



**Doing More and Expecting Less:  
The Future of US Alliances in the Asia Pacific**

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Based in Honolulu, the Pacific Forum CSIS ([www.pacforum.org](http://www.pacforum.org)) operates as the autonomous Asia-Pacific arm of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. The Forum's programs encompass current and emerging political, security, economic, business, and oceans policy issues through analysis and dialogue undertaken with the region's leaders in the academic, government, and corporate arenas. Founded in 1975, it collaborates with a broad network of research institutes from around the Pacific Rim, drawing on Asian perspectives and disseminating project findings and recommendations to opinion leaders, governments, and members of the public throughout the region.

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## **Acknowledgements**

This volume is the culmination of a Pacific Forum project to examine the state and future of the US alliances in the Asia Pacific, identify shared interests and concerns about their future, and develop policy recommendations on ways to adapt these alliances to a new security environment. Throughout the series of nine workshops with partner institutions in each allied country, we had many valuable and provocative discussions about the role of the alliances in the emerging security architecture in Asia. Especially rewarding were the often spirited debates about the changing role of the alliances in addressing emerging regional security concerns and the influence of a rising China. What we could not have anticipated early in the process was the dramatic changes that occurred in the region over the three-year period of the project. The contributions in this volume attempt to both summarize the broad outlines of the discussions while also synthesizing the conclusions with subsequent developments that have shaped the current security environment.

The Pacific Forum CSIS wishes to thank the MacArthur Foundation for its generous support and guidance throughout the project. Co-sponsoring organizations for the individual workshops also deserve special mention as they were most generous with time and resources to help ensure success. These include the Kokoda Foundation in Australia, the Research Institute for Peace and Security in Japan, the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security in the Republic of Korea, the Yuchengco Center – De La Salle University and the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence, and Terrorism Research in the Philippines, and the National Defence Studies Institute in Thailand. We are also grateful to the many security specialists, in and out of government, in Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Thailand, and the United States, who took time out of their busy schedules to join us in various locations around the region to help everyone gain a better understanding of the individual alliances, the prospects for greater collaboration among alliance partners, and the alternative approaches to maximizing the benefits of alliances for ensuring peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the views of the governments, the co-sponsoring institutes, or the group of workshop participants as a whole.

## Executive Summary

This volume examines the role of US alliances in the Asia Pacific, outlining their evolution and offering policy recommendations on how to adapt them to a changing regional security environment. To this end, a group of scholars and policymakers met at regular intervals over a three-year period to examine the alliances and the role they have played in shaping US engagement and the relationships among the alliance partners. While each alliance has its own history and each relationship has been shaped by events and circumstances, the system of bilateral alliances with the US has been a key part of the security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region for the past half century.

A close examination of the evolution of the alliances as a system (the “hub-and-spoke” model) since 1951 reveals several shifts in the rationale for maintaining the system. These changes are being driven by changing security perceptions, the increased role of multilateral organizations in promoting security cooperation, the broadening of the US alliance partnerships, the growing importance of other US security partners in the region, and the rise of Chinese influence in the region. Several common features emerge from these analyses. First, there is a growing expectation that the alliance partners will take on greater responsibility within the bilateral relationship, which challenges the fundamental asymmetry that has characterized each alliance. Second, there has been more collaboration on broader regional and global security issues. Third, there has been a tentative move away from the hub-and-spoke model to a more networked system. Fourth, China’s recent aggressiveness in asserting its territorial claims has led some alliance partners to seek reassurances from the US regarding its commitment to mutual defense.

Changing power relations in the region have created tension within the alliance system. Concern over the way forward has been rekindled as each alliance partner has been forced to reflect on the value of its alliance. The chapters on individual alliances describe how alliance partners have embraced a broader role in pursuing common interests at the regional and global level, especially in South Korea and Australia. In Southeast Asia, the authors describe both sides of the growing influence of China – for Thailand it has reduced the importance of the alliance with the US; in the Philippines it has provided a new rationale for reinvigorating the alliance relationship.

Since the end of the Cold War, alliance partners have at times struggled to find a common rationale for sustaining the alliance with the US. While Australia remains committed to its alliance with the US and continues to lead efforts to integrate the US into the multilateral architecture, recent debates over its long-term interests in the “Asian Century” have challenged long-held assumptions about the role of the US alliance in its security. Japan remains focused on military and defense cooperation rather than on broader security issues. More than any other US ally in Asia, South Korea has recognized the value of the alliance for promoting its interests in regional and global issues. Yet, that recognition has not translated into closer cooperation with Japan on regional security issues. The Philippines views itself as a strong supporter of the US engagement in Asia, but its primary interest is using the bilateral alliance to reinforce its own security agenda. Among the five allies, Thailand has been the most reluctant to acknowledge the influence of the alliance in shaping its security policies. Instead, the common impression is that

Thailand has maintained the alliance with the US to avoid creating difficulties with the US and sees little value in giving the alliance a more central role.

There is a wide range of options available to the US and its partners as they contemplate ways to adapt the existing alliance system to the regional security environment. The most ambitious version of alliance integration would be a system similar to NATO. On the other end of the spectrum, the US could reduce its reliance on the alliances, allowing them to atrophy while reinforcing the importance of “coalitions of the willing” and other regional organizations. This would force its alliance partners to take a more autonomous security posture. An intermediate approach that could lead to stronger alliance integration is to establish trilateral or quadrilateral coordination mechanisms. Reducing military deployments to the region would likely lead to more reliance on ad hoc functional responses to crises and increase the importance of ASEAN-centered regional organizations as the basis for the regional security architecture.

Lessons from this assessment provide important guidelines for thinking about regional engagement with Asia. Policy makers should lower expectations about what the system of alliances can deliver. The US must recognize that its influence has diminished as Asia has acquired its own economic dynamism. The large gap between Northeast and Southeast Asia security policies is a function of divergent priorities and the wherewithal to fund those needs. Finally, the US must recognize that its desire to privilege its alliances can diminish the roles for and prospects of other partners and acknowledge the suspicions that sometimes surround its alliances as well as questions about their ultimate goal and purpose. Five important considerations to keep in mind when thinking about the role of the alliances are:

- The US should not oppose efforts to integrate Asia. Attempts to forge Asian institutions respond to a perceived gap between the region’s economic and political influence.
- The US should champion principles, rules, and institutions that its allies, partners, and other regional governments would want to support.
- The US should be building an economy that nations wish to partner with.
- The US should develop boilerplate agreements that it can sign with allies and that they, in turn, can sign with each other and with other regional governments.
- The US and its partners should always invite China to join security programs, projects, and initiatives.

Promoting cooperation from within the system of alliances only makes sense if the US and its allies seek collaborative solutions to security issues, avoid alienating those outside the system, encourage responsible behavior by all alliance partners, and the results are compatible with ASEAN-based security institutions. There is an urgent need to ensure the alliances are seen as part of the solution to the security challenges in the region and not an anachronism that holds back progress. We should always remember that the system of alliances is a means to an end, not an end in itself.



# Chapter 1

## US Alliances in the Asia Pacific: the Evolving Narrative

Carl Baker

This edited volume had its genesis in a project to examine the role and future of US alliances in the Asia Pacific, to identify shared interests and concerns, and to develop policy recommendations on ways to adapt these alliances to a changing regional security environment. Over three years, the Pacific Forum CSIS convened a series of meetings that included the US and its allies in variable configurations: bilaterally, trilaterally (US-Japan-South Korea and US-Thailand- Republic of Philippines) and quadrilaterally (each trilateral and the Australians) for a total of nine workshops. Over the course of the project, a group of scholars from the various components of this framework examined the relationships among the US and each ally, and in the larger setting among all the alliance partners. While each alliance partner has its own history and each relationship has responded differently to events and circumstances, the system of bilateral alliances with the US has been a key component of the security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region for the past half century. In this chapter, we briefly examine the structure of the system and its evolution.

The network of bilateral alliances, often referred to as the San Francisco system, has been the defining feature of US engagement in the Asia-Pacific region since the end of World War II. The salient features of the system as summarized by Calder are 1) a dense network of bilateral alliances; 2) an absence of multilateral security structures; 3) strong asymmetry in alliance relations, both in security and economics; 4) special precedence to Japan; and 5) liberal trade access to American markets, coupled with relatively limited development assistance.<sup>1</sup> This basic structure has remained largely in place even though the rationale has shifted. Over the course of the 60-plus years since John Foster Dulles famously referred to the hub-and-spoke system in conjunction with the conference in San Francisco in 1951, there have been significant changes in the composition of the system.

As a starting point in understanding the role of the US system of alliances in the Asia Pacific, it is useful to take Stephen Walt's definition of an alliance: "a formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states."<sup>2</sup> Although Walt's definition does allow for a consideration of informal commitments based on tacit or verbal assurance, the five US alliance partnerships in the Asia Pacific examined in this volume have their basis in a formal mutual defense treaty. The key distinction made by Walt is that an alliance is an exclusive arrangement to defend the alliance partner against aggression whereas collective security agreements are inclusive and commit its members to oppose any act of aggression.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kent E. Calder, "Securing Security through Prosperity: the San Francisco System in Comparative Perspective," *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 17 No. 1 (March 2004), pp. 135–157.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Walt, Why Alliances Collapse or Endure, *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (1997), p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> Walt, p. 158.



A study of the evolution of the alliances as a system since 1951 reveals several shifts in the rationale for maintaining the system. The key action-forcing events were the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s and the focus on international terrorism in the early 2000s. During the Cold War, the focus was on mutual defense against the Soviet bloc and more generally the fear of global communism. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the rationale shifted to portraying the alliance system as the basis for a regional security order that enabled the development of multilateral security mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum. The third era, triggered by the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US, shifted the rationale to focus on the need for collective action in response to the threat of global terrorism, at both the local and regional level. The transition between eras was driven primarily by shifts in the US, but to some extent by the alliance partners as well. We will examine each of the three eras to evaluate how the shifts in rationale have impacted the system itself and helped shape the current security order.

In the course of our examination of the alliances, it became evident that a third systemic transition is currently underway. While the US has retained its role as the security guarantor in the region, it is clear that the cumulative effects of the two previous shifts coupled with changes in East Asia are having a significant impact on the role of the US and the alliance system in the regional security order by further altering the system and challenging its defining features. The primary factors driving these changes include the rise of Chinese influence in the region, changing security perceptions in the region, the increased role of multilateral organizations in promoting security cooperation, the broadening of the US alliance partnerships beyond mutual defense, and broadened relations between the US and other security partners in the region.

The impact of these changes on the alliance system is reflected in the individual essays that follow. Several common features emerge from these analyses. First, there is a growing expectation that the alliance partners will take on greater responsibility within the bilateral alliance, which challenges the fundamental asymmetry that has characterized each alliance for the past decades. Second, as the scope of security relations between the US and its partners has expanded, there has been a growth in collaboration on broader regional and global security issues. Third, there has been a move away from the hub-and-spoke model to a more networked system that coexists with the wide range of multilateral organizations that have evolved since the end of the Cold War. In some cases, this expansion has reduced the importance of the bilateral relationships of alliance partners with the US and creates a situation where security cooperation goes beyond the mutual defense treaty-based relationship that has defined the system until now. Fourth, despite the increased focus on multilateral approaches to security, the recent aggressiveness by China in asserting its territorial claims has led some alliance partners to seek reassurances from the US regarding its commitment to mutual defense – in other words, while some trends are moving the alliances away from their Cold War orientation and characteristics, recent developments are reinforcing its traditional purpose and structure.

## **The Cold War Alliances**

At the beginning of the Cold War era, the emergent rationale for the individual mutual defense treaties that form the basis of the alliance system in Asia was that they

were necessary to balance the threat from the Soviet Union and its allies. With the US-Japan alliance at the core, there are several competing, although not necessarily mutually exclusive, explanations for the origin and function of the system of alliances beyond its primary role of defending the allies from the Soviet threat. For Calder, the system was conceived to reassure “the nations of the region against a revival of Japanese aggression, while simultaneously ensuring sufficient economic opportunity for Japan that it could serve as a growth engine for the Pacific region as a whole.”<sup>4</sup> For Cha, the purpose of the alliances in Northeast Asia went beyond the reintegration of Japan to include the need to keep “rabidly anticommunist dictators who might start wars for reasons of domestic legitimacy that the United States wanted no part of as it was gearing up for a protracted global struggle against the Soviet Union.”<sup>5</sup> For Wu, the system served to constrain Japanese remilitarization.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of ancillary functions, it was generally accepted that the alliances were centrally focused on the bilateral mutual defense treaties with the US. Given the overwhelming military strength of the US and its status as a nuclear superpower, the system of alliances, which at the time included Taiwan and New Zealand, served as the basis for controlling Soviet and communist influence in the region. For their part, some allies used the alliance relationship with the US to keep the US engaged in the region and to provide some reassurance against US unilateralism.

While there were attempts to establish a multilateral framework for the treaties during the Cold War, none were successful. The most significant effort centered around the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), although the Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) treaty partnership and the Asian-Pacific Council (ASPAC) were also viewed by the US as potential mechanisms for supporting multilateral engagement.<sup>7</sup> The composition of the group comprising the system of alliances contracted following withdrawal of the US from South Vietnam in 1972 and the termination of diplomatic relations between the US and Taiwan in 1979. New Zealand, as a member of the ANZUS treaty partnership, was also considered to be a part of the system until 1984 when a disagreement over visiting rights for nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered ships of the US Navy to New Zealand ports led to a *de facto* dropping of New Zealand as an alliance partner. Nevertheless, the ‘hub-and-spoke’ alliance structure (with the United States as the ‘hub’, and Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia as ‘spokes’) was a major feature of the regional security architecture in the Asia Pacific.

By the end of the Cold War, general agreement had emerged that the system of alliances provided the foundation for the security architecture in the Asia-Pacific,

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<sup>4</sup> Calder, p. 136.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Cha, “Powerplay: Origin of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia,” *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Winter 2009/2010), p. 159.

<sup>6</sup> Wu Xinbo, “The End of the Silver Lining: The Chinese View of the US-Japanese Alliance,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (2005) p.118.

<sup>7</sup> See William Tow, *Tangled Webs: Security Architecture in Asia*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2008, p. 7 and Yu Jianjun, “America and Asia-Pacific Multilateral Security after the Cold War,” *International Review*, Vol. 44, (2006), pp. 2-4 and Akiko Fukushima, “Japan’s Emerging View of Multilateralism in Asia pp. 24-27, in *Security Multilateralism in Asia: Views from the US and Japan*, Ralph Cossa et al (Ed.) Berkeley: Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, 2009, for a discussion of perceptions regarding US efforts to form multilateral architecture during the Cold War.

especially in the absence of a multilateral collective security mechanism.<sup>8</sup> The general argument went something like this: the US security commitment to Asia, as demonstrated by its forward deployment of military forces and underwritten by the five bilateral alliances, had served as a deterrent to would-be aggressors and provided a stable and peaceful context for the development of security cooperation through multilateral organizations centered on ASEAN and economic prosperity through the development of free trade regimes while the US served as the primary market for goods manufactured in Asia.

### **The Alliances and the Emergence of Multilateral Security Organizations**

In the early 1990s and in the aftermath of the Cold War, there was a shift in thinking as countries in the Asia Pacific saw the changed security environment as offering new prospects for multilateral cooperation. The role of the United States and its bilateral alliances remained central as they prevented a security vacuum. This allowed the focus within the region to shift from global strategic balancing between the US and the Soviet Union to promoting regional stability through confidence-building initiatives and cooperation on a broader set of security issues.<sup>9</sup> In Northeast Asia, the 1991 Agreement on Reconciliation and Nonaggression and Exchange (ARNE) between the two Koreas was heralded as the opening of a new era of cooperation on the Korean Peninsula. In Southeast Asia, the expansion of ASEAN from six nations to 10 and the 1993 decision to create the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) extended ASEAN's emphasis on cooperation to the security realm and became the focal point for security engagement in the region.

With ASEAN as the focal point, the movement toward a larger role for multilateral organizations was seen to be more suited to security cooperation and the threats posed by nontraditional security issues such as transnational crime, piracy, humanitarian assistance/disaster response, nonproliferation, and environmental protection, than the old Cold War alliances. For some, the vision of the US underwriting Asian security through its system of alliances had lost its purpose and the US would have to adapt to the new realities of the region's emerging security environment and its more multilateral architecture.<sup>10</sup> This raised questions within the US about the relationship between the bilateral alliances and the multilateral organizations, the respective value of each to US interests in the region, and the capacity of the alliances to adapt to a security environment that was focused on internal security and transnational issues rather than global deterrence and territorial defense.

The US remained firmly committed to the alliances as the primary basis for its security engagement in Asia. However, it did recognize a role for multilateral organizations in promoting increased cooperation and addressing emerging security concerns in the post-Cold War security environment. In 1992, then US Secretary of State

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<sup>8</sup> Calder, p. 141.

<sup>9</sup> Masafumi Kaneko, "Security Communities through Enhanced Security Cooperation: The Implications for an Asia-Pacific Regional Security Framework," *International Public Policy Research*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2001), pp. 265-284.

<sup>10</sup> William Tow and Amitav Acharya, *Obstinate or Obsolete? The US Alliance Structure in the Asia Pacific*, Working Paper 2007/4, Australia National University, December 2007.

James Baker somewhat grudgingly argued that connecting the hub-and-spoke system, which had fostered stability and economic dynamism for over four decades during the Cold War, had “given form to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process.”<sup>11</sup> He went on to argue that Japan remained the “keystone” of US engagement in the region and “ties with Japan, South Korea, ASEAN, and Australia are the stabilizing and strengthening spokes in the fan. Multilateral organizations would complement, but not replace the alliance network; the bilateral security alliances created a stable environment for multilateral economic cooperation.”<sup>12</sup>

By 1995, the US was more assertive about the positive role played by its bilateral ties and the alliances. The US security strategy for East Asia – articulated in four separate reports throughout the decade – portrayed the alliances as the underlying framework on which the regional security architecture was based, going beyond simply filling the vacuum left over from the Cold War. “These bilateral relationships address numerous security concerns that are often unique to individual nations in the region. Taken as a whole, however, they have formed a strong regional network promoting peace and security ... These bilateral commitments remain inviolable, and the end of the Cold War has not diminished their importance. Moreover, United States’ interest in developing layers of multilateral ties in the region will not undermine the significance of core bilateral ties.”<sup>13</sup>

Despite reassurances by the US, there was considerable concern among analysts that the bilateral alliances and multilateral organizations were in direct competition as the basis for the regional security architecture throughout the 1990s. In Australia, there was a concerted effort to preserve the bilateral alliance with the US while aggressively seeking to “pursue shared security and strategic interests with its Asian neighbours, applying ‘middle power diplomacy’ to develop a collective Australian and ASEAN sense of security and well-being.”<sup>14</sup> When Malaysia Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed introduced the idea of creating an East Asia Economic Caucus, the US viewed it as intended to undermine the alliance network. When the effort failed, some blamed the inability to form effective “truly Asian” regional institutions directly on the US alliance system. These perceptions helped create a sense of zero-sum competition with the US bilateral alliances seen as operating at odds with multilateral institutions in Asia.<sup>15</sup>

Over time, as countries in the region came to realize that both frameworks served their national interest and scholars offered the rationale for justifying the maintenance of both, a new perspective emerged and concluded that the two mechanisms were compatible. For Cha, the explanation lies in the functional utility of each in performing separate security-related tasks.<sup>16</sup> For others, the explanation centers on the fact that the US has sought to maintain the alliance network in the interest of ensuring that the multilateral

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<sup>11</sup> James Baker, “America in Asia: Emerging Architecture for a Pacific Community,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 5 (Winter 1991/1992) p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Defense. *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region*. Office of International Security Affairs. Feb. 1995, p. 5-6.

<sup>14</sup> Tow, *Tangled Web*, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Victor Cha, “Complex Patchworks: U.S. Alliances as Part of Asia’s Regional Architecture,” *Asia Policy*, No. 11, (January 2011) p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 41-44.

security framework emerging in Asia is not harmful to US national interests.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile others, especially the Chinese, have insisted that the alliances are a Cold War anachronism that should be abandoned, although they have stopped short of suggesting an alternative arrangement.<sup>18</sup>

By the end of the decade, the official US characterization of the regional security architecture placed more emphasis on the positive role its network of alliances played in promoting cooperation and the creation and growth of multilateral organizations, while distancing them further from their Cold War origins. The 1998 US East Asia Strategy Report states that the:

US alliances in the region have long served as the cornerstone of regional security. In contrast to Cold War-era alliances, they are not directed at any third power but serve the interests of all who benefit from regional stability and security. The United States views the reaffirmation and enhancement of these alliances over the past three years, and the concurrent and complementary development of constructive ties with non-allied states, as evidence of our continued confidence that an integrated network of security relations is in the mutual interest of all Asia-Pacific nations.<sup>19</sup>

Some argued for creating new forms of security cooperation within the alliance system, much as had been advocated in the early 1990s for promoting economic cooperation from the strength of the bilateral alliance system. For example, Ralph Cossa coined the term “virtual alliance” in arguing for expanded security cooperation between the US and its two Northeast Asian allies, Japan and South Korea, as means to increase “prospects for stability in East Asia.”<sup>20</sup> Dennis Blair, who at the time was the commander of US Pacific Command, and John Hanley went further and suggested moving beyond the idea of the hub-and-spoke model to create a system that would transform the bilateral arrangements into a more open web of security relations. They argued that this approach would allow the region’s countries to move past the “zero-sum, balance-of-power mindsets,” expand cooperation beyond the alliance partnerships, and help the region address its common threats.<sup>21</sup>

At the turn of the century, the US system of alliances remained at the center of US engagement in East Asia, but there was a growing recognition of the need for multilateral cooperation in dealing with nontraditional security issues. The acceptance was partly driven by the transnational nature of these issues along with the need to integrate a “rising China” and other security partners into the region’s security architecture. Repeated reminders from Southeast Asia drove home the message to the US that it should avoid

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<sup>17</sup> Park, Jae Jeok, “The US-led Alliances in the Asia Pacific: Hedge against Potential Threats or an Undesirable Multilateral Security Order?” *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (May 2011), pp. 152-154.

<sup>18</sup> Avery Goldstein, “The Diplomatic Face of China’s Grand Strategy: A Rising Power’s Emerging Choice,” *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 168 (December 2001), pp. 847; Wu, pp. 125-126.

<sup>19</sup> Department of Defense. *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region*, Office of International Security Affairs, 1998, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Ralph A. Cossa, “U.S.-Japan-Korea: Creating a Virtual Alliance” *PacNet #47*, Dec. 9, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Dennis C Blair and John T. Hanley Jr. “From Wheels to Webs: Reconstructing Asia-Pacific Security Arrangements,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Winter 2001), pp. 7-17.

making allies and other potential partners choose between the US and China – something that was seen as a prelude to a zero-sum competition that was undesirable to Southeast Asian nations.<sup>22</sup> There was also a growing discomfort with the criticism that the alliances were anachronisms that risked obsolescence unless they were better integrated into the ASEAN-led multilateralism that was spreading throughout the region.<sup>23</sup>

## **US Alliances and War on Terror**

While the events of 9/11 ushered in a new era in US relations with the world, its bilateral alliances remained the cornerstone of its engagement in Asia. The “War on Terror” provided new purpose for the alliances as the US sought support for its global efforts to combat terrorism. Significantly, there was general resistance to regional strategies in the US response. In the case of the Philippines, it brought focus on internal security matters for the alliance, although the same did not occur in Thailand. For Japan, Australia, and South Korea, the focus shifted to a more general call for supporting US war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. By extension, there was an increased effort to regionalize and globalize the alliance relationships by expanding the scope of cooperation on a wider range of issues. To some extent, the US was expecting its alliance partners to fulfill their commitment to mutual defense by supporting US global security interests. This scared some while it encouraged others to take up the challenge. Significantly, while the US was prepared to broaden its range of security relationships, it still privileged its alliances and looked to those partners as first among equals.

If the general shift in the 1990s was toward inclusiveness, the thinking in the US shifted toward coalitions of the willing in the aftermath of the events of 9/11. To some extent, this reflected a loss of faith by the US in the ability of multilateral institutions to respond to what was generally viewed as a direct, existential threat. While some critical analysts have viewed this as a reflection of US unilateralism,<sup>24</sup> the 2002 *National Security Strategy* characterized it as a more gradual evolution. It states that “We are also guided by the conviction that no nation can build a safer, better world alone. Alliances and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations.... Coalitions of the willing can augment these permanent institutions.”<sup>25</sup>

What emerged in Asia was a policy that called for a new level of consultation with the traditional allies. In an Oct. 24, 2003 *Wall Street Journal* article, then US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice argued:

The centerpiece of the president’s strategy is our strong forward presence and our commitment to our allies. While US alliances with Japan, Australia, South Korea, the

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<sup>22</sup> Alice Ba, “Southeast Asia and China” in *Betwixt and Between: Southeast Asian Relations with United States and China*, Evelyn Goh (ed.), Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) Monograph 7, Singapore Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2005, pp. 93-18.

<sup>23</sup> Tow and Acharya, pp. 12-21.

<sup>24</sup> See for example, Xu Weidi, “Unilateral Security? U.S. Arms Control and Asian-Pacific Security,” *The Nonproliferation Review* Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 2002), pp. 1-5; Bradley Podliska, *Acting Alone: A Scientific Study of American Hegemony and Unilateral Use-of-Force Decision Making*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> The quote is taken from President Bush’s preface to the 2002 National Security Strategy.

Philippines and Thailand were formed in response to a common threat 50 years ago, they have always also been about common values and aspirations that bond free nations. Our allies know that we are committed to their defense and to these values, and that is why they have chosen, each in their own way, to give broader regional and global scope to our security cooperation.<sup>26</sup>

The reluctance by the US to institutionalize cooperation among its Asian allies in the post 9/11 era was also partly driven by a concern with the perception that doing so would be seen as trying to prevent China from assuming a more prominent, positive role in the region and in the world. Instead, the focus was on bringing China in as a bilateral partner. The underlying assumption was that even though the alliances could serve as a hedge against the emergence of a less cooperative or even openly confrontational China, the best alternative was to integrate China into the regional and global security architecture to address the broad security challenges associated with countering the terrorism threat. This approach was best articulated in 2005 when Robert Zoellick stated that “it is time to take our policy beyond opening doors to China’s membership into the international system: We need to urge China to become a *responsible stakeholder* in that system.”<sup>27</sup>

There was an increased reliance on what Cha refers to as “ad-hoc coalitions” that were created to solve specific problems.<sup>28</sup> While the success of initiatives such as the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism reinforced the US faith in forming coalitions of the willing in the wake of 9/11, it was through the response to the Boxing Day Tsunami in December 2004 that the US was able to show the value of such a coalition as a model for humanitarian action. Faced with the need for an immediate response, the US and its partners (Japan, Australia, and India) responded in a rapid and efficient manner, thus demonstrating the value of these ad hoc type arrangements in responding to crises. The value of such a coalition was reinforced in the response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in December 2008 and the 3/11 triple disaster in Japan in 2011. As Cha argues, the value in the ad hoc approach to coalition building is that it avoids the classic collective action problems of membership and rulemaking while creating habits of consultation and the basis for institutionalized responses.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently, these events have bolstered the US argument for sustained support for its Asian alliances as the core element of a regional humanitarian assistance/disaster relief capability.

Official US strategy and policy guidelines during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century reflect a growing bipartisan emphasis on the alliances as the core for sustained US engagement in Asia and the basis for collective action that extends to willing partners. The 2004 *National Military Strategy* establishes “strengthen[ing] alliances and partnerships to contend with common challenges” as one of its four strategic objectives.<sup>30</sup> It continues by

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<sup>26</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Our Asia Strategy.” *Wall Street Journal*. Oct. 24, 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Zoellick, “Wither China: From Membership to Responsibility,” Remarks to National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, New York City, Sept. 21, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Cha, *Complex Patchworks*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p.40.

<sup>30</sup> The other three objectives are to secure the United States from direct attack, secure strategic access and maintain global freedom of action, and establish security conditions conducive to a favorable international order. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America: a Strategy for Today; a Vision for Tomorrow*, Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004, p.9.

asserting that “An integrated global presence and basing strategy serves to strengthen existing alliances while helping to create new partnerships. Strengthening regional alliances and coalitions helps to create favorable regional balances of power that help bring pressure to bear on hostile or uncooperative regimes.”<sup>31</sup> The 2006 *National Security Strategy* states that “America will lead in this fight [against terrorism], and we will continue to partner with allies and will recruit new friends to join the battle.”<sup>32</sup> It goes on to argue that while the US should engage multilateral organizations in Asia, “this institutional framework, however, must be built upon a foundation of sound bilateral relations with key states in the region.”<sup>33</sup> The five allies make up most of those key states. The US Department of Defense’s 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* observed that the alliances “make manifest the strategic solidarity of free democratic states, promote shared values and facilitate the sharing of military and security burdens around the world.”<sup>34</sup>

By the end of decade, the US view of the security architecture had become more solidified around the notion that the five alliances could serve as the core for a whole range of security-related activity that included other security partners. The inaugural *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR)* in 2010 states that “We will build a network of alliances and partnerships, regional organizations and global institutions, that is durable and dynamic enough to help us meet today’s challenges, adapt to threats that lie ahead, and seize new opportunities.”<sup>35</sup> The 2010 *National Security Strategy* is equally confident that the Asian alliances serve as the foundation for regional security. It states: “Our alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand are the bedrock of security in Asia and a foundation of prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. We will continue to deepen and update these alliances to reflect the dynamism of the region and strategic trends of the 21st century.”<sup>36</sup> The continuity from the early years of the Bush administration to the Obama administration reflects firm bipartisan support for sustaining US commitment to the alliances as the basis for US engagement in the region.

Meanwhile, the rapid changes that occurred across the political and economic landscape of Asia over the past 20 years had a significant impact on the alliance system. As these changes occurred, the US consistently placed the system of bilateral alliances at the center of its engagement in the region. In the US narrative, the network of alliances has provided the regional stability that has undergirded the rapid economic growth the region has experienced.<sup>37</sup> The alliances have provided the entry point for US engagement in the region, which has centered on military cooperation through a series of military exercises that begin with the allies and expands outward to a range of security partners.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington: The White House, 2006, p.12.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> *Quadrennial Defense Review*, Washington: Department of Defense, 2006, p.6.

<sup>35</sup> *Leading through Civilian Power: the First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*, Washington: US Department of State, 2010, p.19.

<sup>36</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington: The White House, 2010, p.42.

<sup>37</sup> Calder, p. 149.



However, the regional security architecture that evolved throughout the 1990s and intensified after Sept. 11 was very different from the sustained power balancing strategies of the Cold War. US allies, as beneficiaries of the economic prosperity provided by the alliance system, wanted to retain strong security relations with the US but also wanted to take advantage of the economic growth in China and the sense of community provided by ASEAN. In addition, especially for Korea and Japan, the alliance relationship has become increasingly symmetrical rather than hierarchical as the US sought a more equal partnership in the form of cost-sharing to preserve the US military forces in the region.<sup>38</sup>

While each ally (with perhaps the exception of Thailand) places the alliance with the US at the center of its security policy, each one also recognizes that the recovery from the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis was driven by regional responses rather than by intervention by the United States or Europe. The financial crisis in 2007 brought into relief the growing importance of China as the source of economic stability in Asia. While the US and Europe struggled with recovering from the effects of the downturn, the Asian economies rebounded much quicker. The quick recovery by Asian economies initially led to some speculation that they were decoupling from the West, which would have implications for the longstanding role of the US alliances in providing the favorable security environment for economic growth in Asia. That did not occur as the West has continued to recover even as many of the Asian economies continue to grow at a more rapid pace. Nevertheless, the rapid growth of ASEAN-based multilateralism coupled with the growth of intra-Asian trade has raised new questions about the need or desirability of relying on the US system of alliances as the basis for regional peace and stability. The changing nature of the alliance relationships and the emerging challenge by China to the US-led security order in the region were significant factors in our consideration of the role of alliances to the future of East Asia's security architecture.

