

The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance and the PRC

**The Abandonment-Entrapment Dynamic, the
Balance of Threat and National Identity
in the Trilateral Relationship**

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Introduction: Theory and Methodology

East Asia is currently the only region in the world where military conflict among major powers – the People’s Republic of China, Japan, and the United States¹ – remains as a possible outcome of international affairs in the short to medium term. The primary tripwire is the Taiwan issue which pits the PRC against the US and to a lesser degree Japan as well. Beyond this lie a series of issues such as missile defense and the Senkaku Islands issue that further exacerbate the security relationship between these three regional powers.

Structural factors in East Asia alone make a major power trilateral security relationship in the region a forgone conclusion. Taking lessons from the trilateral security relationship between the Soviet Union, the PRC, and the US that dominated East Asian security during the last half of the Cold War, some analysts have looked at the newer trilateral relationship through the same realist prism that guided the former:²

Triangular relationships, by their nature, reduce international relations to a zero-sum game: any of the three powers is apt to suspect the other two of colluding to augment their bargaining power. A triangle made up of [the PRC, Japan, and the US] ... could be a dangerous one.³

¹ Russia, the other potential great power candidate in East Asia, is unlikely to regain the influence required for such a status in the short to medium term, even while it will likely play the role of an important but secondary power. This in essence means that it will have little influence over the course of the trilateral relationship of the other great powers in the region.

² Ming Zhang and Ronald N. Montaperto. *A Triad of Another Kind: The United States, China, and Japan*. St. Martin's Press: New York; 1999. pp. 2-3.

³ Yoichi Funabashi, “The Asianization of Asia,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, No. 5 (1993), p. 83.

Yet despite such provocative statements, the PRC-Japan-US trilateral security relationship is far from a recast repetition of this classic Cold War trilateral security relationship. Even if we stay within a strict realist framework, the relative power distribution of the three powers would suggest a strongly different dynamic than the one at work during the Cold War. In the Cold War trilateral relationship, the USSR and the US were two relatively equal superpowers and the PRC was a regional power whose collaboration was useful for one superpower to gain an edge vis-à-vis against the other. In the new trilateral security relationship, the US stands as the only superpower with a large advantage over both the PRC and Japan and a hegemonic military position in the region. In such a situation, structural realist thought would predict a balancing of power against a hegemonic US by the PRC and Japan, yet this is clearly not happening and does not seem likely to occur in the short or mid-term.

The key structural factor that throws structural realist theory on its head is the US-Japan Security Alliance that aligns the dominant power with a lesser power against the third even lesser power. Here there is a strong correlation between the alliance, identity and the level of threat. A state will not enter into an alliance with another state from which it feels a threat unless that alliance would help the state counter another even greater threat. Thus we can conclude that the US-Japanese alliance there is no mutual sense of threat or that there is a third and greater threat or both. During the initial stages of the alliance, a strong argument can be made for the latter; the US may have felt a threat for the potential resurgence of Japanese militarism, but the greater threat was communism. During the course of this alliance, the relationship between the US and Japan has produced a largely positive perception of the other and the threat perception is

minimal. This was encouraged by the convergence of identity between the US and Japan in the postwar period as industrialized democracies. Thus, even if we reject the PRC and other nations as the possible greater threat, there were significant reasons to maintain this alliance.

Walt's balance of threat theory modifies the structural realist argument to suggest that a state will ally with another state not based purely on relative power, but also on geographic proximity and aggressive intentions. Since geographic proximity is essentially a factor in relative power, which can in any case be rendered irrelevant with the technological abilities of power projection such as the US possesses, the key factor is a state's perception of threat. Walt argues that states make ongoing assessments as to what threats exist and create alliances against them rather than just balance power. The key question thus becomes how does a state determine what threats are faced from other states.

Since elites determine the course of a state's policy, their perceptions are a key factor in the international security relationship.⁴ Elites' first priority is always to maintain their domestic hegemony. Thus, they will give concessions to those they rule over by consent and use force over those who will not consent. In democracies like the US and Japan, the major concession to those ruled over by the elite is the right to select which elites are the ruling elites. In contrast, the PRC's major concession in the post-Mao era has been economic progress. At the creation of state, elites will attempt to define the national identity and successive generations of elites will modify this over

⁴ See Alexander George, "The Operational Code: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision Making," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1969), pp. 190-222; and Ole Holsti, P. T. Hopmann, and J.D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies*, New York: Wiley, 1973.

time. Ultimately, a state's national identity becomes the basis for elite perception and thus the basis for behavior in security relationships.

To demonstrate this, it is most informative to start at a basic action-reaction analysis of international relations (see Figure 1 on page 8). In reacting on any given situation, a state must answer two basic questions. First, what capability does the state have to act? This is an assessment of resources available to react and is therefore an economic issue. States are constantly maintaining certain resources to allow a certain range of policy options. A set of resources that is of key import in a security relationship is the state's military capabilities, a prominent subset of economic capabilities. The broadest limitation of policy possibilities will be set by capabilities.

A state will assess both its own capabilities and the action of a second state through the prism of its identity. Identity is defined broadly in political, economic and military terms and is an amalgamation of the national self-image held by elites, civil society and the masses. The fundamental question of political identity is how decisions are made, the major variation being the method of determining which elites will make the decisions. The US and Japan rely on the consent of the masses to make the final decision between competing elites while the PRC relies on negotiations between elites that leaves the masses out altogether except in the concession that elite decides to provide them.

The two key factors in economic identity are who owns the capital and who makes decisions about that capital. Ownership can be looked at as a spectrum ranging from complete private ownership to complete public ownership. The US has the most complete implementation of private ownership in the trilateral relationship, followed closely by Japan. The PRC's move from a planned economy to a market

economy and the privatization involved has been continuously reducing the differences between the PRC and the others on this point. The question of who makes decision about the use of capital can also be placed in a range of the amount that the state allocates on behalf of the private sector. Here again the US is the most extreme in keeping the state out of decision-making, followed by Japan. The PRC continues a transition from the total exclusion of the private sector from decision making to a greater inclusion. Here again there is increasing convergence.

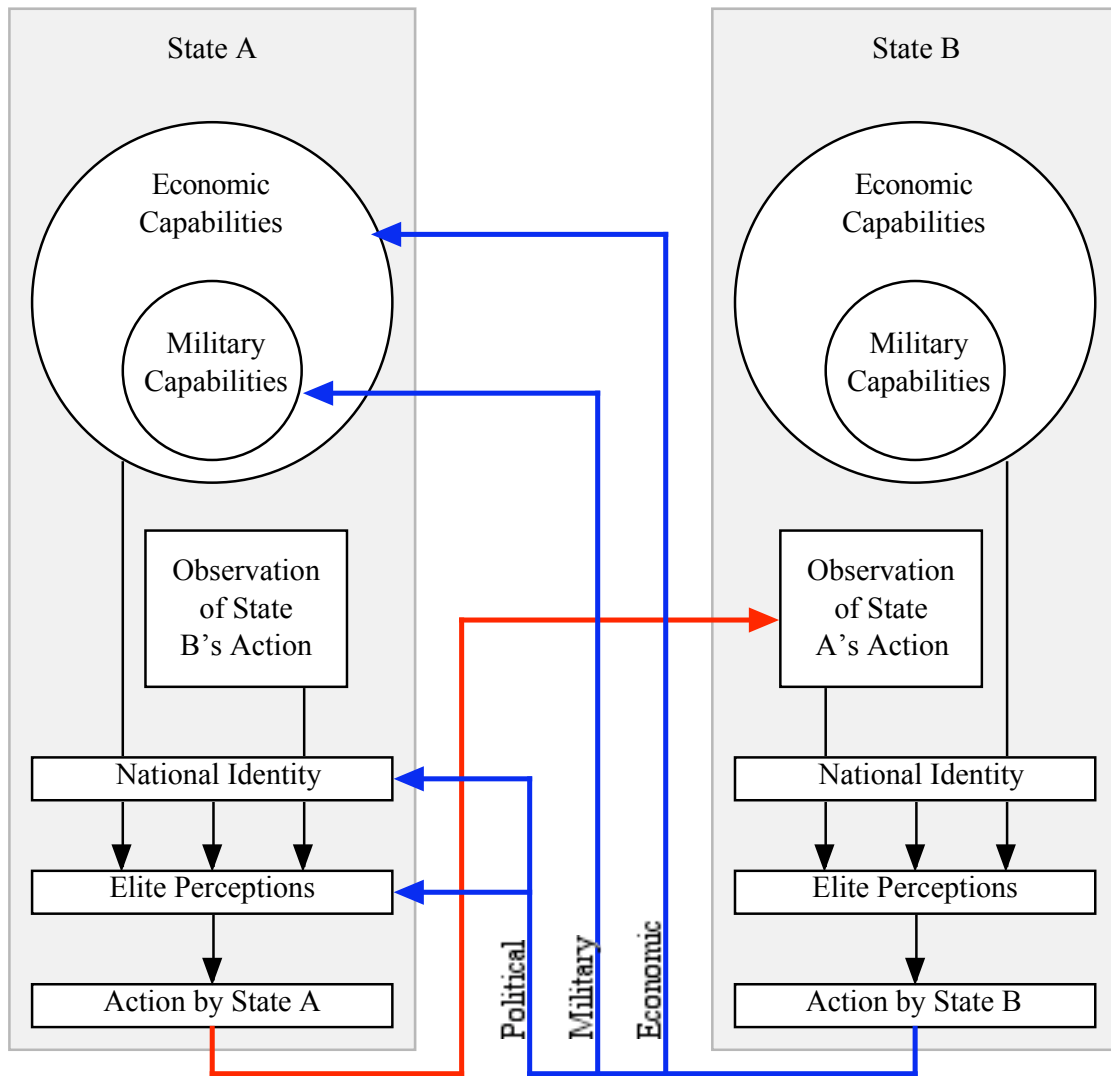
Militarily the fundamental identity question is when can force be used legitimately.⁵ The answer to this will lie in the interpretation of national identity by elites. A state that supports a broad interpretation of the legitimate use of force domestically is likely to keep the use of force open as a policy option when the elite perceive that national interests are at stake, even if no direct threat is felt. The PRC behaves in this way. The US and Japan, in contrast, react strongly when they feel threatened but are less likely to invoke their military threat otherwise.

The interpretation of national identity will formulate elite perceptions. The nature of identity and elite perception will be debated domestically, but these debates will remain within a limited range. Should the range widen too greatly, the debate can go beyond interpretation of a given national identity become a competition of competing national identities, such as in the US Civil War, in which only one will emerge victorious. The results of these limited-range debates lead to a decision to take actions, the amalgamation of which is a state's behavior. When this behavior emerges (even if the "actions" consist of doing nothing at all), other interested states observe this through the

⁵ Nau, Henry. *At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2002.

veil of their own identity. These states will then use the same approach as the first state to formulate a response to the action. In this way, international relations are the endless sum of a series of actions and reactions.

Figure 1



Making an Action in International Relations At the basis of decision making are economic capabilities, of which military capabilities are a subset. National identity is the primary basis for elite perceptions and serves as a prism for evaluating capabilities and the actions of other states. Elite perceptions will lead to a decision to take action. The red line represents an action on the part of State A that is of interest to State B. The blue lines represent the policy possibilities for State B vis-à-vis State A. The left branch deals with altering the perceptions of the elite either directly through diplomacy or indirectly by influencing identity. The middle branch represents military options and the right branch economic options. An action taken by State B will reinitiate the cycle.

These actions come in three basic forms – political, economic, and military – which all have a national and an international manifestation. The primary goal of political actions is to change the nature of the decisions being made. Domestically, this is done among elites internally through the hammering out of elite perceptions and by influencing national identity. Internationally, the primary means through which elites try to influence elites is diplomacy, although globalization is leading to wider elite dialogue that includes important members of civil society in a broader range of countries. Nations may also attempt to influence foreign elites indirectly by urging change in the national identity of other nations, but a number of issues make the efficacy of this marginal at best. Political means are by far the most common means to an end in foreign policy due to their comparative cost effectiveness.

The primary goal of economic actions is to accrue economic benefit to the actor. In a situation where a state cannot or will not enforce his will on a second state, the latter must perceive a fair benefit from the action or the former will face retaliation. In other words, an economic action must be perceived as mutually beneficial. This has led to a burgeoning of mutual beneficial economic relationships since the demise of colonialism that often carry some degree of interdependence. This has the potential to undermine a secondary goal of economic actions: affecting the decision making process or weakening the military capabilities of the target nation. If a state has a mutually beneficial or interdependent economic relationship with another state but could benefit politically or militarily from economic actions, it will think twice before implementing such actions due to the negative effect it would have economically. Thus, even while

economic actions are often used in retaliation for other economic actions, they are used less commonly for political or military ends. Domestically, nations all seek to maximize their economic capabilities and thus increase their overall capabilities. This is essentially a truism that plays little role in international relations as it is a constant, even though the question of how the domestic economy is maximized can play a significant role.

The primary goal of military actions is the protection of the national interest from violent threats. International military actions range from espionage to outright hostilities. Domestically, this includes the economic decision of how much of the economic capabilities will be given to developing military capabilities and how the military should be developed. Military actions, just as economic actions, have been limited by the growing interconnectedness between nations. At the low level, such as espionage, military actions are constant and ongoing but direct hostilities remain comparatively rare due to the extremely high cost.

Within this framework, security relationships can be defined as those in which military capabilities are a significant factor. In such a relationship, there are two main independent variables and one key dependent variable coming directly from the two. The first is economic capabilities, as it will determine the possible levels of military capabilities. The second is elite perception. Elite perception will produce the decisions that set the amount and means by which economic capabilities are transferred in to military capabilities, the third key variable. The elite's perception of capabilities and the national interest will create the decisions that determine the actions of the state and thus its behavior in the security relations. The dependent variable is thus the individual

political, economic or military action or combination thereof that a state takes in response to an action taken by another state.

