



THE FUTURE OF AMERICA'S ALLIANCES IN NORTHEAST ASIA

EDITED BY MICHAEL H. ARMACOST AND DANIEL I. OKIMOTO

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and
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ASIA-PACIFIC RESEARCH CENTER

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CHINA

US-CHINA SECURITY RELATIONS AND AMERICA'S PACIFIC ALLIANCES IN THE POST-9/11 ERA

David M. Lampton

What have been the critical changes in Asia's security environment since 9/11? What opportunities and challenges do these developments present for continued and broadened Sino-American security cooperation? What implications does Sino-American security cooperation have for America's Asian partners, particularly Japan and the Republic of Korea? And, what do these developments imply for future American policy?

There have been six post-9/11 alterations in the regional and global security environments most significant for both Sino-American security cooperation and America's alliances with Japan and South Korea:

- China's economic and diplomatic clout in Asia has dramatically increased since 1997, in the context of a Washington preoccupied elsewhere and a less economically potent Japan. Nonetheless, American preeminence in Asia remains the central geopolitical fact, a circumstance reflected in the PRC's priority on maintaining productive relations with Washington.
- North Korean nuclear weapons programs have fostered Sino-American cooperation to a degree few would have predicted in November 2002, simultaneously strengthened US cooperation with Japan, and have had the opposite effect with respect to Seoul-Washington ties.
- Japan gradually is assuming more responsibility for its own defense and beginning to provide limited "global, public security goods," a development that is occurring with American blessings and Chinese wariness. Simultaneously, Japan is developing ever-deeper economic ties with the PRC and Beijing is not making an issue of Tokyo's changing security role, though it is worried. The US-Japan alliance is strong, in part as a hedge against a rising China, and Chinese leaders have partially conceded that the US-Japan alliance has given Beijing a "free ride"¹ on security. The net is that China seems reconciled to a more "normal" Japan and the US-Japan security alliance as long as neither is aimed at promoting the separation of Taiwan or containing China, concerns that never will be fully assuaged. Indeed, both Washington and Tokyo view this ambiguity as part of the structure of deterrence vis-à-vis an attack on Taiwan.

- South Korean–Chinese economic (and to a lesser extent security) relations have grown with remarkable speed since the two nations established diplomatic ties in 1992. Today, Beijing and Seoul often have been closer on inter-Korean peninsula issues than Washington and Seoul. The ROK-US alliance relationship is troubled, raising the issue of its long-term prospects.
- The war on terror (here to include the war in Iraq and counterproliferation policy) has fostered growing and important Sino-American cooperation. While the Japanese wish to see peaceful and workmanlike US-China relations, they also fear an overly zealous strategic embrace of Beijing by Washington as the PRC cooperates in the war on terror. The fear is that if Washington embraces China intimately as a “strategic partner” some important Japanese interests might be affected.²
- With respect to Taiwan, the core friction in US-China relations since 1950, micro-nationalism and competitive electoral politics have energized Taipei’s increasing efforts to assert autonomy. This threatens Beijing’s, Washington’s, and Tokyo’s interests. For now, this has produced Sino-American cooperation and generated growing friction between Washington and Taipei. American allies and friends are increasingly allergic to a Taiwan Strait conflict and Tokyo and Paris urged restraint on Taipei in the run up to the March 2004 presidential election, as did President Bush on December 9, 2003.

For the most part, these developments have fostered Sino-American security cooperation and strengthened bilateral relations. This cooperation has facilitated Washington downplaying other US-China frictions (e.g., economic and trade and human rights concerns) and enabled Washington to keep its focus on the Middle East, the war on terror, and proliferation threats. For its part, Beijing wishes to avoid external entanglements so it can stay focused on its daunting domestic challenges and continue to enlarge its comprehensive national power over the next two decades or more.

Looking ahead, however, there will be challenges to Sino-American security cooperation and to the post-World War II security structures that the United States did so much to construct. Most fundamentally, China is translating its economic muscle into political clout throughout Asia and beyond; Washington has been relatively distracted³ since 9/11 and therefore needs to devote far more effort to being economically and diplomatically effective throughout Asia. Paralleling the strains that have developed in NATO after the Cold War, the aforementioned developments have weakened the ROK-US alliance and (though US-Japan relations currently are in the best shape in many years) there are cautions for the future of Washington’s alliance with Tokyo as well. The biggest caution is that as the United States bases much of its post-9/11 security

behavior on “coalitions of the willing,” it inadvertently calls into question the sanctity and mutuality of alliances.

With respect to the US-ROK security alliance, one should be troubled by the attitudes that South Koreans reportedly have toward America and its post-9/11 foreign policy priorities. The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press⁴ has found that South Koreans see North Korea as significantly less threatening to “regional stability” than Americans perceive it to be; they view Americans less favorably than many other surveyed US allies do; and they support the war on terror less than any other American ally, with the level of popular support in the ROK less than one-half the level found in Germany, which was only 60 percent in 2003. The chapters by Chung Min Lee and William Drennan in this volume provide additional data in this regard.

Turning to Sino-American cooperation on the North Korean nuclear issue, while Pyongyang’s programs have thus far been a binding force since late 2002, future potential challenges to continued US-China cooperation are evident. Though neither Washington nor Beijing desires a nuclear-armed (much less proliferating) Pyongyang, it remains unclear whether or not either capital is willing to do what may be necessary to prevent (or reverse what may already be) the nuclearization of North Korea. As Alexander George pointed out years ago in his classic *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, it takes much less to induce a state to stop doing something (or to not initiate an action in the first instance) than to undo something already achieved.⁵ In the event that negotiations with North Korea fail, we can expect Washington to push for more vigorous measures, either to eliminate Pyongyang’s programs or to limit the negative consequences of them. If Washington were to push for more muscular measures against Pyongyang under anything like current circumstances, this probably would generate conflict between Washington and Beijing, as well as between Washington and Seoul. Effects on US-Japan relations are less certain, but Beijing’s moderating role has, as Kurt Campbell has noted in his contribution to this volume, produced a situation in “which other countries are beginning to look at China as a stabilizing actor in Asia.”⁶

And a final challenge to continued US-China security cooperation is Taiwan’s current drift toward autonomy, against the backdrop of China’s growing power, the reluctance of US allies to become entangled in this issue, and Taipei’s resistance to US cautions directed toward President Chen Shui-bian in 2003-early 2004. All this spells trouble for the future if some stabilizing combination of changes in Beijing, Taipei, and Washington is not forthcoming. We shall look at each of these four issues below, concluding with suggestions for US policy.

Chinese Power in Asia and Beijing’s New Look

It may sound odd to say, but China has embraced economic and security policies that America has advocated throughout the post-World War II era—multilateral forums, free-trade agreements, and military confidence-building measures, not

the least notable being a recent Sino-Indian joint maritime operation,⁷ as well as military exercises with Pakistan and Central Asian states. Beijing's policies contrast with a Washington that is distracted, more inclined toward unilateral or bilateral than multilateral security options, skeptical of confidence-building measures, more bilateral in its trade policies, and trying to link every dimension of policy to the war on terror. China is emphasizing soft power, cooperation, and mutual economic benefit as America is emphasizing hard power in a region that prefers at least the illusion of preferences now associated with Beijing. Knowing that its own rapid rise could cause a backlash among neighbors, Beijing seeks to reassure them. Over the longer term most nations on China's periphery wish to foster a balance between American and Chinese power.

A decade or so ago it was at least credible to speak of an Asian economic structure of "flying geese" with Japan as the head of the formation and other regional economies arraying themselves around Japan. Today, there is an emerging regional economic configuration in which most Asian economies are becoming suppliers to China. These economies see their principal growth opportunities in the rapidly expanding PRC domestic market and in China's use of those suppliers' intermediate goods in its own production of exports for North America and Europe. China is becoming a principal export destination for nations and economies in East, Northeast, and Southeast Asia, with large jumps in their export percentages going to China since 1996. For example, in 2000 China took about 16 percent of Australia's exports (up from 9 percent in 1994); about 14 percent of Singapore's exports in 2001 (up from about 2–3 percent in 1997); and about 18 percent of ROK exports in 2001 (up from about 8 percent in 1996). In 2002, China replaced the United States as the largest customer of Taiwan and South Korea,⁸ Sino-Russian trade surpassed Russian-US trade in 2003,⁹ and in 2002 China became the largest exporter to Japan.¹⁰ As the economist Pieter Bottelier notes, "China's share of exports [of East Asia, minus Japan] to NAFTA and the EU increased dramatically from 25 to 45 percent [from 1985 to 2001].¹¹ This phenomenon also is seen in the fact that China's share of total US merchandise imports rose to about 11 percent in 2002, about quadruple the 1990 percentage. Meanwhile, the rest of Asia's share of total US merchandise imports fell from about 17 percent in 1990 to about 13 percent in 2002.¹²

