pyongyang, Albright reported that “I brought up the [abduction] issue time and again. I told him that this issue was important not only to Japan but also to the United States as well.”41 The Bush administration similarly

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expressed its commitment to resolving the abduction issue in 2002 by supporting Koizumi’s trip to North Korea to negotiate the return of the abductees.\textsuperscript{42} Bush personally reaffirmed the US commitment to the abduction issue during Koizumi’s visit to the US in May of 2003: “I assured the prime minister that the United States will stand squarely with Japan until all Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korea are fully accounted for… I strongly condemn the kidnapping of Japanese citizens by the North Koreans.” \textsuperscript{43}

The US’ efforts to consult with Japan also improved. As discussed earlier, the Defense Guideline revisions deepened and broadened US-Japan consultation and pledged to align the two countries’ policies more closely. Beyond these general upgrades, trilateral US-Japan-South Korea dialogue on North Korea also improved; the allies “began more regular, trilateral diplomatic consultations on North Korea policy in 1996.”\textsuperscript{44} The Clinton administration’s Perry Process also featured intensive consultation, “exchang[ing] views with officials from many countries with interests in Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula, including our allies, the ROK and Japan.”\textsuperscript{45} The resulting strategy, Perry emphasized, was “a joint strategy in which all three of our countries play coordinated and mutually reinforcing roles in pursuit of the same objectives.”\textsuperscript{46} The Perry Process resulted in the innovative Trilateral Coordination and Oversight

\textsuperscript{42} Manyin, \textit{Japan-North Korea Relations}.


\textsuperscript{44} James Schoff, \textit{The Evolution of the TCOG as a Diplomatic Tool} (Cambridge: IFPA, 2004), 6.

\textsuperscript{45} Perry, “Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea.”

\textsuperscript{46} Perry, “Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea.”
Group (TCOG) in April of 1999, a formal policy coordination group that included Japan and South Korea in an effort to develop and maintain a unified allied front toward North Korea.⁴⁷

The Bush administration continued this policy of closer coordination, albeit with more emphasis on bilateral consultation than on the TCOG.⁴⁸ In 2001, Bush and Japanese Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro “pledged to coordinate closely on pressing regional issues, and reaffirmed the particular importance of maintaining close consultations and coordination regarding North Korea, both bilaterally and trilaterally with the Republic of Korea.”⁴⁹ During the administration’s own policy review, it reported that “We have consulted closely with our South Korean and Japanese allies, whose views have played an important role in our policy deliberations.” Furthermore, Bush personally shared US assessments about North Korean uranium enrichment with Koizumi during the latter’s visit to New York in 2002.⁵⁰

In 2003, as tensions rose on the peninsula, the US also reinforced its military presence in Japan. New fighter-bombers and reconnaissance planes were deployed to US bases in Japan. The

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⁴⁷ Schoff, *The Evolution of the TCOG*.

⁴⁸ Schoff, *The Evolution of the TCOG*.


US also moved the *USS Carl Vinson* to the West Pacific where it patrolled Japanese waters to replace the *USS Kitty Hawk* (which had been redeployed to the Persian Gulf).⁵¹

Despite these improvements, limitations remained. Most notably, the Four Party Talks announced at the 1996 Cheju summit with South Korea and US bilateral negotiations with North Korea both excluded Japan. Although the US made a clear effort to keep Japan apprised, Japan remained on the sidelines for both sets of talks.

**Japanese Policy**

From 1996 through 2003, Japanese confidence in and support for the US on the Korean Peninsula improved. In 2003, Koizumi stressed his certainty in the US deterrent against North Korean threats: “America has made it clear that they would regard an attack on Japan as an attack on their own country, and this is a great deterrent”⁵²

Japan slowly moved toward a cooperative stance on US-Japan TMD over the course of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The US had to cajole Japan to overcome its concerns about provoking China. A senior Pentagon official claimed that “Japan is most nervous about China, even though they talk about North Korea. A decision to build [TMD] would be perceived by the Chinese to be a blatant act. So I’m sure Japan will not go down this line.”⁵³ Nonetheless, by 1998, the North’s Taepodong-1 launch had provided an impetus for a renewed interest in TMD

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cooperation in Japan. A Japanese defense intellectual reported that “a consensus is building among top government officials and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party to reconsider the joint missile defense project.”

By 1999, Japan had agreed to a memorandum of understanding to pursue joint research with the US into a naval-based, upper-tier TMD system. This research continued into the Bush administration, with enthusiasm building within Japan. Still, limits remained in Japan’s willingness to endorse full allied TMD cooperation. When Japanese Defense Minister Ishiba Shigeru told US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld that “Japan will conduct [a] study with the perspective of future development and deployment” of a TMD system, he received a stern rebuke by Koizumi and Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo.

Japan also broadened and deepened its support for US military options on the peninsula. The ACSA, as discussed earlier, finally allowed Japan to resupply US forces if need be. The allies used the Keen Sword exercises in 1996 to practice utilizing this new arrangement. The 1997 Defense Guideline Revisions spelled out the numerous ways in which Japan could support US forces in the event of a threat in “areas surrounding Japan” – a concept that included the Korean peninsula. The Japanese government agreed to provide rear-area support, resupply

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operations, and base access – all critical to a potential US operation on the peninsula.\textsuperscript{58} Japan’s ability to conduct these missions was officially authorized by legislation passed in the Japanese Diet in 1999 and 2001. Japan also moved to acquire Boeing 767s to act as refueling tankers to extend the range of its fighter aircraft for potential strikes on the Korean Peninsula.\textsuperscript{59}

Japan strengthened its cooperation with the US on maritime interdiction. Subsequent Japanese defense planning explored assisting the US in the “inspection of ships based on United Nations Security Council resolutions for ensuring the effectiveness of economic sanctions and activities related to such inspections.”\textsuperscript{60} This JSDF mission was authorized by the Diet in the 2000 Ship Inspection Operations Law. In May of 2003, Japan went still further, joining the US’ designed Proliferation Security Initiative as part of the “core group.” This initiative formed the basis for strengthening international interdiction of vessels engaged in proliferation activities on the high seas.\textsuperscript{61}

In early 2003, as North Korea restarted its Yongbyon facility and threatened to leave the NPT, this increased coordination took on new significance in efforts to pressure China. Bush telephoned Chinese President Jiang Zemin directly, and stressed that 1) all options were on the table for the US as it addressed the North’s nuclear program and 2) China had a responsibility to

\textsuperscript{58} “The US-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation.”


stop the North’s acquisition of nuclear capabilities.\textsuperscript{62} Shortly afterward, the US Department of Defense announced that a CSG, including the nuclear carrier \textit{USS Carl Vinson}, would redeploy to the West Pacific where it would carry out joint exercises in South Korea and Japan.\textsuperscript{63} Japan similarly announced that for the first time, it would send F-15s and airborne warning and control systems planes (AWACS) to joint exercises with the US.\textsuperscript{64}

The allies also presented a more unified front on the North Korean challenge in diplomacy during this time. The 1996 Joint Statement made allied unity particularly clear: “they noted… that stability on the Korean Peninsula is vitally important to Japan and the United States and reaffirmed that both countries will make every effort in this regard, in close cooperation with the Republic of Korea.”\textsuperscript{65} In 1998, despite an initial push in Tokyo to abandon KEDO after the Taepodong-2 test, Japan ultimately chose to stay the course and remain united with Washington and Seoul. Later, in 1999, Japan joined the US and South Korea in warning North Korea to refrain from launching a second missile.\textsuperscript{66}

This compliance continued under the Bush administration. Although Koizumi’s engagement toward North Korea was seen with alarm by some in the US policy community,

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\textsuperscript{63} “USS Carl Vinson to visit Yokosuka,” \textit{The Japan Times}, April 30, 2003.


\textsuperscript{65} “US-Japan Joint Statement.”

Koizumi sought and received Bush’s support in person before making his trip to Pyongyang.\textsuperscript{67} While in Pyongyang, Koizumi did not deviate from the allied position of insisting on North Korean compliance with the Agreed Framework, dutifully insisting that Kim comply with “all related international agreements.”\textsuperscript{68} The 2002 TCOG meeting after the revelation of the North’s uranium enrichment showed a significant degree of solidarity: the joint statement demanded that the North “dismantle this program in a prompt and verifiable manner.” Japan also agreed, despite some misgivings, to end KEDO fuel shipments alongside the US.\textsuperscript{69}

\textit{Compelling China}

As Japanese support for US policy improved, China grew more uncomfortable Pyongyang’s behavior and increased its cooperation with the allies in exerting pressure against its erstwhile ally. Many in Beijing saw the North’s missile launch in 1998 as creating a threat to Chinese interests because of the subsequent changes in Japan’s military posture – including its increased TMD cooperation with the US.\textsuperscript{70} By 2003, China had grown still more alarmed and felt compelled to act given Bush’s tacit threat to escalate. A senior Chinese diplomat reports that there was “a total change in China’s manner of dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue…” China, worried that the escalation of the crisis could go out of control, then, determined to


\textsuperscript{69} Funabashi, \textit{The Peninsula Question}, 136-138.