The trends in two of these variables – economic and military capabilities – have long been constant in the PRC-Japan-US trilateral relationship and in all likelihood will continue to be in the short to mid-term. Economically, the US and Japan are strongly on top as the first and second largest economies in the world, but the PRC is gaining in economic power relative to both of them. Military capabilities closely follow this. The US maintains military superiority primary through their technological dominance and Japan partakes of the same benefits to a lesser degree. But again, the PRC is gradually eroding the relative advantage they possess. This dynamic is a fundament in looking at the dynamics of the trilateral relationship. A second important factor is that identity has not made any significant changes in the recent past nor is it likely to in the near future, barring any unforeseen cataclysmic developments, making identity a constant. The key independent variable is thus elite perceptions of national interest which will change in reaction to its perceptions of the actions of other states.

In the trilateral relationship, this process, based on the perception of little threat, has led to a decision on the part of elites in both the US and Japan that their alliance is the best means to achieve their respective national interests. Analyses of the trilateral relationship must thereby be modified to incorporate this. This forecloses the possibility of drawing major parallels between the USSR-PRC-US trilateral relationship and the PRC-Japan-US trilateral relationship. The primary difference is that the latter must incorporate an analysis of alliance dynamics.

The classic analysis of this is Glenn Snyder's article "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics."⁶ Snyder argues that in any alliance there is the possibility of abandonment and entrapment. Driving these are states' levels of trust, the convergence of national interests, and asymmetries in the levels of interdependence. If one state perceives itself as more dependent than the other, it will fear abandonment. If a state perceives its national interests as significantly different than the other's, it will fear entrapment. A high level of trust can mitigate both of these extremes.

This has several implications in the US-Japan Security Alliance. Based on identity and historical factors, we already know that the level of trust between the US and Japan is high, so there will be at least some dampening affect on the abandonment-entrapment anxieties in the alliance. Second, the US towers over Japan in both military and economic capabilities, leading to the possibility that Japan may perceive itself has the more dependent of the two and thus increase a fear of abandonment. Finally, identity will lead to some similarities in the perception of national interest, although by no means does this guarantee national interest conversion in security affairs.

Security conflict and cooperation in the dyadic relationships between the US and the PRC on one hand and Japan and the PRC on the other provide an opportunity to look at the abandonment-entrapment dynamic in the US-Japan Security Alliance. Application of this theory leads us to some tentative hypotheses. First, security cooperation between an alliance member and the PRC will lead to a fear of abandonment and will prompt the member fearing abandonment to shore up the relationship with the other. This fear will be greatest on the part of Japan due to asymmetric levels of

⁶ Snyder, Glenn H. "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics." *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (July 1984), pp. 461-495.

independence. Second, security conflict between an alliance member and the PRC will lead to a fear of entrapment and will prompt that state to make moves to stave off the conflict.

Table 1

	PRC-US	PRC-Japan
Conflict	Taiwan Straits crisis EP-3E incident	Senkaku Islands dispute
Cooperation	War on terrorism	∅

To test this I will look at a number of case studies that look at cooperation and conflict in both of the dyadic security relationships with a member of the alliance and the PRC (see Table 1). Each of these case studies will focus on decision-making in tense security situations. For PRC-US security conflict, I will analyze the 1996 Taiwan Straits crisis as arguably the key security crisis between the US and the PRC in recent history and the 2001 EP-3E incident for a more current case. The issue that that I will look at for the PRC-Japan security dyad is the dispute over the Senkaku Islands, which has flared up several times and continues unresolved to this day. For PRC-US security cooperation, I will look at the cooperation engendered by the US-led war on terrorism. Finally, the last section of the matrix – PRC-Japan security cooperation – is for all relevant purposes a null set; there are no prominent cases of recent PRC-Japan security cooperation that would carry any major weight in the trilateral relationship.

The trilateral security relationship under study in each case makes the above ideogram more complex by necessitating the addition of a third state. Each case study will begin with a given action by one of the states. This action will be observed by

both of the other states that will react in turn. Each of these reactions will be observed by the other two and the process will repeat itself until the crisis has been resolved. While selecting the initiating action and declaring an end of a crisis involves a bit of arbitrariness due to the action-reaction nature of international relations, I will rely on the general scholarly consensus in making my selection.

These case studies serve as snapshots of relationship behavior at a particular period of time and thus differing times can be compared to see if there has been any change in the nature of behavior. The Taiwan Straits crisis and the Senkaku Islands crisis are both focused on 1996 while the EP-3E incident and the war on terrorism both began five years later in 2001. Moreover, the Senkaku Islands dispute, in its most recent manifestations, is looked at from 1990 to the present, providing further basis for comparison.

The case studies will be used to detect patterns and trends in the behavior of the security relationship over the time period under scrutiny. I will then use these results to assess the abandonment-entrapment dynamic of the US-Japan alliance vis-à-vis the PRC in the context of a balance of threat approach based on national identity theory. Finally, I use this to make some tentative predictions about the future of the trilateral relationship.

The Taiwan Strait Crisis

In an effort to pressure Taiwanese voters to reject pro-independence presidential candidate Lee Teng-hui, the PLA carried out a three-stage exercise code-named Strait 961. On March 5, 1996, Xinhua news agency declared the first stage: “From March 8 to 15, 1996, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army will conduct ground-to-ground missile launching trainings in a sea area,” giving coordinates placing the targets of these tests about 50km west of Taiwan at the south end of the straits and the other about 20km off the shore of northeast Taiwan.⁷ While there were previously two missile tests in the Taiwan Strait, one on July 21, 1995 and the other on August 16 of the same year, none had attempted to come as close as these in 1996.⁸ On March 8, the Second Artillery Division, the PRC’s nuclear missile division, fired two unarmed M-9 missiles from the Huanan Mountains in Southern China. The first landed about 44 nautical miles from the southern port city of Kaohsiung and the other about the same distance from the northern port city of Keelung, which also happened to be within 60km of the Japanese island of Yonaguni.⁹ Later in the same day, they fired a third unarmed M-9 missile into the area off Kaohsiung.¹⁰ On March 12, the PLA launched a fourth and final missile that also landed near Kaohsiung.

On March 9, Xinhua announced the second stage: “From March 12 to 20, 1996, the People’s Liberation Army will conduct naval and air force exercises with live

⁷ “Missiles to be fired off Taiwan,” *Financial Times*; March 5, 1996; p. 6.

⁸ “Chronology of the “Taiwan issue;” Deutsche Presse-Agentur; March 12, 1996.

⁹ Starr, Peter; “Hashimoto ‘very worried’ as China-Taiwan tensions escalate;” Agence France Presse; March 12, 1996.

¹⁰ Witter, Willis; “Taiwan watches tests begin; China fires two unarmed missiles into target zones near port cities;” *The Washington Times*; March 8, 1996; p. A1.

ammunition”¹¹ in a 6,000 square mile area off the southwest coast of Taiwan, approximately 100km southwest Kaohsiung, and warned that ships and aircraft should stay clear while the exercises are in progress.¹² PLA warplanes approached the wartime dividing line of the Taiwan Strait and Taiwanese planes were dispatched, coming within 112 kilometers of enemy contact.¹³ Taiwan’s Defense Ministry said that it had tracked deployments of PRC military aircraft, including Jian-7 fighters, Qiang-5 fighter-bombers, Reconnaissance-6 planes, Hong-6 bombers, and Russian-made Su-27 fighters.¹⁴ On March 15, the PRC announced the final round of exercises to go from March 18 to March 25.¹⁵ These exercises involved both air and naval forces as well as the army, and included at least 150,000 troops and a wide variety of air and naval weapons. The exercises ended as scheduled, marking the end of the crisis and leaving diplomacy to repair any damage done.

US reaction to this is largely divided between political and military. The political reaction, which included both diplomatic salvos and Congressional activity, began immediately. The exercises were denounced in Washington as “both provocative and reckless.”¹⁶ The US lodged an official protest from the embassy in Beijing. National Security Advisor Anthony Lake warned that the PRC would be held accountable for any accidents and that an attack on Taiwan would result in “grave consequences.”¹⁷ The administration even threatened that the US “one-China” policy could be threatened by

¹¹ How, Tan Tarn; “China to hold live-fire war games near Taiwan;” *The Straits Times*; March 10, 1996.

¹² Beal, Thom; “China announces additional war games;” *United Press International*; March 9, 1996.

¹³ “Chinese fighter jets in Taiwan Strait;” *United Press International*; March 12, 1996.

¹⁴ Crothall, Geoffrey, and Dennis Engbarth; “US send second carrier, support ships to strait;” *South China Morning Post*; March 12, 1996; p. 1.

¹⁵ Youngblood, Ruth; “China announces new live-firing exercises;” *United Press International*; March 15, 1996.

¹⁶ Huang, Annie; “China Begins Missile Tests Near Taiwan;” *The Associated Press*; March 8, 1996.

¹⁷ “US carrier to be closer to Taiwan;” *United Press International*; March 9, 1996.

Beijing's provocative moves. Congress passed a resolution urging the administration to defend Taiwan from any PRC attack. The US also began an economic effort to get Japan to halt aid to the PRC, expected to be about \$6 billion that year, which likely contributed to the LDP's refusal to give grant aid to the PRC in 1996.¹⁸

The military response became apparent shortly thereafter. The Pentagon dispatched US surveillance planes and navy ships to the area, to which the PRC responded that it would bury invaders in a "sea of fire."¹⁹ The guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill, equipped with an Aegis weapons system, was close enough to observe the missile flights in the south. An Air Force RC-135 rivet joint spy plane gathered informational from the technical data transmissions from the missiles. The Independence carrier battle group – led by the carrier USS Independence and including the guided-missile cruiser USS O'Brien, a guided-missile destroyer and two frigates – was also in the area from the time of the first missile launches.²⁰ On March 11, President Clinton ordered a second aircraft carrier battle group – led by the carrier USS Nimitz and including several warships, about 70 warplanes, and a pair of nuclear submarines armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles – into the area. Also on March 11, the destroyer USS Hewitt and the guided-missile frigate USS McClusky joined up with the Independence carrier battle group. The groups remained in the region through the duration of the PRC exercises.

Japan's first public reaction to the crisis came on the day the missile firing began. Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto said, "There may be no legal problems since

¹⁸ Kakuchi, Suvendrini; "Taiwan – Security: Show China the aid card, US urges Japan;" Inter Press Service; March 15, 1996.

¹⁹ "Invaders face Chinese 'sea of fire.'" United Press International. March 21, 1996.

²⁰ Burns, Robert; "Navy Ships, Air Force Spy Plane Monitor Chinese Missile Tests;" The Associated Press; March 9, 1996.

the testing took place in international waters. But I think it is in an unfortunate direction.” He then went on to say, “Although there is no way of stopping exercises conducted on open seas, we will think of appropriate measures,” indicating a de facto wait-and-see approach.²¹ Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama expressed concern that the proximity of the tests to Japanese territory could affect Japanese shipping, fishing and air traffic in the area²² and that Japan would be keeping a “careful watch” over the situation.²³ LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Taku Yamasaki denounced the missile tests as “a very dangerous act.”²⁴ On March 11, Ryozo Kato, head of MOFA’s Asian Affairs Bureau summoned PRC Counselor Zheng Xiangling to express Japan’s desire for PRC restraint.²⁵ Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda lambasted the exercises as counterproductive to the PRC’s own stated goals.²⁶

The SDF positioned the Chikuzen, a large 3,800-ton helicopter-carrying cutter, about 50km north of Yonaguni, Japan’s southernmost island, which is about 150km east of Keelung.²⁷ Hashimoto made moves to set up a contingency plan, including how to evacuate Japanese from Taiwan, coastal safety measures, and rear-area support for the US armed forces.²⁸ In addition to Japan’s own monitoring of the situation, Hashimoto requested and received real-time information from the US on the PRC

²¹ Kin, Kwan Weng; “No grounds for Tokyo to ask Chinese to stop tests;” *The Straits Times* ; March 9, 1996; p. 19.

²² “Japan: China missile test regrettable;” United Press International; March 8, 1996.

²³ Kin, Kwan Weng; “No grounds for Tokyo to ask Chinese to stop tests;” *The Straits Times* ; March 9, 1996; p. 19.

²⁴ “LDP’s Yamasaki wants China to halt missile tests;” Jiji Press Ticker Service; March 8, 1996.

²⁵ “Tokyo urges Chinese self-restraint on Taiwan.” BBC Summary or World Broadcasts. March 19, 1996.

²⁶ Starr, Peter; “Hashimoto ‘very worried’ as China-Taiwan tensions escalate;” Agence France Presse; March 12, 1996.

²⁷ Kin, Kwan Weng; “No grounds for Tokyo to ask Chinese to stop tests;” *The Straits Times* ; March 9, 1996; p. 19.

²⁸ Funabashi, Yôichi, *Dômei hyôryû* (Alliance Adrift), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1997; cited in Nishihara, Masashi; *The Japan-US Alliance: New Challenges for the 21st Century*; Japan Center for International Exchange: Japan; 2000.

exercises.²⁹ Despite these actions suggesting a unity of purpose with the US, regarding US ship deployments, Secretary Kajiyama said, “Military instability in the Taiwan Strait is not desirable but this is a spontaneous action by the United States. We are not in a position to approve or disapprove,” essentially delinking Japan from the US.³⁰

As the Taiwan Strait crisis strongly added to Japan’s perception of threat from the PRC, it was also a major influence in the enhancement of the US-Japan security relationship in the 1990s. The major embodiment of this relationship was the Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation, which provided a new framework for the security alliance that included “areas surrounding Japan that have an important influence on Japan's peace and security.”³¹ Some of the momentum for the move toward this can be seen in the immediate reaction to the Taiwan Strait crisis. For instance, it was in reaction to the PRC’s ratcheting up of tensions in the Taiwan Strait that Yamasaki suggested that the LDP should look into applying the acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) with the US.³² This was just one of the security arrangement between the US and Japan that was strengthened in the wake of the Taiwan Strait crisis, also including the Guidelines and joint missile defense development.