While inward foreign direct investment (FDI) to the United States, the world, and ASEAN has been declining in recent years, inward FDI to China has been rising (though a considerable fraction of this is "round-tripping" money from the PRC itself, looking for the benefits accorded "foreign" capital).¹³ While China's magnetic pull on FDI alarms much of Asia, another fact does not—China is a growing foreign direct investor in the region, though starting from a low base. About 13 percent of PRC (non-trading) FDI¹⁴ goes to ASEAN and 16 percent to Asia more broadly (including ASEAN), with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimating a cumulative total Chinese FDI (worldwide, 1979–2001) of \$34.69 billion. These figures considerably understate China's FDI because of

unrecorded capital flows (flight) from the mainland over a long period (though this has reversed recently). “The rapid development of outward FDI reflects not only China’s increasing integration with the global economy but also its continuing need to expand overseas to secure natural resources (e.g., Australia and Canada) and advanced technology (e.g., the US).”¹⁵

Beijing has been quick to perceive the power that derives from its growing economy and has embraced a number of policies that, not long ago, would have been associated with Washington. The first hint of this approach came with the 1997 announcement of China’s New Security Concept and with the subsequent Asian financial crisis (1997–1998) when Beijing decided against devaluing the Chinese dollar (RMB or yuan), winning gratitude throughout East and Southeast Asia. Moreover, as distinct from Washington, Beijing became proactive by contributing stabilization funds to Thailand and Indonesia via the IMF.¹⁶ Thereafter, in November 2000 in Singapore, then premier Zhu Rongji proposed an ASEAN Free Trade Zone, an initiative finally agreed to in Phnom Penh in late 2002.¹⁷ During his October 2003 trip to Southeast Asia, Premier Wen Jiabao emphasized Beijing’s willingness to drop its barriers on some Southeast Asian agricultural exports (e.g., Thailand and China signed an agreement to end tariffs on 188 kinds of fruits and vegetables in June 2003¹⁸) ahead of schedule—the “early harvest” initiative.

Not only is Beijing seizing the opportunities afforded by economic integration to its south, it also is pursuing similar policies in Northeast Asia. At the Bali Meeting in October 2003, Premier Wen Jiabao proposed the establishment of a “Tripartite Committee” of China, South Korea, and Japan to study a Free Trade Area among the three and cooperation between that group and ASEAN.¹⁹ A recent survey in the three countries indicated that the concept had wide appeal among enterprises in each society.²⁰

By way of contrast, as Beijing is pushing free-trade areas around its periphery, in 2003–early 2004 Washington had a two-pronged trade policy. One prong was targeted protectionism against politically sensitive imports during the election season. The other was bilateral free-trade arrangements such as those with Singapore and under negotiation with Australia.

All this means that America’s historic friends in the region have increasing interests with Beijing (and vice versa) in terms of supply and investment relationships. Nowhere has this growing interdependence been more evident than in the Sino–South Korean relationship. Seoul has become a major investor in China (US\$6.8 billion in 2002, making the ROK the fourth largest FDI supplier to China after Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the United States)²¹ and, as noted above, the PRC has become the number one export market for Seoul. In 2002, Seoul’s trade with the mainland accounted for 13.1 percent of the ROK’s total global trade.²²

Consequently, South Korea is developing interests with the PRC and sometimes joins Beijing in resisting US policy preferences—most notably the use of force on the peninsula. At the same time that one recognizes the increasing

attraction of China for South Koreans, however, one also must acknowledge the mutual anxieties lying near the surface. Chinese investment now is going into the ROK (South Koreans had seen China as a market, not an investor that would gain domestic clout) and there are unresolved territorial issues that Koreans and Chinese alike remember.²³

Ironically, the United States for more than fifty years advanced the proposition that free trade and interdependence would contribute to a more stable framework in the region and Beijing's integration into that structure would constrain the PRC. This has been true to a remarkable extent. At the same time, however, this development also constrains Washington by weakening the perceived dependence that many Asian societies have on America and by limiting the degree to which Washington can exert economic pressure on Beijing without damaging the interests of friends and allies. Moreover, China's economic integration into the region has produced attitudinal shifts. Every year since 1996, public opinion surveys in South Korea have shown a popular preference for China over the United States.²⁴ William Watts reported in 2002 that 86 percent of South Koreans expected closer relations with China in the future.²⁵ Adding this dynamic to the other tensions in US-ROK relations, it is hard to predict that the troubled alliance will soon become less so. Moreover, were Washington to employ its military assets based in Korea beyond the peninsula for purposes with which China and/or the South Korean populace disagreed, this would further strain the alliance.

Currently, with Japanese forces cooperating in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US-Japan alliance appears stronger than it has been in a long time. Nonetheless, there are corrosive forces at work, not the least Japanese desires to see the United States operate more multilaterally and use more diplomacy. Moreover, there is disquiet with the notion of "coalitions of the willing," marriages of convenience arranged by Washington that degrade alliances and international institutions.

On the other hand, there are centrifugal forces in Sino-Japanese relations that strengthen the US-Japan alliance. Among those are Japan's efforts to become a more "normal" country in defense terms (worrying Beijing) and Tokyo's wariness of growing Chinese power. Consequently, it is an open question whether or not the rise of China's power will constitute a glue for the US-Japan security pact or, on the contrary, China's growing economy will prove to be an aphrodisiac for Japan, gradually ripping asunder the alliance.

For its part, Beijing apparently expects the US-Japan alliance gradually to weaken as Tokyo seeks accommodation with China. As Yang Bojiang at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations put it:

Strategically, it [Japan] undoubtedly balances the bulwark of [its] US ally against Chinese influence. But its [Japan's] high degree of economic internationalization, past decade of depression, the extensive security demand[s] in the Asia-Pacific region, and the emergence of China—all this stimulates it to expand cooperation with China and other nations

so as to keep diplomatic equilibrium. Tokyo cannot possibly turn to the single banyan tree of America for its security strategy. For all its mental complexities before and varied reactions to the emergence of China, Tokyo still needs cooperation with Beijing in security strategy and even more so in political and economic fields.²⁶

The North Korean Nuclear Programs and Their Implications

Since Pyongyang's apparent²⁷ October 2002 declaration that it had a covert uranium enrichment program in violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework and other sovereign undertakings, its subsequent withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the North's other assorted declarations since, US-China cooperation to denuclearize the Korean peninsula has been growing. This cooperation has far exceeded the expectations of most Americans who assessed the prospects for such joint efforts in late 2002. The effect of this cooperation has been to considerably improve US-China bilateral relations. As Secretary of State Colin Powell said at the Bush Library in Texas on November 5, 2003, "This is just illustrative of the kind of leadership role that China is playing regionally and on the world stage in cooperation with us, not in competition with us."²⁸ Using both carrots (aid and the prospect of non-isolation) and sticks (oil interruptions and threats that China would not come to the North's aid if a war were to break out) in its dealings with Pyongyang, Beijing has pushed Kim Jong-il to diplomatic tables, though with few results thus far. In late 2003, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in Pyongyang, winning its agreement to come to a second round of Six-Party Talks early in 2004.²⁹

By pursuing a strategy in which negotiations are front and center, and in which regime change in North Korea figures not at all, Beijing has been much closer to the policy preferences of Seoul (and probably Japan) than have the more vocal and muscular among US policymakers. Beijing has increased credibility in Washington (by pushing Pyongyang to the negotiating table in a multilateral context) and in Seoul (and to a lesser extent Tokyo) by pursuing a policy of negotiation instead of regime change and military threat. As in the economic area, there is symmetry of interest between Beijing and Seoul that may contribute to a weakening of the traditional US-ROK relationship.

In the happy event that an agreement in principle with Pyongyang can be reached concerning the verifiable elimination of its nuclear programs, this still would leave a divisive issue on the table, in terms of not only US-China relations but also US-ROK ties. This issue is verification. It is likely that Washington's standards for "adequate" verification will be more rigorous than Beijing's or Seoul's.

If one turns from the relatively happy possibility of "successful" negotiations over the North Korean nuclear programs to negotiations "failing," then continued close Sino-American cooperation ought not be assumed. Beijing consistently has said that it does "not wish to see" a nuclearized North Korea

and that its objectives are *both* a stable North Korea and a non-nuclear North Korea. This formulation has left unclear which of these two objectives Beijing would choose, if forced to do so. My hunch is that Beijing would choose stability: China fears a US application of coercive power against the North and precipitous regime collapse there more than it dreads a nuclear Pyongyang. Seoul joins Beijing in this preference, however unpalatable.