The discussions held with alliance partners as part of this project revealed that the allies remain committed to sustained US engagement in the region. While there was some concern over the US tendency toward unilateralism in the early years of the George W. Bush administration, there was a general recognition that sustained US engagement in the region was in the interest of countries facing an increasingly influential China. The underlying issue was the extent to which the US was willing to accept the role of China in the emerging balance.

### **The End of Alliances or a New Era?**

By the end of the first decade of the new century, the US security focus in Asia had shifted away from the global war on terrorism and back to a consideration of how the alliances serve the broader mutual interests of the US and its allies. The 2010 *National Security Strategy* states that “We are working together with our allies to develop a positive security agenda for the region, focused on regional security, combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, climate change, international piracy, epidemics,

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<sup>38</sup> Tow and Acharya, pp. 30-31

and cybersecurity, while achieving balanced growth and human rights.”<sup>39</sup> From this perspective, the US was prepared to continue in its efforts to retain its role as the leader in defining the security agenda in Asia. However, Asia has changed. Differences over territorial claims have returned with a vengeance, ASEAN-centered multilateralism has grown to include several overlapping institutions, the US has expanded its security relations to new partners beyond the alliances, and China has become more influential throughout the region. In the process, the US alliance system is being challenged. For some its role as a hedge against a more aggressive China has become more important. For others, the system is becoming less relevant as the US must begin to accept that it must share power with others, especially China.<sup>40</sup>

There was a general sense in several of the discussions with alliance partners during the project that while the US continues to be the dominant security actor, China has become the center of the economic and trade relations in the region. Is this growing bifurcation between economic and security interests leading to a third systemic shift in the alliance network? In the aftermath of the global financial crisis in 2007, China has grown increasingly confident in its ability to influence both regional economic and security dynamics while the US has shown increased interest in realizing the economic benefits that its role as security underwriter over the past decades have provided. Although the US continues to portray the network of alliances as the basis for peace and stability in the region, China and others are attributing renewed tensions over maritime territorial disputes in the region to US interference and support for its alliance partners – asserting that “the (alliance) tail is wagging the (US) dog.” In other words, the alliances are now being portrayed as part of the problem rather than the solution to Asian security. The individual responses by alliance partners to these competing narratives are addressed in the following chapters. Here we will address the systemic issue of the role of the alliances as the basis for peace and stability in the region.

The debate on the changing shape of Asian security architecture is not over, but there are perceptible changes underway that were uncovered in this project that provide some insight to its eventual contours. The shift in relative power between the US and China does not allow a simple reversion to “the good old days” of US primacy in the region. The rapid growth of China is changing the calculus. Among international relations analysts, there is a cottage industry that has emerged in an attempt to understand what is happening in Asia. The worst fear is that if the US withdraws its military, this competition for primacy will lead to a new security dilemma in the region – an extension of the argument for sustaining US military presence in the region, dating back to the end of the Cold War.<sup>41</sup> One of the most vocal alternative voices has been Hugh White who argues that the option for hedging behind US primacy is no longer an option and that if the US refuses to accept China as a more equal partner it will actually sacrifice peace and stability

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<sup>39</sup> US National Security Strategy 2010, p. 42.

<sup>40</sup> Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why American Should Share Power*, Collingswood, VIC, Australia, Black Inc., 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Christensen, “China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia,” *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999) pp. 49-80.

in the region.<sup>42</sup> He believes there is a third systemic shift underway and it requires a significant rethinking of the system of US alliances as the basis for peace and security in the region.

Over the past two decades there has been an expectation that the Asian alliance partners should contribute more to sustain the relationship. The extent of progress and prospects for this happening in the individual alliance relationships are laid out in detail in the chapters of this volume. In general, as the gap between the US and the alliance partners in Northeast Asia has narrowed, there has been an expectation that each partner should shoulder more of the cost associated with its own defense. This has come in the form of both increased defense budgets and a demand for burden-sharing to sustain the presence of US forces in the region. Discussions of roles, capabilities, and missions are now a staple of bilateral meetings.

There has also been an increased expectation for cooperation among the partners – moving away from the hub-and-spoke model to a networked web centered on the alliances. While there has been some movement toward an acceptance of more equitable burden-sharing by some of the alliance partners, there has been very little in the way of networking. There is a trilateral dialogue between the US, Australia and Japan, and hopes for a similar effort with Washington, Canberra, and Seoul, but other arrangements remain unexplored. Indeed, we believe our US-Thailand-RP trilateral discussion was the only one of its sort; the same can be said for our quadrilateral meetings. Apart from constitutional constraints that Japan faces, domestic politics in South Korea have impeded cooperation with the US off the Korean Peninsula. Increased tensions between Japan and South Korea also contributed to the reluctance on all sides to promote more trilateral cooperation. As a result, while there has been an expansion in the cooperation between the US and both of its alliance partners in Northeast Asia, the cooperation has been limited to bilateral actions, which have served to strengthen the bilateral ties, but done little to enhance the systemic value of the overall alliance system. It is unclear what domestic audiences in Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand will accept when it comes to cooperation with the US beyond defense of the homeland.

In Southeast Asia, while the alliance partners have consistently expressed concern with being forced to choose between China and the US, there is a growing recognition that reliance on the US as the security guarantor and China as the economic engine is not sustainable. If the US alliance system is really the basis for the security architecture, then the US should be able to realize benefits from the economic growth that has been generated by the public good it offers in the form of a supportive security environment. By the same token, if China's economic engagement in the region is dependent on a stable security environment, it should be contributing to the public good that ensures that stability. Part of the problem is a lack of trust between the US and China – each doubts that the other is actually providing a public good – while the reluctance by countries in the region to choose one or the other encourages inaction on all sides. For all the complaints

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<sup>42</sup> Hugh White, "Power Shift: Rethinking Australia's Place in the Asian Century," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2011), pp. 81-93.

US allies have with Washington, our discussions revealed precious little trust among those same alliance partners toward Beijing.

Not surprisingly, both the US and China have become increasingly dissatisfied with the current arrangement. The growth in Chinese military capability has created concern that China will seek to dominate the region. This elevates pressure on the US to demonstrate its continued commitment to a strong military presence in the region and creates the potential for a separate security dilemma involving the US and China. Meanwhile, by introducing the concept of strategic trade in its 2010 National Security Strategy, the US has made increased economic interaction and trade a key component of its security strategy in Asia. Hence, White's argument that the best solution is to develop a "concert of powers" centered on shared influence by China and the US.

The changing power relations in the region have created tension within the system of alliances. Concern over the way forward has been rekindled as each alliance partner has been forced to reflect on the value of alliance. In the individual chapters that follow, some authors describe how alliance partners have embraced a broader role in pursuing common interests at the regional and global level, especially in South Korea and Australia. In Southeast Asia, the authors describe both sides of the growing influence of China – for Thailand it has reduced the importance of the alliance with the US, while in the Philippines it has provided a new rationale for reinvigorating the alliance relationship.

There are others who see continuity in the evolving security architecture. In an article that seeks to rationalize the sustainability of the current alliance system, Victor Cha argues that the approach to security issues that currently exists between the alliances and the various multilateral organizations has served to mitigate security dilemmas. The organizational complexity and the functional approach to security issues have created a positive security environment where ad hoc cooperation based on the alliance relationship has led to improved multilateral cooperation while avoiding the problem associated with collective action.<sup>43</sup> While there is value in having more cooperation, there is not necessarily a need to reduce the centrality of the bilateral relationship among alliance partners since the complex overlay of institutions creates a degree of uncertainty. Therefore, we should not expect big changes. The alliances will continue to serve as the basis for security in the region and fill a functional role for which they are best suited such as rapid response to disasters and reducing the likelihood of emergent threats.

Cha is optimistic about the positive influence ad hoc responses by alliance coalitions can have on institutionalizing multilateral cooperation; others are more skeptical. After nearly two decades of attempting to transition from what Tow and Acharya refer to as alliance exclusivism in favor of a broader regional security agenda established through ASEAN-based multilateralism – what they refer to as "alliance mutuality" – the challenge remains unfulfilled. They believe that the region will remain unable to move beyond the constraints of exclusivism as Asia continues its integration process leaving the Asian partners allied to the US, a country that is outside their naturally defined community.<sup>44</sup> The

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<sup>43</sup> Cha, *Complex Patchworks*.

<sup>44</sup> Tow and Acharya, p. 27.

fact that China and others continue to portray the US as an outside balancer that is ultimately detrimental to community building efforts in Asia will exacerbate the problem.<sup>45</sup> The best option for the US and its alliance partners is to aggressively seek a multilateralization of the alliances through trilateral and quadrilateral cooperation among the allies and security partners in the region – first through dialogue and then through operational activity. Of course, this activity could be interpreted by an anxious China as another, more dangerous form of exclusivism aimed at containment.

As each alliance has modernized, there is little indication that much consideration is being given to integration among the alliance partners. Yet, each alliance partner seems reluctant to jettison its alliance relationship with the US. As part of the project that motivated this volume, a group of Pacific Forum Young Leaders explored the feasibility of establishing a caucus of alliance partners that would help to ensure that the US stays actively engaged in the region by integrating the alliance relationships into the emerging institutionalization of multilateral organizations. While intuitively attractive, there seems to be a great deal of skepticism among policy analysts that an attempt to create such a caucus would not be viewed with a great deal of suspicion by China and others, primarily because it would be viewed as a mechanism to contain China.

So, where are the individual alliances headed? Are they sustainable? Should the alliances be networked? There is also the broader question of linkage among alliance relationships. The US has already established a regular US-Australia-Japan trilateral dialogue. Can/should other allies join? Should other trilateral or quadrilateral dialogues be established? Is this the precursor to a “League of Asian Democracies,” an idea which, in varying formats, has been referenced by a number of different national leaders? These are some of the questions that we have posed to the authors of this volume. In the following chapters, we will see that in each case the rationale for sustaining the relationship is different and expectation for the future reflect specific historical concerns. It is particularly interesting to see that each author highlights the importance of the bilateral relationship and largely downplays the desirability of a more networked or collaborative structure. For some it is a fear of antagonizing China, while for others it is not being able to see value in such an undertaking.

This broad systemic security shift in Asia is still evolving, which makes it difficult to determine how it will ultimately impact the US alliance system. Since 2010 there has been renewed emphasis on the traditional role of alliances especially in the case of the Philippines and Japan as they seek to confirm the US mutual defense commitment on territorial issues. It is also clear that the idea of US rebalancing its military forces to Asia has exacerbated the perceived dilemma in Asia about choosing between China and the US. Clearly, the competition between the two narratives – the alliances as anachronisms vs. the alliances as the basis for peace and security – continues. One problem that must be addressed is the fact that the alliances are defense oriented and do not address commercial, financial, and economic interests, which are critical to the US long-term success in Asia. Without vigorous engagement, especially multilateral political and economic engagement,

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<sup>45</sup> Xiaosong Tang, “The future role of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region: dead end or crossroads?”, *Australian Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 66, No. 5 (November 2012), pp. 592-605.

US credibility and influence will wane, making it even more difficult for Washington to justify its security presence in the region.

The bilateral alliances remain the central focus of US engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, since the end of the Cold War, alliance partners have at times struggled to find a common rationale for sustaining the alliance relationship beyond the claim that they provide the foundation for peace and stability, thereby preventing the emergence of a security dilemma in the region. This has led to a search for a common set of interests in addressing transnational security issues or a common set of values that could provide the glue to rationalize the system of alliances. For traditional realists, this has been problematic because of the tendency to see alliances as necessarily focused on a response to a military threat. Some strategists see China's emergence as constituting the common threat, focusing attention on its anti-access/area denial military strategy and the territorial disputes between China and its neighbors to drive that point home. More broadly, there is general recognition that to remain relevant the alliances must emphasize shared interests and demonstrate their centrality to the maintenance of regional stability. The collection of essays in this volume addresses these issues because they will determine whether the US alliance system in Asia will endure in the coming decades. Ultimately, the question of sustainability of the system will be driven by the development of a sustained sense of shared values and a perception that the system of alliances contributes to the regional public good, however that good comes to be defined by the alliance partners as well as all the other nations in the region.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Down Under and in Between: Australian Security Perspectives in the ‘Asian Century’**

Danielle Chubb

This chapter will provide an overview of Australian perspectives on the US alliance in light of ongoing and emerging challenges in the Asia-Pacific region. After a brief discussion of the motivations behind the signing of the ANZUS treaty, the first part of the chapter examines the historical context of the alliance, with a particular focus on the long-standing and ongoing tussle in Australia between independence in foreign policy making vis-à-vis broader structural constraints. While this debate has been a constant feature of the political scene in Australia, it has come into particular focus since the US withdrawal from Vietnam, which marked a turning point in Australian perspectives with regard to its own role in Asia. The collision of ideas surrounding Australian identity and Australian national interest has been reflected in policy approaches as successive governments have sought to strike a balance between the two exigencies and thus, most optimally ensure Australia’s strategic future. The chapter concludes by examining current perspectives through the lens of an ongoing debate taking place in Australian academic circles about what the rise of China means for Australia and its commitment to the US alliance, and considers options for caucus-style cooperation with fellow US allies beyond the hub-and-spokes model.

### **ANZUS and Australian Security Perceptions**

Debate over the relative merits of relying on ‘great and powerful friends’ in Australia’s foreign and defense affairs is not unique to the contemporary strategic environment. The very negotiations that culminated in the ANZUS security alliance came on the back of a decade of discussion about the desirable direction of Australia’s loyalties. The war in the Pacific had left Australians anxious and the question of how to deal with a defeated Japan spoke intimately to Australian disquiet over the new geopolitical reality of post war Asia. The existential nature of these fears, prompted by a sense of isolation created by Australia’s antipodean location far from its powerful wartime allies, led to a desire to dismantle Japan’s military potential completely and impose severe restrictions to prevent any future resurgence. The US, on the other hand, was keen to expedite normalization of relations with Japan, motivated by a desire to have Japanese bases available to US forces for use in the Korean War.<sup>1</sup> Some within Australia argued that the US and other major powers should not be left to negotiate the terms of the peace settlement, given their geographic distance from the heart of the threat.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J.G. Starke, *The ANZUS Treaty Alliance*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> The decision adopted unanimously by the UK and US in early 1941 (almost a year before Japanese strikes on Australia) to prioritize the European/Atlantic area over the Pacific arena, in the case of war in the latter, provided a sharp reminder to Australia that the protection of its security in the region could not be left to foreign powers, who defined Western interests to be best achieved through security in Europe and the Atlantic, rather than the Pacific. Trevor Reese, *Australia, New Zealand, and the United States: A Survey of International Relations. 1941-1968*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Concerns about the level of US commitment to Australia's national interests in the Pacific region accompanied the effort to create a regional security agreement in the 1950s, known then as a *Pacific Pact*. In the end, however, it became clear that Australia was not adequately able to provide for its own security needs. Acquiescence with the Japanese peace treaty was widely seen as a price for what became known as the Australia, New Zealand, US (ANZUS) Security Treaty, which was signed into effect in San Francisco Sept. 1, 1951.

Just as the onset of the Cold War served as a motivation for the formalization of the Australia-US alliance, so too did a series of events contribute to debate surrounding the alliance's purpose and future. No event was more influential in this regard than the Vietnam War. Australia's involvement in Vietnam was justified in terms of ANZUS and both the Australian Embassy in Washington, along with Canberra's Department of External Affairs, argued that 'showing our flags' in Vietnam would directly contribute to Australia's national interest. The security calculations of such a decision are evident in the advice given to Canberra in May 1964 by Australia's ambassador to Washington:

[O]ur objective should be....to achieve such an habitual closeness of relations with the United States and sense of mutual alliance that in our time of need ... the United States would have little option but to respond as we would want. The problem of Vietnam is one ... where we could without disproportionate expenditure pick up a lot of credit with the United States [by picking up] not so much the physical load the bulk of which the United States is prepared to bear, as the moral load.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the bipartisan foundations of this commitment, the Vietnam War increasingly became an electoral liability. In the face of growing dissatisfaction and public unrest, frequent changes in strategies and tactics on behalf of the US left the Gorton and McMahon governments open to the accusation that they no longer had any independence vis-à-vis their foreign policy and were merely at the beck and call of strategic policy decisions made by the United States in an entirely unilateral manner.<sup>4</sup> Australia's reasons for involvement in the war became even more obscure in 1969; the newly elected Nixon administration announced its intention to extricate its troops from Vietnam and from Southeast Asia, warning its allies that the days of forward defense in Southeast Asia were drawing to a close. As the Whitlam Labor government was swept into power in 1972 after more than 16 years of conservative rule on the back of a promise to enact a complete withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam, serious debate about the value of the ANZUS alliance in a post-Vietnam world had begun.

It is thus evident that the debate today about Australian identity and security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been underway since Nixon's 1969 announcement, referred to widely as the 'Guam Doctrine.' This new, apparently 'hands-off' approach to Asia by the US significantly shaped Australian perspectives regarding its own security future. Australia was not alone in this re-evaluation; then, as now, fears of instability following a partial

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Sexton, *War for the asking: Australia's Vietnam Secrets*. Penguin: Melbourne, 1981, pp. 44-45.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Siracusa and Yeong-Han Cheong. *America's Australia, Australia's America: A Guide to Issues and References*. Claremont: Regina Books, 1997.



disengagement of US commitment to the region led to a rekindling of debate among the Asia-Pacific allies about where their individual and collective strategic destinies lay.

We now know that fears in the 1960s and 1970s that a re-adjusted US approach to the region would lead to a diminishing of its influence and a shift in the values and ideas governing the international relations of the Asia Pacific countries were in large part unfounded. Predictions of stability through greater interdependence have proven to instead have more merit. Rather than a fundamental balance of power shift, we have witnessed the creation of a new and complex security order in which states are bound together by a global market system. Survival of all states depends on the avoidance of conflict and the management of rivalries, which has allowed for the continuation of US leadership in the region. The US is closely tied to this system, as is China, even as it grows in both size and influence.

In Australia, this new reality has shaped perspectives dramatically and called for a reassessment of alliance obligations vis-à-vis a regional economic and political focus. The fundamental challenge facing governments from both sides of the political spectrum has been how to avoid stumbling when walking the fine line between historical security allegiances and economic and security futures. Different governments have displayed varying degrees of coordination of this balancing act. The overall result has been an approach to Asia that has been characterized as at best inconsistent and at worst hypocritical. This is in large part a mischaracterization: the apparent incoherence is simply a reflection of the difficult – and at times impossible – choices that policy makers have attempted and continue to attempt to make. In some respects, it seems to be Australia's destiny that it will continue for some time to develop a somewhat Janus-faced approach to its own security. While the impossibility of the choices faced by Australian policy makers in the complex interplay between Australia's alliance obligations and a commitment to a stronger regional role is largely acknowledged by analysts, some today worry that, in the face of shifting regional power balances, Australia will one day be forced to rectify this approach and choose between its economic relationship with an increasingly powerful and potentially belligerent China or its political relationship with a United States whose security primacy appears to be waning.

The 1990s saw two very different types of political leadership in Australia struggle to fine-tune the balance. While the legacies of the Keating and Howard governments with regard to Australia's relationship with Asia remain disputed, the striking dissimilarity in the rhetoric employed, first by the Keating Labor government, followed by the conservative Howard Coalition government speaks volumes about the struggle to define Australia's identity and, in turn, national security interests.

The decision by Prime Minister Paul Keating's predecessor, Bob Hawke, to provide troops for the US-led 1991 Gulf War without consulting his Cabinet was one in a series of missteps that led to a great deal of public debate over whether the Australian government was taking seriously its newly conceived role as an independent-minded, Asia-Pacific power committed to nuclear disarmament and multilateralism. In response, Keating took up the question of where Australia's foreign policy options lay and sought to redefine the national interest in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one that revolved

around an identification of Australia as an Asian power. His ultimate failure to capture the imagination of Australians and garner their whole-hearted support for his enthusiasm for this vision is multi-faceted. What is clear is that Keating had misread at least one element of the public mood: while Australians had been critical of Hawke's mismanagement of alliance relations and demanded more transparency with regard to basing agreements and nuclear issues, these concerns did not amount to a rejection of old fears and dependencies.

Instead, Australia responded to the challenges of nuclear proliferation by clinging ever more closely to the familiar US nuclear umbrella. While Australian business turned inexorably toward Asia and the economy became increasingly regionally interconnected, Australian mindsets remained firmly embedded in their Western identity. The mid-1990s saw a surge in anti-Asian, anti-immigration attitudes, illustrated most distinctly by the electoral success of right wing Queensland politician Pauline Hanson, who was brought into Parliament on a platform that harked back to the days of the White Australia Policy. Amid this resurgence of fears about Australia's tenuous place in a globalizing world, the conservative Howard government claimed electoral victory, promising to halt what was posited by the new government as a wholehearted embrace of an Asian identity under Keating.

In a symbolic move, the Howard government immediately reconfirmed Australia's commitment to ANZUS. A traditionalist and a monarchist, John Howard represented all that Keating had promised to overcome: a white, Western Australian identity closely tied with ideas of kinship and historical allegiances. In the aftermath of the crisis between China and Taiwan, Howard had moved to secure US strategic commitment to the region and secured a joint statement out of the 1996 AUSMIN consultations that became known as the *Sydney Statement*. The *Sydney Statement* affirmed the upgrading of US bases and the intensification of cooperation between the two countries on regional security issues. Analyst William Tow argues that Howard "thus believed he had acted quickly and forcefully during his first months in office to restore the regional-global balance in Australian foreign policy," a perception that revealed itself in the ensuing years to have been chimerical.<sup>5</sup>

Howard was to learn early on of the limitations of the ANZUS agreement and how closely Australia's national security was tied to its independent role in the Asia-Pacific region. While Australia had wholeheartedly embraced the 'deputy sheriff' idea, it was to prove problematic in the Howard government's early days. In particular, the ANZUS treaty was put to a real test in the context of East Timor. Since its invasion by Indonesia in 1975, Australian governments had been under an increasing amount of domestic pressure to step in and restore East Timor's self-determination. Australia's eventual peacekeeping efforts spoke volumes of the future for ANZUS and the role of both Australia and the US within it. While the US, under Clinton, was prepared to provide diplomatic assistance, it was unwilling to provide forces for a conflict that it would have difficulty justifying domestically in terms of its national interest. As such, while Washington provided diplomatic pressure to help persuade Indonesia to withdraw its army (and associated

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<sup>5</sup> William Tow. "ANZUS: Regional versus Global Security in Asia?" *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 5 No. 2, 2005, pp. 197-216.

militia) from East Timor, Australian and New Zealand peace-keeping forces were deployed in the ground.<sup>6</sup> Tow argues that the unfolding of the East Timor crisis highlighted the “gap between Western and Asian political and security approaches.”

The Howard government’s initial difficulty in getting the Clinton administration to commit to playing a viable supporting role in [the East Timor] operation reflected its misreading of how much the United States was prepared to link the *Sydney Statement’s* rhetoric to any real American propensity to view Southeast Asia as a US strategic priority.<sup>7</sup>

### **In the Middle Down Under?**

As the US ‘pivots’ toward Asia, debate in Australia has been portrayed as revolving around a choice between history and geography. This is a dilemma Australians have faced before, but never has it been so pressing. The urgency of the question is directly related to the rise of China, which most pundits argue is not only substantive, but also both ongoing and meaningful. The central question driving contemporary debate is: how can Australia continue to benefit from China’s economic rise and simultaneously secure its own national interests? A range of responses have arisen about where Australia’s national interests lie and which mechanisms will best achieve them. On one side of the spectrum is the argument that, in light of the inevitable decline in US influence in Asia, Australia (along with other regional powers) needs to dramatically reassess its alliance obligations to take stock of the shifting power balance, away from the US-centered order to one that is increasingly multipolar. On the other side is the argument that, in fact, the close economic interdependence of all states, including the US and China, actually leads to an increased likelihood that cooperation, rather than conflict, will become the new default order in Asia.

It is however between these two extremes that most debate lies. This debate revolves around competing visions of the future of Australia and Australian identity in what has been dubbed the ‘Asian Century.’ Here, the febrile nature of the security arena is acknowledged to have created the exigency for the careful management of Australia’s relationship with China, which in turn paints the backdrop for considerations of how the Australia-US alliance can continue to shape Australia’s future. It is the apparent incompatibility of these goals, and the clumsy manner in which Australian governments have dealt with this difficult scenario, that has led to the accusations of incoherence that are outlined above. The most recent announcement regarding an increased US presence in Australia (discussed below) is a case in point: widely seen as an effort to consolidate America’s influence in the Western Pacific in response to China’s growing influence, both Australian and US policy makers fumbled publicly as they sought to make assurances, in press conferences and official statements, that this was not intended as a containment of China.

Since 2008, the Rudd/Gillard government has put in place a number of initiatives, in response to accusations that Australia has been slow to come to terms with the national

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<sup>6</sup> In September 1999, under the command of Australian Maj. Gen. Peter Cosgrove, a UN-mandated, multinational peacekeeping force (INTERFET – International Force for East Timor) made up primarily of Australian and New Zealand forces was deployed in East Timor tasked with restoring peace and security.

<sup>7</sup> Tow, pp. 197-216.

security implications of China's rise. Most recent of these is the commissioning of the *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*, released in October 2012. The White Paper's central goal is to provide a set of recommendations for how Australia should adjust its horizons to prepare itself in face of the global shift of economic and strategic weight to Asia. Whatever the findings of the White Paper – and its ambit is wide, as it seeks to provide a whole-of-government approach to the variety of challenges facing Australia – it is clear that the US alliance will remain the cornerstone of future policy initiatives. Calls by some within the academic and policy communities to respond to the shifting balance of power through acknowledging that the ANZUS treaty is 'out of date'<sup>8</sup> notwithstanding, the current Labor government has reinforced the centrality of this alliance to Australia's national security interests. The November 2011 announcement of an increased US presence in Australia has served to further strengthen the country's political commitment to this alliance. Under the bilateral, US-Australia agreement, US Marines – totaling 2,500 by 2017 – will rotate through Darwin and the Northern Territory. It is in this context that Australian policy makers must grapple with the implications of the 'Asian Century.'

Long involved as a key instigator and supporter of regional multilateralism, it is through the establishment of cooperative institutions that Australia hopes to play a role in molding the coming new order in Asia. In the context of the US alliance, a number of opportunities are open to Australia in this regard. The US-centered alliance system in Asia incorporates a wide range of stakeholders, such as the Philippines, Thailand, the ROK, and Japan. At present, a hub-and-spokes model paints the backdrop against which Asian allies each work individually with the United States in the context of other domestic and regional pressures. Where cooperation between the allies – the spokes – is evident, this usually takes place under the leadership of the US – the hub. While this bilateral (and limited multilateral) approach to security is likely to remain valuable, key players in Canberra are keen to expand cooperative efforts in new and innovative ways.

While budgetary concerns currently constrain a move in this direction, and while it is clear that Australia's capacity to significantly alter the regional order is limited by its relative size and influence, the White Paper highlights the importance of these types of interactions. It is increasingly acknowledged in circles that extend wider than the Canberra-centric policy and academic arenas that have traditionally hosted such discussions, that rivalry among Australia's regional neighbors will inexorably lead to an increased potential for instability and conflict, brought about by a rapidly changing strategic environment. As such, moves to increase cooperation between the US's regional allies in some manner of a 'spokes-joining' exercise speaks to the dilemmas posed by the competing pressures weighing upon Australia's policy makers; while increasing the diplomatic weight of neighbors who, by virtue of the US alliance system, share some of Australia's values, and at the same time reinforcing the value of US presence. This is seen as one mechanism through which Australia may be able to make real inroads in achieving its own national security goals without significantly increasing the material cost.

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Woolcott, *Australia in the Asian Century*. Submission to the Australia in the White Paper Committee. 2012.

How would a more flexible cooperative institution, which moves beyond the current hub-and-spokes model, be beneficial to Australia and what would this institution look like? Informal platforms for cooperation, based on existing institutions such as the US alliance system, would allow Australia to participate in diplomatic initiatives that are more responsive to the dynamic nature of the current strategic environment, and thus, are more responsive to the needs of its participants, which are in a constant state of flux. Rather than replace or add to existing regional security architecture (with which the region is replete), the alliance network would provide the basis from which allies could caucus and create leverage. Diplomatic initiatives that take place within such a ‘caucus’ model would allow states to move beyond traditional conceptions of the bilateral-multilateral nexus that seem to be failing to deal with the complexity of the Asian security environment. The most exciting aspect of such a model is the potential for it to allow a more dynamic alignment of interests among states. As I discuss below, policy makers now widely acknowledge that states’ security interests are wide and deep in their complexity. No longer will simple calculations of strategic strength allow for the fulfillment of national interests, according to this broader definition of security. From the perspective of Australia, which sits somewhat outside Asia in terms of culture and history, and yet simultaneously shares with it a range of common strategic choices, the time has come to look beyond the status quo and re-imagine a brave new world of cooperative partnerships with its neighbors who share the common dilemma of increased economic ties with China and a reliance upon the United States, whose influence is perceived to be waning, for their security needs.

A further question is worth exploring; given the centrality of the US alliance to Australia’s strategic planning, what – if anything – would cause the alliance to end? Right now, it is very difficult to imagine such an occurrence. Even those hard-headed realists who suggest it may be out-of-date (or for that matter, those extremely optimistic liberals who place all their faith in the market), do not intimate in the same breath that Australia should abandon its most important strategic partner any time soon. At the very most, they are calling for Australia to reassess its strategic alliances and develop more flexibility in its foreign policy making. It is in this latter purpose that a ‘caucus’ forum would serve Australia’s interests, allowing the allies to develop symbiotic partnerships in ways that would better allow for an assessment of their individual, and regionally-focused, security needs.

Any talk of such cooperation, among US allies, raises questions about the need to exercise caution in light of potential accusations that they are aimed at containing China. However, while perceptions are important, these questions hold within them a set of assumptions about the very nature of the regional order. That is, accusations that caucusing among US allies could only be aimed at consolidating the balance of power in Asia, in favor of the US (and against the rise of China), are predicated on an understanding that it is ‘hard’ military power that is, and will remain, responsible for maintaining order in the Asia Pacific. Thus, the easiest response to accusations of containment is to reject the very premise of the question: the US alliance system should not be seen as simply a mechanism for helping maintain the balance of power system in Asia.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Bisley, “Asia’s Transformation, International Relations and Public Policy,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 1, 2012, pp. 102-108.