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²⁹ Yoshifumi, Nakai; “Policy Coordination on Taiwan,” in Nishihara, Masashi.; *The Japan-US Alliance: New Challenges for the 21st Century*; Japan Center for International Exchange: Japan; 2000.

³⁰ Starr, Peter; “Hashimoto ‘very worried’ as China-Taiwan tensions escalate;” Agence France Presse; March 12, 1996.

³¹ United States Department of Defense; “Amendment to the US-Japan Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA); April 28, 1998; < http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr1998/b04281998_bt196-98.html> February 17, 2003.

³² “LDP’s Yamasaki wants to strengthen military accord;” Japan Economic Newswire; March 13, 1996.

As Barton Gellman correctly suggests, this was a turning point in the PRC-US relationship from rising confrontation to the “strategic partnership” that the Clinton administration turned to in the years following the crisis.³³ Nevertheless, it was actually just one of many turning points throughout a period of roughly a dozen years following the Tiananmen Square massacre within which the PRC-US relationship could best be characterized as a wave, ranging from highs to lows depending on which way events sent the relationship reeling. The difference between this and most of the other low-points in the relationship was that there was a very real threat of military confrontation that forced both sides to pause and reanalyze their stance vis-à-vis the other. This led to a willful effort on both sides to improve the relationship.

The PLA exercises were undoubtedly a ham-fisted attempt to influence the Taiwanese presidential election to the detriment of Lee Teng-hui that in the end backfired for the PRC hawks who managed to push the idea for maneuvers through to realization as Lee won in a position stronger than previously expected. Nevertheless, the PRC demonstrated the ability to significantly disrupt air and sea transport to Taiwan with just exercises, with obvious implications for a potential blockade. In retrospect, it is fairly clear that the PRC did not intend to actually open hostilities with Taiwan, but instead was merely attempting to intimidate through a show of force. At the time of the tests, however, the pattern of troop and weapon movements would not allow a discounting of the possibility that a full invasion was planned.

The US reaction was designed to prevent hostilities from breaking out between the PRC and Taiwan. The most obvious reason for this is the treatyless yet real

³³ Gellman, Barton; “US and China Nearly Came to Blows in ’96; Tension Over Taiwan Prompted Repair of Ties;” *The Washington Post*, June 21, 1998; p. A01.

US commitment to protect Taiwan from unprovoked PRC hostilities. This ties into the US desire for stability in East Asia and its commitments to its treaty allies in the region. Moreover, if the US were not to stand up to PRC hostilities against Taiwan, it would lose significant clout with other allies who might question its commitment to them. This commitment to Taiwan is also a serious contributor to fears of entrapment in Japan.

Another less obvious reason for the muscular US reaction was the PRC nuclear threat. Had hostilities actually broken out, there was a very high probability that the US would have confronted the PRC militarily. In January 1996, PLA General Xiong Guangkai had said to Assistant Secretary of Defense Charles Freeman, Jr., that the US would not threaten the PRC with a nuclear attack because “in the end, you care a lot more about Los Angeles than you do about Taipei.”³⁴ The administration could not rule out the possibility that Xiong’s attitude was prevalent enough to make such an implicit attack a reality. Thus, the Clinton administration saw it in US interests to prevent any initiation of hostilities whatsoever through deterrence.

There was a distinct split in the public statements of the various members of the LDP, with Kajiyama’s statements clearly distancing Japan from the US while Yamasaki’s statements called for closer cooperation. This reflected the debate among elites within Japan and more specifically within the LDP. On the one hand, Japanese economic ties with the PRC and risk aversion raised the fear of being dragged into a conflict between the US and the PRC. On the other hand, the risk of being perceived as not supportive of the US could encourage the US to disengage from Japan, a possibility that was being debated among US elites at the time. In the end, Japan was not able to

³⁴ Crowell, Todd, and David Hsieh; “A Win-Win Summit; In spite of their differences, China and America seem set to develop closer ties for the next century,” *Asiaweek*; July 10, 1998; p. 28.

resolve this debate quickly enough, resulting in a hodge-podge of reactions that nevertheless tended towards support of the US. Japan's ultimate public reaction to the Taiwan Straits crisis consisted of nothing more than a mild berating of the PRC's actions while monitoring the situation and encouraging a peaceful resolution, revealing Japan's unwilling to stand out with the US over Taiwan. Nevertheless, behind the scenes the Hashimoto administration was preparing for a worst-case scenario with plans to militarily support the US suggest that, had push come to shove, Japan would have had no qualms about whose side it was on.

The Senkaku Islands Crisis

The Senkaku Islands (in Japanese) or the Diaoyutai Islands (in Chinese) are a small group of five islands (Uotsuri, Kita Kojima, Minami Kojima, Kuba and Taisho), three reefs and some above-water rocks that lie about 200 kilometers northwest of Taiwan and 400 kilometers west of Okinawa, measuring a mere 10km² of land.³⁵ The only current economic value of the islands is for fishing rights. But the potential for a much larger pay off is also present in suspected natural oil and gas in the seabed surrounding the islands, a possibility whose extent remains untested due to the competing claims between Japan and China (the PRC and Taiwan).

According to the International Boundaries Research Unit at the University of Durham, the dispute over to whom the islands belonged erupted after an 1968 UN study indicated that there could be massive amounts of natural gas and oil in the region when Taiwan voiced its opposition to Japanese sovereignty over the islands.³⁶ The PRC chimed in several years later in September 1972.³⁷ The PRC claims the Senkaku Islands as their own based on a mass of historical evidence dating back to the 13th century.³⁸ From that time until Japan's imperial march West, the Chinese were the primary human visitors to the Senkaku Islands.

Japan asserts that the islands are part of the Ryukyu Islands, which Japan annexed in 1879 (and now form Okinawa Prefecture), and are therefore an integral part of Japan. Japan effectively controlled the islands from 1895, when it acquired Taiwan

³⁵ Jones, Clayton. "Japan's Claim on Islet Sets Off Regional Protests." *The Christian Science Monitor* . October 24, 1990. p. 5.

³⁶ "Japan leasing land since '72 on another disputed..." Japan Economic Newswire. January 8, 2003.

³⁷ Hirano, Minoru. "Nationalists Growl Over Senkakus." *The Daily Yomiuri*. March 20, 1992. p. 3.

³⁸ "Yet another Miyazawa 'Misstatement?'" Japanese Economic Newswire. February 27, 1992.

from the Qing Dynasty, until its defeat at the end of World War II. At that point, the US took control of the administration of the islands, incorporating them into the occupation administration of Okinawa and, after 1956, using them for military bombing exercises. When the US returned Okinawa to Japanese administration in 1972, it also gave them administrative rights over the Senkaku Islands. Since the restoration of the islands to Japan, private citizens have owned four of them and the MOF owned the fifth. They have not been inhabited.

The official US position is to let the claimants resolve the issue among themselves. Before signing to Okinawa Reversion Treaty in 1971 that gave Japan administration of the Senkakus, the US State Department has issued a statement of “non-interference” that stated that although the US was giving the administration of the islands back to Japan, it would be up to Japan and the ROC to settle questions of sovereignty (the PRC had still not yet voiced its claim on the islands). The US to this day maintains this as their general position on the issue, despite Japanese efforts to get US support for their position.

Despite this position, the US has taken advantage of Japan’s de facto control of the island for its own military use. Seeking to continue the air-to-ground bombing practice that they had used the islands for since 1956, the US leased the government-owned Taisho Island and the privately-owned Kuba Island (under the obscure code names of Kobi Island and Sekibi Island) following the reversion to Japanese control in 1972 for a period of 20 years and renewed this again in 1992 for another 20. Even though the leasing continues today, the US military last bombing exercises on the islands were in 1979.

The Senkaku Islands crisis refers primarily to a series of events in 1996 but the build up began years before. In 1978, a right-wing Japanese group built a lighthouse on one of the islands that would become a recurring focal point of tensions between Japan and China. During the 1980s, right-wing groups had partially restored the lighthouse. In 1990, another of these groups sought to finish the job. The MSDF issued a report that stated they would soon approve the authorization for a new lighthouse to be placed on the Senkaku Islands. The PRC hotly protested this move and the issue died down for the time being.

Tensions would flare again in February 1992, this time stoked by a PRC action. The PRC passed the Territorial Waters Law which reaffirmed its claims over the Senkaku Islands. The law stated that the disputed islands were part of PRC territory. It further stated that the PRC may forcibly remove foreign ships from its territorial waters and that any losses or damages resulting from such an intrusion would be the responsibilities of the intruding ship's home country. The protests unsurprisingly erupted from the Japanese side. "We regret your stating that the Senkaku Islands are part of Chinese territory," said Deputy Foreign Minister Hisashi Owada to PRC Ambassador Yang Zhenya in no unclear terms, "The Senkaku Islands are part of the Japanese territory which Japanese effectively governs."³⁹

The next significant incidents occurred in 1995. In August, the PRC sent several Sukhoi 27 fighters towards the disputed islands. The Japanese ASDF immediately dispatched two Okinawa-based jets to intercept the PRC aircraft, which backed off. Later PRC vessels were spotted near the islands doing exploratory test for

³⁹ "Japan Protests China's Claim to Islands." Asahi News Service. February 27, 1992.

oil, including at least two instances of drilling.⁴⁰ These surveys would continue throughout 1996 and 1997.

The most immediate spark of the 1996 crisis was, again, a right-wing Japanese group. On July 14, 1996, the JYF made a trip to the islands in which it built a 5-meter high aluminum lighthouse, raised the hinomaru, and made a monument for Japanese war dead on the privately owned island of Kita-Kojima. After Typhoon Herb damaged the lighthouse was damaged, the JYF returned again to repair it. After repairing the lighthouse, the JYF on September 10 submitted an application to the MSDF to consider making the lighthouse “official.”

The PRC protested in a variety of ways in reaction to the actions of the JYF. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang accused the Japanese government of implicitly supporting “resurgent right-wing militarists” by permitting them to erect the lighthouse and plant a flag on the disputed islands. The PRC went down a familiar path by lambasting the Japanese claims regarding the islands in their domestic media with fiery rhetoric. An unsigned editorial in the People’s Daily asserted: “Japan has thrown down the gauntlet on the issue of the Diaoyu Islands. This is in no way an accident, but the inevitable appearance of Japan's domestic political right flaunting strength overseas.”⁴¹ The newspaper stated that after China’s “century of humiliation” the PRC remains supersensitive to questions of sovereignty and anyone giving into Japanese demands would find himself “cursed for all ages.”⁴² They cancelled Vice Premier Li Lanqing’s visit to Japan. Maj. Gen. Dai Yifang of the PLA’s Academy

⁴⁰ Harrison, Selig S., “Quiet Struggle in the East China Sea,” *Current History*, September 2002, p. 274.

⁴¹ Saiget, Robert J. “People’s Daily raps Japan’s claim to Senkaku Islands.” Japan Economic Newswire. August 30, 1996.

⁴² Ibid.

of Military Sciences told the *China Daily* in a front page interview: “A people’s war will lead us to victory in high-tech conditions,” implicitly threatening Japan.⁴³ Yet in some ways, the PRC reaction was restrained here; even as protesters from Taiwan, Hong Kong and even the U.S. were manning boats to forcibly land on the Senkaku Islands, the PRC did not permit any of its citizens to do so.

The PRC also took provocative military steps. It sent two submarines to the islands following the erection of the lighthouse. The PRC *Sing Tao* newspaper reported that the islands were under surveillance by more than 10 PRC naval vessels and that the PLAAF has sent several planes over the islands.⁴⁴ On September 30, the PLA held exercises to simulate the blockade, invasion and occupation of an island chain. On the side of restraint, however, the PRC did play down calls for a military response to the repeated landings by the JYF.

At first, the Japanese response to the PRC was cool; Ikeda responded that the Senkaku Islands are an inherent part of Japanese territory, only leading to stronger protests from the PRC. By fall, Japan had changed its tune and began to seek an end to a crisis that clearly was not leading to any resolution of the situation. On September 24, Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda informed his PRC counterpart Qian Qichen that there were no plans to recognize the lighthouse as “official” and confirmed on October 10 that the government would not act on the JYF’s application. In November, Ikeda expressed Japan’s readiness to promote better relations with the PRC and Prime

⁴³ “PLA ready for 'people's war': Chinese press.” Japan Economic Newswire. September 25, 1996.

⁴⁴ “China steps up military surveillance over disputed islands.” Agence France Presse. October 10, 1996.

Minister Hashimoto stated: “We believe we must prevent our important relations from being poisoned over this problem.”⁴⁵

Throughout the crisis, the US reiterated its position of supporting “no nation” regarding the territorial row over the Senkaku Islands while urging a peaceful resolution. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said: “We do not recognize any particular country’s sovereignty” and urged that the various claimants settle their disputes “in an orderly and peaceful and stable manner.”⁴⁶ State Department spokesman Glyn Davies said: “From the U.S. standpoint, though we understand it has a great emotional content, it’s not the kind of issue that’s worth elevating beyond a war of words. ... We expect that the claimants to the islands will resolve their differences and do so peacefully and we urge all the claimants to exercise restraint as they move forward in this process.”⁴⁷ Burns went on to say that Washington had no intention of serving as a mediator and called for direct negotiations among the claimants.

After the peak of the crisis was passed, the US finally indicated that the US-Japan Security Treaty would cover a conflict over the Senkaku Islands. State Department Assistant Secretary for Asia and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell said: “The United States has a very strong commitment to Japan under Article V of the security treaty. We abide by that commitment and its terms, requiring the United States to support Japan and its territories, are very clear.”⁴⁸ Campbell avoided making a statement supporting Japanese sovereignty over the Senkakus, distinguishing that with “an area

⁴⁵ “Japan to seek stronger ties with China: FM.” Xinhua News Agency. November 8, 1996.