\textsuperscript{70} Abramowitz et al., \textit{US Policy Toward North Korea}.  
change its previous manner.”\textsuperscript{71} A retired Ministry of Foreign Affairs official claimed that “security concerns along its northeastern border have prompted Beijing” to adopt “more active diplomacy” because “a US military strike against the DPRK could… force Beijing into an embarrassing confrontation with the United States.”\textsuperscript{72} Similarly, a senior Chinese academic observes that “China’s change in policy on the North Korean nuclear issue [in 2003] is thought to be affected by the likelihood of US military intervention.”\textsuperscript{73} While this concern was likely at least partially a function of the US’ Operation Iraqi Freedom, the US capacity to carry out any such operation in North Korea depended heavily on the upgraded Defense Guidelines. Without the improvements in Japanese support for US policy that took place from 1996 onward, it is unclear whether the US tacit threat to escalate would have been as credible.

China’s shifting threat perceptions were accompanied by stronger action toward the North and increased cooperation with the allies. Early on, in 1998, China allegedly pressured North Korea into abstaining from another missile test over Japan.\textsuperscript{74} When North Korea restarted its nuclear program and withdrew from the NPT in 2003, China reacted still more strongly. In January, China supported an IAEA resolution calling on North Korea to end its nuclear program. In February, China went further, voting for an IAEA resolution referring North Korea to the UNSC for its nuclear activities, and suspending oil flows to North Korea for three days (although

\textsuperscript{71} Funabashi, \textit{The Peninsula Question}, 266.


it would later claim that this was due to technical problems). In March, President Hu Jintao wrote to North Korean leader Kim Jong Il stating that “if Pyongyang went nuclear, the 1961 Sino-North Korean treaty would be declared null and void and that economic aid and critical fuel supplies would be at risk.”\(^{75}\) Although much of this pressure was more symbolic than material, it constituted a significant step for Chinese policy.

But this cooperation clearly had limits. China’s public reaction to the 1998 missile test was muted at best: “We have taken note of the reports about the DPRK’s missile testing yesterday. Currently relevant parties already have channels for consultations on this issue.” In a 2002 summit with Bush, Jiang emphasized that the emerging crisis was a bilateral concern between the US and North Korea and that China would not play a large role in resolving it.\(^{76}\) After referring North Korea to the UNSC, China refused to support sanctions or even an official condemnation in the UNSC, threatening to veto strong international measures against the North.\(^{77}\)

### 6.4 2003-2006: The Six-Party Approach

\textit{Background}

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\(^{76}\) Funabashi, \textit{The Peninsula Question}, 160.

\(^{77}\) Wu, “What China Whispers to the DPRK.”
August 2003 saw the gradual de-escalation of tensions and the introduction of a new negotiating forum for addressing concerns on the Korean peninsula: The Six-Party Talks. This new forum included the four parties from preceding talks but also Japan and Russia. The talks moved slowly, but by 2005 the Six Parties had agreed to a Joint Statement in which North Korea committed to abandon its nuclear program and weapons and to return to the NPT.

Around the same time, however, the US Treasury Department froze $25 million in North Korean funds being laundered in Banco Delta Asia, a Macau bank. North Korea demanded the funds be returned. When the US refused to comply, North Korea left the Six-Party Talks. In July 2006, the North fired seven ballistic missiles, including a new long-range Taepodong-2. In October, North Korea conducted its first nuclear weapons test underground at P’unggye. Both provocations were met with UNSC condemnation and sanctions.

*US Strategy: Strong Coordination*

From mid-2003 to 2006, the US further strengthened its coordination with Japan, drawing closer to its ally to amplify pressure on both China and North Korea. In general, the US upgraded its alliance with Japan through the Realignment Roadmap and the Common Strategic Objectives. On the North Korean issue, the US commitment to and consultation with Japan through the Six-Party Talks.

US commitment to and coordination with Japan was amplified by its agreement to the 2005 Common Strategic Objectives and the 2006 Realignment Roadmap. The CSOs represented both the cumulation of extensive US consultations with Japan *and* new commitments by the US.
to partner more closely with Japan on a wider range of regional and global issues.\textsuperscript{78} The US also reconfirmed that its “nuclear umbrella” covered Japan: “US strike capabilities and the nuclear deterrence provided by the US remain an essential complement to Japan’s defensive capabilities.”\textsuperscript{79}

Through the Roadmap, the US addressed a longstanding Japanese grievance: USMC presence in Okinawa. The Roadmap obligated the US to transfer 8,000 marines from bases in Okinawa to Guam, a pledge that would significantly reduce the burden on Okinawans.\textsuperscript{80} Although the implementation of the Roadmap would later become an issue of significant contention between the allies, this initial step served as a clear signal of US commitment to its ally’s interests and concerns. Furthermore, the Roadmap committed the US to more extensive consultation with Japan by agreeing to collocate US and Japanese army and air force commands at Camp Zama and Yokota Air Base.\textsuperscript{81}

The US strengthened its commitments to both the abductee issue and the North Korean missile program. In October of 2003, Bush publicly highlighted the US’ concerns about North Korea’s abductions ahead of a meeting with Koizumi: “A major issue with the Prime Minister, of course, is the abductees. I’ve always said that the fact that North Korea kidnapped or abducted


these people talks to the nature of the administration in North Korea. And of course, we will send strong signals that we object to that kind of behavior, that that is not a civil behavior.”

In November of 2003, the US State Department supported Japan’s decision to raise the abduction issue at the Six-Party Talks. The State Department subsequently referred to North Korea’s abductions in its “Patterns in Global Terrorism 2003” report (released in 2004) for the first time and pledged to “take every opportunity and act in every way we can to help Japan realize its interests in this area.” Still more importantly, the Common Strategic Objectives (CSOs) that the allies developed in 2005 committed the US to “work closely” with Japan to “seek the peaceful resolution of… humanitarian issues such as the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korea.”

In 2005, US delegate to the Six Party Talks Chris Hill reassured Japanese delegate Kenichiro Sasae that the US would work with Japan to “definitively handle” North Korea’s abductions. Building on this commitment, Bush joined Koizumi in a joint statement in 2006 pledging to work toward “protecting human dignity, and resolving humanitarian and human

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82 It is important to acknowledge that this statement was accompanied by a frank acknowledgement that the US top priority remained denuclearization. “George W. Bush Interview With Taro Kimura of Japan’s FUJI TV,” The American Presidency Project, October 14, 2003, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63503.

83 “Kelly Okays Tokyo’s Plan To Bring Up Abduction Issue At Six-way Talks,” Japan Digest, November 18, 2003.


rights problems including the abduction issue.”

Bush would also personally meet with the mother of the abductees in 2006. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would echo this sentiment in a personal meeting with Koizumi’s successor Abe: “We continue to support Japan’s stance on the abduction issue.”

The US doubled-down on its commitment to address Japan’s concerns about North Korean missiles during this period as well. The US-Japan CSOs in 2005 pledged to resolve North Korea’s “ballistic missile activities.” The US backed up this pledge with new deployments designed to address North Korea’s missile capabilities. In 2003, the US Navy announced it would deploy an Aegis-equipped vessel to Sasebo Naval Base in Japan to form part of a new expeditionary strike group. In October 2004, the US began sequencing a new Arleigh Burke-class destroyer with Aegis equipment in the Sea of Japan. In 2005, it upgraded these destroyers with Standard Missile-3 Block-1 armaments designed to neutralized North Korean short- and mid-range ballistic missiles (those most threatening to the Japanese homeland). It


89 “Prime Minister Receives a Courtesy Call from US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice,” Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, October 19, 2006, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/abephoto/2006/10/19rice_e.html.


92 David Brown, “‘Virtually continuous presence:’ Destroyer’s Asian deployment will start anti-missile first phase,” The Navy Times, April 5, 2004.

93 Brown, “‘Virtually continuous presence.’”
also replaced two non-Aegis vessels with two new Aegis-outfitted Arleigh Burkes. In 2006, the US similarly replaced an older cruiser with the advanced BMD-capable USS Shiloh in CFAY.\textsuperscript{94} Just as importantly, the US deployed its first X-band radar system, capable of tracking North Korean missile launches, to Shariki Airbase in Japan in 2006 and pledged to share the data with JSDF.\textsuperscript{95} The US also deployed Patriot PAC-3 unit to Kadena Airbase in 2006.

The US also shared information with Japan on North Korean missile testing. According to a later SCC Joint Statement:

\textit{“During the North Korean missile provocations of June-July 2006, the United States and Japan exchanged information in a timely manner, including through an interim coordination facility at Yokota Air Base with SDF liaisons. The success of this facility in ensuring that both sides had a common awareness of the evolving situation validated the importance of continuous enhancement of bilateral policy/operational coordination.”}\textsuperscript{96}

Most significantly, however, the Bush administration brought Japan into the Six-Party Talks with North Korea. The administration believed that Japan needed to be more closely integrated into US negotiation efforts toward North Korea and China. Cha, a NSC staff member at the time, emphasizes that “It made no sense to allow countries in the region that were most directly threatened by their North Korean neighbor to free-ride off the negotiating efforts of the

\textsuperscript{94} “Around the Navy,” \textit{The Navy Times}, February 27, 2006.