The US alliance system is fundamentally responsible for assisting its stakeholders in meeting the security needs of their populations. Security, in this sense, is conceived more broadly than narrow conceptions of military dominance. It speaks to a wide range of what are commonly referred to as ‘human security’ needs – from transnational crime and climate change, to economic justice, poverty, and natural disaster relief. This reality was thrown in stark perspective in 2011; the US played a central role assisting the Japan Self-Defense Forces in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and tsunami. The idea of a caucus forum is thus predicated on the understanding that a greater integration of US allies would allow them to individually and collectively develop more independence in meeting their own security needs. As such, while this type of informal caucusing among US allies on the sidelines of existing regional groupings (such as ASEAN, APEC, or the EAS) is in itself valuable. It also has the potential to provide a launching pad for greater regional cooperation on more prickly issues such as energy security.

## **Conclusion**

Australia has much to gain from the US alliance and it is likely that it will remain the centerpiece in strategic planning. It is in this context that Australia must grapple with the competing demands posed by the shifting dynamics of the regional order and an increasingly strong reliance upon China’s wealth for national prosperity. The interplay between Australia’s sense of identity, its stake in the current regional order predicated on US primacy, and the changing nature of its economic and security futures, is not a new one. It is, however, a dynamic that has come into recent focus with the announcement of a new basing agreement with the US and the release of a White Paper on Australia’s place in the Asian Century. Australia has an established reputation for relying on cooperative mechanisms for its diplomatic efforts in the Asia Pacific. Moving forward, the establishment of an informal caucus forum, which met alongside institutionalized meetings such as ASEAN or APEC, and drew on the strengths of the already established US-centered alliance system, would allow countries with common interests and challenges to overcome the bilateral-multilateral cooperation trend that is proving increasingly problematic in light of the emerging multipolar order. Australia has a lot to gain from such a grouping, and while it would not allay the fears of those within the country who predict that conflict in the region is inevitable, it helps answer the concerns of those who argue that America’s Asian allies are mired in unhelpful patterns that have served to provoke fears of containment and are predicated on an understanding of the strategic environment that misreads the US alliance system as one that is singly focused on the projection of hard military power. The reality is much more complex and conceptualizations of Australia’s strategic future rely on a firm understanding that the security interests served by the US alliance are much more broadly defined and require innovative and flexible informal forums for the cultivation of dialogue that seeks to assure stakeholders that security in the Asia-Pacific is not a zero-sum game.

## Chapter 3

# The US-Japan Alliance: Where From and Where To?

Matake Kamiya

### The Origin and the 1960 Revision

The US-Japan alliance originated in the signing of the “Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan” (the old US-Japan Security Treaty) on Sept. 8, 1951, in San Francisco, only five hours after the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty between Japan and the Allied Powers in the same city. The treaty was the result of the shared perception that such a treaty was necessary both for Japan and the US. Due to disarmament under the allied occupation, Japan would “not have the effective means to exercise its inherent right of self-defense”<sup>1</sup> after regaining independence, and would require US military protection. For the United States, it was essential to maintain the military bases in Japan as part of its Cold War strategy.

So the treaty, on the face of it, looked beneficial to both countries. The “Basic Policy for National Defense,” adopted by the Japanese government in 1957 (which is still in place), declared that Japan would “[d]eal with foreign invasions of Japan based on security arrangements formed with the United States until the United Nations becomes able to effectively prevent the said threat,” while progressively developing “national defense capabilities to the necessary limit for self-defense in accordance with national power and circumstances.”<sup>2</sup> In Japan, however, the old US-Japan Security Treaty was unpopular because of its unequal nature. Negotiated while Japan was still under the allied (essentially US) occupation, the terms and conditions of the treaty were in US favor in at least the following four ways.<sup>3</sup> First, while the treaty stipulated that Japan was obliged to provide bases to the US forces, it did not clearly commit the US forces to defend Japan in case of aggression. It merely said “[s]uch forces *may be utilized* . . . to the security of Japan against armed attack from without . . .”<sup>4</sup> (emphasis added). Second, the treaty included the so-called “internal disturbances clause (*nairan-joko*)” that stipulated that US forces might be used to “put down large-scale internal riots and disturbances in Japan” if requested by the Japanese government.<sup>5</sup> Many in Japan perceived that provision as an affront to national sovereignty. Third, there was no time limit on the treaty. Fourth, the treaty did not include the right of Japan to check how and for what purposes the US would use its forces and bases in Japan. As Japan recovered from the ruins of World War II, dissatisfaction and criticism among the Japanese public about the treaty sharply mounted.

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<sup>1</sup> Preamble, *Security Treaty between the United States and Japan*.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2012 [Bouei-hakusho Heisei 24-nen-ban]* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2012) [tentative translation by the Ministry of Defense], [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2012/19\\_Part2\\_Chapter1\\_Sec3.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2012/19_Part2_Chapter1_Sec3.pdf), accessed on Oct. 10, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Fuji Kamiya, *Sengo-shi no Naka no Nichi-bei Kankei [The Japan-U.S. Relations in the Postwar History]* (Tokyo: Shincho-sha, 1989), pp. 75-76, 100-102.

<sup>4</sup> Article 1, *Security Treaty between the United States and Japan*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

On the other side of the Pacific, there was an increasing concern in the US about the future shape of Japanese foreign and security policy. By the late 1950s, Japan had recovered considerable economic strength, restored diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and had become a member of the United Nations. Observing such developments, anxiety started to grow in the US that Japan's dependence on the US might weaken if the bilateral relationship continued to be seen as unequal by the Japanese.<sup>6</sup>

The two governments officially started the negotiations on revising the security treaty in October 1958. The "Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan" (the new US-Japan Security Treaty), was signed in Washington in January 1960, and became effective in June. Although it has been commonly called the "revised" treaty, it was in effect the conclusion of the new, much more equal security treaty which replaced the old one.<sup>7</sup> The new treaty includes a sentence that stipulates the US obligation to defend Japan. The "internal disturbances clause" was removed, and the time limit of the treaty was specified. The system of "prior consultation (*jizen-kyogi*)" regarding the US use of bases in Japan was also introduced.

Despite the comprehensive revision, the new US-Japan Security Treaty inherited one basic characteristic that has made the US-Japan alliance substantially different from a traditional alliance arrangement. Usually, alliance partners promise each other to defend the other side in case of enemy attack. In the case of the US-Japan alliance, the United States promises to defend Japan, but Japan cannot reciprocate because of its policy of banning the exercise of the right of collective self-defense based on the constraints imposed by the Article 9 of the postwar Constitution (the so-called "no war clause" [*fusen-joko*]). Japan instead allows the US to maintain military bases and to station a sizable military force on its soil. Japan also provides the US with generous host-nation support – the largest amount among all the US allies. In short, the alliance is based on asymmetric reciprocity of "material/personnel cooperation" while ordinary alliances are based on symmetric reciprocity of "personnel/personnel cooperation."<sup>8</sup> Although the new treaty stipulates the US obligations in a much more explicit manner, the essence of the basic structure of the old treaty remained.<sup>9</sup>

## **Redefinition after the End of the Cold War**

The end of the Cold War generated a pressing need for Japan and the US to reevaluate and restructure their alliance. First, the two governments had to find a new rationale for the alliance in the world where the Soviet threat no longer existed. Second, with the rapid development of regional security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, they had to define the relationship between such multilateral security efforts and the bilateral alliance.

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<sup>6</sup> Kazuya Sakamoto, "Japanese Diplomacy in the 1950s," Makoto Iokibe, ed. [translated by Robert D. Eldridge], *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> Fuji Kamiya, *Sengo-shi no Naka no Nichi-bei Kankei*, p. 80.

<sup>8</sup> Kazuya Sakamoto, "Material/Personnel Cooperation and the Future of the US-Japan Security Treaty," paper presented at the conference on "Restructuring US-Japan Security Relations," co-sponsored by the Okazaki Institute, the Policy Study Group, and the Pacific Forum CSIS, Washington, DC, April 29-May 2, 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Sakamoto, "Japanese Diplomacy in the 1950s," p. 75.



Third, Tokyo and Washington had to deal with the issue of alliance reform and restructuring, including the longstanding question of burden sharing between the two allies. They had to determine how the alliance had to be changed in order to maintain its vitality and its effectiveness in the post-Cold War setting.

Although relations were dominated by trade and other economic friction at the beginning of the 1990s, the first North Korean nuclear crisis generated serious concern in the minds of security thinkers and planners in both Japan and the US. From late spring to early summer of 1994, there was a real possibility of the US bombing of nuclear facilities in North Korea. Faced with such a possibility, many worried that in the event of a Korean contingency, Japan might not be able to support or cooperate with the US military operations against North Korea in an appropriate and timely manner due to the domestic constraints, including the constitutional ban on the exercise of the right to collective self-defense. If that happened, there was concern that the US would be enraged by the Japanese attitude, stop seeing Japan as a trusted ally, and stop supporting the continuation of the alliance.

The final report of Japan's Advisory Group on Defense Issues (the Higuchi Commission) on the future outlook of Japan's security policy, which was submitted to Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama in August 1994, generated another concern in some minds. In the report, the section on promotion of the multilateral security cooperation was placed before the section on enhancement of the functions of the US-Japan security cooperation relationship.<sup>10</sup> US security experts worried that this order of discussion indicated Japan's intention to gradually increase security autonomy. Meanwhile, the fact that the US East Asian Strategic Initiative reports of 1990 and 1992 outlined a process for restructuring and reducing US forward presence in the region caused concern in Japan that the United States might be trying to limit its security role in East Asia.<sup>11</sup> In turn, Japan watchers in the US worried that the Japanese might be losing confidence in the US commitment to the defense of Japan.

Under these circumstances, Tokyo and Washington finally came to share the sense of urgency that they had to start the process of reevaluation and restructuring of the alliance as soon as possible centered on two central questions. What kind of roles should be assigned to the US-Japan alliance in the post-Cold War world? What kind of changes should be made to the alliance so that it can fulfill such roles effectively?

As for the first question, they agreed to transform the fundamental nature of the US-Japan alliance from countering the manifest, specific security threat of the Soviet Union to dealing with the latent, unspecified sources of instability in order to buttress peace and stability in the Asia Pacific. In other words, the two allies redefined their alliance as a kind of international public good that would provide regional order. Tokyo and Washington also agreed that their alliance would provide the foundation on which the

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<sup>10</sup> Advisory Group on Defense Issues, *The Modality of the Security and Defense Capability of Japan: The Outlook for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, August 12, 1994.

<sup>11</sup> US Department of Defense, *A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Looking toward 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, April 1990; US Department of Defense, *A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Report to Congress 1992*, April 1992.

regional multilateral security mechanisms would be built. While these mechanisms would provide important opportunities for dialogue and cooperation among the regional states to build mutual confidence and to promote regional stability, they were not a substitute for the bilateral alliance. Based on these understandings, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and President Bill Clinton, in the US-Japan Joint Security Declaration of April 1996, reaffirmed that the US-Japan alliance “remains the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives, and for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region”.<sup>12</sup>

As for the second question on changes required, Japan and the US faced two kinds of tasks. First, they had to establish a new framework for security cooperation so that Japan could cooperate more actively with the US in case of contingencies in the areas surrounding Japan, even when no direct enemy attack on Japanese territory or territorial water took place. This was due largely to the postwar pacifism and consequent official interpretation of the Constitution as prohibiting the country from exercising the right of collective self-defense.<sup>13</sup> By the mid-1990s, security planners in Tokyo and Washington came to share the basic understanding that the US-Japan alliance would not be an effective regional stabilizer without promotion of “personnel/personnel cooperation.”

Another important task for the two governments was to ensure public support for the US-Japan alliance in both countries. In the US, there was concern that Tokyo’s failure to take prompt measures to cooperate effectively with Washington in case of contingency in the areas surrounding Japan would offend the US citizens and undermine the domestic support for the alliance. In Japan, on the other hand, the issue of US bases, which had always been subject to local political pressure from surrounding communities, became even more acute after the end of the Cold War, particularly in Okinawa. During World War II, Okinawa was the only place other than Iwo Jima where land battles took place on Japanese soil, and the people of Okinawa suffered many casualties. Following the war, the island remained under US administration until May 1972, but even after it was returned to Japan, approximately 75 percent of the land allocated for US bases in Japan has remained in Okinawa, which comprises less than 1 percent of Japan's total territorial land space. The people of Okinawa feel strongly that they have been sacrificed for the Japanese mainland and it is understandable that they want US bases reduced or removed. However, the Marines in Okinawa constitute an important pillar of US military forces in Japan and the bases in Okinawa are a strategic priority for the US. The two countries thus hope to reduce the trouble which the bases cause for the local people but to keep them in Okinawa.

In addition, by the mid-1990s there was a growing sense of dissatisfaction in Japan that the US still tended to treat their country merely as a junior partner. Consequently, the Japanese desired to make security relations with the US more equal.

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<sup>12</sup> “The Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security-Alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century - Alliance for the 21st Century,” April 17, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> As one of the best English materials that explains Japan's postwar pacifism, see Thomas U. Berger, “From Sword to Chrysanthemum,” *International Security*, 17-4 (Spring 1993). In this article, Berger uses the term “anti-militarism” instead of “pacifism.”

In an effort to redefine the framework for security cooperation, the two governments adopted the new Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation in September 1997,<sup>14</sup> which replaced the 1978 guidelines, and the Japanese Diet adopted the necessary laws to implement the new guidelines, such as the Contingency Laws and the Ship Inspection Laws, in the following years. Security planners on both sides shared the understanding that the adoption of the new guidelines represented “not the end, but the beginning,” of the process,<sup>15</sup> and US experts particularly emphasized that the revised guidelines “should be regarded as the floor - not the ceiling - for an expanded Japanese role in the transpacific alliance.”<sup>16</sup> It represented a major breakthrough toward the enhancement of the “personnel/personnel cooperation” in the alliance.

On the Okinawa base issue in April 1996, shortly before the issuance of the US-Japan Joint Security Declaration, Tokyo and Washington reached an agreement on the return of the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, the largest US base in Okinawa, in return for an alternative facility in the same prefecture. In addition, the final report of the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) in November 1996, called for the return of about 20 percent of the total land space occupied by US military facilities in Okinawa to the original owners. These decisions were spurred by the strong Japanese reaction, particularly in Okinawa, to the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl by three US marines in Okinawa in September 1995. Recognizing the real possibility that the Japanese might eventually say no to the stationing of the US forces in their country and the continuation of the alliance unless they found some ways to mitigate the base issue, the two governments were driven by a sense of urgency that they had to do something substantial to reduce the burden of the Okinawans. The difficulty, however, lies in the fact that the two governments cannot sacrifice the efficacy of the alliance in the process of mitigating the base issue. The discrepancy between the national policy on the alliance and the sentiment toward the US bases widely shared among the Okinawans has been quite wide. For example, in the “Attitude Survey of the Residents of the Okinawa Prefecture,” conducted by Japan's Cabinet Office in November 1994, only 38.8 percent of the respondents said that the US bases in their prefecture were “necessary” or “unavoidable” for Japan's security, while 54.3 percent said that they are “unnecessary” or “dangerous.”<sup>17</sup> In short, while many Okinawans desire the abolition or a drastic reduction of the US bases, Tokyo and Washington want to maintain the functions and capabilities of the bases. Futenma has become an unfortunate symbol of the retardation of the process – more than 16 years after concluding the agreement, there is little prospect for the early reversion of the air station.

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<sup>14</sup> “The Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation,” <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/guideline2.html>, accessed on June 19, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Koji Murata, “Shin-Guideline Saiko [The New Guideline Revisited],” *Voice*, January 1998, p.217; Kazuya Sakamoto, “Nichi-bei Anpo ni Okeru Sougo-sei no Katachi: Guideline Minaoshi ni Yosete [The Shape of the Reciprocity in the U.S.-Japan Security Relations: On the Occasion of the Revision of the Guideline],” *Gaiko Forum*, December 1997, p.50.

<sup>16</sup> *The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership*, INSS Special Report, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, Oct. 11, 2000. This report has been often referred to as the “Armitage report” or the “Armitage-Nye report.”

<sup>17</sup> Cabinet Office, “Okinawa Ken-min no Ishiki ni Kan-suru Yoron Chosa [The Attitude Survey of the Residents of the Okinawa Prefecture],” conducted from November 3 to 13, 1994, <http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h06/H06-11-06-12.html>, accessed on Sept. 15, 2012.

As for the “equalization” of US-Japan alliance relations, although an increasing number of officials and security experts in the US recognize the Japanese eagerness and irritation and have admitted the necessity to establish a “more equal partnership,” no concrete steps have been taken by Washington to actually equalize the relationship.

### **The US-Japan Alliance after 9/11**

The US and Japan celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the alliance on Sept. 8, 2001. In the commemorative conference that took place in San Francisco, the participants, including former Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, former US Secretary of State George Shultz, successive Japanese ambassadors to the US and US ambassadors to Japan, business leaders, and scholars from both sides of the Pacific including myself, almost unanimously praised the half century of close cooperation and friendship that had been established between the two former enemies, and urged that the two allies should strengthen their partnership in the next half a century. Some US participants, however, also pointed out that the US-Japan alliance “has not been tested in the crucible of war”<sup>18</sup> and expressed concern that it was unclear what Japan would be able to do in a crisis due to domestic constraints.

The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 that occurred only three days after the alliance’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary represented the first serious “test” in its history of whether it could function effectively in an actual crisis. In the wake of the incident, foreign policy and security experts in both the US and Japan awaited Tokyo’s response with significant anxiety. They knew that the US would be enraged at Japan if Tokyo failed to take decisive actions to help its ally. Many US experts worried about a recurrence of Tokyo’s response to the Gulf Crisis, in which Japan’s contribution was limited to financial support and sending a small number of civilians in spite of strong US pressure to do more, due to the public reluctance to dispatch Self-Defense Forces abroad, and invited strong criticism from abroad.<sup>19</sup>

With strong leadership by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, however, Japan acted in a timely manner with an unprecedented package of measures to support the US-led war against terrorism.<sup>20</sup> Koizumi eloquently told his compatriots why Japan had to join the international coalition against terrorism and the Japanese public accepted his bold and frank explanation. On Sept. 19, Koizumi announced a seven-point program responding to the crisis, including dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces to provide logistical support to the US forces in the war against terrorism overseas and the protection of the US bases in Japan. He submitted bills to enable the Self-Defense Forces to legally perform such functions (the so-called Anti-Terrorism Bills) to the Diet on Oct. 5, and the Diet passed

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<sup>18</sup> A remark by Richard Samuels. at the conference entitled “The United States and Japan: An Enduring Partnership in a Changing World,” held in San Francisco Sept. 6-7, 2001, <http://www.usajapan.org/home/21stCentury/html/conference/plenary3.html>, accessed on April 9, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> For the impact of the Gulf Crisis on Japanese attitude toward overseas commitments, see Mataka Kamiya, “Pacifism and the Japanese Attitude toward the United Nations,” in Philippe Régner and Daniel Warner, eds., *Japan and Multilateral Diplomacy* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001), pp.180-181.

<sup>20</sup> A comprehensive explanation of Japan’s response to 9/11, see Shotaro Yachi, “9·11 Tero Kougeki no Keii to Nihon no Taio [Facts about and Japanese Response to the 9/11 Terrorist Attack],” *Kokusai Mondai*, No.503 (February 2002).

them on Oct. 29. Such a quick deliberation of such an important bill by the Diet was quite extraordinary, considering that debates and deal-makings among political parties usually take a long time in Japanese politics.

The Japanese actions satisfied the US government. In his speech to the Japanese Diet on Feb. 19, 2002, President George W. Bush said: “Your response to the terrorist threat has demonstrated the strength of our alliance ... our alliance has never been stronger.”<sup>21</sup> The American people also appreciated the Japanese support to the US on the war against terrorism. In a public opinion poll jointly conducted from Oct. 27 to Nov. 12 by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Japan’s largest national daily, and the Gallup organization in the US, 66.3 percent of the US respondents favored the actions taken by the Japanese government while only 16.9 percent answered that they did not favorably view the Japanese response. Besides, 90.6 percent of the US respondents answered that they evaluated the history of the US-Japan alliance during the past half century positively, and 80.5 percent of them answered that they trusted Japan.<sup>22</sup>

As one US expert argued, Japan’s extraordinary response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attack represented “a victory for supporters of the US-Japan alliance and a validation of their strategy to nudge Japan toward a greater role in regional security.”<sup>23</sup> Another US expert pointed out, “[t]he war on terrorism has provided Koizumi with the incentive (and excuse) to take a major step toward becoming a ‘normal’ nation ... a more equal partner to Washington and a more active participant in international security affairs.”<sup>24</sup>

Observing Japan’s responses to the Iraq war, the US trust in Japan as its ally grew even further. When the US started the war and came under fire from the international community, including some of its most important allies – France and Germany – for its unilateral use of force, Japan did not lose any time in expressing its support. Only one hour after the start of the war, Prime Minister Koizumi held a press conference “to clarify the position of the government of Japan and to call upon the people of Japan for their understanding and cooperation,” and declared: “I understand and support the engagement in the military action by the United States<sup>25</sup>.” After the war ended, notwithstanding the fact that a majority in Japan did not support the war against Iraq per se – a majority in Japan supported Koizumi’s decision that Japan would back the US – and exhibited strong sense of dissatisfaction at the US handling of the postwar situation, the Japanese government dispatched Ground Self-Defense Forces in December 2003 to help in the reconstruction of postwar Iraq. It was not an easy decision politically for Koizumi, because it represented the first occasion for Japan since the end of World War II to send its armed forces to a territory where military conflict was still in progress, and marked the “opening of a new era for the

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<sup>21</sup> “Remarks by the President to the Diet,” Office of the Press Secretary, Feb. 18, 2002, <http://usembassy.state.gov/tokyo/wwwhus0048.html>, accessed on Feb. 24, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Nov. 30, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Brad Glosserman, “Making History the Hard Way,” *Comparative Connections*, 4th Quarter 2001 (January 2002), [http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0104Qus\\_japan.html](http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0104Qus_japan.html), accessed on Feb. 18, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Ralph A. Cossa, “Ushering in the Post Post-Cold War Era,” *Comparative Connections*, 3rd Quarter 2001 (October 2001), <http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0103Qoverview.html>, accessed on Oct. 14, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> “Press Conference by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi,” March 20, 2003, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/middle\\_e/iraq/issue2003/pmpress0320.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/middle_e/iraq/issue2003/pmpress0320.html), accessed on Sept. 3, 2012.

role of the Self-Defense Forces.”<sup>26</sup> In the Yomiuri-Gallup poll conducted from Nov. 13-21, 2004, in the US 85.5 percent of the respondents evaluated Japan’s dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces positively, while only 12.9 percent did not.<sup>27</sup> In an article published in *The International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun* on Jan. 12, 2004, US Ambassador to Japan Howard Baker said that “[r]elations have never been stronger between the United States and Japan.”<sup>28</sup>

In the mid-2000s, Tokyo and Washington conducted a thorough bilateral review of the alliance and came to a set of agreements which, if successfully implemented, would realize a more equal and deeper than ever security partnership between the two countries.<sup>29</sup> In three US-Japan Security Consultative Committee (2+2) meetings between February 2005 and May 2006, the two sides agreed to set common strategic objectives and outlined a variety of initiatives to upgrade the alliance. This included the promotion of bilateral contingency planning, promotion of interoperability, promotion of intelligence and information sharing, enhancement of coordination between the Japanese and US command elements, coordinated improvements of their respective missile defense capabilities, and the realignment of US forces in Japan, including the transfer of about 8,000 Marines and their families from Okinawa to Guam, and building a new military facility on Camp Schwab to replace Futenma Air Station. Japan made its willingness to work with the US in the Asia Pacific and globally in such areas as the handling of China and North Korea, prevention and eradication of terrorism, the Proliferation Security Initiative, and consolidation of the bilateral partnership in international peace operations.<sup>30</sup> It was a remarkable joint effort and Prime Minister Koizumi and President Bush “heralded a new US-Japan Alliance of Global Cooperation for the 21st Century” in the joint statement titled “The Japan-US Alliance of the New Century” at their last summit meeting in June 2006.<sup>31</sup> When Koizumi left office in September of that year, there was a shared perception in Tokyo and Washington that “[a]rguably, the US-Japan alliance has never been better.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Turmoil under the Hatoyama Administration**

Unfortunately, the successive Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) prime ministers after Koizumi were slow in implementing the agreements achieved in the series of 2+2 meetings. Particularly problematic was the delay in the relocation of the Futenma Air Station. Under the May 2006 Roadmap, the US agreed to move Futenma Air Station from its current location in the congested center of the main island of Okinawa to a safer, rural

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<sup>26</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Jan. 10, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Dec. 16, 2004.

<sup>28</sup> Howard H. Baker, Jr., "Shared Risks, Shared Rewards," *The International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun*, Jan. 12, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Words of an anonymous ex-high ranking Self Defense Force officer.

<sup>30</sup> "Joint Statement," US-Japan Security Consultative Committee, Washington, DC, Feb. 19, 2005; "US-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future" [Security Consultative Committee Document], Oct. 29, 2005; "United States-Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation" [United States-Japan Security Consultative Committee Document], May 1, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> "The Japan-US Alliance of the New Century," June 29, 2006, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/summit0606.html>, accessed on June 19, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Brookes, "Japan: Coming of Age," *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, No. 11 (Fall 2006), <http://www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2006/11/brookes.php>, accessed on Sept. 20, 2012.

location in the island's northeast (Camp Schwab at Henoko). Under the agreement, which was achieved 10 years after the original announcement by the two governments of the return of Futenma in April 1996, the relocation, together with the realignment of 8,000 Marines stationed in Okinawa to Guam, would be completed by 2014. However, it took almost three years for the two countries to sign the final accord regarding the relocation of US military personnel to Guam in February 2009. And before the LDP administration could implement this agreement, the historic change of government from the LDP to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) took place in the August 2009 general election.

Despite the slow implementation of the mid-2000s agreements, it was still generally perceived near the end of the LDP rule that “[b]y almost any indicator, the state of the US-Japan alliance has never been stronger.”<sup>33</sup> However, under the first DPJ Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, who came in to power in September 2009, the alliance entered “one of the greatest periods of uncertainty in recent memory.”<sup>34</sup> The alliance was thrown into disarray when he suggested creating an East Asian Community that excluded the US. He aggravated the relationship further when he aimed to change the agreement between Tokyo and Washington regarding Futenma.

In August 2009, Hatoyama criticized the agreement and stated publicly that the base at Futenma should be relocated outside Okinawa Prefecture at the very least. Although he claimed that he wanted to present a plan acceptable to the people of Okinawa, the Japanese public, and the US government, Hatoyama could not propose any concrete alternative to the plan. This inconsistency caused serious damage to US confidence in Japan. In Japan, unease regarding Hatoyama's leadership mounted, leading to his early resignation in June 2010. The alliance was said to be “in a period of confusion and uncertainty,”<sup>35</sup> and “[t]he future of the alliance seems quite unpredictable.”<sup>36</sup>

### **The Alliance on the Recovery Path**

The US-Japan alliance recovered rapidly after Hatoyama left office. There are broadly three reasons for that. The first is the behavior of China and North Korea. A series of events since the summer of 2010 have made both Japan and the US, with other East Asian countries, rediscover the importance of this alliance for the peace and security in East Asia. At the 17<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting in Hanoi in July 2010, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pushed back against Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea by maintaining that freedom of navigation represents a vital interest for the US, and that the US opposes the use of force to resolve territorial disputes. Eleven other East

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<sup>33</sup> Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Asia, “Japan’s Changing Role,” a statement by Michael J. Green, Senior Adviser & Japan Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Associate Professor, Georgetown University, June 25, 2009, Rayburn House Office Building, [http://csis.org/files/ts090625\\_green.pdf](http://csis.org/files/ts090625_green.pdf), accessed on Sept. 20, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Michael J. Green and Nicholas Szechenyi, “US-Japan Relations: Adjusting to Untested Political Terrain,” *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (January 2010), [http://csis.org/files/publication/0904qus\\_japan.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/0904qus_japan.pdf), accessed on Feb. 3, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Yoshiji Nogami and Ralph A. Cossa, “Foreword,” Brad Glosserman, rapporteur, *Celebrate or Separate?: The Japan-US Security Treaty at 50, A Conference Report*, Issues and Insights, Vol. 10, No. 15 (Honolulu: Pacific Forum CSIS, 2010), p. v.

<sup>36</sup> Mataka Kamiya, “Future Visions of the Alliance,” *Celebrate or Separate?*, p. 41.

Asian countries, including core ASEAN members such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, along with Japan, joined her to express concern about Chinese behavior in the South China Sea.

Then the Senkaku incident took place. On Sept. 7, 2010, Japan Coast Guard boats patrolling in Japanese territorial waters near the Senkaku Islands in Okinawa Prefecture ordered a Chinese fishing boat engaged in illegal operations to stop, but the fishing boat intentionally rammed two of the Coast Guard vessels in an attempt to escape. The captain of the fishing boat was arrested on suspicion of interference with government officials in the execution of their duties and subjected to the administration of Japanese justice. The people of Japan were utterly stunned by the subsequent confrontational posturing and actions of the Chinese government, including the unilateral postponement of negotiations on a treaty over joint gas field development in the East China Sea, unilateral suspension of ministerial and higher-level exchanges, cancellation of several private sector exchanges including a scheduled visit by a group of 1,000 university students to the Shanghai Expo, a de facto ban on exports to Japan of rare earth minerals, and detention of four employees of a major Japanese construction contractor, Fujita.

One of the greatest concerns in international politics today is how the emergence of China will affect the current liberal, open, and rule-based international order. The basic policy of Japan and the US regarding China is to simultaneously engage and hedge against it. Both countries hope that China will come to regard maintenance of the existing international order as being to its own benefit and cooperate with them and other advanced countries as a “responsible stakeholder.” Japan and the US have therefore approached China in many ways (engagement). On the other hand, they have made efforts to be fully prepared (hedging against) if China acts against the current order and rules. Since the latter half of 2010, Tokyo and Washington have reaffirmed the importance of hedging. China’s actions in the South China Sea, its unrestrained ways of exercising power against Japan at the time of the Senkaku incident, its reluctance to join the circle of international criticism against Pyongyang even after the two attacks by North Korea against the South, i.e., the sinking of the South Korean Navy ship *Cheonan* in March 2010 and the bombardment of the ROK island of Yeonpyeong in November of the same year, and other factors have aggravated doubts about whether China intends to abide by international rule and cooperate with international society. The most important tool for Japan and the US when hedging against China is their alliance.

Another significant reason for the recent recovery of the US-Japan alliance was Operation *Tomodachi*, undertaken by the US military following the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011. Although the presence of the US military in Japan had provided Japan with a consistent deterrent since the end of World War II, and had continually made a major contribution to the security of Japan, the success of the deterrent could not be proved. Thanks to the fact that Japan has never been directly involved in military conflicts since 1945, the Japanese people had almost no chance to observe the US forces do something to help them. So, while Japan passed the “test” on the occasion of 9/11 to prove that it is a trustable ally, for the United States, the “test” of the same kind was yet to come. Before 3/11, a considerable number of Japanese people questioned the contribution of the US military presence to Japan’s security. Some said that the US was



simply using Japan as part of its global strategy. Some questioned whether the US military would respond to Japan's need in an emergency. With Japan facing its biggest national crisis since the war, the US military did its utmost to hold out a helping hand. Even when some relief teams dispatched to Japan from other nations after the disaster fled owing to fears over radioactivity from the damaged nuclear power plant in Fukushima, the US military, in contrast, bolstered its support. US military personnel proved to the fullest degree that they were acting for the benefit of the Japanese people, and that the US is really a trustworthy ally.