While it is unclear how Washington actually could conduct a military option against North Korea with the two contiguous land powers opposed (one of which is a US ally that would pay a steep price), the results of a split between Washington on the one hand and Beijing and Seoul on the other could rupture the US-ROK alliance. Even if Washington did not employ military force against the North, it probably would search for muscular ways to “quarantine” North Korea; Beijing and Seoul likely would resist this course too. This would further strengthen Seoul’s ties with Beijing at Washington’s expense.

Further, we need to consider the possibility that Washington simply accepts North Korea (either explicitly or implicitly) as a nuclear power, declared or otherwise. Were this to happen, Seoul might increasingly turn to Beijing as a more useful partner in constraining Pyongyang than Washington. For its part, Japan might rethink the wisdom of relying exclusively on the US nuclear umbrella. Tokyo might consider it prudent to move to the threshold of nuclear capability or something approaching Israel’s current status, both of which would spur further vertical and horizontal proliferation in the region. And finally, the United States must ask itself: If US troops leave South Korea for whatever reason, how long will the Japanese people be willing to provide the last large, permanent outpost for those US troops that remain in the region, particularly if to do so makes Japan a possible target for North Korea?

Whether negotiations with North Korea succeed or not, Beijing is thinking about whether or not the “Six-Party” framework (North and South Korea, China, Russia, Japan, and the United States) might constitute a promising future multilateral security structure for Northeast Asia. Such a structure could be seen as either a supplement to or a substitute for the hub-and-spokes alliance system in the region today.

Concisely, as the United States is distracted, as its policy preferences on the Korean peninsula differ somewhat from those of North Korea’s neighbors, and as the common interests between the PRC and its neighbors grow, it is not axiomatic that the United States’ bilateral alliances with the ROK and Japan will remain unchanged.

The War on Terror, the War in Iraq, and Counterproliferation Policy

With respect to the war on terror, Sino-American cooperation has been multidimensional and positive:

- The PRC was extremely helpful in the initial stages of the war in Afghanistan by encouraging Pakistani president Musharraf to cooperate with Washington, by sealing off its own borders to Al Qaeda and Taliban forces, and by supporting (or abstaining on) key UN resolutions since 9/11.³⁰
- While Beijing has been anxious about the growing American military footprint in Central Asia, it has created no obstacles to US military operations there.
- With respect to the Iraq war, Beijing voted for the key UN resolution (1441 of November 2002) and did not join Russia, France, and Germany in actively opposing the US invasion. Beijing acquiesced because its interests in Iraq were not great, it hoped to benefit from post-US victory contracts, and it placed priority on maintaining good relations with Washington.
- Beijing has cooperated in the Bush administration's Container Security Initiative (CSI), an effort to inspect containers before they depart the world's top twenty ports that ship to America. These ports account for about two-thirds of US cargo imports, and China controls big facilities on the list—Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Shenzhen (Shekou). These three ports alone account for approximately two-thirds of the PRC's total port trade.³¹
- And, Beijing has continued to improve its nonproliferation export-control regime by issuing regulations in the latter half of 2002. Though Washington has felt obliged to sanction Beijing since those regulations were promulgated, former assistant secretary of state for nonproliferation Robert Einhorn describes the overall situation as follows:

But by the early fall of 2002, the Chinese had promulgated the comprehensive, missile-related export controls called for in the November 2000 agreement and upgraded controls in the chemical and biological field. Since then, they have made serious efforts to inform Chinese firms of the new regulations and required firms wishing the right to export controlled commodities to register with Chinese authorities. They have also investigated a number of questionable transactions by Chinese entities when the US has tipped them off with intelligence information, stopped a shipment to North Korea of chemicals associated with nuclear reprocessing, and taken disciplinary action against the Chinese entity that the US had earlier sanctioned for missile assistance to Pakistan.

Notwithstanding these undeniably serious attempts to get a handle on the chronic problem of China's sensitive exports, performance remains uneven.³²

All in all, China's role in the war on terror has had several effects. To start, China is being regarded as a responsible member of the international community, and therefore the anxiety level about Beijing in the region (and in Washington) has dropped. For its part, China enjoys its newfound status, with

President Hu Jintao announcing at a state dinner in Paris in January 2004 that France and China bear “a great responsibility in world affairs.”³³ Second, the global counterterrorism effort has left Washington principally talking about counterterrorism in a region that also wants to talk about other forms of US engagement—Washington seems to many in East and Southeast Asia to be a “Johnny one-note.” By way of contrast, Beijing has been talking about multilateral cooperation, free-trade areas, and making confidence-building moves. The contrast between a preoccupied America and a dynamic PRC in the region is symbolized by the warmer reception that Chinese president Hu Jintao received from the Australian Parliament than the same body accorded President Bush in the fall of 2003. Third, Beijing’s cooperation in the war on terror has helped restore discipline to Washington’s demands of Beijing, meaning that while economic and human rights frictions are not ignored, they are not pursued to the detriment of security cooperation. And finally, China’s cooperation in the war on terror has contributed to Washington’s willingness to resist entreaties from Taiwan to pursue a course that Washington feels could undermine Beijing’s cooperation.

Taiwan—An Unanticipated Area of Beijing-Washington Cooperation?

The latter point provides a segue into an unanticipated (limited, and probably temporary) area of US-China security cooperation—the Taiwan issue. When President George W. Bush assumed office in January 2001, one of his first impulses was to more explicitly deter the PRC from using force across the Taiwan Strait. When asked in April 2001 whether he felt obligated to defend Taiwan “with the full force of the American military,” the president said that Washington would “do whatever it takes to help Taiwan defend herself.”³⁴ Two other impulses the president shared with many in his political base were to enhance military-to-military ties with (and arms sales to) Taiwan and to treat Taipei with more dignity than had been the practice since normalization with Beijing in 1979. This latter impulse was reflected in ways large and small, not the least by enabling Taiwan president Chen Shui-bian to transit the United States for longer periods in more visible venues, the last being a relatively high-profile visit to New York City in fall 2003. However, these initiatives combined with domestic politics in Taiwan to create an increasingly volatile mix.

In March 2004, Taiwan’s presidential election will occur. The incumbent president, Chen Shui-bian, in late 2003 and early 2004 sought reelection against a coalition of the Kuomintang or Nationalist Party (with its presidential candidate being Lien Chan) and the People’s First Party (with the vice-presidential candidate being James Soong). This coalition was popularly known as “Pan Blue.” In the prior presidential election (2000) Chen had won with a plurality of the votes (about 39 percent) because the Kuomintang (KMT) had split its own vote between Lien and Soong (the PFP did not exist then). In the March 2004 election, therefore, Chen’s problem was how to get 50 percent of the vote

with a united opposition. Moreover, he had to do so when the economy had not done well during much of his tenure (though it picked up somewhat in the second half of 2003³⁵), his initial reform agenda had not made much progress (against an admittedly recalcitrant legislature dominated by the KMT), and cross-Strait relations were tenser than when he assumed office.

Chen apparently concluded that his principal opportunity for victory depended on polarizing the electorate over cross-Strait issues and standing for reform of a political system widely perceived as dysfunctional. By creating wedge issues Chen hoped to mobilize young voters and his political base to get to the polls. He tarred the opposition as pro-Beijing—hence his campaign slogan of “Believe in Taiwan and Insist on Reform.”

In pursuit of this strategy, in the last third of 2003 and into 2004 Chen advanced an ever-changing array of proposals, including setting a timetable for constitutional change and a national referendum. Like a cascade, the first proposal for a referendum focused on constitutional change, the second on PRC missiles aimed at the island, and the third on whether or not the island should join the US ABM system and resume cross-Strait dialogue with the mainland. Each proposal in this sequence was designed to energize Chen’s political base for the March 2004 election. Beijing became progressively more apprehensive about abandonment of the ROC’s “One China” constitution, but was hamstrung by its knowledge that if it openly threatened Taiwan (as it had prior to two previous elections) it probably would help reelect Chen, thereby producing precisely the result China wished to avoid. Consequently, Beijing sought Washington’s help in restraining Chen.