\textsuperscript{95} Jennifer Svan, “Army showing off new X-Band radar in Japan,” \textit{Starts and Stripes}, June 8, 2006.

United States but at the same time demand that the United States solve the problem while others sat on the sidelines." Including Japan “would give the United States a strong foundation in any multilateral negotiating forum” given the US-Japan partnership.\(^97\)

**Japanese Policy**

This increased US commitment and consultation was accompanied by a more confident and cooperative Japan. Japanese leaders responded positively to the Bush administrations’ efforts to reassure Japan of its commitment to the abductee issue. LDP Cabinet Secretary Fukuda expressed gratitude for Bush’s support on the abduction issue and Foreign Ministry Press Secretary Takashima Hatsuhisa expressed appreciation for mentioning the abduction issue on in the State Department’s terrorism report.\(^98\) Abe himself would claim to be “greatly heartened” by US support for Japan on the abductions issue.\(^100\) Japanese leaders similarly expressed their confidence in the Bush administration’s efforts to strengthen the alliance. As Defense Minister Ishiba put it in 2003: “the country that would defend Japan at the time of crisis is Japan’s only ally, the U.S.”\(^101\) Even after the North’s nuclear test, Abe stated that he was reassured by US

\(^{97}\) Cha, *The Impossible State*, Chapter 7, Loc 4813.


\(^{100}\) “Prime Minister Receives a Courtesy Call.”

pledges of support for Japanese security.\textsuperscript{102} Japan’s earlier trepidation about China’s reaction to Japanese coordination with the US and worries about the US neglecting Japanese concerns about missiles and abductees were noticeably absent.

As Japan grew more confident, it pursued closer cooperation with the US on BMD. In 2003, Japan formally decided to introduce and fund a BMD system.\textsuperscript{103} In 2004, Japan signed an MOU with the US to strengthen their joint development of BMD.\textsuperscript{104} 2005 saw the Japanese Diet develop legislation for responding to a ballistic missile launch against Japan.\textsuperscript{105} In October 2005, the US-Japan SCC’s joint statement put emphasis on Japan’s cooperation with the US on BMD.\textsuperscript{106} Finally, in December of 2005, Japan agreed to an SM-3 Joint Cooperative Development initiative with the US, pledging to help the US create a highly advanced ballistic missile interceptor.\textsuperscript{107}

Japan also strengthened its support for US military contingencies involving the Korean Peninsula. In late 2003, Japan played a major role in a maritime interdiction exercise in cooperation with the US; Japan’s National Institute for Defense Studies reported that this was aimed at strengthening a joint “dialogue and pressure” strategy to resolve tensions on the Korean

\textsuperscript{102} “Prime Minister Receives a Courtesy Call.”


\textsuperscript{104} “Defense of Japan 2006.”

\textsuperscript{105} “Defense of Japan 2006.”

\textsuperscript{106} “US-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future.”

\textsuperscript{107} “Defense of Japan 2006.”
Peninsula. Through these and other similar exercises, Japan continued to strengthen its commitment to the Proliferation Security Initiative. The US-Japan SCC consultations in 2005 detailed “roles, missions, and capabilities” for the JSDF and US military in allied operations. Japan agreed to strengthen its cooperation with the US in key missions pertinent to a Korean military contingency, including maritime interdiction, minesweeping, aerial and maritime refueling, shared airlift and sealift, and airport and seaport facility access.

Japan’s 2004 National Defense Program Guidelines and Mid-Term Defense Plan served to further augment Japan’s military strength, reinforcing its ability to support US military operations and its own defense. The Guidelines laid out a plan for JSDF modernization, arguing that “the roles that our defense forces have to play are multiplying” and that as such “Japan will develop multifunctional, flexible and effective forces that are highly ready, mobile, adaptable, and multi-purpose, and are equipped with state-of-the-art technologies and intelligence capabilities.” These plans outlined improvements in missile defense capabilities, including 4 new Aegis-equipped destroyers and preparing seven air warning groups and four air warning squadrons for BMD. Just as significantly, they streamlined Japan’s bulky and outdated JSDF to

110 “US-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future.”
create a more technologically advanced and highly trained force that was able to project power.\footnote{Christopher Hughes, \textit{Japan’s Remilitarization} (Routledge, 2017).}

Finally, Japan aligned itself more closely with the US in diplomacy. Japan and the US maintained a relatively unified position in the Six-Party talks until the talks stalled in 2005. Japan then stood with the US in “urg[ing] North Korea to return expeditiously to the talks without preconditions, to dismantle its nuclear programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and to cease all illicit and proliferation activities.”\footnote{“United States-Japan Security Consultative Committee Document, Joint Statement,” 2006.} When the North resumed test-firing ballistic missiles and conducted its first nuclear test, Japan worked closely with the US in securing Chinese support for new UN resolutions condemning and sanctioning North Korea’s provocations. Notably, while Japan had been hesitant to impose sanctions on North Korea in the past short of a UNSC resolution in the 1990s, Abe was more than willing to impose unilateral sanctions on North Korea prior to UNSC action in 2006.

\textit{Compelling China}

Mounting pressure by the US and Japan on North Korea coincided with increased alarm in China over the destabilizing impact of North Korean behavior. In 2005, Chinese sources stated that if the North continues its program “there will be no peace in East Asia.”\footnote{Ching, “Running out of patience,” \textit{South China Morning Post}, May 18, 2005.} In 2006, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao concluded that nuclear and missile tests would “aggravate the situation of
Leading Chinese academics claimed that the test “hurt China's national interests” and would cause regional states to build up their military power further. The pro-China Hsin Pao pronounced that North Korea’s actions increasingly risked “chang[ing] the balance of strength in Northeast Asia” by leading the US to strengthen “the deployment of its military forces in Northeast Asia, especially… Japan’s defense capabilities.” Similarly, a top Chinese think tank scholar worried that “such a move will certainly give the United States and Japan an excuse to adopt a tougher stance” that might adversely affect Chinese interests.

It is difficult to disentangle China’s growing worries and frustrations about North Korea’s provocations from its concern about the US-Japan reaction. North Korea’s missile launch and nuclear test in 2006 antagonized China in and of itself. It is interesting to note, however, that much of the discussion in Chinese policy circles about the consequences of the launch emphasized that it had adverse consequences on Chinese interests because of the US-Japan reaction. Although the counterfactual cannot be proven, this suggests that absent amplified US-Japan cooperation in the lead up to and following these provocations, China might not have reacted as strongly.

China’s growing concerns coincided with an increase in its compliance with US requests for it to increase its pressure on North Korea. In 2005, as North Korea abandoned the Six-Party talks, a top Chinese academic noted an increasingly “permissive attitude” toward criticism of the

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118 “Pyongyang’s missile tests raise concern,” People’s Daily, July 6, 2006.
North in official media.\textsuperscript{119} China allegedly froze $24 million of North Korea’s assets in a Chinese bank and similarly targeted North Korean money laundering in Macau.\textsuperscript{120}

Chinese compliance with US-Japan demands increased significantly during and after the 2006 missile and nuclear tests. China briefly cut off oil supplies yet again in a repeat of its actions in 2003.\textsuperscript{121} It agreed for the first time to UNSC sanctions – UNSCR 1695 in response to the missile test and UNSCR 1718 in response to the nuclear test. UNSCR 1718 banned the trade of luxury goods and missile materials with North Korea and allowed for inspections of shipments to and from North Korea. Hill would later remark that “I think the Chinese really did put some heat on them.”\textsuperscript{122}

China publicly condemned North Korea’s actions with unusually strong language.\textsuperscript{123} The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that: “The Democratic People's Republic of Korea disregarded the international community's universal opposition and flagrantly conducted a nuclear test. The Chinese Government expresses its resolute opposition in this regard.”\textsuperscript{124} \textit{China Daily} was highly critical of the test: “An act showing no restraint, the test has made more unpredictable the


\textsuperscript{120} Moore, “How North Korea threatens China’s interests.”


\textsuperscript{122} Mike Chinoy, \textit{Meltdown: The Inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis} (St. Martin’s Press, 2010), 307.


complexities of the current situation on the Korean Peninsula.” Furthermore, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson claimed that China and North Korea were not allies, instead characterizing ties as “normal state-to-state relations.”

Despite these improvements, Chinese support for allied pressure on North Korea had its limits. Although China agreed to support sanctions on North Korea through the UNSC, it deliberately watered-down the punitive measures in UNSCR 1718. It also pushed for an allusion to Article 41 ruling out the use of force to resolve the nuclear issue. China was willing to increase pressure on North Korea, but not to the extent that would threaten the stability of the regime. Furthermore, Chinese with North Korea grew from 1.02 billion USD in 2003 to 1.7 billion by 2006.