*Operation Tomodachi* also proved that the US-Japan alliance can function in an emergency in a well-coordinated manner. Before 3/11, the Self-Defense Forces and the US military had never jointly carried out a large-scale campaign. That said, the success of *Operation Tomodachi* clearly showed the world that they can take effective joint action. This increases the credibility of the US-Japan alliance deterrent for Japan and the region, particularly against China and North Korea.

Finally, the third factor that contributed to the reinvigoration of the US-Japan alliance was the continued efforts by the alliance managers in both countries to advance the bilateral alliance review process that took place in the mid-2000s, even when it was disturbed under the Hatoyama administration.

In December 2010, the Japanese government under the Kan Naoto administration adopted the new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) that stressed the importance of Japan's alliance and cooperation with the US, arguing first that the US-Japan alliance is indispensable to Japan's security; second that the presence of US military forces brings reassurance to Asia-Pacific nations; and third that the alliance is vital to Japan's effective action in multilateral security cooperation and addressing global security issues.<sup>37</sup> The guidelines declare that Japan "will further deepen and develop the alliance to adapt to the evolving security environment," and states that cooperation between the two countries should be stepped up, "in order to strengthen the US forces' deterrent and response capability to regional contingencies."

The first 2+2 meeting under the DPJ government was held on June 21, 2011. The Joint Statement titled "Toward a Deeper and Broader US-Japan Alliance: Building on 50 Years of Partnership" stated that both countries "affirmed that our Alliance remains indispensable to the security of Japan and the United States, and to the peace, stability, and economic prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region in the twenty-first century."<sup>38</sup> The Joint Statement also praised *Operation Tomodachi*. At the same time, the four ministers "recognized the need to continue to address challenges posed by the increasingly uncertain security environment," pointing out the real issues of "the expanding military capabilities and activities in the region; North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and its

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<sup>37</sup> "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and beyond," approved by the Security Council and the Cabinet on Dec. 17, 2010, [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/kakugikettei/2010/ndpg\\_e.pdf](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/kakugikettei/2010/ndpg_e.pdf), accessed on Dec. 22, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee, "Toward a Deeper and Broader US-Japan Alliance: Building on 50 Years of Partnership," June 21, 2011, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/pdfs/joint1106\\_01.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/pdfs/joint1106_01.pdf), accessed on June 24, 2011.

provocative behavior; the emergence of non-traditional security concerns; and other evolving threats, such as to outer space, to the high seas, and to cyberspace.” The Joint Statement went on to state that “increasing global challenges, including the ongoing struggle against extremism in Afghanistan and the Middle East” have been “noted” by Japan and the United States. Based on awareness of these issues, Tokyo and Washington both reaffirmed their alliance commitments. The US “reaffirmed its commitment to the defense of Japan and the peace and security of the region, including through the full range of US military capabilities, both nuclear and conventional,” while Japan “reaffirmed its commitment to provide for the stable use of facilities and areas by US forces and to support the smooth operation of those forces through the provision of Host Nation Support,” in return. In addition, Japan and the United States “revalidated and updated the Alliance’s Common Strategic Objectives of 2005 and 2007.” The 24 new objectives include:

- “Deter provocations by North Korea.”
- “Strengthen trilateral security and defense cooperation with both Australia and the Republic of Korea.”
- “Promote trilateral dialogue among the United States, Japan, and India.”
- Encourage China’s “cooperation on global issues” and its “adherence to international norms of behavior.”
- “Improve openness and transparency with respect to China’s military modernization and activities.”
- Regarding Taiwan, “encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues through dialogue.”
- “Discourage the pursuit and acquisition of military capabilities that could destabilize the regional security environment.” (No countries are named, but it is clear that this was included with the expansion of Chinese military power in mind.)
- “Maintain safety and security of the maritime domain by defending the principle of freedom of navigation.” (This was clearly included with Chinese maritime advances in mind.)
- “Maintain the US-Japan cooperation with respect to protection of and access to space, and cyberspace where we share interests.” (This was clearly included with China in mind.)
- “Realize full normalization of Japan and Russia relations through the resolution of the Northern Territories issue.”

As can be seen, wariness of the strengthening Chinese military and its maritime advances in recent years was noticeable in the Joint Statement. To respond to the rise of China, Japan and the US must strengthen and deepen their bilateral alliance first and, based upon that, keep encouraging China through continuous talks to take responsible actions. The US and Japan are in agreement on this point. This confirms that Japan’s foreign and security policy remains centered on the US-Japan alliance even after the change in the ruling party, and that for the US this alliance is still the cornerstone of its East Asian strategy even after China’s GDP surpassed Japan’s.

The April 30, 2012 Washington, DC summit between Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, who took office in September 2011, and President Obama, indicated that this trend toward a recovery has continued. On May 2, *The Washington Post* carried an editorial titled “Tokyo and Washington make a welcome step forward” and pointed out that the summit marked “a small but significant diplomatic breakthrough: the easing of the two-year-old standoff over US bases on the Japanese island of Okinawa.” The editorial also expressed the hope that “it may open the way for an invigoration of strategic cooperation at just the right time in East Asia.”<sup>39</sup>

The Noda-Obama summit was based on the content of the Joint Statement of the 2+2, issued April 27.<sup>40</sup> In the statement, the four ministers, “reiterated their commitment to advance the Common Strategic Objectives set forth in the June 21, 2011 SCC [2+2] Joint Statement, [i]n view of the increasingly uncertain security environment in the Asia-Pacific region.” They then “expressed their intention to enhance bilateral security and defense cooperation in line with that Joint Statement and to identify ways to strengthen engagement with countries in the Asia-Pacific region.” The Joint Statement announced the decision by the two governments to delink progress with the relocation of the Futenma Air Station from the relocation of the US Marine Corps from Okinawa to Guam, which had been conditional on progress with the Futenma relocation. However, there is still little prospect for an agreement between the Japanese government and Okinawa Prefecture on a construction site for the Futenma replacement facility, due mainly to the opposition from the local Okinawans. Nevertheless, the impasse has been broken over the issue of the realignment of US military bases in Okinawa, which had been ongoing since the Hatoyama administration strayed on the issue.

It is important progress for the US-Japan alliance that Tokyo and Washington have achieved the conditions for focusing on discussions of strategic issues through this Joint Statement and the Noda-Obama summit at a time when the regional situation involving China and North Korea is growing increasingly severe. Japan and the United States will no longer need to be so heavily involved in the discussions around the Futenma issue and with the June 2011 Common Strategic Objectives; it is now possible for them to drive concrete cooperation. Following the summit, the prime minister and president issued a joint statement with the subheading “A Shared Vision for the Future” where they made the following statement:

We face both conventional and emerging security threats, and commit to act together based on our 2011 Common Strategic Objectives in addressing global challenges such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and piracy. We pledge to work together to promote the rule of law, protect human rights, and enhance coordination on peacekeeping, post-conflict stabilization, development assistance, organized crime and narcotics trafficking, and infectious diseases. We must also work to protect and develop the tremendous potential of critical areas such as the high seas, space, and cyberspace, ensuring their use is responsible and rule-based.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “The Post’s View: Tokyo and Washington make a welcome step forward,” *Washington Post*, May 2, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> “Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee,” April 27, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> “US-Japan Joint Statement: A Shared Vision for the Future,” [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/pmv1204/pdfs/Joint\\_Statement\\_en.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/pmv1204/pdfs/Joint_Statement_en.pdf), accessed on May 3, 2012.

Aiming for the most realistic and effective alliance, Japan and the US came to such an agreement while confronted with severe public finance restrictions. A particularly important point is that the agreement conforms to the US strategy of “rebalance” or “pivot” to the Asia-Pacific region outlined in the new US Defense Strategic Guidance, which was announced in January 2012.<sup>42</sup> This helps the US administration justify the expense of a Guam relocation of the Marine Corps before Congress, and it also sends a clear message to China, which is expanding and modernizing its military power while increasing military activity in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, and to North Korea, which is strengthening its provocative posture under the rule of Kim Jong Un. For Japan, the military alliance is more important than ever in a situation where China is rising and the state of affairs in North Korea is growing opaque. The US “rebalance” or “pivot” to Asia and the idea of rotating US Marines through Darwin has been generally welcomed by Japan because these actions indicate that the US has become serious about maintaining the existing order and keeping peace and security in East Asia in the face of rising China and ever more troubling North Korea. In order to achieve that goal, cooperation with allied countries in the region will be more indispensable than ever and Japan will surely be regarded as particularly important in this context.

### **In Lieu of Conclusion: Future Challenges**

The Japan-US alliance still faces challenges. First, the basic structure of this alliance remains “abnormal” in that it is still based on asymmetrical reciprocity of “material/personnel cooperation.” Although “personnel/personnel cooperation” between the two allies has been considerably expanded since the redefinition of the alliance in 1996, the scope of military cooperation outside the territories and territorial waters of Japan remains limited, due to Japan’s constitutional ban on the exercise of the right of collective self-defense. Influential individuals in the US, such as Richard Armitage, Joseph Nye, and Michael Green, now openly state that “[p]rohibition of collective self-defense is an impediment to the alliance.”<sup>43</sup> In order to ensure the continued vitality and effectiveness of the US-Japan alliance, the alliance structure must be transformed into a more “normal” one. Since the US bases in Japan remain a necessary component of the US-Japan alliance, the “material/personnel cooperation,” will remain an important part of the alliance in the foreseeable future. An alliance based solely on such an abnormal type of reciprocity, however, is unlikely to maintain its vitality and its effectiveness for a long time in the future. The “personnel/personnel cooperation” must be promoted further between the two

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<sup>42</sup> “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” US Department of Defense, January 2012. For the US “rebalance” or “pivot” to Asia-Pacific under the Obama administration, see also “Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament,” Parliament House, Canberra, Australia, Nov. 17, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>, accessed on November 30, 2011; Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, November 2011; and Hillary Rodham Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” (remarks), East-West Center, Honolulu, Nov. 10, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/11/176999.htm>, accessed on Nov. 30, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Anchoring Stability in Asia* (Washington, DC: CSIS, Aug. 2012), p. 15. The report is often called the “Thrid Armitage-Nye Report.” The first and second Armitage-Nye reports were published in 2000 and 2007, and had significant influence on the discussion in both the US and Japan about the future course of the alliance.

allies. In order to achieve this goal, it will be necessary for Japan to reconsider its policy with regard to collective self-defense and make necessary adjustments.

Second, it should be understood, particularly by the Japanese, that discussing the future of the alliance rhetorically with the US is not enough. The results of such discussions need to be implemented. On the US side, frustration about the weakness of Japanese political leadership in implementing the agreements has continued to simmer. The more than 16-year-old history of the Futenma relocation issue has been taken as an indication of a “Japan that can't implement.” When the Japanese government adopted the new NDPG in December 2010, Michael Green, in an interview with *Yomiuri Shimbun*, said that he would give the grade of A to the strategic aspect of the guidelines, but only B-minus to the financial aspect.<sup>44</sup> What he meant was that although he appreciated the words written in the new NDPG, he was not sure if those words would be followed by deeds. This same sense of frustration is evident in the two important documents concerning the future course of the US-Japan alliance, published by mainstream security thinkers in the United States in August 2012<sup>45</sup>.

The Third Armitage-Nye Report indicates that doubt has surfaced among the alliance managers in the US on how effective Japan's cooperation would be, even though it is regarded as important. The report argues that in the face of the “re-rise of China and its attendant uncertainties, North Korea with its nuclear capabilities and hostile intentions, and the promise of Asia's dynamism,” and many other “challenges of a globalized world and an increasingly complex security environment,” a “stronger and more equal alliance is required to adequately address these and other great issues of the day.” The report, however, points out that “[f]or such an alliance to exist, the United States and Japan will need to come to it from the perspective, and as the embodiment, of tier-one nations.” The authors of the report say that they “have no doubt of the United States' continuing tier-one status,” but as for Japan, they believe that “there is a decision to be made” by the Japanese. In other words, the US hopes to, if possible, team with Japan and deal with regional and global security issues, starting with the issue of an increasingly assertive China. The strategy, however, will not work unless Japan possesses political will and ability to steadily implement measures for consolidating the US-Japan alliance. The US has become somewhat uncertain whether Japan actually possesses such will and ability. They believe that “Japan is fully capable of remaining a tier-one nation,” which is defined as a country with “significant economic weight, capable military forces, global vision, and demonstrated leadership on international concerns.” However, there is “a question of her [Japan's] disposition.”<sup>46</sup> To dispel such concerns, Japan needs to reestablish a political leadership that can implement necessary measures to promote security cooperation between the two countries.

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<sup>44</sup> "Shin Bouei-Taikou, Michael Green-shi ni Kiku [Q and A with Michael Green on the new National Defense Program Guidelines]," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Dec. 19, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Armitage and Nye, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Anchoring Stability in Asia*; and David J. Berteau and Michael J. Green, co-directors, *US Force Posture Strategy in the Asia-Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic Studies, August 2012).

<sup>46</sup> Armitage and Nye, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Anchoring Stability in Asia*, p. 1.

Through a series of US-Japan consultation that took place since the mid-2000s centering around the 2+2, and variety of track-2 processes such as the Annual Japan-US Security Seminar, more than a sufficient number of good ideas and proposals about how to promote the US-Japan alliance have been presented to the two governments. Both sides share the understanding that a deepening of security cooperation will be beneficial for both of them, in the increasingly strained security environment in the Asia Pacific. Both sides agree that a strong US-Japan alliance will be the most useful tool to deal with the increasing assertiveness of China. What is pressing for them now is to execute such ideas by taking necessary actions, and to remove, or at least ease, the existing obstacles to such executions.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The ROK-US Alliance: Past, Present, and Future**

Kang Choi

*Desiring to declare publicly and formally that common determination to defend themselves against external armed attack so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that either of them stands alone in the Pacific area (From the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America)*

The ROK-US alliance was officially established in October 1953, about three months after the end of the Korean War with the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty. Since then the ROK-US alliance has been one of the key elements in both countries' security strategy. For the United States, the ROK-US alliance has been regarded as one of the critical pillars in East Asian strategy. During the Cold War era, it was the forefront of containing Communist expansion in the Far East. And, for the ROK, the alliance relationship with the US has been one of the bedrocks in its national security: deterrence and defense vis-a-vis possible North Korean aggression.

However, over the past several decades, there have been ups and downs in this alliance relationship and the ROK and the US have overcome various challenges together. And, despite some worries and concerns, the ROK and the US have deepened and widened not only their military and security cooperation, but also their level of political and economic cooperation. Furthermore, the successful economic development and democratization of South Korea have contributed to the expansion of common interests and shared values, which have created more opportunities for cooperation and responsibility-sharing beyond the Korean Peninsula.

In recent years, the ROK-US alliance has experienced very severe stress, if not crisis, and has gone through 'physical' adjustment or adaptation. Each side had different rationales and motivations for the changes and adjustments, and failed to understand those of the other side. South Korea approached the alliance issue from a peninsula- and sub-regional perspective with little attention, or understanding, to the US strategic shift of defense transformation and transformational diplomacy, whereas the US approached the alliance issue from a global and transformational perspective. Furthermore, the process itself was poorly managed and trust between the two allies eroded. Someone argued that the ROK-US alliance entered into the terminal phase with little hope of recovery.

Despite the fact that concerns and worries over the alliance were constantly raised throughout the Roh Moo Hyun government from both sides of the Pacific, the ROK and the US resolved many sensitive, maybe overdue, issues such as the realignment, or relocation, of US Forces in Korea (USFK) and the Land Partnership Plan (LPP), strategic flexibility, transfer of special missions, operational control (OPCON) transfer, etc. Unfortunately, these adjustments have been carried out without a clear common vision or blueprint. Whether it was intentional or not, both rarely had in-depth discussion of the strategic assessment and vision which should have guided the whole process of alliance

adjustment. In other words, the process of alliance adjustment has been driven by a series of pending issues one at a time and by domestic political moods, especially in South Korea.

With the inauguration of President Lee Myung-bak in February 2008, South Korea began to re-emphasize the importance of its alliance relationship with the US and to restore the traditional ROK-US alliance relationship and to transform it into a “21<sup>st</sup> century strategic alliance.” For the United States, the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak government appeared to be a significant milestone for repairing and strengthening ROK-US relations. The US administration, for its part, emphasized the implementation of the agreements that have already been reached between the governments of the two countries and underscored the global aspect of the alliance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The United States once again has very high hopes and expectations for the ROK-US alliance.

On June 16, 2009, at their second summit, President Lee Myung-bak and President Barack Obama adopted the long waited “Joint Vision for the Alliance of the Republic of Korea and the United States of America.” The statement envisioned the future of the ROK-US alliance by stating that “... we will build a *comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope, based on common values and mutual trust* (emphasis added). Together, we will work shoulder-to-shoulder to tackle challenges facing both our nations on behalf of the next generation.” And, upon President Obama’s visit to Seoul on Nov. 18 and 19, 2009, the two leaders agreed to have the US and ROK foreign and defense ministers meeting, the so-called ‘2+2 meeting,’ in 2010 and to adopt guidelines for implementation of the Joint Vision Statement. Eight months later the meeting took place in Seoul. While they did not adopt the guidelines, the two sides have shown a strong determination to strengthen and transform the alliance, which will be able to tackle not only traditional security challenges coming from the North but also various challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century at the regional as well as the international level.

Realization of this vision requires much more attention and a clear understanding of the challenges ahead. A clear concept and well-defined nature of the alliance to meet those challenges are also necessary. Attaining a strategic alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be built in concrete terms and actions since we have already passed the stage of rhetoric and declaration. For that purpose, it is required for us to review the fundamentals of our alliance and to set a new course and roadmap for the alliance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Alliance Adjustment in Retrospect**

The ROK and the US have discussed and settled various issues related to the adjustment, or transformation, of the alliance using diverse channels since 2003. Despite different perspectives and understanding of the issues, they hammered out agreements on the overall adjustment of the US military base system, most notably the relocation of Yongsan, the reduction and realignment of the US Second Infantry Division,<sup>1</sup> and the overhaul of the “Land Partnership Plan” through the Future of the ROK-US Alliance

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<sup>1</sup> In the FOTA process, the United States revealed its plan to reduce the size of USFK by 12,500 until 2007. The reduction went on until early 2008. However, President Lee and President Bush agreed to freeze the size of USFK at 28,500 at their first summit in April, 2008.



Policy Initiative (FOTA) talks.<sup>2</sup> They also came to a consensus on issues related to operational issues such as “strategic flexibility,” Comprehensive Security Assessment (CSA), Joint Vision Study (JVS), wartime operational control (OPCON) transfer, and Command Relations Study (CRS) through the Security Policy Initiative (SPI) talks. However, differences of opinion came to light in the process, and with regard to strategic flexibility and the CSA, the two countries managed to get closure rather than reaching a complete settlement. Because the process was poorly managed, mutual trust and confidence were damaged resulting in the spread of anti-American sentiment in South Korea and the erosion of pro-South Korean, or pro-alliance, sentiment in the US.

In parallel, the two countries have reinforced the role of their deliberation procedures by establishing additional new high-level consultation mechanisms such as the “Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative (FOTA),” the “Security Policy Initiative (SPI),” and the “Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership (SCAP).”<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. Alliance-related ROK-US Consultation Mechanisms

<b>Consultation Mechanisms</b>	<b>Key Agreements</b>	<b>Note</b>
FOTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transfer of the Yongsan base</li> <li>- Relocation and revamping of the US Forces Korea (USFK)</li> <li>- LPP</li> <li>- Transfer of specific missions</li> </ul>	Superseded by the SPI after the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement and an implementation agreement (Sept. 2004)
SPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of the progress made in the implementation of FOTA agreements; follow-up measures</li> <li>- Assessment of the general security situation</li> <li>- Vision for the future ROK-US alliance</li> <li>- Wartime OPCON and a new command system</li> </ul>	In operation
SCAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- USFK’s strategic flexibility</li> </ul>	In operation

\* In addition to these frameworks, ROK-US Annual Security Consultative Meetings (SCM) and Military Committee Meetings (MCM) are held regularly

\*\* “Big 4 Meetings,” comprising the ROK foreign and defense ministers, the US ambassador to the ROK, and the commander of the USFK, are held when needed

<sup>2</sup> From 2003 to 2004, FOTA talks took place 12 times. The last meeting was held on September 2004.

<sup>3</sup> In addition, the two sides have introduced the so-called 2+2 meeting as of July 2010. While the 2+2 ministerial meeting was rather ad hoc, the 2+2 high level meeting (Deputy Minister level) is likely to be institutionalized.

At Gyeongju in November 2005, President Roh and President Bush adopted a joint declaration, the crux of which was the “development of the ROK-US alliance into a *comprehensive, dynamic, and mutually beneficial* (emphasis added) alliance.” However, the two allies failed to come up with a concrete action plan or specific measures. Thus it remained an abstract and declarative document. Furthermore, Seoul and Washington halted discussion on some items without being able to reach full agreement and with regards to some matters which they agreed upon, they put off implementation. What is more, the two countries were not able to bridge differences of opinion over the subjects on which they couldn’t agree. The relocation of USFK bases was delayed mainly due to land purchases, environmental treatment, and cost-sharing of base and facility construction.<sup>4</sup> Regarding the CSA, the ROK and the US agreed on only issues where views converged. The outcome of the JVS remains a mystery to this day. The two sides closed the talks on USFK strategic flexibility by making note of each party’s position, hence setting the issue back to square one.<sup>5</sup> Minister Ban and Secretary Rice agreed as follows:

The ROK, as an ally, fully understands the rationale for the transformation of the US global military strategy and respects the necessity for the strategic flexibility of US forces in the ROK. In the implementation of strategic flexibility, the US respects the ROK position that it shall not be involved in a regional conflict in Northeast Asia against the will of the Korean people.

The United States asked South Korea to bear a larger share of defense costs on the grounds of “equitable sharing,” but South Korea expressed reservations. The transformation of “Concept Plan 5029 (CONPLAN 5029)” – a plan designed to prepare for a contingency in North Korea – into an operations plan fell through over differences regarding the plan’s character, sensitivities, basic course of response, and the subject of the plan’s enforcement. South Korea and the United States originally agreed to dismantle the Combined Forces Command (CFC) following the wartime OPCON transfer<sup>6</sup> and create and operate an “Alliance Military Coordination Center (AMCC).” In the course of reviewing this plan, however, South Korea called for an arrangement similar to the CFC, while the United States preferred cooperation among operational units. The AMCC debate is therefore back at the starting point.

With the inauguration of President Lee Myung-bak, the expectation for restoration of the traditional ROK-US alliance and transformation of it into a global strategic alliance has become very high on both sides. The Lee government singled out the “creative development of ROK-US relations” as one of the top 10 key tasks for arriving at the national signpost of “Global Korea.”<sup>7</sup> One of the basic goals of the new government was to restore the traditional ROK-US alliance and develop ROK-US relations into a “strategic alliance” that contributes to the peace of not only the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia but also of the world. This is to be done by reinstating traditional ROK-US relations,

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<sup>4</sup> As of January 2008, 38 out of the 79 USFK bases targeted for relocation have been returned but the remaining 41 have not been returned. In 2008, nine bases are supposed to be returned to South Korea.

<sup>5</sup> In the first SCAP meeting on Jan. 20, 2006, South Korea and the US agreed on this issue.

<sup>6</sup> Both sides agreed to transfer wartime OPCON on April 17, 2012, but it was subsequently delayed following North Korean provocations in 2010.

<sup>7</sup> “Global Korea” is an indication of being a mature nation in the world.

sharing liberal democratic and market economic values, broadening mutual trust, and expanding strategic cooperation across the spectrum of political, economic, and social relations. Essentially, for the newly envisioned ROK-US alliance, three words stand out: trust, value, and peace.

Across the Pacific, the US administration, Congress, experts, and media have enthusiastically welcomed and expressed similarly high expectations. For the US, the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak government appeared to be a significant milestone for repairing and strengthening bilateral relations. To strengthen and upgrade the ROK-US alliance, the Bush administration and the Obama administration have taken a series of positive measures such as freeze the USFK force level at 28,500, upgrade of the ROK's FMS (foreign military sale) status, and reassure Seoul of the US commitment to extended deterrence on the peninsula.<sup>8</sup>

What is more important than those specific measures is the announcement of the Joint Vision Statement on June 16, 2009, which many security specialists in both South Korea and the US saw as crucial to modernizing the alliance. It lays out the basis, or foundation, of the alliance in the future (common values and ideals), expanded the areas of cooperation (from security to political, economic, social, and cultural areas), and identified the issues of cooperation at different levels (peninsula, regional, and global). Furthermore, upon President Obama's first visit to South Korea, the two presidents agreed to have foreign and defense ministers, at the so-called "2+2 meeting",<sup>9</sup> to meet and discuss specific ways to develop the alliance in 2010, which marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. It is expected that in their first meeting, ministers and secretaries will discuss and introduce the so-called security cooperation guidelines, which probably contains more specific action plans. Thus, at this juncture, it is critical to lay a solid foundation for a strategic alliance. It may be time to have a comprehensive bottom-up review of the alliance and to identify roles, missions, capabilities, to shape project the alliance into the future. In doing so, lest we make the same mistakes again, it is necessary to learn the lessons from the past experience in alliance adjustment.

A common problem of both the pro-alliance school and the pro-self-reliance school in South Korea was an inability to understand the essential nature of international politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and an inclination to focus on domestic elements in interpreting and understanding problems. As a result, constantly changing variables such as public opinion on specific issues overshadowed the discussion of the alliance. In analyzing and resolving problems, it was very hard to overcome the dichotomic framework of analysis of right vs. left, conservative vs. progressive, and pro-American vs. anti-American. Such debates and approaches kept us from understanding the rationale for transforming the ROK-US alliance, which has been considered one of the most successful cases of an alliance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, this lack of understanding made it difficult to lay out appropriate directions for alliance transformation.

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<sup>8</sup> In addition, both sides agreed and reaffirmed to enhance the cooperation in climate change, energy security, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, peace-keeping operation, and economy and trade. Nowadays the ROK and the US are discussing the strategic alliance 2015, missile range extension, proactive deterrence, and others.

<sup>9</sup> The '2+2' meeting has been held two times. The second meeting was held in Washington, June 2012.

To cope with ever-increasing asymmetrical threats in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the US began to implement the concept of an advanced flexible force, which is capable of responding to threats at any time and any place with high mobility and precision strike capability. The shift in strategic paradigm was accompanied by changes in the traditional alliance concept, which was characterized by the mission of defending a specific region or country – rigid regional defense. Due to the nature of emerging threats, restricting alliances to geographic boundaries was no longer a valid concept in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To effectively cope with unspecified threats with no geographical limit and to enhance the flexibility of troop movement – “strategic flexibility” – the US began to transform the traditional hub-and-spoke alliance system into a multidimensional network-like alliance system backed by strong commitment to new security concerns and deep trust. The 9/11 incident facilitated the transformation in all dimension. From 2003, the US began to emphasize the necessity of physical as well as conceptual transformation of the ROK-US alliance and changes in USFK’s strategy.

The US strategy of transformation was neither fully nor correctly understood by the ROK government. In South Korea, debate over the ROK-US alliance was mainly driven by the fear of abandonment vs. fear of entrapment, or pro-alliance vs. pro-self-reliance. The conservatives in South Korea argued that the Roh administration’s mismanagement of the relationship and its progressive orientation resulted in the weakening of the security posture. On the other hand, the progressives argued for sovereignty, national pride, and the need for a self-reliant defense posture. Neither argument understood the US transformation strategy at the global level and its implications for the USFK and the ROK-US security alliance. Their arguments about the changes in the ROK-US alliance and defense posture were the traditional 20<sup>th</sup> century peninsula-specific ones. Consequently, domestic debate was counterproductive and wasted time and effort. Furthermore, they failed to provide proper direction and a blue print for alliance transformation. Rather, they were driven by temporal issues on the peninsula.

The second lesson we can draw is the importance of cognitive elements in maintaining and strengthening the alliance. For the past several years of alliance adjustment, despite all the agreements, there has been an erosion of trust and confidence between the two allies. A perceptual or cognitive gap was the source of the erosion and little effort was given to overcome or narrow the gap. Despite official statements and explanations of both the ROK and US governments, throughout the Roh administration, friction, maybe conflict, between policy-makers as well as opinion groups in both countries went beyond simple policy differences. Both sides became very suspicious of the other’s intention, sincerity, and integrity, which led to misinterpretation and left a huge emotional scar.

For example, the Roh and Bush administrations had quite different understandings and outlooks regarding North Korea, China, and what desirable regional security architecture would be. South Korea thought the Bush administration exaggerated the North Korean threat and was preoccupied with the war on terrorism, whereas the Bush administration believed that the Roh administration was too sympathetic toward North Korea and underestimated the gravity of the North Korean threat. They also differed in evaluating the long-term regional security environment, most notably regarding the rise of China and its implication for regional peace and security. Another difference was that the

Roh administration saw multilateral security arrangements in Northeast Asia as an alternative, maybe more desirable, security structure, whereas the Bush administration emphasized the bilateral alliance system as the backbone for peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. In other words, they had different perspectives and interpretations of the present security reality as well as the future one.

Such cognitive differences had a great negative influence over policy consultation and coordination between the two allies. While they were able to hammer out pending issues, the ROK and the US were becoming less trustful of each other's genuine intention. A series of issues such as strategic flexibility of USFK, reference to preemptive strikes in the US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), establishment of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, and the creation of a multilateral security cooperation mechanism in Northeast Asia actually functioned to confirm the differences and weaken mutual trust and confidence. This was either the result of failing to narrow the cognitive gap through in-depth and frank strategic dialogue, or the two allies were simply preoccupied with issues such as the North Korean nuclear problem, base relocation, and burden-sharing, and did not have time to review the fundamentals of alliance.

The second lesson leads to the third: absence of vision for the ROK-US alliance and issue-driven adjustment. The Roh and Bush administrations failed to identify the rationale for the alliance in the future and develop a common understanding of the desirable form of the future alliance. To ensure a smooth and stable transformation of the 50-year-old alliance, there should be a new and fundamental common understanding of a blue print for the transformation, as there was in the US-Japanese alliance during the 1990s. In 1996, President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto adopted the Joint Declaration of US-Japan Security Cooperation. A year later the US and Japan agreed on guidelines for implementation. Consequently, they had a relatively clear understanding on why and where they were heading and how they were going to get there.

In contrast, the alliance adjustment process between South Korea and the US was driven by specific issues without an agreed vision for the future of the alliance relationship. Consequently, they failed to provide the rationale for transforming and strengthening the alliance and to identify roles, missions, capabilities, strategies, and structure of the alliance. In other words, South Korea and the US dealt with their issues without a clear conceptual framework of the alliance. Or the US might have had an idea, whereas the ROK did not have one of its own, except the desire to be less dependent upon the US – “self-reliant defense.” The ROK lacked sufficient judgment and evaluation of what strategic meaning and impact each of those issues had for their alliance and the system of the alliance. Unlike their official statements, the ROK and the US did not have a strong interest in producing vision and guidelines. And they might have had different ideas about the future alliance. As a result, the adjustment process itself became a source of misunderstanding and misjudgment of each other.