These calls did not fall on deaf ears because President Bush was coming to feel that his earlier solicitude of Taiwan, and his several earlier requests that Chen restrain himself in the interests of maintaining stability in the area,³⁶ were being ignored. Moreover, Washington did not need, and would find it difficult to cope with, a security crisis in the Taiwan Strait given American deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, military sources in the PRC were cranking up incendiary rhetoric about the price the PRC might have to pay to prevent Taiwan independence.³⁷ In a November 21, 2003, interview with the *Washington Post* Premier Wen Jiabao had said, “The Chinese people will pay any price to safeguard the unity of the motherland.”³⁸

President Chen Shui-bian was overplaying his hand with a US administration that had assumed office well-disposed toward him. This all came to a head in the December 9, 2003, visit of Chinese premier Wen Jiabao to the White House, when the president said: “The comments and actions made by the leader of Taiwan indicate that he may be willing to make decisions unilaterally to change the status quo, which we oppose.”³⁹ In a CNN interview two days later, President Chen rejoined that he would continue to pursue the referendum he had proposed on December 5, 2003,⁴⁰ urging the PRC to withdraw missiles aimed at the island and to renounce the use of force against the island. This rebuff was unwelcome at the White House, but the administration was reluctant to apply

much additional public pressure, though Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Randall Schriver made a statement on December 17, 2003, indicating that the administration would differentiate among possibly different types of referenda. There were those clearly of a domestic character, those that bore on sovereignty, and those that were in a gray (symbolic) area. Washington would not express a view on the first type, would oppose the second, and would approach instances in the third category on a “case-by-case basis.”⁴¹ This formulation inadvertently encouraged Chen to plumb the limits of the third category. In the short run, however, President Bush’s December 9 remarks seem to have reassured Beijing that Washington and it shared an interest in keeping stability in the Taiwan Strait. Chen has continued to push near the limits of Washington’s tolerance. And Beijing keeps pushing the administration to get firmer with Taipei in ways Chen’s electorate will discern.

For Washington’s friends throughout Asia, this US-China cooperation was welcome. These nations all desire to avoid being forced to take sides in a conflict between America and China over Taiwan—in the last extremity, most probably would seek to remain uninvolved. Early in the Bush administration, the discomfort of US friends and allies with Washington’s Taiwan tilt was evident. When Deputy Secretary of State Richard L. Armitage went to Australia in early 2002 and suggested that Washington expected Canberra to be at its side in a Taiwan contingency, former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser said: “[The Australia–New Zealand–United States Defense Treaty] designed to achieve Australian security is now being distorted potentially to embroil us in a conflict of America’s choosing with another superpower [China].”⁴² In June of the preceding year, Singapore’s visiting prime minister Goh Chok Tong told a Washington audience, “It makes no sense to mortgage East Asia’s future by causing the Chinese people to conclude that its neighbors and the US want to keep them down.”⁴³

In the wake of Chen Shui-bian’s moves, the administration has welcomed friends and allies warning Taipei away from a dangerous course. In late December 2003, former Japanese prime minister Mori arrived in Taipei reportedly “carrying a message from Prime Minister Koizumi” informing President Chen Shui-bian “that Japan does not want to see Taiwan hold referenda and hopes cross-Strait stability will be maintained.”⁴⁴ And, during his January 2004 visit to Paris, French president Jacques Chirac greeted Chinese president Hu Jintao with a state dinner and the statement that “Breaking the status quo with a unilateral destabilizing initiative, whatever it is, including a referendum, would favor division over unity. It would be a grave error. It would carry a heavy responsibility.”⁴⁵

In short, President Chen’s policies, and US preoccupations elsewhere, have combined to get the United States and its friends and allies back on the same page of Taiwan policy and have fostered US-China cooperation, at least for the moment.

Implications

What does all this mean for US policy, future US-China security cooperation, and prospects for America's alliances with the Republic of Korea and Japan?

- A concatenation of events (the war on terror, counterproliferation efforts, and the North Korean nuclear problem) has recreated a security rationale for US-China relations, a foundation that disintegrated in the 1989–1991 period with the fall of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union and the Tiananmen violence. This more stable basis for US-China relations is welcome by our friends and allies in the region, almost without exception, though Japan and others get nervous if Washington embraces Beijing with excessive ardor. This security rationale, when combined with growing economic and cultural ties between the United States and China, has created a relationship that is stronger than often perceived. If the Taiwan issue can be managed effectively, this situation is likely to endure for a considerable period.
- If the Taiwan issue is managed ineffectively and degenerates into conflict, this would be a solvent to the US alliance with South Korea and might well weaken the alliances with Japan and Australia as well. Beyond cross-Strait stability, therefore, a lot is at stake for the United States in Chen Shui-bian's behavior. The Bush administration and the current US Congress, along with their successors, will face hard decisions about how far to go in backstopping Taiwan's domestic politics. The Bush administration has welcomed the cautions that allies (Japan and France) have expressed to Taipei and more such statements from capitals influential in Taipei should be sought.
- The combination of growing Chinese economic and diplomatic attraction and gradually mounting Chinese power provides America's allies increasing incentive to cooperate with the PRC. In the case of Seoul (when combined with the frictions in US-ROK relations), all this has created a process in which the alliance is weakening. The US-Japan alliance is stronger, given the history of Japan's relations with China, Japanese disquiet with the PRC's growing strength, and Beijing's wariness of Tokyo's slowly expanding global security role. Nonetheless, it is wise to remember that Seoul also has partially sublimated anxieties about what PRC economic and military power may mean for it, despite the current "China fever."
- The developments discussed in this paper raise a fundamental question: Is a new (perhaps supplementary) security structure needed for Northeast Asia? Does the Six-Party framework provide a place to start thinking about such a development?
- A failure to achieve a negotiated settlement with Pyongyang over the nuclear issue could push the United States in one of two undesirable directions. The first would be toward a muscular policy that would strain—possibly break—the US-ROK alliance, push Seoul yet closer to Beijing, and damage US-China ties. The second would be the explicit or

implicit acceptance of a nuclear North Korea. This would have ominous long-term consequences for proliferation in the region and beyond and for both US alliances in Northeast Asia. The Bush administration needs to come to some internal agreement on the basis for possibly productive negotiations with Pyongyang. The current policy of near total reliance on China, no positive inducements to the North, and no actions that would stop the North's march down the nuclear road promises a nuclear North Korea, a more influential China, and a proliferating region.

- The United States should diversify its policy repertoire in Asia, moving beyond the war on terror by engaging more with Asia in multilateral economic and security forums and by using its "soft" power as well as its "hard" power. One example would be the problem of visa delays and the obstacle this presents to business and educational exchange. Multilateral trade liberalization would be another avenue, albeit difficult at the moment given electoral and economic considerations in the United States.
- Finally, because Asian economies are becoming progressively more integrated with China's, Washington will find it increasingly difficult to employ economic sanctions against Beijing without simultaneously hurting a broad array of American regional partners, not to mention the United States itself.

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CHINA AND AMERICA'S NORTHEAST ASIAN ALLIANCES: APPROACHES, POLITICS, AND DILEMMAS

Jing Huang

The most significant phenomenon in the Asia-Pacific after the end of the Cold War is China's ascendancy. This is demonstrated not just by China's dynamic economy, which has become essential to continued prosperity in the region, but, more importantly, by China's increasingly active and prominent role in international affairs, especially in Asia. Thus, it is imperative in our inquiry of the future of America's Northeast Asian alliances to understand China's view on the two US-led alliances and its approaches and policies toward them.¹

This paper begins with an examination of China's "new diplomacy," based on the newly adopted "development strategy of peaceful ascendancy" (*heping jueqi fazhan zhanlue*), and its implications for China's approach to international affairs. The analysis then focuses on the changes in Beijing's view of America's role and military presence in Asia—from hostile to realistic, and from negative to conditionally positive. Beijing's accommodative approach toward the United States and its conditionally positive attitude toward the US role in Asia have changed China's negative perception of America's Northeast Asian alliances, resulting in a pragmatic and rational approach toward them. I will argue, however, that although China's current policies toward the two US-led alliances seem to be interest-oriented rather than based on ideology or nationalism, China still faces a serious dilemma with regard to them.

Despite their substantial reservations about the two US-led alliances, especially that between the United States and Japan, Chinese leaders seem to have realized that it does not serve China's best interests to challenge or undermine the status quo of the international system in Northeast Asia.² This is not only because China's rapid development in the past two decades has resulted largely from integrating its economy into the world economic system, which is market-based, but also because a peaceful international environment is necessary for China's political stability as well as its further development. Chinese leaders have recognized that China has in fact had a free ride on the existing system in the Asia-Pacific, a system which has been secured essentially by America's Northeast Asian alliances and prospered upon a market economy in which the United States and its allies have played leading roles. For China, seeking regional dominance would be economically too expensive—perhaps

the essential reason why Beijing refuses to give up the artificial peg of RMB to the US dollar despite the substantial power and credibility RMB has earned in the Asian market since 1997. Moreover, it could also set China on a collision course with America's Northeast Asian alliances.