6.5 2006-2009: Independent Diplomacy

Background

As 2006 ended, North Korea agreed to rejoin the Six-Party talks. The Bush administration, sensing its last opportunity to resolve the nuclear issue, launched a concerted effort to reach a negotiated settlement with North Korea. Although the Six-Party talks remained the primary organizing framework for these talks, the US relied heavily on intensive bilateral


engagement with North Korea. In an effort to reach a final deal on the North’s nuclear program, the US agreed to unfreeze North Korea’s laundered financial assets, de-list the North as a state sponsor of terrorism, and lift several sanctions. While this effort made some headway toward implementing the ambitious 2005 Agreed Statement, it floundered late in 2008 when North Korea refused to accept a verification protocol on its plutonium reprocessing activities. Unable to secure Chinese assistance in compelling North Korea to agree to the protocol, the administration’s efforts to negotiate an end to the North’s nuclear aspirations ultimately fell short.

*US Strategy: Limited Coordination*

From December of 2006 to 2009 the Bush administration adjusted its approach to denuclearization. As it sought to reach a major agreement with North Korea on the nuclear program, the US put less of an emphasis on coordination with Japan with respect to its policy on the Korean peninsula. The US’ general commitment to Japanese security remained intact. On policy toward North Korea, however, particularly the abductee issue, the US seems to have distanced itself from its ally.

Most controversially, the US appeared to downgrade its commitment to Japan’s abductee issue. While the administration had previously taken great care to demonstrate the US solidarity with Japan on this issue, the administration ultimately decided to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism as an incentive for denuclearization, delinking North Korea’s status on the list from the abduction issue. A major deal with North Korea in February 2007 saw the US agree to delist North Korea in exchange for a declaration of all nuclear facilities by the Kim regime. In
February 2008, Hill announced that the US would not link delisting to the abductee issue.\(^{128}\) In October 2008, a few months after the North issued the desired declaration, the US formally delisted North Korea despite its Japan’s protests. Bush sought to mitigate the impact of the move, stating that “I am aware that people want to make sure that the abduction issue is not ignored… the United States will not abandon you on this issue.”\(^{129}\) The State Department similarly made it clear that “Rescission of the State Sponsor of Terrorism designation will not diminish the United States’ concern over the matter of North Korea’s past abductions of Japanese citizens.”\(^{130}\) But Japanese officials would nonetheless view this as both a change in US strategy and a signal that the US was putting less of an emphasis on Japan’s concerns on the Korean peninsula.

The US partially stepped back from the careful consultation of the preceding years. Hill had a clear preference for the freedom of action offered by independent diplomacy, arguing that Tokyo would impede progress toward a settlement. After the Six-Party talks resulted in no tangible gains in December 2006, Hill agreed to begin bilateral talks directly with the North


Koreans outside of the Six-Party framework. These bilateral talks would leave Japan and South Korea out of the loop – a dynamic that Japanese officials distrusted and resented.

Despite the US decision to distance itself from Japan in negotiations with North Korea, it maintained a strong military commitment to Japan’s defense. In 2007, the US deployed a Joint Tactical Ground Station in Aomori Prefecture to expand BMD. It continued to invest in joint BMD research and to share intelligence with Japan from the newly installed X-band radar system. The US also maintained – and in some cases strengthened – defense consultation with Japan. Most notably, 2008 saw the establishment of new Defense Trilateral Talks, an annual military dialogue that brought together the US, Japan, and South Korea. Still, even this strong record of defense coordination was not unblemished; in 2008, the US decided to refrain from selling Japan its advanced F-22 fighter aircraft despite Japan’s strong interest in the platform.

Japanese Policy

These policy steps had clear implications for Japan’s fears of abandonment, both in general and with respect to concerns about the Korean peninsula. Hill’s approach to diplomacy

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and limited consultations created considerable anxiety throughout the government; a Ministry of Foreign Affairs official worried that “since the agreement in February came about as a result of talks between Hill and DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-kwan in Berlin, there could have been a backroom deal.” When Hill visited Pyongyang for bilateral talks later in mid-2007, Foreign Minister Aso Taro worried publicly about US resolve: “They must not go there in haste to get stared down. I don't want them to yield easily… Does this really lead to six-way talks?”

US delisting also fueled concerns about US commitment to Japan. Aso Taro, now Prime Minister, remarked that Japan was “dissatisfied” with the US decision. Former Prime Minister Abe echoed this sentiment, stating that the delisting “could affect the Japan-US alliance and the relationship of trust.” The Japanese House of Representatives similarly expressed alarm, saying the move “would disappoint many Japanese people and seriously affect the Japan-US alliance.” Finance Minister Nakagawa Shoichi (a confidant of Aso’s) called the move “extremely regrettable” and argued that the US had failed to adequately consult with Japan on its plans to delist the North. Foreign Minister Nakasone Hirofumi emphasized personally to Rice that the move would undercut Japan’s ability to resolve the abductee issue. The opposition


139 “Japan house committee urges US not to delist North Korea,” BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, December 8, 2007.


parties similarly expressed concern; DPJ Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama remarked: “The United States gave Japan the brush-off even though the government believes in the Japan-U.S. alliance as a linchpin.”

The Japanese government also came under increasing political pressure from its domestic opposition because of the decision. Japan was undergoing a period of political instability, with Prime Ministers rising and falling quickly after the end of the Koizumi administration. The official delisting in September 2008 did significant damage to the current Prime Minister Aso’s standing at home. Aso sought to downplay the development: “we have not lost any leverage at all.” But the DPJ took the opportunity to hammer Aso in the Diet: “To sum up, your attempt to work with the United States to resolve or make progress on the issue has collapsed.” The DPJ blamed the LDP’s reliance on the US and “sloppy” policy. Aso came under increasing pressure to adopt an independent stance on North Korea.

During this period, Japan was more reticent to align itself with US policy toward North Korea. In 2007, Japan refused to comply with the agreement developed to implement the Agreed Statement. It rejected US requests to supply heavy fuel oil alongside the US to induce North Korea to end its plutonium processing at Yongbyon, insisting that its concerns over abductees be adequately addressed first. Japan also refused a US request to provide food aid to North

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142 “Delisting will test govt’s clout,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 17, 2008.


145 “Delisting will test govt’s clout,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

Korea, again citing its dissatisfaction with the lack of progress on the abductee issue. Hill argued that “the Japanese had lost their way in dealing with others and... were often the delegation least in line with the others.”

Compelling China

China seems to have perceived the US-Japan break over abductees as a signal of faltering US resolve toward North Korea and weakening US-Japan ties. A prominent scholar at China’s top think tank commented that “The US administration has been working on this issue for years and doesn't want to see it remain unresolved when Bush leaves office early next year.” Another Chinese commenter remarked that Hill’s accommodative measures “clearly indicated that the United States had softened its posture toward the DPRK.” Similarly, a leading Chinese pundit argued that:

“In its eagerness to resolve the DPRK nuclear issue, the Bush administration has been making concessions to the DPRK lately... Thus, the mechanism of Japan-US-ROK coordination against the DPRK now exists in name only, which further highlights the fact that Japan has been marginalized in Korean Peninsula affairs.”

147 “US to ‘take DPRK off terrorist list soon,’” China Daily, October 10, 2008.


151 Pei Jun, ZBQ, October 9, 2008.
This view of US irresolution was accompanied by a limited willingness to support US pressure on North Korea. While China supported the US administration’s accommodation of North Korea in 2007, it ultimately refused to crack down on the North as talks foundered over verification in 2008. The US sought (and expected) Chinese assistance; State Department spokesman Sean McCormack stated that “there is an understanding among the parties… that fuel oil shipments will not forward absent progress” on verification.\(^{152}\) But China (and Russia) elected to continue their transfers to North Korea even as the North stonewalled on verification. A Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson emphasized that “the October 3 agreement outlines 1 million tons of heavy fuel oil in exchange for North Korea agreeing to disable its Yongbyon nuclear plant” rather than in exchange for a verification regime.\(^{153}\)

At the same time, China strengthened its ties to North Korea, shielding the North from US and allied pressure. Xi Jinping, then a Vice President, visited Pyongyang in 2008. The two countries announced a Friendship Year for 2009, planning “bilateral exchanges and cooperation in every field.”\(^{154}\) President Hu and Kim Jong Il “sent celebratory New Year’s messages to each other.”\(^{155}\) China agreed to help develop a free trade zone along its border with North Korea.\(^{156}\) Finally, Chinese trade with North Korea increased dramatically to compensate for a significant


\(^{153}\) “China Hints it will Continue Energy Aid To North Korea,” AsiaPulse News, December 18, 2008.

\(^{154}\) “North Korea-China ties to reach higher level – official,” Xinhua, December 26, 2008.

\(^{155}\) “China, North Korea show signs of stronger political ties,” BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, January 3, 2009.

\(^{156}\) “North Korea, China said planning free trade zone in border area,” BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, January 21, 2009.
drop in intra-Korean trade caused by the election of conservative President Lee Myung-bak in South Korea. Sino-North Korean trade increased from 1.7 billion USD to 2.79 billion USD in 2008.