In sum, during the past several years, the lack of understanding regarding the transformation in international politics (or changes in the challenges and ways to meet them), the inability to narrow the perceptual gap, the erosion of trust and confidence between the two allies, and the absence of vision and guidelines have all served to hinder

progress in transforming the ROK-US alliance. Put in a different way, the two allies lacked real in-depth strategic dialogue, consultation, and coordination in their efforts to adjust the alliance relationship. Rather, they opted for tactical discussion and failed to diagnose the symptoms and identify the fundamental causes and the nature of the problems. These experiences and lessons should be seriously taken into account in realizing the ROK-US strategic alliance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – the past should guide the future.

### **Prospect for the ROK-US Alliance: Challenges and Tasks**

With the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak administration in South Korea, hopes and expectations for the restoration and strengthening of the ROK-US security alliance rose on both sides of the Pacific. A series of meaningful measures and agreements were adopted and implemented, including the adoption of the Joint Vision for the Alliance on June 16, 2009, which is quite significant in laying out the direction for the ROK-US alliance into the future. The ROK and the US are in the process of realizing it. But to fully establish the 21<sup>st</sup> century strategic alliance there are many things to do.

#### *Defining and Operationalizing “Strategic” Alliance*

The first task for the ROK and the US is to clearly define and operationalize the concept of strategic alliance, going beyond the rhetoric: i.e., what “strategic alliance” is in theory and practice. Forming an alliance itself is a strategic choice. Are there other types of alliances we can think of? Is it just another case of a term without substance? It is only quite natural and necessary to ask what is the difference between an alliance and a “strategic” alliance? It is also closely related to roles and missions of the alliance in the coming years.

An alliance is formed to cope with common threat(s), notably military in nature, as a way to make up for a deficiency. What makes an alliance different from other forms of relations is that an alliance is primarily based on and aims at close military cooperation and coordination. An alliance is rather defensive and passive in nature; promoting stability by balance of power or the status quo. It is reactive to any action that is intended to bring about changes. Traditionally, an alliance is perceived as a geographically focused military cooperation mechanism that is intended to preserve peace and security in a specific region by enhancing military cooperation between countries. Most modern alliances such as NATO, US-Japan, US-ROK, US-Australia, and US-Philippines show such characteristics.

The Lee administration has identified three elements of a strategic alliance of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: value, trust, and peace; both parties share common values; the relationship is based on mutual trust; and the objective of the alliance is peace. Thus, it is possible to say that the ROK-US strategic alliance is different from the traditional threat-based alliance. In realizing it, both sides emphasize the expanded scope of the alliance. From a geographic perspective, the ROK-US alliance is not confined to the Peninsula. Rather it intends to cope with regional and global security issues as well as peninsular ones. Second, the alliance covers not only military concerns but also nonmilitary issues. Both the ROK and the US have strongly emphasized cooperation in nonmilitary areas. So it will be an alliance for comprehensive cooperation in wide range of mutual concerns.

Both South Korea and the US clearly recognize the interconnectedness and complexity of issues at present and in the future. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the changes in the security environment and the emergence of new challenges and threats, some changes in the alliance have occurred. First, due to the nature of challenges in the post-Cold War era and advances in science and technology, geographic boundaries or limits of alliances have become a less dominant and determining factor. The nature of issues and challenges is now a more important factor than geographic boundaries in forming alliances or coalitions. Thus, an alliance should be ready to tackle various threats and challenges beyond a region and its forces should also be able to carry out missions and roles anytime and anywhere.

Table 2. Common Denominators of Future Cooperation between ROK and the US  
A Set of Common Goals for Future ROK-US Cooperation

Implementing Agent Strategic Level	ROK	Common	US
Global-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance ROK's status in international community</li> <li>Search for complex global order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Realize universal value for sustaining world peace</li> <li>- Promote global political and economic cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Counter WMD terrorism</li> <li>- Sustain authority as a leading country in global order</li> <li>- Maintain US-led capitalist global order</li> <li>- Promote US values</li> </ul>
Regional-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance the ROK's status in the order of East Asia</li> <li>- Contain emergence of a regional hegemonic power</li> <li>- Oppose US unilateralism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain regional peace</li> <li>- Contain emergence of regional hegemon</li> <li>- Promote economic cooperation</li> <li>- Secure SLOCs</li> <li>- Prevent anti-humanitarian activities in the region</li> <li>- Counter terrorism and nonproliferation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain regional peace</li> <li>- Continue US superior status in the region</li> <li>- Check regional hegemonic power, China in particular</li> <li>- Promote expansion of democracy</li> <li>- Lead the regional economic order</li> </ul>

Peninsula-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deter and defend against use of force or threats on the Korean Peninsula</li> <li>- Procure relative autonomy</li> <li>- Achieve Korean reconciliation, cooperation and common prosperity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prevent outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula</li> <li>- Sustain democracy and market-economy in ROK</li> <li>- Achieve ROK-led reunification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pursue stability of the Korean Peninsula</li> <li>- Continue US influence toward the Korean Peninsula</li> <li>- Sustain democracy and market-economy</li> </ul>
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Second, this leads to the transformation of the alliance system from a US-centered hub-and-spoke model to a web-like global network model. US allies should be linked organically among themselves. They should be structured and able to work not only with the United States but also with other US allies. The most notable example is the Japan-Australian security cooperation. Nowadays, the US strongly urges South Korea to enhance security cooperation between its allies, especially with Japan. So, to become a true and meaningful strategic partner, one should be closely integrated into the global alliance network. The ROK and the US should think of other partners in attaining their common goals and objectives. It must be a mandate to think of “alliance+someone (or something).”

Third, a new alliance should be geared to shape the future, not just respond to situations. Nowadays, the function of an alliance is not just for maintaining the status quo, but actively developing the desired strategic landscape. For that purpose, proactive and preventive actions and measures are desired. A combination of means across fields is going to be a dominant feature. So the concept of DIME (diplomatic, information/intelligence, military, and economic) has become very popular in discussions between allies. Comprehensive inter-governmental cooperation, which is far beyond just mil-to-mil cooperation, is necessary more than ever.

Fourth, responsibility-sharing, or benefit-and-burden sharing, is one of the key elements. Alliances used to be a kind of patron-client relationship. Mutuality is now being emphasized from both sides. One’s strategic value is highly determined by how much one contributes to the attainment of common goals. The issue is how to define and share responsibilities. In other words, who takes the leading role, while the other assumes the supporting role? For that purpose, it is necessary to think of the relative weight of national interests of both countries at stake. The second element can be capabilities: that is, who has what and how much.

Based upon these criteria, we can say that a strategic alliance is a proactive, balanced responsibility-sharing, issue-based, adaptive, future-oriented, and highly and comprehensively integrated alliance. But the core of a strategic alliance is the enrichment of military cooperation and coordination by deepening and widening the contents of cooperation. This actually encompasses some elements of a regional alliance, but goes beyond simple geographical extension of the ROK-US alliance. It can be called a ‘multidimensional comprehensive alliance’ or a ‘complex alliance.’ With this new framework, South Korea and the US should identify, eliminate, and deter potential threats



to peace and security in the region and the world. A new alliance should not be targeted toward a specific state or bloc. Instead it should be a tool for realizing common and cooperative security.

### *Strengthening the Fundamentals*

There are several key elements in realizing a comprehensive, multilayered and complex, or strategic, alliance. These elements can be considered as the basics, or fundamentals, of an alliance. The future of a strategic alliance depends on how much we consolidate these basics.

First, there should be a common threat perception among the allies. One of the essentials in forming and maintaining an alliance is the existence of commonly shared national (security) interests among the constituents. However, the existence of common national interests and the exchange of them among the concerned parties is a necessary, but insufficient condition, since it is possible to choose other ways and means to realize those common interests than forming an alliance. There should be something else which makes an alliance different from other forms of cooperation in international relations – a common threat perception. Of course, a threat perception itself evolves over time and the changes in internal and external environments bring about perceptual changes among the allies. It is not difficult to find cases where allies tend to have different threat perceptions. Consequently, the cooperation among the allies becomes weaker and the relationship becomes strained. So the future of the ROK-US alliance greatly depends on how effectively the ROK and the US replace the original rationale of forming the alliance – the North Korean threat – with the threats to common values and interests in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If this new threat perception is continuously shared, the foundation of the ROK-US alliance will become solid and strengthened, and in turn, the ROK-US alliance will function properly under the changing security environment.

A second important element in alliance relations is trust. The existence of common threat perception and national interests does not ensure solidarity among the allies. Since threat perception and national interests can change, allies may shift policies and positions, and/or they may fail to carry out commitments they have made. Given this uncertainty, trust ensures the solidarity and integrity of the alliance: that is, belief in “whatever you do, I am with you.” Of course, a common threat perception among allies enables them to maintain an alliance relationship not only during war-time or contingency but also during peace-time. But the trust or belief that an ally will be there at all times and that the ally will fully honor the commitments helps maintain the solidarity and robustness of an alliance regardless of changes in the security environment. Trust is becoming more important in the era of defense transformation and it requires a fundamental recognition of the congruence of strategic security interests between the allies. Furthermore, trust ensures common identity in values, vision, and culture. To upgrade and strengthen the ROK-US alliance, efforts should be made to deepen mutual trust – “we go together.”

Third, there should be institutional mechanism or framework between allies to support the realization and strengthening of the cognitive foundation. Without this, it would become an organization of “No Action Talk Only (N.A.T.O.)” and it cannot secure

effectiveness in operation. In other words, to strengthen mutual trust between the allies, it is necessary to have an effective institutional framework, including treaty-bound responsibilities. In introducing or inventing an institutional mechanism, the following points should be taken into account and the institutional mechanism should be able to strengthen these points in operation.

First, it is important to honor the basic spirit of the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty: that is, from the beginning the ROK-US alliance is not exclusively confined to the Korean Peninsula. This has significant implications for the future development of the ROK-US alliance. The expression “*no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that either of them stands alone in the Pacific area* (emphasis added)” implies that the objective of the ROK-US alliance is not only to deter North Korea’s use of force against South Korea but also to respond to diverse potential security threats in the Pacific area. Thus, we can argue that from the beginning the scope of the alliance covered not only the Korean Peninsula but also East Asia and the Asia Pacific. This can be extended to cover global issues due to the increasing linkage of issues and challenges across regions. Furthermore, it is geared toward the establishment of a “*comprehensive and effective security mechanism* (emphasis added)” in the region. That is, the ROK-US alliance should function as a cornerstone of a collective security mechanism in the region. It means that the ROK-US alliance and multilateral security cooperation are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are mutually reinforcing and efforts should be made to realize that relationship.

Second, the ROK should be more concerned with the meaning and implications of the word “mutual” in the Mutual Defense Treaty. Adopting a Mutual Defense Treaty implies that when one party is in danger or faced with danger, both parties respond. Until recently, the ROK-US alliance has been usually interpreted and understood as the US commitment to the defense of the ROK. However, as it has developed its national power over the years, the ROK should recognize that areas for cooperation and collaboration over the US security concerns have also widened and that it should share the responsibility. To develop a balanced and robust alliance relationship with the US, the ROK must assume greater responsibilities and to identify and expand areas of cooperation and contribution. That is, the ROK should try hard to increase its strategic value to the US by making meaningful and substantial contribution to US efforts in managing and transforming regional and global order. On the other hand, the US should also be aware and concerned with sub-regional concerns and issues that affect the ROK’s national interests directly.

Third, the ROK and the US should think of ways to utilize the abstractness and the possibility of flexible interpretation of phrases in the Mutual Defense Treaty. Some argue that to extend the scope of the ROK-US alliance beyond the Korean Peninsula it is necessary to revise or amend the Mutual Defense Treaty. Otherwise, they claim, it is a violation of the treaty. However, it is unnecessary and counter-productive to amend the treaty. Rather, the ROK and the US should follow the example of the US and Japan from 1996 when they adopted a declaration of new security cooperation. By taking into account changes in its security environment, the ROK and the US should set the goals and directions for the alliance within the framework of the Mutual Defense Treaty. In addition, it is possible to lay out security cooperation guidelines or principles. The current command

relationship and structure – the Combined Forces Command – should be adjusted accordingly for the sake of ensuring the effectiveness in carrying out roles and missions.

Fourth, even as the ROK and the US aim at “comprehensive alliance,” the core element of this comprehensive alliance should be the widening and deepening of military cooperation. This makes the alliance different from other types of relations and makes it more meaningful and important. “Comprehensive cooperation” should not mean the weakening of military security commitments to each other. Rather it should be interpreted as a way to strengthen the alliance by adding other elements of common interests to the existing core relations and by constructing a more complex, intertwined and multilayered relationship among the allies. These additional elements and complex relationships will ensure the stability of security commitment and enhance military security cooperation. With a complex alliance, the ROK will be able to maintain robust security collaboration backed up by the expansion of national interests in political, economic, and social arenas.

In sum, South Korea and the United States should seek a new form of alliance and military cooperation that is in tune with the characteristics of a strategic alliance. The two countries need to undergo a process of minimizing their perception gaps in judgment, prospects, and challenges by shoring up security dialogue and intelligence cooperation, charting multiple plans tailored for various types of challenges, and setting the scope and level of cooperation and division of missions. By experiencing this process, closing the fissures in understanding, and acting in concert (think alike, act together), South Korea and the United States should aim at developing their alliance into a relationship where benefits and responsibilities are shared. Hence, under the principle of shared benefits and responsibilities, the two countries need to seek, expand, and advance cooperation in new areas, in addition to their existing security and military cooperation, in consideration of each party’s capabilities. Moreover, the two allies should formulate a plan that addresses in what forms and to what levels they should cooperate to meet the challenges arising on the Korean Peninsula and at the regional and global levels.

The key to repairing and strengthening the ROK-US alliance is to consolidate the foundations of the alliance by stepping up efforts to place priority on fine-tuning and coordinating each outstanding issue and promote shared understanding. The United States and South Korea are bound to have incongruent points of view and perceptions, but to consolidate the foundations of the ROK-US alliance and build a healthy alliance, it is vital that the two countries make efforts to bridge their gaps to the maximum extent and foster confidence and trust. In order to move toward a “strategic alliance” that aspires to share values and broaden strategic cooperation, what the two countries need is a set of systems, institutions, and measures of closer consultations and cooperation capable of ensuring “comprehensive interoperability,” where even situation assessments and prospects, challenge discernments, and means of planning and response are shared.

For its part, the ROK needs to expand national interests through the utilization of its alliance with the United States as a means of counterbalancing the burden of maintaining the alliance. The ROK also needs to take advantage of the alliance to supplement its weaknesses – notably its deterrence against North Korea and balance of power vis-à-vis neighboring countries – and raise its stature and influence in the security

realm and regional security structure. Seoul also needs to enhance its strategic value by developing and advancing the country's own areas of specialization which benefit its international prestige, national power, and image to the outside world. To this end the ROK, as a successful model of democratization and economic development, may examine ways to blend "soft power" with other positive elements it possesses and make use of it as an asset of the alliance. The ROK can also consider ways to build on and take advantage of the know-how it has accumulated in the fields of peace-building, stabilization, and social reconstruction, and begin establishing its own areas of expertise.

There are some technical, but very important, issues to be reviewed and agreed between South Korea and the US: the scope and degree of the participation of the ROK-US security alliance in shaping the future; alternative defense cooperation mechanisms and structures between the ROK and the US, including command relations; a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula and the status of United Nations Command; strengthening of the ROK's defense capabilities and restructuring of ROK forces; adjustment and redefining of roles, missions, and capabilities of USFK in the future; maintenance of proper size of USFK; and base realignment.

## **Chapter 5**

# **US-Philippines Alliance: Addressing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Challenges**

Rommel C. Banlaoi

This chapter examines how the US-Philippines alliance has evolved since the end of the Cold War and describes the role this alliance plays in the current security thinking in the Philippines. It analyzes the Philippines' expectations of its alliance with the US and how to meet these expectations. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the US-Philippines alliance can help contribute to regional security, particularly in the context of the so-called US pivot to Asia.

### **Evolution of the US-Philippine Alliance**

The evolution of the US-Philippines alliance is best understood in its proper historical context. Shared historical experiences immensely contribute to the development of this alliance. Before becoming an ally, the Philippines first was a US colony from 1898 to 1935. The almost four decades of direct colonial rule greatly shaped the pro-US orientation of Philippine security policy having inherited many attributes of its erstwhile colonial master. Though separated by the vast Pacific Ocean, they have been closely linked by the shared values of liberalism, open society, and democracy, which were all honed during the almost 40 years of colonial rule.

On Nov. 15 1935, the US granted the Philippines the Commonwealth Government as a transition toward self-rule. However, foreign policy and military affairs remained in the hands of the US. All legislation passed by the Philippine Congress needed the approval of the US president. The passage in 1935 of the Commonwealth Act Number 1 allowed the US to maintain a grip on the Philippines and shape the direction of defense policy. Better known in the Philippines as the National Defense Act (NDA) of 1935, it created the umbilical cord between the two countries and provided the legal foundation for forging a military alliance. The NDA allowed the establishment of US military reservations in Philippine territories while the Commonwealth Government was setting-up its own independent armed forces. The NDA also authorized Commonwealth President Manuel L. Quezon to confer on US Gen. Douglas MacArthur the title of field marshal of the Philippine Army. MacArthur was the architect of the Philippine defense plan that became the basis for the development of modern Philippine armed forces.

Though it has gone through several revisions, the NDA remains in effect and continues to serve as the sentimental tie that strongly binds the security of the Philippines with the United States. Even when Japanese Imperial forces occupied the Philippines from 1941 to 1945, Commonwealth President Quezon evacuated to the US to run a government in exile. The Commonwealth Period formed a habit among Philippine security officials to be very reliant on the US government for security advice and training, if not outward decision-making.

The Japanese occupation allowed the US and the Philippines a common foe.<sup>1</sup> Fighting side-by-side against the Japanese further cemented the historical foundation of the US-Philippines alliance; around a million Filipinos and over 60,000 US soldiers died in the Philippines during World War II.

World War II served as the main catalyst for Philippine security officials to develop a strong emotional affinity with their US counterparts. Most Filipinos during World War II regarded the US as the liberator of their country from the Japanese Imperial Forces.<sup>2</sup> This created an image of the US among most Filipinos as a “savior” of the Philippine republic. Thus, when the Philippines received its independence from the US on July 4, 1946, then President Manuel Roxas enunciated a pro-US orientation of Philippine security policy.

During his inauguration, President Roxas declared his unequivocal pro-US position when he stressed that he was committed to “subscribe irretrievably” to US foreign policy and to the “cause and international program of the United States of America.”<sup>3</sup> He also underscored the need to have the “closest cooperation with the United States in all matters concerning our common defense and security.”<sup>4</sup> President Roxas signed with the US the Treaty of General Relations that outlined overall diplomatic relations between the two countries.

President Roxas also signed a Military Bases Agreement (MBA) on March 14, 1947, which justified the presence of 23 US military facilities in various parts of the Philippines, particularly the US naval base in Subic and the US air base in Clark for a period of 99 years. Complementary with the MBA was the signing of Military Assistance Agreement (MAA) on March 21, 1947. Through the MAA, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) received aid in the form of military training, procurement of weapons, acquisition of military assets, and provision of technical assistance. To defend themselves against external armed attacks, the Philippines and the US signed the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) on Aug. 30, 1951. Now, the MDT is still in effect and continues to serve as the main foundation of the US-Philippines alliance.

The US alliance with the Philippines served two important purposes during the Cold War. It supported the US strategy in containing communism and guided the Philippine government’s campaign against internal communist insurgencies. As allies, both countries fought together during the Korean War (1950-1953) and the Vietnam War (1964-1973). They fought common wars to defend democracy, promote open society, uphold the rule of law and pursue free trade.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed historical analysis of the Philippines under Japanese occupation, see Teodoro Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years: Japan’s Adventure in the Philippines, 1941-1945* (Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Publishing Company, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> Samuel E. Morrison, *The Liberation of the Philippines: Luzon, Mindanao, the Visayas 1944-1945*, vol. 13 of *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II* (New York: Castle Books, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Jose Ingles, *Philippine Foreign Policy* (Manila: Lyceum of the Philippines Press, 1983), p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

During the Martial Law period, President Ferdinand E. Marcos utilized the US-Philippines alliance not only to address common external threats and to confront internal insurgency threats, but also to maintain an unpopular political regime. The US had to pragmatically and cautiously “waltz with the dictator” because the Cold War required US military facilities in the Philippines.<sup>5</sup>

Marcos used nationalist rhetoric to get more military aid from the US for purposes of maintaining his regime, threatening to terminate the MBA if the US would not pay an annual compensation package for the use of facilities in Philippine territories. Marcos endeavored to remold the US-Philippines alliance by initiating an amendment of the MBA during the first term of his presidency. This effort led to the signing of the Ramos-Rusk Agreement on Sept. 16, 1966, which reduced the term of the bases treaty from 99 to 25 years – thus the expiration of the treaty in 1991.

The end of the Cold War in 1991 posed enormous challenges to the relevance of the US-Philippines alliance. US withdrawal from Clark and Subic after the termination of the MBA in 1991 weakened the foundation of the alliance. The complete withdrawal of US military facilities in the Philippines in 1992 made the “once-strong” and “once-special” alliance “essentially moribund.”<sup>6</sup>

The governments of the two countries attempted to fashion a new type of security relations with the proposed Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Security in 1991, but the Philippine Senate rejected this treaty.<sup>7</sup> Though there was strong popular support for the retention of US bases in the Philippines, the Philippine Senate rejected a new treaty as they were “either acting opportunistically or were caught up in the ‘anti-American’ mood of the times.”<sup>8</sup>

With the termination of the MBA, the US discontinued its annual Foreign Military Finance (FMF) of \$200 million to the Philippines. The US also restricted the access of the Philippines to Excess Defense Articles (EDA). The Pentagon even removed the AFP as a priority for International Military Education and Training (IMET). The post-bases period, which coincided with the post-Cold War era, saw the deterioration not only of the US-Philippines security alliance, but the weakening of Philippine military capability.

After the closure of the bases, the Philippine government flirted with the idea of autonomous defense by passing in 1995 the AFP Modernization Program. Confronted with territorial disputes in the South China Sea and internal armed conflicts with the Maoist and Moro rebels, the Philippine government even accommodated multilateral options, through regionalism, to overcome its complex security dilemma.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy* (New York: Random House, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> Richard Fisher, Jr., “Rebuilding the U.S.-Philippine Alliance”, *Heritage Foundation Backgrounders*, Number 1255 (Feb. 22, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> For an eyewitness account of the bases talks, see Alfredo R.A. Bengzon and Raul Rodrigo, *A Matter of Honor: The Story of 1990-91 RP-US Bases Talks* (Manila: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Leszek Buszynski, “Realism, Institutionalism, and Philippine Security”, *Asian Survey*, Volume XLII, Number 3 (May/June 2002), p. 487.

From its bilateral security alliance with the US, the Philippine government, therefore, went regional and multilateral by strongly participating in the expansion and strengthening of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Philippine government also supported the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1993 and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 1989. It even formally joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) after it terminated the MBA in 1991.

But the Philippine government realized that neither autonomy nor multilateralism was a complete solution. Autonomous defense was not just ambitious, it was also very impractical considering the country's sluggish domestic economy in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. It realized the peril of pursuing security through self-help without adequate military resources. It also acknowledged that while multilateralism was important to promote dialogues for regional confidence building, it was not adequate for national capacity building to overcome the country's internal and external security problems. With the growing security challenges emanating from China against the backdrop of complex maritime disputes in the South China Sea, the Philippines found it necessary to reactivate its alliance with the US.

Thus, the Philippines fashioned a new type of security relations with the US when the Philippine Senate ratified the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) in 1999. The VFA was regarded as an implementation of the MDT that could make their alliance work at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and served to assuage the Philippine government's fear of growing Chinese assertiveness in the Spratly disputes, especially in light of Beijing's occupation of Mischief Reef in 1995.<sup>10</sup> With the VFA, the US and the Philippines resumed their bilateral military exercises in Philippine territories. In February 2000, the joint *Balikatan* military exercises were revived and seen as a milestone in returning the US-Philippines alliance in the post-Cold War/Post-Bases era to life.

To assess the Philippine security posture, both countries conducted a Joint Defense Assessment (JDA) in 2000. Completed in 2001 and updated in 2003, the JDA identified some deficiencies in the Philippine defense and military establishments, particularly in addressing external security challenges and confronting internal security threats.<sup>11</sup>

The findings of the JDA prompted the Philippines and the US to implement the Philippine Defense Reform (PDR). The PDR aimed to provide the Philippines "a framework of introducing a comprehensive, institutional, structural and systemic reform package at the strategic level for the defense and military establishment."<sup>12</sup> With the assistance of US security consultants and subject matter experts, Filipino defense officials

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<sup>9</sup>Jose T. Almonte, "New Directions and Priorities in Philippine Foreign Relations" in David G. Timberman, ed., *The Philippines: New Directions in Domestic Policy and Foreign Relations* (New York: Asia Society, 1998), p. 148.

<sup>10</sup>For an excellent account of the Senate vote, see Secretary of the Senate, *The Visiting Forces Agreement: The Senate Decision* (Pasay City: The Philippine Senate, 1999).

<sup>11</sup>Rocky L. Carter, "Current State of the U.S.-Philippines Alliance", *Strategy Research Project* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 2011), p. 11.

<sup>12</sup>Office of the Secretary of National Defense, *The Philippine Defense Reform Program* (Quezon City: Department of National Defense, 2003).



implemented the PDR at the height of Philippine participation in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

Strong support for the GWOT was a watershed event as it instantly made the Philippines an active American ally in the post-9/11 era. The White House declared the Philippines a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) in 2003, a status that gave the AFP renewed access to EDA, FMF, and IMET. The \$1.9 million US military aid to the Philippines in 2001 dramatically increased to \$44 million in 2002 and \$49.87 million in 2003.<sup>13</sup> President George W. Bush visited the Philippines in October 2003 to stress the importance of the alliance. With the status of MNNA, the Philippines experienced the re-awakening of the US-Philippines alliance at the height of the GWOT.

To broaden the scope of the alliance, the US and the Philippines created the Security Engagement Board (SEB) in 2006. The SEB complements the Mutual Defense Board (MDB) by focusing on bilateral cooperation in response to non-traditional security threats. The US and the Philippines also signed the Mutual Logistic Support Agreement (MLSA) in 2007. The MLSA gave US troops limited but strategic access and rights to base equipment in the Philippines for a certain period. The MLSA, reinforced by the VFA, justified the continuing presence in Mindanao of at least 600 US troops belonging to the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTFP).<sup>14</sup> With all these new defense agreements and innovative mechanisms for security cooperation, the US-Philippines alliance was revitalized in the post-9/11 period.

### **Current State of the Alliance**

The US-Philippines alliance has endured for more than 60 years despite the “ups” and “downs” in their relationship. At present, the US regards its alliance with the Philippines as an essential component of its pivot to Asia strategy.<sup>15</sup> The Philippines supports this strategy not only to demonstrate its loyalty to the alliance, but also to take advantage of the alliance in building capacity to address its myriad security challenges. Philippine support to the US pivot to Asia strategy was first officially articulated on Nov. 16, 2011 at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MDT.<sup>16</sup> During the celebration, both countries issued the Manila Declaration, which stressed the continuing relevance of their security relations “for peace, security, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, “Philippines: Security Assistance” (Washington D.C. July 11, 2007).

<sup>14</sup>For a critical analysis of JSOTFP, see Herbert Docena, “Unconventional Warfare: Are U.S. Forces Engaged in An Offensive War in the Philippines?” in Patricio Abinales and Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, eds., *The U.S. and the War on Terror in the Philippines* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2008), pp. 46-83.

<sup>15</sup> For a good reference on US pivot, see Mark E. Manyin, et. al. *Pivot to the Pacific: The Obama Administration’s “Rebalancing” Toward Asia* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, March 28, 2012).

<sup>16</sup>Rommel C. Banlaoi, “The Philippines and U.S. Pivot to Asia” (Paper presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> Symposium of the Council for Asian Transnational Threat Research organized by the Institute for Defense Analyses and hosted by the Institute of Security and International Studies at Dusit Thani Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand on May 2, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> See *Manila Declaration on U.S.-Philippines Alliance*, Nov. 16, 2011.

On Jan. 27, 2012, the US and the Philippines also issued a joint statement at the conclusion of their 2<sup>nd</sup> Bilateral Strategic Dialogue in Washington, DC. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to their six decades of formal security alliance and recognized the need to deepen their alliance by broadening cooperation in security, defense, commerce, law enforcement, human rights, and disaster relief.<sup>18</sup>

To reiterate their commitment to the alliance, a 2+2 meeting was held in Washington on April 30, 2012. This meeting allowed foreign affairs and defense officials to exchange strategic perspectives on various security issues. The Philippines highlighted the need for continued US assistance to the Philippine military in building its capacity for territorial defense, counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, and even nation building. It meant asking from the US more access to EDA, greater priority to IMET, and more grants from FMF.

Though the US and the Philippines have had some disagreements on some specific issues, they have chosen to be allies based on shared threat perceptions. As candidly stressed by Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alberto F. Del Rosario:

The alliance has been tested by time, across various administrations in both countries. In the past sixty years, we have gone through periods of intense engagement, and periods of arms-length relations. As we went through the various phases of our bilateral relations, we have learned that even the closest of allies do not agree on all things at all times. Our different levels of development dictate diverse, sometimes conflicting priorities.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the current state and future direction of the US-Philippines alliance can be best appreciated by understanding both countries' threat perceptions.

### *Rise of China as a World Power*

The US and the Philippines have shared security concerns on the rapid rise of China as a world power. Both countries have an interest in China adhering to international norms as it rises as a formidable world power. They want China to contribute to global peace and regional stability. For Manila, the rise of China's power generates security problems as it encourages Beijing's more assertive actions in the South China Sea. In China's "charm offensive" strategy in Southeast Asia, what Manila is seeing from Beijing's recent activities in the South China Sea is more "offense" than "charm". Though the US does not have territorial disputes in the South China Sea to warrant urgent US military involvement, Manila expects strong reassurance from its ally to uphold its commitment to mutual defense – more than words and public declarations, should tensions in the South China Sea degenerate into military conflicts, a grim scenario that all stakeholders do not want to occur.

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<sup>18</sup>Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Republic of the Philippines issued in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 27, 2012.

<sup>19</sup>Alberto F. Del Rosario, "Common Challenges, New Developments in the Philippines-U.S. Alliance" (Delivered at the Public Lecture at Heritage Foundation, Washington DC on 2 May 2012).