⁴⁶ “U.S. backs no nation over Senkaku: Burns.” Jiji Press Ticker Service. September 11, 1996.

⁴⁷ “U.S. calls for restraint in Senkaku dispute.” Jiji Press Ticker Service. September 24, 1996.

⁴⁸ Akaza, Koichi. “U.S. confirms security treaty covers Senkakus.” *The Daily Yomiuri*. November 29, 1996. p. 1.

under Japanese administration.”⁴⁹ William Breer, a former U.S. Minister in Japan, broke out of diplospeak and stated simply that the U.S. would have in all likelihood responded to a Japanese call for security support had hostilities broken out.⁵⁰

Japan did little to try to bring the US into the conflict on their side as the US had already repeatedly stated its position. However, a right-wing Japanese media outlet did pick up on the contradiction between the US’ neutral stance and its military use of the Senkaku Islands: “The United States is liable to state a clear view on this contradiction as long as it maintains the right of using the firing ranges.”⁵¹ On the diplomatic front, Japan asked the US to reassure the PRC that the US-Japan security relationship does not target the PRC in response to a series of PRC media reports accusing Japan of a resurgent militarism with US support to contain the PRC. In this relatively minor aid, the US came through for Japan.

The issue settled down until the following May when Shingo Nishimura, a member of the Japanese House of Representatives’ opposition New Frontier Party, led a 4-member group to the Senkaku Island of Uotsuri in order to “inspect part of Japanese territory.”⁵² Not surprisingly, this was denounced by the PRC as a serious violation of PRC sovereignty. Even an anonymous U.S. administration official reacted negatively towards this action, calling it “provocative” and saying: “we certainly don’t advocate any party taking action that serves to increase tension regarding this issue.”⁵³

With tensions ratcheting up once again, the PRC called for a shelving of the issue. On July 14, 1997, Chinese Ambassador to Japan Xu Dunxin said: “It is better

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “U.S. may act for Japan in Senkaku emergency.” Jiji Press Ticker Service. October 20, 1996.

⁵¹ “US criticized for sidestepping island dispute.” Agence France Presse. September 21, 1996.

⁵² “U.S. calls for cool heads on Senkaku isles dispute.” Japan Economic Newswire. May 7, 1997.

⁵³ Ibid.

for the issue to be solved over a long period of time.”⁵⁴ Shortly thereafter, in early September, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto made a visit to the PRC which downplayed the past tensions over the Senkaku Islands, saying: “Neighbors tend to have trouble as they have close relations.”⁵⁵ The same day Hashimoto made those remarks the MSDF prevented another landing by a right-wing politician on the islands, the first time it had prohibited Japanese nationals from doing so.

After this point, the Senkaku issue faded in importance although it continued to rear its head from time to time. Both Japan and the PRC continued to assert their sovereignty over the islands. Japan continued to fend off the boats filled with people from Taiwan and Hong Kong from visiting the islands and the PRC continued to keep its citizens from participating. The JYF sought to make a visit to the islands to fix their lighthouse once again in 1999 and the typical protests were issued by the PRC. In 2000, the LDP included Senkaku sovereignty as part of their party platform to the expected PRC protests. In 2001, Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research Carl Ford indicated more strongly than the previous administration that the US would support Japan in a conflict over the Senkakus with the PRC, saying: “Anytime Japan is involved in conflict of whatever sort, the United States will be seriously concerned and involved to one degree or other.”⁵⁶

Ships from the PRC at a regular pace entered waters sensitive to the Japanese and this precipitated repetitive diplomatic flurries. In reaction to this, Japan and the PRC negotiated a “confidence-building” agreement in February 2001. This

⁵⁴ “Chinese envoy calls for shelving territorial dispute.” Japan Economic Newswire. July 14, 1997.

⁵⁵ Suzuki, Miwa. “Hashimoto urges ‘mutual understanding’ between China, Japan.” Agence France Presse. September 5, 1997.

⁵⁶ “U.S. official hints at support for Japan on Senkaku isles row.” Japan Economic Newswire. December 10, 2001.

agreement stated that each side would notify the other “if either country is to conduct maritime scientific research nearby the coast of the other, except for territorial waters.”⁵⁷ According to Japanese Foreign Ministry officials, “nearby the coast of the other” was understood to mean a theoretical median line. By that measure, the PRC has broken this agreement several times since its implementation but it nevertheless represents an improvement in the pre-agreement situation.

Most recently, and in a sign of the Japanese government’s desire to shore up its claim for sovereignty of the islands, the MPMHAPT in April 2002 began leasing the three islands not already leased by the U.S. (Uotsuri, Kita-Kojima, and Minami-Kojima) from their private owner.⁵⁸ One government source was quoted as saying that the lease “will show our firm stand that the Senkaku islands are historical Japanese territory.”⁵⁹ The PRC’s reaction was predictable – they condemned the action – as was Japan’s reaction – they brushed it off by asserting their sovereignty over the islands.

* * * *

The Senkaku Islands issue is one that lights the hottest of nationalist fires on both sides of the conflict. Similar to the Taiwan issue, it is one that seems likely to maintain a certain level of tensions and provoking occasional crises due to the intractable positions on both sides. It is fairly certain that no resolution is likely anytime soon.

⁵⁷ Harrison, Selig S., “Quiet Struggle in the East China Sea,” *Current History*, September 2002, p. 274.

⁵⁸ “Japan: Government said to be renting three disputed Senkaku islands.” BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political. January 1, 2003.

⁵⁹ “China steps up protest over disputed Senkaku islands.” Japan Economic Newswire. January 5, 2003.

This issue clearly shows the concessions the ruling elite are willing to give in order to keep the right-wing groups' consent for their rule. Surely, Japan could have devised any number of means to keep people off the islands and thereby greatly reduce tensions with the PRC. But it elected not to. This suggests that the ruling LDP was seeking to appease the right, and taken in conjunction with Yasukuni Shrine visits and white washed textbooks, this seems to be a reasonable conclusion. This pandering to the right has the potential to bring this issue to the foreground until a final resolution is reached.

The PRC showed an aggressive face in the use of their military forces. The timing of its most aggressive actions is important to note: it was just two months after the Taiwan Straits crisis. After this point, the use of extremely provocative military actions on the part of the PRC tapered off. This suggests that over time the leadership of the PRC slowly began to reject aggressive military tactics as the most efficient way to achieve the national interest. In this case, the increasing tensions with Japan would not lead to any constructive end; any battle would have likely been lost and would have brought them into conflict with the US, with broad and negative repercussions.

Here too both Japan and the PRC showed restraint. The PRC did not permit boatloads of activist citizens to make attempts to land on the Senkaku Islands, as did Taiwan and pre-reunification Hong Kong. Again the PRC ignored calls for more aggressive military retaliation that seems to emerge in every crisis. Finally, each side decided at a certain point that enough was enough and it was time to resshelf the issue, as no practical solution was in sight.

The PRC seems to be taking a “wait and dominate” approach to the Senkaku Issue. With trends in power capabilities, the longer the two wait to resolve this issue the greater the leverage of the PRC will become. Thus instead of forcing an abortive and damaging confrontation, the PRC bides its time and shows restraint for the time being, even while also revealing that it has a tendency to provocatively use its military in confrontations. Even while showing restraint, the PRC gives hints to its actual position by the continuing surveying of the sea for natural resources.

Yet the most striking behavior regarding the Senkaku Islands is that of the US. The US insists on neutrality, even while ultimately confirming under both a Democratic and a Republican administration that it will stand behind Japan if hostilities break out. The implication is that the US is willing to tolerate a certain level of tension between PRC and Japan and the line is drawn at the point where the US-Japan Security Treaty comes into effect. It seems that if the US does not perceive its direct interest as being involved, it does not make moves to get its hands dirty. This is in contrast to the EP-3E incident when Japan’s national interests were at little risk but it stuck out its neck any way to stand beside the US. This is consistent with the predictions based on Snyder’s concept of asymmetries of the levels of interdependence; the lesser power makes strong moves to reassure the greater of its value while the greater simply does not.

The twist in all of this is that the US is not just an unrelated third party. Its military leases on two of the islands make it an interested player. That lease is in itself an interesting issue. It seems more than just a little odd that the US is has been leasing islands since 1972 and will be at least until 2012 for bombing exercises even though it states that no exercises have been conducted since 1979. It is hard to swallow that any

military would simply lease empty space for an activity that has not been done for over two decades. The implication is that there is another motivation in US actions here. One can undoubtedly speculate to no end about what interests the US has here, but the long-term commitment to lease these islands belies that there is one.

If it is in the US interests to maintain access to these islands, why does it not push Japan's case for sovereignty over the islands? The obvious reason is the negative impact this would have on relationship with the PRC, not to mention Taiwan. Such a unilateral push to resolve the island issue would be a temporary solution at best and it would provoke higher tensions between the PRC on one hand and Japan and the US on the other. Thus, the US benefits from the status quo; much like with Taiwan, keeping the sovereignty status of the Senkaku Islands in limbo lets the US continue to reap military benefits while not having to deal with a contentious resolution.

The EP-3E Incident

On the morning of April 1st, 2001, a US Navy EP-3E Aries II surveillance plane with a crew of 24 left Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, Japan, for a surveillance mission on a PRC Russian-built Sovremenny-class destroyer along the southern coast of the PRC. Prior to its final emergency landing, the EP-3E did not enter the internationally recognized 12-mile span of coast waters on the PRC's perimeter, even though it was within the zone unilaterally declared by the PRC which supposed to extend its sovereign rights into waters far beyond the 12-mile norm.

The PRC responded by scrambling two F-8 fighter-bombers to monitor the reconnaissance plane, which was circling near the destroyer. During the interception, the EP-3E and one of the two jets collided, causing significant damage to both aircraft. The F-8 broke apart and plummeted to the ocean below in flames. Wang Wei, the pilot of the stricken plane radioed to Zhao Yu, the pilot of the other, that he would bail and proceeded to do so. Wang landed in the sea below and was never seen again, despite intensive PRC search efforts over the following days.

The EP-3E's damage was also severe, and it plummeted hundreds of meters before the crew managed to regain control of the aircraft. According to Taiwanese defense sources that electronically monitored the entire incident, the EP-3E crew tried to fly the plane to make an emergency landing on friendly territory. This, however, was aborted when Zhao, after being denied permission to shoot the EP-3E down, fired warning shots in close proximity to the plane in order to force it down on

PRC territory.⁶⁰ The EP-3E issued a distress call, to which aviation authorities on Hainan did not respond, and made its emergency landing at the Lingshui Airport on Hainan Island off of the southern coast of the PRC.

As soon as it became clear that the EP-3E would land in the PRC, the crew began destroying the sensitive data and equipment inside and it later revealed to the media that it had gone through the entire list. Once on the ground, PRC forces demanded that the crew leave the plane, which the crew at first resisted, demanding to remain on board until US diplomats could arrive. The PRC forced its way onto the plane by wrestling to the ground the EP-3E crewmember that was attempting to hold the door. They took the crew into custody and had unfettered access to the plane from that point.

This collision was the culmination of several months of ratcheting tensions in the cat and mouse game between US spy planes and the PRC fighters sent to intercept them along the PRC's southern coast. About a month before the EP-3E incident, two US spy planes monitoring PLA naval exercises in the Yellow Sea were intercepted by four F-7 MiG fighters. The following day, the US again sent out two spy planes, but this time they were accompanied by four F-15 fighters. The PRC then again elected to intercept with two F-7 MiG fighters but this time accompanied by two additional SU-27 fighters.⁶¹ Moreover, the US was able to produce a variety of videos and photographs showing a pattern of PRC interceptors flying dangerously close to US aircraft in order to intimidate

⁶⁰ See Martin Fackler, "Military intelligence reveals details of dramatic mid-air exchange: US was spying on Chinese destroyer," *The Advertiser* (Australia), April 5, 2001, Pg. 15, and Julian Borger and John Gittings, "Hawks goad leaders in US and China: Chinese pilot reported to have forced American spy plane to land after being refused permission by ground control to shoot it down," *The Guardian* (London), April 9, 2001, p 14.

⁶¹ Schloss, Glenn, and Mark O'Neill. "Cold War crash course: Tactics being used in the Hainan crisis hark back to a dark ear." *South China Morning Post*. April 6, 2001.

US pilots. One video even showed Wang himself displaying his email on a piece of paper from his jet's cockpit to the US crew.

* * * *

With the plane and crew in PRC control, the two sides began to seek a resolution to the issue. Before the PRC Foreign Ministry could even confirm the incident, the US publicly demanded that both the crew and the plane be returned immediately to the US, laying the blame with the PRC. President Bush initially sought to handle this issue at a level lower than the president so as to minimize its seriousness, but on April 2 he entered the fray and called for “the prompt and safe return of the crew and the return of the aircraft without further damaging or tampering.”⁶² The PRC, predictably, rejected this and blamed the US, demanding an apology from the US for the incident. Jiang Zemin himself began demanding on a nearly daily basis that the US apologize. The apology initially sought by the PRC was supposed to include all aspects of the situation, including the reconnaissance off of the PRC coast. The PRC's official news agency Xinhua listed PRC demands as follows: “The US government must apologize to the Chinese government and people, stop immediately all its reconnaissance activities along the coastal areas of China, actively cooperate with the Chinese government to conduct a comprehensive and thorough investigation of this incident, and

⁶² “U.S. Plane, Crew Held in China Following Collision.” *Burden of Proof*, CNN. 2001 April 2.

compensate in a rapid, complete, and effective manner for the personnel and property losses on the part of the Chinese side.”⁶³

With the demands of each side set, the diplomatic haggling began. The Bush administration initially rejected outright any apology, but in seeking to avoid an outcome like the 1960 U-2 incident, this position gradually ameliorated.⁶⁴ On April 4, Secretary of State Colin Powell expressed “regret” over the fate of Wang, which Beijing welcomed as “a step in the right direction.”⁶⁵ As late as April 8, Vice President Dick Cheney said that the US had no intention whatsoever of apologizing to the PRC, but just three days later on April 11 US Ambassador to the PRC Joseph Prueher handed a letter to the PRC Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong saying that the US was “very sorry” for the loss of the PRC pilot and also that it was “very sorry” that the EP-3E had landed in Hainan without permission.⁶⁶ This diplomatically nuanced statement was one that was palatable to the Bush administration in English – it accepted no blame nor offered an apology – and could be translated as *baodian*, the Chinese word for apology that connotes the fault of the speaker, thus satisfying the PRC demand for an apology on the part of the US. The crew was released the following day, with no PRC lack of emphasis on the US *baodian*.