6.6 2009-2016: Patient Coordination

**Background**

From 2009 to 2016, North Korean provocations intensified significantly. In 2009, the North left the Six-Party Talks, launched a long-range ballistic missile, and tested a second nuclear device underground. The UNSC responded with condemnation and new sanctions. 2010 saw North Korea undertake several significant provocations, sinking the *ROKS Cheonan* and shelling Yeonpyeong Island. Despite US efforts in 2012 to broker a deal trading food aid for the suspension of the North’s nuclear program, these efforts collapsed as the North conducted yet another long-range missile test. Subsequently, the North would conduct more missile tests than any point in its history from 2013 through the end of the Obama administration. Still more problematically, the North tested two additional nuclear devices of increasing magnitude, to widespread condemnation and strengthened UN sanctions.

**US Strategy: Strong Coordination**

The Obama administration moved to put a heavier emphasis on coordination with Japan in policy toward the Korean peninsula. In general, the administration coordinated more closely with Japan through the “Rebalance to Asia” announced in 2012 and the Defense Guideline
Revisions developed in 2014 and 2015. The Rebalance to Asia strategy fortified US commitment to the Asia-Pacific region in general and US alliances. These commitments were both economic, including the Transpacific Partnership, and military, particularly the pledge to move 60% of the US Navy into the Asia-Pacific. The new US-Japan Defense Guidelines developed a new standing “Alliance Coordination Mechanism” to facilitate continuous, whole-of-government consultation, information sharing, and policy planning in the alliance. They also upgraded the Bilateral Planning Mechanism and introduced new consultations in space and cyber.

The new administration reaffirmed the US’ commitment to the abduction issue in response to the backlash over delisting in 2008. Clinton made a point of visiting the families of the abductees upon her visit to Japan in 2009. Obama similarly emphasized that “North Korea's full normalization with its neighbors can only come if Japanese families receive a full accounting of those who have been abducted.” US senior envoy to North Korea Steven Bosworth acted upon this commitment, pressuring North Korea to meet with Japan to resolve the abductee issue in during a trip to North Korea in late 2009. In a 2010 SCC Joint Statement, the

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US committed to work with Japan to “address humanitarian issues” vis a vis North Korea in a veiled reference to the abductees.\textsuperscript{162} The 2011 SCC Joint Statement reinforced this point more explicitly in outlining updated Common Strategic Objectives. The US once again agreed to “resolve issues related to… humanitarian concerns, including the matter of abductions by North Korea.”\textsuperscript{163} In the same year, US special representative for North Korea policy Glyn Davies met with the abductees’ families and reassured them that the US would do whatever it could to solve the issue.\textsuperscript{164} Finally, in 2014, President Obama personally met with the abductees’ families.\textsuperscript{165}

The US continued to strengthen its commitment to defend Japan against ballistic missile attacks in word and deed. In 2014, the US deployed a second TPY-2 radar system in Kyogamisaki Communication Site.\textsuperscript{166} The US also pledged to add two more BMD-capable Aegis


ships to USFJ.\textsuperscript{167} 2015 saw the delivery of the first of these two ships. Finally, in 2016 the US deployed an air defense battery with the F Patriot Pac-2/3.\textsuperscript{168}

The US also continued to modernize its other military capabilities in Japan. The USMC replaced its aging CH-46 helicopters in Okinawa with MV-22 Ospreys beginning in 2011.\textsuperscript{169} In 2013, the USN began deploying P-8 maritime patrol aircraft in Japan to replace the P-3.\textsuperscript{170} The USAF introduced the Global Hawk unmanned aircraft in 2014, and in 2015, the US approved the sale of the Global Hawk to the JSDF.\textsuperscript{171}

The Obama administration’s strategy also included more consultation with Japan and South Korea. Bader recalls that the administration’s strategy aimed to:

\begin{quote}
Use diplomatic channels to achieve much more intense coordination with America’s allies. Under the Bush administration, there was a strong perception in Tokyo and Seoul that the United States was working more closely with China and saving drive-by consultations with them until after the fact.\textsuperscript{172}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{167} Marie-Louise Gumuchian, “US to send 2 more missile defense ships to Japan to protect from North Korea,” CNN, April 7, 2014.

\textsuperscript{168} The Military Balance 117 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017).

\textsuperscript{169} Travis Tritten and Chiyomi Sumida, “Ospreys will replace Sea Knights at Futenma, Marine Corps says,” Stars and Stripes, June 2, 2011.

\textsuperscript{170} David Cenciotti, “US Navy Deploys Newest Patrol Aircraft to Japan Amid China Air ID Zone Crisis,” The Aviationist, December 1, 2013.


\textsuperscript{172} Bader, Obama and China’s Rise, 28.
The new strategy sought a less unilateral approach toward North Korea; “Henceforth… we would not communicate with the North Koreans without first coordinating with Seoul, Tokyo, and ideally with Beijing and Moscow.”

The US intensified military and diplomatic consultation with Japan following North Korea’s attacks on the ROKS Cheonan and Yeonpyeong Island. 2010 saw the US orchestrate a major trilateral summit to develop a response to the North’s provocations in consultation with the Japanese and South Korean foreign ministers. The US also established the US-Japan Extended Deterrence Dialogue. In 2012, the US brought Seoul and Tokyo together to create the working-level Steering Group as a means of further institutionalizing consultation. It also launched assistant secretary-level trilateral talks. The US also initiated a regular trilateral defense ministers’ meeting in 2013 at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue to coordinate defense policies with Tokyo and Seoul.

Japanese Policy

The US renewed emphasis on coordination served as a welcome reassurance for Japan’s leadership. During the DPJ administration, Hatoyama reacted positively to Clinton’s meeting

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with the families of the abductees, claiming that it “was indeed much appreciated as a message.” Similarly, the Obama administration’s renewed support for Japan was lauded by the LDP after its return to power in 2013; Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio “expressed gratitude for the understanding and support by the United States.” Japanese perceptions were just as positive in the security sphere; Japanese leaders expressed confidence in the US security commitments to Japan even amidst the North’s heightened provocations.

During this period, Japan’s support for US policy increased. Japan took a series of major steps aimed at strengthening its military support for the US. Japan participated in several trilateral military exercises with South Korea and the US in 2012. It increased its ability to contribute to deterrence on the Korean Peninsula by moving to acquire F-35 attack fighters and new aerial tankers to allow for in-flight refueling. Still more importantly, the Japanese government agreed to reinterpret Article 9 of the Japanese constitution in 2014, permitting Japan to engage in “collective self-defense” to assist the US if it were attacked. This legislation gave

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Japan the legal support necessary for it to defend US warships in the waters near Japan and to intercept missiles launched at US forces or bases.

Japan also continued to cooperate with the US in strengthening TMD. In 2011, Japan formally announced that it would allow the transfer of missile defense technology to select China, a necessary step for strengthening cooperation with the US on the SM-3 Block IIA missile. In 2014, Japan followed this up by approving “The Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology” to facilitate this process further. Finally, in 2014 Japan laid out plans to increase its total Aegis destroyers from four to eight and began to express an interest in acquiring Aegis Ashore systems.

Japan’s diplomatic support for the US was also noticeably stronger. There were some initial disagreements; when the North tested a long-range Taepodong-2 missile in April of 2009, Japan split with the US, pressing for a full UNSC resolution rather than a UNSC presidential statement (as the US proposed). Japan was vocal about its displeasure with the US proposal, criticizing it publicly. Ultimately, however, despite this public spat, Japan agreed to support a Presidential Statement. More importantly, after the North’s second nuclear test in May 2009, sinking of the Cheonan and shelling of Yeonpyeong in of 2010, and missile and nuclear tests in

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185 “The Defense of Japan 2016.”

186 “The Defense of Japan 2016.”

187 Bader, Obama and China’s Rise, 32.

188 Bader, Obama and China’s Rise, 33.
2013 and 2016, Japan stood with the US in condemning North Korean provocations.\textsuperscript{189} Japan assisted with the development on UNSCR 1874 and 2270 (as a nonpermanent UNSC member in 2009 and 2016) and supported UNSCR 2097 and 2094.

Just as significantly, Japan supported the US efforts to engage directly with China to persuade it to amplify pressure on North Korea. In 2009 and again in 2011, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, special representative Stephen Bosworth, and Bader developed and delivered a pointed message to China that relied significantly on Japanese and South Korean support.\textsuperscript{190}

\textit{“The basic framework of the presentation was that North Korea’s continuing provocations had brought Washington to an “inflection point.” If North Korea’s nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missile programs continued and ended in deployments, it would inevitably cause the United States and its allies to alter their security posture to respond to the emerging threat. A North Korea with a growing nuclear arsenal and the means of delivering warheads would alter the calculations and plans of the allies to counter it. U.S. military deployments in the western Pacific would increase to counter the growing threat. Missile defense systems with the intent of ensuring America could not be targeted would be significantly expanded. While this missile defense capability would not be aimed at degrading China’s modest...”}

\textsuperscript{189} See, for instance: “US, Japan, South Korea condemn nuclear test by North Korea,” PBS, September 18, 2016.

nuclear deterrent force, it would inevitably have some effect in that regard. The United States, South Korea, and Japan would explore collectively and individually other means of defense... We visited Seoul and Tokyo en route, which both indicated strong support for the message.”

With Japan willing to strengthen its support for US military options, TMD, and trilateral cooperation with South Korea, the US was ultimately able to deliver a potent message to China that its failure to pressure the North could have serious ramifications for its security environment.