## *Threats of International Terrorism and Transnational Crimes*

The US and the Philippines also have shared perceptions of threats posed by international terrorism and transnational crime. Specifically, both countries want to see the final defeat of Al-Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). They have mutual interests in addressing threats from transnational criminal groups engaged in maritime piracy and trafficking of arms, drugs, and humans. Bilateral cooperation is important in promoting “intelligence sharing and coordination of surveillance and interdiction efforts.”<sup>20</sup>

The US and the Philippines also share perceptions on threats emanating from other non-traditional security issues such as climate change and disaster management; health problems and spread of infectious diseases; as well as poverty and hunger issues, among others.<sup>21</sup> The creation of the SEB is tailored to develop the capacity to address these non-traditional security concerns. In their terms of reference, the US and the Philippines established the SEB in order to “provide a framework and mechanism for direct and continuing liaison and consultation on non-traditional security concerns such as, but not limited to, terrorism, transnational crimes, maritime security and safety, natural and man-made disasters, between the appropriate Philippine and United States authorities; develop measures and arrangements for enhanced cooperation in connection therewith; and promote the common security interests of the two sovereign countries.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Philippines Expectations**

The Philippine government has the following expectations from the US as a powerful ally. These expectations aim to increase the operational capacity of the Philippine state to address its many security challenges:

#### *Defense against China’s Increased Activity in the South China Sea*

Amidst the rising tensions in the South China Sea, particularly during the standoff between the Philippines and China in the Scarborough Shoal that started in April 2012, there were calls from different branches of the Philippine government to invoke the MDT to defend the Philippines from China’s perceived aggression and bullying behavior. Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin candidly said that the Philippine government would

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<sup>20</sup>US Department of State, “Joint Statement of the United States-Philippines Ministerial Dialogue”, 30 April 2012.

<sup>21</sup>Carlyle A. Thayer, “Revitalizing U.S. Engagement in Asia: The Obama Administration and the Challenge of Non-Traditional Security Issues” (Paper presented to KAMER MAAS International Conference, “The United States and the New Asia: Towards Partnership and Multilateral Engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, sponsored by the Centre for American Studies (KAMERA), Institute of Occidental Studies (IKON), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and the Malaysian Association for American Studies (MAAS), Hotel Nikko, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 1-2, 2010.)

<sup>22</sup>Department of Foreign Affairs, “Philippines and United States Security Engagement Board: Terms of Reference” (Manila, April 2006).

invoke the MDT in its on-going face-off with China in the South China Sea.<sup>23</sup> Gazmin was alluding to China when he said that the US and the Philippines should “enhance our security relations and, most importantly, demonstrate our unequivocal resolve to support each other against the threats of external aggression and the enemies of freedom and liberty.”<sup>24</sup>

But Secretary of State Hillary Clinton clarified that while the US would seriously fulfill its obligation in the MDT, it would cautiously not “take sides on the competing sovereignty claims to land features in the South China Sea.”<sup>25</sup> Instead, she strongly urged the Philippines and China to resolve their territorial disputes peacefully.<sup>26</sup> Clinton further stressed that the US would “oppose the threat or use of force by any party to advance its claim.”<sup>27</sup>

Manila is building constructive relations with Beijing, since China is its second largest source of foreign development assistance, third largest trading partner, and fourth largest source of foreign tourists.<sup>28</sup> Thus, China’s economic influence in the Philippines is growing. But there remains a residual distrust of China among Filipino security officials because of the South China Sea Dispute. The alliance with the US serves as the Philippines’ security blanket against China’s increased activity in the South China Sea.

#### *Continuing Aid in the Implementation of AFP Modernization Program*

As a security ally, the Philippines expects the US to give the AFP additional access to EDA, FMF, and IMET to enable the Philippine military to move faster in its modernization program. The DND already earmarked in 2012 an amount of \$1.6 billion (P70 billion) in the next five years to finance by self-help 138 projects to modernize the Philippine military through the acquisition of aircraft, vessels, and radar systems.<sup>29</sup> However, the AFP admitted that this amount would not meet its desired defense capabilities, particularly in territorial defense. Thus, the Philippines urged the US to increase its military aid to the AFP. Secretary Del Rosario explained that it would be “to the strategic interest of the US to invest in the development of the Philippines’ defense and military capability.”<sup>30</sup> However, he noted that US military aid to the Philippines was small compared to other allies and partners in Asia. He lamented:

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<sup>23</sup>Florante S. Solmerin, “Standoff Over Panatag Shoal to Test US-PH Defense Treaty”, *Manila Standard Today*, April 28, 2012.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Richard Dudley, “US and the Philippines Reaffirm Defense Alliance”, *Defense Update*, April 30, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> US Department of State, “Remarks of Hillary Rodham Clinton With Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Philippines Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario, and Philippines Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin After 2-plus-2 Meeting”, April 30, 2012 at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/04/188982.htm> <accessed on May 23, 2012>.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Alberto F. Del Rosario, “Welcome Remarks On the Occasion of the Launching of the 2012-2013 Philippines-China Years of Friendly Exchanges” (Manila: Department of Foreign Affairs March 20, 2012.)

<sup>29</sup> Alberto F. Del Rosario, “Common Challenges, New Developments in the Philippines-U.S. Alliance” (Delivered at the Public Lecture at Heritage Foundation, Washington DC on May 2, 2012).

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

We note with concern that in terms of the proportionate share of the FMF pie for East Asia and the Pacific, the allocation for the Philippines is shrinking. We note that in 2006, the State Department FMF request for the Philippines accounted for over 70 percent of the total US FMF request for East Asia. Looking at the FY2012 tables, it appears the FMF for the Philippines only accounts for 35 percent of the requested amount for East Asia. We hope this is not indicative of the priority placed on the Philippines as a regional partner, as even non-treaty allies appear to be getting a bigger share of the FMF allocation.<sup>31</sup>

Del Rosario stressed that the Philippine government already allocated some funds for AFP modernization as part of its investment for defense. But he admitted that “supplementary foreign military financing from the US remains a very important component of our effort to develop our external defense capabilities.”<sup>32</sup>

#### *Continuing Assistance in the Philippine Defense Reform Efforts*

The Philippines regards PDR as essential to the professionalization of security forces and strengthening of civilian control over the military. For the US, implementing the PDR is necessary to develop a capable ally that is prepared to assume national defense responsibilities to contribute to regional peace and stability. Thus, the US funded the PDR, supported its conceptualization, and assisted its implementation.<sup>33</sup>

However, progress in the implementation of PDR priority areas has been uneven. The most significant achievements, thus far, are only in the area of strategic planning and budgetary programming.<sup>34</sup> Reforms in the area of defense procurement are promising but reforms in other critical areas remain a big challenge.<sup>35</sup> What the PDR has achieved, thus far, are “small step” reforms in the overall Defense System of Management (DSOM). Nonetheless, through the PDR, the DND is now able to release an annual *Defense Planning Guidance* that is important for the implementation of the Multi-Year Defense Capability Planning System (MYCAPS). There is a great expectation that Washington will continue to support its Philippine ally to sustain progress.

#### *Participation in Building AFP Internal Security Capabilities*

The Philippines is one of 20 countries in the world with ongoing internal armed conflicts. Sadly, the country still faces a Maoist insurgency and Muslim rebellions. The Philippines is still struggling to defeat the New People’s Army (NPA), which, according to

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> For detailed information about the PDR, see Department of National Defense, *Philippine Defense Reform Handbook* (Quezon City: DND, revised Jan. 31, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Charles Comer, “Philippine Defense Reform: Are We There Yet?” at [http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Philippine\\_Defense\\_Reform.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Philippine_Defense_Reform.pdf) <accessed on May 30, 2012>.

<sup>35</sup> Rommel C. Banlaoi, “Challenges of Security Sector Transformation in the Philippines: A Policy Recommendation for the New Aquino Administration”, *Autonomy and Peace Review*, Volume 6, No. 2 (April-June 2010), pp. 11-72.

an official estimate, still has 5,000 fully armed members as of 2010.<sup>36</sup> The US State Department listed NPA as a foreign terrorist organization in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks. The *2011 National Security Policy* of the Philippine government describes the NPA as its greatest internal security threat.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, the Philippines continues to face the threats of the ASG, the lawless elements of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the rouge factions of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The Philippine military says that the ASG has no more than 400-armed members as of 2010 and most of its members are engaged in criminal activities such as extortion, kidnap for ransom, and small arms sales.<sup>38</sup> The MILF, on the other hand, has around 10,500 armed combatants in Mindanao according to government sources.<sup>39</sup> Though the MILF is currently engaged in difficult peace talks with the Philippine government, there are lawless elements of the MILF that are engaged in terrorism, criminality and other acts of political violence. Lastly, the MNLF entered into a peace agreement with the Philippine government in 1996. But there are “rogue” MNLF members who are still engaged in armed rebellion and criminality.<sup>40</sup>

Complicating the problem on the Moro front is the creation of a shadowy armed group called the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM), a breakaway MILF group. BIFM claims to have 1,500 armed combatants belonging to its military wing, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighter (BIFF). The BIFM is opposed to peace talks and is advocating an armed struggle to create a separate Islamic state in Mindanao.

The Philippine government expects the US to assist the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP) in improving their effectiveness in dealing with internal security threats by continuing counter-terrorism assistance programs and advice to Philippine law enforcement authorities. The Philippines cannot be an effective security ally if internal armed challenges continue. The Philippines will serve as the weakest link in the US network of alliances in Asia if its internal security problems linger.

### *Support in Addressing Non-Traditional Security Threats*

As an archipelago of more than 7,100 islands, including the contested islands in the South China Sea, the country is highly vulnerable to maritime piracy, illegal fishing, arms smuggling, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. Located in the Pacific Ring of Fire, it is also prone to natural disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes. The Philippines does not have adequate national capacities to address all these non-traditional security problems.

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<sup>36</sup>General Headquarters of the AFP, *Internal Peace and Security Plan, Bayanihan* (Quezon City: Armed Forces of the Philippines Headquarters, 2010), p. 10.

<sup>37</sup>Office of the President, *National Security Policy, 2011-2016* (Manila: Office of the President/National Security Council, 2011), p. 15.

<sup>38</sup>General Headquarters of the AFP, *Internal Peace and Security Plan, Bayanihan*, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

Thus, Manila expects Washington's help in building "the Philippines' maritime security presence and capabilities and strengthening its maritime domain awareness in order to contribute to national defense and enhanced regional security related to issues such as illegal fishing, transnational crime, and natural disasters."<sup>41</sup> The holding of the US-Philippines *Balikatan* exercise in April 2012 with a strong focus on disaster management contributed to the process of capacity building. While the Philippines appreciates the delivery of a second-hand *Hamilton Class* cutter from the US in 2011 to strengthen the country's naval patrol of its maritime zone, it also expects the US to deliver three more cutters so it can effectively protect its maritime domain from non-traditional security threats. The Philippines also expects the US to support the country's National Coast Watch System so it can "deter and respond proactively, rapidly, and seamlessly to various situations in the region."<sup>42</sup>

### **US-Philippines Alliance and Asian Security: Supporting the US Pivot to Asia**

The US-Philippines alliance aims to primarily promote mutual defense. But it also has the strategic mission to contribute to regional security, particularly in the context of the US pivot to Asia. Thus, in the Manila Declaration of 2011, the US and the Philippines committed to support "increasing regional cooperation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM+), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the East Asia Summit (EAS)."<sup>43</sup>

In these multilateral institutions, the alliance can serve as a springboard for both countries to engage other US allies and non-allied third parties in Asia. Enhancing the alliance can also help improve regional cooperation among allies and non-allied third parties. The role of the Philippines as Country Coordinator for US-ASEAN Dialogue Relations for 2009-2012 is an indication on how the bilateral alliance can contribute to regional cooperation.

In May 2012, the Philippines hosted the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-US Dialogue Meeting. Participants discussed how to enhance cooperation on regional and global issues while underscoring "the relevance of the implementation of the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DoC) and the usefulness of the Code of Conduct to efforts to preserve peace, stability, unimpeded commerce, and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea."<sup>44</sup>

Interestingly, almost all topics discussed during the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-US Dialogue Meeting are congruent with the current agenda of the US-Philippines alliance. The alliance, therefore, can be used as leverage in multilateral organizations and within larger

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<sup>41</sup>"The U.S.-Philippines Alliance: Charting a Course Forward" (Joint statement by the United States of America and the Republic of the Philippines issued in Washington, D.C. on April 30, 2012).

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> *Manila Declaration on U.S.-Philippines Alliance*, Nov. 16, 2011.

<sup>44</sup>Department of Foreign Affairs, "Statement of the Department of Foreign Affairs on the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-U.S. Dialogue", *Official Gazette* (May 22, 2012) at <http://www.gov.ph/2012/05/22/the-undersecretary-of-foreign-affairs-on-the-25th-asean-u-s-dialogue-may-22-2012/> <accessed on May 30, 2012>.

regional security architecture. As part of elevating the status of their security alliance, the US and the Philippines have also agreed to increase US military presence in the Philippines. Beyond contributing to US presence in the region, this increase also raises Manila's strategic profile as a US ally in Asia.

Since the Philippines has a strict constitutional ban on foreign military bases, the US presence in the Philippines can only be in the form of a "light footprint" without a permanent basing arrangement.<sup>45</sup> Increased US presence in the Philippines can be established through the following:

- Greater US access to Philippine ports and airfields for re-fueling and service of warships and planes;
- Stationing US warships and reconnaissance and other aircraft, on a rotational basis;
- Increasing the number and frequency of joint military exercises, training, ship and aircraft visits, and related activities;
- Increasing the number of US troops serving on a temporary basis; and,
- The Philippine purchase and lease of US military ships and aircraft.<sup>46</sup>

The Philippine government is keen to welcome an increased US presence on its territories for two reasons: 1) to serve as a key link in US pivot to Asia strategy; and 2) to create opportunities for Manila to request additional military assistance from the Pentagon. By welcoming additional troops and supporting the US pivot, the Philippines expects warmer ties with the US. This will help assuage its present security anxieties over China as a reemerging world power and to build its needed national capacities to address the internal security threats and external security challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Conclusion**

The US-Philippines alliance is a product of common history, cultural familiarity, shared values, mutual security interests, and a shared vision of regional security. For more than 60 years, the alliance has endured and has even created an unnecessary habit of Philippine reliance on the US. The alliance with the US has been the cornerstone of Philippine defense, foreign, and security policy. This alliance has also been an important linchpin of US security strategy toward Asia.

In return, the Philippines expect the US to assist in building national capacities to address longstanding domestic threats as well as evolving external security challenges. Without this support, it is problematic for the Philippines to serve as an effective, useful, and reliable ally that can advance both countries' mutual interests in promoting regional security. Having a weak ally in the region is anathema to the US reassertion of responsible and credible leadership in Asia.

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<sup>45</sup>Thomas Lum, *The Republic of the Philippines and U.S. Interests* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, April 5, 2012), p. 28.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.



## **Chapter 6**

# **The US-Thailand Alliance: Perceptions, Realities, and the Way Forward**

Kitti Prasirtsuk

As the Obama administration seeks to reengage with Southeast Asia, it is timely to reexamine the alliance relationships the US has cultivated since the Cold War days. With tensions originating in the Cold War persisting in Northeast Asia, the rationales to keep the alliances in that region remain intact. That is not the case in Southeast Asia, where Thailand and the Philippines are the traditional US allies. For proof, just witness the withdrawals of military bases from Thailand in 1976 and from the Philippines in 1992.

This chapter examines how the US-Thailand alliance has evolved, focusing on the post-Cold War era, then explores the changing threat environment and the current perspectives regarding the US alliance relationship. It does so by focusing on perceptions and realities regarding the alliance and argues that while Thai perceptions of the US alliance are not that favorable, there are several positive realities. The chapter also lays out expectations for the alliance from a Thai perspective.

### **Origin of the US-Thailand Alliance**

Thailand (then known as Siam) became the first US diplomatic partner in Asia when the two states signed the “Treaty of Amity and Commerce” in 1833. Though focusing on commercial relations, not security, the treaty served both countries quite well. While Siam could diversify its relations with Western powers as a strategy to avoid colonization by European powers, the United States gained access to mainland Southeast Asia equal to that of the Europeans.<sup>1</sup>

The current US-Thai alliance relationship can be traced to the end of World War II, when Washington came to defend Thailand despite its status as a “defeated” nation. As Britain made numerous demands on Thailand, which initially sided with Japan during the war, the United States argued that Thai support for Japan was not unitary, as several segments of the population supported the Allied Powers through the Free Thai Movements. The US move created trust between the two nations. But the alliance relationship was formalized only after the Cold War was intensifying, first by the Manila Pact signed in 1954 that formed the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Though SEATO was far from effective, the US-Thailand alliance was cemented by the communiqué signed by Foreign Minister Thanat Khorman and Secretary of State Dean Rusk in 1962. Originally, the Thanat-Rusk Communiqué sought Thailand’s cooperation to prevent the communists from taking over in Laos, but is always cited as the basis for the alliance, which culminated in nine joint bases during the Vietnam War.

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<sup>1</sup> Catharin Dalpino, “The United States-Thailand Alliance: Issues for a New Dialogue,” *NBR Special Report* No. 33 (October 2011), p. 4.

The alliance was supported by various assistance schemes from both the United States and the World Bank, many of which focused on infrastructure development. The most prominent facilities include the US-built airfield at Utapao, the deep-water port at Sattahip, and Mittraphab Highway connecting Bangkok to the northeastern provinces. Investment from the private sector also thrived. Importantly, the two countries signed the “Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations” in 1966, which gave Americans privileges in doing businesses in the kingdom where conditions for foreign investment were quite restrictive at that time. Specifically, the treaty allows US citizens and businesses incorporated in the US or in Thailand to maintain a majority shareholding or to wholly own a company in Thailand, and thereby engage in business on the same basis as a Thai national.<sup>2</sup>

The alliance became diluted when the US withdrew from the Vietnam War in 1973 and vacated the joint bases in Thailand in 1976. In fact, between 1973-76 Thailand briefly enjoyed a more liberal political atmosphere in which anti-base protests periodically occurred. Thai leaders, meanwhile, came to view the US military presence as an increasing liability. At any rate, Washington was also not willing to maintain US troops on mainland Southeast Asia. With the communist takeover of all the Indochina states, Thailand was left in the cold. When the threat from Vietnam was looming large after its invasion and subsequent occupation of Cambodia in 1978, Bangkok had to seek help from Beijing instead (which is discussed below). Later, Thailand came to limit US military access to facilities following the *Mayaguez* Incident in 1975 when the United States unilaterally decided to respond to the seizing of the ship without consulting with Bangkok on the use of Utapao Air Base.<sup>3</sup>

### **Thai Perceptions toward the United States**

Significantly, Thailand tends to view the alliance as part of a broad-based relationship, rather than in the realm of security alone. This is in contrast with the tendency of Americans to disaggregate the relationship into separate parts and see the alliance as confined to the security realm.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is crucial to consider overall bilateral ties when analyzing the alliance relationship. It is important to note that I refer to Thai perceptions at both the levels of elites and the general public. Though the general public is not that well informed about the relationship with the US, the media is quite reflective of the general feelings toward Americans.

Interestingly, Thais tend to refer to the United States as *America maha-mit* (great friend America). However, this term, most of the time, is used with a negative connotation. It tends to be followed by “why a great friend treats us like this.” Complaints stem from a variety of US actions, ranging from economic disputes and pressures, the US listing Thailand as a country with poor records, including on human rights, human trafficking, violation of intellectual property rights, and money laundering. In particular, relations were

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<sup>2</sup> American companies are also exempt from most of the restrictions on foreign investment imposed by the [Foreign Business Act of 1999](#).

<sup>3</sup> Lewis Stern, “Diverging Roads: 21<sup>st</sup> Century U.S.-Thai Defense Relations,” *Strategic Forum* No. 241 (June 2009), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Dalpino, p. 7.

subjected to difficulties as a result of rising US economic pressures since the 1980s. Thais perceive that the US fails to appreciate the historical depth of the bilateral relationship and hesitates to honor the friendship; instead it uses economic calculations and shifting policy interests.

The negative perception can be traced back to the US withdrawal in the 1970s when the region still faced grave communist threat, as mentioned earlier. US support for the authoritarian regimes in Thailand and other alliance countries is also cited as a source of criticism, as it is seen as an inconsistency over democracy and human rights. Indeed, a sizable number of Thai scholars are left leaning, which partially explains their critical stance toward the US in general and American capitalism in particular. Importantly, they are outspoken and function as opinion leaders in Thai society and are quite influential among the Thai public. Accordingly, the US, for the Thais, could be at fault in many ways. In a joint US-Thailand seminar that included senior politicians, bureaucrats, and leading academicians in 2002, a Thai participant even commented that there existed a “deep mistrust of America”.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, most people who criticize the United States would prefer either visiting or sending their children to study in the United States. Compared to most Southeast Asians, the majority of Thais are relatively more receptive to American culture, ranging from Hollywood movies, American music, IT gadgets, fashion, and American lifestyle and consumption in general. In other words, the feelings toward the US are mixed: there are some negative of the US government and corporations but quite positive on American culture.

### **Post-Cold War Events**

After the end of the Cold War, several events unfolded in the 1990s that did not favor the US-Thailand alliance. First, Thailand rejected the US proposal to pre-position military equipment in Thai territorial waters in 1994. Second, the failure of the F/A-18 jet fighter sale after Bangkok decided to trim the military budget largely due to the financial problem after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis strained relations. Third, the US was criticized in 1999 when a chemical spill was discovered at Hua Hin airport and was traced to US use of that facility during the 1960s.<sup>6</sup> In the same year, Thais were disappointed with the US decision to support the New Zealand candidate for WTO secretary general over the Thai contender, Supachai Panitchpakdi.

Three major events during the 2000s further tempered Thai perspectives toward the United States. First, when the Asian Financial Crisis hit Thailand in 1997, there was only moral support from the US, to the disappointment of Thais. The subsequent predatory takeovers by Western companies at fire-sale prices generated more negative feelings. In contrast, regional powers like Japan and China came to engage and cooperate with crisis-hit countries more positively and intensively, as exemplified by the Japanese soft loans under the Miyazawa Initiative and the fact that China refrained from devaluing its

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<sup>5</sup> John Brandon and Nancy Chen (eds.), “United States-Thailand Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Bilateral Conference Summary, the Asia Foundation, Washington, D.C., March 11-13, 2002, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Stern, pp. 3-4.

currency, which made it easier for other Asian countries to recover through increasing exports. Such help further enhanced relationships between regional powers and Thailand.

Second, Thais became more reluctant to support the US when unilateralism was promoted by neo-conservatives during the George W. Bush administration. Apart from the failure to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the war on terror fought in Afghanistan and Iraq deterred Thais from wholeheartedly supporting the United States. However, US-Thailand alliance relations were resurrected after Washington granted Thailand the status of non-NATO alliance upon Bush's visit during the Bangkok APEC leaders meeting in 2003. Soon after, under the Thaksin administration, Thailand sent troops to support the US effort in Iraq, aiming to pursue FTA negotiations with Washington. Yet, it is quite common for Thais to criticize the United States for waging war with Iraq allegedly for US oil interests. Worse, the lack of US attention to the region aggravated the unfavorable perceptions, owing to the consecutive absences of Secretary Condoleezza Rice in the annual ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Both events tarnished the US image for Thais and other Southeast Asians. This is very much in contrast with the image of China which tends to generously lend a hand to ASEAN countries without any conditions.

Third, when the US suspended assistance and criticized Thailand following the military coup in 2006, many Thais were disappointed. Elites who supported the coup at the time said that Washington failed to understand the context of the kingdom. Some went further to argue that Thailand launched a coup as its own way to solve a political deadlock; in contrast other countries may use assassination of leaders. Such arguments became moot after the coup worsened the political crisis in the kingdom. Very few Thais understand Section 508 of the US Foreign Operations Appropriations Act that prohibits obligating or expending funds for a foreign government deposed by decree or military coup. Overall, as the country's divisiveness became more aggravated, feelings toward the US were more mixed and starkly contrasting, depending on who was asked. For instance, anti-Thaksin groups (the yellow shirts) were happy that Thaksin was barred from entering the US, to the anger of Thaksin supporters (the red shirts). Any US statements regarding protests or violence in the nation were received differently by these two groups. Any group that staged a protest would be heartened if the US aired its concern about human rights violations, which might deter the government from ordering a military crackdown. The opposite group, meanwhile, was not happy with the US. In short, US action or inaction regarding the Thai political crisis can always be viewed negatively from one of these sides.

On the international front, fortunately, the Obama administration somewhat recovered the US image with its reengagement policy. Secretary Clinton's participation in the ARF hosted by Thailand was helpful as Thais tend to place great value on high-level visits. The move was warmly welcomed when several Southeast Asian nations became wary of China's assertiveness on issues concerning the South China Sea and the Mekong River. The territorial disputes over Spratly and Paracels make Vietnam and the Philippines particularly nervous, while concerns have been heightened over China's dam construction that affects downstream countries like Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand. The US initiative on Lower Mekong-Mississippi Cooperation has been warmly welcomed. Accordingly, US reengagement efforts, coupled with public diplomacy and strong US soft

power, has gained much acceptance from Southeast Asia. Overall, the US image has improved during the Obama administration.

## **Changing Security Environment**

The security environment has changed considerably after the end of the Cold War. Without communism, Thailand's threats most primarily come from the border areas in the forms of smuggling, drugs, and human trafficking.<sup>7</sup> While border trade with neighboring countries was burgeoning, several transnational problems also arose. During the 1990s, the Thai government declared the spread of drugs, particularly "amphetamines," a major threat to national security. Thailand, indeed, has become a drug consuming country. Meanwhile, skirmishes over territorial disputes with Laos erupted briefly in 1987. Border skirmishes with Myanmar used to happen more often, particularly when the junta government hunted down minority rebel groups along the border. Accordingly, Thailand came to embrace the perspective of "comprehensive security," comprising both traditional and non-traditional security.

The insurgency in the deep South where Muslims are the majority has continued since 2004. While Manila allowed the deployment of thousands of US troops to help curb terrorism, based on the US-Philippines Visiting Forces Agreement, a similar move is unimaginable in Thailand, which would treat it as an infringement on its sovereignty. In fact, the US has been sensitive enough to refrain from conducting any military operations with Thailand in southern provinces.<sup>8</sup>

Since 2005, Thailand has also been trapped in a prolonged political crisis which began with the 2006 coup d'état, several violent riots, and military crackdowns causing hundreds of casualties which happened as recent as 2010. The controversy surrounding ex-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has continued without a mutually satisfactory solution. Thailand has very much been preoccupied with protracted domestic conflicts, and thus is kept from contemplating how to deal with significant international issues, including the US alliance.

Another key security problem in the past several years has been the border disputes with Cambodia over Preah Vihear Temple. The US is less likely to play a role in this conflict since Washington is cultivating ties with Indochinese countries like Cambodia, including military cooperation. In fact, Thailand expressed concern over a US-Cambodia joint exercise, arguing that it was undercutting the US-Thailand alliance.<sup>9</sup> Even without this specific issue, it is hard to see the benefits Thailand could get from the US alliance on issues like territorial disputes with neighboring countries.

In short, the threats facing Thailand are domestic or non-traditional, which makes it less likely for the US to get involved directly. This means that the United States does not have a significant role in the Thai security thinking. Moreover, Thailand believes that its

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<sup>7</sup> Panitan Watanayagorn, "Thailand: The Elite's Shifting Conceptions of Security," in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Asian Security Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 438.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with US military officer, Bangkok, March 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Dalpino, pp. 10-11.

security is increasingly of marginal interest to Washington. Among the five traditional allies in the Asia Pacific (Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand), Thailand seems to be given less attention by US security planners, even compared to new partners like Singapore. As the US increasingly cultivates security ties with Indonesia, Cambodia, and Vietnam, many analysts wonder if Thailand is being relegated to the group of second-tier allies.<sup>10</sup>

## **The Rise of China**

Another crucial change is the rise of China, which attracts much attention in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Though the emergence of China was initially viewed with suspicion, usually as a threat in the 1990s, most countries came to appreciate it as an opportunity. Thus, more countries are trying to cultivate ties with China in many ways and Thailand is no exception.

It is widely expected that China will function as a new growth engine for the world economy, as the West suffers from an economic meltdown. In fact, despite the global financial crisis that has influenced the world economy since 2008, Asia as a whole fared much better than the rest of the world and is set to continue to grow faster. According to the latest IMF World Economic Outlook, Asia, spearheaded by China, has become a key engine of global growth and is expected to rise steadily.

For Thailand, the turn to China is not a recent phenomenon. Since the late 1970s when Vietnam invaded Cambodia after US troops had left mainland Southeast Asia, it was almost imperative for Thailand to seek help from China. As the frontline state, Thailand was very much concerned about Vietnamese forces, particularly when they crossed the Thai border several times to hunt down the Khmer Rouge. Beijing responded positively by sending support to the anti-Vietnam Khmer Rouge and cutting assistance to the underground Thai Communist Party. China even waged a border war with Vietnam in early 1979 to force the Vietnamese military to redeploy to the north. This changed the shape of defense realities in the region and formed the basis for the Sino-Thai alliance. A wide range of arm sales at “friendship prices” were also offered to Thailand, including armored vehicles, artillery, and missiles.<sup>11</sup>

The pattern was repeated recently. When the United States sanctioned Thailand after the 2006 coup, China offered Thailand good deals on arm purchases and other forms of assistance and cooperation. Notably, the Chinese provided \$49 million in military assistance, almost doubling the \$24 million in military assistance from the US, which was suspended in accordance with Section 508 of the US Foreign Operations Appropriations Act (mentioned above).<sup>12</sup>

Thailand arguably has the closest relationship with China when compared to other Southeast Asian nations. Without any territorial dispute, the trust relationship between Thailand and China is very high. The lease of pandas to Thailand is indicative in this

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<sup>10</sup> Conversation with Thai and Japanese professors, Bangkok, February 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Walter Lohman, “Reinvigorating the U.S.-Thailand Alliance,” *Backgrounders* No. 2609 (Sept. 26, 2011), The Heritage Foundation, p. 8. See also Stern, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

regard. In fact, Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that hosts pandas and the government recently secured an extension to keep them for another three years. In April 2012, the Thai defense minister also led a military mission, including chiefs of the army, navy, and air force, to visit China and paid a courtesy call to Vice President Xi Jinping. Such a visit does not happen often for any country and is thus significant.

### **Increasing Regional Integration**

Regional integration is another factor that qualifies the alliance. After the Asian Financial Crisis, regionalization and regionalism have been on the rise. Exemplified by the ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, and Korea) process and integration through the ASEAN Community, intra-regional interdependence has been increasing with no precedent both in terms of trade and investment. Japanese production networks are prevalent throughout the region. Thailand benefits much from Japanese automobile clusters invested in the nation. China has also increased its investment in Southeast Asia in the past several years. Korea, meanwhile, is advancing its investment in emerging markets like Vietnam and Cambodia, after having a strong hold in several Southeast Asian countries. Importantly, intra-regional tourism among Asians is also thriving.

Significant regional cooperation includes the currency swap arrangements among the ASEAN+3 countries now known as the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM), which recently planned to double the swappable amount to \$240 billion. This decision was made in the face of the looming economic crisis in Europe. Other functional cooperation schemes are also prevalent, ranging from pandemic disease, disaster relief, piracy, drug, and human trafficking, as well as terrorism.

ASEAN, meanwhile, has continually enhanced its capacity and institutions, as exemplified by the ASEAN Charter adopted in 2008. Moreover, the goal to establish the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was accelerated from 2020 to 2015, which has resulted in efforts by most ASEAN countries to respond through seeking additional economic integration with other members of the association. The AEC is only one pillar among the three that are part of the effort to establish the ASEAN Community, namely the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

Such economic expansion and regional integration contributed to a shift in national interests among Asian countries in ways that increase the importance of Asia, so that it is even likely to surpass that of the United States. Thailand is no exception in this regard.