China's "New Diplomacy" and Its Implications for China's Foreign Policy

The most noteworthy change in China's foreign policy in the post-Deng period has been the adoption of a "new diplomacy," with two "guiding principles" (*zhidao fangzhen*):

1. "Actively engaging in international affairs," especially in the Asia-Pacific, with a general approach of "seeking cooperation, putting aside disputes so as to avoid confrontations ... [and] promoting multilateral communication and cooperation."³
2. "Maintaining a stable relationship with the United States" this is "the core issue concerning China's diplomacy."⁴

Although China's leaders claim that they still adhere in foreign affairs to the "principles" laid by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1990s, i.e., "observing sober-mindedly, standing firm, and remaining calm,"⁵ this "new diplomacy" has in fact departed from Deng's teaching that China should "hide [its] capacities and bide [its] time" (*taoguang yangwei*) in world politics and focus on economic growth and political stability at home, given the difficult situation caused by the May 1989 crisis and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Instead of following Deng's tactics, which were virtually an extension of Mao's guerrilla strategy—to build up one's capacity while waiting patiently for the enemy to be worn out—the post-Deng leadership has actively engaged in international affairs since the late 1990s, especially in Asia, with "constructive, multilateral, and cooperative approaches." Meanwhile, Beijing has approached the United States with various initiatives after the September 11 terrorist attack in an effort to "seek cooperation" or even a "strategic partnership." All this, according to the Beijing media, is part of a newly adopted "development strategy of peaceful ascendancy," a strategy which is aimed at integrating China positively into the existing world system despite differences in political systems, levels of economic development, and cultural traditions; and at "seeking multilateral and constructive cooperation," instead of confrontation, with the world powers in solving differences and conflicts during China's "ascendancy."⁶

Beijing's new approach to international affairs resulted in large part from several simultaneous "research projects" in 1998–2001. These projects were to "reassess China's international environment" and the role a rising China can, and should, play in international affairs.⁷ Although there are differences

among Chinese leaders, a common assessment has been reached of the world situation and China's approaches in world politics in terms of its "peaceful ascendancy":⁸

1. China should recognize and accept the reality that the United States has played, and will continue to play in the foreseeable future, a predominant role in both international politics and the world economy. Thus, *maintaining "a stable relationship and avoiding confrontations with the United States" must be the linchpin in China's foreign affairs.*
2. Although China is still a developing country, the outside world sees China as a rising power that could become a threat to the status quo. Thus, *China must strive to cast an image of a responsible power that abides by the accepted norms and principles in international affairs.*
3. The mainstream in world politics is for peace and prosperity; and the current international system is an essential guarantee for such a status quo. It is more effective to promote China's interests from within this system rather than challenging it from the outside. Thus, *China must integrate itself into this system, and be opposed to any attempts to undermine it.*
4. The United States has enormous and increasing interests in the Asia-Pacific. Thus, *"a good and interdependent relationship" with the Asian countries will not only help China's security and development, but also provide China with effective leverage in dealing with the United States.*
5. Despite America's predominance, other major powers have important roles and substantial influence in international politics. Thus, *China must actively engage with the major powers with cooperative approaches in order to develop a "stable framework of big power relations"* (wending de daguo guanxi kuangjia).
6. To sustain economic growth and maintain political stability at home, China needs not only a peaceful international environment but also a healthy world economy, especially in the Asia-Pacific. Thus, *China's long-term development strategy must be constructive for promoting regional prosperity.*

Obviously there is a certain amount of wishful thinking in the above assessments and policy designs; and serious questions can be asked about this "peaceful ascendancy strategy."⁹ Yet it is well observed that China's international behavior has changed substantially since 1999: while actively engaging in international affairs, China has become more patient and cooperative in interstate affairs. A subtle but significant change is that Beijing quietly replaced "anti-hegemonism" with "anti-unilateralism" in its diplomatic language after it actively involved itself in the North Korean nuclear crisis. This shows that China has accepted America's predominance in international politics. But it is opposed to US unilateralism, not only because Chinese leaders see the multilateral and cooperative approaches as a more effective way to steer America's predominance

into directions not adverse to China's vital interests, but also because they have realized that only by strengthening and operating through international regimes and institutions can China better protect itself and avoid confrontations with the superpower, given the inevitable conflicts of interests between the two countries during China's ascendancy. Not surprisingly, Beijing argues forcefully that US unilateralism not only undermines the existing international system in which the United States is the leader, but it can also damage America's own vital interests.¹⁰

Changes in China's View of America's Role and Military Presence in Asia

But it is in the Asia-Pacific that we have seen the most significant changes in China's diplomacy. In addition to increasingly active and accommodative engagements in South, Southeast, and Central Asia,¹¹ China has adopted pragmatic and rational approaches toward the United States and its Northeast Asian allies. The first and foremost change, which is subtle but significant, is in Beijing's view of America's role and military presence in Asia.

Chinese leaders used to be very suspicious of, and to some extent hostile toward, the US role in Asia. They were convinced that after the May 1989 crisis, and especially after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the ultimate US policy goal in East Asia was to contain China in order to keep it under US influence. This view was best expressed by Deng in his talk with a Japanese delegation on December 1, 1989:

The Western world, especially the United States, incites turmoil in many countries. They are in fact carrying on power politics and hegemonism in order to control these countries. They attempt to pull these countries into their sphere of influence. Seeing this point clearly helps [us] to realize the essence of the matter.¹²

Thus, up to 1998 China's foreign policy in Asia was largely centered on its efforts to counterbalance mighty America and to "break the blockade by the Western world led by the United States."¹³ Major measures Beijing adopted included:¹⁴

1. Improving its relationship with Moscow in an effort to form a "Sino-Russia strategic partnership."
2. Initiating "confidence-building measures" with Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan to reduce military forces in border areas and promote military exchanges. (Based on these confidence-building measures the five countries established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on June 15, 2001.)
3. Joining the ASEAN countries in promoting "the ASEAN way" of security concept and practice; i.e., maintaining regional peace and stability through

multilevel communications, coordination, and cooperation among the Asia-Pacific countries.

4. Improving its bilateral relations with Japan and South Korea (especially the latter) in an effort to dilute the perceived threat from the US-led alliances.

5. Reinforcing the “good neighborhood policy” with a conciliatory and even accommodative approach in settling territory disputes.

Although China has achieved some success with these measures according to its “new security concept,”¹⁵ the reality that America’s Northeast Asian alliances are crucial to peace and stability in Asia remains unchanged. Nor has the US role diminished in the regional security system. Instead, the US role in Asia has become more prominent since the late 1990s because of the lingering economic recession in Japan, continual tension across the Taiwan Strait, nuclear competition in South Asia, Pyongyang’s nuclear weapon program, and above all, the effort to combat terrorism. Thus, the Chinese leadership had to reconsider China’s approaches to the United States and its military presence in Asia.

Evidently, Beijing’s view on the US role in Asia has changed, although its diplomacy along the lines of the “new security concept” continues, especially in Southeast Asia. Chinese leaders have recognized that the United States has vital *and* legitimate interests in Asia. Moreover, they have realized from their own perspective that US interests in Asia do not have to collide with those of China—it is vital for both countries to maintain peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific. Since Zhu Rongji’s visit to America in 1999, all the Chinese leaders have repeated virtually the same thesis in their meetings with the Americans: that the United States and China share “important strategic interests” in the Asia-Pacific and the two countries should therefore “put aside their differences but seek cooperation.” Even the bombardment of the Chinese embassy in 1999 and the EP3 incident in 2001 did not alter China’s conciliatory approach toward the United States, despite strong opposition from the hard-liners.¹⁶ The September 11 attack just provided the Chinese leaders with “an opportunity” to present their case to the Americans.¹⁷

Consequently, China’s attitude toward the US military presence in Asia has also changed from negative to at least realistic, if not downright positive. Contrary to the conventional wisdom that China would be opposed to any US military presence in Central and South Asia, Beijing has in fact been cooperative with, if not supportive of, US military operations in these areas during the war on terrorism. Even the PLA generals, who were known for their hostile stance toward the US military presence in Asia, have acknowledged that the US military has a right to stay in Asia because of vital American interests in the region. Today the PLA even views the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific positively for the sake of military-to-military exchanges.¹⁸

It is noteworthy that in his speech at the Conference on Security Cooperation in East Asia on December 12, 2003, Wang Yi, a vice minister of foreign affairs

in charge of policy planning and Asian affairs, admitted *for the first time* that “the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific is caused by a historical process.” Thus, China “is willing to see the United States ... playing a positive and constructive role for peace and stability in the region.”¹⁹ This is a significant change indeed, for until 1999 “withdrawal of all foreign troops in Asia” had been a “principle” in China’s foreign policy. More importantly, this change has set the backdrop for the changes in China’s approach toward America’s Northeast Asian alliances.