Compelling China

From 2009-2016, China grew increasingly alarmed about the consequences of North Korea’s provocations and their impact on US-Japan policy. As early as 2010, significant shifts were apparent in Chinese policy elites’ views toward North Korea. Zhu Feng, Executive Director of the China Center for Collaborative Studies of the South China Sea, argued that:

“Chinese dithering has incited Cold War-type concerns in South Korea, Japan, and the US... If North Korea fails to restrain itself, and China’s approach remains tantamount to coddling a dangerous, nuclear-armed state, strategic rivalry across East Asia might revive around a Washington-Tokyo-

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Seoul axis vis-à-vis a China-North Korea coalition. Not surprisingly, that prospect offers scant comfort to China.―192

The 2013 missile and nuclear tests further reinforced these perspectives among Chinese policy elites. In the lead up to the 2013 tests, Su Hao, the director of the Asia-Pacific Research Center at the China Foreign Affairs University, opined that the North’s actions were creating “a deepened trilateral military alliance among the US, Japan and South Korea [that] will be a great threat to China.”193 Following the tests, the China Daily ran an article by a Chinese scholar arguing that the US needed to upgrade its military commitments with Japan and Korea as a result of the North’s provocations to prevent a nuclear cascade, but that these commitments “have triggered concern among China, Russia and some of their neighboring countries, for the strengthening of the alliance between the US and Japan or the US and the ROK could change the geopolitics of the region.”194 As such, the scholar concluded, “the issue is not a matter just between the US and the DPRK” (an argument implicitly rejecting the PRC’s longstanding line that the nuclear issue was primarily a bilateral one between the US and North Korea. Other scholars expressed similar frustration with the North albeit with a less sympathetic reading of the US and allied reaction: “The [North’s activities] will bring more instability to the region, giving the US and other nations another excuse to increase their military presence and hold military exercises.”195 These sentiments continued to build as the North tested more missiles and nuclear


weapons in 2016; by 2017, Feng would argue that “today, many within China believe that Beijing must reevaluate its relationship with both Koreas, which essentially means abandoning Pyongyang.”

These perceptions were accompanied by a slow but significant upswing in Chinese support for efforts to pressure North Korea. In 2009, China agreed to the strongest sanctions yet on the North in the aftermath of its second nuclear test. After a period of inaction and noncooperation immediately following the North’s provocations in 2010, China again was persuaded to cooperate in passing still more stringent sanctions in 2013 (UNSCR 2087 and 2094) and 2016 (UNSCR 2270 and 2321). Perhaps most significantly, UNSCR 2321 curtailed North Korean coal exports, a major source of the North’s revenue. China also allegedly stepped up its enforcement of sanctions, ordering companies to cease importing coal from the North.

It is important to note that doubts remain about the sincerity of China’s commitment to these sanctions and to the US’ strategy of amplifying pressure on North Korea. There is little doubt that there have been and continue to be serious gaps in China’s implementation of UN sanctions. Nevertheless, China’s actions from 2009-2016 represent a clear shift compared to its far more lenient stance under the Bush and Clinton administrations.

6.7 Findings: Alliance Strategy and Alternative Explanations

Alliance Strategy

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These cases align relatively well with the expectations of the theory of alliance coordination. When strategic coordination was at its weakest from 1991-1996 and 2006-2009, Japanese support for US policy was relatively limited and China was less than cooperative in pressuring the North when the US called upon it to do so. From 1996-2003, 2003-2006, and 2009-2016, however, the US improved strategic coordination, Japanese support for US policy increased, and China was more inclined to support US efforts to pressure the North. As such, these cases support H1, H2a, and H2b.

The theory of strategic coordination, however, is insufficient as a comprehensive explanation for the complex dynamics on the Korean Peninsula following the Cold War. First, North Korean provocations may play an important and independent causal role. US efforts to coordinate with Japan were driven in no small part by advancements in the North’s nuclear and missile capabilities. When Japan upgraded its cooperation with the US in 1996, 2003, and 2009 it was considering not only the US’ amplified commitment and consultation, but the increased threat posed by North Korea’s missile and nuclear programs. Similarly, when China moved to increase pressure on the North in 2003, 2006, 2009, 2013, and 2016, the proximate cause may have been North Korean provocation in the form of missile and nuclear tests.

This presents a significant challenge for these case studies as tests of the theory of strategic coordination. Given that the cases do not control for the presence or absence of North Korean provocations and the extent of the North’s nuclear and missile capabilities, these cases can offer only limited, highly-qualified support for the theory of strategic coordination. Nevertheless, they do not falsify the proposed theory and highlight the futility of past US attempts to distance itself from Japan in its approach to the Korean peninsula.
The evidence from these five cases does not, however, support the arguments made by H3, H4, and H5. When US commitments were in doubt from 1991-1996 and 2006-2009, Japan hedged and was less willing to support US policy; subsequently, the US had less success in compelling China. This directly contradicts H3 and H4b. When the US adopted an approach that prioritized coordination, Japan does not appear to have been emboldened to either behave provocatively or free-ride; instead, it was more supportive of its ally, yielding better results in relations with China. This undercuts H3 and H4a. Similarly, while improved coordination created constraints for US policy by requiring the US to accommodate Japan’s concerns about its kidnapped citizens, this does not appear to have significantly impeded the US ability to compel China to change its stance toward North Korea. As such, these cases do not support H5.

**Domestic Politics**

The impact of shifts in Chinese domestic politics on its policy toward the Korean Peninsula is somewhat unclear. China underwent significant political transitions throughout the period of time in question, with major leadership transitions in 1993, 2002-2004, and 2012-2013. China was relatively uncooperative in 1993, moderately cooperative in 2002-2004, and quite cooperative from 2012 onward. As such, domestic political pressure does not seem to be associated with a more intransigent China.

**Reputation**

There is some reason to believe that the US intervention in Iraq in 2003 may have had an impact on China’s increased willingness to pressure North Korea. Some Chinese policy scholars suggested that the US tacit threat to use force should North Korea continue its nuclear program was made more credible by the US decision to oust Hussein. Overall, however, US military
interventions do not appear to be strongly associated with increased Chinese cooperation. The US engaged in a number of interventions between 1991 and 2016, during periods of both Chinese intransigence and cooperation. Similarly, the US’ decision to refrain from intervening in Syria in 2013 did not undercut the US’ ability to secure better cooperation from China in pressuring North Korea. Finally, it does not appear that the US’ withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol and ABM Treaty, or its rejection of the Rome Statute, undercut its ability to secure greater cooperation from China in the early 2000s.

*Other Explanatory Variables*

Other explanatory variables – the balance of interests, strategic culture, offense-defense balance, and regime-type – do not appear to explain the shifts in the dependent variable. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the US and China’s strategic culture, offense-defense balance, and regime-type all remained relatively unchanged following the end of the Cold War. Similarly, neither the US nor China underwent a fundamental shift in interests on the Korean Peninsula that would alter the balance of interests and thereby account for changes in compellence outcomes.
CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE US

7.1 Summary of the Findings

The case studies examined by this study indicate an association between changes in US alliance strategy, Japanese support for US policy, and the US success in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China. Broadly speaking, when the US has adopted stronger coordination strategies, Japanese has provided more support for US policy, and the US has been more successful in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China. When the US has distanced itself from Japan, Japan has been less willing to support US policy, and the US has had more difficulty reassuring, deterring, and compelling China.

This suggests that, as hypothesized by the theory of strategic coordination outlined in this study, US coordination – commitment and consultation – with Japan better enables the US to reassure Japan, preventing Japan from hedging and encouraging it to work through the alliance in relations China. This helps reduce the chances that Japanese hedging will undercut US reassurances; it also strengthens the capabilities the US can bring to bear in deterrence and compellence. Conversely, US distancing strategies create incentives for Japan to hedge and adopt independent policies toward China. Without Japan’s support, the US faces greater challenges in reassuring, deterring, and compelling China.


**Figure 6: Synopsis of Cases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Alliance Coordination</th>
<th>Japanese Support</th>
<th>Influence Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECS 1991-1996</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECS 1996-2009</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECS 2009-2013</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECS 2013-2016</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan 1991-1996</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan 1996-2001</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan 2001-2009</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea 1991-1996</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea 1996-2003</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea 2003-2006</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea 2006-2009</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea 2009-2016</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7.2 Theoretical Implications

**Strategy and Alliance Coordination**

Broadly speaking, this research reinforces the importance of studying strategy as a key variable in international relations. Canonical international relations theory arguably gives pride of place to structural factors, whether at the level of the international system (neorealism and
liberal institutionalism) or domestic political systems (democratic peace theory and neoclassical realism). These factors are clearly significant. It is difficult to account for many of the contemporary challenges in managing Sino-allied relations without, for instance, without considering the impact of shifts in relative power on allied threat perceptions and Chinese assertiveness. Nevertheless, the preceding research indicates that structural factors alone are insufficient to account for the significant variation in Chinese escalation. Instead, we must consider the impact of American agency – the vision and choices adopted by the US leadership – which do not seem to be predictably derived either from the US’ position in the international system or domestic political institutions.