### **Wither the US-Thailand Alliance?**

Given the changing threat environment, combined with the growth in regional interdependence and the rise of China, Thai perceptions of the US alliance are not so favorable. At a closed door brainstorming session on Thailand's strategies toward the US and China in the next five years (2012-2017), three dozen representatives from concerned agencies (i.e., Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Commerce), private sector, and academia agreed unanimously that Thailand must look beyond the US

alliance and strengthen engagement with China as they lamented the shrinking utility of strategic ties which were important during the Cold War, but not now.<sup>13</sup>

With such inauspicious realities and perceptions of the US, it is difficult to develop common and comprehensive strategic thinking between the two countries. We have to accept that and concentrate on what we can do rather than aiming at unrealistic goals. Though the factors discussed above sound less hopeful, there are several promising factors for the future of the alliance.

First, the US-Thailand alliance has been quietly and firmly institutionalized even after the end of the Cold War, thanks to regular military exercises and various forms of military cooperation. Military-to-military relations remain robust with more than 50 joint US-Thailand exercises annually. Between 2001 and 2009, the total number of military exercises continually increased from 44 to 59, seven of which are multilateral.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the well-known *Cobra Gold*, major exercises include *Cope Tiger*, *Red Flag* (previously *Cope Thunder*), and *CARAT* (Cooperation Afloat Readiness Training). Originally focusing on the navy, exercises have expanded to cover the army and air force, thus training is taking place in many areas of Thailand. The US also benefits from conducting exercises on several kinds of terrain. In recent years, exercises increasingly focus on counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, civil affairs, peacekeeping, and, importantly, humanitarian assistance.<sup>15</sup>

*Cobra Gold*, which started in 1982, has grown into one of the world's largest military exercises, involving thousands of American and Thai troops, as well as participants from several countries. In recent years, other countries came to participate, including Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea. Even China has joined the exercise as an observer.

There is room for further multilateral cooperation, particularly on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), an issue beneficial for all participating countries. In fact, then Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya gave particular support to such cooperation during the Abhisit administration (2009-2011). Cyclone Nargis inspired the Thais to think they could play quite a prominent role in the region in the area of disaster relief. As a former ambassador to Washington, Kasit had a broad view on security cooperation, including peacekeeping operations (PKO). Unfortunately, the Thai political crisis and his status as a lightning rod deterred him from moving much on any issue. At the time of this writing, there is neither leadership regarding nor priority on these issues in the current Yingluck administration.

The institutionalized military relations is greatly attributable to the role of the Joint United States Military Assistance Group Thailand (JUSMAGTHAI), which has been active in various schemes of military cooperation, particularly military exercises,

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/opinion/Thailand-looks-beyond-the-US-alliance-30179152.html> (accessed April 4, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> John Baseel, "The Military Relationship between Thailand and the United States in the Post September 11<sup>th</sup> Era," M.A. Thesis in Regional Studies, Chiang Mai University, 2009, p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.



humanitarian and counter-drug missions. In fact, JUSMAGTHAI organizes one of the largest International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs for Thailand. For instance, a number of cadets are sent to study in the United States each year. Likewise, US military officers also take courses at the Command and General Staff Academy in Thailand. The socialization is helpful in pursuing more cooperation.

Second, Thailand has been a reliable partner that the US can count on. Thanks to the interoperability accumulated through years of military exercises, training, and equipment purchase, several new cooperation initiatives have been proceeding well. In response to increasing terrorism threats following 9/11, Thailand has hosted a new multilateral naval exercise called *SEACAT* (South-East Asia Cooperation against Terrorism) since 2002. The exercise is aimed to help policing sea lanes in Southeast Asia from maritime terrorism and piracy. Importantly, Thailand cooperated with the US in arresting Hambali (Riduan bin Isamuddin), a key Al-Qaeda member, in 2003.

Moreover, the US and Thailand reached agreement in late 2002 to create a War Reserve Stockpile,<sup>16</sup> the first US stockpile outside of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and South Korea.<sup>17</sup> This demonstrates a form of cooperation as a non-NATO alliance partner. Further, the US-sponsored Container Security Initiative could enlist Thailand as member. Thailand also offered Utapao as an air base for disaster relief operations in response to the Boxing-Day tsunami in 2004 and cyclone Nargis in 2008. As such, it would be less likely to see the US approaching other Southeast Asian countries, apart from the Philippines, to function as a host or base of activities at such a scale. Arguably, many Southeast Asian countries are reluctant to do so. In short, the merits of traditional alliance remain valid here.

Third, the areas of shared interests between the United States and Thailand remain considerable. As discussed, cooperation is increasingly focused more on non-traditional security, including drugs, terrorism, and insurgency, all of which are important threats to Thailand. Here, information and intelligence sharing are crucial. On Valentine's Day 2012, right after US travel warnings, several bombs exploded in Thailand. The US Army assists Thailand on the technique how to defuse time bombs.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, Thailand has come to be more interested in peacekeeping operation and HADR, both of which can help raise the country's international profile. This is particularly true after its successful involvement in the peace processes in Cambodia and Timor Leste. The frequent occurrence of disasters in the region also motivated Thailand to play a more active role in this area. As the US is always a key player in such activities, there is much room for cooperation and joint operations.

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<sup>16</sup> Memorandum of Agreement Concerning the Transfer of Equipment and Munitions from United States War Reserve Stocks to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand, *Treaties and International Act Series 02-1126*.

<sup>17</sup> Stern, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Conversation with US army officer, Bangkok, February 2011.

## The Way Forward

Having discussed the perceptions and realities of the US-Thailand relations in general and the US-Thailand alliance in particular, several important points emerge. First, the overall perceptions of the United States are not cordial. Second, the reality of the changing security environment apparently does not make a close US alliance so attractive, unlike the Cold War days. Third, however, there are also realities favorable to the alliance, namely institutionalized military-to-military relations and shared interests regarding some non-traditional security issues. Here it is arguable that the alliance still functions as an important asset for the two nations. Accordingly, several suggestions can be made to reinvigorate the alliance relationship, which should benefit both the US and Thailand.

### *1) Enhancing overall relationship, not just in the realm of security*

As shown above, Thais tend to view the alliance as part of a broad-based relationship, thus a negative perception on the overall relationship can impact and limit the alliance. In other words, perceptions matter, regardless of reality and thus the maintenance of overall relations is crucial. Both countries should enhance trust in broader relations.

Though US-Thailand security cooperation has been occurring, the lack of public awareness creates a perception that the United States is overlooking Thailand, focusing more on cultivating ties with new strategic partners in the region. In fact, the military relationship has been institutionalized without much public attention. Such cooperation, therefore, should be made known to the general public, especially how it can contribute to the well-being of the Thais in an area such as disaster relief. This is in line with the promotion of “Public Diplomacy,” which the US has emphasized in recent years and would serve to counter Chinese public diplomacy in the process.

While military-to-military relations remain strong, there is a need for more face-to-face relations at the top leadership level. Thais value the exchange of high-level visits. It is, indeed, a good initiative to have bilateral foreign minister meeting, under the banner of a “strategic dialogue,” which is scheduled later in 2012. But the plan to convene the meeting annually might be too ambitious. Frequent meetings risk the dilution of substance, especially when considering the proliferation of high-level meetings in the Asia Pacific, ranging from APEC, the ARF, and the EAS. Therefore, biennial meetings between the US secretary of state and the Thai foreign minister seems more effective and in fact, more realistic. If necessary, the two can always have a side meeting during the ARF and other ASEAN-related meetings.

Overall, both sides should not take bilateral relations for granted but should try to maintain and enhance them. It is worth noting that the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of bilateral relations was not so outstanding in 2008, compared to, say, the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan-Thailand relations in 2007. There were not very many events organized and there was little publicity regarding the anniversary. Therefore, there is room to celebrate and publicize the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary more in 2013. Importantly, inviting Bangkok to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) would be a nice gesture the US can make to Thailand, which has long

aimed to have an FTA with the US, its largest export destination. TPP negotiations will need to pass a number of hurdles, though.

## 2) *Focusing more on non-traditional security*

Although Thailand's threat environment cannot be directly addressed through the US alliance, there are several areas for cooperation and alliance enhancement in the context of non-traditional security issues. Here, HADR offers an outstanding example as a potential area of cooperation. Given the existing facilities at the Utapao Air Base and some experiences over the Boxing Day tsunami and cyclone Nargis, Thailand is a natural location for a regional hub for disaster relief and rescue, and the US would be an important partner. Another possibility would be counter-terrorism, an area of ongoing concern for most countries in the region. These are the areas to address the lack of shared strategic purpose between the US and Thailand. As Walter Lohman has argued, it is futile to search for a shared comprehensive strategic purpose, but the two sides should maximize value in operational areas that the alliance can do and does best.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, joint exercises should focus on elements of non-traditional security which are beneficial to any country involved.

## 3) *Increasing multilateralism*

Related to the above point, it would be beneficial for both the US and Thailand to further multilateralize military exercises, particularly on disaster relief and rescue. Here, the alliance can be used as a building block toward "multilateralism." Many would argue that an alliance is quite incompatible with multilateralism, but non-traditional security issues seem to open the door in that direction.

Given the sporadic tensions between the US and China, increasing Chinese participation in *Cobra Gold* can be quite helpful, particularly as a confidence-building measure between the two powers, which would be beneficial for the stability of the region. Paradoxically, military exercises can function as a way to help reduce tensions between the US and China and probably between China and other countries in ASEAN as well.

It would be difficult to use the alliance network to caucus and create leverage within the regional security architecture. Doing so would unnecessarily agitate other powers, namely China. Many countries in the region want to cultivate ties with China and look for more economic opportunities there. By the same token, Bangkok would be reluctant to join a triangular cooperation with other US alliance countries to avoid antagonizing China. The bottom line is that Thailand has diversified its relations with several powers for and is not likely to shift such direction in a foreseeable future.

## 4) *Finding new common issues*

Apart from the non-traditional issues mentioned above, there are other common traditional and non-traditional security issues that the US and Thailand should seek out to further their cooperation. This point is in line with Brandon and Chen who suggest that

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<sup>19</sup> Lohman, p. 1.

both countries need to identify issues and problems.<sup>20</sup> The recommendation was raised a decade ago, but still more work needs to be done. Important common issues include defense consultations at the technical level and cooperation/training to beef up Thai capabilities in peacekeeping operations (PKO) and counter-terrorism. Representing a new venue to channel the activities of the Thai military, PKO is obviously an area of emphasis in recent years, as indicated by the dispatch of troops to Sudan and the anti-piracy naval unit to the Gulf of Eden. Some cooperation programs like the Defense Resources Management System (DRMS) are also very useful to enhance efficiency in the highly bureaucratized Thai military.

Moreover, as Thailand still lags behind in the area of defense reform, advice from an alliance partner like the US would be helpful. Of course, this is subject to the Thai military's willingness, but defense sector reform, sooner or later, seems unavoidable. In short, it is important to pursue both "hard" and "soft" training and cooperation between the two nations.

#### *5) Utilizing and maximizing the existed mechanisms*

There are multiple existing mechanisms, particularly the ARF and the ADMM+, where both countries are members and thus may work together. There is still room to energize and add substance to such schemes. Again, non-traditional security issues would be the primary area to work on. To do so, there should be regular think-tank cooperation at Track II and Track 1.5 between the US and Thailand, which can support the interactions at Track I.<sup>21</sup>

#### *6) Act now, and don't wait until the Thai political crisis is settled*

Though it seems obvious that the US-Thailand alliance should be reinvigorated, there is an argument that Thailand needs to overcome its political crisis and get its house in order first.<sup>22</sup> It would be unnecessary and counter-productive to wait until Thailand solves its political impasse, which could be long-lasting. Regardless of who is in the Thai government, the alliance should be refreshed.

It is arguable that Thailand's relations with the US tend to be institutionalized and stable in any administration, as Bangkok highly values the ties with Washington. Meanwhile, US relations with Thailand seem to depend much on the priority/interest of each administration. Sometimes, the US posture has been personalized, depending on a person in charge if he or she is interested in Southeast Asia/Thailand or not. Thus, more institutionalized and stable relations are desirable.

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<sup>20</sup> Brandon and Chen, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> A defense think-tank meeting among ASEAN countries has been regularized recently under the name of "The Network of ASEAN Defense Institutes (NADI)." They tend to lack budget and research capabilities, however.

<sup>22</sup> A closed discussion session on the US Thailand alliance, Bangkok, March 2012.

## Chapter 7

### US alliances in the Asia Pacific: doing more and expecting less

Carl Baker and Brad Glosserman

Security dynamics in the Asia Pacific have changed considerably since we began this project in 2009. As the study commenced, the overriding concern for any assessment of the changing role of US alliances in the region was a shifting balance of power – real or imagined – between the United States and China, as well as the emergence of new security concerns that obliged the US and its allies to think more creatively, and expansively, about security arrangements. The global financial crisis that erupted in 2007-8 was a tectonic shock to the system, undermining perceptions of US (and Western) credibility and competence as well as reducing the assets available for common security. Long-simmering tensions over territorial claims in the East China Sea and South China Sea have returned with a vengeance, leading to a downturn in relations between alliance partners (Japan and South Korea) and fresh concerns about the applicability of alliance commitments in disputed territory. North Korea's success in advancing its nuclear and long-range missile programs has had a polarizing effect in Northeast Asia and led to a stoppage of the Six-Party Talks. The ASEAN-based multilateral organizations have expanded and become more influential in setting the region's security agenda, which has created questions about the role of US alliances, especially in the realm of nontraditional security. While the US has sought to better integrate itself into multilateral organizations, the perception persists that the US remains largely outside – and sometimes even hostile to – Asian efforts to create a regional identity through these organizations. As a whole, these changes have created new opportunities along with many uncertainties. They have influenced perceptions of the individual alliances as well as the overall role of the alliances in the regional security order.

The 2007-2008 global financial crisis prompted a reassessment of Asian perceptions of the US role in the region's future. As the rapidly expanding economies of Asia have come to be seen as the engine for sustained growth rather than causes of instability, as happened in the 1997 crisis, there is a newfound belief that Asia is becoming the center of the global economy. This shift has bolstered Chinese confidence as the leader of this economic expansion, and has led to a parallel concern that financial weakness, fiscal overextension, and political paralysis will undermine the US commitment to provide security in Asia. There are increasing questions about the sustainability of the US military presence in the region even as China expands its military capabilities. In addition, there are concerns that the perceived value of access to the US market will decrease, prompting the 'decoupling' of the security and economic linkage that has been the basis for the individual alliances.

Despite these challenges, one thing that has not changed is the US belief that its alliances are the centerpiece of its security strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. While recognizing that sustaining its influence in the region demands more than simply reinforcing individual alliances, the starting point for the US policy response to the changing security environment has been to focus on "our existing alliances, which provide

a vital foundation for Asia-Pacific security.”<sup>1</sup> The effort to expand and modernize US alliance relationships has taken several forms, including the establishment of regular strategic dialogues involving top-level defense and foreign affairs officials (referred to as “2+2” dialogues), joint vision statements outlining mutual expectations for the individual alliances, the development of indigenous defense capabilities, the creation of networks among alliance partners through trilateral and quadrilateral dialogues, modernization of deployments and basing arrangements, and an increase in joint military training and exercises to include multiple alliance partners. To complement these efforts, the US has sought out new security partners (especially Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia) and worked to integrate them into the alliance network by engaging them in a variety of bilateral and multilateral military-related activities. However, the alliance partners remain at the core of US efforts to retain its position as security guarantor in the Asia-Pacific region.

This chapter will summarize perspectives on the current status of the individual alliances and examine the major influences that will shape the trajectory of the entire alliance system. The perspectives shared by alliance partners both in the chapters of this volume and in our discussions in the various forums throughout the project offer a summary of what each alliance partner sees as priorities for sustaining the individual alliance. Our examination of the policy responses to regional security dynamics evaluates perceptions of the US initiative to “rebalance” to Asia, the impact the changing regional security order is having on the system of alliances, and the prospect for adaptation to the changing order. We conclude with a discussion of US options in adapting its alliance relationships as it contemplates “the Asian Century.” What is clear is that promoting cooperation among alliance partners only makes sense if it focuses on cooperative solutions to security issues, avoids alienating those outside the system, encourages responsible behavior by alliance partners, and is compatible with ASEAN-based security institutions.

### **Alliance Partner Perspectives**

The chapters in this volume on the individual alliances make plain the many nuances in individual alliances despite the overarching attempt to modernize bilateral relationships. In Northeast Asia, the emphasis has been on expanding the role of South Korea and Japan as the US seeks to leverage each alliance to promote mutual interests in regional and global issues with its allies. In Southeast Asia, the effort has been more focused on reinvigorating the alliances with the Philippines and Thailand, while aggressively seeking to expand ties with other security partners. The focus for the US and Australia has been mutual reassurance of commitment to the alliance and an examination of ways to increase the US presence in Australia as a means of securing the maritime region from the southern edges of East Asia and into the Indian Ocean. That particular dyad has proven especially durable and effective in engaging other countries, allies or not. Yet, despite US efforts, there has been little movement toward a more networked structure among allies. In fact, throughout the dialogues held in conjunction with this study,

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<sup>1</sup> *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*, Washington: US Department of Defense, Jan. 2012, p. 2

references to the “hub-and-spoke system of bilateral alliances” were common even though it has been more than two decades since Secretary of State James Baker acknowledged the need to start thinking beyond bilateral relationships.

In our conceptualization of this project, we sought to understand the degree to which allies were still committed to their alliances, whether they were prepared to sustain or enhance them, and to identify factors that might encourage them to seek out other allies to reinforce the alliance system. We found that very little thought was being given to networking or establishing even an “alliance caucus” that could be used to influence decisions taken at regional or global forums. There were periodic considerations of autonomy and independence – at various times, governments had pondered whether the alliances themselves had outlived their “use by date” – and the most rudimentary forms of trilateralism, usually, but not always, driven by Washington. The failure to ponder larger questions could be because analysts viewed the individual alliances as something to be used primarily to leverage the security relationship with the US for specific national security interests and secondarily (if at all) as the basis for improving regional relations. If governments see the alliances as promoting national interests, divorced from larger regional considerations, then the failure to think more broadly is understandable. But it also means that the US must lead efforts to modernize and adapt these alliances to move beyond their historically narrow focus.

As could be expected, China hung uneasily over all our discussions. While many saw the system of alliances as a hedge against a perceived threat of Chinese dominance in the region and crude aggression, there was also concern that the alliances fed Chinese anxieties about US intentions to maintain its dominance in Asia and a perception that the US sought to use the alliances to contain China.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly widespread is the belief that the alliances provided the security foundation for the region, while China provided the economic foundation. Clearly, perceptions of the alliances are intricately tied to relations with China’s growing influence and any effort to modify them will be influenced by China’s reaction to those efforts.

There are nuances within each bilateral alliance relationship that must be isolated if we hope to answer larger questions about the alliance system’s capacity to remain relevant to Asia’s security environment. Each relationship has evolved at a different rate and for different reasons. As long as the US was the preponderant power and the source of military reassurance and economic growth, there was little incentive to move away from the hub-and-spoke structure. Looking forward, it is important to understand how each alliance partner envisions the system and its relation to the larger regional security architecture.

### *Australia*

Perhaps more than any of the others discussed in this volume, the US-Australia alliance is viewed as stable, and the least likely to be influenced by changing security dynamics in the region. Australia has long been one country that the US could rely on as a stalwart supporter – to the point of being dubbed the “deputy sheriff” for the US –

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<sup>2</sup> A perception that Chinese security policy makers and analysts have encouraged.

including its military involvement in Vietnam, both wars in Iraq, and most recently in Afghanistan. The recent decision to accommodate an ongoing rotation of US Marines through Darwin on the Northern coast and repeated reaffirmations by senior government officials of the solidarity between the US and Australia suggests that the alliance is on solid ground.

Yet, as Danielle Chubb notes in her essay, the longstanding debate over Australian identity in Asia, coupled with the emergence of a multilateral security architecture centered on ASEAN and China as the engine for economic expansion in Asia, has led many in Australia to call for a reassessment of the alliance with the US.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, Australia has become the “canary in the coal mine”<sup>4</sup> signaling a broader perception in the region that changing national interests demand a re-evaluation of the role of the US alliances in Asia – a choice between history and geography, or economics and security. How can Australia continue to take advantage of Asia’s economic rise while maintaining its relationship with the US in a multipolar security environment? Thus far, the answer has been a less-than-satisfactory, “very carefully.”

As a longstanding promoter of multilateralism in the Asia Pacific, Australia has pressed to broaden the influence of ASEAN-related multilateral organizations and networking among the US alliance partners as a means of finding a middle ground between China and the US. Australia was instrumental in the formation of APEC in the early 1990s and became the first ASEAN dialogue partner in 1967. Alliance-related initiatives have included active participation in a US-Japan-Australia trilateral discussion that was launched in 2002 and became a ministerial-level Trilateral Strategic Dialogue in 2005, increased security cooperation with the Philippines, including the conclusion of a Status of Visiting Forces Agreement in 2012, and established a strategic dialogue with South Korea in 2012. Australia has also been at the forefront of seeking ways to integrate India into East Asia’s security architecture. These initiatives can be viewed as tentative steps toward the “alliance mutuality” suggested by Tow and Acharya,<sup>5</sup> but much work remains to be done before the system of alliances can be transformed into a truly multilateral security mechanism that promotes security reassurances through cooperative action.

It seems likely that Australia will remain a central part of the US rebalancing efforts in the region. Canberra’s agreement to host an increasing number of US forces for the purpose of securing the southeastern approach to Asia will make this relationship a central part of the Asian security architecture in coming years. Nevertheless, the recent debates in Australia over its long-term interests in the “Asian Century”<sup>6</sup> have challenged historical assumptions about the role of the US alliance. Australia’s resource-based economy has become increasingly dependent on the manufacturing-based economies of China and the rest of East Asia, setting up a clash between its long-term economic interests and its security orientation. Nevertheless, Australia remains committed to its alliance with the US and continues to lead efforts to integrate the US into the multilateral architecture by

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<sup>3</sup> Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why America Should Share Power*, Melbourne: Black Inc., 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Brad Glosserman, “The Australian Canary,” *PacNet* #67, Nov. 21, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> William Tow and Amitav Acharya, *Obstinate or Obsolete? The US Alliance Structure in the Asia Pacific*, Working Paper 2007/4, Australia National University, December 2007.

<sup>6</sup> *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*, available at <http://asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au/white-paper>.



supporting US membership in the expanded East Asia Summit and promoting the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

### *Japan*

The entire system of US alliances in the Asia Pacific has been framed around this relationship; indeed, this alliance is often referred to as the cornerstone of US engagement with the region. Yet the distinguishing feature of the US-Japan alliance has been its inherent inequality: the US was obliged to defend Japan in the case of an attack against it while Japan had no reciprocal obligation to respond in kind to an attack on the US. To some degree, this imbalance was mitigated by giving the US the right to base its military on Japanese soil at the same time that Japan was precluded from maintaining a military. Although Japanese restraints have been modified over the years, Japan remains dependent on the US for the defense of its territory while Japan is prohibited from reciprocating because of its constitutional prohibition from engaging in collective defense arrangements. As Mataka Kamiya notes in his examination of the relationship, this has resulted in a situation where the alliance exchange is based on personnel from the US and material support from Japan, rather than the normal alliance relationship where the exchange is personnel for personnel.

In the post-Cold War era, the alliance has continued to be the centerpiece of US security engagement as reflected in the 1996 Joint US-Japan Security Declaration, which specifically states that the alliance is the “cornerstone for achieving common security objectives and for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region.” In addition, there has been an effort by both sides of the alliance to integrate Japan into multilateral organizations to promote that stability. Nevertheless, there remains an undertone, especially among Japanese, that the alliance remains an unequal partnership. This belief is refracted in Japanese domestic politics, in particular the acrimonious dispute in Okinawa over the presence of US forces and the perception that the prefecture bears an unfair burden that should be shared with the rest of the country. For the purposes of this volume, it is important to note that there is also a strong perception among Japanese that the US has prevented Japan from expanding its multilateral security relationships with the rest of Asia outside the alliance relationship.

Recent events have served to strengthen the bilateral component of the alliance. Reassurances of mutual support as a result of the threat from North Korea’s missile and nuclear programs, increased tensions between Japan and China in the East China Sea, and the rapid and expansive assistance offered by US forces in *Operation Tomodachi* in response to the triple disaster on March 11, 2011 have increased confidence in the alliance among Japanese. This has led to new initiatives to develop increased regional cooperation based on the alliance rather than as an independent effort, thus reaffirming the alliance and its commitment to regional stability.

Nevertheless, there remains a great deal of concern that the US-Japan alliance has not met its full potential in promoting multilateral cooperation among other allies due to the inherent inequality in its structure, the prohibition against collective defense for Japan, and the inability to execute agreements reached among alliance managers as a result of

local politics. Thus, even though the US-Japan alliance remains at the heart of the alliance system, it remains very much focused on the bilateral relationship rather than serving as a catalyst for networking among other alliance partners. Whether this will change as Japan appears to begin a serious rethinking of the prohibition against collective defense and its readiness to engage in regional security mechanisms, especially in Southeast Asia, remains to be seen.

There is little indication that Japan is prepared to see the alliance extending to increased economic cooperation with the US. Instead, Japanese participants in our discussions regularly focused on military and defense cooperation rather than on broader security issues. The domestic political sensitivities that thus far preclude Japan's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) are exhibit A in the case for restrained cooperation.

### *South Korea*

The constant and enduring threat from North Korea has meant that the US-South Korea alliance has retained much of its Cold War focus of directly deterring military aggression. As such, ensuring military interoperability and specific military-oriented issues such as operational control, land management, and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) has absorbed much of the attention of alliance managers. At the same time, South Korea has also been the most aggressive among US alliance partners to see the advantage of using the alliance to extend its influence on the global level. As Choi Kang notes in his assessment, the 2009 "Joint Vision for the Alliance of the Republic of Korea and the United States of America" reflects a commitment to build a comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope, based on common values and mutual trust. This is clearly the most expansive vision for the future of any of the alliances.

While recognizing that impediments created by operational problems associated with the existential threat from North Korea have been a drag on the realization of these expansive goals, Choi notes that the signing of the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement and sincere efforts to reassure mutual commitment to the alliance have strengthened the relationship. He insists that the most critical need is to refine the meaning of "strategic alliance" to solidify mutual expectations and understandings of responsibilities among the partners. While many of his recommendations are specifically geared to the US-ROK alliance, they are also relevant to efforts to establish an effective network of alliances in the region.

More than any other US ally in Asia, South Korea has recognized the value of the alliance for promoting its national interest in regional and global issues. Yet, that recognition has not translated into closer cooperation with Japan. In fact, the historical animosity between them has dampened trilateral cooperation (with the US) to address security issues on the Korean Peninsula. South Korea has also been reluctant to support the use of Korea-based US forces for regional military contingencies for fear of being drawn into a conflict with China in the event these forces are called upon for the defense of Taiwan. There has also been little involvement by South Korea in increased security cooperation with the US in Southeast Asia beyond minimal involvement or as observers of

military exercises. Instead, South Korea has sought to promote the notion that its shared values of democracy, free trade, and human rights serve as a basis for cooperation with the US on global issues.

### *Philippines*

The US-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty has been the cornerstone of the US-Philippine relationship since the end of World War II. It has endured despite the departure of US forces and the termination of the Military Bases Agreement in 1991. That decision reduced trust between the countries, left a sense of betrayal on both sides, and led to a drift in the relationship. For Philippine analysts involved in our project, China's assertion of control over Mischief Reef in the mid-1990s was a wake-up call and led by the turn of the century to a revised visiting forces agreement and an increased level of military interaction, largely in the form of joint exercises. These decisions were reinforced by a renewed insurgency in the Muslim-dominated south of the Philippines that drew US attention as part of its global war on terror. Subsequent actions have steadily reinforced the notion that the alliance with the US serves as a check against an increasingly assertive China.

Throughout our discussions, Filipino interlocutors agreed with Rommel Banlaoi that the Philippines views itself as a strong supporter of the US "rebalance" to Asia, but its primary interest is using the alliance to ensure its own security agenda. During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the global war on terror, this was expressed in efforts to ensure US involvement in internal security affairs in Mindanao. In recent years, this sentiment has been expressed in fresh calls for the US to acknowledge a commitment to defend Philippine territorial claims in the South China Sea, and provide both material and planning assistance to ensure the Armed Forces of the Philippines are adequately equipped and prepared to defend its national interests.

The Philippines, in return, has consistently supported US interests in the Asia-Pacific region. But, there seems to be little interest in establishing a more robust form of alliance-based cooperation, or even support for an alliance "caucus" within ASEAN-based multilateral organizations. In fact, several individuals from the Philippines expressed more interest in stronger bilateral ties with Australia, Japan, and South Korea in anticipation of the perceived security benefits that they would create than with creating a more networked approach to promoting mutual security interests within multilateral security organizations. Not surprisingly, there was little interest in pursuing trilateralism with the US and Thailand, or even enhanced Thai-Philippine ties based on their respective alliance relationships with the US. Remaining a subordinate partner within the alliance is good enough for Manila. Shaping security policies around the reassurance of an outside balancer has served Philippine security planners well, and continues to be the best solution given limited resources and the opportunity to promote economic integration through ASEAN.

### *Thailand*

Among the five allies, Thailand has the distinction of being the most reluctant to acknowledge the influence of the alliance in shaping its security policies. Instead, the common impression is that Thailand has maintained the alliance with the US to avoid

creating difficulties with the US and sees little value in giving the alliance a more central role. While this perception is partially driven by the fact that Thailand has a much more amiable relationship with China than the other four alliance partners, there is a common perception in Thailand that the US has not been a completely faithful partner. As Prasirtsuk notes in his assessment in this volume, this perception is driven by several political factors, but especially by a widely shared view that Thailand was abandoned by the US in its hour of need during the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

Unlike the Philippines, Thailand has consistently resisted US involvement in its internal security affairs, especially in the decades-long conflict in the south. The frequent US sanctions placed on military-to-military engagement between the two countries and the refusal by the US to sell arms to Thailand following military coups have also led to a much more restrained security relationship between the two allies.

None of the Thais in our discussions expressed much optimism for a proposal to establish an alliance-based caucus within regional security organizations. In fact, Thailand seems to be much more committed to promoting economic integration through ASEAN Plus 3, while viewing its security concerns as largely internal and beyond the scope of a military alliance. Accordingly, Prasirtsuk argues that the US-Thai alliance has marginal utility and the energy of both partners would be better used to promote common interests in nontraditional security issues through increased cooperation in the context of broader consideration of economic concerns and ASEAN-based multilateral security mechanisms.

### **Alliances and the US Rebalance**

The US alliances have been the basis for its engagement in the region since 1951. That premise has been repeatedly reinforced since Secretary of State Clinton announced in January 2010 that the “US was “back in Asia,” that the “Asia-Pacific relationship is a priority for the United States,” and that the “United States’ alliance relationships are the cornerstone of our regional involvement.”<sup>7</sup> All major policy documents since then, including the *2010 National Security Strategy*, the *2010 Quadrennial Diplomatic and Development Review*, and the *2012 Strategic Guidance for the Department of Defense*, have highlighted the role of alliances in the US strategy for security engagement in the Asia Pacific.