Changes and Dilemmas in China’s Approach toward the US-Led Alliances

Up to 1998 Beijing’s view of America’s Northeast Asian alliance stemmed largely from the classical explanation of military alliances. That is, alliance building is not necessarily based on identical domestic attributes among the alliance members, but it is motivated by an external threat coming from a common adversary.²⁰ Thus, a military alliance has a clearly defined goal, to contain or defeat the common adversary. To the Chinese leaders in the Deng period, the continuous existence of America’s Northeast Asian alliances, which were established during the Cold War to contain communism, was “not desirable now or in the future.”²¹ They believed the two US-led alliances were essentially US instruments to contain China, which remained communist (at least in its political system) after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Chinese leaders were very skeptical about the US-Japan security alliance, especially after it was revised in 1997 with a redefined (or not clearly defined) scope, target, capacity, and roles for its members. They believed that the ultimate mission of the alliances was to contain China by stealth. Thus, Beijing saw the US-led alliances in Asia as “a serious, long-term challenge, if not a threat, to China’s national security, national unification, and modernization.”²² Not surprisingly, while the Chinese media was vocal in criticizing the alliances, especially the US-Japan alliance, the PRC government warned repeatedly that America’s Northeast Asian alliances had to be “strictly bilateral” and not “intervene in internal affairs of the other countries.” Otherwise, they would “cause instability to the neighboring countries and create complicating elements for regional security.”²³

As China’s view has changed, so has its approach toward the US-led alliances. It is evident that Beijing has adopted a pragmatic strategy that aims at improving bilateral relations with the members of the two alliances and solving problems through interstate talks instead of dealing with the alliances. The best example in this regard is the changes in China’s approach to Japan on the Taiwan issue and the expansion of the Japanese Self-Defense Force (SDF), the two major concerns for China with regard to the US-Japan alliance.²⁴ Although from Beijing’s perspective the two issues have roots in the revised US-Japan security treaty,²⁵ China has quietly stopped criticizing the US-Japan alliance on these “two most troubling issues in Sino-Japan relations” after the September 11

attack. Instead, Beijing now expresses its concern and anxiety over the two issues directly to Tokyo and handles them in a bilateral framework. In other words, China is trying to manage these issues by putting pressure on Japan rather than on the US-Japan alliance, where the problems originated.²⁶ Accordingly, the vocal attacks on the US-Japan security alliance in the Chinese media have also quieted down. The occasional criticisms that appear now usually focus on Japan's increasing role in the alliance and the expansion of the Japanese SDF, rather than the alliance itself.

But it is Japan's military development that worries China the most. Ironically it is on this issue that Beijing can appreciate the US-Japan alliance to the extent that it effectively contains Japan's militarism and constrains Japan's role in international affairs. This, from China's perspective, is essential for the regional peace and security necessary for China's development.²⁷ Beijing feels uneasy about the expansion of the Japanese SDF, both in quantity and quality, not necessarily because of the expansion per se but because such expansion can be justified in the system for cooperative security provided by America Northeast Asian alliances.²⁸

China has adopted a similar approach to the US-ROK alliance: improving bilateral relations in order to dilute the perceived threat from the military alliance. China's approach to South Korea has been more successful and fruitful than that to Japan, partly because of the shared resentment against Japan but largely because of the increasing common interests and policy priorities between the two countries in both economic development and security concerns, especially on the recent North Korea nuclear issue. The summit meeting between Hu Jintao and Roh Moo-hyun on July 7, 2003, "has brought the Sino-ROK relationship to a new height." The two sides "agreed that they would lift bilateral [Sino-ROK] relations up to a partnership of comprehensive cooperation [that will] cover political, economic, educational, cultural, scientific and technological, and all other fields."²⁹ In this new Sino-ROK courtship, however, neither side has mentioned, let alone discussed, the US-ROK alliance; nor has either side addressed the US military presence in South Korea. An intriguing fact is that China has quietly dropped its support of North Korea's demand that "all foreign forces must withdraw from Korea." This seems to suggest that China can appreciate the US military presence in South Korea to the extent that it helps to sustain peace and stability on the peninsula and, ironically, keeps Pyongyang dependent on Beijing. Yet Chinese leaders are understandably reluctant to confirm, or even to imply, this newly adopted view of the US military presence in Korea. Not only is this view inconsistent with China's insistence that the Korean problem must be solved peacefully, but it is also against China's well-advocated policy of noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries. Thus it is revealing indeed that after September 11 the US military presence and the US-ROK alliance have become virtually invisible in the official PRC documents on Sino-ROK relations and on China's policy toward South Korea.³⁰

As a matter of fact, America's Northeast Asian alliances have rarely been mentioned, let alone discussed, in the official PRC documents of the past few years. Nowadays it is well-known among Beijing insiders that America's Northeast alliances are among the most "bothering topics" for PRC spokespeople.³¹ In his speech on improving "collective security in East Asia" at the Conference on Security Cooperation in East Asia on December 12, 2003, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi did not once mention America's Northeast Asian alliances.

China's ambiguous and even contradictory views on the alliances and the US military presence in Asia reflect Beijing's dilemma on these issues. On the one hand, Chinese leaders feel uneasy about America's Northeast Asian alliances, not necessarily because they were established during the Cold War in part to contain China, but because they are in fact double-edged swords: they can secure regional peace and stability, which is necessary for China's further development, but they can also contain China if the allies feel threatened by China's ascendancy. Chinese leaders are especially unsure about the US-Japan alliance. It is true that the alliance has effectively deterred Japanese militarism and constrained Japan's international role. But it can also justify and sponsor an increasing Japanese role in international affairs and a dramatic military build-up in Japan if necessary.

On the other hand, the post-Deng leadership has realized that America's Northeast Asian alliances are fundamental to American interests in the Asia-Pacific, and that China also shares these interests to a large degree. In order to "maintain a stable relationship with the United States," China has to respect and accept this status quo. Moreover, the alliances are essential to the regional peace and security necessary for China's political stability as well as its economic development. China is neither willing nor capable of challenging this system, on which it has had a free ride since 1979.

This dilemma in China's approach toward America's Northeast Asian alliances has considerable implications for China's policies toward them.³² It is evident that the Chinese leadership has made remarkable efforts to improve or at least stabilize bilateral relations with Japan and South Korea. Beijing has taken a generally conciliatory approach toward Japan despite its anger and frustration over Japan's refusal to formally apologize for war crimes against China during World War II and the repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese leaders, including Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.³³ Beijing has also made a substantial effort in recent years to calm growing anti-Japan nationalism. It is noteworthy that since 1999 the major newspapers in China have stopped routinely printing Japan-bashing editorials and commentaries on anniversaries such as July 7 (Japanese troops attacked the Lugou Bridge), September 18 (Japanese troops attacked Shengyang City), August 15 (Japanese surrender), and December 15 (the rape of Nanjing). The conciliatory message could not be clearer given the tight control of the media by the PRC government. China

has also taken an accommodative approach to South Korea, although people in Beijing were convinced that Seoul “double-crossed China” on the refugee issue.³⁴ China has in fact gone the extra mile to promote economic exchanges between the two countries, despite over \$82.4 billion US dollars of deficit on the China side since the 1997 Asia crisis.³⁵

Yet Beijing has been careful not to let its policies toward the two American allies be seen as an effort to undermine the US-led alliances, not only because this would damage the effort to “maintain stable relations with the US,” but also because Chinese leaders are afraid that a conflict within the alliances could have consequences damaging to peace and stability in Asia. Thus, Beijing has made sure that its policy portfolios with Japan and South Korea not involve their alliances with the United States. For example, Beijing has engaged in bilateral talks with both Tokyo and Seoul on the North Korean nuclear issue. The Chinese participants had “clear instructions” that their exchanges with their Japanese or Korean counterparts had to be strictly bilateral, and that they should not involve themselves in any discussions about the US-led alliances.³⁶ In fact, China has made a painstaking effort to keep itself out of the dispute between Washington and Seoul over the North Korean nuclear crisis,³⁷ although Beijing does share Seoul’s position that the crisis must be solved peacefully and that the key to the solution is to provide Pyongyang with assurances of security and economic development.

Concluding Remarks

China’s approach toward America’s Northeast Asian alliances is based on its long-term goals of sustaining economic development and maintaining political stability at home. To accomplish this goal, which is an enormous challenge in itself, China needs a peaceful international environment. But only recently have the Chinese leaders realized that China’s rise could itself become a formidable threat to the existing international system, not necessarily because history has taught us that a rising power usually means instability, but because a rapidly developing China has brought, and will bring, conflicts and competition over resources, markets, and eventually the value system. Moreover, China’s previous efforts to counterbalance “hegemonism” and to break the perceived “containment” by the US-led alliances not only caused further anxiety and suspicion from the outside world, but also helped to reinforce the perception that China is a challenger of the status quo.

Thus, we have witnessed substantial, if not dramatic, changes in China’s foreign policy and international behavior in recent years. Not only has China accepted America’s predominance through “seeking constructive cooperation” with the United States in international affairs, but it has made remarkable efforts to integrate itself further in the existing world system through multilateral and cooperative approaches. Consequently, it appears that China has also accepted America’s Northeast Asian alliances as part of the status quo in the Asia-Pacific.