⁶³ “USA “violates international law” in plane collision – Xinhua.” BBC Worldwide Monitoring. April 4, 2001.

⁶⁴ On May 1, 1960, a US U-2 spy plane piloted by Francis Gary Powers crashed in the Soviet Union and Powers was taken prisoner. Powers was put on trial and convicted for spying and sentenced to three years of imprisonment and seven years of hard labor, even though he only served one year and nine months before being traded for the Soviet spy Colonel Rudolph Ivanovich Abel. Nevertheless, the incident had a serious negative impact on the US-USSR relationship. Because the US refused to give an apology that the Soviet Union had demanded, the Paris Summit between Eisenhower and Khrushchev collapsed. The incident also helped cement a pattern of mistrust that can be tied to the Cuban Missile Crisis and much of the Cold War. See “Gary Powers and the U-2 Incident: Demise of the Paris Summit,” *American History*, 7 April 2003 <<http://americanhistory.about.com/library/weekly/aa061801a.htm>>.

⁶⁵ “Chronology of the US-China spy plane standoff.” Agence France-Presse. April 12, 2001.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

The PRC treated the crew relatively well, resisting any number of strong domestic voices calling for harsher action.⁶⁷ They were housed in a military guesthouse, rather than any number of less hospitable possibilities. On April 2, US diplomats arrived in Hainan and demanded to see the crew but were unable to for nearly 72 hours, when they were permitted to speak only briefly to the crew. The meetings continued throughout the detention of the crew and became slightly more substantive than the first meeting. The PRC engaged in sometimes-controversial interrogation methods, including sleep deprivation and disorienting schedules, knowing fully well that these are also in the US' bag of tricks and would elicit little reaction from the US. The only unwanted physical contact that came to light during the crew's detention was the skirmish to board the plane, mentioned above.

With the negotiations that were going on, the two sides waged a fierce PR war, each trying to lay the blame on the other. The pointedness of this rhetorical conflict peaked and was toned down as the sides negotiated for their priority demands. The US cited the norm of international aviation law that a faster aircraft is responsible for avoiding a slower one and the increasingly aggressive intercepts along the southern coast of the PRC. The PRC countered that the US plane veered suddenly in the direction of the lost jet, implying that this flight pattern negated any relevant aviation norms. The US cited "commonly accepted principles of international law" to justify the emergency landing in Hainan.⁶⁸ The PRC countered that the plane violated PRC sovereignty by landing without permission, despite being forced down by the PRC pilot and the

⁶⁷ One entry on a Beijing University online bulletin board declared: "All Chinese must stand up and fight against Americans. This time we've already got some Americans in our hands. Let's kill some and brainwash the others." See Melinda Liu, "This is War," *Newsweek*, April 3, 2001.

⁶⁸ "U.S. officials en route to Chinese island where American plane landed." The Associated Press. April 2, 2001.

emergency situation. Early on, one US official even countered the PRC demand for an apology with a counter-demand that the PRC apologize for endangering the lives of the 24 crewmembers. Each side released a computer animation depicting their version of events.

Once the US apology led to the release of the crew, the negotiations moved onto the other demands of each side. For the US, the remaining issue was to get the EP-3E returned as quickly as possible. While the crew was released in a comparatively short period of 11 days, the aircraft languished in Hainan for more than three months; the final pieces did not leave Hainan until July 3.⁶⁹ The PRC was clearly willing to let negotiations for the return of the plane to drag out over months, giving its technicians ample time to examine the contents of the plane. Despite the technical feasibility of being able to repair the EP-3E and fly it out back to the US, the PRC forced Washington to agree to remove the EP-3E in pieces and transport it back to the US. The PRC also rejected a US proposal to remove the plane on a US-made C-5 transport plane, and instead coerced the US to use a Russian-made Antonov 124 cargo plane, which had to be leased from a Russian company.

The remaining PRC demands were widdled down to just one. The PRC undoubtedly realized that the US would not end its reconnaissance missions along the coast and that fell from the negotiations. Their demand for cooperation in an investigation also became moot when each presented an extremely different account of what happened, both “based on evidence.” This left the PRC with their demand for compensation, an issue that became one of haggling over numbers. The PRC produced

⁶⁹ Reuters. “Payout for EP-3 Care is Rejected; Diplomacy: China, which sought \$1 million, calls U.S. offer of \$34,576 for crippled spy plane’s support costs inadequate.” *Los Angeles Times*. 2001 August 12.

an itemized list of expenses demanding \$1 million, which US officials dismissed as “exaggerated.”⁷⁰ The US countered with an offer to pay \$34,567, a number some in the PRC suggested was selected arbitrarily by the US to humiliate the PRC. Negotiations for this wrangled on throughout the summer but fell off the map after September 11.

The rhetorical back-and-forth also continued throughout these negotiations, but the overall trend was on the downward. Once the US secured the release of the crew, they turned the rhetorical heat up. The US provided evidence of PRC “unsafe intercepts” by PLA aircraft along the southern coast of the PRC in the form of a number of videos and photos. This was the final upward spike in the intensity of the PR war. From that point, the rhetorical conflict on this issue gradually petered out as the two sides moved to resuscitate the bilateral relationship even before September 11 cleared the EP-3 incident right off the board.

The captive domestic audience of the PRC was also privy to the PR campaign on the part of their government. Although initially the media was briefly low-key about the issue, a few days into the incident the media began to whip up nationalist support for the government against the US. This created a situation in which the government created pressure on itself and then was able to back its demand for an apology with a need to placate its citizens.

In contrast to the Taiwan Strait crisis, the US military reaction was subdued. In a subtle military threat, the US ordered some warships that were scheduled to transit through the South China Sea to slow down and remain in the area for a longer period of time. A defense official declined to characterize the move as a “show of force,”

⁷⁰ Gedda, George. “U.S. rejects \$1 million tab from China for spy plane costs.” The Associated Press. July 7, 2001.

and instead said: “Their presence is a constant signal of US interest.”⁷¹ In the end, however, the ships eventually left the area as negotiations pressed on and never made a big splash in the course of events.

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Japan, itself often the target of PRC reconnaissance planes, this time allowed no doubts about its position of support for the US.⁷² On April 3, Japanese Ambassador to the United States Shunji Yanai stated that Japan supported the US position and noted specifically many of the points of that position. He backed the US demand for an early return of the plane and its crew to the US and the US demand that the PRC not board the plane. He dismissed the PRC allegation that the plane had illegally entered PRC airspace in landing on Hainan. Japan’s Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs delivered the same message to the PRC in a phone call. Japan’s SDF chief Toshitsugu Saito reiterated much of the same message. Interestingly, Saito also unrealistically suggested that Japan could investigate the crash since the US and the PRC could not agree, implying a balanced mediation.

Rhetorically, Japan wasted no effort in emphasizing their hope for an amicable solution to this issue. Yanai called for such a solution so as to prevent a major diplomatic rift between the US and the PRC. Saito also said much the same thing, stating, “Friendly relations between the United States and China are indispensable for

⁷¹ “Warships gather in spy plane stand-off.” Nationwide News Pty Limited. April 3, 2001.

⁷² “A dangerous game of cat and mouse.” The Japan Times. April 4, 2001.

peace and stability in Asia and the Pacific region.”⁷³ Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono was quoted as saying to US Secretary of State Colin Powell that “it is extremely important that good US-China relations continue.”⁷⁴

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At the core of this incident again is the Taiwan issue. US reconnaissance activities around the perimeter of the PRC are largely in support of the de facto protectorate the US has over Taiwan. Any enhancement of the US ability to protect Taiwan directly conflicts with the PRC’s primary foreign policy and military goal of unification with Taiwan. The PRC is well aware that US reconnaissance has kept the US up to date on the development of many PRC military capabilities – including the vast missile deployment across from Taiwan – which tend to lead to more robust arm sales packages to Taiwan and thus neutralize some of the gains that the PRC makes vis-à-vis Taiwan.

The rising tensions in the South China Sea prior to April 1, 2001, were due in significant part to US domestic politics. When Bush entered office, the PRC was re-classified as a “strategic competitor” in line with neo-conservatism and tensions between the US and the PRC rose. The newest ism to enter the White House led to an increase in the amount of surveillance being conducted along the PRC’s coast. It was this augmentation that coincided with increasing PRC aggressiveness in its intercepts and it is very likely a causal relationship. The rather ridiculous assertion that the EP-3E was able

⁷³ “Japanese Defense Agency chief offers to investigate US-China mid-air collision.” BBC Monitoring Asian Pacific – Political. April 3, 2001.

⁷⁴ “Japan backs U.S. position on plane collision: Yanai.” Kyodo News Service. April 4, 2001.

to “ram” an F-8 aside, this aggressiveness combined with a miscalculation on the part of Wang Wei is what ultimately caused the actual collision.

The most inflammatory act on the part of the PRC in the course of this incident was the warning shots fired by Zhao Yu. It is unclear whether these were authorized by higher authorities or by an independent act on the part of Zhao himself. But it is important to note that the PRC was adamant in its refusal of Zhao’s request to shoot down the EP-3E, an act that would have been an extreme escalation of the situation.

The PRC treatment of the crew showed careful restraint. Calls, admittedly extreme, for a much harsher treatment of the crew were ignored. A cost-benefit analysis can easily explain this; the treatment of the US crew was undoubtedly an explosive issue in the PRC-US relationship and the potential damage could have been huge. At the same time, there would have been a strong public support for much harsher actions against the US. The PRC leadership chose to sacrifice the public opinion benefit they might have gained to avoid the guaranteed damage to the PRC-US relationship such actions would have caused.

The PRC once again used this incident to stoke up domestic nationalism, an issue which touches on the core problem of the PRC: diminishing legitimacy. To bolster this legitimacy, the CCP seeks to define its identity through a form of virulent nationalism. The PRC almost always does this when there is some kind of conflict with either the US or Japan. Yet by stoking nationalistic outrage, the PRC hamstringing their own flexibility in diplomatic crises. Because the PRC government makes domestic public opinion swerve in one direction and thereby affect how decisions can be made,

they become limited in their policy options due to the need to maintain at least some level of domestic support in order to limit opposition to the regime and enhance their legitimacy. This tends to make the PRC aggressive, inflexible, and extremely sensitive to losses of face.

The PRC's handling of this incident clearly showed the power of their concept of gaining or losing face. Their foremost diplomatic goal in this issue was, simply, a statement from the US. Peter Hays Gries and Kaiping Peng argue that, rather than the collision itself, it was the US' refusal to apologize properly that really angered Beijing.⁷⁵ In returning the plane, they subtly moved to gain face by humiliating the US in making them dismantle the EP-3E instead of repair it and then forcing them to use a non-US cargo plane to transport it back. They then accused the \$34,567 US offer of compensation of being a way to humiliate the PRC, which seems likely despite any evidence that it actually was.

The concept of face encourages the PRC to be both practical and petty at the same time. The PRC needed to gain something from this. They knew that there was little they could gain from the US and they did not wish to expend the political capital to do so. Thus, they pursued what they realistically and rightly believed they could get from the US: a suitable apology. On the other side, they raised a seemingly logistical issue – what kind of plane would transport the EP-3E out of Hainan – to an importance that allowed them to gain face by humiliating the US.

The PRC's acceptance of Bush's apology as what was needed to release the crew certainly demonstrated the value that the PRC places on the PRC-US

⁷⁵ Harmsen, Peter. "Year after spy plane crisis, China-US ties face new uncertainty." Agence France Presse. March 31, 2002.

relationship. It managed to strike a balance between that relationship and the demands of the extremely nationalistic domestic audience and the conservatives in the leadership. This was despite speculation from US pundits who asserted that the PRC would use the crew as a bargaining chip in the upcoming US arm sales to Taiwan when in fact the PRC showed considerable restraint in its handling of the troops.

The PRC clearly did not feel the same restraint in its actions toward the plane as it had with the crew. The PRC was content to let negotiations drag out over months, giving its technicians more than enough time to examine the plane's equipment. Even though the released US crew claimed that it had destroyed all the "good stuff," the PRC undoubtedly plucked and picked at the US plane until completely satisfied that they could glean no more information from it.⁷⁶ Some even claimed that it could be "the most significant seizure of an adversary's intelligence equipment since Britain seized a key to the "Enigma" code aboard a German submarine in World War II."⁷⁷ And despite US protests and arguments of international law that military craft are "sovereign territory," the PRC was actually doing the same thing the US had done when a Soviet pilot with intentions to defect landed the newest Soviet "Foxybat" fighter plane at a Japanese air base in Hokkaido on September 6, 1976; the US and Japan dissected the plane and studied it, only to return it later – in pieces.⁷⁸

The US administration's initial behavior was the sum of a Republican administration influenced by and playing to a neoconservative base while at the same time needing to pragmatically consider the lives of the endangered troops. Initial rhetoric

⁷⁶ Cimon, Marlene, Tony Perry and Susan Essoyan. "Spy plane plunge terrified crew." The Toronto Star. April 13, 2001.