What has changed is the broadened scope of security challenges. The region faces complex security challenges that demand multiple points of attack and diverse and variegated resources. There is a wider variety of concerns and an expanding number of tasks; the wider the perspectives on these problems and the more contributors to these efforts, the better. There is also growing capacity among US allies and partners at the same time that all governments, including the US, face growing fiscal restraints. This is a particularly pointed problem for the United States. The challenge is how to best apply the advantages of this ready-made system of relationships to this broader set of challenges.

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<sup>7</sup> “Remarks on Regional Architecture in Asia: Principles and Priorities,” by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Honolulu, Jan. 10, 2010. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/135090.htm>.

But that begs a question: why have alliances forged over a half century ago persisted despite the virtual transformation of Asia's politics, economics, foreign policy and social structures? Why hasn't a new security order emerged? Part of the reason is the endurance of Cold War disputes. Despite the end of the superpower standoff in most of the world, its most poisonous legacies – divided nations – continue in East Asia. The absence of a larger multilateral security framework is both a reflection and an amplifier of historical frictions that bedevil regional relations.

Part of the US rationale for putting the alliances at the center of its strategic approach to Asia is the fact that alliances represent sunk costs. The US has invested considerable resources in sustaining each of the bilateral alliances, and it makes sense to leverage these relationships to the greatest extent possible. Add a concordance of values and interests, and familiarity among bureaucrats, politicians and policymakers – the product of decades of (sometimes contentious) defense-related dialogue and joint military operations and exercises – and it is only logical for the US to continue to turn to its alliances as it seeks to solidify its position as security guarantor and expand its economic interaction in the region. Moreover, the commitments of mutual defense embedded in the alliances provide immediate credibility for the US statements about long-term commitment to the region. Therefore, even though partners such as Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia may be seen as more valuable and desirable partners in the current security environment in Southeast Asia, the US has placed emphasis on sustaining its alliances with the Philippines and Thailand. Finally, the cost of maintaining these alliances has been relatively low and jettisoning them now would create fresh doubts about the US commitment to the region and diminish its long-term credibility as a “resident power.”

This logic even applies for Thailand, which is probably the alliance partner least committed to ensuring the US alliance system remains the foundation of regional security. Bangkok has reciprocated US interest in recent months and appears to have chosen to keep the relationship on life support by agreeing to a joint vision statement that is focused on both broadening the alliance as a component of regional stability and deepening the bilateral relationship to ensure that “defense ties complement all elements of our much broader relationship, including strong diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties.”<sup>8</sup>

Each of the chapters on the individual alliances demonstrates the ways the US has worked to ensure the alliances remain relevant. There is a perception of an urgent need to create a sense of a renewed commitment by the US and an expanded role for the alliance partners. Joint vision statements and redefined guidelines have called for an expansion in scope beyond the specific requirements outlined in the mutual defense treaties to include a broader range of security issues and threats. This has led to increased interest in partnering in the areas of cyber security, intelligence sharing, surveillance and reconnaissance, maritime security, nonproliferation, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response. There is some fear among allies and regional nations, however, that an attempt to

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<sup>8</sup> The joint vision statement specifically addresses: 1) regional security in Southeast Asia; 2) supporting stability in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond; 3) bilateral and multilateral interoperability and readiness; and 4) relationship building, coordination, and collaboration. “2012 Joint Vision Statement for the Thai-U.S. Defense Alliance,” US Defense Department News Release No. 904-12, Nov. 15, 2012. Available at: <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=15685>.

recalibrate burdens among partners and to recognize their demands for greater equality in particular alliances, is cover for a move by the US to disengage from the region. Sustaining the perception that the US alliances provide the foundation for security in the region reinforces the conclusion that a reduced US presence would increase the risk of miscalculation and misperception. Consistent reassurance of the US commitment to a sustained conventional military presence in Asia has been the response to that concern. Unfortunately, emphasis on the military component has led some to conclude that the US presence is too narrowly focused.

The US recognizes that the alliances are not enough to sustain its influence in the region. Successive national security strategies emphasize the importance of multilateral efforts to create security and stability in Asia. From its beginning, the Obama administration has sought to bolster its involvement in ASEAN-related organizations by designating an ambassador to ASEAN, faithfully participating at all ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) gatherings, acceding to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and joining the East Asia Summit. In a recent news release by the *Armed Forces Press Service*, a US official was quoted as saying “we are interested in ... working through our mission in ASEAN a little bit more, trying to empower that body ... to do a little more, to be a little more assertive in problem-solving as a multilateral organization, versus doing most of the business bilateral capital to capital.”<sup>9</sup> Ironically, however, this effort is sometimes misread as an attempt by Washington to offload some of its regional security responsibilities and to distance itself from regional concerns. All things considered, the US remains committed to privileging the alliances as the primary vehicle for its security cooperation in the region, but has struggled to expand beyond the confines of the bilateral relationships.

There is no missing the tension between US alliances and Washington’s engagement with ASEAN and other security partners. Victor Cha may be right and ad hoc functionality based on the strength of the alliance partnerships can ensure that the US is able to both maintain the alliances and engage with other security partners, including ASEAN, based on different functional requirements associated with specific security problems.<sup>10</sup> Thus far, that model does describe the US approach to the region. Alliance partners have served as the nucleus for regular security engagement while the US has sought to extend its engagement with other partners such as Singapore, Indonesia, and Vietnam. But it isn’t clear if the model is sustainable in the longer term. Historically, difficulties arise when there is a divergence between the security interests of the alliance partner and the broader coalition or multilateral organization. In most cases, the ally has appeared to take the alliance for granted and afforded US demands a lower priority than those of other multilateral organizations. That could be changing. In Manila, for example, the dispute between China and the Philippines over territorial claims in the South China Sea, has pushed the Philippine government to reassess the value of its alliance in the face of its inability to garner support for its position from other ASEAN members.

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<sup>9</sup> Jim Garamone, “Official: Asian Leaders Begin to Believe in US Shift to the Region,” *American Forces Press Service News release*, Dec. 19, 2012. Available at: <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=118840>.

<sup>10</sup> Victor Cha, “Complex Patchworks: U.S. Alliances as Part of Asia’s Regional Architecture,” *Asia Policy*, No. 11, (January 2011).

In another apparent irony, the Philippines now seeks to invoke its alliance relationship as a means of asserting its claims, and the US finds itself having to choose between maintaining the alliance and being perceived by its other security partners as disrupting peace and stability in the region. This requires a delicate balance and challenges the underlying premise that the alliances are sunk costs that serve as a foundation to build from rather than creating what appear to be additional, unwanted security obligations for the US.

As the US seeks to respond to the changing regional security dynamics, determining the role of the alliances will be a major challenge. They can serve as a basis for increased engagement, but the exclusive nature of the mutual defense relationship also creates uncertainties for countries outside the relationship. As we probed the prospects for an “alliance caucus,” it quickly became clear that the chief concern of allies was fear of being trapped in unwanted confrontations, especially with China. Planners worry that the prospect of such confrontations would limit cooperation in areas such as joint disaster relief exercises or joint military exercises if the perception persists that the US alliances are being maintained to contain or counter Chinese influence. US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey acknowledged that “It’s not just the Chinese who are interested in our intentions. We’ve had similar conversations with Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and we have to keep at that.”<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, US fiscal realities will require a larger contribution from alliance partners to maintain the system, which could lead some to question the value of the alliance with the US. At some point, allies may feel the need to reevaluate costs associated with maintaining the alliance. Then again, historically, US allies have seen their partnership with the US as a means of restraining American unilateralism and ensuring that they have a window into, if not some influence upon, US decision making. The ordinary procedures of alliances afford those allies insight into US thinking and alert and sensitize US officials to the concerns and preferences of their partners. There is no guarantee that those concerns would be heard in as systematic or widespread a fashion within the US without those alliances.

This leads to what may be the most serious shortcoming associated with the notion that the system of alliances can serve as the basis for US “rebalancing” toward the Asia Pacific. Given their traditional focus on mutual defense and military security, the emphasis on alliances makes the US argument that it seeks a broader security relationship less convincing. Using the alliances as the “cornerstone” of US engagement does little to instill confidence that the purpose of rebalancing is anything more than an attempt to strengthen the US military presence in the region. Without more collaboration among regional alliance partners, it remains unclear how the US intends to leverage the alliances to promote a deeper sense of peace and stability through a broadened security approach as described in the *2010 National Security Strategy*.

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<sup>11</sup> Jim Garamone, “U.S.-Australia Conference Points to Possibilities,” American Forces News Service News Release, Nov. 15, 2012. Available at: <http://www.jcs.mil/newsarticle.aspx?id=1037>.



## Alliances and a New Security Order in Asia

Since the US Department of Defense issued its strategic guidance in January 2012, analysts have questioned how US rebalancing fits into Asia's security architecture given the changes of the past 20 years. Certainly, the region has become much more complex. On the one hand, as we noted in the introduction, the trend has been toward addressing nontraditional security issues through multilateral organizations, with an emphasis on inclusive mechanisms that emphasize cooperative approaches. Throughout that transition, the narrative associated with the US system of alliances has shifted to emphasize its role in creating a stable security environment that facilitated rapid economic growth throughout the region, rather than as a balancer against the Cold War military threat from the Soviet Union. However, recent tensions over territorial disputes in the maritime spaces of East Asia, have made it clear that traditional security still matters and that the mutual defense agreements remain an important component for some allies.

In other words, the return of more traditional security concerns challenges the US assertion that the alliances have brought peace and stability to the region. Indeed, it can be asked whether the network of alliances is to at least some extent part of the problem. But the reemergence of traditional security concerns – and the manifestation of those concerns in the form of what Richard Bitzinger has described as a growing military capabilities competition that could lead to a regional arms race<sup>12</sup> – makes it plain that ASEAN-based multilateral security institutions have also failed to develop the capacity to deal effectively with preventive diplomacy or conflict resolution. Recognizing this dilemma, China has insisted that the system of alliances is an anachronism that has stunted regional cooperation.<sup>13</sup> In recent months, the Chinese have taken this claim a step further and argue that the alliances embolden some allies to take actions that are not “conducive to regional stability and peace”<sup>14</sup> and that the US “is a complete destroyer of peace under the veil of maintaining global stability.”<sup>15</sup>

Two very different narratives are emerging. On the one hand, the US argues that the alliance system is based on the expressed concern of countries in the region and must be reinvigorated to ensure peace and stability. From this perspective, recent Chinese actions to assert control in the East and South China Sea have created a sense of urgency for an expanded alliance-based effort to develop a credible balance. China, meanwhile, argues that this US attempt to bolster its alliances is sending the wrong signal and will lead to increased competition. From this perspective, US actions to reassert itself in the region are meant to contain China and prevent the development of a China-led security

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Bitzinger, “Will the US Pivot Trigger a New Regional Arms Race,” *Global Asia*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Winter 2012), pp. 34-37.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Chambers, “China’s Military Rise to Great Power Status: Its Implications for United States and Southeast Asia,” in *China, the United States, and Southeast Asia: Contending Perspectives on Politics, Security, and Economics*, Evelyn Goh and Sheldon Simon (eds.), New York, Routledge, 2008, pp. 172-174.

<sup>14</sup> Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei’s press briefing remarks on July, 31, 2012 regarding Japan’s annual defense white paper and for “making various excuses for its continuous arms expansion, reinforcement of military alliance and distorting facts on regional security issues,” quoted at <http://www.chinaembassy-fi.org/eng/fyrth/t957587.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> “Lifting US’ Veil of Peace Defender, (2)” *People’s Daily online*, Dec. 19, 2012 <http://english.people.com.cn/102774/8062957.html>.



architecture in Asia. Meanwhile, both pay lip service to the central role of ASEAN even though both are ultimately dismissive of its ability to respond to or calm the growing competition.

While it is tempting to dismiss the Chinese rhetoric that the US alliances are part of the problem in Asia, the idea that US reinforcement of its alliances is leading to a new period of instability in Asia has spread to mainstream Western publications as well. In a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, Robert Ross argues that US efforts to demonstrate its credibility as the regional security guarantor by increasing joint naval exercises and inserting itself into maritime territorial disputes have “unnecessarily challenged Beijing” and contributed to increased instability in the region.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Michael Wesley argues in a recent article in *The National Interest* that as the distribution of power in Asia has shifted in recent years, US attempts to reassert its system of alliances as the foundation for Asian security is exacerbating regional instability.<sup>17</sup>

Evan Feigenbaum and Robert Manning make a somewhat different claim in a recent article in *Foreign Policy*, suggesting that two “Asias” are emerging – one is a Chinese-led economic Asia that is mostly cooperative, dynamic, and increasingly integrated, and a US-led security Asia that is mostly competitive and increasingly driven by tension and mutual suspicion.<sup>18</sup> For them, these increasingly irreconcilable Asias are condemnations of failed efforts at Asian regionalism and demands that the US become more engaged economically to avoid a pyrrhic victory by becoming the center of a security-oriented Asia that is dominated by conflict. On one level, the message is similar: the alliances have not solved and will not solve the security problems in Asia. Yet this perspective also highlights the risk of the US being drawn into Asian conflict by believing its rhetoric that the alliances have created a stable and peaceful security environment.

### **Whither the Alliances?**

Plainly, the US must find a sustainable rationale for maintaining its alliance system in Asia as it faces four challenges to its most basic and fundamental assumptions. First, there are rising doubts about the indivisibility of economic and security partnerships – i.e., that the country that provides security to Asian nations also provides the greatest economic benefits. The notion that the individual alliances have the systemic effect of providing the foundation – security and stability – for the region’s economic development is fraying as intraregional trade and regional financial cooperation under the auspices of ASEAN Plus 3 (all or some of its members, formally and informally) have become more influential in Asian economic policy considerations. This separation ultimately challenges the “economic for security” bargain that Calder identifies as being at the heart of the San Francisco system of alliances.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Robert S. Ross, “The Problem with the Pivot,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 2012), pp. 70-82.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Wesley, “Asia’s New Age of Instability,” *The National Interest*, Issue 122, (Nov/Dec 2012), pp. 21-29.

<sup>18</sup> Evan Feigenbaum and Robert Manning, “A Tale of Two Asias,” *FP: National Security*, Oct. 31, 2012, available at: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/10/30/a\\_tale\\_of\\_two\\_asias](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/10/30/a_tale_of_two_asias).

<sup>19</sup> Kent Calder, “Securing Security through Prosperity: the San Francisco System in Comparative Perspective,” *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (March 2004), pp. 150-152.

This breakdown has second-order effects as well. In recent years, the US has attempted to emphasize other elements of its engagement with allies, most pointedly as it has reconfigured its deterrent (and its extended deterrent in the case of its Asian allies).<sup>20</sup> To make the case that US commitment to and assurance of its allies is not shaken by these changes, Washington has argued for an expansive definition of “strategic,” insisting that the deepening integration of the US and its allies in the realms of diplomacy, politics, and economics creates a seamless entity that will eliminate doubts among adversaries that an attack on the ally would constitute an attack on the US. In other words, the US is arguing that diplomatic and economic cooperation can be used to create linkages between the US and its allies as tightly as a forward-deployed military presence. The most striking example of this is the framing of the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS) as a “strategic” deal, meaning it is fundamental to the bilateral relationship and not just another trade negotiation. Recent conversations with regional officials and analysts suggest that the US hope that other forms of interaction would be seen as complementing its military engagement or even compensating for changes in that presence will be dashed. Asian partners see the military component of the relationship as unique: that commitment cannot be demonstrated in other ways.

That is not to say that the US shouldn’t seek to broaden engagement with allies in Asia. This has been an integral component of the rebalance to Asia, even though it has gotten short shrift from most commentators who prefer to focus on and emphasize its military dimensions. The military isn’t a slim reed upon which US engagement can hang, but it is heavily burdened. A diversified presence offers the US more options and opportunities to shape and influence policy in Asian capitals and perceptions of the US among Asian publics. It can also serve as a shock absorber if and when US military deployments change. At the same time, however, the US must be realistic about what its allies expect and how it can reassure them (and deter adversaries).

Second, there is the assumption that the US is and must remain the pre-eminent security power within the region – that it can in fact underwrite regional security. There are two fundamental issues here. First, questions have been raised about the US ability to deal with transnational security challenges: that the nature of such threats is beyond the capacity of any one country to address, regardless of its strength. A cooperative, inclusive approach is demanded, one that employs many diverse assets that can be mustered as efficiently as possible.

More significant, is concern that the balance of power in Asia is shifting to the US disadvantage and China is destined to replace it as the dominant power in the region. Regardless of Chinese intentions, it is viewed as a revisionist power that can be a threat to the regional status quo. There are growing questions, however, about the capacity of the US (and its allies) to respond to Chinese challenges. While there is general agreement that the military capabilities gap has not narrowed to the point where the US can no longer achieve its objectives in a military conflict, the US is perceived to be in trouble, regardless of the reality. The ongoing fiscal crisis in the US has served to exaggerate this perception.

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<sup>20</sup> The 2010 US Nuclear Posture Review says the US will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in its security policy.

As China continues to modernize its military and increase its capacity to patrol its maritime claims in regional seas, the regional capacity of the US will be increasingly challenged. If Asian nations are balancers, then a perceived US weakness should strengthen their readiness to work with Washington to balance China. If bandwagoning is the predominant mentality, then perceived weakness could accelerate the decline of the US alliance system.

The third assumption is that the US is better served by a hub-and-spoke relationship that focuses on individual alliances rather than a larger multilateral security framework, even one with alliances at its core. Unlike the other assumptions, this belief is being challenged by the US (although the hub and spoke system isn't going anywhere anytime soon). For reasons of efficiency and efficacy, the US is looking for greater coordination among its spokes. Yet individual alliance partners (i.e., South Korea and Japan or the Philippines and Thailand) have been reluctant to work together, albeit for different reasons. As reflected in the individual chapters of this volume, there is a strong tendency by the alliance partners to view the alliance relationship through a bilateral, rather than a multilateral, lens. Even the idea of an alliance-based caucus for the purpose of creating a common position in ASEAN-related organizations received a cool reception in our discussions, with several participants expressing fears that this would unnecessarily compromise individual country positions on regional security issues.

Implicit in the US challenge to this assumption is a fourth assumption about the systemic value of the alliances. The increased emphasis in the post-Cold War era on the role of the alliances in ensuring regional stability reflects a belief that regional peace and stability is a systemic benefit of the alliances. In other words, the alliance system is bigger than the individual bilateral alliances. As long as the US was the dominant military and economic partner, there was little need to emphasize these systemic benefits. But, the increased emphasis on the value of networking among partners and the effort to expand alliance benefits to others in the region reflect a belief that the systemic effects of the alliances are a critical part of the regional security architecture. With the focus on alliances, observers are also reminded that the balance of power is not determined by the US and China alone; instead the US has an entire network of security partners and relationships that should be taken into account as well.

Let's be clear here: promoting the systemic benefits of the alliances is not the same as establishing a region-wide alliance. Despite US claims that the alliances have helped build confidence among partners, facilitated the integration of militaries, and stimulated habits of cooperation among allies, as we saw throughout this project, there has been a great reluctance to pursue anything resembling a formal coordinating mechanism among the allies. Nevertheless, regular references to the value of the alliances in realizing regional security goals make it clear that the US sees value in moving beyond the current focus on bilateral dyads. The US *National Security Strategy* declares the five alliances included in this study to be "the bedrock of security in Asia and a foundation of prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region."<sup>21</sup> Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates takes this a step further and argues that US security is better served by "more multilateral ties rather than hubs and

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<sup>21</sup> US National Security Strategy, June 2010, p. 42

spokes,”<sup>22</sup> although Gates and like-minded thinkers usually seek the inclusion of security partners like Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, and India, with allies.

Yet, little systematic thought has been given to how the alliances can best be integrated into the regional security architecture. Here, we will outline a range of options available to the US and its partners as they contemplate ways to adapt the existing alliance system to the regional security environment. While the tendency will be to favor some adaptation of the existing status quo, we offer a spectrum to show the range of possibilities.

The most ambitious version of alliance integration would be to create an alliance system similar to NATO. Although easily dismissed as fantasy, especially given the failure of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in the 1970s, China’s concern with containment, and ASEAN’s vision as being at the center of Asian multilateralism, creating a six-member security alliance would give the strongest expression to the role of the alliances in ensuring peace and stability and would solidify the efforts to expand relations among alliance partners.

On the other end of the spectrum of options, the US could seek to reduce its reliance on the alliances by withdrawing most of its military forces from the region. This option would lead to an atrophying of the bilateral alliances, reinforce the importance of “coalitions of the willing” and other regional organizations in US regional security planning, while forcing its alliance partners to take a more autonomous security posture. A defensible argument for this option could be made around the idea that the US was simply recognizing the centrality of ASEAN-based multilateral architecture as the basis for regional peace and stability, or that it was embracing the role of “offshore balancer,” intervening only when needed to maintain the balance of power and security in Asia.

Between these two extremes are several intermediate options. These alternatives could serve as ends in themselves or as a means to achieve the goals expressed at each end of the spectrum. If maintenance of the hub-and-spoke system is at the center of the spectrum, then US policy has been ambiguous: it seems inclined toward alliance integration as it places increased emphasis on networking among partners at the same time that it seems to be reducing reliance on the alliances by placing increased emphasis on seeking security partners beyond the alliances and promoting the central role of ASEAN-based institutions.

Positioned closer to the alliance integration end is multilateral cooperation among selected alliance partners, an option that includes several variants. The multilateral relationships embodied by the US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, or by the US-Japan-ROK Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group, would encourage greater cooperation and consultation between and among them to stimulate greater mutual understanding of the core objectives of security cooperation in a regional context. While serving the immediate purpose of ensuring regional peace and security, these types of arrangements also serve to create confidence in the value of collaboration among allies and

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<sup>22</sup> “Speech by Defense Secretary Gates in Jakarta, Indonesia Discusses a Range of Security Issues on East Asia,” Feb. 25, 2008, [www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/February/20080225130031eaifas0.2525141.html](http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/February/20080225130031eaifas0.2525141.html).

lead to a larger aggregation of alliance partners. One manifestation of this approach would be the development of an alliance caucus that could be used to influence outcomes in regional security forums.

If the ultimate goal of the US is to reduce reliance on its alliances, intermediate options include maintaining the alliance commitment while withdrawing military forces or maintaining alliance relations with selected partners while abandoning others. Either option would strain all or some of the alliances, but would make it easier for the US to increase security partnerships and reduce Chinese insecurities about containment.

### **Building a New Consensus**

Of course, the US is not alone to make these decisions; the views of its allies are just as important. Understanding their thinking is one of the most important contributions of this project. Rather than merely taking allied attitudes toward the alliance as a given, this study has examined both this range of options and the attitudes of our allies toward the future of the alliance system. Three years of focused meetings on these topics, as well as dozens of other discussions, both formal and informal, have given us extensive insight into regional thinking about these relationships.

The lessons we have gleaned from this assessment provide important guidelines for US thinking about regional engagement with Asia. They offer valuable first principles as the US attempts to adapt its alliance relationships to the evolving political and security environment in the Asia-Pacific region. First, we urge all policy makers (in both the US and allied capitals) to lower expectations. In truth, military and security concerns are primordial, elemental factors that shape national psychologies, but publics and policy makers tackle such issues only when they must. Usually, and especially – even? – now, four years after a global economic crisis and lingering economic uncertainty, economic issues predominate in politics: butter prevails over guns. As the US and its allies face straitened economic circumstances, neither is willing to increase defense expenditures, especially if that would diminish social or welfare outlays. For the US, the prospect of more equitably apportioning burdens, no matter how vocal the demands for equality within a particular partnership, is going to be difficult. Those partners must recognize that US resources are limited as well. Modernizing alliances to perform their existing functions better, much less to take on new capabilities and challenges, will be tough. Similarly, unless there is a significant shift in thinking among alliance partners about the value of collaboration, we shouldn't expect more collaboration among “the spokes.” While there has been some success in forming trilateral dialogues among alliance partners, the partnerships have been formed around the US and Australia rather than among two or more Asian partners. Plainly, expectations must be managed.

Second, and as a corollary of the first point, we should remember that alliances serve as an entry point and not an end point for US engagement with Asia. Alliances provide a framework for regional engagement, and carry a great load, but they remain just part of a broader weave of relationships. That engagement can expand in two dimensions: the range of potential partners and forms of cooperation. The US is doing both. First, Washington is pursuing new security partners, reaching out to like-minded governments,

and pressing regional institutions to put security issues on their agendas. Even if Asian institutions remain ASEAN-centered, the US role as a dialogue partner of those bodies has helped shape the range of issues they take up and the ways that they respond to new challenges. At the same time, the US has rediscovered the need to expand the ways it engages with Asia, Southeast Asia in particular, and is now stressing its political, diplomatic, and economic/business assets in those relationships. Nonmilitary forms of engagement have been highlighted in the “smart power” approach advocated by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton even before she penned the *Foreign Policy* article that laid out the “rebalance” to Asia and identified forward-deployed diplomacy and economic engagement as the starting points for relations with Asia. The US must adopt a more expansive definition of “strategic” when forging and consolidating relationships; the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement is a good example of how to adopt this approach.

Third, and flowing from the previous point, the US must also be cognizant of the limits of this thinking. While we don’t accept that there is a necessary tension for allies when they assess the economic and security components of relations with the US, it is no longer a seamless whole. The US must recognize that its influence and its leverage have diminished as Asia has acquired its own economic dynamism. While Asia has not decoupled from the US, America’s economic role is reducing and that trend is likely to continue. And consistent with the logic of our first point, we should expect allied governments to bargain even harder on economic issues, regardless of security considerations. Access to the US market is no longer the carrot (or the stick) that it once was. Conversely, the US must also recognize that its partners see economic issues as having only limited utility when compensating for military engagement. Some argue that political, diplomatic, or economic coordination can substitute for a forward-deployed US military presence when reassuring allies. Crudely put, thousands of US business people and tourists, and tens (if not hundreds) of billions of dollars in US investment in allies, are the equivalent of a military tripwire. An attack against those civilians and those assets will ensure a US response. Appealing though that logic may be, it doesn’t seem to be borne out by reality. Our allies seem fixated on military mechanisms for assurance and US policy makers should accept that fact.

Fourth, the US must be ready to live with a lack of coordination, coherence, and shared capacity among its Asian allies. When examining security policies, the gap between Northeast and Southeast Asia is large. This is largely a function of divergent security priorities and the economic wherewithal to fund those needs. Rudimentary questions of capability stymie efforts to cooperate among allies and these gaps will persist. Moreover, subregional political and economic frameworks in Southeast Asia give governments in the Philippines and Thailand imperatives that sometimes diverge from those of Japan, South Korea, and even the US. The nascent “plus Three” mechanisms of China, Japan, and South Korea may create a logic of their own – and their own countervailing tugs – but this process is only beginning. The key point is that competing logics exist that can inhibit coordination among alliance partners; and even when priorities align, different countries bring vastly different capabilities to the system.

A fifth point is that the US must recognize that its desire to privilege its alliances can diminish the roles for and prospects of other partners. Obviously, at a time of limited

resources, the attention devoted to alliance relationships is time, energy, and money that is not available to other nations. More significantly, however, Washington must acknowledge the suspicions that sometimes surround its alliances as well as questions about their ultimate goal and purpose (whether nurtured by China or not). The determination to focus on those relationships with their avowedly military purpose and Cold War history is seen by some in Asia as a potential source of tension, friction, and even division with the region.

The willingness by other governments in the region to cooperate with the US (or its allies) bilaterally can be diminished by the fear that such actions might be misinterpreted as a desire to engage in more pointed fashion against China. The alliance network makes that expansion of purpose much easier. Even when concerned about Chinese intentions, those governments do not wish to be identified with explicit actions that might antagonize Beijing. In short, even when hedging against China, they are unwilling to take concrete actions that would make or identify China as an enemy. (US protests that no one is asking them to do that are disregarded.) Regional governments would rather work with China and they remain committed to the development of inclusive regional mechanisms that bring China into the community. This may give Beijing a disproportionate voice in the operation of such institutions, but thus far it has not abused that power – at least not as far as most Asian governments are concerned, although that could be changing after the shenanigans at the 2012 ASEAN meetings hosted by Cambodia.

Given these guiding principles, we offer several suggestions for the US as it works to strengthen its alliance relationships, expand its regional security networks, and protect its national interests in Asia. First, as guiding principle, the US should never oppose efforts to integrate Asia. The attempt to forge Asian regional institutions responds to a perceived gap between the region's economic and political influence. While the US may worry about the creation of an "Asia" in which it is not readily identified as a standing member and which could in theory compete with broader Asia-Pacific institutions and mechanisms, such concerns reek of hypocrisy when Washington championed the North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA) and the European Union. A perceived US hostility to Asian integration will do great damage to the US image and reduce its influence on the shape and texture of the integration effort. The US should trust its allies and partners to ensure that its interests are considered when Asian governments meet and the US is not at the table. The odds of a deep integration that would threaten US interests are quite remote given the diversity that characterizes the region and the fact that most Asian countries see great value in the US as an off-shore balancer.

Second, the US should champion principles, rules, and institutions that its allies, partners and other regional governments would want to support. The real foundation of US success in the post-World War II era has been its promotion of a rule and law-based international order that offered opportunity for all nations. Washington accepted – indeed pushed – institutions that constrained its own room for maneuver. This is a mark of real leadership and a role to which it should continue to aspire. The same foresight will pay dividends in the 21st century.

Third, the US should be building an economy that nations wish to partner with. Economic dynamism creates its own influence. While we are reluctant to call this "soft

power” – we prefer to think of economic influence as more like gravity than power, per se – this energy and success generates its own supporters. Countries want to be part of the action. In recent years, the US model of capitalism has been best noted by its failures and the economy itself a shadow of its potential. President Obama has recognized this shortcoming and has called since his first inaugural to make rebuilding the US the country’s first priority. This creates challenges of its own as this focus must not be construed as disengagement, but the president’s instincts are right. The US must put its own house in order to re-establish itself as a country that is prepared and capable of leading. This is the gist of the section of the *2010 US National Security Strategy* that states, “The foundation of American leadership must be a prosperous American economy.”<sup>23</sup>

Fourth, the US should develop boilerplate agreements that it can sign with allies and that they, in turn, can sign with each other and with other regional governments. We are thinking here about nuts and bolts deals that facilitate alliance operations, such as an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) or a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) to increase interoperability and cooperation. These are essential to smooth operations among security partners. Moreover, standardized agreements are easier to expand and lay the foundation for expanding cooperation among “the spokes” or to other partners. Standardized agreements can defuse controversy, as occurred in Korea when Seoul tried to conclude a GSOMIA with Japan.

Finally, as a rule the US and its partners should always invite China to join security programs, projects, and initiatives. Beijing should be given every opportunity to participate in such endeavors and see what US-led efforts are about. This will prepare the ground for cooperation with China when circumstances permit and may defuse suspicions about US intentions. Even if that does not succeed – as we fear is likely – the burden will be on China to opt out and it will make plain that it is not the US and its allies that are drawing a line through the region.

While the conclusions that emerge are not as promising as we had hoped, they do offer some important principles for thinking about the future of US alliances in Asia. In sum, promoting cooperation within the alliance only makes sense if it promotes collaborative solutions to security issues, avoids alienating those outside the system, encourages responsible behavior by alliance partners, and is compatible with ASEAN-based security institutions. Fortunately, those appear to be the principles that guide US thinking. That is one reason for optimism, but it is certainly not cause for complacency.

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<sup>23</sup> 2010 US National Security Strategy, p. 28.



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