Toward the US-led Asian alliances China's views are no longer based on ideology or nationalism, but rather reality and objectivism; its approaches focus on bilateral relations, with the rationale that a solid bilateral relationship with the members of the two alliances, including the US, will diminish or even dissolve their potential threat to China's security; and its policies are more pragmatic and interest-oriented.

It is beyond China's capacity to change the reality that America's Northeast Asian alliances have been fundamental to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific. Moreover, as long as Beijing is convinced that America's alliances are not aimed at containing China, any conflicts between the United States and its Northeast Asian allies do not serve China's best interests, for such conflicts weaken the regional peace and stability necessary for China's development. All this has formed the source of China's dilemma in its approach to America Northeast Asian alliances. On one hand, the US-led alliances are the core of the security system in Asia, a system that has an enormous impact on China security environment. On the other hand, China is neither included in nor does it have any substantial influence over this system. Moreover, any effort by China to change or influence the system could backfire against its own interests. At present it seems that Beijing has not found a way to solve this dilemma, only to manage it with ambiguity—avoiding America's Northeast Asian alliances altogether in international affairs but setting out to improve its bilateral relationship with the members of the alliances. Ambiguity may provide China with more options, but it means uncertainty.

NOTES

¹ In addition to China's rise, how China rises could have an equal, if not more significant, impact on international politics. This is the question raised by Yoichi Funabashi in his recent article "China's Peaceful Ascendancy," in *YaleGlobal Online*, 19 December 2003. This paper does not address this question.

² This conclusion is consistent with the one Iain Johnston draws in his "Is China a Status Quo Power?" (*International Security* 27, no. 4 [Spring 2003]) that China is a status quo power rather than a challenger to the existing world system.

³ This approach was raised in Jiang Zemin's "Report to the 15th CCP National Congress," *Shiwuda yilai zhongyao wenjian xuanbian* [Collection of the Important Party Documents since the 15th Party Congress], vol. 1, Beijing, People's Press, 2000, pp. 42–43. It was restated as a guiding principle in his "Report to the 16th CCP National Congress," at http://www.cctv.com/news/china/20021117/100187_9.shtml.

⁴ Quoted from Niu Jun, in Song Nianshen, "Zhongguo zhoubian waijiao fenliang zhong" (China's peripheral diplomacy carries a heavy weight), *Global Times*, December 12, 2003, p. 7.

⁵ Deng raised these principles in his talk with "several leading comrades" in the CCP leadership on September 4, 1989. His original words were *lengjing guancha, wenzhu zhenjiao, chenzhuo yingfu*. See *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianpu* [Chronology of Deng Xiaoping's Thought] 1975–1997, composed by the CCP Central Department for Research on Party Documents, 1998, p. 435.

⁶ Zheng Bijian, executive vice president of the CCP Central Party School, made a speech, “The New Road of China’s Peaceful Ascendancy and the Future of Asia” at the Bo’ao Asian Forum, held in October 2003 at Bo’ao, Hainan Province, China. The CCP leaders reached a consensus on this strategy at a “Politburo study session” on November 24, 2003. But it was Wen Jiabao who repeated this thesis of “peaceful ascendancy” during his visit to the United States in December 2003. See Zhang Jianjin, “*Heping jueqi: yige zhongda de chengnuo*” (Peaceful Ascendancy: An Important Promise), *China Economic Times* (published by the Center of Development Studies of the PRC State Council), December 12, 2003, p.1.

⁷ Immediately after the 1997–98 Asian economic crisis, several leading research institutes and think tanks in China, including the Social Science Academy, the CCP Central Party School, and the China Foundation of International and Strategic Studies, organized simultaneous “research projects” on world politics and trends in its future development, China’s development strategy, national security, foreign policy, and China’s position and role in international affairs. The “policy recommendations” produced by these projects have exerted a substantial effect on policymaking, especially after the Hu-Wen leadership took over in March 2003. I authored four policy papers and participated in several workshops for these projects.

⁸ See Tang Jiaxuan, “*Zhongguo kua shiji waijiao de guanghui licheng*” (The glorious achievements of China’s diplomacy in 1989–2002). This is a speech Tang made at a conference on October 17, 2002, convened jointly by five CCP central apparatus and ministries, including the CCP Propaganda Department and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The version at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/ziliao/wzzt/2319/t10827.htm> is watered down for “the propaganda toward the outside [*duiwai xuanchuan*].” But even in this version one can see fundamental changes in China’s foreign policy in the post-Deng period, especially after 1998.

⁹ For example, Yoichi Funabashi in his recent article “China’s ‘Peaceful Ascendancy’” questions China’s willingness and ability to “learn to respect and observe the rule of law on the international stage... [and] to accustom itself to treating others as equals, particularly other Asian countries.” He also seems skeptical about whether Beijing can convince Washington that China’s “peaceful ascendancy” will not present a threat to the United States.

¹⁰ See He Hongze, *Danbian zhuyi de kunjing* (The Plight of Unilateralism), *People’s Daily*, August 4, 2003, at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/guoji/1030/1998190.html>.

¹¹ In my view, China’s diplomatic maneuvers in these areas are more noteworthy in terms of China’s “peaceful ascendancy strategy,” although they are not the focus of this paper.

¹² *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianpu* (Chronology of Deng Xiaoping’s Thought) 1975–1997, p. 445.

¹³ See Tang Jiaxuan, “*Zhongguo kua shiji waijiao de guanghui licheng*” (The Glorious Achievements of China’s Diplomacy in 1989–2002).

¹⁴ See Chu Shulong, “China and the US-Japan and US-Korea Alliances in a Changing Northeast Asia,” project paper of America’s Alliances with Japan and Korea in an Changing Northeast Asia, Asia-Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, June 1999, pp. 8–13.

¹⁵ Beijing began to advocate its “new security concept” in early 1997. It argues that the “traditional concept” that security can only be achieved through military means is wrong because this concept would lead only to arms races in which every country is trying to build up its military for its own security. According to China’s “new concept,” true security must be “common security [*gongtong anquan*] that is based on mutual trust and common interests, and it cannot be achieved except through communication, coordination, and cooperation among the involved countries.” See “[Defense Minister] Chi Haotian’s Speech in Japan,” *The PLA Daily*, February 5, 1997, p. 1; Editorial Commentary, “A

New Security Model of Good Neighborhood,” *People’s Daily*, April 25, 1997, p. 1; Qian Qichen’s speech at the 4th ARF Meeting in Malaysia, *China Daily*, July 28, 1997, p. 1, and Li Qinggong and Wei Wei, “The World Needs a New Security Concept,” *People’s Daily*, December 24, 1998, p. 5. But this “new security concept” has rarely been seen in the Chinese media since September 11.

¹⁶ See Willy Wo-Lap Lam, *Dynamics of Sino-US Relations: The Perspective from Beijing*, *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 103 (December 30, 2001). Lam’s assertion was confirmed by two reliable sources in Beijing in March 2002. According to them, The Center had issued instructions [during both crises] that the [handling of] the event must not interfere with the general direction of maintaining stable Sino-US relations.

¹⁷ According to the same sources, the CCP leadership issued an instruction that China “must seize the opportunity to show [our] sincerity to the US [*zhuaizhu jiyu, xiang meiguo biaoshi women de chengyi*]” immediately after the attack.

¹⁸ A senior PLA officer who has a role in China’s policy toward the United States told me recently that there has been a “fundamental change [*genben bianhua*]” in the PLA’s perception of the US military presence in Asia. He said, “No matter what, we have to accept the reality that Americans will stay in Asia because they have important interests here. Don’t you Americans have a saying that ‘if you can’t beat them, join them’? The fact that they are here makes it easier for us to engage with them in our exchange programs.”

¹⁹ Wang’s speech is published at <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2003-12-15/14091346610s.shtml>.

²⁰ See, among others, George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962); and Julian Friedman, Christopher Bladen, and Steven Rosen, eds., *Alliances in International Politics* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1970).

²¹ Chu Shulong (1999), *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²² Yu Bin, “Containment by Stealth: Chinese Views of and Policies Toward America’s Alliances with Japan and Korea after the Cold War,” project paper of America’s Alliances with Japan and Korea in an Changing Northeast Asia, Asia-Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, June 1999, p. 5.

²³ Comments by Cui Tiankai, spokesman for the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the Japan-US Security Treaty, *People’s Daily*, June 11, 1997, p. 1.

²⁴ The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “*Zhongri mingan wenti*” (Sensitive Issues in Sino-Japan Relations), April 2, 2002, at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/sbzheng/252/7824/7837/20020402/700371.html>.