⁷⁷ Schloss, Glenn, and Mark O'Neill. "Cold War crash course: Tactics being used in the Hainan crisis hark back to a dark era." South China Morning Post. April 6, 2001.

⁷⁸ "A dangerous game of cat and mouse." The Japan Times. April 4, 2001.

attacking the PRC was clearly in the neoconservative line but as the Bush administration realized that they would have to bend in order to get the US crew members back safely, they did so. With the crewmembers home safe, they moved back to the strong rhetoric, knowing full well there was little they could do to hasten the return of the EP-3E until the PRC was satisfied that it had gotten all it could from the plane. Nevertheless, the Bush administration is well aware of the importance of the relationship with the PRC, especially for big business, another key GOP constituency. The administration moved to get the relationship back on track. As September 11 approached, PRC-US relations were decidedly on the upswing.

Japan, similar to its reaction to the Taiwan crisis, took on the position of falling in line behind the US while urging an amicable resolution to the crisis. The difference, however, was that the responses here was much stronger. While Japan may make some almost ludicrous attempts to play itself as a possible neutral arbiter between the US and the PRC, its solid support for the US position belies the threat Japan feels from the growing military power of the PRC and a belief that the PRC need to be watched. It is also possible that Japan rationalized that this conflict was unlikely to escalate, meaning the possibility of entrapment was low. At the same time, it provided a good chance to show that Japan is a “good ally” by siding unmistakably with the US.

Japan has no interest to see a more threatening conflict emerge between the PRC and the US. The downing of the EP-3E served as a stark reminder of the slowly rising challenge to US military eminence in the Pacific, a challenge last presented by imperial Japan. This is a threat that, even more than the US, Japanese is acutely aware of. Both politicians and the Japanese media in general portray increasing PRC military

spending in a threatening light. Speaking of Asian nations such as Japan, Professor David Shambaugh stated, “None of them wants to be in a position where they have to make a choice between the US and Chinese.”⁷⁹ Japan’s reaction to the situation sought to both encourage a peaceful resolution and shore up their qualities as an ally to the US.

As much if not more so than Japan, the PRC and the US sought to ameliorate the problem once the major negotiating issues were cleared. The dynamic in the bilateral relationship of economic interests bringing the two nations together even as security issues can pull them apart works like a rubber band, limiting the range of motion and pulling thing back when they get stretched out of comfortable proportions. After the EP-3E incident drove a wedge between the two nations, they both moved to get the relationship back on track. They even sought to avoid a repeat of the EP-3E incident; when the US and the PRC resumed military conflicts, one of their first orders of business was to work out rules of conduct for aerial interceptions. Through the entire course of events, the PRC especially took steps that were greatly less inflammatory than could have been.

⁷⁹ Hadar, Leon. “China-US tensions bring back Cold War memories.” The Business Times Singapore. April 5, 2001. p. 10.

The War on Terrorism

PRC President Jiang Zemin watched the September 11 attacks unfold on CNN and immediately ordered his government to issue condolences to the US and offer full cooperation with the US to track down those responsible for the attacks. Jiang used the emergency hotline between Beijing and the White House to contact Bush, reportedly being the second leader to get through after Russian President Vladimir Putin. According to Xinhua, Jiang reiterated the condolences and the offer of cooperation, saying: “China is ready to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with the US and the international community in combating all manner of terrorist violence.”⁸⁰

Following these broad yet vague declarations of PRC support, details of what PRC cooperation would entail gradually began to emerge. PRC Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan said that the PRC would share intelligence that could be helpful to the war on terrorism. The PRC also said that aid in the war against terrorism would not be linked to any other issues. On the other hand, various PRC officials made clear the link to the war on terrorism with their conflict against Muslim separatists in Western Xinjiang, none more clearly than a statement by Foreign Ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi: “We hope that efforts to fight against East Turkistan terrorist forces should become part of the international effort, and should also win support and understanding.”⁸¹

Even with a new tone of cooperation between the US and the PRC thanks the war on terrorism, issues that were traditionally part and parcel of PRC foreign policy continued to reverberate in official announcements, including anti-hegemonism and

⁸⁰ Becker, Jasper. “Mainland to feel the heat over ‘rogue’ arms deals.” September 14, 2001. p. 6.

South China Morning Post .

⁸¹ MacLeod, Calum. “China says it has its own problem with terrorists.” October 12, 2001. p. A19.

The Washington Times. October

abiding by the principles of the UN. PRC Chief of the General Staff Fu Quanyou warned: "Counter-terrorism should not be to used to practice hegemony."⁸² Tang Jiaxuan said that the anti-terrorism campaign should "respect the United Nations charter and norms of international law."⁸³ Sun Yuxi expanded on that, saying: "I want to emphasize that on the question against terrorism, China's position is clear cut. We have always held that the relevant measures against terrorism should be well-targeted, concrete evidence and based on the charter and principles of the United Nations."⁸⁴

The US' diplomatic efforts were aimed to get as many allies as possible, and the thrust for the PRC's assistance was strong despite the administrations previous tensions with the PRC. Colin Powell noted that the PRC could be helpful in Central Asia because "it has influence in that region. It has knowledge and information. It has intelligence that might be of help to us."⁸⁵ This statement closely mirrored the core of Beijing's offer to Washington. As Beijing had long been hoping, Bush also finally moved away from the "strategic competitor" label for the PRC and made the functioning rhetoric a "cooperative, constructive, and candid" relationship. And in a relationship that often relies on summit diplomacy to smooth over tensions, Jiang was very pleased that Bush went to the APEC meeting in Shanghai despite ongoing military activities in Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, various administration officials made clear that there would be no trade-off for PRC cooperation in the war on terrorism for benefits in other aspects

⁸² "China warns US against using terrorism fight to expand influence." Agence France Presse. January 16, 2002.

⁸³ Mufson, Steven. "China Tells U.S. It Will Share Information." *The Washington Post*. September 22, 2001. p. A30.

⁸⁴ "China against willful expansion of anti-terror war." *The Press Trust of India*. March 12, 2002.

⁸⁵ Mufson, Steven. "China Tells U.S. It Will Share Information." *The Washington Post*. September 22, 2001. p. A30.

of the relationship. The two issues that appeared to be at the crux of these statements were Taiwan and criticism of the PRC's human rights record. There was much speculation on Taiwan that they might be traded for PRC assistance in the war on terrorism to which at least in part prompted an administration response. And with the PRC's linking of East Turkistan separatists to the war on terrorism, many were concerned that the US would turn a blind eye to the PRC's treatment of the Uighur minority group from where these separatists came.

The PRC came through on its offer of complete support in a variety of concrete ways on the diplomatic and humanitarian fronts. It assisted in the drafting and passing of two key resolutions in the UN Security Council and General Assembly. Its vote on Resolution 1368 marked the first time that Beijing supported a US-led military intervention since the end of the Cold War, opting to vote for the resolution rather than its typical practice of abstaining. The PRC also used its diplomatic influence on Pakistan to help bring that country on board the anti-terrorism bandwagon, despite years of support for the Taliban. Despite declarations by PRC officials that the APEC meeting would not be "hijacked" by the war on terrorism, its priority in the agenda of the meetings was not protested by the PRC and APEC issued its first-ever major political statement. On the humanitarian front, the PRC offered aid for Afghan refugee resettlement in Pakistan and \$150 million in reconstruction aid to Afghanistan.⁸⁶

The PRC's cooperation also covered a wide range military and security issues. As US request and PRC statements indicated, the most widely known form of cooperation was their sharing of intelligence on Al Qaeda and the Taliban. The PRC

⁸⁶ Shambaugh, David. "Sino-American Relations since September 11: Can the New Stability Last?" *Current History*, Vol. 101, No. 656. September 2002.

quickly secured the remote mountain borders with Afghanistan and then Pakistan with rapid-response units. The PRC granted approval for a US aircraft carrier battle group, on its way to the Arabian Sea, to make a port call in Hong Kong. It participated in the moves to cut off terrorists from funds, searching accounts in both the PRC and Hong Kong for terrorist links. The PRC worked with the US to establish a practical working relationship on counterterrorism, including permitting the FBI to open an office in Beijing to help coordinate anti-terrorist activities between the two capitals. The PRC signed on to the Declaration of Principles on Enhanced Security Cooperation, a US-led initiative to ensure safe maritime trade. In what some viewed as a quid pro quo for putting the East Turkistan Islamic Movement on the US list of terroristic organizations, Beijing promised to address missile technology proliferation.

It is also important to note some of the things the PRC did not do. On the positive side for the PRC-US relationship, there was little of the typical rhetoric when the US placed its troops in countries bordering the PRC. "If the US military presence is genuinely for the purpose of anti-terrorism, and favorable for the prevention of chaos in Afghanistan after the war, China can understand," said Beijing University International Relations Institute chief Zhu Feng.⁸⁷

But most of what the PRC could have done but did not would have benefited the PRC-US relationship. The PRC, citing sensitivities over sovereignty, did not grant overflight or basing rights to the US, making it and Iran the only two countries on Afghanistan's border to do so. The PRC declined to commit any military units as part of the UN forces on the ground in Afghanistan. Despite its pledges of monetary aid, and

⁸⁷ O'Donnell, Lynne. "Beijing awakens to Washington's new role in region." *The Australian*. January 9, 2002. p. 8.

in contrast to the role the PRC played in East Timor, the PRC also declined to help with training the new Afghan army or police forces, as well as declining to send engineers, construction workers, or equipment to help in the reconstruction.

The US reaction to PRC assistance in the war on terrorism needless to say was positive but had caveats. In a notable rhetorical departure, Bush praised PRC cooperation, saying: “President Jiang and the government stand side by side with the American people as we fight this evil force.”⁸⁸ But, in an obvious reference to the PRC’s Uighur minority, Bush said the war on terrorism “must never be an excuse to persecute minorities.”⁸⁹ Nevertheless, nearly a year after the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration greatly pleased the PRC when it put the East Turkistan Islamic Movement on its list of terroristic organizations, even while continuing to stress to the PRC the need to “treat the Uighur minority with respect and with dignity.”⁹⁰

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Like Jiang, Koizumi did not take long in offering Japan’s full cooperation. In contrast to the foot-dragging in organizing Japanese support for the first Gulf War, Koizumi promised swift enactment of a law that would permit Japanese assistance in the war against terrorism, allowing a much broader role for the Japanese military than in the past. The law he supported would provide non-combat rear area logistical support to the

⁸⁸ Becker, Jasper. “‘Side by side against terrorism’; Bush praises Jiang for his backing of America’s global campaign at leaders’ first meeting.” *South China Morning Post*. October 20, 2001. p. 1.

⁸⁹ Knox, Olivier. “Bush and Jiang vow to cooperate in anti-terror war.” *Agence France Presse*. October 19, 2001.

⁹⁰ Armitage, Richard L. “Remarks at Center for Strategic and International Studies 40th Anniversary and Advisory Board Conference. Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC. September 10, 2002.

US war on terrorism and was most controversial in that it would allow the deployment of troops overseas for something other than a UN peacekeeping mission.

In comparison to the PRC's loud opposition to the 1996 strengthening of the US-Japan security relationship, the PRC's reaction to US-Japanese cooperation in the war on terrorism and the changes required to bring about that cooperation were muted. Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said: "For historical reasons, it is quite obvious a military role by the Japanese government would be a sensitive issue. It should be dealt with in a prudent manner."⁹¹ Professor Liang Yingming, a Beijing University scholar, said: "China is not opposed to Japanese support for the US. In principle, it would not be fair to dictate how Japan can help in the fight against terrorists. But as a victim of Japanese military aggression in World War II, China is justifiably wary."⁹² Some PRC sources demanded that Japan make a public statement disavowing any intention to strengthen its military in its aid to the US. But Professor Liang shrewdly noted: "What can Japan say that will banish anyone's suspicions?"⁹³

Nevertheless, on October 8, the day the US began its bombing campaign in Afghanistan, Japan began an explanation of its military activities to the PRC at the highest level. Prime Minister Koizumi traveled to Beijing for a quick one-day visit to meet with top PRC leaders such as Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji where one of the main issues on the table was Japanese cooperation in the war on terrorism. Jiang Zemin said it was "easy to understand" Japan's desire to assist the US.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the PRC voiced

⁹¹ Leow, Jason. "Send US military aid in prudent way, China warns Japan." *The Straits Times (Singapore)*. September 28, 2001. p. A1.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Eckholm, Erik. "Japanese Leader, Visiting China, Is Mildly Rebuked on Army Role." *The New York Times*. October 9, 2001. p. 7.

concern as well and urged caution. Zhu Rongji, repeating the earlier sentiments expressed by Zhu Bangzao, told Koizumi: “I want Japan to be careful about expanding the SDF’s role.”⁹⁵ Koizumi moved to assure the PRC that the new legislation that would permit enhanced military cooperation would not lead to Japanese troops moving to conquer foreign lands, telling Zhu Rongji: “We are discussing how to take on international terrorism and have already decided that we will not use force because we regret that the Japanese military victimized many people in the past.”⁹⁶ He even went so far as to say: “I want to make the Japan-China relationship stronger – on par with the Japan-US alliance.”⁹⁷

Having assured support to the US and attempted to placate the PRC’s worries, Koizumi’s policy still had to overcome significant domestic opposition. The Japanese postwar constitution rejects force as a means of settling international disputes and restricts the military to self-defense, which was traditionally interpreted in such a way that Japanese troops rarely went abroad. Koizumi used a variety of methods to speak in favor of his policy choice. He directly appealed to the constitution by implying that the war against terrorism was in Japan’s self-defense as well: “The acts of terrorism on the US are a grave challenge to the freedom and peace not only of the US but also of the international community.”⁹⁸ He also argued that the close relationship with the US made Japan’s support necessary. He emphasized that it would be within the existing constitutional framework and subject to the parliamentary control.