It is important to be clear-eyed about the limitations of this approach, however. This paper has not probed deeply into questions about why US alliance strategy has evolved as it has. This approach has also necessarily put less emphasis on the agency of other states, particularly China. While the US and Japan can shape Chinese incentives as discussed above, it is important to recognize that in strategy (to paraphrase an adage about war) the other player gets a say. While the abstract model utilized to explain the impact of US strategy in this study helps to clarify the possible consequences of US actions, it cannot fully predict China’s response – exactly how China will choose to respond to novel threats or react to new assurances.

**Future Research: Beyond the US-Japan Alliance**

Significant gaps remain in our understanding of alliance management and strategy. This work points to several promising avenues for future research. First, these findings may be generalizable beyond US relations with Japan and China. If so, we should expect closer US coordination with other allies to yield similar results both for allied support for US policy and for
the effectiveness of US reassurance, deterrence, and compellence efforts with China. Strong commitment to and consultation with South Korea, for instance, should bolster the South’s support for US policy toward North Korea. Consequently, it should strengthen the US’ ability to succeed in deterring and/or compelling North Korea. Similarly, US coordination strategies with Israel should have the effect of encouraging Israel to work more closely with the US in managing relations with Iran. This should, in turn, increase the US’ ability to both deter and compel Iran. Both sets of trilateral relations could serve as interesting future tests of the theory of alliance coordination (and its alternatives).

While this study has explored commitment and consultation as mechanisms for securing an ally’s support, questions remain about the relative efficacy of various forms and manifestations of these measures. Are some techniques for demonstrating alliance commitment inherently more credible and powerful than others? What forms of consultation are best at synchronizing threat perceptions and providing reassurance to partners? This study has focused on alliance cooperation at the strategic (and to some extent, operational) levels; these questions require analysts to think more about alliance management at the tactical level.

Another promising avenue for future research would examine why allies (including Japan) react in different ways to concerns about abandonment. Why, in some instances, did Japan react to fears about US commitment by implementing a hardline, assertive policy to demonstrate its resolve toward China while at other moments it instead reacted by adopting an accommodative policy designed to appease China? Both strategies are viable (although problematic) reactions to fears of abandonment, but the theory of strategic coordination is indeterminate as to which option fearful allies will pursue.
7.3 Policy Implications and Recommendations

These findings have several implications for US strategy in the Asia-Pacific. Below, this study details a set of general prescriptions for the US-Japan alliance as well as issue-specific suggestions for allied policy in the East China Sea, Taiwan Strait, and Korean Peninsula.

General

1. Maintain and reinforce the US-Japan alliance

Despite President Trump’s rhetoric on the campaign trail about qualifying or reducing US alliances in Asia, the administration has behaved differently in office, reinforcing US commitments to Japan and other regional allies. The US should continue this course, making it clear that the US has no intention of downgrading its partnership with Japan. This policy should include repeated, public, vocal reminders of the US’ commitment. Words should be backed with action; the US should make it clear that there will be no reduction in the USFJ’s capabilities (and PACCOM more broadly) even as realignment continues.

The US should continue to reinforce the newly established alliance infrastructure as a means of solidifying consultation. The US needs to refine and reinforce the new Alliance Coordination Mechanism established under the 2014/2015 Defense Guidelines. Beyond the ACM, the US must seek to develop a joint command and control arrangement with Japan to ensure maximum coordination in the event of a military crisis or conflict.

2. Refrain from pressuring Japan on trade or host-nation support
Related to this, the US must avoid picking unnecessary fights with Japan over trade and host-nation support. Private discussions about these points of disagreement can and should occur, but not in ways that seem to undercut the US commitment to the alliance. The US must continue to make it clear that it will prioritize its security relationship with Japan over trade or financial concerns; the latter must never be pursued to the detriment of the former. The US should also consider the possible ramifications of withdrawing from trade arrangements with other significant regional security partners (KORUS) as this might generate concerns about US commitment to the region more broadly.

Indeed, a positive trading relationship with Japan should help reinforce the US’ security commitment. The US should consider rejoining the TPP or a modified version of it. Alternatively, a bilateral trade agreement with Japan might similarly serve as a way of reinforcing US partnership via economic means.

3. **Bolster PACOM survivability in the West Pacific**

One of the more pressing challenges facing the US’ ability to coordinate with Japan is the growing threat of China’s anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities. How can the US render its professions of commitment credible given increasingly capable Chinese ballistic missile capabilities which threaten the US’ forward-deployed forces and ability to access and defend allied territory? One option under consideration is to enhance the US’ offensive capabilities. If the US augments its ability to preemptively strike the missile batteries and other facilities in Chinese territory that support China’s A2/AD strategy, then the US can render its commitments to Japanese security more credible. Such capabilities undercut efforts by both allies to reassure China, however.
A less provocative approach is to bolster survivability and resiliency of US forces in Japan and the Western Pacific more broadly. The US should continue to invest in early warning systems (like the TPY-2 radar recently installed in Japan) that would allow US forces advance notice of a ballistic missile attack. Similarly, the US should continue to develop GPS jamming and spoofing equipment to degrade ballistic missile attacks. The US would be well-advised to strengthen programs like the Pacific Airpower Resiliency Initiative that are hardening airbases in Okinawa and Guam. West Pacific bases need to be upgraded with more hardened shelters, redundant and hardened runways, underground fuel storage, and materials for rapid runway repair. Finally, the US should continue to invest in STOVL aircraft (like the F-35B) for its West Pacific bases, as these aircraft are better able to operate from damaged runways.

4. *Coordinate more closely with Japan on strategy toward China, emphasizing an appropriate balance between deterrence and reassurance*

The allies must work to develop a synchronized and balanced regional strategy toward China. Such a strategy should be cohesive – based on a similar perception of the challenge and utilizing complementary means to accomplish a mutually agreed upon set of ends – and should not neglect reassurance or deterrence. The countries’ respective National Security Strategies (NSS) may serve as imperfect indicators of their grand strategies toward China but provide a useful starting point nonetheless. While both strategies emphasize the clear challenges posed by China’s military modernization and conduct in the East and South China Seas, there are remarkable divergences in several areas. The Japanese strategy emphasizes that “stable relations between Japan and China are an essential factor for peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region.” There is no such acknowledgment in the US’ discussion of the Indo-Pacific. The US strategy argues that China is pursuing a world order that is “antithetical to US values and
interests.” Despite the alarm over China’s conduct in the ECS, Japan’s NSS expresses no such conclusion.

Perhaps still more concerning is the divergence in the ways and means emphasized in each NSS. Japan’s NSS adopts a relatively balanced approach to managing relations with China, emphasizing the need for both reassurance and deterrence to stabilize relations with China: “Japan will strive to construct and enhance a Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests with China in all areas… [and] will seek to urge improvement in transparency of China’s military and security policies, and promote measures such as establishing a framework to avert or prevent unexpected situations.” At the same time, “Japan will urge China to exercise self-restraint and will continue to respond firmly but in a calm manner without escalating the situation.” The US NSS does not emphasize reassurance or restraint as a means of promoting stability, beyond a brief and vague reference to “seek[ing] areas of cooperation with competitors.” It correctly concludes that “experience suggests that the willingness of rivals to abandon or forgo aggression depends on their perception of US strength and the vitality of our alliances.” But it neglects the role of reassurance and restraint as a complementary tool to resolve and deterrence. In future, the US should work with Japan to more closely coordinate strategy toward China, ideally balancing deterrence and reassurance to manage relations with China.

*East China Sea*

1. *Maintain US commitment to Japanese administrative control of the Senkakus*

In the East China Sea, the US must continue to maintain its commitment to Japan’s administrative control of the Senkakus. Any wavering in US support for the security of the
islands could cause Japan to fear abandonment and to doubt the US broader commitment to the defense of Japan. This could, in turn, cause Japan to take escalatory measures to shore up its ability to secure the islands, perhaps militarizing the dispute by developing military installations on the islands themselves. The US should not (as some has suggested) take sides in the sovereignty dispute over the islands, however. The entry of the US (and the US-Japan alliance) into the sovereignty dispute would constitute a shift from the status quo that might provoke escalation on Chinese side driven by a desire to further buttress its own claims. It might also lead to more strident Chinese territorial assertions in the South China Sea driven by concerns that the US would abandon its neutrality on the sovereignty question in these disputes as well.

2. **Bolster US-Japan coast guard cooperation**

To reinforce this commitment and to bolster deterrence toward China, the US should assist Japan in developing its coast guard. Japan faces major challenges to its de facto control over the Senkakus given growing Chinese “hybrid” threats – including an increasingly powerful Chinese Coast Guard and Chinese maritime militia forces. The US can assist Japan by sharing technology and best practices, developing joint exercises, and strengthening joint planning for so-called “gray zone” contingencies. The US should focus on strengthening Japan’s ISR and less-than-lethal capabilities. By amplifying Japan’s white-hull capabilities, the US will both strengthen Japan’s ability to deter China and reduce Japan’s incentives to escalate the dispute by introducing naval assets (facilitating restraint and reassurance).