²⁵ From Beijing’s perspective the revised guidelines redefined the scope, capacity, and target(s) of the US-Japan security alliance. As a result, not only have the guidelines justified the expansion of Japan’s Self-Defense Force, they have also reoriented Japan’s security strategy from “home defense” to active responses to (the perceived) “external threat” from either an adversary (e.g., China) or a looming international crisis (e.g., a conflict in the Taiwan Strait). See Liu Jianguyong, “*Xin ‘rimei fangwei hezuo zhizhen’ yu zhongri guanxi*” (The New ‘Guideline for Japan-US Cooperative Defense’ and Sino-Japan Relations), in *1997-98 guoji xingshi fenxi baogao* (1997–98 Reports of Analyses on the International Situation), composed by the Chinese Society for Strategy and Management Research, Beijing, 1998, pp. 19–21; and Yu Bin (1999), *op. cit.*, pp. 8–10.

²⁶ A senior official who has a role in China’s foreign policymaking said bluntly at a conference in March 2001, “We understand that the US has to intervene [in Taiwanese affairs] because of the Taiwan Relations Act. But Japan does not have such a law. So we have the absolute right to put pressure on Japan and ask them not to get involved [in Taiwanese affairs]. As long as Japan is reluctant to intervene, it will put constraints on the Americans.”

²⁷ Some Chinese scholars call it “hegemonic security” (i.e., security that is based on

US military supremacy and US alliances in Northeast Asia), which China does not really like but cannot do without. See Pang Zhongying, “*Lengzhan hou de zhongguo guoji diwei he duiwai zhanlue*” (China’s International Position and Strategy after the Cold War), lecture at Tsinghua University on April 6, 2002, at <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2002-05-05/1127567001.html>.

²⁸ Niu Jun, “*Dongyan anquan de chulu he zai*” (The Future for Collective Security in East Asia), *Global Times*, December 26, 2003, p. 15.

²⁹ See the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “President Hu Jintao Meets with ROK President,” at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/wjw/zjzg/yzs/gjlb/1236/1238/t23670.htm>.

³⁰ For example, at a news conference on July 8, 2003, when a reporter asked Kong Quan, spokesman for the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, if “China’s relations with the DPRK are mainly on security because of the bilateral treaty and its relations with the ROK are mainly on economic aspects,” Kong repeated the statement “President Hu Jintao and President Roh Moo-hyun... agreed that they would lift the bilateral relations up to a partnership of comprehensive cooperation.” Yet he stopped short of saying anything about the implications of this “partnership of comprehensive cooperation” for the US-ROK alliance, nor did he clarify if China’s relations with the DPRK are mainly security-oriented. For this news conference, see <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/2510/2511/t22725.htm>. The published documents about the Hu-Roh summit meeting also avoided this issue altogether.

³¹ I had a brief discussion on this issue with a person who has a role in China’s foreign policymaking on June 30, 2003. He said bluntly: “What can they say about it? We know we need American troops to stay in [East] Asia. But we cannot talk about it because it is against our own official position on this matter.”

³² This paper does not examine China’s policies toward Japan or Korea. The author merely wants to indicate the general implications of China’s dilemmas in approaching America’s Northeast Asian alliances for China’s policies toward the two US allies.

³³ Koizumi paid homage to the shrine again on January 1, 2004. China’s reaction was prompt but restrained: except for voicing China’s anger and protest, no substantial actions were taken. See “China Expresses Strong Indignation at Japanese Prime Minister’s Paying Homage to the Yasukuni Shrine,” at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/zxxxt/57352.htm>.

³⁴ Quoted from a PRC official who was directly involved in the refugee controversy.

³⁵ Quoted from the news conference by the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/xwfw/fyrth/1032/t23473.htm>.

³⁶ The author participated in the Sino-Japan Bilateral Talks on Security in October 2003 as a “special observer.” The Chinese participants confirmed to me that they could not discuss any issues regarding the US-Japan alliance at the meeting, although they would not object to listening to the comments and discussions of the Japanese participants on the US-Japan alliance.

³⁷ When the North Korean nuclear crisis began to unfold in late 2002 and early 2003, there was an opinion among Beijing insiders that China should take advantage of the growing gap between the US and South Korea and strengthen the Sino-ROK relationship at the expense of the US-ROK alliance. The CCP leadership soon suppressed this opinion, dressing it down as “myopic and foolish.”

CONTRIBUTORS

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DONALD P. GREGG is chairman of the board of the Korea Society in New York City. Following graduation from Williams College in 1951, he joined the Central Intelligence Agency, and over the next quarter-century was assigned to Japan, Burma, Vietnam, and Korea. Gregg was seconded to the National Security Council staff in 1979, where he was in charge of intelligence activities and Asian policy affairs. In 1982, he was asked by then Vice President George H. W. Bush to become his national security advisor. He then retired from the CIA, and was awarded its highest decoration, the Distinguished Intelligence Medal. During his six years with Vice President Bush, Gregg traveled to sixty-five countries, and also was a professorial lecturer at Georgetown University, where he taught a graduate-level workshop entitled "Force and Diplomacy." From September 1989 to 1993, Gregg served as US ambassador to Korea. Prior to his departure from Korea, Mr. Gregg received the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service, an honorary degree from Sogang University, and a decoration from the Prime Minister of Korea. Recent awards include an honorary degree from Green Mountain College (1996), the Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service (2001), Williams College's Kellogg Award for career achievement (2001), and the 2004 Bartels World Affairs Fellowship from Cornell University.

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From November 1999 to December 2001, he served as chairman of the Defense System Reform Committee, Ministry of National Defense. Since September 2003, he has taught students at Yonsei University.

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Kim has pursued a foreign service career since joining the Korean Foreign Ministry in 1978. He has worked as the second secretary in the Korean Embassy in Washington, DC, and as the deputy director of the North America Division in the Foreign Ministry. He subsequently served as the political counselor in the Korean Embassy in New Delhi, and as the director of the Treaties Division in the Foreign Ministry.

In 1996–97, Kim served as the alternate representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations Security Council. During that period, Korea was a nonpermanent member of the Security Council for the first time, and sought to contribute substantively to international peace and security. Kim also worked as the political counselor of the Korean Mission to the UN until 1999.

Most recently, Kim worked at the Office of the President of the Republic of Korea as the secretary to the president for foreign affairs and trade (2002–03), as well as international security affairs (2000–02). During that period, he was in charge of overall coordination of Korea's foreign policy on major issues, including the North Korean nuclear problem and management of the Korea-US alliance. Since September 2003, he has been in residence as a visiting scholar at the Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford.

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A graduate of the political science department at Yonsei University (BA, 1982), he received his MALD and PhD from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University (1988). Dr. Lee is a specialist in East Asian security issues with a focus on developments in Northeast Asia and the Korean peninsula. He has written widely on security dynamics, defense planning, force modernization, WMD proliferation, and political-military crises. Dr. Lee co-authored a RAND monograph, *Preparing for Korean Unification* (1999), and his recent publications include "Reassessing the ROK-U.S. Alliance," *Australian*

Journal of International Affairs (Summer 2003), “East Asia’s Awakening from Strategic Hibernation and the Role of Air Power,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* (Spring 2003), and “North Korean Missiles: Strategic Implications and Policy Responses,” *Pacific Review* (2001). Dr. Lee served as an advisor to the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1993 to 1994 and as an advisor to the ROK National Security Council Secretariat from 1999 to 2001. He is a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (London) and the Seoul Forum for International Affairs.

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In 1976, Professor Okimoto co-founded the Asia-Pacific Research Center. He has also been vice chairman of the Japan Committee of the National Research Council at the National Academy of Sciences, and of the Advisory Council of the Department of Politics at Princeton University. Professor Okimoto’s fields of research include comparative political economy, Japanese politics, US-Japan relations, high technology, economic interdependence in Asia, and international security. He received his BA in history from Princeton University, MA in East Asian studies from Harvard University, and PhD in political science from the University of Michigan.

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Some of Major General Yamaguchi's writings include "US Defense Policy Transition after the Cold War," *International Security* (Tokyo: International Security Association, 2001); "The Origin of Civilian Control," *Securitarian* (Tokyo: Defense Agency, March 1993); "Japan's Future Security Role," *Strategic Review* (Washington DC: US Strategic Institute, 1992); "Japan: Completing Military Professionalism," in *Military Professionalism in Asia*, edited by Muthia Alagappa (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2001); "The Security of Northeast Asia," in *The Future of Korea-Japan Relations*, edited by Robert Dujarric (Indianapolis: Hudson Institute, 2001); "Trilateral Cooperation: Opportunities, Challenges, and Tasks" in *US-Korea-Japan Relations*, edited by Ralph Cossa (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1999); "Why the Marines Should Remain in Okinawa: A Military Perspective" in *Restructuring the US-Japan Alliance*, edited by Ralph Cossa (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1997).