⁹⁵ “Zhu cautions Koizumi over beefed-up SDF role.” *Mainichi Daily News*. October 8, 2001. p. 8.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Kakuchi, Suvendrini. “Japan: Gov’t poised to play role in US-led campaign.” Inter Press Service. October 10, 2001.

Koizumi was successful in getting his Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law through the lower house just before the APEC summit in Shanghai and, in the upper house, with little power to halt legislation, it passed shortly thereafter. The legislation enabled Japan to send its military overseas to transport weapons and other supplies for the war on terrorism, as well as to provide logistical and humanitarian support. It limited Japanese troops to areas where combat was not taking place, even while loosening the restrictions on carrying and using weapons. It would have a sunset of two years, at which point the Diet would be able to renew it or let it expire. Plans for Japan's involvement emerging at this time called for up to 1,000 personnel, two fuel-supply ships and three or four destroyers for logistical support on Diego Garcia.⁹⁹ Inner-LDP opposition had succeed in keeping Aegis-equipped destroyers out of the plans up to this point, believing sending them would be seen as overly aggressive.¹⁰⁰

The PRC reaction to this legislation broke completely with precedent and welcomed the legislation but nevertheless called for prudence on Japan's part. In response to the passing of the Japanese law, Sun Yuxi, a spokesman for the PRC Foreign Ministry, said: "We believe that cracking down on terrorism is a common task of the international community. We hope that the relevant parties will, in accordance with the UN Charter and international law, make efforts in the fight against terrorism."¹⁰¹ This essentially gave the PRC's blessing to Japan's activities to support the US war on terrorism. However, he continued to urge caution, saying: "Due to historical reasons, the role of Japan in the military field is a question that should be handled with caution by the

⁹⁹ "China takes conciliatory line on Japanese anti-terror law." Agence France Presse. October 30, 2001.

¹⁰⁰ Chanda, Navan. "Japan's Navy Is Back, and There's No Cause to Be Alarmed." *International Herald Tribune*. November 22, 2001. p. 8.

¹⁰¹ "China takes conciliatory line on Japanese anti-terror law." Agence France Presse. October 30, 2001.

Japanese government.”¹⁰² He also stressed that Japan’s role should be a non-combat role, saying that all activities “should be adopted in consideration of history, in consideration of the Asian people and in consideration of the demands and feelings of the Japanese people who much love the cause of peace.”

Even while the diplomatic tone was cautiously supportive, some outlets of the state-controlled media of the PRC continued to warn of a threat and gradually moved back to the more traditional PRC stance. The official *China Daily* expressed concern that any further solidification of the US-Japan security alliance would be “a threat to security in East Asia.”¹⁰³ In a January 11, 2002, article entitled “Japan’s new defense plans alarming,” the *China Daily* accused Japan of intending to be a military superpower, saying: “With changes in international circumstances and the Asia-Pacific security environment in the past few years, Japan quickened the pace on its path to becoming a political and military giant.”¹⁰⁴

The Japanese support under the Anti-Terror Special Measures Law began in less than 10 days after the law came into effect. The Japanese dispatched six MSDF vessels: three destroyers, two supply ships and a minesweeper. The ships – including the 8,150-ton Hamada and the 8,100-ton Towada – were used to procure fuel in Singapore, Bahrain, Australia and elsewhere and supply it to US ships, a request strongly pressed for by Washington. The 5,700-ton minesweeper, in addition to availability for its namesake use, carried about 200 tons of tents and other goods to the port in Karachi, Pakistan, to be given to refugees. The SDF supplied six C-130 transport planes and other aircraft that

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Chanda, Navan. “Japan’s Navy Is Back, and There’s No Cause to Be Alarmed.” *International Herald Tribune*. November 22, 2001. p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ Yang, Yunzhong. “Japan’s New Defense Plans Alarming.” *The China Daily*. January 10, 2002.

linked US bases in Japan with those in Guam, Singapore, and elsewhere, carrying goods and personnel. The SDF supplied transportation for goods between US bases within Japan.¹⁰⁵ The cabinet later added an additional destroyer and a landing ship to transport construction equipment along with a 140-member Thai army engineering battalion.¹⁰⁶ Early in 2003, after an intense domestic debate over the legality, the Aegis-class destroyer Kirishima left the Japanese port of Yokosuka bound for the Indian Ocean to replace one of the destroyers escorting support ships that were refueling coalition ships involved in Afghanistan.

The diplomatic support the Japanese provided was unflinching, even if they were not in the same positions of influence as the PRC in terms of the UNSC and geography. Koizumi declared: "The government of Japan is firmly resolved to strive for the eradication of terrorism. At the same time, Japan strongly supports the United States and is determined to do its utmost to offer assistance and cooperation."¹⁰⁷ Japan continuously supported the US rhetorically as well as through its activities in organization such as the UN and APEC. They voiced solidarity with the US at a number of summit meetings and through various officials at lower levels. Japan also sought and succeeded in hosting the international conference for reconstruction aid in Afghanistan.

As with the PRC, the US administration was strongly pleased with Japan's reaction to the US call for assistance. In a trip to Japan, Bush said: "Your response to the terrorist threat has demonstrated the strength of our alliance, and the indispensable role of

¹⁰⁵ Mochizuki, Koichi. "SDF's 1st wartime mission narrow in scope." *The Daily Yomiuri*. November 18, 2001. p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Sato, Yoichiro. "Japan breaks ground in naval cooperation; Defense precedents." *International Herald Tribune*. February 18, 2003. p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Prusher, Ilene. "War on terrorism challenges Japan's pacifism." *Christian Science Monitor*. September 24, 2001. p. 7.

Japan – a role that is global, and begins in Asia.”¹⁰⁸ This line continued unabashed and untainted by the caveats found in the praise of the PRC’s cooperation in the war on terrorism.

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The PRC’s support of the US was strong and unambiguous when placed in the context of the post-Tiananmen relationship. This was a reaction that was strongly anchored in the national interests of the PRC in two fundamental ways. Most obviously, the PRC has its own security worries from Islamic terrorists supported by the network of international terrorism that the US war against terrorism is aimed at. Previous PRC carrot and stick efforts to end collaboration between extremists in Afghanistan and Xinjiang had been to no avail. Moreover, this undoubtedly extends to the general border security in Western Xinjiang and along the borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan.

But behind the scenes was the ever-present importance of the PRC-US relationship, easily given more weight by the PRC than any other single bilateral relationship. After September 11, it was a no-brainer that the US was about to lash out aggressively at the culprits of the attacks. For the PRC, their typical opposition to foreign military intervention became untenable due to the nature of the attacks and the strong reaction they provoked from the US administration; such a position would have been an immense and unnecessary drag on PRC-US relations and it was clear that such opposition would not be easily shook off in the wake of September 11.

¹⁰⁸ “Bush lays out vision for ‘Pacific century.’” AFX News Limited. February 19, 2002.

The PRC still had to deal with the strong anti-American domestic settlement. Being in the PRC on September 11 and for months afterwards, it was not difficult to find citizens who contributed to the strong undercurrent of opinion that thought the US got what it deserved. Moreover, almost any visitor to the PRC can cite some PRC citizen's criticism of Jiang Zemin. One person I spoke to criticized Jiang Zemin for not striking back at the US after the bombing of the embassy in Belgrade, which he was sure was intentional.

Opinions like this molded the PRC reaction to September 11. They guaranteed some level of typical PRC rhetoric. Anti-hegemony was a common theme in PRC statements, where the post-USSR meaning of hegemony is understood to be US dominance. The PRC was adamant in wanting the US to conduct the war on terrorism via the UN, where the PRC's voice could be heard and where it would be easier to claim that the US-led war on terrorism was not a unilateral hegemonist action but rather something sanctioned by the UN. The PRC was also setting the groundwork to stand against future questionable expansions of the war on terrorism. With a US administration that was taking a very critical look at Iraq, this was likely in the PRC's thoughts as they emphasized that the war on terrorism should be clearly linked to terrorist activities and done through the UN.

Domestic opinion was also likely also a factor in the limits on PRC military cooperation. However, this cannot fully explain the decision since it would be easy enough for the PRC to grant something like overflight rights to the US and simply censor the media so the public never finds out. Thus, we need to seek opposition to these actions elsewhere. The group that likely opposed this was in the leadership and it is not a

big assumption to think that this was the influence of the conservative element of which the military is a huge part.

Yet at the same time it is noteworthy that there was no outcry at the emergence of US troops in nations bordering the PRC. This represented the silencing of the conservative military element in the PRC, which in previous nearby US interventions such as Korea and Vietnam encouraged a vitriolic reaction from the PRC. Elements of the same group helped produce the reactions against military interventions in sovereign nations such as Kosovo on the fear that they could set a precedent for such intervention against the PRC. Yet this time, even though there was concern in the PRC about the US military build-up in the nations along its western border and the loss of PRC influence in these nations, the response was muted.

Bringing Japan into the picture, one sees complex actions considering both sides in the trilateral relationship on the part of Japan and the PRC. First, Japan needed to outdo the PRC in cooperation. Failing to do so would lead to questions of the benefits of the security treaty with Japan when a so-called “strategic competitor” was providing more cooperation. Second, even while seeking to back the US strongly, Japan sought to placate the PRC. It did not want the PRC to see its activities as hostile.

The PRC, for its part, seemed to have been considering the US reaction when it reacted mildly to the expansion of the role of the Japanese MSDF. One can imagine that if there were no attacks on September 11 and Japan suddenly sent its ships to the Indian Ocean the PRC’s reaction would have been full of the typical rhetoric. The PRC’s restrained reaction makes sense if we consider it’s approach to the US; it did not

want to be seen as impeding the US war on terrorism, and hostile opposition to Japanese military activities might have produced just such a result.

As in the past, the PRC-US relationship is at its best when there is a shared issue of national security. The US, for its part, was able to toss aside the “strategic competitor” rhetoric and move to cooperate with the PRC in the war on terrorism. Even while maintaining a balance among domestic factions in how to handle cooperation with the US in the war on terrorism, the PRC used the war on terrorism to advance the bilateral relationship. The prominence of the Taiwan issue and other contested issues not tied to the war on terrorism diminished as the war on terrorism emerged as an important issue in the PRC-US relationship. Even as Bush argued that a blind eye would not be turned toward PRC human rights abuses, such issues nevertheless fell in priority. The sum effect was that the PRC-US relationship reached a new high point, not really comparable with anything in the post-Tiananmen relationship. The convergence of not only economic but now security interests as well offered an entirely new venue for cooperation.

However, it would be premature to conclude based on that alone that the roller coaster relationship of the 1990s – plunging and rising on events – has come to an end. The 1990s saw ups and downs followed by more ups and downs in the PRC-US relationship. Yet the relationship has so far been more stable than before. As we approach almost two years after September 11, there has been no major decline in the state of PRC-US relations. This is significant as the period contained significant differences in major issues such as weapon sales to Taiwan and the war on Iraq.

These issues do not equate with the major falls of Tiananmen, the Taiwan Strait crisis, the embassy bombing, and the EP-3E incident. The irritants in the relationship after September 11 have been the ever-present ones like arms sales to Taiwan and criticism of human rights practices, which both sides have long grown accustomed to dealing with without straining the relationship in a major way. As for Iraq, the interests of the PRC were served with France and Russia leading the charge, so the PRC was able to sit in the back and avoid directly confronting the US. The PRC has not faced the hostility France has, even though its position was much the same. In any case, if France and Russia had jumped to the US side, the PRC would not have been inclined to stand alone against Washington in the UNSC.

Nevertheless, there is an underlying distrust that continues in the PRC-US relationship.¹⁰⁹ Traditional domestic politics in both countries also continues to pull the PRC-US relationship in different direction. Nationalists, conservatives and the military are the traditional voices of anti-US sentiment in the PRC and they remain strong. Their influence can be seen in such places as the dispersion of various PRC surveillance to gather intelligence on the US war in Iraq to look for potential weaknesses. Nationalists continue to chafe against US “hegemony,” forwarded by things like the Bush security doctrine, in which the US “has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge.”¹¹⁰

The same can be seen in the US. Traditional human rights questions emanate from the left. On the right, the neoconservatives who are so influential in the

¹⁰⁹ Kosukegawa, Yoichi. “Focus: Bush to start 3-country East Asian tour this weekend.” Japan Economic Newswire. February 14, 2002.

¹¹⁰ Norton-Taylor, Richard. “This Marks the Death of Deterrence. The Guardian. October 9, 2002. April 16, 2000 <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/nations/future/2002/1009preemptive.htm>>.

administration continue to hold the PRC as a key long-term threat to the US. In a recent article in the *Weekly Standard*, Gary Schmitt wrote:

Whatever moderation China is exhibiting on the diplomatic front, it continues headlong in its effort to undermine America's security guarantees in the region. ... The truth is that the United States can put off competition with China only so long. At the end of the day, China's ambitions make a contest inevitable. For that reason, the United States should be taking advantage of China's current preoccupation with its internal affairs to strengthen our hand in the region. Washington should so conduct relations as to leave no room for the Chinese to doubt that the United States is able and willing to turn aside any challenge they pose.¹¹¹

As long as such thinking plays an important part in the US administration or even in US politics, there is a strong possibility that policy toward the PRC will be confrontational, placing stress on the bilateral relationship and making a pattern like in the 1990s a possibility as well.