3. **Strengthen Japan’s amphibious capabilities**

In addition to strengthening Japan’s coast guard, the US should bolster Japan’s amphibious capabilities. The US should continue to hold joint exercises like Iron Fist that give the JSDF –
particularly the new Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade – the opportunity to train alongside the US Marine Corps. The US should encourage Japan to involve the Maritime JSDF more closely with these exercises as well. By increasing this Japanese capability, the alliance will contribute to Japan’s ability to deter China from pursuing a fait accompli occupation of the Senkaku Islands.

4. *Incentivize Japanese restraint*

The US should make it clear that its increasing assistance for the defense of the Senkakus should negate the need for Japan to adopt more provocative measures to secure the islands or assert its control. Specifically, the US should privately encourage Japan to continue to prevent nationalist activists from traveling to the islands. It should also express its support for Japan’s decision to refrain from militarizing the islands themselves; if Japan were to install military facilities on the Senkaku Islands, China would likely view this as a serious provocation and escalate the dispute.

5. *Develop crisis-stability measures for the ECS*

Finally, the allies should seek to develop several crisis-stability measures to reduce the chances of incidental or accidental escalation. The Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) provides a starting point for several measures designed to standardize communication and conduct of naval vessels to reduce the chances of a collision, clash, or other incidents. CUES currently only applies to gray-hull vessels – military naval forces – however; the allies should consider inviting China to include coast guard vessels in an addendum to the code. The allies should also welcome the recent establishment of an East China Sea hotline between China and Japan.
Taiwan

1. Continue consultations with Japan on Taiwan contingencies, despite relative stability

The relative stability of the Taiwan Strait since 2008 has made cross-strait relations less of an immediate concern for the allies than the East China Sea and the Korean Peninsula. Despite the positive trends in cross-strait ties, including deepening economic interdependence, there remains the potential for significant instability. The return of the DPP to power, Beijing’s growing political repression in Hong Kong, and the increasing military asymmetry between Beijing and Taipei all create sources of potential friction. As such, the US should not neglect to consult closely with Japan on developments in cross-strait relations. The allies should strive for a unified strategy toward reinforcing cross-strait stability while continuing to prepare the capabilities and contingency plans that may prove necessary should Beijing-Taipei relations take a turn for the worse. Peace and stability in the strait remain a key common strategic objective for the alliance.

2. Joint commitment to the Three Noes

As the allies strengthen Taiwan’s security, they should simultaneously bolster their efforts to reassure China and restrain Taipei from challenging the status quo. The “Three Noes” emphasized under the Clinton administration – no support for Taiwanese independence, no support for Taiwanese membership in intergovernmental organizations, and no support for “two Chinas” – was a key component of US reassurance during the Clinton administration. The allies should publicly and privately commit to these principles in an alliance context. This will clarify to Taipei that the alliance’s assistance should not be seen as a license to provoke China; it should also help assure Beijing that the allies will not seek to alter the cross-strait status quo.
Korea

1. *Maintain commitment to resolving abductee issue and addressing the North’s ballistic missile program*

   With respect to the Korean Peninsula, the US should continue to prioritize the abductee issue and missile development alongside its concerns about the North’s nuclear capabilities. Doing so will reduce the chances of another costly split between the allies that would undercut their efforts to secure China’s cooperation in pressuring the North.

2. *Maintain trilateral coordination with South Korea*

   The US should continue to reinforce trilateral coordination with Japan and South Korea. This trilateral cooperation serves the dual purposes of keeping both allies fully apprised of US threat assessments and strategy while also amplifying indirect pressure on China.

3. *Clarify to China that significantly strengthened anti-missile systems are contingent on North Korea’s nuclear capabilities*

   Finally, the allies should make it clear to China that they will have no choice but to continue developing missile defense systems so long as the North continues to engage in nuclear and missile development. If China wishes to prevent this, it will need to contribute more to international efforts to isolate and pressure the Kim regime.

7.4 Conclusion

   The US has fared best in relations with China when it has first forged a strong partnership with its ally in Tokyo. Coordination strategies have proved effective tools for securing Japanese
support for US policy toward China. Japan’s support has, in turn, improved the US’ ability to succeed in reassurance, deterrence, and compelling China. If the US is to remain a “Pacific power,” actively engaged in securing its interests in East Asia, then it should continue to strengthen its commitment and consultation with Japan.
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Received appointment through a competitive application process. Taught an intensive summer class session of Introduction to International Relations (Undergraduate).

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Worked with Syracuse Professors Matthew Bonham and Thomas Keck to prepare, grade, and lead discussion sessions for the following courses: America Foreign Policy (Undergraduate), Constitutional Law I (Undergraduate), and Constitutional Law II (Undergraduate).

POLICY ENGAGEMENT AND WORK EXPERIENCE

Junior Scholar, Carnegie International Policy Scholars Consortium, 2014-ongoing
Attended regular conferences, workshops, and networking events with other junior scholars and senior scholars and policymakers. Worked to develop the background, skills, and knowledge necessary to conduct policy-relevant security research and analysis.


Intelligence Intern, InterPort Police, 2014
Provided open-source intelligence collection and analysis on terrorism and organized crime in the Asia-Pacific and Latin America.

Intelligence Intern, AKE Ltd. Intelligence Department, 2013
Provided daily analysis on political and security risks for businesses in Asia.

Research Assistant, Syracuse University, Dr. Hongying Wang, 2012
Conducted research on Chinese soft power and economic ties in Asia and Latin America.

Graduate Assistant, Syracuse University: IR Capstone Seminar, 2012
Conducted research and developed briefings for a crisis simulation set in Syria.
Research Intern, Center for Advanced Defense Studies, 2009-2010
Provided research support on defense, technology, and policy for the director and staff.

PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES


POLICY MONOGRAPHS


ACADEMIC WORK IN PROGRESS

“The Strategic Implications of a South Korean Nuclear-Powered Submarine: Risks and Rewards” (with Jihoon Yu).
Under Review by the Naval War College Review.

Under review by Bloomsbury Academic as part of an edited volume.
BOOK REVIEWS


EDITORIALS

“She should South Korea Start Building Nuclear Submarines?” The National Interest, September 26, 2017 (with Jihoon Yu).


INVITED & GUEST SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS

Presenter, 18th Navy Shipboard Symposium: Roles and Tasks for ROK Navy to Build up South Korea as a Maritime Power, Busan, 2018
Invited by the Republic of Korea Navy and Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy to speak on South Korea’s aspirations to acquire a nuclear-powered attack submarine. Spoke alongside Dr. Koonryeol Seoh (Seoul National University) and Dr. Jiyoung Park (The Asan Institute for Policy Studies).

Panelist, The Future of East Asia After the Pivot, Cazenovia, 2017
Invited to speak alongside Frederick Carriere (Syracuse University) and Arnaud Blin (World Democratic Forum).
Invited to speak at a workshop developed by the Maxwell School in cooperation with the US State Department’s Office of the Historian. Discussed trilateral relations between the US, Japan, and China. Spoke alongside David Nickles (US State Department), Terry Lautz (Syracuse University), Dimitar Gueorguiev (Syracuse University), and Yingyi Ma (Syracuse University).

Speaker, *The US-Japan Alliance and the Taiwan Problem*, Syracuse, 2017
Invited to speak by the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration at their “Conversations in Conflict” seminar. Discussed the evolution of US-Japan cooperation in managing cross-strait relations.

Invited by Pacific Forum, Center for Strategic and International Studies and the US Embassy in Tokyo to give a series of talks on the importance of the US-Japan alliance at consulates, universities, and other venues across Japan. Spoke alongside Lauren Dickey (King’s College London), Miha Hribernik (Verisk Maplecroft), and Akira Igata (Keio University).

Invited by Pacific Forum, Center for Strategic and International Studies to speak on a panel about my research into US-Japan relations and the rise of China. Spoke alongside General Yamaguchi (Japan SDF), Wilfred Wan (Hitotsubashi University), Gary Sampson (USMC), and Joseph Lin (University of Pennsylvania).

Invited by the Moynihan Institute at Syracuse University to discuss Li Keqiang and Xi Jinping. Spoke alongside Peg Hermann (Syracuse University).

Speaker, *Territorial Disputes in East Asia*, Syracuse, 2012
Invited by the East Asia Program at Syracuse University to discuss territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas.

**CONFERENCES PAPERS**

**SAIS Asia Conference**, Washington DC, 2015
Paper: “Chinese Perceptions of the US-Japan Alliance”
ISPA Annual Conference, Montreal, 2014

ISA Annual Conference, Toronto, 2014
Paper: ““Good Citizen” or “Free Rider”? China’s Participation in Global Governance in Comparative Perspective.”

ISA Annual Conference, San Francisco, 2013

Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Toronto, 2012
Paper: “China’s Participation in Global Governance in Comparative Perspective.”

PROFESSIONAL/ACADEMIC SERVICE AND ASSOCIATIONS

- Peer Reviewer, Asian Security
- Member, International Studies Association
- Contributing Author, Global Risk Insights (2016-ongoing)
- Assistant Editor, Journal for Asian Politics and History (2013-2014)
- Young Leader, Pacific Forum CSIS (2012-ongoing)