Thanks to new areas of cooperation and an attitude shift, a more stable relationship has emerged in the wake of September 11 between the PRC and the US. Good will was developed through concrete cooperation rather than the diplomatic fluff that typically is used to bolster the relationship. It is true that the relationship was on an upswing after the EP-3E incident as both countries sought to pull back but there is no reason to think that this was any different than the previous upswings after any of the other low points in the relationship. September 11 brought the relationship new levels of

¹¹¹ Schmitt, Gary. "Our Ambivalent China Policy: Hoping to leave well enough alone is shortsighted." *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 7, Issue 42. July 15, 2002. April 12, 2002 <<http://www.weeklystandard.com/content/public/articles/000/000/001/433kiauk.asp>>.

cooperation. But this has yet to be truly tested. The relationship navigated successfully around difference on arms sales to Taiwan and the war on Iraq, but no major strain on the relationship has yet to truly test the hypothesis that the PRC-US relationship has moved beyond the roller coaster of the 1990s.

Japan's new military roles emerged in the context of a PRC-US relationship bolstered by this new strength in the relationship. The US has long pushed Japan to move away from its pacifist constitution and the war on terrorism was a great opportunity for the US to further this. Domestically in Japan, there has been growing elite support in Japan for this for a while, with Koizumi among its leading supporters. Professor Tomihisa Sakamoto, a defense analyst at Aoyama Gakuin University, said: "Koizumi is very keen to have Japan play a significant role on the side of the Americans in the ongoing conflict." Finally, The post-September 11 PRC-US relationship meant that the PRC would not breathe fire about Japan's new military role.

The CCP uses the memory of Japan's war against China – and their prominent position of opposition – to add legitimacy for their own rule.¹¹² Nevertheless, the voices of caution in "friendly tones" used in the PRC's mild response to Japanese use of the SDF in the war on terrorism belies their tacit acceptance of not only Japan's role in the war on terrorism but on Japan's eventual loosening of the rules for sending military forces abroad.¹¹³ The PRC made clear its anxieties about latent Japanese militarism remain, but showed that under the right circumstances it would accept greater military activity for Japan.

¹¹² Chanda, Navan. "Japan's Navy Is Back, and There's No Cause to Be Alarmed." *International Herald Tribune*. November 22, 2001. p. 8.

¹¹³ Eckholm, Erik. "Japanese Leader, Visiting China, Is Mildly Rebuked on Army Role." *The New York Times*. October 9, 2001. p. 7.

Japan used the war on terrorism to set a range of military precedents. They provided support for actual combat operations as opposed to peacekeeping operations. Highly relevant to the Taiwan issue, they showed that the Guidelines' "areas surrounding Japan" could be interpreted to mean the Indian Ocean, confirming PRC suspicions that Taiwan was also within that area. Japan SDF assisted the US, but importantly they also helped non-US ships participating in the operation in Afghanistan. In short, Japan used its cooperation on the war in terrorism to push through major advances in the effort of some of its leaders to make Japan a "normal" nation once again.

The war on terrorism has provided for significant shifts in the trilateral relationship that have been on the whole positive. Most notably, the cooperation has contributed to a stability in the relationship that, although untested, may have fundamentally altered the PRC-US relationship. Japan's continuing moves to become a normal nation were forwarded by its activities in the war on terrorism with the encouragement and qualified acceptance of the PRC. Japan's strong support continued through the war on terrorism to other issues such as Iraq, while the PRC carefully hedged from the beginning against future US moves and its qualified support for the war on terrorism was not extended to the war on Iraq.

The PRC in the US-Japan Relationship

The PRC national identity that uses aggressive force domestically to ensure that the elites remains in power is clearly exported in its foreign policy. Both the Taiwan Straits crisis and the Senkaku Islands crisis of 1996 display strong and provocative uses of the military force, as does the EP-3E incident in 2001. This is further supported by the fervent cries for military retaliation beyond what the PRC has so far done by various actors within the PRC, which have thus far been ignored largely due to capability issues.

At the same time, however, the PRC has modified the degree that the PRC exports its aggressive use of force through foreign policy. In 1996, the PRC fired missiles, conducted massive exercises, played cat and mouse with Japanese fighters, and was generally aggressive with the use of its armed forces. By 2001, this was reigned in considerably. The aggressiveness of the intercepts of the EP-3E and other reconnaissance planes however shows that provocative behavior remained latent. Nevertheless, the fact that the largest military conflict with the PRC in recent years was limited to small-scale interceptions along the PRC borders possibly caused by decisions on the parts of individual pilots, rather than larger-scale actions aimed at territories not administered by the PRC and definitely sent down the chain of command, suggests that the PRC leadership reigned in the use of provocative military actions.

This reason for this change is largely that aggressive military behavior failed as a means to forward the PRC's national interest. First, the actions in the Taiwan Straits crisis failed in their immediate goal; threatening PRC actions did not hinder Lee Teng-hui from getting elected and many suggested that they actually helped him.

Second, the aggressive actions increased the threat perceived by Japan and the US. This encouraged them to tighten security relations even further, something the PRC has long perceived as against its national interests. In sum, these actions brought no significant gains to the PRC but did bring significant losses and they have thus lost favor as a policy tool.

Another export of PRC identity is its fiery rhetoric and threats, implicit or explicit. PRC elites use fear of the use of force as an important tool in governing and this tactic is exported to Japan and the US in the trilateral security relationship. These too, in tandem with provocative military actions, have declined over the course of the case study. Implicit nuclear threats to the US and the “sea of fire” were not prominent in the EP-3E incident, despite strongly indignant rhetoric.

Throughout the period covered in the case studies, PRC rhetoric of opposing a “hegemonic” US and a “militaristic” or “imperialistic” Japan is a constant. This is a product of the national identity fostered in the PRC by the ruling elites of the CCP. This identity has its historic root in opposition to the humiliation of China under imperialist rulers, most notably Japan. The US, although not a major imperial power in China, still is portrayed as part of the Western imperialist club and can thereby play into the oppositional identity of the PRC. As a concession to those the CCP rules over, it assures them that it is not allowing the PRC to get humiliated and that it continues to stand in opposition to the “imperial” powers. The CCP actively encourages this perception and then uses it to enhance their own legitimacy when an opportunity presents itself. For Japan and the US, the ultimate effect of this is to lower their perception of trustworthiness of the PRC and thereby encourage the perception of threat.

There are also important trends in the actions that these states took in reaction to the actions they observed from the others. We have already seen that the use of military actions diminished the intensity due to the PRC moving away from provocative use of its armed forces. Economic actions were virtually nonexistent as reactions to these security issues. This was largely due to the US delinking of economic issues from other issues with the PRC. The motivation for this was primarily that economic sanctions would hurt both the PRC and the US and thus other methods of pursuing political and military interests should be sought. Thus, political actions are ascendant in the trilateral relationship, reducing significantly the threat of hot conflict as well as tensions in general.

Behavior within the US-Japan Security Alliance regarding the PRC is consistent with Snyder's abandonment-entrapment dynamic. In March of this year, LDP policy chief Taro Aso, regarding Japanese cooperation with the US on Iraq, stated: "In terms of priority, we have to weigh heavily on the Japan-U.S. security treaty concerning the security of Japan ... as the United Nations will not protect us. If we have to protect Japan by force, the Japan-U.S. security treaty will be a very important factor."¹¹⁴ This strongly belies the fear that Japan, as the lesser power, could be abandoned by the US should the US perceive it as irrelevant and is reflected clearly in the two cases studies of US-PRC conflict. The Japanese reaction to the Taiwan Straits crisis revealed some of Japan's concerns about entrapment yet their actions suggest they were prepared to show that they were not irrelevant in the security relationship had hostilities broken out. The

¹¹⁴ "Japan should back U.S. even without new U.N. vote: Aso." Japan Economic Newswire. March 1, 2003.

EP-3E crisis provided a less ambiguous displaying of Japanese support, again suggesting that Japan.

The US also expressed its unease about entrapment in the Senkaku Islands crisis by reacting negatively to some Japanese actions as well as by urging the sides to resolve the issue peacefully. The neutral US position on the sovereignty issue has been easier for it to hold due to its power dominance over Japan; the US has little fear of being deemed irrelevant and thus abandoned by the Japanese as long as a threat like the PRC exists. Especially revealing here is the differences in the US reaction to the Senkaku Islands crisis and the Japanese reaction to the EP-3E incident. Both sides were essentially third parties with no strong interests at stake, yet Japan backed the US strongly during the EP-3E incident while the US refused to back Japan's position at all. This suggests that the US will keep out of sticky PRC-Japan security issues that do not endanger US security concerns.

Finally, Japan has made strong moves to stand beside the US in a meaningful way during the war on terrorism. This was especially important since the PRC's cooperation was raising the fear of abandonment by making the PRC a US ally in this war. In contrast to the PRC, the war on terrorism affects Japan only indirectly and thus it is not so clearly in Japan's national interests to take a prominent role. Yet the Japanese reaction to the US call for assistance went farther than that of the PRC. This not only reflects capabilities but also Japan's fear of abandonment as the US had increased security convergence with the PRC thanks to the war on terrorism.

The Japanese moved from support with caveats in the Taiwan Straits crisis to outright support in the EP-3E incident and even more proactive support in the war on

terrorism. This suggests that between 1996 and 2001 Japan reached the consensus, reflected above in Aso's comment, to more resolutely support the US, and is further supported by other factors such as the strengthened Guidelines and joint missile defense development. The key factor in this move was the increased Japanese perception of a threat from the PRC in the wake of the PRC's aggressive military behavior in 1996. This encouraged the Japanese to seek greater protections from the rising capabilities of an aggressive PRC, for which it turned to the US.

The US actions can all be based on a policy of deterring the actual outbreak of hostilities in the trilateral relationship. US moves in the Taiwan Straits crisis were directly aimed at that end. That has also been the US goal in the Senkaku issue: paralleling Taiwan, the US standing behind Japan strongly discourages hostilities from the PRC. Even the surveillance that led to the EP-3E incident is part of this cycle, as the US seeks to maintain a balance in the Taiwan Strait so the PRC will not be tempted use military force against Taiwan.

In the long-term of the trilateral relationship, the worst-case scenario for Japan is US-PRC security collusion that does not include or, worse yet, targets Japan. Thus, given any security cooperation between the US and the PRC, Japan will act strongly to show that its security cooperation in the security alliance is more valuable to the US than that of the PRC.

In the same way, long-term US security goals in the region would be hurt most by PRC-Japan security cooperation excluding or targeting the US. However, the observation that PRC-Japanese security cooperation of major relevance is a null set gives the US an advantage, at least in the short to medium terms. Due to historical mistrust that

centers specifically on security issues, the PRC and Japan will for the foreseeable future remain unlikely to cooperate in security matters. Thus the US has little need to fear abandonment in favor of the PRC.

By this measure, the PRC is facing its worst-case scenario of US-Japanese collusion against the PRC. The PRC will continue reacting hostilely to perceived enhancements of the US-Japanese security arrangements and will seek to drive a wedge into the relationship. However, as long as there is a strong perception in both the US and Japan that the PRC is a threat and the other member of the alliance can help them reduce it, the PRC will have only limited success in prying the US and Japan apart.

This threat perception is based in identity factors that, for now, are playing to keep Japan and the US strongly aligned against the PRC. Barring the unlikely scenarios that Japan or the US import PRC identity, the change that could totally revamp this identity structure would be the emergence of democracy in the PRC. It was Deng Xiaoping himself who suggested that there could be general elections in the PRC in the 21st century, and many in the West continue to speculate over when democracy will finally sweep through the PRC. If the PRC were to change to the extent that, say, Taiwan has, identity differences between the US, Japan and the PRC would be immensely reduced, engendering a greater trust between all three actors and making the threat level between the three nations similar and low. Although such an altered PRC-Japan-US security relationship would parallel the USSR-PRC-US relationship with similar levels of trust, the key is that in this case those levels would be low. Most likely, as the PRC's identity gets closer to the US and Japan, it will become better incorporated into the

security framework, similar to the way Russia has with NATO after the collapse of the USSR.

A second issue that is already in flux and that has the potential to affect the trilateral relationship over the long term is the relative power capabilities of the three sides. Specifically, the relative power capabilities of the PRC are rising vis-à-vis the US and Japan. Holding all else constant, the more these abilities increase, the more weight the US and Japan will place in the security relationship. At the same time, by raising the stakes, the fear of entrapment will also continue to rise. If the PRC ever gets to a point where its power capabilities significantly exceed that of the US and Japan combined and it has the will to use these capabilities – in other words, the PRC becomes dominant in the region – it could very well play on this fear of entrapment to drive a wedge into the US-Japan security relationship. However, as this assumes no identity change, the PRC is unlikely to completely break the relationship or effectively co-opt one of the other players against the third due to identity differences that place the PRC in opposition to the others.

The most likely scenario seems to be that the identity of the PRC is changing gradually in ways that cause identity convergence even as its power continues to rise. The rising power of the PRC seems to be encouraging the US and Japan to tighten the security bonds between them and this looks set to continue into the foreseeable future. Moreover, this rise in relative power seems to be outstripping the kinds of identity changes – namely political reform – that could truly raise the trust and diminish threat perceptions in the trilateral security relationship. Nevertheless, the PRC's moves away from aggressive use of its armed forces as well as its reduction of the most outrageous

rhetoric indicates some of the possible creeping evolutionary changes that may be in store for the PRC national identity. The PRC's economic identity has converged rapidly with Japan and the US in the post-Mao era. This has strongly limited the level to which these nations are willing to let tensions rise and is very likely at least partially responsible for the PRC's relaxation of tension-increasing activities over the course of these case studies. One can hope that the whole of PRC national identity will also converge rapidly and further limit the possible range of tensions. Yet The PRC, the US and Japan will continue to behave with restraint in the trilateral security relationship in the short to medium term despite the crises, while the long-term situation will depend ultimately on the respective speeds of the PRC's identity change and their relative capability growth.

List of Acronyms

ACSA	acquisition and cross-servicing agreement
ASDF	Air Self-Defense Force
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
JYF	Japan Youth Federation
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MPMHAPT	Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Post and Telecommunications
MSDF	Maritime Self-Defense Force
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SDF	Self-Defense Force
TMD	theatre missile defense

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